

UP YOUR CREEK !

ALAMEDA CREEK ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER

Issue 8 • January 2000

NEXT ALLIANCE MEETING

Tuesday, **February 22**, 7-9 PM at the Math/Science Nucleus, 4074 Eggers Drive (at Fremont Blvd.) in Fremont. Call (510) 845-4675 for directions.

FEASIBILITY STUDY TO BE RELEASED THIS MONTH

The feasibility study commissioned by the Alameda County Flood Control District (ACFCD), "An Assessment of the Feasibility of Restoring a Viable Steelhead Trout Population in the Alameda Creek Watershed" will be publicly released this month. The study, prepared by Applied Marine Sciences, Inc. and Hagar Environmental Science, will provide the basis for future management decisions about steelhead in the watershed.

A draft version of the study has been circulating among the Alameda Creek Fisheries Restoration Workgroup (Workgroup), and has received comments from all the agencies involved in management of the creek and peer-review comments from several fisheries biologists. Without going into too much detail, the study will likely conclude that restoring a viable steelhead population is feasible and will lay out recommendations for the changes needed to restore the run.

The primary recommendation will be to provide fish passage past the ACFCD drop structure. The ACFCD is already preparing a Section 1135 restoration grant proposal to the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps). The Workgroup has been meeting with the Corps about this

proposal, and the prospects for a fish ladder look very positive!

The feasibility study examines the biological needs of Alameda Creek steelhead, including spawning and rearing habitat, in-migration and out-migration barriers, and adequate water flows. The study details the changes required from existing conditions and the impact of these changes on existing uses of the creek (water supply, flood control and recreation). The report will identify actions essential for steelhead recovery, additional restoration actions which would enhance steelhead runs, and issues which need further investigation.

The feasibility study should be available for viewing online by January 31 at the AMS web site by clicking on the Alameda Creek Fishery Restoration Workgroup:

www.amarine.com/information/information.html

Printed copies can be obtained from ACFCD by calling Laura Kilgour at (510) 670-6479 or from the Alliance (510) 845-4675.

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SFPUC
WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) is out for the SFPUC's management of the Alameda Creek watershed. This document will determine the short-term and long-term management of the creek and a significant portion of the land in the upper watershed.

Specific issues of concern to the Alliance are:

- 1) SFPUC must provide adequate flows below their dams (Calaveras, San Antonio, and Upper Alameda Creek Diversion Dam) for fish and wildlife, especially for steelhead. Current operation is in violation of Fish and Game Code 5937 and will likely be in violation of the federal 4(d) rules;
- 2) that SFPUC provide fish passage past Sunol Dam in Niles Canyon and the Upper Alameda Creek Diversion Dam;
- 3) proposed construction of an inflatable rubber recapture dam in the Sunol Valley will harm steelhead and red-legged frogs;
- 4) proposed expansion of leased gravel quarrying in the Sunol Valley will destroy habitat and alter the hydrology of the creek;
- 5) current grazing practices which are degrading trout spawning habitat in upper Alameda Creek.

Copies of the DEIR are available for review at the Fremont, Pleasanton, and Livermore libraries, or can be obtained by mail from Kathe Zaloz at (650) 872-5934. Comments are due January 31. Jeff can provide a sample comment letter.

A public hearing for the DEIR will be held on:

January 25, 2000, at 5:30 PM

Pleasanton Middle School, multipurpose room 5001
Case Avenue, Pleasanton

**PLEASE COME TO THE PUBLIC HEARING
AND SPEAK OUT OR WRITE A LETTER!**

LAWSUIT VICTORY:
FEDERAL PROTECTIVE REGULATIONS FOR
STEELHEAD

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) issued proposed protective regulations for threatened steelhead on December 30, 1999. The proposed 4(d) rules were published following a lawsuit by a coalition of seven environmental and fishing organizations, including the Alliance.

The 4(d) rules will define illegal "take" of threatened populations of steelhead, including those in Alameda Creek, and will extend some federal protections to the species. NMFS will take comments on the proposed rule until February 22. Under the terms of a settlement agreement, NMFS must issue a final rule by June 19, 2000, and the regulations will go into effect by July.

The proposed rules are significant for Alameda Creek steelhead, with the following given as examples of activities which would result in violations:

- 1) diverting water through unscreened diversions (could apply to Alameda County Water District (ACWD) diversions into the quarry ponds);
- 2) blocking fish passage through fills, dams, or impassable culverts (could apply to the drop structure, ACWD inflatable dams, SFPUC dams in Niles Canyon, PG&E pipeline crossing in Sunol, and county owned culverts);
- 3) trampling or smothering of redds by livestock in the streambed (could apply to grazing permitted by East Bay Regional Parks and SFPUC along Alameda Creek);
- 4) water withdrawals that impact spawning or rearing habitat.

