

Up Your Creek!

The electronic newsletter of the Alameda Creek Alliance

Alameda Creek Cleanup – January 19

Mark your calendars for our next creek cleanup day on **Monday, January 19th** (Martin Luther King Jr. Day), when we'll meet again from 10 am to 12 pm and continue our efforts to remove invasive plants from our adopt-a-spot along Alameda Creek in Niles. As usual, we'll meet at the [Niles Staging Area parking lot](#) along Old Canyon Road at Canyon Oaks Court in the Niles area of Fremont. Wear work clothes, including long pants and sturdy shoes that can get dirty. A long-sleeve shirt and hat are recommended. We'll provide gloves, waste bags, litter grabbers, water, and a snack. Please bring your own re-usable water bottle to fill.

Thanks to our volunteers who came out on November 16th to continue our work removing cape ivy and English ivy along Alameda Creek in Niles. We removed another 15 bags of ivy, and picked up some trash in the area as well. There is little noticeable re-sprouting of ivy so far around the oaks, willows, and elderberries that we've cleared in the past year. That is sure to change as the rains arrive, but it is certainly very encouraging! Thanks to everyone who has helped in the efforts. Your work is making a real difference, and is greatly appreciated.

Streamkeeper Volunteers Wanted

It's spawning season for steelhead trout, and we need Streamkeeper volunteers to be on the lookout for migrating fish!

Steelhead trout could be waiting between now and April for a pulse of storm water to signal the right conditions to migrate upstream in lower Alameda Creek. There are still barriers in the Alameda Creek Flood Control channel that prevent fish from getting upstream to their spawning habitat, though great progress is being made. That's where our Streamkeeper volunteers come in! We need people to keep an eye out for returning fish in the Alameda Creek Flood Control Channel, in case a rescue needs to be organized. Steelhead have been seen in recent years trying to ascend the BART weir after a major storm on the declining end of the hydrograph, typically when the stream flow is about 200 to 400 cubic feet/second (cfs). You can check the current Alameda Creek stream flow on the web in [lower Niles Canyon](#) and in the [flood control channel](#) in Union City.

Two locations where migrating steelhead are more readily observable are the former lower rubber dam/fish passage site, and at the BART weir ([see map here](#)). We need volunteers who will visit the channel after a major storm has passed, or who will monitor the [webcam at the BART weir](#).

Please report any observations of migrating steelhead or salmon! Find out [what to do if you spot fish in Alameda Creek](#). For more information, and to become an official Streamkeeper, please e-mail Ralph Boniello at ralph@alamedacreek.org.

Looking for Project Sponsors Along Alameda, Stonybrook, or Sinbad Creeks

Do you own property along Alameda, Stonybrook, or Sinbad Creeks? Would like to host a project to improve fish habitat and creek health? Potential projects could involve rain gardens, water storage, invasive species removal, re-vegetation with native plants, or planting native trees.

Projects like these reduce flood flows by slowing and filtering runoff before it can get into our creeks and waterways.

Contact Ralph Boniello (ralph@alamedacreek.org) if you're a landowner with a specific project in mind, or if you like us to come out and discuss possibilities for your site. We can provide help with design, materials, and labor. You'll enhance your property and local habitat at the same time!

Little Yosemite Fish Passage Controversy

The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) is proposing the Little Yosemite Fish Passage Project along upper Alameda Creek in Sunol Regional Wilderness. The project is intended to improve upstream passage conditions for migrating steelhead trout through the natural boulder cascades in Little Yosemite. The project would involve constructing concrete weirs shaped like natural boulders or bedrock that would be strategically installed at three critical fish passage sites. These artificial boulders and weirs would reduce water surface drops, create new pools, and deepen existing pools to allow adult steelhead leap over constricted boulder areas. Other modifications would include removing select boulders from existing pools to increase pool depth for leaping, and plugging holes at other locations.

However, there is debate about whether or not Little Yosemite would be passable to steelhead under higher flows without the proposed modifications to the natural boulder falls and there are concerns that the project may have unintended consequences and unnecessary significant impacts on imperiled native amphibians, specifically California red-legged frogs and Foothill yellow-legged frogs that inhabit Little Yosemite.

The SFPUC has published a draft environmental review document [here](#).

Unfortunately the review document improperly concludes that there are no potentially significant environmental impacts from the project, does not adequately evaluate potential impacts to rare frog species, and does not propose adequate mitigations for those impacts.

The amphibian protection group Save The Frogs! has provided information and evidence that biological surveys for the project were inadequate, and missed known breeding populations of foothill yellow-legged frogs at the project site. Save The Frogs! also provided evidence that significant impacts to native amphibians can be expected from the project, including likely mortality of frogs during construction, loss of important breeding areas for foothill yellow-legged frogs, potential spread of the deadly chytrid fungus to uninfected native amphibian populations, and expansion of invasive bullfrogs and crayfish which predate on native frogs.

While we welcome enhancing fish passage for steelhead trout into upper Alameda Creek, we'd like the SFPUC to take a hard look at the potential impacts on native frogs. You can read the Save the Frogs! and Alameda Creek Alliance comments on the review document [here](#) - click on "Documents."

Eastern Alameda Christmas Bird Count Tallies 140 Species

On December 19th, the sixth annual Eastern Alameda County [Christmas Bird Count](#) was held on what was supposed to be a rainy day. Our citizen-led annual count tracks winter bird populations in the upper Alameda Creek watershed. While it wasn't ideal weather conditions, 90 volunteers scoured our 15-mile diameter count area and documented 140 bird species.

