



A CREEK RUNS THROUGH US

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

SpawnUSA.org

On Course to Save Salmon: SPAWN Completes San Geronimo Golf Course Restoration Project

THIS COMING WINTER, when adult, endangered wild coho salmon struggle back from the ocean to the streams of the San Geronimo Valley, their epic migration will be a little easier as they make their way through the creeks on the San Geronimo Golf Course.

With the support of our members, volunteers and a committed team of partners, and a grant from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife Fisheries Restoration Program, SPAWN recently completed a major restoration project on the golf course. SPAWN and a team of restoration specialists reshaped and revitalized 200 feet of valuable salmon stream

habitat on Larsen Creek near the 11th hole. The project is designed to slow water velocity to improve migration conditions, protect nests and juvenile salmon, stop fish-choking sediment and re-establish native habitat species. The owners of the course, the Kim family, were eager to help SPAWN move the project forward and protect their eroding streambanks.

We have now completed the project in time to welcome this winter's migrating salmon, thanks to SPAWN's partnership with the golf course, a grant of \$52,838 from the Fisheries Restoration Grant Program to implement salmon improvements on the course, the hands-on help of more than 36 volunteers, and the support of SPAWN's members, donors and activists.

Preparing the site for heavy equipment required a light touch. SPAWN worked with a professional ornithologist whose bird survey found more than 24 species in the area, but no nesters that could have been harmed. SPAWN's staff and volunteers then temporarily rechanneled the creek, and moved native amphibians and fish downstream.

Then, contractors used a front-loader to widen Larsen Creek's steep, eroded banks

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SPAWN and Volunteers Honored with Two Awards



TURTLE ISLAND Restoration Network's Salmon Protection And Watershed Network (SPAWN) program's consistent efforts to protect endangered coho salmon and steelhead trout, and restore crucial creekside habitat have earned us the prestigious Charles McGlashan Environmental Award from the Marin Democratic Party, and a "Certificate of Recognition" by the California State Senate for our "leadership, commitment and tireless efforts towards conserving and protecting the Lagunitas Watershed and our endangered coho salmon." We proudly accepted these awards on your behalf. Read Executive Director Todd Steiner's Speech at Bit.ly/awardspeech.

Please make a tax-deductible contribution to SPAWN. Act now to give us the resources to protect and restore the majestic coho salmon of California. Donate at: SeaTurtles.org/Donate-Spawn/



SPAWN staff and volunteers construct a willow wall above Larsen Creek which will stabilize the slumping bank and prevent erosion from the golf course green above.

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Habitat Restoration vs. Advocacy?

SPAWN BEGAN 15 YEARS AGO when we found endangered coho salmon trapped behind an old, unused dam on the San Geronimo Golf Course. Advocating for a solution was easy because there was no downside to anyone since the dam was no longer in use. SPAWN became a hero in our local community. Since then the vast majority of SPAWN's efforts and resources have gone to restoration projects where we planted trees, fixed stream banks, rescued fish with school kids, and improved salmon habitat.

But it quickly became evident that fixing the mistakes of the past would be worth nothing, if we continued to repeat those same mistakes in the present. It became obvious that new problems were popping up faster than we were able to repair those created by 150 years of poor land management. In fact, despite all the good work, overall, salmon habitat was being degraded faster than it was being repaired.

Instead of ignoring the contentious issues of land use planning and regulations, and happily accepting accolades for our restoration activities, SPAWN decided it had to take action to prevent further degradation if coho salmon and steelhead trout were going survive "us."

We must address the recurring root problems that have resulted in our coho salmon population being pushed to the precipice of local extinction. This means demanding that our elected officials enact regulations to prevent the destruction of critical habitat and ensure that the waters are clean and healthy enough not only for these endangered species, but also for our kids who play here.

We have educated the public, testified at public hearings, built environmental coalitions, provided scientific evidence from some of California's leading scientists and provided legal resources to Marin County on how to implement science-based, common sense regulations. But our pleas have fallen on the deaf ears of the County of Marin Board of Supervisors. Only after we had exhausted all of these actions without success, did we file a lawsuit to ensure environmental laws to protect our salmon are enacted and enforced.

The struggle has been contentious and unfortunately some local residents who are adamantly opposed to any rules that interfere with their ability to cut trees, modify stream banks, and increase their development footprint on their properties have organized to oppose us. It would have been easier if SPAWN followed the path of least resistance, and ignored our responsibility to not only educate the public and restore habitat, but to also fight legal battles to save these endangered fish.

But then they would be extinct.

The fish need a strong voice if coho salmon are going to survive in Marin County. Please join us, volunteer, donate and do your part to protect these ancient salmon that live in our backyard waterways.



TODD STEINER



SPAWN staff and volunteers planted over 50 plants on this newly-restored bank to prevent erosion, increase the riparian buffer, and provide better shade.

continued from cover

so that they now roll gently towards the creek. The softer banks allow the creek to create a more natural floodplain habitat, and to transport important spawning gravel downstream, rather than sediment. We set several large woody debris structures (naturally fallen redwood tree logs and root balls) into the creek and secured them using large boulders. These structures act as "speed bumps" that deflect water away from banks while creating cool, shady hiding spots for the endangered fish.

Next, SPAWN's volunteer crew removed invasive Himalayan blackberry plants, installed erosion control fabric and straw log, planted plants grown in our native plant nursery, and installed a drip irrigation system.

