

DESTRUCTION OF FISH RUNS IN THE SANDY RIVER

The old stories of locking the barn door after the horse is stolen or killing the goose that lays the golden egg are so often applied to the conservation of our natural resources. It is a more important step, however, to find the horse and if possible return him to the stall, also save the goose and give her a place to nest. One can hardly consider the story of the Sandy River and not bump into one of these old proverbs at the turn of every page.

This river was discovered by Lieut. Broughton of Vancouver's Expedition, October 30, 1792. In Lewis' and Clark's Journals mention is made of these explorers' stopping at its mouth. They called it Quicksand River. Later through usage the name was shortened to Sandy. Its waters come tumbling down from the glaciers on the west side of Mt. Hood. For a long time it was a brood stream for the migrating schools of trout, salmon, and smelt.

Years ago the State maintained a hatchery up the Sandy to increase the runs of salmon. One could walk along the shore a few miles from Troutdale and watch hundreds of salmon spawning in the shallow riffles. The hatchery has fallen to pieces and the salmon runs have passed.

Also years ago one of the attractive features was the spring run of smelt. Hundreds of families gathered along the shorelines with improvised dip-nets of all kinds to harvest this delicious pan fish. Many will remember a time further back still when farmers hauled out wagon loads of smelt to fertilize their fruit trees. They thought the supply of fish was inexhaustible. But with the diminishing runs restrictions were placed upon the catches so enough brood stock would be left for future harvests. Few people foresaw the ap-

proaching calamity that would smother the smelt runs.

The conditions of the river have been changing. The channel has been gradually filling up. The sweep of the mighty Columbia in its flood stage helped to block the mouth of the Sandy with drifting sand and gravel. It is the same condition that would block commerce from the Columbia River if no jetties had been built to deepen the channel. The water of the Sandy River near its mouth has been spread out over such a shallow area that fish cannot enter and ascend to their former spawning beds.

Oregon has both a Fish Commission and a Game Commission supplied with state funds to protect and conserve the fish resources of the Sandy. There are officers to watch the fishermen. There are men to investigate fishways and fish screens, hatcherymen and fish experts. But when a condition arises that kills the combined fish runs of a whole season and automatically destroys the crop that should follow every third or fourth year, it is too hard a problem for State Commissions and all their employees to solve.

When the State of Oregon cannot protect and save the natural resources within its border, the next step is to appeal to the federal government for funds. This is a very frank admission that the State cannot save its fish runs in the Sandy, and is another step toward federal control of the State's outdoor resources.