Chinook salmon are populating farther up a Bay Area creek for the first time in decades

By **Sam Mauhay-Moore**,*National Parks Reporter*

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Chinook salmon are once again populating an upper part of the largest local tributary of the San Francisco Bay, thanks to the recent completion of a multiyear fish passage and restoration project.

Fish biologists and environmental consultants documented two Chinook salmon in the upper Alameda Creek watershed on Nov. 19, nonprofit California Trout announced on Tuesday. Earlier that week, volunteers photographed almost a dozen of the fish in lower Niles Canyon, the Alameda Creek Alliance wrote in a Nov. 18 news release.

According to CalTrout, this is the first time the fish have accessed this area of their own accord since the 1950s.

The salmon's passage up Alameda Creek, which carves through Niles Canyon and the Sunol Wilderness Regional Preserve to the Diablo Range, was made possible this year through the relocation of a PG&E-owned gas pipeline near the Interstate 680 overpass, CalTrout wrote. A layer of concrete that had previously covered the pipeline had helped block the salmon's passage through the stream. This month, PG&E and CalTrout wrapped up efforts to relocate the pipeline and bury it under the riverbed, allowing salmon to migrate upstream once more.

The pipeline was the last major barrier to fish migration in Alameda Creek, and its relocation marks the fruitful result of over two decades of fish passage restoration projects in the watershed. Two dozen restoration projects have been completed in the stream since 2001, according to the Alameda Creek Alliance — work that included constructing fish ladders, removing dams and restoring the area's native riparian habitats.

"The continuing return of salmon heralds hope for more healthy ecosystems and these charismatic fish are excellent ambassadors for protecting and restoring our local watersheds," Jeff Miller, director of the Alameda Creek Alliance, said in the organization's news release. "We're seeing results from two decades of restoration projects and we hope Alameda Creek will have an outsized impact on recovery of steelhead trout in the region. It's profoundly gratifying to see watershed residents and the local water agencies taking pride in bringing back native fish and wildlife."

The salmon in Alameda Creek likely migrated from hatcheries in the Central Valley, according to the Alliance, though it's possible that they spawned in the Guadalupe River in

San Jose. Salmon populated waterways in the region prior to industrialization, as evidenced by salmon remains found in Native American shell mounds, the Alliance wrote.