

Upper Truckee,
El Dorado

May 19, 1955

WALTER T. SHANNON, DEPUTY DIRECTOR

REGIONAL MANAGER, REGION II

GRAVEL REMOVAL FROM SPAWNING STREAMS

There has been an increased desire on the part of construction companies to remove gravel from some of our important streams. The Feather River, the Yuba River, and the American River have been affected this way during the past year.

About three weeks ago we learned that the Nevada Lumber Company in Tahoe Valley is making plans to remove gravel from the Upper Truckee River, El Dorado County. The Upper Truckee River is one of the two main spawning streams on Lake Tahoe. Years ago the spawning run that ascended this stream was very large. Since the 1938 flood, the banks of the stream have been subject to severe erosion and the run has declined. Even so, it is still the largest run on Lake Tahoe. We have proposed that the erosion of the stream banks be arrested by fencing to exclude cattle, and by grading and planting vegetation on the banks. The project was first submitted in July, 1953 but was disapproved by the Department of Finance. Since then we have made plans for experimental work on a small section owned by Mr. Walter Broder of Folsom. We had expected to begin work this spring. However, before Mr. Broder signed an agreement with us the Nevada Lumber Company approached him with an offer to purchase the gravel in the bottom of the stream and in some of the bars that have been built up along the sides.

We have met with the branch manager of the Nevada Lumber Company and are attempting to work something out so that the stream bottom will not be affected. At the present time, however, it appears that the gravel company will extract the gravel and that trout reproduction will suffer disastrously.

We would like to request that this matter be taken up with Mr. Ralph Scott to determine if there is anything we can do legally to prevent the damage. Even if we should be successful in delaying the extraction, or perhaps preventing it on Mr. Broder's land by some type of a lease or an agreement with him, the problem will eventually arise again. Unless some legal way can be found to prevent the gravel extraction, we believe it might be wise to consider purchasing the bed of the stream.

Mr. Don Kelley has been working on this problem and estimated that there were more than 50 pair of spawning rainbow trout in Mr. Broder's one-half mile section two weeks ago. It would cost us between seven and

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eight thousand dollars (\$7,000 - \$8,000) to raise the number of fingerlings that these rainbow trout will produce. Kokanee salmon, brown trout, and brook trout also spawn extensively in this area. We expect that this one-half mile section produces more than ten thousand dollars worth of fingerlings each year for Lake Tahoe. With more assistance, it would probably produce more.

The problems involved in the purchase of this section of the Upper Truckee River would be great. Water rights could not be interfered with and the present owners or those who purchase or lease from them would have to be guaranteed cattle access.

Several of the states are using Dingell-Johnson funds for the purchase of lands to guarantee public access to lakes and streams. Minnesota has purchased northern pike spawning areas to prevent landowners from draining them. In spite of the difficulties which would be encountered, we believe that purchase of the lower section of the Upper Truckee River with D-J funds, or possibly with WCB funds if additional funds are allocated, may be the only permanent way to improve conditions for spawning.

We would appreciate your views on this matter, as well as Mr. Scott's legal opinion.

Robert D. Montgomery
Regional Manager
Region II

D&K:jp

cc: S. Gordon
A. Calhoun
H. Anderson
J. Fraser
C. Woodhull