A notable record was set in our area for Band-tailed Pigeons, with over 3,000 - the oak woodlands of upper Alameda Creek have many acorns this year, an important winter food item

for Band-tailed Pigeons. Another notable sighting was up to 10 Vaux's Swifts mixed in with White-throated Swifts in Sunol Regional Park. Two Bell's Sparrows were found in Del Valle Regional Park and a Northern Pygmy-owl was calling in Sunol Valley. The Golden Eagle count for our area was 16, with 2 Bald Eagles also reported.

Court Voids Newark Efforts to Fill Wetlands Near Wildlife Refuge

The Alameda County Superior Court recently voided the City of Newark's Environmental Impact Report for a proposed development of executive housing and golf course project on a 560-acre site in Newark that would have destroyed precious wetlands and endangered species habitat bordering the San Francisco Bay.

The successful lawsuit was brought against the City of Newark by the Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge, a local volunteer group of Bay Area citizens determined to preserve the ecological health of San Francisco Bay's shoreline and its wetlands. Working with then-Congressman Don Edwards, the Citizens Committee helped create the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge in 1972, and then worked to expand the Refuge's boundaries in 1988.

The proposed development area contained the historic Whistling Wings and Pintail duck clubs, and the majority of the acreage involved in the lawsuit is within the expansion boundary of the Refuge. The site contains 277 acres of seasonal wetlands, tidal marsh, freshwater seeps and ponds. The area provides habitat for endangered species such as the Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse, breeding shorebirds and migratory waterfowl, which navigate the Pacific Flyway to winter locally.

Steelhead Recovery Potential Upstream of Stanford's Dam

A new report, [*Habitat Quality, Rainbow Trout Occurrence, and Steelhead Recovery Potential Upstream of Searsville Dam*](#), shows the occurrence of suitable steelhead spawning and rearing habitat in numerous tributaries of San Francisquito Creek in Palo Alto, upstream from Stanford's controversial Searsville Dam. There are wild reproducing rainbow trout in at least seven tributaries upstream from Searsville Dam, as well as adult and juvenile steelhead downstream of the impassable dam. The report concludes that providing effective access for steelhead to habitat both upstream and downstream at the current Searsville Dam and reservoir site would significantly benefit steelhead recovery throughout the watershed and region. Get more information from [Beyond Searsville Dam](#).

Dam-busting Documentary at Parkway Theater in Oakland

Tomorrow night, Tuesday January 13, Friends of the River presents DAMNATION at the New Parkway Theater. This documentary is not to be missed!

This powerful film odyssey across America explores the sea change in our national attitude from pride in big dams as engineering wonders to the growing awareness that our own future is bound to the life and health of our rivers. Dam removal has moved beyond the fictional Monkey Wrench Gang to go mainstream. Where obsolete dams come down, rivers bound back to life, giving salmon and other wild fish the right of return to primeval spawning grounds, after decades without access. DamNation's majestic cinematography and unexpected discoveries move through rivers and landscapes altered by dams, but also through a metamorphosis in values, from conquest of the natural world to knowing ourselves as part of nature.

Featuring a post-film discussion by film-makers and dam removal activists.

More info and tickets: <http://thenewparkway.com/wp/?date=01/13/15>

Regional Salmon Restoration News

[For California Salmon, Drought and Warm Water Mean Trouble](#)

Yale 360 – January 5, 2015

[King Salmon Spawning In the Napa](#)

Napa Valley Register – January 1, 2015

[A New Twist on Saving Salmon — and Keeping West Marin Affordable](#)

Bay Nature Magazine – December 30, 2014

[Steelhead Numbers Alarmingly Low at Nimbus Fish Hatchery](#)

Daily Kos – December 29, 2014

[Salmon Population Dwindling at Marin County Creeks](#)

NBC – December 26, 2014

[Modified Bay Delta Plan Still Draws Critics](#)

KCET - December 22, 2014

[Chinook Salmon Could Be Wiped Out By 2100, New Study Claims](#)

Canadian Press - December 22, 2014

[Siskiyou Coho Salmon Numbers Low In 2014](#)

Siskiyou Daily News - December 22, 2014

[9th Circuit Sides With Salmon in Water Fight](#)

Courthouse News Service - December 22, 2014

[Endangered Fish Score Legal Win Over Farmers](#)

Central Valley Business Times – December 22, 2014

['Wild' Fish Make a Comeback In Putah Creek](#)

Sacramento Bee – December 20, 2014

[Pumps Dropped From Delta Water Tunnel Plan](#)

Sacramento Bee – December 18, 2014

[Carmel River Diverted To Demolish San Clemente Dam](#)

San Francisco Chronicle – December 14, 2014

[House Passes Salmon-Killing Drought Relief Bill](#)

Daily Kos – December 13, 2014

[Warming Waters Could Shift Salmon, Other Species on West Coast](#)

Scientific American – December 12, 2014

[Canada Blocks NAFTA Investigation into British Columbia Fish Farm Impacts on Wild Salmon](#)

Center for Biological Diversity press release – December 12, 2014

[Bay Area Streams and Creeks Flow Anew As Drought Eases](#)

San Francisco Chronicle – December 10, 2014

[**10,000 Salmon Return To the Yuba**](#)

Appeal-Democrat – December 10, 2014

[**Despite Rain, Coho Salmon Still Struggling**](#)

KQED Forum podcast – December 9, 2014

[**New Video Highlights Stanislaus River Restoration**](#)

FishBio – December 8, 2014

[**The Scott River - A Balance of Beaver and Salmon**](#)

USFWS – December 3, 2014

[**Dam Removal in Tehama County Helps Landowner and Fish**](#)

USFWS – December 1, 2014

[**Small Dam Removed from Lion Creek**](#)

Los Padres Forest Watch – November 7, 2014

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