

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

This year was a hopeful one - hopeful because of projects advanced as well as volunteers and students engaged. Most notably, we

- updated our watershed plan to guide the next chapter of citizen stewardship of Fautleroy Creek and Fautleroy Park.
- launched a self-guided tree walk in the park using a QR code.
- hosted one of our biggest salmon-release seasons ever.



**FAUTLEROY
WATERSHED
COUNCIL**

WATERSHED PLAN 2.0

After more than two decades being guided by our 2001 watershed plan, Ryan Lewis and Vanessa Pepi took the lead in updating that plan. After they summarized accomplishments to date and forecast what ongoing challenges would be, Judy Pickens and Dennis Hinton organized and edited input from current members of our watershed council. In line with the same core values as our original plan, the second edition (posted at fautleroywatershed.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/WatershedPlan2023.pdf) updates objectives under five goals that will guide our restoration, monitoring, public awareness, education, research, and advocacy activities for the foreseeable future:

- Preserve, restore, and enhance native vegetation and aquatic resources for long-term sustainability of natural systems.
- Collect and record data that paints a picture of natural systems over time.
- Promote habitat-sensitive public enjoyment of Fautleroy Park.
- Encourage environmental education.
- Facilitate long-term stewardship.

SALMON

OUT-MIGRATION. Annual monitoring of smolts leaving the creek for saltwater spanned March 15 to May 25. Volunteers checked net traps in the upper and lower creek twice daily to count smolts and remove debris.



They documented 41 coho smolts that survived their year here to migrate to nearshore habitat in Fautleroy Cove. Monitoring confirmed that salmonids made use of the entire creek system, including a pond that formed upstream of the creek culvert under 45th Ave. SW. Smolts were good sized and appeared healthy. Monitors also found 238 live fry and 10 dead ones that had washed into the traps.

CULVERT BLOCKAGE. In mid April, volunteer Tom Trulin noticed a pond forming upstream of the city's creek culvert under 45th Ave. SW and took a photo. His diligence led to a month-long temporary bypass to channel flow over the roadway. The crew also netted 11 coho smolts trapped in the pond en route to saltwater. Chunks of concrete, apparently from slurry material dumped in the ravine years ago, were the culprit. Until



Removing the culvert blockage required the city crew to employ a boat to navigate in "Fautleroy Pond."

the culvert can be replaced (maybe in 2026), the city is inspecting it monthly and videotaping it in spring and fall.

RELEASE SEASON. Late April through May was one of our biggest salmon-release seasons since the first school release, in 1991. Volunteers Dennis Hinton, Pete Draughon, Shannon Ninburg, and Tom Trulin hosted 730 students and 235+ adults for 17 releases in Fautleroy Park. The 1,837 coho fry from the Salmon in the Schools-Seattle program included 500 reared by volunteer Jack Lawless so that, in the event of a school die-off, every student would have a fish to put in the water. His fry also gave children from four preschools a release experience. The release total includes a first release here, in March, by White Center Heights Elementary, where the Mid-Sound Fisheries Enhancement Group coordinates the Salmon in the Schools program.

The emotional highlight of the season for our release team was helping a special-needs 5th grader release the last fish. He had watched them in the tank at school every day but was not able to come on the release field trip with other students. At our invitation, his mother wheeled him to the release bridge, where he felt the fish in a bucket, saw them up close in a cup, and watched them take off in the creek.



EGG DELIVERIES

Students at Our Lady of Guadalupe School welcomed their coho eggs in early January.



From a walk into the woods to a look at aquatic insects to a Q&A session over lunch, students on release field trips had a full day.

SPAWNING SEASON. After two years of very high numbers of coho spawners (244 in 2021, 254 in 2022), some people were not impressed with this year's count of 34. A little perspective is helpful, though. Since the first spawners, in 1994, we've had 13 years with 10 or fewer, including years when we saw none. Also of note: With large numbers in a short spawning reach, late arrivals dig up the redds of earlier fish, thus reducing home-hatch potential.



A special community release marked the installation of Rabbi Sabine Meyer at West Seattle's Kol HaNeshamah synagogue.

I grew up in West Seattle in the 50s and 60s and fishing was my thing. This little creek is doing awesome! Keep up the good work; the salmon need our help.

