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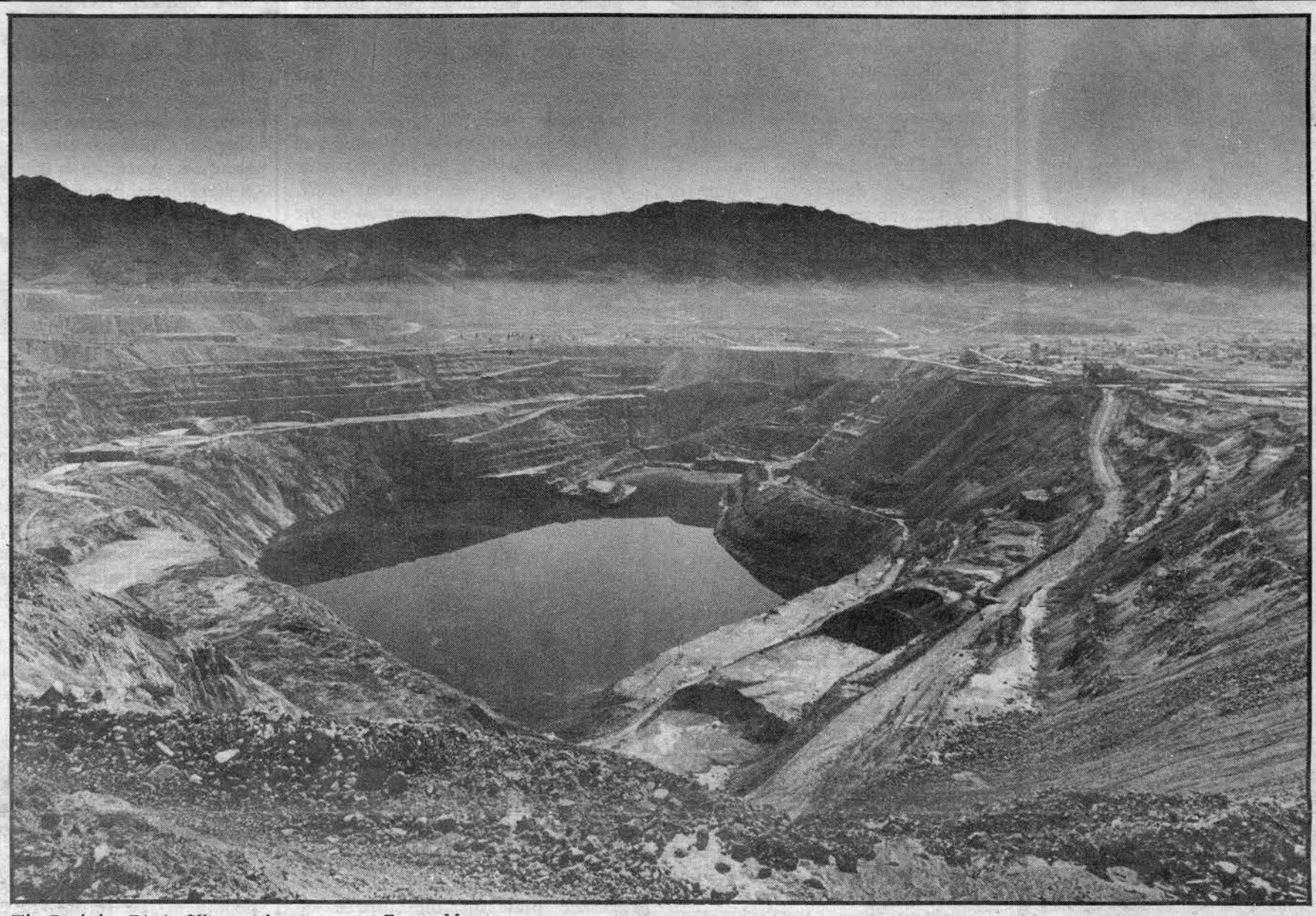

Walter Hinick, Montana Standard

The Berkeley Pit is filling with water near Butte, Montana

Montana's Clark Fork River:

An industrial drain

by Bruce Farling

With all of its wilderness and wildlife, Montana's greatest natural asset may be its rivers.

From the timeless Missouri and Yellowstone, to angler dream-streams, such as the Big Hole and Madison, Montana's rivers are among the finest in the West. Recognizing this, the state has managed to avoid degrading most of its pristine river reaches.

But one river was forgotten -- a river whose recent history has much in common with Ohio's combustible Cuyahoga and Virginia's once-dead James.

It is the Clark Fork of the Columbia -- a river that has been neglected and abused for decades and that is only now gaining the attention of people who are determined to bring it back to life.

If you don't look at the Clark Fork too closely, all seems well. Driving the interstate between Missoula and Anaconda can lull you. The cottonwood-lined river meanders under scenic cliffs. Mergansers cruise the eddies and kingfishers perch on willows. The Flint Creek Range provides a dramatic backdrop, and all seems well.

Closer examination reveals large stretches of trout-scarce water and denuded banks lined with copper-green mine tailings -- legacy of 100 years of copper mining and smelting in Butte and Anaconda, at the river's upper reaches.

Below Missoula, side streams dump runoff from farms and ranches and sediments from logging and road building into the river. There, spawning gravels are slimy with algae nourished by municipal and industrial discharges. The Clark Fork is not a well river.

Encompassing 22,000 square miles, the Clark Fork basin is roughly the size of Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and New Jersey combined. It drains the wet, western third of Montana and counts as tributaries the storied Flathead and Bitterroot rivers. By the time it dumps into Idaho's Lake Pend Oreille -- 300 miles downstream from its source near Butte -- the Clark Fork's mean annual discharge is 16 and one-half million acre-feet, nearly twice that of the Missouri at the North Dakota border and equal to the Colorado River in a wet year.

But these geographic statistics don't disguise more disturbing numbers. Along the upper river between Butte and Missoula lie four federally-listed Superfund cleanup sites. There, fish kills in recent years have numbered in the tens of thousands, the result of rain-induced flushes of heavy metals from streamside mine wastes. A decrepit wooden dam seven miles upstream of Missoula holds back tons of sediments loaded with mining contaminants. Some call that situation an environmental time bomb.

On the lower river, effluent discharges from a pulp mill and Missoula's sewage plant have markedly degraded water-quality; and conservationists and real estate interests near Lake Pend Oreille worry that their multi-

