

Truckee Trout Poisoned; New Plant Expected

All fish in a five-mile stretch of the Upper Truckee river were killed last week when some unknown person released a flow of poisoned water from Echo Lake, the California Department of Fish and Game reported yesterday.

Jim Leamon, local game warden, said Echo Lake was poisoned with rotenone last October in an effort to kill rough fish out of the lake preparatory to stocking with kokanee and rainbow.

Pacific Gas and Electric agreed to block the outlet to the lake until the poison lost its effectiveness and this was done. Then sometime last week, some unknown person removed the slash boards from the outlet and the poisoned water rushed down Echo Creek and into the Upper Truckee.

Leamon says the rotenone ordinarily becomes inactive in about 60 days but Echo Lake froze over and apparently the poison was not dissipated. "I want to make clear there was no negligence on the part of PG&E," Leamon said. "They were very cooperative about blocking off the lake.

"It was just one of those things and apparently somebody, we'll never know who, who didn't know the lake was poisoned removed one of the splash boards. It could have been anything . . . someone wanting to work on a dock, for example."

Leamon said the poison apparently killed all the fish in the river between Meyers grade and Lake Tahoe. Most of the trout, he said, were rainbows and browns, including some good-sized German brown trout, and a few brook trout. Half the fish killed, Leamon said, were rough fish.

There was no damage to fish life above the point where Echo Creek empties into the Upper Truckee.

Leamon said the river will be restocked for summer fishing. "I don't know officially what size fish will be planted," the game warden said, "but I suspect that, from a public relations standpoint if nothing else, a good portion of the plant will be catchables."

The major damage from the incident appears to be that the Upper Truckee will be a little short of 5-6 pound German browns for a couple of years.

Leamon said some dead fish may be found in Lake Tahoe right at the mouth of the Upper Truckee but that the rotenone was diluted as soon as it hit the lake and will not damage fish life in Tahoe itself.

Don Kelley of the fisheries branch of the department of fish and game has reported that the department will continue with its erosion control efforts in the river this year. It appears likely that some money for this work will be included in the department's forthcoming budget.