

OUTDOORS NOTEBOOK

By Jim Parsons

A. B. Curtis of the Orofino Chamber of Commerce employed some very unusual reasoning in preparing a statement which he released to the press prior to last Friday's hearing on army engineers' proposals to build some dams in the Clearwater drainage.

He said the proposed Bruce's Eddy dam would flood approximately 20,000 acres. Of this, he neatly eliminates 7000 acres because it is old river bed below high water level, and then lops off half the balance because it is "too close to civilization to be inhabited by elk and some in steep rocky canyon walls."

He thus winds up with 6000 acres lost forage area, which is six-tenths of one per cent of the surrounding 1,000,000 acres of land in the Clearwater and Pottlatch Timber Protective associations. Curtis says this area now supplies a herd of 3000 elk so that taking six-tenths of one per cent of the area would deny forage to only 18 animals.

In other words, he would have us believe that 13,000 acres of river bottom winter range would benefit only 18 elk.

This reasoning is fallacious. It assumes, incorrectly that if you have 1,000,000 acres of land you have 1,000,000 acres of elk range with suitable food.

I could make just as effective an argument as Mr. Curtis's by arbitrarily saying that the proposed dam is in the heart of 50,00 acres of land which would sustain elk and that the 6000 acres lost—plus the 7000 below the old high water

level—actually means about one-fourth loss instead of six-tenths of one per cent.

Mr. Curtis went on to say that "absentee sportsmen clubs from Sandpoint, Boise and elsewhere are condemning the proposals with blanket opposition while the local sportsmen who are most vitally affected are endorsing it."

I disagree that sportsmen of the Clearwater drainage are the ones "most vitally affected." The Clearwater elk herd is the property not of the people of that area, but of the people of all Idaho and, in fact, the entire nation. Sportsmen everywhere have an interest in this herd, just as they have in Priest Lake's big mackinaws, or Wyoming's antelopes, or steelheads running the Rogue.

It seems to me that Mr. Curtis takes an untenable position with his implication that the question of whether or not to build dams in the Clearwater ought to be decided by the people who live there, and the rest of us should keep our noses out of it. Those elk are just as much mine as his, and the public funds which would be needed for dam construction were contributed by everyone and not just by the people of that area.

I wonder if some of the people in the Clearwater who are so hot for dams aren't trading their birthright for a mess of pottage in the form of some temporary pool hall prosperity.