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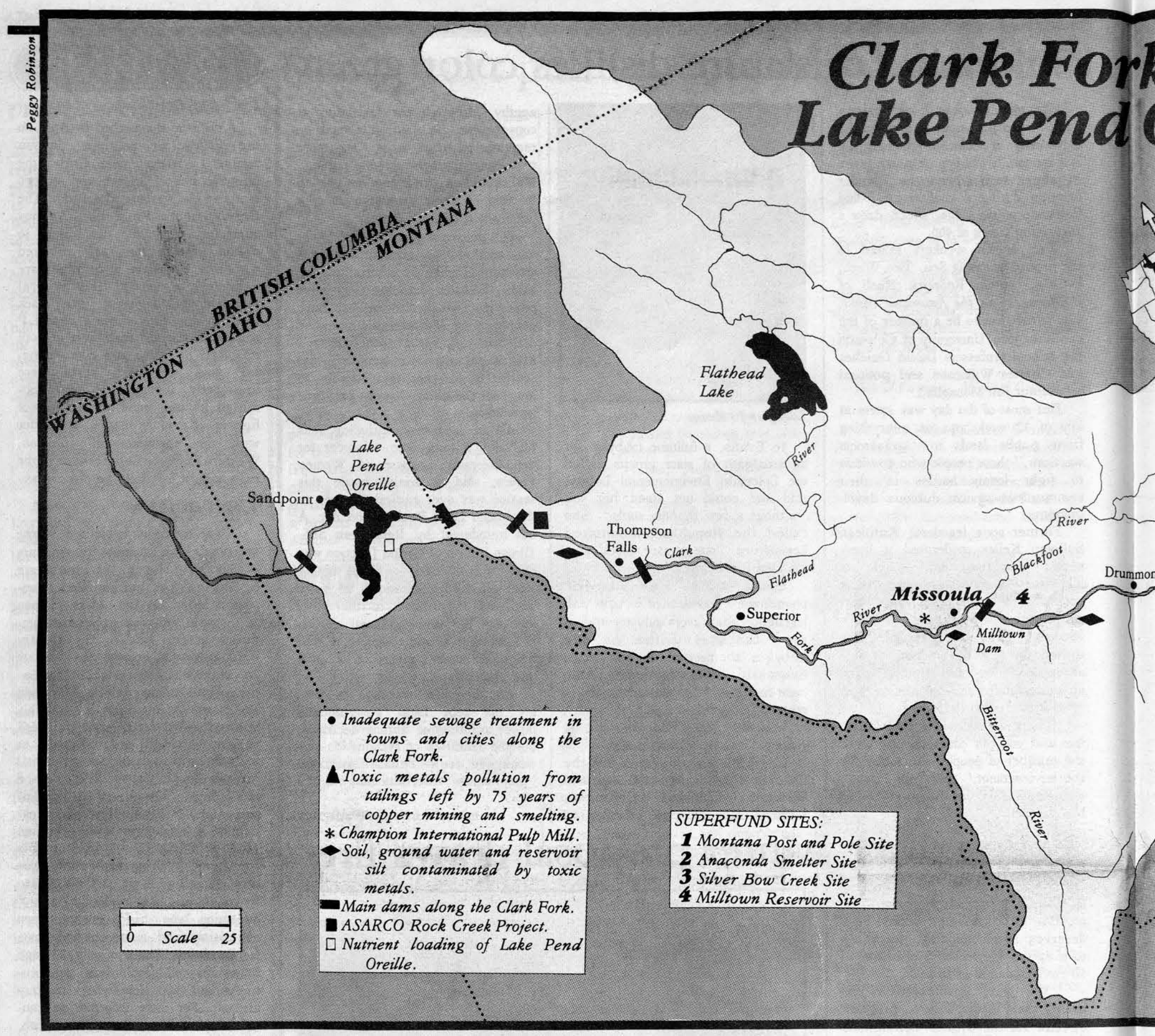


Clark Fork...

(*Continued from page 1*)

million dollar tourism industry may be threatened by the pollutants. Additionally, proposed silver mines in the Cabinet Mountains pose problems for tailings disposal and water quality. All this in a river whose trout population is estimated by biologists to be only 10 percent of its potential.

Examples of the poisonous problems that dog the Clark Fork River abound. Over at Mill Creek, near the closed Washoe smelter site in Anaconda, more than 30 families are being relocated because of cadmium, arsenic and lead in the area's soil and water. The need for relocation was emphasized by a study by the Centers for Disease Control showing that Mill Creek children had elevated arsenic levels in their urine.

According to Mike Rubich of the Montana Solid and Hazardous Waste Bureau, the Anaconda Mineral Company is buying the families out and only "seven or eight remain." Rubich says the "area is being reviewed as an uninhabited area" until Superfund cleanup is completed there and elsewhere in the smelter vicinity.

In 1985, when highly-toxic pentachlorophenol was found leaking into Silver Bow Creek from the defunct Montana Pole Treatment Plant in Butte, EPA officials sent in a toxic SWAT team to temporarily stem the leakage. Then this summer, after a rainstorm caused heavy metals from tailings to flush through a bypass channel on the upper river, thousands of fish died. That led to a meeting of conservationists, the EPA and the Anaconda Minerals Company to discuss how to prevent another occurrence.

The mining company agreed to spend $10,000 annually to build temporary diversion structures until Superfund comes up with a permanent solution. The fish kill was the fourth in recent years on the upper Clark Fork, and skeptics said they will keep an eye on the temporary fix.

James Flynn, director of Montana's Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, says the state has gone beyond skepticism. In 1983, the state sued ARCO, Anaconda's owner, for $50 million for damaging natural resources.

More recently, the Legislature appropriated $200,000 to pay for damages not covered by the Superfund cleanups.

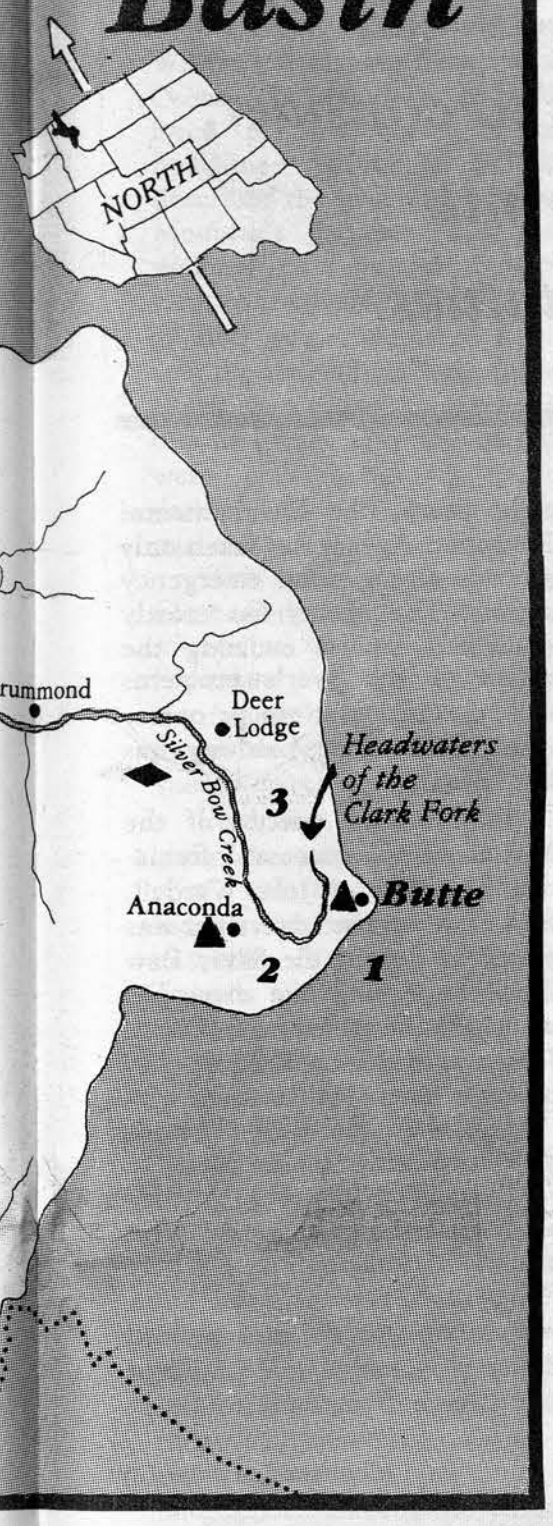
Other impacts mount throughout the main river basin. Recent accelerated timber harvests and roadbuilding on private lands contribute unwanted sediments. And with forest plans now completed, the Forest Service may also soon start logging steeper and unstable lands in adjacent drainages. Erosion and pesticides from agriculture and dewatering of streams continually add to the river's troubles. Despite seemingly overwhelming problems, grassroots efforts to help the river hold some promise.

"We aren't just working to hold ground," says Peter Nielsen, director of the citizens group, the Clark Fork Coalition. "The premise we are working under is that we can improve the river to become a high-quality stream."

