

# The Daily Review

Hayward, California

**THURSDAY**

March 12, 1998

Ian Gilroy of the National Marine Fishery Service struggles with a long net in Alameda Creek Wednesday as he and others try to relocate a school of steelhead trout.

ROD A. LAMKEY JR.  
— Staff



## Endangered trout may make comeback

### Steelhead school seen in Alameda Creek

By Kristin Butler  
STAFF WRITER

FREMONT — About a dozen steelhead trout were spotted trying to scale a concrete weir in Alameda Creek Wednesday afternoon, suggesting that the threatened species is trying to make a comeback in local waters.

The fish were found by several state and federal officials, who were visiting the creek to design a fish ladder for the area near the BART tracks and Peralta Boulevard. Steelhead have been spotted alone or in pairs swimming upstream in the creek at least three times since November, but never in such large numbers.

Environmentalists say the latest sighting proves the steelhead are trying to swim up Alameda Creek from the Bay to the spawning grounds they favored decades ago. But the weir and several inflatable dams used to collect drinking water now alter the flow and bar the way for fish traveling upstream.

#### Seeing is believing

"This, for us, is the proof — a sign — that a number of wild fish are trying to use the system," said Jeff Miller, an activist with the Alameda Creek Alliance, a group of local environmentalists and fishermen who have been fighting to restore steelhead and

salmon runs to the creek for more than a year.

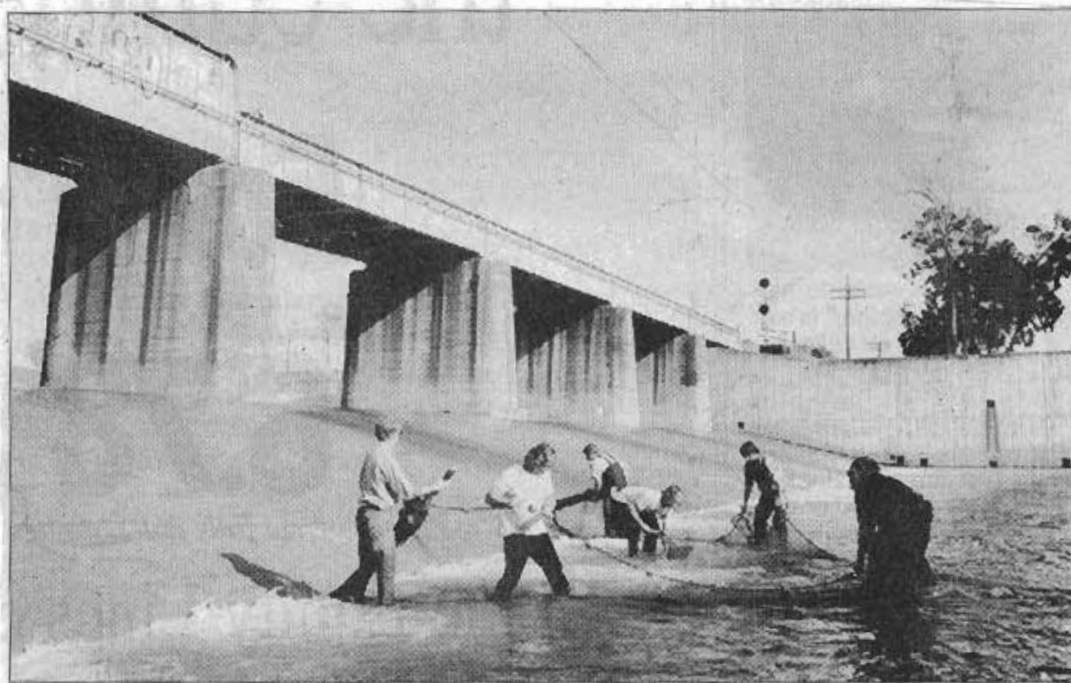
Regulatory agencies, including the Alameda County Water District, say they are already carrying out measures to protect the fish.

#### Keeping an eye out

For example, the Alameda County Water District is training employees to look for fish before inflating the dams and to contact the parks district when fish need to be rescued, General Manager Paul Piraino said.

But officials have also expressed concerns that changes needed to help the steelhead could jeopardize local water supplies. They say the Alameda County Water District

Please see **Steelhead**, NEWS-9



ROD A. LAMKEY JR. — Staff

Officials from state and federal agencies take up a net Wednesday, hoping to catch a school of steelhead trout trying to make its way up Alameda Creek. The group was hoping to relocate the fish to the top of the creek.

## Steelhead: 40,000 down to 4,000

Continued from NEWS-1

would need to divert water from its normal flow to replenish drinking water supplies.

Despite a 120-foot net brought in Wednesday by biologists from the East Bay Regional Parks District, the fish escaped and hid. Officials plan to try again to catch the fish Friday. If successful, they will transport the fish upstream to breeding habitat.

The decline of the steelhead trout population is increasingly drawing attention statewide.

Steelhead are anadromous rainbow trout — born in freshwater streams, they migrate to sea then return inland to spawn. Like their cousins, the salmon, they have suffered from decades of human tampering with their environment. Unlike salmon, they can spawn more than once.

But logging, road building and development have stripped the tree canopies that keep streams cool enough for young steelhead to survive. Clear cutting along banks has eliminated the woody, debris-filled hiding places the fish need, and led to erosion that clogs streams with dirt. And water pumping and dam releases have further upset

river flows and temperatures.

Last August, the National Marine Fisheries Service listed as "endangered" — meaning at risk of becoming extinct in the foreseeable future — steelhead in Southern California from the Santa Maria River to just south of Malibu Creek.

Steelhead on the central and south central California coast were listed as "threatened," meaning they are likely to become endangered.

And on Friday, federal officials must list the steelhead populations in California's Central Valley and North Coast and Oregon's southwestern corner as "threatened" or "endangered" — or explain why they should not be listed.

Friday's decision on the Central Valley and North Coast fish is required by court order, stemming from a lawsuit brought by environmentalist and fishing organizations.

The Central Valley fish — those that migrate on streams feeding the Sacramento-San Joaquin River system — have dwindled to mere remnants of their historic numbers. By some estimates there are now no more than 4,000 fish, down from a high of about 40,000.