

Polluting of Rogue River ^{Aug 1 1937} By Miners Target of Suit

GRANTS PASS, July 31 (Special) The 27-year-old fight between the upper and lower Rogue river this month entered the courts, influenced by various factors such as the devaluation of the dollar, building of coast bridges, and the peculiar habits of Chinook salmon. In the circuit court of Curry county a complaint was filed on order of the county court and financed by property owners seeking to enjoin forever gold miners of the upper Rogue and its tributaries from depositing any mud, gravel or sand from their operations in the streams or along them.

The complaint declared that the world-famous fishing stream was made unfit for navigation, recreation, domestic and livestock and many other kindred uses.

Peculiarly the roles have been reversed. Back in 1910 the Rogue was first closed to commercial fishing by the people. Curry county demanded commercial fishing again of the legislature and got it—all but the spring run which was left for the anglers—the same run Curry county now misses because of mine-muddied waters. In nearly every legislature since and four times on the state ballot Josephine and Jackson counties have asked for an anglers' stream and Curry county has resisted their efforts.

The legislature again barred nets in 1935. Although petitions were started for a referendum, the fish commission clinched the matter by also closing the river to commercial fishing because the runs were near depletion.

At about the same time President Roosevelt raised the price of gold and devaluated the dollar. Gold mining in Josephine and Jackson counties boomed, 113 payroll concerns being listed in the first county and 63 in the second that year by the federal government.

The number has since increased. Unlike other types of mines and smelters, gold mining does not discharge poisonous chemicals into streams. Unlike sawmills and canneries, it does not debouch organic matter which depletes the oxygen in the water. And as for municipal sewage, Jackson and Josephine counties have made the Rogue the cleanest stream in the state with four operating disposal plants.

But torrents of muddy water did rush from the mines as dredges mucked their way in the streams for gold and hydraulic giants washed soil from bedrock in the rainy season.

At about the same time the coast highway and its bridges were completed. Gold Beach welcomed tourist hordes. They fished industriously with hook and line in the lower Rogue.

But with the fog and rain of fall a blight struck the town; the Rogue was so muddied that fishing was practically futile. Angrily the residents declared they might as well have stayed with netting—the fish couldn't see the lures.

Charges multiplied. Gold Beach declared it was being smothered by mud. It asseverated that the fish were being killed. It accused the miners of filling the beds of the roaring Rogue with sand and gravel, covering the spawning riffles. It indicted the gold-seekers for so filling the stream that it would be necessary to take plows

to dig out the salmon when they appeared.

The fight reached the legislature and a bill passed the house to prohibit any mine from adding more than one pound of mud or rocks to 50 tons of water as it swirled down the Rogue canyon. Miners admitted that it was hard to fish successfully in discolored water but they denied that the salmon themselves were injured.

Ten thousand signatures protested any action injurious to mining. Governor Martin urged mining development. Business men said Josephine county alone received \$600,000 out of the earth in a single year. The senate defeated the Curry county bill, its author admitting later that it was too stringent.

Battle Unended

But the battle did not end. In the upper river, as usual, salmon fishing ended in June.

Curry county impatiently waited for its summer fishing. Not until mid-July when the mines closed down did it report perfect angling. But remembering that for over 80 years the mines have been sending mud down the river, an injunction suit was filed to halt mining on the upper river. Plenty of technical legal difficulties loomed, involving jurisdiction of the court across county and even state lines.

More significant, perhaps, were the statements that the state mine department, the fish commission, and federal bureaus among others plan surveys of the Rogue to learn if any or all of the charges are true—and if they are true whether it is more important that the lower river fish all year or that the mines operate. They indicated their findings might apply to similar mines elsewhere in the state.

Then, when the facts are known, another chapter in a 27-year Rogue river battle may end.

WALTON LEAGUERS OPPOSE DAM PLAN

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Great Valley Project Seen as

Menace to Fish

Oregonian

BY DON WOODMAN
Staff Writer, The Oregonian

McMINNVILLE, July 31 (Special)—A storm over the proposal for a series of river dams in the Willamette valley, coupled with sharp criticism of the Oregon state game commission, developed today in the 15th annual state convention of the Izaak Walton league.

The \$56,000,000 valley project, calling for seven dams, was characterized in a resolution adopted as a probable menace to fish life.

The Waltonians, on seeking state department information on the subject, learned that no commission representative was attending the session—and the fireworks were on.

Absence Draws Criticism

Oral condemnation was followed by a resolution that the commission "and the governor, if he directed their absence, be censured," for such non-attendance.

Spirited discussion was followed by tabling of the motion, after M. F. Corrigan of McMinnville, league president, and Dr. Irvine E. Vining of Ashland, both former game commissioners, had led efforts to tone down condemnation.

The convention was told the commission and governor were on "a political junket" to Florence.

Among resolutions adopted by the convention were:

Advocating an increase of trained personnel in management of Oregon wild life; opposing transfer of the forest service and biological survey from the department of agriculture to department of interior; opposing the practice of using large baited spinners in trout fishing from boats above tidewater in Tillamook and Lincoln counties.

Trout Limit Advocated

Opposing taking of trout under six inches from Oregon streams; advocating no open trout water in Oregon from November 30 to April 15, striking at the present winter-long open season in tidewater for trout over ten inches; advocating stocking of the Cascades, particularly the Mount Hood and Columbia gorge sections, with mountain goats; discouraging offering of prizes or pool money for large game specimens killed; urging more state anti-pollution legislation, and stricter enforcement of present laws.

Ed F. Averill, president of the Oregon Wild Life federation, urged complete investigation of the eastern Oregon mule deer situation as regards condition of animals from poor winter range. He proposed restocking such range through transplanted bitter brush. Mr. Averill also characterized as asinine the proposal to develop the Willamette for transportation.

William L. Finley, Portland, vice-president of the national Walton league, talking on fish conservation, said: "We have been following a policy of liberating fish without knowing what results have been attained." There evidently is a terrific loss not yet accounted for, he contended.

Fisheries Director Speaks

Work of the northwest bureau of fisheries was explained by Dr. F. A. Davidson, director. Protection of the salmon life in the Columbia river and tributaries presents less of a problem at Bonneville than at Grand Coulee, he declared. Fish-loss problems in this area, while not yet acute, need immediate and consistent attention, he said.

Other speakers on the day's program included Margaret Whipple, Oregon State college representative, and Charles McClees, head of the state police game division.

A banquet, served at 7 P. M., brought a display of wild life pictures by Mr. Finley and an address by Dr. Vining.

Sunday events at Hirter's park, on the Willamette, will conclude the three-day session. The Oregon state casting tournament will be a morning feature, following a golf tournament. The afternoon will bring trapshooting contests.