



**FAUNTLEROY  
WATERSHED  
COUNCIL**

## **2003 ANNUAL REPORT**

Since 2001, the Fauntleroy Watershed Council has been a venue for citizens and agency partners to work toward common restoration and stewardship goals for Fauntleroy Park, Fauntleroy Creek, and other natural areas in the watershed. This report summarizes Council activities and accomplishments during the 2003 calendar year.

### **HABITAT ENHANCEMENTS & ADVOCACY**

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As the year unfolded, we had several opportunities to partner with agency partners to advance the goals of our watershed action plan. Individually and in combination, the various projects and activities summarized below contributed to the overall health and vitality of habitat in the watershed.

#### **FAUNTLEROY CREEK**

The Council continued enthusiastic support for the instream erosion-control work that Seattle Public Utilities began in the upper creek in 2002 with funds from the city and NOAA Fisheries. We provided feedback on plans to install large woody debris in 2,200 linear feet of channel, wrote articles for the community newsletter, and posted the scope of work on our Website. EarthCorps positioned the logs during the summer and will install them mid 2004 when the final permit is in hand. The logs are intended to slow the water, create pools for salmonid and macroinvertebrate habitat, and capture some of the fine sediment that has plagued salmon habitat downstream.

We worked closely with the city and state to ensure that coho returning in the fall could readily enter and make their way up the creek. Kathy Minsch (SPU's liaison with the Council) brought together concerned citizens and agency staff to assess impediments to access, understand permit requirements, and secure cooperation. Nearby residents cleared watercross to define a channel on the beach while volunteers Tom Linde and Steev Ward secured a state permit and city waiver to reposition logs at the mouth as needed. In conjunction with EarthCorps' erosion-control work in the watershed, a crew led by Bob Keller pinpointed and moved several logs. Within days of project completion, high flow from a major rainstorm punched through the sand berm that had forced the creek to run parallel to shore. The change eliminated the beach channel and greatly stabilized access conditions. Volunteers continued to monitor logs throughout return season.

In July, City Councilwoman Margaret Pageler and Martha Burke (SPU) brief the Council on the city's planning process for a new drainage comprehensive plan. In November, Kathy Minsch (SPU) guided us in articulating the highest priorities for the watershed (water quality and habitat). We expect additional opportunities for input before the plan is forwarded to the City Council in fall 2004.

During the year, we advanced our understanding of salmon habitat in city creeks. Several 2002 salmon watchers gathered in April to hear a presentation by Laura Reed (SPU) about local research into pre-spawn mortality. Also in the spring, Steev Ward participated in a NOAA Fisheries seminar on the topic. In July, he and Tom Linde attended a City Council roundtable on the science of Seattle's creeks; Steev represented Fauntleroy Creek volunteers on the citizen panel.

Fauntleroy Park, Fauntleroy Creek, and Fauntleroy Cove are dominant natural features of the residential community in West Seattle that shares their name. From upland and riparian habitat in the 28-acre park, the creek flows one mile through a wooded ravine to the cove in central Puget Sound. Except for tiny Kilbourne Park bordering the middle reach of the creek, the remainder of the 98-acre watershed is urbanized.

## **FAUNTLEROY & KILBOURNE PARKS**

Seattle Parks and Recreation developed a vegetation management plan for Fauntleroy Park, bringing it to near completion by year's end. The Council provided feedback at regular meetings and assisted in arranging and publicizing the final public meeting. In addition to recommendations for plant removal and revegetation in wetland, upland, and riparian habitats, the project produced detailed state-of-the-art maps of the park.

We secured a voice in decisions related to trail maintenance in Fauntleroy Park, including advocacy for specific areas of neighborhood concern. Seattle Parks completed most spot maintenance and upgrading of arterial trails during the year, with wrap-up expected in January 2004. Drainage complexities forced a delay in restoration of the S.W. Cambridge Street entrance to the park until 2004, when SPU will take the lead to address both runoff and access concerns.

