



UP YOUR CREEK!

ALAMEDA CREEK ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER Issue 25 • Spring 2008

Protecting and restoring the natural ecosystems of the Alameda Creek watershed

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Steelhead Romance

A historic pair of steelhead trout were rescued at the BART weir in lower Alameda Creek on February 26th and radio tagged and moved upstream to continue their journey to the spawning grounds. The pair, a female weighing 8½ pounds and 27 inches in length along with a male weighing 8 pounds and 28 inches long, were nicknamed ‘Bonnie and Clyde.’ Following the radio signals, EBRPD biologists and ACA volunteers located the pair in the Stonybrook Creek tributary apparently attempting to spawn. They have been monitored on a regular basis and by early May many juvenile fish could be seen in the pool where Bonnie and Clyde had taken up residence. We are almost certain now that these fry are offspring of Bonnie and Clyde, based on the location, numbers, and timing of emergence.

Later, fin clips from the young fish will be taken to determine if they are, in fact, the offspring of the adult steelhead pair. If confirmed, it will be the first documented spawning of steelhead and successfully hatching of steelhead fry in the Alameda Creek watershed in almost half a century. All of the years of hard work by the Alameda Creek Alliance seem to be paying off. Congratulations to all! This event has created an avalanche of newspaper and TV reports, which are posted on the ACA web site.



As of mid-May Bonnie and Clyde are doing fine and we will continue to monitor them and the fry throughout the year. The water flow is good and temperatures are low, so the adults should be okay for now. They could stay in this tributary all summer long until the fall/winter runoff period. If they do stay, they will likely be very emaciated by the time they migrate back out in the fall/winter.

Carpe Diem

Since March we have gotten quite a few reports of schools of large fish spawning in the flood control channel in lower Alameda Creek. Since steelhead spawning season generally ends by mid-March, we haven't had much rain at all this spring, and water temperatures in the lower creek are fairly high, we suspected these fish were either native or introduced warm water fish. It is carp spawning season and these schools of fish all turned out to be non-native carp, which can tolerate the warmer water of the flood control channel.

Funding For BART Weir Fish Ladder

The Alameda County Water District and Alameda County Flood Control District were notified this spring by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation that they will receive a \$500,000 grant to help fund the design, permitting, and environmental review for the BART Weir/Middle Dam Fish Ladder Project.

Leaping Steelhead Award

In January the Alameda Creek Alliance was awarded the 2007 Leaping Steelhead Award from fish and water policy writer Dan Bacher. The following statement accompanied the award: *“The Alameda Creek Alliance, a coalition of anglers and environmentalists committed to restoring salmon and steelhead to this East Bay stream, celebrated its tenth anniversary on August 24, 2007. Due to the alliance’s 10 years of political pressure, four public agencies are moving forward quickly with five stream restoration projects that will help restore steelhead and salmon to the creek. For their grassroots work to restore this creek, Jeff Miller, executive director of the Alliance, and all of its volunteers receive the ‘Urban Steelhead’ award.”* Well done, Jeff!

Calaveras Dam Permit Must Consider Steelhead Trout

The SFPUC has been rebuked by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) over their failure to consider impacts to steelhead trout for the Calaveras Dam rebuild. NMFS sent a letter to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the lead agency for federal permits for the project, that the Calaveras Dam rebuild will require consultation under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) for a federal permit to rebuild the seismically challenged Calaveras Dam in upper Alameda Creek. In an April 4 letter to the Corps, NMFS rejected the SFPUC's contention and the Corps' determination that the Calaveras Dam project will have no impact on steelhead trout.

In February the Corps, at the urging of the SFPUC, made a determination that the Calaveras project would have "no effect" on steelhead trout, which are listed as a threatened species under the ESA. In its letter, NMFS noted that Alameda Creek "could play a key role in the recovery" of the Central California Coast steelhead trout population, and that the SFPUC's proposed consideration of steelhead trout in a future

Alameda Watershed Habitat Conservation Plan cannot be relied upon to address all steelhead issues.

Letters Needed on Calaveras Dam

Please write a letter or send an e-mail to the San Francisco Public Utilities Commissioners and the San Francisco Board of Supervisors regarding the Calaveras Dam Replacement project. We are still trying to get the Calaveras Dam project to include adequate flows for steelhead trout, provide fish passage, and change the operation of the Alameda Diversion Dam. See our action alert on the ACA web site.

