

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 8

JUNE, 2026

NORTHWEST FISHING

EXPLOR

NW

STYLE

COVER STORY

SUMMER

SALMON ...ARE COMING!

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EDITOR'S CORNER:

As spring transitions into early summer, not only are the fish waking up, but nature all around us is as well. Here in Montana, that means not only focusing on catching fish but also not getting eaten in the process. The bears are out in record numbers this spring and continue to push out into the high plains around Great Falls. Now that I have a jet boat, I've been exploring remote stretches of the Missouri River, which includes grounding the boat and hopping on the shoreline from time to time. So, I've added bear spray to my boating essentials. I love the solitude of fishing in Montana, but along with that comes new risks. The recent death of a hiker in Glacier National Park from a grizzly bear attack is a grim reminder that all activities in the outdoors come with a risk.

Just last week, as I was loading my boat after a satisfying fishing trip on the Missouri River (at Widows Coulee (how's that for a fishing access point name). A 3-4 foot rattlesnake slithered out from the brush a few feet from me. Just another day in Big Sky Country.

Stay safe wherever you are fishing!

- Mike Carey, Northwest Fishing



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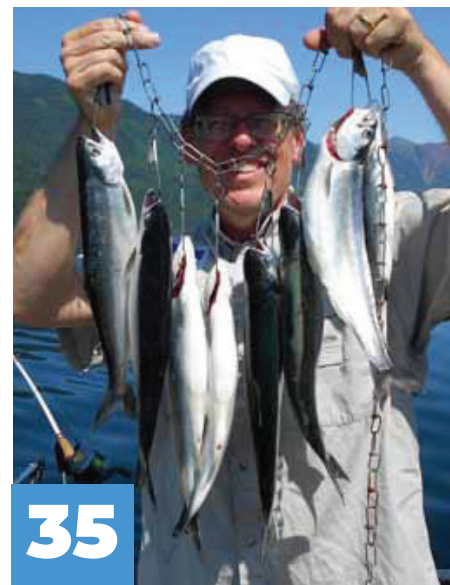
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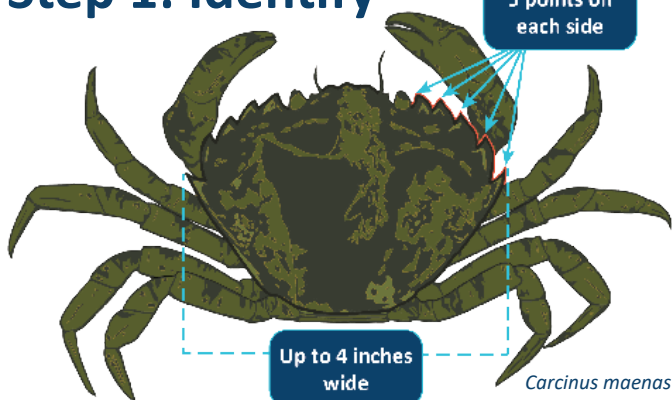
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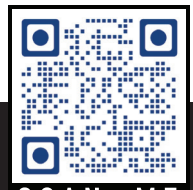
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DESTINATION: Prineville

Two reservoirs within striking distance of Prineville offer great fishing for smallmouth bass, crappie, and rainbow trout.

BY GARY LEWIS

That angry red eye says it all. This fish doesn't like you, nor do the rest of his kind. Looking for a fight? You don't need to go any farther than right here.

Two reservoirs in Central Oregon offer good fishing for smallmouth bass, and the top months for smallies are June, July, August, and September. The Central Oregon Bass Club regularly meets for tournaments on Prineville Reservoir. Once, I got a chance to fish in one of those tournaments, and our team had a shot at the trophy if one of us was able to get a big fish in the boat. As luck would have it, I hooked the money fish.

We fished Senko plastics that day, rigged "wacky-style" and bounced our baits off the rock walls and twitched them down deep.

We battled the red-eyed brawlers all morning long with an eye on the clock for the weigh-in at 1:30 in the afternoon.

Along a steep vertical wall, I cast to a broken fragment of boulder, watched the bait fall out of sight, twitched it once, and felt the 'tick' as a bass sucked it in. This one put a good bend in the rod, and just before I had a visual on it, she threw the hook. So went my dreams of getting the biggest bass of the tournament.

Any soft plastic worm can be rigged wacky. Simply run a worm hook through the middle of the worm such that both ends of the worm wiggle as it falls on its way to the bottom. Twitch it a little bit on the way down to entice a strike on the fall. When it hits bottom, hold the bait in place and impart a twitch through the rod tip and

down the line to make the ends of the worm wiggle again.

PRINEVILLE RESERVOIR

was created with the completion of the 245-foot Arthur R. Bowman dam in 1961. The Crooked River began to backfill the side canyons and rimrocks. A ranch, its buildings, and roads were claimed by the water. The new earthen structure backed up 150,000 acre-feet of water for a total of 3,136 surface acres and a depth of 130 feet.

As the water filled the arroyos of the Crooked River and engulfed the rocky outcroppings above the channel, a classic smallmouth bass habitat began to take shape. As soon as the water levels stabilized, smallmouth bass were planted and began to colonize the rocky points throughout the lake.





Six boat ramps are sited around the lake to provide access to the water. Powder Cove, at Bowman Dam, offers the closest launch from Bend, accessed from Highway 27. Closer to Prineville, there are launches at County Ramp No. 1, Prineville Reservoir State Park, Prineville Resort, and Jasper Point. Roberts Bay East offers access on the south side of the lake across from Prineville Resort. Smaller craft can be launched in various places besides the developed and primitive ramps.

Although it takes a boat to cover the most water at Prineville Reservoir, the best fishing is right at the bank.

Look for rockslides where smallies stage to pounce on schools of baitfish that stray too close.

In the spring, search out the patches of small-diameter gravel close to woody or

rocky structures where smallmouth spawn.

