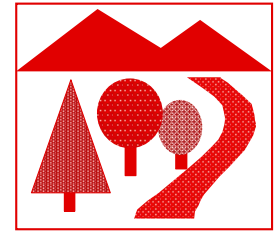


2015 ANNUAL REPORT



**FAUNTLEROY
WATERSHED
COUNCIL**

This year, the Fautleroy Watershed Council

- hosted a record 750 students releasing salmon in Fautleroy Park.
- advocated to retain the city's natural areas for passive enjoyment.
- continued a six-year project to restore native vegetation in the Kilbourne ravine, which shapes and provides habitat along the middle reach of Fautleroy Creek

SALMON

OUT-MIGRATION MONITORING. Starting March 27, volunteer monitors documented a total of 35 coho smolts that survived their year in Fautleroy Creek as fry and fingerlings to migrate out to saltwater habitat in Fautleroy Cove. All but two of this number were found in the lower trap as the upper trap did not go in until a month later. By casual observation, smolt size appeared to be comparable to past years. Volunteers found 120 release fry that had washed into one of the traps.

SALMON IN THE SCHOOLS. Teachers were especially taxed this year to participate in the Salmon in the Schools program and implement a challenging testing regimen in the Seattle School District. The fry survival rate from eyed eggs was exceptionally low (63%) and even veteran teachers had difficulty maximizing the program's potential while meeting traditional academic requirements.

Nonetheless, a record 750 students brought fry in May to release in the upper creek. Chaperones served as team leaders so that all students had the opportunity to safely explore habitat in Fautleroy Park during their release. Many classes also came to the lower creek to see the fish ladder and engage in a question-and-answer session with volunteers before capping

their field trip with time on the shore of Fautleroy Cove at Lincoln Park.

Judy Pickens scheduled and coordinated with teachers and enlisted community volunteers as needed to increase chaperone coverage. Dennis Hinton and Pete Droughon staffed the release site during 20 releases, 17 for the 14 schools that reared their own fish and three for schools that released fry reared by volunteer Jack Lawless. All of Jack's 500 fish were called on this



Dennis Hinton and Pete Droughon check one of the two smolt traps installed by Steev Ward to monitor out-migration. Photo courtesy Suchang Le



Dennis assists a student from KapKa Cooperative School in releasing her fish. Photo courtesy Michael Wilson



Dennis and Pete head to the creek with young salmon from the Fautleroy Children's Center. Photo courtesy Judy Pickens

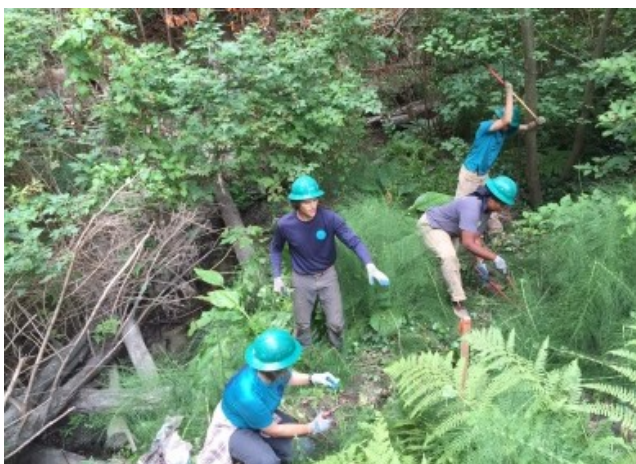
year to ensure that every student had a fish to put in the water.

Phil Sweetland worked with teachers and volunteers to keep tank equipment up and running and water quality optimum for coho juveniles. Phil also worked with teachers at selected schools to pilot feeding that tied amount of food to fish weight. The goal was to test fry survival while giving students an additional opportunity to apply math skills.

Year	Live Smolts Upper	Live Smolts Lower	Smolts to Salt	Eggs to Schools	Released Fry	% Fry to Eggs	Spawners
2015	2	33	35	2,700	1,700	63%	0
2014			19	3,450	2,409	70%	19
2013			141	2,800	1,987	71%	3
2012	145	85	157	3,100	2,615	84%	274
2011	147	36	36	2,900	2,027	70%	14
2010		24		2,500	2,298	92%	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

Looking to release season 2016, we reluctantly asked schools to bring no more than one busload of students (70) on release day to avoid undue wear and tear on sensitive habitat. With significant increases in students across the Seattle School District, bringing all of a school's fifth-graders, for example, is no longer environmentally responsible. Volunteer Shannon Ninburg will be new this coming spring, responsible for developing and overseeing the habitat exploration part of release day for every school, both elementary and preschool.

