



UP YOUR CREEK!

ALAMEDA CREEK ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER Issue 21 • Winter 2005/2006

ALAMEDA CREEK ALLIANCE

Protecting and restoring the natural ecosystems
of the Alameda Creek watershed

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STEELHEAD RETURN FOR NINTH CONSECUTIVE YEAR

Steelhead trout seen in lower Alameda Creek on December 29th and 30th were likely blown out by the historic New Year storm, which brought Alameda Creek flow up to 10,000 cubic feet/second in lower Niles Canyon and 18,000 cfs in the flood control channel in Union City!!!! Steelhead were again seen at the weir on March 3rd. On March 4th ACA volunteers and the East Bay Parks biologist, with cooperation from the Alameda County Water District and Alameda County Flood Control District, helped rescue two adult males from below the BART weir and move them upstream into Niles Canyon. One of the fish, given the name "Brutus", was the largest steelhead documented yet in the creek, weighing 11 pounds and measuring 31 inches. More steelhead were spotted at the weir on March 8th as this goes to press.



"Brutus" weighed in at 11 pounds

CALAVERAS DAM REPLACEMENT PROJECT



Planning for the replacement of Calaveras Dam lurches forward, with the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) hoping to remove the seismically inadequate dam and have the rebuilt dam completed and operational by 2011. The ACA, concerned that fish restoration elements are being left out of the project while engineering plans move rapidly forward, asked the SFPUC in December to revise the project to include steelhead and stream restoration elements. Although the SFPUC declined to change the project description before approving their overall Water Supply Improvement Program, SFPUC staff was instructed to work with us to include fish restoration measures in the project.

In February the SFPUC presented a draft steelhead restoration strategy to the Alameda Creek Fisheries Restoration Workgroup. Major elements of the strategy include funding and participating in Workgroup flows studies to determine timing, amount and location of flow releases to restore migratory fish; implementing fish flows as part of a Habitat Conservation Plan to be signed with the National Marine Fisheries Service; providing mitigation measures to maintain resident fish and future restored steelhead in Alameda Creek as part of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for Calaveras Reservoir; considering fish passage at Calaveras Dam, the Alameda Creek Diversion Dam, Little Yosemite, and above Calaveras Reservoir; and

restoring Alameda Creek and San Antonio Creek through the gravel quarries in the Sunol Valley.

The ACA wants these commitments and other environmental protection elements enshrined in a signed legal agreement and a SFPUC policy resolution, as a condition of ACA support for the Calaveras Dam replacement. These agreements are necessary in order for the ACA to feel confident that the replacement project and operation of the rebuilt Calaveras Dam will include protection of endangered species, adequate stream flows, fish passage, and habitat restoration. The ACA is asking for a SFPUC policy resolution stating that the agency will restore a self-sustaining run of steelhead trout, provide adequate stream flows for native resident and anadromous fish, comply with state and federal environmental laws, restore stream and riparian habitat, and protect listed species in Alameda Creek.

Other elements that need to be included in the SFPUC restoration strategy are avoidance of endangered species habitats during the dam construction, an interim operations plan (through 2011 when the dam is rebuilt) that provides summer rearing flows for native trout, fencing along streams to exclude cattle from trout habitat above and below the dams, measures to protect the reservoir trout populations, and management practices for leased quarry, nursery, golf course and grazing lands in the Sunol Valley to reduce pesticides and sediment.

In December the SFPUC altered the description of their "Alameda Creek Fishery Enhancement" project, dropping the controversial proposal to construct a rubber dam and water recapture facility in the Sunol Valley, and the agency will instead explore alternatives to the rubber dam as part of the EIR for the Calaveras Dam Replacement project. The revision of this project and the SFPUC proposal of a steelhead restoration strategy are important steps. The ACA hopes to work with the SFPUC to revise the Calaveras Dam project so that a new seismically safe dam can be quickly completed, that will be operated in a manner which allows for protection and restoration of Alameda Creek and its native fish.

