Summer News

As Puget Sound has experienced growth in the last few decades, so goes the population of Kitsap County. Now, at a little over 240,000 residents, the pressure is on the water resources of the area.

In more sparsely populated areas of the county, precipitation events may pose less of a problem as native vegetation receives the water and disperses it into groundwater and streams. Water management concerns begin when native soils are covered with impervious surfaces such as housing, driveways and roads. Why? Impervious surfaces do not allow water to pass into the soil but cause the water to be concentrated into larger and larger volumes on surface areas. As the larger volumes of water flow uncurtailed, they erode the land they pass over and pick up pollutants. This storm water moves silt, pesticides, and fertilizers caught in the drainage path.

Not surprisingly, these pollutants and good water end up in the Puget Sound. For years the Sound has been showing signs of stress due to the amount of contaminated water that is being added to it. In the past, the aim was to channel the water immediately to the Puget Sound to avoid flooding hazards. As we learn more about surface water management, new paradigms are encouraging residents to deal with storm water at the point it is being created instead of sending it to ditches or storm drains.

Kitsap County Surface and Storm water Management Program (SSWM) is determined to find progressive solutions for residents of the county. Among the solutions, one stands out as an excellent option. Continued on page 3
Kitsap Conservation District is working cooperatively with the Silverdale Dog Park Stewardship group to promote the use of rain gardens as a preferred alternative to meeting the County’s surface water infiltration requirements. KCD provided a rain garden design and has overseen construction and planting of the garden at no cost to the Dog Park. Many of the plants that will be used are those leftover from the 2010 Tree Sale.

The rain garden will capture and treat surface water from the new parking lot area. KCD has been tasked with coordinating and administering the rain garden program funded by the Kitsap County Surface & Storm Water Management program. This project will serve as one of several demonstration sites of rain gardens. The park is located on Silverdale Way next to the skate board park and is easy to find for those who are interested in viewing the example.

Silverdale Dog Park Takes a Bite out of Storm Water

Kitsap Conservation District welcomes the service of our newest member on our Board of Supervisors, Nikki Johanson. Nikki was elected to her position in our March election. She will bring her experience with Kitsap agriculture to our table as well as her keen organizational skills.

Nikki and her husband, Allen Johanson, operate Pheasant Field Farm in Silverdale. This property was a homestead since 1885 and has been farmed by the family since the early 1900’s. She is a member of local farm groups and a strong supporter of conservation and sustainable farming methods. The farm has installed a large structure to compost waste from the garden and chickens, returning it to productive soil. Theirs is a terrific example of active farming in our county.

Thank you Nikki for your willingness to serve on our Board of Supervisors and help us influence agricultural and natural resource protection in our county!

2010 Cooperator of the Year

Whitethorn Farm, located on Bainbridge Island, has been chosen by the District as the 2010 Cooperator of the Year. The owners, Janet Grunbok and Christopher Bury, specialize in dressage training techniques. The farm has the capacity to board seventeen horses and has both an indoor and an outdoor training arena.

The owners understood the importance of natural resource protection back in the early 90’s when they received funding from USDA - Natural Resource Conservation Service for roof runoff management assistance. The Best Management Practices (BMPs) helped reduce surface water and muddy conditions on the farm. They continued toward their goal to improve their property by beginning to work with the Kitsap Conservation District in 2005.

The farm installed HoofGrid as a surface treatment in their paddocks. Hoofgrid is a low impact development product that provides a firm and dry surface for livestock in their confinement areas. They also received funding to construct a waste storage facility to contain manure generated on the farm. The final product of their work is a boarding facility that works for the owners, the livestock, and the environment.
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This approach is to use rain gardens, a Low Impact Development (LID) tool, to handle water runoff. In addition, Kitsap is particularly suited for rain gardens because it has an abundance of short high volume rain events, sand-based glacial soil conditions, and an array of native wetland plants that are well suited to both wet winters and dry summers.

So, how do rain gardens work their magic? It helps to first know how they are constructed. Rain gardens are pretty basic...They are depressions in the landscape that collect rain water and slow down the flow so pollutants and silt can be filtered out and water can seep back to groundwater sources. They are easily created by excavating a depression about two feet deep and sized to accommodate the volume of water to be treated. An amended top soil is placed back into the excavation leaving about an 8” depression. The special soil mix is high in sand and compost, has a high permeability, and a high water capacity. It soaks up water like a sponge and releases the water slowly to the aquifer below.

Many rain gardens are planted with native plants that are specialized for their water tolerant characteristics. For example, the bottom of the rain garden will pond slightly during storm events and should be landscaped with plants that do not mind having wet roots. Since Kitsap County has dry summers, these plants are also accustomed to long dry periods.

In native Kitsap soils, 10 to 40 percent of the precipitation returns to groundwater. In contrast, populated areas with lots of roads and buildings only return about 15 percent of precipitation to groundwater. This becomes a problem for areas that depend on drinking water from wells. Adding rain gardens to populated areas helps equalize the recharge of aquifers by returning more water into the ground. With rain gardens in residential yards, homeowners can slow down storm water moving off properties, enjoy less flooding and erosion in stream beds, protect salmon, and provide more clean water in the ground, in lakes, and in streams. Yes, all that from ‘slow water’! With rain gardens in strategic locations in their neighborhoods, residents cooperating with one another solve runoff issues in a basic and easy way.

This approach to storm water treatment is within the grasp of most homeowners to accomplish. To make it even easier to infiltrate your rainfall, Kitsap County’s SSWM program is offering incentives for up to $500 to install the rain gardens. If you live in unincorporated Kitsap County, contact Teresa Brooks (t-brooks@conservewa.net) at the District for details on the program and join an increasing number of residents that are starting to think ‘slow’.
Kitsap Fairgrounds Awarded Stormwater Retrofit Grant

The Kitsap Conservation District will be facilitating implementation of a Department Ecology Stormwater LID retrofit grant at the Kitsap County Fairgrounds. This will include construction of a pervious pavement roadway, rain gardens, a green roof, rainwater infiltration trenches and waste storage structures. These retrofits will reduce runoff volume and sediments, bacteria and nutrients from contaminating Barker Creek and Dyes Inlet shellfish beds. This will also be a great opportunity for the community and contractors to witness how these practices actually work and the long term savings that come from these designs which result in storm water management, landscaping and facility improvements, and water treatment. If you would like to be on our e-mail list for invites to LID demonstrations and tours please contact Carin at carin-anderson@conservewa.net.