



SalmonGRAM

Committed to Protecting and Restoring South Puget Sound Habitat



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Cover: Beautiful wild steelhead from the White River. Photo: Emmett O'Connell

Message from the Executive Director



Hello SPSSEG Supporters!

Salmon need functioning habitat and clean water to thrive. For thousands of years, salmon coexisted with nature and have adapted to a wide range of environmental conditions and habitat. Normally these changes would have occurred over many centuries and in the case of catastrophic events (similar to the Mt. St. Helens eruption) many of these salmon would have simply found a way to survive and re-colonize their existing habitat.

Today, salmon have a difficult time adapting because environmental changes happen more quickly. Human activities such as building dams, clear-cut logging, water pollution, over-fishing, and sprawling development have occurred practically overnight in our watersheds (over years and decades). These subtle and/or drastic habitat changes can dramatically reduce the survival in our salmon bearing watersheds. Without proper functioning habitat and clean water salmon are not going to make it regardless of what we do to try and save them.

There is still hope. Recent dam removals like Goldsborough Creek near Shelton have paved the way for more dams to come down. Dam removals in watersheds like Goldsborough that still offer intact habitat are ripe for continued restoration and conservation work. Intact habitat is becoming a rare commodity and efforts are underway to protect the critical habitat for salmon and other species. In David Montgomery's wonderful book "King of Fish" he eloquently describes the concept of salmon preserves and open spaces to protect rivers and floodplains. People are buying more into this concept. In fact, several jurisdictions like Pierce County are acquiring strategic properties along rivers and are prioritizing set-back levees that improve salmon habitat and reduce floods. Projects like the Nisqually Delta dike removal restored nearly 800 acres of prime estuary habitat. Even the Elwha dam is scheduled to be removed in the coming years. These are all great signs that stakeholders are trying to save salmon.

Continued on Page 9.

SalmonGram is published twice per year by the South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group (SPSSEG), a 501(c)(3) non-profit, volunteer-based organization that conducts salmon habitat restoration, salmon enhancement, and community education to increase salmonid populations in the South Puget Sound Region.

The SPSSEG is one of fourteen Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups created in 1989 by the Washington State Legislature. The Regional Fisheries Enhancement Program is partially supported by surcharges on sport and commercial fishing licenses. The Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife provides technical and administrative support to the program.

Ciscoe Morris visits Eatonville and Ohop

By Kimberlie Gridley

KIRO's very own Ciscoe Morris arrived early on a blustery morning in the Ohop Valley to tour one of the largest restoration projects the South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group has ever under taken. This began a morning full of tours and hands on restoration in the Eatonville area. This small town in the shadow of Mount Rainier has taken strides over the last few years to take a stand for environmental stewardship.

Ohop Creek, which is essentially a meandering creek through a low gradient forested wetland, and the Mashel River, a fast moving, highly variable, steep gradient river, offered Ciscoe a quick and effective overview of the variety of restoration opportunities in Western Washington. From Ohop the group continued to the Mashel River where over the last five years the tribe and SPSSEG have worked furiously to install engineered log jams. These jams provide habitat for salmon and protect the community against flooding.

Next there was an opportunity to highlight Low Impact Development (LID) projects in the area. The group continued on to the new Eatonville City Hall which boasts permeable pavement, reclaimed and recycled lumber and native landscaping. Finally, everyone headed over to a local housing development where Stewardship Partner's had organized the building and installation of six community Rain Gardens. These small swales planted with wet and drought tolerant native plants, will collect all of the runoff from each of six residences, improving localized stormwater infiltration and decreasing the amount of stormwater that ends up untreated in local waterways. Local non-profits and neighbors showed up in force regardless of the rainy weather.

While Ciscoe interviewed local restoration and LID leaders, volunteers installed plants and spread mulch throughout the Rain Gardens. By noon, the work was complete and everyone enjoyed some sweet treats and the company of like minded individuals who are working at home and in their community to make tomorrow a better place for us all.

To listen to a podcase of this event, go to www.mynorthwest.com; Podcasts, select Gardening with Ciscoe. The show aired May 22.



Above: Jeanette Dorner WRIA 11 Lead Entity Coordinator explains the Mashel Project to Ciscoe.

