

Niles Canyon News

Silent Protest at Caltrans Hearing May 7 in Fremont

Caltrans, after announcing it will restart the environmental review and public comment for phases I and II of the Niles Canyon highway widening project, will now hold yet another public meeting on the project, supposedly to get “local stakeholder feedback.” Scheduling a public input meeting on a Monday morning when most of the community cannot attend is telling.

This next meeting will be with an “independent” panel of “traffic safety experts” from the Federal Highway Administration. The FHA is not independent – they are in the business of road-building and highway widening and work with and fund Caltrans on many highway projects.

Since Caltrans has completely ignored all public input, comments and opposition to the project and has yet to consider a safety project without highway widening, we view this latest dog-and-pony show as an attempt by Caltrans to have the FHA somehow “validate” their highway widening project.

The FHA and Caltrans will now conduct a “Road Safety Assessment” to “evaluate the current accident data, observe current traffic patterns and behaviors, consider environmental impacts and local stakeholder feedback, and recommend possible safety improvements to State Route 84.” We are not aware of any independent environmental experts invited to be on the panel.

Caltrans and FHA will hold a kickoff meeting and presentation on Monday, May 7, from 9 am until noon, at the City of Fremont Housing Division (Niles Conference Room), 39550 Liberty Street in Fremont.

Save Niles Canyon and Alameda Creek Alliance will hold a silent PROTEST outside of the meeting; we need as many people as possible to arrive at 8:30 am on May 7 and hold signs lining the entrance to the meeting. We will try to get the press there. This will be a silent protest – we will not engage or debate Caltrans or FHA representatives outside the event. The purpose is to have a dignified show of community opposition to the project. We will have numerous creative signs with our message: to protect the canyon and its wildlife habitat, demand Caltrans drop the highway widening proposal, and supporting reasonable and justifiable road safety projects within the existing roadway. Save Niles Canyon, Alameda Creek Alliance and the coalition of groups working to protect the canyon will send a delegation of stakeholders into the meeting to raise our issues with the project before the FHA.

There will be a sign-making party in Niles on Saturday, May 5, at the LEAF Center in Niles, with BBQ and pies by Niles Pie. If you would like to attend the sign-making party and/or the protest, please contact Bruce Cates at bwates@hotmail.com.

Caltrans and the FHA will have a follow-up meeting on the Road Safety Assessment at the same location (Fremont Housing Division) on Wednesday, May 23, from 1 to 3 pm.

Find out more about the Alameda Creek Alliance's campaign to [Protect Niles Canyon](#).

Caltrans Audit

Save Niles Canyon is pursuing a Caltrans internal audit of the proposed highway widening project. Although we do not hold out much hope for Caltrans to objectively audit themselves, a complaint letter was sent to Caltrans' Audits and Investigations Unit on March 22.

Where are Our Elected Representatives?

We are extremely disappointed in the inaction and non-response of our elected state officials, Senator Ellen Corbett and Assembly member Bob Wieckowski. On February 23, we asked these representatives to introduce legislation that would prevent Caltrans from funding or implementing any project which involves widening the road in Niles Canyon. These are our elected officials who are supposed to represent the constituents in their legislative districts; it has been over **two months** and they have not responded and refuse to return phone calls.

Please contact these representatives and politely insist they help with a legislative solution to force Caltrans to pursue a reasonable and justifiable highway safety project in Niles Canyon. Ask them to sponsor legislation that would prevent Caltrans from funding or implementing any project which involves widening the road in Niles Canyon, while allowing safety projects and measures within the existing roadway that address safety concerns in Niles Canyon.

