

# UP YOUR CREEK!!

ALAMEDA CREEK ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER

Issue 1 • November 1997

## WHO ARE WE?

Alameda Creek Alliance is a newly formed community watershed group. Our first project is to restore steelhead and salmon runs on Alameda Creek. Please read the enclosed press release for an overview of the issues involved. Our second meeting was held on October 28th, with 29 people attending! We decided to approach the obstacles to successful spawning runs as a spawning fish would - by working our way upstream. Which means that we will initially focus on the concrete drop structure at the B.A.R.T. crossing in Fremont, which is owned by Union Pacific Railroad and the inflatable diversion dam operated by Alameda County Water District. However, even if the fish are able to reach Niles Canyon, we need to ensure adequate water flows for successful spawning, rearing and out migration of juvenile fish. The San Francisco Water Department operates two dams and controls water flows in the upper watershed. The Department of Fish and Game and the National Marine Fisheries Service (the federal agency responsible for threatened and endangered marine species, such as the Chinook salmon and steelhead) need to know that the community wants to see wild fish runs restored on the creek. We also need to approach these agencies about federal and state funding for restoration and habitat improvements.

We will publish names and addresses of agency representatives to write to in the next newsletter, with an outline of the important points to make and a sample letter. There is also a group of us working on drafting a formal letter from the Alliance to these agencies stating what we would like to see happen on the creek. We can form a friendly, positive working relationship with these agencies, keeping in mind that if we encounter opposition we can apply pressure through phone/letter lobbying and media coverage as well as recourse to strong legal precedents requiring that these agencies manage for fish and wildlife, particularly threatened species. There is also a lot we can volunteer to do ourselves, hands on, without waiting for bureaucratic solutions.

## NEXT ALLIANCE MEETING

Tuesday, November 25th, 7-9 PM  
Centerville Public Library  
3101 Nicolet Avenue in Fremont

**Directions:** From Hwy. 880 take DeCoto Road exit. Go East on DeCoto. Turn right on Fremont Blvd., turn left on Nicolet.

Margaret Roper from the California Department of Fish and Game is supposed to attend this meeting so a large turnout would impress upon her the support for this issue.

## MEDIA

The San Jose Mercury news will be running a story on Alameda Creek and our efforts on Monday November 10th. Enclosed is the press release that was sent to local papers in mid-October. If anyone has a copy of the Tribune article, please send in a copy

## PHONE TREE

Enclosed is a copy of the phone tree we will be using for alerts. When fish are spotted in the creek trapped below the dams we will activate the phone tree as well as alert the media. We also will use the phone tree for timely blitzes of letters and/or phone calls if needed.

To activate the phone tree call all five of the people on the left side of the sheet, or one person if you can get them to call the other four. These five each call the three below them, who call the two below them. If you can not contact one person, please call the people below them. As we get more people, the phone tree will become more necessary to spread out the effort involved in contacting everyone rapidly. The phone tree is organized more or less by area to save toll calls. If you did not receive a phone tree in this mailing it is because we do not have your phone number. If you want to be on it, contact the Alliance. If you are on the phone tree and want to be taken off, or moved to a

position where you make less phone calls, contact the Alliance. This is the first draft of the phone tree - we may have to do a couple more before it works smoothly.

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#### CREEK WALKS

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We will be meeting for two creek walks in November, one the weekend of the 15-16 and one the weekend of the 22-23. The dates are not set yet, so we will contact you through the phone tree, which will also serve as a test of the phone tree. We will visit the main obstructions in Fremont, and if time permits, spawning habitat in Niles Canyon and Sunol.

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#### LITERATURE

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We have copies of the technical report published in 1989 which is a feasibility and cost analysis study of steelhead restoration on Alameda Creek. We also have a color coded map of the watershed with important features and a biological fact sheet on steelhead and chinook salmon. We will have copies of these at the next meeting. Please bring a few bucks to pay for the copying costs.

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#### FISH DOCUMENTATION

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We should be on the creek when the rains arrive, watching for fish trapped below the invert. If you have a video camera, let us know. If you have any documentation of steelhead or salmon in the creek or want to write a signed statement of fish sightings, please send it in.

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#### RANDOM THOUGHTS

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Anyone interested in organizing a creek cleanup? Contact Jeff at 376-0518.

