

2019 ANNUAL REPORT



**FAUNTLEROY
WATERSHED
COUNCIL**

This year, the Fauntleroy Watershed Council

- rallied exceptional support to open the mouth of the creek to coho spawners.
- initiated a “Silver Anniversary” celebration of the first spawners in the creek.
- hosted 1,000+ people on releases and 125 more during spawning season.
- continued to earn support for our Fauntleroy Watershed Stewardship Fund.

SALMON

SPAWNER ACCESS. This year’s lead salmon story was the exemplary emergency response that enabled coho spawners to access the creek from Fauntleroy Cove. Multiple factors aligned so that fish spotted near the mouth could make their way into freshwater and on to spawning habitat in the lower creek.



Steve Richmond and Joey Baumgarten, invasive-removal specialists with Garden Cycles, pulled reed canary grass from the channel near the beach so spawners could access the creek and spawning habitat. Photo by Dennis Hinton

SILVER ANNIVERSARY. In the fall of 1994, the first coho spawners (“Harry” and “Louise”) in modern history came into Fauntleroy Creek and spawned a few yards from the beach. Twenty five years later, we welcomed another crop of spawners and initiated a year-long “silver anniversary” celebration of salmon restoration fueled by community volunteers and their agency and funding partners.

Volunteer salmon watchers reported a small logjam on the beach blocking spawners’ route to the mouth, plus a thicket of vegetation blocking their progress upstream. Per watershed-council policy involving private property, we called in State Fish and Wildlife’s area habitat biologist Larry Fisher, who affirmed both blockages, gave a neighbor permission to shift the logs on his beach out of the way, and asked the property owner to permit us to open a path for spawners through the vegetation.

We lined up a team from Garden Cycles to do a professional job and, within 24 hours, that team was on the job, paid for by donations to the Fauntleroy Watershed Stewardship Fund. With volunteer help, the channel was soon open.



Judy Pickens and Dennis Hinton dispensed more than 100 anniversary stickers at the annual Fauntleroy Fall Festival and talked fish and habitat with many of the 1,500 festival goers. Photo by West Seattle Blog



At our annual drumming to call in spawners, we asked participants to sign a large “anniversary card” and collected more signatures a week later at the Fauntleroy Fall Festival before hanging the poster at the fish-ladder viewpoint. We also emphasized the anniversary during an “open creek” in spawning season. We plan to continue the observance into 2020.

SALMON IN THE SCHOOLS. On April 30, we hosted the first of 23 salmon releases in Fautleroy Park and, by May 31, 2,006 coho fry were beginning their year-long stay in the creek. Our release team of Dennis Hinton, Shannon Ninburg, and Pete Draughon helped 730 students put fish in the water and explore nearby habitat; 356 young siblings and parents also enjoyed this Salmon in the Schools experience. Special guests were City Councilwoman Lisa Herbold and County Councilman Joe McDermott. A good rearing season at most schools left us with enough “just in case” fish to have a community release in early June; these fish (reared by volunteer Jack Lawless) ensure that every student has a fish to release. Release day for students from Our Lady of Guadalupe Schools included a chance to talk restoration and careers with EarthCorps trainees working that day in the Kilbourne ravine.



Dear Dennis + Pete,
 Thank you for letting us go on that
 trip into the woods.
 I loved how the fishes felt. They
 felt slippery and hard.
 ELI

(Above) Students from Louisa Boren STEM gathered for the school’s first release. (Right) A close look at aquatic insects was part of the experience for Sanislo students. (Left) Thank-you notes from students are part of the payoff for release volunteers. (Upper left) A community release got the last of the fry into the creek. Photos by West Seattle Blog, Judy Pickens, Kersti Muul



Soos Creek Hatchery workers harvest coho spawners in October, including those we will use for in-class dissections. Photo by Judy Pickens

DISSECTIONS. In-class dissections continued as a bonus learning experience for Salmon in the Schools students. Volunteer fish biologist Steev Ward visited eight classrooms for an animated session on salmon anatomy and systems. We have seven frozen coho spawner carcasses for more dissections in 2020.

SALMON WATCH. Sixteen veteran and new watchers documented 19 coho spawners between Oct. 20 and 27 and marked one possible redd for winter monitoring. The fish were a portion of those seen schooling in the cove while awaiting a clear channel from the beach. They appeared to be healthy and stayed near the fish ladder in the lower creek.