- comment on the West Seattle Blog



LOG RELOCATION

A permit from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife enabled volunteers to relocate enough logs trapped by sand and ferry-terminal piling to give spawners a clear path to the mouth of the creek. Mark Sears led Tim Wulfekuhle, Joe Gluck, Pete Draughon, Tom Trulin, Fred Fleischmann, and Dennis Hinton in getting the job done. After the first spawner sighting, Mark braved the weather to return daily to keep the route open.



The watch began on Oct. 22 with 20 volunteers taking shifts during the five hours after high tide. They recorded the first robust spawner on Nov. 4 and the last just a week later. They also recorded four cutthroat trout seeking salmon eggs and harbor seals and other predators in the cove taking many fish. Watcher Alana Khayat's data analysis showed that, by Nov. 18 when the watch ended, watchers had invited 80 visitors down to creek level during their shifts. Another 136 visitors of all ages came during our Nov. 12 afternoon open creek to talk salmon and habitat.

SALMON DATA

Year	Eggs	Released Fry	% Fry From Eggs	Live Smolts Upper	Live Smolts Lower	Smolts to Salt	Spawners	Release & Field Trip Students ⁵	Spawning Season Visitors
2023	2,600	1,797	69	11	30	41	34	780	224
2022	1,950	1,624	83	2	9	11	254	460	441
2021	1,500 ⁴	1,061	---	15	34	49	244	130 ²	400
2020	2,400 ²	2,069	86	22	55	77	2 ³	50 ²	5 ²
2019	2,400	2,006	83.5	4	18	22	19	730	125
2018	2,400	1,955	81	26	19	45	18	662	240
2017	2,400	1,817	---	18	14	32	4	744	?
2016	2,900	1,795	62	14	5	19	7	764	67
2015	2,700	1,700	63	2	33	35	0	750	?
2014	3,450	2,409	70	8	11	19	19	680	190
2013	2,800	1,987	71	65	76	141	3	543	40
2012	3,100	2,615	84	145	85	230 ¹	274	562	290
2011	2,900	2,027	70	147	36	183 ¹	14	647	100
2010	2,500	2,298	92	---	24	24	0	556	?

¹ Corrected ² Approximate ³ 1 live/1 dead at mouth ⁴ Participation reduced by pandemic ⁵ Not including siblings and adults

Find complete data at fauntleroywatershed.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/SalmonDataTable.pdf.

HABITAT & STEWARDSHIP

FOREST STEWARDS. While Charlotte Linton juggled family and work responsibilities in order to have time in Fautleroy Park, Karen Farnsworth was in there most days to monitor and respond to conditions as an unofficial forest steward. Activities through the year included the following:

- weeding ivy and adding native plants with Charlotte at the SW Cambridge Street and SW Barton Street entrances.
- pairing with Charlotte for small weeding parties elsewhere in the park.
- picking up pet waste when walkers did not scoop after their dogs.
- locating and reporting small fires in the park during the dry season.
- suggesting a simple solution to slope erosion in an area frequented by Hazelwood Preschool classes.
- assisting with the Summit Atlas student study as summarized elsewhere in this report.

KILBOURNE RAVINE MAINTENANCE. Our stewardship fund financed two crew days for EarthCorps to keep on top of invasive plant species trying to regain a toehold along the middle reach of the creek. After finding Italian arum, trainees weeded the area and covered it with thick plastic to exhaust stored energy (a current best management practice). In addition to weeding the ravine’s steep banks, trainees refreshed ivy survival rings around conifers and noted areas that had remained free of invasives. The crew took a break in the spring to participate in Pathfinder K-8’s salmon release.

CULVERT REPLACEMENTS. Planning to replace two creek culverts that have long been barriers to upstream fish passage continued with increased urgency. Video revealed significant and ongoing deterioration of the culvert under the Fautleroy Church parking lot, which conveys creek flow between Fautleroy Park and Kilbourne Park. The city also advanced planning toward replacement of the culvert under 45th Ave. SW.

ADVOCACY

OVERFLOWING DUMPSTERS. Watershed residents are ideally positioned to keep an eye out for small threats to habitat, and one such situation drew our attention this year: garbage overflowing from Dumpsters above an overlook into the middle reach of the creek. We talked with building management and also filed a Find It Fix It report with the city. Spotlighting the problem appears to have resolved it but we continue informal monitoring to be sure.



FERRY-TERMINAL REBUILD. In the fall, Washington State Ferries reconvened its community advisory group, on which Judy Pickens serves to advocate for Fautleroy Creek and nearshore habitat in Fautleroy Cove. Planners floated several new concepts that would expand overwater coverage in order to park more vehicles on the trestle. She and others continued to emphasize that, by implementing state-of-the-art pre-ticketing, service efficiency would improve, especially for commuters, and trestle size could stay the same.

