

# THREATENED STEELHEAD BACK IN ALAMEDA CREEK



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 18, 1999

## CONTACT:

Jeff Miller (510) 845-4675  
Alameda Creek Alliance

Richard Wetzig (510) 670-6478  
Alameda County Flood Control District

Another school of threatened steelhead trout was spotted in Alameda Creek today by an Alameda County employee and a member of the Alameda Creek Alliance. Three 16-24" fish were spotted this morning by Richard Wetzig, an employee of the Alameda County Flood Control District, and Jeff Miller of the Alameda Creek Alliance. The steelhead are trapped below a cement drop structure in the creek, and were observed trying to jump the barrier. The drop structure, located below the B.A.R.T. tracks in Fremont, is owned by the Flood Control District. It is one of several barriers in the lower creek keeping steelhead and salmon from migrating upstream to spawning habitat in Niles Canyon and Sunol Regional Wilderness. According to local fisheries biologists, usually only 1/5 to 1/10 of the steelhead in a school are visible, which means potentially 15-30 fish are trapped in that spot. "If the county and the water district will agree to put fish ladders on these barriers, these fish will restore themselves," said Miller, founder of the Alliance. The Alliance has been working to restore steelhead and salmon to the creek since 1997.

**Fisheries biologists with the East Bay Regional Park District will attempt to net the steelhead at 10 A.M. tomorrow, February 19, and move them upstream past the dams. (See page 2 for directions to the drop structure.) The biologists will be assisted by county Clean Water Program employees and community volunteers.**

A lone steelhead was sighted in the same spot in Alameda Creek on January 28, then a dead steelhead was found a week later, after a railroad car spilled sheetrock gypsum into the creek. It is unknown whether this fish was killed by the spill or by dewatering of the creek from operation of Alameda County Water District inflatable dams.

A school of 20-60 steelhead was trapped below the drop structure last March, and 10 of those fish were successfully netted and moved over the barriers in the creek. Fin clips were taken last year from each of the steelhead moved, and sent to Hopkins Marine Lab in Monterey for genetic testing. Tests done by fish geneticists at Hopkins indicated that the fish were wild, central California coast anadromous steelhead. "These steelhead are exactly where they belong," said Miller. "In Alameda Creek, where they spawned for millennia before dams and water diversions destroyed the run. Now is the time to restore

this resource -- let us state clearly for the last time: these are native fish attempting to return to spawn in their native habitat, and they deserve protection!" A California Department of Fish and Game spokesperson had claimed last winter that returning fish were "lost" and "wandered into the wrong creek."

The Alameda Creek Alliance has been meeting since last winter with the Flood Control District and with the Alameda County Water District, which operates three inflatable rubber dams in the lower creek channel. The Alliance wants the two agencies to apply for funding assistance from the Army Corps of Engineers, which built the flood control project, to help construct fish passage ladders at all the barriers. Through an Army Corps Section 1135 restoration project, the local agencies would pay only 25% of the construction costs of the fish ladders. "These barriers need fish ladders, in fact it's required by state and federal law," said Miller. "Section 1135 is a great deal for the agencies, and a fair deal for the fish. We encourage both agencies to be the local sponsors for this restoration project." The Alliance has offered to help fundraise the non-federal costs of the fish ladders, and already holds \$7500 in trust for that purpose.

**An attempt will be made at 10 A.M. on Friday, February 19, to net and move the trapped fish. This event should be highly photogenic! Directions to the drop structure: From Hwy 880, take the DeCoto Road exit and go East (toward the hills). Turn right on Alvarado-Niles Road and go about 1 1/2 miles to the Niles District of Fremont. Turn right on G Street, then left on 3rd Street. Turn right immediately into Niles Community Park. Park in the parking lot and walk to the trail along Alameda Creek. The drop structure is 1/4 mile downstream.**

Contact us at:

P.O. Box 192  
Canyon, CA 94516  
Phone: (510) 845-4675  
FAX: (510) 848-5499  
[AlamedaCreek@formulate.com](mailto:AlamedaCreek@formulate.com)  
<http://www.formulate.com/alamedaCreek>