

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Saturday, December 27, 1997

San Francisco Chronicle

CHRONICLE SECTIONS

ALAMEDA CREEK STEELHEAD

Editor -- Re: The December 13 article, "Steelhead Ends Up in Alameda Creek -- First Time in Fremont Since '50s."

The article about the "lost" steelhead that "blundered" into Alameda Creek: Alameda Creek is not a small creek that a stray threatened species wandered into. It is the largest tributary to the South Bay, draining almost 700 square miles, with historic runs of thousands of steelhead and salmon. Steelhead have been spotted in the creek before, but the fish was the first to be verified and photographed in recent years.

The "lost fish" scenario is less likely than the possibility that this fish is the offspring of a healthy population of rainbow trout further up the creek near Sunol Regional Park. These trout are landlocked descendants of the original steelhead run on the creek. Upcoming genetic tests on this steelhead will determine its origin.

The steelhead died before spawning when flow was interrupted by water district diversions. A federally threatened species, steelhead are entitled adequate water flow and access to quality spawning grounds upstream. DFG Code 5937 requires dam owners to supply sufficient water to maintain fish populations downstream. Water exports for development in other counties indicates available water. Public agencies are obligated to manage water resources for wildlife. With the documented return of steelhead, we expect DFG to take the lead in restoration efforts.

JEFF MILLER