



Nature At Home

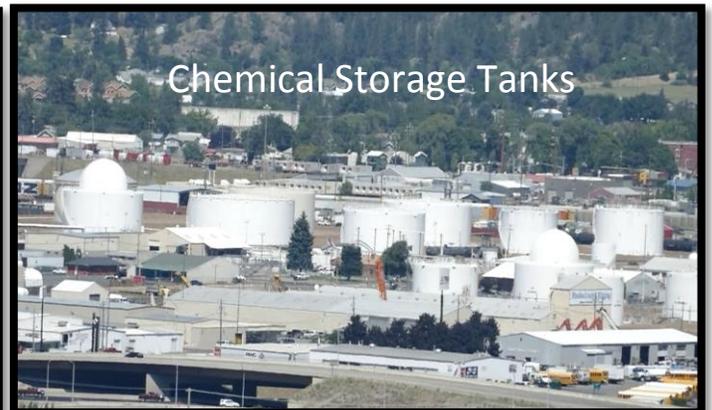
We hope to inspire kids of all ages to learn about the natural world and discover new connections to nature.



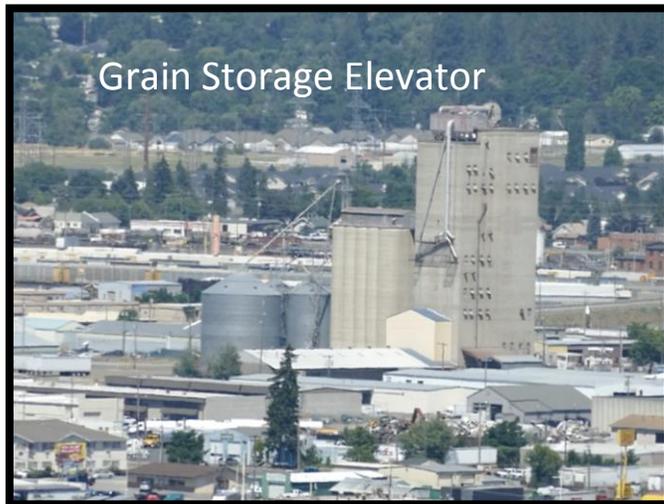
Spokane's Aquifer

View the video at DishmanHills.org/Nature-At-Home

The next time you hike the trail to Nimbus Knob on the north end of the Dishman Hills, stop and look at all the great views. You can see downtown Spokane; the homes, schools, businesses and industry of Spokane Valley. Watch all the cars and truck on the freeway. On the north side of the of the Spokane River you will see a large group of big white round tanks used to store chemicals.



You can also see Grain Elevators that store wheat and other grains waiting to be transported by rail to other markets or waiting to be ground into flour to help feed the city. See if you can locate the giant rail yards. Listen for the horns of the many trains that have been passing daily through the heart of the Spokane Valley, since the railroad arrived over 130 years ago.



All of this sits on top of the local regions water supply. The cities of Spokane and Spokane Valley get their only safe supply of water from the Spokane-Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer.

The blue water of the Spokane-Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer almost looks like a lake; however, there is one important difference. The water you see has traveled from Lake Pend Oreille all the way from North Idaho UNDERGROUND!

It flows through a layer of rock that was deposited by the Great Ice Age Floods at the end of the last Ice Age thousands of years ago.

As the flood waters slowed down, rocks of different sizes began to fall out of the water and accumulate in the bottom of the valley.

First large boulders fell out. As the water slowed down even more, the energy that was needed to keep them suspended in the water decreased. Smaller cobbles about the size of a baseball and gravels fell out of the water. As they stacked up, many spaces were left between them so that water could easily flow through. As the flood water receded, everything was covered up by sand, finer silts and clays. These became the new floor of the Spokane Valley.



Before the aquifer was discovered in 1905, people used to get their drinking water out of the Spokane river. The problem was that they also threw their garbage and human waste in the river as well. As the City grew, more and more people got sick. When farmers in the valley dug their wells, they discovered that the wells consistently filled with water. The farmers had sunk their wells into the aquifer.

In 1908 the first well into the aquifer was dug. This well became Spokane’s first supply source of clean, safe water.

For the tiny town of Spokane to grow, it needed three things. The first was a river to power a sawmill to create building materials and provide power to local flour mills to grind wheat into flour. Second, it needed a railroad to bring in more people and materials to help the city grow and to transport timber, grains, livestock, and produce to other markets. And third, it needed a reliable source of safe water drinking.

We need to remember that the cities of Spokane and Spokane Valley sit on top of their only safe supply of water, the Spokane-Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer. We need to protect this valuable resource for generations to come.

If you have any questions, e-mail us at Education@DishmanHills.org