

## CalTrans Niles Canyon Project Update

More than 170 people showed up at the hearing with CalTrans on March 9th to oppose the Niles Canyon "Safety Improvement" Project, and peppered CalTrans Region 4 Director Bijan Sartipi with questions about the need for the project, the purported safety benefits and severe environmental impacts including damage to the Alameda Creek environment. For photos and information about the hearing see [www.savenilescanyon.org](http://www.savenilescanyon.org).

This was a great turnout during work hours on a weekday and Caltrans got the message loud and clear that Niles and Sunol residents do not want the project, do not believe the rationale for the project, and think the project will actually make the road less safe, all at a significant cost of \$80 million and with unnecessary damage to riparian trees, creek habitat and the scenic beauty of the canyon.

Read the media coverage on the hearing:

Livermore Independent 3-12-11

### ***Niles Canyon Protest Picking Up Steam***

[http://www.alamedacreek.org/Media\\_Articles/Livermore%20Independent/Livermore%20Independent%203-12-11.pdf](http://www.alamedacreek.org/Media_Articles/Livermore%20Independent/Livermore%20Independent%203-12-11.pdf)

San Francisco Chronicle 3-10-11

### ***Niles Canyon Road Widening Project Battle Brews***

[http://www.alamedacreek.org/Media\\_Articles/Chronicle/San%20Francisco%20Chronicle%203-10-1.pdf](http://www.alamedacreek.org/Media_Articles/Chronicle/San%20Francisco%20Chronicle%203-10-1.pdf)

Contra Costa Times 3-10-11

### ***Caltrans Moving Ahead With First Niles Canyon Road Project***

[http://www.alamedacreek.org/Media\\_Articles/Contra%20Costa%20Times/Contra%20Costa%20Times%203-10-11.pdf](http://www.alamedacreek.org/Media_Articles/Contra%20Costa%20Times/Contra%20Costa%20Times%203-10-11.pdf)

**Caltrans has agreed to hold another public hearing soon, this time in the evening so that more of the public can attend. We do not have a date yet for the hearing - stay tuned for details, we will want to pack this meeting.** Check [www.savenilescanyon.org](http://www.savenilescanyon.org) for updates. CalTrans however has refused to put the project on hold or stop the project and could not provide answers for many of the community's questions.

**Save Niles Canyon and the Alameda Creek Alliance will hold another protest against the project at the bottom of the canyon in Niles, on Saturday, April 9<sup>th</sup> at 3 pm.** See [www.savenilescanyon.org](http://www.savenilescanyon.org) for more information.

The Alameda Creek Alliance has submitted a Public Records Act request to CalTrans and state permitting agencies to determine whether Caltrans has complied with its permit requirements for phase 1 of the project, whether they properly notified relevant stakeholders in the environmental review process, and for evidence of Caltrans ownership or easement where project activities have occurred or will occur. These records will help us determine whether there is any viable legal action that can be taken regarding phase 1 of the project. Some of the information will also be useful for public education and outreach to legislators.

The tree-cutting for phase 1 of the project appears to be completed, and about 80 native trees have been killed in the lower canyon. Caltrans is expected to remove the trees and the stumps, clear remaining vegetation and begin construction of retaining walls, lane widening and rip-rap and other project construction this summer.

Although phase 1 includes a fish passage project that the Alameda Creek Alliance supports (removing a culvert under Highway 84 at Palomares Road and replacing it with a bridge), we

think the culvert removal could be a stand-alone project; the ACA does not support the highway widening project and we do not support the cutting of trees and other damage to the creek that Caltrans proposes as part of any phase of the project.

The Alameda Creek Alliance formally commented and still feels that the use of a Negative Declaration was an inappropriate and inadequate environmental review for phase 1 of the project and the analysis of impacts, particularly on creek hydrology and wildlife habitat, was completely inadequate. Unfortunately, the ACA has been improperly denied the opportunity to fully participate in the environmental review for the project, since Caltrans failed to notify us of the final project approval and the final environmental review document. See our March 2011 [letter](#) to Caltrans regarding the agency's failure to notify the ACA of the final project approval. <http://www.alamedacreek.org/Alerts/Niles%20Road%20Widening/Letter%20to%20Sartipi%203-11-11.pdf>

The Alameda Creek Alliance will be actively opposing phases 2 and 3 of the project.

Thank you to the hundreds of you who have sent letters or called or attended the hearing opposing the project. **If you have not already, send a letter opposing the project**

Click on this [action alert](#) to send a letter to CalTrans and your city, state and federal officials opposing the unnecessary destruction.

<http://www.alamedacreek.org/Alerts/Niles%20Road%20Widening/Action%20alert.pdf>

Check out the [Alameda Creek Alliance information page](#) on the project and more planned devastation in Niles Canyon by CalTrans.

<http://www.alamedacreek.org/Alerts/Niles%20Road%20Widening/Niles%20Road%20Widening.htm>

Also get more information at the Save Niles Canyon web site, [www.savenilescanyon.org](http://www.savenilescanyon.org)

## Other Alameda Creek News

### ***Park District Purchasing Land in Castro Valley, Along Pleasanton Ridge***

<http://pleasanton.patch.com/articles/park-district-purchasing-land-in-castro-valley>

The East Bay Regional Park District is buying nearly 1,000 acres of private land within the Alameda Creek watershed, bordering Stonybrook and Palomares Creeks in Palomares Canyon and Pleasanton Ridge Regional Park. The land is important habitat for protected species in the watershed such as the Alameda whipsnake, California red-legged frog, and California tiger salamander.

