



News Release

For Immediate Release

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Endangered Steelhead Spawns on Valentine's Day?

Ojai View, California – A spawning “redd,” a mound of gravel created by an endangered steelhead trout laying her eggs, was discovered on February 14, 2008 (Valentine’s Day) in the Ventura watershed. Scott Lewis, Casitas’ fisheries biologist, was conducting a spawning survey when he came upon the redd. This offers more evidence that steelhead are returning and spawning in the Ventura Watershed. Last week, Casitas’ photographed five endangered steelhead swimming up its fish ladder. They were the first confirmed steelhead to use the ladder since it was built in 2004.

“A redd is created by a female fish when she turns her body sideways and rapidly fans the gravel to create a depression. She then lays her eggs in the depression and waits for a male fish to quickly fertilize the eggs. The female will then move her tail to cover the eggs with gravel so they will not be swept away by the water current,” explained Lewis.

Lewis said, “the size of the redd was 6.5 feet long and 4.5 feet wide. This indicates that it was probably too large to have been made by a rainbow trout, which means it was likely created by an endangered Southern California Steelhead,” according to Lewis. Last year, a smaller redd was discovered but initial results were unclear as to whether it was created by a rainbow trout or steelhead. Lewis, now believes last year’s redd was likely created by a small steelhead. The only other sighting in recent years was in 2001.

The exact location of the redd is not being made available to the public so as to protect it from possible human interference. It is illegal to fish below the Matilija Dam on Ventura River down to the ocean or downstream of the Wheeler Campground because of potential harm to endangered steelhead. Casitas encourages the public to maintain their distance from the river to better protect the endangered steelhead. For additional information please call Ron Merckling, Water Conservation Manager at (805) 649-2251 Extension 118.
