



A CREEK RUNS THROUGH US

Newsletter of the Salmon Protection And Watershed Network of Turtle Island Restoration Network

SpawnUSA.org

The Return of the Coho Salmon: An Ancient Cycle Continues

“The Coho Salmon are Back!”

THE SALMON PROTECTION and Watershed Network (SPAWN) spread the good news after biologists spotted fish in West Marin’s Lagunitas Creek Watershed in November. The highly endangered Central California Coastal Coho Salmon are expected to return through January. Though this is the strongest surviving run of these endangered coho salmon, less than five percent of the historic population returns today.

With the support of our members and volunteers, SPAWN biologists will carefully monitor the population, and our naturalists will guide hundreds of people to view this fascinating species.

While their population is fragile, each salmon embodies tremendous fortitude—and hope for the future. They make an epic migration from the sea and leap waterfalls to return to their natal streams. Here, the female will dig a “redd” or nest in the gravel with her tail. A male will fight for a chance to spawn (deposit sperm) with her and the fertilized eggs will sink into the gravel.

Exhausted, the salmon remain in the creek until they die. Their bodies nourish the

ecosystem with nutrients brought from the sea. In fact, redwood trees grow larger on salmon-bearing creeks!

Sheltered in the gravel, the eggs develop. In about 8 weeks, the young (called “fingerlings”) will emerge into the streams, where they face threats from pathogens to swift stormwaters. Survivors will live in the creeks 18 months before they head downstream to the sea, to begin the cycle anew.

Support the Salmon! Your tax-deductible gift to SPAWN dated by Dec. 31 will be **DOUBLED** by generous donors. Go to SpawnUSA.org to give securely, use the enclosed membership envelope, or call 800-859-SAVE to make a contribution.

See the Salmon! Visit SpawnUSA.org to join a winter CreekWalk through January, and download a “Where to See Salmon” map.

Protect the Salmon! If you live in the watershed, don’t cut trees or brush cover near the creek, and leave fallen natural woody debris to shelter young salmon from storm flows. Need help with eroding banks? Call SPAWN for a free consultation at 800-859-SAVE and learn more at SpawnUSA.org.

SPAWN Wins Protection for Salmon from Creekside Building



SUSAN FARRAR

IN AUGUST, the critically endangered California Coastal Coho Salmon begin schooling off of Point Reyes for their annual run into the creeks of West Marin. Onshore, SPAWN won an important legal ruling: no new building within 100 feet of all salmon-bearing creeks. In a defeat for the anti-environmental agenda of real estate speculators, the Superior Court of Marin enjoined the County from approving any application for development in the so-called “Streamside Conservation Area” (SCA).

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Win-Win Projects Benefit Fish and Landowners

CONTINUING ITS MISSION to bring the Central California Coho Salmon back from what fisheries experts call “an extinction vortex,” SPAWN has ramped up a multi-faceted, hands-on strategy in the Lagunitas Watershed. At the center of this approach is a partnership with local landowners to complete restoration projects on private land. This tactic yields the elusive double-win of natural resources recovery: revitalizing critical salmon creek habitat—and enhancing private property values.

This approach, funded through agency grants and generous donations from SPAWN members, is an essential tool in the Lagunitas watershed, where over 80% of the headwaters habitat is on small, privately owned parcels. To date, SPAWN has completed more than 20 restoration projects on private property, such as that of Robert Sherman.



Robert Sherman’s woody parcel sits on the inside bend of a creek that was once pristine headwaters spawning habitat. Shaded by redwoods and bays, cool waters flow in a thready summer trickle over dark basalt cobble and gravel. But the creek bed lies downhill of a county road that failed in 2008, dumping yards of sediment into the fragile spawning waters, and further weakening the steep bank above his property. While the road was eventually repaired, little was done to shore up the bank, which has since come to resemble the wall of an open pit quarry.

“The hillside above the stream on our property was in danger of heavy erosion, and possibly collapsing and creating a flood into our yard, threatening our home,” said Mr. Sherman.

SPAWN’s solution was simple: undo what man hath wrought, and stop erosion with natural materials like woven willow walls and plantings with local natives raised in our volunteer-operated nurseries. The project reduces the flooding threat to Mr. Sherman’s property, and gives juvenile fish better habitat in which to survive their critical first year of life.

“SPAWN partnered with the Department of Fish and Game in a careful and conscientious job,” says Mr. Sherman. Salmon recovery is a coalition effort. And thanks to concerned landowners such as Robert Sherman and the generous funding of all its supporters, SPAWN continues to find innovative strategies to protect the embattled coho salmon. With this latest approach, SPAWN is also helping enhance property values—a “win-win” for everyone involved.

If you are struggling with problems with a creek on your property, I hope that you will contact SPAWN at 800-859-SAVE to discuss how we might be able to help.

TODD STEINER

The ruling is the latest sanction against the county in a 5-year struggle to compel the supervisors to perform their mandate under the 2007 countywide plan to adopt a Streamside Conservation Area Ordinance, and results from a lawsuit filed by SPAWN in 2011.

