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SAWMILL POLLUTION ON THE ST. GEORGE RIVER

George A. Rounsefell

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The pollution of the St. George River by wood wastes in the form of sawdust, shavings, etc. can do much harm to the restoration of salmon runs in spite of the 35-mile length of river from Warren to St. George Lake. Thus, our observations indicate that only about 13,500 yards (less than 8 miles) of the river furnish the swift water suitable as a habitat for young salmon. A smaller portion of these riffles have gravel or rubble suitable for the spawning of the adults.

Between Warren at the mouth of the river, and the low log dam at Union village there are only 1,500 yards of riffles. Obviously, in order to create a run of any size it will be necessary to utilize more of the stream. From Union village upstream to the abandoned concrete dam just below Sennebec Pond there is an additional 1,000 yards.

Above the abandoned concrete dam about 8,500 yards of riffles are available between Sennebec Pond and the sawmill dam on Ghent Road in Searsmont. It is the mill utilizing power from this damsite that is polluting the river with wood wastes.

This 8,500 yards of riffles immediately below the source of pollution constitutes the best portion of the St. George River for the spawning

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of adult and the growth of young salmon. The pollution by the above-mentioned sawmill was first observed on June 24, 1941, on which date Inland Fisheries Wardens Charles Head, Winfield Foster, and I observed fresh sawdust falling constantly into the river and being carried downstream.

On July 21, 1942 I again visited the locality and observed large quantities of sawdust and other mill waste falling from the mill into the river. The bottom of the river below the mill was littered with sawdust, shavings, slabs, bark, and edgings.

During the past year we have been able to demonstrate that salmon do survive and grow in the St. George River during the critical summer period of high temperatures. Obviously then it is only a question of time until most of the suitable portions of the river will be needed as nursery ground for the young salmon.

Sawdust pollution is particularly harmful in that the effects linger on long after the pollution has ceased. The sawdust does not readily decay, but forms a blanket over the bottom ruining it both for spawning and for the growth of food organisms. Since this pollution is immediately above the best portions of the stream it is highly desirable that it be stopped as quickly as is practical.