

THREATENED STEELHEAD BACK IN ALAMEDA CREEK

WATER AGENCIES PURSUING FISH PASSAGE PROJECTS



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 6, 2002

CONTACT:

Jeff Miller (510) 845-4675
Alameda Creek Alliance

Fremont, CA – About a dozen threatened steelhead trout were spotted in lower Alameda Creek today and yesterday, struggling to surmount a concrete barrier at the BART tracks in Fremont. Steelhead and other migratory fish have been blocked from returning to Alameda Creek since the 1970s by barriers in the flood control channel in the lower portion of the creek.

A consortium of eleven local, state and federal agencies are pursuing planning for fish passage projects involving either dam removal or construction of fish ladders past barriers in the lower creek, so that steelhead and salmon can migrate upstream. These projects are scheduled for completion by 2004/2005, which will allow ocean-run steelhead trout to access spawning and rearing habitat in Niles Canyon, tributaries in the Sunol Valley, and Alameda Creek through Sunol Regional Wilderness.

In the past few years, volunteers moved some of the adult fish that returned to the creek over the barriers. Regulatory agencies have no plans to help the fish that are now in the creek upstream, due to delays in obtaining permits necessary to handle protected species and concerns about starting a steelhead run of just a few fish with low genetic variability. Planning is underway to “jump-start” a steelhead run once fish passage projects in the creek have been completed. The jump-start restoration would use hundreds of fish from genetically diverse trout populations above Calaveras and San Antonio Reservoirs upstream.

The East Bay Regional Park District completed the first Alameda Creek dam removal project in September of 2001, removing two low swim dams from Alameda Creek in Sunol Regional Wilderness. The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) is moving forward with plans to remove the Niles and Sunol Dams in Niles Canyon. SFPUC has budgeted \$1.25 million for the dam removals and is seeking matching funds from the CalFed program. These dams will likely be removed in 2002 or 2003.

Video footage shot Sunday, January 6 of leaping steelhead trying to ascend the BART weir is available from the Alameda Creek Alliance. Contact Jeff Miller at (510) 845-4675 or Dave Garges at (510) 471-3685.