

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Since its inception, the District has been dedicated to protecting the Carmel River's banks against erosion; monitoring ground and surface water levels throughout the District; and protecting threatened species such as the Carmel River steelhead trout and California red-legged frog, as required by federal and state regulations. Approximately one-half of the District's budget is allocated toward environmental protection.

District Focuses on Protecting Threatened Species

Protecting Carmel River Steelhead Trout a Priority

The Carmel River steelhead trout population continued to increase in 2002. In spite of the progress made on the Carmel River in the last 12 years, steelhead trout continue to be listed as a threatened species on the Carmel River and areas throughout California under the federal Endangered Species Act. District fishery programs focus on maintaining a healthy environment for steelhead spawning and rearing. District staff coordinates with Cal-Am, the California Department of Fish and Game and NOAA Fisheries to control the amount of water released from reservoirs and pumped from wells so that adequate river flow is maintained for fish throughout most of the year.

Steelhead Numbers Continue to Rise

The adult steelhead population continued to recover from the impacts of the 1987-1991 drought. The District's automatic fish counter at San Clemente Dam recorded 642 fish between December 2001 and May 2002. The 2002 run was the fourth highest since the District began counting in 1991, but was below the peak of 861 in 1998. In 1992, following a four-year drought, only 15 fish were counted.

In October 2002 District staff surveyed the number of juvenile steelhead at ten stations below Los Padres Dam, including two new stations within the inundation zone of San Clemente Reservoir. Overall population density of juveniles was 76 percent higher than levels recorded in 2001, averaging 123 fish per one hundred feet of stream. These values are typical of well-stocked steelhead streams.

Improvements Made at Sleepy Hollow Steelhead Rearing Facility

The Sleepy Hollow Steelhead Rearing Facility includes a cooling tower for maintaining a safe water temperature in the rearing channel and holding tanks during the hot summer months. Monitoring data show that the cooling tower reduces daily maximums and daily mean water temperatures by five to eight degrees fahrenheit compared to conditions in the river.

The facility is monitored 24 hours a day by a computer system that monitors the power supply and five pumps, and automatically alerts District staff to potential problems when the Facility is not staffed. The alarm system was upgraded in 2002 to

measure water depth in the river pump gallery, water flow, temperature and pressure on the cooling tower side of the system. The system alerts staff if these measurements fall outside optimum range.

The rearing facility was out of service from March 2002 until August 2002 because the two river pumps were severely damaged by sand and fine silt abrasion in the pump housing. One pump was overhauled while the other was replaced. Therefore, no fish were held in the facility during the summer 2002 rearing season.



District team conducts steelhead rescue operation in the Carmel River.

Fish Rescue Operations Continued

District staff conducted 49 rescue operations in calendar year 2002, capturing a total of 36,398 steelhead from drying

