

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 7

MAY, 2026

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COVER STORY

THE BEST KIND OF FISHING TRIP

SPRING CHINOOK

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THREE HIGH DESERT
HOTSPOTS FOR RAINBOWS



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IT'S "SHRIMP-TACULAR"
SEASON



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TEN GREAT KOKANEE
DESTINATIONS IN THE
PACIFIC NORTHWEST



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EDITOR'S CORNER:

Spring continues to be all over the map here in Great Falls. One week in the upper seventies, the next snow, and in the thirties. Which makes it hard to find fishing time between work, house chores, and good weather. My son Matt and I went out for a relaxing float recently on the Jefferson River. We fished with Hunter and Sam of River Borne Outfitters, who are excellent guides and always get us on fish.

The sun was shining, the wind was calm, and the fish were cooperating. It was a day of beautiful scenery and priceless memories. Owners Ed and Jeanie at Rainbow Valley Lodge in Ennis call this time of year "shoulder season". It's a chance to float these beautiful Montana rivers without the coming crowds of summer. If you hit it right, you'll experience a day on the river all to yourself. And that, my friends, is priceless.

I dare say every place has its own "shoulder season". While most anglers are waiting for clear skies and warm days, the rest of us have undisturbed lakes and rivers to enjoy. I wish you your share of perfect "shoulder days" this spring. See you on the water!

- Mike Carey, Northwest Fishing



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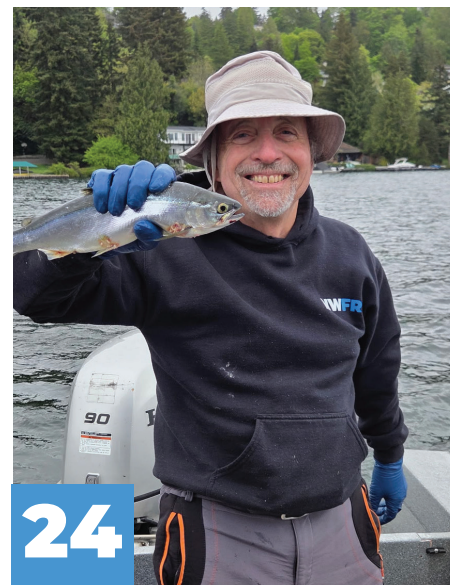
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Photo by Jeff Betz

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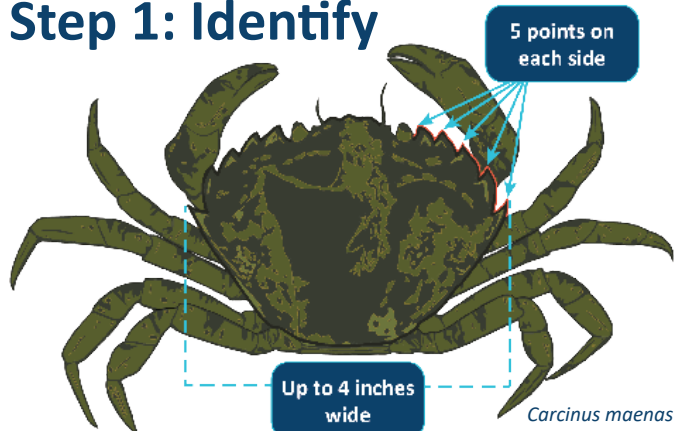
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5/10: #196 TROLLING LAKE ROOSEVELT FOR
KOKANEE & TROUT

5/17: #191 CLEARWATER RIVER IDAHO SPRING SALMON

5/24: #197 ALASKA'S KASLOF RIVER: SOCKEYE & KINGS

5/31: #190 BANKS LAKE WALLEYE BONANZA



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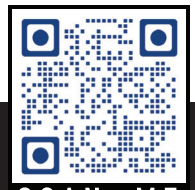
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**All of the articles do not necessarily represent the opinion of Northwest Fishing magazine.*



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Gary Lewis

3 High Desert Hotspots for Rainbows

Pull those spinning rods and fly rods out of the closet, tie up leaders, and wind new line on the reels. Here are three great spring fisheries that you need to know before you hit the water.

The warming water raises trout metabolisms and quickens an angler's pulse as rise rings appear within an easy reach of shore.

CHICKAHOMINY

Chickahominy Reservoir is a trout fishing oasis on a windswept plain 100 miles east of Bend. Driving by on Highway 20, you see two blue fingers, a few campers, and picnic tables. Nothing more. What could draw campers to this windy place?

Rainbows are stocked in Chickahominy as fingerlings and reach ten to eleven inches in length by the following year.

Two-year-old fish reach eighteen inches. Three years later, they will weigh between three and four pounds.

A narrow reservoir with many coves and fingers, much of the best fishing can be had from shore. Watch for depressions adjacent to shallow bays. Trout use these spots as staging areas prior to feeding in the shallows. A careful presentation yields a strike.

Early in the season, dragonfly nymph patterns are productive, as are scuds and red and black leech patterns. Concentrate on weed beds, edges, and drop-offs. The reservoir reaches a maximum depth of 28 feet. A slow-sinking fly line provides the best control for fishing below the surface.

Bait fishermen do well in the bays and inlets with nightcrawlers, salmon eggs, or jar bait. Use a sliding sinker to take your bait to the bottom. Leave a little slack in the line so a trout won't feel resistance.

There is a paved boat launch near the dam. Troll trout spoons, or 1/6-ounce Rooster Tail spinners, in the narrows or explore the shoreline, casting to the shallows and letting the lure flutter over the drop-offs.

KRUMBO

A shallow lake on the west side of the Steens, Krumbo Reservoir, is a great rainbow destination in the desert.

Best bet is to bring a float tube, a canoe, or a car-topper. But there is bank access. Anglers can fish at the dam or walk from the ramp to one of two rocky points that look out over some of the lake's deeper water.

Fish a sliding sinker and 48 inches of leader terminating at a No. 8 single hook with Power Bait or Gulp!

With a boat, launch at the ramp and fish out from the cove to 15 yards from the rocky point on the south. A long weedbed stretches north across the lake. The lake averages ten feet deep. Rainbows stack along the weeds and grow fat on callibaetis and chironomids.

