

# Carmel River NEWS

From the Carmel River Watershed Conservancy (CRWC)

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## Dam Removal Update

The San Clemente Dam Removal and Reroute Project is entering a new phase in mid-2015: the drawdown of the water in the reservoir behind the dam, the construction of new step pools for easier steelhead migration, and the tear-down of the dam itself.



Construction of new step pools underway.

The drawdown began in May and is scheduled to be completed by July. This drawdown has two purposes: to allow access to the new river channel bottom where the new step pools will be constructed and new vegetation will be planted along the river bank; and to allow access to the dam itself to begin demolition of the concrete structure. There was approximately 500 acre feet of water behind the dam, which is being slowly released into the river channel below the dam. An important side effect will be to keep water in the river and the underlying aquifer during the dry summer months for the benefit of the threatened species residing in the lower river.

The new step pools are being constructed (see photo above) approximately one foot apart in elevation to enable steelhead to jump from one pool to another and migrate up the river much more easily than when they had to navigate a lengthy fish ladder at the side of the dam. The construction crews are installing large boulders and other structures that hopefully will withstand heavy river flows in rainy years.

## Interested in a Carmel River Tour?

CRWC and MPRPD periodically conduct public tours of the Carmel River watershed. To sign up for future tours please contact Lorin Letendre at [letendre@sbcglobal.net](mailto:letendre@sbcglobal.net).

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According to Bill McGowan, the director of the project for Granite Construction, they started construction in mid-June and will be installing 55 step pools during the course of the reconstruction of the river channel through the area of the dam. They expect to finish this installation by the second week in October.

So what will all this construction work mean for the river and the fish? For the river it means that the channel below the dam site will restore its prior normal functioning with plentiful sediment and gravel. The river banks will have enough silt to support the riparian vegetation and prevent those banks from eroding. The river channel will tend to meander more, although in most places it will still be constrained by the large rocks, wooden walls, and concrete that have been placed along its banks to protect the nearby homes or golf courses.

For the fish it will mean opening up ready access to more than eight more miles of the river where they can spawn and grow.

The actual demolition of the dam itself is scheduled to begin in late July or early August and will be accomplished gradually using heavy equipment rather than using explosive devices. This is a landmark event that we will report on in our next newsletter.

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## Conservancy Assumes Chair Role of Carmel River Task Force

Initially launched back in 2007, the Carmel River Task Force (CRTF) is composed of representatives of the federal, state, and local government agencies and non-profit organizations with an interest in or authority over the Carmel River and its watershed. This includes such organizations as the State Coastal Conservancy, National Marine Fisheries Service (division of NOAA), U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California State Parks and Recreation, County Resource Management Agency, Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, Big Sur Land Trust, Carmel River Steelhead Association, Trout Unlimited, and CRWC. Its purpose is to coordinate and synchronize the plans and activities of all these organizations, and especially to determine collaboratively the priorities for work projects in the river and watershed.

The chair role of the CRTF was previously held by the Resource Conservation District of Monterey County, which had received a \$300,000 grant to chair the CRTF, develop a watershed manual, and update the Carmel River Watershed Assessment and Action Plan. It accomplished all of those goals, but its funding ran out in December 2014 so the Conservancy agreed to assume the role of arranging and chairing the meetings. These meetings are hosted by the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District at its office on Harris Court.

The CRTF recently reviewed the revised Action Plan and agreed on the following priorities for seeking grant funding: (1) removal of fish passage barriers; (2) increasing off-stream water storage; (3) restoring riparian habitat; (4) adding large woody debris to the stream; (5) augmenting the gravel in the riverbed for improved spawning habitat; and (6) creating a volunteer coordinator role for the watershed and hiring someone to fill that

role.

The 2014 [revised Carmel River Watershed Action Plan](#) may be found on our CRWC website.

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## Conservancy Receives Grant from the Peggy and Jack Baskin Foundation

The Carmel River Watershed Conservancy is the appreciative recipient of a \$10,000 grant from the [Peggy and Jack Baskin Foundation](#) to conduct watershed education focused primarily on female students from low-income families. The Baskin Foundation was established in 2007 to create and support innovative strategies for eliminating obstacles facing marginalized populations, and it emphasizes empowering women and girls and promoting educational equality for all community members. The Conservancy will utilize the Baskin Foundation grant funds to sponsor watershed educational programs and river tours focused on female students from low-income families and who aspire to be the first in their families to attend college.

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## CRWC Educates Local Students about the River



Students from Gonzales Middle School

Employing grant funds from the Community Foundation for Monterey County, the Conservancy and its partners - MEarth, RISE (Recruitment in Science Education), and Marie Butcher - involved over 200 local students in our watershed education programs in spring 2015. Students came from diverse communities including Gonzales, Salinas, Marina, Seaside, Monterey, Cachagua, and Carmel. Schools included the International School of Monterey, Fairview Middle School, Seaside High, Marina High, North Salinas High, Monterey High, Cachagua Community Afterschool Program, and Stevenson School.

Students enjoyed visits to the San Clemente Dam, the Carmel Valley History Museum, DeDampierre Park (access to Carmel River), Garland Park, the new Schulte Road bridge, and Carmel River Lagoon and State Park. They learned about rivers and their watersheds, their flora and

fauna, threatened species in the river, riparian restoration, recycling, and water conservation.

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## **In Memoriam**

### **Lawson Little III**

**1947 - 2015**

Only one month after being elected as Co-Chairman of the Carmel River Watershed Conservancy and while vacationing in Las Vegas, Lawson Little III fell ill with septicemia that eventually put him into a coma from which he never emerged. He served for many years on the Conservancy Board of Directors and had just agreed to reengage with the Board when he fell ill. His beautifully crafted obituary in the [Herald](#) best summed up what he meant and gave to everyone he met: "He was a father to many, a best friend to more, a mentor, a role model, and a confidant with the uncanny ability to give love, strength, clarity, and wisdom through simple conversation and his openhearted presence. His colleagues at CRWC will deeply miss him.