Anyone interested in running for the Alameda County Water District Board of Directors on a pro fish and wildlife platform?

Do you know environmental lawyers that know water law or endangered species law willing to do pro bono work? Are you interested in working on legal strategy, researching relevant laws?

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#### PETITION DRIVE

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Please copy, post, and circulate the enclosed petition. We can present these petitions to the public agencies in support of our overall effort. Bring completed petitions the next meeting or mail directly to ACA.

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#### THE FISH

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#### ACA CONTACT INFORMATION

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You can contact the Alameda Creek Alliance at:

P.O. Box 192  
Canyon, CA 94516

(510) 376-0518  
[alamedaCreek@formulate.com](mailto:alamedaCreek@formulate.com)

## **ALAMEDA CREEK ALLIANCE FIGHTING TO RESTORE ENDANGERED STEELHEAD AND SALMON RUNS**

A community watershed group has formed to help restore local runs of wild salmon and steelhead in Alameda Creek. Alameda Creek Alliance will be working to make Alameda Creek a more hospitable place to Steelhead and King Salmon, two species of ocean-going fish which have attempted to reintroduce themselves to the watershed in recent years. Last winter's heavy rains brought salmon in numbers not seen in several decades to spawn in South Bay streams, including over a thousand of the mighty fish in Guadalupe River, through downtown San Jose. King Salmon were seen last Thanksgiving in Alameda Creek trapped below a concrete drop structure constructed to stabilize the Union Pacific Railroad (U.P.R.R.) tracks in Fremont; one of several obstacles to fish attempting to make it upstream to quality spawning habitat in and above Niles Canyon. The political barriers have proved as deadly as the physical ones to the fish. Various water agencies control stream flows and water diversions out of Alameda Creek, and for the steelhead to survive, there need to be adequate flows through late spring to ensure that the juvenile fish survive to make their way back to the bay as "smolts" 1 to 2 years later.

Alameda Creek is a 700 square mile watershed, the largest in the East Bay and contains prime stream spawning habitat in Niles Canyon and Sunol and Ohlone Regional Wildernesses, east of Fremont. Steelhead, King and Coho Salmon, all of which have recently been federally listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act, once ran in large numbers up Alameda and other Bay Area creeks. Urbanization, and the accompanying dam building and water projects, along with misguided flood control channelization of streams and water diversions virtually destroyed these runs. The California Department of Fish and Game has claimed that wild steelhead runs were eliminated in Alameda Creek in the 1950's, but local fisherman have seen wild steelhead attempting to come upstream to spawn during many of the wet winters, and as recently as four years ago. Concerned citizens took it upon themselves to carry fish over the U.P.R.R. invert during last year's salmon run. With the possibility of record rainfall from the predicted El Nino weather patterns, this winter could see a return of steelhead and salmon attempting to migrate up Alameda Creek to spawn. Which is where the Alliance comes in. "It is truly remarkable that even remnant populations of these fish have survived, despite the development and the abuse inflicted upon this creek. These fish are fighters, a testament to the power of nature, and we owe it to them to make sure they have the habitat they need to survive and to thrive." said Alliance member Jeff Miller. "It's very exciting; who doesn't want to see large, ocean-going fish flopping up their backyard creek to spawn? "

In the 1970s the State Department of Water Resources proposed Alameda Creek as the top candidate in the state for urban creek restoration. In 1989, a citizen's group called friends of Alameda Creek attempted to restore steelhead and salmon runs and eight public agencies published a feasibility and cost analysis study of restoring a steelhead run in the creek. Due to opposition from the water agencies, no action was taken. Now, eight years later, both steelhead and salmon have been federally listed under the Endangered Species Act, theoretically giving them some protection. Alameda Creek Alliance has formed to make that protection a reality. "We will do whatever it takes to help these fish reestablish themselves." said Miller. "We'll be out on the creek this winter documenting the fact that the fish are indeed here, so that we have a case to take to the Department of Fish and Game and the National Marine Fisheries Service - that they need to take action to protect these threatened species. Pressure on the agencies responsible, lawsuits, carrying trapped fish over barriers, restoration work...there's lots of work to be done, but the rewards are immeasurable - the return of a wild species to our watershed."

Alameda Creek Alliance  
P.O. Box 192  
Canyon, CA 94516



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