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Initial Report
FISHERY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation
Humboldt County, California
July, 1969 and January, 1970

Division of Fishery Services
Bureau of Sport Fisheries and
Wildlife
United States Department of the
Interior

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Fish and Wildlife Service
Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife
Division of Fishery Services

Reno, Nevada

Initial Report

F I S H E R Y M A N A G E M E N T P R O G R A M

Hoop Valley Indian Reservation
Humboldt County, California
July 13-14, 1969
January 9, 1970

Initial Report
Fishery Management Program
Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation
California

INTRODUCTION

The Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation lies in the heart of the Klamath-Trinity recreational area of northern California. Although it is located in a remote area of the State, the opportunity to develop a substantial recreational enterprise is excellent. One of California's better salmon and steelhead rivers flows through the Reservation and several tributary streams and potential lake sites are located throughout its scenic mountainous terrain. Realizing the opportunity that exists for recreational fishery development on the Reservation, the Tribe contacted the Reno field office in February 1969. A meeting was attended and a tour of the area was made during a two-day trip in July.

Tribal representatives were very enthusiastic about working with the Bureau to improve salmon and steelhead runs in the Trinity River and trout fishing in tributary creeks and impoundments. An overall economic development plan was prepared by the Tribe and presented to the Economic Development Administration in May. A resolution calling for the assistance of this Bureau in the management of fishery resources was passed in July. The following report presents the findings of our visit, outlines the fishery resources, and reviews the development potentials of the Reservation. Information on anadromous fishery resources was provided by the Sacramento River Basin Office, reports of the California Fish and Game Department, and knowledgeable tribal members.

AREA DESCRIPTION

The Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation, located in the northwestern corner of California, was established by Executive Order in June, 1876. The Reservation is twelve miles square and encompasses 86,055 acres of land situated along the lower Trinity River in Humboldt County. It is bordered on three sides by the Six Rivers National Forest and on the fourth side by private holdings of large timber companies. A good portion of the bottom lands adjacent to the Trinity River is owned by non-Indians.

The topography of the area is extremely rugged with heavily forested mountains and deep canyons. Elevations range from about 350 feet to 5,500 feet. Several tributary creeks feed the Trinity River as it flows northward through the center of the Reservation. In the southeasterly portion of the Reservation is Hoopa Valley which provides the major level area for homes, ranches and businesses. Here the community of Hoopa is located. An estimated 2,800 non-Indians and 1,200 Indians live on the Reservation.

A variety of climatic conditions are found on the Reservation. At the lower elevations hot summers and rainy winters usually prevail. Cool breezes coming upriver from the Pacific Ocean usually drop evening summer temperatures. Air temperatures in the valley vary from 20° to 108° with annual precipitation averaging 50 inches. At the higher elevations summer temperatures are cooler and approximately 30 to 48 inches of snow covers the mountain ridges in the winter. Stream runoff is heavy during the winter from rainfall and during the spring from melting snow. The area is far enough inland not to be affected by summer coastal fog except on rare occasions.

The Reservation is accessible by auto and private plane. U.S. Highway 299, an east-west route across the Coast Range, connects the Sacramento Valley at Redding with U.S. 101 on the coast near the towns of Arcata and Eureka. The highway passes through the community of Willow Creek eleven miles south of the Reservation. Starting at Willow Creek, State Route 96 runs through the Reservation and terminates with Interstate Highway 5 near the California-Oregon border. A county airport is located in Hoopa Valley but does not provide fuel services. The nearest commercial airport is the Arcata-Eureka Airport which is 52 road miles from the Reservation.

The basic source of income on the Reservation is derived from forest-based industries. Approximately 69,000 acres of land within the Reservation are classified as commercial timber lands. Timber species of commercial value include Douglas fir, some pines, and various hardwoods. There are two softwood plants and a small stud mill located in the valley. The timber resource is administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs on a sustained yield basis.

FISHERY RESOURCES

Anadromous Fisheries

The Trinity River, largest of the Klamath River tributaries, has long been noted as a good producer of anadromous fishes. Even with Trinity and Lewiston Dams diverting an average of 820,000 acre-feet of water annually into the Sacramento River drainage, the Trinity is still considered to be one of the most important salmon and steelhead rivers in California. Principal species are king salmon, steelhead and silver salmon. The river also supports runs of American shad and sturgeon and substantial numbers of resident brown and rainbow trout.

