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### SETTLEMENT PROVIDES MORE WATER FOR TROUT

*Bonita Brewer*

A legal settlement has been struck that fishing enthusiasts hope will bolster the population of native rainbow trout in the stretch of Alameda Creek that passes through Sunol Regional Wilderness.

The San Francisco Water Department has agreed to release water from Calaveras Reservoir to maintain creek flows for more than four miles through the park area. The department will then recapture the water downstream in a holding pond at a Sunol pumping station for domestic use.

The agreement was reached this fall with California Trout Inc., after an eight-year legal battle. "We hope, with this agreement, to eventually see creation of a controlled urban fishery that allows for limited-access fishing to a high-quality trout stream within a stone's throw from a major metropolitan area," said Michael Bowen of San Francisco-based California Trout.

He said although his organization hopes to open the regional park to limited trout fishing, that's not a done deal.

"The way the agreement is structured, the fish will come first," Bowen said. "It provides for putting the water in the stream and monitoring the status of the recovering population and, if that population can support it, opening it up to limited access to sport fishermen."

Among potential alternatives is requiring people to release fish after catching them or putting limits on the number of anglers in a given day.

"If it's just Come one, come all,' the stream will be loved to death," Bowen said.

Currently, the only stretch of Alameda Creek where fishing is allowed is through Niles Canyon between Interstate 680 in Sunol and Mission Boulevard in Fremont. That stretch of creek is stocked with nonresident rainbow trout by the state Department of Fish and Game.

Bowen said his organization supports separate efforts by the Alameda Creek Alliance to restore flows all the way to San Francisco Bay for steelhead trout and to build ladders so steelhead trying to get upstream for spawning can get over dams and other barriers.

"We're working from the top down, and they're working from the bottom up, and that makes them highly complementary," he said.

"We truly believe we'll be creating a high-quality spawning and rearing habitat for trout that are there (in the Sunol wilderness) and for steelhead, if they ever arrive."

Joseph Naras, acting watershed manager for the San Francisco Water Department, said the agency will pay for the facility that will recapture the water released through the park in spring and summer.

"Conceptually, it might cost \$1 million, but we're just beginning the design phase," he said.

He said the idea of larger releases to help establish a full-blown steelhead habitat "will require a whole different magnitude of discussion."

"The fact is that we need more water, so that would be unlikely," he said.