

To the Alameda Creek Alliance e-mail list:

Welcome to those of you new to the Alameda Creek list. I send out updates, usually about twice a month, about Alameda Creek steelhead and salmon restoration, habitat protection for imperiled wildlife within the Alameda Creek watershed, and statewide salmon protection and river restoration news of note. You can always opt off of this list with an e-mail reply.

Alameda Creek Restoration Overview

The restoration of Alameda Creek for anadromous fish has accelerated the past few years, and the coming few years will be critical for restoring our native fish runs and more natural stream flow and habitat in Alameda Creek.

The Alameda Creek watershed is the largest drainage in the southern San Francisco Bay region, encompassing almost 700 square miles and draining roughly the southern two-thirds of the East Bay. Since central coast steelhead trout were listed as a federally threatened species in 1997, the Alameda Creek Alliance has been advocating for restoration projects to allow anadromous fish to reach spawning habitat in upper Alameda Creek in and above the Sunol Valley and Sunol Regional Park. Restoration of Alameda Creek steelhead runs will benefit the overall recovery of the Central California Coast steelhead population and will help boost steelhead returns in neighboring creeks in the Bay. We also anticipate providing suitable habitat for a regionally significant population of fall-run chinook salmon.

Fifteen local, state, and federal agencies are cooperating on Alameda Creek fish passage projects, including dam removals and construction of fish ladders and fish screens. These projects will make up to 20 miles of Alameda Creek and its tributaries accessible to ocean-run fish for the first time in over 50 years. Four dams and four other fish passage barriers have been removed so far, and one additional dam removal, three major fish ladders, and two other fish passage projects are planned to be completed in the next few years.

Last spring, we had our first (and only) pair of spawning steelhead in Alameda Creek in 45 years. With a fish ladder planned to be constructed at the BART weir by 2010, allowing fish to migrate past our most significant barrier in the lower creek, we anticipate steelhead and salmon returning to spawn in increasing numbers in Alameda Creek.

The key missing ingredient now is water – specifically adequate flow releases from upstream dams to allow steelhead and native trout to survive our hot summers, and sufficient flows for steelhead smolts to make it out to the Bay in late winter and spring.

Seventeen public agencies signed an agreement in 2006 to collaborate on studies of stream flows and fish habitat needed for the Alameda Creek steelhead restoration. The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) recently began environmental review for major capital improvement projects to the San Francisco water supply system, including nine projects along Alameda Creek in the Sunol Valley. The largest is the Calaveras Dam Replacement Project, to rebuild the seismically vulnerable Calaveras Dam. The Alameda Creek Alliance is pushing for the project to include minimum flow releases from Calaveras Reservoir to help spawning, rearing and migration of steelhead in Alameda Creek below the dam, and the removal of the Alameda Diversion Dam from upper Alameda Creek.

You can help this effort by visiting the creek, spreading the word about Alameda Creek restoration, joining and donating to the Alameda Creek Alliance, writing letters to water management and regulatory agencies when we send out alerts, and volunteering with us for creek cleanups, fish rescues, and fish habitat and population surveys. See www.alamedacreek.org.

ALAMEDA CREEK NEWS

San Francisco Endangered Species Take Permit for Alameda Watershed – Take Action!

The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission has begun developing a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for their projects, maintenance, and operations in the upper Alameda Creek Watershed. The HCP will be a long-term conservation plan for land use and biological planning on SFPUC lands. The HCP will result in a permit allowing the SFPUC to legally "take" or harm endangered species, in exchange for conservation measures intended to protect the species and their habitats.

The HCP will cover the operations of three SFPUC dams and two reservoirs, watershed operation and maintenance activities, and lease activities such as cattle grazing, nurseries and the Sunol golf course. Covered species include steelhead trout, California red-legged frog, Alameda whipsnake and California tiger salamander.

The SFPUC's reservoir operations have a huge impact on the aquatic ecosystem of Alameda Creek. The dams interrupt the natural flow of Alameda Creek and its tributaries, influence water temperatures downstream of the dams, and significantly alter suitable habitat for native fish and other aquatic wildlife. The SFPUC cattle grazing leases have impacts on aquatic and riparian special status species.

The Alameda Creek Alliance submitted scoping comments on the HCP in January, detailing the inadequacies of the SFPUC's biological inventory report and draft impacts analysis. You can read the scoping comments [here](#).

What you can do: write a letter or e-mail to the SFPUC and the permitting agencies for the HCP, and insist on meaningful mitigation and adequate management of endangered species habitat. We have provided an action alert with talking points and contact information [here](#).

For more information visit the [ACA web page on the HCP](#).

Alameda Creek Fish Barrier Removal Scorecard

See our [Fish Barrier Removal Scorecard](#) measuring the progress of dam removal and fish ladder projects. So far, 33% of the fish passage projects in the watershed needed to get steelhead to their spawning grounds have been completed; an additional 29% are in the planning stages and may be completed in the next few years.

Progress by stream reach:

Mainstem Alameda Creek - 36% completed; additional 46% in planning stages

Stonybrook Creek - 0% completed; 33% in planning stages

Arroyo de la Laguna Watershed - 40% completed

Alameda Creek Predatory Fish Survey

A report on a predatory fish survey conducted by the East Bay Regional Park District in lower Alameda Creek in 2008 is posted [here](#).

