UP YOUR CREEK!

ALAMEDA CREEK ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER Issue 16 ● Winter 2002-2003

ALAMEDA CREEK ALLIANCE

Protecting and restoring the natural ecosystems of the Alameda Creek watershed

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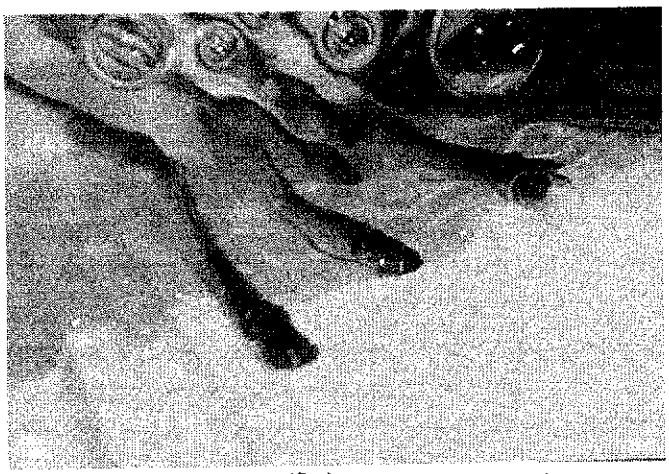
NEXT ACA MEETINGS

March 25, April 29
7 - 9 PM, Sunol Glen School, Sunol
(for directions visit www.alamedacreek.org/Next_Meeting/meetings.html)



Pacific lampreys

ALAMEDA CREEK LAMPREY SPECIES PETITIONED FOR ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT PROTECTION

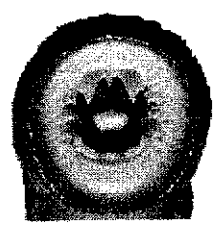
In January 2003, eleven conservation organizations in California, Oregon, and Washington petitioned the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service to list four species of lampreys as threatened or endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act. Lampreys are ancient jawless fish that resemble eels, but are not related. Lampreys have anadromous life-cycles and freshwater habitat requirements somewhat similar to salmon and steelhead trout. The four lamprey species petitioned for are the Pacific lamprey, river lamprey, western brook lamprey, and Kern brook lamprey.

Pacific lamprey still spawn in Alameda Creek. The species also persists in Coyote Creek in Santa Clara County, Lagunitas Creek in Marin County, Sonoma Creek in Sonoma County, and Conn Creek, tributary to the Napa River. Pacific lamprey have apparently been extirpated from many other Bay Area streams such as Walnut Creek in Contra Costa County, Walker Creek in Marin County, Dry Creek and Pena Creek in Sonoma County, and the San Lorenzo River in Santa Cruz County.

The last known river lamprey in Alameda Creek was collected near Niles in 1966. River lamprey reportedly still exist in the Napa River and Sonoma Creek but none have been observed there during the 1980s and 1990s. Western brook lampreys once occurred in Coyote Creek, with the last collection in 1923; brook lampreys still spawn in Mark West Creek, tributary to the Russian River.

Adult Pacific lamprey have been observed recently in Sunol Regional Wilderness in upper Alameda Creek and a probable chlorine spill in the Sunol Valley in April 2002 killed at least 24-36 adult lampreys. A few adult upstream migrants have been seen in lower Alameda Creek at the ACWD rubber dams and larval lampreys, called ammocoetes, have been found in upper Alameda Creek within Sunol Regional Wilderness in recent years.

Contrary to popular belief, not all lampreys are parasitic, nor are they necessarily detrimental to salmon. Lampreys play an important role as a food source for many species of fish, birds, and mammals, and healthy lamprey populations serve as a buffer to reduce predation upon salmon. Lamprey also transport nutrients to freshwater ecosystems and their consumption of algae in the larval stage acts as a bio-filter, helping maintain the health of river systems.



Business end of a Pacific lamprey

Lamprey have declined concurrent with salmon populations due to the impacts of dams blocking access to spawning habitat, water diversions, siltation of river habitat by logging and poor agricultural practices, and pollution.

