

A HEALTHIER WHATCOM CREEK

Before they were forced out by Euro-American settlement in the 1800s, the tribes of the Coast Salish region inhabited and cared for these lands and waters. Our industrial past was built on their homelands and territories, and Whatcom Creek's natural habitat has been affected by the logging industry, transportation, and development. For decades, the City of Bellingham has worked with the community to restore the health of Whatcom Creek and improve the ability of fish to grow and spawn.

MILWAUKEE RAILROAD TRESTLE



Photo by Jack Carver, 1949, courtesy of the Whatcom Museum

Whatcom Creek, photo courtesy of the City of Bellingham

As part of the restoration of Whatcom Creek, the deteriorating "Milwaukee Trestle" was removed from the creek in 2023 (see map for location). The railroad trestle connected the sawmill at the northwest end of Lake Whatcom with the Bellingham Bay waterfront between 1915 and 1959. Once an important element of the logging industry, the trestle was no longer needed, in a state of disrepair, and impaired the Whatcom Creek habitat.



Whatcom Creek originates in Lake Whatcom and flows four miles through downtown Bellingham before entering Bellingham Bay. The Whatcom waters are within the traditional territory of the Lummi Nation and Nooksack Indian Tribe, who utilized the waters and lands of Whatcom County for thousands of years prior to EuroAmerican settlement.

IMPROVING HABITAT



Cutthroat Trout

Upper portions of Whatcom Creek are home to cutthroat trout and kokanee salmon. Ocean-migrating fish (including steelhead trout, and coho, chum, and Chinook salmon) live in the lower portion below the natural barrier falls in Whatcom Falls Park. Clean, cold water and unimpaired stream movement are important for the health of fish and their ecosystem.