

Study to Look at Restoring Fish

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Studies to restore threatened steelhead trout within the Alameda Creek watershed will soon get under way. A formal agreement to collaborate on water flow and fish habitat studies was signed this month by 17 public agencies and nonprofit organizations.

The agencies signed a Memorandum of Understanding to conduct jointly-funded studies of how much water might be needed at critical times to support a viable steelhead population, while also considering other native fish and wildlife and minimizing potential impacts to drinking water supplies. The \$240,000 technical study will be conducted in two phases by an independent consultant.

“These studies should identify how much water is needed, when it is needed, and in what stream reaches,” said Jeff Miller, Director of the Alameda Creek Alliance. “We believe we can provide water to restore a steelhead run without compromising water supply, and in the process provide beneficial habitat for other native wildlife.”

Contributions of \$30,000 each were approved this year by four of the signatories - the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC), Livermore-Amador Valley’s Zone 7 Water Agency, Alameda County Water District (ACWD) and Pacific Gas and Electric Company. The \$120,000 provided by these four agencies will be matched by the California State Coastal Conservancy, for a total of \$240,000.

“The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding is a milestone in the process of restoring steelhead to Alameda Creek,” said Paul Piraino, Alameda County Water District General Manager. “Water supply and environmental issues are not always seen as going hand in hand. In this case, however, all the parties agree that these studies are an important step in determining how to provide enough water for both steelhead and the residents of the Bay Area.”

Other participating organizations include the Alameda County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, Alameda County Resource Conservation District, Alameda Creek Alliance, American Rivers, California Department of Fish and Game, East Bay Regional Park District, National Marine Fisheries Service, Natural Resources Defense Council, San Francisco Regional Water Quality Control Board, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Efforts to restore steelhead to areas of the Alameda Creek watershed where there were historical trout populations are gaining momentum on other fronts as well. For example: Steelhead trout in the central California coast (including the Bay Area) were listed under the Endangered Species Act as a federally threatened species in 1997.