

Up Your Creek!

The electronic newsletter of the Alameda Creek Alliance

Happy New Year! We've got a lot to report about Alameda Creek events and projects:

Upcoming Volunteer Restoration Days in Niles

We're using this season's wet weather as an opportunity to enhance wildlife habitat at our adopted restoration site along Alameda Creek. Join us for an upcoming workday where we'll plant more native trees and shrubs, weed and maintain areas that have been planted by previous volunteers, and pick up trash along the creek. Our restoration work at this site will help stabilize soils and stream banks, provide cooling shade, filter pollutants, and improve food and shelter for wildlife. Come learn about the creek and the natural community it supports!

Upcoming workdays:

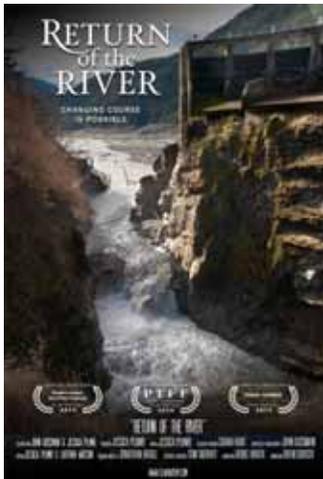
January 17th (Sun): 10 am to 12 pm

February 20th (Sat): 10 am to 12 pm

March 19th (Sat): 10 am to 12 pm

We'll meet at the [Niles Staging Area parking lot](#) and walk a few hundred yards upstream to our adopted site. Wear work clothes, including long pants and sturdy shoes that can get dirty. A long-sleeve shirt and hat are recommended. We'll provide gloves, waste bags, litter grabbers, water, and a snack. Please bring your own re-usable water bottle to fill. Heavy rain cancels. RSVP to Ralph Boniello, ralph@alamedacreek.org.

Free River Restoration Film, *Return of the River* – January 13



The Grizzly Peak FlyFishers will host a free showing of the film [Return of the River](#), an inspiring new documentary film about the largest dam removal project in the history of the United States, on the Elwha River. The film chronicles the extraordinary effort to restore salmon and an ecosystem and set a river free. The free film showing is on Wednesday, January 13th, at 7:30 pm in the Kensington Community Center, 59 Arlington Ave, Kensington, CA. **Free admission and popcorn!**

Watch the trailer [here](#)

There will be a speaker from American Rivers to share what that group is doing to remove harmful and obsolete dams in California.

Please RSVP on the [Grizzly Peak FlyFishers website](#)

The Alameda Creek Alliance hopes to bring this film to Niles in early 2016!

Alameda Creek Natural History Walk – January 30

Join the Alameda Creek Alliance and the California Center for Natural History for an interpretive walk along Alameda Creek in Fremont, on Saturday, January 30th, from 1 to 4 pm. We'll discuss the history of water management in Alameda Creek, look at some of the barriers to fish migration that we're working to remove, and discuss some fish-friendly improvements that have already been accomplished. As we approach Niles Canyon, we'll see the creek abruptly change from an engineered flood control channel to a creek with natural banks and native vegetation. We're likely to see waterfowl in Alameda Creek, and if we're really lucky we may even see some migrating steelhead trout!

We'll meet at 1 pm at the [Isherwood Staging Area](#) of Quarry Lakes Park and walk upstream to the western outlet of Niles Canyon. We'll walk along the mostly-level Alameda Creek Trail for a round-trip of approximately 7 miles. Bring a water bottle and layers for potentially changing weather. Parking is available at the Isherwood Staging Area, which is also a 10-minute bicycle ride from the Union City Bart Station. Heavy rain cancels. RSVP to Ralph Boniello, ralph@alamedacreek.org.

Stonybrook Creek Culvert Enhanced for Fish Passage



The Alameda County Resource Conservation District and Alameda County finished phase one of a fish passage project in Stonybrook Creek along Palomares Road. As part of the [Stonybrook Creek Crossings and Fish Passage Improvement Project](#), baffles were installed in the road culvert at milepost 8.75 to allow trout migration through the culvert, and the creek channel above the culvert has been stabilized and re-graded to remove a boulder jam. A second culvert upstream at milepost 8.60 will be replaced in 2016 with a free-span bridge. These projects will also reduce the risk of flooding for landowners along Stonybrook Creek.

