

## CONSERVATION GROUP ASKS WATER BOARD TO INVESTIGATE FILLING OF PLEASANTON WETLANDS



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**Pleasanton, CA** – The Alameda Creek Alliance has asked the San Francisco Regional Water Quality Control Board to investigate the apparently unpermitted filling of seasonal wetlands at the Staples Ranch site in Pleasanton. A public records request and investigation by the Alameda Creek Alliance revealed that wetlands on the Staples Ranch site were filled without required permits from the Water Board.

“The wetlands on the Staples Ranch site were potential breeding habitat for the threatened California tiger salamander and were documented to support a population of a rare plant, the San Joaquin spearscale,” said Ralph Kanz, Conservation Director for the Alameda Creek Alliance. “These wetlands were improperly filled in 2003, before surveys for salamanders were conducted.”

The City of Pleasanton is currently proposing a development project for the Staples Ranch site. During environmental review for the Staples Ranch development, the Alameda Creek Alliance learned that construction of the Arroyo Las Positas Realignment/Arroyo Mocho Widening Project in 2003 filled wetlands in the northwest portion of Staples Ranch with surplus soils. A 1994 wetland delineation identified this area as having all the features of an alkali sink or vernal pool, including San Joaquin spearscale, a rare plant usually found in alkaline soils. A portion of the wetlands was filled with 6-12 inches of water, potentially enough to provide breeding habitat for salamanders. The California tiger salamander depends on ephemeral vernal pools for breeding. In recent decades, 95 percent of California’s vernal pools have been lost, and at least 75 percent of the salamander’s habitat throughout the state has been eliminated.

“Although the filled area will never again provide habitat for wetland species, the impacts of past and future activities should be properly mitigated, especially when habitat for threatened and rare species is altered or destroyed,” said Jeff Miller, Director of the Alameda Creek Alliance. “The City of Pleasanton and Alameda County must fully mitigate for wetland habitat loss on the Staples Ranch site.”

The Alameda Creek Alliance and the Center for Biological Diversity filed and won a lawsuit challenging an inadequate environmental review for the Staples Ranch development project in 2009. A settlement with the City of Pleasanton resulted in a supplemental review of the project’s effects on sensitive plants and wildlife in December of 2009. This supplemental review was also deficient since it did not fully disclose the impacts to wetland species and habitat. The Alameda Creek Alliance has provided comments on Pleasanton’s supplemental Environmental Impact Report and highlighted the inadequacy of surveys and mitigations for San Joaquin spearscale and California tiger salamander habitat.

*The Alameda Creek Alliance ([www.alamedacreek.org](http://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.*