

Clean Water



Alameda Countywide
Clean Water Program

Only Rain Down the Storm Drain

Spring 2000, Volume 1, No. 3



Photo by Jeff Miller

Patrick Kobernus, former Alameda County Flood Control Staff,
Rescuing the steelhead trout, a threatened species in Alameda Creek.

Wild Fish in Fremont

by Laura Kilgour

"There goes one now!" shouted Jeff Miller, an activist and founder of the Alameda Creek Alliance. "And another!" Members of National Marine Fisheries Service and US Fish and Wildlife Service watched in disbelief as several magnificent steelhead trout attempted to jump a concrete drop structure in Alameda Creek. The fish shot out of the water in an incredible attempt to vault the formidable barrier. Halfway up, they smacked the concrete and slid back down. It was heart breaking to watch. The trout had impeccable timing as the group was there to examine whether or not the structure posed a significant threat to the migration of anadromous fish.

Over the last three years, several steelhead trout have been captured and released upstream of the barrier. Fin clips were taken and analyzed by a

geneticist. The results of the analysis indicate with a high level of confidence that the Alameda Creek samples are not of hatchery origin, and should be classified as part of the Central California Coast Evolutionarily Significant Unit (ESU). This particular ESU has been recently listed as "threatened" pursuant to the Federal Endangered Species Act.

"...[the fish] smacked the concrete and slid back down. It was heartbreaking to watch."

Steelhead trout were once abundant in the Alameda Creek watershed before the Army Corps of Engineers constructed an 11-foot drop structure to protect the railroad and BART crossings in 1972. The concrete drop structure protects the bridge piers from scouring but forms an impassable barrier to anadromous fish.

The Alameda County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, Alameda County Water District, US Army Corps of Engineers and California Coastal Conservancy are discussing partnering to build a fish ladder which will correct the problem of fish passage. But there are more

barriers to the restoration of a steelhead trout run than the ones the fish smack into.

The onslaught of human development has led to the degradation of steelhead trout habitat by altering flow, erosion and deposition, and the ability of a creek to support the bugs that serve as lunch. Diversion of water reduces flows affecting the adult trout's ability to migrate upstream as well as the ability of young fish to migrate out to the bay and ocean. (continued on page 4)

Reaching Out

Bringing folks together to work on common interests is one of the goals of the Alameda Countywide Clean Water Program (ACCWP). In January, the ACCWP's Maintenance Subcommittee and the Regional Water Quality Control Board hosted a workshop for local utilities, water agencies, and contractors to kick around ideas for keeping storm water clean while doing their jobs. Union City's Carl Howard, the impetus for the workshop, observed that too many pollution incidents were still occurring despite the local cities' efforts to implement Best Management Practices (BMPs). (continued on page 2)

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If you have any comments or suggestions for the Clean Water Newsletter, please contact Christie Galitsky from EOA, Inc. at (510) 832-2852 or galitsky@eoainc.com

Murky World

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Excess sediment also may result from the maintenance of flood control modifications to creeks and channels. Alameda County is working with other flood control agencies in the Bay Area to develop a new **Flood Control Maintenance Best Management Practices Manual and Reference Guide**. The manual and guide are intended to help field staff select and implement BMPs that minimize the impact of sediment and other pollutants associated with maintaining flood control channels. This manual and guide will be completed late this spring, and training on their use may be offered next fiscal year. For more information on this project please contact Wendy Edde at EOA at (510) 832-2852.

Wild Fish (continued from front page)



Development increases the amount of impervious surface area, which in turn, increases the peak flows during a storm. This added water scours creek banks and deposits silt downstream. If the sediment covers steelhead trout redds (trout eggs in a nest) or the clean gravel needed to support the redds, less oxygen will be available to the eggs.

Stormwater pollution is a barrier to fish restoration as well. Organophosphate pesticides like diazinon, a common insecticide, used in the watershed can be fatal to the bugs fish feed on. Other pollutants like oil, surfactants and heavy metals can also disrupt the early lifestages of steelhead trout.

The presence of steelhead trout is not unique to Alameda Creek. They have been spotted in San Lorenzo Creek, San Leandro Creek, Ward Creek and numerous other creeks that drain to the Bay. The problems steelhead face are not unique to the Alameda Creek watershed either. Problems of pollution, flow and sedimentation contribute to the destruction of valuable creek habitat in most

Bay area watersheds. The reduction and control of stormwater pollution everywhere is vital to the protection of habitat for creatures like steelhead trout.



Key Contacts

Questions? Problems?

Haven't a clue what's going on but would like to know?

General Program number

For general questions or the name of who to contact regarding a specific question, call the Clean Water Program (888)BAY-WISE.

Committee & Subcommittee Chairs

Watershed Management and Monitoring (WMM) Subcommittee: Joe Lucia, City of Hayward (510) 881-7960

Public Information/Participation (PI/P) Subcommittee: Brian Lorimer, City of Pleasanton (925) 931-5511

Maintenance Subcommittee: Danny Akagi, City of Berkeley (510) 665-3409

New Development Subcommittee: Diane Stark, Alameda County (510) 670-5529

Industrial & Illicit Discharge Control (I&IDC) Subcommittee: Darren Greenwood, City of Livermore (925) 373-5233



Alameda Countywide Clean Water Program

A Consortium of Local Agencies

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Member Agencies:

- Alameda
- Albany
- Berkeley
- Dublin
- Emeryville
- Fremont
- Hayward
- Livermore
- Newark
- Oakland
- Piedmont
- Pleasanton
- San Leandro
- Union City
- Alameda County
- ACFC & WCD, Zone 7 of Alameda County Flood