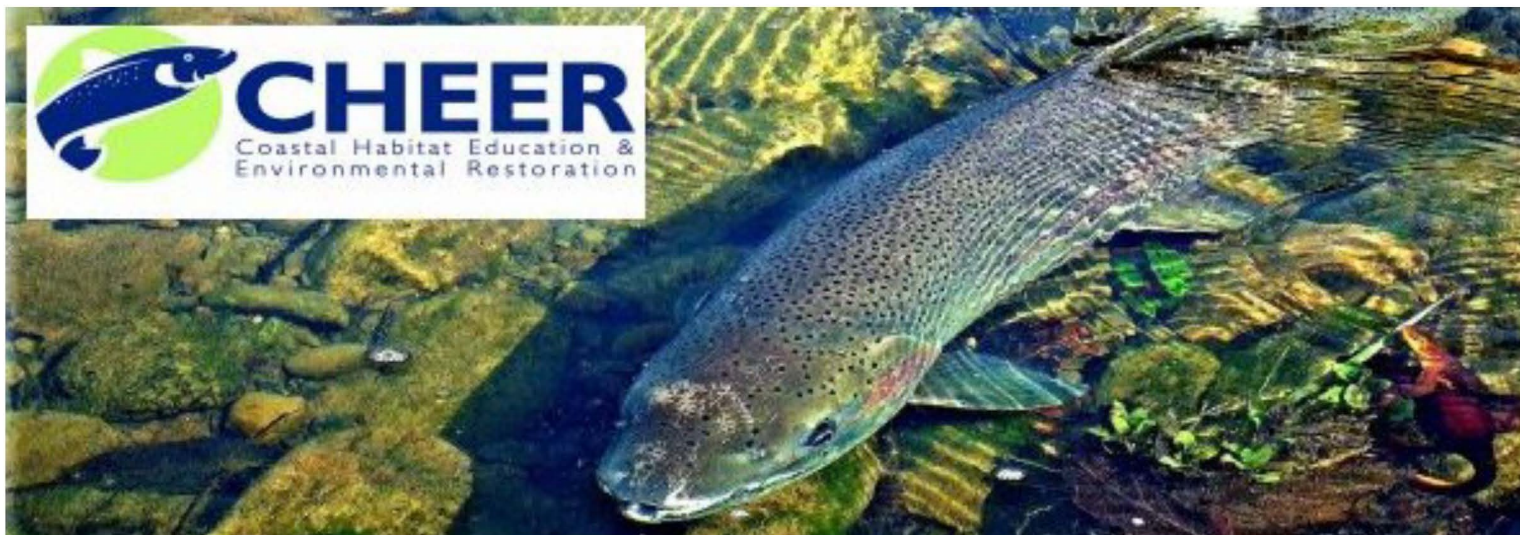


CHEER up your Creek!

Coastal Habitat Education and Environmental Restoration
(CHEER)

Newsletter of the
Pajaro River Watershed

12-31-2014



Dave's Creek



Pictured above and below, founding board member, Bob Brem, rescues and releases a 33 in. 13 pound Male Steelhead Trout. Into Uvas Creek at the Dave's Creek confluence.

The year 2007, early spring CHEER Board President, Herman Garcia received a phone call from a 17 year old high school senior, David Hamblin. David reported a trapped Steelhead Trout in a drainage at the base of Uvas Dam. The entire creek exists on private property with no public access.

At the time Herman and state Biologist, Michelle Leicester (CDFW) were conducting a watershed assessment and were able to respond to Dave's call. Upon meeting David at the location the very small creek was completely dry. We were assured there was a trapped fish in a back pool at the headwater. Following David what a "shock" when we were shown a 34 inch male Steelhead Trout trapped in the only pool of water on the tiny drainage. The fish was rescued and moved to the confluence on Uvas Creek.

David continues to volunteer with CHEER and Michelle is still our Supervising State Biologist. That year, for CHEER, state and federal reports the stream was appropriately named "Dave's Creek".

Uvas Dam is the end of the line for migrating Steelhead, and Dave's Creek provides an alternative to spawning in Uvas Creek at the base of the dam.

2011 pre-drought rescue total in Dave's Creek:

| Young of Year | Smolt | Adult | Total |
|---------------|-------|-------|-------|
| 5,552 | 7 | 7 | 5,566 |



Our Mission

Coastal Habitat and Environmental Restoration, also known as CHEER, is an organization with a fresh take on environmental programming. Its mission is to restore coastal ecosystems but do so in a way that safeguards resource-based local economics. CHEER recognizes that varied interests are represented in local economics. 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 up watersheds that once teemed with wild Steelhead Trout where Steelhead Trout are now severely 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's objectives
- 5) Provide for CHEER's financial sustainability

CHEER Board

President: Herman Garcia

Founding Board Member: Bob Brem

Founding Board Member: Eleanor Villarreal

Founding Board Member: Irma Batrez

Founding Board Member: Pete Valdez



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President's Message

The CHEER rescue truck is transformed into a 5 cubic yard dump truck.



