



# UP YOUR CREEK!

ALAMEDA CREEK ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER Issue 20 • Spring 2005

## ALAMEDA CREEK ALLIANCE

Protecting and restoring the natural ecosystems  
of the Alameda Creek watershed

P. O. Box 192  
Canyon, CA 94516  
(510) 845-2233

E-mail: [alamedacreek@hotmail.com](mailto:alamedacreek@hotmail.com)



The lower ACWD rubber dam will be removed

### Alameda County Water District Awarded \$1 Million to Improve Steelhead Migration in Alameda Creek

In May, the Alameda County Water District (ACWD) was awarded two \$500,000 grants from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to fund two projects that will help improve passage for steelhead trout in the Alameda Creek Flood Control Channel.

NFWF awarded over \$2 million from the S. F. Bay Salmonid Habitat Restoration Fund to 11 projects in central and southern San Francisco Bay watersheds, for restoration of riparian habitat and migratory fish passage, involving community participation, and benefitting salmon and steelhead trout.

One project will remove the lower inflatable rubber diversion dam from the Alameda Creek Flood Control Channel, which acts as a barrier to migrating steelhead when inflated. ACWD diverts water impounded behind three rubber dams in the flood control channel to groundwater recharge ponds. This water percolates into the aquifers beneath the Tri-City area and supplies up to 50% of water used in Fremont, Newark, and Union City. Since the dam removal will impact some water supply recharge ponds, the project will also construct a pipeline connecting the affected pond to other recharge ponds to maintain ACWD groundwater recharge capacity.

The other project will install fish screens on ACWD's water supply diversion at the mouth of Niles Canyon. Fish screens eliminate the potential for out-migrating juvenile steelhead from being trapped in the diversion pipelines and adjacent groundwater recharge ponds. Both projects will be completed by fall of 2006.

“These grants are an important step in restoring this very important resource to Alameda Creek,” said Alameda County Supervisor Scott Haggerty. “With the support of local agencies, environmental groups, and resource agencies we hope to secure additional funding so that in the near future we will see native steelhead trout completing their lifecycle in the Alameda Creek watershed.”

“ACWD is to be commended for modifying its water supply facilities to begin to allow steelhead to thrive once again in Alameda Creek,” said Jeff Miller, Director of the Alameda Creek Alliance. “These two critical fish passage projects mark the beginning of a concerted effort to return steelhead to Alameda Creek and will hopefully open the floodgates of community support for further creek restoration.”

“With sufficient funding, we can bring one of the greatest spectacles of nature back to Alameda Creek,” stated Representative Pete Stark. “Because of the size of the watershed and the preservation of its headwaters during the past century, Alameda Creek could form the nucleus for returning steelhead to the larger South Bay region.”

“Over the past six years, members of the Alameda Creek Fisheries Restoration Work Group have put an incredible amount of effort into restoring steelhead to Alameda Creek,” said ACWD Board President Marty Koller. “Their support has resulted in grant funding that will bring those efforts to fruition.”

The California Department of Transportation funded the Salmonid Habitat Restoration Fund as mitigation for potential impacts to steelhead and salmon from pile driving and other activities undertaken during construction of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge East Span Seismic Safety Project.

## 68 Bay Area Conservation Groups Call for SFPUC to Restore Alameda Creek

Stream Flows, Dam Removal Requested to Restore Fish Runs

While the City of San Francisco hosted a United Nations "Green Cities" conference in early June, 68 Bay Area conservation groups called on the City's water agency to improve its stewardship of local watershed lands and restore Alameda Creek. The Alameda Creek Alliance and over 60 other environmental and fishing groups sent a letter requesting that the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) restore stream flows in Alameda Creek sufficient to sustain steelhead and rainbow trout, protect rare fish populations in SFPUC reservoirs, remove a diversion facility that limits steelhead restoration, and abandon plans to construct a new dam in the Sunol Valley.

"A city is only as 'green' as the manner in which it stewards the natural areas which provide its resources," stated Jeff Miller, Director of the ACA. "After 90 years of water diversions from Alameda Creek, it time for San Francisco to come to the table with a commitment to provide suitable stream flow for fish and wildlife below their diversion dams."

