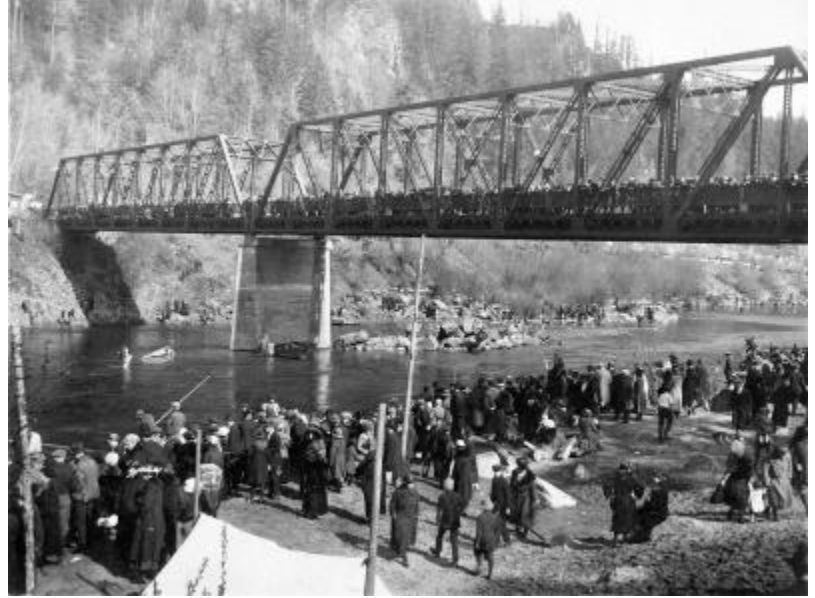


Smelt Runs in the Sandy River

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Though smelt runs in the Sandy River are infrequent now, some Troutdale residents continue to hope that *eulachon*, also called smelt or candlefish, will once again choose to spawn in the Sandy River. These small oily, silver fish are four to eight inches in length and live two to three days after spawning.



In the spring, usually March or April, smelt used to spawn in the Sandy River. Their return was sporadic and part of the fun was guessing when they might return. But when the fish did arrive, entrepreneurs, commercial fishermen, laborers and local businesses all capitalized on them.

Smelt are dipped with nets from the bank. The arrival of smelt in the Sandy -- the last big run was in 1980 -- was once the signal for Portlanders to pile in their cars and come to dip or buy smelt. As many as 5,000 people ventured to the river in a single day, forcing Multnomah County Sheriff's deputies to make the Historic Columbia River Highway a one-way road into town, with outbound traffic one-way east on Stark Street.

While individual smelt dippers toted away the limit of 25 pounds of fish for personal use, commercial dippers sold their huge catches to Sea World in San Diego to feed the marine animals.

In 2023, smelt returned to the Sandy River in enough numbers to allow for a one-day fishery.



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