Watchers talked with 125 visitors during spawning season. They included primary students from the nearby Taproot School and attendees during a Saturday all-ages “open creek.”

Lia ran to meet me at the car and told me all about seeing a spawner. I don’t think I’ve ever seen her so excited about something!! - Taproot parent

| Year | # Eggs | # Released Fry | % of Fry From Eggs | # Live Smolts Upper | # Live Smolts Lower | # Smolts to Salt | # Spawners |
|------|--------|----------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|------------|
| 2019 | 2,400 | 2,006 | 83.5 | 4 | 18 | 22 | 19 |
| 2018 | 2,400 | 1,955 | 81 | 26 | 19 | 45 | 18 |
| 2017 | 2,400 | 1,817 | - | 18 | 14 | 32 | 4 |
| 2016 | 2,900 | 1,795 | 62 | 14 | 5 | 19 | 7 |
| 2015 | 2,700 | 1,700 | 63 | 2 | 33 | 35 | 0 |
| 2014 | 3,450 | 2,409 | 70 | 8 | 11 | 19 | 19 |
| 2013 | 2,800 | 1,987 | 71 | 65 | 76 | 141 | 3 |
| 2012 | 3,100 | 2,615 | 84 | 145 | 85 | 230* | 274 |
| 2011 | 2,900 | 2,027 | 70 | 147 | 36 | 183* | 14 |
| 2010 | 2,500 | 2,298 | 92 | --- | 24 | 24 | 0 |
| 2009 | 2,500 | 1,936 | 77 | --- | 18 | 18 | 18 |
| 2008 | --- | 1,790 | --- | --- | 17 | 17 | 2 |
| 2007 | --- | 2,276 | --- | --- | 24 | 42 | 89 |
| 2006 | --- | 2,033 | --- | --- | 22 | 22 | 0 |
| 2005 | --- | 1,138 | --- | --- | 10 | 10 | 48 |
| 2004 | --- | 1,534 | --- | --- | 11 | 11 | 6 |
| 2003 | --- | 1,254 | --- | --- | 37 | 37 | 4 |
| 2002 | --- | 1,965 | --- | --- | --- | --- | 5 |
| 2001 | --- | 1,050 | --- | --- | --- | --- | 167 |
| 2000 | --- | 750 | --- | --- | --- | --- | 126 |
| 1999 | --- | 875 | --- | --- | --- | --- | 100** |
| 1998 | --- | unspecified | --- | --- | --- | --- | 200** |
| 1997 | --- | unspecified | --- | --- | --- | --- | 2** |
| 1996 | --- | unspecified | --- | --- | --- | --- | 6 |
| 1995 | --- | unspecified | --- | --- | --- | --- | 11** |
| 1994 | --- | unspecified | --- | --- | --- | --- | 2 |
| 1993 | --- | unspecified | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1992 | --- | ? | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1991 | --- | unspecified | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1990 | --- | unspecified | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |

*corrected **approximate

OUT-MIGRATION & ASSESSMENT. Between March 30 and May 26, volunteers Pete Draughon and Dennis Hinton documented 22 coho smolts leaving the creek for nearshore habitat in central Puget Sound. It was our 16th year of monitoring out-migration and the eighth having soft traps in both upper- and lower-creek locations.

By checking the traps twice daily, they soon realized that few smolts were exiting Fauntleroy Park, where Salmon in the Schools students had released nearly 2,000 fry a year earlier. Only four apparently survived to leave as smolts, compared with 26 the year before.



Steve Damm and Josh Meidav assessed the creek mainstem downstream of the salmon-release site. Photo by Dennis Hinton

To try to ascertain why, environmental analysts Josh Meidav and Steve Damm with Seattle Public Utilities offered to take a look, especially if vegetation might be trapping smolts in the channel. In July, they determined it was not and concluded that the upper creek is in excellent condition. Noting that extreme

temperatures and/or flows as well as pollutants in stormwater runoff could be factors, they posited that dogs allowed to frolic in the water at the salmon-release site could have killed many juveniles. We plan to work with Seattle Parks to influence dog walkers to keep their pets on leash, especially at the site.

HABITAT RESTORATION & STEWARDSHIP

STEWARDSHIP FUND. We promoted the Fauntleroy Watershed Stewardship Fund at every opportunity. EarthCorps provided periodic reports and, after a year of experience, we put our agreement in writing.



