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INSTITUTE FOR FISHERIES RESEARCH

DIVISION OF FISHERIES

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

COOPERATING WITH THE

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

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REPORT NO. 477

PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION OF SOUTH BRANCH OF KALAMAZOO RIVER,

HILLSDALE COUNTY, MICHIGAN

The following letter was received on May 7, 1938 from Mr. L. G. Lovell
of Jackson, Michigan:

"Since the first time I fished the "South Branch" I have been partial to it as a near-home trout stream. Each year I wonder if there will be "Posted" signs along it when the season opens next year. As yet it is open to the public and has not felt the curse of W.P.A. ditching and cleaning-out operations. The stream, itself, is just as good as when I first visited it, but the fishermen have increased by the dozens and it is not as productive of rises as it once was. The inherent possibilities are as great as ever and it is one stream in this area which I believe should be acquired by the state and developed along lines of lower creel limits, adult stocking, and rigid supervision.

"I am speaking of the stretch of the Kalamazoo river which lies east (south) of the railroad in sections 1, 2, and 11 of Scipio township, (5S, 2W) Hillsdale County. Here are some three stream miles of water supplied by numerous spring feeders, which have no equal within 50 miles. The greater part of the course is through woodland with a deep bend jutting out into the marsh meadow now and then. Unless you have visited this stream it is hard to visualize that such a stretch of water really exists south of Townline 16, except in Kalamazoo and Allegan counties.

"In closing may I add that I do not represent any agency which might benefit from the acquisition by the state of this beautiful stretch of water, but only as a fisherman and conservationist do I ask that consideration be given to the request that the few remaining Southern Michigan "A" grade trout streams be dedicated to perpetual public use."

On May 14, 1938 I visited the above-mentioned stream and fished it for about one mile, noting bottom types and taking temperatures. It was not the best day to observe the stream, as it was raining heavily and rather cool.

Between the two lower road bridges in Section 1, Scipio Twp., the stream is 8-20 feet wide and from ankle deep to thigh deep. It evidently floods approximately 2 feet or more each spring. In this section the land is a wooded pasture, and the bank cover consists mainly of elm, maple, poplar, tag alder, and a little tamarack.

The bottom of the stream is excessively silted and sanded in because of the spring floods, also because of slight bank erosion started by the cattle. If it were not for these factors, probably 40% of the stream bed would be gravel. At present the bed is not more than 20-25% gravel from fine to medium size. The holes at the bends are silty and sandy, but there are numerous undercut banks.

The vegetation in the stream consists mainly of heavy beds of water-cress and scattered beds of Vallisneria (?).

I fished downstream from the railroad in Section 1 to the next road bridge with worms, but got no strikes and saw no fish. I seined at the road bridge with a six foot common sense seine but could catch no fish of any kind. I saw 1 blue heron and 1 woodcock.

Temperature - Air - 54)
Water 50) 10:30 a.m. - Rain, cool east wind.

At road bridge 50 yards from railroad crossing.

Section 11

Fished upstream from bridge. Stream about same width, but here it is much deeper in the holes at the bends and the banks are more undercut. Bottom is mainly sand and silt. One bank at least is usually overhung with alders. Well shaded in Section 2, where it flows through swamp. Some Chara beds coming in here. Seining in, under and around bridge yielded no fish. Continued rain. Temperature at 12:45 - Air 52, water 50.

Numerous small springs (up to 5 g.p.m.) with temperatures varying from 47° to 49° F. entered the stream in both sections cruised.

No fishermen seen at any time, but there was evidence that the stream has been fished by a few fishermen quite regularly. Posters designating the stream as trout water were observed. Brown trout fingerlings have been planted in recent years.

The South Branch of the Kalamazoo River is being aversely affected as a trout stream by the excessive flood deposits of silt, which have let mud banks as deep as ones' knees on the stream edges, and the grazing cattle which are breaking down the banks which are already very low along most of the stream.

It is planned to have Harold Bowditch secure summer temperatures at several points on this stream during the peak of the hot weather this year in order to determine more accurately its value as a trout stream.

No posting against fishing was observed at the points of examination.

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