

Long-gone trout return to spawn

By **Kristin Butler**
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FREMONT — Two steelhead trout were found spawning Tuesday in a tributary to Old Alameda Creek, spurring local environmentalists once again to call for measures to protect the once-abundant fish.

The fish are the first couple found spawning in the area since the species vanished from the creek 20 years ago. Employees of Alameda County's Clean Water Program spotted the 21-inch-long male and female fish courting and trying to spawn in a shallow section of the flood

Environmentalists want habitat restored

control channel in Hayward.

Biologists say the fish — a threatened species — are wild, not stocked. They apparently made their way from the Bay to the Hayward channel through Fremont's Alameda Creek Flood Control Channel, the same path their ancestors once took to spawn.

But their efforts to reproduce will likely be fruitless because the area where they were found was not a suitable habitat for spawning. The channel is clogged with garbage, loaded with silt, lined with

concrete and devoid of the vegetation needed to shade the water, biologists said.

The discovery gives one more piece of ammunition to the Alameda Creek Alliance, a group of local environmentalists and fishermen. The grassroots group has been fighting to restore steelhead and salmon runs to Alameda Creek, said organizer Jeff Miller.

"This scenario sort of sums up the problems with our urban creeks, but these fish also represent their amazing

potential," Miller said.

Large numbers of steelhead trout — an ocean-going variety of rainbow trout — used to swim up Alameda Creek from the Bay to former spawning grounds. The fish vanished in the 1950s because of urban development. Their habitat was further damaged when Alameda Creek was reconfigured to serve as a flood control channel.

The Alameda Creek Alliance will hold its next meeting at 7 p.m. March 24 in the Centerville Public Library, 3101 Nicolet Ave., Fremont.