

Tests show rare steelheads are natives of Alameda Creek

By Mary Neuman
STAFF WRITER

FREMONT — Genetic tests recently proved that the steelhead trout discovered in Alameda Creek last year are native to the area, and a local group is fighting to make sure the threatened species will stay here.

The steelhead trout, once plentiful in Alameda Creek, had been considered extinct in this area for decades, but last winter several were spotted in Alameda Creek during a five-month period. One reason the steelhead trout was considered gone from the area forever was the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' transformation of the creek, in 1977, into a flood control channel, said Jeff Miller of the Alameda Creek Alliance. There are dams that block the trout's passage, he said.

Genetic samples from the trout proved they are native to the Alameda Creek area, and did not just wander into the creek accidentally, Miller said.

This information makes it likely that the Corps of Engineers will fund almost completely the cost of building a



money on restoring the steelhead trout there.

But the Corps of Engineers is permitted to pay for only 75 percent of the project, which has an estimated cost of anywhere from \$100,000 to \$1 million. The Alameda Creek Alliance, a local organization, is working to convince Alameda County's water and flood control districts to pay the remaining 25 percent of the cost.

It is a cooperative effort right now, but the alliance is willing to fight the battle in court if necessary, Miller said.

"We think this can be done proactively, so that it's a pretty good deal for the districts and the fish," Miller said.

"But we intend to see this through. We think (the districts) are violating three fish and game codes and, if we have to, we fully intend to seek enforcement of those laws."

Officials from both the water and the flood control districts said their agencies are willing to pay their fair share of the project, provided they can be convinced Alameda Creek still is a viable steelhead home.

bypass so the threatened species can once again use the creek, said corps officials.

"It can only help," said Scott Miner of the corps. "The fact that they are descendants from the local population certainly supports the case for spending