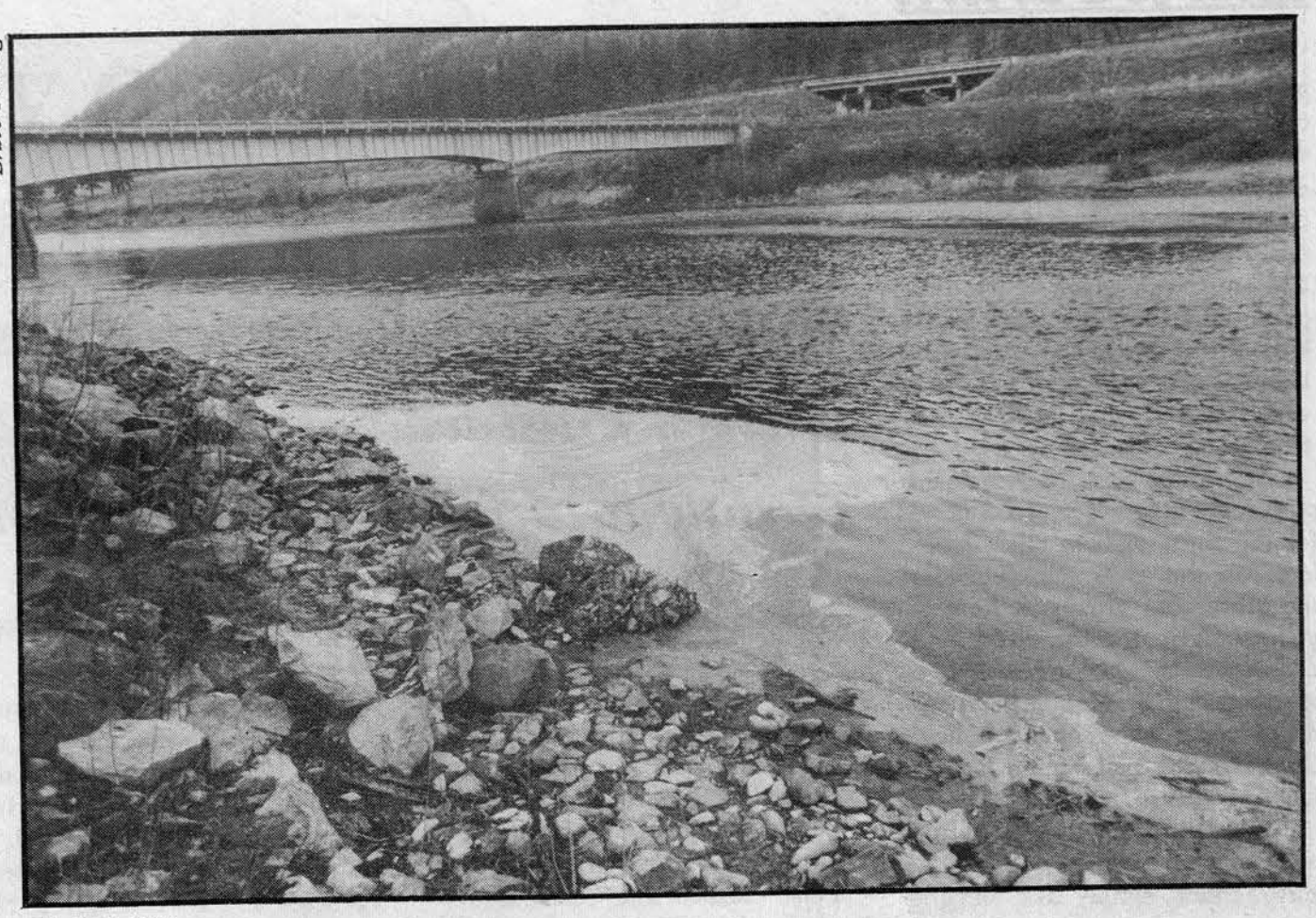
While a number of local and statewide citizen organizations have been involved in individual issues on the Clark Fork, it is the coalition that watchdogs the whole river. According to Nielsen, the river "has the habitat and the physical characteristics to be perhaps the finest trout stream in the country. If it attained its potential, people would forget where the Big Hole is," he says.

Bringing the Clark Fork to that condition is a tall order. Southwest Montana's Big Hole River is considered one of the country's premier trout streams. But given a bit of luck and perhaps 20 years, Nielsen says the Clark Fork could support more than 2,000 trout per mile. He envisions the river someday playing a major role in Montana's tourism industry. For that to happen, the river will have to cease being a convenient dump.

Fork River nd Oreille Basin

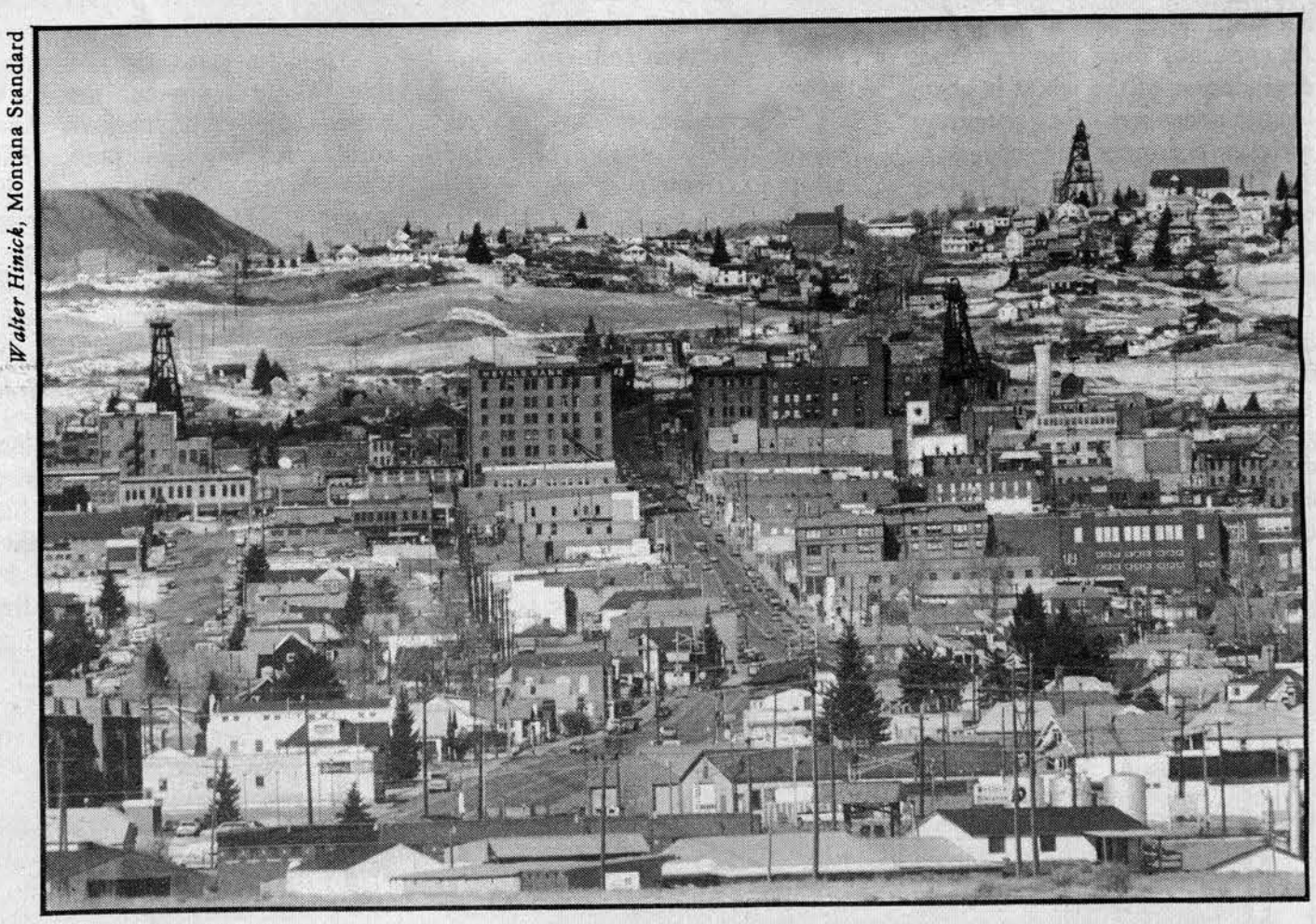


Bruce Farling



Clark Fork River

Walter Hinick, Montana Standard



Uptown Butte, Montana

In late 1986, a crucial first step was made. The Montana State Board of Health and Environmental Sciences approved a compromise plan restricting discharges into the river from the Stone Container Corp.'s large pulp plant at Frenchtown, just downstream of Missoula. This concluded a three-year battle pitting Clark Fork basin residents against one of the state's largest employers. The controversy was sparked by the state's approval of a permit allowing the plant (then owned by Champion International) to discharge treated wastes into the river during the low flows of summer. Before that, discharge was only allowed during periods of high runoff.

The issuance of the discharge permit led to protests from hundreds of people. They complained that the wastes produced foam, discolored the river and put nutrients into the water that lowered oxygen levels. As a result of the protests, the state agreed to reconsider its permit decision.

The issuance of the discharge

(*Continued on page 10*)

The Clark Fork River drains some of Montana's most beautiful country.

But it also drains many of the state's mines, mills and logged and roaded hillsides.

