

Pioneer Park

Your Mission: Seek out the Deschutes River and take a photo of the stream bank erosion along its banks and send it to us! streamteam@ci.lacey.wa.us

The Deschutes River flows from south Thurston County, northward, all the way to Puget Sound. Its sources include small spring-fed creeks in the Bald Hills, but, as it travels north, more and more tributaries join in to make it the large, often fast-flowing river you'll see at Pioneer Park.

Rain and Rivers: (Trail entrance is immediately on your left when you drive into the parking lot.) Stream flows for the Deschutes River and all of our lowland South Sound streams are rain dominant. This means rain water is what determines how deep a river flows versus snow melt.

Follow the river: Where do you think this river ends?
If you were to follow the river all the way to its end, you would flow into Capitol Lake and then through the dam and under the 5th Ave bridge in Olympia before joining with the salt water of Budd Inlet in Puget Sound!

Riparian Area: What is a riparian area? They are lands that occur along streams and water bodies. They are distinctly different from surrounding lands because of their unique soil and vegetation that are strongly influenced by the presence of water. Can you identify any of the plants in this area?

Trees along the river: Trees and shrubs along the river banks are very important and help keep the river banks stable reducing erosion. Trees are a part of the riparian zone and help slow down the force of the water reducing erosion.

More about trees and rivers: Trees are very important in providing shade along streams. What animals can you think of that need cool water? Salmon! Fish like salmon and also the aquatic insects that they eat need cold clean water to survive. The shade from trees and other vegetation keep streams cool.

Erosion: Along the way can you see places where the river bank has fallen in? This is called erosion. Erosion is a natural function of a stream system. It is a process that takes the gravel out of the stream banks and delivers it to the stream bed for fish to use for spawning. When humans interfere causing excess erosion then the waters become muddy harming fish, like salmon.

Who lives here: Have you seen or heard any wildlife using this area?
Over 80% of wildlife use the riparian area for part of its life history. What wildlife do you think use this area? Birds, garter snakes, mice, raccoons, deer, and butterflies! See if you can find any!

Manmade features: Have you seen any unnatural rock walls along the river? This feature is call rip rap.

On banks where the vegetation has been removed large rock or rip rap is used to slow down bank erosion. When the force of the high water hits the rock it bounces off instead of scraping away the soil.

Restoration: Did you find the sign about riparian restoration? What is restoration? It is when we replant native trees and shrubs to return it to how it once was. Would the eroding river banks be a good place for restoration? Yes!