

For Better or Worse - Santa Margarita's Due for Change



RAMBLING RIVER—With a warm afternoon sun shining, the Santa Margarita River in Fallbrook

provides a relaxing setting for trout fishermen. At left a man maneuvers his bait in one of many



big pools while being closely observed by his rock-climbing son. Photo at right shows pool up-

stream in Temecula Canyon, site of a fire last fall.—Evening Tribune Staff Photos

Fire Helps in Higher Water Level of Streams

By HARLON BARTLETT

EVENING TRIBUNE Outdoors Writer

FALLBROOK—A fire last fall that cooked the surrounding slopes may have changed Santa Margarita River for the better.

Within five years, a man-made change, two dams, will change the river, and whether it's for the better or the worse won't be known for some time.

In any event, they will erase one of the few remaining trout streams in San Diego County. When it goes, only Pauma Creek, Santa Ysabel Creek, Pine Valley Creek and San Luis Rey River will be left.

The Fallbrook Public Utility District and the federal government have been going mano-a-mano in the courts for 13 years over construction of a dam.

Now two will be built—a water supply dam for the district north of downtown and a federal flood control dam down stream on Camp Pendleton.

There's still time for several more trips to prow the wide, sandy pools along the river before the bulldozers get into the act, however.

Bill Aguilera, an assistant engineer for the district, estimates it will be "at least two to three years" before the Bureau of Reclamation comes up with the necessary government funds to start work on the district project.

Another two years will be required to com-

plete the dam, which will be located west of where Willow Glen Road meets the river. About 36,500 acre feet of water will be stored behind the dam.

Aguilera said the district anticipates opening the reservoir for boating and fishing.

Until this development becomes fact, Santa Margarita will continue to be a stronghold for stream fishing addicts.

Water level is unusually high for this time of year and Capt. John Roumasset, head of DFG wardens in the county who assisted in stocking trout there two weeks ago, has a theory: "The only thing I can figure is they had a burn there and there's more runoff than usual."

"Streams tend to have more water after a fire."

Aguilera feels last year's heavy rains and a short, relatively cool summer, resulting in good runoff at the headwaters in Riverside County, also is a factor.

Rainbows, running three to the pound, were planted along a two-mile stretch of the river at the end of Willow Glen and, given time, they fan out, some roaming up stream into rugged Temecula Canyon, some west toward De Luz Road.

Unfortunately, access to the upper canyon is blocked by "no trespassing" signs that are so familiar to San Diego outdoorsmen. From where Willow Glen meets the river, you can drive a twisting dirt road up the canyon to a

fork—one road leading to Jack's Gem Mine, the other—to a private residence.

Most fishermen park at this fork and fish the nearby pools. The posted property is only 200 yards upstream. The reason for the signs isn't hard to figure out. Litter is thick on the banks of the accessible portion.

Immediately west of Willow Glen Road, a fence and gate have been erected by the utility district. This is to halt the practice of people driving to the river and depositing their garbage, according to Aguilera. It's still permissible to cross the fence—on foot—to fish.

The clear pools hold more than stocked trout. Tadpoles abound, but, more important, minnows from one to three inches long also flit about. Says Roumasset, "They could be small trout."

"It wouldn't surprise me if they get off a spawn there. They could be this fall's spawn. The department has developed fall spawners. We've heard of spawning in the lower reaches of Pine Valley Creek."

In all probability, Santa Margarita will be planted again next week by the DFG and, thereafter, periodically through the winter and spring.

To reach the productive section of the river, take U.S. 393 north for about 20 miles beyond Escondido, turn off Mission Road, then take a right on Willow Glen, which winds down into the canyon.

SPORTFISHING

SEAFORTH—123 passengers on three half-day boats caught 80 barracuda, 270 rockfish, 189 miscellaneous.
MUNICIPAL PIER—14 passengers on two half-day boats caught 75 barracuda, 77 cojito bass, 4 bonito, 27 miscellaneous.
IMPERIAL BEACH—32 passengers on one boat caught 556 rock cod, 76 knip bass, 18 live cod, 22 sheepshead, 6 cat cod.

Martinez Wins Brazil Marathon

SAO PAULO, Brazil (AP)—Mexican Runner Juan Martinez was the surprise winner of the annual St. Sylvester 8,700-

meter marathon race through Sao Paulo downtown streets last night in 24 minutes, 2.3 seconds.

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