Current estimates indicate that the Trinity River annually supports 50,000 angler-days of salmon, steelhead and trout fishing. The amount of angling effort expended within the Reservation is not known. The river is open to the public without charge and some excellent salmon and steelhead fishing is available. Considerable effort is also expended each year on "half-pounders". This is a run of small steelhead that accompany the fall run of king salmon. They are usually fish that have spent less than one year in the ocean before returning to fresh water. Anglers also fish for sturgeon and shad with the latter gaining in popularity in recent years.

The average annual spawning escapement of salmon and steelhead for the Trinity River is currently estimated at 47,000 fall-run king salmon, 15,000 spring-run king salmon, 6,000 silver salmon and about 70,000 steelhead. The majority of these fish pass through the Reservation enroute to upstream spawning areas. Estimates indicate that approximately 4,000 king salmon, 500 silver salmon and 10,000 steelhead utilize Reservation waters. Shad and sturgeon migrate up the Trinity River at least to Willow Creek or to Gray's Falls between 10 and 23 miles above the Reservation. It is reported that within the Reservation large concentrations of shad occur and provide some fine fishing during June and July.

Within the Reservation the Trinity River has some excellent king salmon spawning gravels. In addition there are several tributary creeks that support anadromous fish runs. Though the actual size of the population or the kind of fish utilizing these creeks is not known, tribal representatives feel that a decline in these fisheries has occurred. Logging has altered the habitat on some of these creeks and has probably contributed to the decrease reported.

The Trinity River has been the fishing grounds for generations of Indians. Within the Reservation a subsistence fishery for salmon and steelhead is

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still conducted at selected sites along the river. The majority of the fishing pressure is for fall-run king salmon from August through November.

Proposed water projects for the Trinity River call for construction of three dams upstream from the Reservation. Two dams are planned for the main river and one for the South Fork. These dams would eliminate most of the spawning and nursery areas in the drainage. The anadromous fishery resources of the Reservation might also be affected through modification of the stream flow patterns and water temperature cycles, and through the loss of spawning gravels. In order to insure continuation and development of anadromous fishery resources on the Reservation, future needs should be established and an overall management plan developed with these projects in mind.

Resident Fisheries

A potential exists for the development of catchable trout fisheries on selected tributary creeks. These areas are presently closed to the public. However, some good trout fishing is now enjoyed by tribal members and the Tribe hopes these waters can be opened to the public. Lake development should be confined to the headwater areas of tributary creeks because of high seasonal runoff, and because dams lower on the drainage would block anadromous fish runs.

During July a potential lake site was located in the headwater area of Pine Creek at an elevation of 2,500 feet. A paved road from Hoopa follows the scenic terrain of Supply Creek and comes within a few miles of the lake site. This paved road could be easily extended into the area, and campgrounds developed. Good access and camping facilities would be necessary to encourage public use. This lake site was recently toured by the Bureau of Indian Affairs area conservationist. Preparations are now being made for an engineering feasibility study by the Soil Conservation Service.

On the more accessible creeks stocking of catchable-size trout could provide another form of fishing for the public and provide additional income for the Tribe. However, before such a program is initiated, complete biological surveys are needed to determine the most beneficial way to manage these waters.

MANAGEMENT NEEDS

A comprehensive fishery management program is needed on the Reservation to insure continuance and build-up of anadromous fishery resources and to develop a compatible resident fishery program. In order to accomplish this a complete biological survey of the fishery resource is needed to determine problem areas, to make sure the full potential of all waters is realized, and to insure that the Tribe's fishery resources are fully protected under future proposed water development projects on the drainage. On some waters the greatest benefits to the Tribe may come through the use of an area for salmon and steelhead while other waters may be more suitable for development of resident sport fisheries. Management of salmon and steelhead on tributary creeks may include clearing of natural or man-made barriers, other habitat improvement, and re-establishing runs through stocking.

Development of a resident fishery will require the stocking of sub-catchable or catchable rainbow trout in man-made lakes and in suitable areas on tributary creeks. As the program develops, a good supply of hatchery fish will be needed for a successful program.

