

FAUNTLEROY WATERSHED COUNCIL
Meeting #41, May 14, 2009, 7 p.m., Fautleroy Church

ATTENDEES

Watershed volunteers: Judy Pickens, Steev Ward, Steve Bomkamp, Steve Winter, David Follis, Jack Lawless

Fautleroy Church: Randy Sleight

Seattle Public Utilities: Miles Mayhew

Seattle Parks: Carol Baker

Department of Ecology: Dave Garland

Facilitator: Randy Sleight

Scribe: Judy Pickens

NOTES:

1. Introductions

2. March minutes

Approved as circulated.

3. Treasurer's report

Dennis Hinton reported (in writing) \$1,861.69 in the Council checking account. The balance reflects a \$100 expenditure, approved by the Executive Committee, to Sanislo School for a bus so that students could come to the creek to release their salmon.

4. In the media

Judy Pickens reported coverage of the Arbor Heights' salmon release on the *West Seattle Blog*, posted May 12.

5. Education projects

Gatewood water-sampling: Trisha Montemayor, volunteer coordinator at Gatewood Elementary, introduced fifth-grade students Natalie Barr and Ainsley Montemayor, who reported on the school's fecal-coliform bacteria study. (See full report.) Sinang Lee and Dave Garland with State Ecology and Jed Moore with the Council aided teams of students in collecting monthly water samples at four stations along the creek, then analyzing lab results of testing for fecal coliform. They sought to answer two questions: (1) What are levels of bacteria along the creek? (2) Do the levels of bacteria change over time?

Testing of the student samples showed the greatest amount of bacteria in February (a very snowy and rainy month) and the least in March (a drier period). Students concluded that levels did, indeed, change over time according to the amount of precipitation washing bacteria into the creek.

In response to questions and comments from Council members, Trisha said they had not been aware of the coyote den (estimated at 10 animals) due east of Forest Court, which could have affected bacteria counts in the forest tributary, which had some of the highest readings of the study. She thanked the Council and State Ecology for making this research project possible and expressed interest in having Gatewood students involved in a survey of wildlife in Fauntleroy Park.

Salmon releases: Judy reported 14 salmon releases on the schedule, most in May, involving some 500 students. Three preschool releases and two with students from White Center Heights Elementary involved coho fry raised by Jack Lawless for youngsters who don't participate in Salmon in the Classroom. She noted that teachers commented on having an easier time raising their fish this year, thanks to the tank upgrades the Council was able to provide. The total of coho fry released is expected to be about the same as past years (roughly 2,000).

Local volunteers have helped with schools unable to bring enough adults; Cathy Mastroianni Follis's parents from Illinois even gave a hand, twice! Judy singled out Steve Winter for adjusting of logs to ensure enough water at the release site and Phil Sweetland's help fetching fish from schools taking Metro and assisting during lunch time downstream. Thanks, also, to Steev Ward, who snared the teacher from Sanislo, a school that, unbeknownst to us, had been releasing here for several years but is now "in the system." She also expressed appreciation to Parks' staff for cleaning the steps down to the water and spreading chips to reduce mud and erosion at the release site.

6. Agency updates/news

Seattle Public Utilities: Substituting for Kathy Minsch, Miles Mayhew reported that cutbacks at the utility have impacted some watershed services, though not directly here. The Thornton Creek Watershed Council will no longer have administrative support from SPU. Also, the Aquatic Habitat Matching Grant Program will not be accepting applications for a new round of funding in 2010 but will be continuing full administrative support for existing grantees.

Miles announced the second citywide watershed forum to be hosted by SPU on June 3 at 5:30 at REI. Anyone interested is invited (so far, Randy, Phil, and Judy are going for Fauntleroy).

Seattle Parks: Carol Baker said installation of the kiosk at 97th has been delayed by irrigation-system work at Lincoln Park but it will happen soon. In response to city budget cuts, she said that Parks has again cut back on seasonal hiring and also is not filling all vacancies or is deliberately being low in filling them. As a result, some permanent staff positions are staying vacant longer or may not be filled. Cuts have also been made in programs that support Fauntleroy Park. For example, the trails coordinator has taken on additional responsibilities to oversee some of the contractors working in parks.

Carol noted that the easement agreement with Fauntleroy Church is fully signed. Parks' survey crew will do a little clarification in anticipation of replacing the bridge over the Forest Court tributary; neither that nor any other project associated with the easement has been scheduled yet.

She distributed information about the Parks and Green Spaces levy, part of which is an "opportunity fund" that will allow community groups to request funds for projects that were not anticipated before the levy went on the ballot.

Carol also shared a touching story about a baby barred owl that Parks' employees were able to rescue in Lincoln Park and return to a tree where the parents could care for it. The baby's progress became a point of interest for park users.

Steve Richmond relayed in writing that his plant work in Fauntleroy Park has been curtailed by city budget cuts. Weeding of new plants will continue, as will applying herbicide to holly and laurel that Steve Hodson has been working to eradicate. He hopes to organize volunteer support for mulching and watering, and one of his employees will meet volunteer requirements of a training program by working in the park.

7. Special projects

Out-migration study: Steev Ward reported a total of 18 smolts leaving the creek through the trap since April 1. He noted that the trap was fully impacted by mud and debris after a big rainstorm but was back in service within a day. Some smolts might have gone unrecorded then or before the trap went in. Dennis Hinton has helped with this annual research. Steev expressed disappointment with the total but said the smolts (except for one with a bite out of it) were of good size and vigor.

City's stormwater code update: Randy summarized several points contained in a letter he wrote for Executive Committee signatures regarding the draft code, putting the Council on record about this important update.

8. Lower-watershed projects/news

Judy reported that a state allocation of \$140,000 for sea-lettuce research and removal from beaches (including Fauntleroy Cove) passed the Legislature and is awaiting the governor's signature. Rep. Sharon Nelson from this district and Sen. Tracey Eide from Federal Way (where Dumas Bay is impacted) had proposed bills to use a portion of boat-registration fees for response to saltwater algae, tapping a fund established for freshwater algae. Lake advocates protested sharing the fund, even though it was under-spent, and were lobbying the governor for a veto. If signed, the allocation will be administered by the water quality folks at State Ecology in Olympia; it's to be available as grants to local jurisdictions, and details of accessing it are not yet known.

9. Upper-watershed projects/news

Fenton Glen restoration: Judy said that the city grant contract is nearly finalized, after which the project will get under way. Given the probable timing for applying herbicide to the yellow archangel infestation, the rest of this year is likely to be devoted to planning toward instream construction and revegetation in 2010.

Tour de Fronds and myco-remediation: Steve Richmond reported, in writing, that his Tour de Fronds in late April drew some 30 native-plant enthusiasts for a nature walk in the park. Also, he is experimenting with "myco-remediation" - the ability of mushrooms to filter runoff from farms and such - as a possible way to reduce fecal coliform bacteria from park runoff. He has placed a burlap bag inoculated with mushroom stem butts near the Barton Street entrance to see if the mushrooms will grow.

Way-finding signage: To move this project forward, Judy produced a large map of the park and six cardboard pillars to help us visualize where signposts should go and what they should say. Those assembled changed wording and locations to their eventual satisfaction. Carol thought that making six signs was within the realm of possibility for Parks' carpentry staff and that we might help by painting the routed letters and arrows.

Action item: Judy will forward sign locations and text to Carol for her to determine what Parks can do and roughly when.

Next meeting: 7 p.m. Thursday, September 10, @ Fautleroy Church