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FISH and FISHING

Steelhead, salmon will soon climb a ladder to success

By ERIN BLAIR
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SANTA CRUZ — Steelhead trout and salmon will be pleased. Their new fish ladder on Moore Creek should be ready by October, in plenty of time for the winter migrations, according to Ken Hart, program manager for the county Planning Department's division of natural resource management.

Although the term "fish ladder" conjures up comic images, it describes a stepped series of pools engineered to help fish travel upstream to their spawning grounds.

The fish ladder at Moore Creek will consist of five concrete boxes, or compartments, separated by one-foot jumps. It is necessary because the stream level has lowered itself through erosion of the stream

bed. That has created a five-foot jump salmon and steelhead can't manage between the creek and a culvert at Old San Jose Road, Hart said.

"The number of fish is much diminished from past years as a result of barriers on the water and the number of people living in the watershed and depleting the creek," said Hart.

"Salmon and steelhead are indicators of stream quality. They like clean, plentiful water and clean gravel to spawn in. When their numbers diminish, it shows the destruction and degradation of the stream," he said.

Companies that do concrete forming began bidding for the project Tuesday. The contract will be decided next week. Work will begin Sept. 1 and take about a month,

Hart said.

The project must be completed by Oct. 15, when the rains start, he added.

The \$39,000 fish ladder is part of a \$390,000 grant from the Department of Fish and Game to improve fish habitats.

Other projects in the grant include drainage work on Corralitos Creek, enlargement of a culvert on Love Creek, construction of a sediment retention basin on Mill Creek and erosion work on the San Lorenzo River.

A grant from the Wildlife Conservation Board will permit additional improvements to Moore Creek, including the placement of a structure in the creek bed that will use water power to dig pools for juvenile fish to summer in.