

Steelhead Trout Moved Past Concrete Barrier

March 30, 2017

Alameda Creek Alliance volunteers last week helped fish biologists from the East Bay Regional Park District capture adult steelhead trout in lower Alameda Creek. They were located below an impassable concrete barrier that blocks fish spawning migration. The trout were moved upstream into Niles Canyon. Five steelhead trout were netted during a half hour fish rescue by about 30 volunteers and fisheries staff. Radio transmitters were attached to four steelhead so their upstream migration can be tracked by Park District biologists. There was to be an attempt Wednesday, March 29 to capture more steelhead that remain in lower Alameda Creek below the BART weir, the site of a future fish ladder. Jeff Miller, director of the Alameda Creek Alliance, stated, "With the wet winter we're having, it's nice to welcome steelhead and other migratory fish back into the Alameda Creek watershed. The steelhead we tagged yesterday can move into tributary streams in Niles Canyon to spawn, and may even be able to migrate up to prime trout habitat in Sunol Regional Wilderness. Water agencies are close to completing planning for two fish ladders in lower Alameda Creek that will allow future salmon and steelhead to migrate upstream on their own to reach spawning areas."

Steelhead trout were initially spotted in lower Alameda Creek on February 6 at the BART weir, a 12-foot concrete barrier that is monitored during fish migration season by Alameda Creek Alliance volunteers. Dozens of steelhead were seen jumping at the barrier throughout March. Pacific lamprey, bizarre native fish that resemble eels and which also migrate to freshwater for spawning, were seen at the weir throughout the past month. Lamprey can suction their way over barriers that block steelhead, and are known to make it upstream to spawn in upper Alameda Creek in Sunol Regional Park. The Alameda County Water District and California Department of Fish and Wildlife helped coordinate yesterday's fish capture and tagging. Trout Unlimited and the Diablo Valley Fly Fishers also provided volunteers.

Local, state and federal agencies have been working on multiple projects to restore steelhead trout to Alameda Creek. The Alameda County Water District and Alameda County Flood Control District are planning critical fish ladder projects in the flood control channel that have been delayed for many years. Beginning in 2019, the agencies plan to construct two fish ladders that will allow steelhead to bypass the BART weir and two inflatable rubber dams in the lower creek channel.