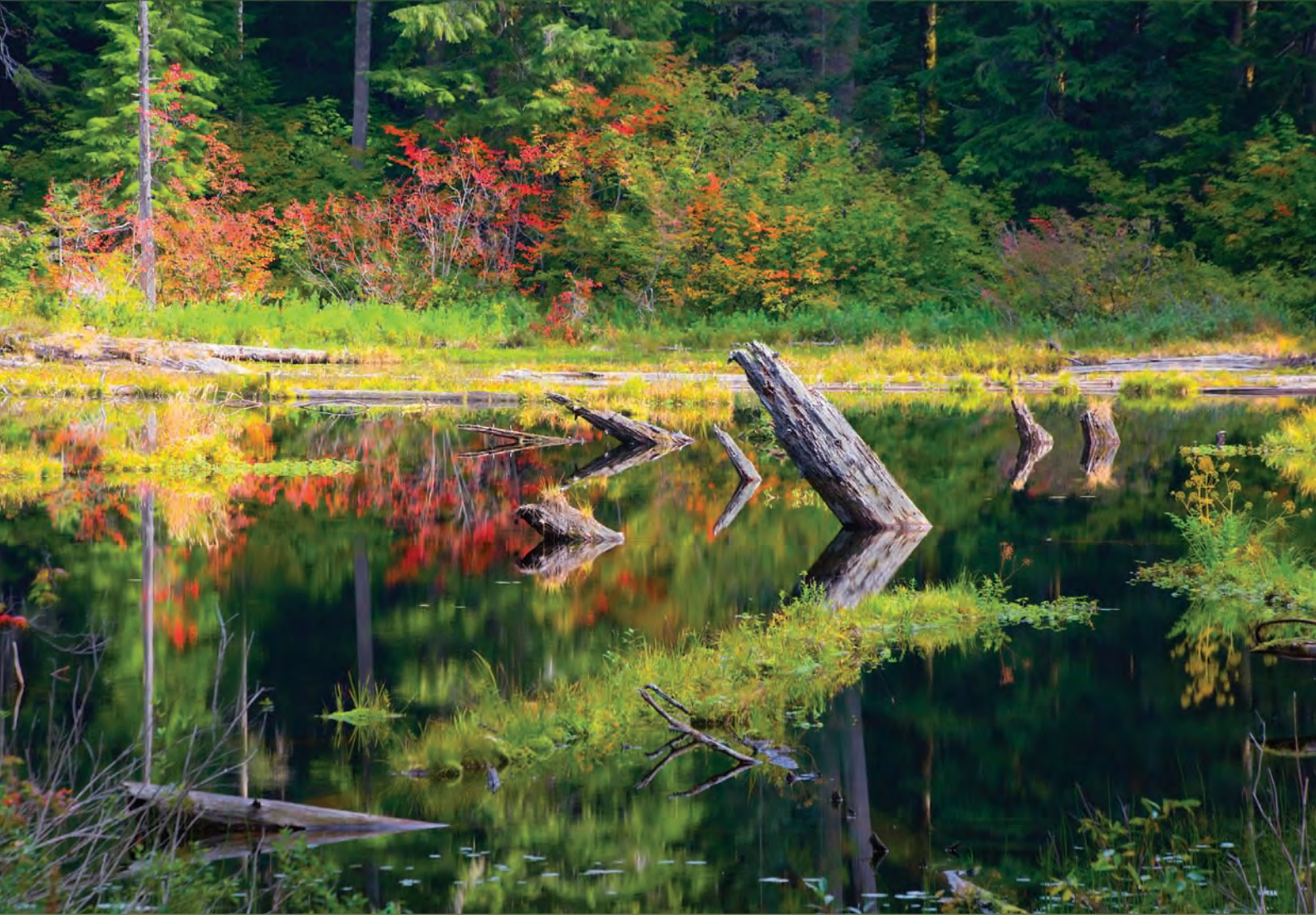


Clean Samish Initiative

Quarterly Report

Winter 2011



"Quiet Ponds" by Lee Mann

Welcome to the 2nd edition of the Clean Samish Initiative Quarterly Report, the newsletter for the Samish watershed community. This report is being published on a quarterly basis to inform residents of activities that are being conducted in the Samish watershed. We encourage you to help preserve the beauty, health, recreational use, and potential for shellfish harvest by joining in this community effort to clean up the river – protecting and restoring our waterways takes the effort of every citizen.

