

Maddox Creek Salmon Surveys
Mount Vernon, WA
10/22/20 - 1/17/21
What We Found

BY:

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We found coho salmon!!! Coho salmon did return to Maddox Creek again, really. In fact, every year that someone has surveyed this creek, coho salmon have been found. Also cutthroat trout. This is an urban creek, subject to high flows, drought, and pollution due to storm water effects from city streets and housing subdivisions. Fish have to enter from Skagit Bay near Stanwood through tide gates, and swim through nearly 11 miles of agricultural ditches and other long culverts to reach the area we survey. Whew! Considering all that, having any salmon return to spawn is a pretty encouraging thing to witness. One new witness this year is a local creek-side landowner who joined in the survey effort. He brought his underwater video system, and made the video on one of our survey days. Pretty cool technology, and easy to share. A map of our survey area is found in Figure 1.

So, what did we find this year? 18 live coho salmon - not a huge number but better than has been seen over the last 4 years, (see attached table and graph). There is no hatchery planting program or any other sort of major augmentation here. Returning adult coho are wild fish, either coming back to their origin or wandering in from other places. We routinely survey only a short section of Maddox Creek beginning downstream at nearly Blodgett Rd, ending now upstream at Blackburn Rd, (see attached map). And starting this year we have been adding other sections further upstream from Blackburn Rd. - checking on existing habitat.

This has been a special year for Maddox Creek, the most important for approximately 50 years. For all these decades, an old rusted-out 6 foot metal culvert has been the end of the road for salmon and trout migration (Figure 2). It was a total fish passage barrier from the day it was installed. As of August 2020, the culvert is now completely removed, along with all the approximately 15,000 cubic yards of dirt, trees, and brush that covered it (Figure 3). A partnership including the City of Mount Vernon, Skagit Co. Public Works, Skagit Conservation District, the Trout and Salmon Foundation, EarthCorp, with major funding from WA. Dept. of Ecology all got this project done. Congratulations from the grateful fish and all the rest of us.

Our spawner surveys have now been lengthened because, since salmon can now get upstream of the old culvert; we go too. We even had *live coho upstream of the old culvert*, and one spawned out female carcass. So, for the first time in 50 years, salmon have been able to get to this formerly inaccessible creek section, and have spawned in it. Great! Just what we wanted! There is over a mile of additional stream habitat further upstream awaiting

colonization by the salmon in future years. Trout already reside and spawn up there. There are salmon habitat restoration and channel maintenance needs upstream, and work to be done. We volunteers plan to keep looking for the salmon to get there. Stay tuned.

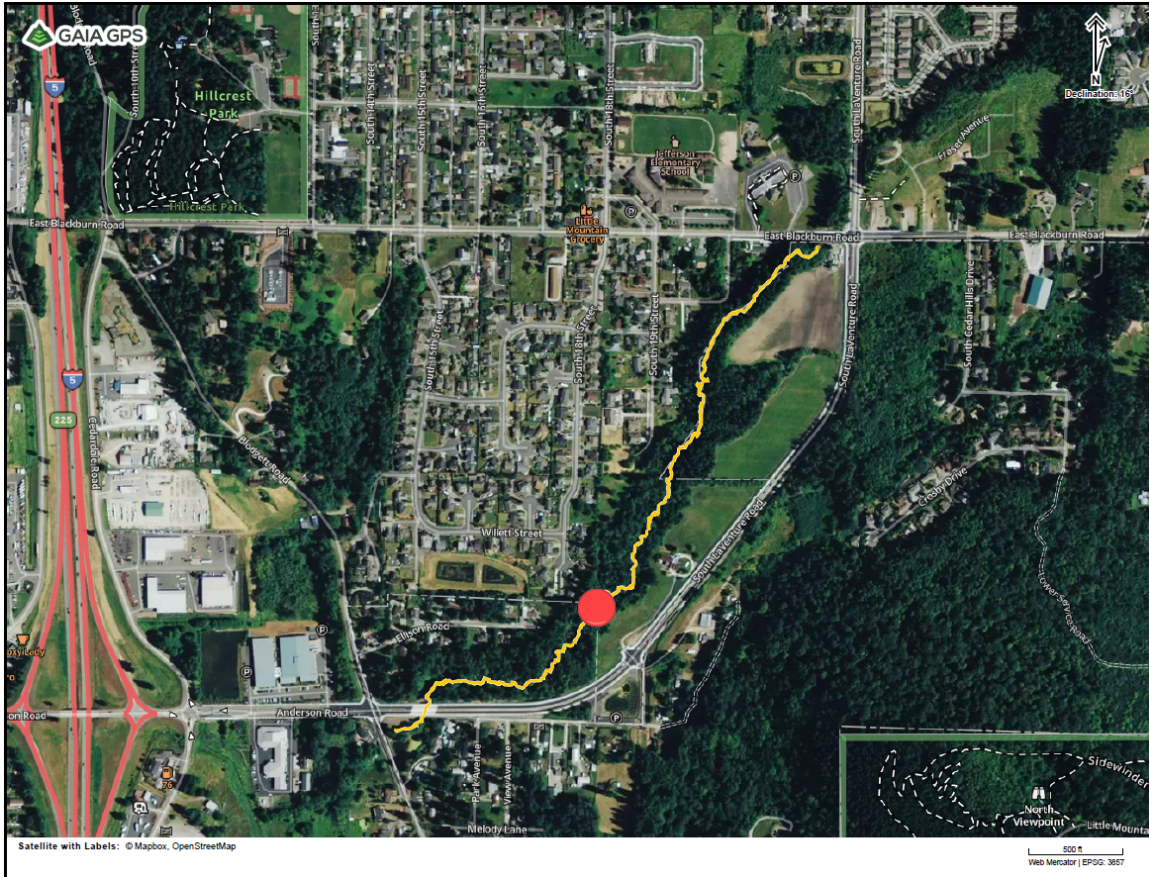


Figure 1. Survey path followed yellow line. Removed culvert shown by red dot.



Figure 2. 2016 6 ft. diameter, 210 feet long culvert, steep, a mess, and total fish passage barrier.



Figure 3. August 2020 Culvert now gone, and new channel opened up.