Use a clear intermediate sinking line and troll along the weedbed. Fish a No. 12-14 callibaetis nymph, or better yet, a pair of them. To tempt with chironomids, employ No. 16-18 zebra, black, or red midge larva imitations under an indicator. Leech patterns are effective. Use black, red, or olive buggers, weighted at the head. Twitch the fly with one-inch pulls.

Krumbo is stocked in late March or early April. Trout that winter over grow to 16 inches in their second year. Every season, the lake produces a number of 20-inch and bigger fish.

Covered tables are provided. A restroom can be found near the dam and at the boat ramp. A handicap-accessible fishing platform is near the boat ramp. The launch is paved with a nice dock. Electric motors are permitted.

Krumbo is open for day-use-only from the opening of trout season through October 31. Access is controlled by an automatic gate that opens a half hour before sunrise and closes a half hour after sunset.

Page Springs campground is a few miles down the road. There is RV camping available in private campgrounds on both sides of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge.



WILLOW CREEK RESERVOIR

Willow Creek gathers her water from the Blue Mountains and runs it down to the Columbia. An impoundment, built to control periodic flooding of the town of Heppner, Willow Creek Reservoir, is located less than a mile upstream from the town.

The 110-acre lake draws anglers from nearby Hermiston and other towns to do battle with its piscine inhabitants. April and May are the best months for rainbows.

Trout put on weight fast in this food-rich water. Most anglers opt for a bobber and worm or a jar bait to put fish on the stringer, but spinners, trolling and fly-fishing techniques are productive.

The best trout water is along the rip-rapped south bank and across the lake along the north shore. The water drops off quickly to a maximum depth of 85 feet at the dam.



Good bank fishing access makes this reservoir a safe bet for anglers without a boat. Drive past the boat launch along the south shore and take a gravel road down to a parking lot above a riprap bank. Walk down to the water or fish from the car. A trail along an old roadbed provides plenty of room for fishermen to spread out.

Fly fishermen should troll small spinners or flies such as the No. 8 Woolly Bugger or Spruce. Use minnow imitations like the Zonker to spark the predatory instinct in the bigger rainbows. Change direction, speed, and depth to simulate the escape tactics of a worried minnow.

Willow Creek Campground is located high on the western shore, overlooking the dam and the lake. It has 24 hook-up sites, offering water, electric, and sewer. Maximum length is 40 feet. Covered tables, barbecues, flush toilets, drinking water, showers, and telephones are available.

From I-84, turn right at Exit 147 and follow State Route 74 south to Heppner. Proceed through town and follow the signs uphill to the reservoir.

There won't be crowds of people, and there probably won't be a line at the boat ramp, but there are trout to fight.



GARY LEWIS BIO

Gary Lewis is an award-winning author, TV host, speaker and photographer. Recent books include *Fishing Central Oregon*, 6th Edition, *Fishing Mount Hood Country* and *Bob Nosler Born Ballistic*. Gary has hunted and fished in eight countries on three continents and in the islands of the South Pacific. Born and raised in the Northwest, he has been walking forest trails and running rivers for as long as he can remember. Lewis is twice past president of the Northwest Outdoor Writers Association and a recipient of NOWA's Enos Bradner Award.



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I-90: THE ROAD TO FISHING PARADISE

BY MATT CAREY



Buckle up, Northwest Fishing readers. You're about to get a blend of the best of both worlds - a history lesson on this great country and one of its key transformative features that allowed for expansion, as well as a little bit of fishing knowledge for consideration when planning future trips. I'm a history buff, enjoy a little bit of windshield time, and of course, an avid fisherman. I'm sure there are quite a few of you out there that share a similar enjoyment as I do, and if you don't, that's fine too. I am almost certain you are here for the fishing information anyway! To those in the latter camp, continue to indulge me a little bit as we talk about one of the key interstate systems that connects West Coast to East Coast, spanning from Seattle, Washington, to Boston, Massachusetts.

Being a Montanan, I'm going to give you a few stops along the way in this great state for you to think about as you make the nearly 3,100-mile trip along Interstate 90.

As noted, Interstate 90 (I-90) is just under 3,100 miles and is the longest highway in the U.S. Interstate System. Established under the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956, it was officially numbered in 1957 as the northernmost transcontinental route. My personal favorite president, Eisenhower, felt it was a necessary transportation need for the country that would strengthen the US defense and economic output after his experience with the autobahn during World War II. Its creation replaced earlier U.S. Highways and auto trails, unifying them into a modern, high-speed corridor designed for safer, more efficient long-distance travel.

The project spanned over decades, with most of the remaining western segments between Seattle and South Dakota opened by 1987, completing the continuous coast-to-coast route.

As much as we may wish fishing access was the intent of the creation of the interstate, it was not. We, as anglers, however, gained convenient access to many tremendous waterways along the route. Let's dig into those easily accessible bodies of water here in Big Sky Country, just a short jaunt off I-90, in no particular order.

1 YELLOWSTONE RIVER

Many of you are familiar with a little place called Yellowstone National Park, I'm sure. The Yellowstone River, as you'd expect, flows through the park while heading northeast throughout the state. It weaves along I-90 in several



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areas starting in Livingston and through the northeast corner of the state, but unless you're an angler looking for a remote fishing experience (and maybe you are!), its I-90 journey ends in Billings. To those wanting to make the drive along I-90, these cities offer anglers amenities you'd expect when planning a fishing trip, while also being able to quickly get into big fish. Anglers can expect to find rainbows and brown trout, as well as cutthroat and mountain whitefish.

