



River Researcher, Brush Buster

By Jenny Baker, SCD Habitat Restoration Specialist

Rolf Aalto knows a lot about rivers and streams, so it was no surprise that he took a serious interest in Woods Creek, where it flows for 1,500 feet across his farm just north of Monroe. Rolf, an Affiliate Assistant Professor at the University of Washington's Earth and Space Sciences Department, and an Associate Professor at the University of Exeter's Department of Geography in England, studies river shape and sediment patterns. He bought the property 15 years ago and spent some time observing the creek. In the end, he decided he wanted to make 'his section' of Woods Creek a vibrant place for people, wildlife and fish.

Devising a Plan

Working with Conservation District staff, he devised a plan to fence his horses out of the creek and plant a protective creekside buffer with native trees and shrubs. It's important to keep livestock away from creeks because their manure pollutes the water, their hooves can erode creekbanks, and they eat or trample native trees and shrubs. (A healthy native plant buffer along a creek or river acts like a combination grocery store, air conditioner and home for all kinds of fish and other aquatic life, as well as birds, small mammals, frogs, salamanders, snakes and insects.)

Finding Money and Manpower

In 2005, District staff received a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to fence Woods Creek and plant its buffers. Rolf, his family, and numerous helpers began the biggest task - removing mounds of blackberries and thickets of reed canarygrass where the fence and plants would be located. Knowing that herbicides can be harmful, they removed weeds mechanically.



Rolf Aalto took a serious interest in Woods Creek on his family's property near Monroe.

Multi-Purpose Planting

The following winter, the Conservation District provided 350 native plants from Bush's Nursery. The Adopt-A-Stream Foundation's field crew installed a mixture of flowering and berry-producing shrubs, and evergreen and deciduous trees. This mix will provide food, shelter and nesting places for many different birds and small mammals, as well as shade for the creek's aquatic life, and a future source of dead trees and rootwads for the creek itself.

Dead Trees are Good

Woody debris in the stream gives aquatic insects and fish places to rest and hide, captures gravel, and creates pools as water scours holes around the wood. Although this project didn't include placing any woody debris, several logs that floated by are forming a small logjam downstream.

When logs and rootwads catch on creek banks, they often "catch" more logs to form a logjam. Logjams provide more pronounced benefits than single logs, such as deeper pools, gravel capture, and additional hiding and resting places for aquatic life.

As the trees on the Aalto property grow, decay and fall into the creek over time, they will provide additional places for fish and other creek-dwellers to hide, and deep pools will develop as water carves away the creek bed under and around logjams.

Rolf has continued to carefully cut grass and spot-spray blackberries that re-sprout around each small seedling to ensure their survival. But after 15 years of getting to know this section of creek and restoring it so well, he and his family recently moved to England where he will continue his research. They will miss this rural, creekside haven, but feel good knowing they've improved it for future inhabitants, human and otherwise.



This attractive fence protects the new planting as well as older, more established trees.

Fences for the Future

Next, Rolf built a sturdy three-rail wood fence (above) to keep his horses out of the creek. The fence was placed well away from the creek and included protection for a large grove of established alder and cottonwood in the buffer. This preserved the mature trees already growing next to the creek and protected future plants from livestock. The fence placement also allowed room for a path where Rolf and his family could walk or ride horses and fully enjoy the creek.

Winter 2008

Serving Snohomish County
and Camano Island

Open House

The District will have its annual Open House on Wednesday, February 13, 2008 at its office in Lake Stevens. Join us in recognizing our award winning clients and partners from 1:00 - 4:00 PM. Awards begin at 2:00 PM. Refreshments directly after.

District Elections

One volunteer board member position will be open in 2008. Conservation District Board members attend monthly meetings, provide financial oversight, and represent landowners while directing the District's natural resource programs. Five members serve on the District's Board of Supervisors, three are elected and two are appointed by the Washington State Conservation Commission.

The election will be held on March 11, 2008. Potential candidates must submit a petition and gain 25 signatures to be included on the ballot. Election hours will be 2 PM - 6 PM at the District office, 528 - 91st Ave NE, Suite A, Lake Stevens, WA.

If you would like to run for a position, please contact Kathy at the District Office, 425-335-5634 Ext. 102.

Inside

- ❖ District Award Winners
- ❖ Reviving Riley Slough
- ❖ Healthy Spring Pasture
- ❖ Country Living Expo
- ❖ Buffer Widths & CREP
- ❖ "Salmon Safe" is Here
- ❖ Plant Sale News

Winter Wonders

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"O, wind, if winter comes, can spring be far behind?"

