

**Alameda Creek Alliance**  
**Acterra**  
**American Rivers**  
**The Bay Institute of San Francisco**  
**California Native Plant Society, East Bay Chapter**  
**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 the Creeks**  
**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 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**

**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  
Sierra Club - San Francisco Bay Chapter  
Sierra Club - Southern Alameda County Group  
Stop the Dump in Sunol  
Strawberry Creek Lodge Restoration Project  
Tri-City Ecology Center  
Tri-Valley Fly Fishers  
Trout Unlimited, California Council  
Tuolumne River Trust  
Urban Creeks Council of California  
Ward Creek Alliance**

June 2, 2005

Susan Leal, General Manager  
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President Richard Sklar  
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**Re: Restoration of Alameda Creek**

Dear Susan Leal and SFPUC Board of Directors:

Our 65 organizations represent tens of thousands of Bay Area residents, and a wide range of interests concerned about the protection and restoration of San Francisco Bay and its largest tributary, Alameda Creek. While we recognize several contributions recently made by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) to stewardship of fishery resources in the Alameda Creek watershed, we are writing to express our concern about the continued degraded condition of Alameda Creek. We request that the SFPUC act expeditiously to resolve ongoing environmental problems and undertake much needed restoration actions on behalf of this important public resource.

The SFPUC has focused considerable attention on its Water System Improvement Program (WSIP), with more than 70 projects proposed throughout the SFPUC's system, including several within the Alameda Creek watershed. The SFPUC has engaged the Bay Area Water Stewards (BAWS), which includes some of the signatory groups below, in discussions on the scope and impacts of these projects. BAWS promotes a just and sustainable water system that protects wildlife habitat and restores the Alameda Creek, Tuolumne River, and Peninsula watersheds affected by the SFPUC water system.

During the last several years, the SFPUC has also participated in a forum intended to restore steelhead trout to the Alameda Creek watershed, the Alameda Creek Fisheries Restoration Workgroup (Workgroup). Also, the SFPUC has undertaken studies critical to further understanding of the trout populations using Calaveras and San Antonio reservoirs and their tributaries. Finally, the SFPUC has substantially advanced planning for the removal of Niles and Sunol Dams.

However, action on other issues critical to habitat restoration in the Alameda Creek watershed has not been forthcoming. Our organizations now specifically request that the SFPUC:

- State its intention to restore sufficient instream flows to sustain steelhead trout and other native fish in good condition, without impacting other river systems, specifically the Tuolumne River
- Develop and implement an interim operations plan to protect steelhead and rainbow trout and their habitat prior to the Calaveras Dam rebuilding project
- Participate in a Workgroup program of studies necessary to make long-term decisions about restoration of anadromous fish and aquatic and riparian habitat along Alameda Creek, including instream flows
- Abandon efforts to construct a rubber water recapture dam in the Sunol Valley (the so-called "Alameda Creek Fishery Enhancement Project" in the WSIP)
- Remove the Alameda Diversion Dam from upper Alameda Creek

These requests are explained in greater detail in the attached memo.

As the water district serving one of the most environmentally progressive areas of the nation, the SFPUC can do a better job of stewardship than the status quo for Alameda Creek. We recognize that the SFPUC provides an important service by delivering water to people and businesses in the Bay Area. However, restoring a healthy Alameda Creek can provide economic, environmental, recreational, and societal benefits while not significantly impacting the current water supply. Although the challenges of restoring Alameda Creek are real, water districts throughout California have found ways to meet the needs of customers and the environment without violating environmental laws. Our organizations are committed to helping ensure that changes to SFPUC operations will preserve the benefits to Bay Area customers while also protecting our native plants and

wildlife, affording us opportunities for recreation, and improving the quality of life in the Bay Area.

We are not willing to wait another eight years for the SFPUC to address steelhead restoration in Alameda Creek. For these reasons, our organizations request that the SFPUC commit to the actions recommended above, in order to restore Alameda Creek.

We understand the SFPUC Water Enterprise will soon be hiring a new Natural Resources Manager. The actions requested in this letter should be among the first tasks undertaken by this Manager.

We look forward to your response and to working together with you in restoring the unique natural resources of Alameda Creek.

Sincerely,

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## Restoring Alameda Creek: Requests of the SFPUC

### **Restore Instream Flows**

The SFPUC has for decades knowingly been in violation of California Fish and Game Code §5937, which requires dam owners to release enough water to keep downstream fish populations in good condition. The SFPUC owns and operates three dams in the Alameda Creek watershed (Calaveras Dam, San Antonio Dam, and Alameda Diversion Dam) which divert natural stream flow. The SFPUC does not release any water from any of these dams to benefit fish and wildlife habitat or native vegetation downstream of the dams. The operations of these dams contributed to the past extirpation of anadromous fish, and current diversions behind these dams leave inadequate flow in Alameda Creek and the San Antonio and Calaveras Creek tributaries below the dams to maintain resident trout populations in good condition. Fully 86% of the stream flows in the watershed area tributary to Alameda Creek in the Sunol Valley are diverted by the SFPUC for water supply demand, reducing habitat and harming native fish populations.

