

**FAUNTLEROY
WATERSHED
COUNCIL**

2004 ANNUAL REPORT

The Fauntleroy Watershed Council provides a venue for citizens and agency staff to advance restoration and stewardship goals for Fauntleroy Park and the Fauntleroy Creek system. Our guide has been the Fauntleroy Watershed Action Plan adopted in 2001, concurrent with formation of the Council. This report summarizes our 2004 activities.

INSTREAM RESTORATION

In June, EarthCorps installed some 200 logs in the upper creek in a city- and NOAA Fisheries-funded project to slow flow, reduce erosion, and enhance instream habitat. The \$100,000 “large woody debris” project directed by Seattle Public Utilities extended from tributaries in Fauntleroy Park through the mainstem to 45th Ave. S.W. Revegetation of work areas will follow in 2005.



This public investment prompted the Council to submit a proposal to complete instream restoration in the lower creek, where private property is involved. In September, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation awarded us \$11,625 in federal and county funds for the project. Volunteer and in-kind contributions are expected to match half that amount. The project will involve diversifying two reaches below 45th Ave. S.W. Following invasive removal in spring 2005, instream work is planned for the summer, with revegetation in the fall 2006.

Seattle Public Utilities supported this public/private partnership with proposal advice and will be providing assistance to recruit long-term creek stewards from among streamside residents. Seattle Parks and Recreation supported the project by contributing fell logs. In addition to serving as contractor, EarthCorps will provide pro-bono assistance with design and permitting as an enhancement to its conservation training program.

These instream projects address six action items in the watershed plan related to improved spawning habitat, instream and bank erosion, and silt transport. Seattle Public Utilities began monitoring large woody debris placement and effectiveness in the upper creek, which will complement volunteer monitoring of newly restored restoration sites in the lower creek. (See www.fauntleroy.net for a status summary of needs identified in the watershed plan.)