As a result, the Clark Fork is barely alive

But now reaction has set in, and the river has attracted the attention of citizens citizens determined to restore the massive river to health and vigor.

Clark Fork...

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permit also led to the formation of the Clark Fork Coalition. After drawn out and often heated debate, the state brokered a compromise between Stone Container Corp. and the coalition. The mill was given a five-year permit that reduces much of its effluent discharge to 1982 levels. Limits were also added to prevent low-flow, high river-temperature discharges.

According to Nielsen, the pulp mill victory was good news for the fight against other problems on the river. He points to the grassroots groups that emerged to fight for the river, and adds that the controversy led to affirmation of Montana's nondegradation water quality policy. Until then, it had been a largely ignored statute.

The nondegradation policy says that an industry or community cannot simply ask for and expect to receive a permit for additional discharges without proving that the discharges will not harm other uses of the water. An applicant must also show that degradation of the water is absolutely necessary for important social or economic development.

The nondegradation policy could prove pivotal in changing discharge activities at Missoula's sewage treatment plant, a facility cited by the state as the largest contributor of algal nutrients on the Clark Fork River. Though the city recently upgraded the plant to reduce its discharges of suspended solids and biochemical oxygen demand, it still dumps large amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus into the river. Both nutrients encourage algal blooms that stifle fish production on the lower river. Some biologists also suspect the facility's nutrients may be contributing to algal problems and drops in fish populations in Lake Pend Oreille. The state is currently reviewing the plant's discharge permit, with the Clark Fork Coaliation pushing for an extensive environmental review and a nutrient-reduction program.

Conservationists say they recently suffered a setback in the effort to clean up sewage entering the Clark Fork near Missoula. The state Water Quality Bureau in February granted the city of Missoula a sewage permit doubling the allowable output of phosphorus. The permit also increased the total amount of sewage allowed.

With four extensive Superfund sites to consider, citizens must wade through a labyrinth of state and federal agencies and statues.

Activists who thought the pulp mill and sewage plant issues were complicated say they are amazed by the complexities of cleanup on the upper river. With four extensive Superfund sites to consider, citizens must wade through a labyrinth of state and federal agencies and statutes. Even Bob Fox, the EPA's new Clark Fork cleanup coordinator in Helena, says it's hard to keep track of all the elements at the four areas.

They include: the Milltown dam above Missoula, the Anaconda smelter complex in Anaconda, the Montana pole treatment site in Butte, and the massive Silver Bow Creek site, which actually includes much of the old mining complex in Butte (including the enormous Berkeley Pit) and the 140 miles of the Clark Fork River from Butte to Missoula.

To the Clark Fork Coalition, the glacial pace of getting action from the Superfund program has been frustrating. Nielsen blames much of it on foot-dragging by the Reagan Administration. After eight years, the Environmental Protection Agency has taken only a few site-specific emergency actions. The agency has mostly conducted studies outlining the extent of the river's problems and describing cleanup operations. Still, some headway has been made.

Jim Jensen, director of the Montana Environmental Information Center, says John Wardell, EPA's Montana director, was pivotal in getting the Silver Bow Creek Superfund site expanded to include the mine area in Butte. Jensen said this occurred despite pressure from local boosters who "didn't want the black cloud of Superfund hanging over Butte."

The Silver Bow site now includes old mine works, the mammoth Berkeley Pit, which is filling rapidly with water laced with heavy metals, and several thousand acres of mine tailings that stretch from Butte to Deer-

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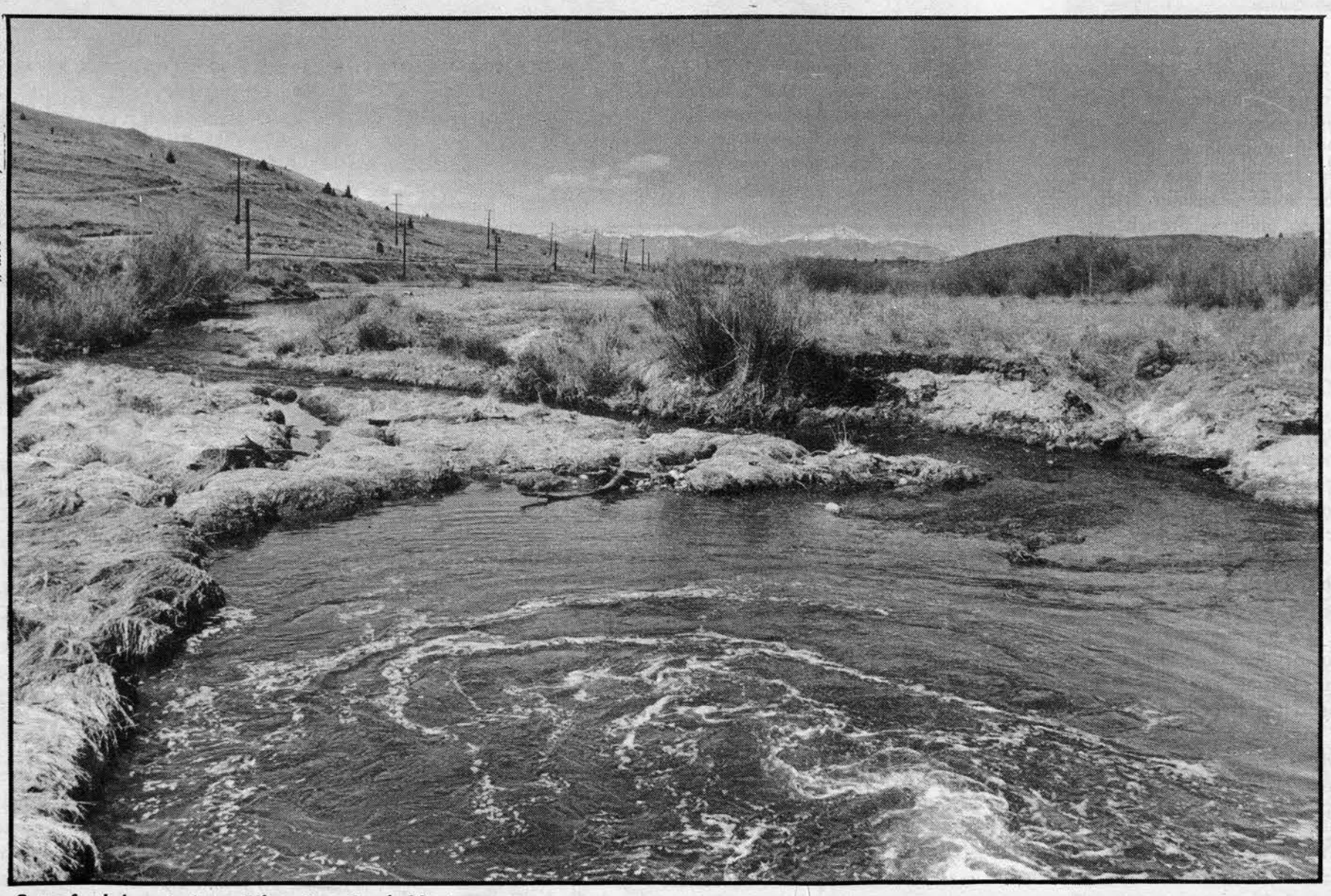
Walter Hinick, Montana Standard



Superfund cleanup site at Silver Bow Creek, Montana

The legacy of Montana's pioneers

The July 10, 1960 headline in the *Missoulian* was blunt: "Clark Fork River: Western Montana's Sewer to the Ocean." In the Aug. 28, 1967, issue of *Newsweek*, a story headlined "River of Poison" described the toxic legacy left to Montana's largest and most polluted river by the Anaconda Copper Company.

Both stories depicted a river running red with mining concentrates that caused massive die-offs of aquatic life. The accounts were grim reminders of the darker sides of Montana's industrialized past.

With today's cleanup of the Clark Fork moving through a muddle of water pollution laws, Superfund and high-tech environmental mitigation, it is easy to forget that the river's troubles started more than 130 years ago.

Until the early 1850s, the main human enterprise along the river was travelling bands of Indians headed to and from eastern Montana's buffalo grounds and a few white trappers, who, for the most part, had only middling success.

