

2014 ANNUAL REPORT



**FAUNTLEROY
WATERSHED
COUNCIL**

This year, the Fautleroy Watershed Council

- launched a six-year project to restore native vegetation in the Kilbourne ravine, which shapes the middle reach of Fautleroy Creek
- hosted a record 20 salmon releases in Fautleroy Park
- continued to engage students in research and the general public in "owning" the natural features of this watershed.

HABITAT RESTORATION

KILBOURNE RAVINE. In August, an EarthCorps crew began restoration of the ravine that is the riparian corridor for the middle reach of Fautleroy Creek. Aided by Seattle City Councilman Tom Rasmussen's office, we secured our last permit – to work in undeveloped right-of-way – in time for crews to put in 544 person hours before weather shut down the project until spring. Additionally, an agreement with Seattle Parks and Recreation enabled EarthCorps to work in a portion of Kilbourne Park and treat a large expanse of city- and privately owned slope as one restoration area.

Project objectives are to (1) improve water quality by controlling erosion, filtering runoff, and holding rain in restored conifer canopy, (2) reclaim the ravine as wildlife habitat, (3) stop the spread of invasive plants into the neighborhood, and (4) enlist ravine property owners and the community in keeping invasive plants out of landscapes.

During this first year of the six-year project, EarthCorps crews removed garbage from the ravine and installed coir logs to protect the creek from dirt-laden runoff. They cut down small non-native invasive trees, dosed the cut stumps with herbicide, and injected herbicide cartridges into larger standing trees. They also cut away wild clematis and ivy vines from 41 native trees to kill upper vine growth and weeded in a three-foot radius around the base of each trunk to discourage new growth.

ABOUT THE RAVINE

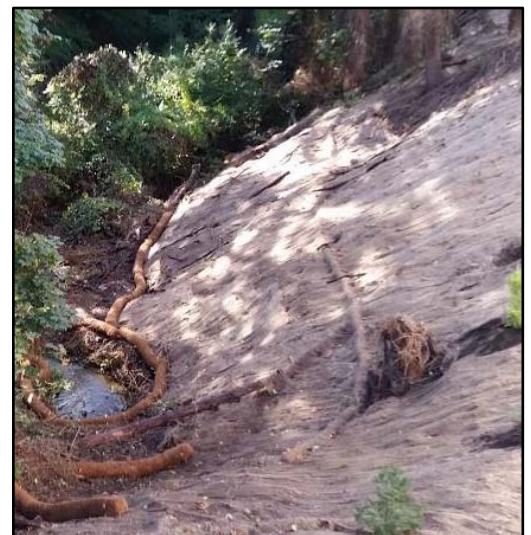
Total area: approx. 2.5 acres
Eight private parcels: 1.46 acres
Undeveloped city right-of-way: .32 acres
Kilbourne Park (natural area): .72 acres

ABOUT PROJECT FUNDING

- \$48,820 from the King Conservation District (KCD) – Seattle Community Grant Partnership
- \$245 from KCD for signage
- \$5,000 from the Puget Sound Stewardship and Mitigation Fund, a grant-making fund created by the Puget Soundkeeper Alliance and administered by the Rose Foundation for Communities and the Environment



Whacking the tangle of wild clematis and blackberry vines against the schoolhouse on the north slope. EarthCorps' Whitney Bowman planting a conifer. Jute matting and coir logs in place to control erosion on the weeded north slope. Photos courtesy Dylan Grace Wells (left) and Rob Anderson



To tackle blackberry vines blanketed by wild clematis on the sunny portion of the north slope, EarthCorps trainees whacked down the mass, sprayed herbicide, and laid down 12,500 square feet of jute matting to stabilize the slope. Herbicide treatments and hand removal will be on the docket every year through 2019 as invasive plants attempt to rejuvenate. Large conifer saplings are beginning to create a new canopy to shade out invasive vines. Crews also did the first planting of native emergent and wetland species.

At the same time these activities were under way, Seattle Parks made progress restoring the .72 acres of the ravine comprising Kilbourne Park. Crews weeded persistent invasives on steep slopes in anticipation of more planting in early 2015. Seattle Parks renewed its commitment to monitoring the site, removing emerging invasives, and replacing dead native plants over six years.



Phil Sweetland installing the project sign.