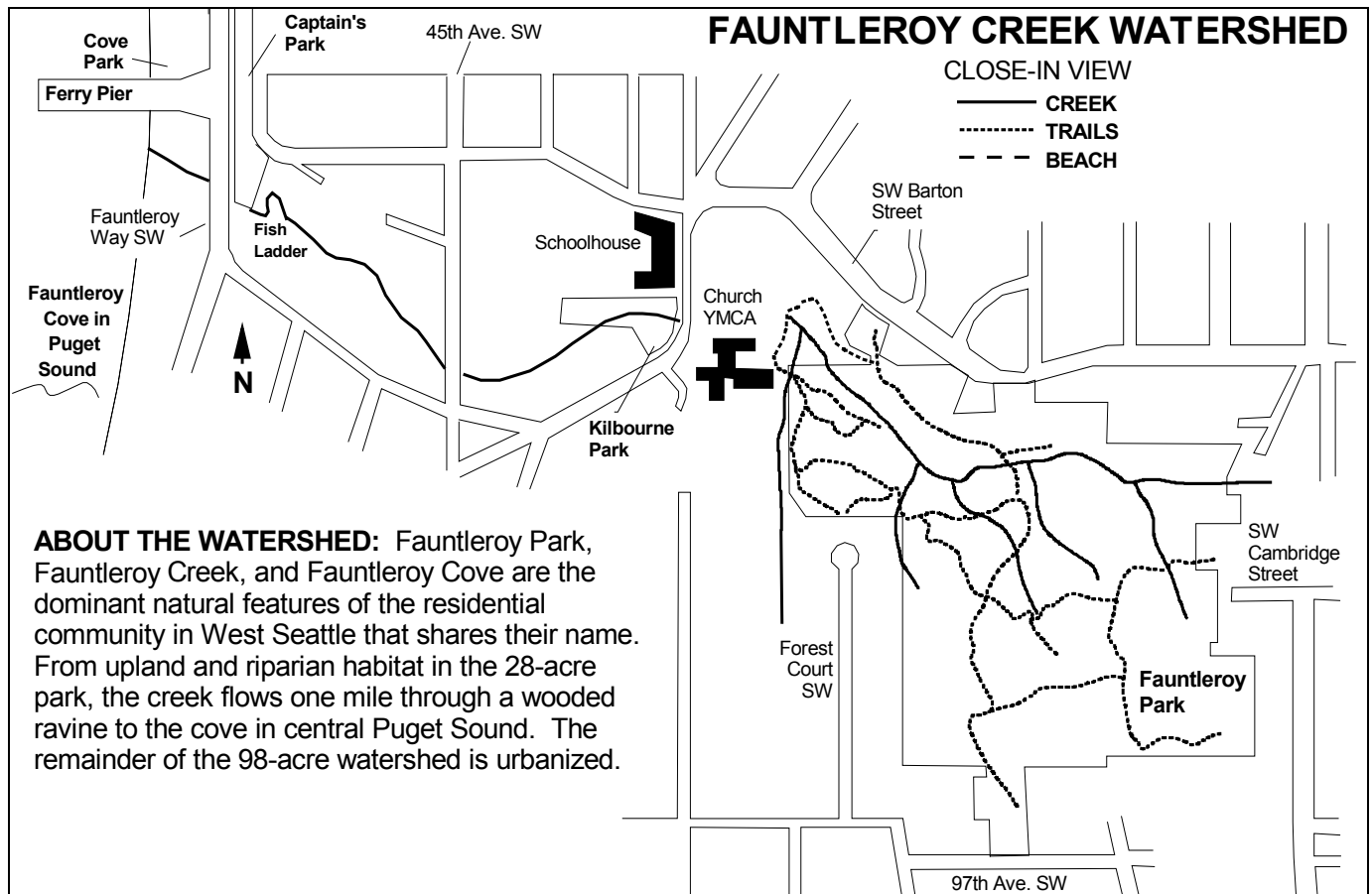
PARK PRESERVATION

Friends of Fauntleroy Park continued weeding to preserve the park's native vegetation. Many hours of digging, pulling, and cutting back have noticeably weakened the hold of clematis, ivy, and other invasive non-natives. Seattle Parks completed major maintenance of arterial trails begun in 2003. In consultation with trails staff, the Council, and interested residents, Seattle Public Utilities developed a repair plan for the S.W. Cambridge Street entrance, where street drainage had washed out the trailhead. The Seattle Conservation Corps did the work in the fall, with revegetation and assessment scheduled for early 2005.

Following city adoption of a vegetation management plan for Fauntleroy Park, Seattle Parks directed leftover funds from that project into a contract with EarthCorps to cultivate more volunteer involvement in the park. In consultation with the Council and community association board, the outreach effort got under way at year's end, with four work parties planned for early 2005. The project included doorbelling, fliers, and other communication to try to interest citizens - especially park neighbors - in participating.

Efforts continued toward a negotiated easement between Fauntleroy Church and Seattle Parks, which would add the fire lane behind the church to the park's trail system. Council assistance included site documentation and communication to keep the process moving forward.

The Council initiated a joint "Dear Neighbor" letter with Seattle Parks and Fauntleroy Church to households adjoining the northwest corner of the park. This outreach sought their cooperation in curbing illegal dumping of yard waste on park and church property above the creek.



HABITAT RESEARCH

KapKa Cooperative Primary School capped its yearlong pet-waste study in May with an energetic and informative report to the Council by a dozen students. In addition to surveying dog poop in Fauntleroy Park, the project tested various ways of communicating with dog walkers about “scooping the poop.”



The students found some indications of improved stewardship and recommended repeating the study over a longer period of time. The State Department of Ecology recognized their efforts toward improving water quality with a special certificate.

In addition to generating articles about the students’ work (see “Public Notice”), the project pinpointed where to install more bag dispensers to the best advantage. The last of the project’s grant money went toward purchase of more posts for bag dispensers and toward production of our new watershed brochure, which includes stewardship advice about pet waste.

