



STEPHEN PRINGLE — Staff

Fred Muller of Hayward casts for freshwater trout and salmon in Fremont's Alameda Creek on a Sunday morning. If local activists are successful, someday he may be casting for saltwater steelhead, as well.

Alameda Creek group seeks fish's return

By Kristin Butler
STAFF WRITER

FREMONT — Environmentalists have started a movement to bring wild king salmon and steelhead trout back to Alameda Creek. But water district officials say the effort would cost too much and deplete local water supplies.

The newly formed activist group — the Alameda Creek Alliance — will hold its first meeting from 7 to 9 p.m. Tuesday to discuss strategies for bringing the fish back to the creek.

"We used to have runs of tens of thousands of fish," said environmental activist Jeff Miller. "These are big, wild fish, and all over the Pacific Coast they are in decline."

The fish — which must migrate between fresh and salt water to survive

— are cousin to the freshwater rainbow trout now found in the creek.

The steelhead has declined so much that it was listed as a threatened species by the federal government this year. The wild king salmon — once thought to be extinct from the area — were seen last November trying to scale a dam near the BART tracks and Western Pacific Railroad in Fremont.

Environmentalists say they hope these factors will bring money and support to their effort.

But, this is not the first time people tried to bring the fish back.

In 1989, officials from the Alameda County Water District, the San Francisco Water Department, the East Bay Regional Water District and the California Department of Fish and Game studied bringing the fish back to the creek.

The group considered ideas such as annually releasing extra water from several reservoirs above Alameda Creek so young fish could make it to the Bay, building fish ladders and removing temporary dams to help mature fish travel back upstream.

But they decided such a project would cost too much.

To implement the project, the local water district would have had to raise rates and find an alternative water supply, he said.

In addition, wild steelhead and king salmon could interfere with the survival of the 20,000 to 30,000 freshwater rainbow trout that water and parks districts stock the creek with every year, he said.

For information about the alliance, call 376-0518.