



Salmon Spawning Field Trip

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 salmon's role within the greater ecosystem.

S&G, 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:

- [MS-LS2-2](#): *Construct an explanation that predicts patterns of interactions among organisms across multiple ecosystems.***

Learning Outcomes:

- Salmon spawning is a natural process in which salmon lay and fertilize eggs, followed by death. The **salmon carcasses provide necessary nutrients back to the environment to sustain other organisms.**
- Students will be able to **explain and predict how changes to salmon populations could affect environmental conditions** and vice versa.
- **Patterns in salmon spawning**, from the temporal cycles in which salmon spawn to the spawning routine of males and females, are **predictable** and **sensitive to environmental factors.**

Grade Level: 6th-8th

Lesson Leader: S&G 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) = Constructing explanations and designing solutions

Orange (Disciplinary Core Ideas) = Interdependent relationships in ecosystems

Green (Crosscutting Concepts) = Patterns