The SFPUC diverts 86% of natural stream flows tributary to upper Alameda Creek into Calaveras and San Antonio Reservoirs for water supply. Alameda Creek Diversion Dam (ACDD), completed in the 1930s, also diverts water into Calaveras Reservoir from upper Alameda Creek. The groups are asking the SFPUC to abide by state Fish and Game Codes requiring sufficient instream flows to sustain steelhead trout and other native fish in good condition, without impacting other river systems, specifically the Tuolumne River. The SFPUC signed an agreement in 1997 to release minimal flows from Calaveras Reservoir to restore about five miles of Alameda Creek in the Sunol Valley, but to date has not released any water. The groups also want the SFPUC to:

- Implement an interim operation plan to protect steelhead and rainbow trout and their habitat (including providing instream flows, excluding cattle from streams, and controlling predaceous bass in reservoirs), prior to the rebuilding of Calaveras Dam, which is scheduled to be completed in 2011;
- Cease operation of and remove the ACDD, which captures virtually all stream flow from upper Alameda Creek and is a barrier to steelhead migration into the headwaters of Alameda Creek; and
- Abandon efforts to construct an unnecessary water recapture dam in the Sunol Valley (the so-called

"Alameda Creek Fishery Enhancement Project"), at a savings of \$17.5 million.

The SFPUC will spend at least \$3.4 billion on their Water System Improvement Program (WSIP) to seismically retrofit the system's pipelines and other infrastructure. WSIP projects include replacing Calaveras Dam and the proposed construction of the rubber dam. The Bay Area Water Stewards, a coalition of local environmental groups (including the ACA and several of the groups signatory to the letter) has been encouraging the SFPUC to increase recycling and water conservation, and develop a just and sustainable water system that protects wildlife habitat and restores the Alameda Creek, Tuolumne River, and Peninsula watersheds affected by SFPUC water management.

*The groups are: Alameda Creek Alliance, Acterra, American Rivers, The Bay Institute of San Francisco, East Bay Chapter of the California Native Plant Society, California Oak Foundation, California Sportfishing Protection Alliance, California Trout, Center for Biological Diversity, Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge, Clean Water Action and Clean Water Fund, Earth Island Institute, East Bay Watershed Center, Environmental Defense, Flycasters of San Jose, Friends of Alhambra Creek, Friends Of The Arroyos, Friends of Baxter Creek, Friends of Corte Madera Creek Watershed, Friends of Coyote Hills and Fremont, Friends of Crow Creek, Friends of Cull Creek, Friends of Fairview Creeks, Friends of Five Creeks, Friends of Islais Creek, Friends of Marsh Creek Watershed, Friends of Orinda Creeks, Friends of Palomares Creek, Friends of Pinole Creek Watershed, Friends of the Ridgeland, Friends of the River, Friends of San Leandro Creek, Friends of San Lorenzo Creek, Friends of Sausal Creek, Friends of Strawberry Creek Watershed, Friends of Sycamore Grove Park, Friends of Sycamore Valley, Golden Gate Audubon Society, Golden West Women Flyfishers, Grizzly Peak Fly Fishers, Hayward Area Planning Association, Lake Merritt Institute, Mission Peak Fly Anglers, Natural Heritage Institute, Natural Resources Defense Council, Northern California Council Federation of Fly Fishers, Ohlone Audubon Society, Preserve Lamorinda Open Space, Regional Parks Association, Restore Hetch Hetchy, Richmond Environmental Defense Fund, Salmon Protection And Watershed Network, Salmonid Restoration Federation, Save The Bay, Save Niles Canyon, Save Open Space - Gateway Valley, Save Our Sunol, San Francisco Bay Chapter of Sierra Club, Southern Alameda County Group of Sierra Club, Stop the Dump in Sunol, Strawberry Creek Lodge Restoration Project, Tri-City Ecology Center, Tri-Valley Fly Fishers, California Council of Trout Unlimited, Tuolumne River Trust, Urban Creeks Council of California, and Ward Creek Alliance.*

The letter to the SFPUC and an ACA report on the history of Alameda Creek management actions, *Alameda Creek - Ninety Years of Neglect*, can be viewed on the ACA web site home page at [www.alamedacreek.org](http://www.alamedacreek.org)

## Local Environmental Groups Unite to Protect Sunol Valley

Save Our Sunol (SOS), Stop the Dump in Sunol (SDS) and the Alameda Creek Alliance (ACA) have formed a coalition to focus and intensify efforts to save the rural character, open space and wildlife habitat of the Sunol Valley. The groups are uniting to combat continuing industrialization of the Sunol Valley, particularly two large-scale quarries and a compost dump approved by Alameda County.

