



ALAMEDA CREEK ALLIANCE
THIS 23-INCH, 4½-pound steelhead trout was found in a pool along Alameda Creek on Dec. 11, 1998. Since then, at least three dozen trout have been trapped behind the concrete weir.

Sources: Alameda Creek Alliance, San Francisco Water Department, Alameda County Water District
 JONI MARTIN/STAFF

Trout restoration to get closer look

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■ A county and conservancy study will consider fish ladders for the Alameda Creek watershed

By Bonita Brewer
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SUNOL — Steelhead trout could get their chance to spawn again in the far reaches of the Sunol Regional Wilderness.

Alameda County supervisors agreed Tuesday to join with the California Coastal Conservancy to pay for a \$40,000 fishery restoration study of the Alameda Creek watershed.

The study, which is expected to be completed in December, will consider what it would take to build three fish ladders to help trout migrate upstream from the Bay over a series of man-made barriers along the lower end of the creek in the Fre-

mont area.

In what could prove to be more controversial, it also will explore what it would take to improve the habitat for fish along the creek and its tributaries — including the increase of water flows during dry months.

That has raised concerns from water agencies serving both the Livermore-Amador Valley and the Fremont area. The agencies have warned that municipal water supplies could be affected if they're required to release water from dams, or to change other operations, in order to maintain adequate year-round water flows for fish.

"This is not committing the county, but it's looking at the feasibility," said county Supervisor Scott Haggerty, whose district includes Fremont, Sunol and much of the Livermore-Amador Valley. "If we get all the parties to agree, it would cer-

tainly be a great project to restore a lost natural resource."

Members of the Alameda Creek Alliance, who have long sought to restore a steelhead run, applauded the decision.

"This is a big, important step," said creek alliance spokesman Jeff Miller. "It never goes fast enough, but things are finally moving. I'd be surprised if the study results aren't encouraging in December."

Miller said even without additional water flows or other habitat work, fish ladders would at least give steelhead access to suitable spawning areas in Stonybrook Creek, a tributary to Alameda Creek that runs along Palomares Road.

"The prime habitat is way up in the Sunol Regional Wilderness, but this is the first step in getting fish past the initial barriers in the lower channel," Miller said.

County flood control official

Richard Wetzig said the cost of building a fish ladder at the most troubling migration barrier — a concrete weir near three inflatable dams operated by the Alameda County Water District in Fremont — has been estimated at \$1 million.

If the study shows that the fish ladder project is feasible, the count would apply to the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers for 75 percent of the needed funding.

In addition, the Coastal Conservancy has expressed interest in helping the county pay its 25 percent share. County funds would come from the budget of the Zone 5 Flood Control District, which serves northern Fremont, Newark and Union City.

The ladders would be built in a series of small puddles, allowing fish to jump easily from one to the next. The largest would be built near the weir, which is near the middle of the three inflatable dams. The other ladders would be smaller and less expensive.

Steelhead trout have been listed by the federal government as a threatened species, a designation that could lead to special protections, including required changes in the management of creeks where they are found.

The study will be performed under county contract with Applied Marine Sciences Inc.