Urbanization and Impacts to Water Quality Cottonwood Creek at Parks Hwy

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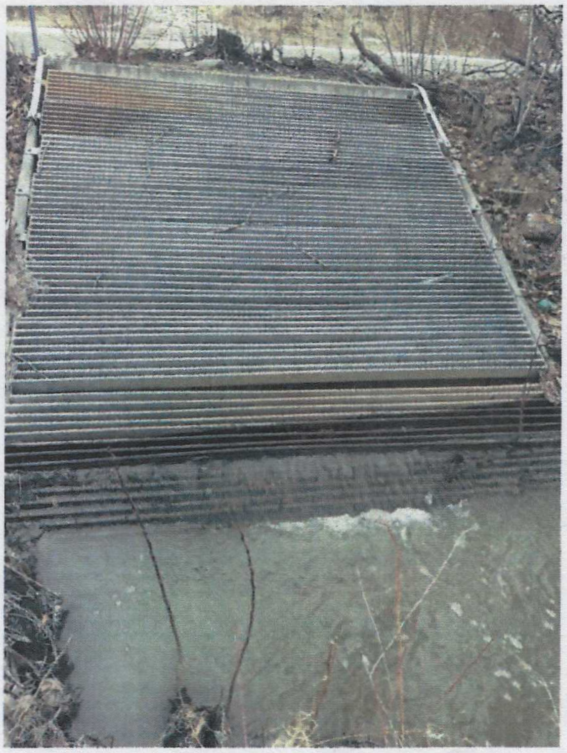

Polluted stormwater runoff being discharged directly to Lake Lucille in Wasilla.

Description: Just like humans need clean air to breathe and be healthy, fish and other aquatic life need clean water to survive. One of the biggest threats to water quality is polluted runoff from roads, highways, bridges, and parking lots entering area creeks and lakes. This polluted runoff is not treated in a wastewater treatment plant before being discharged to the creek or lake. This means the aquatic life is in contact with this pollution and often times ingesting it. Runoff pollution tends to concentrate in urban environments resulting in potentially life- threatening conditions for fish and other aquatic life.

The Mat-Su Salmon Habitat Partnership and partner organizations are working to measure water quality and identify any imbalance in the chemistry or other measures that may signal a problem in our local waterways as well as identifying locations where stormwater is entering these waterways. Partners are identifying potential solutions on how to fix these areas of runoff pollution and restore water quality. Challenges include changing the traditional way stormwater is handled (directly shunting it to creeks, streams, and lakes) to incorporating other techniques (such as nature-friendly green infrastructure) at the design phase or retrofitting areas of known concern. We've all heard that it's cheaper to prevent a problem from occurring in the first place than to try and fix it later. This adage is certainly true when trying to restore water quality after a pollution problem is identified. Prevention is the key!