



Carmel River Steelhead Association

Advocating for Steelhead Since 1974

Fish Tales
Monthly Newsletter



February 2021

CRSA Membership

Have you paid your 2021 Membership Dues?

Members, please click the blue button above to pay dues.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Written By Steve Parks

CRSA puts another year to rest.

What a year!

It was another very good rescue year. Over 2,500 juveniles +1 years old and another 10,000 young of the year. Add the 2020 rescues to the 2019 rescues and the total is right around 27,000 tributary fish rescued.



That's a huge bunch of youngsters that have been given another chance at living in cool running river water charged with oxygen - quite a change from where they were with a host

of drying back -oxygen deprived tributaries.

That is only part of the state of affairs going forward with CRSA's advocating for the Carmel River steelhead.

CRSA in 2020 attended various virtual meetings whether discussing water issues or fish issues.

The bi-monthly board meetings were all zoomed.

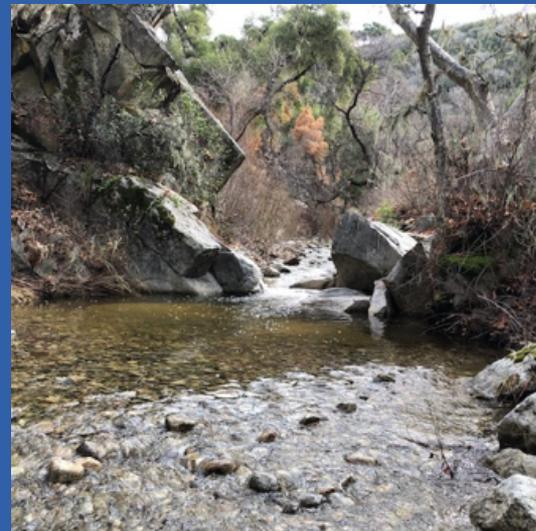
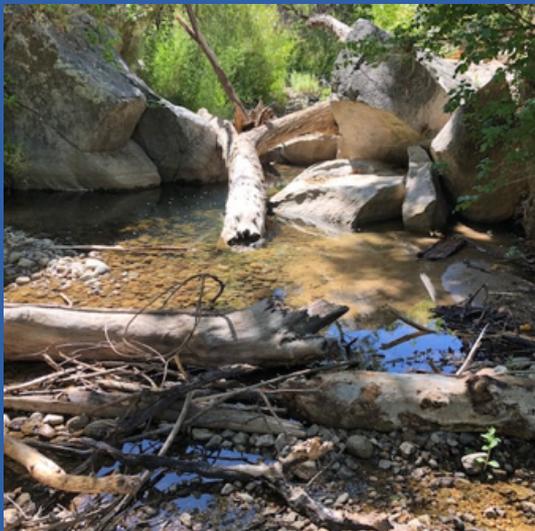
The redd surveys, rescues and creek clearing gatherings were performed with all corona virus protocols being adhered to.



CRSA was accepted to its first MCGIVES fund raising campaign. It was a success that was led by a very generous donation that got the CRSA campaign under way. The most recent total donations to date is over eighteen thousand!

It is becoming increasingly clear that the Cachagua Creek and its adjoining tributaries are most likely the leading steelhead spawning tributaries to the Carmel River.

So there in lies much of the work CRSA will be carrying out in the years to come. Rescues lead the way but redd surveys and creek passage improvements are important projects.



Establishing which steelhead are using the Cachagua drainage and how they are coming and going is part of the PIT tag project but collecting their DNA is creating new conversations on how to proceed with their tracking.

Finding ways to keep water in the water ways is a priority which cannot be denied. Working with water users is a CRSA project that is challenging and uphill all the way. Water is treated like a gold and the holders of that gold are very protective.

When the winter water comes CRSA will be ready to help, study and further the cause for the Carmel River steelhead and their struggle to stay in their life giving river and its tributaries.