Percy Bysshe Shelley

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Meet Our 2007 Award Winners

Snohomish Conservation District will be honoring several District partners and landowners at the winter Open House on February 13th, 2008. Awards are given to landowners who have worked hard to improve natural resources on their land, and who are completing their farm/resource management plans. In addition, these folks have gone the extra mile in promoting how the District can help farmers and rural landowners by hosting tours, spreading the word about District services, and attending District events.

Cooperator of the Year winners receive a plaque and a metal farm sign, such as the one shown below, to post on a fence or barn. Merit farm winners receive a certificate as well as a farm sign to post.

Partnership awards are given to agency staff, consultants, and other individuals who have helped further the goals of the Conservation District by providing valuable support and by helping the District leverage its resources.

Please join us in honoring these inspiring and hardworking partners at our Open House:

1 PM to 4 PM
Wednesday, February 13, 2008
Ag Service Center
528 - 91st Ave NE, Lake Stevens

The awards ceremony will be at 2:00 PM with refreshments directly afterwards.

For a map to the District office, check our website at www.snohomishcd.org.



A merit farm sign that award winners can hang on their fence or barn.

Cooperators of the Year

Commercial – Tristan Klesick
Dairy – Don Tillman
Small Farm – Sue Bell

Wildlife Farm of the Year

Neal and Serena Friedman

Merit Farm Awards

Lyn Gross
Linda Williams
Dr. Dana Bridges
Cheri Bryant
Kitty Ratcliff

Partnership Awards

Sonny Gohrman
Snohomish County
Noxious Weed
Coordinator
Carolyn Henri,
Resource Consulting
Service, LLC

USDA Farm Service Agency
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service



Don Tillman speaks to visitors from the front porch of his farmhouse in Arlington.



Lyn Gross on her farm near Lakewood.

Reviving Riley Slough for Salmon

By Victor Insera, Habitat Restoration Specialist

This past summer, Julie and Mark Boulter purchased 20 acres on Riley Slough just south of Monroe to create their dream home and a horse facility for boarding, training and riding instruction. The property, easily defined as a fixer upper, left plenty of room for Julie and Mark's imagination and handyman skills.

While their dream includes sharing their acreage with the local wildlife, Julie soon noticed that the slough, which bisects part of the Boulter's back pasture, looked unhealthy. The water was stagnant and very little vegetation grew along its banks. Historically, many species of fish, including Coho salmon and Bull trout, traveled up the Snoqualmie River to spawn in Riley Slough, which is only six miles long. It feeds into the river where the Skykomish and Snoqualmie rivers connect.

After asking Conservation District Farm Planner Alan Shank to come out and discuss best management practices for their farm, Alan suggested that they also invite District Habitat Restoration Specialist Victor Insera to examine Riley Slough and offer suggestions to improve its fish and wildlife habitat.

After learning about Julie and Mark's dream, Victor was able to explain that healthy horse pastures could also create a healthy environment for fish in the slough, and attract a variety of native birds, mammals, and amphibians at the same time. A healthy Riley Slough would offer significant food and shelter for fish and wildlife. The slough itself could provide premium feeding and resting areas for young salmon seeking refuge from predators. Salmon need cool clean water that native trees and shrubs along the banks can provide.

A functioning Riley Slough would also improve water quality and furnish some flood control. The slough, like a bathtub, can temporarily hold floodwater and debris, and let the water drain slowly. This helps to reduce and slow down raging floodwaters and dangerous debris, and lessens the harm done to nearby homes and roads.

Between 1999 and 2002, the Conservation District - along with their partners the Stilly-Snohomish Fisheries Enhancement Task Force, Adopt-A-Stream Foundation, Washington Conservation Corps, and the Tulalip Tribe - completed eight projects along Riley Slough downstream of the Boulter's property.



Alan Shank, far left, works with volunteers from the Stillaguamish Snohomish Fisheries Enhancement Task Force to plant Riley Slough in November.

This work restored 13 acres of streamside habitat by removing blackberries along 15,000 feet of Riley Slough and replanting the land with a mix of over 5,000 native trees and shrubs; installing 8,600 linear feet of fence to keep livestock out; removing three old culverts that prevented fish from moving upstream, and building three bridges over the slough.

