

THE SESPE WILD

The Newsletter of the Keep the Sespe Wild Committee

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JUNE 2019

UNITED WATER'S PROGRESS TOWARDS FUNCTIONING FISH PASSAGE AT THE VERN FREEMAN DIVERSION DAM

United Water is under a tight deadline, following a federal court ruling in September 2018, to design and install a working fish passage structure at the Vern Freeman Diversion dam, which straddles the Santa Clara River between Oxnard and Santa Paula. The court case was brought by the Wishtoyo Foundation.

The current fish ladder there has in over twenty years only ever allowed maybe a handful of the endangered southern steelhead to pass upstream on their way to their ancestral spawning and rearing grounds along Sespe, Santa Paula and Piru Creeks. United has spent a great deal of time and money in doing as little as possible to rectify this situation - as Judge David Carter described in his ruling last fall.

At the most recent court-mandated progress report meeting with the judge, in early June, United stated that they are preparing reports on three different engineering solutions to provide fish passage at the Vern Freeman Diversion. These will be provided to the court between now and the end of August. These are 100% design reports, meaning that they are detailed enough to be put out to bid to engineering contractors.

In October the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), who have the responsibility to bring back the southern steelhead from the verge of extinction, will select the best design, which will then be subjected to modeling. This takes place in a warehouse, where a scale model of the diversion dam and the selected fish passage design are tested, under various conditions, so as to reveal any unexpected problems before construction begins. (*contd. p.3*)

CAMPING OUT AT PINE MOUNTAIN - IN 1887 STYLE

In an article first published in March 1887 in *The Century*, a popular quarterly publication of the time, "In these pages," writes John Hassard, "I propose telling how we lived without hardship on a remote mountain, hunting, fishing, exploring wild places, and idling in the shade of the pines." Excerpts follow, from this lengthy story of two months' camping -

"We were five comrades, including one lady, and we were served by a guide, Soper, and a Chinese cook." And, as well as their horses, they took along a cow for fresh milk!

"Our point of departure and base of supplies was the little hamlet of Nordhoff" [now Ojai].

Their route went through Matilija Canyon and thereby up to near the summit of what is now Hwy. 33, before heading up to the Pine Mountain ridge. They enjoyed a leisurely two weeks camping out in Matilija Canyon.

"The Dolly Varden trout, which is caught in these California brooks, is named from the brilliant and varied colors of its sides and belly. No special art is needed to take it; worms, flies, grasshoppers, bits of bread or of meat—it swallows them all. I think with a few accidental exceptions we had trout with every meal as long as we remained in this camp.

Farther up we afterward found still finer fishing. There was a spot on the left fork of the Matilija where the doctor and the Chinaman, resting a day on the march to the mountain, hooked trout almost as fast as they could throw their lines. Here Ah Hing performed his great exploit of catching forty-eight fish with one worm, which has always seemed to me the most remarkable illustration of Chinese thrift in my experience."

"We spent a week on the road from our first camp to the mountain. Once we set up our

tabernacle in a group of bay-trees, and made our beds of the fragrant branches. Again we halted in a copse by the Sespe River, where we caught trout of prodigious fatness.”

Arriving at Pine Mountain, they “had no water; that had to be brought from the glen, about a mile distant, the trail comprising a breakneck ascent of five hundred feet which was much worse than anything we had passed on the journey. If we had realized the full extent of the water difficulty before starting, we should have directed our expedition elsewhere; and indeed I must confess that, in many respects, Pine Mountain, as a camping place, is open to objections. I will not rehearse them all, for I am more concerned to show how one can live comfortably in camp.” They let loose their horses, which fended for themselves during their six week stay.

