

Steelhead Rescue

March 16, 2006

Four more adult steelhead trout migrating up Alameda Creek were rescued below a migration barrier on Saturday, March 11th, and moved upstream into Niles Canyon. Two large adult male steelhead were previously moved upstream on March 4th. The fish moved Saturday were from 22 to 27½ inches long, weighed from 3.7 to 8.3 pounds, and included one female and three male trout. This is the ninth consecutive winter the Alameda Creek Alliance has documented ocean-run steelhead trout in the creek.

Migratory fish are currently blocked below the BART weir, a barrier to fish migration in the Alameda Creek flood control channel in Fremont. Alameda Creek Alliance volunteers and an East Bay Regional Park District Fisheries Biologist captured the steelhead and moved them upstream to suitable habitat, operating under state and federal permits.

There are now 12 local, state, and federal agencies cooperating on fish passage projects in Alameda Creek, including dam removals and construction of fish ladders and fish screens. The projects will allow adult steelhead, currently blocked by barriers in the lower creek, to access up to 15 miles of spawning and rearing habitat in and above Sunol Regional Wilderness.

Until fish passage projects are completed, fisheries biologists and volunteers have been given annual permits by the California Department of Fish and Game and the federal agency National Marine Fisheries Service to move blocked or stranded fish from the Alameda Creek flood control channel to suitable habitat upstream.

The Alameda County Water District and Alameda County Flood Control District are pursuing funding for fish passage projects in the lower creek. In May 2005, the ACWD received a \$1 million grant to fund two projects that will help improve passage for steelhead trout in the flood control channel. This summer and fall, the ACWD will remove an inflatable rubber dam and install a fish screen at a water diversion in the lower creek. This year the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission plans to remove two abandoned dams from Niles Canyon.