

Some May Die To Let Rare Trout Live

By Marjie Lambert
Bee Correspondent

In an effort to create a home for a rare species of trout, state and federal agencies want to poison other types of fish in about a dozen lakes and streams and replace them with the Lahontan cutthroat trout.

Most of the fish to be killed with the chemical rotenone are more aggressive species of trout, such as brook and rainbow trout, and non-game fish which have crowded the Lahontan cutthroat out of its native habitat in the eastern Sierra, said Eric Gerstung, a fishery biologist who is coordinating the project for the state Department of Fish and Game.

Two of the sites proposed for chemical fish kills are Meiss Lake, located south of South Lake Tahoe

near Carson Pass, and the upper three miles of the Upper Truckee River. The other proposed locations are in Mono County and western Nevada.

Although the Lahontan cutthroat once thrived, it cannot co-exist with non-native trout which have been transplanted to the eastern Sierra, Gerstung said.

As a result, it exists in only a few lakes and streams and in 1975 was placed on the federal endangered species list as a "threatened" species, a step further from extinction than an endangered species.

"The feeling is, even though we have a couple populations, these populations could be wiped out overnight by a cloudburst, a drought or some kind of man-made disaster. We almost lost them in 1977 in the drought," Gerstung said.

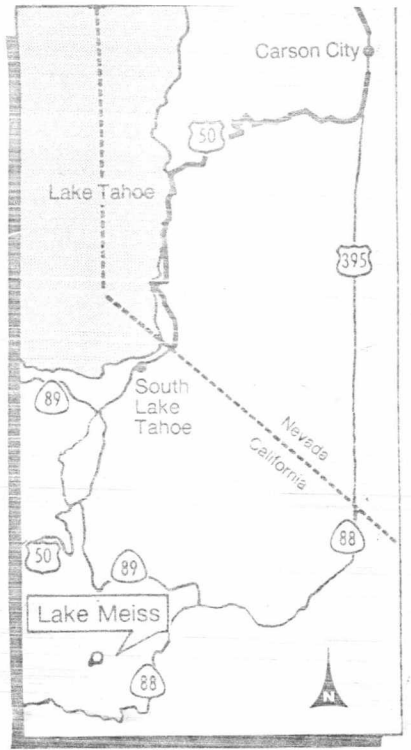
The proposal is still in the environmental review process. The federal, California and Nevada agencies sponsoring the project must take public comment before taking final action on the plan, probably this summer.

The fish to be killed are in no danger of extinction, Gerstung said, adding that brook trout breed so fast that they are stunted in size.

"The brook trout is in 1,500 Sierra Nevada lakes and several thousand miles of streams, while the Lahontan cutthroat trout is nearly extinct, in only a few miles of streams and a couple lakes."

Keeping the threatened species alive is crucial, Gerstung said, because the species may have scientific or economic value to people. For

See CUTTHROAT, Page B2



Bee Graphic

Continued From Page B1

example, he said, Lahontan cutthroat are able to survive in warm or alkaline water that would kill most other trout.

Bob McDowell, wildlife staff officer for the Tahoe unit of the U.S. Forest Service, said there appears to be agreement among government agencies that the program is needed.

"Our charge with threatened species is to build up their population so they aren't threatened anymore," he said. "Conceptually, it's a good idea. Right now the major concerns are the effect on the fishery: If it kills all the fish, how long will it take to re-establish it?"

There is also concern, McDowell said, over the potential health hazard caused by rotenone, which kills fish by depriving them of oxygen. McDowell and Gerstung both said the amount of the chemical needed to kill fish is not high enough to pose a danger to humans or other mammals.

Gerstung said rotenone can be chemically neutralized so it does not affect fish outside a specific area.

The Lahontan cutthroat can be planted within a few days after rotenone is used in a stream, and a few months after the chemical is used in a lake. The waterways are usually left open to fishing, although it generally takes three to five years to build up the population.

Using the same methods, wildlife experts successfully replaced brook trout in a Placer County

creek with Lahontan cutthroat in 1977, Gerstung said.

Drug

Continued From Page B1

that we recognized as being involved in drug activities in Shasta County. We agreed to put him to work and work he did."

The paid informant also provided police with details about the Feb. 21 murder of Thomas Rook, 18, of Redding, and several burglaries, armed robberies and car thefts in Shasta County.

"When there is stolen property, murder and other violent crimes involved, it's often related to drugs," Jaharis said.

Glenn County Sheriff Roger Roberts said \$10,000 worth of cocaine and heroin was seized at an Orland bar where five of the arrests occurred. Additional amounts of marijuana and methamphetamines were confiscated at other sites.

Eighteen Shasta County men and women were arrested early Tuesday on suspicion of selling and/or transporting illegal drugs, followed by five more arrests on similar charges.

Arrested Tuesday night were Ricky A. Patterson, 29; Greg K. Rumford, 29; Alan D. Plouffe, 35; Debbie K. Thrailkill, 20; and Marian C. West, all of Redding.

Jaharis said more arrests are expected.

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