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**MANCHESTER**

# Duncan Creek culvert project will encourage fish migration

Work is to be completed in 2025, the county says

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By **Mike De Felice**

## Special to the Independent

PORT ORCHARD – Court-ordered work on the Duncan Creek culvert in Manchester, which is being done to improve fish migration, will cost \$3 million to be completed, according to officials.

The existing culvert consists of a three-foot-wide corrugated metal pipe that runs 500 feet from the intersection of Hemlock Street and Colchester Drive, through a concrete flow control structure, over private property and into Puget Sound, said Dave Kimble, founder and spokesman of The Committee to Restore Duncan Creek.

The nonprofit group is working to improve the health of the creek in order to promote spawning of native fish, Kimble said.

The concrete flow structure within the culvert was designed to collect sediment and stormwater containing contaminants from roads before they flow into Puget Sound. However, the structure blocks fish migration, he said.

A new design will remove the flow structure and allow fish to migrate up the creek, he said. Stormwater would be diverted to treatment areas before going into Puget Sound, he added.

The U.S. Supreme Court decision *Washington v. United States, et al* nearly two years ago called for the state to remove obstacles, such as the Duncan Creek culvert that blocks fish movement, and replace them with structures that promote more natural fish migration, Kimble said.

“Duncan Creek is the only stream we have in Manchester,” Kimble said. Once the culvert is revised several species of fish will be able to mitigate and spawn up the creek, he said.

“Sea-run and resident cutthroat trout along with coho and chum salmon will be able to move up the creek, according to a county survey,” Kimble said.

Once the new system is completed, Kimble believes Duncan Creek will provide educational opportunities for local students.

“We envision the culvert being designed in a way that will allow elementary and middle school kids to come down on public property and watch the fish. It would not likely be a fishing area, but [used] more for education,” he said.

“This project replaces the aging stormwater conveyance system, adds water quality treatment and replaces a fish-passage barrier culvert,” Doug Bear, Kitsap County public communications manager, said.

“This is a multi-phase, multi-year project that will first upgrade conveyance and add stormwater treatment before replacing the culvert.”

The \$3 million project is set to begin 2022 and be completed in 2025, Bear added.

The court decision that was the impetus for the project was handed down in June 2018 in a split 4-4 decision. Justice Anthony Kennedy sat out of the case because he had participated in the case at an earlier stage while on the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. The tie vote left in place a lower court ruling that required state government to pay for removing culverts that prevent fish migration.

As the rebuild approaches, The Committee to Restore Duncan Creek is looking to expand.

“We are looking for new members,” Kimble said.

“The goal is to get community interest in the project. We also want more members to lobby the county to follow through on this project.”

Additional information about the committee and culvert project can be found on the group’s website: [thecommitteetorestoreduncan creek.org](http://thecommitteetorestoreduncan creek.org).