Dennis Hinton and granddaughter Lilia were among volunteers staffing our information table at the Colman estate during the June garden tour, where we had more than 100 substantive conversations. Photo by Connie Hinton



December was all about planting for EarthCorps trainees, including Katherine Stratton from Chicago. They added nearly 500 plants to the Kilbourne ravine to enhance habitat, control erosion, and keep invasive species from coming back. Photo by EarthCorps

The fund drew 15 donations this year totaling \$8,700, bringing the total since March 2018 to \$18,175. They included a \$4,000 grant from the West Seattle Garden Tour, some of which will fund a pocket garden at the east end of the Kilbourne ravine to promote use of native plants. We will use the remainder for annual maintenance of restored habitat in the ravine.

KILBOURNE RAVINE RESTORATION. On Dec. 31, grant funding for the six-year Kilbourne Ravine Riparian and Buffer Project ended, leaving annual maintenance along the middle reach of Fauntleroy Creek up to the community and the Seattle Parks and Recreation for the Kilbourne Park portion.

Funding from the King Conservation District (\$70,023) and the Rose Foundation (\$5,000) enabled EarthCorps to not only achieve project objectives but also involve at least 40 trainees as they developed skills they will use in conservation careers around the world. In addition to greatly reducing invasive plant species in the steeply sloped ravine, crews documented canopy, mid-story, and ground native and invasive density each year. This data will greatly aid in strategizing how best to employ two crew days annually to keep invasives from re-establishing, especially since payment will be out of our stewardship fund.

CULVERT REPLACEMENT. Phil Sweetland and Judy Pickens continued to represent the watershed council and Fauntleroy Church on the community group advising Seattle Public Utilities on replacement of culverts on either end of the middle reach of the creek (45th Ave. SW and California Ave. SW). Current cost estimates for both range from \$9 million to \$20 million.

As the city's team members homed in on preferred designs, they continued to use meetings, a dedicated website, a list serve, and media to solicit community input. Feedback focused on public safety, cost, and long-term impacts, especially for the culvert under California Ave. SW that links to the church-owned culvert under its main parking lot. Additional design work and a value-engineering study in the new year will lead to recommendations

for how to get the most value for the least cost. Geotechnical investigations and a pre-proposal for funding through the state's Fish Passage Removal Board will also advance planning in 2020.

LOWER CREEK RESTORATION. Instream structures in the lower creek continued to deteriorate with the force of flows during Seattle’s changing rainy-season conditions. After another grant application went unfunded, we transferred plans for upgrades to the city’s culvert replacement team in hopes that some improvements could be incorporated in their designs.



Dave and Joshua Follis did their part to restore beneficial habitat in the lower creek. Photo by Kersti Muul

OPEN SPACE RESTORATION. In March, 14 volunteers planted 200 trees, shrubs, and groundcovers in the flat portion of city-owned property adjacent to the channel and fish ladder in the lower creek. Through the Green Seattle Partnership, Seattle Parks revegetated the steep portion to continue this multi-year effort to bring back a healthy habitat.

FOREST STEWARDS. Volunteer forest stewards gave generously of their time to maintaining and enhancing habitat in Fautleroy Park. Cooper hawks expressed their thanks by nesting again in the park this year.

Steve Hodson gave 540 hours and installed 80 groundcover plants provided by Seattle Parks. In addition to serving on the watershed council and its executive committee, Peggy Cummings volunteered 120 hours this year, primarily for outreach and planning. New

A highlight of the year for me was hearing people who use Fautleroy Park frequently say how wonderfully it has been taken care of. Some of them joined me on several occasions to weed! - Steve Hodson

forest steward Mike Arizona clocked 7 hours on the planting party in the lower creek and on planning associated with Cambridge Street. On the horizon, Peggy expects her move to Burien to lighten her involvement as a forest steward and council member.

Attesting to the great value of these volunteer stewards, Steve was the first to sound the alarm about runoff into the upper creek from a Dec. 5 fire at a homeless encampment in Fautleroy Park. With immediate help from Kathy Minsch and Eric Autry at Seattle Public Utilities, we were reassured that the Seattle Fire Department had used a safe fire suppressant and that city workers removing the encampment would be on the lookout for any source of toxic runoff.