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Clean Samish Initiative is a team effort

By Dan Berentson

Natural Resources Division Manager, Skagit County Public Works

It takes teamwork and community support to tackle the serious pollution problem in the Samish River watershed. Clean water is everyone's business. The high fecal coliform levels in Samish Bay are a threat to our health, our shellfish industry, and our quality of life.

The Skagit County Board of Commissioners has made a strong commitment to this effort in a partnership with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Washington State Department of Ecology to fund a \$473,000 multi-agency effort in the Samish in 2011. Skagit County's Clean Water fund is contributing \$152,504 for 2011 with \$320,659 from the EPA grant. Over the next three years, Skagit County will continue to match dollars with EPA to clean up the Samish River Watershed. EPA's total commitment to the Clean Samish Initiative is more than \$961,980.

Skagit County has developed a Pollution Identification Correction (PIC) program addressing monitoring, failing septic systems, and enforcement.

Skagit County has taken the lead in the effort and distributes Clean Water Fund and EPA dollars to the Skagit Conservation District, Skagit Conservation Education Alliance, Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group, Western Washington Agriculture Association, Samish Nation and Washington State University Extension to perform a myriad of tasks including public education and outreach, and working with farmers and landowners to reduce pollution through the implementation of farm plans.

Clean Samish Initiative Town Hall Meeting

On Wednesday, March 23rd, Skagit County will host a Town Hall meeting to discuss the Clean Samish Initiative (CSI) and efforts to clean up the Samish Basin. The meeting will take place at the Allen Fire Hall located at 9061 Avon Allen Road from 5:30 – 7:00 p.m. For more information, contact Emma Whitfield at emmaw@co.skagit.wa.us or at (360) 419-7667.

SAMISH WATERSHED

2010 Summary of Accomplishments

Your Clean Water \$\$s at Work

Over the last year, our Clean Water District dollars were put to work towards building and implementing a comprehensive locally led program to address Samish basin fecal coliform problems. Priority projects undertaken by our local Clean Water partners were identified through the Clean Samish Initiative (CSI) work plan and the Samish Fecal Coliform TMDL Implementation Plan (Dept. of Ecology, 2009). With support from Skagit County's Clean Water partners, the Clean Samish Initiative (CSI) committee, and hundreds of local residents, significant accomplishments were made with a summary of highlights provided below:

Samish Pollution Identification and Correction Program (PIC)

In July, 2010 Skagit County received a \$961,980 EPA grant to begin a major Pollution Identification and Correction (PIC) program in the Samish watershed – a key milestone for Samish watershed stakeholders. The purpose of the PIC program is to identify and correct sources of bacterial contamination in the watershed. The program provides a

multifaceted approach to address fecal coliform pollution problems, including intensive monitoring, incentives, compliance and enforcement, and a comprehensive education program.

Water Quality Monitoring Program

- Skagit County Public Works established 9 new sampling locations on a 10-mile stretch of the river, in addition to their regular (ambient) Samish monitoring program. A DNA monitoring study was also initiated, which, when completed will help identify sources of fecal coliform pollution.
- Samish Indian Nation began an extensive monitoring program in the Thomas Creek sub-basin. Thomas Creek was identified as a priority tributary of the Samish due to high concentrations of fecal coliform bacteria.
- Skagit Conservation District's Samish Stream Team and Storm Team volunteers continued monitoring efforts in the Samish. 2009/10 Storm Team data indicated some improvements in water quality.

Skagit County Public Health's Marine Recovery Area Project

Skagit County Public Health has been working since 2006 on assuring all on-site sewage systems in the Samish are working properly. Public Health's program promotes education and voluntary compliance. Septics 101 clinics were offered throughout the year. Letters were mailed to targeted areas of the watershed requesting that landowners have their septic system inspected by certified operations and maintenance specialist. The following report is based on completion of the inspections:

- Samish Island 414 inspections; 4 failures
- Lower Samish 355 inspections; 5 failures
- Upper Samish 445 inspections; 9 failures
- Colony Creek 228 inspections; 1 failure
- Thomas Creek 109 inspections; 1 failure

Technical Assistance

In 2010, the Skagit Conservation District provided technical assistance to 36 Samish watershed landowners; completed 19 conservation plans; planned and designed 21 best management practices treating approximately 400 acres of land; installed 14,000 feet of fencing; and provided \$9,261 in cost share for the implementation of 9 structural best management practices.