2) CLARK FORK RIVER

Sticking with accessible river fishing, Clark Fork is more than worthy of consideration if you plan to make a drive along the interstate. Many folks will talk about fishing in Montana on the Yellowstone River, and of course, the Missouri, but this river is as worthy of a day or two of fishing as any

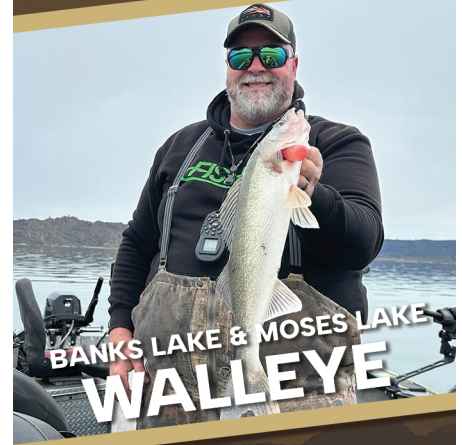
in the state and certainly along the interstate. Perhaps because of the infamy of the other rivers, the Clark Fork can often be less crowded than other fly-fishing rivers in the state. Anglers can expect to catch similar species of trout, but may also find westslope cutthroat along with the native Mountain Whitefish that lurk in the river. Speaking of lurking, depending on how adventurous you want to be, you may even get into some pike if you're looking to target something else while on the water.

3) CANYON FERRY LAKE

Northwest Fishing fans may remember a combination pizza/walleye episode filmed on the lake, and while the lake doesn't have the size of fish that some anglers may crave, it does offer plentiful limits and a variety of species to be caught.



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Its location, just a short drive off the interstate, gives it both convenience and aesthetics as it is tucked in the Rocky Mountains with the Big Belt Mountain Range looming over it. If for nothing else, the views surrounding the lake are worth it on their own, and the fishing is just an added bonus! It is a must-stop location with its scenic views, close but slightly out-of-the-way access, and an abundance of different fish to catch make it a worthwhile stop on your travels.


4) **GEORGETOWN LAKE**

Georgetown Lake is an ice fisherman's paradise nestled in the western part of the state, sitting at nearly 6,500 feet. Kokanee are the prize here, and many consider Georgetown to be the destination for those looking to limit out. Like many kokanee, anglers can expect to catch fish in the 8-10 inch range, with some getting up to 15 inches. The limit on these kokanee? Not 10 daily, 15 or even 20. There is no daily or possession limit for the fish on the lake. To those looking to create a little kokanee candy, fire up the smoker and plan to spend some time at

Georgetown and catch fish until eternity - or at least whenever the state decides to change the regulations.

5) **MISSOURI HEADWATERS**

We'll end with a trifecta, actually, rather than one fishing spot. The Missouri Headwaters near Three Forks provides anglers with an opportunity to fish three distinct Montana rivers in one central location. The Jefferson, Madison, and Gallatin Rivers all meet along the south-central side of the state, just minutes off the interstate. While some of the better fishing would be had elsewhere along any of those three rivers, the significance of the Missouri Headwaters cannot be overstated, as it was a pivotal point in the Lewis and Clark Expedition, is the starting point for the Missouri River, and also provides anglers with access to premium trout fishing anywhere in the country. The benefit of being situated just off of I-90 and close to a major city like Bozeman only adds to the allure of this historic and fishy spot.

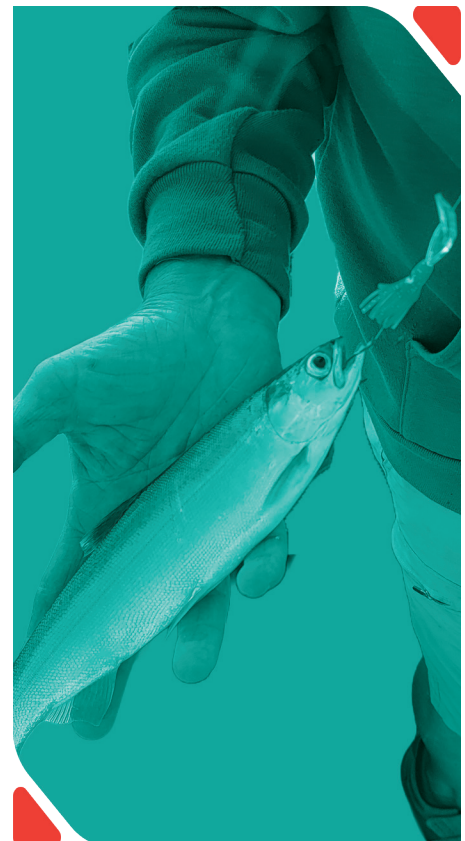


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It's Shrimp-tacular Season

by Mark Yuasa



When it comes to spot shrimp fishing, May and June are a “shrimp-tacular” time to be on the water in Puget Sound, Hood Canal, San Juan Islands, and Strait of Juan de Fuca.

The recreational spot shrimp fishery will open on May 24 in many Puget Sound marine areas, with additional dates scheduled in several areas into early July. The one area to have an opening prior to May 24 will be Marine Area 12 (Hood Canal), which will have an early opportunity on May 10.

“Test fishery data in Marine Areas 9 (Admiralty Inlet), 10

(Seattle-Bremerton Area), and 13 (South Puget Sound) continue to indicate low abundance of spot shrimp,” said Don Velasquez, a Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Puget Sound shellfish biologist. *“As a result, these areas are not scheduled to open for recreational spot shrimp harvests in 2026 (similar to the closures in 2025).”*

WDFW fishery managers selected the shrimp fishing dates to offer opportunities to harvest spot shrimp while distributing participants and reducing the chance of exceeding recreational harvest quotas.

Due to high expected turnout, some areas cannot support weekend openings while remaining within their current quota.

To ensure a safe and enjoyable experience, shrimpers are encouraged to monitor weather conditions and avoid launching or leaving the dock if their vessel can't safely participate. Check with local access ramps and marinas ahead of time to stay informed on potential closures or fee changes. Allow extra time for launching boats, show courtesy to others at the boat ramps, and respect others' gear while on the water.

Spot shrimping is one of Washington's signature recreational fisheries that occurs during the spring for these tasty prawn-sized denizens of the deep.

In all open areas of Puget Sound, the daily limit per shrimper is 80 spot shrimp with a total daily weight limit of 10 pounds (whole shrimp) for all species of shrimp combined. Shrimpers who retain only spot shrimp may remove and discard the heads while in the field and before returning to shore. Shrimpers retaining any shrimp species other than spot shrimp must continue to retain the heads until

finished and on shore to verify compliance with the 10-pound daily limit. To avoid going over the daily limit, count your catch not once but twice or three times and put each limit into separate containers. Nothing is worse than being checked and finding out you're one spot shrimp over the daily limit. Also, keep in mind that each angler can have only two traps and a maximum of four traps per boat, meaning when you are near the point where you only have one last limit to catch, you cannot have four traps sitting in the water.