Council advocacy for attention to invasives in Kilbourne Park resulted in the assignment of a Seattle Conservation Corps crew in the fall. Chris Woelfel (SPU) and Mark Mead (Seattle Parks) assessed the park as having advanced infestations of clematis, ivy, and Himalayan blackberry. The crew focused on cutting away vines within reach to try to save trees on the steeply sloped site bisected by the creek channel.

## **FAUNTLEROY COVE**

We continued working with state and city agencies to understand reasons for the exceptional build up of sand on the beach at and near the mouth of the creek. We surveyed beach residents around the cove and, in conjunction with this project, we added several households to our courtesy e-mailing of minutes and other Council information.

After viewing research that points to migration of sand and gravel from beach renourishment at Lincoln Park as the cause of significant loss of bull kelp in Fauntleroy Cove, we strongly advocated with State Fish and Wildlife to cease permitting the strategy. We opened a line of communication with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to share results of its periodic monitoring of materials placed on the beach in the fall of 2002.

## **YOUTH INVOLVEMENT & EDUCATION**

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The watershed again offered diverse learning experiences for young people, as well as opportunities for us to partner with additional educators. Over the course of the year, we provided field-trip experiences for some 250 students from five schools; this number includes students engaged in volunteer-coordinated salmon releases, work parties, and research. Naturalists with Seattle Parks led salmon releases in Fauntleroy Park for three more schools.

## **PET-WASTE STUDY**

In response to interest by Kapka Cooperative Primary School in an ongoing project, we designed and secured funding for a yearlong study of pet waste in Fauntleroy Park, which has long been assumed to be a significant source of fecal coliform bacteria in the creek and cove. Lisa Olson with State Ecology enthusiastically provided technical assistance and the Washington Foundation for the Environment provided \$150 to fund the study. Students helped devise procedures to survey a segment of popular dog-walking trail every other month, noting the number and location of poop deposits.

After two surveys, the students collected milk jugs and plastic bags to turn into "put and take" bag dispensers, which Seattle Parks installed at three park entrances. The next layer of the project, begun late in the year, was information aimed at making dog owners more aware of the health and water-quality hazards of dog feces. Students will complete the study in May 2004. Seattle Parks supported the project, as well, with advice and labor to install the bag dispensers.

## **MACROINVERTEBRATE STUDIES**

Students from Arbor Heights Elementary participated in two continuing studies during the year. In the spring, fourth graders did the annual stonefly exoskeleton count in the spawning reach; the largest one recorded to date was among the 42 they found (up from 2002). The same students returned in the fall as fifth graders to do the annual benthic sampling in the upper creek. The macroinvertebrate larva in their sample were all microscopic and for the first time included pollution-tolerant species. We communicated results of both studies to agency partners and posted them on our Website.

## **HABITAT RESTORATION**

Kapka students came numerous times during the year to weed, stake, and mulch their native seedlings at the Barton Street entrance to Fautleroy Park. They also took osier dogwood cuttings to propagate at school for eventual planting in the park.

Seventh-grade science students from Denny Middle School began after-school work parties in the park in the fall. In cooperation with Bob Spencer (SPU) and Phil Renfrow (Seattle Parks) we identified areas where the students could work on invasive plants and erosion control. We hosted and financed one all-class field trip for the students in September and recruited an award-winning video producer willing to advise them as they create a stewardship-related public service announcement. We also secured a STEP grant from SPU, which enabled the purchase of \$417 worth of equipment and supplies for the project.

## **COMMUNICATION & STEWARDSHIP OUTREACH**

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SPU chose the watershed as a pilot for a series of four "Natural Yard Care Neighborhoods" workshops to test the premise that neighbors reinforcing neighbors could enhance positive behavior change. We helped identify especially "neighborly" streets in the watershed, co-signed the invitation cover letter to encourage participation, and welcomed attendees. Initial response was very positive and SPU is following up with longer-term evaluation.