The project highlights "bio-engineering" techniques that use natural materials to restore creeks. In October, SPAWN trained local residents and public lands managers in how to weave living willow into a low-impact bank-stabilizing wall that also creates shade, shelter and food for salmon.

As SPAWN Watershed Biologist Preston Brown told reporters from the Marin Independent Journal, "The largest population of Central California coast coho salmon is right here. For recovery to happen, it has to start here." And thanks to the support of SPAWN's funders, partners, interns, volunteers and activists, that is exactly what the San Geronimo Golf Course Restoration Project is designed to accomplish.

To learn more and sign up for SPAWN's email newsletter and event notifications, visit SeaTurtles.Org/Salmon.



Community Salmon Land Trust (C-SALT)

Saving West Marin's Coho Salmon by Restoring Habitat and Buying Homes

COHOSALMON THRIVE in creeks surrounded by a rich forest ecosystem, but with urbanization, roads, and buildings, the local populations of coho salmon disappear.

Despite being federally listed as threatened or endangered since 1996, one of the few places where the fish remain is in the Lagunitas Watershed. Here they are hanging on. But more needs to be

done to ensure they remain a part of our community.

Our new Community Salmon Land Trust (C-SALT) initiative seeks to purchase and repair existing parcels along Lagunitas Creek to restore habitat, maintain modest-sized and affordable homes, and restore a streamside forested buffer zone.

This can be accomplished by creating permanent conservation easements on property deeds to help preserve salmon-friendly habitat improvements; landscaping homes with native trees to create a carbon-sequestering forest buffer; keeping house sizes modest; and making the houses affordable in perpetuity using land trust tools.

This voluntary and non-regulatory initiative will seek to purchase homes when they are up for sale. Future owners will understand the restrictions and responsibilities of purchasing one of these affordable creekside homes. Decades down the road, if we are successful, our children and grandchildren will thank us. Get involved by contacting us at info@spawnusa.org or (415) 663-8590.

Summer Salmon Institute

SPAWN'S SUMMER SALMON INSTITUTE, a professional teacher-training program with funding from NOAA's B-WET program, was offered for the third time in the past few years. Teachers, many from low-income schools in the Bay Area, spent the week learning about hands-on watershed education and its links to the newly adopted Next Generation Science Standards.



Teachers investigate macro-invertebrates in Lagunitas Creek, to complete a biological assessment of water quality.

Each teacher worked collaboratively to develop a 6-8 week unit plan on the decline of the coho salmon population in the Lagunitas Creek Watershed in Marin County, Calif. These units are now being implemented during the school year, providing students across the Bay Area with the opportunity to participate in hands-on watershed sciences. Teachers will have the opportunity to bring their students to work on restoration projects in the Lagunitas Watershed, giving them hands-on experience restoring the environment!

Contact Catie Clune at Catie@TIRN.Net learn more about the educational, financial and logistical support we can provide classrooms!

Shop at the Turtle Island Store



SPAWN T-SHIRT
with our new logo. In navy blue, Men's S, M, L, XL
\$28



SPAWN HAT
100% organic cotton—navy blue
\$21



RAINGARDEN SIGN
"This Garden Harvests Rainwater"
\$18



PEWTER SALMON LAPEL PIN
\$11

All prices include shipping.

Order online on our secure server at SeaTurtles.org/Shop or send a check to SPAWN, P.O. Box 370, Forest Knolls, CA 94933.

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.

Turtle Island Restoration Network
Salmon Protection and Watershed Network
P.O. Box 370
Forest Knolls, CA 94933

ABOUT SPAWN TURTLE ISLAND RESTORATION NETWORK'S SALMON PROTECTION AND WATERSHED NETWORK (SPAWN) program works to protect endangered coho salmon and steelhead trout, 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 our land and us.

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

Visit SpawnUSA.Org to learn more.

Join SPAWN for a Creekwalk!



With the first hard rains in the watershed comes the beginning of spawning season for adult Coho Salmon. These embattled fish make a journey many miles upstream from the ocean to reproduce and die in the headwater streams where they were born. This “homecoming” is a spectacular phenomenon that makes the ecosystems around the Lagunitas Creek Watershed come alive!

Join a SPAWN naturalist on a Creek Walk to explore the majesty and natural history of the region and learn about the ecology of our endangered coho salmon.

Creek Walks are held from 10 am to 1 pm, and leave from the San Geronimo Valley Community Center. Upcoming walks will be held on:

- Dec. 13, 2014
- Jan. 10, 2015
- Jan. 24, 2015
- Feb. 21, 2015

Please RSVP to attend or to schedule a special tour for a group by emailing Preston@spawnusa.org.

Masthead photo: Susan Farrar
Design: Hummingbird Design Studio

Join Today!

Become a member of SPAWN and your gift of \$35 or more will help us protect and restore the wild, endangered coho salmon in West Marin. Donate \$60 or more and receive a free t-shirt! SPAWN's conservation efforts are made possible with the generous support of our members, volunteers and activists each year. Your membership includes a FREE naturalist-led Creek Walk for four people. Please visit SpawnUSA.org, use the enclosed envelope, or call us toll-free at 1-800-859-SAVE x101 and join today!

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A project of Turtle Island Restoration Network



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