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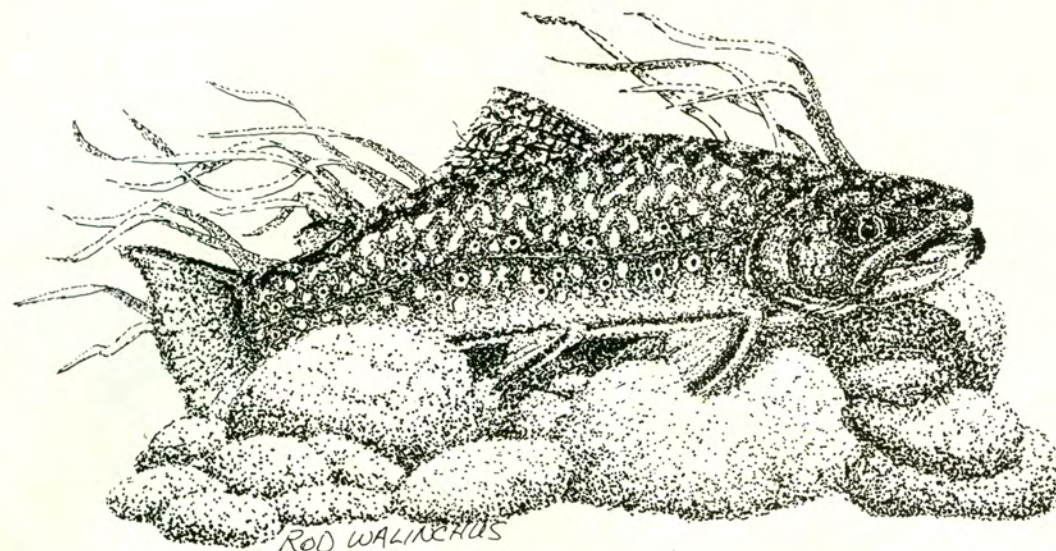
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Acid Rain: My Brook



WHEN I WAS A BOY there were sheep in the pastures behind my home in the Berkshires of Massachusetts. Trucked to the mountains by my uncle each spring after shearing, the bleating ewes and rams arrived when the pastures were greening, when the orchards were white with blossoms and the brooks had just retreated from the winter-shabby meadows to narrow runlets that knifed through sod banks.

It was the best time for exploring downstream with a rod and a worm. On the little brook I learned to extend my arm out as I lay on my stomach with the worm dangling above the brook. I learned to hold the rod steady and to judge the wind so the bait dropped between the banks and hit the foamy little waterfall that made cheerful gurgles deep in its throat. To the tug-tugs on the line I responded with a wild upsweep of the rod and usually the trout came flying from the water and sailed back onto the grass, where I pounced on and subdued it.

I could work my way down through the pasture and into the hemlock woods, catching trout from each pool and run. In the woods I could crawl to the stream-bank and peek from behind a tree trunk to watch the brookies fanning in the pool below. If I moved my head, the trout would dart for the cover of rocks or banks. And then I could reach my hand down into the cool water and grab and tickle for them. The feel of slippery trout sides has lingered in my hands.

The sheep, whose anxious bleating I listened for as dog alarms in the nights, are gone, vanished with the hill farms that gave them pasture. And the trout

that made the little brook a boy's questing place have disappeared, too. Oh, there's an occasional relic fish, but the life has gone from him. It's as though he knows his kind is done for. The 15-trout mornings are a remembrance: The brooks of my childhood no child will know; the trout of my youth no boy will see again.

I did not—could not—overfish the little trout stream. It simply produced new trout faster than a few boys could catch them out. Truly, the little brook was unfished after I departed for college and adulthood. Yet, while no one fished it, the laughing brook with its myriad of wriggling, silver trout became deserted. And as the trout disappeared so did the children who would have haunted its banks had the fish been there. Brooks, trout and boys are companion-pieces.

In my thirties I discovered acid rain in the writings of fishermen. The fish were disappearing, they said, from their Adirondack lakes. No one seemed to know why the trout were gone, but there were suggestions that the rain and snow in that neck of the woods carried man-made acid. In the spring, when the snow melted and unlocked the water in a rush, the run-off water was too acid for trout. Vinegarlike water filled the brooks and lakes and killed the young trout. A few years later someone discovered that the acid unlocked aluminum in the soil and carried it into the streams and lakes, where it killed the fish.

The destruction of the soil's capacity to buffer the acid is progressive, the scientists learned. My trout stream has been destroyed forever—beyond all hope of restoration. They said it was done to

produce cheap electrical power so the Midwest could remain competitive in world industry. They said the acid came from electrical-generating stations that belched high-sulfur smoke from their stacks in America. They said the President of the United States was against doing anything to clean up the air and that without his leadership nothing could be done. Everyone had an answer. Everyone knew something. No one had an answer. My brook is dead.

My brook is *not* dead. I refuse to pronounce "dead brook" over my water. I shall become a do-it-yourself breather of life into my brook. I shall haul limestone chips to my brook. I shall place them in filter pipes; I shall lock them there with chicken-wire mesh so that freshets will not carry them away. I shall "buffer" my brook with man-made chalk percolators. I will gentle its acid waters with healing limestones.

