Salmon Spawning Field Trip

South Sound GREEN

Background:

Every year between the end of October and the end of December, the creeks of South Puget Sound are once again teaming with native chum salmon. These salmon are returning to their birthplace to spawn after spending years in the Salish Sea and Pacific Ocean, and their behaviors while swimming upstream are mesmerizing. Not only do these actions provide insight into the physiological nature of salmon, but also a context for the salmons' role within the greater ecosystem.

SSG, in partnership with Thurston County Stream Team, offers guided and virtual tours of McLane Creek Nature Trail to show students the beautiful Capitol State Forest environment and to feature these chum salmon! In this lesson, students will **observe salmon spawning behaviors**, learn about the complete **salmon life cycle**, and recognize the interconnectedness **of the freshwater ecosystem**.

Next Generation Science Standards:

- 4-LS1-1: *Construct an argument that plants and animals have internal and external structures that function to support survival, growth, behavior, and reproduction.***
- 5-LS2-1: *Develop a model to describe the movement of matter among plants, animals, decomposers, and the environment.***

Learning Outcomes:

- Salmon spawning is a natural process that includes death. The salmon carcasses provide necessary nutrients back to the environment to sustain other organisms, which may sustain young salmon in the future.
- Students will be able to argue how salmon undergo changes when moving from saltwater to freshwater environments to spawn.
- Students will be able to explain and predict how changes to salmon populations could affect environmental conditions and vice versa.
- Salmon spawning actions and cycles are predictable and sensitive to environmental factors.

Grade Level: 4th-5th

Lesson Leader: SSG educator (offered in person or virtually in November)

Materials:

- McLane Creek Salmon Journal
- Outdoor weather equipment
- Polarized lenses
- Salmon egg displays

Career Connections:

- Fisheries technician
- Ecologist
- Salmon farmer

**NGSS Components:
Blue (Science and Engineering Practices) = Engaging in arguing from evidence; developing and using models
Orange (Disciplinary Core Ideas) = Structure and function; interdependent relationships in ecosystems
Green (Crosscutting Concepts) = Systems and system models

Interested in participating in a live or virtual salmon field trip? Contact South Sound GREEN at SBishop@thurstoncd.com!