

THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE COASTAL RANCHES CONSERVANCY

SUMMER 2015

Gaviota Creek Watershed Restoration

Only 50 years ago, steelhead trout like the one in this picture could be caught in streams along the Gaviota Coast. Today it is a rare treat to see a full-grown steelhead; one few of us have had. But the fish is “hanging on” and with a little help, can make a decent comeback. Gaviota Creek has one of the largest watersheds on the Gaviota Coast and has a significant population of wild steelhead. Steelhead, in order to spawn, must be able to swim in



Hollister Kids in Arroyo Hondo

from the ocean to the headwaters of a stream where they can lay their eggs. Unfortunately, Gaviota Creek has a number of barriers in it which make it extremely difficult for fish to migrate upstream. Starting with the bridge in Gaviota State Park, just above the tidal estuary, and moving upstream through the Narrows, there are 10 barriers to fish migration, all within State Park property. Most of these are grade control structures built by CalTrans when Highway 101 was improved in the 1960's. In all the steelhead studies done over the past 20 years, Gaviota Creek has consistently been ranked as one of the top three local candidates for successful restoration of steelhead trout. In spite of the many barriers, virtually every time someone does a survey of Gaviota Creek, they find steelhead of all ages. This proves the value of the

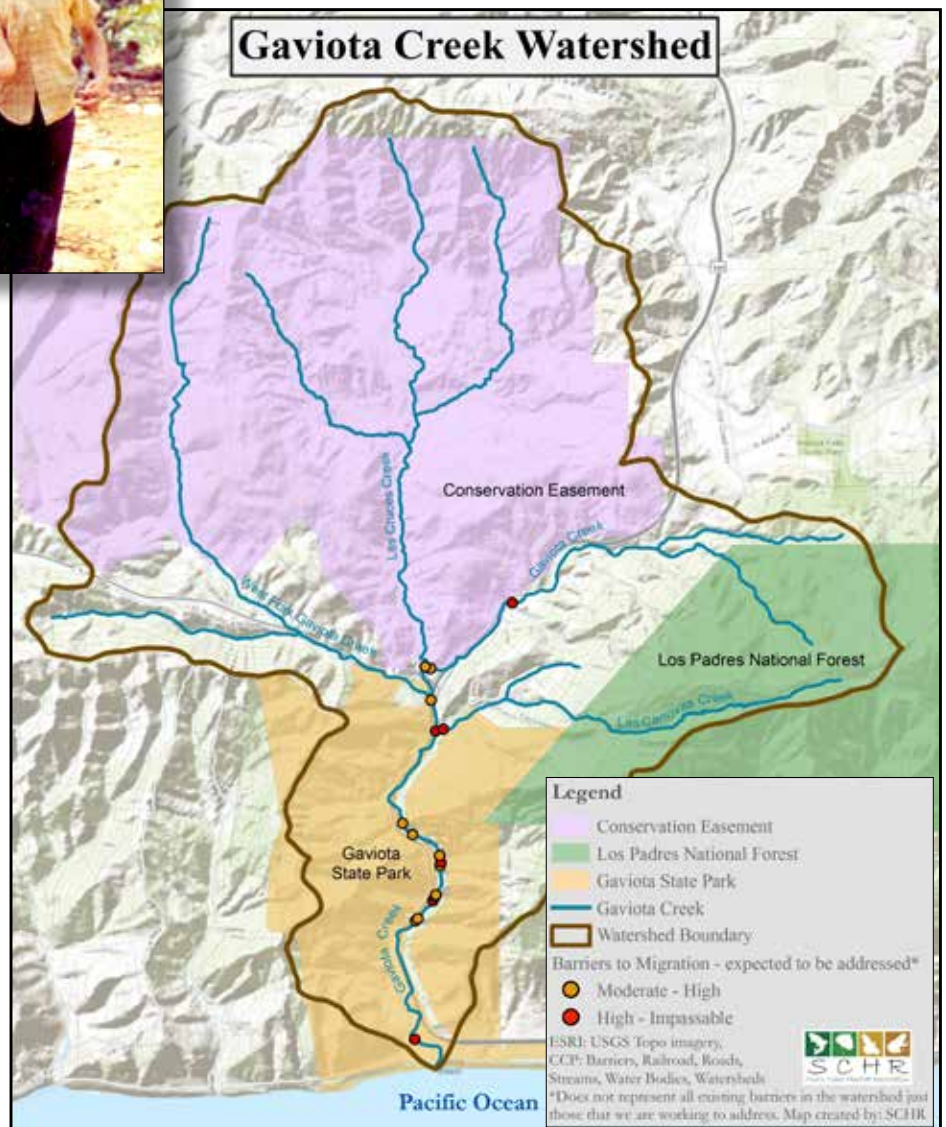
habitat and the potential for success if the barriers can be removed or modified to allow fish passage.

