

## **A History of the Salmon Protection and Watershed Network (SPAWN) and Projects at the San Geronimo Golf Course in Marin County**

Salmon Protection and Watershed Network (SPAWN), a program of Turtle Island Restoration Network (TIRN), applauds Marin County for the purchase of the San Geronimo Valley Golf Course for the intended purpose to convert the 157 acre property into County Open Space. The eventual restoration of this property to wildlands will benefit numerous native terrestrial and aquatic species, including the endangered coho salmon and threatened steelhead trout.

The golf course includes portions of two creeks important to endangered coho salmon and threatened steelhead trout. The segment of San Geronimo Creek that runs through the golf course likely has the highest density of spawning coho in the 100 square mile watershed, as well as a sizeable population of threatened steelhead trout. Larsen Creek, a tributary of San Geronimo Creek that runs through the golf courses “back nine” also supports a significant spawning population of both species.

We intend to use the expertise we have gained over the past two decades of improving wildlife habitat at the golf course to Marin County by offering our services in the design and implementation of the restoration of floodplains, riparian and upland forest habitats.

As open space, this property will be available for recreational opportunities to a much larger segment and a more diverse part of the community since less than 10% of the population plays golf, and less than 25% of those that do identify as female. Its transformation to a park will also facilitate walking and biking “connections” between the villages of Woodacre, San Geronimo, Lagunitas, and Forest Knolls. It also offers the opportunity to re-create extensive floodplains which help reduce flooding of homes downstream, filter sediments and pollutants, provide critical wildlife habitat, and sequester carbon to fight climate change through reforestation activities.

The golf course went up for sale because it was not economically feasible to run the course at a profit and there were no serious buyers who wished to purchase it for that purpose. This has been a serious problem for past owners as well. The one other purchase offer reported in the press recently was also not interested in continuing golf operations, but rather the creation of a luxury hotel and resort that would have brought more traffic and few benefits for local residents.

Turtle Island Restoration Network (TIRN) was prepared to purchase the property for restoration and had been in negotiations with the current owners since last year when we informed Marin County about our negotiations, and they decided to purchase for open space. Our aim was to purchase it in order to re-wild the property and make it available as public or private open space (similar to Audubon Canyon Ranch). This was the second time Turtle Island Restoration Network tried to purchase the property; when the golf course was for sale in 2009, we were in the process of securing funding in when the current owners purchased it first.

### **SPAWN History and Completed Projects at the San Geronimo Golf Course 1998-2017**

SPAWN’s genesis began at the San Geronimo Valley Golf Course, when TIRN’s Executive Director, Todd Steiner, found threatened coho salmon stuck behind a crumbling dam on the property<sup>1</sup> in 1997.

Steiner publicized the salmon’s plight and then worked with National Marine Fisheries Service to assure safe passage over the dam by capturing and moving them around the dam so the fish could complete their

