

Rogue River Fish Runs Are Not on The Decline

One of the most valuable recreational assets to the Rogue River Basin and the State of Oregon, which would be seriously damaged by the building of a high dam in the main channel of the Rogue River in the area used by migratory fish, as reported in the alternate plans of the Reclamation Bureau is the salmon and steelhead runs now existing. The State Game Commission has made an extensive survey of the Rogue River fishery and reports that the same has an annual value to the State of Oregon of \$2,155,000.00 which capitalized at 4% amounts to \$53,875,000.00 and that over \$26,000,00 has been invested in resorts, boats, commercial hatcheries, fish ways and fish screens. These figures are based on the year 1946 and the same can be expected to increase if the fishery is preserved.

It has been contended by the supporters of the Reclamation Bureau Plans that the fish life on the Rogue River is declining to such an extent that it has a vague and uncertain recreational value and that it is doubtful whether the fish runs can be maintained or improved. Reference has been quoted to show the decline of the fish runs but in doing so, several very important factors have been overlooked.

Contrary to the Rogue Valley Irrigation Association's assumption that the runs of Rogue River steel-

head and salmon are declining, it must be pointed out that the runs are showing definite trends toward an increase. With the detailed fisheries management program now in progress with all detrimental factors being controlled, there is reason to expect the runs of migratory fish will continue to increase materially as time goes on.

Unscreened irrigation has taken a great toll of the fish runs during the past 20 years. The tremendous number of fish lost on irrigated fields has been the most important factor responsible for the fishery's decline up to and including 1946. The screening program carried on by the Oregon State Game Commission is nearing completion. With the return of these runs protected by installations of the rotary fish screens, even greater increases can be expected. Commercial fishing in the river took its toll of the fisheries, but as one case of rare incidence, the river was closed to commercial fishing before it became too late.

True, the counts over Gold Ray dam have shown a decline from 1942 through 1946, but those counts were from runs that were still affected during downstream migration by unscreened or inefficiently screened diversions. The 1947 counts of chinook and silver salmon have been completed with each run showing a definite increase over the previous year. The 1947 chinook count totaled 34,740 as compared to 30,065 of the 1946 count (an increase of 15.5 percent). The 1947 count spawned from those fish counted in 1943 of which the return showed only a decrease of 8.7 percent compared to the 31.1 percent decrease between the runs of 1946 and 1942.

The 1947 count of silvers totaled 5,341 compared to the count of 3,849 during 1946. Not only was this a 40 per cent increase over the 1946 count, but the progeny showed a 65.4 per cent increase over the 1944 run from which it originated. The largest egg-take in the history of Rogue River was made from this 1947 run with over a million eggs taken for the Butte Falls Hatchery.

Addition to the unscreened irrigation ditches mentioned above, other factors which have definitely contributed to a smaller count of fish between the years 1942 to 1946, are the take of the commercial offshore fish in the waters of the Pacific Ocean. This fishery definitely has an effect on the Rogue River runs and yet the same contributes to the economy of the State. The fish taken there naturally cannot enter the river to spawn. Also a factor which has not been mentioned is the tremendous fishing pressure which exists and which has increased during the last few years to great proportions. The number of people fishing has increased tremendously from the mouth of the river to its upper most reaches.

These things have their effect and yet notwithstanding the same, the 1947 count increased by 4,675 salmon. This would indicate that ground is being gained and greater improvement in the future will be achieved, providing that the main channel of the Rogue River in which most of the fish spawn is left in at least its present condition.

If all the detrimental factors common to the fisheries prior to 1943 were to continue the unnecessary slaughter of fish life, the Rogue's fisheries could not continue as a stable industry. However, most of these factors are correcter and controlled so that now expected increases in the resource can be looked upon as reality. If high dams in the main channel of the Rogue are not built, the \$2,155,000 annual income from sports fishing can be expected to continue for some time to come, and the capitalized value of \$53,875,000 need not be considered as only a temporary investment. Even if the fisheries resource is maintained only at its present level, an increase in the annual income is certain. The runs of the Rogue are one of the last remaining on the Pacific Coast and they will increase in monetary value as the salmon and trout fisheries all over the country to decline through decimation.

There is a surplus of spawning gravel for use by present numbers of migratory fish using the upper river. In the event these fish were blocked by dams and concentrated below those dams, there would be no way in which the fish could be re-distributed over surplus gravel quantities in the river below or improved utility of that gravel obtained because the fish by natural go upstream to spawn. Only the first one-half mile of river below the dam would be used for spawning to any great extent. The assumption drawn by the irrigation interests that because of this surplus gravel there would be no loss is highly erroneous. With Plans A and B the problem involves 26 and 58 thousand steelhead and salmon, respectively, below main stem dams of which only several thousand could be expected to spawn successfully. The loss would result from later spawning fish digging up and destroying the eggs laid previously. Only the fish using the gravel for the last time could be expected to produce a successful hatch.

It has been stated that 1250 second feet of water will pass through the power plant under Plan A and improve the conditions of the river by furnishing more water. This will be little improvement, if any, over normal years and further there is no guarantee that such amount of water will be allowed to flow down the river.

Whatever minimum flow may be implied to be guaranteed from the report is not borne out by the operating record of governmental agencies on other streams where projects are in existence. The Deschutes River in Oregon and the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers in California are good examples of what happens to a

river after dams are built thereon. Most grievously the conditions are such they are not conducive or adequate for the protection of fish life. Furthermore, if the Reese Creek power house is built, the river will be drawn down to about 200 second feet in the summer time between Shady Cove and the mouth of Reese Creek which is about ten miles of the river. This area is one of the very best spawning areas in the river and would result in great damage and render that stretch of the river practically unfit for use by fish runs and the area from Trail upstream will be completely eliminated by the dam.

Regardless of the progress made in developing methods for handling salvaged and artificial propagation programs for preservation of fish life, there is still no satisfactory substitute for unobstructed streams in their natural condition for maintaining large fisheries resources such as that on the Rogue River.

—Rogue River Basin Conservation Committee
By Kenneth G. Denman,
Chairman

PLANS BEING COMPLETED ON YREKA GOLD RUSH

The Yreka Gold Rush celebration committee will make the gala revival of the famous gold festival a hands across the state affair. They will join with the southern part of Oregon to incorporate the cities of Ashland, Medford, Klamath Falls, Grants Pass and others into the Gold Rush celebration that will be held in Yreka (Calif.) June 24-27 inclusive. Harkening back to the days of Thompson's Dry Diggin's and Shasta Butte City

both earlier names for Yreka the hand of time will be turned back to recall that the original Siskiyou gold strike that rivaled the cry of Gold at Coloma came in 1851. Accordingly, this year's affair will be the first of four celebrations to be held as a revival of the Gold Rush Days that were last held in Yreka ten years ago. All the old time features will be re-enacted from the rustic dance hall to the mammoth historical parade on Sunday, June 27 that will have as its theme "Yesterday and Today." Children's Day, Saturday, June 26 and Pioneer's Day, Friday, June 25 are other features of the four day program that will get under way on Thursday June 24th with the Golden West Girl's Dinner. A modern Gold Way that will bring all the best attractions of a world's fair to Yreka will furnish the meeting place for everyone from 8 to 80. Old time and

modern dances will hold sway in every dance hall in town. Horsemanship will be at its best when as a part of the celebration, Sheriff's Poses from northern California and southern Oregon will hold competitive drills at the Siskiyou County fair grounds on Saturday night, June 26th. Among prominent persons who will be present are Senator Randolph Collier, Assemblyman Lester T. Davis, Congressman Clair Engle, and many others.

NOTICE

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