

2008-09 Spawner Survey Report

By Joe George

It has been a very challenging year for spawner surveys. The first of many obstacles this year was that we had to dig our way through the snow to get to our creeks. Some of us walked when the temperature was 19 degrees, trying to keep warm, fighting the bitter cold and ice forming on our waders. After the snow and rain events, we then had to wait for the floods to recede. As we were able to gain access to our creeks, we found huge changes. Some of the creeks created new side channels or developed a new course, and gravel bars changed location. But, it did make for some beautiful scenery and interesting ice formations on logs and plants in and along the creeks.

I had a chance to walk a couple creeks with volunteers. David and Mary McDonald walk a tributary to Lake Creek near Lake McMurray. They have a beautiful walk up to a natural fish barrier waterfall. I also walked with David Farrow and Christine Kitch on GC creek, near Big Lake. There is a bit of a walk to get there. Dave and Chris say hi to the cows, and Chris brings carrots to feed the horses as they walk through the pasture to get to their creek. GC creek is beautifully tucked away and covered by a lush riparian area. What I enjoyed the most was listening to the stories, experiences, and the history of the creeks they walked.

Volunteers who attended our end of the year potluck had a delicious meal and plenty of good deserts. We shared good ideas for improvements to next season surveys and discussed using codes to record the different water conditions and weather

This year 26 creeks were surveyed totaling about 16.45 miles.

Total salmon documented by SFEG Staff and Volunteers

2008-09	Live	Carcass	Redds	Average Length (m)
Chinook	6	0	6	N/A
Chum	120	33	38	0.73
Coho	471	102	152	0.69

Hansen

creek did not have any Chinook this year, which may be due to the low water level in the creek. Chinook returns on creeks that are regularly walked were very poor compared to last year's totals. Grandy Creek and East Fork Nookachamps, which are not regularly walked year to year, were the only ones that had Chinook return. We had over twice the number of chum return this year and we had a little more than half the coho of last year.

I was hoping with the last large rain event in January that some of the stragglers in the Skagit River would venture up some of the creeks. Lyle creek, in Darrington, was the only creek that had coho stragglers.

Our AmeriCorps intern, Ona Strikas, holds the record for the number of falls into the creek this year at 6.

Kara took her fiancé, Chris, out to walk the East Fork Nookachamps. He was excited to be out seeing salmon, and his job was to cut the tails on the carcasses they counted. Chris could not get past the smell, so Kara had to do it.

Corinne Hughes, our WCC intern walked Parson Creek and saw the first chum since we have been keeping records on that creek. Barnes creek also saw its first chum since we started keeping records.



This Male Chum has done his job.

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