Full load of garbage from lower Pajaro River.

Low winter flows in Uvas Creek and continuing drought conditions in 2014 effectively wiped out our Steelhead spawning for the winter. Not a single pair of spawning adult made it above the Fish Ladder on lower Uvas Creek. A lone adult made it to the base of the ladder, hung out for approximately 4-5 hours before returning to the Pajaro River. The 2014 spawning season was a “complete bust”.

As the drought prevailed CHEER volunteers turned this disaster into a major victory. With streams, creeks, and rivers drying over the Spring, Summer and Fall, historical garbage was exposed in river bottoms, garbage that normally could not be seen or accessed for removal could be scheduled for extraction.

The year started with a pick and shovel extraction of 105 tires picked from the sand, gravel and mud in the gut of the Pajaro River. The designated area was a section 3 miles upstream of Murphy's crossing and 3 miles downstream.

CHEER Special Operations “River Rat Team 6” was supported by volunteers from Trout Unlimited, Monterey County. Special thanks to John Angst, Greg Caudle, Tim Frahm, Geoff Malloway, Brian Leneve, John Tomasello, and Recology South Valley.

Reclamation efforts continued through the year resulting in over 1,000 tires pick & shoveled out of our creeks and Pajaro River. 500 cubic yards of garbage, approximately 30 gallons of oil dumped in sealed containers, 1 ski boat, 1 sail boat, 1 outboard, and 2 row boats were also removed from the upper Pajaro just south of Gilroy in Santa Clara County.

2014

No water, no fish, and very little garbage left behind!

Thanks to our volunteers, supporters, and partners.

One Fish at a Time,

President, Herman Garcia



*CHEER is grateful to the hundreds of volunteers and supporters who make it possible to preserve and protect our natural resources. With an extra "shout-out" to the men and women of the **Special Operations River Rat Team 6**, our rapid deployment forward unit.*



King of the River

Since the early 1960's CHEER founding board member, Bob Brem was bestowed the crown of Top Steelhead Fisherman in the Pajaro River Watershed. The unofficial title was given by fellow classmates at Gilroy High School.

Those were the best days of our lives having attended high school with Bob when we were not fishing, south county was a mecca for hunting, fishing and numerous outdoor recreational activities.

Back then the limit on Steelhead was 10 per day (juveniles), 2 adults or 1 adult and 2 juveniles, any one of these combinations was the legal bag limit, and you could keep them!

In the late 1980's Steelhead populations drastically declined. No one knew why, just that they disappeared. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration placed Steelhead Trout for protection under the Federal Endangered species Act (1997) as threatened.

CHEER in partnership with State and Federal agencies developed rescue and restoration strategies which were implemented by CHEER volunteers (2006). By 2008 habitat reclamation and Fisheries restoration efforts began to produce positive results. The 2008 rescue season resulted in 23,512 Steelhead rescued and restored in the upper watershed. CHEER and its partners turned the corner that year!

Crowning of New King of the River

Winter of 2011 was a wet one with more than 24 inches of rain falling on the valley floor and over 40 inches in the Santa Cruz Mountains. While monitoring fishing activities on Uvas Creek during the Steelhead season I met someone with extraordinary fishing skills. His name is Greg Caudle a retired electrical contractor and Gilroy resident. Greg was on the creek every legal Fishing day which were: Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday, and legal holidays. Steelhead fishing is now strictly regulated and catch and release is the law. Greg would fish morning and late afternoon with lunch and nap in between. Greg often switched from Fly Fishing to spinning gear with the same results catching fish after fish! Many times I would sneak up on Greg using brush as cover or glassing him from a distance his fish stories were true and the numbers of fish caught and released were verified. This man could fish! Greg soon became a CHEER volunteer and continues today in our fisheries restoration efforts.

As baby boomers we once had the best of it in our watershed and collectively we lost it. Greg has taken to heart Bob Brem's Fisheries restoration cry **"we must leave it like we found it"**, so future generations can experience what we took for granted.





Boats in the Upper Pajaro River

It was recently reported that 5 boats were exposed as a result of the drought and very low water levels. David Willoughby of Willoughby Farms reported 1 sail boat, 1 outboard, 2 row boats, and a ski boat abandoned or illegally dumped in the upper reach of the Pajaro River just south of Gilroy. These are large craft at the bottom of the channel requiring use of the 5,000 pound wench for the extraction

The boats needed to be located and extraction locations identified. Access from the top of the bank to the water needed to be cleared (poison oak). Once the boats are removed they are moved to a staging area. Where they will be loaded and transported to Recology South Valley for disposal. All the craft were there for years undetected. Another instance where a positive result was generated from drought conditions.





**Coming soon to
a school or event
near you!**

**The New
CHEER
World Famous
Coastal Watersheds
Garbage Museum
Mobile
Education Exhibit**



**Scheduled
for Rollout
February 26,
2015**

Fabrication by Terra Troph, Welder: Jorge Ruiz