Offshore, use electronics and polarized glasses to scout submerged spires and underwater humps that will hold fish throughout the year.

Some of the easiest structures to find are the cliffs where smallmouths stack in the post-spawn. Here they move up and down in the water column, vertically along the rock - shallow in low light and deeper at midday.

While smallmouth bass fishing takes center stage in the summer, the trout fishing and the crappie fishing are just as good.

Best bets for trout are to troll in deeper water or present baits off the ledges where trout find cool water. Garlic marshmallows (green or pink) and nightcrawlers fished together are a great bait when employed with a

sliding sinker.

For crappie, try wind-drifting across the upper lake using red and white jigs tipped with Crappie Nibbles.

OCHOCO RESERVOIR

At full pool, Ochoco Reservoir is 3 miles long and about 5-miles wide and is open to fishing year-round. Fishing is excellent for stocked (and wild) rainbow trout, smallmouth bass, and crappie. The average trout catch is 12 to 14 inches, with bigger fish up to 6 pounds. Illegally introduced black crappie and a small number of brown bullhead are found in Ochoco. Rooster Tails, Mepps, and flashers are good choices on Ochoco. Fly fishing is very popular, but bait fishermen make up the highest percentage of fishermen. Trout move into deeper water as the water warms.

In June, July, and August, anglers will have better success fishing nearer the dam with flashers and bright lures close to the bottom. Some people jig for trout, crappie, and bass in the deepest areas of the reservoir near the dam.

The trout limit is 5 per day, 8-inch minimum, and of these, no more than 1 over 20 inches.

Because it is an irrigation reservoir, water levels at Ochoco change dramatically over the year, and surface acreages vary from 120 to 1,100 acres. At full pool, Ochoco averages 30 feet in depth with a maximum of 100 feet near the dam. A few lava outcroppings occupy the banks. Because of the lowering water levels, shorelines will usually be composed of exposed silty bottom and muddy flats. Mill Creek and Ochoco Creek form channels in the reservoir.



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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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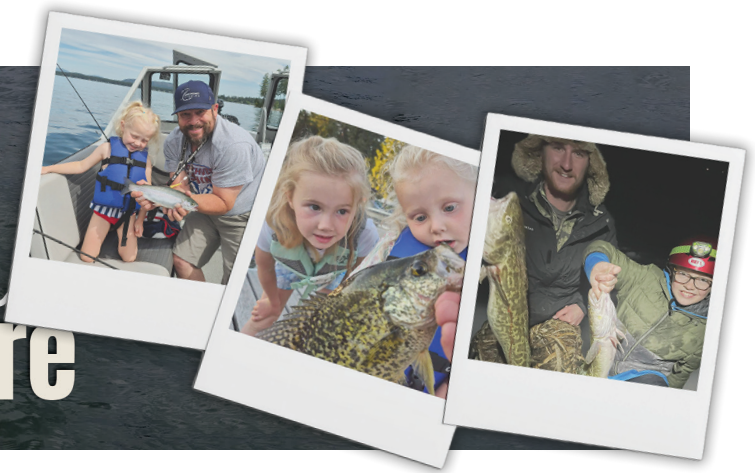
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How to Introduce Kids to Outdoor Adventure

By Eric Magnuson



Taking a kid fishing. The first fish a kid catches rarely breaks records. It may be a hand-sized Sunfish, or a fired-up little Bass that barely bends the rod. But if you've ever stepped back and watched a child reel one in, eyes wide, hands shaking, heart pounding, you know it might as well be a trophy. When I take my kids fishing, it's not about the fish; it's about everything that happens around it. The quiet moments, the lessons that sneak in unnoticed, and the "Spark" that can last a lifetime. Whether it's launching a boat at sunrise or walking down a beaten trail to the water's edge. The adventure starts long before the first cast.

Kids don't measure success the same way we adults do. They don't care about the barometric pressure or follow seasonal patterns.

For them, it's all anticipation, the smell of the bait, the sound of the motor leaving the dock, or the familiar crunch of gravel under the boots on the way to the water. Seems from a boat, everything feels like an expedition. Something special about pushing off the dock, venturing into the unknown. Kids like to explore, heading into uncharted territory. Let them help where they can, holding ropes, watching the depth finder, or even navigating. From the shore, the adventure becomes more grounded but no less meaningful. Skipping rocks, flipping over logs, and watching bobbers float along in the shallows create a slower, more tactile connection to nature. It's simpler and often perfect for younger kids or first timers.

Fishing has a way of teaching patience without ever feeling like a lesson.

In a world of instant gratification, waiting for a bite becomes a rare and valuable skill. Kids learn that good things take time, and that silence isn't something to fear, but something to settle into. But of course, patience has limits, and that's where we come in.

TIPS TO KEEP KIDS ENGAGED

□ **Keep it simple**, skip complicated rigs and techniques. A basic bobber and worm, or bottom setup is more than enough. The goal is action, not perfection.

□ **Target Easy Fish**, like Bluegills and Perch. They're abundant and aggressive. Perfect for building that confidence.

□ **Short trips are key**. Don't plan all-day trips; a couple of hours is plenty. Leave them wanting more, rather than them being exhausted and burned out.

□ **Bring Snacks** (Lots of Them). Hunger can derail even the best day of fishing. Snacks double as fuel and morale boosters.

□ **Celebrating everything** from a missed bite to a tangled line becomes a learning moment. A tiny fish? Celebrate it as the biggest catch of the day.

□ **Let them lead**, if they want to cast in a different direction, reel too fast, let them. Discovery matters more than precision early on.

I've always said, fishing teaches more than how to tie a knot or bait hooks.

It quietly introduces responsibility and respect. Respect for wildlife, respect for the environment, and for the tools they're using. When a child learns how to handle a fish carefully or release it properly, they begin to understand stewardship of the sport. They start to see the importance of nature and become part of it. And then there's resilience. Lines will tangle, Fish will get away, Weather will change. Fishing teaches kids how to handle disappointment and to try again. A lesson that carries far beyond the water.

