

# Outdoors Notebook

By JIM PARSONS

Army engineers, never averse to another "monument" to their handiwork, have come up with some new plans that would help to turn north Idaho into a forest of concrete.

Although publicity has been limited, the engineer-planners have a grand scheme for harnessing the waters of the rivers of the Clearwater drainage. You guessed it--the scheme involves more dams!

The first sounding of public opinion will be at a hearing at Orofino Friday, Nov. 20, and the engineers are going to bump into a formidable snag.

## Game Department Balks

It hasn't been officially announced yet, but Idaho's Fish and Game department is now preparing a brief in opposition to the proposed dams, and a number of sportsmen's organizations are being alerted to the inherent danger to wildlife and recreation resources of the Clearwater drainage, which includes the Clearwater, Selway and Lochsa rivers.

The problem is no more a local one than Hell's Canyon.

The area which would be affected by plans of the engineers is the home of one of the largest, if not the largest, remaining elk herd on the North American continent.

This herd is the target each fall for an average of 15,000 elk hunters--not natives of the area, but hunters from all over Idaho, Montana, Oregon, California and states as far distant as Mississippi and Florida.

The Clearwater drainage elk herd thus is not just an Idaho resource, it is a national one. It belongs to all the people of the U. S., just as much as does the Statue of Liberty or Yosemite park.

Plans of the Army engineers for dams in this drainage are the most serious threat to this herd that has ever developed.

## Submerge Land

Dams would definitely affect a major portion of the elk winter range by putting it under water. Migration routes would be affected. Elk tend to move up and downstream on the ice in winter seeking forage. Wide expanses of reservoir ice would mean greater losses than the normal ones we now have.

Although elk would be especially hard hit, other wildlife would suffer, too.

Future recreational and hunting use of this area--one of the most unique and valuable of its kind in the nation--is at stake; and recreation and hunting are just as deserving of consideration as water and power in reaching a de-

cision on dams.

Since water and electric power are measured by the engineers in terms of dollars and cents, sportsmen ought to be just as practical and measure recreation the same way, too.

The 15,000 hunters who enter this area each fall spend, at a conservative average, \$100 each. That's a million and a half dollars, and probably a low figure.

Their license fees represent a substantial contribution to the state fish and game department.

They take out an average of 4000 to 5000 animals yearly--a substantial sum in itself if you translate eatin' meat into a dollars-and-cents cash value.

And always there is the intangible but very real value of outdoors recreation to morale and health, and its contribution to the American standard of living, highest in the world.

The Clearwater elk herd is not just a symbol of wildlife. It is a tremendously valuable natural resource that annually produces health and wealth. It is so unique that it is worth far more than the alternative of water storage the engineers propose.

Idaho's Chambers of Commerce, industrialists and business men would do well to consider whether or not their best long-term interest lies in aligning themselves with sportsmen's organizations at Orofino Nov. 20 against the dam planners.