

September 9th, 2010

Fishing has been reasonably solid and fairly consistent for the last two weeks. I am not aware of anyone catching Sockeye, and that would be the norm for this time of year. One of the better weeks we have had so far this year was the last of August. Four Kings in the boat was the norm for almost every trip. One of my best days for total fish weight was over 100# for four keepers. I am happy with a day like that anytime! Last week we saw a decline in fish size/weight, and a small decline in numbers in the boat. We averaged two kings per trip in the cooler over the last week. We were also catching and releasing a lot of very small (sub-legal or barely legal) Jacks. The very small ones give you the initial excitement of the bite and hope for a large King. The bite can look exactly the same but the tug back as you set the hook is 100% different.

Steelhead opened on the 8th, and we are now required to go to single barbless hooks. Yes, single barbless does affect the hook up and fish in the boat rate a little. The bites are still there but the intent of less fish being hooked by the regulation does work. I asked WDFW at the meeting in Brewster last night, and they are unwilling to change the "Selective Gear" rule. They do not want to lose the ability to fish for Steelhead. I understand their reasoning...kind of/maybe agree....but think they should have left Steelhead closed for one more month. Again I don't know how much I agree with negatively affecting one fishery to benefit another that lasts twice as long. We just have to work harder and not make any mistakes on setting the hook and bringing the fish in. Even with no mistakes they will come unhooked at times.

WDFW did open up the Columbia between Brewster and Wells dam this year again until the end of Salmon season. This is new so only time will tell if it will be a benefit to the Salmon anglers. The dam counts are still showing days with decent numbers, and these are fresh new fish that should be in great shape. The meat on a few fish is starting to lighten, but then others are nice and bright red. Again, this commonly happens as we near the end of the season. I am hearing stories and being asked if the Salmon are gone. I do not think they are gone at all but the number of boats is almost zero. For those of you who fished earlier in the season will be shocked at the lack of boats and anglers. Based on what we are catching and other trusted anglers the catch rate for September is holding true to previous years considering the catch rate earlier in the season.

Steelhead is being caught in the Methow and in the Columbia with the best to come. Remember bait/scent only in the Columbia and single barbless hooks. The current numbers are decent but people need to remember we are very early compared to previous years. The Steelhead will only get better, and according to WDFW the total count will be equal or slightly higher than last year. At this point WDFW does have a pretty accurate idea on numbers do to actual lower river dam counts not speculation based on "models". WDFW needs us to catch the hatchery Steelhead, so please get out and catch some. If we anglers don't catch them WDFW will be forced to employ other methods to reduce the number on the spawning areas. We do need to help WDFW on this and they are asking us for the help. The reality is we are helping ourselves to be able to fish for Steelhead.

Ron