Going back to fishing from a boat or shore. A boat, of course, offers the opportunity to cover more water and to fish several different ways while doing so. Can turn into a relaxing boat ride, venturing around the lake, taking in the scenery. But shore fishing has its own fun involved. It's accessible, can be low-pressure, and a little more interactive for the kids. They have a chance to move around, explore, and stay engaged with the outdoors even when the fish aren't biting. To be honest, it really doesn't matter where or how you fish.

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You can ask any avid angler about their earliest fishing memory, and chances are it involves a parent, grandparent, or mentor. As I said before, it's not about the fish. It's about the time, the people who were present, what was said, and most importantly, how it felt. Trust me, these moments stick. Maybe it was the way the sun looked, rising over the water, or the sound of the birds being busy about the trees, or maybe the sound of laughter after a wild cast.

Or maybe it's the quiet pride of holding that first fish. When you take a kid fishing, you're teaching them a hobby, giving them a memory they'll carry forever, and maybe one day pass it on themselves. In an age dominated by screens and schedules, fishing offers something rare, and that's unplugged time. It seems to slow everything down and creates that space for conversation, curiosity, and connection. While learning about fishing, they will also learn about you and themselves. That kind of connection is hard to replicate anywhere else.

And with my Final Cast before I go... You don't need fancy gear, a big boat, or perfect conditions. You just need a little time, a bit of patience, and the willingness to share the experience. Because in the end, it's not about teaching them how to catch fish. But about teaching them to love the water, respect the outdoors, and find joy in the nature given to us. Catching fish? That's just a bonus.

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TAKING THE PATH

Less Traveled

Rediscovering Washington's Overlooked Fisheries in Changing Times

BY BRENT KNIGHT

For many Washington anglers, recent seasons have felt like a slow unraveling of something we once took for granted.

Winter steelhead? Few opportunities and often crowded. Blackmouth in Puget Sound? Gone almost as soon as it opened. Entire river systems in North Puget Sound were closed, not necessarily because fish weren't there, but because WDFW monitoring dollars weren't. And as each North of Falcon season unfolds, rumors swirl; fewer Chinook days, shrinking coho opportunities, more uncertainty where consistency once lived.

For lifelong anglers in the Evergreen State, especially those who remember the abundance of the 1970s and early '80s, it's hard not to feel discouraged.

But here's the reality: while some of our most iconic fisheries are constrained by policy, funding, and complex ecological pressures, Washington still offers an incredible diversity of fishing opportunities, many of them thriving, and many of them overlooked.

So instead of stepping away, more anglers are doing something different, adapting.



SON RYLIE WITH A BAKER LAKE KOKANEE

A SHIFT IN MINDSET

Fishing in Washington today requires flexibility. The “go-to” fisheries may not always be there, but that doesn’t mean the experience has disappeared; it has just changed shape.

The anglers finding success in 2026 aren’t necessarily fishing more; they are fishing differently. They’re exploring.

LAKES: The Quiet Comeback

As spring gives way to summer, Washington’s lakes quietly come alive.

Warming water triggers aggressive feeding behavior, opening the door to some of the most accessible and rewarding fishing in the state. Kokanee (landlocked sockeye) offer fast action in lakes like **Lake Chelan**, **Lake Roosevelt**, and **American Lake**.

Meanwhile, trout fisheries across the state, from **Pass Lake** on Whidbey Island to **Lenice** and **Nunnally Lakes** near Vantage, provide consistent action for both fly and gear anglers.

And then there’s warmwater fishing.

Eastern Washington, in particular, is a goldmine:

- Walleye in **Lake Roosevelt**, **Banks Lake**, and the **Columbia River system**
- Smallmouth bass in the **Snake River** and **Columbia River**
- Largemouth bass, crappie, and bluegill in **countless farm ponds** and **reservoirs**

Walleye, especially, remain one of the most underrated table fish in the region, in my opinion, rivaling halibut or lingcod in quality.

RIVERS BEYOND SALMON

For anglers who define themselves by moving water, the loss of salmon and steelhead seasons hits hardest. But Washington’s rivers still offer exceptional opportunities, just with different targets.

The **Yakima River** stands out as one of the state’s premier trout fisheries. Stretching from Cle Elum through the Yakima Canyon to Roza Dam, it’s a blue-ribbon, catch-and-release system known for healthy populations of rainbow and cutthroat trout.

Other standout river options include:

- **Methow River** (selective trout fishing when open)
- **Upper Columbia tributaries** for seasonal trout
- **Skagit** and **Sauk Rivers** (when open for trout or limited steelhead opportunities)
- **Olympic Peninsula streams** for cutthroat trout

Guided trips through outfits like Red’s Fly Shop or Ellensburg Angler for the Yakima River can dramatically shorten the learning curve for those new to these systems.



SON RYLIE WITH A HALIBUT

SALTWATER: Looking Beyond Salmon

While salmon seasons may be compressed, the **Puget Sound** still offers underappreciated saltwater options.

Flatfish like flounder and sand dabs provide surprisingly fun and productive fishing. Target sandy bottoms in 30–80 feet of water using small bait rigs, Sabiki rigs, or setups tipped with shrimp, squid, piling worms, or other baits are especially effective.

18 | NWFISHING.net



It's not uncommon to hook multiple fish at once, and larger specimens make excellent table fare.

Other overlooked Puget Sound fisheries include:

- Squid jigging in winter months (**Seattle waterfront, Edmonds, Tacoma**)
- Surf perch along **coastal beaches**
- Pile perch and striped perch around **docks** and **pilings**
- Cabezon and greenling in **rocky areas** (when open)

These fisheries are accessible, often family-friendly, and largely underutilized.

