

Marco P. Rains

From: Brent Renfrow [renfrbr@dfw.wa.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, April 06, 2005 4:11 PM
To: Marco P. Rains
Subject: Re: Lyle Creek Buffer?

marco

I recommend a 50 foot buffer as a basic minimum buffer along the streams in the UGA. All of our streams are temperature sensitive...and flowing north-south direction makes them even more so. In the summer the sun shines on these waters from 5 am to 9 pm and water temperatures can get high enough to be unhealthy for native salmon and trout. (warm waters are low in oxygen and warm temperatures promote fungal infections.) If there are irrigation withdrawals from the creek so that flow is really minimal (or if it is a drought year) water temperatures can be high enough to be lethal for trout. All these streams need shade in the summer....and it is hard to grow a shade tree in a buffer area of only 20 feet. The canopy diameter of a large pacific willow tree common around the valley streams is commonly 40-50 feet. A mature "street shade tree" in town is in the 30-50 feet size range depending upon species. There needs to be enough room along a creek in the UGA to grow and maintain mature trees.

An example of a bad example is at the DSHS office (Paul Alderman's building) across from BiMart. The Creek runs along the west side of the building. They keep cutting trees down because they hang on the building and damage the roof....but the stream needs the shade and the stream banks need the strong woody roots. the stream is eroding the bank and will put the building at risk because of the lack of streamside trees. It is not a good situation.

Except for when we are dealing with an area with existing infrastructure constraining creeks (e.g. in town where Wilson Creek runs next to houses, under houses, etc.) where buffer widths are really challenging, I would suggest 50 feet is reasonable. In areas where the stream meanders, flooding occurs, stream energy is high or the channel pattern is dynamic, 50 feet is too small. The standard WDFW recommendation would be that the buffer should be the same as the height of a mature cottonwood tree...as that would be the "zone of influence" of trees on the stream. For shoreline streams such as Taneum Creek which in places have complex associated wetlands and multiple channels, a variable width buffer extending to 300 feet might be reasonable.

For Lyle Creek at that location.....I suggest staying with 50 feet, even though the creek is not a great environmental wonder at this time. Fish use the creek but there are problems with how flows are managed. Sometimes the creek at this location is more of a wetland used by snipe than a stream used by fish. At present, 100% of the flow of Lyle Creek is captured in the Cascade Canal...and then a small portion of the flow is spilled back to the creek bed below the canal and flows through the project area. (this is problematic for fish passage in both directions!) There are liability and legal concerns with this arrangement as well as problems for fish, and I expect to see a change at the canal in the future so that flow is separated from the canal and passed under the canal to the project area. The current periodic dewatering of the channel in the project area would end. (making the creek a better amenity in the development)..even if flood flows are not passed to the project area.

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>>> "Marco P. Rains" <marco.rains@co.kittitas.wa.us> 04/05/05 3:13 PM
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Hi Brent,

I'm sure your busy as ever, its that time of year again. I wanted to give you a chance to

give some thoughts on Lyle Creek. There is the Vista View Estates 170 lot subdivision application in on Kittitas Hwy and Pfenning Rd just east of Ellensburg within the UGA. We will be issuing the notice of application shortly. If we could get some input for what an appropriate buffer might be, that would be great. Jan has told us that she has been trying her best to enforce a 50' buffer on Lyle Creek (the range is currently 20-50'. I'd be interested to here your thoughts on Lyle Creek in this area. Thanks!

Marco

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