

# Memorandum

To : Files

Date: August 7, 1969

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8/14/69

From : Department of Fish and Game

Subject: Complaint Regarding Arroyo Sausal Creek, Marin County.

Mr. William Barboni of 1052 Hicks Valley Road, Petaluma, contacted the Department through Ellis Berry concerning a complaint about fish passage on Arroyo Sausal Creek. Mr. Barboni feels that a dam built and owned by Mr. Bonelli blocks upstream migrant steelhead from areas of stream crossing the Barboni Ranch.

The intent of this memo is to document my observation of the drainage with Warden Al Giddings and Fishery Biologist Wally Strohschein, and a telephone conversation with Mr. Barboni.

A field investigation for the purpose of gathering information (supplemental to file data) concerning the Bonelli Dam and status of the fishery resource was conducted on June 17, 1969. The investigation included spot checks along the main stem of Walker Creek, Arroyo Sausal Creek, Chileano Valley Creek and Salmon Creek.

Our findings were generally indicative of poor habitat conditions in the drainage and are reflective of previous surveys conducted in past years.

The lower portion of Walker Creek was found to be relatively open, lacking much of the overhead canopy present in other parts of the drainage. Although the vegetative cover in the upper part of Walker Creek was considerably more dense than that along the lower portion of the stream, the presence of extensive quantities of sand and silt detracted from the general condition of the habitat. A large percentage of the silt appeared to be a red clay like material. This material covered much of the streambed for a distance of about 1 mile downstream from the confluence with Salmon Creek. Warden Giddings indicated this red silt originated from a mining operation that is the subject of pending legal action. We found very few juvenile steelhead present in the upper portion of Walker Creek. I believe this is reflective of the poor and damaged habitat.

Chileano Valley Creek was found to be in poor condition primarily because of dairy pollution. The stream was discolored a dark green, and organic material overlaid much of the streambed. Warden Giddings plans to investigate this pollution problem.

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The Salmon Creek tributary was spot checked from the County road paralleling the stream. Our survey revealed the presence of juvenile steelhead in the amount of about 10 per 100 feet of stream. However, because this tributary normally becomes intermittent to dry, I suspect that many of these fish will perish. Stream flow at the time of our survey was estimated to be 1.0 c.f.s.

Arroyo Sausal Creek was spot checked from its confluence with Salmon Creek (the mouth) upstream to the Bonelli Dam and reservoir. Habitat conditions for juvenile steelhead at the time of survey were in fair condition, at best. Juvenile steelhead in this 1 mile section of stream were estimated to number about 5 to 10 per 100 feet. Riparian vegetation throughout this area formed a canopy over about 30 percent of the stream. Stream flow was estimated to be about 1.5 c.f.s. Algae and silt were observed over much of the streambed. Most of the silt was believed to have originated from cut and eroded stream banks in the area.

Additional observations of Arroyo Sausal Creek and an unnamed tributary were made upstream from the reservoir. Condition of the stream in the vicinity of the Point Reyes - Petaluma Road was considered poor. The vegetative cover was broken and patchy. Stream flow was low and estimated at less than 0.5 c.f.s. No trout were observed. The streambed was virtually composed of sand and silt.

The small secondary tributary entering the Bonelli Reservoir from the southwest was spot checked near the reservoir and found to have relatively good trout habitat. The lower part of this small unnamed tributary contained trout in the amount of about 15 per 100 feet of stream. Riparian cover was considered good and estimated at 80 percent complete. Although stream flow in this small tributary is expected to become intermittent by late summer, sufficient pools may remain to sustain a small population of trout.

The Bonelli Dam is of earth construction, 48 feet high, and creates a reservoir of 670 acre feet of water. The spillway is of step and slope design, initially dropping a vertical distance of about 20 feet at the upper end before sloping on an angle of about 45 degrees to the streambed below. Because of the initial vertical drop, I believe that trout would not survive downstream movement over this spillway.

Mr. Barboni was contacted by phone on June 23, 1969, to obtain information concerning his complaint and to inform him of the Department's views on the status of Arroyo Sausal Creek. During the conversation Mr. Barboni appeared to be quite excited. His complaint was explained as the inability of steelhead to gain access to headwater areas of Arroyo Sausal Creek above the Bonelli Dam. Mr. Barboni further explained that prior to construction of this dam, steelhead migrated into the upper reaches of Arroyo Sausal Creek in large numbers. Now that the dam has been constructed, and in the absence of a fish ladder, steelhead have been blocked from this area of the drainage.

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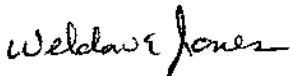
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An attempt was made to explain the Department position concerning fish passage. However, Mr. Barboni was not interested. In reply he stated, "I'm not interested in any of your book-learned principles". Mr. Barboni further indicated that he wanted steelhead to have access to the upper drainage or he would organize a petition to that affect. An attempt to set up a meeting with Mr. Barboni to discuss the problem further met with his disapproval. Mr. Barboni indicated such a meeting would be useless, the Department could not change his mind, the dam is in and the fish are gone. Upon re-stating my hope that a meeting could be arranged, Mr. Barboni reiterated that nothing could be gained and if such a meeting took place he would want sufficient advance notice to enable him to organize his friends and neighbors.

In summary, the Walker Creek drainage was observed to be in relatively poor condition. Factors appearing to limit fish populations include siltation, low flow and pollution. Trout, although present in the drainage above the reservoir, are confined to a small portion of the available area by poor habitat conditions. The presence of this small population could however be sufficient to develop a fishery in the reservoir. Wally Strohschein plans to investigate the suitability of the reservoir to sustain such a trout fishery.

It is my belief that the Department was justified in not requiring Mr. Bonelli to construct a fish ladder over his dam.

I recommend the Department maintain the position that a fish ladder was and is not needed. The Department should be prepared to answer questions that may be asked if Mr. Barboni organizes a petition.



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