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Mendocino Survey and
Report for Feliz Creek

[Division of Fish and Game. Sept 4 1947, STAMP]

Department of Natural Resources
Division of Fish and Game
Field Correspondence

From: Garth L Murphy
To: Bureau of Fish Conservation

Place: Box 182, Lakeport
Date: Sept. 3, 1947

Subject: Hellman Dam on Feliz Cr., Mendocino Co.

In response to your letter of Aug. 29, Feliz Cr. Was investigated Sept. 1 1947.

1.

Importance of Feliz Cr. as a steelhead spawning stream, as a fishing stream and as a contributor to the Russian River fishery.

It is difficult to assign an absolute value to the importance of Feliz Creek as a spawning stream and contributor to the Russian River fishery. My own impression is that it is of middle importance to the river (i.e. not the best tributary, but certainly of importance). The people who live on the creek describe the runs as being fairly large on a normal water year. Last year, fewer fish than usual ascended the creek.

From information gathered from wardens last winter and local observations I judge there are approximately 14.5 linear miles of steelhead spawning grounds above the dam site, as follows:

1. Main stem Feliz Cr. – 8.5 miles
2. Middle [trib], Feliz Cr. – 1.0 miles
3. Misc. small tribs (allowing .5 miles for each) – 5.0 miles

The quality of most of the grounds is not known. The first two miles above the dam site are excellent. Since the Hellman Ranch ([Arittendon] Ranch on Hopland Quad) blocks access to the creek, little summer fishing is carried out. The foreman reported a few catches of trout were made by guests this spring.

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2.

Amount of live water above the dam site in summer in which juvenile steelhead can survive.

Immediately above the dam site for 100 yards there was water in fair abundance. Flow was estimated at 30 GPM, water [7?˚ F], air 85˚ F at 10 AM. Several large pools (shallow) exist that contain suckers, numerous minnows and a few RT of the year. Above this water there was a dry stretch for 1.5 miles due to deep gravel. Above this dry stretch the stream enters a canyon, where there is a flow of live water (40 +or- GPM at max [penetration]). Few RT were seen at the maximum point of [penetration], but the foreman reports trout in abundance further upstream.

It must be remembered that conditions for the summer [holdovers] of SH were probably extreme on Sept. 1. A normal water year would probably provide much more favorable habitat. 3. Presence of falls, or barriers… etc… this item is answered under [pp 1.]

I believe that provisions should be made to allow steelhead to pass this dam, unless it is felt they can pass unassisted. Personally I feel that, though some might get over, the bulk of the run would be stopped below the dam.

Though there is no surface flow from a point just below the dam to the mouth, I believe a small release should be made during the months of June, July, Aug and Sept - the amount to be the surface flow entering the dam, or 20 – 30 GPM, or whichever is greatest. The 20-30 GPM is a fair request since that amount was passing the dam site on Sept. 1, and would otherwise be impounded, though this is not enough to produce a surface flow in the lower reaches of the stream at present, it may keep pools gouged out by winter floods - alive. These are no pools of consequence this year, but as Ed Sacks points out, the rainfall regime this year tended to obliterate old holes and failed to gouge out new ones.

Recommendations:

1. That Provisions be made for the passage of SH over the projected Hellman Dam.
2. That minimum release during the months of June, July, Aug and Sept of the amount of surface flow entering the impoundment or 20 – 30 GPM, or whichever is greater be required.

Garth L. Murphy
[Junior] Aquatic Biologist