The Boulter's wanted to continue this positive momentum and fully restore the 700-foot section of Riley Slough on their property. Past livestock practices had resulted in overgrazed pastures, invasive non-native plants, and two filled-in culverts that restricted the slough's flow during low water. Over the Summer of 2007, Victor and Restoration Specialist Jenny Baker developed a restoration plan for this section of Riley Slough with the landowners, Bush's Nursery, and the Stilly-Snohomish Fisheries Enhancement Task Force.

On a cold, rainy November morning, about 35 Task Force volunteers of all ages and from every corner of the county showed up to help.

Mark and Julie, District staff, and volunteers managed to plant more than 1,100 native plants along the entire 700-foot section and install plant protectors to prevent damage by voles, beaver and deer. Funds from the Department of Ecology's 4-Her's for Clean Water grant purchased the plants, fencing, and other equipment.

Thanks to the Boulter's hard work and diligence, the north side of Riley Slough is on its way to becoming a naturally functioning streambank.

With the help of the District, the Boulter's plan to install a bridge over the slough, plant a 70-foot wide buffer on the slough's south side, and install a fence to keep their horses out of the water. Past efforts by the Task Force, Tulalip Tribes, and District have improved the slough's condition to where juvenile Coho were seen in 2000!

Thanks to this and future projects, Riley Slough may once again be home to an abundance of salmon.

"Generous landowners like the Boulter's are key to restoring critical habitats and reviving our local fish populations" according to Victor Insera. "We at the Conservation District are eager to provide technical assistance, and financial assistance if possible, but it's the landowner's desire and commitment that, in the end, produce results."

Winter Confinement

The Key to Healthy Pastures Come Spring

by Eric Schuh, Certified Farm Planner

Like many livestock owners in Snohomish County, you may have been combating mud around your barn areas for years. This year is no exception as our typically wet winter has firmly set in, but that doesn't mean mud is an unavoidable part of the equation.

So, how do you avoid mud? By following a practical best management program! This will minimize mud on your acreage as well as improve your pastures for grazing next Spring. The key ingredient in this solution is to install a winter confinement area with a suitable footing material, such as gravel.

A winter confinement area, often called a "Sacrifice Area", is an outdoor, non-grazing area in which livestock are confined by fences or other structures. This lets your pastures rest during winter when low light levels and low temperatures reduce its forage growth. Grazing in winter can easily destroy your grass stands and compact the soil structure, reducing your forage yield the next growing season.

Benefits of a Mud-free Pasture

- ❖ increase forage yield
- ❖ reduce the amount of feed that you have to purchase
- ❖ help keep stream and lake water clean
- ❖ promote better livestock health

Mud is much more than just a mess or a nuisance; it can cause injury to your animals from falls, makes chores harder to complete and be a breeding ground for bacteria and other organisms. What's more, livestock standing in moist conditions for prolonged periods will be prone to hoof problems.

A successful sacrifice area starts with a well thought-out plan. First of all, your sacrifice area should be in a high and dry location. If the sacrifice area is adjacent to a building, it is imperative that roof water (from rain and snow) be



This confinement pen will help keep animals high and dry in winter, and protect pastures so that they will be more productive come Spring.

collected by gutters and diverted away from the area via underground pipes or other means. This roof water, as well as any runoff from your sacrifice area, must not be allowed to flow directly into ditches or streams. Installing a well-vegetated filter strip between your sacrifice area and any streams, lakes or ditches is also recommended.

Manure in the sacrifice area must be collected and properly stored. Manure is a key ingredient of mud, so if it's not collected every one to two days, it will end up mixing with the footing material and become impossible to remove.

To learn more about installing a sacrifice area to improve your pastures, contact Eric Schuh, Certified Farm Planner, at 425-335-5634, ext 118 or email eric@snohomishcd.org. You can also watch for the next FREE small farm workshop on our website: www.snohomishcd.org.

Country Living Expo Coming to Stanwood



Photo by Anya Zolotusky

Attention farmers and gardeners. Plan to attend the day-long **Country Living Expo and Cattlemen's Winterschool** in Stanwood, presented by WSU Extension and the WSU Livestock Master Foundation. There will be more than 50 classes, educational booths and a prime rib lunch!

Here are just some of the classes being offered:

- ❖ Milking dairy sheep
- ❖ Marketing strategies for beef
- ❖ Recycling rain water
- ❖ Shearing sheep on a stand
- ❖ Identifying noxious weeds

Also, learn about:

- ❖ Organic pastures and crops
- ❖ Equine nutrition and health
- ❖ Making cheese at home
- ❖ Raising pastured poultry
- ❖ Designing and installing a home-drip irrigation system



The expo will be held at Stanwood High School on Saturday, January 19, 2008. **Pre-registration is \$45 if received by January 14, \$55 after.**

Ask about special rates for 4-H and FFA students!

