



Enterprise/DUSTY LOCKE

Home making

Students learn how to restore salmon habitat



Silver Lake Elementary parent Richard Schaff helps fifth-grader Laura Vega plant a tree during a stream restoration field trip. The students were planting native trees and shrubs to restore the ecosystem.

Plantings included native trees such as fir, hemlock and spruce, as well as shrubs such as salmonberry, red osier deerwood and pacific nine bark.

Native vegetation provides water filtration, erosion control and shade for salmon.

By Jana Hill

Mill Creek Enterprise Editor

The North Creek watershed just gained a few more care givers.

Fifth-graders from Silver Lake Elementary were invited by Adopt-a-Stream staff to plant native plants on the banks of North Creek near the Northwest Stream Center at McCollum Park on Jan. 23. The planting helps restore salmon habitat by keeping water cool and providing debris that provides both home to, and food for, a variety of invertebrate insects — such as caddisfly, mayfly and stonefly.

The native planting is intended to educate students in the same details of a stream's life cycle that Adopt-a-Stream teaches at its "Streamkeepers" classes, offered to members of community throughout the year.

Flies are food for salmon, and are part of a cyclical process that has to happen for salmon eggs to develop into adult salmon so they can take their long trip out to sea, only to return home to the place they were born to spawn, and die. When the adult salmon die, their decaying bodies provide nutrients for plant and aquatic life in the stream.

See **STREAM**, Page 12

Mill Creek Enterprise. Jan. 31, 2002

Mill Creek Enterprise Jan. 31, 2002

STREAM

Continued from page 1

Rod Snyder, fifth-grade teacher at Silver Lake Elementary, said the activity has helped his students to be "aware of environmental issues and basic quality of life issues."

Streamkeeping helps students better understand the cycle of life and how the plants in an environment affect the animals that live there, he said.

Nutrients from dead salmon can be measured in the trees along the streams banks, said Tom Murdoch, director of Adopt-a-Stream. Those nutrients feed leaves, in turn feeding flies, in turn feeding salmon.

Students were ready to share what they learned about the cycle of life in streams.

Fifth-grader Jasmine Brooks said the planting, "helps the animals and it helps provide food and oxygen for us and the roots keep the dirt from falling in our river."

A rapid increase in the velocity of water causes dirt to flow downstream, and when that happens "salmon eggs literally smother," Murdoch said. Native plants also serve to anchor soil to prevent erosion, which in turn prevents soil runoff.

North Creek salmon spawned in late November,

and are probably now in the "button fry" stage, when they have just emerged from eggs, and their yolk sack is being absorbed by their body as they remain in the gravel, Murdoch said. At this stage, water temperature and flows are critical, Murdoch said.

Alder, western Red Cedar and Vine Maple trees are the natural trees that grow along North Creek, Murdoch said. Trees are needed near salmon spawning streams because they grow tall and provide an "over story" which keeps the water cool, Murdoch said.

The importance of keeping water cool is one fifth-grader

Gabe Wheaton said he would remember. The planting helped because "when the water's hot, the fish will get hot and they will die," Wheaton said.

Murdoch said people who live near streams often love their stream to death by cutting down vegetation so they can see the water.

Patrick Hicks, also a fifth-grader, said, "I learned that you can just take a little branch of a normal plant and just stick it into the ground and it'll root itself and it'll stop erosion from going into the water."

Snyder said he was glad for the opportunity to add that experience for his students.

"These days schools are so focused on the core academic subjects that sometimes we have less" time left for other activities, Snyder said.