

Alaska

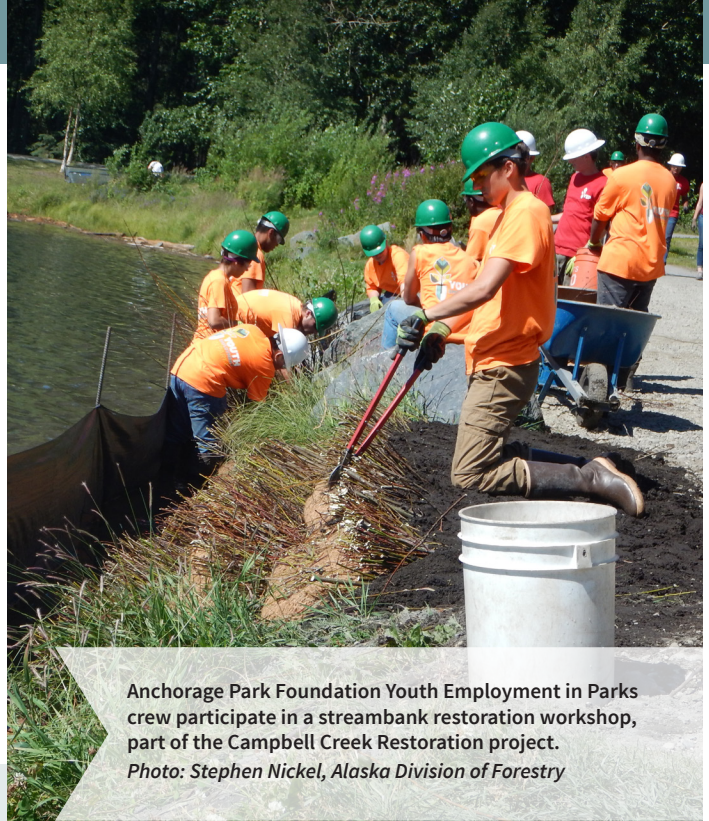
ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES, DIVISION OF FORESTRY

As a major watershed and recreational destination of Alaska, the Campbell Creek Restoration Project presents the rare opportunity for project partners to share resources to improve the riparian ecosystem comprehensively and to raise public awareness of its importance to the larger urban environment. The project also builds on work by individual agencies and provides cost-effective restoration and conservation of high value resources that individual groups cannot accomplish on their own. Ultimately, partners will learn from shared expertise and will benefit from a comprehensive approach that addresses multiple challenges.

Campbell Creek flows from the Chugach Mountains to Cook Inlet through the heart of Anchorage, Alaska's largest city, creating a 70-square mile watershed that is home to five species of salmon, rainbow trout, moose, bears, and beavers. The associated Campbell Creek Greenbelt trail system offers easy access to recreation, fishing, and wildlife viewing. It is also a transportation corridor for humans and wildlife. However, development, heavy year-round use by approximately 40,000 trail users and 4,000 anglers annually, and climate change threaten the ecological values that support the diverse wildlife populations and draw people to the creek. The loss of vegetation, pervious surfaces and polluted runoff degrade aquatic and wildlife habitat and increase flooding risks. Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation classified the creek as impaired due to the pollutants, sediment and high temperatures that can harm fish and other aquatic life. The Municipality of Anchorage will reconstruct the trail, presenting a perfect opportunity to share resources to restore the riparian area, and create low impact access.

The three-year project focuses on the lower 7.5-mile portion of the greenbelt that has the highest use and is the most degraded stretch of the 18-mile long creek. Project partners will restore riparian forest functions, improve habitat and water quality, create low impact pedestrian routes at prioritized sites, and engage the community in education and stewardship.

The improvements will also create a safer and more enjoyable experience for the thousands of people who visit the area year-round to fish, float and wade in the creek, watch wildlife, bike, ski, and walk. The residential and commercial developments along the creek will benefit from reduced erosion and flooding risks. Improved access and way-finding to appropriate sites will



Anchorage Park Foundation Youth Employment in Parks crew participate in a streambank restoration workshop, part of the Campbell Creek Restoration project.
Photo: Stephen Nickel, Alaska Division of Forestry

discourage trespassing on private property. The close proximity of so many residents, businesses, and schools to the creek and involvement of the Youth Employment in Parks teens offers opportunities to increase awareness of this valuable natural asset and to encourage stewardship of its resources.

Partners for this USDA Forest Service Landscape Scale Restoration Grant funded project include: Anchorage Park Foundation and Youth Employment in Parks, Municipality of Anchorage: Parks and Recreation, and Watershed Management Division, and the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry, Community Forestry Program, State of Alaska Department of Fish & Game, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, USDA Forest Service, and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

The project will serve as a model for land and recreation managers in other cities on how to conserve and manage natural resources successfully in densely populated urban areas. Demonstrating and documenting practices that are sustainable, effective, and affordable will encourage their use in other areas. Reforestation and streambank stabilization will lead to long-term improvements in forest health, water quality, and fish and wildlife habitat in this valuable urban watershed. The new partnerships formed, lessons learned, and ongoing monitoring will build capacity to expand this effort to other watersheds facing similar challenges. As the community experiences the improvements and participates in education and stewardship activities, support will grow for conserving and managing these valuable resources.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry
Community Forestry Program
<http://forestry.alaska.gov/community/index>