SALMON WATCH. Early predictions to the contrary, few coho spawners survived warm ocean conditions to return to Puget Sound. A dozen volunteer watchers, including new ones recruited through the *West Seattle Blog*, began looking for spawners on Oct. 19. Stream conditions were ideal through the end of the month and tides were ideal into the first week of November. Frustration for watchers was high that last week of ideal tides as a culvert blockage under 45th Ave. SW, upstream of the spawning reach, demanded emergency attention by the city, resulting in dewatering of the spawning reach by about half. Any spawners in the cove would not have encountered sufficient water to enter the creek. Members of the council met with key staff from Seattle Public Utilities to air concerns about the project's timing in relation to salmon needs and emphasized the value of timely communication and a collegial relationship as the city weighs how best to convey creek flow under 45th.



EarthCorps trainees dig ivy, wild clematis, and morning glory to suppress the return of these invasive non-native species until new conifers can shade the area. Photo courtesy Jammie Kingman

HABITAT RESTORATION & STEWARDSHIP

KILBOURNE RAVINE. EarthCorps crews completed four days of field work for a total of 145 person-hours on the ground. They accomplished several tasks as part of a six-year project to (1) improve water quality in the middle reach of Fautleroy Creek by controlling erosion, filtering runoff, and holding rain in a restored conifer canopy, (2) reclaim the ravine as wildlife habitat, (3) stop the spread of invasive plants into the neighborhood, and (4) enlist property owners and the community in keeping invasive plants out of landscapes. Crews accomplished the following this year:

- cut survival rings on three new native trees and refreshed rings on the 41 native trees protected in 2014.

- dug out invasive shrubs (primarily blackberry and clematis) and English ivy that had grown back since last year and removed additional ivy, staying clear of landslide-prone slopes and one area not permitted by the landowner.
- installed 315 native plants, including coniferous trees, deciduous shrubs, and dogwood cuttings.
- broadcast one pound of seeds from three dozen kinds of native emergent and wetland species.
- treated 200 new plants with mycorrhizal fungi to improve their survival in drought conditions.

Seattle Parks continued restoration of the Kilbourne Park portion of the ravine with the addition of scores of native plants.

ABOUT PROJECT FUNDING

- \$48,820 from the King Conservation District + \$245 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



EarthCorps crew members outline the Kilbourne ravine project to sixth-grade science students from Our Lady of Guadalupe School. Photo courtesy the school

PAST & PROPOSED WORK. In addition to funding annual herbicide treatment of tenacious shoots of yellow archangel in Fenton Glen (upper creek), property owner Fautleroy Church purchased and installed 15 more sword ferns for erosion control on slopes. Instream diversification installed in 2010 continued to function properly and we received no reports of flooding or vandalism at this very public site.

We failed in our efforts to make instream repairs and restore landscaping around the fish ladder in the lower creek. Early in the year we drafted a grant application that included all the work and, in response to a request by the prospective funder (King Conservation District) that we stop ivy intrusion from adjacent city open space, we set out to identify a volunteer willing to train as a forest steward able to engage community volunteers to work on the site. The district also required that we include a plan for long-term maintenance of the landscaping. For safety reasons, maintenance could not be done by volunteers and Seattle Public Utilities, owner of the fish ladder, declined to take responsibility. Consequently, we were forced to withdraw the landscaping portion of the project from our application. It was subsequently rejected as not comprehensive.

With few plants around the fish ladder still surviving from construction in 1998, the prospect of a blackberry-ridden eyesore below a public viewpoint compelled the Fautleroy Community Association board to offer to pick up the tab for ongoing professional maintenance (\$400+ annually). Before taking on the complex task of drafting a second grant application reflecting this commitment, we sought assurance from Seattle Public Utilities that it would support such a proposal. Again, the response was no. During this back and forth, the grant program at the district broadened in scope, making it even more competitive. The combination forced us to put the entire project on the back burner.

