



# South Coast Habitat Restoration Newsletter

Winter 2017

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## South Coast Habitat Restoration Celebrates 10 Years!



*Steelhead in Maria Ygnacio watershed 2017*

SCHR is thrilled to celebrate 10 years of protecting, conserving and restoring various habitats and native biodiversity in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties. With support from organizations such as Earth Island Institute, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and Patagonia, SCHR has made significant impacts for steelhead trout passage restoration projects in the region .

Working with the various project funders and partners, South Coast Habitat Restoration, manages grant funding for projects and coordinates operations. Based in Carpinteria, some of our first projects were located locally, working in partnership with the City of Carpinteria and the Carpinteria Creek Watershed Coalition to ensure

steelhead trout migrations are free of barriers. South Coast Habitat Restoration projects have also provided a venue for volunteers, community members and visitors to learn about habitat restoration and the importance of the Carpinteria Creek Watershed.

SCHR is grateful for the support of the Carpinteria and Santa Barbara communities. As we look ahead, we are proud to be working on 20 more barrier removals and restoring an additional 30 miles of habitat for the steelhead trout. These beautiful salmonids have persisted despite development, water diversions and other challenges. SCHR is committed to helping this resilient species improve their population numbers.

The mission of **South Coast Habitat Restoration** is to protect, conserve, and restore the various habitats and native biodiversity of Santa Barbara and Ventura counties.

For more information please visit us at:  
[schabitatrestoration.org](http://schabitatrestoration.org)

**Interested in supporting SCHR?**  
Contact us at  
[info@schabitatrestoration.org](mailto:info@schabitatrestoration.org)

## CREATURE FEATURE: COAST LIVE OAK



Over half of all Californian oak species can be found in our local region. The Coast Live Oak is perhaps the most common, thriving in our coastal fog and mild climate. Coast Live Oaks are located along the coast from San Francisco to Baja. They are usually between 10 and 25 meters tall with widely spread branches and dense foliage. The cupped leaves are oblong or oval shaped with sharp edges, and the bark is rough and grey. One-seeded acorns can range in size and shape, but are generally oblong and smooth. Coast Live Oaks provide food and habitat for wildlife such as birds, small mammals, and deer, and also help protect slopes from erosion. A major threat to Coast Live Oaks is Sudden Oak Death, a disease that spreads through fungus-like pathogens. Sudden Oak Death can kill a healthy, mature tree within weeks, and has caused the death of millions of oak species since the 1920s.

## Upcoming Events & Information

### **Patagonia—The Activist Company!**

Patagonia believes the environmental crisis has reached a critical tipping point. Without commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, defend clean water and air, and divest from dirty technologies, humankind as a whole will destroy our planet's ability to repair itself. At Patagonia, the protection and preservation of the environment isn't what we do after hours. It's the reason we're in business and every day's work. For more info visit [patagonia.com](http://patagonia.com).

### **Salmonid Restoration Conference**

The 36th annual, Salmonid Restoration Conference will be held in Fortuna California, at the River Lodge, April 11<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018. The four day conference consists of two days of workshops and field tours on Wednesday and Thursday, followed by two days of concurrent sessions on Friday and Saturday. Abstracts are currently being accepted for the sessions and poster presentation. Check out [calsalmon.org](http://calsalmon.org) for more information and for sponsorship information.

### **SERCAL Conference**

The 25<sup>th</sup> annual, California Society for Ecological Restoration or SERCAL Conference, will be held at the Marina Village Conference Center in San Diego May 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018. The three day conference will include workshops field tours, presentations, and other educational activities dealing with the restoration of California native habitats. Check out [sercal.org](http://sercal.org) for more information.

### **American Fisheries Society**

The 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual Cal-NEVA meeting will take place in San Luis Obispo from February 28 - March 2, 2018. The theme of the meeting is "Communicating with our communities". Check out [afs-calneva.org](http://afs-calneva.org) for more information.

### **Audubon Christmas Bird Count**

The Santa Barbara Audubon Christmas Bird Count will be held on Saturday December 30, 2017. If you are interested in participating check out their website and be sure to register for the event at [www.casbbirdcount.org/](http://www.casbbirdcount.org/)

## Meet the New SCHR Staff

### **Alyssa Obester – Project Manager**

Alyssa is excited to bring her passion for watershed management and restoration, and knowledge of freshwater systems to SCHR. Prior to joining the SCHR team, Alyssa worked as a GIS Analyst for the UC Davis Center for Watershed Sciences, where she was involved with a variety of projects including drought-impact analyses and modeling of the historic Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, and had the opportunity to spend time in the field collecting data and "working" in many of Northern California's rivers. She also worked at the South Yuba River Citizens League studying



mountain meadows, and at California Freshwater Fish Laboratory, where she studied the impacts of hydropower and water diversions on Chinook salmon in Butte Creek, CA. Alyssa received her master's in Environmental Science and Management from the Bren School at UCSB, and holds a B.S. in Environmental Science and Management and a minor in Environmental Policy from UC Davis.