SEATTLE WATERSHED ALLIANCE. Judy Pickens and Phil Sweetland continued to represent this watershed on the Seattle Watershed Alliance. The group includes watersheds across the city, plus allied organizations. Advocacy this year included asking the city to recognize the validity of data collected by volunteers and asking agencies to take a holistic rather than piecemeal approach to creek restoration.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH & RESOURCES

TREE WALK. With pride (and relief), Lindsey Conrad declared our self-guided tree walk in Fauntleroy Park ready to go live over Memorial Day weekend. She led a team of fellow volunteers in planning, photographing, marking, and writing about a dozen native species along established and well-maintained trails. Using a QR code, park visitors can access text about each species at fauntleroywatershed.org/index.php/park/treewalk. Over the summer, she did a trial run on offering a day/time to guide people through the walk.

In June, Lindsey and fellow plant volunteer Rosalie Miller staffed an information table during the West Seattle Garden Tour, which gave us a \$4,700 grant to fund the project and beef up our stewardship fund for habitat maintenance. Despite using markers designed to make removal difficult, three of them disappeared in the fall. After getting replacements, Lindsey scheduled with Seattle Parks to reinstall all 12 in a manner that should be more vandal-resistant.



WAYFINDING. In the spring, volunteer Tracy Randle took on the idea of creating a digital map of Fauntleroy Park to aid visitors in knowing where they are and knowing where stairs and other challenges areas are. In the fall, volunteer Megan Mallmon Webber got started on updating our self-guided nature walk in the park. At year's end, the two decided to collaborate and also to include tree walk and accessibility in the final product.

ACCESSIBILITY. To improve access for park visitors who rely on wheels (walkers, wheelchairs, strollers), volunteer Rosalie Miller assessed entrances and arterial trails, then began working with Seattle Parks' trails coordinator on what might be done in challenging areas. At year's end, they concluded that a hard-gravel path would assist visitors in getting safely across the grassy area at the SW Barton Street entrance (it's in!).



SALMON DRUMMING. Our annual drumming to call in spawners and launch the salmon watch drew 80+ people on Oct. 22, including Fauntleroy ferry workers just off duty. Musician Jamie Shilling and emcee Judy Pickens kept things moving on a theme of "home."

We used the occasion to recognize Tracy Record and Patrick Sand, publishers of the *West Seattle Blog*, for their exceptional contributions to the community and support for our activities on behalf of the creek and park. After



Tom Trulin snapped a group photo, many went down to the spawning reach where we had planted a dozen signs highlighting facts about the habitat. Find our tribute at fauntleroywatershed.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/westseattleblogtribute_2024.pdf.



TROLL TAKES UP RESIDENCE

A stop to see Bruun Idun playing her flute in Lincoln Park and hear her environmental story will be an option for students during future salmon-release fieldtrips. We helped recruit volunteers to assemble the Thomas Dambo sculpture from recycled materials and to photograph her in August as she came to life.

FAUNTLEROY FALL FESTIVAL. On Oct. 15, this annual event returned to its pre-pandemic popularity, with an estimated 2,000 people of all ages in attendance. Cathy Follis again rallied other volunteers to continue the making of salmon hats we initiated in 2004. Young children decorated hats they could then wear throughout the afternoon.



