

Fall City's Youngest Watershed Stewards

by Allyson Schrier

On Earth Day, at Fall City's Baxter Barn, a giant salmon named Squirt handed out certificates to grinning third grade students from Fall City Elementary School—the kids were now officially Watershed Stewards. It was hard work to get certificate, but the kids had earned it! Leading up to their field trip to Baxter Barn, Fall City's third graders studied local ecosystems at school. This included a visit from Ginny Ballard, a teacher with the Redmond organization, Nature Vision, an organization that works with kids in the classroom to create a stronger stewardship ethic. Ginny worked with the kids on a project to improve water quality. They learned about pollutants, and what they can do to be improve water quality in our region. "We shouldn't wash our cars on the driveway because the soapy water can run straight into the river and hurts fish," explained a third grader. "And we need to be careful with fertilizers and pesticides."

At Baxter Barn the kids also worked with Heather Swift from Cohabitats, a Seattle based educational organization with a mission to foster healthy balance between human areas and wild habitats. With Heather, the kids toured the Baxter Barn property learning about native plants, and how those plants help the ecosystem. They learned that some plants provide food, in the form of leaves, flowers, berries and seeds for native creatures. Some plants provide hiding places. Woody debris provides shelter for burrowing animals, and as it decomposes it invites insects. Dead trees left standing, called snags, provide nesting cavities, and perches for birds. Baxter Barn, which has won numerous awards for their conservation efforts, was the perfect place for the children to learn about native plants, as the Barn's owners have put significant effort into replanting their property with natives. The kids even get a little dirty, planting a few plants of their own. This amazing program of learning was able to happen thanks to a grant from the King Conservation District (KCD). United States Department of Agriculture "Backyard Conservationist" 253-539-4801



Fall City Elementary School at Baxter Barn field trip..

SE 39th Place Update

by Kathy Lambert

I would like to provide you an update on the status of our efforts to reopen SE 39th Place to allow access to the Snoqualmie Valley Trail. This morning, the King County Council voted unanimously to approve 2010-0159, which authorizes the county to pursue eminent domain for full fee ownership of SE 39th Place (beyond the easement we had previously purchased in 1911). We greatly appreciate everyone who emailed the council, attended the public hearing, and/or provided testimony. Specifically, I would like to personally thank the 20+ individuals who drove to Seattle during business hours to be at the public hearing this morning. Your participation in the legislative process validated the information I had shared with the other council members and helped lead to its successful passage.

Now that the legislation has been approved, the county can take the next steps towards full public ownership. As required as part of the eminent domain process, the county is required to pay fair market value for the land that it is acquiring. The county is in the midst of doing an appraisal to establish the value of the land. Once that is completed, we will make an offer to the property owners, which we are hoping will occur within the next couple of weeks. The property owners can either accept or reject the offer. If the county's offer is rejected, the matter would then go before a judge to decide how much money should be paid for the land. As soon as it is legally feasible, we will take action to have the ecology blocks and fencing removed so that the public can access the trail again. kathy.lambert@kingcounty.gov