### **Debra McCarty – Grants Administrator**

Her non-profit experience includes creating and teaching science curriculum for a non-profit in San Diego County, engaging and volunteering with Diabetes Advocacy Organizations throughout California, planning and executing the California Avocado Festival as the Executive Officer and creating sustainable fundraising programs as the Development Director of the Carpinteria Education Foundation. McCarty has a bachelor's degree in Biology, focusing on Marine Biology from San Diego State University. As the Grant Administrator for South Coast Habitat Restoration, she will focus on organizing and management of the many grant opportunities available to SCHR.

## SCHR Named Beneficiary of the 24th Annual Patagonia Salmon Run



Patagonia will host the 24th Annual Salmon 5K Run on November 5th, 2017. The Salmon Run is a benefit event that over the years has raised more than \$150,000 for environmental groups working on important issues right in Patagonia's backyard. South Coast Habitat is honored to be named this year's Salmon Run beneficiary. We are proud to be recognized by Patagonia as a non profit organization that works to protect and restore the habitats and native biodiversity through the Santa Barbara County. As a zero-waste event, the Salmon Run and Patagonia are committed to reducing the amount of waste created by the event. Runners are asked to bring their own water bottles. The Salmon Run includes refreshments, a Silent Auction venue and a non-profit booth area. Guests are encouraged to visit the booths,

and learn more about the environmental impact the organizations are making in the region. South Coast Habitat Restoration will host a table at the event to speak to community members on the work they do to support the local Steelhead Trout population. Thank you to Patagonia for recognizing South Coast Habitat Restoration!

### Atascadero and Maria Ygnacio Fish Passage Work

SCHR continues to work in partnership with various stakeholders towards the removal of nine barriers to migration in the Atascadero and Maria Ygnacio Creek watersheds. Our efforts involve the removal of the County owned debris basin in partnership with the Santa Barbara County Flood Control District and the preparation of engineering designs at six barriers in the low to middle section of the watershed.

The removal of the debris basin (and two other associated barriers) is slated to take place in 2018. This project will restore perennial habitat to steelhead trout and open up 4.15 miles of habitat. This project is funded with support from the Department of Water Resources Urban Streams Restoration Grant Program and the County of Santa Barbara.

The preparation of designs for the six barriers is proceeding with input from many agencies (County, USGS, COMB, NOAA, etc.) in order to improve steelhead trout migration through this reach of the watershed. Designs are being prepared by Waterways Engineering and are currently at the conceptual design phase for the sites. Funding for the project was awarded to SCHR by NFWF.

In March of 2017, an adult female steelhead trout was observed to be trapped in a pool below one of the barriers we are working on. She was approximately 24" in length and was accompanied by a ~7" male trout. They were observed to make an egg nest, red, however, stream conditions were not favorable and the female was observed trying to jump over the existing barrier. After about two weeks of watching over the fish, and having the incredible opportunity to interact with the residents near the site who watched over the trout, they were assumed to have swam downstream with a late spring rain event. Their ultimate fate is unknown. We'd like to think they headed back down to the ocean and either came up a different creek in the region or are waiting for the barriers to be removed so they can come back upstream and spawn in the near future.



