

EDITORIAL

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Federal Funds Kill Fish

THE fishermen of the country have for many long years plunked down license fees to try to keep fishing on a self-sustaining basis. Have they been sound asleep while private interests and political pressure groups have been pushing bills through Congress to lift more tax swag from their pockets for river promotion schemes that will murder our biggest runs of fish in their own beds?

Why, on the one hand, should the fishermen furnish funds to protect, propagate and conserve the great harvest of our rivers and, on the other hand, dish out hundreds of millions of dollars to block our best trout and salmon streams with high, impassable dams?

Watch these private exploiters who are incessantly angling for Federal loot for river engineering projects without a glimmer of interest in our valuable wildlife resources or necessary recreation for all our people.

The rivers of this nation have many public values. Who besides the Army engineers have studied the plans for the development of power, irrigation, inland waterway transportation and flood control? No one questions that some of these projects will be beneficial to the human race, but others that have cost the taxpayers ten or twenty million dollars have destroyed outdoor resources worth double this amount, and the amount gambled will never be returned.

When the Federal Government allotted funds for two high dams on the Columbia River in order to produce more kilowatts and irrigate more land in the Northwest, it created a mania and speeded a campaign which is now under way to splatter the headwaters of this great river with seven additional dams.

THE Willamette River is the best salmon tributary of the Columbia. The Army engineers have worked out the plans for seven 200-foot dams on this fine stream and its tributaries. This is scheduled in the flood-control authorization bill in the House Committee of Congress. It's a great game. Now is the time for both the sportsmen and the commercial fishermen of the country to take off their coats and roll up their sleeves.

Of all the rivers in the world, the Columbia is the greatest salmon stream. It has produced and still produces more and better salmon than any other river. Commercial fishing furnishes a living to thousands of families. It is a harvest of waters worth ten million dollars a year, which is 5 per cent on a \$200,000,000 gift of nature not burdened with debt. Nor does this include the added amount of vast recreational values of angling in the Columbia and all its tributaries.

Let not the sportsmen be fooled into thinking that the migratory runs of Pacific salmon can be saved

merely by the establishment of hatcheries. The records show that this is a fallacy. On the upper stretches of the Sacramento River in California, at Baker Lake in Washington, and on some of the tributaries of the upper Columbia, the U. S. Bureau of Fisheries in past years had hatcheries where many millions of salmon eggs were taken. In spite of hatcheries in these and other regions, the salmon runs have faded out.

In the case of the Pacific salmon certain facts must be kept in mind. In the ocean the fish stores up the fatty tissue in its body to carry it to the spawning beds. No appreciable food is taken after entering the fresh water. The stomach shrivels up. The flesh slowly turns from bright pink to a whitish color as the eggs develop in size and reach a ripe condition. The Pacific salmon spawns but once and dies. The female has but one pair of egg sacs. Any blockades in the river or delays in the long trip affect the life of the salmon.

WHAT about the fingerlings returning from headwaters to the ocean? They seek the shallower waters, and many are led out into irrigation ditches to die in the fields where ditches are not screened. When a rapidly moving river is turned into a series of lakes, both the temperature of the water and the natural food conditions for fingerlings are changed. No estimate has been made of young salmon drawn into the turbines of the power plants. Nor can any one figure out the schools of fingerlings that will be destroyed by bass and other predatory fish which will thrive in these lakes through which the young salmon have to pass.

No one can stop the logical economic development of our country. The Pacific Coast is still rich in natural resources, and its people are eager for a larger population and more industries. On the other hand, rapid exploitation of these resources, although producing quick private profits, has encouraged waste and resulted in a great public loss. A most difficult problem is to prevent one use of a river from destroying its other values. Therefore, before our public waters are exploited it is common sense to make detailed and careful studies and find out which is the most important service of a river.

Hail to the sportsmen! Do you want to dig up the cash to conserve fishing and at the same time hand out more funds decreed by your own Congressmen to destroy fish?

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