

CONSERVATION GROUPS CALL ON S.F. TO RESTORE ALAMEDA CREEK, PROTECT TUOLUMNE RIVER

SFPUC Hearings on Water Supply Plans This Month



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
OCTOBER 7, 2005**

CONTACT:

**Jeff Miller (510) 499-9185
Alameda Creek Alliance**

Fremont, San Francisco, CA – Conservation groups will be insisting that San Francisco's water agency improve its stewardship of local and regional watershed lands at scoping hearings this month for the SFPUC's Water Supply Improvement Program (WSIP), a \$4.3 billion water system upgrade plan through the year 2030. The SFPUC will hold hearings on the plan on October 11th in Fremont and on October 19th in San Francisco. The Alameda Creek Alliance (ACA) and over 65 other Bay Area conservation groups have called on the SFPUC to restore water flows in Alameda Creek to sustain trout and other native fish.

The Bay Area Water Stewards (BAWS), a collection of environmental interests including the ACA, is calling on the SFPUC to meet future water demands by increasing recycling and water conservation; to improve water flow for the Tuolumne River, Alameda Creek, and Pilarcitos Creek to support the needs of wildlife and recreation; and to include watershed restoration and environmental improvement projects in Tuolumne and Bay Area watersheds as part of the WSIP. The BAWS and ACA have encouraged the SFPUC to aggressively pursue needed system repairs and earthquake safety retrofits, but without expanding the capacity of the Hetch Hetchy system to withdraw more water from the Tuolumne River.

The WSIP scoping meetings will cover planned water supply and infrastructure projects in the Alameda Creek watershed, including the replacement of Calaveras Dam, proposed construction of a controversial rubber dam in the Sunol Valley, enlargement of the Sunol Valley Water Treatment Plant, and fish restoration projects. The SFPUC manages 36,800 acres of public land and operates three dams in the upper Alameda Creek watershed. In June 2005, 68 conservation groups requested that the SFPUC restore stream flows in Alameda Creek sufficient to sustain steelhead and rainbow trout, protect rare fish populations in SFPUC reservoirs, remove a diversion facility that limits steelhead restoration, and abandon plans to construct the new dam in the Sunol Valley.

The SFPUC diverts 86% of natural stream flows tributary to upper Alameda Creek into Calaveras and San Antonio Reservoirs for water supply. The Alameda Creek Diversion Dam (ACDD), completed in the 1930s, also diverts water into Calaveras Reservoir from upper Alameda Creek. The groups asked the SFPUC to abide by state Fish and Game Codes requiring sufficient instream flows to sustain native fish in good condition. The SFPUC signed an agreement in 1997 to release minimal flows from Calaveras Reservoir to restore about five miles of Alameda Creek in the Sunol Valley, but to date has not released any water.

The ACA will be asking the SFPUC to include steelhead trout restoration actions in the WSIP, dedicate instream flows below SFPUC dams, and study the feasibility of removing or re-operating the ACDD, which captures virtually all stream flow from upper Alameda Creek and is a barrier to steelhead migration into the headwaters of Alameda Creek. The groups also want the SFPUC to remove the so-called "Alameda Creek

Fishery Enhancement Project” from the WSIP, the proposal to construct an unnecessary \$17.5 million water recapture dam in the Sunol Valley.

Since steelhead trout in the Bay Area were listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 1997, the ACA has been advocating for dam removals and construction of fish ladders to allow migratory fish from the Bay to reach spawning habitat in upper Alameda Creek. Resident rainbow trout in Alameda Creek and in the SFPUC’s reservoirs have been proposed for ESA listing, with a determination due in December. There are 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. In May 2005, the Alameda County Water District (ACWD) received a \$1 million grant to fund two projects that will help improve passage for steelhead trout in the Alameda Creek Flood Control Channel. In 2006, the ACWD will remove an inflatable rubber dam and install a fish screen at a water diversion in the lower creek, and the SFPUC will remove two abandoned dams from Niles Canyon.

The Fremont scoping meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 11, 2005, from 6-8 PM at the Fremont Main Library, Fukaya Room, 2400 Stevenson Boulevard. The San Francisco meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 19, 2005, from 7-9 PM at the Tenderloin Community School, 627 Turk Street (at Van Ness).

The letter from the 68 groups to the SFPUC is at www.alamedacreek.org/Home%20page/SFPUC%20letter.pdf.

Read an ACA report on the history of Alameda Creek management actions, *Alameda Creek - Ninety Years of Neglect*, at www.alamedacreek.org/Home%20page/90%20Years.pdf.

The ACA is a community watershed restoration group with over 700 members, dedicated to protecting and restoring Alameda Creek and its tributaries. Contact the ACA at (510)499-9185 or visit www.alamedacreek.org.