



Alameda Creek Fish Ladders Completed, Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony April 25

Culmination of 25 Years of Steelhead Restoration Efforts

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Fremont, CA – The Alameda County Water District has completed construction on two fish ladders in lower Alameda Creek, critical infrastructure that will allow ocean-going steelhead trout and Chinook salmon to migrate into the watershed for the first time in half a century. ACWD will host a ribbon cutting ceremony at the completed fish passage facilities on Monday, April 25, from 10 am to noon, with tours of the state-of-the-art fish screens and ladders (<https://www.acwd.org/354/Alameda-Creek-Fish-Passage-Related-Proje>).

“This historic restoration project could be transformative for Alameda Creek and its fish and wildlife, help connect local residents to their watershed, and recover a piece of our natural heritage in the Bay Area,” said Jeff Miller, director of the Alameda Creek Alliance. “We hope that Alameda Creek, the largest local tributary to San Francisco Bay, can have an outsized impact on recovery of steelhead trout in the region. It’s profoundly gratifying to see people and agencies taking our non-human neighbors into consideration, and implementing projects to help recover imperiled wildlife.”

Alameda Creek is becoming an urban stream success story after decades of restoration efforts. Since steelhead trout in the Bay Area were listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act in 1997, a consortium of organizations and agencies has cooperated on restoration projects to allow migratory fish to reach spawning habitat in upper Alameda Creek. Partners in the Alameda Creek Fisheries Restoration Workgroup have completed nearly two dozen fish passage projects in the watershed since 2001, including removal of 5 small dams and 4 other fish passage barriers, construction of 6 fish ladders, replacement of 3 road culverts, and installation of fish screens at 5 water diversions. Water agencies are also working on projects to improve stream flows and restore stream and riparian habitat along Alameda Creek and its tributaries. These restoration projects will make up to 20 miles of potential spawning and rearing habitat in Alameda Creek and its tributaries accessible to ocean-run salmonids.

The Alameda County Water District and Alameda County Flood Control District completed a critical fish ladder at a former barrier to fish migration, a 12-foot cement drop structure known as the BART weir. The new fish ladder will allow steelhead and salmon to migrate under the BART tracks and past an adjacent inflatable rubber dam used for water supply operations. In 2019 ACWD completed another fish ladder at a second inflatable rubber dam one mile upstream in the flood control channel. ACWD has spent \$80 million on fish passage projects, with the cooperation of 24 partner agencies and stakeholders, and raised \$33 million in grants so far to help pay for fish-friendly improvements in lower Alameda Creek. Alameda Creek is a local water supply and accounts for roughly 40 percent of ACWD water serving 357,000 people in Fremont, Newark and Union City. These projects will allow ACWD to continue operations of its rubber dams and other facilities along the creek to recharge the Niles Cone Groundwater Basin sustainably.

In 2018 the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission finished rebuilding the seismically-challenged Calaveras Dam in the upper Alameda Creek watershed. The new reservoir now operates with cold water releases in the summer to help trout rear downstream of the dam. The SFPUC also built a new fish ladder and fish screens at the associated Alameda Diversion Dam in upper Alameda Creek. This diversion dam is now operated to bypass much more of the winter and spring high flows in upper Alameda Creek. The enhanced stream flows will help migratory fish get further upstream to better habitat.

There is now only one remaining major fish migration barrier on the mainstem of Alameda Creek, a cement apron across the creek in the Sunol Valley protecting a gas pipeline owned by PG&E. The Fisheries Workgroup is coordinating with PG&E to relocate the pipeline and remove the cement barrier. Multiple agencies are planning a project to restore former salt ponds near the mouth of Alameda Creek to tidal marsh as part of the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration. This project will create estuary habitat near the outlet of Alameda Creek that could be critical to growth and survival of salmonids.

Alameda Creek is considered an ‘anchor watershed’ for steelhead trout, since it has regional significance for restoration of the threatened fish to the entire Bay Area. Steelhead, salmon and lamprey are anadromous fish, living out their adult lives in the ocean and migrating up freshwater streams and rivers to spawn. Suitable habitat for cold water fish has been blocked and reduced by construction of dams and other barriers, and habitat has been degraded by water diversions, urban development, stream channelization and other modifications to the Alameda Creek streambed. Steelhead are also impacted by pollution and runoff from roads, and introduced and invasive fish.



Steelhead Trout at the BART Weir, photo by ACA member Dan Sarka

Photos of steelhead trout and Chinook salmon in Alameda Creek are available for media

The [Alameda Creek Alliance](#) is a 2,000-member strong community watershed group, dedicated to protecting and restoring the natural ecosystems of the Alameda Creek watershed. The Alameda Creek Alliance has been working to restore steelhead trout to the Alameda Creek watershed since 1997.