CAMBRIDGE STREET ENTRANCE. New council member Mike Arizona jumped right in to assess what to do with the Cambridge Street entrance on the east side of Fautleroy Park. For years, street runoff has eroded steps into the park and the wetland area at the base of the stairway, creating a public hazard. Mike and volunteer hydrologist Steve Winter did a fresh assessment and recommended that the lightly used entrance be closed. Seeking to save the connection to the neighborhood, Seattle Parks agreed to work on a runoff solution with Seattle Public Utilities and the Seattle Department of Transportation.

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS

In response to forest-steward reports about **unsafe wire mesh on boardwalks** in Fautleroy Park, staff with Seattle Parks devised a way to make long-term repairs. Members of the southwest district crew also responded quickly to reports of **downed trees** affecting trails and the release bridge in the park.

Creek neighbor and Fautleroy Community Association President Mike Dey arranged for the State Department of Natural Resources to remove **creosote logs** from Fautleroy Cove. Over two days in February, the crew removed 19 tons of treated wood from nearshore habitat.



This juvenile is the second beaver to come into the creek, apparently from the cove, to try to build in the lower creek. Photo by Susan Lantz-Dey

Mike also responded in June when a juvenile **beaver** began construction in the reach to the beach. By the time he had enlisted expert help, her dam had backed up the creek nearly to the top of the culvert outlet. Mike financed her trapping and relocation to Tulalip land north of Seattle.

RESEARCH

MACROINVERTEBRATES. On March 26, sixth graders from Our Lady of Guadalupe School came to the lower creek for the annual count of stonefly exoskeletons along the spawning reach. Jonathan Frodge, limnologist with Seattle Public Utilities, was a resource for them. They documented 67 exoskeletons on trees, bridges, fences, and the ground, up from 42 in 2018. Size range was typical of last year. The students suggested that coming earlier in the month may have increased how many were spotted.

The students were back on Oct. 22 for the annual sampling for macroinvertebrates, returning to two established sites in the upper and lower creek. Following are the findings they reported to watershed council and Seattle Public Utilities representatives two weeks later and noted finding additional species in unofficial grab samples. We forwarded their data to Seattle Public Utilities as documentation of water quality.

| | 2014 | | 2015 | | 2016 | | 2018 | | 2019 | |
|---------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Upper Creek | Lower Creek | Upper Creek | Lower Creek | Upper Creek | Lower Creek | Upper Creek | Lower Creek | Upper Creek | Lower Creek |
| Stonefly larvae | 1 | 2 | | 2 | | | 1 | | 2 | 2 |
| Mayfly larvae | | 1 | 1 | 5 | | | | 1 | | |
| Caddis fly larvae | | 1 | 1 | 19 | | | | | | |
| Aquatic worms | 2 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 2 | |
| Black fly larvae | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| Midge fly larvae | | | | | | | | | | |
| Water penny | 2 | | | | | | | | | |
| Beetle larvae | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| Riffle beetle | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| Snail | | | | 4 | | | | 1 | | |
| Too small to ID or unable to ID | | | 2 | | | | 1 | 3 | | |
| Total | 8 | 6 | 3 | 35 | 1 | 7 | 3 | 7 | 4 | 2 |

PROFESSIONAL MONITORING. Seattle Public Utilities continued monitoring water temperature and electrical conductivity in the upper and lower creek, a study begun in 2016 to check for any dissolved solids (indicating sewage) in the water. Findings contributed to the utilities' crediting Fauntleroy Creek with having the highest water quality in Seattle. Scientists will keep monitoring temperature and conductivity as part of their background monitoring.

OUTREACH

WEBSITE ACTIVITY. Our website continued to draw more than 2,000 page views annually. The highest number of referrals were via the *West Seattle Blog*. In the fall, webmaster Chris Nack began exploring options for updating our site to be accessible from any browser and easier to manage, without being prohibitably costly. The 2000 documentary, "The Gift of the Salmon" became a permanent feature of the website.



OTHER OUTREACH

In March, our table and display at the annual **Fautleroy Food Fest** enabled Judy Pickens and Peggy Cummings to interact with many area residents at the popular community event, especially about the stewardship fund.

Also in March, Judy gave a presentation on the creek and stewardship fund to the **West Seattle Kiwanis Club**. Dennis Hinton, Peggy Cummings, and Jack Lawless helped with the Q&A.

In April, Judy met with the environmental-compliance team from **Washington State Ferries** to answer creek-related questions as part of the planning process to rebuild the Fautleroy Ferry Terminal.

