

Tenmile Treasures

A Newsletter for the Tenmile Creek Watershed Community

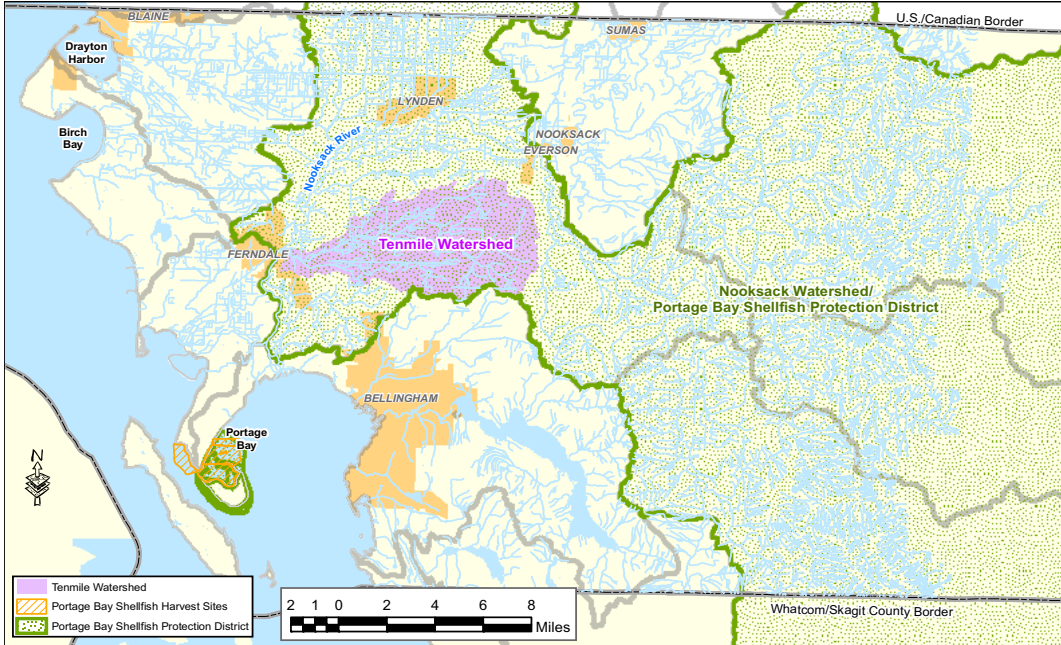
TENMILE CREEK
WATERSHED

Healthy Streams
Neighbor to Neighbor

Welcome Summer!

Are YOU thinking like a watershed? Everything we do on our property can affect the health of our watershed - our soil, water, air, plants, animals and families. One responsibility is to make sure our septic systems are working properly. Most people don't think about their septic system until it's broken. That can be harming the watershed and costing you lots of \$\$\$\$. How can we save money, while protecting our watershed and family's health?

From the FLUSH to the BAY!



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Tenmile Advisory Committee

Henry Bierlink, APC
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John Gillies, NRCS
Darrell Gray, NSEA
Craig MacConnell, WSU

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Susie Nelson, Volunteer
Leroy Plagerman, Landowner
Steve Seymour, WDFW
Kevin Sterk, Landowner
Eric Sundstrom, Landowner
Dan Thompson, Landowner
Art Zawicki, Landowner

In partnership with WCD, NSEA,
WA Dept. of Ecology & NFWF

Project Manager: Dorie Belisle

*"The future depends on
what we do in the present."
- Gandhi*

Acknowledgement: Much of this septic information came from Skagit Co. Health Dept.

The Tenmile watershed is a sub-basin of the much larger Nooksack River watershed, which flows to Portage Bay. Bacteria and pathogens from failing septic systems in the Tenmile watershed can negatively affect the health of the shellfish beds downstream.

When you flush, where do you think it ends up? What about your bath water, garbage disposal sludge, or laundry suds? Did you ever imagine that your flush could be feeding our shellfish? Your land drains to the lowest body of water - within the Tenmile watershed that could be the Fourmile Creek, Tenmile Creek, Deer Creek or Silver Springs Creek (Crystal Springs). The Tenmile watershed flows into the Nooksack River just before Ferndale. In the Nooksack River, discharge from the Tenmile watershed mixes with the waters of Bertrand Creek, Fishtrap Creek, Silver Creek, Kamm Creek and Schneider and Scott Ditch to combine with what comes down from Mount Baker. There are 10,700 known (plus an estimated 3200 undocumented) septic systems in just the area that drains into the Nooksack, then into Portage Bay. Polluted water from a failing septic system has the potential to contaminate our land, drinking well water, streams, the Nooksack River and eventually Portage Bay.

