Tenmile Treasures

A Newsletter for the Tenmile Creek Watershed Community

TENMILE CREEK WATERSHED
Healthy Streams
Neighbor to Neighbor

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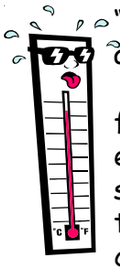
Spring 2004

Tenmile Treasures – Spring 2004

Happy Spring to all of us who share the Tenmile Creek Watershed. This year spring has come fast and furiously. It is tough to have the garden area dry before it gets planted! Temperature sure plays an important role in our lives. . . it is one of the main factors determining what we do each day. Temperature also affects the fish and other critters who share the waters of the Tenmile, Deer Creek, Fourmile Creek and Crystal Springs. Read more in "A little Science". I hope you all have a delightful spring with time to enjoy your family, friends and our home in the Tenmile Creek Watershed.

A Little Science - Tidbits on Temperature

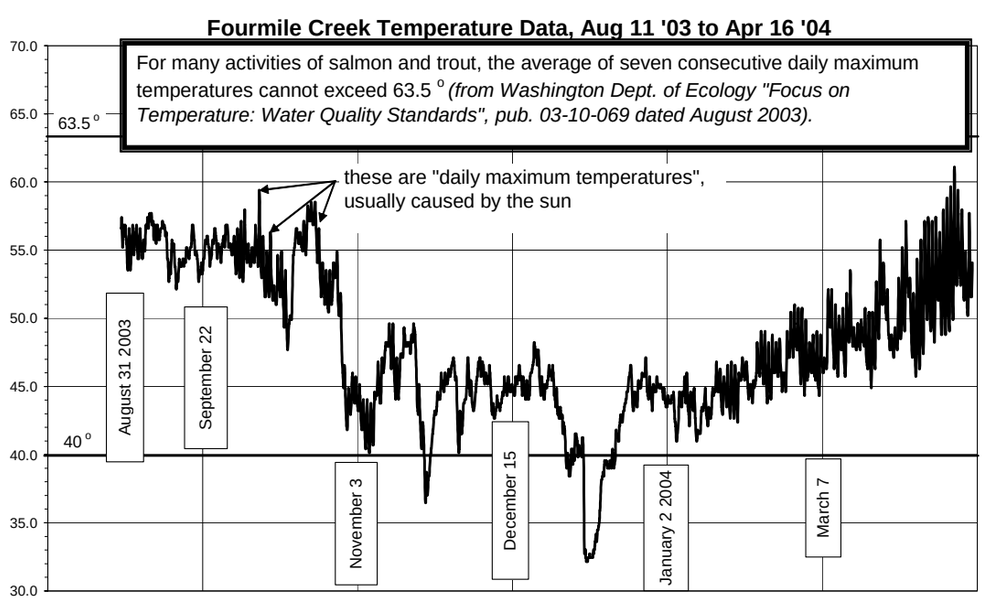


"Do we really have a temperature problem?" "Will planting trees actually do something"? "The water seems cold enough to me."

These are just a few of the comments and questions I hear from you and to be honest, I dont have good answers. The experts say that the temperature range for healthy fish spawning and rearing is 40-57° F, but it actually varies with the type and life stage of salmon (i.e., adults or juveniles of coho, chum, chinook, steelhead or cutthroat trout). However, experts do know that for all of these species, growth stops at 69° F. and water temperature is lethal between 73-78° F.

Finding data on the actual temperatures of the creeks in the Tenmile Creek Watershed has been complicated, partly because data collection has not been consistent. There are indications that our water is too warm in the late summer and early fall months when cool water temperatures are important for returning adults. The Dept. of Ecology has listed Tenmile as degraded for temperature on their list of streams that don't meet water quality standards. The water temperature in a stream is affected by the amount of water in the stream, the amount of shade cover over the stream, the amount of groundwater that flows into the stream, how we use the water and the air temperature.

