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ACTIVISM

## Salmon Safe: Positively Promoting a Healthier Region

[Julia Levitt](#)

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### The story:

The Salmon-Safe label has earned accolades from around the country for developing an incentive that encourages Northwest landowners to take responsibility for how their management practices impact their [local watersheds](#).

[Salmon Safe](#), a nonprofit organization, originated in Portland, Ore. in 1997. The organization oversees a third-party certification system to recognize landowners like farms, wineries and urban properties for practicing land management strategies that protect healthy habitat for salmon – and by extension, preserve the natural ecosystems of the Pacific Northwest.

In 2004, the local nonprofit [Stewardship Partners](#), which works to improve the quality of Washington watersheds, brought the Salmon-Safe program to Washington state. In the four years since, this branch of Salmon-Safe has expanded to include 50 farms and 25 vineyards.

The certification has inspired several of them to make major changes to their practices, says Stewardship Partners Executive Director David Burger. One example is the [Wilcox Farm](#), located along the the Nisqually River, which became the largest family owned farm to earn Salmon Safe's stamp of approval. The farm, known primarily for its eggs, converted to organic methods and completed significant restoration of the riverbank as part of its certification process. And the changes made a lasting impression: the Wilcox Farm went on to partner with Stewardship Partners, the [Nisqually Indian Tribe](#), the [Nisqually River Council](#) the [Nisqually Land Trust](#) and Seattle firm [Jones & Jones](#) in an innovative watershed conservation project that recently garnered an award from the [Cascade Land Conservancy](#).

The Salmon-Safe label helps guide consumers to products that promote the health of their region, and in so doing, help stir up their awareness of their specific location in the natural world, and their ties to other species. "People want to know how they can help salmon," says Burger, "because salmon are the icon of the Northwest."

### Why it's worldchanging:

Organic labels tell you when a product is free from pesticides, and "locally grown" says you're supporting local farms and minimized transportation impacts – all of which are important. But by directly linking the food we eat to the preservation of biodiversity specific to our region, the Salmon Safe program calls attention to the interconnected relationships of people, food, land and wildlife in a way that other food certifications don't. And the incentive nature of the program, which motivates landowners to make stewardship decisions on their own, is another bonus. In Burger's words, "You can take measures that aren't just regulatory to achieve your goals and engage private landowners to take part in conservation."



*This post is part of the series, "Seattle to the World: 100 Best Innovations from the Emerald City."*

COMMENTS



Nice article about Salmon-Safe and the impact of this program in rural areas of Washington. These are great achievements both for watershed improvements and for public education.

I would also like to call your attention to the other Salmon-Safe outreach going on in Washington State--

NBIS, the Network for Business Innovation and Sustainability, is bringing the Salmon-Safe certification process to urban landowners. To date, three sites and systems have completed the certification process through this program: University of Washington, Bothell/Cascadia Community College, the Port of Seattle park system, and the Washington State Department of Ecology campus in Lacey. We expect to be able to announce another group of certifications before the end of the year. Focusing on the urban environment is an important new direction for Salmon-Safe and for Washington's efforts to restore the health of Puget Sound.

From the Puget Sound Partnership's website:

"\* Stormwater pollution has harmed virtually all urban creeks, streams and rivers in Washington State.

\* Stormwater is the leading contributor to water quality pollution of urban waterways in the state.

\* Two species of salmon and bull trout are threatened with extinction. Loss of habitat due to stormwater and development is one of the causes.

\* Stormwater likely contributes to the killing of high percentages of healthy coho salmon in Seattle creeks within hours of the fish entering the creeks, before the fish are able to spawn."

The Puget Sound region is densely populated and heavily paved and built over. NBIS' Salmon-Safe urban initiative engages urban landowners in adopting more effective stormwater management plans and landscaping systems that keep road pollutants, toxic pesticides, fertilizers and other pollutants out of the watershed streams.

To learn more about this program, visit our website at [www.NBIS.org](http://www.NBIS.org)

Posted by: [Mary Rose](#) on September 13, 2008 10:46 PM