



UP YOUR CREEK!

ALAMEDA CREEK ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER Issue 22 • Fall 2006



Sunol Dam During Preparation for Removal

ALAMEDA CREEK ALLIANCE

*Protecting and restoring the natural ecosystems
of the Alameda Creek watershed*



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Sunol and Niles Dams Removed From Alameda Creek

A historic moment in the restoration of Alameda Creek was realized this fall when the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) removed Sunol and Niles Dams from the Niles Canyon reach of Alameda Creek. Niles Dam was removed from lower Niles Canyon by late August and the last rubble from Sunol Dam was removed by October.

Sunol Dam is the largest dam ever removed in the Bay Area for fish restoration. After the dam removals, Alameda Creek flowed free at the former Sunol Dam site at the top of Niles Canyon for the first time in 105 years, and at the former Niles dam site for the first time in 165 years. The SFPUC hosted a dam-busting ceremony on September 21 attended by over one hundred people, including agency officials, representatives of Alameda Creek management agencies, Alameda Creek Alliance members and community leaders.

These dam removals, in concert with other fish passage projects in the lower creek already funded or in the planning stages, will eventually allow steelhead trout and salmon to migrate up Alameda Creek to suitable spawning and rearing habitat up through Sunol Wilderness.



Niles Dam Before Removal



Niles Dam After Removal

Arroyo de la Laguna Stream Bank Restoration Project Completed

A consortium of public agencies completed a restoration project this fall aimed at battling serious stream bank erosion along the lower reach of Arroyo de la Laguna between Pleasanton and Sunol. The project uses bioengineering techniques such as anchoring logs and tree roots to reduce stream velocity and control erosion. The Arroyo is being severely impacted by runoff from the upstream Tri-Valley watershed, with several feet of stream bank eroding each year. The project is a collaborative effort by local, state and federal agencies to demonstrate a series of "biotechnical" stream restoration practices not often used in a semi-urban area, protecting stream banks and water quality in a way that also improves and creates wildlife habitat.

The project is located along a 1,000-foot section of the Arroyo de la Laguna, owned by the SFPUC, about a half mile south of the Verona Road bridge between Pleasanton and Sunol. The Arroyo is the main tributary to Alameda Creek, the second largest drainage to the San Francisco Bay. The Arroyo de la Laguna drains approximately 400 square miles of the upper Alameda Creek watershed in the Tri-Valley region, and provides habitat for the California red-legged frog, the Western pond turtle, migrating song birds, and other local wildlife. The project will also improve habitat for steelhead trout and salmon, once downstream barriers to fish migration are removed, by reducing stream bank erosion, controlling sediment, creating pool habitat, and restoring riparian vegetation.

This project is a collaboration among the U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service, Alameda County Resource Conservation District, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, Livermore-Amador Valley's Zone 7 Water Agency, Alameda County Public Works Agency, and the Dublin San Ramon Services District.

Stream Management Plan for Livermore-Pleasanton Creeks

In August Zone 7 Water Agency approved a Stream Management Master Plan (SMMP) in August to guide management of the 120 miles of creeks, streams, arroyos and flood control channels in their Livermore-Amador Valley service area. The SMMP is aimed at protecting communities from floods through planned buildout in 2034, while at the same time improving water quality, wildlife habitat and public recreational/educational opportunities. The SMMP encompasses projects and policies geared towards flood control and channel maintenance issues, water supply, water quality, erosion/sedimentation, habitat enhancement and environmental protection, and recreation issues.

The SMMP includes ten restoration and enhancement projects which will specifically remove or modify about a dozen fish passage barriers in Arroyo Mocho, Arroyo del Valle and Arroyo de la Laguna to accommodate future steelhead runs. There are also quite a number of projects that will restore natural stream meander, plant riparian vegetation or replace non-native vegetation with native plants, stabilize stream banks, create low flow channels, create wetlands and other habitat for sensitive species, and install educational kiosks. There are several proposed projects to construct local and regional trails along the Arroyos, including an important trail connection along Alameda Creek from the confluence of Arroyo de la Laguna over two miles downstream into Niles Canyon to Stonybrook Creek. Finally, there are a few flood control projects that involve hardening stream banks in already-altered stream reaches in urban areas, due to constraints.

The SMMP is posted on the Zone 7 web site at www.zone7water.com/masterplan.html

Stonybrook Creek Culvert Will be Replaced With Bridge

The California Department of Transportation began environmental review in June of 2005 for the Route 84 Improvements Project in Niles Canyon, which includes adding a turn lane off Niles Canyon Road onto Palomares Road and modifying a CalTrans road crossing culvert at the bottom of Stonybrook Creek. The existing cement box culvert is undersized and a potential barrier to steelhead trout migration into Stonybrook Creek.