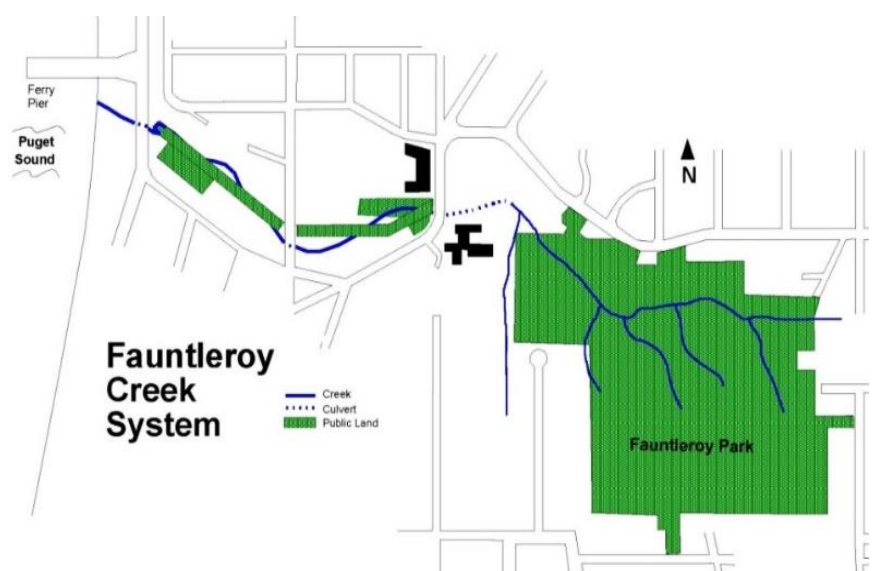
VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT. This was an especially productive year in terms of recruiting fresh volunteer energy and talent to the watershed and finding rewarding ways to put newcomers to work. Starting with a robust list of people who had volunteered for one assignment (such as salmon watcher), we were able to interest some of them in taking on an additional task. Several inquiries came through our website in the wake of reports about our activities. We invited prospects to a “tea and talk” to understand their talents and interests, review current needs, and encourage them to jump in when something peaks their interest. Our current list of opportunities is posted at fauntleroywatershed.org/index.php/2023/11/05/watershed-volunteer-opportunities/.

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 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 149-acre watershed sustain flow year round. Prior to the city’s installation of the drainage system that captures most stormwater runoff, 493 acres drained into the creek.



RESEARCH & EDUCATION

STUDENT RESEARCH. Fourth graders from Louisa Boren STEM K-8 came in October to do annual sampling for benthic macro-invertebrates in the creek and, for the first time, to monitor lichen growth forms and size as indicators of air pollution. Volunteer educator Shannon Ninburg led the group that updated student benthic research initiated here in 2000. Volunteer Lindsey Conrad led the group that piloted our draft protocol for collecting data on lichen near the creek. Both groups examined samples from sites in the upper and lower creek.



Lindsey Conrad (left) helped students locate lichen to identify and measure while Shannon Ninburg (right) led macroinvertebrate sampling.

The benthic group recorded a diversity of aquatic insects at both sites, most of which require good-quality water. The students also found an abundance of insect larva that are essential food for juvenile salmon. Find their report at fauntleroywatershed.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/2023_benthic_report.pdf. The lichen group did not get usable data but taught us a lot about how to make lichen research accessible for young scientists.



EXOSKELETON COUNT

On May 12, Boren fourth graders did our annual count of stonefly exoskeletons along a defined reach in the lower creek. The casings left behind when stoneflies take wing to mate indicate the abundance of this food source for juvenile salmon, as well as how clean the water is. The report is at fauntleroywatershed.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/2023_exo_count.pdf.

IMPACT STUDY. For the first time, we cooperated with Summit Atlas, a public charter school near Fauntleroy Park, on a research project. Science teacher Ayla Wilk asked students in her two senior classes to study impacts of urban development on the park's natural ecosystem. After a site orientation by Karen Farnsworth, they worked in teams to analyze soil and water, assess biodiversity, and record invasive plant species. Judy Pickens and Phil Sweetland asked questions and gave feedback as teams made their presentations.



As part of their project, Summit Atlas researchers made interpretative maps for kiosks at major park entrances.

Their conclusion: *“Our examination of Fauntleroy Park unveiled the richness and complexity of its natural ecosystem. By observing wildlife from a respectful distance, we gained valuable insights into the coexistence of native species and the lush vegetation that thrives in the park. The project enhanced our appreciation for the park’s biodiversity and underscored the importance of what we concluded is a generally healthy ecosystem.”* A summary is at fauntleroywatershed.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/SummitAtlasImpactStudy_2023.pdf.

SALMON IN THE SCHOOLS. Teachers across the city used the rearing of salmon to focus lessons on science, math, and other subjects and to emphasize responsible stewardship. Salmon in the Schools-Seattle provided teacher training in October, eyed coho eggs in January, and ongoing curriculum and technical support throughout the rearing season. Watershed Council members Phil Sweetland and Judy Pickens continued to be on the program’s citywide leadership team.

SALMON DAY. During a special “salmon day” at Hazelwood Preschool, volunteer educator Dana Catts acquainted them with the types of Pacific salmon and what is important for their habitat to provide at different life stages. Students also got to inspect macroinvertebrates dipped from the creek.



ON THE FENCE

Watershed Council members were in the audience when Salmon in the Schools students showed off colorful salmon they had painted to adorn the playground fence at Westside School.

