

January 14, 2013

Re: Japanese Gulch Fish Passage


The Learn and Serve Environmental Anthropology Field (LEAF) School has partnered with the City of Mukilteo and Snohomish County Paine Field Airport on innovative service-learning projects over the past two years that have facilitated the removal of barriers to fish passage in Japanese Gulch, a Puget Sound tributary that historically hosted significant salmon runs.

Snohomish County and the City of Mukilteo had begun an ambitious project to remove fish passage barriers and reconnect Japanese Gulch to its historic channel when they encountered cultural artifacts from an early twentieth century company town that had hosted Japanese workers for Mukilteo and Crown Lumber companies from 1903 - 1930. This discovery significantly increased costs and threatened to derail the entire effort until the LEAF School stepped in to turn this chance discovery into a learning laboratory for students at Edmonds and Everett Community Colleges.

The LEAF School is an intensive service-learning program with field-based curriculum in human ecology and archaeology. Hosted at Edmonds CC, and serving students from both Edmonds and Everett CC, the LEAF School combines traditional knowledge with modern science in service-learning projects that help make our communities more sustainable. Modeled after indigenous ways of learning the LEAF School employs peer mentoring and service-learning as teaching strategies.

The Japanese Gulch Fish Passage project provided excellent service-learning projects for students in both the human ecology and archaeology courses. Human ecology students monitor wildlife and fish in the Japanese Gulch basin, collecting data before and after the stream restoration. The archaeology students conducted targeted excavations to minimize the impact of the construction on cultural resources and to salvage the artifacts that might otherwise be damaged or lost. Students then analyzed the artifacts and prepared them for permanent repository at the Wing Luke Museum in Seattle.

The Japanese Gulch Fish Passage project earned prestigious recognition with the VISION 2040 Award from the Puget Sound Regional Council. These "awards recognize innovative projects and programs that help ensure a sustainable future as the region grows. Stephanie Wright, Chair of the VISION 2040 Awards Selection Committee, states, "This project created an innovative model for multiple levels of government and civic interest working together to achieve environmental, cultural and educational goals." (<http://www.psrc.org/about/news-releases/japanese-gulch-fish-passage-wins-vision-2040-award/>).



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