



July 7, 2010

Dear Samish Watershed Resident,

We know that you value clean water. In the Samish River Basin, we need clean water to irrigate crops, support fisheries, sustain a viable shellfish industry, and give children a safe place to play. Unfortunately, the Samish River and many of its smaller creeks are some of the most contaminated in Puget Sound. They are contaminated with “fecal coliform” – the bacteria that indicate that fecal matter is present in our waters. The sources are numerous and include animal waste, failing septic systems and others.

That’s the bad news. The good news is that there are only about 6,000 of us living in the Samish watershed so we should be able to greatly improve the quality of our water if we each do our part. Protecting our quality of life and local economy depends on it.

The Clean Samish Initiative, a partnership of organizations trying to clean up the water, have hosted workshops and site visits, and obtained media coverage to increase awareness and reduce the level of pollution. These actions have not been enough, as we are continuing to see high pollution levels.

This letter is being sent to more than 5,000 households in the Samish to let you know that:

- There will be an **important community meeting** on July 14 to provide information on the problem and what you can do about it. A flyer is attached.
- There is financial and technical assistance available now for someone to come to your property to give you ideas and help on how to keep manure from reaching creeks and to get your septic system fixed if needed.
- There will be continued regulatory site inspections by County Planning, Health, and Ecology to get this under control. We hope for voluntary compliance. However, if problems are not corrected by landowners, we will need to go to the next step of enforcement, including the possibility of penalties. The situation is simply that severe.

Please make time to attend this important community meeting to learn about the problem, what you can do, and to ask questions. It will take each of us doing our part and working together to solve this problem.

Sincerely,

Commissioner Ron Wesen
Skagit County

Commissioner Ken Dahlstedt
Skagit County

Commissioner Sharon Dillon
Skagit County

Jeannie Summerhays
Regional Director, Washington State Dept of Ecology
Endorsed and supported by the 20 member organizations of the Clean Samish Initiative