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Salmon Restoration Working



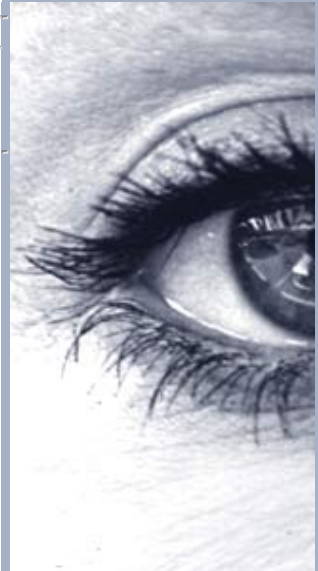
(photo by Bob Walter)

The pile of boulders to the right of the photograph is "rip rap," put on the shore of the Mashell River by the Kid's Pond/Smallwood Park years ago to prevent flooding the park. Rip rap is defined as "a protective cover of stones placed to prevent erosion...of an embankment. Very large rip rap is sometimes referred to as "Armoring."

Young Chinook Census Encouraging...

by Dixie A. Walter
September 12, 2005

Last week, members of the Nisqually Tribe's salmon recovery team, accompanied by KING-TV, took a census of young Chinook salmon in the Mashell River near the Kid's Pond/Smallwood Park. What they discovered made the crew working the river very optimistic. Three divers, in dry suits and equipped with SCUBA (Self-Contained Underwater Breathing



Apparatus) gear flattened, themselves in the river to observe the population of tiny fishes.

The Nisqually Tribe and partners have spent three years making the Mashell a more natural river by replacing man made obstacles with natural ones such as fallen trees and branches creating liquid havens for the petite young Chinook. "Tons" of small Chinook are making use of the habitat prepared by the years of work.

The rip rap shown in the photo above "destroyed the natural flow of the river and all of the rock has to go," according to Environmental Specialist reporter Gary Chittim. He explained, "It [rip rap] prevents a river from working its banks and creating eddies, pools and side streams where small fish and stop and rest," on their journey to the sea.

Census takers said they saw more and larger fish than they expected. Last winter Chinook in the Nisqually River responded to restoration efforts when more than 2,600 salmon returned to spawn. Ten years earlier only 400 Chinook salmon spawned in the Nisqually River.

Planting a New Forest...



(photo by Bob Walter)

Hundreds and hundreds of trees and native foliage were planted by a large group of volunteers Saturday, March 5 along Ohop Creek.

*by Bob Walter
March 9, 2005*

A virtual army of volunteers descended on Ohop Creek just below Eatonville Saturday, March 5 from 9 a.m. to noon, as part of a truly massive salmon habitat restoration project. Last week, it was the Nisqually River. And before that, Muck Creek, Yelm Creek and the Mashell River had plantings.

Bobbi Allison, town councilmember in Eatonville, invited her friend Karen Devereaux of Puyallup, Karen's daughters Emily and Madeline, and Emily's friend Katie Potasky, to come and help dig and plant. Karen was thrilled at the great lesson her daughters would get from the experience. The planting they were doing would be evident for decades. She plans to bring them back in ten years to see the effects of their work, and again in another ten years.

Coordinator Florian Leischner, Salmon Restoration Biologist with the Nisqually Tribe, explained this one project on the Ohop will occur in three major phases and planting areas. This is the first. A sea of colored flags, of various bright colors, show the crew where each type of plant is to be set into the earth. Willow sticks are stuffed into augered holes in the water-logged grasses close to the creek, where they will readily root and help hold soil in place. Plants liking a little drier, drained soil, such as ninebark, are turned in further away from the stream.

Pierce County Stream Team and Nisqually Stream Stewards, the same organizations that conducted the salmon carcass toss a few weeks ago in the watershed, were out Saturday with shovels, gloves, augers and bundles

of plantings.

Jeanette Dorner, Salmon Recovery Program Manager with the Nisqually Tribe, described how a seed grant for the project came from The National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, which was matched by a Pierce County Community Salmon Fund Grant.

On Wednesday, March 9 about 50 Eatonville High School students planted trees from 9 to 11 a.m. along Ohop Creek. And on Friday, March 11 two shifts of 75 fifth graders from Eatonville Middle School will be planting in the morning from 9 to 11 a.m. and during the afternoon shift from 12:45 until 2 p.m. Friday, March 11.

