

Spawning Good Stewardship

Unique natural resources offer a means to demonstrate good environmental stewardship.

BY STEVE KEALY

Glendale Country Club is located in Bellevue, Washington, a nearby suburb of Seattle. Our golf course has a unique situation: two salmon-spawning streams cross the length of the property and provide the primary spawning habitat for the entire reach of each stream. Our interest in salmon and the environment has provided opportunities for us to get involved in a number of partnerships that have helped us not only communicate a message of good environmental stewardship, but also *demonstrate* it.

We have been very active in the City of Bellevue's Stream Team program since 1989 and a member of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses since 1991. Over the years we have completed many restoration projects on the course and have developed a very close partnership with the City of Bellevue. We continue to work with them on habitat enhancement projects at Glendale and adjacent properties surrounding the course.

In 1997, I was asked by the Stream Team coordinator to talk to Patty Shelton, a fifth- and sixth-grade science teacher at Odle Middle School. Patty wanted to start a "salmon in the classroom" program, but she needed funding to get started. The school district had problems supplying new books and surely would not be able to fund her request for the needed equipment. I met with Glendale course officials who were very supportive of the project, and they donated \$1,200 to purchase an aquarium and related equipment for the school.

Each year since 1997, Patty's students have successfully raised salmon in their



Steve Kealy (left) shows off a grown salmon that has returned to Kelsey Creek to spawn.

classroom. Coho salmon eggs are supplied by a local Washington State hatchery, and they spend the next 90 days or so at the school. During that time, the kids learn about salmon life cycles and discuss current issues that affect stream habitat and salmon survival, including pesticide use, urban development in and around sensitive areas, and water quality issues. They also explore things they can do around their homes to prevent storm water contamination of nearby water bodies. When the fish have grown to the level required for release into the stream, Glendale pays for bus transportation for the fish and the kids to the golf course. (The school district has no money to pay for field trips, either!)

The kids really enjoy the release of the fish into the stream. Representatives from the City of Bellevue school district, mayor's office, and Storm and Surface Water Utility are present, and they talk to the students about the importance of their project. Some of the kids get emotionally attached to the fish because they invest a lot of time in their care and feeding over the previous

three months. Many kids have names for *their* adopted fish and are really excited to release them with the hope that they will return to spawn four years later.

Although the quantity of salmon raised and released by the kids is relatively small (300 per year), the learning experience is great. Student interest in the subject matter is enhanced because they raise the salmon themselves. Best of all, the salmon project spawns a lasting sense among the students of the importance of getting involved personally in environmental stewardship.

Glendale Country Club is very proud of its partnership with Odle Middle School and the City of Bellevue. Besides the positive public relations aspect of being involved with the school and city, it's just the right thing to do. This project was one of several "outreach and education" activities that contributed to our achieving certification as an Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary in 1998. Development of these partnerships was very easy and did not take a lot of time or money. Most schools are struggling from budget shortfalls and they welcome any offered assistance. If I had known how simple it was to get involved with a school and help make a positive impact on its program, I would have done so years earlier. We look forward to continuing our support for the students and the environment, and we're pleased with the positive impact our golf course is creating in our community.

STEVE KEALY serves as golf course superintendent at Glendale Country Club (Bellevue, Wash.).