



**FAUNTLEROY
WATERSHED
COUNCIL**

2012 ANNUAL REPORT

As we completed instream restoration of Fauntleroy Creek, we celebrated its testament to the value of healthy urban creek systems with a rewarding number of coho smolts migrating to saltwater and a record number of spawners coming in. Also, our forest stewards hit their stride in 2012, hosting work parties in Fauntleroy Park and extending their scope to the Kilbourne ravine.

SALMON IN THE SCHOOLS & CREEK

SALMON RELEASES: In May, watershed volunteers Dennis Hinton, Judy Pickens, and Pete Draughon led 16 field trips to release coho fry in Fauntleroy Park. They hosted 562 students, preschool through seventh grade, from 14 schools (two split their students into two releases). Because staff changes at our 15th school made scheduling a field trip difficult, teachers released that school's fish without students. Of the 2,615 total fry released, 500 were reared by volunteer Jack Lawless for schools that didn't bring their own. New this year was an invitation for schools to bring one piece of student creativity for posting on the Barton Street park kiosk. The display grew into a colorful assortment of drawings, collages, and poems.



Coho fry jumping against her hand elicit a big smile from West Seattle Elementary student Egra Mahamed. She helped care for the fish as they grew from eggs and learned about life cycle, culture, stewardship, and habitat. Photo courtesy Tara Slinden

OUT-MIGRATION: At the same time fry were getting acquainted with moving in freshwater, coho smolts were leaving for saltwater. Volunteers Dennis Hinton, Steev Ward, and Pete Draughon checked traps in the upper and lower creek almost daily between March 17 and June 7. Many students releasing fry got to see a smolt or two to understand how much their fish would grow in one year.

Within a week of finding smolts in the upper trap, we suspected a discrepancy between catches in the two traps, with smaller numbers being found in the lower trap (as in 2011). On April 11, Washington State Fish and Wildlife granted us permission to transport fish in an aerated bucket of creek water from the upper trap to below the lower trap. The volunteers transported 115 smolts, adjusted for the possibility of double counting, and added home hatch from the lower creek to reach a reliable number of smolts migrating to saltwater. Steev made adjustments to the lower trap in case its design was allowing smolts to escape.

SPAWNING SEASON: In late October, a neighbor spotted coho spawners in the tidepool at the mouth of the creek and they soon ventured in. River otter got the first seven (we think) but, after that, they poured into the spawning reach above the fish ladder. By Thanksgiving, our cadre of 12 salmon watchers had documented 274 fish, most of which were missing the adipose fin, indicating hatchery origin.

High predation prevented volunteer biologist Steev Ward from finding many carcasses to examine for pre-spawn mortality or disease. Some of the fish pushed against the high end of our customary size range (16" – 24"). About two thirds of the way through the spawning period, the fish began to show loss of scales on their tails.



Watershed resident Jim Spraker caught this exceptionally colorful spawner moving up the creek. The fish were bright and vigorous, and many were the largest yet

With the spawners came great community enthusiasm. Salmon watchers engaged an estimated 290 visitors, including school groups and individual students dispatched by their teachers to have a look. Many visitors took and shared photos, boosting our catalog of shots for presentations and publications. In addition to cultivating general goodwill, the spawners attracted a few area residents with professional expertise that may be helpful to the Watershed Council over time.

SALMON EDUCATION

ALLIANCE: Phil Sweetland and Judy Pickens kept fellow Council members up to date on activities of the Salmon Education Alliance, the group coordinating Salmon in the Schools in Seattle/King County.

Thanks to funding from Seattle Public Utilities for Seattle schools, a grant from the Washington Fly Fishing Club, and private donations, SEA was ready by year's end to provide exceptional support to the program's 145 participating schools. Judy serves as area coordinator for West Seattle and Phil responds to equipment needs throughout the city.



They collaborated to lead a workshop in November for Fauntleroy Creek teachers and tank volunteers, then two more (in December and January) that drew teachers and volunteers countywide. Also thanks to their efforts, every school received a CD with the first edition of a teacher handbook, multiple lesson plans and activities (many drawn from the Council's website), and detailed information about monitoring and maintaining the salmon tank.

Through the program, 13 area schools (coordinated by Judy) received coho eggs during the 2011-12 school year for eventual release in Fauntleroy Creek. The "volunteer" fish reared by Jack Lawless under permit to the Council supported two preschool releases and filled in after a major die-off at one elementary school left few fish for those students to release.

Year	Live Smolts Upper	Live Smolts Lower	Smolts to Salt	Released Fry	Spawners
2012	145	85	157	2,615	274
2011	147	36	36	2,027	14
2010		24		2,298	0*
2009		18		1,936	18
2008		17		1,790	2
2007		24		2,276	89
2006		22		2,033	0
2005		10		1,138	48
2004		11		1,534	6
2003		37		1,254	4
2002				1,965	5
2001				1,050	167
2000				800	126

*corrected

PARK STEWARDSHIP

Park stewards Steve Hodson and Peggy Cummings continued their dedicated service to the watershed, with Steve specializing in on-the-ground work and Peggy on outreach. Early in the year, a busier schedule prompted Annabelle Lota to resign as our third park steward.