For more info on lamprey and the listing petition, visit: www.biologicaldiversity.org/swcbd/species/lamprey/index.html

FEDERAL FISH LADDER PROJECT INCHES FORWARD

A federal restoration project involving construction of proposed fish ladders and fish screens at the BART weir and ACWD rubber dams in the Alameda Creek flood control channel has been given provisional approval by the Army Corps of Engineers. A Preliminary Restoration Plan (PRP) has been developed, but the Corps cautions that a 2007 start to construction is the earliest reasonable estimate. The Corps PRP and a completed Project Management Plan can be viewed at: www.cemar.org/alamedacreek/.

The California Coastal Conservancy has expressed potential interest in sharing responsibility for the environmental review of the project as a way to save money and expedite the process. The ACA has initiated a discussion among the involved agencies for an interim plan for restoration of a steelhead run before the Corps project is completed.

SFPUC PROJECTS

Calaveras Dam

The SFPUC has confirmed that Calaveras Dam will have to be replaced and that they are working on the geotechnical and engineering studies now. The dam will likely be replaced at a site immediately downstream of the present dam. The dam would potentially be enlarged up to 420,000 acre-feet (current capacity 100K acre-feet), but an analysis is being done of how conservation and water recycling activities could be used to reduce the size of the reservoir. Completion of the new dam could allow removal of the Alameda Diversion Dam from upper Alameda Creek and there is the potential for reservoir water to be delivered in reverse through the diversion tunnel into Alameda Creek for fisheries habitat flows.

Niles and Sunol Dams

The SFPUC has been awarded a Prop 13 grant in the amount of $1,000,000 for the removal of Niles and Sunol Dams. The environmental review process for this project has begun and the next step is planning for sediment removal from behind the dams. The removals are planned for 2004.

Habitat Conservation Plan

The SFPUC will be initiating a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) over the next few years for all SFPUC projects and lands (excluding the Calaveras Reservoir replacement) to establish appropriate mitigation for activities which impact endangered species. Depending upon how an HCP is developed, implemented, and monitored, the process can provide a benefit for listed species and their habitats, or can become a legal loophole for "taking" endangered species without adequate protections or mitigations.

FOCUS ON THE ARROYOS

Friends Of The Arroyos One Year Anniversary

Friends Of The Arroyos has been alive and well for one year, with about 70 members connected via e-mail distribution. FOTA's most notable accomplishment has been to increase awareness and dialog with our local wholesale water agency, Zone 7, on the importance of the Arroyo Mocho for the passage of steelhead trout to potential spawning grounds in the upper Mocho gorge.

This occurred as FOTA became involved in opposing two projects as originally planned by Zone 7. These projects would have added more fish passage barriers along the Arroyo Mocho. Because we brought this to the newspapers via press releases and encouraged letter writing, through contact with Zone 7, concerned citizens, and the California Deptartment of Fish and Game, the result was re-designed projects that met the needs of Zone 7 for water delivery and created a much improved environment for native species. FOTA is presently providing input to Zone 7's long-term Stream Water Management Master plan.

FOTA recently received $12K from General Electric (in lieu of GE paying a water discharge fine directly to the state water board), to be spent over this year to re-vegetate 2.5 acres of land around the Arroyo Mocho crossing by Granada High School in Livermore with native plants. An educational kiosk will be built explaining to the students our efforts to restore the historical steelhead run in the Arroyo Mocho and the use of the Arroyo Mocho by Zone 7 as a delivery channel to recharge our groundwater storage basin. FOTA assisted the City of Pleasanton in securing $500K in state funds to restore 2 miles of Sycamore Creek along the Bernal property near 680 in Pleasanton. We have also organized 3 creek cleanups of the Arroyo Mocho, Arroyo las Positas, and Altamont Creek.

Zone 7 Projects

The ACA and FOTA were able to change 2 projects proposed by Zone 7 Water Agency that would have added potential fish migration barriers to the Arroyos and impacted other sensitive species. Zone 7 revised a project that will widen, realign, and restore sections of Arryo Mocho and Arroyo las Positas in Livermore after a letter-writing campaign and discussions between ACA, Zone 7, and the CA Dept. of Fish and Game. The revised project will remove two existing fish passage barriers, add two fish ladders to steep sections of the creek, and restore a more natural stream channel with native vegetation and enhanced stream wildlife habitat. Zone 7 also made modifications to a proposed rubber dam which will be used for groundwater recharge, including operational constraints and a fish screen to avoid impacting juvenile fish.

