

# Opener yields few steelhead

By GREG BEEBE  
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — Long-faced anglers described Monday's first day of freshwater salmon and steelhead fishing as "nothing to write home about."

Area fishermen reportedly pulled about a dozen or so salmon and steelhead out of the San Lorenzo River on the season's first day.

Monday's bite, though slim compared to years past, was at least "a lot better than last year," when persistent drought conditions kept the San Lorenzo River flow very low and the fish very scarce, said Ken Smith, owner of Seabright Fishing Center.

"The last two years have been the worst two years we've ever had," said Ernie Kinzli, owner of Ernie's Casting Pond in Soquel. "And if we don't get rain soon, (this season) is probably going to be like the last two."

"Our steelhead fishermen are depressed," said Kinzli. "We've had two real bad years and the outlook doesn't look too bright. We need some some rain, and one rain isn't going to do it."

Those who managed to pull fish out of the San Lorenzo used both bait and artificial flies, with the fly fishermen meeting up with more success, said Kinzli.

Hot spots on the river, according to Smith, were the mouth of the San Lorenzo in the morning and beneath the Riverside Avenue bridge later in the day.

A good number of the fish were caught and released by sportsmen concerned about the dwindling population of steelhead and salmon, said Kinzli.

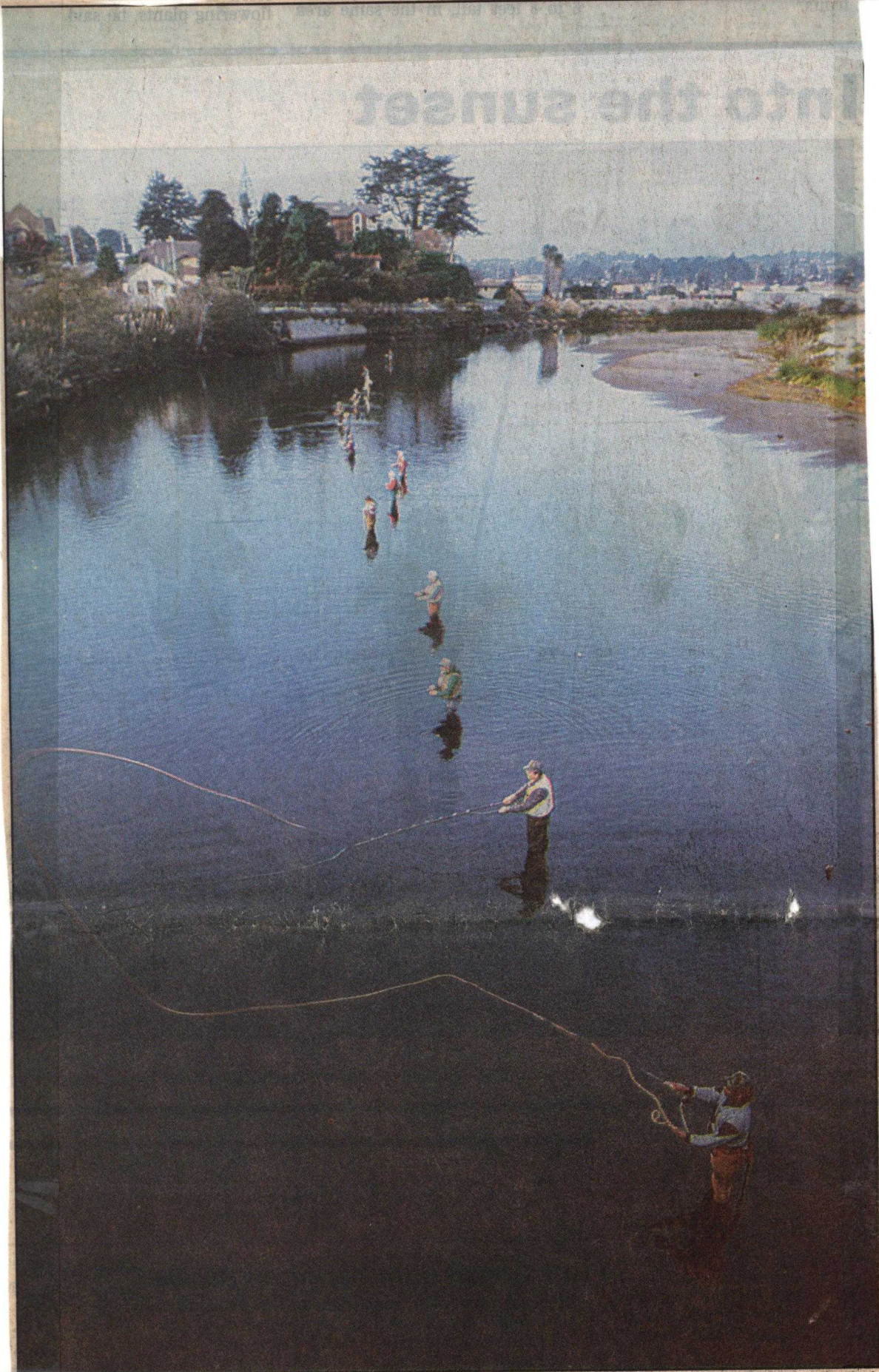
Twenty years ago, the first day of the season meant fishermen shoulder-to-shoulder on the river, no place to park and hundreds of fish landed, said Kinzli.

"There would be fish jumping everywhere in the lagoon, and maybe 100 or 200 fish caught. Easily," said Kinzli.

Nowadays, he said, it's not uncommon for an angler to venture down to the San Lorenzo and "not see a fish jump or move."

Freshwater steelhead and salmon season is open on Wednesdays, holidays and weekends through Feb. 28.

# Slow day on the river



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Roger Bennett, foreground, lays out a fly line as he and others angle for scarce steelhead.