

## ***Alameda Creek Alliance Highs and Lows 2009-2010***

***Calaveras Dam Replacement:*** The long-awaited draft Environmental Impact Report for San Francisco's Calaveras Dam Replacement Project came out last October. The Alameda Creek Alliance, regulatory agencies and other water districts submitted extensive comments on the inadequacy of accommodations for steelhead trout and proposed mitigation measures. We organized 46 other Bay Area conservation and fly-fishing organizations and nearly 1,500 individuals to submit comments. The final EIR and responses to comments are expected this fall, which leads us to:

***Increased Alameda Creek Flows For Steelhead:*** We cannot publicly release details yet, but the SFPUC, as a result of our public pressure and influence from permitting agencies, has increased the planned instream flow releases from Calaveras Dam and the associated Alameda Diversion Dam, to improve steelhead migration, spawning and rearing after the dam is rebuilt. The SFPUC has committed to constructing a fish ladder and fish screen at the Diversion Dam and will investigate fish passage at Little Yosemite. Two major outstanding issues in the EIR are the adequacy of mitigation measures for construction impacts on endangered species habitats, and greenhouse gas emissions.

***Lower Alameda Creek Fish Passage Projects:*** In June the Alameda County Water District dedicated two recently completed restoration projects that improve passage for migratory fish in lower Alameda Creek. For the Rubber Dam 2 Fish Passage Project, the ACWD removed the fabric portion of the lower inflatable rubber diversion dam from the channel, notched the foundation, and installed a low-flow fish ladder. The new Bunting Fish Screen Facilities protect juvenile salmonids from the diversion at the Bunting Pond.

***Niles Canyon Highway Widening:*** The Alameda Creek Alliance is organizing community opposition to a proposed CalTrans project to widen Highway 84, which could forever change the bucolic character of Niles Canyon. The project would cut over 400 native trees along Alameda Creek, add shoulders to Niles Canyon road from Palomares Road to Highway 680, and construct nearly two miles of retaining walls adjacent to the creek.

***First Christmas Bird Count a Huge Success:*** The Alameda Creek Alliance and Ohlone Audubon Society organized the first annual Eastern Alameda County Christmas Bird Count in December, a volunteer effort to survey wintering birds within a 15 mile radius count circle. For the inaugural bird count, over 75 volunteers scoured 30 areas, compiling an impressive list of 144 bird species, including bald and golden eagles, Lewis woodpeckers, yellow-billed magpies, northern pygmy-owls, and vesper sparrows. The count provides important information about wintering bird populations in the watershed.

***Alameda Creek Closed To Fishing:*** New state regulations for 2010-2012 include a year-round closure on all fishing in Alameda Creek and its tributaries downstream of San Antonio, Calaveras, and Del Valle reservoirs, to protect listed steelhead trout and remnant populations of native rainbow trout. Conservation and flyfishing groups supported the regulations due to the conservation significance, low population numbers, and potential threats to steelhead and rainbow trout populations in Alameda Creek.

***Staples Ranch Conservation Deal:*** The Alameda Creek Alliance and Center for Biological Diversity negotiated a conservation agreement with Alameda County that will provide nearly \$1 million for habitat preservation and allow the Staples Ranch development in Pleasanton to move forward. The agreement will fund protection of rare alkaline soil habitat and restore 85,000 square feet of riparian habitat along the Arroyos.

***Sunol Valley Restoration Plan:*** The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission has initiated a Sunol Valley Restoration Plan to determine what restoration of the creek for steelhead trout is physically and biologically feasible in the Sunol Valley reach. The plan will guide restoration, conservation, and monitoring efforts in the Sunol Valley.

***Stonybrook Creek Fish Passage Strategy:*** The Alameda County Department of Public Works has prepared a draft strategic plan for eliminating barriers to steelhead migration in Stonybrook Creek, an important tributary of Alameda Creek for trout in Niles Canyon. Numerous road crossings and culverts in Stonybrook Creek have been identified as either complete or partial barriers to upstream migrating steelhead. Alameda County is identifying priority crossings for fish passage improvement and estimating potential costs for implementation.

***Disappointing Steelhead Report:*** Alameda Creek Alliance volunteers found no steelhead trout or chinook salmon in the lower creek during migration season last fall and winter.