

Burnt Bridge Creek

by Shelley Matthews

YEAR
4

in Vancouver, from Divine Road to Thunderbird Village



BEFORE

Lack of native riparian tree and shrub cover

The Burnt Bridge Creek Project was a collaborative effort between the City of Vancouver and Americorp's Vancouver Service Team. The scope of the project was to plant native shade trees throughout 4,500 yards of riparian habitat along Burnt Bridge Creek in order to reduce water temperature and increase the amount and diversity of habitat for fish and wildlife.

Due to agricultural and residential conversion of the land along this stream, riparian vegetation and shade cover were severely depleted. As a result, water temperatures had risen dramatically, water quality was lowered, and native salmon no longer inhabited the stream. This area was further impacted by a ten-foot wide asphalt trail built for pedestrian traffic. The portion of the trail that cuts through the restoration site is in a high use viewing area. In order to restore this riparian zone, a landscape design was created to both restore habitat and to enhance the aesthetic value for nature viewing.

The restoration site was divided into three sections and western red cedars, Oregon ash, black cottonwood, elderberry, Douglas spirea, red osier dogwood, vine maple, Douglas fir, Pacific crabapple, western hazelnut, red flowering currant, and Indian plum were planted in October and November, 1995. A flood in December 1995, followed by a major flood event in 1996, wiped out 60% of all plants. A second planting took place in March and April 1996.

A monitoring and maintenance plan was put into place to assure the project's continued success. The biology class from the neighboring high school made a commitment to monitor growth and replace plants that did not survive. The City of Vancouver's Drainage Division has provided aid by watering and providing general plant care.

Benefits

- Provided a tree canopy over the stream. This is expected to lower water temperatures, increase oxygen in the water, provide root structure for erosion control, absorb fecal coliform bacteria from domestic waterfowl, enhance the diversity and quality of fish and wildlife habitat, and reduce off-trail foot traffic.
- Created more diverse habitat for resident and migratory birds and other wildlife.
- Took actions in hopes of future use by the once present salmon and other aquatic species.
- Provided hands-on restoration training for students and other community members.

Budget

Total Proposed –30,000

Total actual – 20,168

Metro/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service grant awarded – \$15,000

Grant dollars spent - \$9,393

Helpful Hints – what worked, what didn’t

- Buy large plants and stake and flag their locations. Partners purchased plants for about one-third the cost of retail through the Clark County Offenders Industries Program.
- Consider putting mulch around the plants to help identify planting locations and to nourish the vegetation as it becomes established.
- Maintain continuous communication between the staff that maintain the stream banks and their employees. We did not do this and it was a mistake.
- Put the wood chips under the weed fabric to keep the grass from growing and the mulch in place when the water rises.
- Seek help from other people working on similar projects.

Partners

City of Vancouver

Clark County Public Works

Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife

Americorps / Vancouver Service Corps

Martin Luther King Elementary, Vancouver

Contact

Phil Oaks, City of Vancouver, Parks and Recreation Department, (360) 696-8171

Timeline and Tasks	
October 1995	Prepared site and ordered plants
October – November 1995	Planted trees and cleaned-up
December 1995	Restoration site flooded
February 1996	Additional flooding at project site; 60% of the new plantings were destroyed
April – March 1996	2 nd planting to replace trees killed in floods
April – September 1996	Monitored and maintained site