Contact Senator Corbett

E-mail: Senator.Corbett@senate.ca.gov

Phone: (510) 794-3900

Mail: Senator Ellen Corbett, 39155 Liberty St., #F610, Fremont, CA 94538

If you live in Corbett's district (Pleasanton, Sunol, San Leandro, Hayward, Union City, Fremont, Newark, Milpitas, San Jose), you can contact her online here: <http://sd10.senate.ca.gov/contact>

Contact Assembly member Wieckowski

E-mail: Assemblymember.Wieckowski@assembly.ca.gov

Phone: (510) 440-9030

Mail: Assembly member Bob Wieckowski, 39510 Paseo Padre Parkway, Suite 280, Fremont, CA 94538

If you live in Wieckowski's district (Pleasanton, Sunol, Castro Valley, Union City, Fremont, Newark, Milpitas), you can contact him online here:

<http://lcmspubcontact.lc.ca.gov/PublicLCMS/ContactPopup.php?district=AD20&>

No Fremont Truck Ban for Niles Canyon

The Fremont City Council on April 3 directed staff not to proceed with the Niles Canyon Road Truck Restriction Process. Fremont had initiated a process with Caltrans for restriction of trucks over 5 tons on Niles Canyon Road to help improve safety in the canyon. However, the Initial Study looking at the proposed truck restriction raised a number of issues regarding the benefits and risks of pursuing such a truck ban

To start with, the restriction could only apply to big-rig trucks and trucks over 5 tons; panel trucks and smaller trucks that are responsible for most of the accidents involving trucks and a disproportionate number of accidents in the canyon could not be restricted. There was also concern that diverting big-rig and large truck traffic out of the canyon would force these vehicles and any safety impacts onto Mission Blvd., where schools are located.

Fremont has been very vocal in trying to change the scope of Caltrans' misguided Niles Canyon highway widening project. We appreciate Fremont's investigation into the truck restriction and respect their decision. One beneficial result from this process was that Fremont contributed to information about the purported safety need for the Caltrans project, publishing data on collisions and fatal accidents in the canyon that differed significantly from Caltrans' suspect data. The Fremont data show that most metrics of safety conditions have improved in the canyon since the 2007 installation of a center-line rumble strip by Caltrans, a partial solution to safety issues in the canyon without highway widening.

The coalition of groups working to protect Niles Canyon will now investigate a state process for de-certifying the Niles Canyon Road section of Route 84 as a State Highway, which would

remove the Caltrans incentive to try to force unneeded one-size-fits-all highway widths into the canyon.

Steelhead Return to Lower Alameda Creek

After no sightings since 2008, two adult steelhead trout were spotted in lower Alameda Creek at the BART weir on March 17, and an unsuccessful attempt was made the following day to capture these fish to tag them and transport them upstream. A steelhead was again seen on March 25. Another attempted fish tagging was made on March 28. No adult steelhead were caught, but there were some very interesting fish sightings: an adult Pacific lamprey was at the BART weir suckering its way up the drop structure, headed upstream to spawn; and a juvenile trout that looked like a smolt (a juvenile trout beginning its downstream journey to the ocean) was netted at the weir. This implies that resident rainbow/steelhead trout populations in Alameda Creek below the major dams are still migratory, and send offspring to salt-water to come back as steelhead.

Many thanks to the volunteers who showed up to help with the nets for the attempted fish rescues. If you want to be alerted for future fish rescues, send an e-mail to alamedacreek@hotmail.com.

Sunol Quarry Agreement

Read the San Jose Mercury News article from March 17 about Save Our Sunol and mining company Oliver de Silva entering into an agreement regarding the gravel quarry (SMP-30) on Calaveras Road in Sunol:

[***Sunol Quarry Makes Friends in Deals to Help Environment and Pay Community***](#)

The Sunol agreement follows a 2008 Alameda Creek Alliance [conservation agreement](#) with Oliver de Silva regarding the existing Sunol Valley Quarry and the proposed Apperson Ridge Quarry.