More information on recreational shrimp fishing rules, seasons, and marine areas is available on WDFW's webpage, including a webpage on shellfishing gear rules at: wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/shellfishing-regulations/gear-rules.

Shrimpers are reminded that traps can be set one hour before official sunrise during any open period in the marine areas without specified harvest hours. These include Marine Areas 4, 5, 6 (except for the Discovery Bay Shrimp District), Marine Area 7 East, Marine Area 7 South, and Marine Area 7 West.

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The pots must be removed from the water in these same areas by one hour after sunset at the end of an open period. The start and end times for all other areas are listed above.

Seasons for non-spot shrimping (dock, coonstripe, sidestripe, and pink shrimp only) will begin later this year and will be announced separately. During non-spot shrimp seasons, 1/2-inch mesh pots are allowed, depth restrictions are in place, and all spot shrimp are required to be released immediately.

A rule adopted in 2025 prohibits setting shrimp gear from a vessel near 19 designated Washington State Department of Transportation-managed ferry terminals in Puget Sound and the San Juan Islands (Marine Areas 7, 8-1, 8-2, 9, 10, and 11).

Shrimpers and other boaters are reminded to follow Washington rules to help protect endangered Southern Resident killer whales (SRKWs). Under state law, recreational vessels in Washington waters must stay 1,000 yards away from Southern Resident killer whales (SRKW). For details about steps boaters and fishers can take to keep the whales – and themselves – safe, refer to the Be Whale Wise website at: www.bewhalewise.org/.

TIPS TO CATCH SPOT SHRIMP

Top of the list when planning a spot shrimp fishing outing is to make sure all your gear – pots rigged correctly, yellow buoys, line, cooler and ice, electric pot puller, and boat motor – is ready to go, and the bait is properly prepped before you leave home.

Another key point to keep in mind is that this highly popular fishery draws



hundreds of anglers, so allow yourself plenty of time to get to the boat launch and secure a parking space, which can be limited depending on the area.

One of the tips that can make or break success is knowing where the schools of spot shrimp are congregating. The majority of spot shrimp can be found in deeper depths along steep ledges, drop-offs, and sharp inclined bottoms, and usually lurking in 200 to 350 feet of water.

Once you've located them on the fish-finder, make sure to scatter your pots across a broad area and set them at various depths because schools of spot shrimp tend to move around quickly depending on the tides and currents.

The amount of weight to keep your pots on the bottom depends on the tide, current, waves, and wind. A safe bet is anywhere from 20 to 30 pounds, and be sure they're evenly placed and secured around the corners of the pot. Allow a one to two-hour soak before the first pull. This provides you with at least two more chances during a brief four-hour fishing period.



The bait mixture is another important factor in catching spot shrimp, and prep a good slurry of bait ingredients and thickness similar to yogurt. Make sure the scent cloud is leeching out of the trap consistently.

For the bait itself, use a good amount of shrimp bait pellets mixed in with oily tuna, whitefish, or salmon in a five-gallon bucket. Bring a large ladle or scooper and latex gloves, as it can get rather messy, and nothing is worse than a bunch of stinky slime on the boat deck. Be sure to add several cans of cat food with small holes punched into them just before you drop the traps. Don't forget to take around 25 to 35 extra cans of cat food; more is better than running out while out on the water with a grocery store nearby.

A medium-sized square pot with a bait barrel (bring extra bait barrels) connected to a four-way rope harness attached to each corner of the pot. Keep your bait barrel securely fastened to the trap with a wide strip of elastic cord. Using a biodegradable escape cord made of cotton (or other natural fiber) will degrade and reduce the amount of shrimp wasted if the pot is lost and required on all shellfish traps.

Having an electric pot puller is a wise investment, especially when pulling up a 35-plus-pound trap from 300 feet of water. The Scotty Electric Pot Puller and the Ace Line Hauler Pro are two ideal choices that can be placed onto a Scotty downrigger mount and plug.

For buoys, go with a large round (soccer ball size) yellow buoy (your full name and address is required on the buoy and must be legible) attached to a secondary buoy stick with a flag or staff. A phone number is highly recommended. Use a colorful flag or staff to help easily locate your own buoy among the thousands of other buoys set nearby. Always attach buoys with the rounded end towards the trap and not the flat end, which creates more drag and can snag floating debris.

Never use empty containers (like a one-gallon milk container) as a buoy, and it is illegal since they create drag and fill up with water and sink.

For each pot, use at least 400 feet of sinking lead line. The line length is dependent on how deep you drop the pots. Tide changes will alter your water depth, so a good tip is to use a line that is 1/3 longer than the maximum water depth to prevent losing a trap. Avoid using lines with a large diameter, particularly those greater than 5/16 inch, which create more drag in a current and



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can pull lighter traps away from where they're set. You can also add a weight to the line. Propellers can sever floating lines on the surface and will increase the chance of entanglement with floating debris. Before heading out, make sure the drop lines are coiled neatly and ready to deploy.

Spot shrimp are high in Omega-3 fatty acids with a nice, sweet flavor to the firm meat texture. They can be eaten raw, and if cooked, boil them for one to two minutes at most or until they turn pink.

If possible, live spot prawns should be prepared the same day they're caught to avoid them becoming mushy.

To keep spot shrimp in the best condition, ice immediately after you catch them. Shrimp can be kept in the refrigerator for a couple of days to be eaten fresh. Freeze immediately if you plan on saving them. Never store them with tap water, as chlorine kills them.

If kept overnight, remove the heads as the digestive enzyme makes the flesh turn mushy.

Lastly, now that spring has arrived, you'll need a 2026-2027 recreational fishing license valid from April 1, 2026, through March 31, 2027. WDFW offers two mobile apps wdfw.wa.gov/about/apps, and both apps are designed to make your outdoor experience easier and more efficient.

MyWDFW serves both hunters and anglers, offering electronic tagging, harvest reporting, and access to licenses and permits, and go to wdfw.wa.gov/about/apps/mywdfw for details. The Fish Washington® at wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regulations/app is tailored for anglers, providing fishing regulations, digital catch cards, and license management. Licenses may be purchased online at fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov/login or from hundreds of license dealers across the state.

