

## **4. SUMMARY**

Illahee Creek drains a small, high-quality watershed that is unusual in the central Puget Sound, in that it is presently only lightly developed and has a significant fraction of its channel network and riparian zone in a permanent forest preserve. Despite this protection, the stream is showing many of the early signs of damage from watershed urbanization. Based on abundant evidence from around the region, this damage will be irreversible if not corrected promptly. The most acute problems are being generated by uncontrolled stormwater discharges from the County road network; the worst chronic problems are a result of land use in the upper watershed, particularly the area draining into the upper North Fork of Illahee Creek. These conditions are manifest most prominently in the infilling of the Illahee Road culvert and flooding of an ill-placed house on the Illahee Creek delta, but they are also recognizable in the loss of in-stream habitat for salmon. The stream system retains good resiliency to episodic high flows, such as that of 3 December 2007, because it still retains a largely intact riparian zone and extensive tracts of forested land throughout its watershed. These conditions are not assured, however, and the consequences of their loss would be evident in both infrastructure damage and irrevocable ecosystem degradation.