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the outdoor world

By Sam Powell

ONE OF THE MAJOR CONSERVATION victories in recent years was the successful effort to include the New River of North Carolina as part of the nation's Wild and Scenic Rivers System. When the President signed legislation naming the river to the system, it ended a 16-year battle. What is especially noteworthy, in this situation, there was a coalition of landowners along that stream, and conservation groups, working to see it included in the national system. Just the opposite of what we've seen develop concerning our own Illinois River.

The inclusion of the New River saved it from a proposed project that would have flooded 44 miles of the river's main stream -- displacing more than 2,000 of those residents who fought that. It would have been a twin-dam, pumped-storage electrical facility.

The New River is an historic and ecologically valuable stream, regarded as the world's second oldest river. The victory has been hailed by every conservation group in the country. Typical of most of the comments was that of former Tulsan Jack Lorenz, now executive director of the Izaak Walton League of America, which had a major part in the campaign. Lorenz said that, "We were proud to have been the first group to join in the fight to save the New. This is just one example of what can be done when we all work together toward a common goal"...

Here's some good news, and bad news, for waterfowlers. First, the good stuff: The final tally on the 1976 Tulsa chapter Ducks Unlimited benefit dinner shows a whopping net profit of $56,000! Or, it might be $2,000 less than that, depending upon what happens regarding one last expense of the local committee. We reported earlier that Curt Gowdy, key speaker for the evening, was donating his appearance here. Seems that was a little premature. We now are faced with a "talent fee" bill of that amount, and so that old saying goes, what we had here was a slight "lack of communication." Regardless of what eventually transpires, this is a great accomplishment by the folks that worked so hard on this year's dinner -- a sum almost double what was netted last year. That's net profit too, not the gross sum totaled that night. The dinner in Oklahoma City, by comparison, netted $11,000, still a darn fine effort for the waterfowl.

Now the bad item. We're very sorry to have to report that the big state duck and goose calling championships slated later this month in Tulsa have been cancelled. Our friend Tom Beem, who was organizing and hosting the contest as part of the Izaak Walton League activities here, has suffered another severe heart attack. He's had several before, and this one hit him during a business trip to Kansas City. He's in St. Margarets Hospital, Kansas City, Mo., and we're sure he'd appreciate hearing from local hunting buddies. He'll probably be there for several more weeks. The Green County lass could find no one else to take charge of the contest, so it's been called off...

Public Hearings

A series of six public hearings concerning the possible changing of fishing regulations will be held in the state this week, although none are slated for Tulsa. The first will be held Tuesday in Heavener and Ponca City, Wednesday in Muskogee and Tishomingo, and Thursday at Lawton and the Department Headquarters in Oklahoma City. The Muskogee meeting will be at the public library; all begin at 7:30 p.m. They concern the possible change of netting regulations around Wister Reservoir, and changes in laws at the trout fishing stream in the southern part of the state, Blue River...

Bass Anglers Sportsman Society just completed the 1976 Classic, and has already announced the 1977 tournament trail. The tour starts on the St. Johns River in Florida, Jan. 19-21. Other events firmed up include: Toledo Bend, Feb. 16-18; Lake Gaston, Va., Mar. 16-18; Greers Ferry, Ark., May 11-13; West Point Lake, Ala., June 15-17; the final regular-season tourney will be held in September, at a site not yet selected. With a full field for all six meets, they will have a total purse of approximately $375,000...

Hiking is becoming more popular, and more recognized, each year in Oklahoma, and it won't be long before we have a complete trails system in the state. One of our first major routes was recently opened. It's a 64-mile segment skirting the left bank of the Arkansas River navigation system, from the Port of Catoosa to the Port of Muskogee. It's called the Jean Pierre Choteau Trail, and will eventually be 150 miles in length. It honors the memory of Major Chouteau, one of the earliest white explorers of this part of the country. It also opens up some good spots for both hunting and fishing along the waterway, and should be a real asset for all types of outdoor groups.

In the big picture, there continues to be progress in the creation of some 300 miles of other new trails in the state. Sen. Dewey Bartlett introduced original legislation which called for a feasibility study. The exact route of this trail has not been set -- that will be the role of the study, but it's expected that it will wind through some of eastern Oklahoma's most scenic areas, extending from the Red River to the Kansas state line...

"PCBs." We'll be hearing more and more about that deadly compound, unfortunately in the coming years. It's showing up more often, all across the country. The abbreviation stands for polychlorinated biphenyls. They are highly toxic to both humans, and aquatic organisms. Recently, high levels of PCBs found in fish in New York's dreadfully polluted Hudson River, prompted state officials there to recommend limits on the consumption of sport fish, and to ban all commercial fishing in certain areas. Similar controls are already in effect for some fishing in Lakes Michigan and Ontario.

Rivers Closing

The PCB situation is getting so bad in some parts of the country, that entire river systems are being closed to fishing. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources has just closed the Etowah and Oostanaula to commercial fishing, following closure of the Coosa. They have found heavy contamination of the streams from the compounds, and are also warning persons to refrain from eating any fish taken from all three streams.

In addition, a group of Georgia and Alabama residents have just filed a $300 million suit in federal court against General Electric and Monsanto, charging them with polluting the Coosa with PCBs. Monsanto has been named a co-defendant in a $1 billion class action suit by property owners on huge Lake Hartwell in Georgia and South Carolina. That reservoir is also now polluted from PCBs.

In New York, General Electric has just agreed to pay $3 million towards helping cleanse the Hudson River of PCBs it has dumped there, and another $1 million on research as to how to end the problem. Dredging of the rivers has been suggested, but no one really knows what that would help, or only aggravate the ill.

The Environmental Protection Agency is seeking to limit wastewater discharges of PCBs, and the regulations would take effect within 18 months. It would prohibit any discharge of PCBs by industries manufacturing the chemicals, and would apply with some exceptions to process wastes from industries using PCBs in the production of electrical transformers and capacitors (one of their major uses). The proposed EPA regulations are sure to be met by out-cries of "Federal meddling!", here. But protection of the environment is still not popular with some either...

The Oklahoma Wildlife Department has a new assistant chief of fisheries for research. He's 38-year-old Dr. Charles Wallace, who previously was a research specialist with the Nebraska Wildlife Department. He will be responsible for all research supporting fishery management in Oklahoma, and will be the fisheries coordinator for the vital Federal aid projects going on here. Fisheries chief is Steve Lewis, and the other assistant chief is Kim Erickson, well-known to many Tulsans for his work with the revived bass program, before moving to Oklahoma City about a year ago...

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