FOREST STEWARDS. Our two forest stewards remained active on behalf of natural areas in the watershed. After a break for other priorities, Steve Hodson resumed volunteering about 20 hours per month in Fautleroy Park to monitor conditions and remove invasive plants. He and Peggy Cummings kept an eye out for trail repairs, fallen trees, and invasive plants to call to the attention of Carol Baker and her maintenance crew from Seattle Parks. Improvements this year included a berm to divert runoff from Forest Court and identification of two sizeable yellow archangel infestations.

Peggy's outreach efforts included introducing habitat features of the park to visiting students from Vashon Island and assisting with salmon releases. When summer drought conditions threatened new trees in the Kilbourne ravine, she worked out logistics with the Fautleroy Schoolhouse Community Center and Tuxedos and Tennis Shoes Catering to enable volunteer watering several times a week until fall. She also saw to removal of asphalt dumped in Kilbourne Park.

Seattle Parks and Recreation honored Peggy, Steve, and other forest stewards across the city with its 2015 Superintendent's Award for outstanding volunteer stewardship.

OUTREACH

FALL OUTREACH. Our popular salmon-hat booth at the Fautleroy Fall Festival on Oct. 11 drew nearly 170 young children to decorate the paper coho profiles, then wear their hats around the annual community event. Attendance (estimated at 1,500) was down from 2014, thanks to the growing popularity of Sunday football games. The weather cooperated, however, and eager volunteers shared responsibility for the booth.

A Seahawk's game also detracted from the 21st annual salmon drumming the following Sunday, Oct. 18. Two dozen people, from toddlers to elders, drummed and sang to entice any coho spawners waiting in the cove to come into the creek. The initial, informal drumming occurred in 1994, the first year we documented spawners in the lower creek.

ADDITIONAL OUTREACH. Though we encounter hundreds of school children every year through our participation in the Salmon in the



Brownie Girl Scouts hosted a ribbon cutting to show off their Metro bus shelter. Photo courtesy *West Seattle Blog*

Schools program, we don't often know how well their salmon lessons "stuck." Members of Brownie Girl Scout Troop 40255 proved that it does happen when they included images of the salmon life cycle in a Metro bus shelter they painted to show commodities important to Washington State's economy.

The annual shareholders meeting of the Green Seattle Partnership, in late September, prompted Forest Steward Peggy Cummings to work with Judy Pickens on a poster (at right)

summarizing restoration progress in the watershed. The display also include copies of our 2014 annual report and of our watershed brochure.

At our request, the Seattle Department of Transportation removed a derelict "crossing Fautleroy Creek" sign on 45th Ave. SW. Three of the grant-funded signs went up in 1992 to call attention to the creek. We removed one vandalized sign several years ago; one survives, across from the Fautleroy Ferry Terminal.



Musician Jamie Shilling led spirited singing and drumming at the annual outreach event to call in coho spawners. Photo courtesy *West Seattle Blog*



COMMUNICATION

IN THE MEDIA. The *West Seattle Blog* continued as our mainstay for sharing news with the entire peninsula. Coverage included delivery of Salmon in the Schools eggs (January), salmon releases (May), the annual salmon drumming (October), benthic sampling by Our Lady of Guadalupe students (October), and our call for salmon watchers (October). In addition, we had habitat-related news in every issue of *Neighbors*, the Fautleroy Community Association's quarterly newsletter.

WEBSITE. Webmaster Chris Nack reported that, this calendar year, our website had 2,710 visits, with 4,681 page views. Visits were from numerous countries, including Brazil, Canada, Russia, and Italy. Total visit from Seattle were 768. The most popular searches were Fautleroy Creek, the Fautleroy Park map, and 153 visits to the education page.

EDUCATION

STUDENT RESEARCH. For the third year, sixth-grade science students from Our Lady of Guadalupe School ably added to data about benthic macroinvertebrates (BMIs) in Fautleroy Creek - the aquatic insects that are an important food source for juvenile salmon.

