

June 16, 2011

Spring is looking like another long one this year. As many of you know from the news reports around the state there is a lot of snow/water in the mountains. Just one of those things we all have to deal with in the best way we can. The Okanogan and Columbia are just ripping compared to any time since this Salmon fishery here in the upper Columbia started back in 2000. The Okanogan has dropped one foot in the last week, so the largest run-off rush seems to be over. More important for the overall catch rate for Salmon season in this area is the temperature of the Okanogan. As said before the warmer water of the Okanogan causes higher numbers of fish to hold in the main stem instead of continuing their migration. As I look at the run as it starts crossing the dams on their way up river I can also see the fish are definitely arriving much later than the norm. At this point I do believe it will balance itself out in regards to water temperature and arrival times.

I get a lot of questions on what I think the fishing will be like this year. I wish I had the "Glass Ball" to be able to know exactly but I don't. I can only go on what the seasons have been like in the past. Based on what I am seeing I really think the season will be as good as the average, but it will be later than the norm by probably two weeks. I know fish will be able to be caught early in the season for sure, but the largest numbers will start to arrive later than normal.

Lake Chelan

I made it up to Chelan a couple more times for Lakers. They are biting in larger numbers than a month ago. One day we put 26 in the boat. Have not spent much time on Chelan lately due to Rufus Woods going ballistic.

Rufus Woods - Well it happened again!

Positives,

There was another large release/escapement of Triploids from some of the net pens. When this happens Rufus is the perfect fishery in my opinion for kids and new anglers. It really gets them excited about fishing. The numbers/rumors I am hearing have ranged from 5,000 to 100,000 either escaped or were released. According to what Joe Peone from the CCT said the number is 50,000, and that is the first solid information I have on the actual numbers. So what does that mean for anglers. It means for the last couple of weeks getting a two fish limit with bait takes about an hour or less. Boat anglers are running about the same, but this last week I have heard the first comments of it slowing down. I guess if a person now has to fish for 2-3hrs to get a limit that is slowing down a little. Last Sunday we boated 12/65lb of fish. Triploids are some of the best smoked fish around. I had a first for any trout I have caught. One of the fish was full of small river rocks, and of course those were included in our overall weight.

****The rumors of what is legal or not for releasing trout on Rufus, and anglers "high-grading" of fish is running rampant again.****

If you fish Rufus Woods and use any kind of scent or bait regardless of the hook or lure, and catch a trout you must count that fish towards your daily limit. Even if the trout is

released it is counted towards your caught limit. The only way to catch more than two trout a day is to use a fly or artificial lure with a single point barbless hook with no scent or bait.

As many of you know Triploids are specifically designed to be raised in a fish farm setting, and to put on huge amounts of weight quickly. Triploids do not have the ability to recover from the stress of being caught like a regular trout or fish. They also sustain more injury than a "wild" fish. By turning them loose a person is actually reducing the ability of other anglers to catch and take home some great eating meat.

Negatives,

As I have written about before this release/escape could not have come at a worse time for the ESA Springers, Steelhead, and Summer Chinook fishery from Chief Joseph Dam down river. More water is being spilled and ran through all the dams since Triploids were first in Rufus Woods. These fish were washed down river 30 miles in only a couple days due to the flow, and I have never seen escaped/released triploids travel that fast. All of these fish are un-clipped and un-tagged, and they are being washed into ESA fish spawning waters in record numbers. The entire situation has now just compounded ten times.

It is just unfortunate that the great increase of one fishery potentially will decrease another fishery. I know the WDFW is working on this problem, and with our help can hopefully come up with a possible solution in the near future.

Call to book your 2011 salmon fishing trip.

Ron