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First Steelhead Trout in Decades Spotted at Malibu Lagoon *Marks Third Endangered Species Within First Year After Restoration*

LOS ANGELES – A year after the grand reopening of the newly restored Malibu Lagoon, a third endangered species missing for decades was spotted. An adult steelhead trout, approximately 20 inches in length, was discovered on May 15 during post-construction fish monitoring by the Resource Conservation District-Santa Monica Mountains, California State Parks and The Bay Foundation.

No steelhead trout have been reported in the Malibu Lagoon for decades, although their presence in the creek upstream is known.

“We are thrilled to see an adult steelhead in the newly restored lagoon. Its presence shows that the conditions onsite are now vastly better,” said Suzanne Goode, senior environmental scientist for California State Parks.

This marks the third discovery of expanded activity by an endangered species since the completion of the [Malibu Lagoon Restoration Project](#). In summer 2013, the California least tern produced seven nests with eggs, which had not occurred in over 70 years. Federally listed tidewater gobies have also expanded their presence into the restored area taking advantage of almost two additional acres of suitable burrow habitat.

Steelhead trout are known for needing clean, cool, well-oxygenated water, all of which were goals of the Malibu Lagoon Restoration and Enhancement Project. In addition to steelhead trout, tens of thousands of native fish were documented during the fish survey. The plan is to place a camera (underwater ultrasound) in early June to record the fish as well.

Prior to the restoration, the Malibu Lagoon—on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency list of impaired water bodies for over a decade due to excess nutrients and low oxygen levels—was filled with

contaminated soil and trash built up over many decades, including fill dumped from past road construction work. The resulting choke points impeded regular tidal flow in and out of the lagoon, causing little “flushing” of the lagoon channels. This created a build-up of nutrients and fine sediments (mud) in the lagoon, which in turn caused low oxygen levels in the water. Without oxygen, aquatic life cannot breathe, so very little was able to grow in the lagoon.

"There will be an extensive five year monitoring program that measures water quality, avian resources, fish, benthic invertebrates and vegetation to determine the overall success of the program, but thus far we are delighted with the results," said Mark Abramson, senior watershed advisor for The Bay Foundation.

The restoration addressed and successfully completed:

- Removal of the old fill and trash
- Improvement of the tidal flow and connection so there is natural cleansing and flushing of wastes from animals, and healthy levels of oxygen for creatures
- Better habitat connectivity and less disturbance of wildlife by humans
- Attracted returning fish, birds and other animals and increased the habitat diversity
- Enhanced visitor experience for surfers, students, birders and residents

The Malibu Lagoon Restoration and Enhancement Project was completed by California State Parks with project partners State Coastal Conservancy, Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains, The Bay Foundation and Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission.



Photo Credit: Jayni Shuman, RCDSMM Stream Team.

About California State Parks

California State Parks manages 280 park units, which contain the finest and most diverse collection of natural, cultural, and recreational resources to be found within California. Responsible for almost one-third of California's scenic coastline, the California State Park system includes 280 parks, beaches, trails, wildlife areas, open spaces, off-highway vehicle areas, and historic sites. It consists of approximately 1.59 million acres, including over 339 miles of coastline, 974 miles of lake, reservoir and river frontage, approximately 15,000 campsites and alternative camping facilities, and 4,456 miles of non-motorized trails. For more information, visit www.parks.ca.gov.

About The Bay Foundation (TBF)

The TBF is a 501(c) 3 non-profit environmental group founded in 1990 to restore and enhance the Santa Monica Bay (from the LA-Ventura county line to the Palos Verdes Peninsula) and local coastal waters. The Foundation is the non-profit partner of the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission, raising and expending funds for research, education, planning, cleanup efforts and other priorities identified in the Commission's Santa Monica Bay Restoration Plan. As advocates for the Bay, TBF works collaboratively with a broad group of stakeholders, including government agencies, industry, environmental groups, and scientists, to implement innovative policies and projects that clean up the waterways, create green spaces and natural habitats in the Los Angeles region. The TBF conducts research and mentors student intern and volunteers through its Center for Santa Monica Bay Studies at Loyola Marymount University. <http://www.santamonicabay.org/>

About Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains (RCDSMM)

<http://www.rcdsmm.org/>