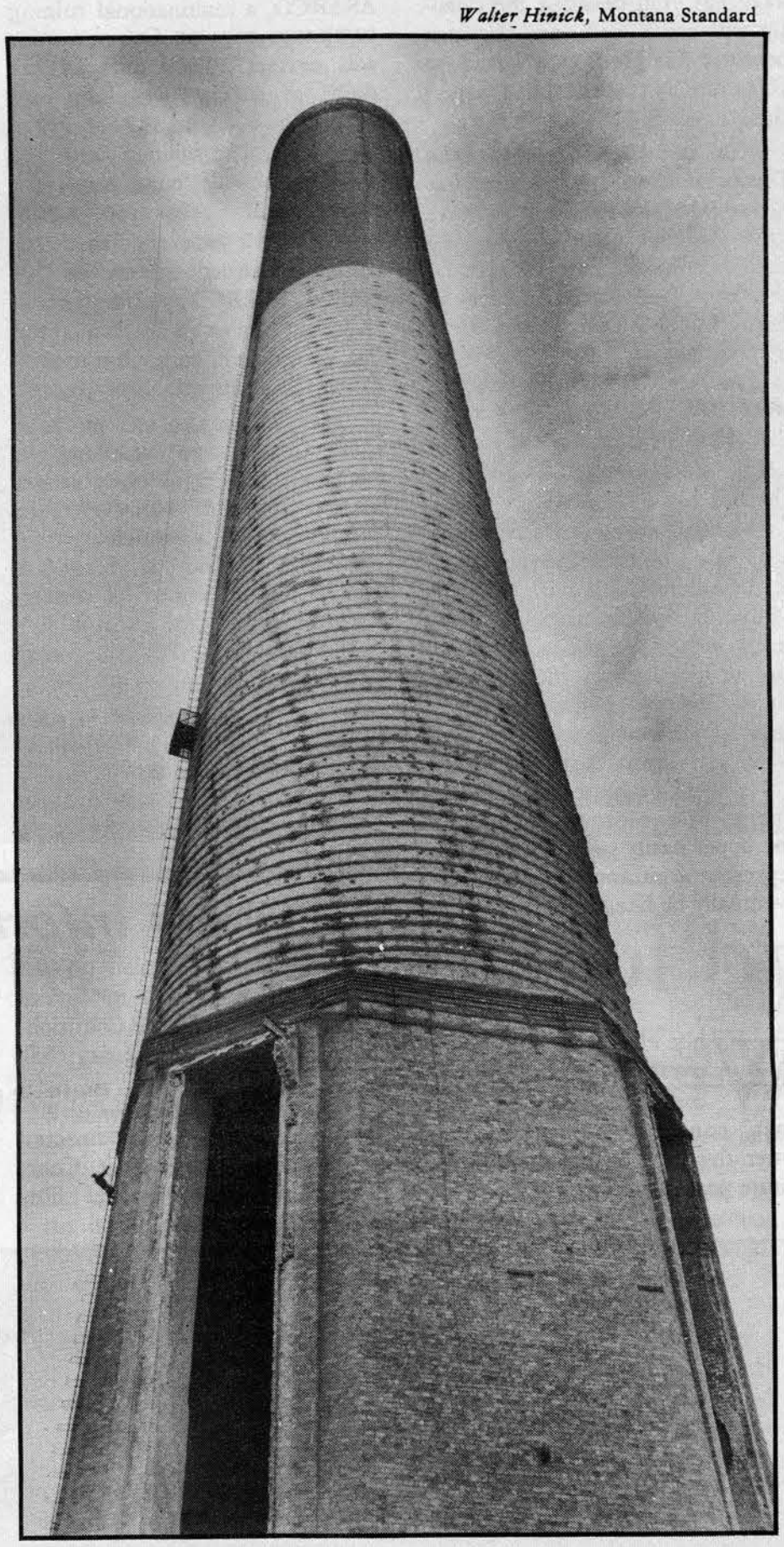
In 1852, Francois Finlay, a Red River Metis also known as "Benetsee," found a few flakes of gold at Gold Creek, some 60 odd miles upstream of present-day Missoula. Though Finlay never explored further, word spread of his discovery, and that began the mining era in the Clark Fork basin -- a development that would transform not only the river, but also the social and political nature of the state well into the next century.

Two brothers named Stuart started mining in Gold Creek in earnest in 1857. Later more miners moved in, some with highly-destructive hydraulic operations. Though many eventually moved to more profitable mining districts in the state, such as at Bannack and Virginia City, enough remained to cause one noted Clark Fork traveler to bemoan the river's fate.

"The beautiful river has been permanently ruined by miners; and has been for three years as muddy as the Missouri. Before the discovery of gold, it was clear and pure as any mountain stream could well be," said future president James A. Garfield in 1872.

Around Butte at the Clark Fork's source, mining in the 1870s had been primarily for silver and gold. Copper was considered merely a byproduct, and the area was just another moderately-producing mining district. That was to change in 1882, when a major discovery of copper coincided with the rise of a wily miner named Marcus Daly.

Walter Hinick, Montana Standard



Inspection of Anaconda stack after the smelter was torn down

Butte, the Clark Fork River, and Montana would never be the same.

Daly was an Irish immigrant backed by wealthy San Francisco investors, including George Hearst, father of William Randolph Hearst. He solved the problem of getting ore out of Butte and then went head to head -- eventually winning -- with the international cartel that controlled the world's copper market. In 18 years he helped transform Butte into the West's largest mining center, while simultaneously creating a huge smelter complex in nearby Anaconda.

Eventually Daly and another copper king, William Andrews Clark, ruled Montana. The two waged a sordid battle against each other in the legislature, in Congress and in their respective newspapers. Montana convulsed at their every antic. Meanwhile, mining boomed Montana's population. From 1880 to 1890 it increased from 39,000 to 143,000, the largest jump in the state's history.

The tapping of the copper wealth turned the Clark Fork into an industrial ditch. Silver Bow Creek, at the river's headwaters near the Butte works, ran thick with mining byproducts and sewage. A sampling of the Periodic Table of Elements settled on the stream's riverbanks and bottom. Copper, zinc, cadmium, iron, manganese, lead and arsenic worked their way into soil, groundwater and aquatic life.

The smelter at Anaconda also pumped out pollutants, eventually striping nearby hills of anything green. To feed the wood-fiber needs of the giant complex and the railroad that serviced it, local drainages were clearcut. In 1881, before the era of Homelites and Stihls, loggers were cutting 200 trees a day around the Clark Fork and its tributaries. In 1889, the mill at Milltown, near Missoula, was shipping over 80,000 board-feet of timber to Anaconda and Butte daily. The river quietly bore its burden of sediment.

By the early 1900s the copper wars subsided. Daly died and Clark faded from view. Standard Oil Company made an appearance and bullied the copper industry, but eventually it too bowed out. Anaconda Company, originally started by Daly, survived.

At its peak in 1917, 70,000 people lived in Butte and there were 150 active mines. Though eventually some pollution abatement was instigated at the mines and smelter, little was done about cleaning up the river. In fact, it wasn't until 1969 that Butte stopped dumping untreated sewage into Silver Bow Creek.

In the 1960s public outrage over fish kills brought the river's woes national attention. In 1967, *Newsweek* reported on a fish kill resulting from a labor strike at the Anaconda Company. Because striking laborers were not available to run a critical precipitation plant, heavy metals had been released into the river, resulting in dead fish. When management got the plant running again, by court order, the United Steelworkers Union said that pollution was of minor consequence compared to the issues of wages and benefits. Its chief bargainer accused the company of strike-breaking and said, "We're interested in people, not fish."

Another fish kill in 1970 prompted one frustrated state water quality official to complain to the press that Anaconda wouldn't give a reason for the spill and that "they usually blame it on the wind blowing the stuff (tailings) all over."

Anaconda pulled out of Butte in 1983, leaving behind it many open, running sores. In addition to these old wounds, copper mining on a small scale continues in the area. The question now is: Can the damage mining inflicted on the area be healed, and the Clark Fork brought back to life?

--Bruce Farling

Clark Fork...

(*Continued from page 10*)

lodge. It is the legacy of 100 years of mining without environmental regulation.

Plugging the river seven miles upstream of Missoula is the Milltown dam, an 80-year-old wooden dinosaur owned by the Montana Power Company. Backed up behind it is a potent larder -- 120 million cubic feet of sediment laden with heavy metals.