Engaging Samish Citizens

The public education and outreach program aimed to reach a broad variety of interests and key audiences.

- Skagit County and partners hosted a stakeholders meeting on July 14th for Samish residents, convening over 130 landowners to learn about the health of the river.
- Skagit County produced a "call to help" video, "The Samish River: A Clean Water Initiative Video."
- Skagit Conservation District (SCD) hosted 12 workshops reaching over 400 individuals, including 8 technical seminars related to land use management, 3 educational workshops targeting a broader audience, and 1 family oriented watershed education event.



The "Family Night on Samish Bay" event provided an opportunity for Samish neighbors to learn about water quality and Samish Bay shellfish resources. The watershed enviroscape model, hosted by the Skagit Conservation District, was a "hit" for kids of all ages.

- The first edition of the Clean Samish Initiative Quarterly Report was published and mailed to over 5,600 watershed residents. In addition, articles were placed in local newspapers and the Conservation District's newsletter to keep the general public aware of current activities.
- A Samish Watershed field tour and a "Family Day at Friday Creek" event were hosted by the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group (SFEG)
- SFEG implemented the Junior Stream Stewards Program, engaging 45 Allen Elementary and 60 Edison Elementary 8th grade students and SCD provided 4 water quality presentations to 114 Edison Elementary 4th grade students using the watershed enviroscape model.



Teamwork and citizen involvement has been and will continue to be the key to resolving Samish pollution issues. During 2010, hundreds of neighbors attended stakeholder meetings, workshops and field tours, numerous provided volunteer support, and many took action in their own backyard.



Sammy Salmon made a special appearance at the Family Day at Friday Creek event hosted by the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group.

- Skagit Conservation Education Alliance (SCEA) began a social media outreach program and leveraged funding from other sources to install 85 stream signs and a stream ecology interpretive sign at Donovan Park.
- SCEA installed port a potties at the mouth of the Samish River during fishing season.
- Our Clean Water partners provided numerous presentations and hosted educational displays focusing on the health of Samish Bay at several local events, reaching over 2,000 individuals.



RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR

Skagit County's Natural Resource Stewardship Program

Skagit County's Natural Resource Stewardship Program (NRSP) is designed to improve water quality throughout Skagit County by inspiring landowners to participate in protecting and enhancing water quality and the stream environment for the benefit of all the citizens of Skagit County while furthering community awareness.

NRSP can provide up to \$10,000 in free grant funding and works in partnership with the Skagit Fisheries

Enhancement Group (SFEG) and the Skagit Conservation District (SCD) to fund projects for landowners willing to enhance the watershed in which they live. Projects can consist of removal of invasive vegetation and replanting native vegetation, livestock exclusion fencing, bank stability and other projects that will benefit the overall health of the watershed. For information, contact: Emily Derenne, Skagit County Public Works @ 336-9400 x3154 or email: emilyjd@co.skagit.wa.us.



An NRSP project was recently completed on a small unnamed tributary to Cranberry Lake where horses had unrestricted access to the stream bed. This resulted in an increase in fecal coliform, severely eroded banks, increased turbidity and muddy pastures. The project, which included installation of a culvert and a livestock crossing, fencing 1,258 feet of stream, and planting 311 native plants, will improve water quality, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, provide bank stability, enhance aesthetic values of the property, and protect animal health.



Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP): A Voluntary Program with Benefits for Landowners and the Environment

CREP pays landowners to establish native tree buffers along fish bearing streams and rivers. The program pays 100% of the expenses to establish the buffer, in addition to annual rental payments and other benefits to the landowner. Native vegetation buffers provide habitat and travel corridors for a wide range of fish and wildlife, help protect water quality, stabilize stream banks, reduce erosion, create shade that lowers water temperature and provide attractive borders for privacy and protection.

In addition to traditional riparian buffers, **participants can now use 15-foot hedgerow buffers along smaller water courses, upstream grass filter strips, and**

wetland enhancements connected to salmon streams. In addition, orchards, vineyards and berry farms are now eligible for all CREP practices! The changes allow producers to meet critical habitat needs without sacrificing large portions of their farms or ranches. For information, contact Joe Holtcamp, Skagit Conservation District at 428-4313 or email: joe@skagitcd.org.

Do you own livestock and have streams and ditches that need protection? The Skagit Conservation District has cost-share funding available for eligible Samish landowners to off-set the cost of implementing best management practices! The SCD also provides FREE technical assistance and farm planning to farms of all sizes! Give us a call!



