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Valley of Snags An 'Obscene Sight'

By DON VIPOND

Fourteen miles northwest of Sooke lie the Bear Creek and Diversion reservoirs, helping feed B.C. Hydro's power plant at Jordan River.

Both date from early in this century, long before there was any law requiring such land be cleared before flooding.

At the moment, both reservoirs are "drawn down" drained while work is being done on their dams. What is left on display is an obscene stand of grey snags.

It's been suggested the reservoirs could be converted to lakes for people — with fishing, swimming, possible even camping someday.

The snags would have to be cut while they are empty. The debris could be hauled out when they are reflooded. One estimate puts the cost at \$30,000.

At the moment, Hydro has a contractor at work among the snags in the Bear Creek reservoir, salvaging cedar for shakes. His operation is small and isn't making a dent on the mess.

Is there any urgency? The reservoirs will be drained again next summer for more work on the dams. After that, the water will be in the way.

Hydro today said "no" to the clearing project.

Charles Nash, manager of the corporate services division, said from Vancouver that Hydro feels expenditure of public funds to clear the reservoirs at this time is not justified.

In a nutshell, Hydro can't afford it now but it might reconsider in the future.

Nash noted that the Elliott dam reservoir which is being developed further down the Jordan River will be cleared and relatively more accessible.

And he said that because the Jordan River plant is basically to help handle peak hydro loads, he couldn't see any reason why the Bear Creek and Diversion reservoirs couldn't be drained again for cutting if there's a change in policy.

The reservoirs are narrow, about a quarter-mile wide. The one damming Bear Creek is about two miles long. Diversion Reservoir, on the

Continued on Page 2

DISMAL GRAVEYARD of snags make Bear Creek and Diversion reservoirs north of Sooke not only ugly but useless. Helmeted forest worker, lower right foreground (see black arrow) provides contrast to show size of grey

stand of shattered tree trunks. Both reservoirs are drained for repairs to dams. They hold water to feed Hydro's Jordan River power station. Hydro is not taking opportunity to remove snags due to cost.