

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
INTRAOFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

DATE: November 20, 1959

TO: Don Kelley, Fisheries Biologist III

FROM: James L. Galbreath, Fisheries Biologist I

SUBJECT: Results of survey of the lower one-half mile of Sopiago Creek,
El Dorado County.

On November 17, 1959, I made a trip to Sopiago Creek in regard to water application 18827, filed by the Wetzel-Oviatt Lumber Company, to divert 2 cubic feet per second from Sopiago Creek in Section 33, T9N, R13E.

The proposed diversion is approximately one-half mile upstream from the confluence of Sopiago Creek with the Middle Fork Cosumnes River near a major logging road crossing. A pump is to be installed in the creek bed and water pumped 200 to 300 feet up the slope to a small reservoir near the mill. Capacity of the reservoir is so small that it is planned to pump water throughout the May 1 - December 31 period, which includes the dry season.

I examined the creek from a point near the proposed diversion site, downstream to the confluence of Sopiago Creek with the Middle Fork Cosumnes River, a distance of one-half mile.

The following information was obtained:

1. Water temperature was 35°F at 11:00 p.m.
2. Air temperature was 42°F at 11:00 p.m.
3. Section from logging road downstream about 200 yards was heavily choked with decomposed granite, although there were two riffles that were relatively clean. The stream velocity was a little over 1 foot per second in the clean areas. True silt beds occupied the margins of the stream in this area. Exposed logging road-cuts no doubt are at least partly responsible for these deposits. As in previous examinations of this stream, a brown, slimy substance was evident in several areas. This may be dead and decaying algae or slime molds. Logging operations ^{at Berry Lumber Co.} are probably responsible for this condition.

4. For approximately one-quarter mile, the substrate is predominately rubble and gravel, with some bedrock present. Just below this section, the substrate changes to bedrock entirely. At this point, the gradient is very steep, with cascades forming deep pools in the bedrock. The drop in elevation in this area is approximately 320 feet in 1320 feet, or a rate of drop of 1280 feet per mile.
5. The flow was estimated to be about 2.5 cubic feet per second at the road crossing. Downstream in the area just above the bedrock, a small unnamed tributary joins Sopiago Creek. The flow picks up slightly from this, and possibly from some accretion. This flow, however, is not adequate for this stream. A 4 c.f.s. flow would be sufficient to protect the fishery once it is re-established. On July 18, 1958, Don Kelley and Almo Cordone estimated the flow at between 3 and 4 c.f.s., at a point just above where I estimated the flow.
6. Aquatic organisms are not abundant in this stream because of pollution.
7. No fish of any kind were seen in the entire one-half mile of stream.

Conclusions

There are a few areas where trout could spawn if they were present in this section of stream. However, resident populations are not present because of the pollution problem at the Berry Lumber Mill. Potential spawners from the Middle Cosumnes River cannot migrate up Sopiago Creek because of the many high bedrock barriers at the mouth of the creek. The many beautiful, deep pools formed at the base of each cascade would provide only temporary fishing as they would be easily fished out. There is no place for the trout to spawn, therefore fish would have to be washed downstream from the upper spawning areas to provide much of a fishery.

Although a fishery is not present in this stream below the Berry Lumber Company mill, the Department has been working with the Berry Lumber Company with the idea of rehabilitating Sopiago Creek as a trout stream. I feel that this application should be protested on these grounds.

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JLG/rs

cc: Water Projects Coordinator
Attn: J. C. Fraser