



ANCHORAGE SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT



2 0 0 4 A c t i v i t i e s R e p o r t & 2 0 0 5 P r e v i e w

Our Mission

Supporting self-governance, to assist landowners and land managers with conservation and development through technical, financial and educational programs.





Dear Cooperators,

The Anchorage Soil and Water Conservation District (ASWCD) focuses on practical programs that deliver discernible benefits to our Cooperators and the Municipality of Anchorage as a whole. We have adopted four priorities for 2005.

Although work has been done since 2000, much work remains to eliminate the tinderbox of dead spruce in Anchorage. The ASWCD has received almost \$1 million this season to hire contractors to remove dead wood, and we will seek additional funds to continue this program through the coming years.

High on our list of funding priorities is money to hire staff to complete our Cooperators' Conservation Plans. These plans address soil, water, air, plant and animal resource concerns and help Cooperators institute best management practices.

One of our most exciting projects involves the municipality's watersheds, beginning with Fish Creek, perhaps Anchorage's neediest waterway. This project started as an effort to "daylight" a section of Fish Creek that was culverted years ago, and has grown to include the entire watershed. From there the concept has bloomed into a partnership with the goal of looking at all of the municipality's watersheds.

Of course our core mission is to protect private property rights and self governance, and assist private landowners with development and conservation planning of soil, water and other related natural resources. We act as a liaison to provide resource information and technical assistance for sustainable development and serve as a non-regulatory agency. We invite you to attend our monthly meetings and get involved in our activities. Our Board of Supervisors' meetings are open to the public and provide an opportunity to have direct input on your District.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Bell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Greg Bell
Chair

The Anchorage Soil and Water Conservation District and Alaska's other 11 districts

After the “Dust Bowl” years of the 1930s, Congress saw the need for management and sustainable land development on private lands and created the Soil Conservation Service (later developed into the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, or NRCS). The NRCS was founded with the mission to “provide leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.”

At the same time, people saw the need for an intermediary agency to work as a conduit between private property owners and local, state and federal agencies and the concept of Soil Conservation Districts was born. Today, virtually all of the United States is contained within the more than 3,000 districts nationwide.

The Anchorage Soil and Water Conservation District (ASWCD) was formed by State Charter in 1997 and operates under Alaska Statute 41.10, the Alaska Soil and Water Conservation Law. The ASWCD, and the 11 other districts in Alaska, are legal subdivisions and local entities of the State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources. Alaska's districts have been empowered to develop and carry out natural resource

conservation programs that affect their districts, including:

- Conduct land capability surveys and investigations of potential agricultural areas and of soil conservation and erosion control, including necessary preventative and control measures, in the state; to publish the results of these surveys and investigations and to disseminate information concerning the results of the surveys and investigations to prospective settlers and the general public
- Make technical guidance and other assistance available to settlers of new land to assure the development of the land in a manner that will permit it to be



used in accordance with its capabilities and treated in accordance with its needs;

- Carry out measures for soil conservation and erosion control within the state, including engineering operations, methods of cultivation, the growing of vegetation, and changes in use of land, with the consent and cooperation of the land user or agency having jurisdiction over the land;
- Cooperate with, furnish assistance to, and enter into agreements with a user of land or agency within the state;
- Construct, improve, and maintain soil erosion control and conservation structures as are necessary and practical for carrying out the purpose of this chapter;
- Develop comprehensive plans for the conservation of soil and control of soil erosion within the state, cropping programs, tillage practices and changes in land use, and publish plans and information and bring them to the attention of users of land within the state;
- Accept contributions in money, services, materials, or equipment from the United States or its agencies, from an agency of the state, and from any other sources, for use in carrying out the purposes of this chapter.

ASWCD Partners

- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- Natural Resource Conservation Service
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- National Association of Conservation Districts
- State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources
- Natural Resource Conservation and Development Board
- Municipality of Anchorage
- Anchorage Waterways Council
- Anchorage Firewise Partnership



Wildfire mitigation

The ASWCD has received a \$986,000 appropriation from the U.S. Department of Interior to remove dead and dying trees in areas affected by the spruce bark beetle infestation, which impacted an estimated 85,000 acres in the municipality.