*Female steelhead , March 2017*



# Celebrating 10 Years of Restoration Success!



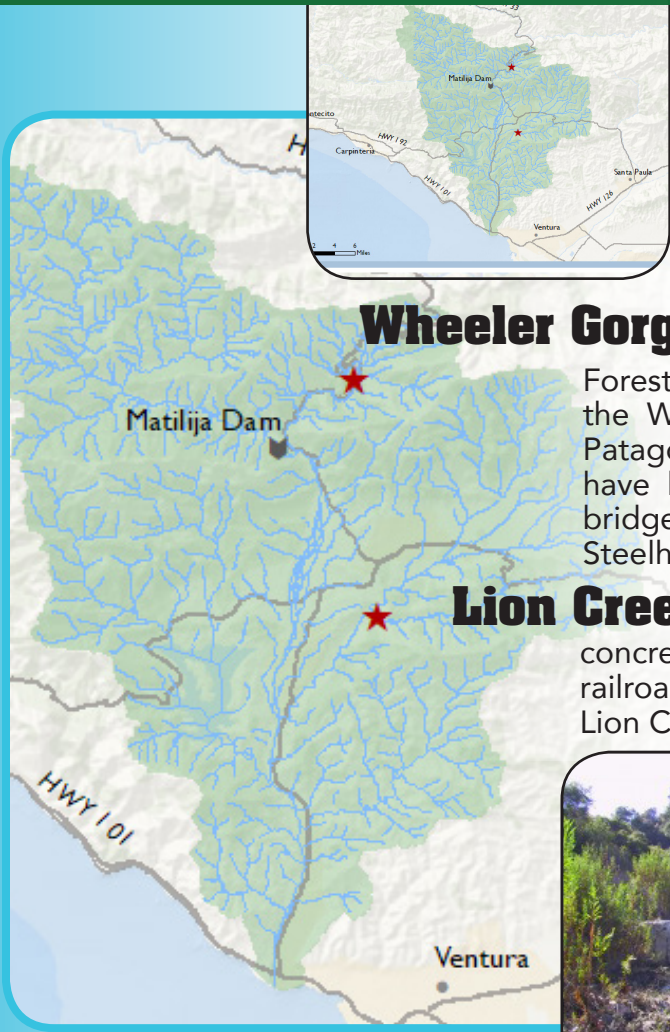
Carpinteria Creek Restoration Site

## Examples of Current & Recently Completed Projects



Restoration Site	Barriers Removed	Barriers Planned for Removal	Miles Restored	Miles of Restoration Planned	Funds Awarded
1 Davy Brown/Munch Creeks	-	3	-	3.1	\$140,000
2 Gaviota Creek	-	5	-	0.54	\$255,000
3 Tajiguas Creek	9	-	3.54	-	\$2M
4 Maria Ygnacio Creek	1	6	0.5	-	\$1.6M
5 Carpinteria Creek	8	2	5.5	-	\$4.3M
6 N. Fork Matilija Creek	1	4	17.5	-	\$228,000

## Restoring the Ventura River Watershed



### Wheeler Gorge

In partnership with the Los Padres National Forest, SCHR is working to remove four barriers within the Wheeler Campground. Conceptual plans funded by Patagonia and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation have been prepared where we will install two vehicular bridges across the creek to maintain access and improve Steelhead migration.

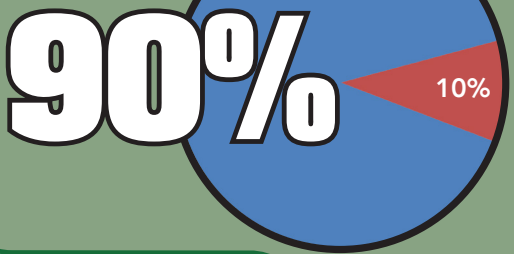
### Lion Creek

The Lion Creek Project removed an old concrete stream crossing and replaced it with a recycled railroad car. This opened up Steelhead migration into the Lion Creek tributary of San Antonio Creek.



## Accomplishments Since 2007

Of all barriers removed by nonprofits in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties since 2003...



were removed by SCHR

Of all barriers removed in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties since 2003...

45%

were removed by SCHR

20 Landowners



partnered with SCHR to restore Steelhead habitats

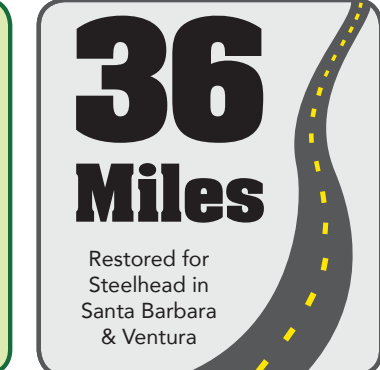
\$11 Million

Secured for Steelhead Recovery in Santa Barbara & Ventura



36 Miles

Restored for Steelhead in Santa Barbara & Ventura



12 Bridges

Installed on private lands to help upstream migration & landowner access



LOOKING AHEAD:

Current projects will remove 20 barriers and restore 30 miles of habitat for Steelhead.

25 Barriers

Removed to improve Steelhead habitat





## El Capitan Creek Fish Passage Designs

SCHR recently completed the development of the engineering designs for the removal of the barrier to steelhead migration along El Capitan Creek within the El Capitan State Park. The site is currently made up of a metal, corrugated arch culvert with a concrete apron. This structure creates an impediment for steelhead trout migration.

With support from California State Parks, SCHR was awarded grant funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to prepare engineering designs for the removal of the barrier and replacement with a clear span bridge. Our engineering team (Waterways Consulting, Streeter Group and Earth Systems Southern California) prepared engineering designs to remove the existing barrier and replace it with a clear span bridge. The plans were prepared with the approval of California State Parks and review by CDFW and NOAA. With the completion of the designs, State Parks will now prepare for the construction of the project in the next couple of years after they have completed the permitting and secured the funding for the project. The project will improve upstream migration to steelhead trout in this important watershed and will also install a taller bridge which will have greater flood protection and improve public safety.