Also, the study contributed to the State Department of Ecology’s choice of Fauntleroy Creek for monthly sampling for several water-quality indicators. Property owners cooperated in establishing this “basin station” near the mouth, where samples will be taken until October 2005.

Arbor Heights Elementary continued two research projects. In April, fourth graders did the annual stonefly exoskeleton count in the lower creek. They documented that the number was down for the third year in a row and that many exoskeletons were smaller than in years past. In October, fifth graders conducted the annual benthic sampling in the upper creek; a class delegation reported findings at our November Council meeting. They found a similar number and diversity of macroinvertebrates as in years past and a notable widening of the creek channel at the sampling site. (See www.fauntleroy.net for full reports on these studies.)

EMERGENCE & OUTMIGRATION MONITORING

In March, creek volunteers observed as many as 20 natural-hatch coho fry in one sighting. They emerged from one redd known to have been left by last fall’s spawners. They were joined by approximately 1,500 coho fry released into the creek by Salmon in the Classroom students between early April and early June.

Volunteers placed our smolt trap in the fish ladder on March 3 and checked it daily through early June. Results of this second annual monitoring documented the smolt outmigration as between mid March and early May. The creek produced 11 coho smolt this year, compared to 37 in 2003, our first year of monitoring. They ranged in size from 97 mm to 123 mm standard length (body not including tail fin). We did not find any dead smolt and trapped only three dead fry.

The number of outward-bound juveniles was down from 2003, and we did not see the oversized

individuals that may have resulted last year from cannibalism. A total of 569 live fry landed in the trap, some of which may have been counted more than once because we relocated many back upstream.



Factors that may have contributed to healthier survival were (1) fewer eggs delivered to schools, such that no premature releases were required to relieve tanks and (2) more releases after spring break, when fish were larger and stronger. Volunteers worked closely with the city's Salmon in the Classroom coordinator to institute these key changes. A third possible factor was the absence of major rainstorms during release season, thus giving fry a better chance to gain a "toehold" in moving water.

We did not find any cutthroat trout in the trap. We did, however, find large stonefly larvae and began to record them as another potential indicator of habitat health. Their presence also helped pinpoint when to do the annual stonefly exoskeleton count. (See www.faultleroy.net for a full report of this study.)

SALMON WATCH

Despite early rains and excellent conditions at the mouth and in the channel, 2004 was our third disappointing coho return in a row. The only solace was that the coho return was also sparse in other Seattle creeks.

A total of 25 volunteer watchers were on duty in the spawning reach from mid October through early December. They included several new volunteers and many veterans. Standard procedure was to monitor within a five-hour period after peak high tide and record any activity in and above the fish ladder. In cooperation with Washington State Ferries, six watchers also observed activity in the cove near peak high. Washington Trout monitors complemented our efforts with weekly surveys for Seattle Public Utilities.



Although cove monitors reported schooling near the ferry pier in early October, those fish passed us by. Watchers documented six coho in November, some of which were jacks. One redd was evident. Predators - including a river otter in the fishway - left little trace of carcasses.

Our primary recruitment venue for volunteers was the Fauntleroy Fall Festival in mid October.

Although we were in communication with a number of schools about field trips, all but Chautauqua Elementary on Vashon backed out for lack of fish. Watchers reported more than 60 hopeful visitors to the fish ladder viewpoint, where we posted bulletins about the return.

ADVOCACY

During the year, city and regional agency representatives briefed the Council on current and upcoming topics of interest. As a result, we provided input to and feedback on an update to the city's Comprehensive Drainage Plan and began involvement in the public process to update the city's Critical Areas Code. We also got "in the loop" on the regional habitat plan being developed for the Green/Duwamish/Central Puget Sound watershed and on the mayor's "Restore Our Waters" aquatic strategy.