Lower Stonybrook Creek contains about two miles of potential spawning and rearing habitat for steelhead. The Alameda Creek Alliance and regulatory agencies had concerns that the original project proposed by CalTrans, which would have routed Stonybrook Creek through two concrete culverts under Niles Canyon Road, did not adequately address fish passage up Stonybrook Creek. CalTrans has recently confirmed that they will replace the existing box culvert with a free span bridge, which will ensure fish passage into Stonybrook Creek, avoid hydraulic constraints that could lead to erosion

or limit fish passage, and maintain a natural stream channel in Stonybrook Creek.

SFPUC Adopts Stewardship Policy

In June the SFPUC adopted a Water Enterprise Environmental Stewardship Policy, which provides direction for management of SFPUC-owned lands and natural resources affected by operation of the SFPUC water system. This policy will affect the mitigations and operation of the new Calaveras Reservoir and other SFPUC projects and operations, and should provide guidance for protecting and restoring steelhead and other native fish in Alameda Creek. The policy commits the SFPUC to operating the SFPUC water system “in a manner that protects and restores native fish and wildlife downstream of SFPUC dams and water diversions, within SFPUC reservoirs, and on SFPUC watershed lands.”

Pleasanton Creek Project Gets OK

The Pleasanton City Council by unanimous vote approved the Kottinger Creek Restoration Project in Pleasanton in March, agreeing to spend over \$1 million to rebuild the park and restore the creek alongside Kottinger Drive. More information about the restoration is on the Alameda Creek Alliance web site on the Friends of Kottinger Creek web page.

Alameda Creek Steelhead Report 2005-2006



Adult steelhead trout attempting to migrate upstream were seen at the BART weir in lower Alameda Creek on 7 occasions from December 29 through March 11. Six adult steelhead (5 males and 1 female) ranging from 3.7 to 11 pounds were moved upstream into Niles Canyon, under state and federal permits. Photos from the fish rescues are posted on the ACA web site.

Friends of Springtown Preserve Forming



After several years of attempting to draw attention to the Springtown alkali sink in Livermore as a precious open-space area, a group of folks are beginning to organize to work towards that goal. Spearheaded by Rich Cimino (Ohlone Audubon Conservation Chair and ACA Board Member), Mary Ann Hannon (California Native Plant Society), and Patti Cole (resident of Springtown and nature enthusiast), the newly formed Friends of Springtown Preserve is looking for others who may be interested in either actively or passively joining in

this effort.

They are still in the initial steps of forming the group and developing an appropriate mission statement. At this point, identified concerns include wetlands protection, listed native plants protection, burrowing owl habitat (they do live/nest here), habitat protection for other native listed/unlisted nesting birds, herps, invertebrates, and vertebrates. The group would like to ensure the sensitive areas are off-limits for future development and that habitat deemed necessary for species of concern is monitored or controlled in some way to reduce/eliminate the level of random destruction we have seen over the years (for example, motorized vehicles driving through the preserve, expansive BMX bike course built in the center, and so on). The group will be focused on working *with* all involved agencies to ensure this area is given the attention it deserves.

If you are interested in the group and would like to be added to the e-mail distribution list, please contact Patti Cole at pjcassoc@earthlink.net.

Sinbad and Stonybrook Creek Landowner Outreach

The Alameda Creek Alliance went door-to-door this summer and fall talking to landowners along Sinbad Creek in Sunol and Stonybrook Creek in Niles Canyon about our steelhead restoration efforts. Both creeks are tributaries to Alameda Creek with viable steelhead spawning habitat. We met with or left information for over 150 residents along these stream reaches and identified over a dozen landowners interested in small-scale restoration projects on their property. The ACA will be meeting with participating landowners in 2007 to conduct stream habitat assessments and identify and prioritize small scale steelhead habitat restoration projects along these creeks. Potential habitat restoration projects such as erosion control, small migration barrier removal, and riparian re-vegetation will be implemented with grant funding and ACA volunteer labor.

Sunol Victory - Watershed Compost Site Gets Dumped

The Alameda County Waste Management Authority board voted unanimously in July to put the proposed Sunol compost facility project on hold, in reaction to a 4-0 vote by the Board of Supervisors that the plan did not comply with Alameda County's general plan. The ACWMA vote effectively kills the project. Communities for a Healthy Alameda County Environment, Save Our Sunol, Sierra Club and Alameda Creek Alliance opposed siting this 40 acre facility on SFPUC watershed land along Andrade Road in the Sunol Valley. The open-air facility would have been located next to Sheridan Creek, affected nearby populations of threatened red-legged frogs and tiger salamanders, and eliminated potential breeding habitat for several protected grassland bird species.

