

# DUNCAN CREEK STREAM BUFFER VIOLATION

**BEFORE CLEARING**



**AFTER CLEARING**



# IMPORTANCE OF RIPARIAN BUFFERS

Riparian buffers are the natural vegetation from the edge of the stream bank out through the riparian zone. The vegetative zone serves as a buffer to pollutants entering a stream from runoff, controls erosion, and provides habitat and nutrient input into the stream. A relatively undisturbed riparian zone supports a robust stream system; narrow riparian zones occur when roads, parking lots, fields, lawns, bare soil, rocks, or buildings are near the stream bank. Residential developments, urban centers, golf courses, and rangeland are the common causes of anthropogenic degradation of the riparian zone.

Riparian buffers are the most valuable protection a stream system has against outside influences. In most cases healthy riparian directly reflects upon the condition of the stream unless the source of the insult is a specific pollutant. Enhancement of the riparian buffer by re-planting native grasses, forbs, shrubs and trees is the first step in the recovery of the stream back to a more natural condition. Some of the many **benefits** of a healthy riparian buffer are listed below. Can you think of more?

- Provides organic material as food for invertebrate, fish and wildlife;
- Supplies large and small pieces of woody debris that provide habitat for fish, invertebrates and amphibians;
- Alters how sunlight reaches the stream and is an important temperature moderator;
- Stabilizes stream banks and reduces erosion;

- Filters sediment and materials from overland runoff and roots of many plants traps and holds the sediments;
- Absorbs nutrients from overland and sub-surface flows; and
- Reduces the impacts of flooding through temporary storage, interception and slow releases from heavy rains.

In the case of this riparian buffer violation, Kitsap County code enforcement did issue a warning letter. No fines were imposed and no further violations of stream buffers in this area were noted. From all appearances the area cleared was not replanted but has since grown back considerably. This is the letter: