

All Outdoors

with

Jim Kenealy

A hope for Hudson

Editorial satire is often a breath of fresh air in a confused stalemate of opposing opinions. It can, however, result in more misunderstanding and further polarize the factions. In this writer's opinion the following editorial which appeared on the editorial page of this newspaper last Friday, stumbled into this pitfall and further confused the issues:

"Sudden Thought—

A few years ago the generating plants of Consolidated Edison, which supplies New York City with its electricity, ground up (a) 10,000, (b) 100,000, (c) 500,000 Hudson River fish. Environmentalists were outraged.

Now we learn that Hudson River fish are polluted with a cancer-causing chemical and shouldn't be eaten. The Environmental Conservation Department has banned nearly all commercial fishing in the river.

Wouldn't it be appropriate now for some of those environmentalists who complained so loudly about Consolidated Edison to telephone the firm to say thank you for grinding up those fish that were poisoning many of us? But maybe that is not the way zealots operate."

As a outdoor writer and concerned lay conservatonist, I feel the facts should be told . . . and explain the ground rules most environmentalists would like have applied to the Hudson River

Regarding the Fish Kill . . .

In 1972 the Regulatory Staff of the Atomic Energy Commission released a study stating that since the start of operations in 1961, the Con Edison Indian Point No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant was responsible for killing five million fish in the Hudson River. Other marine biologists claim this figure is low

The report then went on to state that upwards to 50 per cent of all striped Bass eggs, and young of the year, are killed by Hudson River power plants, either by impingement on intake screens or thermal pollution. Today, with Indian Point Plant No. 2 in operation, this figure is much higher.

What It Means to Joe Doe . . .

To the average citizen the above statistics have little meaning or impact until the AEC study and findings of other marine biologists are taken one step further.

The Hudson River, long considered a polluted wasteland, was found to be the spawning waters for up to 80 per cent of all striped bass on the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic coast. Each year 10 million sport fishermen follow this great game fish along our east coast and spend in excess of $300 million. States that benefit most are New York, New Jersey, and the New England states. Ironically, during the early days U.S. Rep. Jerry Studds from Massachusetts and Sen. Abraham Rubinkoff from Connecticut were the only seriously concerned legislators. Both were highly vocal in reporting the loss of this fishery would be catastrophic to their states.

Until recently the Hudson Valley received only a pittance of this sport fishing income while commercial fishing was at best a part-time occupation for a few netters. Fortunately, this "care-keeper" role by river towns and cities began to dramatically change with the passage of the New York State Pure Waters Bond Act, and the subsequent building of sewer districts along the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers. Suddenly thousands of fishermen and boatmen appeared on the river, primiarly in the southern sections.

The most dramatic turnabout however, was noted in the Metroland area. In the summer of 1974 more than 200 fishermen entered the Rensselaer County Conservation Alliance Hudson River Striped Bass Derby to try their luck in the waters stretching from Castleton to the Troy Dam. Hudreds of striped bass in the 2 to 8-pound class were caught along with a few "lunkers" ranging up to 20 pounds. Of these fish, 216 were tagged and released

The year 1975 was to be another banner year; more fish, more fishermen, more boats and more concern.

And Then Enter the PCBs . . .

Rumors at first, then confirmed reports . . . . the fish in the river were contaminated with PCB's and were unfit to eat. As if struck by a plague the river emptied of fishermen. Many citizens shrugged their shoulders in disillusionment and again turned their backs on their "magnificant waste".

Hopefully the PCB scare will become the catalyst needed to hammer home the necessity of intelligent environmental controls and laws. This doesn't mean clean air, lands, and waters at any cost; but rather a realistic phase out of all chemicals and products known to be harmful to man or the environment.

It does mean, however, that new plants and industries must build-in adequate pollution controls and safe-guards. It also means that existing industries and the New York State Department of Commerce must stop black-mailing communities with threats of layoffs or plant relocations to avoid implementing these safe-guards.

The problems of existing nuclear power must be termed a 20th century tragedy. Utility companies are trapped into nuclear fission which has turned out to be a marginal energy source fraught with safety and waste problems.

A Solution And A Hope . . .

The solution is a new, safe power source or group of power sources. During the research and transition period utilities should have available to them long term federal loans at low interest rates. This would assure needed construction of human and environmental safe-guards into existing power plants. For example, closed Cycle cooling systems in the Hudson River nuclear power plants, to prevent further thermal pollution. It would also guarantee quicker development of new power sources.

Finally, our hopes and dreams for the Hudson River. All conservationists and environmentalist work for the day when the river is revitalized and will become;

1) a major recreation area for millions of New Yorkers and visitors from surrounding states.

2) a regional base that offers industry, labor, and management the conditions and life-styles that will attract them to the Hudson Valley.

3) a waterway that those of us who live in its valley can point with pride when we say, "That's the Hudson"

The Knickerbocker News
ALBANY, N. Y.
D. 69,751
MAR 3 1976

MONS 032835