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GROUPS SUE TO PROTECT STATE'S STEELHEAD TROUT

*Compiled from staff and wire reports by Mercury News Staff
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A coalition of eight environmental and fishermen's groups sued the National Marine Fisheries Service in federal court Tuesday, claiming that the government agency had not done enough to protect the population of steelhead trout in California.

"We're hoping the lawsuit will force the National Marine Fisheries Service to promptly issue protective measures for the steelhead trout," said Jeff Miller, the spokesman for the Alameda Creek Alliance, a Fremont-based conservation group.

North Coast and Central Valley steelhead trout were listed in February 1998 as a "threatened" species, one notch below "endangered" in the federal ranking system.

Since the 1940s, the steelhead population in California has fallen from 487,000 to 124,000. Scott Smullen, a spokesman for the National Marine Fisheries Service, one of the agencies responsible for enforcing the Endangered Species Act, said he had not received a copy of the lawsuit.