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EXAMINATION OF THE MONTREAL RIVER, GOGEBIC COUNTY, TO DETERMINE ITS SUITABILITY FOR TROUT PLANTING

by

A. S. Hazzard

At the request of Mr. Joseph Cvengros, Secretary of the Ironwood Conservation Club, transmitted through Harry Gaines, Executive Secretary of the Michigan United Conservation Clubs, examination was made of the Montreal River, Gogebic County, to determine its suitability for planting with trout. This investigation was conducted jointly with Mr. John O'Donnell, biologist of the Wisconsin Conservation Department, since it was stated that Wisconsin stocked this border stream whereas Michigan did not.

Mr. O'Donnell and I met at Ironwood on August 15 and proceeded to the Montreal River. Following are the facts determined on this stream:

(1) At Ashland bridge on US-2 (approximately one mile downstream from the Ironwood-Hurley bridge). Air temperature 79°F., water 70.5° at 1 p.m. Water heavily polluted. Gas bubbles coming up all over stream. Red sludge worms (Tubifex) abundant; also blue-green algae.

(2) At Ironwood-Hurley bridge--water temperature 75° at 12:30 p.m.

(3) About one mile upstream from Ironwood--water 74° at 1:30 p.m.

(4) About 6 miles upstream from Ironwood--air 82°, water 73° at 2 p.m.

(5) Layman (Lyman) Creek (Wisconson) at highway crossing. This is a tributary to the Montreal. 74°. Very small flow.

(6) Montreal River at dam on Pine Lake--77°.

(7) At outlet of Pike Lake (Wisconsin) called Turtle River but which is the head of the Montreal--water temperature 77°.

All of these temperatures except the first indicate water which is or would become too warm for trout during the hot weather of summer.

We interviewed a man on Moose Lake who told us that he helped the Wisconsin warden plant 16,000 brown trout fingerlings last fall in Layman Creek and in the Montreal River at the outlet of Pine Lake at the points where we took temperatures.

Mr. O'Donnell and I agreed that where examined the Montreal cannot be considered trout water because of high temperatures above Hurley and because of pollution from Hurley and Ironwood below. In passing through these towns the temperature drops 4.5°. If the stream were unpolluted it should support brown or rainbow trout for at least several miles below the cities but upstream the water becomes too warm. It is likely that there are a few pools in the upper portion where springs enter where trout can live in summer, but these could not be located except by cruising the entire stream. It is doubtful if there is enough stream affected by springs to support many trout. Raymond Rigoni, Ramsay, later reported to me that a few trout are caught in the Montreal early in the season but none in summer.

Recommendations

Trout should not be planted in the Montreal River upstream from Ironwood. When pollution is eliminated from the river the stream should be checked again to determine whether the river in and below the city will carry trout.

INSTITUTE FOR FISHERIES RESEARCH

A. S. Hazzard, Director

Report typed by V. Andres