The Alameda Creek Alliance will aggressively pursue any violations once the regulations are in place.

Please comment on the proposed rule. There are numerous exceptions being proposed by NMFS, which will administratively authorize illegal take!

For a copy of the proposed rule, contact Jeff or visit the NMFS web site at www.nwr.noaa.gov and click on What's New, then click on Steelhead 4(d) Federal Register Notice.

MEMBERSHIP

If you haven't already joined, please use the enclosed form to become a member of the Alameda Creek Alliance. We now have 87 official members. If you wish to receive regular e-mail updates and alerts about issues and activities of the Alameda Creek Alliance, e-mail us at alamedacreek@hotmail.com.

SUNOL AND OHLONE PARKS LAND USE PLANS

The East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) will be updating the Land Use Plans for Sunol and Ohlone Regional Wildernesses. Again, this will have significant bearing on the short-term and long-term management of the upper Alameda Creek watershed.

The biggest concern for the Alliance is EBRPD grazing leases in both parks. The cattle are in the creeks, and are trashing some of the best spawning and rearing habitat for steelhead and rainbow trout. Tell EBRPD that you want these parks managed as true wilderness areas, not as feedlots for cattle. Please mail the enclosed postcards to EBRPD or write your own letter.

ALAMEDA CREEK STEELHEAD GENETIC STUDY

Dr. Jennifer Nielsen, a west coast fish genetics expert, has finished a draft of "Microsatellite Analyses of Alameda Creek Rainbow/Steelhead Trout." Nielsen analyzed fin clips from adult steelhead we have moved past the barriers in the last two years, and clips from native rainbow trout in 6 tributary creeks in the upper watershed. Nielsen determined that our returning adult fish are genetically similar to the native rainbow trout populations. In comparing our clips to other west coast fish, Alameda Creek trout have a close genetic relationship to coastal trout found in Lagunitas Creek in Marin County.

This study supports the contention we have made all along, that native steelhead are returning to the creek. Nielsen also recommends managing the rainbow trout in the watershed as part of the threatened population of Central California Coast steelhead.

DAY OF ACTION AGAINST DAMS

Tuesday, March 14

The International Rivers Network is sponsoring an International Day of Action Against Dams and for Rivers, Water & Life. Last year, the Alameda Creek Alliance participated in this event through the "Free the Water Relay", where water from creeks around the Bay and throughout the Central Valley was deposited in S. F. Bay to symbolize the need for more freshwater flows on California Rivers.

This year, the Alameda Creek Alliance will sponsor a demonstration at the Alameda County Water District. With the wheels in motion for a fish ladder past the drop structure, the water district needs to be reminded that there is strong public support for providing fish passage past the ACWD inflatable dams.

DEMONSTRATION

Tuesday, March 14, Noon

Outside the ACWD Offices

43885 South Grimmer Blvd., Fremont

We would also like to have a presence outside the SFPUC office in San Francisco at the same time, to urge that fish passage be provide past Sunol Dam and the upper Alameda Creek Diversion Dam. Contact Jeff if you can help organize this.

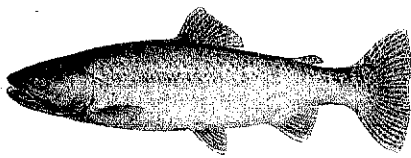
FREMONT STEELHEAD FESTIVAL

Saturday, May 13

We are planning to hold a Fremont Steelhead Festival on Saturday, May 13 at Niles Community Park in Fremont. The festival will have a Watershed Awareness Fair, with booths, activities, and music. There also will be a 10K road race (the Alameda Creek 10K Spawning Run) along the creek. The Mission Peak Striders are helping to organize the 10K run (call Larry Heibert at (510) 657-6179).

**WE NEED YOUR HELP
TO ORGANIZE THIS EVENT!**

The festival will be a fun way to introduce people who use the creek for recreation to our restoration efforts and goals. If your organization is interested in co-sponsoring the festival or having a booth, contact Jeff.