Photo courtesy Judy Pickens

LOWER CREEK. In 1990, a crew with the Summer Youth Employment Project worked in the reach due upstream of Fautleroy Way SW to accomplish the first instream restoration of Fautleroy Creek. The teens installed logs to "step" the channel for fish passage and native shrubs to shade the water for temperature control. Eight years later as part of a larger project, Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) built and landscaped the fish ladder in the same reach. Since then, volunteers maintained the landscaping at the ladder viewpoint and alerted the city to landscape needs adjacent to the ladder. Over time, log steps in the creek have failed, plants in the ladder's landscaping have succumbed to drought, and split-rail safety fencing built by volunteers has weakened. This year, SPU replaced rotting decking on the promontory at the ladder viewpoint. Recognizing that more work is needed in the reach, the watershed council asked EarthCorps for a thorough assessment of instream, plant, and safety needs there. We submitted this assessment to SPU in the fall and are using it as the focal point for strategizing how to get the work done.

PAST PROJECTS. In 2010, we completed restoration of the creek's "reach to the beach" in central Puget Sound. Since then, owners Elizabeth Butler and Chris Kim have nurtured the many plants along the rebuilt channel, and logs and other instream structures have remained in place. Restoration in Fenton Glen, completed in 2012, required attention last year by property owner Fautleroy Church to restore log stability after minor vandalism. Plants have established a foothold on steep slopes and those suited to the very shady former flood plain are showing their potential to protect the area from unwanted foot traffic.

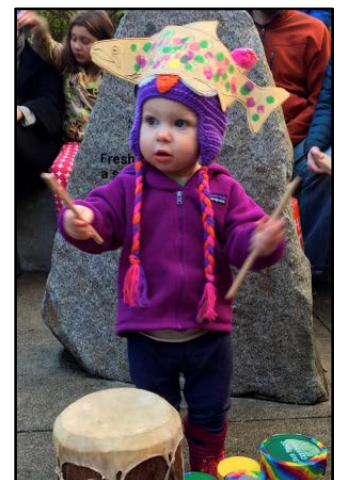
OUTREACH

FAUNTLEROY FALL FESTIVAL. The watershed council's traditional salmon hats drew 200 young children during the afternoon event in mid October. Volunteers organized by Judy Pickens helped them decorate the paper hats, then pose for photos by proud parents. Peggy Cummings staffed a table at the east end of the Kilbourne ravine, where she updated many of the 2,000+ attendees on the restoration project and offered handouts about invasive plants.

SALMON DRUMMING. The annual drumming, on Oct. 27, to call in salmon spawners proved to be a bit late as the first ones had entered the creek two days before. The 50-60 people of all ages who attended were no less enthusiastic, though, to call in more coho. Jamie Shilling led the



Esme Reeves tied her welcome flag to the fence. Photo courtesy West Seattle Blog



Lilia Matual wore her salmon hat to the annual drumming. Photo courtesy Lori Hinton

singing and drumming at the 5 pm event at the fish-ladder viewpoint. The special component this year was making "welcome flags" –words written on strips of fabric tied to the fence overlooking the creek. The flags stayed on the fence through spawning season.

EDUCATION

RESEARCH. Sixth-grade science students from Our Lady of Guadalupe School continued two studies to monitor aquatic insects in the creek – the stoneflies, mayflies, and other macroinvertebrates that are an important source of food for juvenile salmon.

In May, the class did the official count of stonefly exoskeletons in a portion of the spawning reach, due upstream of the fish ladder in the lower creek. The number of exoskeletons left behind on trees, fences, and bridges before the stoneflies take to the air to mate is an informal indicator of the abundance of larva in the creek (a major food for juvenile salmon). The number was the highest since 2004 and average size was typical. Fifth-grade and kindergarten students from Arbor Heights Elementary repeated the count as a backup.

In mid October, the class divided into teams for the annual benthic sampling at sites in the upper and lower creek to learn the abundance of aquatic-insect larva and which species were present (an indication of water quality). They took an "official" sample from a riffle at each site using a Surber sampler and established protocol. For comparison, they also took a sample of leaf debris from the water. Teams collected the samples, made site observations, sorted out the macroinvertebrates, identified the critters, and documented the experience in photos.

Back at school, they worked with teacher Nathan Franck to develop a slide presentation about the study – purpose, procedures, findings, conclusions, and outstanding questions. Jonathan Frodge, a benthic scientist with Seattle Public Utilities, joined members of the watershed council, school staff, and student relatives for the presentation. In addition to finding a few more macroinvertebrates at each site than in 2013, the class noted that 4 of the 8 critters found in the upper creek and 4 of the 6 critters found in the lower creek required excellent water quality (were intolerant of pollution).



Photo courtesy Our Lady of Guadalupe School

SALMON IN THE SCHOOLS. Because of their involvement with the Salmon Education Alliance, watershed councilmembers Phil Sweetland and Judy Pickens kept us abreast of the Salmon in the Schools program in Seattle/King County. Again this year, our website, www.fautleroywatershed.org, was an online contact points for program information and teacher resources.



