



## **ALAMEDA CREEK ALLIANCE FIGHTING TO RESTORE ENDANGERED STEELHEAD AND SALMON RUNS**

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A citizen's watershed group has formed to help restore local runs of wild salmon and steelhead in Alameda Creek. Alameda Creek Alliance will be working to make Alameda Creek a more hospitable place to Steelhead and King Salmon, two species of ocean-going fish which have attempted to reintroduce themselves to the watershed in recent years. Last winter's heavy rains brought salmon in numbers not seen in several decades to spawn in South Bay streams, including over a thousand of the mighty fish in Guadalupe River, through downtown San Jose. King Salmon were seen last Thanksgiving in Alameda Creek trapped below a concrete drop structure constructed to stabilize the Western Pacific Railroad (W.P.R.R.) tracks in Fremont; one of several obstacles to fish attempting to make it upstream to quality spawning habitat in and above Niles Canyon. The political barriers have proved as deadly as the physical ones to the fish. Various water agencies control stream flows and water diversions out of Alameda Creek, and for the steelhead to survive, there need to be adequate flows through late spring to ensure that the juvenile fish survive to make their way back to the bay as "smolts" 1 to 2 years later.

Alameda Creek is a 700 square mile watershed, the largest in the East Bay and contains prime stream spawning habitat in Niles Canyon and Sunol and Ohlone Regional Wildernesses, east of Fremont. Steelhead, King and Coho Salmon, all of which have recently been federally listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act, once ran in large numbers up Alameda and other Bay Area creeks. Urbanization, and the accompanying dam building and water projects, along with misguided flood control channelization of streams and water diversions virtually destroyed these runs. The California

Department of Fish and Game has claimed that wild steelhead runs were eliminated in Alameda Creek in the 1950's, but local fisherman have seen wild steelhead attempting to come upstream to spawn during many of the wet winters, and as recently as four years ago. Concerned citizens took it upon themselves to carry fish over the W.P.R.R. invert during last year's salmon run.

With the possibility of record rainfall from the predicted El Nino weather patterns, this winter could see a return of steelhead and salmon attempting to migrate up Alameda Creek to spawn. Which is where the Alameda Creek Alliance comes in. "It is truly remarkable that even remnant populations of these fish have survived, despite the development and the abuse inflicted upon this creek. These fish are fighters, a testament to the power of nature, and we owe it to them to make sure they have the habitat they need to survive and to thrive." said Alliance member Jeff Miller. "It's very exciting; who doesn't want to see large, ocean-going fish flopping up their backyard creek to spawn? " In the 1970s the State Department of Water Resources proposed Alameda Creek as the top candidate in the state for urban creek restoration. In 1989, a citizen's group called friends of Alameda Creek attempted to restore steelhead and salmon runs and eight public agencies published a feasibility and cost analysis study of restoring a steelhead run in the creek. Due to opposition from the water agencies, no action was taken. Now, eight years later, both steelhead and salmon have been federally listed under the Endangered Species Act, theoretically giving them some protection. Alameda Creek Alliance has formed to make that protection a reality. "We will do whatever it takes to help these fish reestablish themselves." said Miller. "We'll be out on the creek this winter documenting the fact that the fish are indeed here, so that we have a case to take to the Department of Fish and Game and the National Marine Fisheries Service - that they need to take action to protect these threatened species. Pressure on the agencies responsible, lawsuits, carrying trapped fish over barriers, restoration work...there's lots of work to be done, but the rewards are immeasurable - the return of a wild species to our watershed."

Alameda Creek Alliance meets Tuesday, October 28th, 7-9 PM at the Centerville Public Library in Fremont, 3101 Nicolet Ave. (510) 376-0518 for information.