Below: Volunteers building a Rain Garden in Eatonville



Sherwood Creek Revisited



Above: Sherwood Creek Bridge in 2010

Below: Schumacher Creek Wetlands



After nearly 10 years the Sherwood Creek bridge is still one of SPSSEG's most successful and popular projects. Completed in 2002, the bridge improved access to over 15 miles of intact salmon habitat in the watershed. The pre-existing double barrel culverts were a significant barrier limiting fish migration into Mason Lake and Schumacher Creek.

SPSSEG, Allyn Salmon Enhancement Group and Squaxin Island Tribe have investigated salmonid usage in the creek and the results were a little surprising. The primary limiting factor in Sherwood Creek appears to be water temperature. Most salmonids observed in the watershed were found either in Anderson Lake Creek much lower in the watershed or Schumacher Creek which is above the lake. Thermal refuge and water quantity is a critical need for salmonids to thrive. Survival may continue to decrease if not enough salmonids migrate through the warm lake and into the cooler and intact wetlands of Schumacher Creek. Coho salmon in particular need access to cold water summer habitat.

It is important to utilize all intact habitat in salmon recovery. Opening up fish passage barriers in Sherwood Creek is just the first step. Now it's time to start thinking about better ways to reduce water temperatures and increase salmon survival. According to our observations, the in-stream habitat in Sherwood Creek can be functioning for salmonids. Unfortunately, the warmer water conditions are more appropriate for bass and perch. It is important to work with local communities and government agencies to ensure that this intact and functional watershed can be used by salmonids year round.

Beachcrest

an estuary reclaimed

The Beachcrest Estuary Restoration project removed a dam that had been impounding a tidal estuary and blocking fish passage to the estuary and spring fed stream since the 1940s. In the early 1940s, a road was constructed along the barrier spit that formed the estuary, and the mouth of the estuary blocked by a 7-foot tall standpipe and wooden box culvert.

*After 65 years
the tides have
now returned to
Beachcrest.*

The tides were returned to the Beachcrest estuary on February, 17th, 2010 when a 14-foot concrete box culvert was installed and the earthen dam was removed. The tides now flush in and out of the estuary nearly everyday providing rearing habitat for juvenile salmon and unimpeded upstream migration for spawning adult salmon.

The completed project now provides a suite of ecological benefits for all nearshore-dependent species in Puget Sound including: increased estuarine rearing and foraging area, restored fish access to a small local watershed, salt marsh fringe habitat and a shallow, vegetated shoreline. Natural changes to this habitat will create a diverse, complex habitat to support an array of estuarine fish and wildlife including spawning populations of chum, pink and coastal cutthroat trout and rearing populations of listed Chinook, coho, chum, pink, steelhead and coastal cutthroat.



Above: The water travelled underground (before)

Below: New bridge allows estuary access for fish



White River *Steelhead*



ead

By Emmett O'Connell

Benefits of a steelhead broodstocking program for a weak run of White River steelhead is rapidly becoming apparent.

So far this year, around 300 steelhead from a genetic broodstock program have returned, almost twice as many as the amount of wild fish. For four years the Muckleshoot and Puyallup tribes, along with the state Department of Fish and Wildlife, have spawned around 20 wild steelhead taken annually from an adult trap on the White River. Their offspring are raised in tribal hatcheries and eventually released into the White River.

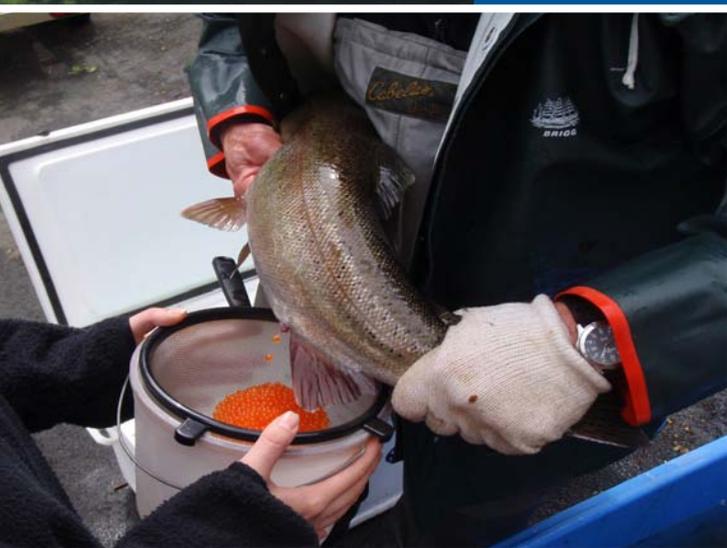
Seeing a high return of broodstock fish is encouraging because the program goal is to put more adults on the spawning grounds" said Blake Smith, enhancement biologist for the Puyallup Tribe of Indians. "Even though we're seeing encouraging returns from our broodstock fish, the overall population is still perilously small."