“We are happy that the salmon at least have the temporary protection of this judgment,” says SPAWN’s executive director, Todd Steiner. “But saddened that County leadership has again failed voters and taxpayers and decided to play politics with landowner rights instead of simply passing a common-sense regulation to protect the salmon—as required by the countywide plan.”

County Board President Steve Kinsey appears to be taking a radical, pro-development stance on the ordinance, and has stated publicly that he will push for an ordinance that grandfather in illegal, unpermitted building in the SCA, and is entertaining other ways to loosen protections, such as reducing the streamside setback from its current standard of 100 feet.

Nonetheless, SPAWN hopes to work collaboratively with County board of supervisors to craft an ordinance that includes developing meaningful protections for salmon and guarantees enforcement for all protective regulations in the County. You can help SPAWN take action for strong streamside protection. Please sign this online petition at SpawnUSA.org/Ordinance addressed to the County supervisors to oppose efforts to allow more development on fragile salmon habitat.



BECOME A SPAWN VOLUNTEER & Help Save Our Coho!

OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

- Native Plant Nursery Volunteer
- Habitat Restorationist
- Creek Biological Monitor
- Student Intern
- Coho Advocate
- Photography & Video
- Invasive Species Monitor
- Tiling for New Intern Housing
- and more!

SPAWN Certifies First Marin Class of UC California Naturalists

BY COLETTE WEIL PARRINELLO, Certified California Naturalist

PASSION FOR THE OUTDOORS runs deep throughout the greater San Francisco Bay Area. So does the desire by many to preserve, protect and sustain the area's remaining natural resources. But a crucial component was missing—in-depth environmental training for the public. The first-of-its-kind SPAWN UC California Naturalist training course accomplished this goal!

Twenty-three students from ages 14–65 with the desire to become knowledgeable citizen scientists and take an active role in stewardship of the Lagunitas

Creek Watershed completed our Summer 2012 course. Each graduate completed 40 hours of in-class and field instruction based on materials developed by the UC Cooperative Extension and earned the new California Naturalist certificate. These students completed over 300 hours of volunteer service work on SPAWN projects! Lead instructor Dr. Chris Pincetich is excited to welcome the next class of California Naturalists in March 2013 for the Spring Session. To learn more and register, visit SpawnUSA.org/training.

Leave a Legacy for Coho Salmon

THROUGH A BEQUEST to the Salmon Protection and Watershed Network in your will and other estate plans, you can leave a legacy for Coho Salmon.

Call us at 800-859-SAVE x105 for information on including a bequest to SPAWN in your will, adding a simple codicil to your existing will, and other ways to give through your estate. All information discussed is confidential. Thank you for considering this important way to give.

SPAWN's 2012 Work By the Numbers

- Counted **273** Coho Salmon and Steelhead Trout smolts through our out-migrant study to assess how many young salmon leave the watershed
- Restored over **45,000** square feet of watershed habitat
- Partnered with more than **40** private landowners to protect creek habitat and property values
- Raised more than **5,000** local native plants in our two nurseries
- Recruited more than **400** volunteers to protect salmon and their habitat
- Inspired more than **200** students to care for endangered salmon and habitat
- Finished the **4th** mile of dirt road repairs to protect creeks and protect homes and ranches
- Rescued more than **800** juvenile fish through a project that has saved **23,352** endangered coho and steelhead trout from drying streams

SPAWN counts young salmon and steelhead as they leave the watershed through an outmigrant trap study



Turtle Island Restoration Network
Salmon Protection and Watershed Network
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Join SPAWN for a Creekwalk!

EXPLORE THE LAGUNITAS CREEK watershed with SPAWN's experienced naturalists on a quest to see endangered Coho Salmon.

Weekends through February at 10 am & 1 pm
with special trips on holiday weekdays!

Space is limited and registration is required.

FREE for SPAWN members! Suggested donation for non-members:
\$10 for adults, \$4 for children. No one turned away for lack of funds.

For more information and to register visit: SpawnUSA.org/Creek-Walks

Join Today—Your Gift Will Be Doubled!

Right now, membership contributions will be MATCHED by generous donors for gifts dated by Dec. 31. That means that for every \$1 you give, SPAWN will receive \$2 to help the salmon. When you join with a \$35 membership, you will receive a FREE naturalist-led Creekwalk for four people. Please visit SpawnUSA.org, use the enclosed envelope or call us toll-free at 800-859-SAVE x101 and join today!

ABOUT THE SALMON PROTECTION AND WATERSHED NETWORK

THE SALMON PROTECTION AND WATERSHED NETWORK (SPAWN) works to protect endangered coho salmon and steelhead and the environment on which we all depend. The protection of these keystone species leads to the protection of all the wildlife of our community, and indeed the protection of ourselves and our land.

SPAWN uses a multi-faceted approach, including grass-roots action, habitat restoration, policy development, environmental education, collaboration with other organizations, media campaigns and strategic legal action.



Masthead photo: Susan Farrar
Design: Hummingbird Design Studio

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