Since 1991, SOS has been leading the fight to prevent Mission Valley Rock Company from excavating a 240-foot deep gravel pit over the next 45 years on publicly-owned prime agricultural land in Water Temple Field north of Highway 680, adjacent to the town of Sunol. Alameda County granted the mining permit in 1995 and the S. F. Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) ignored protests of local residents and proposed alternative uses for the land put forward by SOS in approving the project.

The gravel quarry would expose Sunol residents to unacceptable levels of noise and dust, cause siltation of Alameda Creek, disrupt wildlife habitat, and devastate this bucolic area. SOS has led unsuccessful litigation seeking enforcement of Measure D, which disallows new quarries in unincorporated areas without a vote of the electorate.

SOS was formed in 1991, when the county approved 2,640 homes in upper Sinbad Canyon, and is dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of the unique resources in the rural area of Sunol. Visit the SOS web site at [www.sunol.org](http://www.sunol.org).

In 1984, Alameda County approved the Apperson Ridge Quarry, a hard rock mine proposed east of the Sunol Valley, midway between Sunol Regional Wilderness and San Antonio Reservoir. Oliver de Silva, Inc. plans to begin mining soon and destroy 680 acres of prime wildlife habitat in the heart of the home range of the San Antonio tule elk herd. The quarry will feature daily dynamite blasting that will be heard in Sunol Wilderness and the town of Sunol and up to 1,000 trucks per day on Calaveras Road.

Alameda County conducted the EIR for the quarry in 1984. Since that time the Alameda whipsnake, California red-legged frog, and California tiger salamander, rare species all inhabiting the quarry site, were listed under the Endangered Species Act. Despite inadequate or non-existent mitigations for the quarry's impacts on these species, the county has



Aerial view of Sunol Valley

refused to conduct further environmental review and will allow the quarry to go forward with full knowledge the quarrying will evict the San Antonio elk herd.

The ACA has been alerting Bay Area residents to the devastating impact the Apperson Quarry will have on Sunol's wildlife and attempting to have the county re-open the environmental review process. Visit the ACA web site at [www.alamedacreek.org](http://www.alamedacreek.org)

SDS was formed in the summer of 2004 to challenge and prevent siting of a 40 acre compost dump on SFPUC land on Andrade Road next to the driving range in Sunol. Alameda County has mis-classified this project as a composting facility. The Alameda County Waste Management Authority is moving forward at an alarming pace to build this recycling dump that will initially accept over 600 tons of rotting food daily, generating in excess of 52 tons of ammonia into the air and our water system annually. This amount could easily double or triple as the dump expands.

The EIR for the project exposes 12 significant and unavoidable impacts to the environment. This plant will generate litter, toxics, an inconceivable odor and infestations resulting in potential health problems for people living miles away. The site is currently publicly-owned open space grassland that provides habitat for numerous rare birds of prey. The Andrade Road site is an inappropriate location for a facility of this type. Visit the SDS web site at [www.stopthedumpinsunol.org](http://www.stopthedumpinsunol.org).

As a result of their first meeting together, the groups realized that the potential devastation of the Sunol area was far greater than any one group had previously believed. The groups will be pursuing a long range strategy to protect the Sunol region.

## Calaveras Dam Enlargement Abandoned

With very little fanfare the SFPUC has abandoned (for now) the proposed enlargement of Calaveras

Dam and reservoir. The SFPUC had originally proposed enlarging the reservoir up to 6 times, and recently proposed a four-fold enlargement. Both enlargement projects would have flooded the only stream spawning habitat for landlocked steelhead trout in Calaveras Reservoir and flooded habitat for numerous other endangered and threatened terrestrial and aquatic species.

Calaveras Reservoir will still be rebuilt as soon as possible to ensure it is safe in an earthquake, but at the same size as the original dam. The SFPUC plans to build the new dam with a core that will allow for building a larger dam at some point in the future if it is determined to be desirable or necessary, but we will fight that battle when the time comes. For now, we will be lobbying the SFPUC to include meaningful mitigation measures for the impact of Calaveras Dam on Alameda Creek fisheries as part of the dam replacement project; these include removing the Alameda Diversion Dam from upper Alameda Creek and providing minimum flow releases from the new reservoir for fish and wildlife habitat downstream of the dam. The dam is scheduled to be rebuilt by 2011.