New Staff

Please welcome our newest part-time staff, Membership Director Larry Dennis. Larry, who has been an Alameda Creek Alliance member since 1997 and is on our Board of Directors, will oversee our membership activities and produce our quarterly newsletter.



Friends of Springtown Preserve in Livermore

The new web site of the Friends of Spring Town Preserve has launched: www.springtownpreserve.org. The mission of the of the Friends of Spring Town Preserve is

to educate and engage the community in the preservation and sound management of the unique Springtown Alkali Sink Ecosystem in Livermore. Please check the site periodically for updates and opportunities to learn more about the preserve and its watershed through field trips, guest speakers, etc. There will also be alerts for action posted.

Eastern Alameda County Conservation Plan

Zone 7 Water Agency, Alameda County, the Cities of Livermore, Pleasanton and Dublin, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the CA Department of Fish and Game and other agencies are preparing a comprehensive strategy for the eastern portion of the county. The purpose of the Conservation Strategy will be to address conflicts between development, growth and infrastructure maintenance activities along with the continued survival of endangered or threatened species as well as their habitat. Also to be addressed will be Endangered Species Act permitting processes and ongoing conservation programs requiring support from both local stakeholders and regulatory agencies. The ACA will be participating in this group to insure that protections for waterway corridors and endangered species habitats are adequate.

SFPUC Planning Environmental Improvement Projects

In 2005 the SFPUC began their Watershed and Environmental Improvement Program (WEIP), which will provide \$50 million over the next 10 years to manage, protect and restore environmental habitats in the three SFPUC watersheds, including Alameda Creek. Some of the projects either already underway or awaiting funding under the WEIP are: Watershed Road Management where surveys and evaluations will be made to provide fish passage at culverts, improve drainage and reduce sedimentation in waterways; an Education and Outreach plan for a Watershed Education Center in the Alameda Creek watershed; a New Zealand Mud Snail survey in Alameda Creek to determine the effect on the overall food web; a project to combat Sudden Oak Death in the watershed; a weed management program; a watershed land protection project aimed at acquiring and preserving watershed lands; and an assessment of the Niles Canyon Stream Gauging Weir to determine whether to repair, replace or remove the failing USGS weir near the bottom of Niles Canyon. The agreed upon option will, naturally, include adequate fish passage.

Alameda Creek Watershed Sediment Forum

San Francisco Estuary Institute and the Alameda County Flood Control and Water Conservation District hosted the first Alameda Creek Watershed Sediment Forum in April, with attendance by about 50 interested parties from agencies and organizations. The forum featured presentations and discussion regarding current sediment and water issues affecting the Alameda Creek watershed. This twice-annual forum will allow stakeholders and public agencies to come together to share ideas and information on addressing sediment issues in the watershed. The amount, type and location of sediment entering our creeks have important implications for fish habitat in the watershed. For more information and posting of the presentations at the forum: www.sfei.org/alamedacreek.

ACA Board Member Profile

Jeff Miller, Executive Director

It is only fair that we begin this series of ACA organizational profiles with Jeff Miller, the founder and Executive Director of the Alameda Creek Alliance. Jeff began the alliance literally on a shoestring conducting meetings whenever and where ever space and an audience could be

found. After endless meetings and strategy sessions a cohesive group began to emerge which, ten years later, has grown into an effective grassroots organization dedicated to the protection and restoration of one of the states largest watersheds.



Jeff is a native of the East Bay, growing up in El Cerrito and Berkeley and attending local schools. His environmental activism started over twenty years ago when he began to take part in old growth forest protection campaigns. He is a self taught naturalist and ecologist. Currently, Jeff shares his duties between the ACA and the Center for Biological Diversity where he manages media and organizational work, works on endangered species issues and other duties relating to conservation campaigns. What spare time Jeff has is spent enjoying whitewater rafting, hiking, birding and ‘ornithophilately’ (collecting worldwide postage stamps depicting birds). Jeff continues his dedication to protecting wilderness, wildlife, enjoying outdoor adventures and his many friends.

Yes, I would like to support the Alameda Creek Alliance. Enclosed is \$20 or more for a one-year membership. Membership of \$30 or more receives a new ACA t-shirt (please specify size). Make checks payable to: Alameda Creek Alliance.

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\$20 Fry

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(To receive ACA e-mails only)

- Send me a free bumper sticker
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