Trout restoration to get closer look

A county and conservancy study will consider fish ladders for the Alameda Creek watershed.

By Bonita Brewer

SUNOL - Steelhead trout could get their chance to spawn again in the far reaches of the Sunol Regional Wilderness.

Alameda County supervisors agreed Tuesday to join with the California Coastal Conservancy to pay for a $40,000 fishery restoration study of the Alameda Creek watershed.

The study, which is expected to be completed in December, will consider what it would take to build three fish ladders to help trout migrate upstream from the Bay over a series of man-made barriers along the lower end of the creek in the Fremont area.

Richard Wettig said the cost of building a fish ladder at the most troubling migration barrier—a concrete weir near three inflatable dams operated by the Alameda County Water District in Fremont—has been estimated at $1 million.

If the study shows that the fish ladder project is feasible, the county would apply to the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers for 75 percent of the needed funding.

In addition, the Coastal Conservancy has expressed interest in helping the county pay its 25 percent share. County funds would come from the budget of the Zone 5 Flood Control District, which serves parts of Fremont, Newark and Union City.

The ladders would be built in a series of small pools, allowing the fish to jump easily from one to the next. The largest would be built in the weir, which is near the middle of the three inflatable dams. The other ladders would be smaller and less expensive.

Steelhead trout have been listed by the federal government as threatened species, a designation that could lead to special protections, including required changes in the management of creeks where they are found.

The study will be performed under a county contract with Applied Fresh Sciences Inc.