Steelhead return
could curb trout
fishing in creek

By Kristin Butler

FREMONT — Fishermen
could lose their chance to angle
in Alameda Creek, thanks to a
recent effort by the Alameda Creek
Alliance to bring steelhead
tout back to the popular
watersway.

If the steelhead make a
serious comeback, the state will
have to stop stocking the creek
with rainbow trout, according
to biologists. These smaller fish
would compete with the steelhead
for food and eat their
young, and could also spread
disease to their wild cousins.

But local fishermen would
then be deprived of rainbow
tROUT AND they won't be able to
take the steelhead for many years because the creek
would be protected.

Despite these potential
losses, many local fishermen say
the chance to catch wild fish in
its home would far outweigh
the losses of their local fishing
ground.

"I would give up my right to
fish there if they could improve
the natural habitat and bring
the steelhead back," said Demi
Rose, 55, who lives just
outside Union City and is president
of the local fishing group called
the Skippers Club. "I'm hoping for
the long run my grandkids will
be able to fish there like I did.

Environmentalists have
sought to bring the steelhead
back to its
former spawning grounds
upstream in Alameda Creek
for more than a year. The fish are
barred from reaching their old

destination by concrete
weirs and infiltrable
drains, and their
habitat has been damaged by
pesticides and chemical
lagoons.

Since November, more than a
dozens steelhead have been
spotted in the creek, contradicting the earlier belief that the
fish had vanished from the area
40 years ago.

The Alameda Creek Alliance
recently transported eight steelhead
from a hatchery to upstream
spawning grounds. It
hoped to build a fish ladder to
help other fish make the
journey.

Local fishermen say they
support these efforts to bring
steelhead back to the creek. A true
sportsman welcomes the return
of a threatened speccies and is
willing to accept what that may
mean to his hobby, they said.

"The fishermen are excited,"
said Casey Martin, a 57-year-old
fisherman who has lived in
Fremont and Union City all his life.
"We are willing to go through
the effort to give the steelhead a
chance to spawn. This is a long
term decision.

Fishermen are not to blame
for the destruction of fish
populations, said fellow Skippers
Club member Harry James, a 57-
year-old fisherman from
Newark.

A representative from the
Alameda Creek Alliance will meet
with the Skippers Club to talk
about steelhead at the club's
next meeting, at 7:30 p.m.
Sunday at Marie Callender's at
the Hub.