## Integrated Water Strategies to Enhance Streamflow in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties



South Coast Habitat Restoration, along with Central Coast Salmon Enhancement, Sierra Watershed Progressive, and Hicks Law, are partnering together on a new planning project that seeks to increase the amount of water in creeks in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties. As a first step, this project will identify and prioritize areas that offer the greatest opportunity to enhance stream flow. To do this, we will be examining factors such as land use, hydrology, habitat suitability for southern steelhead, as well as current water diversions. Based on areas prioritized for flow enhancement, the project team will then communicate with local landowners about strategies to decrease onsite water use that will consequently increase flows during critical times of year. Based on landowner support, we will then plan

future projects that implement these changes. This project presents a unique opportunity to improve local water use efficiency and increase stream flows in a non-regulatory manner. We thank the Wildlife Conservation Board and the California State Coastal Conservancy for providing funding for this project.



# Gaviota Creek Fish Passage Designs

We are happy to share that we have been recommended for funding for barrier removal work along Gaviota Creek by staff from the California Coastal Conservancy! Earlier this year, we applied for grant funds to the Conservancy to begin working on the removal of the five lower barriers to steelhead migration along Gaviota Creek. This funding is being matched with funding awarded from the County of Santa Barbara's Coastal Resources Enhancement Fund (CREF) and from Patagonia.

Our efforts to restore steelhead to Gaviota Creek were initially funded with support from the Santa Barbara Foundation and the J.S. Bower Foundation. Their support allowed us to build relationships with landowners and stakeholders in the watershed including California State Parks and CalTrans as well as to apply for grant funding for this project.

The grant funds will allow us to hire an engineering team to tackle the removal of five barrier to migration and make upstream habitat available to steelhead trout. Initial efforts will be to develop preliminary engineering

designs and alternatives analysis for these barriers. The Gaviota Creek watershed is unique in Santa Barbara County in that it has a perennial source of water and excellent habitat for steelhead and other sensitive species.

Our efforts along Gaviota Creek have been successful as a result of the partnership with Coastal Ranches Conservancy. Their dedication and support of our mutual goals to restore the Gaviota watershed have been invaluable towards our efforts. We look forward to beginning this work in the beginning of 2018 and updating you on progress of the project.

## Davy Brown and Munch Creek Fish Passage Restoration

SCHR is continuing restoration work on Davy Brown and Munch Creeks in the Santa Maria River watershed. With funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and Santa Barbara County's Coastal Resource Enhancement Fund (CREF), SCHR is partnering with the US Forest Service to remove three barriers to steelhead migration on Davy Brown and Munch Creeks, which are tributaries to the Sisquoc and Santa Maria Rivers and are located in the Los Padres National Forest. This project will open up 3.1 miles of habitat in unburned areas of the Santa Maria River watershed, providing steelhead and other aquatic species with additional refuge habitat while the burned portion of the watershed continues to recover from the 2007 Zaca Fire. Conceptual plans for the project have been prepared, which include the removal of three barriers and the replacement of these barriers with two vehicular bridges. Construction of this project is set to begin in August of 2018.





## Letter from the Director Mauricio Gomez

I hope you have enjoyed reading the articles and project summaries presented in this newsletter. Our work continues to show progress towards restoring species and watersheds in the Santa Barbara and Ventura County regions. December 1, 2017 marks the 10 year anniversary of South Coast Habitat Restoration! I am extremely excited about the direction SCHR is on. With the addition of new staff, Alyssa and Debra, we are growing and positioning ourselves to continue our efforts of watershed restoration.

We are proud of the partnerships with various landowners (public and private) we have established and look forward to continuing to work with them to design for the removal of barriers and ultimately improve watershed conditions by removing barriers to steelhead trout migration and improving watershed health. As we prepared the information for this newsletter, I was very proud of the statistics we compiled. Our various partnerships have allowed for our efforts to make considerable progress by removing many barriers, restoring many miles and raising millions of dollars for our local economy. I am proud of all these statistics and look forward to adding more to these categories over the next few years.

We are beginning to focus some of our work on enhancing instream flows in local creeks and we know this will be a challenging process. Much like removing barriers was a challenging process when we began this work many years ago, we look forward to making a difference in stream flows to help steelhead trout in the region.

As I think back over the past 10 years when we were first beginning our barrier removal work, I have to say thank you to all of our partners and supporters. From, the landowners that have trusted us to work on their property, to the grant funders who continue to support our efforts and award us funding for our projects and to all the partners that we have worked with over the years that have allowed us to learn about the complex process of doing watershed restoration projects. To the community supporters and non-profit partners that have engaged in our efforts in order to better build partnerships and make the process easier for us to do the work we've been able to do.

Lastly, I'd like to thank Earth Island Institute staff and Board for their continued fiscal sponsorship and support of SCHR. Without their support we wouldn't be able to do the work we get the opportunity to be involved with.

Please join me in celebrating 10 years of restoration success and stay tuned for an actual celebration in the near future!

Sincerely,

Mauricio Gomez

Director, South Coast Habitat Restoration

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