MARK YUASA

Mark Yuasa is Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Communications Manager and longtime local fishing and outdoor writer.



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A collage of six small photographs showing various fishing scenes: people holding large fish, a person in a boat, and people on a shore. A QR code is located in the bottom right corner of the collage with the text "SCAN ME" below it.

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2026 Spot Shrimp Fishing Dates



Before making plans to go spot shrimp fishing, anglers should check the WDFW emergency rules webpage for possible in-season closures. at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regulations/emergency-rules>.

Marine Area 4: *East of the Bonilla-Tatoosh Line*

Open daily beginning May 24. Shrimping is allowed during daylight hours only. The recreational spot shrimp season closes when the quota is met or Sept. 15, whichever comes first.

Marine Area 6: *Port Angeles Harbor, eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca, excluding the Discovery Bay Shrimp District*

Open on May 24, May 26, June 7-8, and June 21-22. Shrimping is allowed during daylight hours only. An announcement regarding additional dates may be made later in the season.

Marine Area 7: *EAST: Northern Rosario Strait, Bellingham Bay, Sucia, and Matia islands, Strait of Georgia*

Open on May 24, May 26, and June 7-8. Shrimping is allowed during daylight hours only. An announcement regarding additional dates may be made later in the season.

Marine Area 7: *WEST: San Juan Channel, Speiden Channel, Stuart, and Waldron islands*

Open on May 24, May 26, June 7-8, June 21-22, and July 18-20. Shrimping is allowed during daylight hours only. An announcement regarding additional dates may be made later in the season.

Marine Area 9: *Edmonds, Port Townsend Bay, Admiralty Inlet*

Closed for spot shrimp harvest in 2026 due to low abundance.

Marine Area 10: *Outside of Elliott Bay west of a line from West Point to Alki Point, which includes the Bainbridge Island shrimp fishing grounds*

Closed for spot shrimp harvest in 2026 due to low abundance.

Marine Area 12: *Hood Canal Shrimp District*

Open on May 10, May 24, May 26, June 7, and June 21 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. only. An announcement regarding additional dates may be made later in the season.

Marine Area 5: *Western Strait of Juan de Fuca*

Open daily beginning May 24. Shrimping is allowed during daylight hours only. The recreational spot shrimp season closes when the quota is met or Sept. 15, whichever comes first.

Marine Area 6: *Discovery Bay Shrimp District*

Open on May 24 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. only. An announcement regarding additional dates may be made later in the season.

Marine Area 7: *SOUTH: Iceberg Point, Point Colville, Biz Point, Salmon Bank*

Open on May 24, May 26, and June 7-8. Shrimping is allowed during daylight hours only. An announcement regarding additional dates may be made later in the season.

Marine Area 8-1: *Saratoga Passage, Deception Pass) and Marine Area 8-2 (Port Susan, Port Gardner, Everett*

Open on June 8 and June 22 only with shrimp fishing allowed from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. each day. An announcement regarding additional dates may be made later in the season.

Marine Area 10: *Inside of Elliott Bay east of a line from West Point to Alki Point*

Closed for spot shrimp harvest in 2026 due to low abundance.

Marine Area 11: *Tacoma-Vashon Island*

Closed for spot shrimp harvest until further notice. An announcement regarding an opening may be made later in the season if sufficient quota is available.

Marine Area 13: *South Puget Sound, Carr Inlet*

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TEN GREAT KOKANEE DESTINATIONS IN THE PNW

BY HANNAH PENNEBAKER

Spring has sprung, and kokanee fishing is in full swing here in the Pacific Northwest! These landlocked salmon are absolutely delicious on the smoker or grill. These silver bullets put up a good fight, too! Some lakes have naturally reproducing populations in adjoining creeks or rivers, and others have wild populations that are supplemented by state game department stocking. Kokanee are typically caught by trolling or jigging from a boat. Whichever method you choose, you'll need a good fish finder to locate the schools. Jig fishermen will anchor on top of schools and vertically jig lures tipped with corn. If fish are scattered,

trolling can bring you more success. Toss out a small dodger and a lure tipped with corn or maggots, and troll between .9 and 1.3 mph. Kokanee like a slow troll!

Wherever you live, chances are there's a kokanee lake near you. Whether you like jigging or trolling, get out there and give it a shot! Limits vary greatly by location, so make sure to check before going out. Let's go over the top ten kokanee lakes in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana!

AMERICAN LAKE

Public access abounds at this south Puget Sound lake! It receives ample plants of kokanee every spring. They grow to a

healthy size, around 14-15 inches. You can't beat the accessibility and wealth of knowledge on how to target them in this lake. This is a hugely popular fishery and is great for beginner kokanee fishermen. April through September are the prime months to target kokanee here. It also receives a healthy rainbow trout planting, so you might need to weed through them to get to the kokanee. This lake is on the shallow side, so you can count on the fish hanging out near the thermocline most days.

LAKE CHELAN

While you're trolling for kokanee here, you might just end up with a chinook salmon on the end of your line! This is the largest natural lake in Washington,



over 50 miles long. The sheer size and depth of this lake can certainly be intimidating, but there are several reputable guides who fish these waters. They can help you figure out the best locations and tackle to use. The fish can be finicky here. Your best bet will be to troll the top 20 feet of water in the morning, then go deeper in the afternoon. Most people troll for kokanee in the lower basin of the lake. Target points and coves until you find willing biters!

LOON LAKE

Over on the eastern side of Washington, this lake boasts large kokanee and mackinaw as well. You can troll for them, but many anglers jig for kokanee at nighttime here.

Use glow hooks, corn, and plenty of scent. The fish are usually near the bottom during the night, but keep a close eye on your sonar. The bite is very light, so you'll need to pay close attention to your rod. Mack's Wedding Rings work great if you're trolling. Try tipping them with a piece of worm or a Gulp maggot. There is only 1 boat ramp at this lake, so plan on getting there early to beat the lines, especially during the summer.

SPIRIT LAKE

Just across the Washington/Idaho state border, this picturesque lake is a known kokanee producer. In fact, there are a few boat ramps and resorts with boat rentals along this smaller lake.

