

NEW STATE FISH AND GAME REGULATIONS CLOSE FISHING IN ALAMEDA CREEK BELOW MAJOR DAMS



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 15, 2009

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Sacramento, CA – The California Fish and Game Commission voted last week to approve new statewide sport fishing regulations for 2010-2012 that include a year-round closure on all fishing in Alameda Creek and its tributaries downstream of San Antonio, Calaveras, and Del Valle reservoirs, to protect listed steelhead trout and remnant populations of native rainbow trout. Conservation and flyfishing groups in the watershed and throughout the state supported the Alameda Creek regulations due to the conservation significance, low population numbers, and potential threats to steelhead and rainbow trout populations in Alameda Creek.

“We’ve worked very hard for over a decade to begin to bring steelhead trout and salmon back to Alameda Creek and we support the closure on fishing at this time to allow steelhead to recover and reduce potential impacts on remnant rainbow trout populations below the major dams,” said Jeff Miller, Director of the Alameda Creek Alliance. “If we can restore the native fish of Alameda Creek and thereby contribute to the recovery of the central coast population of steelhead trout, we can potentially revisit fishing regulations in the future to provide some unique angling opportunities near an urban area. However, without immediate protection of the limited trout populations still residing in the creek, the seeds of successful restoration could be lost.”

The new fishing regulations resulted from a combination of Department of Fish and Game and public requests for revisions to sport fishing bag limits to protect fisheries resources. The new regulations provide year-round closure of all fishing for areas downstream of the major reservoirs in the Alameda Creek watershed, while continuing to allow catch-and-release fly-fishing (with artificial lures and barbless hooks) where there is legal access for fishing in tributaries upstream of these reservoirs, from the end of April through November 15.

The Alameda Creek Alliance, California Sportfishing Protection Alliance, Center for Ecosystem Management and Restoration, Friends of Sausal Creek, Golden West Women Flyfishers, Mission Peak Fly Anglers, Nature in the City, Northern California Council of the Federation of Fly Fishers, Regional Parks Association, and Tri-City Ecology Center supported the proposed changes to the fishing regulations for Alameda Creek and its tributaries.

The Department of Fish and Game requested the new Alameda Creek regulations because of the substantive efforts that are underway to provide fish passage over migration barriers in Alameda Creek. The new regulations protect anadromous steelhead that are annually relocated upstream of barriers in the flood control channel from fishing pressure as well as resident rainbow trout populations below the major dams, which have declined to low numbers in recent years.

The state fishing regulations up until 2006 allowed for the take of up to five trout per day from Alameda Creek during a late April to mid-November fishing season. In 2006 fishing in the watershed was restricted to catch-and-release fishing only with artificial lures and barbless hooks during the fishing season. Public access for fishing is not allowed in the flood control channel in the lower creek, in Niles Canyon, or in the Sunol Valley. Above the major dams, public fishing access on public land is only provided above Del Valle Reservoir.

Alameda Creek, the largest watershed of all local streams tributary to the San Francisco Bay, is becoming an urban stream success story after decades of restoration efforts. Since steelhead trout in the Bay Area and central coast were listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 1997, numerous organizations and agencies have been pursuing restoration projects to allow migratory fish from the Bay to reach spawning habitat in upper Alameda Creek. Downstream of major dams, 11 fish passage projects at small and medium barriers in the creek have been completed since 2001 and several more major fish ladder and dam removal projects will be completed by 2012. This will allow anadromous fish access to 20 miles of suitable spawning and rearing habitat in the watershed for the first time in almost half a century. Alameda Creek is an 'anchor watershed' considered regionally significant for restoration of threatened steelhead trout to the entire Bay Area.

The Alameda Creek Alliance (www.alamedacreek.org) is a community watershed group with over 1,750 members, dedicated to protecting and restoring the natural ecosystems of the Alameda Creek watershed. The Alameda Creek Alliance has been working to restore steelhead trout and protect endangered species in the Alameda Creek watershed since 1997.