They supported four work parties during the year:

- On March 22, students from **Schmitz Park Elementary** removed 1,000 square feet of invasive plants and laid 20 square feet of rock on a trail.
- On March 31, crewmembers from EarthCorps led a Green Seattle Partnership **community work party** during which volunteers cleared English ivy from 3,300 square feet of forest floor.
- In cooperation with Seattle Audubon and EarthCorps, the park hosted students from **Alki Elementary** on June 5 for a birding/working event.
- Crewmembers from EarthCorps returned on Oct. 6 for a second Green Seattle Partnership **community work party** involving a group of 20 teens, plus four local volunteers.





Many hands make light work

(Above) Schmitz Park teacher Stephanie Poole encourages the rock bucket brigade. (Below) Students spread the rock on a segment of muddy trail. Photo courtesy Peggy Cummings



A crew with the Washington Conservation Corps came April 16 to weed invasives from the **slope off the Barton alley** (near the SW Barton Street entrance) that had been inadvertently cleared by a county crew in 2011. Steve Hodson and fellow volunteer Michael Oxman installed some of the 200 conifer seedlings acquired in the spring through the Green Seattle Partnership on that slope. In the fall, Steve and his daughter, Georgia, worked with Wolfe Schaaf to put in **more plants** from the Partnership - salal, mock orange, sword fern, lady fern, bleeding heart, Garry oak, grand fir, and vine maple. During both activities, Steve observed that many trees planted in 2011 had survived an exceptionally dry summer.

Peggy coordinated with Seattle Parks for placement of a **JoBox container** on an existing concrete pad near the 97th Street park entrance. The box provides handy storage of tools for volunteers working in the park.

WATER PROBLEMS: Water-related problems continued at two sites in the park. One was erosion associated with street runoff at the **SW Cambridge Street** entrance to Fauntleroy Park. It received attention from Seattle Public Utilities and Seattle Parks and, by year's end, was partially repaired by volunteers. We expect 2013 to bring implementation of a plan to redirect street runoff, reroute other flow, and repair the trail.

The other was a seep across the **Barton alley**. The water defied what Seattle Parks trail staff thought would be the solution, and work began to implement more robust drainage to keep the trail dry and check erosion.

ENCROACHMENT: In the spring, a crew with Seattle Parks removed residential shrubbery from park property along SW Barton Street. Immediate revegetation blended the reclaimed areas with adjacent park habitat. The work and payment of a fine closed the book on an encroachment that came to light in 2011, when the homeowner cut trees behind his house that belonged to the park.

ABOUT THE WATERSHED

Fauntleroy Park, Fauntleroy Creek, and Fauntleroy Cove are the dominant natural features of the residential community in West Seattle that shares their name:

- **Fauntleroy Park** is a 28-acre wooded ravine preserved by the city as a natural public park. Its network of well-maintained trails provides access to explore and enjoy a remnant of the coastal forest ecosystem that once blanketed the region.
- **Fauntleroy Creek** originates in the park and drops 300 feet in elevation over its one-mile course to Fauntleroy Cove in central Puget Sound. Springs and runoff from the 149-acre watershed sustain flow year round.

The natural, geologic watershed is approximately 493 acres. Installation of storm drains reduced the runoff area to its current 144 acres.

CREEK HABITAT

FENTON GLEN RESTORATION: The four-year, grant-funded project to restore the lower part of Fenton Glen wrapped up on Dec. 31, and responsibility for maintenance and additional improvements transferred to the property owner, Fauntleroy Church UCC. The \$51,850 project adjacent to Fauntleroy Park in the upper watershed restored the last degraded segment of Fauntleroy Creek, made great strides toward eradicating a heavy infestation of invasive non-native plants, and revegetated with native species to hold the soil, attract wildlife, and add year-round visual interest to a site that is often visited by the public. Seattle Public Utilities, King County, and the King Conservation District contributed grant monies, and the church provided a partial match in the form of volunteer labor and \$1,400 in cash.

Observations during 2012 identified a continuing need to discourage foot traffic across the channel and encourage growth in the shady, compacted former flood plain, where grant-funded plants did not do well. A winter work party is set to install several more church-funded seedlings there. In addition, the church's Green Committee has earmarked funds for new plants to refresh the upper glen and increase its habitat value.

KILBOURNE RAVINE PROJECT



Concern about the proliferation of wild clematis emanating from the Kilbourne ravine evolved into a multi-year eradication/revegetation project with a strong community-outreach component. The steeply sloped ravine carries the middle reach of Fauntleroy Creek and over the years has become blanketed with invasive trees, shrubs, and groundcovers. To be successful, the project will require the cooperation of multiple ravine property owners, as well as owners of nearby properties infested with clematis.

