

## A new project should dramatically improve conditions for endangered steelhead trout in the lower reaches of Alameda Creek.



The project is part of a long-term effort to restore steelhead to Alameda Creek. Last year, for the first time in decades, the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission [began releasing water from a newly retrofitted dam](#), effectively reviving an important tributary stream. Also in 2019, the Alameda County Flood Control District began construction of a key fish ladder at the BART line crossing that will allow adult steelhead to access the river's headwaters. The new fish passage enhancement plan focuses on a section of the stream that flows through a highly urbanized area. Largely contained within channels of concrete and riprap, the water courses under a freeway overpass and several boulevard bridges. The water is warm, swift and shallow—an unfriendly environment for salmonids. The county's plan would create a low-flow channel deeper than the existing waterway that will provide safer passage for both juvenile and adult steelhead, which face a high risk of being eaten by birds, raccoons and other predators. This channel will also facilitate the downstream flow of sediment, which currently accumulates in the streambed, periodically requiring expensive removal work. The improvements, described in a [draft environmental report](#) released in January, also include upgrading an existing fish ladder, planting native vegetation along the banks, and creating holding pools for fish by placing boulders in the creek. Alameda Creek Alliance director Jeff Miller says these steps will offer clear benefits to adult fish making their spawning migrations, as well as their finger-sized offspring. That said, the work will take years to complete. "It's still going to be a while before we get a sizeable run of fish back," Miller says.