

The ACWD Aqueduct

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Milestone Agreement Brings Steelhead One Step Closer to a Home in Alameda Creek

The restoration of a steelhead trout run in Alameda Creek came one step closer to reality recently with the signing of a milestone agreement. This fall, 17 public agencies and nonprofit organizations signed a Memorandum of Understanding to conduct studies of how much water might be needed to restore a population of the threatened species within the Alameda Creek watershed.

Steelhead trout on the central California coast were listed under the Endangered Species Act as a threatened species in 1997. Working with the knowledge that the 700 square mile Alameda Creek watershed once supported populations of steelhead, a multi-agency fisheries workgroup, formed in 1999, has been pursuing the goal of reestablishing a healthy steelhead run in the creek. The water flow studies are a critical part of accomplishing this goal.

The studies will help to identify how much water will be needed to sustain a viable population, as well as when and where it will be needed. Other native fish and wildlife will be taken into consideration as the studies are done, as will potential impacts to drinking water supplies. The goal is to provide water to restore a steelhead run without compromising water supply.

The Alameda County Water District contributed \$30,000 towards the studies, as did three other public agencies. The total \$120,000 is being matched by the California State Coastal Conservancy. The flow studies will be conducted in two phases by a team of consultants. Flow studies in Alameda Creek will help to determine how much water is needed to sustain a steelhead trout population.

ACWD Partners in Streambank Restoration Project

For many years, the eroding banks of the Arroyo de la Laguna, a major tributary of Alameda Creek, have jeopardized property, degraded water quality, and destroyed wildlife habitat. Now, the Alameda County Water District, together with other local, state, and federal agencies, is participating in a federally sanctioned pilot project to battle this serious streambank erosion. The project will demonstrate a series of "biotechnical" stream restoration practices that will protect the streambank and water quality in a way that will also improve and create wildlife habitat.

To help slow down the water and deflect it back to the Arroyo's center, while creating healthier habitat, the project uses harvested eucalyptus trees, Christmas trees, root masses from fallen oak trees, rock barbs, and new vegetative plantings. If successful, these practices may be utilized in other parts of the watershed with similar issues.

Because controlling streambank erosion in the Arroyo will improve water quality in Alameda Creek, ACWD has contributed \$10,000 to the restoration project. Reducing the amount of silt carried by Alameda Creek will allow cleaner water to percolate into the groundwater basin underlying the Tri-City area. Up to 50% of the water used in Fremont, Newark, and Union City is drawn from this groundwater basin.