



## Information for Creekside Property Owners

The City of Walla Walla is well-known for the many small creeks that run through town. These creeks are part of the character of this area, yet they also present challenges to the community.

The creeks mostly flow on the surface across private property; where it intersects a city street, a creek is piped under the street through a culvert. Some of the smaller creeks such as Lincoln, Bryant, and Butcher Creek are piped underground on private property, including under buildings. Problems occur when these pipes, inlets or channels become obstructed, causing flooding and damage. The risk of flooding is heightened during the rainy season when the flow in these creeks is increased by stormwater runoff.

Obstructions occur in both the open and piped sections of area creeks and are caused by natural and man-made debris. Examples include tree branches that fall into a creek that trap leaves or other debris causing an obstruction. Debris such as yard trimmings, plastic bags, bottles, buckets, lumber, etc. can block flow in a creek. In some areas, fences and walkways are constructed across creeks which can trap leaves and other debris.

**The City is only responsible for the portion of a creek that crosses City streets and other City-owned property.** As part of normal maintenance, culverts in City right-of-way are inspected and cleaned to ensure they function properly.

**Property owners are responsible for maintaining sections of a creek located on their private property.** By keeping a creek clear of debris, obstructions and flooding can be minimized. This includes keeping grass clippings, leaves, sticks, branches, and other vegetative debris out of the creek channel and making sure vegetation in and around a creek does not become overgrown where it significantly impairs water flow. Particular attention should be paid to the entrances to piped sections. It may be very difficult and costly to remove any obstruction and if located on private property, it is the property owner's responsibility to remove it. Screening of the entrances to piped sections can prevent many issues. These screens will periodically become plugged with accumulated debris and need to be cleaned, but it is much easier to remove items before they enter the pipe and cause problems. Care should be exercised to release backed up or impounded water slowly to avoid a sudden surge of water that could flood areas downstream.

Property owners should be aware that when a creek becomes obstructed on private property, it can cause flooding and damage not only to the owner's property but also to adjacent property owners up and downstream. If a creek located on your property (either on the surface or piped underground) becomes obstructed and causes flooding of another's property, you may be liable for any damages. If the obstruction causes flooding of City streets and City property or a significant threat to the safety of the public, the City may take action to remedy the situation. The City of Walla Walla's Municipal Code, [Chapter 13.20](#), gives the City the authority to require obstructions be removed. In addition, under the [Revised Code of Washington 9.66.010](#), the obstruction of creeks is considered a public nuisance and subject to enforcement under State law.

Help keep our creeks free-flowing and unobstructed!

### Questions and/or Comments?

Contact the City of Walla Walla Stormwater Coordinator at 509.527.4537