FOR SAMISH LANDOWNERS

WHAT'S IN YOUR BACKYARD?

Septic tanks, sewage systems, and on site sewage treatment systems (OSS) – one and the same!

By: Corinne Story, Skagit County Public Health Department

Commonly referred to as septic tanks, your on-site sewage system is so much more. In the Health Department, we refer to them as on-site sewage treatment systems because that's what they do, they treat your sewage. A septic tank is just one component of this sometimes complicated system. It is the first line of defense by clarifying wastewater. Solids settle out and



Proper septic system maintenance and regular inspections helps protect water quality. Keep the Samish watershed clean! Take care of your on-site sewage system.

scum floats to the top, leaving a cleaner effluent. The microbial action that takes place in the tank reduces the level of microbes (including ones that can make people sick) before the effluent is pushed out to the drainfield. The drainfield further treats the effluent in the soils below the drainfield trenches. It's hard to top Mother Nature's way of purifying water by filtering it through the beneficial microbes in the soil.

You can do your part to help keep the Samish watershed clean by taking care of your on-site sewage system. Annual inspections by an operations and maintenance

specialist certified by the Health Department will help make sure your OSS is working properly.

Many of you received letters from the Public Health Department over the past two years reminding you that your OSS system needs to be inspected annually. The law not only requires these inspections, but an inspection could also SAVE you money. Repairing small problems at the time of inspection can save your drainfield from failing 'before its time.' Think of an OSS inspection as an investment.

Call it whatever you like: septic tank, sewage system, or on site sewage treatment system -- that thing in your backyard is a small piece of the puzzle that helps keep us all healthy and the Samish waters clean! Failing on-site sewage systems can cause significant water quality problems. Repairing problems will protect yourself, your friends and your community.

Septics 101 classes are an ongoing opportunity to learn everything you need to know about your very own on-site sewage treatment system. All classes are free. Contact Skagit County Public Health at 336-9380 or email: health@co.skagit.wa.us to register for an upcoming class:

- Mar. 24th 6 pm – 7:30 pm Big Lake Elementary School Library, 26802 Lakeview Blvd.
- April 2nd 10 am – 11:30 am Hearing Room A, 700 S. 2nd St. (County Admin. Bldg), MV
- April 7th 2 pm – 3:30 pm Commissioner's Hearing Room, 1800 Continental, MV
- April 25th 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm Padilla Bay Research Reserve, 10441 Bay View Edison Rd.
- May 17th 2 pm – 3:30 pm Sedro-Woolley City Hall, 325 Metcalf St., Sedro-Woolley
- July 12th 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm Alger Community Hall, 18735 Parkview Lane (Alger)

MONEY AVAILABLE TO REPAIR SEPTIC SYSTEMS

Skagit County administers a low interest loan program available for local homeowners with failing on-site sewage (septic) systems. (OSS's for short.)

What does it take to be eligible to receive a low-interest loan? Only that you have a failing OSS system and a good credit record. There is no minimum income requirement. Terms of the loan will vary. You might even be eligible for some grant dollars to reduce the principal.

As of this printing, we still have a lot of money to loan. Please contact the Health Department at 360-336-9380, the Planning Department at 360-336-9410 or the Treasurer's Office at 360-336-9350 for more information.



KEEP YOUR ON-SITE SEWAGE SYSTEM IN GOOD WORKING ORDER ... AVOID SEPTIC SYSTEM NIGHTMARES!

New Samish River watershed signs now posted at 85 locations



A new sign project has just been completed during the fall of 2010 and coordinated by the Skagit Education Outreach Network (ECO Net) led by the Skagit Conservation Education Alliance (SCEA). The purpose of the signs are to raise awareness about the water quality issues in the watershed and to remind everyone who lives, works or plays in the watershed that any given creek or the river “Flows to Samish Bay” and the salmon are “Yours to Protect”. Approximately 85 road signs have been placed with about 65 in Skagit County and 20 in Whatcom County.



These new Samish River watershed signs were installed throughout the basin to remind everyone who lives, works, or plays in the watershed that the river and its many tributaries all drain to Samish Bay.

The Skagit ECO Net signage project also included the construction of an interpretive sign that was designed by the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group (SFEG) and placed at Donovan Park, located on the Friday Creek Road.