In past years, water temperature monitoring was done over varying periods of time in various locations along the stream, providing us with scattered windows of information. The landowners on the Tenmile Creek Advisory Committee decided that a better way to monitor would be to gather real time, continuous, long term data. The landowners along Fourmile Creek have given us permission to begin a pilot monitoring project so, with the help of Whatcom County WSU Cooperative Extension, we placed six sensors along Fourmile last August. The sensors were placed in the two tributaries that feed the head of the creek down to where it joins Tenmile. The temperature is read every hour and data will be collected continuously with software donated by WSU Extension. The information can be made available to anyone who wants it – this includes you, too! This is what we have from Sept. 1, 2003 through April 16, 2004:



While it is too early to give you the concrete information we all desire, we feel confident that we will have the information we need to make decisions that are good for the landowners along the creek and good for the health of the stream. We will now be able to begin looking at all those factors listed above which affect water temperature. We hope to extend this data collection throughout Tenmile Creek, Deer Creek and Crystal Springs.

The Fourmile landowners are in the middle of a three-year planting project. What we are doing now is collecting a baseline of information and we will continue to monitor as the riparian areas mature. So in ten years when you or somebody else asks, "Does the Fourmile creek have a temperature problem?", we will be able to answer that question.

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"What we do today, right now, will have an accumulated effect on all our tomorrows"
~ Alexander Stoddard

Trees for Streams Success

What a month! Over 121 families participated in the "Trees for Stream" program. These are the unsung heroes of stream restoration. Every Saturday landowners came for 10, 25, 50 or 100 trees to replant along their stream, pond, river or wetland. More than 5200 trees and shrubs were replanted to improve the water quality in Whatcom County. Over 20 sub-basins were improved, including Bertrand Creek, Fishtrap Creek, California Creek, Dakota Creek, Tenmile Creek, Deer Creek, Johnson Creek, Terrell Creek and Whatcom Creek. Ponds and wetlands now have a greater chance to be shaded. The Nooksack River and the Lummi River now have more trees.

Many thanks to the following volunteers: Lynden FFA who grew 775 native shrubs and trees, Meridian FFA, who donated over 100 hours to dig the trees from the fields, bag and load them for our participants, our community volunteers – Dan Vekved, Terry Philips, Joel Breems, Mildred Snydar and Shannon Taylor, and to all the participants in the Farmers Growing Trees for Salmon program, who grew the trees.

This is the third year of the "Trees for Streams" give away. It is the intent of the Whatcom Agriculture Preservation Committee, which sponsors this project, to have "Healthy Streams: Neighbor-to-Neighbor".

Letters to the editor:

"What is CREP?" - M.S.

The Conservation Resource Enhancement Program or CREP is a Federal and state program that pays landowners, through establishment of 10-15 year contracts, to plant trees and shrubs along eligible streams to improve habitat conditions for salmon. Land along Tenmile Creek is eligible for CREP. Eighteen of your neighbors along Tenmile Creek have enrolled in CREP, resulting in 27,448 feet of stream planted through this program. The minimum buffer requirements for this program have been reduced. So give me a call, and I will come and talk about YOUR Tenmile. I also have programs available for Deer Creek, Fourmile and Crystal Springs and I love getting off the farm!

Summer Stream Walks

Summer evenings are a great time for a "STREAM WALK". We can LEARN about the needs of the creek, share a little history, look at maps to see how we are all connected and get your ideas to help create a healthier stream system.

Call Dorie 398-9187.

Tenmile Creek Watershed: The Story of its People and their Land –

Do you have a Tenmile Story to tell? Do you know someone who has lived in the Tenmile watershed for years and would like to share a story or two among friends? We are planning a Tenmile picnic and story telling time – WE NEED FOLKS WHO HAVE STORIES, FOLKS WHO WANT TO HEAR THE STORIES, A SUMMER EVENING AND A SPOT ALONG THE CREEK. Call to help us plan. 398-9187

COUNTY CULVERT TEAM says "THANKS TENMILE OWNERS!"

Whatcom County Public Works would like to thank the Tenmile landowners that allowed the Team access to the streams on their property for the Whatcom County Culvert Inventory Project.

The purpose of this study was to identify all culverts and drainage structures in the county in order to identify opportunities for improving fish access to spawning and rearing habitat. Adult salmon migrate from the ocean to spawn in streams and rivers throughout Whatcom County. But some of the vital spawning and rearing habitat is not accessible due to stream barriers, the majority of which are culverts! Culverts can also prevent downstream movement of gravel and woody debris that is needed for maintaining quality salmon habitat. Repairing these culverts to allow salmon passage is the simplest, most cost effective method of restoring salmon habitat to enhance the natural production of salmon! Thank you!