

Fish-flow study receives \$30,000 from water agency

SUNOL: Research to cover Alameda Creek watershed, its effect on steelhead trout runs

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The Livermore-Amador Valley's water wholesaler will contribute \$30,000 to a study of water flows needed in Alameda Creek and its tributaries to restore steelhead trout runs to and from San Francisco Bay.

The Zone 7 Water Agency board approved the funding Thursday night. The agency provides wholesale water to Livermore, Pleasanton and Dublin, and manages flood control projects throughout the valley.

The \$240,000 fish-flow study is a cooperative effort between several agencies, including Zone 7, the Alameda County Water District serving the Fremont area, Pacific Gas & Electric Co. and the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission. Half of the cost, \$120,000, will be covered by the California State Coastal Conservancy.

Zone 7 board President John Greci said his agency is committed to managing its operations in ways that support natural habitats in the valley and downstream.

Because the Alameda Creek watershed connects an entire network of streams and arroyos, "Zone 7 realizes that what we do upstream can impact our downstream neighbors, and we manage our portion of the watershed accordingly," Greci said.

In 2004, Zone 7 studied potential past and present steelhead populations within the Livermore-Amador Valley, focusing on Arroyo Mocho and Arroyo del Valle, tributaries of Alameda Creek.

"The study found that, historically, steelhead rarely -- if at all -- visited Arroyo del Valle and Arroyo Mocho," agency spokeswoman Karla Nemeth said. "However, both arroyos are prime habitat for steelhead, and Zone 7 is doing its part to ensure that conditions are right should the fish enter these areas in the future."

She said when the agency recently realigned Arroyo las Positas and widened Arroyo Mocho near Interstate 580 and El Charro Road, it built two fish passageways that enable the fish to move upstream.

The study will look at how much water might be needed in creeks during critical times of year to support a viable steelhead population. A big question is whether municipal water supplies will be adversely affected if water agencies, including Zone 7, are required to release water from dams, or to significantly change operations to maintain flows for fish.