

## Poisoning the Tomorrow / Waupaca River

by George Becker

**E**ARLY IN 1971, I learned that the DNR was planning to "treat" the Tomorrow-Waupaca River with the fish poison Antimycin along with a green dye so as to trace the movement of the toxin. As soon as the public meetings were published, I planned to attend all three, which were held in the early months of the year.

Several DNR managers said they planned first to remove all the trout along with minnows, which they would hold at state fish hatcheries; the carp would be destroyed. When the water in the river was safe, the trout would be returned along with the bass. Over 50 miles of stream would be treated and end at the Weyauwega Dam. On September 17, I was in Madison meeting with the Lawton and Cates law firm to seek an order to restrain the DNR from poisoning the Tomorrow-Waupaca River system. The order would include the Citizens Natural Resources Association of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Trout Fisherman's Association, and Trout Unlimited.

Lawton and Cates attorneys immediately sought a restraining order from Circuit Judge Maloney, who promptly denied our request. On October 5 Antimycin, mixed with green dye, spurted from barrels as the DNR began chemically treating the river. But the project was halted later in the afternoon when a short restraining order was granted by Chief Justice E. Harold Hallaway of the Wisconsin Supreme Court. In a few hours, the Supreme Court reversed the order and poisoning was resumed.


Several students and I seined the waters below the Nelsonville dam and extracted dead northern pike, suckers, carp, pan fish and 25 dead trout, ranging up to two and a half pounds. Earlier in the summer the DNR recovered nearly 5,000 trout, which they were holding at hatcheries until the water was safe for restocking.

I went home rather dejectedly. Even an unexpected visit from Paul Hayes, sports and environmental writer for the *Milwaukee Journal*, didn't cheer me up. Paul, Sylvia and I were a sad bunch. I remember telling Paul "They (the DNR) don't know what they are doing."

Early the following morning, my son Dale and I trudged through a disaster of hundreds of dead trout. There was a lunger brown about

four and a half pounds. Dale held it for a moment while I snapped a picture and we put it back in its watery grave. We filled a large museum bottle with beautiful 12"-14" trout, which I took along to the State Supreme Court. One judge saw the jar and all he had to say was "What's that?" and turned away without waiting for an answer.

We lost the "Tomorrow" and we saw the devastation once again on the Horicon Marsh this past winter. We will continue to lose until the DNR realizes its poisoning efforts jeopardize the diversity of our fish fauna.

Thanks to CNRA that stood behind us. And kudos to Fred Ott who found money to pay the huge legal bills without blinking. 

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