2021 will be another year of challenges. It will also be another year of great moments. Challenges and great moments it's what CRSA works with while advocating for the Carmel River sea run trout.



So eager to just simply survive.

Conservation Report

Report and Opinions by Brian LeNeve

The river is running for a while

After a very dry December and most of January, we finally received a good rain storm the last week of January and the Carmel River breached to the sea on the morning of January 28, flooding a few houses near the lagoon on its way. The rise of the river was quite dramatic in that on January 26 the flow at the village was 10 cubic feet per second (cfs) and in less than 30 hours it peaked at around 1,800cfs.

The County will say the river made a natural breach but, knowing the storm was coming, the County created a low channel on the south side of the lagoon which the river used when it breached. I will never agree that predetermining where the lagoon will breach and at what level the lagoon will breach is a natural breach. Even with the lowering of the channel several houses flooded because, in my opinion, the river came up so fast that the predetermined breach could not keep up with the rapidly rising river which also happened at the peak of a very high tide. Whatever the reason, there are several very unhappy homeowners who wonder why they should get flooded to protect the environment (i.e., steelhead).

The Carmel is considered a flashy river. When it goes up fast it comes down fast

and, when the ground is so dry, it comes down even faster. One week after the peak of 1,800cfs the river at the village was 114cfs and at Hacienda Carmel it was 103cfs. With a prediction of only 0.06 inches of rain between now and Feb. 19, the guidance plot for the river at the village shows it dropping to around 90cfs by Monday Feb 8 which should relate to just over 80cfs at Hacienda Carmel. The numbers at the Hacienda Carmel bridge are important: Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR), which is pumping excess water from the Carmel in winter to store in the Seaside groundwater basin then to be pumped out the following summer for use by the people on the peninsula, stops when the river falls below 120cfs for ARS II and below 80cfs for ASR I. We cannot fish when the river drops below 80cfs and it is hard for fish to migrate upriver below 80cfs. Unless we get rain the last week of February it will be a short season for ASR and fishing, not to mention hard to recover steelhead.

From my experience fish will not start the migration up river when it is at flood stage, so if they did not start until January 30 and the river dropped below 80cfs on February 4 or 5, fish would have only 6 or 7 days to make it to Cachagua or Los Padres Dam and that might not be enough time. This may not be an issue because after 8 days of the river being open, they have only recorded 22 fish at the new Carmel River Weir which is close to the lagoon. (That is a whole new story.)

Sleepy Hollow Fish Rearing Facility

In the last issue I wrote about my despair, frustration and distress over the once again early release of steelhead from the Sleepy Hollow Steelhead Rearing Facility (SHSRF). In this issue I will write about costs of the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District Rescue and Rearing Program (RRP) which includes SHSRF and how that equates to the end product which is steelhead being released at a time and place the river can support them.

In the restoration field we often discuss how much money should be spent to protect and recover salmonids and how much value we get from a project. Most of us feel there is a limit to what a project can cost but we have never seen an amount that was too high. Most of us do agree that there is good value in some projects and not such good value in others. I hate to discuss expenses in regards to the RRP, but since the water ratepayers on the peninsula are paying for RRP in one way or another, I feel a discussion of cost is warranted.

How do we figure the cost of running the RRP? First, I need to remind people the RRP is required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because of an Environmental Impact Report issued by Monterey Peninsula Water Management District (District) in 1990 which stated that any amount of water they were considering pumping would have a significant impact on steelhead and must be mitigated for. In other words, pumping the river dry for the benefit of the people on the peninsula kills fish and must be mitigated for.

When the District first proposed the RRP (just one of 5 programs they were to undertake) they stated they anticipated it would take \$66,000.00 per year (in 1990 dollars) to run the program. The District has released a Mitigation Annual Report every year for the program and just like other things the reports have gotten better over time. The most adequate and complete reports are for the years 2005-2006 until now so that is what I will work with.

