

What is a Watercourse?

A watercourse is defined as any channel through which water flows; it can be a natural channel or a canal made for the conveyance of water. It is also defined as the bed of a stream that only flows seasonally. Watercourses serve to drain the land.

There are three seasonal watercourses that drain the canyons on the east slope of Mission Ridge into the City of Wenatchee's urban area. These watercourses are called No. 1 Canyon Drain, No. 2 Canyon Drain and Dry Gulch.

The outfall points of all three canyons include alluvial fans where sediment has been deposited naturally over the years. The soil in these alluvial fans are primarily silt loam or loam. Alluvial fans are, by their nature, unstable and unpredictable floodplain features.



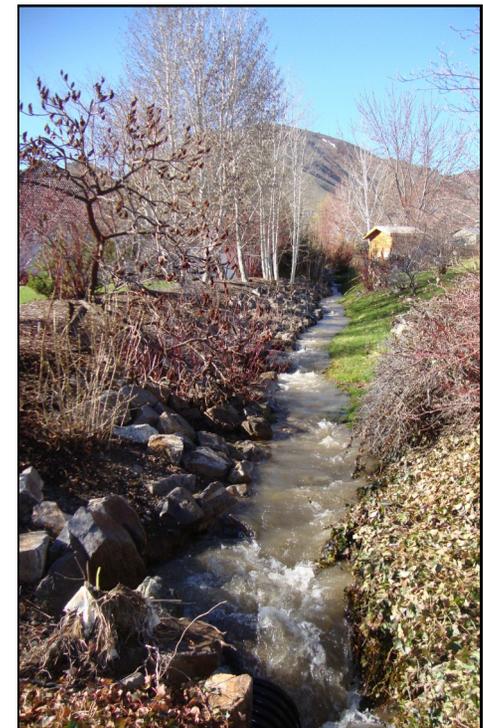
Culvert half full of sediment

The stormwater runoff from these canyons is currently handled by ditches that meander through the city before they eventually connect with the Columbia River. Combined, these three canyons drain through 246 private properties within the City of Wenatchee.

Watercourse Maintenance



*No. 1 Canyon Drain
No. 2 Canyon Drain
Dry Gulch Canyon Drain*



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Canyon Drainage Maintenance

Following the July 28, 2010 rainstorm it was apparent that the three seasonal watercourses or canyon drains can have a large impact on the residents of Wenatchee. In the event of a large thunderstorm, the water that falls in the canyons will find its way to the Columbia River. If the natural drainages are partially or fully blocked the stormwater will find its own path.

The canyon drainages are a separate system from the city's urban stormwater system. The City of Wenatchee does clean and maintain the portions of the canyon drains that are under public roads. The remainder of the canyon drainages are located on private property and the maintenance is the responsibility of the property owners. It is the landowner's responsibility to see that the flow of water through their property is maintained, be it in an open channel or enclosed in an underground pipe.

The basic principle of the law of natural drainages is that landowners must take whatever advantages or inconveniences of drainage nature places upon their land. The court system has viewed this type of stormwater as a common enemy and has a common enemy doctrine that allows a property owner to move the water off his or her property downstream. The next property in line has to take the water and in turn move it along. Property owners can not divert the water onto a property that it has not historically drained to and the property owner cannot increase the speed or the volume of water that your neighbor receives.



It is hard to find the open channel under all of the vegetation.

Below is after the bushes have been cut.



Common maintenance problems include:

- Overgrown vegetation
- Debris and yard waste dumped into the ditch
- Filling in or reducing the capacity of the watercourse
- Installing permanent structures that restrict or alter the flow (i.e. fences, sheds, decks, walls)
- Not removing debris and sediment deposited from previous flood events

This homeowner's drainage contained the flow - until it encountered the neighbor's fence at the property line.



Regular inspections of drainage facilities are key to maintaining a properly functioning drainage system. At a minimum, inspections should be made on an annual basis. Early spring is a great time of year to do this, when the rest of the yard is getting its spring cleaning. In addition, inspections should occur after a rainfall to determine if any changes have occurred that require action to maintain the functionality of the drainage system.

From April through October when the Irrigation Ditches are in operation it is common for the canyon drainages to have some water flowing through them. This water is irrigation overflows from the Irrigation Ditches and private irrigation systems.