COMMUNICATION

IN THE MEDIA. We benefited from robust coverage in the two media devoted to reporting West Seattle and Fautleroy news. Articles on the *West Seattle Blog* (with photos and/or videos) were as follows:

- March - home-hatch emergence
- April - partial culvert blockage
- May - first school release, special rabbi release, release wrap-up
- October - drumming, student research
- November - first spawners, open creek, spawning-season wrap-up

WEST SEATTLE BLOG
NEWS 24/7

Neighbors, the quarterly newsletter of the Fautleroy Community Association, conveyed watershed news to area residents as follows:

- March -preview of tree walk
- June - salmon releases, out-migration report
- September - call for salmon watchers, stewardship fund, salmon drumming
- December - spawning season wrap-up

NEIGHBORS

WEBSITE. Webmaster Chris Nack reported a 5% increase in use of our website in 2023, with the most popular topics being the creek and tree walk. A total of 611 referrals came from other websites.



	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total Users				968	1,002	749	878	849	1,777	1,869
New Users	2,543	2,329	1,544	955	995	74	873	847	1,771	1,868
Sessions	3,159	2,710	1,904	1,187	1,187	1,048	1,115	1,123	2,021	2,414
Page Views	7,320	4,681	3,915	2,531	2,368	1,805	2,188	2,632	4,209	4,743
Duration	0.06	0.04	0.07	0.06	0.05	0.04	0.14	0.10	1.29	.51
WS Blog Referrals				76	127	24		276	205	246
Social Media Referrals				2	10	14		6	6	41

Note: In 2016, teachers began going to the Salmon in the Schools-Seattle website for learning resources instead of to our site.

HONORABLE MENTION

New volunteers who signed on to contribute fresh energy, ideas, and expertise to this watershed.

Tracy Record and Patrick Sand, publishers of the *West Seattle Blog*, for their professionalism and unflinching support for what we do.

Tom Trulin for taking great photos and for talking about what we do with anyone in the neighborhood.

Karen Farnsworth for being an unofficial forest steward until city training for the volunteer position resumes.

Lindsey Conrad for an exceptional job adding the tree walk as another amenity of Fauntleroy Park.

Mark Sears and fellow “loggers” for keeping the mouth of the creek free of drift logs for spawners.

Our salmon watchers - the largest corps yet - for coming out in the cold and wet to document spawners and talk with scores of visitors.

LOOKING AHEAD

New volunteers have brought fresh energy for ongoing activities and fresh projects. Here's what we anticipate achieving in for 2023:

- We will take steps to offer a salmon-release experience for all, including **students with special needs**.
- We will delve into our watershed plan for **at least one new project** to take on.
- We will devise a more durable **design for our smolt traps** to ensure that they work and can easily be installed and dismantled.
- We expect to pilot and finalize **digital wayfinding** in Fauntleroy Park and use it to enhance nature-walk options for park visitors.
- We will seize opportunities to **improve wheeled access** for park visitors reliant on wheels.
- We will make improvements to our **lichen-study protocol** to ensure that it is doable for young researchers.
- We will continue to **recruit and retain volunteers** by tapping their skills and interests in satisfying ways.

COUNCIL BUSINESS

MEETINGS. The council met on second Thursdays in January, March, May, September, and November. Because of the continuing pandemic, meetings were on Zoom. All meetings were open to anyone interested in stewarding Fauntleroy Creek, Fauntleroy Park, and other natural areas in the watershed. Judy Pickens (judy_pickens@msn.com) and Dennis Hinton (denhinton43@gmail.com) planned meeting agendas and kept an ear out for anything that needed tending to between meetings. Email them with concerns, inquiries, or ideas.

FINANCIALS. We began the year with a balance \$907.35 in our checking account, spent \$46.42 for all-weather paper, and closed the year with a balance of \$860.93. A couple of small donations paid for photocopies.

We began the year with a balance of \$14,839.49 in our Fauntleroy Watershed Stewardship Fund administered by EarthCorps, received donations of \$4,700, and spent \$5,078.83 for tree-walk signs and two EarthCorps crew days maintaining restored habitat in the Kilbourne ravine. At year's end, we had a balance of \$14,660.66. Visit fauntleroywatershed.org/index.php/donate/ for details about donating to this fund.

Thanks to Tom Trulin, Dennis Hinton, the West Seattle Blog, and Lindsey Conrad for use of their photos in this report.