Since 1997, the Alameda Creek Alliance has been requesting that the SFPUC restore a minimum amount of stream flow below these dams to provide suitable spawning and rearing habitat for steelhead trout, but the SFPUC has yet to conduct the studies necessary to determine what flows would be required. The SFPUC, as part of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed with the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) in 1997, promised to restore minimal flows to approximately five miles of the creek. To date, the SFPUC has not released water for this purpose.

Furthermore, the National Marine Fisheries Service has proposed listing resident rainbow trout below SFPUC diversion facilities and landlocked steelhead in SFPUC reservoirs as threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The final listing determination is due this summer. Listing will support the SFPUC's obligation to provide sufficient water flow and habitat conditions to prevent unauthorized take of these populations.

As citizens, advocates and stewards of the San Francisco Bay watershed our organizations request the following of the SFPUC:

- Commit to releasing the flows necessary to enable restoration of anadromous steelhead by 2007
- Commit to the release of sufficient interim summer flows from Calaveras and possibly San Antonio reservoirs between now and 2007 to keep resident steelhead and rainbow trout in good condition
- Commit to the development and adoption of a restoration study plan which provides the necessary information by 2007 to determine the flows needed for steelhead restoration
- Commit to the development of a water supply operations plan which explores ways to offset or mitigate water supply impacts of restoration

Releasing water from Calaveras Dam and ceasing diversions from Alameda Diversion Dam would enhance about eight miles of spawning and rearing habitat for trout and benefit riparian vegetation. These flows would provide additional deep-water habitat, identified by the SFPUC as a factor limiting trout restoration. Periodic flushing flows would help prepare spawning gravels downstream, reduce summer algal blooms and overgrowth by cattails.

We support investigating reasonable alternatives for flow releases, including conjunctive use of surface and ground waters, relaxation of releases during dry and critical water years, and other measures to assure that restoration of the Alameda Creek fishery is accomplished in a manner that also avoids significant reductions in water supply.

### **Interim Operations Plan**

A minimum flow schedule adequate to maintain spawning and rearing habitat for steelhead and rainbow trout will be a condition of the regulatory approvals for any modification of Calaveras Dam under applicable law (including the California Water Code, Clean Water Act, the California Fish and Game Code, and Section 7 of the ESA). However, since Calaveras Dam is not anticipated to be rebuilt until 2011, the SFPUC should immediately fund and implement an interim operations plan for all SFPUC dams and fish habitat in the Alameda Creek watershed, which would guide water releases and management activities until the Calaveras replacement project is completed.

Our organizations request that the SFPUC adopt the following interim operations:

- Release minimum flows from SFPUC reservoirs
- Cease diversion of upper Alameda Creek flows at the Alameda Diversion Dam
- Immediately exclude cattle from instream fish habitat and adjacent riparian areas above and below the reservoirs to protect trout spawning and rearing habitat
- Implement a bass control program in the reservoirs to prevent predation on trout by introduced fish

### **Stream Flow and Habitat Studies**

The SFPUC has yet to conduct the studies necessary to determine what flows would be required in Alameda Creek for anadromous fish. We request that the SFPUC participate in and fund studies recently proposed by the Workgroup that will provide information about the stream flows needed for migratory fish passage and spawning and rearing habitat in Alameda Creek. These studies will address habitat throughout the watershed. The water supply element of the studies will include proposed release schedules for diversion facilities in the watershed necessary to achieve the management objective of restoring the steelhead fishery, as well as an allocation of the resulting costs (in water or monetary terms) between the water agencies in the basin. The elements of this study plan are being discussed by the Workgroup, of which SFPUC is a member. This study plan

should be completed within the next two years, and will provide the basis for cooperatively determining water supply for a restored Alameda Creek steelhead fishery.

### **Abandon Construction of a Rubber Dam in Sunol Valley**

Our organizations request that the SFPUC not fund or pursue construction of the rubber dam and water recapture facility proposed as part of the Alameda Creek Fishery Enhancement Project. This project was originally proposed in response to the 1997 MOU with CDFG and was intended to create a limited tail-water rainbow trout fishery. The legal requirement to restore and maintain a steelhead run in the watershed requires that this agreement be revised. New interim flows and long-term flows arrangements suitable for steelhead trout should replace the obsolete flows proposed under the MOU. Money dedicated for the rubber dam project should be redirected to other fishery enhancement studies and projects in Alameda Creek, including the flow studies, interim operations, and water releases described above.

### **Remove Alameda Diversion Dam**

Operation of the Alameda Diversion Dam affects resident trout below the dam proposed for federal listing. The dam itself will eventually be a barrier to steelhead migration into the headwaters of Alameda Creek. In recent years, all of the stream flow from upper Alameda Creek except spills has been captured by this dam. Our organizations request that the SFPUC immediately fund an assessment of the feasibility and impacts of the removal of the Alameda Diversion Dam, and that the removal of the Alameda Diversion Dam be considered during the environmental review for the rebuilding of Calaveras Dam.