THE WASHINGTON COAST: Opportunity Still Abounds

If you're willing to travel, Washington's outer coast remains one of the most productive fisheries in the Pacific Northwest.

- Ports like **Neah Bay, La Push, Westport**, and **Ilwaco** offer a wide range of options:

- Rockfish (especially pelagic black rockfish)
- Lingcod
- Halibut (during tightly managed seasons)
- Seasonal Chinook and coho

Ocean fisheries are often more stable than inland salmon seasons and can provide both action and harvest opportunities.

HIGH COUNTRY & HIDDEN GEMS

For those willing to hike, Washington's alpine lakes offer solitude and surprisingly good fishing.

Thousands of lakes scattered throughout the Cascades and Olympics are stocked with trout or sustain wild populations. Late summer is prime time, with fish eager to feed before winter.

Closer to home, don't overlook:

- **Urban lakes** stocked with trout by WDFW
- Small **neighborhood ponds** holding bass and panfish
- **Local docks and shorelines** that consistently produce

Sometimes the best fishing isn't far; it's just forgotten.

BACK TO THE ROOTS

For many anglers, the solution to today's changing landscape isn't to fish harder; it's to fish simpler.

Cast a spinner from shore. Float a worm under a bobber. Take a kid to a stocked lake. Revisit the kind of fishing that made you fall in love with the sport in the first place.

Because at its core, fishing in Washington has never just been about limits or seasons, it's about time on the water.

THE PATH FORWARD

Yes, we've lost opportunities. Yes, the future of some fisheries remains uncertain. But Washington still holds an incredible variety of waters, species, and experiences.

The anglers who continue to thrive are the ones willing to adapt, to take the path less traveled. So, check the regulations, explore something new, and keep going.

The fish, and the experience, are still out there.



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Worms, Worms, & More Worms

By Mike Carey

Learning how to farm worms as fishing bait

Worms – it's what's for dinner. If you're a walleye, that is. Ever since the invention of cane poles, worms would have to be considered one of the go-to baits for a shore angler. They are portable, easy to obtain, and fish love them. Most of us likely have early childhood memories of going fishing with our Zebco reel, the one that always seemed to get tangled up. A hook, a worm, a couple of split shots, and a round red and white bobber were all that was needed for a day's adventure at the local pond.

Back in my youth (and that's a long way back), the nightcrawler was the king of bait. We didn't buy them, though; we caught them. After planning a fishing trip for the next day, we would wait for darkness to descend. As the streetlights came on, my brothers and I knew it was time to

go worm catching! Into the backyard we would go, flashlights in hand. Because, like vampires, nightcrawlers only came out at night. For some reason, I never asked my dad why that was so; I just figured that's what they did.

Our backyard had a nice-sized garden and several pine trees, and lots of nightcrawlers. There was a trick to catching crawlers that only boys could appreciate. Walking slowly along, guided by our flashlights, we would come upon a big, plump crawler, poking out of its hole, stretched out in the dirt and grass. The next steps at this point were critical. Nightcrawlers don't like light, so it was vital to move the flashlight beam away from the crawler but still shining enough to be able to see him/her (worms are asexual, a fact we did learn with keen interest).

The trick was to hold the flashlight with one hand and slowly reach down with the other to grab said crawler. Most importantly, you had to grab the crawler at the point where he was coming out of his hole because the instant your fingers touched that crawler, he was crawling back down. As we got good at catching crawlers, it was a matter of gently pulling the frantic worm away from Mother Earth and into our waiting bucket. Now, sometimes the worm would win, and sometimes we would come away with half a crawler, which I guess was a draw, but I never did catch any half-broken worms. We did, however, come across two crawlers in a romantic embrace. If you got both, that was bragging rights for best crawler catcher.



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At the ripe age of 67, I have no interest in staying up after dark to catch nightcrawlers that I can easily buy. My sleep time is well worth the \$3.50 for a dozen crawlers at the local bait shop. That said, I hate wasting bait. If I come home with nightcrawlers left, I put them in the fridge for another day. Sometimes they last, sometimes they don't.

Last fall, I started a new hobby, which solved the dying crawler dilemma. Worm composting! Yes, you can have your bait and save it too.

Now I want to say here and now that I did not stumble on this new adventure for any "green" purposes. That said, I am happy to see that a byproduct of worm composting is some highly nutritious soil/fluids for my garden.

More importantly, I can bring home my unused nightcrawlers and add them to my bin of little friends. Now I always have "worms to go" if I want to go after some walleyes (or catfish). No more wasted nightcrawlers, and bait is always available.

Worm composting is quite easy, and there is a wealth of information on the web



and YouTube. You can use very simple setups or spend a lot of money on them. I decided to start with a four-tray system and 100 European Red Wigglers, "starter worms". These worms are not the larger nightcrawlers anglers are familiar with. They are smaller, perfect for panfish. They are also eating machines, turning fruit and vegetable scraps into nutrient-rich compost and "worm juice" which will go into my garden this spring. As a bonus, these worms will rapidly reproduce to the capacity of your system, but no more. So, in addition to worm compost for the garden, I will also have excess worms that I can add to my garden to further increase my vegetable yields.



“What about those nightcrawlers?” you ask. To be specific, what you are buying for bait are Canadian Nightcrawlers. With the rich environment the Red Wiggler worms produce, the nightcrawlers I come back with after a fishing trip have a new home to live in until the next time they join me for a trip on the water. The two types of worms do fine together, and my nightcrawlers stay healthy and get even bigger and plumper than when I bought them. Unfortunately, Canadian nightcrawlers are not fast reproducers, and I do end up buying more crawlers, but I no longer toss my remaining bait in the water at the end of a fishing day.

Instead, they return home with me to fish another day.