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This is a great lake to hit if you're worried about the afternoon winds at nearby Lake Pend Oreille. These fish are on the smaller side, but they're numerous and tend to be very snappy. Fish early in the mornings; this lake is very popular with power boaters. As a bonus, this lake was stocked with chinook salmon in 2016!

LAKE PEND OREILLE

Another Idaho lake, this one is significantly larger than neighboring Spirit Lake. Mackinaw, walleye, and Kamloops rainbow trout also reside in this 134-square-mile lake.

Just like Lake Chelan, there are a few guides that you can hire to help get a feel for the lake. Idaho Fish and Game supplements the wild population with yearly releases of millions of kokanee fry. There was a kokanee population crash in the 80's and 90's. Idaho Fish and Game found that kokanee populations were crashing due to increased lake trout predation. They netted 177k lake trout and put a bounty out for the fish to encourage anglers to remove them. Now, thanks to their combined efforts, there is a thriving kokanee fishery at this lake.

ODELL LAKE

There is a very popular kokanee jigging fishery at this Oregon lake. Motor around slowly until you find a school and then drop your jigs! Don't forget to tip them with corn. Most tackle manufacturers make kokanee jigs. They're about 3/8 to 1 oz in weight, and typically pink or orange. Try jigging slowly at first, then switch up your speed until you find what works. It's important not to allow slack in your line because you'll miss bites. If you catch a fish, remember what depth it was at.

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Jigging for kokanee can help keep the day interesting.

DETROIT LAKE

Another Oregon lake, this is a popular, tried-and-true fishery for both kokanee and rainbows. Interestingly, you don't need a boat to catch them here. Many anglers report success from the dock and shore. Try fishing near creek mouths! If you're trolling, use the usual kokanee gear. The later in the season, the deeper you'll need to fish. Troll slowly, about 1mph, and don't forget the corn! Many anglers report success jigging for the fish in the early season.

Detroit Lake has been stocked with kokanee since the 1950's as a response to declining sea-run salmon populations and has thrived ever since. Give it a shot!

HOLTER LAKE

This is your destination if you want a shot at 5-pound kokanee. Populations are rebounding, which is great news for anglers near this Montana lake. Old Goat lures are proven fish catchers here. This is a large, deep reservoir where downriggers truly shine. You might need to put in some work to find the fish, but the payoff could be a trophy kokanee!

Check out Northwest Fishing's episode of Holter Lake for an in-depth tutorial on this fishery- Mike Carey had a great day filling his boat with 5-pound kokanee!

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PISHKUN RESERVOIR

Located near Glacier National Park in Montana, this lake is worth the drive for the views alone. The kokanee can be few and far between, but they are big! You'll likely have the lake to yourself, and you'll have a shot at big rainbow trout and pike as well.

For the best chance of getting a big kokanee, try to put as many lines in the water as you can. Use planer boards and stack your downriggers.

Watch your fish finder carefully. This lake is sixty feet deep, and the kokanee will likely be near the thermocline. Oh, and bring bug spray!




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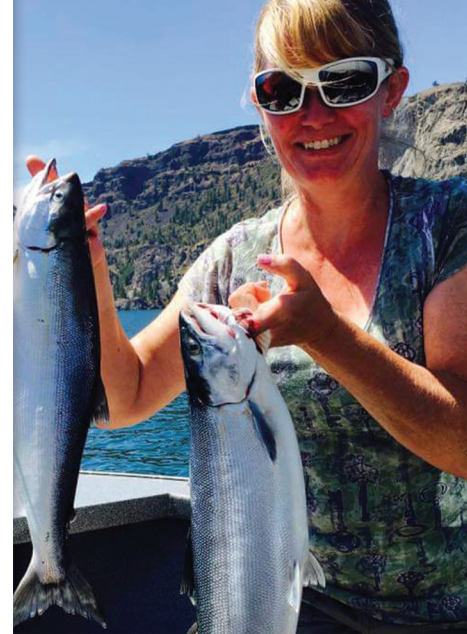


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THE BEST KIND OF FISHING TRIP

BY JERAD SORBER

Early season Spring Chinook is always a bit hectic. There's a short window between when the fishing gets realistic and when the first season closes. The annual uncertainty about when the next opener will be increases the pressure. Both the fishing kind and the internal kind, even if the fish aren't quite here yet. It's easy to get discouraged when you don't see a lot of fish, and nobody else is catching them either. When the magic does happen, though, it makes it all the better. Recently, we had one of those days.

I arrived at the ramp around 5:15 AM to get the boat in the water and do any final preparations. I had told my clients to be there by 6 AM.

There was a good morning outgoing tide, and there would be competition for spots to anchor up. As I prepped, I listened to the conversations from the other guides that were doing the same thing. This is a great time to get intel on what's going on with the fish.

Just as I finished up, my clients came down the dock. They had booked the whole boat and brought 4 people. If this had been a July ocean salmon trip, I would be excited about lots of fish. Today I was figuring out how to manage expectations. The fish checker reports the day before were 3 fish on 35 angler trips. We went through the usual greetings, and they hopped on board.

A quick safety briefing, and we pulled away from the dock at precisely 6 AM.

I ran us out to the spot I had planned on. That was at least a good sign. With the anchor set, I put out the first round of plugs. I was hoping for the best. The water looked good, and the temperature had risen about half a degree. If they were here, they should be biting. A little bit later, another friend and fellow guide swung by and anchored to the outside of me. A bit after that, another guide popped in, and we had an old-fashioned hog line set up. We were covering everything from 12 feet of water to 40 feet. If a salmon was moving through it would have to look at our gear.

The conversation bounced between boats as it should for hog line fishing. One of my clients seemed to really love hearing the "inside baseball" chat. I talked to my clients about what they had been doing. I answered a lot of questions about fishing and fish biology. I learned about the ins and outs of building embassies for the US government in faraway places. My clients had been working internationally, and this was spring break for the youngest son. Their most recent location was Malawi in Africa.

They chose to come back home and enjoy a day of fishing.

