



SFPUC Nears Historic Completion of Dam Removal on Alameda Creek to Restore Threatened Steelhead

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SFPUC Celebrates Sunol & Niles "Dam Busting" as 17 Organizations Sign Landmark Agreement on Restoration of Creek Flows & Native Fisheries

Officials from the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) today joined environmental leaders and representatives from other local agencies to celebrate the removal of the Sunol and Niles Dams on Alameda Creek in order to restore Creek flows and native habitat for threatened Steelhead. The more than 100-year old Sunol and Niles Dams are the largest dams ever removed for fish restoration in Bay Area history. SFPUC General Manager Susan Leal and Alameda Creek Alliance Director Jeff Miller also formally signed a historic agreement between the SFPUC, Alameda Creek Alliance and more than a dozen other local, state and federal water, regulatory and natural resources agencies to jointly study improved Creek flows necessary to restore Steelhead runs.

"This is a historic day for the SFPUC and for all those who care about restoring Steelhead to Alameda Creek," said SFPUC General Manager Susan Leal at a "dam busting" celebration luncheon near the Sunol Water Temple. "Even as we work to rebuild the seismically vulnerable Calaveras Reservoir upstream, we have a responsibility to work together and protect Alameda Creek and native fisheries for the future."

The demolishing of the two dams restores Alameda Creek flow and removes long-time barriers to upstream passage of the central California Coast steelhead, a federally listed threatened species that was once a self-sustaining population in the creek. The dams and the pools they created have also attracted trespassers and posed public safety hazards.

"We commend the SFPUC for removing these barriers to fish migration and we look forward to working with the agency to further enhance native fish habitat as part of their upcoming project to rebuild the seismically vulnerable Calaveras Dam," said Jeff Miller, Director of the Alameda Creek Alliance.

As part of the "Dam Busting" luncheon hosted by the SFPUC and attended by dozens of agency officials, representatives, environmentalists and community leaders, Leal and Miller formally signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between 17 local, state and federal agencies and organizations to jointly support and fund \$240,000 in Creek studies to determine the stream flows necessary to allow ocean-run steelhead trout and salmon to reach

suitable spawning and rearing habitat in upper Alameda Creek in and above the Sunol Regional Wilderness.

“With the removal of these dams and the signing this month of a cooperative agreement among 17 agencies and organizations to conduct stream flow and fish habitat studies throughout the watershed, the restoration of Alameda Creek's native fisheries is well underway,” said Miller.

The Spring Valley Water Company (purchased by San Francisco in 1930) built the Niles Dam in the 1880's. The Sunol Dam was built in 1900. Though the dams were once important parts of the local water system, the SFPUC discontinued their use following the completion of the Hetch Hetchy water system in the 1930's. The cost of the dam removal projects is \$1.4 million.

Over the last ten years, the SFPUC has also more closely monitored Creek flows and resident fish populations. SFPUC workers are currently installing a temporary valve in the existing, seismically vulnerable Calaveras Dam to ensure fluctuations in Creek flow are controlled and minimized. Once rebuilt, beginning in 2009 and completed in 2011, the Calaveras Reservoir will help ensure creek flows that will support threatened Steelhead runs on Alameda Creek.

“Now we are working cooperatively to see that seismic improvements to protect our regional water supply also bring environmental improvements to protect Alameda Creek,” said Leal. “None of us can restore this wonderful and unique steelhead population alone, but I believe we can do it together.”

The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission owns and manages the Hetch Hetchy water system that delivers drinking water to 2.4 million people in San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara & Alameda Counties. The SFPUC also collects and treats wastewater and storm water for the City of San Francisco and generates clean hydropower and renewable power to provide municipal energy for San Francisco.

For more information about the restoration of Alameda Creek, visit the Alameda Creek Alliance web site at <http://www.alamedacreek.org/>.