Council interest in reaching park and creek neighbors with stewardship information dovetailed with SPU's plan for an updated brochure for use citywide. An incident in an environmentally critical area near Fautleroy Park aptly demonstrated the need and residents there offered to assist in reviewing content. We expect to help move this outreach initiative forward in 2004.

The community association began including SPU's "Natural Yard Care" brochure in their new-neighbor welcome bags, with a note attached from the Council highlighting water-quality implications of pesticide and herbicide use in the watershed. We offered the brochure at our information table during the Fautleroy Community Association's annual meeting in May and at the Fautleroy Fall Festival in October. Our activities for the very popular festival were creating a beaded "salmon cycle" bracelet (young children) and taking a guided nature walk in Fautleroy Park (mixed ages).

Robert and Linda Gresky enthusiastically took on the singular stewardship task of being neighborhood bird coordinators. They hit the ground running in late fall, starting with posting of a "sightings" list on our Website.

In the spring, Judy Pickens gave a presentation about the creek to a PEO group, complete with a release of salmon raised by volunteer Jack Lawless. She also hosted members of a planning task force from the City of Burien for a restoration walkaround.

Three volunteers ably continued their communication roles: Chris Nack as our Webmaster, Dennis Hinton as our media-relations person, and Judy Pickens as writer of viewpoint bulletins, newsletter articles, and special publications.

## EMERGENCE & SMOLT MONITORING

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Volunteer Tom Linde counted up to 16 "home hatch" coho fry from the one redd left by fall 2002 spawners. Release fish (in both upper and lower creek) totaled approximately 1,250.

With technical assistance from Laura Reed (SPU), Tom Linde and Steev Ward built, installed, and monitored our first smolt trap to tally out-migration. They installed the trap below a weir in the fish ladder on April 2 and check it twice daily over a 12-week period. They examined and recorded 37 full-sized smolts, 84 dead fry (> 2"), 227 live fry, 310 fingerlings (< 3"), and one salamander.

Most fry mortality occurred after early-spring releases. Mortality of fry released after the rainy season was minimal but the number of live fry caught in the trap was greater. Dead fry and live fry too weak to fight the current totaled 25 percent of the fish released.

How 300-plus fry released this year grew quickly into fingerlings remains unclear, as does why they insisted on going out to sea a year ahead of schedule. Cannibalism after the majority of release fish were in the creek may explain the growth spurt and a genetic predisposition to seek lake habitat may explain the exodus.

## SALMON RETURN

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For the second year, the number of returning coho was disappointing - just four spawners and one redd. We were encouraged, however, by the continuing interest of volunteers, including the watch leadership team: Sherry Richardson (watcher liaison), Tom Linde (monitoring), Steev Ward (biology), Phil Sweetland (logistics), Judy Pickens (coordination), and Dennis Hinton (media relations).

Volunteers watched in 30-minute increments during the five hours after daylight high tide (the most opportune time to see fish newly in from the beach). Watchers performed a walk-through of the spawning reach, noting live or dead fish, spawning activity, or changes in the water or surroundings. Their completed observation forms were available to volunteers and agency staff throughout the watch. We recorded weather conditions, kept an eye on the cove for spawners, and monitored logs at the mouth of the creek.

We relied heavily on returning watchers from last year and recruited new volunteers at our neighborhood fall-festival celebration in mid October. We also posted fliers and published a call for volunteers in community and church newsletters, on the community Website, and in the *West Seattle Herald*. A feature column in the *Herald* about the drumming included a way to inquire about watching.

New watchers and those who wanted refresher training came for one of two on-site training sessions. Our watcher packet provided details about methodology, guidelines for reducing spawner stress, and scheduling instructions, plus a layout of the host property. Seattle Public Utilities provided the pocket folders, as well as handouts about where to see salmon when in the region, brochures on natural yard care and creek stewardship, and anti-glare glasses. Except for phone calls to those few watchers without Internet access, we relied on mass e-mails to provide information as well as encouragement and a sense of participation during the six-week watch (October 23 - December 6).