Extensive information on the Calaveras Dam Project is on the ACA web site at www.alamedacreek.org. Click on "Action Alerts" in the upper right corner, then "Calaveras Dam Replacement".

HELP SAVE THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

The Endangered Species Act is the nation's foremost biodiversity conservation law, intended as a safety net to prevent the extinction of our most imperiled plants and animals, to increase their numbers and effect their full recovery and removal from the endangered list. The Act is one of the reasons agencies are working to restore steelhead trout in Alameda Creek and it protects numerous other declining species in the watershed, such as the red-legged frog, California tiger salamander, Alameda whipsnake and Bay checkerspot butterfly.

In September, anti-environmental extremist Rep. Dick Pombo (R-CA), whose district includes portions of the Alameda Creek watershed, passed H.R. 3824, a bill that would gut the Act by systematically removing every proven recovery tool for imperiled species, including a provision to eliminate protected "critical habitat." In December, Senator Crapo (R-ID) introduced a companion Senate bill. Cynically titled the "Collaboration and Recovery of Endangered Species Act", Senate bill 2110 would derail the endangered species listing program, remove protections for endangered species habitat, and cut federal oversight of projects that threaten endangered species. To find out how you can help protect the Endangered Species Act, visit the Center for Biological Diversity web site at www.biologicaldiversity.org.

KOTTINGER CREEK WEB SITE AND ALERT

The ACA is pleased to host the new web page for the Friends of Kottinger Creek, a non-profit group working to restore and preserve the City of Pleasanton's creeks and their riparian habitat, particularly Kottinger Creek through Kottinger Community Park. Kottinger Creek is a tributary of Arroyo Valle, which flows into Arroyo de la Laguna, then into Alameda Creek. Check out the new web page at www.alamedacreek.org. Click on "Links" on the left side of the page, then "Kottinger Creek".

Please write or speak out in support of the Kottinger Creek Restoration Project, which will restore 1,800 feet of the creek, reestablishing an active creek channel, planting native riparian plants, protecting high quality habitat and mature trees, and providing new creek access via bridges and stairs. Project approval is tentatively scheduled before the Pleasanton City Council on March 21st. Check "The Latest" on the Kottinger web site to confirm the date.

CHRISTMAS RULING SCROOGES RESIDENT ALAMEDA CREEK TROUT

The National Marine Fisheries Service in December announced final Endangered Species Act listing decisions for 10 populations of west coast steelhead trout, including the Central California Coast (CCC) population, which encompasses Alameda Creek. NMFS reaffirmed the threatened status of CCC steelhead, originally listed under the Act in August 1997, but excluded resident rainbow trout and landlocked steelhead above dams from the listing.

In June 2005 NMFS originally proposed listing all resident trout and landlocked steelhead in some watersheds, including those in Alameda Creek, as part of the CCC steelhead population. Published studies (from data on fin clips collected by ACA volunteers) demonstrate that Alameda Creek's rainbow trout and landlocked steelhead are genetically related to the CCC steelhead population. The NMFS decision is biologically unjustified since it arbitrarily divides steelhead populations, listing only adult fish that have been to the ocean, yet excluding trout below dams that can interbreed with migratory steelhead and even juvenile trout that are the offspring of steelhead.

The ACA is looking into a legal challenge of this flawed listing as well as the NMFS decision in December to exclude the Alameda Creek watershed from the "critical habitat" designation for steelhead. Other conservation and fishing groups will likely challenge the new listing policy for southern CA and central CA coastal steelhead as well. For their role in lobbying against the federal listing of resident trout in Alameda Creek, Daniel Bacher of The Fish Sniffer Magazine awarded the SFPUC one of his "Cold Dead Fish" awards for 2005.

