

OUR MISSION

Coastal Habitat Education and Environmental Restoration, also known as CHEER, is a registered 501(c)3 Non-Profit Organization with a fresh take on environmental programming. It's mission is to restore coastal ecosystems but to do so in a way that safeguards resource based local economies. CHEER recognizes that varied interests are represented in local economies. It believes that assessing and reconciling these interests so that each group profits by cooperation in restoration efforts, is the key to more effective environmental programming.

OUR OBJECTIVES

- 1) Clean watersheds that once teemed with wild Steelhead Trout but where Steelhead Trout are now listed endangered or threatened due to environmental impacts.
- 2) Restore Steelhead populations to renewed watersheds.
- 3) Involve the community in each step of the process to improve chances of attaining and preserving project results.
- 4) Find ways for people to profit by cooperation and collaboration with CHEER objectives.
- 5) Provide for CHEER's financial sustainability.

CHEER BOARD

CEO/Executive Director
Herman Garcia

President: David Hamblin

Chief Operating Director: Irma Batrez

Vice President: Mike Sanchez

Treasurer: Steve Guerriero

Secretary: Sheila Smith

Board Member: Chris Gonzalez

For more information please visit our site or give us a call!

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CHEER up your Creek!

COASTAL HABITAT EDUCATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION
(CHEER)

20th Anniversary Edition

NEWSLETTER OF THE PAJARO RIVER WATERSHED 4/29/23



Historic Winter Massive Flooding Throughout Pajaro River Watershed



*Snow covered Diablo Range in the Pajaro River Watershed
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South Valley environmentalist chosen for national film project

Herman Garcia and his crew of volunteers' mission to clean up the watershed and save steelhead is well-chronicled in the local region.

But now, the story of Gilroy-based Coastal Habitat Education and Environmental Restoration (CHEER) is going national.

A crew from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Fisheries division visited Gilroy on Aug. 22 to film Garcia as he explained how he went from a star poker player known as "The California Kid" to becoming one of the state's most outspoken advocates for watershed reclamation and fish recovery.



Charlotte Ambrose, NOAA Fisheries' California programs coordinator, said the division provides oversight of conservation and recovery efforts of salmon and steelhead. The film project is an initiative to highlight stories of people and organizations across California, Washington, Oregon and Idaho who are working to save these fish from extinction.

Ambrose said NOAA Fisheries plans on

interviewing about 20 individuals and organizations as part of its year-long project, of which Garcia was the first to be filmed.

"Herman is our first for obvious reasons," she said. "He helps support NOAA's mission to save salmon and steelhead, works with the homeless, educates underserved communities and builds a community-supported steelhead restoration. If not for Herman and CHEER, we wouldn't have steelhead in Gilroy."

Nor in San Benito County, perhaps, in the summer of 2020 - after Garcia and other volunteers spent more than 18 months cleaning up sections of the Pajaro watershed - biologists found steelhead in the San Benito River for the first time in 75 years!

Source: Free Lance reporter, Erik Chalhoub

Gangster Squad

The gangster squad is a new division of CHEER volunteers whose focus is to conduct habitat reclamation in high risk areas such as the Coyote Creek Jungle, Guadalupe Creek Jungle, and other dangerous areas where even law enforcement has a difficult time accessing. They follow our Executive Director/CEO, Herman, into these areas with no questions asked and perform an outstanding job in a high risk and high stress environment! A huge shout out goes to Gil (right) and Paul (left).



Keep up the great work!

Golden Girls of the Coyote Creek Jungle



CHEER volunteers offered to assist Granite Rock in the cleanup of the Coyote Creek Jungle starting October 2022. From day 1, these senior homeowners who reside adjacent to the jungle offered to provide support to the CHEER gangster squad (*above*) who had just started habitat reclamation work in the creek channel occupied with homeless encampments. CHEER would like to give a huge thanks to **Marian** (left) and **Griselda** (right) for their support!

You ladies rock!

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The winter season of 2022 - 2023 produced a historic 42 inches of rain on CHEER's rain gauge in Gilroy. Rainfall data collected by CHEER very closely corresponds with totals collected by stakeholder agencies from October 1st - May 1st. These 7 months comprise our winter season. Average annual rainfall for our gauge location in Gilroy is 14.95 inches annually. We monitor 6 gauges in the watershed. The highest numbers come from gauges in the Santa Cruz mountains specifically Summit road. Since 2016 we have had 3 years eclipsing 200 inches per year at our Summit

road location. Those 3 years were 2016-2017, 2017-2018 and 2022-2023. Drought years of 2014 and 2015 are normal occurrences. Residents should always practice conservation, wet year or not. Conservation should be embedded in our DNA. Water is one of four essential elements required for life on Earth!

What upsets residents the most is the mismanagement of this key resource for the past 70 years in California. When the state built our dams, 70 years ago, contracts and operational policies were signed with water agencies. There were never any reviews, modification or amendments made to these policies to create responsible water management that would take us into the 21st century! It is now time for the "Great Reset", I think everyone can agree that we are over the drought state wide! So stop raising rates under the pretext of *"we're in a drought so expect water rates to go up"*. So I can say with skepticism expect rates to go down!



Fish Rescue Season 2022



Steelhead Trout rescue season of 2022 is over, and the disheartening numbers are a testament as to why fish rescue is so important to California's South Central Coast Steelhead. The 6 year suspension of permits stopped cold our fisheries progress and started a rapid decline in our Pajaro River Watershed numbers. The rescue numbers were awful and they demonstrated that only two pair spawned in the Uvas Creek sub-basin; both

below Luchessa bridge in Gilroy. The upper system had no evidence of spawning. Included in that are the tributaries with no spawning activity. With these numbers we cannot wait for nature to fix it. CHEER has a plan and the support from stakeholder agencies. It is innovative and exciting! Hold on to your hats for the official announcement!

Here are the numbers for 2022

Steelhead Adults: 1

Steelhead Juveniles: 1

Steelhead Young of the year: 450

Total Rescued: 452

A huge thank you goes out to Cipriano Echezarreta (bottom left) and Gil Lujan (bottom right) for all of the help during the CHEER rescues!





FAITH BASED STEWARDSHIP



Every year South Valley Community Church in both Gilroy (left) and Hollister (right) participate in creek cleanups!

The Gilroy group conducts creek cleanups in April & November in the Debell Preserve on Uvas creek. The Hollister group conducts creek cleanups in April & November as well but in the San Benito River in Hollister!



No matter your beliefs, we should all strive for the restoration, preservation, and protection of our natural resources!

Whether its a religious group or any other, get your crew involved now and create a better tomorrow for future generations to come!