Other project partners included the SFEG, Skagit Conservation District, Puget Sound Partnership and Skagit County. Funding for the signage was provided by a Puget Sound Partnership grant, with support for installation of the road signs provided by Skagit and Whatcom County Public Works Departments. Special thanks to Storm Team volunteers, Jack Middleton, Kurt Buchanan, Bill Bowen, and Pete Haase who also provided valuable support for both projects!

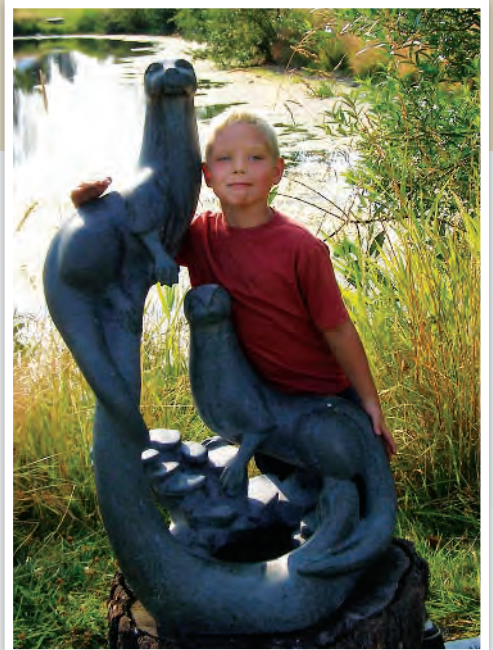


This new Friday Creek Ecosystem interpretive sign was recently installed at Donovan Park.

Youth Receives “Samish Hero” Award

The Samish Indian Nation Department of Natural Resources is proud to announce a new award for significant contributions to the stewardship of the Tribe’s natural resources. The first Samish Hero award winner is 7 year old Colby Martin-Cloninger, grandson of upper Samish River resident and tribal member Larry Thomas. To practice his reading skills, Colby has been avidly reading road signs while visiting his grandfather. Recently, Colby and his grandfather noticed the new signs at every road crossing of the Samish River, “*Samish River, Yours to Protect*”. Soon after reading the new signs and talking with his family about what they meant, Colby noticed something else. After a recent mid-November rain storm, he noticed a 500 gallon tank floating in the river. What Colby did next is what makes him a Samish Hero, he acted. In acting and insisting that Larry call someone to take care of the tank, Colby took a step to act that many adults might never take. Because of Colby, a potential threat to the Samish River is being addressed.

Colby, Thank you for acting and reminding us all that we are personally responsible for the place we live. Keep up the good work!

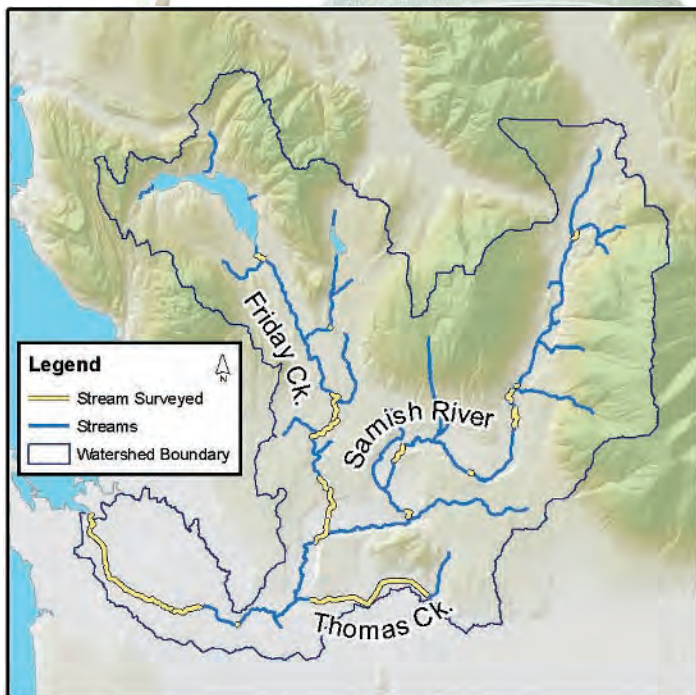


Colby Martin-Cloninger, 7 year old grandson of upper Samish resident Larry Thomas, was the first recipient of the new Samish Hero award!

Intruder invades the Samish!

