WHATCOM COUNTY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT
NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Terrell Creek Mainstem

LAND USE MANAGEMENT PRIORITY: PROTECTION/RESTORATION

Watershed Characterization Results from the 2007 Pilot Study:

This watershed's ability to help maintain / improve water quality:

The Terrell Creek Mainstem watershed is a large area with many low-gradient stream channels and a high percentage of wetlands, which are effective at removing nitrogen, bacteria from septic systems, and other pollutants that would otherwise flow into downstream area. There are numerous septic systems and a dairy farm located in this watershed, so the wetlands and streams here are especially important for protecting the water quality of the Bay.

This watershed's ability to maintain / improve natural patterns of surface and groundwater flow:

The watershed largely consists of undeveloped land, so water is able to infiltrate into the ground instead of running off and potentially causing flooding problems. Also, the watershed contains several large wetlands that can store substantial amounts of water during periods of heavy or prolonged rain, which protects against flooding and recharges groundwater. Some of the largest wetlands in the watershed are located to the north and east of the BP oil refinery.

Important Wildlife Features:

The watershed is important for wildlife habitat because of its pattern, or mosaic, of diverse habitats (fields, stands of trees, and shrub-dominated areas). The watershed contains streams, wetlands, large forest patches, and fields that provide cover, foraging, and breeding areas for a variety of mammals, birds, fish, amphibians and other fauna. Habitats of particular important include Terrell Creek, a salmon stream, and a Great Blue heron nesting colony in the western portion of the watershed, adjacent to Terrell Creek.

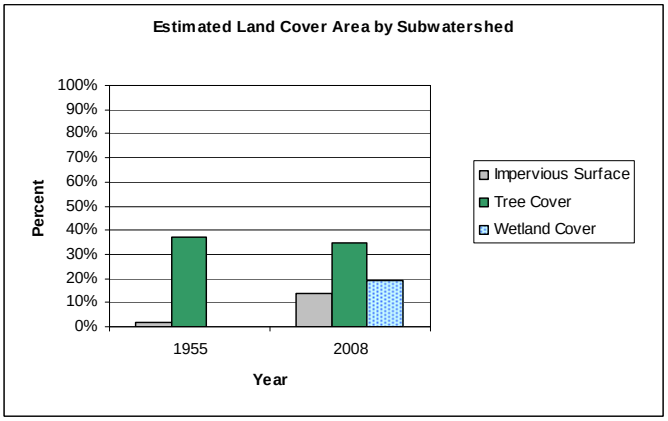
Anticipated Challenges:

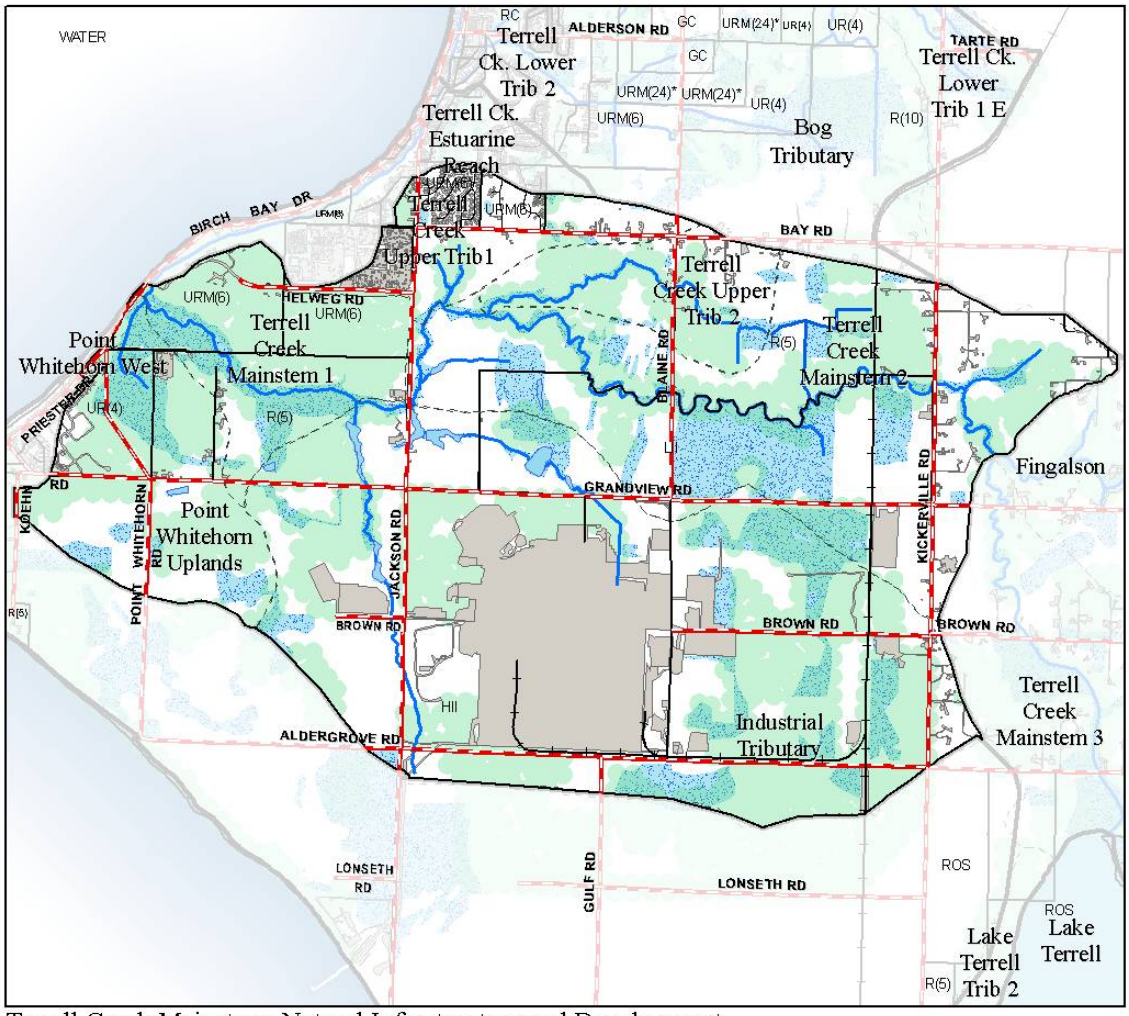
According to the 2007 pilot study, the watershed has a moderate potential of future development. The majority of the watershed is zoned rural residential, which allows only one dwelling per five acres minimum. However, the southern portion of the watershed, near the BP oil refinery, is zoned for industrial uses. Industrial land development typically involves creation of substantial amounts of impervious surfaces (e.g., roads, parkings lots, roofs, etc.) which can increase the risk of erosion and water quality problems down slope. Also, clearing land for development would reduce the amount of high-quality habitat available for wildlife, and may degrade the streams and wetlands in the area.

What We Found: The Land Cover Analysis by the Numbers

Feature	2008	1955
Impervious Surface	14 %*	2 %*
Tree Cover	35 %*	37 %*
Wetland cover	19 %*	
Stream miles	12.73 mi	
Subwatershed Area	4,380 Ac	

*Percentage of Subwatershed
Note: Areas of tree cover and wetland cover may overlap
Note: Wetland Data was unavailable for 1955





Terrell Creek Mainstem: Natural Infrastructure and Development

Questions or comments? E-mail us at pgill@co.whatcom.wa.us or call 360-676-6907