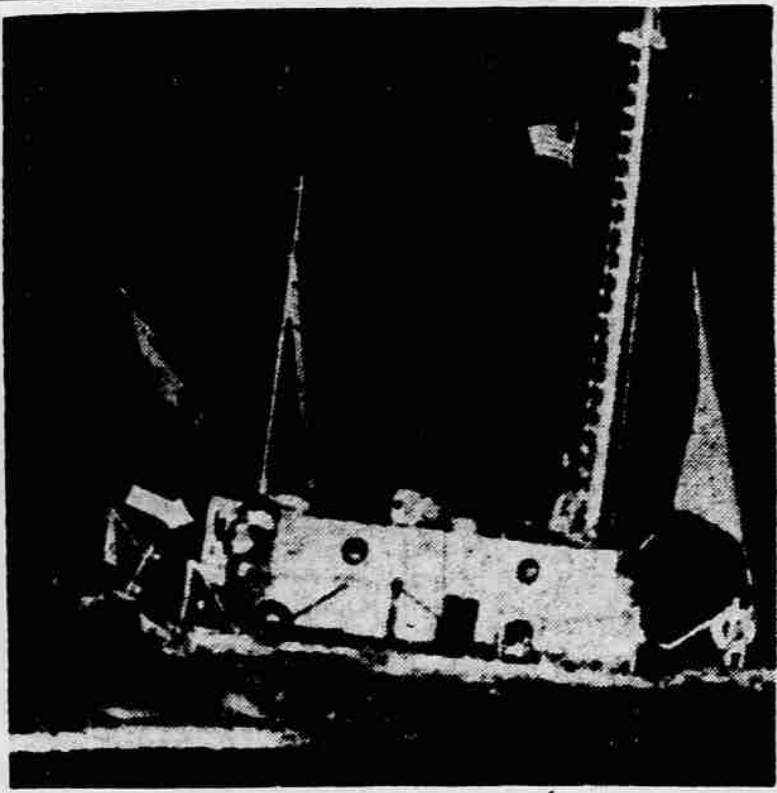




RAFT FLOUNDERS—Arrow points to DeVere Baker, skipper of raft Lehi II who was last to leave the sinking craft off Monterey, Cal., coast, hoping to prevent it from becoming a "free prize." In foreground is Coast Guard Cutter Active rubber raft which was used to rescue the ill-fated craft's crew.

Water Conservation Has Bearing on All Phases of Economy

(Editor's note: This is the third in a series of articles being published this week in connection with Conservation of Natural Resources week, May 1 to 7.)

By DAVID C. HENDRIX

District Water Master

Water is one, if not the most important of all our natural resources. In varying degrees, water is vital in all segments of economic activity. As the population of our state grows and our plane of living is raised, the total demand for water increases through new uses and intensification of old ones.

In Oregon, which has experienced a population gain of 38.6 per cent during the 1940 to 1950 decade and expects to increase by an additional 1,000,000 people by 1975, it is estimated that alone will increase to 110,000,000,000 gallons; that the requirements of Oregon's two major water-using industries, the processing of timber and agricultural products, will increase from 5 to 10 times in the foreseeable future.

As a whole, it isn't that Oregon does not have an adequate supply of water, if properly developed to meet these increasing needs, for years to come. It is estimated that our annual stream runoff amounts to 50,000,000 acre feet of water.

The demand for water by the people of Oregon, who are becoming conscious of its value and of the necessity for obtaining a legal right to use it, has more than doubled during recent years.

For example, during the five year period for 1949 to 1953, the State Engineer received applications for water use permits totalling 5,731, as compared with 2,689 applications during the five year period of 1937 to 1941.

However, permits have been issued for more water than minimum stream flows will provide, on many of Oregon's streams. On Bear creek between 1909 and 1953, for instance, 23 permits were issued for 414 cubic feet per second of water, although the records of this stream taken at Medford indicates that the

average minimum flow during the 10-year period, 1941 to 1950 amounted to only 10 cubic feet per second.

What Is Solution?

What then is the solution to these problems, as nearly all of Oregon's streams are characterized by this wide fluctuation between maximum and minimum flows?

First, it is necessary to utilize properly all water so as to reduce excess loss and waste of our present supply. It has been estimated that the state can secure sufficient water to nearly double its existing irrigable acreage by reducing present water losses.

Second, it is of the most importance that adequate storage dams of all sizes be constructed in order that surplus water may be stored during the winter months of heavy runoff so that the low flow in streams can be supplemented during late summer and early fall, following periods of little or no rain. Also adequate storage dams would provide needed flood control and lessen the damages which annually exceed 19 million dollars here in Oregon.

Ground Water Important

Third, and last, it will be necessary to fully utilize, through proper development, our ground water supply. At present, the principal use of ground water in Oregon is for domestic, stock-watering, public supply, industrial and irrigation purposes. It is estimated that new wells are being drilled at the rate of 5,000 annually and that 100,000 wells are now used for domestic and stock-watering. Ground water also furnished the public supply for about 250,000 people and irrigates approximately 50,000 acres of land.

In closing, it should be understood that "Water Conservation" means the conserving of all water through proper economic uses, so as to provide maximum productive potentialities in agriculture, manufacturing, domestic, power, mining, fish and wildlife, recreation, and many other purposes.

So the existing necessity for proper surface and ground water can be readily seen.

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