Montana Power says the dam is unsafe and needs major repair. But the state and conservationists say reconstruction could result in catastrophic releases of sediments downstream. In a hard-fought concession won by conservationists, Montana Power recently agreed to move the toxic tailings from behind the dam to an upland site, away from wetlands. Now that it has a permit from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the company says it will reconstruct the dam.

Even when all the regulatory players decide on how best to handle the mess left by decades of mining in the upper basin, the river will not be restored easily. First, there is the matter of fixing liability, a Superfund responsibility. Anaconda Minerals Company, purchased by ARCO in 1977, has already been officially tapped for some of the financial responsibility. But when multi-million dollar figures are tossed out to finance some of the big problems at, say, the Silver Bow site, the company is likely to follow the lead of those in Colorado and fight (*HCN*, 2/29/88). And because the clean-up will occur well into the next century, Congress will need to cooperate by reauthorizing Superfund.

On this matter, Montana Democratic Sen. Max Baucus has already become active, as have two Senators not known for their environmental concern -- the conservative Idaho duo of Sens. James McClure and Steve Symms.

Last year, the three senators were influential in getting more than $2 million earmarked for the Clark Fork and Lake Pend Oreille.

Montana Gov. Ted Schwinden has also become involved in restoring the Clark Fork. With a $200,000 contribution in 1984 from Anaconda Minerals, he started a project in his office to study and to help coordinate cleanup efforts. Since then the state legislature has kicked in $130,000 to evaluate reclamation efforts. Still, those familiar with the upper basin say these efforts represent a pittance of what will eventually be needed.

While efforts on the upper river are geared toward correcting sins of the past, conservationists on the lower river are trying to prevent future problems.

Two giant silver mines proposed next to and underneath the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness raise concerns about the effects of tailings disposal, sewage and industrial pollutants on the river. ASARCO, a multinational mining company, says its Cabinet mine will extract 10,000 tons of ore daily, producing 100 million tons of tailings over the 30-year life of the mine. The tailings could be stored one-half mile from the river. Full production would involve 350 workers after an initial construction peak of 500 people. ASARCO's mining permit is being reviewed by the state. Once approved, an environmental impact analysis will be prepared.

U.S. Borax also has plans to mine in the area, although its plans are still in the early stages of development. However, the company says it anticipates an operation similar in scale to ASARCO's. A concern of conservationists is that ASARCO's operation will be run similar to another of its mines 17 miles away near Troy. There, the company has had a history of water quality violations.

Conservationists also lament the impact on fisheries by three utility-owned dams on the lower river. Activist Peter Nielsen says they have created an environment "that is not really a river and not really a lake." The result: "Fishing is the pits," he says.

Attempts to rebuild fisheries in the reservoirs, which are run by Montana Power and Washington Water Power, have been dismal failures. Despite the utilities' claims when the dams were being built that they would create recreation opportunities, releases at the dams have damaged fish populations.

Those who think the Clark Fork is a Montana problem haven't talked to Idaho residents around Lake Pend Oreille. Its 148-square-mile area and 111 miles of shoreline make it Idaho's largest natural lake.

Its crystalline depths and low-key shoreline development have made it a major tourist attraction in northern Idaho and an economic mainstay for com-

(*Continued on page 14*)

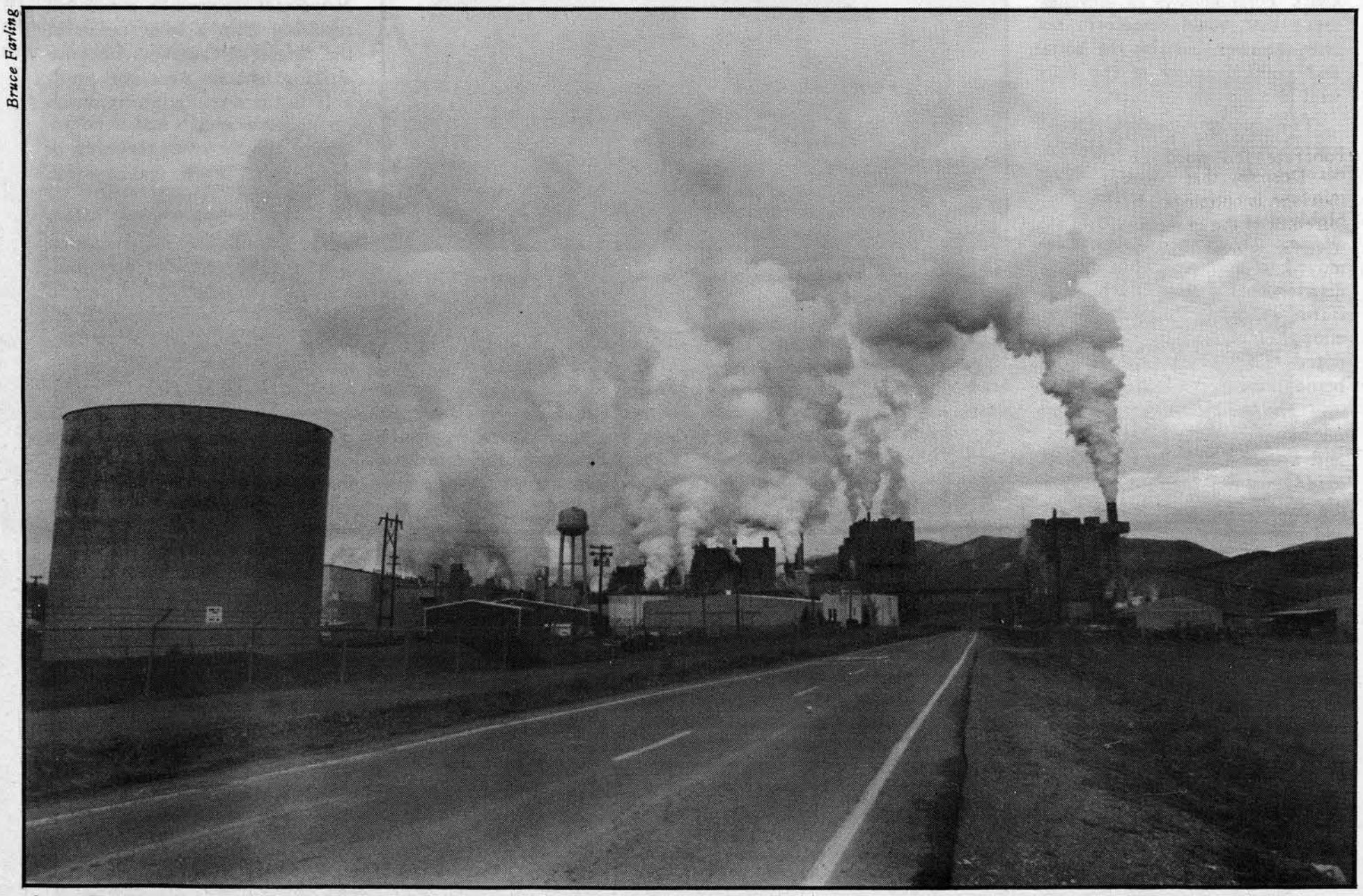
A river of information

For more information on the Clark Fork River and its issues contact: The Clark Fork Coalition, P.O. Box 7593, Missoula, MT 59807 (406/542-0539).

Questions about the Cabinet Mountain mines can be directed to: Ron Erickson, Project Coordinator, Kootenai National Forest, 506 Hwy. 2 West, Libby, MT 59923 (406/293-6211).