Over the next 3-5 years, Coastal Ranches Conservancy will work with Moe Gomez of South Coast Habitat Restoration, the State Parks Department, CalTrans, and adjacent landowners, as part

of a team effort to remove the barriers to steelhead migration in Gaviota Creek and to improve the overall watershed health. CRC's primary role in this will be to help raise matching funds to help win grant money to do the work. When matching funds can be made part of the grant application, it greatly improves the odds of success.

Here is a map of the watershed which shows the primary fish passage barriers.

Continued on next page



Continued from page 1

Our project will only work on the barriers found within Gaviota State Park, although we are happy to assist land owners who want barriers removed on their property.

This will be a fairly big project because of the number of barriers that must be dealt with and the difficulty of working in a stream with a large number of other endangered species (Tide-water Goby and California Red-Legged Frog, among others). Some preliminary engineering studies and watershed planning have already been done and our work will build on those.

**CRC'S GOAL IS TO
RAISE \$100,000
FOR THIS PROJECT
OVER THE NEXT
3 YEARS.**

**WE NEED
YOUR HELP IN ORDER
TO DO THIS.**

Grant requests will be submitted in 2015 to finish the engineering for the barrier removals. The second phase will be to go after

the construction funding in perhaps 2016-2018.

This gives us time to start accumulating the matching funds.

CRC's goal is to raise \$100,000 for this project over the next 3 years. We need your help in order to do this.

Please visit our website for information on how you can support this project at: www.coastalranchesconservancy.org. ●

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Moe Gomez and South Coast Habitat Restoration



Moe Gomez of South Coast Habitat Restoration

Moe Gomez, Director of South Coast Habitat Restoration will do the major portion of the work on the proposed Gaviota Creek watershed restoration. Moe has been very successful at working with private landowners to remove steelhead migration barriers over the past ten years. He began working on barrier removal projects in Carpinteria Creek and has since done projects in Mission Creek, Maria Ygnacio Creek and Tajiguas Creek. Along Tajiguas Creek, he managed 9 barrier removal projects that have opened up the headwaters for fish. Moe and his team recently completed this project while working closely with the landowners. The photos below show a typical example where a low water crossing is removed, the stream bed regraded and then native vegetation planted. ●

"Moe has done a great job for us on Tajiguas Creek, providing critical knowledge in project permitting, construction, and restoration planning. He has great working relationships with the agencies and was able to move our project forward smoothly even when faced with unforeseen obstacles in the field."

Alicia Harrison, Tajiguas Ranch representative, BHF&S.

"Moe has done a terrific job helping us on our ranch to remove a particularly difficult invasive weed. I would recommend him for any project."

Janet Erro
La Paloma Ranch



This low-flow crossing on Tajiguas Creek was a barrier to fish before work was begun.



Same location after barrier removal and before vegetation restoration.

COASTAL RANCHES CONSERVANCY

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**SUPPORTING NATURE CONSERVATION, RESTORATION, AND EDUCATION
ON THE GAVIOTA COAST**

Visit us at:

www.coastalranchesconservancy.org



Typical Steelhead Barrier on Gaviota Creek, slated for removal.