Registration includes the famous smoked prime rib lunch from Pat Cairus at Del Fox Custom Meats! Class size is limited, so early registration is advised. To register and find out more, contact Vickie DeWitt at 360-691-4492, Joan DeVries at joanrd@co.skagit.wa.us, or visit www.snohomish.wsu.edu.

Buffers are Narrower - Rental Payments Higher

In last issue of the Nexus, you may have read about the recent 32 percent increase in annual rental payments for Snohomish County landowners enrolled in the CREP program. CREP stands for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. This is a Federal/State partnership to encourage the planting of native trees and shrubs along fish-bearing streams and rivers.

In addition to this increase in rental payments, the minimum streamside buffer width has now been reduced to 35 feet. The minimum buffer width had been 100 feet, which didn't appeal to some landowners because it reduced the amount of land available for farming by a large percentage. Narrower buffers will mean that CREP will likely be a more popular alternative for landowners wanting to protect their streambanks. For those folks interested in and able to plant wider buffers, the maximum buffer width remains 180 feet.

Landowners who enroll in CREP:

- ❖ Receive an annual rental payment
- ❖ Are reimbursed for preparing their site (removing weeds, reducing soil compaction, etc.)
- ❖ Are reimbursed for fencing and planting their site
- ❖ Are reimbursed for maintaining their site (reducing competition from weeds)

Why all this fuss about planting trees and shrubs next to our streams and rivers? Streamside vegetation is essential for keeping streambanks intact, fish populations healthy and streams clean. Plant roots hold soil in place, protecting streambanks from erosion and keeping stream water clean. Trees that fall into the water create deep areas (pools) where fish can safely hide and rest. Trees, especially evergreens, shade the water, keeping it cool enough for salmon and steelhead to survive. Trees and shrubs drop leaves and other debris into the water which becomes food for various small aquatic organisms that are in turn eaten by salmon and steelhead.

Why Wait?

Your streamside land could be paying you as much as \$323 a year per acre! For a free, no-obligation visit and site assessment, please contact Jenny Baker, Habitat Restoration and Water Quality Coordinator, at 425-335-5634, ext. 112.



Announcements

Small Forest Landowner News

The Small Forest Landowner Office at the Washington Department of Natural Resources is starting a new program, the **Long-Term Forest Practices Application!**

This new program allows small forest landowners to apply for a long-term timber harvest application that is valid for up to 15 years. This new opportunity is expected to ease the paperwork burden and allow more flexibility in timing harvests, but the process of filing a long-term permit will be much different than the standard two-year permit.

In January 2008, three meetings will be held for **Forestry Consultants** regarding the Long-Term Forest Practices Application:

- January 8: Everett, 9:30 AM - 12:30 PM**
- January 9: Spokane, 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM**
- January 10: Chehalis, 9:30 AM - 12:30 PM**

If you're a consultant interested in attending one of the meetings, please call Michael Ahr at 360-902-1849 or email michael.ahr@dnr.wa.gov by **December 21, 2007**. More specifics on the consultant meetings and the long-term application can be found at the link below:
<http://www.dnr.wa.gov/sflo/ta/>.

Forest Planning Classes

Washington State University Extension and the Washington Department of Natural Resources will be offering the Forest Stewardship Coached Planning class in two North Sound locations in early 2008. This popular class is designed to help forest landowners "help themselves" by equipping them with tools and resources to manage for a broad variety of objectives. The class includes evening presentations, a field day, a comprehensive Forest Stewardship Notebook and an individual consultation from a professional forester or wildlife biologist.

Topics to be covered in the class include forest ecology and silviculture, forest health, reforestation, forest soils, fish and wildlife habitat, sustainable timber harvesting, non-timber forest products and forest recreation.

A winter class will be held Monday evenings in Silvana beginning January 28. A spring class will be held Thursday evenings in Burlington beginning March 13. Tuition is \$150 per family or ownership and includes all course materials. Class size is limited to ensure a quality educational experience. Registration is first-come, first-served.

