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WATERSHED LOOKOUT JANUARY 2023



Dear acwForum stakeholders, partners and friends,

Wow! Rainfall in December (and into this week) has impacted the Alameda Creek Watershed in both positive and challenging ways. Read about the opportunity it gave ACWD to start up operations of the fish ladder below. Also below is information shared by Friends of San Lorenzo Creek about the Watercourse Protection Ordinance modifications that are in the works.

Below are additional articles about the recent storms:

<https://www.npr.org/2023/01/02/1146565599/california-floods-atmospheric-river>

<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2023-01-03/another-atmospheric-river-expected-for-california>

<https://www.sfchronicle.com/projects/2022/atmospheric-river-california/>

We plan to share information about the impact of the storms on the reservoirs in the Alameda Creek Watershed next month as the rain keeps falling.

Also coming soon - information about the 2023 State of the Alameda Creek Watershed Conference! We will again host an in-person event with presentations, booth and sponsorship opportunities, and a photo contest!

**Share your watershed news by
emailing allison.rodacker@acred.org, today!**

EVENTS

**Saturday, January 21
9:00am - 12:00pm
Carlos Bee Park Litter Pick Up**

The Clean Water Volunteers and the Hayward Area Parks & Recreation (H.A.R.D.) Volunteers in the Park (VIP) have partnered to help clean up and beautify this community park. Volunteer to help remove litter and beautify Carlos Bee Park and watch a water testing demonstration!

[Register](#)

**Saturday, January 21
9:00am - 12:00pm
Living Arroyos Volunteer Day**

Join Living Arroyos in Livermore to help remove trash from the Arroyo Mocho at the Stanley Reach.

[Register](#)

ACWD FISH LADDER START OF ACTIVITIES



Alameda County Water District, December 20, 2022

ACWD began operational testing of the new fish ladder and biological monitoring equipment located at the Rubber Dam No. 1 and BART weir on November 28. Additional testing days were scheduled for Nov. 30, Dec. 2, 12, 15, and 20 with the intention to complete testing and initiate full-time, automated operations during the last week of December.

Until testing is complete, and the fish passage facilities are confirmed to be operating within specifications, they cannot be left in operation without staff onsite; therefore, the ladders have been unavailable for fish passage outside of scheduled active testing periods.

On December 3 and 4, a small atmospheric river event produced Alameda Creek runoff up to 740 cubic feet per second (cfs). On Dec. 5, Alameda Creek Alliance volunteers observed approximately 30 Chinook salmon attempting to ascend the BART weir. After peak flows receded, the salmon retreated to the pool downstream of the ladder where they were observed milling for the remainder of the week. Daily monitoring by ACWD staff revealed no evidence of stranding or carcasses, though at least one Chinook was observed being predated by river otters.

Fish ladder testing resumed on December 12, providing suitable flows for passage for approximately six hours. The acoustic imaging ARIS (sonar) camera was not fully operational and hence unavailable for monitoring; however, staff at the camera station believe that at least one fish was observed swimming past the camera. PIT (Passive Integrated Transponder) tag antenna tests demonstrated 100% success at detecting over 50 test tags. The antenna array did not detect the presence of any tagged fish during the flow events. ACWD staff observed at least three Chinook in the upper reaches of the ladder during the short periods of low flow occurring in between flow tests, and staff observed one during shutdown and dewatering at the end of the day; ACWD staff released pulse flows in the ladder to entice the remaining fish to exit back down the ladder. These data points represent the first confirmation that adult salmonids had found the entrance to the ladder and ascended at least as far as the exit pool.

On December 13 and 14, ACWD staff observed a notably smaller number of Chinook salmon milling below the ladder than were observed on December 12. These fish appeared to be quite fresh as indicated by only slight color change and no spawning damage. Monitoring revealed no indication of spawning behavior, as indicated by a lack of any nest or redd construction.

On December 15th, between 2-5 Chinook were believed still present below the ladder. Another testing day commenced with a high 'pulse flow' of water through the ladder to entice fish to move upstream.