"Last spring, we saw about 30 offspring return from efforts," said Smith. "We thought we were at least replacing the fish we were taking, but now we're seeing increasing numbers.

No one is sure why steelhead populations in the Puyallup and the rest of South Sound have crashed in recent years. Steelhead returning to the Puyallup River watershed are a part of a larger Puget Sound wide stock that is listed as "threatened" under the federal Endangered Species List.

Each returning adult broodstock steelhead carries a small tag that can be detected when they are processed at the adult trap. "We need to keep track of how many fish from the project actually return," said Smith. "The only way we can do this is to tag them before they're released into the wild."

Usually, the small tags also carry a code that biologists can read to find out where the fish were raised, but the tags inserted into these steelhead are blank. "Because the only steelhead returning to the White River are either totally wild or part of the restoration program, we only need a non-visual way to identify them to evaluate the program," Smith said.



Other hatchery steelhead are distinguished by having their adipose fin – a small, fleshy extremity on the fish's back – clipped off when they're young. A missing adipose fin usually means that the fish can be retained during a fishery.

"It's encouraging to see this many steelhead come back, given the low release numbers," Smith said. Before its production was curtailed recently because of flood damage and budget cuts, the state's nearby Voights Creek Hatchery used to release ten times more juvenile steelhead. "Even though they released more steelhead, they didn't produce as many adults as the wild stock brood program," Smith said. "We'll hopefully be able to find a way to turn this stock around so we can save it from extinction."

Summer Construction



Big Cove Estuary Restoration:

Big Cove is a cove-estuary at the mouth of a small creek that was historically subject to the tidal inundation that provides rearing and foraging opportunities for juvenile salmon. Several decades ago, the creek and the cove were cut-off from tidal influence by construction of a full-spanning earthen dam. The dam converted the estuary zone to a fresh water lake and restricted all access for migrating fish. With grant funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Salmon Recovery Board, SPSSEG will coordinate the removal of the fill, rock, and culverts that are blocking the cove and estuary.



Goldsborough Creek Planting:

SPSSEG and the Mason Conservation District teamed up this spring to initiate an important riparian planting project on Goldsborough Creek. The project site, adjacent to the location of the former Goldsborough Dam, is a barren slope that currently provides little shade to the creek. Since the removal of the dam in 2001, coho salmon numbers in the creek have been steadily increasing however temperature problems and other in-stream issues still present obstacles to full salmon recovery. The planting project site represents the largest area adjacent to the former dam site that is not vegetated with riparian trees and shrubs. The site has been scraped and mulched in preparation for the planting.



Ohop Restoration:

SPSSEG and Nisqually Land Trust are preparing to reconnect Ohop Creek to its original floodplain later this summer. SPSSEG is in the midst of evaluating the changing site conditions and will make any necessary adjustments prior to the final project being completed. In the mean time, it is great to see some of the desired habitat being created in the Ohop Creek channel. SPSSEG will continue to monitor and plant the streambanks with shrubs to stabilize erosion. This phase has been in progress over several years and is finally coming to fruition. SPSSEG will continue engineering for the next downstream phases that connects to the Nisqually River.

