

Triangle Cove Watershed

NEWSLETTER

Working with you to improve water quality in your watershed

Island County Public Health

Fall 2015

Time to reflect on our success and...

plan future steps to protect and enhance the Triangle Cove watershed

It's been a fascinating couple of years to delve into water quality issues in the Triangle Cove watershed. We've met some great people who are motivated to take care of the land they call home.

This is the final issue of this community newsletter, but we hope the great work continues by citizens, farmers, business owners, special interest groups and other users of land in and around Triangle Cove.

What's planned for future work in the watershed? Snohomish Conservation District will continue to provide soil tests, farm planning and technical assistance to landowners. The District can also help home and business owners with stormwater assistance such as installing rain gardens, combating drainage and runoff issues, and promoting water retention by protecting wetlands and water recapture with rain barrels and cisterns.

Island County Public Health will continue limited water quality monitoring in the watershed and provide assistance with failing septic systems and other residential issues.

Rest assured, we've learned a lot about land use and community needs and hope to continue to meet and work with the great residents and businesses on Camano Island.

DRINK WELL WATER? IT PAYS TO PROTECT YOUR WATERSHED

by Lois Ruskell, Snohomish Conservation District

If you live on Camano Island, you likely get your drinking water, as well as water for other home and farm uses, from a well or a small water system. Camano Island is considered a sole-source aquifer, which means there are no outside sources of drinking water other than the underground aquifers. Protecting the underground aquifers is paramount for a reliable, safe source of drinking water for island residents.

It takes everyone on the Island, and in the Triangle Cove watershed, to ensure that how they live, work and recreate on Camano doesn't impact the aquifers. What can you do to protect your water? Strive to protect the watershed you live in. A healthy watershed - for people, wildlife, and pets - is the best place to start.

What is a Healthy Watershed?

A watershed is all of the land that drains to a particular stream, river, or bay. All land, from upland farms and forestland to homes along the shoreline of Triangle Cove and Driftwood Shores, are part of your watershed. When watersheds are healthy and functioning well, they provide food and fiber, clean water, and healthy habitat for native plants and animals.

Even if you can't see it, healthy watersheds work hard. They move sediment from the upland to the beaches and bays, filtering it along the way in wetlands, swales and ditches. They cycle nutrients and convert them into forms that living organisms can use. Healthy watersheds purify and store water and meter its release into streams to reduce flooding and damaging erosion in the winter and to sustain flows and cool temperatures during the dry season.

Well-functioning watersheds also absorb pollutants and greenhouse gases which improves air quality. And - healthy watersheds are more resilient to natural and human-induced disturbances than highly-impacted or altered watersheds.



What makes a watershed healthy?

- Water quality is high enough to support native aquatic species.
- Local streams and wetlands are able to hold and filter water slowly without causing erosion or flooding.
- Streams have sufficient complex habitat features including pools, gravel bars, and large pieces of wood to support fish and other aquatic wildlife.
- Native, keystone plant and animal species (i.e. beavers, herons, and eagles) are able to sustain stable populations.
- The riparian (or stream) corridor has a dense, healthy native plant community that regenerates naturally.
- Upland forests and grasslands are managed to promote rain infiltration, provide diverse habitat, reduce erosion, and deliver clean water to streams.
- Tidal areas are connected to their wetlands.

How can you help?

- Learn more about your watershed and its specific issues and challenges.
- Plant a variety of native plants that fit your specific location and conditions. Include grasses for erosion control, wildflowers for bees and butterflies, and shrubs and trees for birds.
- Collect roof runoff and slow its release with rain barrels, rain gardens, and bio-swales. Reduce impervious surfaces.
- Use non-toxic household and garden products, keep oil, human and animal waste out of streams and storm drains and pick up pet waste.



Residents of Triangle Cove watershed - we have news for you!
The Triangle Cove grant funding is ending but there is still help available to protect Triangle Cove

Triangle Cove Watershed Meeting and Celebration!

Join your neighbors for an update on the water quality conditions of the Triangle Cove watershed including a report on Island County's recently completed onsite septic survey. You don't need to live on the Cove to come, anyone in the surrounding area is encouraged to come celebrate and learn more about where you live and work.

