

PRESS RELEASE

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DRAFT

**RESTORATION OF CREEK STEELHEAD POSSIBLE
New Report Recommends Actions to Return Steelhead to the Alameda Creek Watershed**

While visions of salmon struggling upstream to spawn are normally associated with undeveloped regions, a report released today suggests that such a vision could be a reality in South San Francisco Bay. The study concludes that steelhead, an ocean-going form of rainbow trout closely related to salmon, could move up Alameda Creek to spawn if man-made structures in the creek channel are modified or removed.

"There appears to be adequate habitat for spawning, but presently the fish cannot get to it," said Laura Kilgour of the Alameda County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, which commissioned the study along with the California Coastal Conservancy. A key barrier to fish migration is a flow-control structure that prevents erosion around bridge supports where BART crosses the Creek in Fremont.

There has been interest in restoration of steelhead in Alameda Creek before, and two small dams on the creek include remnants of "fish ladders" that were built over fifty years ago. Recently, volunteers have captured adult steelhead at the BART crossing, transporting them around the major barriers and releasing them upstream. In addition, state-of-the-art genetic techniques have documented that these fish are not from hatcheries, but instead represent the remnants of a wild population of trout that are listed as a Threatened Species under the Federal Endangered Species Act. "The fact that these fish are part of the native population means that they are adapted to the local environment," said Pete Alexander, a fisheries biologist for the East Bay Regional Park District. "This means they are well-suited to respond to restoration actions."

Preparation of the report was supervised by the Alameda Creek Fisheries Restoration Workgroup, a unique committee composed of staff from fish and wildlife, flood control, and water supply agencies, local fishermen, and environmental organizations. "Restoration of the steelhead population will only be realized through cooperative efforts of all stakeholders in the watershed" said Pat Coulston, who represents the California Department of Fish and Game on the Workgroup.

The report was prepared by Applied Marine Sciences of Livermore and Hagar Environmental Science of Richmond, and concludes that steelhead could complete their life-cycle in the watershed with provision of fish passage at key locations. "The precise size of the steelhead run that would result cannot be predicted," cautioned Andrew Gunther, Vice-President of Applied Marine Sciences and senior author of the report. Gunther cites climate variation, groundwater flow into streams, and future water diversion practices as factors that would influence the ultimate success of restoration efforts.

The report was commissioned because of the availability of federal funds through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for environmental restoration of streams and rivers. In the early 1960s the Corps channelized the lower 12 miles of Alameda Creek, including the section that contains major barriers to migration. A key component of the report's recommendations is to prepare an

application for federal funding to construct facilities for adult fish passage, and screens to prevent juvenile fish from getting into water supply structures. The report also identified areas of further study, such as determining flow requirements in the creek that are needed in order to implement restoration.

A unique aspect of the effort was the cooperation between the major stakeholders in forming the Workgroup and commissioning the study. "This definitely is not business-as-usual" said Gunther. He complimented all the members of the Workgroup for seeking cooperative solutions rather than the more adversarial approaches that have characterized past restoration efforts.

"Alameda County Water District was pleased to cooperate in this effort, and the consultant and members of the workgroup should be commended on an excellent report", said Paul Piraino, General Manager of ACWD. The water district, which serves the cities of Newark, Fremont and Union City, operates several inflatable dams on Alameda Creek which are used to divert water to the adjacent quarry lakes for groundwater recharge. "However, the report raises some key questions that still need to be answered before we can fully evaluate the effects of the restoration effort on our water supply operations." These items include how much water would need to flow to the Bay to facilitate fish migration, what is the timing of the migration, and what sources of water are available to provide the needed flows.

The text of the full report, and an executive summary, are available at <http://www.amarine.com/information/alameda/fish/acfish.html>