LLNL Stream Crossing

In 2004, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory will replace a cement stream crossing in Arroyo Mocho upstream of Mines Road with a bridge.

ACA VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES.

- Volunteers are needed for 2 weekends in March and April to distribute steelhead and watershed information brochures door-to-door to creekside residents
- The SFPUC is again using volunteers for fish surveys and smolt trapping above Calaveras and San Antonio Reservoirs
- Our Fourth Annual Fremont Steelhead Festival will be held the 2nd or 3rd weekend in May at Niles Community Park.

LOCAL ACTIVIST GROUPS IN THE ALAMEDA CREEK WATERSHED

Save Our Sunol

SOS is a local grassroots organization dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of the unique resources in the rural area of Sunol. SOS has been leading the opposition to expansion of gravel quarries in the Sunol Valley.

Contact: Pat Stillman (925) 862-2263, bpstillman@cs.com
web site: www.sunol.org

Friends Of The Arroyos

FOTA is a grassroots group working to protect and restore the creeks and arroyos of the Pleasanton-Livermore Valley and to restore the historical steelhead migration through the Arroyos via Alameda Creek to the Bay.
Contact: Louann Tung (925) 455-8823, lstung@pacbell.net

Friends of Kottinger Creek

FOKC is a newly formed creek group in Pleasanton.
Contact: Cheri Puls (925) 462-3389

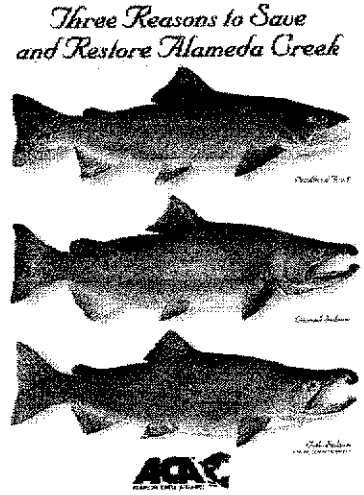
Save Our Danville Creeks

SODC is working to protect the Alamo Creek watershed from further development that will endanger the environment
Contact: sodc@hotmail.com

Friends of Coyote Hills Fremont

FCHF is working to preserve Fremont's last large baylands open space, and to protect Coyote Hills' ecosystems and wildlife habitat, thereby ensuring meaningful quality of life for present and future generations. FCHF is working to ensure that development proposals will not be allowed to negatively impact or degrade the irreplaceable regional treasures that are Coyote Hills Regional Park, Alameda Creek Trail and Crandall Creek Trail or the surrounding Ardenwood community in any way.
Contact: (510) 794-0847, info@fchf.org
web site: www.fchf.org

Support the Alameda Creek Alliance
Help restore Alameda Creek
Free t-shirt with membership of $20 or more



ACA Membership Form

Yes, I would like to become a member of the Alameda Creek Alliance and receive the newsletter Up Your Creek! Enclosed is $10 or more for a one year membership. Membership of $20 or more receives ACA t-shirt (please specify size). Checks payable to Alameda Creek Alliance.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

e-mail _____

❑ $10 Fry ❑ $25 Parr ❑ $50 Smolt

❑ $100 Spawner ❑ Send me a free bumpersticker

Mail to: Alameda Creek Alliance, P. O. Box 192, Canyon, CA 94516

We still have t-shirts from the 2002 Steelhead Festival ☞ (in all sizes except XL) available for $8 postage paid.

Alameda Creek Alliance
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PLEASE SUPPORT THE CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

If you are a member of the Alameda Creek Alliance, you will find enclosed a fundraising letter from the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD). The Alameda Creek Alliance is an affiliate of CBD because of their hard-hitting advocacy and legal work on behalf of steelhead trout, salmon, and other imperiled wildlife (such as the California red-legged frog and Alameda whipsnake) found within the watershed. Please take a minute to read their letter and consider supporting the CBD. If you are not an Alameda Creek Alliance member, visit the CBD web site at www.biologicaldiversity.org to learn more about the most effective endangered species protection organization in North America (and please also join the Alameda Creek Alliance to support our restoration work in the Alameda Creek watershed).