If this sounds like something you’d like to try, there is a wealth of information online and on YouTube that will tell you everything you need to get started. Depending on how fancy you want to proceed, you can go from very inexpensive DIY projects to spending a couple of hundred dollars for everything. Amazon has all types of composting/ worm bins for sale. An excellent resource I found to purchase worms and learn more about this fun hobby is Uncle Jim’s Worm Farm.

Raising worms is fun! It’s educational! And it might just get you “hooked” as it did me.

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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



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KAYAK FISHING FOR TROUT



BY JOSH DEBRULER

As we roll into summer, it can be a little overwhelming managing the excitement of all the fisheries that are opening around us and becoming more accessible due to the passing of the winter doldrums. It's a good problem to have! We are inundated with fishing opportunities. For me, it's comforting knowing that I always have the simple staple of rainbow trout fishing. Its simplicity brings accessibility for our families and children. It means we can throw a couple of kayaks in the back of the truck, a cooler, some rods, and we can take the ones we love out to relish in the joys of fishing. Now, I enjoy my motorized boat as much as the next guy, but with small trout lakes being so abundant, there's a good chance we can bring the kids out to a lake that offers the added comfort and safety of boat speed restrictions, or in some cases, motorized boat restrictions.

Rainbow trout are intensely prolific throughout the Pacific Northwest. Native rainbows can be found throughout the Columbia River and its tributaries, like the Yakima and the Snake, and they thrive in the reservoirs built amongst these waters. They also flourish in alpine lakes high in the Cascades and Olympic Mountains. Though they are native to many waters of the northwest, the native stock are for the most part, highly regulated by the Department of Fish and Wildlife for conservation purposes. Aside from this, wild rainbow trout tend to be found in rivers and high lakes that are not as easily accessed by kayak, which is why I personally like to target the stocked rainbows, which, despite what you might hear from a handful of naysayers, are actually quite good eating when thrown on the smoker or baked with butter and garlic and whatever other

aromatics you might throw at it. If you'd like to target Columbia basin Redband rainbow trout (Wild trout) for catch and release, Lake Roosevelt in Ferry, Stevens, Lincoln, Okanogan, and Grant counties is an excellent place to get started.

Hundreds of thousands of catchable-sized rainbow trout are stocked in lakes throughout Washington each year. There are too many lakes to mention here; however, you can hop onto the WDFW website and navigate to "catchable trout plants," and chances are you will find a lake within a short drive of wherever you are that has planted trout.

As an avid kayak angler, I'm not afraid to admit that some kayak fishing can be cumbersome, complicated, and often leaves me wondering why I'm not instead using a larger boat to catch my fish.



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Thankfully, rainbow trout fishing from a kayak does not bring up any of those thoughts or trepidations. It can be as easy as casting a lure out behind you, setting your pole in a rod holder, and enjoying a nice paddle until you hear your rod bouncing around and causing a ruckus behind you.

Just about any type of kayak will do for rainbow trout fishing. With the one caveat being that if you're trolling, you should have a rod holder. If your kayak does not come equipped with one, then you can find a mountable one at most outdoor sporting equipment stores that carry fishing gear.

Trolling is my favorite method as it allows me to cover a lot of ground, and if done during the morning or evening, it can result in a limit of trout within a short period of time.

Trout are a predatory fish, and once stocked, trout become accustomed to the natural diet of the lake they are planted in. They tend to be aggressive towards moving targets during the warmer months.

Inline spinners like Panther Martin, Rooster tails, Mepps Aglia, and Blue Fox

Vibrax are all classic lures that work by allowing a constant spinning motion of the small attached spoon while presenting a colorful tube-shaped body. These all come with a treble hook or single hook that typically have the choice of being dressed with or without hackle. Generally, larger lures will catch larger fish and vice versa. The dressed lures present themselves as larger due to their increased profile. Chartreuse, black, white, yellow, and rainbow trout colors are all very effective. I typically start with a rainbow trout colored lure and switch out once they stop biting at that. The Blue Fox Vibrax has the added benefit of emitting a sonic vibration that can agitate fish and produce a strike. These inline spinners can be cast or trolled and are oftentimes the only lure type that I need to bring along with me. Other options outside of spinners would be small spoons or mini tube jigs.

A rubber trout net is another essential tool to bring along on your kayak. The cheap poly nets are less preferred as they often get stuck under the fish's gills and can result in a dead fish that you

otherwise may have been throwing back.

Since we are talking about kayak fishing, and with kayak fishing, I like to keep things simple, I hesitate to add more complexity to our fishing setups. However, if the mid-day warming of the water is causing the fish to hold deeper below the surface than what your standard trolling setup can achieve, then it might be worth deploying a diver. Divers are planers generally made of plastic that use hydrodynamics to pull your gear deep into the water. Most divers have a tripping mechanism that releases

and stops the diving motion once a fish strikes. This allows you to reel the fish in without fighting the diver's natural tendency to go deeper into the water. Though they take away from some of the simplicity, they are a heck of a lot easier to deal with than a downrigger, and they can absolutely produce good results.

Summer is here, and the fish are biting! I hope this information helps you with your next kayak fishing adventure! Stay safe and tight lines!



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Summer SALMON Are Coming!

BY MARK YUASA, WDFW



Washington Department of
FISH & WILDLIFE



That means it's time to get all the salmon fishing gear in order and begin thinking about the kickoff to several salmon fisheries planned to open in June.

While the tentative proposed 2026-2027 salmon fishing season package was finalized in mid-April, they won't be officially adopted until sometime in mid-June.

The rules set by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) were submitted to the National Marine Fisheries Service within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries in early May.

NOAA Fisheries implements the actions through its regulatory channels under the Endangered Species
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Act and Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Proposed fisheries are not finalized for the 2026-2027 salmon season until NOAA Fisheries approves them.

