

chronic, even as the actual numbers of livestock dwindled. King County has acknowledged that the inundation of septic systems that were formerly high and dry is the central reason for high E-coli levels in the Ditch. As an additional note there have been no new residences, nor septic systems, built along the Ditch in decades.

As the neighbors along the Ditch grew older, they were even less able to maintain the Ditch by hand. Beavers, not historically present, soon arrived to further block the passage of fish. The Ditch is a single channel drainage with a less than .003 gradient so that the combination of governmental enforced neglect, willow, purple loosestrife and other weeds and those "damming" beavers sealed the fate of the fish and the farmer alike. The Ditch was destroyed by those who were sworn to protect it - the bureaucrats.

Over the years, in a vain effort to reason with the County, residents formed several groups and task-forces to bring the bureaucrats to their senses. Nothing changed, except the level of interference and duplicity by the County. Finally taking hope from renewed activity to stem such abuse in the Courts, May Valley neighbors rallied one more time to birth MVEC, an organization well prepared for the shenanigans ahead. Turning back every bit of dis-information the staffers brought before the County Council, MVEC carried the day and success was at hand. With passage of a Basin Plan that at last recognized community input and needs, everyone looked forward to a cooperative effort to set things right - and bring back the fish. This was when things turned sour.

A select few zealots at the County immediately began, again, to block the Plan and any efforts to formulate real projects for cleaning the Ditch. Their reasons are clear. They consider May

Valley to be a "recovering wetland," disregarding the fact that any "wetness" was created by County neglect and that the land was private property; disregarding the fact that a single channel drainage of this sort was kept clear to allow for fish passage and never mind that the nearby City of Bellevue recently, and publicly, performed similar maintenance on streams in their locale specifically to "allow for the passage of fish." Incredibly, the Nisqually Tribe recently celebrated the recovery of Muck Creek (no pun intended) from the same ravages and neglect that destroyed the May Creek Ditch. The Nisqually Tribe did the work themselves, along with volunteers from the ranks at nearby Fort Lewis, just as we intend to do in May Creek.

Two County employees who have been the most aggressive in thwarting community efforts to fix the mess along the Ditch recently acknowledged, in testimony before a King County Hearing Examiner, that they have no fisheries expertise. One apparently did not realize that salmonids cannot spawn in silt, the very material I removed from the bottom of the Ditch. Never mind that I had uncovered and restored the natural gravel base in this stream and stockpiled more gravel nearby to enhance the spawning beds. This employee complained that the "salmon habitat had been seriously degraded," then admitted that she had not inspected the bottom of the stream before the hearing.

These two well-intended but misguided bureaucrats typify the ineptitude that has so long frustrated my neighbors and me. They imagine they have some right to impose a swampy morass on private property owners without compensation, and even worse, that this is good for fish. In a recent electro-shock survey of the area of the Ditch in question, they found two salmonids and TWENTY-THREE BULLHEAD! What does that say for their long time "management" of the Ditch? Are we trying to restore salmon, or bullhead?