SUMMARY

In order to improve the Tribe's economy, tribal leaders are seeking sources of income other than the logging industry. With sound reasoning, they believe that the development of tourism offers one of the best means to create new jobs and provide additional income for the Tribe. It is also evident to the Tribe that the development of sport fishing will be an essential part of this program. It would include development of trout fishing on tributary creeks, and angling for salmon, steelhead, and shad on the Trinity River.

Utilization of northern California for recreational purposes has shown a marked increase in the past few years, and growth of urban populations and development of better highways indicate an even greater increase of outdoor recreationists in the future. The Reservation has a high potential for meeting much of this increasing demand especially in providing outstanding fishing opportunities for the public.

The Tribe has requested our assistance in the development and management of their fishery resources. They are a well organized and capable group who are extremely interested in immediate development. They are ready

for a comprehensive program that includes development of campground areas, improvement of access roads and air facilities, and other enterprises such as motels, restaurants, and tackle shops to accommodate the public.

The Bureau does not have a Division of Fishery Services field station in California. The need for such a station is rapidly increasing each year as more reservations become interested in a recreational fishery enterprise. The Reno field office cannot provide the level of full-time assistance needed in California and also meet responsibilities on Indian reservations in Nevada and Idaho. A field station staffed with at least one full-time biologist is essential to achievement of a successful program on the Hoopa Valley Reservation because of the diversity of the fishery resources and the potential for development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To initiate development and protection of the Hoopa Valley Reservation fishery resource and to provide an improved economy for the Tribe, it is recommended that:

1. The Division of Fishery Services and the Bureau of Indian Affairs assist the Tribe in formulating an overall recreation plan that is centered around the development of their sport fishery resources.
2. The Tribe consider establishing a reasonable fishing permit fee on the Trinity River and use the revenue to develop campgrounds and associated enterprises.
3. The Tribe proceed with development of fishing lakes and associated public use facilities only in those areas that will not significantly alter anadromous fishery resources. Pre-impoundment studies should be conducted as soon as possible on the upper drainage of Pine Creek.
4. Tributary creeks remain closed to public fishing until an evaluation of existing fishery stocks can be made.
5. The Tribe be kept informed of proposed Trinity River water projects and of the possible effects on the Reservation fishery resources.

6. A fishery management station be established in California with at least one full-time biologist to provide comprehensive technical fishery assistance to various reservations in the State.

Robert P. Roman

Fishery Management Biologist
Date: January 9, 1970

Approved:

Donald H. Wynn

Project Leader
Date: February 17, 1970

Reviewed:

D. H. Rasmussen

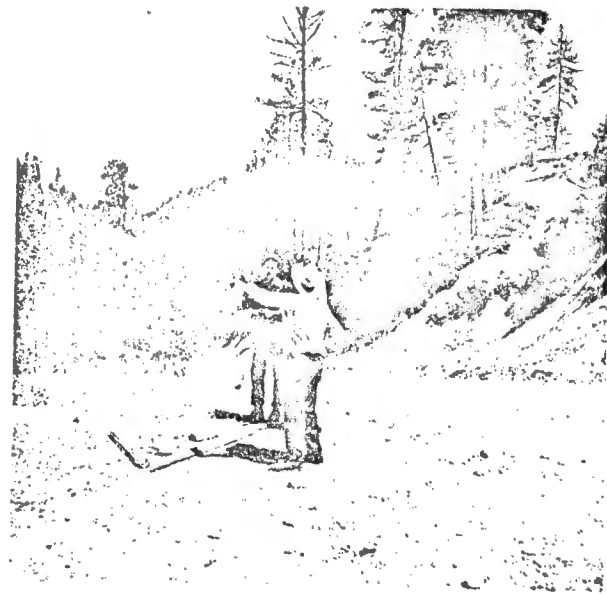
D. H. Rasmussen, Regional Supervisor
Division of Fishery Services
Date: April 20, 1970

Distribution:

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- 7 Hoopa Valley Tribal Council
- 1 Inter-Tribal Council of California
- 3 Reno Field Office
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- 2 Division of Fishery Services Field Offices



The Trinity River as it flows through the rugged mountainous terrain of the northern portion of the Reservation.



Tribal representative Mr. Marshall, BIA forester, and staff biologist look over potential lake site on Pine Creek.