Gatewood Elementary students gently let their fry go in the creek at the release site in Fautleroy Park. Photo courtesy Nancie Hernandez

Judy coordinated the participation of 15 schools rearing coho fry for Fautleroy Creek - 3 preschools, 11 elementaries, and a middle school. Two additional preschools released fry reared by volunteer Jack Lawless. In May, volunteers Pete Droughon kept an eye on safety while Dennis Hinton dipped fish for a record 680 students.

STEWARDSHIP

WEEDING IN TOUGH PLACES. A combination of individual and work-party stewardship cleared much of Fauntleroy Park of invasive plants, leaving difficult-to-access areas for professional attention. One such tough place is the "Bernice Basin" in the northeast corner of the park. The five-acre, boggy wetland bordered by private property and street ends sends runoff into a tributary of Fauntleroy Creek.

In the fall, Seattle Parks contracted with Garden Cycles to remove one of the worst infestations of invasive plants that crewmembers had seen – Himalayan blackberry, knotweed, clematis, English ivy, holly, and laurel. The very steep slopes required jute matting and coir logs to minimize erosion until new plants could be installed later. Steve Richmond and his crew were surprised to discover that many evergreen seedlings planted seven years ago had survived, despite being crowded by horsetail and starved for sun. Now that the trees have been freed of invasives, Steve is optimistic that they will thrive.

Seattle Parks expanded the scope of work to include the ravine off of 37th Ave. SW. The crew found a dense infestation of invasives but also a diversity of native plants not often seen in the urban landscape, including marsh marigold, deer fern, swamp lantern, and false lily-of-the-valley.

Seattle Parks' natural-areas crew began replanting these cleared areas in early 2015.

FOREST STEWARD ACTIVITIES. Since 2010, Steve Hodson and Peggy Cummings have been the watershed's forest stewards, a volunteer assignment developed by the Green Seattle Partnership (GSP) to strengthen ties between the city's parks and their communities. Steve focuses on physical work in Fauntleroy Park (installing plants, clearing brush from trails, etc.). Peggy organizes habitat experiences for children, serves on the watershed council, keeps park kiosks informative, and does community outreach for work parties. Both talk with watershed residents stewardship at every opportunity, both in the park and at neighborhood events.

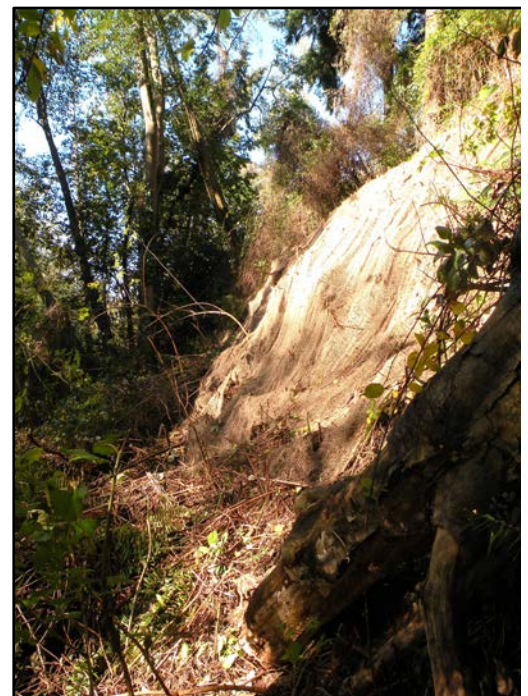
In 2014, these forest stewards reported trees down on park trails, boardwalk damage, and trail degradation caused by runoff and seeps. When requested by Seattle Parks' district maintenance chief, they also assisted with remedies. Steve installed 25 native trees in Fauntleroy Park, provided by Seattle Parks.

Peggy attended two GSP events: a workshop on riparian/wetland restoration and the annual stakeholders meeting. Both offered worthwhile information as well as opportunities to compare notes with other forest stewards from across the city. Peggy also assisted in defining the scope of work for the "tough places" contract summarized above, including advising about communication with park neighbors.

Over the course of the year, Steve volunteered an estimated 100 hours in Fauntleroy Park. Peggy donated approximately 120 hours.