The average inflation rate from 1990 until now was 2.3%. I have used that 2.3% figure and the \$66,000.00 original anticipated cost to come up with an equivalent cost for the period half way between 2005-2006 and now, to reach an average cost for these 14 years of \$114,203.00 per year.

The District's Mitigation Annual Reports since 2005-2006 have also reported the money spent on the steelhead program and for those 14 years of reports, it has averaged \$730,242.00 per year plus an additional average administration fee of 26.79% (what Cal Am calls overhead and profit) for a total for the steelhead program of \$905,595.00 per year. The fisheries staff at MPWMD really does a lot of work to benefit steelhead and our knowledge of Carmel River fish, so I do not know how to breakout the amount for only the RRP. While this amount is interesting, I cannot determine what amount was allocated to the RRP so I will use the \$114,203.00 figure. (original anticipated cost plus inflation.)

Using my estimate of \$114,203.00 per year, (remember it could be higher), in the last 14 years MPWMD should have spent a total of \$1,598,842.00 (\$114,203.00 times 14 years). During that same time period MPWMD released 68,595 fish back to the river.

This amounts to \$23.31 per fish. Somehow, we must make allowance for the \$3,716,820.00 spent in the last two years (see January conservation report) on upgrading the facility. Capital costs are usually allocated over many years. SHSRF has been operating for 30 years and this is at least the second time the facility needed capital expenditures and it appears this last expenditure did not do the job probably requiring additional capital expenditures. So, for this article I am going to use 15 years to allocate the upgrade costs which amount to \$247.788.00 per year which would be an additional \$3.61 per fish released or a total cost of \$26.92 per fish.

It costs around \$800,000.00 per year to run the Mad River Hatchery. The hatchery must spend money to somehow acquire wild fish to spawn with the hatchery fish. The hatchery keeps the fish for a full year not 4 to 6 months. They release around 150,000 steelhead smolts which amounts to \$5.33 per fish. Fingerling rainbow trout can be bought for \$1.50 each. CDFW believes it costs \$2.00 per fish to raise rainbow trout and stock them in rivers and lakes.

When comparing \$26.92 fish to \$2.00 fish, it does not appear that SHSRF is a good value, but remember we are comparing rescue-and-rearing to other forms of fish hatching-and-rearing because there are no other programs like the RRP to compare

it to. Sometime ago other agencies tried a rearing channel but abandoned the try for lack of success. Even though there are no programs like this one, the difference in costs is too great to ignore.

[Donate](#)

[CRSA Membership](#)

Carmel River Steelhead Association 2020 Board Members

CRSA Officers

President: Steve Park
831-601-8649
stevepark@razzolink.com

Vice President: Frank Emerson
O: 831-655-3626
M:831-277-0544
frank.t.emerson@gmail.com

Treasurer: Brian LeNeve
831-624-8497
brian@brianleneve.com

Secretary: James C. Jeffery III
831-659-0804
jim@jamescjeffery.co

Conservation Chair:
Brian LeNeve
831-624-8497
bjleneve@att.net

Newsletter Editor:
Hallie Heath

CRSA Board of Directors

Robert Stoddard
541-954-9477
rhstoddard@gmail.com

Tom Pelikan
831-601-8270
tbpelikan@comcast.net

Hallie Heath
hcheath487@gmail.com

Luke Coletti
ljc@groknet.net

Erik Scarr
erikscarr3@gmail.com

Jaime Eltit
jeltit7@gmail.com

Miranda A. Taylor
209-202-8720
mat755@humboldt.edu

Web Master:

Julie Dalton

newsletter@carmelsteelhead.org



*Copyright © *ICURRENT_YEAR* *ILIST:COMPANY*, All rights reserved.*

IIFNOT:ARCHIVE_PAGE* *ILIST:DESCRIPTION

Our mailing address is:

IHTML:LIST_ADDRESS_HTML* *IEND:IFI

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

IIF:REWARDS* *IHTML:REWARDS* *IEND:IFI