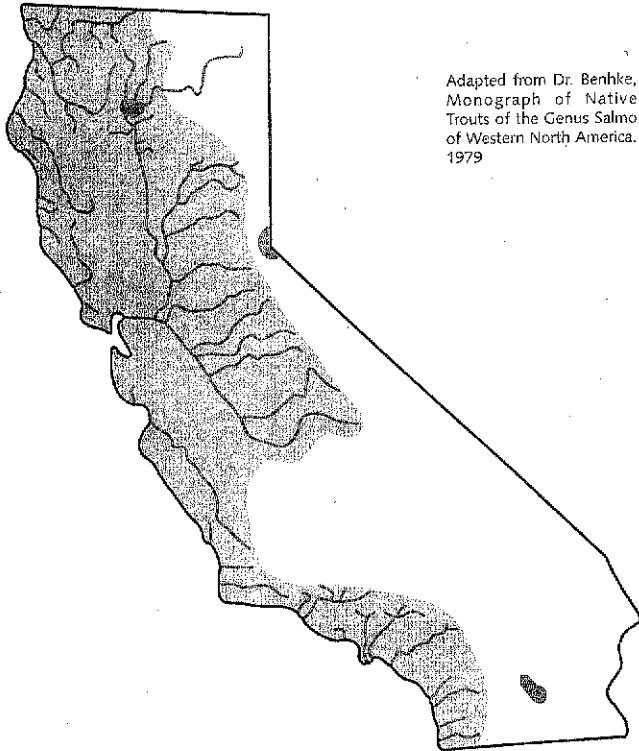


THEN AND NOW

Native steelhead once populated much of California, but have declined as human populations have expanded.

Distribution of Steelhead Trout

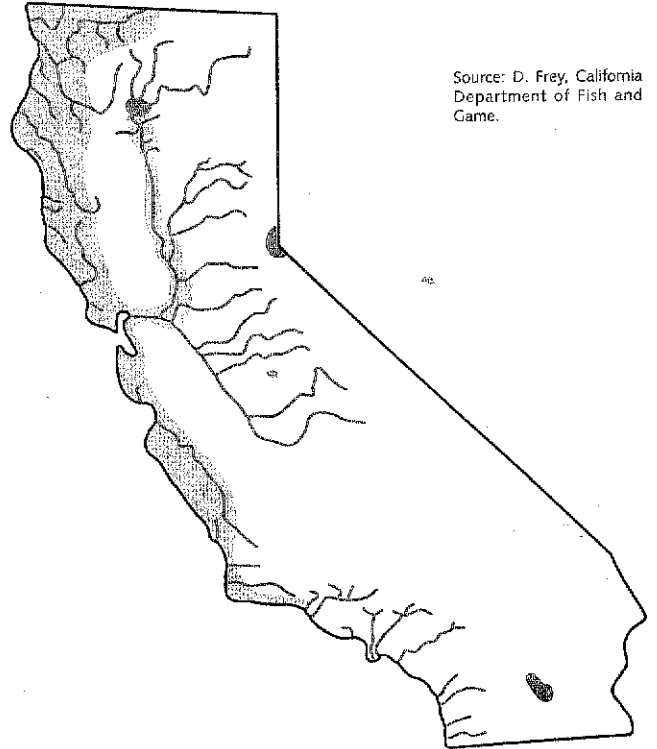
Inland Habitat Pre-1900



Adapted from Dr. Benhke, Monograph of Native Trout of the Genus Salmo of Western North America. 1979

Distribution of Steelhead Trout

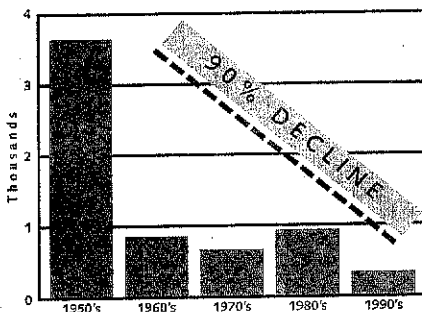
Inland Habitat Today



Source: D. Frey, California Department of Fish and Game.

