

# Stream-Bank Fencing

PAUL J. OLSON

Reprinted from *Dane County Conservation League Newsletter*

**Madison-area sportsmen have the experience to prove they can perform "first aid" to keep streams "alive." Question: How many volunteers—how big a program—in 1957?**

A hundred streams flow down a hundred valleys in Dane county. Some of them are small, minor trickles at times—sometimes surprising torrents. Some of them are larger. In the western half, the driftless, the "land the ice forgot," the streams are faster and the headwaters are often trout waters—in the eastern half of the county the streams meander more lazily, the water is warmer and few contain trout. Together they represent a great, abused, neglected and ignored resource.

It comes as a shock to most people that there is a concern over water. It has always been plentiful here—or so it seems—but clean water, sustained flow of water, is on the critical list of resources—even in Dane county.

It is true a sportsman club is more concerned over a trout stream than a similar less blessed stream—but that is partly because a stream which carries trout still has a future. Its waters are still moderately cool, moderately pure, and moderately uniform in flow. Of course it is a matter of comparison and a matter of degree.

**WHY DO STREAMS** that once carried trout no longer do so? Some of the answers are found in the naked hills, the grazed banks, the up-the-hill plowing, the gullies, the creameries and other industrial wastes, the siltation which carries top soil away to hasten the death of lakes and ponds.

It is the answer of the Dane County Conservation League that although the time is late, it is not too late—that although the odds are high against us—they are not insurmountable. We are

not surrendering, yet.

In the past 25 years progress has occurred as well as despoiling. Many farms are farmed better today, most people recognize a naked hill and a grazed woodlot as a waste, our state laws are slowly clamping down on pollution, there are new and better techniques and considerable financial help, but what are we doing about it?

Well, last summer we made a start. Fencing of banks is the first aid treatment for streams. It is keeping the patient alive until the doctor arrives. The doctor in this case is the farm planner—the county agents, the ASC and SCS, and maybe even the soil bank—but while agricultural technology and its bureaucracy is marshaling its forces we are plugging a gap.

**WE FENCED** some 530 rods of stream this year. That is about 800 cedar posts set, 6 cattle watering areas installed and gravelled, a pot full of stiles and some 5 miles of barbed wire strung and stapled. On those 530 rods fishermen and cattle respect each other's domain. The barbed wire does not set up a zone of armed neutrality but a zone of mutual respect for each other's place and function.

Furthermore we have established multiple purpose areas. Probably game is assisted as much as fish. The banks heal and return to grasses and shrubs (with an assist from multiflora, etc.). Here is that "odd corner" habitat with a vengeance, and with water thrown in. We have built a "biotic trench" down a valley.

How did we do it? Well, it takes co-



Madison high-school students got their first initiation into stream-bank fencing on Black Earth creek some years ago. Now, with sportsmen pushing the program, the goal is five miles of fence on various streams in 1957.

operation. The land owners—the Anderson boys and Dan Pederson on Token creek, Herman Frye on the Mt. Vernon, Henry Best on the Tipperary—these were men with vision and willingness and we refer you to them as trail blazers. Then there was Oscar Mayers' who were willing to gamble their tractor on our success—the Capital City Culvert Co. and Eggum and Johnson Lumber Co., who were willing to forego a profit and wait for a payment so that your \$2 membership could be stretched to the limit of its inflated 200 pennies. There was the Dane County Board Conservation Committee, there were the ASC payments, (not yet arrived), there was the Conservation

Department, there were league members' cars, and most important there were the kids who did most of the work.

I give it to you straight. When city kids give up their vacation to build fences for farmers for nothing, we have reached a new day in American culture—and believe me, my friends, the day is here.

If 25 adult members of the Dane County Conservation League will volunteer one week end and their car next summer, I will maneuver the rest of it and build five miles of fence down the valleys of Dane county in 1957. It's my offer—how many takers are there? Last summer we learned how—we know what we need and how to do it.

### **“Duck Boat?” What's That?**

Duck boaters take unexpected icy baths more often than anyone else because the average craft of this description isn't safe in a bathtub.

Duck hunters are really lubbers afloat. Cast-off skiffs that fishermen traded in on a new plug are usually dubbed acceptable “duck boats”—much to the glee of ducks and undertakers.—*Johnson Motors News Bureau*