A historic win for spawning salmon, trout in Alameda Creek

With the completion of the new fish ladder, the ocean-going fish will be able to migrate on their own for the first time in 50 years

FREMONT, CA – April 25: Guests tour the lower portion of a recently completed fish ladder in Alameda Creek in Fremont, Calif, on April 25, 2022. The fish ladder will allow ocean-going fish such as Chinook salmon and threatened steelhead trout to get around human-made barriers such as the cement structure known as the BART weir, seen in the background, and migrate upstream to spawn. (Dai Sugano/Bay Area News Group)

By **JOSEPH GEHA**
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FREMONT — For the first time in half a century, ocean-going fish will soon be able to migrate up Alameda Creek to spawn, now that a second fish ladder has been completed in the lower portion of the creek in Fremont.

Alameda County Water District and Alameda County Flood Control District officials on Monday celebrated the completion of the fish ladder, which was finished earlier this month, according to Sharene Gonzales, a water district spokesperson.

The ladder, which consists of a series of steadily elevating pools, allows migratory fish such as Chinook salmon and threatened steelhead trout to get around human-made barriers in the lower creek, including a 12-foot, sloping cement structure known as a weir, and a rubber inflatable dam, according to Jeff Miller, director of the nonprofit Alameda Creek Alliance.

FREMONT, CA – April 25: A group of guests tours the area near a newly completed fish ladder along the Alameda Creek on April 25, 2022, in Fremont, Calif. The fish ladder will allow ocean-going fish such as Chinook salmon and threatened steelhead trout to get around human-made structures such as the rubber dam, seen at right, and migrate upstream to spawn. (Dai Sugano/Bay Area News Group)

The water district built another fish ladder about a mile upstream in 2019 near another rubber dam. With both ladders now complete, fish will be able to migrate upstream on their own to reproduce, after living their lives out in the ocean. In the past, they were blocked by the obstacles, and only a lucky few fish that could be caught by scientists or volunteers to be trucked upstream would be able to make the trip to spawn.


FREMONT, CA – April 25: Pictured here is an interior view of a vertical slot fishway in lower Alameda Creek, in Fremont, Calif., on April 25, 2022. The fishway is part of a newly completed fish ladder system that allows ocean-going fish to get around human-made obstacles to go up the creek and spawn. (Dai Sugano/Bay Area News Group)

Over the span of nearly 25 years, the water district, in partnership with many other public agencies, has spent about $80 million, including about $33 million in grants, to build the ladders and other fish passage projects, such as screens that keep fish from getting sucked into reservoirs when the district pulls water from the creek for local customers, according to Gonzalez and Miller.

“This historic restoration project could be transformative for Alameda Creek and its fish and wildlife, help connect local residents to their watershed, and recover a piece of our natural heritage in the Bay Area,” Miller said in a statement.

FREMONT, CA – April 25: Jeff Miller from the Alameda Creek Alliance, center, along with Alameda County Water District board members, and other regional officials participate in a ribbon-cutting ceremony of the newly completed fish ladder along lower Alameda Creek on April 25, 2022, in Fremont, Calif.

FREMONT, CA – April 25: A group of guests tours the area near a newly completed fish ladder along the Alameda Creek on April 25, 2022, in Fremont, Calif. (Dai Sugano/Bay Area News Group)

FREMONT, CA – April 25: FREMONT, CA – April 25: Jeff Miller from Alameda Creek Alliance, center, gives a tour of a newly completed fish ladder along the Alameda Creek on April 25, 2022, in Fremont, Calif. (Dai Sugano/Bay Area News Group)