Have you noticed an intruder in the Samish River watershed? The past few years it has been creeping into your lawns, along roadsides and river banks. This aggressive intruder, left unchecked, will dominate the landscape. This intruder is Japanese Knotweed. The Samish Indian Nation Natural Resource Department (Samish DNR) has spent the late summer and early fall 2010 working in the Samish watershed to map the extent of knotweed infestation. Thus far, Samish DNR has walked approximately 15 stream miles and surveyed more than 25 acres of knotweed. This comprises just 20% of the watershed! The 2010 knotweed surveying and treatment season has ended and will resume in the spring of 2011. We are now collaborating with landowners to schedule treatment projects starting late summer of 2011.

This effort is critical because knotweed is destroying the natural stream ecology. The large bamboo-like shrub chokes and destabilizes stream banks, out-competes native vegetation, destroys the scenic and recreational qualities of our natural areas and degrades the habitat quality for wildlife and salmon. The extensive rhizomatous root system allows for prolific growth and regeneration. It is not uncommon to see patches of knotweed hundreds of feet long by tens of feet wide



To date, 15 stream miles and 25 acres of knotweed have been surveyed in the Samish watershed. The infestation is extensive and if left unchecked will dominate the landscape.



Knotweed infestation along Prairie Road. Control of knotweed is challenging and often requires a watershed approach to be effective along waterways.

and 12 feet tall along the Samish. Knotweed is a high priority because the rate at which it spreads and its uncanny ability to grow just about anywhere. Pieces of knotweed stem $\frac{1}{2}$ an inch long can float down stream and recolonize wherever it lands.

Samish DNR's knotweed program has been funded by the US Environmental Protection Agency and offers assistance in controlling knotweed on both private and public lands at no cost to the landowner. Knotweed activities include: surveying, mapping, land owner consultations, and potential treatment. Samish DNR would like your help in this watershed wide effort. If you have knotweed on your property, the Samish Department of Natural Resources Knotweed program can help! Please contact Amanda Summers at (360) 293-6404 ex. 111 or asummers@samishtribe.nsn.us for more information

Invasive knotweeds quickly invade valuable riparian areas and displace native plants due to its aggressive growth.



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POSTAL CUSTOMER



Upcoming Events:

Wed., March 23rd, 5:30 pm – 7 pm

Clean Samish Initiative Town Hall Meeting: Skagit County will provide an update on progress with the Clean Samish Initiative, but the majority of the meeting will be for citizens to ask questions, make suggestions and voice concerns. The event will be held at the Allen Fire Hall, located at 9061 Avon Allen Road.

Fri., March 25th, 9 am – 5 pm and Sat., March 26th, 9 am to 1 pm

Skagit Conservation District Annual Native Plant Sale: Great selection of conservation-grade native plants for restoration projects, shelterbelts, erosion control, wildlife habitat and other conservation purposes. First come basis. The event will be held at the WACD Plant Materials Center, 16564 Bradley Road. For info call 428-4313.

Thurs. March 31st, 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm

Gardening for Wildlife Workshop: Join your neighbors from Friday Creek and the Skagit Conservation District at this FREE workshop, which will be held at the Alger Community Hall, 17835 Parkview Lane in Alger! Learn how you can have your own backyard garden designated as a wildlife habitat, how to create a beautiful landscape that reduces pesticide and water use, protects water quality in local creeks, and provides a haven for people and local wildlife. To register contact Kristi Carpenter @ 428-4313 or email: Kristi@skagitcd.org

See upcoming *Septics 101 Class Schedule* on page 5.

Coming soon: Skagit Farm Supply will be offering in-store farm classes in partnership with Skagit Conservation District – stay tuned for schedule!

NOW AVAILABLE!

The Samish River: A Clean Water Initiative Video

In December 2010, Skagit County Public Works produced a Clean Samish video that is now available for viewing! The video describes and discusses the fecal coliform bacteria pollution issue in the Samish Watershed and the efforts being taken to correct the problem. Please view the video and pass it along to other Samish Watershed residents to raise awareness and support in the clean-up efforts in the Samish Basin! The video is currently available online at www.skagitcounty.net/cleanwater or for a copy, contact Emma Whitfield at 336-9400 or email: emmaw@co.skagit.wa.us.

Share a favorite
Samish photo or
tell us what
you are doing to
protect water
quality in
the Samish!



Email to
Kristi@skagitcd.org
or call
Kristi @ 428-4313.

Clean Water is Everyone's Business

*The Clean Samish Quarterly Report is being published
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