



Conservation in Washington: Powered by People



MAKING AN IMPACT:

- *Following reconstruction of the dam, Coho salmon were spawning and swimming over the dam for the first time in more than 60 years.*
- *Dam modifications opened up 17,750 linear feet of upstream habitat.*
- *If current trends continue, the WA Department of Health will reopen shellfish beds in Birch Bay in 2014.*

WHATCOM CONSERVATION DISTRICT - LAST FISH PASSAGE BARRIER REMOVED ON TERRELL CREEK

Whatcom County's Terrell Creek flows directly to Puget Sound resulting in a "prohibited" status for commercial shellfish harvesting in the area around the mouth of the creek. Once a healthy run, salmon numbers in this stream have declined due to six fish passage barriers. The Whatcom Conservation District (WCD) now works with watershed landowners to reduce runoff, improve riparian (streamside) areas, and remedy the last fish passage barrier.

FINDING A COMMON PATH The final barrier along Terrell Creek was an eight-foot high dam impounding Lake Terrell waters. Other stakeholders did not initiate the removal of this fish barrier because of the perceived complexity of modifying or removing a dam. Further, the community was not interested in disturbing the popular Lake Terrell. Once WCD found a creative and inexpensive way to restore fish passage and water flows without adversely affecting the lake, funders and stakeholders were quick to support the project. The district secured funding and developed a way to elevate the stream channel over the dam eliminating the barrier. WCD also conducted a social marketing campaign and hired a watershed steward

to reach out to watershed residents with poor riparian buffers, uninspected septic systems, and livestock.

RESULTS ON THE GROUND Eight Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) projects were planted along Terrell Creek, totaling 33 acres along 17,700 linear feet of stream using 10,285 native trees. The watershed steward has now worked with 400 residents to improve water quality. If the current trend towards better water quality continues this spring, the Washington State Department of Health is set to reopen shellfish beds in Birch Bay in 2014.

Following reconstruction of the Lake Terrell dam, Coho salmon were monitored in large numbers spawning in the improved channel and swimming over the dam for the first time in more than 60 years. Dam modifications opened up 17,750 linear feet of upstream habitat including 7,400 feet of stream with good riparian cover and spawning gravels. The new dam configuration also improved summer flows by metering lake water into the stream and increased the timing of fall flows to attract migrating fish.

"The Lake Terrell dam project was the final piece of the 15-year long puzzle to restore Terrell Creek to its full potential," said Rachel Vasak, Executive Director of the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association.



Left: Terrell Creek Dam



Right: Reconstructed Terrell Creek stream channel