As part of the North of Falcon process, WDFW is hosting a virtual public hearing on Tuesday, June 9, from 10 a.m.-12 p.m. and will take additional public comments. Go to this link <https://wdfw.wa.gov/events/north-falcon-public-hearing-20260609> to register for the public hearing. Pre-registration is required. Final regulations will be adopted subsequent to that hearing and signed off by the WDFW Director by around mid-June. For a list of the proposed fisheries, go to <https://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/>

[management/north-falcon/summaries](#). The 2026-2027 fishing regulation pamphlet will come out online around June 18. Printed copies should arrive at license dealers and at WDFW offices by June 26.

In the meantime, before rushing out the door, salmon anglers should check on any early-season summer fishery openers by going to the WDFW website (<https://wdfw.wa.gov/>) to see what areas are scheduled to open, and for any possible emergency fishing rule changes or closures.

WHERE TO GO IN JUNE

A much-anticipated early-summer salmon fishery occurs in Marine Area 10 (Seattle-Bremerton Area), which is scheduled to be open daily for a coho

beginning June 1. Look for coho averaging 2 to 4 pounds in the shipping lanes off Jefferson Head, from the western-most Kingston boundary line south to Presidents Point, from the Edmonds oil docks south to Richmond Beach, West Point south of Shilshole Bay, along the east side of Bainbridge Island, and the tide rips off Blake Island, Restoration Point, and the northside of Vashon Island west to Southworth.

If your preference is a chance at catching an early-summer hatchery Chinook, then look no further than Marine Area 11 (Tacoma-Vashon Island). Fishing is scheduled to be

open beginning June 1. These fish usually consist of a mix of resident and mature migrating Chinook averaging 7- to 15-pounds with some in the 20-plus pound category.

WDFW will monitor the June Marine Area 11 Chinook fishery, and it could close sooner in order to stay within the quota and/or other guidelines. The Chinook catch quota for the June fishery is 1,423, with a total unmarked encounter of 820, and a total sublegal encounter (Chinook under the 22-inch minimum size limit) of 2,186. The Marine Area 11 Chinook fishery is managed under two

separate summer quotas, and a second window of opportunity is tentatively proposed to begin on July 23.

Look for salmon off Point Defiance Park in Tacoma from the Clay Banks to Owen Beach; Slag Pile off the Tacoma Yacht Club, outside of Gig Harbor on the "flats" area; northeast side of Vashon Island; Colvos Passage; outside of Quartermaster Harbor; and the southwest side of Vashon Island at Point Dalco.

In the northern sections of Marine Area 11 try Dolphin Point and Point Robinson on the east side of Vashon

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Island, south of the Southworth Ferry Landing, and Apple Tree Cove to Redondo Beach.

If Marine Area 11 is slow or closes sooner than expected, another option is south of the Narrows Bridge in [Marine Area 13 \(South Puget Sound\)](#). Locating schools to baitfish is key to raising the bar on success for salmon at Gibson Point, Fox Island Fishing Pier, Hale Passage, Johnson Point, Anderson Island's east side, and Point Fosdick. Marine Area 13 is scheduled to be open year-round for salmon. Anglers should check the WDFW website or the 2026-2027 regulation pamphlet for details.

Another good Chinook option is the [Tulalip Terminal Area Fishery \(Marine Area 8-2\)](#), which is open Fridays through Saturdays of each week and has a harvest quota of 600 Chinook. The popularity of this fishery has generated some decent action in the past few summers. The WDFW will monitor the Tulalip fishery,

and it may close sooner to stay within the harvest quota.

For saltwater anglers without a boat, there are a good number of viable year-round fishing piers to catch salmon. They include the Edmonds, Fox Island, Mukilteo Ferry Landing, Seacrest in West Seattle, Dash Point Dock, Point Defiance Park Boathouse, Les Davis, and Des Moines piers.

If you prefer a freshwater salmon fishery, then make plans to head to the Skagit River (areas open vary depending on the species, hatchery Chinook or sockeye); Cascade River from the mouth to the Rockport-Cascade Road Bridge (opens beginning June 3 on Wednesdays through Saturdays only); and Nooksack River North Fork from Highway 9 Bridge to yellow marker at upstream end of the Kendall Hatchery property open through June 30. Anglers are advised to check the WDFW website for river sections open to

salmon fishing, and for any possible emergency fishing rule changes or closures.

LOOKING AHEAD

While this column is focused on June fisheries, those looking ahead to July can look at the Strait of Juan de Fuca Marine Area 5 (Sekiu and Pillar Point) and Marine Area 6 (East Strait of Juan de Fuca) west of a true north/south line through the #2 Buoy immediately east of Ediz Hook, which are both planned to open beginning July 1 for hatchery Chinook and hatchery coho. Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands) and Marine Area 9 (Admiralty Inlet) are planned to open July 16-18 for hatchery Chinook and hatchery coho. Marine Area 10 (Seattle and Bremerton Area) is scheduled to open on July 23-25 for a hatchery Chinook directed fishery and is also open daily for coho through Nov. 15. Marine Area 12 (Hood Canal) south of Ayock Point is proposed to open on July 1 for coho and hatchery Chinook.

Each marine area could close sooner for Chinook fishing if specific catch quotas or guidelines are met. Check the WDFW website or the 2026-2027 regulation pamphlet for areas where Chinook must be released or are closed to salmon fishing, and for other specific rules.

MARK YUASA

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



WASHINGTON OCEAN SALMON FISHERIES ON TAP



Later this month – June 20 to be exact, which also coincides with the official first day of summer – many salmon anglers will head to the coast for the Chinook and hatchery coho ocean fishery. The recreational Chinook quota is 54,000 (up a tad from 53,750 in 2025) and a hatchery-marked coho quota of 102,900 (up from 99,720 in 2025).

MARINE AREA 1

(ILWACO): Open daily beginning June 20 through Sept. 30, all salmon. The daily limit is two salmon, and one Chinook only. The subarea guideline is 16,780 Chinook (16,600 in 2025), and the subarea quota is 51,450 marked coho (49,860 in 2025). Columbia Control Zone closed.

