

Our Wild Rainbow Trout Need Your Help

A routine assessment of Sausal Creek immediately upstream of the El Centro Avenue bridge and culvert revealed good news and bad news for our rainbow trout.

On a positive note, the massive oak tree that fell into the creek last year has created a natural settling basin that has trapped sand and sediment and has arrested the erosion of the creek bed (down-cutting). This has stabilized the creek and has allowed for the presence of deep and cool pools of water that are crucial to the survival and reproduction of our fish.

The bad news is that the sensitive stream bank next to the pools is showing signs of increased trampling and compaction from human activity. This is limiting the growth of plants, shrubs, and trees that stabilize the creek, provide cool shade and complex habitat for the fish, and shelter a diversity of insects that comprise their diet.



A downed oak creates an instream dam



Dr. Robert Leidy explains sedimentation

In response, scientists from FOSC teamed-up with students from Oakland High School (OHS) and the buildOn community service organization to plant the barren stream bank with locally native vegetation grown in FOSC's own plant nursery. To keep these fragile new plants from being trampled, and to retire an undesignated "social" trail that was leading hikers to the waters' edge, the restoration team erected a temporary plastic fence along Dimond Canyon Trail. Ultimately we would like to work with the City of Oakland and other organizations to build an attractive, wooden, split-rail fence that allows for a clear view of the creek while also safeguarding this increasingly rare and vulnerable fish habitat.

Direct access to the creek will remain available just 300 feet upstream from the El Centro restoration site, and Oakland High School is doing their part by moving their field study site upstream to this access point.

We are grateful for the strong community support for this restoration project voiced by numerous trail users. Unfortunately not everyone supports this accommodation for the fish, and the restoration site has been vandalized and the temporary fence breached several times.

Please be an ambassador for our wild rainbow trout and explain to your friends, neighbors, and other trail users that these rare urban creek denizens need this stretch of creek for their survival and that we are helping them by "resting and reviving" the gravel bar and stream bank adjoining their cold water pools.

For your reference, please see FOSC's rainbow trout fact sheet (http://www.documents.sausalcreek.org/Rainbow_Trout_in_the_Sausal_Creek_Watershed.pdf); and thank you in advance for your help and patience.

--Tim Vendlinski



Andrew Aldrich recently shared images of Sausal Creek's rainbow trout on the FOSC listserv