

Study to help Alameda Creek steelhead trout

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A study conducted within the Alameda Creek watershed should help endangered steelhead trout spawn, Alameda Creek Alliance spokesman Jeff Miller said today.

The formal memorandum of understanding, signed by 17 public agencies and finalized on Oct. 11, allows for studies of water flow and fish habitat. According to Miller, these studies should identify when and where water is needed to facilitate spawning.

“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,” Miller said.

According to Miller, the California State Coastal Conservancy matched \$120,000 in total contributions given by four other signatory agencies, giving the project \$240,000 to work with.

Efforts to restore steelhead to areas of the Alameda Creek are already underway with the installation of jumping pools called “fish ladders” designed to help fish migrate, he said. Obsolete dams were removed last month in Niles Canyon below Sunol, allowing fish to swim freely.

Miller said the National Fish and Wildlife Association also recently donated \$1 million toward the removal of an inflatable diversion dam and toward the installation of fish screens at the district's water supply diversion point at Niles Canyon.

Steelhead in the central California coast area were listed as a federally threatened species in 1997.

According to Miller, Alameda Creek, the largest tributary of San Francisco Bay, may be the best place for Bay Area steelhead to live.

In the 1950s urban growth in the East Bay ``adversely altered the creek's hydrology to such a degree that salmon runs disappeared and steelhead dwindled to unsustainably low numbers," according to the Alameda Creek Alliance.

``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," Alameda County Water District General Manager Paul Piraino said in a statement.