

# Alliance members seek protection for steelhead trout

By Kristin Butler  
STAFF WRITER

FREMONT — Environmentalists plan to lobby local, county and federal agencies for protection of the federally threatened steelhead trout at several meetings this month.

Local fishermen and members of the Alameda Creek Alliance say they will ask Alameda County Water District officials at a meeting tonight to change the way three inflatable dams on the creek are operated. The board will not vote on the issue.

Alliance activists also have plans this month to meet with the Alameda County Flood Control District and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to talk about building a fish ladder near a concrete weir on the creek.

And they will talk with the San Francisco Water Department to discuss flow releases from the agency's reservoirs in the upper watershed to help young fish survive in the creek.

Steelhead used to spawn in Alameda Creek. But their route is now blocked by the dams and other obstacles, said Jeff Miller, an organizer with the Alliance. The water district raises the dams during low flow periods to collect water to replenish groundwater supplies.

Activists have asked the district to install fish ladders on the dams or find another way to

## WHAT'S NEXT

- Meeting of the Alameda County Water District Board of Directors
- When: 7 p.m. today
- Where: 43885 S. Grimmer Blvd., Fremont

recharge groundwater supplies, Miller said.

District officials say they will continue to explore ways to help the fish as long as they don't conflict with water quality and supply demands.

"We've continued to express a willingness ... to determine whether or not the obstacles for establishing a fishery can be overcome," said Paul Piraino, general manager for the water district. "But we're talking about public dollars here as well as changes to our operations, which could affect our water supply reliability."

Local water district officials have already made several concessions to help the fish.

For example, water district employees look for fish before inflating the dams and contact the parks district to rescue fish in danger.

The district has also promised to consider releasing water to help the fish if activists can find an alternative water source.

## New boss at district water plant

By Kristin Butler  
STAFF WRITER

FREMONT — Providing enough high-quality water to keep up with the growing demands of residents and businesses in the Tri-Cities is Paul Piraino's biggest challenge.

Piraino, 48, became the new general manager of the Alameda County Water District this week. He took over the post at the special district — which supplies water for 300,000 residents in Fremont, Newark and Union City — from veteran general manager Jim Beard Dec. 31.

Piraino has worked as personnel manager, administration manager and assistant general manager for the district since 1982.

"My hope is I'll be able to continue the tradition of quality service we are known for throughout the state," said Piraino, who is the sixth person to hold the position since the agency was created in 1914.

Challenges facing him include managing 190 employees and two water-treatment plants, keeping the water board abreast of local and statewide water issues, and responding to the needs of the public.

Piraino said he plans to try to find additional areas to store rainwater collected during wet seasons, complete a major rehabilitation of the city's older water treatment plant and construct a brackish-water desalination plant.

He also will have to deal with the fight by environmentalists bring wild salmon and endangered trout back to Alameda Creek, which the agency uses help replenish groundwater supplies.

Another challenge is to make sure Tri-Cities water supplies are not hampered by growth in the Tri-Valley area, he said.

He has not yet chosen someone to replace him as assistant general manager.

Piraino has more than 20 years of public-agency management experience, having worked for the State of California, Alameda County and Daly City.

Piraino received his undergraduate degree in history from Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio, and holds a master's degree in public administration. He is working on a master's degree in business administration from City University in Bellevue, Wash.

Piraino lives in Oakland and is married with three children.

The water board chose to replace Beard in June. Beard retired this month after working for the district for 14 years of those as general manager.

Beard moved to Arizona plans to stay active as a consultant and a corps member of Christian Environmental Education.