At their camps, their set-up was magnificent: “In the midst of our grove we set up a capacious table, which not only served us for the meals but marked a place for social gatherings. We leveled a broad platform, raised a stout awning-frame, made benches of split logs, and built on the north, or windward side, a thick screen of wattled hemlock branches, which we hung with sundry housekeeping articles, and decorated, after a while, with deer-skins, and other trophies of the chase. At one side was suspended a vessel of drinking-water; at the other was a little covered fireplace; with a flue running so far back into the hillside that smoke would not annoy us. Here we made the coffee and kept the dishes hot, while Ah Hing held undisturbed possession of the kitchen.

That department was about [10 yards] distant, in a clump of fine trees, and was nearly surrounded by a wind-screen of hemlock boughs and odd pieces of canvas. With poles, and lengths of split pine, and a few empty boxes, the cook made a dresser and a set of shelves. We had an excellent stove of sheet-iron, highly effective and easily transported. It was about three feet long, eighteen inches high, eighteen inches wide; it had no bottom, no legs, nothing that would break; the pipe telescoped and went inside; the weight of the whole was eight pounds, and the shape was convenient for packing.”

“The greatest affliction of this savage existence is dirt, and the greatest comfort is a basin of water.”

“Our party hunted [deer] in moderation. Two of them took to the woods for the benefit of their health, and those who were better able to carry a gun did not depend upon shooting for their daily amusement. They read, they sketched, they strolled about the mountain in search of the picturesque, they made excursions on horseback to various parts of the long ridge and to the valley below, they lounged and chatted in the shade. The ordinary work of camp and the construction of chairs, tables, washstands, and innumerable little conveniences gave everybody some occupation. We had a few carpenter’s tools, and they were never out of use.”

Regular pack animals came up from Ojai - “rawhide bags which hung from the pack-tree were filled with parcels of tea, coffee, sugar, small groceries, powder, shot, nails, flour, and meal, can of honey, a ham, a pail of fresh butter, a peck of potatoes, onions and whatever young vegetables could be got, and on the load were a few young fowls in a sack, a box of eggs, a box of apricots, pears, and apples and a plethoric mail-bag.”

Their camp menu is worthy of description: “Breakfast: Oatmeal porridge and cream; deer’s liver and bacon; broiled kidneys; hot biscuits; coffee and tea.

Luncheon: Lamb chops; canned salmon; honey and cream.

Dinner: Soup; haunch of venison; mashed potatoes; pudding.” The lamb was bought from herders in the valley a few miles below.

“We paid the cook \$1 a day. We paid the guide \$3 a day for his own services and the use of his two horses. Reckoning supplies, wages, and the rent of the cow, the living expenses of the whole party of seven, with the 8 animals, amounted for sixty-eight days, to \$562.31, which, divided among five, gives a cost of \$112.46 a head. Or \$2 a day. As we lived like gourmets, and made no great effort to economize, this, we thought, was doing pretty well.”

Their full adventure is at this link: <https://yankeebareno.com/2012/04/18/camping-out-in-california-pine-mountain-narrative-1887/>



A postcard showing a day's catch of trout at Wheeler's on the upper Ventura River, early 1900's.

(from page one)

United has been attempting to bring political pressure to bear through NMFS' headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, in order to evade their responsibilities, under the Endangered Species Act, for steelhead fish passage at their Vern Freeman Diversion dam.

They attempted to work with another NMFS office than the one at Long Beach, where the NMFS staff have had decades of experience with the southern steelhead, whose range is between Santa Maria and the Mexican border. It is not clear that this effort has been productive for United, as the fish passage matter is currently under the jurisdiction and tight supervision of Judge David Carter and the federal courts.

STEELHEAD AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The southern steelhead is the single most important west coast steelhead population in a time of global heating. The southern steelhead is the only west coast species to survive the most recent Ice Age, when the coast north of Southern California was covered by ice. After the Ice Age ended, the southern steelhead gradually moved northwards and evolved into the more than a dozen west coast steelhead species that we know today.

The southern steelhead is the only steelhead species that can survive in the warm waters of Southern California's rivers and creeks in the heat of summer, when the water temperatures can reach nearly 80 degrees. This makes its genetic characteristics vitally important for the future survival of all west coast steelhead in a rapidly warming world.