REMOVAL OF NILES AND SUNOL DAMS

In October the SFPUC prepared a draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the removal of Sunol and Niles Dams from Niles Canyon, and held public hearings and took public comment on the project. The final EIR is expected to be approved in April. The dam removals are scheduled to be completed by fall of 2006. These removals, in concert with other fish passage projects in the lower creek already funded or in the planning stages, will help steelhead trout and salmon migration up Alameda Creek to Sunol Wilderness.

SUNOL COMPOST FACILITY

Don't Trash Sunol! Citizens for a Healthy Alameda County Environment (CHACE), Save Our Sunol, the Sierra Club and the Alameda Creek Alliance are opposing a proposal by the Alameda County Waste Management Authority (ACWMA) to put a 40 acre compost facility along Andrade Road in the Sunol Valley. The groups fully support the ACWMA composting program and reducing waste going to landfills, but believe that the proposed site in Sunol is not an appropriate location. The groups would like the compost facility moved to a more urban site or a site that already handles waste products, and that would not result in destruction or conversion of undeveloped land that is potential wildlife habitat and not impact the quality of life of Sunol residents.

The ACWMA has finalized an Environmental Impact Report for the project. Your help is needed to defeat this proposed site. For more information about the project and how to get involved visit the CHACE web site at www.healthyacenvironment.org or the ACA web site and click on "Action Alerts."

MEET YOUR NEIGHBORS - Sacramento Perch



The Sacramento perch (*Archoplites interruptus*) is a warmwater fish native to sloughs, slow-moving rivers and lakes of the Central Valley and Coast Ranges. It was once was a major food source for Native Americans in the Central Valley, reaching 2 feet in length and 8 pounds in weight. Although it has been introduced to water bodies throughout central and southern California, Alameda Creek, along with Clear Lake, is one of the two native habitats still inhabited by Sacramento perch. Perch were consistently collected in Niles Canyon from 1953 to 1981. There is debate over whether a population that persists in Calaveras Reservoir was stocked there some time after 1925, from where it spread to the creek. However, perch remains at an archaeological site adjacent to Arroyo de la Laguna indicate the species was likely native to the watershed. These native perch also live in the off-channel percolation ponds adjacent to the Alameda Creek flood control channel.

LAWRENCE LIVERMORE MOCHO CROSSING



Cement stream crossing before

As promised 2 issues ago, here are photos of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory's Arroyo Mocho Road Improvement and Anadromous Fish Passage Project, completed in fall of 2004. LLNL removed a cement stream crossing 160 feet long and 40 to 80 feet wide from Arroyo Mocho that had eroded and was in danger of failure due to undermining by the stream, creating impassable conditions for trout and migratory fish. LLNL replaced the crossing with a free standing bridge, preserving habitat and restoring the natural flow characteristics of the stream.



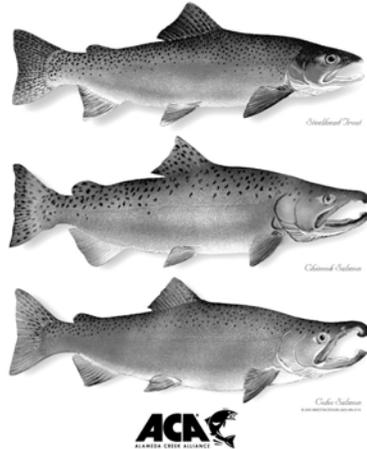
New Mocho Bridge

LLNL Wildlife Biologists successfully relocated hundreds of amphibians, reptiles, and fish out of harms way during the project. Once the bridge was in place, native plants previously collected and raised elsewhere were planted in the project area to complete restoration activities.

**Support the Alameda Creek Alliance
Help restore Alameda Creek**

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

*Three Reasons to Save
and Restore Alameda Creek*



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. Membership of \$25 or more receives the ACA t-shirt depicted above (please specify size). Make checks payable to Alameda Creek Alliance.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

e-mail _____

- \$15 Fry \$25 Parr \$50 Smolt \$100 Spawner
- T-shirt size: S M L XL XXL
- Send me a free bumper sticker
- Send me a free watershed map

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