

THE COURIER-TIMES

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Sportsmen Protest Closing Skagit River for Fishing

Effective April 1 and through the period ending May 27, the Skagit river will be closed for its entire length from the government marker on saltwater, to the Canadian border to all sport fishing, according to the new game laws as issued by the State Game Commission.

This announcement comes as a blow to the fishermen of the entire state. Hardest hit, are the residents of Skagit county who have fished the river the year around since white men first settled in the valley. With gasoline rationing pared down to two gallons per week, residents living in the towns and on farms along the banks of the Skagit will now have to give up their "backyard" fishing and burn their precious gasoline on trips to some lake in the adjacent area on and after April 2. It is always during the coming closed period

that fishermen have always enjoyed their best fishing for steelhead, rainbow, dollies, cutthroat, jack and spring salmon.

Next to the Columbia river, the Skagit has the second largest flow of water of any river in the state, yet—streams like the Quinault, Elwha, Quillayute, Sol Duc, Lewis, Washougal, Cowlitz, Kalama, Toutle, Hoh, Queets, Duwamish, Chehalis, Nisqually, Nooksack and many others have been left open to year around wishing. Oddly enough effective May 1, commercial fishermen will be permitted to pursue their fishing with gill nets in the waters of the Skagit river from the junction of the north and south forks to saltwater. On the other hand, a sports fisherman with hook and line will have to be content with standing by until they are officially allowed to dunk their bait

(Continued on Page 6)

SPORTSMEN HEAR CLOSING OF SKAGIT

(Continued from page 1)

in the waters of the river on May 28. Our state game officials since the inception of the game commission in 1937, have found no answer to the predatory instincts of seals, hell-divers, saw-bills, shag, cranes, suckers, chubs; nor the rise and fall of the river due to the power usage of the Baker river, Diablo and Ruby dams and to our national bird—the bald eagle. The fisherman instead, is blamed for a "so-called" fish loss and depletion of the sport.

According to the new game laws, there are only four counties in the state which are now denied all year around fishing privileges, these being Skagit, Island, San Juan and Adams. The Skagit too has the largest drainage from tributary sources of any stream in Western Washington and a large enough run of all species of fish and sufficient natural spawning grounds to supply the sports needs of all the fishermen of the state.

Prominent sportsmen of Mount Vernon, Anacortes, LaConner, Burlington, Sedro-Woolley and Concrete are now forming plans to organize a movement to form a sportsmen's club to enact corrective measures. The club will be known as the Skagit County Sportsmen's Association, with Floyd McKeon as acting president, and Dick Prankard as acting secretary, both of Mount Vernon. The first meeting is scheduled to be held at 7:30 p. m. Friday, March 24, at Carpenters hall (over the Heatherbell) in Mount Vernon. All sportsmen and sportswomen throughout the county are invited to attend and to bring their friends.

Membership in the new county organization can be obtained at the Wixson club or Fred Bryant's Barber Shop.