

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Tiffany Martinez

Tiffany@millermxfield.com



SAN LORENZO VALLEY WATER DISTRICT UPGRADES THE FALL CREEK FISH LADDER TO IMPROVE FISH PASSAGE AND INCREASE OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCIES

PROJECT WILL IMPROVE THE FALL CREEK ECOSYSTEM

June 26, 2023 — BOULDER CREEK, CA — The San Lorenzo Valley Water District (SLVWD) announces the Fall Creek Fish Ladder is being rebuilt to improve fish passage and improve operational conditions.

Fall Creek is a primary source of drinking water for the town of Felton and provides approximately 160 million gallons of water to customers annually. Water diverted there is pumped to the Kirby Water Treatment Plant and then delivered to homes. The fish ladder facilitates fish to successfully swim upstream past the water diversion.

The fish ladder, owned and operated by SLVWD since 2008, is located in Felton about a half-mile upstream from the San Lorenzo River at the edge of the Fall Creek Unit of Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park. Initially constructed three decades ago, the Fall Creek Fish Ladder was designed with jump heights that have since been identified as too high for salmonoid passage. Previous efforts to modify the structure were not successful in meeting standards for jump heights and did not correct operational inefficiencies.

The District has worked closely with the National Marine Fisheries Service and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to develop a fish ladder design that will support the native steelhead population in Fall Creek. In October 2022, the District was awarded a \$1,116,166 CDFW Proposition 1 Watershed Restoration Grant Program grant, which will significantly contribute to the reconstruction of the Fall Creek Fish Ladder. The total cost of the project is estimated at \$2,365,720.

Work began in early June when Carly Blanchard, the District's Environmental Programs Manager, and two biologists relocated more than 10 steelhead salmon upstream and away from the ladder. Fish relocation will continue as the section of Fall Creek surrounding the fish ladder is dewatered to allow construction can begin. The work is expected to be completed by October 2023.

"Aligning the fish ladder design with current standards will improve fish passage and have a profound positive impact on the Fall Creek watershed," SLVWD Environmental Programs Manager Carly Blanchard said. "It will not only benefit the salmonid species, but also contribute to the overall health and vitality of our aquatic habitats. As stewards of our local watershed, we are proud to be leading this initiative and look forward to witnessing the long-term benefits it will bring to our community and the environment."

The project modifications include the installation of six new or modified concrete weirs downstream of the intake screen, each with a 12-inch drop height. An additional concrete weir will be placed upstream of the intake screens to provide grade control, set to a 6-inch drop height. These alterations will

facilitate fish passage, while addressing structural deficiencies and enhancing the facility's accessibility for maintenance and operation. The project will also incorporate measures to provide improved habitat for juvenile steelhead rearing.

The upgraded ladder pools will create optimal leaping conditions and increase fish passage success through the ladder. The project has received full approval from regulatory agencies, underscoring its alignment with environmental standards and best practices.

"SLVWD is proud to have developed an improved fish ladder design in collaboration with regulatory agencies that not only meets fish passage standards but also significantly optimizes operations within our water system." SLVWD Manager Rick Rogers said. "Our goals are to ensure successful fish passage while enhancing operations, access and maintenance of the facility."

The Fall Creek Fish Ladder Project highlights SLVWD's dedication to environmental stewardship and the preservation of local ecosystems as the only water district in Santa Cruz County responsible for managing a year-round fish ladder.

ABOUT THE SAN LORENZO VALLEY WATER DISTRICT

The San Lorenzo Valley Water District is located in the mountains of northern Santa Cruz County. The district serves more than 7,500 metered connections. Established in 1941, the district supplies water to the communities of Boulder Creek, Brookdale, Ben Lomond, Zayante, Quail Hollow, Scotts Valley, Whispering Pines, Manana Woods, and Felton. For more information, visit www.slvwd.com or follow the District on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [Nextdoor](#).

###