

# Trout study funds OK'd

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■ **Alameda County:** Supervisors agree to look into how steelhead spawning areas might be restored in Sunol Regional Wilderness.

BY BONITA BREWER

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Alameda County supervisors agreed Tuesday to help pay for a \$40,000 study of the Alameda Creek watershed to determine how steelhead trout can spawn again in the far reaches of the Sunol Regional Wilderness.

The fishery restoration study — to involve the California Coastal Conservancy and expected to be completed in December — will consider what it would take to build fish ladders for trout to migrate upstream from the Bay over a series of man-made barriers along the lower end of the creek in the Fremont area.

In what could prove to be more controversial, the study also will explore what it would take to improve the habitat for fish along the creek and its tributaries — including the increase of water flows during dry months.

That has raised concerns from water agencies serving the Livermore-Amador Valley and Fremont. The agencies have warned that municipal water supplies could be affected if they're required to release water from dams, or to change other operations, to maintain adequate year-round water flows for fish.

"This is not committing the county, but it's looking at the feasibility," said county Supervisor Scott Haggerty, whose district includes Fremont, Sunol and much of the Livermore-Amador Valley. "If we get all the parties to agree, it would certainly be a great project to restore a lost natural resource."

Members of the Alameda Creek Alliance, who have long sought to restore a steelhead run, applauded the decision.

"This is a big, important step," said creek alliance spokesman Jeff Miller. "It never goes fast enough, but things are finally moving. I'd

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## Alameda County to help fund trout study

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be surprised if the study results aren't encouraging in December."

Even without additional water flows or other habitat work, Miller said, fish ladders would at least give steelhead access to suitable spawning areas in Stonybrook Creek, a tributary to Alameda Creek that runs along Palomares Road.

"The prime habitat is way up in the Sunol Regional Wilderness, but this is the first step in getting fish past the initial barriers in the lower channel," Miller said.

County flood control official Richard Wetzig said the cost of building a fish ladder at the most troublesome migration barrier, a concrete weir near three inflatable dams operated by the Alameda County Water District in Fremont, has been estimated at \$1 million.

If the study shows the fish-ladder project is fea-

sible, the county would apply to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for 75 percent of the needed funding, and the Coastal Conservancy has expressed interest in helping the county pay its 25 percent share. County funds would come from the budget of the Zone 6 Flood Control District, which serves northern Fremont, Newark and Union City.

The ladder would be built in ascending small puddles, allowing the fish to jump easily from one to the next. A total of three ladders would be built, the largest would be built at the weir, which is near the middle of three inflatable dams. Ladders at the two other inflatable dams would be smaller and less expensive.

Steelhead trout have been listed by the federal government as a threatened species, a designation that could lead to special protections, including required changes in the management of creeks where they are found.

The study will be performed by Applied Marine Sciences Inc.

Some  
wonder if  
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