

# STEELHEAD TROUT AND SALMON RETURN TO ALAMEDA CREEK

THREATENED FISH BLOCKED FROM SPAWNING  
RIVER OTTER ALSO SEEN IN LOWER CREEK



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
OCTOBER 27, 2004

**CONTACT:**

**Jeff Miller** (510) 499-9185  
**Alameda Creek Alliance**

**Fremont, CA** – Steelhead trout and chinook salmon were observed in lower Alameda Creek today attempting to migrate upstream to spawn. One large adult fish thought to be a salmon was seen and numerous other half-pound trout are currently blocked below the BART weir, a barrier to fish migration in the Alameda Creek flood control channel in Fremont. A river otter was observed yesterday at the same location, an unusual wildlife sighting for an urban creek. Another large fish, thought to have been a chinook salmon, was spotted one-half mile downstream earlier this morning near an Alameda County Water District (ACWD) rubber dam that has been deflated due to high runoff from this week's storms. Steelhead trout were listed as a federally threatened species in 1997 and the Alameda Creek Alliance (ACA) has been fighting since then for dam removals and construction of fish ladders to allow migratory fish to reach spawning habitat further upstream.

In past years, fisheries biologists and volunteers have been given permission by the Department of Fish and Game and the federal agency NOAA Fisheries to move blocked or stranded fish upstream. With increased federal protection for steelhead, handling fish now requires state and federal permits, which have not been issued for Alameda Creek, a major failure of the regulatory agencies to allow interim fish passage while stalled fish passage restoration projects move slowly forward. The ACWD and Alameda County Flood Control District are in the planning stages and pursuing funding for fish passage projects in the lower creek. The projects would provide fish passage facilities at the BART weir and ACWD rubber dams, possibly remove one or more of the rubber dams, and install fish screens on ACWD water diversions so juvenile trout would not be diverted from the creek.

The ACA has vowed that this is the last year it will allow fish passage to be blocked without an interim fish passage plan and permits to move fish upstream. "If a plan and permits are not in place by next fall, the ACA will pursue legal action for past and ongoing "take" of steelhead under the ESA and violations of state Fish and Game Codes requiring fish passage and adequate flows to protect fish," said Jeff Miller, Director of the ACA.

An East Bay Regional Park District fisheries biologist has permission to capture the fish to move them downstream to the Bay if they are in danger of getting stranded or de-watered, but not upstream to where they can spawn. The flood control channel is not suitable spawning habitat for steelhead or salmon because the high stream temperature there is harmful to fish eggs and young, water flows are often cut off by operation of the rubber dams, and eggs and young fish face a gauntlet of avian and introduced fish predators.

The restoration of Alameda Creek has become a regional priority since the ACA formed and began advocating for steelhead restoration in 1997. The only other viable steelhead populations in San Francisco Bay tributaries are in Coyote Creek and the Guadalupe River in the South Bay, and San Francisquito Creek on the Peninsula. There are currently twelve local, state, and federal agencies cooperating on a number of migratory fish restoration projects in Alameda Creek, including dam removals and construction of fish ladders and fish screens. The restoration projects are aimed at allowing adult steelhead, which have been blocked by barriers in lower Alameda Creek, to reach spawning and rearing habitat 25 miles upstream in Sunol Regional Wilderness. The most important fish passage projects in the lower creek have been stalled by a cut in hoped-for funding by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) will remove two dams from Niles Canyon in 2005.

Other steelhead restoration projects proposed by the ACA include making a PG&E gas pipeline crossing in the Sunol Valley passable to fish, removing the SFPUC's Alameda Diversion Dam from upper Alameda Creek, providing additional water flows from the Calaveras and San Antonio Reservoirs for fish habitat downstream, and moving landlocked trout from these reservoirs (thought to be descendants of the creek's original steelhead run) to the lower creek to "jump-start" an ocean-run population.

The ACA is a community restoration group with over 620 members dedicated to protecting and restoring Alameda Creek and its tributaries. Contact the ACA at (510) 845-2233 or [alamedacreek@hotmail.com](mailto:alamedacreek@hotmail.com).