### **SFPUC Grazing in Sunol**

The ACA has submitted comments on grazing issues as part of the SFPUC's Habitat Conservation Plan for the Alameda Creek Watershed. For the HCP, the SFPUC and East Bay Regional Park District have committed to fencing cattle out of the riparian corridor along 6 miles of upper Alameda Creek, from Camp Ohlone downstream to Welch Creek. The ACA requested that fencing be continued downstream through the Garcia Lease below Welch Creek, to protect potential trout habitat in that area, and also protect the lower reaches of all tributary streams to Alameda Creek in the Sunol Valley that are known to support rainbow trout.

The agencies also committed to developing 18 off-stream water sources for cattle in conjunction with fencing Alameda Creek. The ACA requested that these water projects not destroy or de-water natural wetlands features such as springs or seeps. The SFPUC committed to fencing cattle out of Arroyo Hondo above Calaveras Reservoir, but set no specific date for doing so. The ACA requested that cattle immediately be excluded from all stream reaches tributary to Calaveras and San Antonio Reservoirs that provide known or potential spawning or rearing habitat for adfluvial steelhead trout. Cattle in these stream reaches are damaging trout spawning and rearing

habitat and have been documented trampling trout redds.

The ACA comments on grazing and more information about the SFPUC Habitat Conservation Plan can be found on the ACA web site by clicking on "Action Alerts."

### **Proposed Patterson Ranch Development at Coyote Hills**

Friends of Coyote Hills and Fremont (FCHF) alerts us that the initial planning is beginning for the proposed development of the Patterson Ranch land, the area surrounding Coyote Hills Regional Park. Your voice is needed to help preserve the integrity of the park and its wildlife. For more information, e-mail the FCHF at [Friendsofcoyote@aol.com](mailto:Friendsofcoyote@aol.com) or visit their web site at [www.fchf.org](http://www.fchf.org).

### **Save Niles Canyon Greenbriar Homes Development**

Greenbriar Homes is attempting to develop over 40 new homes in the old Niles area in lower Niles Canyon, just off Canyon Heights Drive, from Clarke Road to Deer Road. They have proposed 11 two-story homes on a vacant 4.3-acre Alameda County Water District property and 30 more on an adjacent 7-acre parcel home to an abandoned 5 million-gallon water tank owned by the SFPUC. A great deal of this area is wetlands and a large spillway goes into Alameda Creek. Some of the parcels are above the Toe of the Hill, on land that is supposed to be covered by Measure T, the 2002 ordinance that limits development in Fremont's hills. For more information visit the Save Niles Canyon web site at [www.savenilescanyon.org](http://www.savenilescanyon.org)

### **Winter 2004/2005 Steelhead Summary**

There were about a dozen steelhead trout sightings at the BART weir in lower Alameda Creek this winter, with fish seen from January 10 through April 1. Only one fish was caught and moved upstream, a 27-inch, 9-pound wild steelhead that was moved into Niles Canyon on April 1. This is the 8<sup>th</sup> consecutive winter the ACA has documented adult steelhead attempting to migrate upstream in lower Alameda Creek.

## BECOME A VOLUNTEER STREAMKEEPER

Help the ACA monitor fish populations and habitat by signing up to be a volunteer StreamKeeper. StreamKeepers adopt a section of Alameda Creek or one of its tributaries to monitor for fish during winter and check year-round for impaired water quality, pollutants, dumping, poaching, or habitat destruction. The ACA will train StreamKeepers who are interested in learning to do water quality testing and survey potential fish habitat.

### Bay Nature Magazine Offer

The ACA is partnering with Bay Nature Magazine, the quarterly publication about nature in the San Francisco Bay Area. ***Subscribe to Bay Nature and part of your subscription will be donated to the Alameda Creek Alliance.*** For information, click on "Join/Volunteer" on the ACA web site.

### Alameda Watershed Map

***We have a beautiful 24" x 36" color map of the Alameda Creek watershed, available free to ACA members.*** The map, which shows geographical features, stream courses, and locations of fish passage projects, was produced by the Alameda Creek Watershed Management Program, a group of watershed management agencies and stakeholders. If you are not an ACA member and would like a map mailed to you, please mail a request and \$2 (to cover postage and handling) to the ACA.

### Support the Alameda Creek Alliance Help Restore Alameda Creek

Free t-shirt with membership of \$25 or more

---

#### ACA Membership Form

Yes, I would like to become a member of the Alameda Creek Alliance. Enclosed is \$15 or more for a one year membership. Please specify t-shirt size. Checks payable to Alameda Creek Alliance.

- \$15 Fry       \$25 Parr       \$50 Smolt
- \$100 Spawner       Send me a free bumpersticker
- Send me an Alameda Watershed map

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_