

Group Hopes to Bring Back Wild Fish Runs

An East Bay group of fishermen and environmentalists are moving forward with efforts to return the wild runs of Chinook and steelhead to Alameda Creek.

The creek runs through Niles Canyon near Sunol.

There have been arguments put forth that no native Chinook salmon or steelhead (trout) inhabit Alameda Creek. "The fish are there," states Jeff Miller, a member of the group. Every wet year both have been seen in the creek and the group has documentation and will be monitoring the stream this winter to obtain more documentation.

He said a Chinook was spotted in Alameda Creek on Thanksgiving Day trying to swim upstream. The body of the three foot, 25 pound salmon was found later on a dry slab of cement. The Alameda Water District had inflated its dams at a crucial point in the salmon's migration, cutting off the water flow.

Miller said there are two problems fish face in trying to reach spawning grounds. One is a structure built into the flood control channel. The 45 degree structure is about 12 feet high. A fish ladder is needed to allow the fish to negotiate it.

The second is the inflatable rubber dams the water district uses to divert water into nearby quarries. The water is used to replenish the underground water table, necessary to keep

salt water from intruding. During high water flows, the fish can swim upstream. However, the water diversion prevents the fish from reaching spawning grounds.

Miller said the group is working with the water department to try to get a fish ladder installed and to try to retain steady water flow to the bay during spawning periods. The steelhead, unlike its cousin the rainbow trout, migrates to the sea.

He said the first effort will be to try to find a cooperative solution. If that fails, the group will resort to the legal system.

The steelhead was placed on the federal threatened species last summer. The listing gives the group a legal basis to protect the fish.

He pointed out there is currently a healthy population of steelhead in Sunol Regional park. Tests have shown they are the native species so the gene pool is there to reestablish a stronger run.

The Chinook has also been listed as threatened, but not to the south of the Bay Bridge. Miller said fish and game has indicated they don't believe Chinook historically ran in Alameda Creek. They refer to those seen in the creek as "lost" hatchery fish. "The fish should be encouraged to establish a run," Miller said.

He added that Alameda Creek is listed as having supported historic

(See FISH, page 2)

FISH

(continued from page one)

steelhead, coho and Chinook salmon runs in the recently released, "State of the Estuary" report. The report also notes there is an existing steelhead run, size unknown.

In 1989 Friends of Alameda Creek tried to reestablish the Chinook and steelhead in Alameda Creek. Miller said they did not have the benefit of a federal listing at that time.

There are 75 people who belong to the group; about one-third are from Fremont; another third from the Tri-Valley, the remainder from other areas of the East Bay.