





# Salmon and the Cedar River

## THE CEDAR RIVER WATERSHED

### Critical for salmon—and humans too!

An elongated basin of 188 square miles, the Cedar River Watershed begins at the Cascade Crest, near Snoqualmie Pass, and flows through Maple Valley and Renton before emptying into Lake Washington.

The Cedar River Watershed is remarkable in many ways: It contributes over 50% of Lake Washington's inflow—which means that it keeps the floating bridges afloat and allows the operation of the locks in Ballard. It provides two-thirds of the water used by King County residents and businesses (over 100,000,000 gallons per day!). And it supports a run of Chinook salmon—listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act—as well as coho and sockeye salmon.

Humans and salmon alike depend on a healthy habitat and good water quality, which is why it's important for each of us to do our part to care for and protect the Cedar River Watershed.

## Salmon life cycle

Pacific salmon begin and end their lives in the cold, clear water of mountain rivers and streams. A female salmon can lay up to 3,000–5,000 bright pink eggs in a nest called a redd that she digs in the gravelly stream bed.

After the male fertilizes the eggs, embryos develop in the gravel, living off of nutrients in the egg yolk sac. A few months later, they become fry (small fish), swim up out of

the gravel and spend a few weeks to a year (depending on the species) rearing in fresh water.

Fry develop into *smolts* and migrate downstream to an estuary, where they spend time growing and adjusting to salt water before swimming out to the ocean. After one to seven years in the ocean, mature salmon migrate back to the rivers where they were born to reproduce.

After spawning, most Pacific salmon die within one to two weeks. Salmon carcasses are a vital part of the stream ecology. Nutrients from decomposing salmon support plant and insect life that later nourish young salmon. Streamside plants absorb salmon nutrients and bears, birds, small mammals and even deer also feed on salmon carcasses.

### What's a watershed?

No matter where you live, even if it's very far from a body of water, you live in a watershed, which is defined as an area of land that channels rainfall and snowmelt to creeks, streams and rivers—and, eventually, to outflows such as lakes, bays and the ocean.

Put another way, a watershed is like a basin: All the water that falls within it flows to the lowest point, at which it drains. And, even if you don't live near a body of water, your actions affect the health of your local watershed.

## Take action to help salmon!



### Get involved:

Support salmon recovery by volunteering, voting and sharing your knowledge with others.



### With your car:

Take your car to a commercial car wash and have oil leaks fixed.



### Around your dog:

Pick up dog waste, bag it and place it in the trash (not in the yard waste bin).



### Conserve water:

Sweep driveways and sidewalks instead of hosing them off, take shorter showers and use drought-tolerant plants in your yard.



### In your yard:

Use fertilizers and pesticides sparingly, or just use compost.



### At home:

Properly use, store and dispose of hazardous household materials.