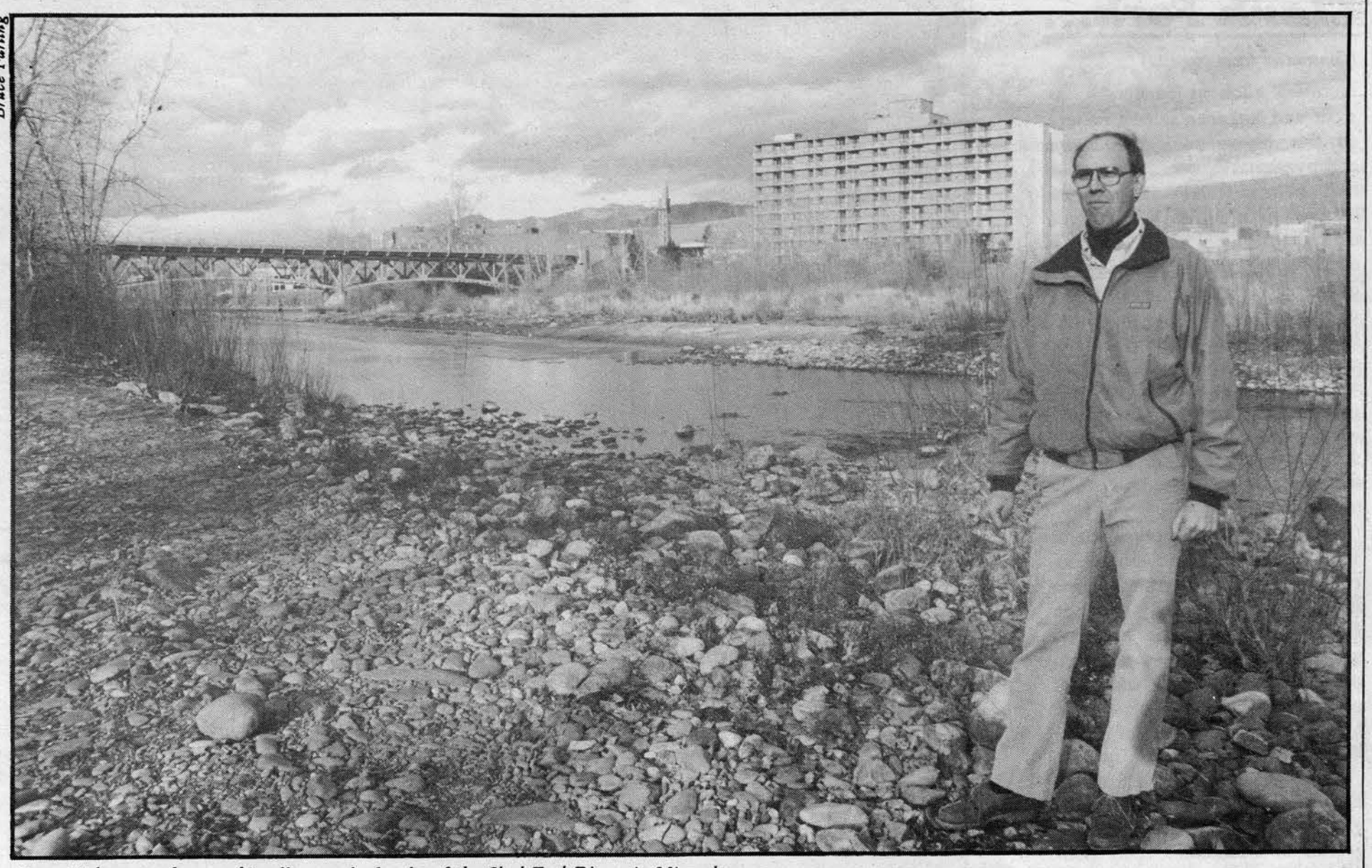
Questions on Clark Fork Superfund sites and toxic waste cleanup in Montana can be directed to Jane Stiles or Mike Rubich at the Montana Solid and Hazardous Waste Bureau. Call toll free 1/800-648-8465.

Bruce Farling



Stone Container Corp. Pulp Plant in Frenchtown, Montana, just downstream from Missoula

Bruce Farling



Peter Nielsen stands near his office on the banks of the Clark Fork River in Missoula

Reclaiming a river, foot by foot

The view from Peter Nielsen's office window provides insight on the reasons he does what he does for a living. The Clark Fork River rolls lazily by, cutting under the Higgins Street bridge -- a concrete funnel that whisks cars into downtown Missoula. Along the river's edge, nothing much grows. Rock riprap clings to failing banks. A small, nearby island is topped by a pile of old concrete and wood debris.

Despite that dismal view, Nielsen is optimistic. Nielsen, the director of the group sparking the river's revival, the Clark Fork Coalition, says the river's vitality is on the rebound.

Pointing towards an area recently-spruced up as part of an urban renewal program centered on the riverfront, Nielsen says, "Missoula, the center of the Clark Fork's comeback. The community has always turned its face away from the river, and now, finally, it is facing it again."

Gesturing upstream towards the site of a large hotel, where the river bank has been cleaned up considerably in recent years, he says: "For a quarter, you used to be able to dump there. No regulations, no water quality restrictions."

Much of the dumping has been stopped, or at least regulated, along the river's 300 miles. Cleanup projects are proceeding tenuously and trout are making a comeback on a few sections. The river's days as a handy repository for untreated mining and sewage waste may be ending. And a lot of the work for change is being done by a group called the Clark Fork Coalition.

In its cramped office -- a 10 by 20 box in an old building -- Nielsen, a former river guide with a degree in wildlife biology, works both a phone and computer. On the wall is an old newspaper ad from the river's largest and most notorious polluter. It proclaims: "We, Too, Are Environmentalists ... Even before the environmental movement became popular, the Anaconda Copper Company did something about pollution."

Bruce Farling

Judy Hutchins

Formed in 1984 by river-community residents and members of the Montana Environmental Information Center, the coalition has 500 individual members and 54 member organization, of which half are businesses. The impetus for its creation was a battle to prevent one of the nation's largest pulp mills from increasing effluent discharges into the river. Because of a minor uprising in the river basin and the efforts of the coalition, the mill's past and present owners, Champion International and the Stone Container Corp., were prodded into a negotiated settlement to reduce discharges. Nielsen says settlement of the pulp mill issue served notice that pollution in the Clark Fork would no longer be a matter-of-fact activity. Just as importantly, he adds, the controversy brought business and conservationists together to solve the river's environmental problems.

Describing the group, coalition president Judy Hutchins says: "It's not a bunch of what you'd usually call environmentalists. We have lots of conservative people."

The 34-year-old resident of Heron, a tiny community on the lower river, says she and Nielsen, 32, are the group's youngest board members. Nielsen estimates that more than half of the group are retirees who moved into the Clark Fork basin for its beauty. They want to see the river cleaned up.

Both Hutchins and Nielsen are quick to point out that what also separates the coalition from other conservation groups is the level of expertise in natural resources and human health many coalition volunteers have. Members include Dennis Workman, a regional fishery biologist for the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks; Kathy Hadley, a former bureau chief with the Montana Department of Natural Resource Conservation; Vicki Watson, an assistant professor of botany at the University of Montana; and John Camp, a retired M.D.

The group's membership includes conservation groups, shoreline and homeowners' organizations, small businesses and even the Montana Power Company -- who the coalition has sparred with over cleanup and repairs at the company's Milltown dam, a Superfund site. Nielsen says business interest in the river is important because the Clark Fork could play an important role in bringing tourism and retiree dollars to the state.

"I'm not saying we should become Florida ... but if you look at it, these people (tourists and retirees from out of state) are bringing in more money than probably logging and agriculture together."

--Bruce Farling

Clark Fork...

(Continued from page 12)

munities such as Sandpoint. Its trout and kokanee salmon fishery attracts thousands of visitors each year. Yet recent drops in fish production -- especially kokanee salmon, the main target of fishermen -- raise concerns over water quality. In addition, increases in algal growth and decreases in the lake's clarity have local residents pointing upstream to Montana. Federal and state-funded studies are getting underway to determine what roles nutrient loads from the Clark Fork and shoreline sewage play in the lake's deterioration.

