

LAKWOOD, WA  
RETAIL  
STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

## GRAZING GOATS HELP CORRECT EXCESSIVE BLACKBERRY GROWTH

A customer site in Lakewood, Wash. better the lives of their customers by providing quality products for reasonable prices. Their goals, to encourage diversity and give back to the community, can be seen through their involvement in non-profits and supporting grant programs that enhance community cohesion.

### PROBLEM

This Northwest Washington store was experiencing excessive overgrowth of Himalayan blackberries, about 40,000 sq. ft, along the slopes of an existing vegetative stormwater detention/infiltration asset. Himalayan blackberries are identified by the Washington Weed Control Board as a nuisance weed. When unmanaged, they can cause dense thickets of vegetation that become very hard to manage, can make stormwater assets difficult to access, and dominate over native vegetation that provide natural ecosystem benefits. Himalayan blackberries encroaching on the stormwater asset will leave the asset vulnerable to flooding from excess debris and sediment build-up near the base and would not allow the native vegetation to absorb and filter runoff. Overgrown vegetation along a slope can also cause soil erosion.

The professionals at AQUALIS chose an environmentally friendly alternative to traditional approaches to address the issue of overgrown nuisance vegetation.

### SOLUTION

The solution to use grazing goats was chosen to correct the issue of excessive Himalayan blackberry growth along the slopes of this stormwater asset. Goats are a useful approach to managing Himalayan blackberries because they can counter-act the aggressive characteristics of the bush. Goats assist in blackberry removal by grazing, and ultimately removing, the entirety of the plant year-round, including the thorns. This alternative is less costly than using herbicides or mechanical controls. Some manual vegetation removal was required for the taller growth.

AQUALIS began by organizing all the equipment and labor to the site. The goats were then directed to the site, where they began to remove the blackberry leaves and stalks from the slopes. A shepherd was kept onsite (including overnight) to look after and care for the goats. A fence was installed prior to releasing them to focus the goats and their grazing patterns. Along with the functioning work of the goats, they were also a joy for the community. The goats were all rescues that worked part of the year and resided in a safe shelter on Vashon Island the other part of the year.

AQUALIS was able to successfully address the issue during a preventative maintenance visit, and suggest the best, most economical approach to the issue. Without a stormwater maintenance plan the vegetation would continue to grow and would easily destroy the stormwater asset. Himalayan blackberry can be a persistent plant and needs to be maintained frequently. Partnering with AQUALIS made this store aware of issues that could impact their stormwater assets, and allowed the problem to be resolved as efficiently as possible.