Don't tell me that it cannot be done. I do not want to hear it. Nor do I care that the President has no heart for my brook and its trout. I will do this all on my own, and I shall restore my little brook if I must line it from top to bottom with limestone—a mile of stream. I will do it. And if I fail, my son and daughter will take up the limestoner's burden after me.

This, then, is my declaration to my uncaring Congress and President: "Go your own way. Leave our skies full of acid and our streams empty. Because you have abandoned me, I will remake my own land and my own water, on my own, without your help. You have bigger fish to fry, I guess. Good luck to you."

JOHN RANDOLPH



News Casts . . .

Continued from page 14
scribed as the "beaver complex" of all such bureaucracies: it is the nature of the beast to continue to build and expand.

Then there is the less publicized potential loss of long-cultivated water rights. With infinite patience, the DWB has purchased and hoarded Western Slope water for ultimate diversion through tunnels across the Continental Divide. This water is valued at \$500 million and, should these rights expire through non-use, the loss could put a sizeable dent in DWB's coffers.

Finally, Denver officials seem determined to use this water so coveted by the suburbs (who have agreed to pay 80 percent of the dam's cost) as a cudgel to force its neighbors to join a regional consortium to defray the costs of hospitals, museums and parks now borne largely by Denver.

Municipal competition has also served as a call to arms. Denver is locked in a political struggle with Aurora, a neighbor to the east that has surpassed it in land area, threatens it in population and challenges it in matters large and small. Equally aggressive in water development, Aurora recently announced plans for its own massive transcontinental diversion with a hint of withdrawing from Two Forks. It has an ally of sorts in the city of

Thornton, which has made plans for an alternate purchase of excess agricultural water to the north.

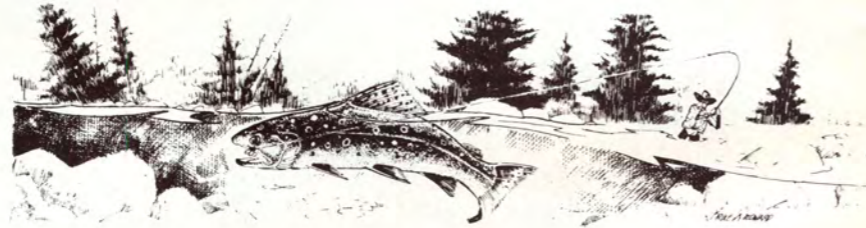
The ultimate veto of Two Forks could come from the U.S. Forest Service on environmental grounds or from the Army Corps of Engineers, which might, given the unsettled political atmosphere sur-

rounding the project, prove less a dam proponent than it has in the past.

But perhaps the best hope for the river's salvation is in the political chicanery at work among Two Fork's subscribers. There may not be a bed—or a dam—in the world big enough to hold them.

CHARLES MEYERS

Acid Rain in Yellowstone Park



HIGHLY ACIDIC RAIN has fallen on Yellowstone National Park and park scientists are watching for damage in some high mountain lakes.

A monitoring station at Tower Ranger Station, in the headwaters of the Yellowstone River, has measured rain with a pH value as low as 4.4, according to park officials. That level is considered highly acidic.

However, the average pH of rain in the park is 5.6, the same as for normal rain. The lower the pH, the higher the acidity. Some high-country lakes in Yellowstone may be susceptible to episodes of low pH, park researchers suspect, and they are watching the acidity of several lakes scattered around the park. "We've had studies to identify what lakes would be most susceptible," said Ron Jones, a fish-

eries biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "We haven't noticed any changes. Acid rain doesn't seem to be serious yet," Jones said.

Some of the lakes considered to be particularly prone to acid rain damage are High, Obsidian, Trilobite, Ice, Mount Everts, Wrangler, Summit, Shelf, Ranger, Forest and Robinson lakes.

Only two of those—High and Trilobite lakes in the northwest corner of the park—contain fish, according to Bob Gresswell of the Fish and Wildlife Service. High Lake holds cutthroat and Trilobite has brook trout.

Research has shown that most lakes are generally barren of fish when the pH of their water drops below 4.8. Aquatic insects, a large part of many fishes' diets also disappear at a pH of 5 or below.

Gresswell said, however, that acid rain would probably have a minor effect on the fisheries in the park because most of the susceptible lakes are fishless anyway. The park's goal is to keep its resources in a natural state, he added.

Researchers think the acid rain in the park may be caused by prevailing winds carrying acid-producing nitrate or sulfate particulates from the industrialized southwestern United States, said Jana Mohrman, who monitors the pH of precipitation at the Tower station. The park

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R. K. KAISER ILLUSTRATION

may receive a federally funded station to monitor particulates in the air, she said, which may give scientists a better idea of the source of the acid rain.

A growing problem in the East, acid rain and snow is just beginning to be found in the West, especially the Rocky Mountains.

ERIC WILTSE



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