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St. Cloud Tribune, 1, no. 7 (October 21, 1909).

STOP THE SEINING.

Our Lakes are Being Depleted and Future Profits Discounted.

Editor St. Cloud Tribune: A recent issue of the Jacksonville Times-Union contains a communication from Rex, of St. Cloud, in reference to fish protection for our inland waters—a timely topic in which the citizens of Osceola and other Counties are bound to be interested, in view of the fact that large numbers of tourists and settlers are now coming to this favored section of the State.

The St. Cloud correspondent says: “The depletion of our lakes of fish will soon cause a crisis in one of the most profitable of our enterprises; namely, the entertainment of the hosts of tourists who frequent our State every Winter.”

Those of us who have been fortunate enough to reside in this delightful lake region for a period of years well know the truth of the above statement, and it seems we are just beginning to realize that it is “up to us” to devise ways and means to have existing laws in regard to fishing enforced. Hitherto it has seemed convenient to some people, almost necessary perhaps, to exercise leniency in the matter of allowing the use of seines, but we are witnessing the dawn of a new day, the hosts of Northerners and Westerners seeking homes in our midst compel the enforcement of laws which will guarantee the new comers, as well as old residents, the privilege of catching with hook and line all the fish needed for home use.

Fishing with seines soon depletes our lakes, even though they are headwaters and are being constantly restocked from distant points, and, besides, it does not seem fair that a few fishermen and speculators should monopolize our fine fishing grounds when so many sportsmen and tourists are attracted to this region because of the fishing and hunting prospects.

Rex complains that in some of our lakes it is almost impossible to catch a fish with hook-and-line, because they have been seined so assiduously in years past. This may be true to some extent, although I have recollection of some fine sport with hook and line not so many days since. However, I believe his main contention is right, and fish wardens, if there are any, should get busy and put a stop to seine fishing. This can be accomplished under existing laws without causing much inconvenience or loss, if any, to those now engaged in the industry. Other avenues are opening up for the utilization of all available capital and labor in these parts; the prospects for

remunerative industry in various lines was never better in Osceola County than at present, and all law abiding citizens should unite to sustain those who are responsible for the enforcement of our much-neglected fish laws, to the end that equity may abound much more in the future than in the past. Of course, everybody expects that seining will always be permissible in order to supply fish for such public uses as fish fries and picnics.

Several persons in this immediate neighborhood have already disposed of their seines, turned their launches and boats to more profitable use, and I feel sure that an unprecedented period of prosperity awaits this County when such action becomes general among our fishermen. It is generally conceded that only a short respite from seine fishing would result in restocking our lakes with such an abundance of edible fish that even the small boy with bent pin and stout string would soon have more fun than he had ever dreamed of.

It may be said by way of reiteration that tourists and sportsmen, both of whom come annually to Florida in constantly increasing numbers, are attracted, first, because of our superior climate and, second, because of the renown which this peninsula enjoys throughout the Northern States as a tourists' and sportsmen's paradise. These people spend large amounts of money in the State, and the question naturally arises which is the most profitable from a purely business standpoint, to allow the continued depletion of our fishing grounds by seining or to encourage tourists and sportsmen by the enforcement of existing game laws?—E. J. S.

[Ezra J. Stewart]