For more information or to register, visit <http://snohomish.wsu.edu/forestry/> and click on 'Events' or contact Kevin Zobrist, WSU Forest Stewardship Educator at 425-357-6017 (kzobrist@wsu.edu) or John Keller, DNR Stewardship Forester at 360-856-3491 (john.keller@dnr.wa.gov).

Plant Sale Begins

Snohomish Conservation District will be having its 23rd annual Conservation Tree and Shrub sale on **March 7 & 8** at the Evergreen Fairgrounds in Monroe. For more information or to download a brochure and order form, visit our website at www.snohomishcd.org. The sale is open to the public and pre-orders will be accepted until close of business on February 6, 2008. There is a \$25 minimum order size.

Trees are the best monuments that a man can erect to his own memory. They speak his praises without flattery, and they are blessings to children yet unborn.

- Lord Orrery, 1749



Here's a Glimpse of Some Record Trees

Tallest living tree:

Hyperion (coast redwood), 378.1 feet, Redwood National Park, CA

Tallest recorded tree:

Unnamed eucalyptus, 500-plus feet, recorded in 1872 in Australia

Most massive living tree:

General Sherman (giant sequoia), estimated weight 4 million pounds, Sequoia National Park, CA

Largest tree canopy:

A great banyan in Calcutta's Indian Botanical Garden covers three acres.

Oldest living tree:

Methuselah (Bristlecone pine), estimated 4,650 years old, in California's White Mountains

Salmon-Safe Label Supports Farmers

By Larry Nussbaum, Program Director, Stewardship Partners

Can healthy, sustainable agriculture and productive fish and wildlife habitat mutually support each other? According to Stewardship Partners, a Seattle-based conservation organization, the answer is Yes! They've brought Salmon-Safe farm certification to the Puget Sound, including Snohomish County.



Salmon-Safe is a third party labeling program that evaluates and recognizes various farm operations (orchards, vineyards, dairies, vegetable growers, etc.) that adopt water quality and habitat conservation practices to benefit native salmon and overall stream health. The program, founded in Oregon in the late 1990s, has had a successful track record. More than 150 Oregon landowners have been certified (approximately 50,000 acres) thanks to their successful public education and consumer marketing efforts.

Salmon-Safe has received national recognition as one of the most reliable eco-labels in the country, alongside certified Organic and Fair Trade. Assessing a farm for certification focuses on how much the operation is compatible with best management practices for protecting water quality, and fish and wildlife habitat.

Salmon-Safe guidelines require farms to:

- ❖ **Protect streamside and wetland areas**
- ❖ **Use irrigation water efficiently**
- ❖ **Conserve water**
- ❖ **Control erosion and sedimentation**
- ❖ **Use natural (non-chemical) soil fertility methods**
- ❖ **Use natural (non-chemical) pest control methods**
- ❖ **Control animal impacts**
- ❖ **Enhance on-farm biodiversity**

On-site inspections are conducted by independent assessors whose expertise includes both sustainable agriculture and water conservation. Once certified, a farm is able to use the Salmon-Safe logo as well as marketing and promotional materials, such as point-of-purchase hang tags, farm stand banners, stickers, and farm signs, to distinguish their operation and products and gain positive recognition in the marketplace.

Stewardship Partners is building on Salmon-Safe's momentum to promote agricultural conservation and restoration practices throughout Puget Sound, and encourage ag owners to participate in regional salmon recovery efforts. To date, more than 40 Puget Sound farms have been certified Salmon-Safe.

Stewardship Partners is expanding its local partnerships with area farmers, organizations, and agencies. They are engaging local landowners in developing collaborative solutions to conserve and restore our rivers and our fish populations. Using the iconic symbol of Northwest native salmon helps build a strong, appealing and distinctive regional branding identity for local environmentally-oriented farms.

The Salmon-Safe program has great potential to support the economic viability of fish-friendly farming by tapping into the growing consumer demand for local, sustainable food. For more information about the program see www.stewardshippartners.org.

January Public Meetings

Snohomish Conservation District will be holding two public meetings to gather input about the proposed assessment in 2009. Please plan to attend to hear more about this change in District funding.

Tuesday, January 8, 2008, Lake Stevens, Cavalero School
Monday, January 14, 2008, Stanwood PUD

Location addresses will be on the District website: www.snohomishcd.org. All meetings will be from 6 PM - 7:30 PM

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Phone 425-335-5634, ext 4

FAX 425-335-5024

Contact: Lois Ruskell

425-335-5634, ext 108

Editing: Donna Gleisner

The Written Edge

425-923-7110

www.snohomishcd.org

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