

THE CONCRETE HERALD

Formerly the Hamilton Herald Established Nov. 23, 1901. Oldest Paper in the Upper Skagit.

July 16, 1953

ARGUE FOR OPEN RIVER

A large delegation from Concrete, Rockport and Marblemount joined with the members of the Wildcat Steelhead of Sedro-Woolley Monday evening in an effort to have the upper Skagit River once again opened for salmon fishing. The target of their pleas was Mr. Schottler, director of the state department of fisheries, under whose orders the river was closed to such sports fishing about Gilligan Creek.

After several hours of argument Mr. Schottler did agree to accept a letter asking for a special season for silver salmon in the fall, but tempered any hopes by further stating that in answering the letter he would "set forth all reasons". This was taken to imply that the answer would be negative.

Chinook Run Most Important

Mr. Schottler made it clear that the closure of the river was a move to aid in the reestablishment of the Chinook salmon run, as other salmon runs seemed to be holding up or improving during the past few years. He stated that the diminishing return of salmon was due to changes in the river from cutting of forests, dams, and pollution over the past 62 years. His department has been working on the problem for some years and it was in 1951 that the first closure to sports fishing was put into effect on the entire river.

The closure was made upon recommendation of the Washington Sports Council and immediately an uproar from the Skagit County fisherman caused the closure to be removed on the lower river. The pressure

was not great enough to have it kept open to the Baker river as had been previously the deadline.

The fisheries department holds that the area from Gilligan Creek to Marblemount is all spawning water and that no fishing should be allowed above Gilligan.

Local Sportsmen Argue

The case of the upper valley sportsman was presented by Howard Boulton and Jerry Clements of the local sports club, who argued that the closure was discriminatory in that salmon could be caught in the lower river and by commercial fishermen at the mouth in much greater numbers than in the upper river, but that the restriction hit only the minority who did the least damage to the run.

Stuart Reynolds, Melvin McLeod, Mervyn Peterson and Chas. Dwelley also argued that the closure was unfair and unnecessary in view of the huge catches made in salt water and at the mouth. The loss of run could not be charged in any way to sports fishing, yet the remedy the department was using was against the sportsmen rather than actual damaging factors.

Andy Miller presented the figures on the salmon taken over the Baker Dam and refuted claims by the fisheries men about decline of salmon runs other than the kings. It was Mr. Miller who finally called for a special silver salmon season for upper valley fishermen.

Dr. Hunter, Con Barclay, Al Lisherness and Chas. Raleigh of the Sedro-

Woolley club added their arguments to those of the upper valley delegation. Dr. Hunter pointed out that no effort had ever been made to determine how much effect sports fishing in the river had on the salmon runs and questioned that the few taken by hook and line in a year could approach the take of a gill-netter in a week.

Maurice Splane estimated the salmon catch so far this year by sports-fishermen at less than a couple of dozen. He further stated that high water and river conditions would now stop all fishing until well into September.

The meeting adjourned without any definite action except proposal of the request for a special season. In spite of the heated discussion and many strong statements, the meeting was remarkable for the lack of any display of frayed tempers.