The Council kept an eye on planning by Washington State Ferries that could impact nearshore habitat in Fauntleroy Cove. For this same reason, we also raised concerns with state agencies about any further renourishment of the south beach at Lincoln Park.

OUTREACH & EDUCATION

Linda and Robert Gresky enthusiastically joined our cadre of volunteers as "bird coordinators." With a focus on cultivating awareness of avian wildlife, they provided a bird checklist for our watershed brochure and staffed a station for a community nature walk in Fauntleroy Park. That March event involved other Council volunteers in planning, as well as staffing stations about erosion and life in the creek. The walk drew dozens of residents, including many children.

Our updated watershed brochure went into service in September, providing information about natural features in the watershed, stewardship advice, the bird checklist, and a self-guided nature walk in Fauntleroy Park. Seattle Public Utilities supported the project with a STEP grant for production costs. To augment existing distribution locations, we added a publication box at the S.W. Barton Street park entrance and posted major components on our website.



Other outreach highlights of the year:

- A hundred young children eagerly made "salmon hats" as the Council's contribution to the annual Fauntleroy Fall Festival in October. In addition, several of the estimated 800 people in attendance stopped by our table to express interest in being salmon watchers.
- A week later, our fourth annual drumming drew some 50 residents to the fish-ladder viewpoint to call the fish home with singing, drumming, and storytelling.
- We created a definitive map of trails and tributaries in Fauntleroy Park and posted an enlarged version at the S.W. Barton Street entrance.
- The Council hosted an information table at the

Fauntleroy Community Association annual meeting in April and provided a display and video for an exhibition on Southwest Seattle at History House during May.

Education activities included an alliance with Islandwood Nature Center on Bainbridge Island. It introduced 40 students from Roxhill Elementary to the creek, where they returned several days later to release salmon. Six other schools came for field trips directed by volunteer educator Judy Pickens, some of which included salmon releases; two additional schools released on their own in the park. Crews from KapKa Cooperative Primary maintained natives in one area of the park, and students from Denny Middle School came through the 2003-04 school term to do plant and erosion-control work. All told, we recorded 275 students in the watershed this year for volunteer-directed field trips, service learning, and research projects. A major update of our "cafeteria" of streamside-education activities and related resources made the website an even more helpful destination for teachers and parents.

We responded to several inquiries from older students, one of whom volunteered to help compile creek archives. The Southwest Seattle Historical Society will accession our documents and make them available to historians and scholars at South Seattle Community College.

IN THE MEDIA

Exposure of Council activities in the media during the year included

- a photo/cutline of KapKa students doing a pet-waste survey, *West Seattle Herald*.
- quotes in an article, "Birdwatching on the Westside," *West Seattle Herald*.
- regular publication of meeting notices, *West Seattle Herald*.
- articles on timely topics in every issue of *Neighbors*, the quarterly newsletter published by the Fautleroy Community Association.
- an article with photo about engaging young students in studying pet waste, *Clearing* (a regional environmental-education journal).

In addition to posting news and information throughout the year, webmaster Chris Nack made updates of major sections happen and provided periodic reviews to document the number of visitors. At its annual meeting, the Fautleroy Community Association board recognized volunteer Tom Linde for his dedicated stewardship of the creek.

COUNCIL BUSINESS

The Council met at Fautleroy Church bimonthly (except July) on the second Thursday evening. The Executive Committee met between sessions to plan agendas. Don Allen with Seattle Parks and Kathy Minsch with Seattle Public Utilities continued their steady participation as agency liaisons. Other agency representatives attended as agenda topics warranted.

Treasurer Dennis Hinton reported a beginning balance of \$353.24 in the Council checking account, expenses of \$173.92, income of \$30 from a memorial donation, and an ending balance of \$209.32. The Council received a STEP grant from Seattle Public Utilities in support of an updated watershed brochure; SPU paid \$520 in production costs directly to the supplier.

CONTACTS & CREDITS

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