Save Tesla Park from Off-road Vehicle Destruction

Tesla Park, 3,000 acres in the southeast corner of Alameda County just outside the Alameda Creek watershed, is a biologically rich and culturally significant landscape threatened by proposed off-road vehicle use. It was purchased by the State of California Parks Department in 1998 to expand the existing adjacent Carnegie State Vehicular Recreation Area off-road vehicle park. But as the plans for expansion of the Carnegie vehicle sacrifice area were studied and the devastating impacts of off-road vehicle use on the unique and fragile Tesla Park land were identified, proposals for an alternative use plan began to evolve and the goal of Tesla Park as a non-motorized historic and natural resource park and preserve was formed.

The [**Friends of Tesla Park**](#) is an alliance of individuals and organizations working to save Tesla Park from off-road vehicle destruction.

The off-road vehicle division of the State Parks recently kicked off a long range [planning process](#) for Carnegie and Tesla to guide future management and operation. There will be a public workshop and environmental review scoping session in Livermore on May 21, from 6:30 to 8:00 pm at the DoubleTree by Hilton Livermore, 720 Las Flores Road in Livermore. Please attend and speak in favor of protecting Tesla Park as a non-motorized preserve.

Garden-Friendly Water Conservation Fair June 16 in Union City

The River Network, Home Depot and utility districts in the Bay Area are presenting a series of water-conservation oriented consumer events at Home Depot stores this spring. The goals of the events are to promote conservation of water supplies, educate consumers on water conservation programs, behaviors, products and services, connect consumers with native plant growers and low-water plants, and generate a festive and fun atmosphere.

In our watershed, there will be a Water Conservation Fair on Saturday, June 16 at the Home Depot in Union City, at 30055 Industrial Parkway, from 9 am to 2 pm. The Alameda Creek Alliance will have a booth at the fair, as will other watershed restoration groups, water agencies, and Home Depot vendors such as Toro, Raindrip, Scotts, and native plant providers as well.

Thank You Unitarian Church!

The Mission Peak Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Fremont hosted the Alameda Creek Alliance on Earth Day to hear about our work to restore steelhead trout to Alameda Creek. The congregation passed the plate and collected donations to support the ACA.

Regional Salmon News

[Former Salmon Judge: Snake Dams Should Come Down](#)

The Seattle Times – April 25, 2012

[Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Faces Deadline for Restoring Fish Habitat](#)

Sacramento Bee – April 22, 2012

[Herbicide Regulations Tighten Over Salmon Protection](#)

Western Farm Press – April 13, 2012

[Feds Say 3 Pesticides Harmful to Salmon](#)

San Francisco Chronicle – April 9, 2012

[California Gets Longest Commercial Salmon Fishing Season Since 2005](#)

San Jose Mercury News – April 5, 2012

[Modern-Day Gold Mining: California's New Rules on Gold Dredging Won't Protect Rivers](#)

Los Angeles Times editorial – April 5, 2012

[Challenge Filed to Destructive Suction Dredge Mining in California's Rivers](#)

Center for Biological Diversity press release – April 3, 2012

[Time for the Cardinal to Dump Their Damn Dam](#)

Drake Fly Fishing Magazine – April 4, 2012

[Scientists: 'No Silver Bullet' to Declining Delta](#)

Stockton Record – March 30, 2012

[Agency Finds Longfin Smelt Deserves Endangered Species Act Protection but Adds It to Waiting List](#)

Center for Biological Diversity press release – March 29, 2012

[BDCP Study, Independent Analysis Show Canal Could Hasten Species Extinction](#)

AlterNet – March 27, 2012

[**Delta Pumping Has Unmeasured Cost for Endangered Fish, Environmentalists Say**](#)

KQED blog – March 26, 2012

[**Myth or Fact? Westlands & Reality**](#)

Salmon Water Now video – March 19, 2012

[**Dry Winter Means Tough Times Along the Klamath**](#)

San Jose Mercury News - March 21, 2012

[**Klamath Riverkeeper Plans to Sue Shasta River Dam Operator**](#)

AlterNet – March 19, 2012

The Alameda Creek Alliance is a non-profit community watershed protection group. Please support our efforts by becoming a member.