I swapped out the initial plugs with ones wrapped with tuna belly. If the water is slow, I usually start with bare plugs covered with some gel scent. This gives them a bit more action. Once the water speeds up with the outgoing tide, I wrap them with tuna belly and send them back. We coordinate line lengths and make sure that there is a literal wall of plugs. Between 3 boats, there were 9 rods in the water.

We all waited for a fish to come in. The middle boat had a bite, but it didn't hook. They had a second and lost it within a minute. Then nothing.

The outgoing tide pulled my depth from 18 feet down to 16 on the sonar. It was getting shallow. The water wasn't that murky, and the sky was clear. By this time, I had swapped my middle rod to a flasher in the middle with a cut plug herring. It had worked before when nothing else did. I pulled out a spin glow, putting it on ahead of a coon shrimp.



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I hooked it to my inside rod and sent it flying to about 4 feet of water. There had been steelhead moving through. If three guide boats captained by guys I respect can't find a springer, maybe I could find some other action. Still nothing.

All three of us started calling and texting our friends that we knew were fishing nearby. Each time, we hoped desperately for a good report. Nothing below us. Nothing above us. A few take-downs, but nothing stuck. I was getting antsy. My clients were enjoying the day, watching ospreys dive on bait.

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They made a game of trying to spot the sea lion that would periodically cruise the channel. Fortunately, he never came close, but it didn't matter. I found myself talking about better days of fishing. I stopped myself and cringed a bit inwardly. These guys were probably thinking, "he should have had us come then, instead of now". I do my best to be clear about what to expect with early Springer fishing. I describe it as the most challenging fishery we have. Even with that, I think that people often come to the dock expecting to be the exception.

I know several guides that don't offer early spring chinook trips for that reason. They don't want people to be disappointed if they go home empty-handed.

The outside boat moved upriver to a different spot, and I moved out where he was. 23 feet of depth felt a lot better given the high sun and clearing water. All the rods were back to plugs, and the sun was getting high. I remembered some advice from a mentor. When the fishing is tough, don't go crazy changing things. Just go with what you know works best and keep at it.

I put fresh wraps on all the plugs and set them down. One of my clients was glued to the sonar like it was a final four game during overtime. If a fish came by, or even something that looked like a fish, I knew he would let me know. There was still nothing. The boat that was now inside of me started picking up. They had to go home early for a doctor's appointment. I decided to make a move as well.

I started swapping out plugs for trolling gear. The outside rods would have 360 flashers with stuffer baits.

The inside rods would be running in-line flashers with cut plug herring. There was enough current going that I could get the rods out while we were on anchor. I pulled the socks, fired up the kicker, pulled the anchor, and started trolling. I looked at either side of me on the side-scan looking for fish. I swerved out into even deeper water when the shallow wasn't showing anything. I thought I saw one mark, but nothing came of it. We reached the end of the pass and reeled up. It was time for a bigger move.

Usually, I move downriver when the fishing isn't good. If you're in a gap of fish moving upriver, there's no sense in staying in that gap. Going downriver means a chance to catch fish that you haven't seen. The reports from downriver had been poor, though, and the trolling area there was pretty spread out and fragmented. I had seen some fish move through on the sonar while we were on plugs. I chose to go upriver.

I went way up above the other boats that I saw. The boat that had been outside of us was there.

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I also spotted some other boats that I recognized as belonging to some really good fishermen. *"If that guy is still fishing, then I don't feel so bad,"* I thought. That little bit of comfort quickly disappeared as the water got a bit choppy and the wind picked up. The top was on the boat, and it started catching the wind. My clients and I struggled a bit to get the rods out, and we had a tangle. Clearing tangles in a foot and a half high chop while trolling into the wind is not easy. Finally, the torn cut plugs were replaced, and the gear was fishing.

I worked the boat against the wind to try to keep it straight. I didn't put a sock on the bow to add stability, but probably should have. I did trim the main over a bit to help compensate. We worked our way out of the worst of it, and the water smoothed out. Even worse than no bites, I wasn't seeing any fish at all.

I stayed glued to the sonar and adjusted the throttle to counter any wind gusts. The 360's were working slowly, which is what I wanted. I didn't want things to move too fast in the water. It was a delicate dance between

having enough power to steer and trolling too fast. About halfway down the pass, there is a big shelf that you must swing out wide to avoid. While the depth isn't bad on top of it, it's covered in weeds. They make it nearly impossible to fish in anything less than 18 feet of water. But moving away from the island would subject me to more wind. I had to swing out anyways.

The wind caught the top, and I soon found myself in 35 feet of water. My clients adjusted the rod depth down, and we continued, trying to make the best of it.



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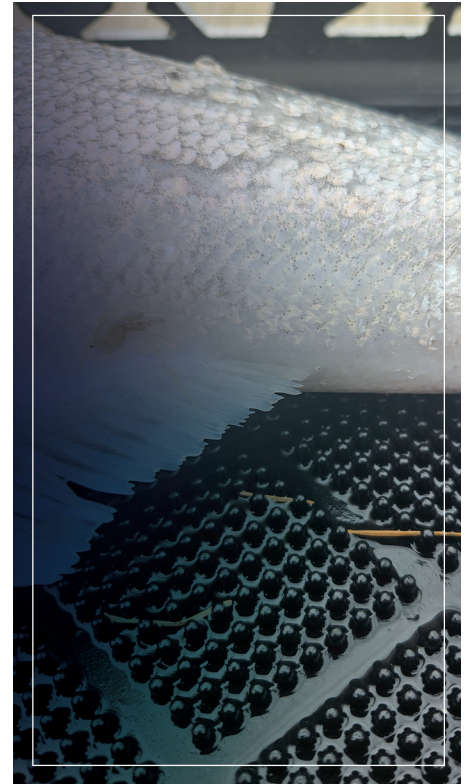
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It's not that 35 feet was magically too deep; I just didn't think the fish were out that far. We passed the shelf, and I pointed the bow back towards the island. The sonar ticked shallower again. At 25 feet, I turned back west and started running parallel to the shore. I looked up at the side scan and saw what looked like a diagonal streak. It started at the edge and moved towards the boat as the sonar scrolled. I waited to see if something would show up on the 2D and down scan.

I looked over at the rods on the left side to see if something would come in.
36 | NWFISHING.net

They kept working normally. False alarm.