Tuesday, October 20, 6:30 - 8:30 PM
Camano Center - Sundin Room
606 Arrowhead Rd, Camano Island

Free - refreshments will be provided

Other Great Camano Island Resources

Snohomish Conservation District

425-335-5634

www.snohomishcd.org | www.betterground.org

Island County Public Health

360-387-3443 Ext. 240

www.islandcountyhealth.org

WSU Shore Stewards

360-387-3443 Ext. 258 (Camano Island office)

<http://ext100.wsu.edu/island/nrs/shore-stewards/>

WSU Master Gardeners

Hotline: Camano Island 360-629-4522 ext. 5527

WSU Waste Wise

(360) 629-4522 Ext. 7974

News for the Triangle Cove Watershed

Kathleen Parvin, R.S., Pollution Identification and Correction Program Manager, Island County Public Health

The Triangle Cove watershed makes up one of the largest drainage basins on Camano Island and includes the developed areas of Barnum Point, Camaloch, Camaloch Golf Course, Camano Plaza, Island County Complex, Driftwood Shores, Evergreen Acres, Grove Lake and portions of Camano Hills and Driftwood Heights. The Triangle Cove watershed is amazingly complex and includes not only residential and commercial development but a major estuary, wetlands, over five miles of stream habitat, forested uplands, and agriculture. Kristoferson Creek is one of only three mapped salmon-bearing streams on Camano Island.

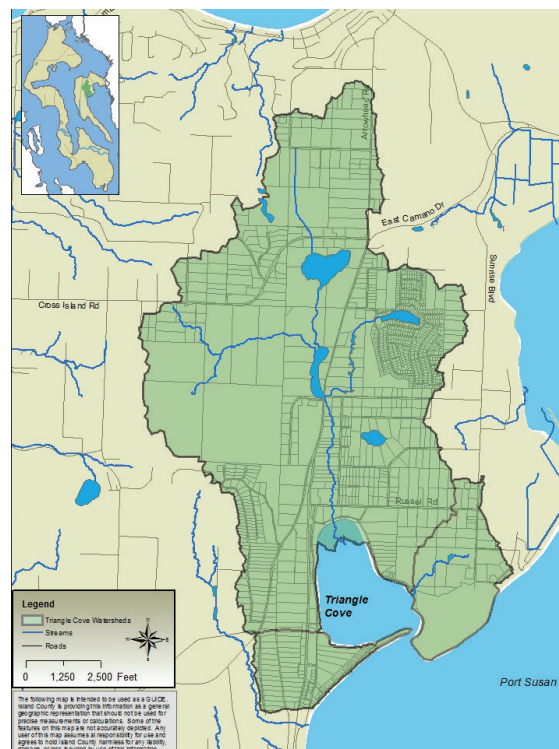
One of the goals for the Triangle Cove Pollution Identification and Correction Program is to continue documenting surface water quality in the watershed. Water quality sampling of streams, ditches and storm drains has been conducted twice a month during the rainy season since 2013. There have been very few cases of exceeding State Water Quality Standards and the overall trend is improving. The efforts you all make to protect water quality add up over time – picking up pet waste, maintaining your septic system and managing livestock manure – it all makes a difference.

The focus this year has been on improving the rate of septic system inspections in the watershed. The State regulation on inspections requires that all conventional gravity systems be inspected every three years and that all alternative systems (any system with a pump) be inspected every year. Only 19% of the septic systems in the watershed had current inspections at the end of February 2015. Reminder notices were sent to all owners of properties without a current inspection and the response has been – to say the least – tremendous. The septic maintenance service providers have been extremely busy accommodating the increased demand for inspections. Public Health trained and certified more than 100 homeowners to perform their own septic system inspections. The rate of system inspections for the Triangle Cove watershed at the end of August has increased to 73%. This is great progress and there are inspections still pending. If you have received an inspection reminder, please schedule an inspection as soon as possible and help us push the inspection rate up even more. Many of the septic system inspections found a deficiency that needed to be corrected and there were more than a few failing systems that are now in the process of repair.

This project has been funded wholly or in part by the United States Environmental Protection Agency under assistance agreement PC-00J32601 to Washington Department of Health.

A big thank you to all who have taken steps to ensure that your septic system is working properly. Not only are you protecting your property investment, you are protecting your watershed. It takes many people doing the right thing to improve and protect water quality in the Triangle Cove watershed.

Please join us on Tuesday, October 20th from 6:30 to 8:30 pm at the Camano Center to celebrate with your neighbors and learn more about the water quality in your watershed.



The Triangle Cove Watershed