Some members of the Lummi Nation are farming the tidal flats in Portage Bay for clams and oysters. Since all water runs down hill, it is our responsibility, as a good neighbor, to make sure our septic systems are working properly and not adding fecal coliform bacteria to the watershed.

Learn about the Portage Bay Shellfish Protection District at the Septic Sen\$e workshop on Aug. 5th!

WHEN THEY ARE GOOD, THEY ARE VERY GOOD.....

When everything is done right and going well, a septic system can effectively remove most pollutants - even exceeding the treatment capabilities of most sewage treatment plants- before returning the treated water into the environment's water system. Like a car though, the key to "longevity" is routine maintenance and sensible use: How you "drive" your septic and how you maintain it, will help determine its life span. Learning how your septic system works and how to keep it healthy is the key! Keep in mind the life expectancy of a septic system is 20-30 years under the best of conditions. Here are a few factors that can shorten the natural lifespan:

- ⊖ Tank needs pumping
- ⊖ High water use
- ⊖ Flushing Garbage
- ⊖ Introducing toxic chemicals (i.e. drain cleaners, antifreeze, powerful antibiotics and chemotherapy drugs, etc.) to the system
- ⊖ Compaction of drain field due to livestock (cows, horses), driveways, or heavy equipment
- ⊖ Tree roots blocking pipes and drainholes
- ⊖ Not knowing that they have a septic system
- ⊖ Not knowing where the tank and drainfield are located

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Septic Sen\$e
Sat. Aug. 5th 9am- 1pm
Lynden Christian High School

Septic Sen\$e cont...

Statewide an estimated 2-5% of septic systems fail every year. In parts of Whatcom County that number has been proven to be as high as 20%, or 1 failing system for every 5 systems tested! The No. 1 reason for failure: Improper maintenance and use. Yikes, weve got septic systems and weve got responsibility!

- ☺ Learn all you can about your system.
- ☺ Have your system inspected first and pumped if necessary.
- ☺ Make the life style changes that can add years to your system.
- ☺ Call Whatcom County Health Department for more information on taking care of your system and for a list of certified inspectors. Call 676-6724, or visit them at 509 Girard Street in Bellingham. Their web site address is:
http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/health/environmental/sewage_systems/sewage.jsp
- ☺ **Come to the Septic Sen\$e Workshop August 5th and have fun while you learn!**

Get Some Septic Sen\$e for Free!

Got a septic system? On Saturday, August 5, all Whatcom County septic system owners have a chance to learn some septic sense at a fun morning workshop. The Septic Sen\$e open house/workshop will be held between 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Lynden Christian High School, 417 Nooksack Ave, Lynden. Spend an hour or spend the morning.

- Bring in your well water to be tested for nitrates.
- Participate in "Septic Systems 101" (Classes run every ½ hour).
- Learn about changes to Whatcom County septic system regulations.
- Enjoy free oysters, clams and other snacks.
- Tour Fishtrap Creek. Learn how water quality monitoring is done.
- Participate in drawings for free and discounted septic system inspections donated by Coastal Construction.
- View displays on all aspects of your watershed and septic care.
- Bring in all your questions.



The workshop is sponsored by the Tenmile Creek Watershed Project, the Bertrand Watershed Improvement District, the Portage Bay Shellfish Protection District, the county health and public works departments, the Whatcom Conservation District, and Coast Construction. For more information contact Dorie Belisle at 398-9187.

It takes a community to put on a community event! Please call to help Sat. Aug. 5th. 398-9187



Saturday work party at the Hunter Farm.

Volunteers Make A Difference

During the past spring through the Farmers Growing Trees for Salmon program, 20,000 nursery trees were planted. Hats off to our farmer/landowners who are now "Growers of Trees" for salmon! On behalf of the entire Whatcom community, we thank: **Jim Bjornstad - Bjornstad Farms, Roger Boxx - Boxx Berry Farm, Bob Hunter and Janet Goodfellow - Hunter Farm, John Belisle - BelleWood Acres, Marian Schouten, Ron Vekved, and Ruth Higgins and Al Krause - Chums of Terrell Creek.** Their growing skills will bring these 5" seedlings to 18-24" in a couple of

years. Then the trees will be given to Whatcom County landowners to plant along their waterways to help improve water quality and fish habitat. Start planning your stream plantings now!

Seventy-five (75) volunteers helped to make this program possible. They included students from the Meridian FFA, the 4th grade Jr. Master Gardeners from Tenmile Elementary School, Chums of Terrell Creek, and community folks interested in making a difference. **Thank you!**