Population Trends

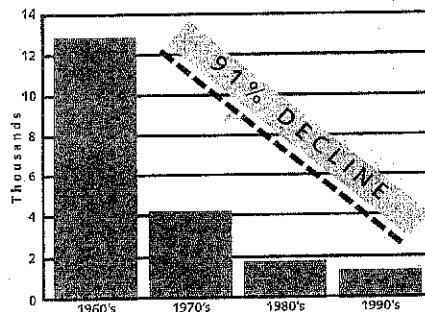
North Coast Steelhead



Eel River at Capehorn Dam

Population Trends

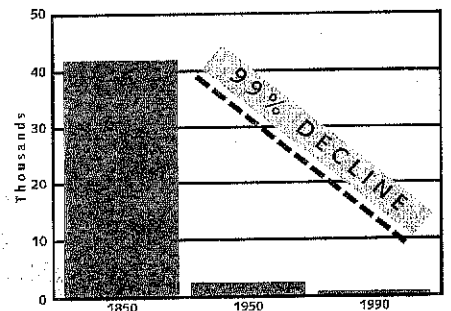
Central Valley Steelhead



Sacramento River at Red Bluff Diversion Dam

Population Trends

South Coast Steelhead



Santa Ynez, Ventura, Santa Clara & Malibu

Courtesy of California Trout

DEVELOPMENT IN THE WATERSHED

Greenbriar: Tassajara Creek in Dublin

The City of Dublin proposes to approve development of 172 homes at the former Yarra Yarra Ranch. The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has informed Dublin that the stream buffers for the proposed project are inadequate, and will likely harm the California red-legged frog.

Please write to the City of Dublin and tell them to work out an agreement with FWS that will provide for the biological needs of the frog. Also mention that the City should be pursuing redevelopment and infill rather than re-zoning agricultural land which has habitat value for native species. Write to:

City of Dublin Planning Department
P. O. Box 2340
Dublin, CA 94568

Pleasanton Golf Course: Happy Valley Creek

The City of Pleasanton proposes to approve a golf course and 34 homes, and fill in 2 miles of intermittent streams. Habitat for the red-legged frog will be destroyed and Callippe silverspot butterflies may be killed during construction. The proposed project will destroy habitat for two federally listed species, though there are already 4 existing golf courses within five miles of the project.

Please write to the City of Pleasanton and tell them Happy Valley is not an appropriate area to build yet another golf course. Write to:

City of Pleasanton Planning Department
200 Old Bernal Avenue
Pleasanton, CA 94566

NATIVE TROUT FOUND

Native rainbow trout were found this summer in upper Alameda Creek and in numerous tributaries. Reproducing populations were found in Welch and Pirate Creeks in the Sunol Valley, in Indian Joe and "W" Tree Creeks in Sunol Regional Park, and in Stonybrook Creek (a tributary in Niles Canyon).

CHINOOK SALMON CONTROVERSY

The EBRPD has received a permit from the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) to move steelhead past the barriers in the lower creek again this winter, if we ever get any rain and fish show up. However, DFG is not allowing us to move chinook salmon (which is already moot for this year, since the fall run has come and gone with no fish spotted). This is an unfortunate decision for a number of reasons. If you are interested in the details of the controversy, or in writing a letter to DFG, contact Jeff.

STEELHEAD CRITICAL HABITAT LAWSUIT

The Center for Biological Diversity and a coalition of conservation and fishing groups are suing NMFS in an attempt to expand the "critical habitat" designation for southern California steelhead. NMFS left out steelhead/rainbow trout populations above dams in its determination, and refused to extend the southern end of the endangered population boundary to include native trout found in San Mateo Creek.

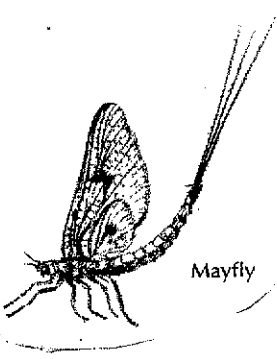
The outcome of this lawsuit could influence whether steelhead behind dams in other listed populations (including Alameda Creek) will be considered for federal protection. For more information, visit the Center's web site at: www.sw-center.org.

STONYBROOK CREEK

25 Alameda Creek Alliance volunteers pulled about 10 pickup truckloads of trash out of Stonybrook Creek this fall. A radio tagged female steelhead went one mile up this creek last March, and may have spawned there with native trout. Hundreds of trout fry were seen in the creek this past summer and fall. The Alameda County Flood Control District is looking to replace two culverts on this creek with bridges, to open up an additional 1½ miles of spawning habitat.

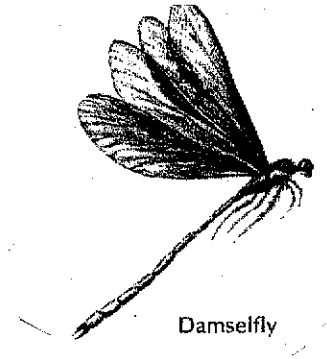
CONDORS IN THE WATERSHED?

The Fish and Wildlife Service has given the OK for condors to be released in the Diablo Range in Santa Clara Valley beginning in December 2000.



Mayfly

MARK YOUR CALENDAR:



Damselfly

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| February 22 | Alameda Creek Alliance Meeting (see page 1) |
| March 14 | Day of Action Against Dams (see page 3)
Demonstration at the Alameda County Water District |
| May 13 | Fremont Steelhead Festival (see page 3) |
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