SALMON DRUMMING. Our annual drumming on Oct. 20 to call in spawners drew 30 people, two of whom were present at the first drumming 25 years earlier. Photo by the *West Seattle Blog*



FAUTLEROY FALL FESTIVAL. Artfully decorated salmon hats were the chapeau of choice for 153 children at the October Fautleroy Fall Festival. Cathy Follis ably coordinated the activity for the first time. Photo by the *West Seattle Blog*

HONORABLE MENTION

Many community volunteers, agency partners, and contractors have contributed to the achievements summarized in this report. We thank the following people for exceptional support:

Jack Miller, owner of Husky Deli, for the loan of freezer space for the well-wrapped salmon carcasses we'll use for in-class dissections.

Mike Dey, reach to the beach creek neighbor for seeing to responsible removal of creosote logs from the cove and the beaver building in the creek channel and for sounding the alarm about spawner blockages.

Larry Fisher, area habitat biologist with State Fish and Wildlife, for his quick response to those blockages.

Steve Richmond and **Joey Baumgarten** with Garden Cycles, who put other work on hold to respond quickly and competently.

Kathy Minsch and **Eric Autry** with Seattle Public Utilities for fast and accurate advice in the wake of a fire near the creek in Fautleroy Park.

Stewardship fund donors, especially the West Seattle Garden Tour.

Phil Renfrow, for many years our go-to plant specialist with the southwest district of Seattle Parks, who retired this summer.

COMMUNICATION

IN THE MEDIA. The **West Seattle Blog** continued as our principal local medium for relaying news about the watershed. Articles during the year (most with photos) appeared as follows:

- January - Salmon in the Schools egg delivery
- March - creosote log removal from Fautleroy Cove
- April - student exoskeleton count and first salmon release
- May - midway and last releases
- June - community release
- September - call for salmon watchers
- October - salmon drumming, removal of spawner obstacles, open creek event, silver anniversary observance
- November - close of spawning season

Neighbors, the newsletter of the Fauntleroy Community Association, featured watershed news as follows:

- March - removal of creosote logs from the cove, annual report, creek documentary on website, open-space planting, and stewardship fund update.
- June - release summary, concerns about juvenile habitat in the upper creek, and fund update.
- September - call for salmon watchers and fund update.
- December - spawning summary and fund update.

In April, **KING 5** aired a week-long series on Puget Sound orcas, including a segment on Fauntleroy Creek's contributions to salmon supply and public awareness. The station chose to air this segment again in July. Link to it from www.fauntleroywatershed.org.

In May, Seattle Public Utilities' culvert-replacement team audited a salmon release, then summarized their experience in text and a photo for the utility's **weekly summary of activities** sent to the mayor's office.

COUNCIL BUSINESS

According to council treasurer Dennis Hinton, we opened the year with \$930.63 in our basic checking account (no minimum, no interest) at Washington Federal and closed it with \$822.35. During the year, we spent \$45.18 on copies for our watershed brochure, an outreach poster, and our stewardship-fund prospectus. We also spent \$63.10 for silver anniversary supplies.

The Fauntleroy Watershed Stewardship Fund opened the year with \$9,475 in donations and received \$8,700 more, including a donation in memory of long-time Fauntleroy Park volunteer Steve Bomkamp. At year's end, the fund balance was \$16,752.59. Expenditures (including a 15% administrative fee) were \$622.63 for a contractor to open the reach to the beach for spawners and \$799.78 for additional plants for fall installation in the Kilbourne ravine.

On Dec. 31, our \$70,023 grant from the King Conservation District for the Kilbourne Ravine Riparian and Buffer Project ended, leaving an unspent balance of \$7.84.

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 the agenda and took care of business between meetings. They were

Peggy Cummings (peggyc@seanet.com) **Dennis Hinton** (denhinton@msn.com) **Judy Pickens** (judy_pickens@msn.com)

For much more about the watershed and our activities, visit our website: www.fauntleroywatershed.org.

ABOUT THE WATERSHED

Fauntleroy Park, Fauntleroy Creek, and Fauntleroy Cove are the dominant natural features of the residential community in West Seattle for which they are named.

Fauntleroy Park is a 28-acre wooded ravine preserved as a natural space. Its network of well-maintained trails provides access to explore and enjoy a remnant of the coastal forest ecosystem that once blanketed this 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 city installation of a drainage system, the geologic watershed was about 493 acres.