## Upcoming Events

### **March 27 - Bird Walk at Shadow Cliffs – Pleasanton**

On Sunday, March 27, join Rich Cimino of Ohlone Audubon for an easy afternoon of birding at Shadow Cliffs Regional Park in Pleasanton, from noon to 3 pm. Shadow Cliffs has a significant Heron-Egret-Cormorant rookery which is viewed easy from the elevated Levee Trail, scopes will be necessary. Participants can also expect to see several species of waterfowl and we'll comb a riparian habitat trail lined with Cottonwood and Black Walnut which may yield a surprise or two. This trip is in collaboration with Ohlone Audubon and Alameda Creek Alliance.

Shadow Cliffs is located at 2500 Stanley Blvd. in Pleasanton. For driving directions go to [www.ebparks.org](http://www.ebparks.org). There is a \$6.00 parking fee. Meet in the Marina View parking lot. There is

currently room for 5-7 Alameda Creek Alliance members. Please RSVP to yellowbilledtours@gmail.com.

### **April 2 - Spring Wildflower Festival at Sunol Wilderness – Sunol**

The 9th Annual Spring Wildflower Festival will be held at Sunol Regional Wilderness on April 2, from 11 am to 4 pm, sponsored by the East Bay Regional Park District.

The theme of the festival is "The Birds, the Bees, the Flowers and the Trees." Enjoy a day of hikes, music, games, slideshows, and crafts. There will be educational exhibits about environmental education, gardening, habitat conservation, native plants, water conservation, pollinators, trail and greenbelt advocacy, wildflowers, composting, recycling and green initiatives.

### **April 29-May 2 - Point Reyes Birding and Nature Festival – Point Reyes**

This is not in our watershed, but it is the best nature and birding festival in California, now in its second year.

There are still tickets available for many of the bird, butterfly and bat hikes at the 2nd Annual Point Reyes Birding and Nature Festival, April 29 to May 2. Trips are led by some of the Bay Area's premier birders and naturalists, and proceeds go to a great cause, the Environmental Action Committee of West Marin.

Go to [pointreyesbirdingfestival.org](http://pointreyesbirdingfestival.org) and click on "Schedule" for the full list and description of trips available.

## **Regional Salmon News**

### ***If Salmon Could Speak to Governor Brown: The Full Series***

Salmon Water Now video

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T4lqD3Pemvw&hd=1>

### ***Paper Water and Other Sordid Tales***

Salmon Water Now video

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1h8sAv0pQJU>

### ***Recreational Salmon Fishing Will Return To the Ocean***

Sacramento Bee – March 14, 2011

<http://www.modbee.com/2011/03/14/1598728/recreational-salmon-fishing-will.html>

### ***Feds to Loosen Restrictions on Salmon Fishing***

Seattle Post-Intelligencer – March 10, 2011

[http://www.seattlepi.com/local/6420ap\\_ca\\_pacific\\_salmon\\_fishing.html](http://www.seattlepi.com/local/6420ap_ca_pacific_salmon_fishing.html)

### ***Sea Level Rise and Delta Subsidence***

California Water Blog – March 9, 2011

<http://californiawaterblog.com/2011/03/09/sea-level-rise-and-delta-subsidence%E2%80%94the-demise-of-subsided-delta-islands/>

### ***GOP Spending Bill Targets Environmental Regulation***

Miami Herald – March 7, 2011

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/03/07/2102273/gop-spending-bill-targets-environmental.html#>

### ***Dam Adapts as Priorities Shift; Red Bluff Project on Target for 2012***

Redding Record-Searchlight – March 5, 2011

<http://www.redding.com/news/2011/mar/05/dam-adapts-as-priorities-shift/>

***Delta Agreement to “Protect Listed Species” or Another Ploy to Export More Water***

California Progress Report – March 4, 2011

<http://www.californiaprogessreport.com/site/node/8739>

***Federal Government Forecasts Larger Abundance of Sacramento Salmon***

IndyMedia – March 3, 2011

<http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2011/03/03/18673742.php>

***Water to the Sea Isn't Wasted***

California Water Blog – March 1, 2011

<http://californiawaterblog.com/2011/03/01/water-to-the-sea-isnt-wasted/>

***House Gives Salmon and Jobs the Pink Slip***

Wild Salmon & Steelhead News – Winter 2011

[http://www.wildsalmon.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=324&Itemid=77#1](http://www.wildsalmon.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=324&Itemid=77#1)

***Next Steps in Court for Obama's Salmon Plan***

Wild Salmon & Steelhead News – Winter 2011

[http://www.wildsalmon.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=324&Itemid=77#3](http://www.wildsalmon.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=324&Itemid=77#3)

***The reckoning: A looming decision on endangered salmon will set the stage for momentous battles over the future***

The Oregonian opinion - February 12, 2011

[http://www.oregonlive.com/opinion/index.ssf/2011/02/the\\_reckoning\\_a\\_looming\\_decisi.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/opinion/index.ssf/2011/02/the_reckoning_a_looming_decisi.html)