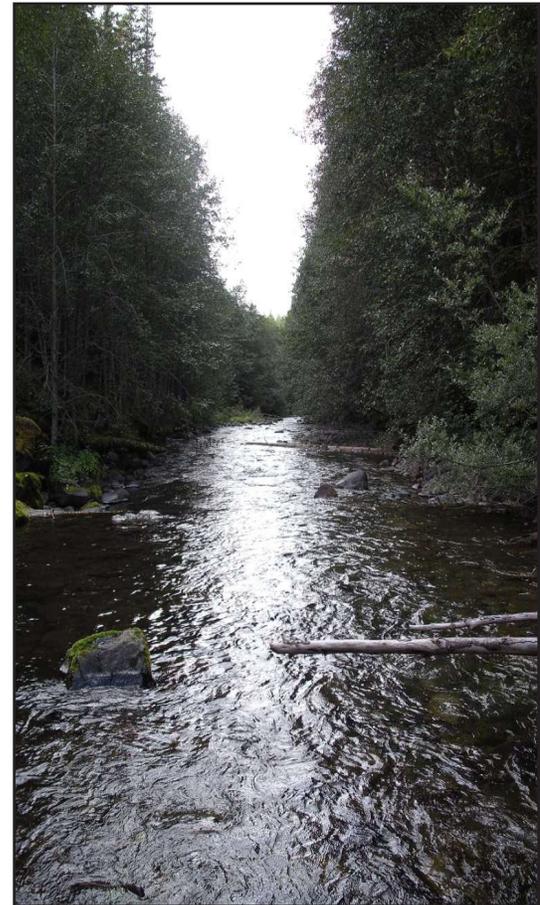
Coho salmon numbers in Goldsborough Creek have been steadily increasing.

Greenwater River Restoration:

The objective of the Greenwater River Large Woody Debris and Floodplain Reconnection Project is to restore aquatic and riparian habitat within a 3 mile reach of the Greenwater River. Restoration is focused on the re-introduction of functional wood and the removal of .8 miles/4,500 linear feet of the abandoned Forest Service Road 7000 located within the Greenwater River Floodplain.

Historically, the Greenwater River was one of the principle spawning and rearing areas in the White River watershed for spring Chinook, bull trout, steelhead and coho. A legacy of clearcut logging degraded the Greenwater River; the majority of the Greenwater River and its tributaries were logged to their banks. The current channel is incised with very few pools, little holding and rearing habitat available to salmonids, and almost no functional riparian cover to provide shade, structure, input of nutrients and recruitment of woody debris.

The SPSSEG, in partnership with the USDA Forest Service, Puyallup and Muckleshoot Tribes, Herrera Environmental Consultants and ENTRIX Inc, has developed the Greenwater River Large Woody Debris and Floodplain Reconnection project. Goals for the project are to rehabilitate the lost processes of wood recruitment, forest canopy and floodplain connection through strategic placement of Engineered Log Jams and removal of a Forest Service Road that impinges on the floodplain.



Executive Director Page 2:

SPSSEG is in the midst of several larger scale restoration projects in diverse watersheds. For example, SPSSEG and partners have installed thousands of pieces of large stable wood into the Mashel River and have also re-created over 1-mile of meandering stream in the Ohop Valley. This summer SPSSEG is also poised to begin a large wood project in the Greenwater River. Projects like this are difficult to locate permit, design, and fund. However, they also can provide immediate and long-term restoration improvements to intact watersheds. Perhaps the future of salmon recovery is protecting and restoring salmon preserves where habitat is already functioning and where human impacts are less. There are still plenty of places worthy of our efforts. Let's keep going! Thanks for reading our summer newsletter.

