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Report 241

PROJECT FOR A NEW C. C. C. CAMP FOR IMPROVEMENT OF THE IN-
LAND WATERWAY IN CHEBOYGAN AND EMMET COUNTIES, MICHIGAN

The "Inland Waterway" of Michigan consists of a chain of large inland lakes and connecting channels or rivers, long famous for scenic beauty and recreational values. These lakes include Mullett, Burt, Pickerel and Crooked, which are among the very largest and finest of the inland waters of the state. Miles of lake shoreline around these lakes are lined with resort cottages, large and small, hotels, boat liveries and the like. State parks and other state properties also lie along the shores, assuring free access by the general public to the lakes, especially for fishing purposes.

In former years the Waterway was much used for light navigation and for sight-seeing trips, but of late years the paved roads around the lakes have taken over such traffic, and the channels between the lakes have in places filled in so as to make it rather difficult even to take small fishing boats through. This is true most particularly of Crooked River, connecting Crooked Lake with Burt Lake. A moderate amount of dredging would open these channels to free passage by boats used for fishing and other recreational uses, and would doubly insure free public use of all the lakes. Restoration of the channels would no doubt bring the "Inland Waterway" back to its former fame, but now more on a recreational rather than a commercial basis. The development would be of benefit not only to the hundreds of local resorters, but also to the more general public. A dredge owned by Emmet County would probably be made available for this work.

This dredging project would very properly, in our opinion, come under the E. C. W. program. It would be in effect a waterway trail, making large areas of fine fishing water more accessible to the public and providing a fine course for recreational travel. In purpose it would thus be essentially like a woodland trail opening up areas for hunting, fishing or hiking. Furthermore it would be very advantageous to have this dredging done under E. C. W. auspices, because much harm could be done to the fishing resources which are of leading importance in the region. Thus weed beds which shelter and feed the fishes, or spawning beds which allow for natural reproduction, might be smothered out unless a man understanding fish life were in charge of the work.

Fishing in these large lakes is fairly good, but in our opinion is subject to very material increase by means of well-planned lake improvement work. This work would be designed (1) to concentrate the large fish about very large brush devices in fairly deep water, ~~concentrating the fish and~~ increasing the catch per hour; (2) to provide shelter for the young game fish so as to increase their survival, thus providing a replacement stock to take the place of the increased number of fish caught out; (3) to improve food production so as to increase the rate of growth of the fish and (4) to better the spawning conditions so as to increase natural reproduction.

These lakes are so large that adequate improvement could not be accomplished by using one or two squads of a dozen or two dozen men. The lakes have the following acreage, according to the Michigan Lakes and Streams Directory: Mullett, 15720; Burt, 17640; Crooked, 2880; Pickerel; 1300; Round, 250. Including connecting channels, close to 50000 acres of water are involved. The effective improvement of these waters would require the use of about five or six 24-man crews through most of the summer period (April 15 to October 15).

In connection with the planning of the improvement of these lakes it should be mentioned that the entire waterway was thoroughly charted and sounded years ago by the federal government. Furthermore, the lakes have been studied in more or less

detail by the staff of the University of Michigan Biological Station on Douglas Lake, nearby. Biologists from the station would be available for consultation on the planning of the work. The University lands (Bogardus Tract) extend from Douglas Lake to the north shore of Burt Lake, and include near Burt Lake a large swamp from which much of the log and brush material needed to improve the lakes could be obtained. This would simultaneously improve the swamp timber, which is in need of clean-up work.

A number of minor and related projects could be accomplished by the same group of men. These include:

(1) Early work dip-netting walleyes and other large fish below the dam in the Cheboygan River (which is the outlet of the Waterway), and transferring these to the lakes.

(2) Some improvements to the operating plant of the State Fish Hatchery at Oden, on Crooked Lake.

(3) An extension of the Fish Rearing Station at Wolverine, which is operated from the Oden Hatchery.

(4) Stream improvement, to increase the trout catch in several streams tributary to these lakes (Minnehaha Creek, the lower parts of the Sturgeon, Pigeon and Maple rivers, etc.).

(5) Constructing a dam in the outlet of Douglas Lake (Maple River), so as to maintain a more nearly constant lake level. This is desirable from the standpoint of fish conditions, of cottage developments and of the operations of the University of Michigan Biological Station located on this lake. Local residents and resorters have been requesting this dam for years.

(6) Miscellaneous minor projects, perhaps including some "field administration" developments and work on the Burt Lake State Park.

The entire project, to conclude, is a very desirable one from the standpoint of conservation and is very distinctly in the public interest, both local and general. It is strongly desired by local residents and resorters.

The magnitude of the project is such as to call for more men than have ordinarily been spared for such work from any one C. C. C. camp. We therefore respectfully suggest that a new camp be authorized for the April 15 to October 15 period to carry out the project. A location on Crooked River near Alanson would make the whole area readily accessible both by water and by paved roads.

The supervising personnel needed by this camp should not exceed the average. Since the work would be highly specialized, the Camp Superintendent if properly chosen could supervise the constructional operations, as was done by the C. C. C. camp which constructed an artificial lake at Ottumwa, Iowa. We have in mind a man well qualified for this post.

The heavy equipment ought not exceed the average for a C. C. C. camp, though it would be different. The needed dredge could probably be borrowed from Emmet County, as stated before. Several barges would be needed, but these could either be rented or purchased at Cheboygan or built at no great expense. A number of outboard motors, and a small tug or heavy-duty launch would be needed. The latter could no doubt be rented cheaply, on the lake or at Cheboygan. Fewer trucks than usual would be required, and probably fewer light tools. Two or perhaps several light pumps for jetting poles would be needed also.

We anticipate that this project if approved and carried out would furnish an extremely valuable DEMONSTRATION of what can be done, by lake and stream improvement work, increasing the fishing and other recreational interests in an area of large lakes and trout streams, and thus building up values in an area where recreational interests are the chief economic asset.

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