

2002 FISH KILLS IN DUNCAN CREEK



Pictured above are two bags containing some 200 fish what were found dead in Duncan Creek on July 9th 2002. Cutthroat trout and Coho salmon were the primary species recovered. It is unknown how many fish were carried down the stream out into Puget sound thus never recovered. For a small creek the size of Duncan, this was a profound loss which Fish & Wildlife officials said would take many years for the creek to recover from.

The property owners living along side Duncan Creek who had recently completed a stream restoration project noted extremely strong odors of what smelled like acetone in the air, with fish immediately spotted floating upside down in the creek. That day there was no known construction activity occurring along the stream. Fish & Wildlife suspected that somewhere upstream someone working on vehicles or equipment accidentally or intentionally allowed a contaminate such as radiator fluid, gasoline or other solvent based chemical to drain or be dumped into the creek.

On July 18th there was a second fish kill effecting Coho salmon, Cutthroat trout, and Rock sculpins. As with the first fish kill the agencies that responded could locate no direct sourced of what killed the fish. Later Health Department water quality officials suggested that low oxygen levels in parts of the lower portions of the creek may have resulted in some of the fish being suffocated. No further determinations or the sources of contamination were ever made. A sample of stream water had been sent to the same Fish & Wildlife lab where the dead fish had been sent, but for some reason the lab failed to test the water sample.

The environmental reporter from the Bremerton Sun wrote the following two stories about the fish kills:

FIRST FISH KILL

DUNCAN CREEK: Chemicals suspected in fish deaths

Sun | Local

By Christopher Dunagan, Sun Staff — [Jul 9th, 2002](#)

At least 200 young salmon were killed in Manchester's Duncan Creek Sunday afternoon, possibly because someone spilled or dumped chemicals into the stream, state biologists said.

Witnesses reported seeing dozens of fish, mostly between 1 and 2.5 inches long, keeling over suddenly and sinking to the bottom of the creek between 4:30 and 5:30 p.m. Sunday, said Jeff Davis of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. They also noted a "solvent smell," he said.

Davis said he gathered up between 150 and 200 fish Monday morning. Most were juvenile coho salmon and sea-run cutthroat trout. A few were adult cutthroat up to 11 inches long. Davis said most of the fish were lying on the bottom of the stream in pools of slow-moving water.

Some fish went unrecovered, Davis said, and uncounted others had washed into Puget Sound before he arrived.

Davis suspects that someone dumped a chemical into the water, which killed the fish as they moved downstream.

"It looked like whatever was dumped in there came down in waves," Davis said.

He took a water sample for testing and called for assistance from the Washington Department of Ecology.

Officials with the Bremerton-Kitsap County Health District surveyed the upper reaches of the stream for possible sources of contamination. By Monday afternoon, live fish were seen swimming in the creek, health inspector Keith Grellner said.

Area residents who observed suspicious activities in the Duncan Creek area (south of Manchester) are asked to call Davis today at (360) 895-3965.

Those responsible could be subject to criminal and civil penalties for environmental damage, he said.

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SECOND FISH KILL

SOUTH KITSAP:

Duncan Creek

Second fish kill in a week near Manchester

Sun | Local

By Christopher Dunagan, Sun Staff — [Jul 18th, 2002](#)

Kitsap County health inspectors recovered about 50 dead fish Wednesday from Manchester's Duncan Creek, where more than 200 fish died a little more than a week before.

Shawn Ultican of the Kitsap County Health District found low levels of dissolved oxygen in a pool near the mouth of the creek south of Manchester.

"I'm not sure what the exact cause is," Ultican said, "but the dissolved oxygen levels were low enough that the little fish in the pool may not have been able to survive."

The fish, which he did not identify, were 3 to 4 inches long.

Unlike the fish kill July 8 in the same creek, nobody reported a chemical odor this time. Ultican sent water samples to a state lab to test for toxic substances.

The investigation continues.