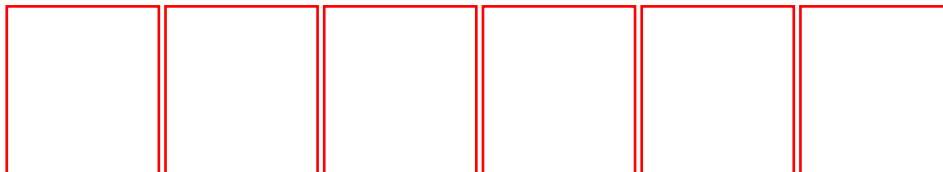
Councilmember Not Afraid to Get Dirty...



(photo by Bob Walter)

Left to right: In front is Madeline Devereaux, Emily Devereaux, Katie Potasky and Eatonville Town Councilmember Bobbi Allison. The kids were invited by Allison to take part in the huge tree planting project so they will be able to watch their efforts grow through the years. Poet Lucy Larcom said, "He who plants a tree plants a hope..." Trees are a hope for the future, just as youngsters are a hope for the future. These kids worked hard for their future.

During the Ohop planting project Jeanette Dorner asked Councilmember Allison if she would help "chaperone" students coming to help plant on Friday. Allison accepted the invitation. Allison also helped plant along the Mashell River previous to the Ohop Creek project.



Mashell River Planting Helps Salmon and Student Education...

Press Release
February 2005

EATONVILLE – Make a difference for salmon at the Mashell River. Nisqually Stream Stewards, South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group, and Pierce County Stream Team are seeking volunteers for a morning of planting native trees and shrubs along the Mashell River Saturday, February 12, 2005 from 9 a.m. until noon. The planting is part of the Mashell River restoration project that will restore habitat in the river for salmon and trout.

Seven log jams have been built and anchored to the stream bank in the river. Log jams are stable accumulations of woody debris in a stream channel which provide high quality habitat for salmon and trout. Log jams form deep pools with lots of cover important to fish. They also protect river banks and divert water flow into important side-channel habitat.

Last summer the Nisqually Tribe and enhancement group added large woody debris to the river, which will help create spawning and rearing habitat for salmon. Volunteers will plant native trees and shrubs to provide riparian cover for the river.

The "Plant-a-Thon" will also help raise money for environmental education in the Nisqually River watershed. "Because of a funding shortfall this year the Nisqually River Education Project, which brings environmental education to students up and down the Nisqually River valley, is in danger of disappearing. For over ten years, 7,000 students throughout the Nisqually valley have benefited from the education project."

Please be advised that there are no restroom facilities on site. Planting will take place rain or shine, so please dress appropriately. Gloves and proper footwear are also recommended.

Interested volunteers should RSVP with Florian Leischner at (360) 438-8687 or fleischner@nwifc.org for directions.

Nisqually River Chinook Trending Towards Recovery



Press Release
January 20, 2005

NISQUALLY: A decade ago, only 400 Chinook salmon spawned in the Nisqually River. This year more than 2,600 Chinook returned. "Nisqually River Chinook are making a comeback because of sacrifices by tribal fisherman and a dedication by the Nisqually Tribe and it's neighbors to protect and restore salmon habitat," said David Troutt, natural resources director for the Nisqually Tribe.

"Restoring and protecting habitat, along with restricting fisheries, are the reasons more chinook are returning to Nisqually River to spawn," said Troutt. Nisqually River Chinook are part of a larger Puget Sound population of Chinook that were listed as "threatened" under the federal Endangered Species Act in 1999.

To protect chinook, the tribe more than halved the number of days that fisherman can catch Chinook. Tribal fishermen were also restricted to a smaller section of river. "Even though the non-treaty fishery is open all week, Nisqually fishers have been cooperative about the halving their fishing days to provide better future returns," said Troutt. "But, cutting fisheries alone would be ineffective if we did not do anything about salmon habitat."

Acting as salmon recovery "lead entity," the tribe has led a community-based salmon recovery effort in the watershed. "The watershed communities have rallied behind recovering Chinook salmon," said Troutt. "Because of their cooperation, we have made great strides in making sure salmon have the habitat they need when they return to spawn."

Over the last four years the Nisqually Tribe has restored almost 40 acres of estuary habitat at the mouth of the Nisqually River and has plans to restore 100 more acres this summer.

Ensuring Chinook salmon reach the spawning grounds is an important part of an effort by the tribe and state co-managers to develop a stock specifically adapted to the Nisqually River from the descendents of hatchery fish. Creating the "locally adapted stock" is important because wild Chinook that are native to the Nisqually River were wiped out earlier this century by the consequences of dams and historic non-Indian over-harvest, said Troutt.