I turned my head to look back and noticed the right inside rod take a dive. This was one of the triangles with a cut plug on it. "Probably bottom," I thought. I started to turn to give it a crank when it took another dive, more assertively this time. Before I could reach it, it started bouncing, then pulling. The line started rolling off the reel. "Fish! Fish! Fish!" We had designated the youngest as the first one to catch a fish.

He had never caught a salmon before. He was also sleeping up under the top.

His dad shook him awake, and he stumbled to the back of the boat. I directed everyone else to start reeling. I grabbed a rod, got it in, handed it off, grabbed the net and turned around. "I don't think it's there," he said. I looked at the flasher, and it was steady in the water.

When a flasher is moving normally, it has a motion to it, even an inline one. It sways and wobbles a bit with the current. If the lure is loaded with weeds or a fish, there is no sway. It moves firmly.

This flasher was moving firmly. "Keep reeling," I told him. "Don't stop reeling,

don't give it any slack". He blinked his eyes a couple of times and started to say, "I still don't think..." then chrome flashed under the water, just behind the flasher. The fish was thrashing.

"Reel to the bead, and when I tell you to, swing the rod to the front of the boat. Keep the tip down, it helps keep them from jumping", I instructed. He reeled down to the orange bead I put just ahead of the line lock. I could see the fish get close, as it turned towards the boat, I took my chance. Just as the net hit the water, the fish turned away, and I

brushed its tail with the net. It went wild and shot off. I pulled the net back.

"It's pulling!" The rod was bent over, and the line screamed off the drag.

"It's ok, just keep reeling," I tried to help him not panic. My own mind resembled a pack of chipmunks on a trampoline after someone dropped a bunch of nuts on it. He reeled down to the bead again, and the fish glided in front of me. It took a quick turn, but then came back towards the boat. I shoved the net under it, lifted, and watched it get surrounded.

Feeling the net, the fish started thrashing around. I started looking for an adipose fin. We haven't gotten a fish yet. It had to be hatchery.

I pulled the fish towards the boat and reached in to steady the fish while trying to avoid the hooks. The fish flipped around, and I saw the back. It was smooth with a beautiful healed scar just ahead of the tail. No mis-clip, just perfect. *"Hatchery!"* I yelled. My own heart was pumping, and I could barely hear the cheers behind me. I lifted the fish and heard four jaws hit the deck.

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In the net was a beautiful, purple-backed, chrome-sided, slightly gray belly upriver Spring Chinook. I looked up and saw smiles all around. Dad seemed beside himself; the younger guys were thrilled. They were all talking about how excited they were.

I rushed to get the rods back out while my client tagged the fish. We took pictures, and I filled the bleed bucket with water. With the gills cut, the fish went headfirst to make sure the meat was as high-quality as possible. The latest price on Columbia River Spring Chinook was \$70 per pound. This fish would give them about 8 lbs. of meat. I wanted to treat it right.

I put us back on course, circled back through the area where we had caught the fish, and hoped for another. It wasn't to be. Once bled, I put the fish in a bag, and it was placed on ice. I always bag the fish first so clients can use the ice in coolers on the way home. Another trick I learned from a mentor. We said hi to the boat that had been on the outside of us for most of the morning. He had one take-down that didn't stick, and didn't see any other boats catch anything. We set up for one final pass. That fish had bit just before 4 PM. We had been fishing for 10 hours. If we had found one, I didn't want to give up a chance at a second. I didn't have any clients the next day, and they wanted to keep fishing, so we did.

The second pass didn't give any results. I thought I saw one more on the sonar come in, but it didn't hook up. We got to the bottom, and I looked around. Everyone was still flying high from catching that fish. We all agreed that it was time to head back to the dock. There were only two other trailers left when we pulled in. The boat for one of them was already on the dock. I tied up, and everyone headed for the restroom. I retrieved my fillet table from the back of my truck.

After a group photo, I cut up the fish and gave out a quick recipe tip. For Springer, just bake it at 425 for about 12-15 minutes maximum. Maybe a little salt and pepper. If you're looking to spice it up, top it with some mayo and sriracha first.



Dad pulled me aside and thanked me. "The point of today was to get my son on his first salmon. I just want to say mission accomplished. The salmon is great, but we're going to remember this for a long time. Thank you." They headed for their vehicle, still smiling. The other boat came in, loaded up, and headed out while I was cleaning up. Mine was the last trailer in the parking lot. Once in the truck, I sent a quick thank you message and headed home. I was exhausted. I thought about fishing on my own the next day, but decided against it. I wanted to savor the experience myself, and maybe sleep in. Like I said at the start, springer fishing can be tough, but the payoff is worth it!

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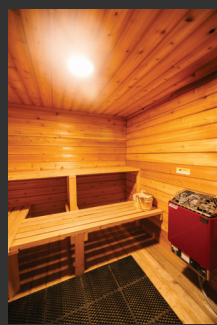
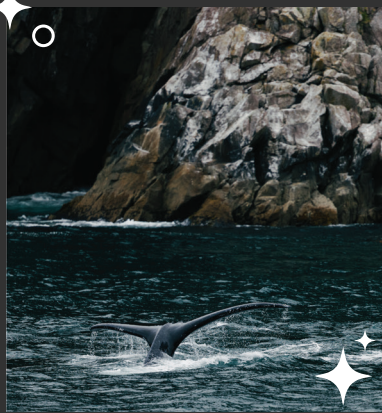
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STAY AWAY

>1,000 yards
from whale(s)

SLOW

Move away obeying
7-knot speed limit

STOP

Disengage transmission,
cease paddling,
luff sails

1/2 nautical mile = roughly 1,000 yards

Boaters must:

- ▶ Stay **1,000 yards** away from Southern Resident(s)
- ▶ If within **1,000 yards**, move away and out of the path of Southern Resident(s) below **7-knot** speed limit
- ▶ If within **400 yards** (and if it is safe to do so), disengage transmission, luff sails, or stop paddling until whale(s) move away



Boaters should:

- ▶ Stay alert and cautious
- ▶ Look out for signs of whales
- ▶ Be ready to slow, stop, or adjust course



Tail



Fin



Blow



Whale
Warning Flag



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