

ENSURING NATIVE RAINBOW TROUT AND WILDLIFE HABITAT SURVIVAL

December 15, 2021

In the spring of 2021, the Alameda County Fish and Game Commission awarded the Friends of Sausal Creek (FOSC) a \$10,000 grant to focus education and stewardship programs in the Sausal Creek Watershed on improving habitat for its wild, native populations of rainbow trout, resident and migratory songbirds, and other aquatic and terrestrial wildlife.

With this funding, FOSC continued and expanded its work supporting wildlife and a healthy creek ecosystem, as well as re-engaging community members.



An In-the-creek cleanup crew works in Dimond Canyon

- FOSC coordinated 15 volunteer workdays attended by over 120 people providing over 280 volunteer hours. Workdays focused on invasive plant removals in the targeted sites of Dimond Canyon and Fern Ravine. Both areas, cleared of invasive plants during these efforts, are slated for native planting in late December with over 500 plants grown at the FOSC Native Plant Nursery.
- In September, FOSC ran a Creek to Bay Day cleanup event at the key sites. Over 50 volunteers collected six bags of trash and filled two 30 cubic yard dumpsters with the invasive plant material. FOSC organized a community workday, and several youth workdays dedicated to trash removal in the Dimond Canyon stretch of Sausal Creek.

- FOSC led monthly youth groups (e.g., buildOn) in restoration activities including the removal of invasives and the planting of natives. Through firsthand, experiential education, youth were quick to make the connection between the native species survival including the rainbow trout, the need for a healthy habitat, and their stewardship contribution in the field.

- In July, over 30 community members learned about the native trout populations in Sausal Creek during a Walk and Talk event led by local Ichthyology expert, Dr. Robert Leidy.
- During the summer of 2021, FOSC worked with Team Oakland crews (a city-sponsored summer employment program run by



Community members engage with Rainbow Trout expert, Rob Leidy, during a trout Walk and Talk event (July 2021)

Youth Employment Partnership for Oakland youth between the ages of 15 and 24) on restoration and creek clean-up activities in the Dimond Canyon and Fern Ravine. Youth not only learned restoration skills but during teachable moments gained knowledge about watershed ecology, aquatic insects, and rainbow trout characteristics and habitat, thus linking their work with the survival and health of the species in the watershed.

- In part due to overuse during the pandemic, Joaquin Miller Park has suffered severe degradation of the biodiversity of important habitats through increased erosion and creek sedimentation, native plant loss, and damaged redwood understory. FOSC spearheaded the approval process with the City of Oakland and coordinated project planning and installation of multiple fencing projects in the Fern Ravine area, the headwaters of Sausal Creek. FOSC partnered with Eagle Scouts, the Friends of Joaquin Miller Park, Bicycle Trails Council of the East Bay, Oakland Trails, and over 50 volunteer contacts. With FOSC support and expertise, the teams installed 400 feet of fencing along the creek and completed additional fencing further upslope to prevent erosion caused by mountain bike and foot traffic. Additionally, FOSC received approval to install a footbridge crossing Sausal Creek in Fern Ravine scheduled for completion during the winter of 2022.



New segments of fencing (before and after) will keep foot traffic out of the sensitive riparian areas in Fern Ravine (November 2021)

- Finally, the FOSC community members and staff, ever vigilant of creek issues, reported four incidents of pollutant discharges in the creek (e.g., chloramine leaks of water main, illegal disposal of construction contaminants). In addition to contacting multiple agencies and departments, FOSC staff tracked the progress, provided documentation of the incidents, and followed up with the City of Oakland (Public Works) and the East Bay Municipal Utility District.

Many thanks to Alameda County Fish and Game Commission for supporting this important restoration and public education work which allows FOSC to expand its efforts to protect the Sausal Creek Watershed and its native rainbow trout inhabitants.