When students came to the upper creek to release their salmon fry, they continued on to the lower creek to conduct the annual count of stonefly exoskeletons. Dating consistently from 2002, this simple count in a designated study area chronicles how many exoskeletons students find on bridges, trees, bushes, and fences close to the creek. Timing has varied from mid April through mid May. They found 23 total - the same as last year - and average size was typical. Students speculated that an especially early spring might have drawn larva out of the creek much sooner than their sampling date of May 20.



Patience paid off for student researchers as they counted a record number of macroinvertebrates in the lower creek. Photo courtesy Our Lady of Guadalupe School

Using standard sampling equipment and a simplified protocol, a new class of sixth-grade science students came in October to collect samples from one riffle in the upper creek and another in the lower creek. They then identified and counted any BMIs they saw, described the sample sites, and documented their work in photos. Several days later they presented their findings to members of the watershed council and Jonathan Froge, a benthic scientist with Seattle Public Utilities. Principal conclusions: BMIs were more diverse and much more abundant this year compared to prior years, especially in the lower creek where spawner carcasses provide nutrients. And the creek is in excellent health because four of the six different BMI species found can live only in non-polluted water.

HABITAT VISIT. In early May, we hosted upper-elementary students from Harbor School on Vashon Island. They got a taste of how students release salmon fry in the upper creek and the system's habitat features and challenges.

ADVOCACY

NATURAL AREAS. Feeling the pressure of a growing population on city parks, the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation wrestled this year with whether or not to allow more activities in natural areas and greenbelts. In May, the watershed council became one of 10 organizations (and 550 individuals) to sign a petition circulated by the Seattle Nature Alliance, calling on park commissions to retain these areas for passive activities. By late summer, commissioners floated amended language that strengthened procedures for citizen input about proposed use changes at any given location. Believing that the revised guidelines would be workable, councilmembers chose not to sign another petition but rather to speak up should any changes affecting the use of natural areas in Fautleroy be proposed.

CRITICAL AREAS. Experience gaining permits for the Kilbourne ravine project reinforced a critical shortcoming in the city's critical-areas ordinance: that permitting for environmental restoration should not be treated the same as permitting for construction. Missed email communication combined with losing the council's liaison to Seattle Public Utilities resulted in our not being part of the updating process until the end. With only 10 days before the close of public comment, we emphasized changes that would encourage restoration in critical areas while retaining city oversight.

IN TOUCH. In March, Kathy Minsch announced that Seattle Public Utilities would no longer have a liaison to our council, a role she had been ably filling since the council's inception, in September 2001. The absence of someone to call with questions or someone who would call us with need-to-know information was soon felt. We missed the chance to comment on the critical-areas ordinance. We did not learn about culvert work that dewatered the creek during spawning season (see "Salmon Watch"). We did not have advice about shaping the fish-ladder grant application (see "Past and Proposed Work"). Fortunately, key staff understood the ramifications for the city's only surviving watershed council and assigned long-time watershed advocate Sheryl Shapiro to be our point of contact within the utility.

HONORABLE MENTION

Many hands contributed to our work in 2015. We especially acknowledge

Kathy Minsch from Seattle Public Utilities for her strong commitment to our mission, without which the council might not have formed and certainly would not have persevered.

Rob Anderson for his able coordination since 2007 of EarthCorps restoration contracts in the watershed.

Jack Lawless for his generous rearing of coho fry to fill in the many gaps that opened this year.

Carol Baker for her steadfast interest and ready response as our liaison from Seattle Parks and Recreation.

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 council treasurer Dennis Hinton, we opened the year with \$1,580.87 in our money-market account at Washington Federal and closed it with \$1,505.47, which includes interest income of \$1.55. We had expenses totaling \$76.95 for paper and copying for our watershed brochure and annual report.

According to Fauntleroy Community Association treasurer Phil Sweetland, we received grant reimbursements during 2015 for \$10,523.44 in expenses for the Kilbourne Ravine Riparian and Buffer Project. In November, we expended the last of our \$5,000 grant from the Rose Foundation and by year's end had \$33,698.55 remaining in our grant from the King Conservation District.

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 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 over its one-mile course to Fauntleroy Cove in central Puget Sound. Springs and runoff from a 144-acre watershed sustain flow year round. Prior to installation of the city's storm-drain system, the natural, geologic watershed was approximately 493 acres.