THE CALIFORNIA FIELD ATLAS

This lavishly hand-illustrated atlas takes readers off the beaten path and outside normal conceptions of California, revealing its myriad ecologies, topographies, and histories in exquisite maps and trail paintings. Based on decades of exploring the backcountry of the Golden State, artist-adventurer Obi Kaufmann blends science and art to illuminate the multifaceted array of living, connected systems like no book has done before. Beautiful, hard to put down.

And this is his newest book, just out in June:

"The State Of Water - Understanding California's Most Precious Resource".

DONATIONS

Please continue to support KSWC with your kind donations. For some reason, our last newsletter brought in fewer donations than usual. Maybe this one will make up the difference. Thanks to all our donors.

NORTH BRITISH AND MERCANTILE INSURANCE CO. Of London and Edinburgh.				Net Fire Assets over \$10,000,000	
1892	1893	1894	1895	1896	1897
April 1 125	April 1 50	April 1 42	April 1 182	April 1 105	April 1 105
= 3 165	= 8 9	= 8 22	= 10 29	= 13 59	= 13 59
= 10 70	= 20 14	= 19 19	= 25 40	= 20 59	= 20 59
= 21 35	May 4 30	May 1 5	May 3 117	= 28 49	= 28 49
May 4 75	= 11 7	88	= 17 8	May 2 52	May 2 52
= 16 46	June 3 29	1895	June 6 3	= 19 26	= 19 26
June 7 28	Sept 9 33	April 1 182	379	= 26 26	= 26 26
= 20 39	= 20 7	= 10 29		June 4 25	June 4 25
July 25 9	179	= 25 40		= 18 25	= 18 25
Sept 11 100		May 3 117		Sept 7 27	Sept 7 27
677		= 17 8		= 17 10	= 17 10
		June 6 3		Oct 2 12	Oct 2 12
		379		462	462

Two pages from Henry Sparks' Ventura River 1892-1913 trout fishing diary. He was just one of probably hundreds of regular fishermen in those days. Note the largest annual catches: April to Sept. 11th, 1892 - 677; April to June 6th, 1895 - 379; April to Oct. 2nd, 1896 - 462. Best day, 182!

Clearly in those days the rivers sometimes ran much longer through the summer, and trout fishing was good with great regularity. Bringing down Matilija Dam will allow local trout populations to expand once again.

**KEEP SESPE WILD COMMITTEE
PO BOX 715
OJAI, CA. 93024**

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SESPE WILD T-SHIRTS: \$20 incl. tax & shipping.

Light Blue T-shirts - 5-color logo on front.

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T-shirts are 100% organic cotton.

**State white or blue, plus sizes -
S, M, L, XL, XXL**

SESPE WILD BUMPERSTICKERS: \$2

**Mail orders to: KSWC,
PO Box 715,
Ojai, CA 93024.**

Allow a few weeks for delivery.

PARADISE ROAD KIOSK SIGN

Since Parks Management took over this area as the concessionaire, visitors are asked to pay simply to pass by the kiosk. However, the concessionaire agreement requires fees only to access developed sites, as are listed on a sign at the kiosk.

KSWC is working with Los Padres Forest administrators to place additional signage saying that (a) access to roadside areas and undeveloped sites & trailheads is free, and (b) to sign limited free trailhead parking where trailheads take off from within a developed site.

We'll keep you informed.

LOS PADRES FOREST OFFICES MOVES - AN UPDATE

The long-awaited move of Los Padres Forest HQ in Goleta to the town of Buellton is now expected to take place early in 2020. The new building has undergone remodeling before the move. In other news, the closure of the Ojai Ranger District office on Ojai Avenue is still to be announced, but Los Padres staff have plans to close and consolidate 2 of their 5 Ranger District offices in a few years. In Ojai, forest permits and info will then be available over the counter at the Casitas station on Hwy. 150.