(Above) The Garden Cycles crew imagined Tarzan swinging from the clematis vines they found dropping from a big-leaf maple tree alongside a very steep, blackberry-infested slope off 37th Ave. (Below) Slopes could hardly be steeper than what the crew encountered. Photos courtesy Steve Richmond



SALMON

Year	Live Smolts Upper	Live Smolts Lower	Smolts to Salt	Released Fry	Spawners
2014			19	2,409	19
2013			141	1,987	3
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

OUT-MIGRATION. While students were releasing just over 2,400 coho fry into upper Fauntleroy Creek, volunteers Dennis Hinton, Pete Droughon, and Steev Ward were documenting the number of smolts migrating to saltwater. Shortly after they began monitoring in mid March, we realized that 2014 would be a very different year for our crop of "teenagers." Only 19 left the creek for central Puget Sound – way fewer than in 2012 or 2013. After considering every possibility for the drop and conferring with others who might know a reason, we had to accept the mystery and record 19 as our total smolt crop for the year.



The first spawning pair circling to build a redd. Photo courtesy Dennis Hinton

SPAWNING SEASON. This year marked the 20th anniversary of documented coho spawners in Fauntleroy Creek. Creekside residents Elizabeth Case and Chris Kim spotted the first two spawners near the mouth of the creek on Oct. 25. One of them had already fallen prey to the river otter that always seem to know when spawning season has arrived. By the end of the month, it was over. Our 11 salmon watchers recorded a total of 19.

With most of the spawners being single females, volunteers observed spawning behavior in just two locations. We'll be monitoring those spots this winter to learn if they were successful. A third pair may have spawned upstream, out of watchers' sight.

Dennis Hinton anchored a weekend "open creek" (Saturday and Sunday hours) that drew most of the 190 visitors that came this year (see quote). The weekenders did not get to experience spawners coming in but were appreciative of being on site, plus learning about salmon and creek habitat from reliable sources.

Yesterday was a very special experience for me...It was delightful to see folks just keep coming to the creek as the day grew cold, a steady rain came down, and the Seahawks were playing at home! You are involved in some very good and important work. – Dean Irwin, fly fisherman

COMMUNICATION

WEBSITE. When webmaster Chris Nack called up the stats on website activity for a report to the council in November, we were all surprised at the uptick during the year. Viewing sessions nearly doubled over 2013 to just over 2,000. The site had nearly 1,700 users, 17 percent of whom were new. Most were from the greater-Seattle area but a few were from as far away as Brazil! Our map of Fauntleroy Park continued to be a popular destination for visitors. In addition to posting watershed news and reports, Chris expanded online resources for Salmon in the Schools teachers. She also eliminated the background color on web pages to make them more inviting.

IN THE MEDIA. The *West Seattle Blog* continued to be a strong communicator of watershed news. In the spring, the *Blog* published a photo and article about the first salmon release and also a photo showing replacement of decking on the fish-ladder promontory. In the fall, the *Blog* covered the annual salmon drumming and kept readers abreast of the salmon watch, including our weekend "open creek" opportunity for creek visitors. In January, the online *Westside Weekly* (published by the *West Seattle Herald*) ran an article with aerial photo about the Kilbourne ravine project. Watershed news appeared regularly in the Fauntleroy Community Association's quarterly *Neighbors* newsletter.

OTHER COMMUNICATION. We updated our watershed brochure and began putting the new edition in brochure boxes at major park entrances and at the fish-ladder viewpoint (where Phil Sweetland installed a new box). Through articles in the community newsletter, we continued to support RainWise, a city/county program aimed at reducing stormwater runoff by helping area residents afford rain gardens and cisterns.

HONORABLE MENTION

- **Steev Ward** for his service over many years as volunteer fish biologist and builder and monitor of smolt traps.
- **Seattle City Councilman Tom Rasmussen** for interceding with the Seattle Department of Transportation to secure the street-use permit that enabled restoration of the Kilbourne ravine to begin in the fall.
- **Rob Anderson** for his exceptional interest in seeing the Kilbourne ravine project succeed and for his unflagging dedication to EarthCorps' training program for young people from around the world.
- **Kathy Minsch** (Seattle Public Utilities) and **Carol Baker** (Seattle Parks and Recreation) for so ably demonstrating how productive city-citizen partnerships can be by ably representing their agencies on the watershed council.



A typical EarthCorps crew learning while restoring the Kilbourne ravine: (L to R): Remus Fleseru (Romania), Amanda Lee (New York), Whitney Bowman (Indiana), Michelle Schuett (Texas), and Matt Fineman (California). Photo courtesy Rob Anderson

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. Members of the executive committee planned council meetings and took care of business between meetings. They were Peggy Cummings (peggyc@seanet.com), Dennis Hinton (denhinton@msn.com), and Judy Pickens (judy_pickens@msn.com).

According to Treasurer Dennis Hinton, we opened the year with \$1,691.95 in our money-market account at Washington Federal and closed it with \$1,580.87, which includes interest income of \$2.43. We had expenses totaling \$113.51 for paper and copying associated with our new edition of the watershed brochure and for one new brochure box.