

update

It Must Be Spring

On March 3, employees of Alameda County's Clean Water Program spotted a pair of steelhead trout attempting to procreate their officially threatened species in a Hayward flood control channel that used to be a tributary of Alameda Creek. Their spawning was interrupted by a very excited local fisheries biologist who confirmed that they were indeed wild steelhead; he measured them (21 inches) and clipped bits of fin before returning them to the shallow water.

The fin clips will join the clip from the steelhead found dying in Alameda Creek in December ("Cityside," January 19)—genetic analysis may provide clues to the fishes' origin. Were the three steelhead trying to return to their ancestral stream? Unfortunately, the spot the spawning pair chose to bed down in—concrete-lined, unshaded, loaded with silt and floating garbage—won't successfully hatch eggs. "This scenario sort of sums up the problems with our urban creeks," says Jeff Miller of the Alameda Creek Alliance, "but those fish also represent an amazing potential."

The Alliance is proceeding with talks for a fish ladder up the concrete barrier below the Fremont BART tracks; Alameda County Flood Control District, owner of the barrier, is willing to participate, and engineers from the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Department of Fish and Game will visit the site this month to begin plans. Meanwhile, the precise location of the fish remains a well-kept secret to protect their privacy.

—Gina Coviza

Fish frenzy: One indication of the environmental benefits of the flush is the return of migratory fish to creeks leading into the Bay. Last week, a dozen steelhead trout were observed trying to ascend Alameda Creek just as fish and game officials were touring the area to consider a proposal for a fish ladder. Members of the Alameda Creek Alliance plan to return this week to where the fish were stranded to help move them upstream. Their migration was blocked by a flood control ditch, which is too slippery for them to climb, Alliance members said. The trout is considered threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act. The listing last year has provided impetus for creek restoration projects around the Bay.

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