"For several months out of the year, it wouldn't be uncommon for entire sections Nisqually River to run dry," said Troutt. "The dams also regularly released a deluge of water in the winter after the wild Chinook had spawned, scouring out their eggs."

To build a sustainable, naturally spawning Chinook stock the tribe is studying whether naturally spawning and hatchery fish can be trapped and sorted by their adipose fin, allowing only naturally spawned fish to proceed o the spawning

grounds. The adipose fin on hatchery raised Chinook is clipped before they are released. "We have been producing Chinook at our hatcheries for years," said Troutt. "By allowing only naturally born Chinook to spawn in the wild, we can help them become adapted to the Nisqually River."

"From limiting fisheries to beginning the effort to restore important habitat, the Nisqually Tribe is doing its part to recover Nisqually Chinook," said Troutt. "The numbers of returning salmon are looking good, but we have a lot of work to do before we really recover Nisqually River Chinook."

Fish Flinging Favors Fry...

Photos by Bob Walter



January 2005: A group of over 70 people listen at 10 a.m. Saturday morning, as Jeanette Dorner, Salmon Recovery Program Manager with the Nisqually Tribe and coordinator for the day's operation, explains the morning's itinerary.

A Load of Dead Salmon...



Two large pickup truck loads of salmon carcasses from the Nisqually Tribal Hatchery were transported to selected sites in the upper Nisqually River Watershed Saturday, to be tossed into the rivers and streams by volunteers.

Various Throwing Techniques...



Using various techniques - the two-hand heave, the overhand pitch, the underhand fling - volunteers manage to get salmon carcasses, vital food for juvenile fish, into the Nisqually River during Saturday's carcass toss.

Preparing to Throw Dead Fish...



A woman carries a carcass from the truck to the river, to help provide food for younger fish inhabiting the river.

The Two-Hand Heave...



A woman prepares to launch a salmon carcass into the Nisqually River, while several young boys behind her show

their excitement throwing the fish, watching them land in the water, and going back for more.

River Bank a Beehive of Activity...



Everyone got into the act, hauling the dead fish down the embankment and flinging them into the river. Volunteers were provided with gloves to hold the messy, thawing fish, and hand sanitizer to wash with afterwards. There are at least eight dead fish in the above photo. Can you spot all of them?

Clipping of the Tails...



The tail of each carcass is cut nearly entirely off with garden lopping shears before they are thrown into the river. This insures that hatchery raised fish, whose carcasses are being offered to juvenile fish in the river, will not be confused with the data being collected on the strength and numbers of the declining wild population,

It's a Long Drop...



From two different perspectives, on a concrete bridge high above the Mashell River, and along the stream bank below, a man and a boy watch the salmon carcasses fall 40 feet through the air and into the water with a splash.

Long Toss...



Peering down from the bridge from which they tossed the dead fish, the carcass brigade watch one of them just before it hits the rushing waters of the Mashell with a splash. This section of the Mashell River, just above its confluence with the Nisqually, is slated for eventual development into a huge state park. Jeanette Dorner of the Nisqually Tribe pointed out that in the meantime, access to the site by the public has been restricted by closed gates, to prevent destruction of the habitat by thoughtless recreationists.

Humans Help Habitat...



Jeanette Dorner points to the man-made log jam constructed last summer by the Nisqually Stream Stewards to enhance salmon feeding and spawning habitat. In the second stage of that project, native tree and shrub plantings will be added by more volunteers here on Saturday, February 12 (see above). Dorner stressed how the hands-on involvement of citizen volunteers has helped salmon recovery efforts

Two-Handed Chest Pass...



This young volunteer executes a perfect version of the two-handed chest pass, sending a salmon carcass out, and down, into the river.

The Mouth of Ohop Creek...



After throwing several dozen carcasses into the Nisqually, the group walked further downriver to the mouth of Ohop Creek, seen in the photo above, where they threw more fish into the creek and the river. Then came the long walk out, and the drive to the next tossing point, near the mouth of the Mashell.

The End...



Some of the many salmon carcasses lying in the shallow, gravelly waters of the Mashell River, where they will become

food for other, younger fish. While most of the carcasses tossed into the streams Saturday were hatchery-raised, the live fish returning from the ocean to spawn in their parent streams also play an important ecological role, bringing with them rich marine nutrients that help the streamside plants, and thus, the whole ecosystem.

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