

46 BAY AREA CONSERVATION GROUPS AIR CONCERNS OVER CALAVERAS DAM PROJECT IN ALAMEDA CREEK

Final Public Hearing on Environmental Impact Report Tonight in Sunol



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 14, 2009

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Sunol, CA – Forty-six Bay Area conservation and fly-fishing organizations today submitted [comments](#) regarding the inadequacy of the draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the controversial Calaveras Dam Replacement Project in the Alameda Creek watershed. The San Francisco Planning Department will hold a final public hearing on the draft EIR tonight, December 14, at 6:30 pm at the Sunol Glen Elementary School, at 11601 Main Street in Sunol.

“We support rebuilding Calaveras Dam as quickly as possible, but the unresolved issue is how the rebuilt dam and reservoir will be operated to allow for restoration of steelhead trout and salmon to Alameda Creek,” said Jeff Miller, Director of the Alameda Creek Alliance. “Along with upgrading the aging water supply infrastructure, San Francisco’s water agency needs to be brought into the twenty-first century regarding compliance with modern environmental protections. San Francisco’s water system can and should be operated in a sustainable manner.”

The San Francisco Planning Department released a draft EIR for the Calaveras Dam project in October, which was [criticized by conservation groups as flawed](#). The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) has proposed operation of the rebuilt Calaveras Dam and the associated Alameda Diversion Dam that is incompatible with restoring steelhead trout to Alameda Creek below the dam. After two dozen conservation groups [insisted](#) that San Francisco and the Army Corps of Engineers extend the public comment period on the environmental review, the comment deadline was extended until December 18 and an additional public hearing was scheduled in Sunol.

“The current proposed stream flow releases for migratory fish are inadequate, contemplated operations of the San Francisco conflict with wildlife protection laws, and the mitigations offered for what will be significant construction impacts on endangered species habitats are meager and inappropriate,” said Miller. “We hope the final EIR and the project will be changed so that future water system operations are consistent with steelhead recovery, in order to move the rebuild project forward quickly and without conflict.”

Alameda Creek is becoming an urban stream success story after decades of restoration efforts. Since steelhead trout in the Bay Area and central coast were listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 1997, numerous organizations and agencies have been pursuing restoration projects to allow migratory fish from the Bay to reach spawning habitat in upper Alameda Creek. Downstream of San Francisco’s dams, 11 fish passage projects at small and medium barriers in the creek have been completed since 2001 and several more major fish ladder and dam removal projects will be completed by 2012. This will allow anadromous fish access to 20 miles of suitable spawning and rearing habitat in the watershed for

the first time in almost half a century. Alameda Creek is an ‘anchor watershed’ considered regionally significant for restoration of threatened steelhead trout to the entire Bay Area.

From 2011-2015, San Francisco will rebuild the seismically-challenged Calaveras Dam on Alameda Creek, the largest local tributary to San Francisco Bay. The environmental review for the Calaveras Dam project is a significant milestone in the restoration of Alameda Creek. With all major fish passage projects in the watershed now underway, stream flows for fish below the San Francisco dams is a critical last piece of the puzzle for the full restoration of Alameda Creek.

The SFPUC manages 36,800 acres of public land and operates three dams in the upper Alameda Creek watershed. Calaveras Dam, completed in 1925, captures runoff from 100 square miles of the Calaveras Creek and Arroyo Hondo watersheds. The SFPUC diverts 86 percent of the stream flows of the upper watershed and plans to divert almost all winter and spring stream flows from upper Alameda Creek at their Alameda Diversion Dam, which diverts flows from upper Alameda Creek into Calaveras Reservoir. Completion of Calaveras Dam trapped formerly ocean-run steelhead trout above the reservoir and blocked fish migration into the best trout spawning and rearing habitat in the watershed. Because the dam is near an active fault zone and was determined to be vulnerable in a strong earthquake, the Division of Safety of Dams in 2001 restricted reservoir storage level to 40 percent of capacity until the dam is rebuilt.

The groups submitting today’s [comment letter](#) are Acterra, Alameda Creek Alliance, American Rivers, Beyond Searsville Dam, California Oak Foundation, California Sportfishing Protection Alliance, California Trout, Center for Biological Diversity, Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge, Clean Water Action, Close to Home: Exploring Nature in the East Bay, Crab Boat Owners Association, Diablo Valley Fly Fishermen, Flycasters of San Jose, Food and Water Watch, Friends of Creeks in Urban Settings, Friends of the Creeks, Friends of Orinda Creeks, Friends of the River, Golden Gate Audubon Society, Golden West Women Flyfishers, Guadalupe-Coyote Resource Conservation District, Hayward Area Planning Association, Institute for Fisheries Resources, International Rivers, Lake Merritt Institute, Mission Peak Fly Anglers, Northern California Council of Federation of Fly Fishers, Ohlone Audubon Society, Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen’s Associations, Peninsula Fly Fishers, Regional Parks Association, Restore Hetch Hetchy, Salmon Protection and Watershed Network, Santa Cruz Fly Fishermen, Sierra Club - Mount Diablo Group, Sierra Club - S.F. Bay Chapter, Small Boat Commercial Salmon Fishermen’s Association, Strawberry Creek Watershed Council, The Bay Institute, Tracy Fly Fishers, Tri-City Ecology Center, Tri-Valley Fly Fishers, Tuolumne River Trust, Visions of the Future Environment, and Water4Fish. The Alameda Creek Alliance and Center for Biological Diversity will also submit more technical comments on the draft EIR.

The Alameda Creek Alliance (www.alamedacreek.org) is a community watershed group with over 1,750 members, dedicated to protecting and restoring the natural ecosystems of the Alameda Creek watershed. The ACA has been working to restore steelhead trout and protect endangered species in the Alameda Creek watershed since 1997.