

## Alameda County Water District Working Within Broad Collaboration to Restore Bay Area Steelhead Runs



A Central Coast steelhead makes its way upstream in Alameda Creek, where the Alameda County Water District is building fish passages as part of a broad collaborative effort to help further restore anadromous fish runs.

Collaboration among ACWA member agency Alameda County Water District (ACWD), a construction firm and environmental groups has secured \$2 million in funding for migratory fish passage projects in lower Alameda Creek in the San Francisco Bay Area.

The successful milestone demonstrates that long-term public, private and non-governmental organization partnerships can achieve multi-layered goals such as environmental enhancements while protecting water supplies.

ACWD's fish passage projects include the construction of fish ladders, fish screens and other fish-friendly improvements in lower Alameda Creek to support safe and unobstructed migration of Central Coast steelhead trout. Following decades of planning, ACWD is currently in the second of a three-year construction schedule to round out its final phase of salmon and steelhead passage projects in Alameda Creek.

Alameda Creek is a local water supply and accounts for roughly 40% of ACWD's water

serving 357,000 people in Fremont, Newark and Union City. The fish passage projects will allow ACWD to continue operations of its rubber dams and other facilities along the creek to recharge the area's Niles Cone Groundwater Basin sustainably.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers constructed flood control projects on the creek during the 1970s that blocked migratory access to most of the Alameda Creek watershed. Its Central Coast steelhead trout run was declared endangered in 1977, and by 1998, just 35 of the fish were radio tagged as volunteers helped trap and carry them over a weir.

When completed, the new fish passages will re-open access to the entire watershed and hopefully nurture healthier runs numbering in the hundreds, if not thousands, of the anadromous fish.

DeSilva Gates Construction, operator of the DeSilva Gates Aggregates Quarry in Sunol, recently made the first of two \$1 million payments to help fund the fish passage projects. This financial support from DeSilva

Gates Construction will aid in the completion of ACWD's projects that will improve access to migratory routes creating a more fish-friendly waterway and access for steelhead and salmon to spawning and rearing habitat throughout the Alameda Creek watershed.

"Alameda Creek fisheries restoration is near to my heart," stated ACWD Board President Judy Huang, in an ACWD news release. "It is not common to see this type of cooperation between organizations who have different interests," added Huang. "Working together, we found a path forward that leads to success, and many thanks to DeSilva Gates Construction, for their generosity."

Since 2008, a Conservation Plan for the Sunol gravel quarry has been in place through the partnership to protect and conserve special-status species and enhance biological resources in Sunol Valley and the Alameda Creek watershed.

"This funding helps ACWD complete the long-awaited and most critical fish passage projects in Alameda Creek, a key watershed for restoration of steelhead trout in the Bay Area. The water district's new fish ladders are going to allow migratory fish to access a significant portion of the watershed," Jeff Miller of the Alameda Creek Alliance and the Center for Biological Diversity, stated in the news release.

"Working in concert with the environmental community and a public agency has been very rewarding, and it is an honor to contribute to this important regional effort," stated DeSilva Gates Vice President Jim Summers. "The agreement that was forged between Alameda Creek Alliance, The Center for Biological Diversity and DeSilva Gates and the \$2 million contribution from DeSilva Gates will have a significant positive impact on the restoration of this important watershed."

ACWD produced a virtual tour of its project that included a "fish eye" view of how it will work when completed. To learn more, visit [www.acwd.org/tours](http://www.acwd.org/tours). ♠

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**Below left**, A fish passage under construction on Alameda Creek in the San Francisco Bay Area will help salmon and steelhead access the creek's upper watershed. **Below right**, ACWD Water Resources Manager Laura Hidas narrates part of a video featuring the district's work on Alameda Creek, in the background. The video is posted on [www.acwd.org/tours](http://www.acwd.org/tours). Photos courtesy of Alameda County Water District