After learning that a promising grant program run by the State Department of Ecology was cut, the Council was able to turn to a King Conservation District jurisdiction grant through the City of Seattle. We proposed to apply nearly \$50,000 to fund the first four years of a six-year project, then return to the district for wrap-up funding. The city gave the proposal a do-pass and, on Jan. 15, so did the district's Board of Supervisors. Seattle Parks will match our effort by doing similar work in Kilbourne Park, which comprises 30 percent of the 2.5 acre site. A Parks' crew got started in the fall by creating a demonstration area at the east end of the ravine, showing removal of invasive plants, slope stabilization, and revegetation with native shrubs and groundcovers.

CREEK MAINTENANCE: In February, lower-creek neighbors joined Aaron Bosworth and Larry Fisher from State Fish and Wildlife and Joe Starstead from Seattle Public Utilities on a walkaround focused on three areas of creek maintenance:

- Regarding **flow on the beach**, residents were advised to use the Council's current hydraulic permit to push out logs that begin to accumulate at the mouth before they can impede creek flow or spawner access.
- Regarding **reach-to-the-beach restoration**, homeowners were advised to continue to pull watercress and reed canary grass, the only concerns in an otherwise picture-perfect restoration.
- Regarding **drainage at 45th Ave. SW**, because debris and sediment have over time cushioned the 4.5-foot drop, it was deemed not likely a cause of smolt mortality. A new grate is needed, though (now on Seattle Public Utilities' maintenance list).

A list conveyed to Seattle Public Utilities in the fall identified additional maintenance needs in the lower creek: pruning on the fish-ladder viewpoint to enhance survival of native plants and eradicate invasives, pruning of willow trees across the ladder itself to improve visibility for viewpoint visitors, fence replacement along the channel for safety, and instream rock to prevent further trail erosion.

OUTREACH



SALMON DRUMMING: The annual drumming to call in salmon spawners on Oct. 28 was enlivened by news that spawners had already been spotted at the mouth of the creek. An estimated 30 people attended, including several small children who acted out a salmon story (with help from Mary Mitchell). Jamie Shilling again led the singing.

(Far left) Mary Mitchell leads baby salmon in the right moves for a story. (Left) A variety of drums, from a mixing bowl to bongos (played here by Cecelia Dunbar), called to spawners. Photos courtesy West Seattle Blog



2012 FALL FESTIVAL: The annual Fauntleroy Fall Festival persevered this year during heavy rain to draw an estimated 700 people – about a third of the usual crowd. Plans for the forest stewards to highlight a demonstration restoration area in Kilbourne Park had to be shelved in favor of their

sheltering under the big tent across the street. Despite having to move the Council's perennial salmon hat-decorating activity indoors to a room off the beaten path, we helped our usual one- out-of- 10 attendees (70 youngsters) make hats.

MAKING CONNECTIONS: Webmaster Chris Nack fine-tuned our new **website** by improving the menu bar and moving current news to the opening page. A Google snapshot of usage during the summer revealed that the Fauntleroy Park map was the number one page visited, followed by creek news.

An updated **watershed brochure** began appearing in distribution boxes and on the Council's website in May.

The Council provided pet-waste **signage** for Seattle Parks to install at the east end of the Kilbourne ravine and supported the department's strategic planning by posting signs in the watershed with the address for an online survey soliciting citizen input.

As time on agendas allowed, members of the Council heard from others in the area engaged in related stewardship:

- **Donna Sandstrom** with The Whale Trail project, which builds awareness of the presence of orcas in Puget Sound and their habitat challenges.
- **Forest stewards** elsewhere in West Seattle briefed the Council on their activities and needs – Sharon Baker (Lincoln Park), Dylan Mendenhall (Schmitz Park), and Scott Blackstock (Roxhill Park wetlands).

In both instances, the Council offered to publicize their events of potential interest to watershed residents.

IN THE MEDIA: The *West Seattle Blog* posted a feature on our first salmon release (May) and three stories during spawning season (November). In addition, the *Seattle Times* picked up a portion of the Blog's wrap-up story our record number of spawners.



(Above) Fly-fishing enthusiast Pete Draughon said yes to the Council's suggestion that he engage festival-goers in fly tying and he drew a steady stream of customers under the big tent. Photo courtesy Peggy Cummings

HONORABLE MENTION

Rob Anderson with EarthCorps for expert assistance in scoping the Kilbourne ravine project.

Bob Keller with Natural Systems Design for assisting with Fenton Glen *after* the firm's contract had expired.

Chris Nack for maintaining our ability to communicate on the web.

Mary Mitchell for drumming and drama expertise and **Jamie Shilling** for music expertise at the annual salmon drumming.

Kathy Minsch for being our liaison to Seattle Public Utilities *and* for interest and professionalism as we wrapped up our city grant for the Fenton Glen project.

Carol Baker for another year of just-right liaison work between the Council and Seattle Parks and Recreation.

Fauntleroy Church UCC for generously providing our meeting room at no charge.

COUNCIL BUSINESS

The Council met on the second Thursday in January, March, May, September, and November. All meetings were open to any interested watershed resident.

According to Treasurer Dennis Hinton, we opened the year with \$1,881.91 in Washington Federal and closed it with \$1,741.96. The closing balance includes interest income of \$3.69. We had \$136.26 in expenses for updating the watershed brochure.

**For contacts, minutes, and information about our education program, visit
www.fauntleroywatershed.org.**