Sunol Yard and Watershed Center Update



The Sunol Watershed Center is finally moving forward! The San Francisco Planning Department has approved the final environmental review document for the Sunol Long Term Improvement Project, which includes upgrades to the SFPUC's Sunol Yard and the construction of the Alameda Creek Watershed Center. The Mitigated Negative Declaration for the project can be found [here](#).

Issues regarding the potential encroachment of the Sunol Yard into the organic farmland at the Sunol AgPark have been resolved. The project has been revised so that the project footprint remains unchanged, and will not jeopardize the space in the adjacent AgPark.

The SFPUC is working closely with [Sustainable Agriculture Education](#) (SAGE) to extend their lease through 2016. This lease amendment will be considered by the Commission in the near future, mostly likely January or February of 2016.

The SFPUC will schedule a meeting with the community in the first quarter of 2016 to provide a more detailed project update, including the interpretive elements of the Alameda Creek Watershed Center. The tentative project schedule is for final design in February 2016 and construction from August 2016 to August 2018.

Christmas Bird Count Results



The 8th annual [Eastern Alameda County Christmas Bird Count](#) was held on Friday, December 18, with 82 volunteers surveying winter birds in 30 areas within a 15 mile radius count circle in the vicinity of Sunol, Pleasanton and Livermore.

149 species of birds were tallied. Notable birds were: 12 Cliff Swallows over San Antonio Reservoir; an Orange-Crowned Warbler on SFPUC watershed land; a Western Tanager in the Pleasanton Sport Park; two Common Loons on Shadow Cliff ponds; 81 Horned Grebes and 110 Western Grebes on the Zone 7 Chain of Lakes; a Bell's Sparrow in Del Valle Regional Park; 20 Red-breasted Nuthatches in Sunol; and 21 Rock Wrens in Sunol Regional Wilderness.

The eastern Alameda bird count was established to inventory wintering raptors using the Tri-Valley floor west of the Altamont Pass wind farms. The raptor count for 2015 was: Osprey 4, White-tailed Kite 26, Bald Eagle 8, Northern Harrier 27, Sharp-shinned Hawk 11, Cooper's Hawk 12, Red-shouldered Hawk 40, Red-tailed Hawk 175, Ferruginous Hawk 4, Golden Eagle 33, American Kestrel 87, Peregrine Falcon 13, Merlin 7 and Prairie Falcon 2.

A huge thank you to Rich Cimino for organizing the bird count!

Sunol Golf Course Closed, Opportunity for Restoration



The Sunol Golf Course, located on leased public land managed by the SFPUC, has closed. In the short term, the SFPUC plans to use some of the course as a staging area for the Sunol Yard and Watershed Center construction. Despite some [recent news articles](#) to the contrary, the property will likely not remain as a golf course. Another proposal to have Alameda County buy the course and allow some heinous development to occur thankfully seems to have fizzled out.

There is an existing SFPUC cattle grazing lease on part of the golf course property, which will continue. The SFPUC has not made any decisions about long-term use of the property, but it will not be sold or developed. Potential options for the course include expanding the existing cattle grazing lease, keeping it as public open space with trails, creating a trailhead for Vargas Plateau, using the site as a restoration site or mitigation bank, and establishing a native plant nursery. The SFPUC has committed to engage the community and the Sunol Advisory Committee when they initiate planning for long-term land use options.

Endangered Species Protection Sought for Local Frog



The Center for Biological Diversity is seeking Endangered Species Act protection for the foothill yellow-legged frog, which has disappeared from more than half its historical stream habitats in California and Oregon. This amphibian faces a host of threats, including dams and water diversions, logging, mining, livestock grazing, roads, marijuana cultivation, off-road vehicles, climate change, pollution, invasive species and disease. Read the Center's [press release](#).