For veteran watchers and newcomers alike, the watch offered a "front-row seat" to observe the delicate balance between habitat and salmon, the tragic consequences of human impact, and the potential of community stewardship. Watchers ranged in age from children to elders. One student applied watch hours toward her community-service requirement.

Of the 49 volunteers recruited, 33 followed up to be watchers. They tallied 192 visitors at the fish-ladder viewpoint. Three new teachers and home-school groups inquired about field trips.

For the third year, we kicked off the watch with a Sunday-evening drumming to call the fish home. Though student storytellers did not materialize, Jamie Shilling came through to lead some 75 people of all ages in spirited singing and drumming at the fish-ladder viewpoint.

In addition to noting specific recommendations for Watch 2004, we hosted a debriefing/strategizing session in December to share insights and expertise. Participants were Bill McMillan and Dave Crabb (Washington Trout), Katherine Lynch (SPU), and volunteers Tom Linde, Steev Ward, and Judy Pickens. After weighing options, we elected to focus - at least for 2004 - on gaining a better understanding of the creek as *rearing* habitat by

- learning more about out-migration so that decisions will be based on at least two year's worth of data about what the creek is producing and when.
- testing the "lake-seeking" theory by returning outgoing fingerlings to the upper creek and charting the numbers.
- learning more about water quality - especially related to salmon habitat - in partnership with State Ecology and SPU.
- using what we learn to help watershed residents "connect the dots" between what they do and the health of the salmon they love to see coming home.
- using what we learn to inform volunteers and offer them more ways to be involved.

## PUBLIC NOTICE

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Following is a recap of media coverage and volunteer recognition during 2003. In July, we added a standing agenda item to capture such information in Council minutes.

### **Neighbors community newsletter**

- Article on "Natural Yard Care Neighborhoods" workshops (April).
- Article on vegetation management planning and erosion-control work in Fauntleroy Park (April).
- Article on results of smolt monitoring (August).
- Article on logs to be used as large woody debris in creek tributaries (August).
- Article on pet-waste study with sidebar on responsible waste disposal (November).
- Item soliciting a volunteer bird coordinator for the watershed (November).

### **West Seattle Herald**

- Drumming, salmon watch, and field-trip opportunities featured in "101 Things To Do" column with photo (October 15).
- Front-page article with photo on scarcity of salmon in Fauntleroy Creek (November 12).
- Notices about upcoming Council meetings and other events (periodic).

### **Other media**

- Pickens quoted in *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* article on pre-spawn mortality (February 6).
- Pickens creekside interview on pre-spawn mortality, KCPQ Channel 13 news (February).
- Profile with photo of Fauntleroy Park in "Walkabout" column, *Seattle Times Northwest Weekend* supplement (December 18).
- Fish-ladder viewpoint with photo included in "City Walks" profile of Fauntleroy, *Seattle Times Northwest Weekend* supplement (December 25).
- Construction of the fish ladder (SPU's 2000 documentary), Seattle government cable channel (numerous).

### **Recognition**

In September, SPU hosted a reception to recognize some 200 volunteer stewards from throughout the city. Honorees included Steev Ward, Tom Linde, and Judy Pickens. Each received a letter of commendation from the mayor applauding their volunteer contributions to the watershed.

## COUNCIL BUSINESS

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The Council met six times during the year, in March, May, July, September, and November. The Executive Committee met six times as well between sessions. Citizen participation was typically 8 -10 per meeting.

During and between meetings, we worked with agency liaisons Kathy Minsch (SPU) and Don Allen (Seattle Parks). The constancy of their involvement on behalf of key city partners and the information and perspective they have brought to the table were invaluable.

As of December 31, 2003, Treasurer Dennis Hinton reported that the Fauntleroy Watershed Council checking account had a balance of \$353.24. During the year, we received a \$150 grant from the Washington Foundation for the Environment and a reimbursement of \$417 from Seattle Public Utilities for expenses associated with the Denny Middle School project. Administrative expenses were primarily for photocopying.

**Executive Committee members:**

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