

68 BAY AREA CONSERVATION GROUPS CALL FOR SAN FRANCISCO TO RESTORE ALAMEDA CREEK

Stream Flows, Dam Removal Requested to Restore Fish Runs



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JUNE 2, 2005

CONTACT:

Jeff Miller (510) 499-9185
Alameda Creek Alliance

Sunol, CA – While the City of San Francisco hosts a United Nations “Green Cities” conference this week, 68 Bay Area conservation groups are calling on the City’s water agency to improve its stewardship of local watershed lands and restore Alameda Creek in southeastern San Francisco Bay. The Alameda Creek Alliance (ACA) and over 60 other environmental and fishing groups sent a letter today to the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC), which manages 36,800 acres of public land and operates three dams in the upper Alameda Creek watershed. The groups are requesting that the SFPUC restore stream flows in Alameda Creek sufficient to sustain steelhead and rainbow trout, protect rare fish populations in SFPUC reservoirs, remove a diversion facility that limits steelhead restoration, and abandon plans to construct a new dam in the Sunol Valley reach of Alameda Creek.

“A city is only as ‘green’ as the manner in which it stewards the natural areas which provide its resources,” stated Jeff Miller, Director of the ACA. “After 90 years of water diversions from Alameda Creek, it time for San Francisco to come to the table with a commitment to provide suitable stream flow for fish and wildlife below their diversion dams.”

The SFPUC diverts 86% of natural stream flows tributary to upper Alameda Creek into Calaveras and San Antonio Reservoirs for water supply. Alameda Creek Diversion Dam (ACDD), completed in the 1930s, also diverts water into Calaveras Reservoir from upper Alameda Creek. The groups are asking the SFPUC to abide by state Fish and Game Codes requiring sufficient instream flows to sustain steelhead trout and other native fish in good condition, without impacting other river systems, specifically the Tuolumne River. The SFPUC signed an agreement in 1997 to release minimal flows from Calaveras Reservoir to restore about five miles of Alameda Creek in the Sunol Valley, but to date has not released any water. The groups also want the SFPUC to:

Implement an interim operation plan to protect steelhead and rainbow trout and their habitat (including providing instream flows, excluding cattle from streams, and controlling predaceous bass in reservoirs), prior to the rebuilding of Calaveras Dam, which is scheduled to be completed in 2011;

Cease operation of and remove the ACDD, which captures virtually all stream flow from upper Alameda Creek and is a barrier to steelhead migration into the headwaters of Alameda Creek; and

Abandon efforts to construct an unnecessary water recapture dam in the Sunol Valley (the so-called “Alameda Creek Fishery Enhancement Project”), at a savings of \$17.5 million.

The SFPUC is planning to spend at least \$3.4 billion on their Water System Improvement Program (WSIP) to seismically retrofit the system’s pipelines and other infrastructure. WSIP projects include replacing Calaveras

Dam and the proposed construction of the rubber dam. The Bay Area Water Stewards, a coalition of local environmental groups (including the ACA and several of the groups signatory to the letter) has been encouraging the SFPUC to increase recycling and water conservation, and develop a just and sustainable water system that protects wildlife habitat and restores the Alameda Creek, Tuolumne River, and Peninsula watersheds affected by SFPUC water management.

Since steelhead trout in the Bay Area were listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 1997, the ACA has been advocating for dam removals and construction of fish ladders to allow migratory fish to reach spawning habitat in upper Alameda Creek. Resident rainbow trout in Alameda Creek and in the SFPUC's reservoirs have been proposed for ESA listing, with a determination due this summer. There are 12 local, state, and federal agencies cooperating on fish passage projects in Alameda Creek, including dam removals and construction of fish ladders and fish screens. The projects will allow adult steelhead, currently blocked by barriers in the lower creek, to access up to 15 miles of spawning and rearing habitat in and above Sunol Regional Wilderness. In May 2005, the Alameda County Water District (ACWD) received a \$1 million grant to fund two projects that will help improve passage for steelhead trout in the Alameda Creek Flood Control Channel. In 2006, the ACWD will remove an inflatable rubber dam and install a fish screen at a water diversion in the lower creek, and the SFPUC will remove two abandoned dams from Niles Canyon.

The groups are: Alameda Creek Alliance, Acterra, American Rivers, The Bay Institute of San Francisco, East Bay Chapter of the California Native Plant Society, California Oak Foundation, California Sportfishing Protection Alliance, California Trout, Center for Biological Diversity, Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge, Clean Water Action and Clean Water Fund, Earth Island Institute, East Bay Watershed Center, Environmental Defense, Flycasters of San Jose, Friends of Alhambra Creek, Friends Of The Arroyos, Friends of Baxter Creek, Friends of Corte Madera Creek Watershed, Friends of Coyote Hills and Fremont, Friends of Crow Creek, Friends of Cull Creek, Friends of Fairview Creeks, Friends of Five Creeks, Friends of Islais Creek, Friends of Marsh Creek Watershed, Friends of Orinda Creeks, Friends of Palomares Creek, Friends of Pinole Creek Watershed, Friends of the Ridgeland, Friends of the River, Friends of San Leandro Creek, Friends of San Lorenzo Creek, Friends of Sausal Creek, Friends of Strawberry Creek Watershed, Friends of Sycamore Grove Park, Friends of Sycamore Valley, Golden Gate Audubon Society, Golden West Women Flyfishers, Grizzly Peak Fly Fishers, Hayward Area Planning Association, Lake Merritt Institute, Mission Peak Fly Anglers, Natural Heritage Institute, Natural Resources Defense Council, Northern California Council Federation of Fly Fishers, Ohlone Audubon Society, Preserve Lamorinda Open Space, Regional Parks Association, Restore Hetch Hetchy, Richmond Environmental Defense Fund, Salmon Protection And Watershed Network, Salmonid Restoration Federation, Save The Bay, Save Niles Canyon, Save Open Space - Gateway Valley, Save Our Sunol, San Francisco Bay Chapter of Sierra Club, Southern Alameda County Group of Sierra Club, Stop the Dump in Sunol, Strawberry Creek Lodge Restoration Project, Tri-City Ecology Center, Tri-Valley Fly Fishers, California Council of Trout Unlimited, Tuolumne River Trust, Urban Creeks Council of California, and Ward Creek Alliance.

The entire text of the letter can be viewed at:

<http://www.alamedacreek.org/Home%20page/SFPUC%20letter.pdf>

Read an ACA report on the history of Alameda Creek management actions, *Alameda Creek - Ninety Years of Neglect*, at: <http://www.alamedacreek.org/Home%20page/90%20Years.pdf>

The ACA is a community watershed restoration group with over 680 members, dedicated to protecting and restoring Alameda Creek and its tributaries. Contact the ACA at (510) 845-2233 or visit www.alamedacreek.org.