Please Welcome New Alameda Creek Alliance Staff

Diana Brumbaugh has been hired to work part time as our Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator. Diana is a full-time school teacher who grew up in the Alameda Creek watershed and still lives in Niles adjacent to the creek. Diana has a Master's degree in Environmental Education and volunteers with several local conservation groups. Diana will organize our volunteers for fish rescues, fish monitoring, creek cleanups and our StreamKeeper program. If you would like to become a StreamKeeper and adopt a section of Alameda Creek for monitoring, please contact Diana. Diana will also organize our tabling and outreach at local events, presentations on the Alameda Creek restoration to community groups, and outreach to landowners along Stonybrook and Sinbad Creeks. Diana can be reached at (510) 794-4252, e-mail alamedavolunteer@yahoo.com

Ralph Kanz has been hired to work part time as our Conservation Director. Ralph is a commercial fisherman who lives in Oakland and has been active in creek restoration with his local watershed group, Friends of Sausal Creek. Ralph has years of experience commenting on environmental review of projects, and also has been instrumental in monitoring rare plant species in Oakland and pressuring the City of Oakland to act on its commitment to protect special status species. Ralph will be doing organizing, outreach and fund-raising regarding the proposed Apperson Quarry project in Sunol and will assist with other conservation issues in the watershed. Ralph can be reached at (510) 482-3979, e-mail rkanz@earthlink.net

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Membership Appeal

Please support the Alameda Creek Alliance by becoming a member or renewing your membership. Your support allows us to be an effective voice for creek restoration and protection of native species and their habitats in the Alameda Creek watershed.

ACA Membership Form

Enclosed is \$15 or more for a one year membership. Checks payable to Alameda Creek Alliance.

Name _____

Send me a free bumper sticker

Address _____

Send me a free watershed map

City _____ Zip _____

\$15 Fry \$25 Parr

Phone _____

\$50 Smolt \$100 Spawner

E-mail _____

Mail to: ACA, P. O. Box 192, Canyon, CA 94516

Alameda Creek Restoration In the News March - October 2006

October 27: **S.F. Chronicle** - *350 More Acres of Former Salt Ponds Restored to Tidal Marsh*
October 26: **Livermore Independent** - *Tools From Nature Used to Shore up Arroyo Banks*
October 22: **Fremont Argus** - *Levee Project to Restore Habitat*
October 20: **Fremont Argus** - *Editorial: Huang, Lampert for Water Board*
October 19: **Livermore Independent** - *Study to Look at Restoring Fish*
October 16: **S.J. Mercury News** - *Study to Help Alameda Creek Steelhead Trout*
Sept. 30: **Fremont Argus** - *Program Says "No" to Eroding Arroyo*
Sept. 22: **S.F. Chronicle** - *Alameda Creek: Two Dams Come Down So Steelhead Can Go Up*
Sept. 22: **Contra Costa Times** - *Utility to Demolish Dams on Alameda Creek Today*
Sept. 22: **S.J. Mercury News** - *Two Obsolete Dams Face Removal*
Sept. 22: **Fremont Argus** - *Memo to Fish: Agency to Blast Two Dams on Alameda Creek*
Sept. 22: **Hayward Daily Review** - *Alameda Creek Reopens for Fish Traffic*
Sept. 22: **S.F. Examiner** - *Dam Removal*
Sept. 22: **Tri-Valley Herald** - *Alameda Creek Dams Slated for Destruction*
Sept. 21: **KTVU Ch. 2** - *Completion of Dam Project to Save Fish Habitat*
Sept. 21: **CBS Ch. 5** - *Project in Works to Restore Alameda Creek*
Sept. 11: **S.J. Mercury News** - *Program Targets Erosion of Arroyo Bank Near Sunol*
August 24: **Fremont Argus** - *Goodbye, Niles Dam*
August: **Estuary Newsletter** - *People: Man of Steel(head)*
July 20: **Fremont Bulletin** - *Friends of Coyote Hills Push No-Growth Measure*
June 26: **Fremont Argus** - *Patterson Ranch Debate Brewing*
May 22: **Contra Costa Times** - *Fish Flow Study Receives \$30,000 From Water Agency*
May: **The Osprey** - *Alameda Creek Steelhead Recovery*
April 13: **Contra Costa Times** - *PUC Approves Removal of Dams to Help Trout*
April 12: **East Bay Express** - *We're Outta Here!*
April 12: **Mercury News** - *Trout to Benefit From Removal of Two More Alameda Creek Dams*
April: **Estuary Newsletter** - *Feds Slam/Locals Open Doors to Steely Survivors*
March 26: **S.F. Chronicle** - *Surprise Arrivals*
March 24: **Fremont Bulletin** - *More Trout Rescued*
March 16: **Contra Costa Times** - *More Trout Saved*
March 16: **Livermore Independent** - *Steelhead Rescue*
March 9: **Contra Costa Times** - *Creek Group Plays Name That Trout*
March 9: **Fremont Bulletin** - *Steelhead in Alameda Creek Get Helping Hand*
March 7: **Hayward Daily Review** - *Spawn-taneous Act of Kindness*
March 7: **Tri-City Voice** - *Steelhead Get Helping Hand*