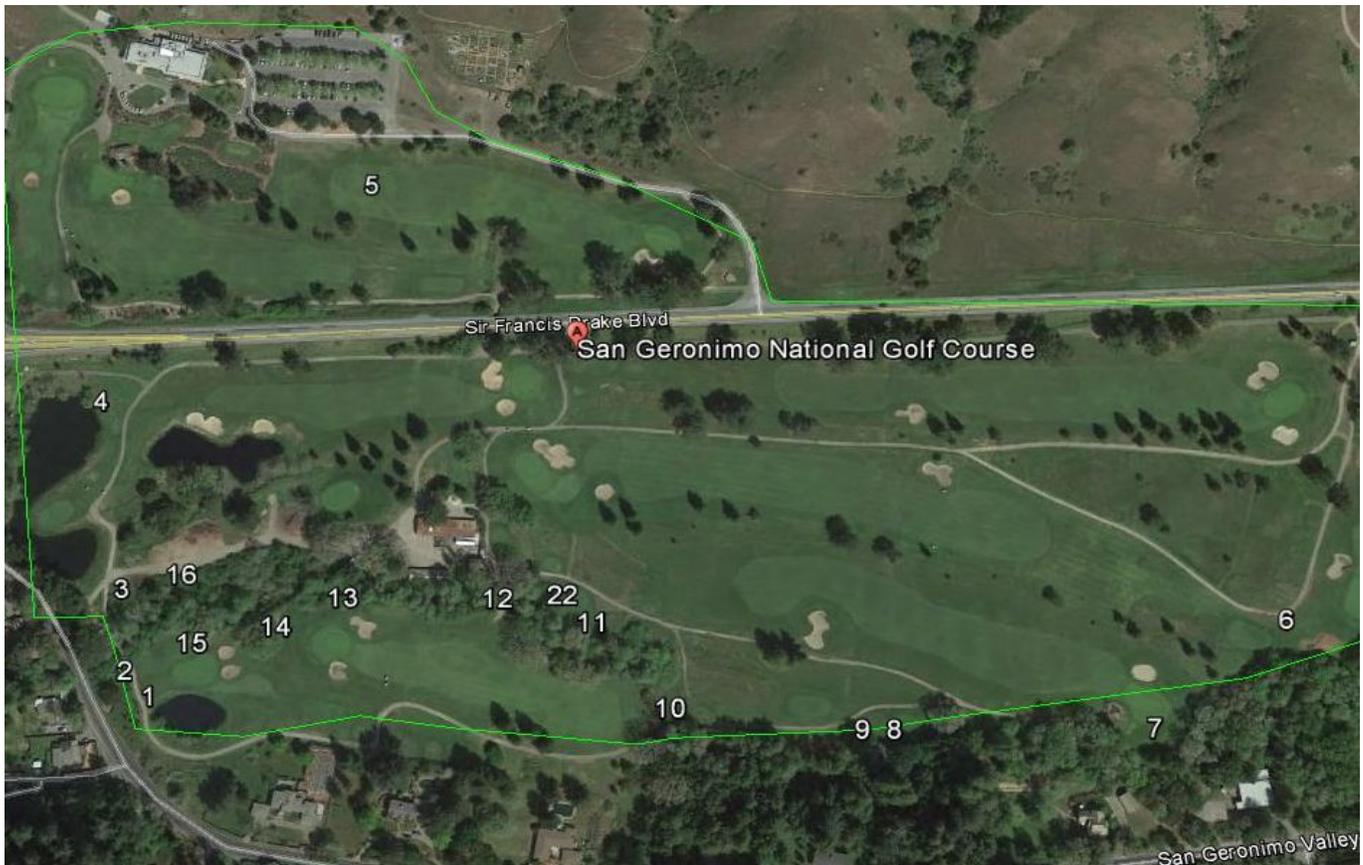
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<sup>1</sup> Warner, M. (reporter) 1999. New pools ease coho salmon spawning. *Marin Independent Journal*, October 3, 1999,

spawning migration. He then set about seeking a more permanent solution, which became the conversion of Roy's Pools to Roy's Dam<sup>2</sup> in 1999.

Over the course of the next approximately two decades, SPAWN completed numerous restoration projects, studies and enhancements to improve habitat on the golf course for coho salmon (Figure 1) raising approximately \$1.3 million to complete the work (Table 1). Two additional projects, the largest so far, have been designed and engineered and applications for implementation funds (\$2.5 million) are currently pending (Table 2).

**Figure 1. SPAWN Projects on the San Geronimo Valley Golf Course: 1998-2017**



<sup>2</sup> Steiner, Todd. 1999. For the Fish: Roy's Dam to Roy's Pools. Opinion-editorial [in](#): *Marin Independent Journal*, October 24, 1999.



Table 1. Cost of projects completed by SPAWN on the San Geronimo Valley Golf Course

Number	Project	Cost
1	Redwood Planting along SG Creek	\$2,000.00
2	Conversion of Roys Dam to Roys Pool	\$450,000.00
3	Fish Passage Restoration at Roys Pools	\$290,000.00
4	Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan	\$4,500.00
5	Coho-Friendly Habitat and Operations Plan	\$175,000.00
6	Songbird Habitat Improvement Nesting Boxes	\$1,500.00
7	Stormwater Harvesting Bioswale	\$500.00
8	Large Woody Debris Installation	\$22,000.00
9	Stormwater Harvesting Bioswale	\$500.00
10	Riparian Maintenance for Fish and Golfers	\$2,500.00
11	Invasive Blackberry Removal and Riparian Planting	\$9,000.00
12	Redwood Tree Planting and Stormwater Reduction	\$5,500.00
13	Bank Stabilization Collaboration with MRCD	\$25,500.00
14	Invasive Blackberry Removal and Redwood Planting	\$13,000.00
15	Bank Stabilization and Redwood Tree Planting	\$2,200.00
16	Redwood Tree Planting	\$750.00
17	Invasive Bass Fishing Derby	\$1,500.00
18	Bank Stabilization and Large Wood Habitat on Larsen Creek	\$20,500.00

19	Floodplain Restoration on Larsen Creek	\$23,000.00
20	Native Riparian Plant Restoration	\$12,000.00
21	Invasive Blackberry Removal and Stormwater Harvesting	\$500.00
22	Floodplain and Instream Habitat Restoration on San Geronimo Creek	\$220,000.00
Total		\$1,281,950.00

Table 2. Completed designs and engineering for projects current with applications for implementation funding currently pending.

Number	Project	Engineering/Design Cost
1	Roy's Pool Barrier Removal	\$2,000,000.00
22	San Geronimo Floodplain Restoration, upstream of Roy's Pools	\$500,000.000
Total		\$2,500,000.00