The spruce bark beetle infestation was estimated to affect 85,000 acres in the municipality.

The new ASWCD program will be a direct outreach to private property owners in an effort to drastically reduce wildfire fuels in priority areas. In accordance with ASWCD policy and appropriation directive, Alaska contractors will receive contractual preference.

The 2005 campaign continues a program that began in 2000 when ASWCD initiated a mitigation and education program in partnership with the

municipality, U.S. Forest Service, State of Alaska Division of Forestry and other local, state and federal agencies and organizations. Beginning with a 2000 appropriation of \$444,627 that went to tree removal and education, then a \$265,000 grant from the municipality to reduce fuel and expand the public wood lots and a \$438,000 grant that has and will continue to fund extensive outreach and community education.

Fish Creek Watershed

The ASWCD entered into a partnership with a group of Spenard residents in 2003 to restore a 900-foot section of Fish Creek that was “temporarily” channeled into a culvert about 30 years ago. ASWCD awarded this group, officially known as the Fish Creek Working Group, a grant of \$16,000 in 2003 to get the project off the ground and contributed significant staff support.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service gave the group \$21,600 in 2004 to continue the feasibility study and design. This match grant was essentially doubled by volunteer efforts and technical support from the working group and ASWCD. The project will free the creek once more and enhance the wildlife habitat and natural beauty of the area. Work will continue in 2005 once additional funding is secured.

The Fish Creek project led to the realization that Fish Creek is a polluted shadow of its former self and that it is our responsibility as land stewards to develop a plan to address the creek's watershed in its entirety.

The ASWCD and the municipality formed a partnership to create a plan to address the needs of the Fish Creek Watershed and implement a priority-based plan of attack. The goal of the project is to support area residents and the development community, better flood/erosion control improve recreational opportunities and enhance the natural fish and wildlife habitat, including significant riparian zones and historical salmon spawning grounds, and migration routes and to provide a model for future watershed projects.

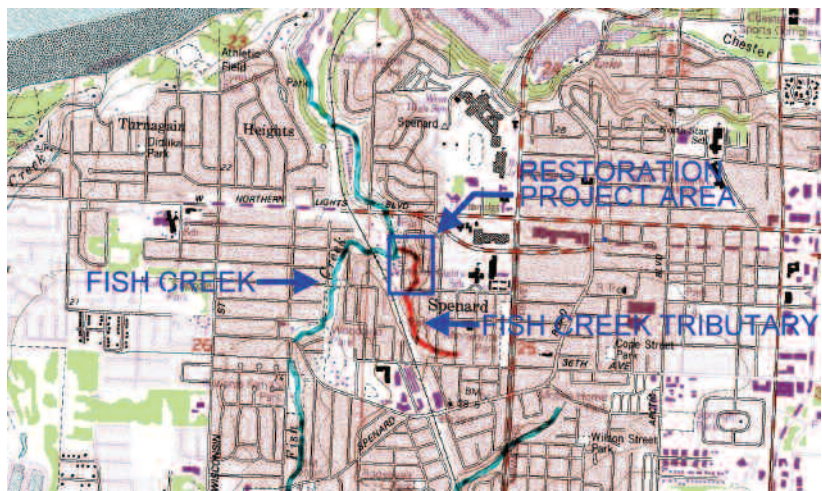
The Dena'ina people, Anchorage's first residents, called the creek "King Salmon

Creek for its robust runs. The creek originates near Lake Otis Parkway and Tudor Road and winds its way six miles through Anchorage.

The Great Land Trust has secured and donated to the municipality important sections of the creek and its wetlands. These include the 30-acre Fish Creek Estuary at the outflow to Cook Inlet, the 14-acre Helen Louise McDowell Sanctuary near the intersection of New Seward Highway and Tudor Road, the 12-acre Waldron Homestead at Lake Otis Parkway and Tudor Road and a 1-acre parcel on lower Fish Creek, upstream of the Fish Creek Estuary.

It is ASWCD and its partners' goal to create a large-scale project that addresses all of Anchorage's watersheds, using Fish Creek as a starting point.