MARINE AREA 2

(WESTPORT-OCEAN SHORES): Open daily beginning June 20 through June 28 for all salmon except coho, and the daily limit is one salmon; release all coho. Fishing is then open seven

days per week from June 29 through Sept. 30, for all salmon. Beginning June 29, the daily limit is two salmon, and only one may be a Chinook. The subarea guideline is 21,910 Chinook (22,270 in 2025), with a subarea quota of 38,070 marked coho (36,900 in 2025).

MARINE AREA 3

(LA PUSH): Open daily beginning June 20 through June 30, all salmon except coho, and the daily limit is one salmon; release all coho. Open seven days per week from July 1 through Sept. 30, all salmon. The subarea guideline is 2,200 Chinook (2,280 in 2025), with 2,680 marked coho subarea quota (2,590 in 2025). Beginning July 1, the daily limit is two salmon. Beginning Aug. 1, no chum retention.

MARINE AREA 4

(NEAH BAY): Open daily beginning June 20 through June 30, all salmon except coho, and the daily limit

is one salmon; release all coho. Open seven days per week from July 1 through Sept. 30, all salmon. Beginning July 1, the daily limit is two salmon. The subarea guideline is 13,110 Chinook (12,600 in 2025), with a subarea quota of 10,700 marked coho (10,370 in 2025). Beginning Aug. 1, no Chinook retention east of the Bonilla-Tatoosh line and no chum retention.

Species and size restrictions are dependent on the marine area. WDFW fishery managers will monitor the number of salmon caught in-season and may close areas earlier than scheduled if quotas or guidelines are met. In-season management may be used to sustain season length and keep harvest within the overall Chinook and coho total allowable catch.

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ALPINE KOKANEE TRIFECTA

Mike Carey

There's an Alpine Kokanee Trifecta that is often over-looked compared to the more well-known and popular kokanee fisheries. What if I told you that within an hour and a quarter of traffic-free driving from Seattle you could enjoy pristine Alpine lake fishing with little to no other boats on the water and have the chance to catch generous limits of kokanee every time out? No way you say? It's true and waiting for you. But a little planning and tempering of expectations is required. These fisheries won't yield 18-20" Lake Roosevelt kokanee, but they do have an abundance of under-fished kokanee that will still give you a nice bounty to bring home. Have I got your attention yet?

The Alpine Kokanee Trifecta I speak of is familiar to many but passed by with a reputation of having small kokanee. I'm here to tell you, that is a myth. While it's true you won't find those 20" koks, you will

find fish that range from 10" up to 14". The lakes I'm referring to?

Keechelus, Kachess, and Cle Elum. Yup, that first big reservoir as you crest Snoqualmie Pass going east is one of three Alpine Kokanee Lakes that I think you should make plans to visit. Let's look at them one by one, going from west to east.

KEECHELUS RESERVOIR

This lake is the one that we all gaze at as we are driving somewhere else. It's also the one that come August turns into a giant stump field. At 2,408 acres, it's the smallest of the three lakes. At 2,521 feet of elevation, it's also the highest of the three lakes. The lake holds rainbow, cutthroat, whitefish, bull trout (which are endangered and are to be carefully released), burbot, and kokanee. Of the three lakes we will look at, this lake probably has the smallest kokanee in it. But check this out – the 2016 stocking numbers for this lake were a whopping

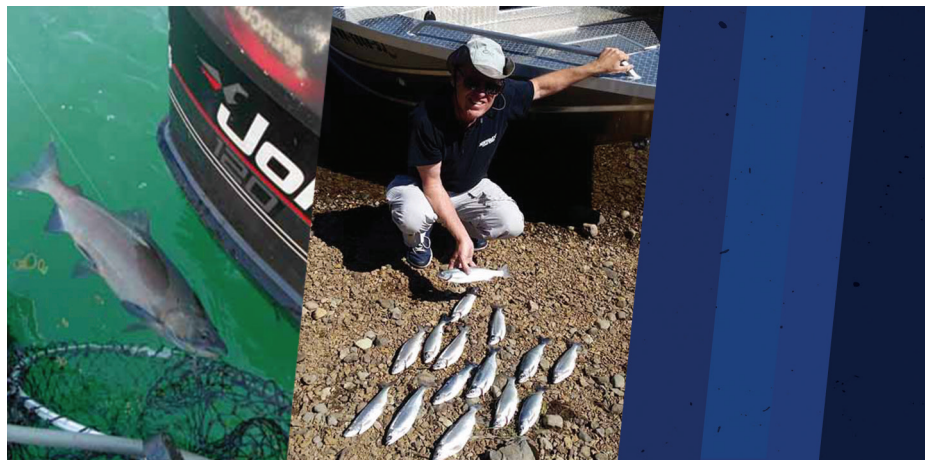
256,892 kokanee! In 2015 it was 265,000 and in 2014 it was 238,000 kokanee. So bottom line, that's a lot of kokanee swimming around waiting to be caught!

Here's the catch (there's always a catch, right?). This reservoir gets drawn down as the summer progresses. Seriously drawn down, as in not able to launch a boat drawn down. So if you want to fish the Trifecta next year, you'd best plan on hitting this lake first. The primary boat launch is found on the west end of the lake. The earthen dam is on the far east end of the lake. Be aware, this lake, perhaps worst of the three, is prone to heavier wind and whitecaps. Be prepared to get back to the launch if the wind picks up. The lake is also the least serene of the three lakes as the constant hum of the freeway and view of semis roaring past are a sharp contrast to the beautiful surrounding mountains. This lake is a one pole only lake.

