

Outdoors Notebook

By JIM PARSONS

I see no reason for not calling a spade a spade when it comes to plans of the Corps of Army Engineers for construction of dams in the Clearwater river drainage. The situation is one which calls for a decisive stand and aggressive opposition.

I must chide my friend Ros Leonard, director of Idaho's fish and game department, because he did not see fit to come out flatly against the proposals, rather than announcing that the department would take no stand but would merely submit a statement of how the dams would affect fish and wildlife resources of the drainage. If past examples are any indication, the engineers will express heartfelt thanks for the statement, then go ahead and do just as they please.

In fairness to Mr. Leonard, however, it should be stated that he is executive head of the department and not its policy maker. The policy makers—the five commissioners—are the ones who should take a positive stand and authorize the director and his associates to fight the dams tooth and toenail. Their job is to fix management policies for Idaho's wildlife—but you can't manage a non-existent elk herd or non-existent salmon and steelhead runs.

I for one do not believe the Army Engineers could ever establish that value of the proposed dam for water storage purposes is anywhere near equal to the wildlife and recreational values which are at stake.

Further, I am plain downright suspicious of the Engineers—suspicious of both their aims and their methods, and I have plenty of evidence, both in Idaho and other states, as a solid foundation for those suspicions.

The record shows that the Engineers never have been particularly concerned with wildlife values. They go out looking for places to build dams—usually ones that

are higher or wider or containing more concrete or with some other superlative such as pink-crocheted edges—and then try to justify them in terms of value of water storage or electric power generated or flood control.

Cites Albeni Dam

Right here in northern Idaho, in Bonner county, the people have had some unbelievably dismaying experiences with the Engineers in connection with construction of Albeni Falls dam. This is what is known as a multi-purpose dam—which is one, in case you don't know, that is kept empty for flood control purposes and full for electric power generation, a very neat trick.

The people of the Clearwater drainage, the ones most directly and immediately affected by the current proposals, would do well to take a look at what happened in Bonner county. They should think about the string of broken promises and the arbitrary, high-handed methods employed by the Corps in some of its dealings with residents and property owners affected by the Albeni Falls reservoir.

I have documentary proof of the fact that during the period the engineers tried to "sell" the area on the so-called benefits of dam construction, they stressed these "benefits", glossed over the disadvantages, and made promises that were kept only reluctantly, or only after heavy pressure or legal action.

The best thing the state of Idaho could do is put up a big sign where the Clearwater joins the Snake: "Army Engineers, Keep Out."