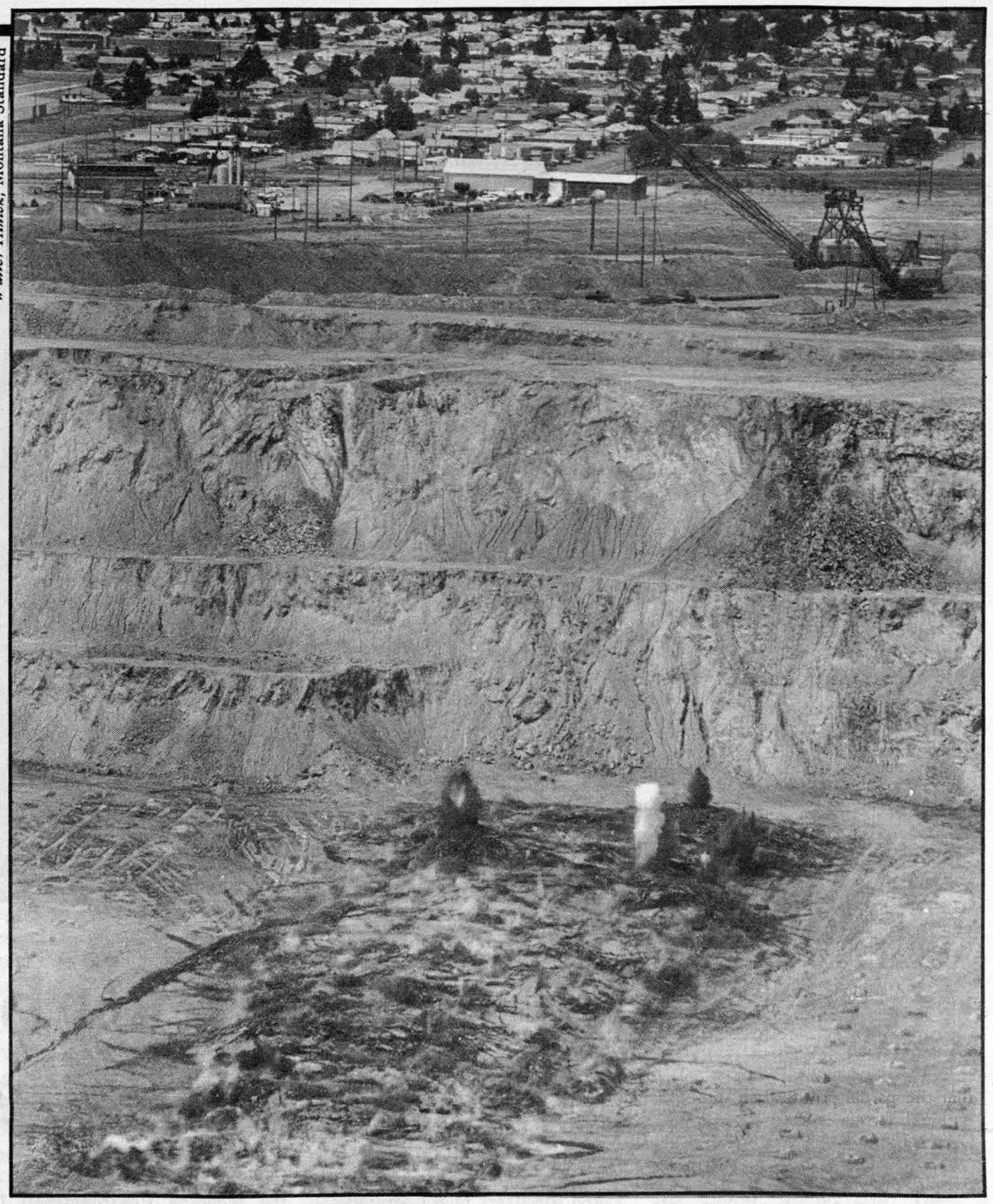
Solutions to two other basin-wide problems are also being explored. Sediment from logging is getting increased attention from conservationists; and dewatering of tributaries for agriculture, mining and industrial uses has wheels rolling at the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

Ken Knudson, a consulting biologist, says, "The single greatest threat to the continued growth of Montana's sport fishing industry is diffuse, nonpoint sediment pollution from logging and road building."

Knudson is developing a plan for the Clark Fork Coalition that will outline how sediments can be limited by applying current water-quality policy to logging. On another front, Jim Jensen, a staffer with the Montana Environmental Information Center, says a priority at the next legislative session in 1989 is a law addressing nonpoint source pollution.

To counter damaging dewatering practices in the basin, the state is preparing an environmental analysis for establishing a water reservation system on the Clark Fork to preserve recreation and fishery values. Montana already has a similar reservation on the Yellowstone.

Walter Hinick, Montana Standard



The first blast at a new pit near Butte

Although the quest to revive the river is blocked by formidable obstacles, there seems to be little disagreement in Montana that it is an important task.

□

Bruce Farling writes from Missoula, Montana. This and related stories were paid for by the High Country News Research Fund.

LETTERS

WRITER SAYS BURR TRAIL NEEDS PAVING

Dear *HCN*,

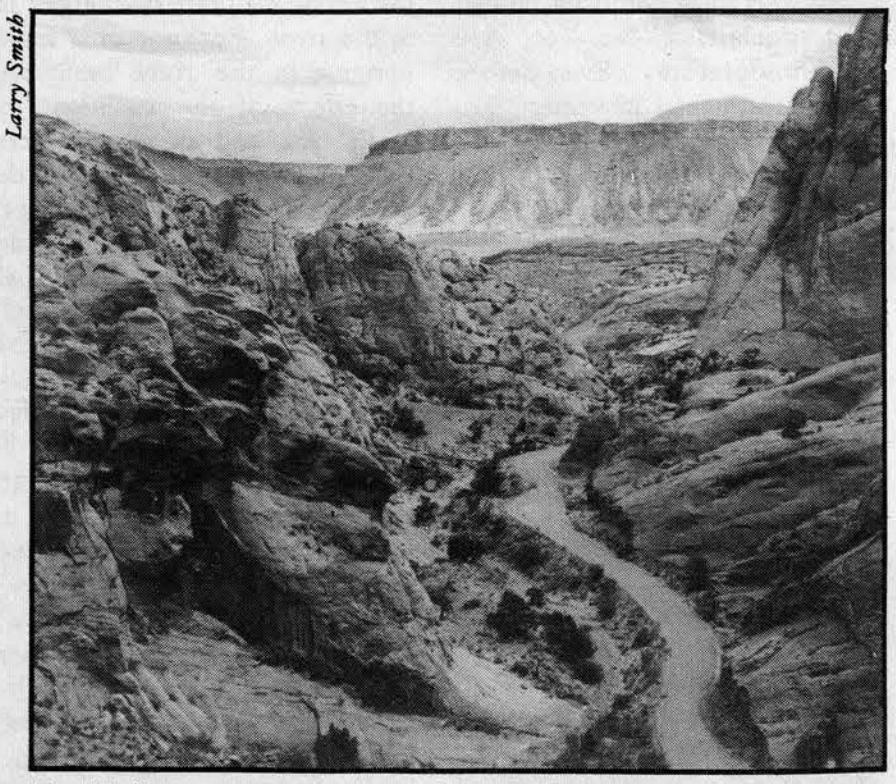
I can't help wonder how many of the people who are trying to prevent paving of the Burr Trail have actually driven over the road, or intend to do so in the future.

I read letters in your forum which sound like we have to preserve the road in it's pristine, dusty-muddy, rough condition. It's as though this were the last dirt road in Utah. If the Burr Trail were paved, there would still be more miles of dirt road intersecting the trail than what has been paved.

As for the environment, building a properly drained and paved road won't cause as much environmental damage as trying to maintain a busy dirt road will. Each time a dirt road is graded, it is carved a little deeper into the landscape. Natural drainage is changed, and dust soon covers everything within a hundred yards of the road.

I like to get away from traffic on a dirt road once in a while myself,

Larry Smith



Burr Trail

but traffic over the Burr Trail is increasing each year. A dirt road is not fun when you are constantly eating dust from other cars. If the traffic gets heavy enough even the scenery will be obscured by dust.

Finally, the thing everyone needs to keep in mind is that the people of Garfield County have the right to pave the roads leading to adjacent population centers.

Imagine the howl if environmentalists were to decree that there could only be dirt roads between Salt Lake City and Provo. The difference is only a matter of degree. I think environmental groups should be forced to pay the costs Garfield County has incurred from their legal maneuvers.

George Hawkins
Bountiful, Utah

BARBS

Lazy journalism! An enterprising reporter would have figured out how far toward the moon the aspirins would reach.

The Feb. 19, 1988, *Wall Street Journal* reports that if all 90 million aspirin tablets made each year "were stacked on top of each other, they would make a very high stack."

Just teach them colors and how to read the numbers on the jerseys.

University of Kansas basketball coach Larry Brown is upset over the effect of the school's liberal arts program on his team. He complained that players have to "meet unbelieveable requirements. You've got 16 hours of foreign language. They've got to take two courses in Western civilization and several other courses."