Testing included extensive efforts to calibrate the ARIS camera imagery. While ACWD staff detected movement on the camera, it could not be confirmed as a fish image. At day's end, dewatering once again revealed one adult female Chinook midway through the ladder. Staff pulsed flows downstream and successfully enticed her to exit.

On Dec 18th, Alameda Creek Alliance volunteers photographed Figure 3 Dec. 15th. ARIS sonographic imaging, several fish in Alameda Creek upstream of both of ACWD's Photo Credit: ACWD & Cramer Fish Sciences rubber dams. Fisheries biologist, Dr. Joe Merz, confirmed that the video and images provided were in fact Chinook salmon. This marked the first proof that salmonids had ascended both new ladders and, for the first time in over 50 years, have volitional access to the Alameda Creek watershed.

On December 19th, ACWD staff observed as many as 25 fish resembling Chinook, in both size and behavior, upstream of ACWD facilities and staging below a low flow barrier in lower Niles Canyon. Experts could not confirm with certitude that the Figure 4 Dec 18th Chinook observed upstream. Photo credit: Dan Sarka fish were Chinook, however video footage of at least one adult Chinook passing the barrier was collected.

On December 20th staff monitored all upstream and downstream locations where they had previously observed Chinook. No new activity was observed.

ACWD would like to thank the Alameda Creek Alliance volunteers for their observations and photos. The data and

Submitted by: Thomas Niesar, ACWD

WATERCOURSE PROTECTION ORDINANCE MODIFICATION

Watercourse Protection Ordinance Modifications In The Works

Alameda County Public Works has been working on a modification to the Watercourse Protection Ordinance (WPO) that applies to all unincorporated areas. A WPO modification is needed because:

- a) The WPO defines "watercourses" as the perennial and intermittent streams that are shown on the most-recent, 7.5-minute, USGS topo map.
- b) USGS maps stopped showing hundreds of intermittent streams that were shown on the USGS maps since the WPO was adopted 40 years ago.

In March 2022, Friends of San Lorenzo Creek and Alameda Creek Alliance requested action to regain protection of these streams with support from Sierra Club SAC, Ohlone Audubon, and Save the Refugee. ACPWA started work on WPO modifications in Spring of 2022. In November 2022, ACPWA Director Daniel Woldeesenbet presented some proposed WPO modifications at the Castro Valley Municipal Advisory Council, including:

- a) a new Unincorporated Alameda County Stream Map based on the 2015 USGS topo maps to define what streams are "watercourses;"
- b) changes to creek setback criteria and the definition of "watercourse;"
- c) defining floodway and floodplain;
- d) new administrative enforcement procedures and Board of Zoning Adjustments hearings for abatement appeals;
- e) FAQs.

Submitted by: Bruce King, Friends of San Lorenzo Creek

TOOLBOX

Alameda County Flood Control & Water Conservation District's Explore Watersheds Website and KMZ files for Google Earth Pro

<https://acffloodcontrol.org/the-work-we-do/resources/>

Restoration Grant Opportunities

[The California Department of Fish and Wildlife \(CDFW\)](#) is excited to announce new funding opportunities for multi-benefit ecosystem restoration and protection projects through the Watershed Restoration Grants Branch. Applications accepted on a rolling basis.

StopWaste Online Guide to Lawn Conversion. Reduce your landscape water use *and* build soil health. <https://www.lawntogarden.org/>

[SEPUC Rebates](#)

[Zone 7 Rebates](#)

[ACWD Rebates](#)

Alameda Creek Watershed
Forum

Click on the logo to view events and past newsletters.

The acwForum's mission is to protect and enhance water-related beneficial uses and resources in the Alameda Creek Watershed in order to create a healthy and sustainable watershed for the community. The acwForum will promote collaboration and the sharing of information among all stakeholders.

You have received this message because of your interest and relationship with Alameda Creek Watershed Forum (acwForum). The monthly e-News will provide you updates of events, news and activities related to the acwForum, whose mission is to protect and enhance water-related beneficial uses and resources in the Alameda Creek watershed in order to create a healthy and sustainable watershed for the community.

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