Sincerely, *Lance Winecka*

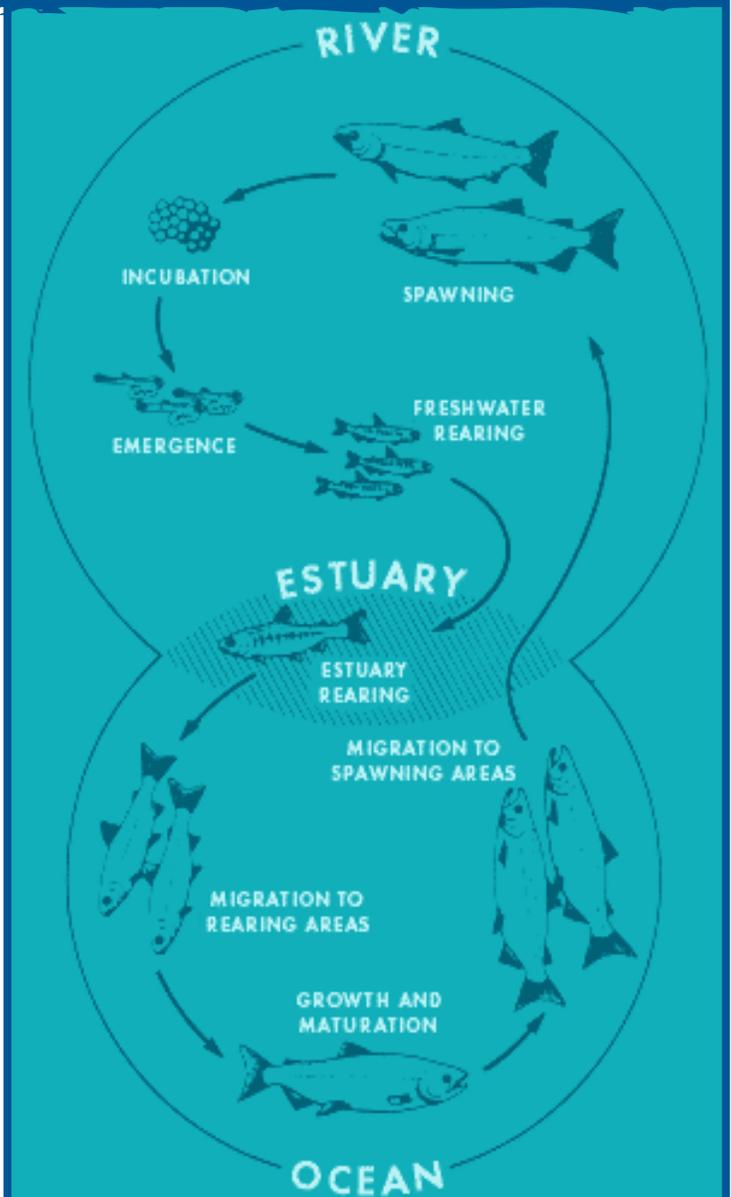
Partner Spotlight: Olympia Traverse

On July 31, 2010 we are going to *put the fun back in Fundraising*. Come join SPSSEG as we participate in Forth Corner Productions first annual Olympia Traverse. The Olympia Traverse is an endurance multi-sport challenge that celebrates the life journey of salmon. Soloists, tandem and relay teams compete for survival on the course that demonstrates the urban and natural challenges that salmon face in their journey.

The course begins in the Capitol Forest outside of Olympia at the Fall Creek Campground and winds through the woods to Mima Falls Trailhead. Flowing roads give a scenic tour of the county along Waddell Creek Road to Delphi Road onto Evergreen Parkway passing by Evergreen College campus winding into the City of Olympia- showcasing the natural downtown beauty of Olympia with Hertiage Park as a focal point. The course hugs the shore of Capitol Lake up past historical landmarks, respecting our state's brewing traditions, through the grounds of the State Capitol - affording views of the Olympic Mountains and the Sound Puget Sound. The finish brings it all together with the complete team finishing together downtown.

Each Traverse participant (SPAWNER) is encouraged to choose an environmental group or related non-profit to support. The non-profit that each participant selects will receive funds through pledges or donations. This event is unique in that participants have the opportunity to choose the group that their pledges will benefit. 100% of what is raised goes directly to groups of like SPSSEG!

For more information or to register a team please visit www.olympiatraverse.com. We will hopefully see you at the finish line and after party at the Fish Tale Brew Pub in downtown Olympia.



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Kennedy Creek Splash

August 22, 2010

Please join SPSSEG and all the Kennedy Creek Salmon Trail supporters and enthusiasts on August 22, from 3:00 - 6:00 p.m. at the Trail. This year's festivities are going to be the best yet, with excellent music and fabulous appetizers, seafood, desserts and beverages. Tickets for this annual event are \$35 per person; remember that \$35 supports 10 student visitors to the trail! This year we are also raising funds to fix a damaged viewing platform.

Kennedy Creek is a one of a kind outdoor classroom which offers a wide range of learning opportunities to kids of all ages. Each year over 5,000 students and numerous community members visit the trail to learn about the salmon life-cycle and this critical habitat that supports salmon.

If you are unable to attend Splash, please make a financial donation using the form below or donate your time by becoming a volunteer docent this fall. We need docents during the weekday for school groups and also on the busy November weekends for the general public. Please contact us for more information. Thank you!



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Steelhead smolt heading downstream to an estuary

South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group Mission:

To protect and restore salmon populations and aquatic habitat with an emphasis on ecosystem function through scientifically informed projects, community education, and volunteer involvement.