The largest remaining foothill yellow-legged frog population in Alameda County, and likely in the entire Bay Area, has been in upper Alameda Creek within Sunol Regional Park, from the Little Yosemite area upstream through Camp Ohlone. Small yellow-legged frog populations also persist in the Arroyo Mocho tributary along Mines Road, southeast of Livermore. These frogs were present in the 1990s in the Arroyo Valle watershed above Del Valle Reservoir, but this stream has not been surveyed for more than 15 years.

Foothill yellow-legged frogs in upper Alameda Creek have been particularly hard hit by the recent drought, disease and invasive species, with few frogs present above Little Yosemite as of 2015. They are subject to predation by invasive bullfrogs and signal crayfish. In 2013, foothill yellow-legged frogs in the Little Yosemite reach of Alameda Creek experienced a deadly outbreak of chytrid fungus infection. The SFPUC recently delayed plans to translocate frogs from this infected population to other areas of the watershed.

Regional Salmon Restoration News

[Bad County Policy Leads To Expensive Litigation](#)

Marin Independent-Journal opinion piece – January 3, 2016

[Coho Salmon Benefit From Dam Removal on San Mateo County Coastal Creek](#)

San Jose Mercury News - December 29, 2015

[Rain-Driven Salmon Run in Marin Brings Hope, But Coho Still Hurting](#)

San Francisco Chronicle - December 28, 2015

[Marin's Coho Salmon Run Off To 'Very Busy' Start for Season](#)

Marin Independent-Journal - December 28, 2015

[Salmon Run in Bountiful Numbers on the Moke River](#)

Calaveras Enterprise – December 28, 2015

[Rooftop Rain Collection Helps Rural Sonoma County Residents and Salmon](#)

Santa Rosa Press-Democrat – December 28, 2015

[**Hatchery Salmon Counts Don't Reflect High Ocean Abundance Estimates**](#)

Daily Kos – December 28, 2015

[**Sidetracked Salmon Rescued, Released Into Sacramento River**](#)

Daily Democrat – December 23, 2015

[**Flowing Again, Russian River's Creeks Open for Spawning Coho Salmon**](#)

Santa Rosa Press-Democrat – December 21, 2015

[**Salmon Runs Stronger Than Expected On Many Rivers Despite Drought**](#)

Contra Costa Times – December 19, 2015

[**Klamath Basin Water Accords Crumble As Congress Fails to Act**](#)

Sacramento Bee – December 18, 2015

[**How a Stunning Klamath Basin Water Agreement Has Been Doomed By Lawmakers**](#)

Los Angeles Times – December 18, 2015

[**Salmon Thrive in Some Places Like Stanislaus River, Struggle in Others**](#)

Modesto Bee – December 15, 2015

[**State Sets Minimum Lake Levels in Attempt to Save Salmon**](#)

San Francisco Chronicle – December 15, 2015

[**Drought Legislation Could Threaten the Very Existence of Salmon and Other Fish Species**](#)

Daily Kos – December 13, 2015

[**Court Compels Marin to Pay Salmon Lawyers \\$652,000 for 'Significant Public Benefit'**](#)

Marin Independent-Journal – December 11, 2015

[**Feds Fund Water-Stealing Delta Tunnels under False Pretenses**](#)

Red, Green & Blue – December 10, 2015

[**Putah Creek as a Salmon Stream? Believe It**](#)

Davis Enterprise – December 8, 2015

[**'Stealth' Water Bill Fumbled As Ag Interests Attempt End-Run Around Democracy**](#)

KCET – December 7, 2015

[**Drought Rider Jeopardizes California Salmon and other Endangered Species**](#)

NRDC blog – December 7, 2015

[**Salmon RIP?**](#)

Reckless water management might wipe out California's Chinook salmon — and the state's fishing industry along with it.

East Bay Express – December 2, 2015

[**With Klamath Bill Uncertain, Dam Relicensing Moves Forward**](#)

Eugene Register-Guard – December 2, 2015

[**Klamath Dam Removal Efforts to Continue If Historic Agreements Fail**](#)

Eureka Times-Standard – December 1, 2015

[**Eel River Flows Still Too Low In Peak Salmon Spawning Period**](#)

Eureka Times-Standard – November 29, 2015

The Alameda Creek Alliance is a non-profit community watershed protection group. Please support our efforts by [becoming a member](#)