REGIONAL AND STATE RESTORATION NEWS

Report Identifying Bay Area Wildlands Needing Protection

[Golden Lands, Golden Opportunity](#) is a new report by the Greenbelt Alliance identifying Bay Area lands that provide vital public benefits, such as open space, recreation, and wildlife habitat - but are still unprotected.

The report discusses the needed public access and protection of sensitive aquatic habitat in the Alameda Creek watershed, as well as the need to curb sprawl in the Livermore Valley to preserve habitat for rare and endangered species, conserve working lands, and protect the Livermore groundwater basin and watersheds - especially the rare alkali sink ecosystem.

San Francisco Chronicle article – February 4, 2009
[Report urges preserving Bay Area outdoors](#)

Schwarzenegger, Feinstein And Nature Conservancy Capture Cold, Dead Fish Award

Dan Bacher's annual awards for eco-villains

<http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2009/02/06/18568658.php>

Dan notes that competition among the candidates for Cold, Dead Fish Awards in 2008 was fierce as corrupt politicians, agribusiness leaders, corporate polluters and their allies launched a full-scale offensive on the imperiled fish populations of California and the West.

Sportsman's Panel Urges Immediate Action for State Fisheries

The Salmon And Steelhead Panel at the International Sportsmen's Expo concluded that unless anglers and the public wholeheartedly join the effort to save California salmon and Delta fisheries now, they will see these fisheries disappear within five years.

Read Dan Bacher's article, [Act Now or Lose Our Fisheries!](#)

Budget Woes Torpedo Restoration Projects

The state budget "crisis" and bond freeze has impacted restoration projects and conservation groups statewide. The Bay Area Watershed Network, California Watershed Coalition, and Sonoma Ecology Center have been providing information on the impacts to projects, and contacts for local media and legislators. See <http://stopworkimpact.ning.com/>

San Francisco Chronicle – January 16
[Cash Crunch Halts 4,000 Conservation Projects](#)

Republicans Hijack Budget to Gut CA Environmental Laws – Take Action

Please call state legislative leaders this week to demand they not give away California's environmental protections in an attempt to court Republican votes on a state budget bill. We need your help right now. The state budget proposal may include devastating rollbacks of the California Environmental Quality Act and AB 32, California's Global Warming Solutions Act.

Please call Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg at (916) 651-4006 and Speaker of the Assembly Karen Bass at (916) 319-2047 and let them know that sacrificing California's environmental protections is unacceptable

News from the Capitol

Thanks, once again, to all of you who responded to the action alerts over the past few weeks and urged your state representatives to keep environmental rollbacks out of the budget deal.

The Bad News

The legislative leadership still hasn't publicly released the state budget bill -- not even to members of the Senate and Assembly. However, despite the extraordinary public outcry over the past few weeks, the budget bill reportedly includes rollbacks of state environmental laws.

Although the exact nature of the environmental rollbacks isn't known, earlier proposals included cuts to the California Environmental Quality Act (known as CEQA) and AB 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act -- California's effort to reduce statewide greenhouse gas emissions.

The changes would effectively eliminate the requirement to analyze and minimize the environmental impacts of new sources of greenhouse gas emissions, and they would greatly slow down California's efforts to fight global warming.

The Budget Impasse

Because state budget decisions in California require a two-thirds majority vote in California, the Republican minority and Governor Schwarzenegger took the opportunity to demand rollbacks of state environmental laws in exchange for their support for a budget bill -- despite the fact that the environmental rollbacks have absolutely nothing to do with the state budget. Unfortunately, the Democratic leadership, Senate President Darrel Steinberg and Speaker of the Assembly Karen Bass, appear poised to concede to these outrageous demands.

What's worse, we may not find out the exact size and scope of the rollbacks until it's too late. Legislative leaders may first release the budget bill this week and move immediately for a vote, before the public can find out about the disastrous giveaways and respond.

The Good News

It's not over yet. We still have time to convince the legislature not to give away California's environmental protections. However, time is extremely short, and we need to move fast to make our voices heard by the legislative leadership.

Please call Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg at (916) 651-4006 and Speaker of the Assembly Karen Bass at (916) 319-2047 today to tell them the budget bill must not contain environmental rollbacks. Because of the extremely tight timeline, immediate calls and in-person visits are critical.

Some example talking points are below, but please feel free to say your piece in whatever way works best for you. Please call day or night, but as soon as possible. If you get the answering machine, please leave a message.

Talking points:

I am calling to urge [Senate President Steinberg or Speaker of the Assembly Bass] to keep environmental rollbacks out of the state budget bill.

The budget bill must not include attacks on the California Environmental Quality Act or on AB 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act, California's best tools for fighting global warming.

Repealing environmental protections in exchange for Republican votes on the budget should not be contemplated, and I expect [Senate President Steinberg or Speaker of the Assembly Bass] to stand strong in defense of California's environmental protections.

Please take action **today**.

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 13 – Berkeley

International Rivers Network's [Rivers Film Festival](#)

Part of the 12th Annual [International Day of Action for Rivers](#)

March 14 – Sacramento

Friends of the River's [California Rivers Festival](#)
