

East Fork Lewis River

by Shelley Matthews

YEAR

7

along the East Fork of the Lewis River, approximately 2-3 miles southeast of La Center Washington, just west of NE 29th Ave. and Stoughton.

BEFORE

Heavily grazed and eroded river banks lack vegetation structure and diversity



DURING

Newly planted trees and shrubs (marked by orange and white flags) will stabilize banks, improve water quality, and provide cover and habitat for fish and wildlife

This project site is located on a 371-acre Clark County park (East Fork Lewis River Oxbow) on the lower East Fork of the Lewis River, approximately 12 miles north of the City of Vancouver, and 2 miles east of Interstate 5.

The property was purchased as an essential piece in the formation of the Lower Lewis River Greenway, which begins at Paradise Point State Park and extends southeast to Daybreak Park. The Lower Lewis River Greenway provides a linked system of park properties that help preserve wildlife habitat and create interconnected trail systems for public use.

The park consists of approximately 74 acres of forested upland slopes and 297 acres of lowlands bordered on the east by the Lewis River. The grant project site is located within the lowland area of the property and consists of a 75 foot wide by 2,500 foot long strip of land adjacent to the East Fork of the Lewis River.

Prior to this restoration project, the site was greatly impacted by intensive livestock grazing practices. Cattle had heavily grazed the area and trampled riparian vegetation while drinking at the river. As a result, the riparian area vegetation was severely depleted and the streambank eroded. Cattle and other livestock are no longer allowed on the property, but the native riverbank vegetation has been slow to recover. The pre-project vegetation provided little shade or cover, and mainly consisted of native and exotic grass and weed species.

This project was the first phase in restoring approximately 150 feet of riparian vegetation along the riverbank. There were two plantings: one in the fall and one in the spring. The sod was stripped prior to planting to protect the new plants from grass and other invasive weeds. Then, over six thousand native trees, plants, and shrubs were planted in the riparian area along the streambank. Woody debris may be incorporated into the river's side channel during later phases of the restoration project.

Benefits

- Restored the riparian area for the benefit of fish, wildlife and outdoor enthusiasts. The riparian area provides the public with an attractive area for non-invasive recreational activities such as wildlife viewing, hiking, and environmental education programs.
- Planted vegetation that provides wildlife with cover from predators, as well as nourishment in the form of leaves, bark, seeds, sap, berries, and fruit. Vegetative debris that makes its way into the stream feeds invertebrates, which in turn provides food for fish.
- Restored vegetation to the streambank, which will increase streambank stability, reduce soil erosion, help retain stormwater runoff, filter surface pollutants, provide shade, lower stream temperatures, raise oxygen levels, improve water quality, and enhance fish habitat.

Budget

Total Proposed – \$22,625

Total Actual – \$21,909.85

Metro/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service grant award – \$10,000

Grant Dollars Spent - \$10,000

Helpful Hints – what worked, what didn't

- It can be time consuming to administer the restoration grant. Schedule adequate time to attend meetings, complete progress reports, and draft the reimbursement report.
- Partner with non-profit groups in order to build-up your volunteer base.
- Keep in mind that the scale of the project and remote access to the site may make it more difficult to organize and fully utilize volunteers. Consider using the Northwest Service Academy to consolidate volunteer efforts.
- Spend adequate time on site-preparation to reduce future maintenance efforts and increase your success rate.
- Pre-order/reserve your plants early. They are in high demand.
- Strip the sod prior to planting to reduce competition from grasses and other weedy species. Consider leaving the thistle to provide young plants with shade and reduce seasonal water requirements.
- Plant lots of dry hardy willow on the bank if native to your site. This native plant has roots that shoot down to the water and help stabilize the bank.
- When working with large quantities and varieties of trees and shrubs, deliver them a few days before the planting and have them dropped off in groups on the outside of the planting area. Then, set the plants out exactly where they need to be planted prior to planting day.
- Use weed mats and mulch.

Partners

Americorps: Northwest Service Academy
Center for Agricultural Science and Environmental Education
Vancouver- Clark Park and Recreation
Habitat Partners
Friends of Trees
Natural Resource Conservation Service
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Contact

Tim Haldeman, Maintenance Services Manager, and Brian Potter, Maintenance Program Coordinator, Vancouver-Clark Parks and Recreation, (360) 696-8171

Timeline and Tasks

January-February 1998	Ordered plant materials and supplies
March 1998	Prepared site for tree planting and planted bare-root trees and shrubs
April 1998	Cleaned up site and flagged trees
April-August 1998	Monitored and watered trees
October 1998	Planted contained trees and shrubs; cleaned up site and flagged trees