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Field Guide to Anchorage Wetlands

The ASWCD and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) are working together to complete an update to the out-of-print "Field Guide to Anchorage Wetlands." Originally produced by the USFWS, the guide describes wetland types, plants and fish and wildlife resources, along with wetland regulations. The municipality is home to more than 11,000 acres of wetlands. Elaine Rhode, owner of Expressions Consulting, is contactor on this project, which will be ready for publishing and distribution during 2005. The project is funded by \$8,000 from USFWS and \$5,050 in cash and in-kind support from ASWCD.



Anchorage is home to more than 11,000 acres of wetlands.



Other activities

- Publishes the ASWCD newsletter, "The Anchorage Landline," formerly the "Anchorage Auger," and other brochures, pamphlets and educational materials.
- Educates children and groups about conservation. In 2004, ASWCD spent many hours in Anchorage School District classrooms and with the Boy and Girl Scouts.
- Keeps current on issues and trends through participation in the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Western Region Conferences. The conference held its 2004 fall meeting in Anchorage.
- Supports the Eklutna River Watershed Council's efforts to return the Eklutna River to its former beauty, with no cars or junk in the waterway.
- Establishing a weed management area in Anchorage in cooperation with the Alaska Association of Conservation Districts, the U.S. Forest Service and other interested agencies and organizations.
- Works with the municipality, developers and other interested parties on issues pertaining to land clearing, water quality and development. Of particular importance is supporting the public in their desire that the "Large Animal Ordinance" being written by the Municipality's Planning Department includes Conservation Plans.
- Participates with NRCS, Anchorage Waterways Council and Anchorage dog owners on two experimental dog manure composting sites. Anchorage has approximately 50,000 dogs that generate 22 tons of waste each day, most of which goes into landfills and waterways. Composting is proving very effective.
- Donated 160 apple trees valued at \$2,700 to Anchorage schools as part of Arbor Day commemoration.
- Contributed \$800 to Girl Scouts Troop 151 for their Dragonfly Park at Balto Seppala Park in Spenard. Other projects with Anchorage School District include \$600 to Ravenwood Elementary and \$200 to Stellar for revegetation projects.

Conservation Plans, equestrian owners and affordable management options

The ASWCD has worked with equestrian owners and the NRCS for the past few years to design and help implement Conservation Plans on Anchorage's equestrian properties. These plans ensure natural resource conservation in the immediate and surrounding areas of equestrian facilities, which, in turn,

for 75 percent of the cost of rehabilitating natural resources and solving such problems as manure storage/composting, drainage, creek and waterway protection, vegetation retention and riparian zones.

ASWCD has worked with the Anchorage Horse Council for the past two years to construct an environmentally responsible compost facility for use by the District Cooperators. Composting turns



support a significant economic base and jobs, and protects the owner's private property rights. One of ASWCD's highest priorities for 2005 is to secure funding to complete our Cooperators' Conservation Plans.

Two ASWCD Cooperators received Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) grants in 2004 and eight more have applied for the 2005 program. These grants reimburse the property owner

the manure into a valuable nutrient addition for local gardeners.

ASWCD board of supervisors and advisors

Greg Bell, Chair

Larry Traw, Supervisor

Linda Perkins, Vice-Chair

Mike Miller, Supervisor

Jon Nauman, Secretary/Treasurer

Anne Newell, Alternate

Ryan Stencil, Alaskalink, Operations

Nancy Welch, State of Alaska,
Department of Natural Resources,
Natural Resources Conservation
and Development Board Executive
Director

Shirley Gammon, State Conservationist,
Natural Resource Conservation Service

Crystal Leonetti, District Conservationist,
Anchorage Field Office, Natural
Resources Conservation Service

The ASWCD is managed by a board of five supervisors. Supervisors are Cooperators elected by the other Cooperators of the District. Supervisors are volunteers and receive no compensation for their time. Because the Board of Supervisors are local residents, they are strong advocates for the Cooperators and have a good understanding of local issues, problems and needs. The ASWCD is not a political organization and maintains as much neutrality as possible as it represents its Cooperators. The ASWCD serves all of the Municipality of Anchorage from the Knik River to Portage, approximately 1,955 square miles and the size of Delaware. There are 1,251,640 acres and approximately 270,000 people within the District.



ANCHORAGE SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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