KACHESS RESERVOIR

If you're looking for a beautiful camping location with stunning scenery this is your lake. The Kachess Forest Service Campground is one of the nicer ones around. Plenty of camping spots and some larger pull through sites make it "boat friendly". The restrooms are - surprise - running water and flush toilets! The boat launch is a two lane concrete ramp with nice grade and plenty of surrounding shoreline to pull your boat up on. Winds can be an issue as it's not in a sheltered location. Parking is good.

Like Keechelus, Kachess holds a nice variety of fish. Rainbow, cutthroat, bull trout (protected), whitefish and burbot can all be found in addition to the kokanee. As to kokanee stocking, in 2014 WDFW stocked 365,000 fish, 2015 490,000, and for 2016 413,098. You'll get into the kokanee as soon as you launch the boat. Motor out a hundred yards and watch as your depth finder shows the bottom dropping to 180 feet and deeper. And then you'll see your fish finder light up with kokanee arches 35 to 80 feet deep. You'll find fish all the way



the length of the lake down to the dam end, over four miles away. But beware, if you head north the lake shallows up at a choke point north of the launch and you'll find yourself in ten feet of water.

On our most recent trip, we found a great early morning bite that turned off at 8:30am. After an hour of fruitless trolling we ran all the way down to the dam and were rewarded with good action the rest of the morning. Don't be afraid to leave non-biting fish in search of the biters! On this trip we also caught and safely released a powerful 16" bull trout. What a thrilling fight on kokanee gear. We hooked him at 55 feet deep on the downrigger. To help protect these beautiful fish bring a knotless net.

Kachess is 4,377 acres and an elevation of 2,258 feet.

CLE ELUM RESERVOIR

The final gem of our trifecta is Cle Elum reservoir. Although the farthest of the three lakes, it's still a day trip for the Seattle area angler. Cle Elum also has a Forest Service campsite and nice paved launch (an old road, actually). Not as nice as Kachess, but the scenery is again spectacular and there is no freeway sound to ruin the experience. Cle Elum also has the nearby town of Roslyn to grab provisions and a nice dinner at the end of your day of fishing.

Cle Elum is the largest of the three reservoirs at 4,566 acres. It's the lowest lake, at 2,227 acres. As the summer water draw down lowers the lake, the ramp becomes high and dry. Boaters then will launch among the stumps at the southeast side of the lake by the dam.

Watch your props and winds out of the north as this can be a risky proposition.

The lake holds the same species as our other two lakes with a notable and significant difference. First there is Mackinaw trout in the lake.

These fish are on WDFW and the Yakima Tribe's radar screen to remove from the lake. Why, you may ask, when some dandy lakers up to 15 pounds and more have been caught? Well, in the (hopefully) not too distant future Cle Elum may join Baker and Wenatchee lakes as a destination sockeye fishery. That's right; the Yakima Tribe has been working since 2009 to restore a sockeye run to Lake Cle Elum. It works like this: the sockeye are captured at Priest Rapids dam and transferred to the lake. They then run up the Cle Elum River and spawn. When the fish hatch, they spend 1-2 years in the lake and then leave the lake via a flume around an earthen dam to the Yakima River. From the Yakima River, they will swim to the Columbia, and traveling on another 330 miles, around four Columbia River dams, to the Pacific Ocean.



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Here's more information from the Yakima Nation Fisheries website:

"One thousand adult sockeye were transplanted in the summer of 2009, 2,500 in 2010, 4,500 in 2011, 10,000 in 2012 and 4,000 in 2013. The sockeye successfully spawned in tributaries above the Lake in all years becoming the first sockeye to spawn in the Yakima Basin in over 100 years. Juveniles from the 2009 brood were observed migrating downstream at Roza and Prosser Dams in 2011. Preliminary data from trapping operations at Prosser indicated a 2011

smolt outmigration of approximately 80,000 sockeye. From July - Oct. 2013, 701 Sockeye migrated to the Yakima River Basin (numbers reported at October 17, 2013). So far, 211 sockeye have migrated back home to the Yakima River Basin (updated July 1, 2014). Once these fish move north to Roza Dam they will be transported into Lake Cle Elum or Cle Elum River. So far, we have trapped and hauled 4,500 sockeye from Priest Rapids to Lake Cle Elum. We will continue to monitor fish run numbers and trap and haul accordingly (updated July 1, 2014)." **JUNE 2026 | 37**


So where are the kokanee you may ask? Well, WDFW has stopped stocking Lake Cle Elum since this recovery process started. But that doesn't mean you can't catch kokanee.

According to a fisheries biologist I spoke with on the subject, some of the kokanee you catch are actually sockeye that have decided to not migrate back to the ocean. Instead, they spend their adult lives in lake Cle Elum, and then spawn as well in the Cle Elum River. In order to protect the sockeye in Cle Elum, WDFW has placed a slot limit of 9" to 15" on kokanee in Cle Elum. The limits are different on Cle Elum as well. As of 2016, Keechelus and Kachess had ten kokanee limits, and not including trout. Cle Elum has a five fish limit, including trout. Cle Elum is also the only lake of the three to allow the two pole endorsement. Finally, there is NO limit on lakers, brown, and eastern brook trout. WDFW wants these non-native species out of the lake to benefit juvenile sockeye salmon and encourages anglers to help in that effort. As always, be sure to check current regs for any updates.

There you have it. Three Alpine Lake Kokanee gems, all day trips from the greater Seattle region offer the angler spectacular scenery and fisheries that produce abundant (if not huge) kokanee. With gas prices at historical lows now is the time to plan a trip to these great destinations and leave the masses behind.

I will offer a couple words of caution for boating anglers. First, the winds blowing down the mountainsides on these three lakes can kick up and blow whitecaps, especially in the afternoon. So, keep an eye on the weather and be ready to head back in if things start blowing. Second, if you troll with downriggers, be aware that these reservoirs may have trees sticking up from the bottom that didn't get clear cut. So be ready to bring those downrigger balls up fast!

See you on the water catching some tasty kokanee on these Alpine Lake Gems!




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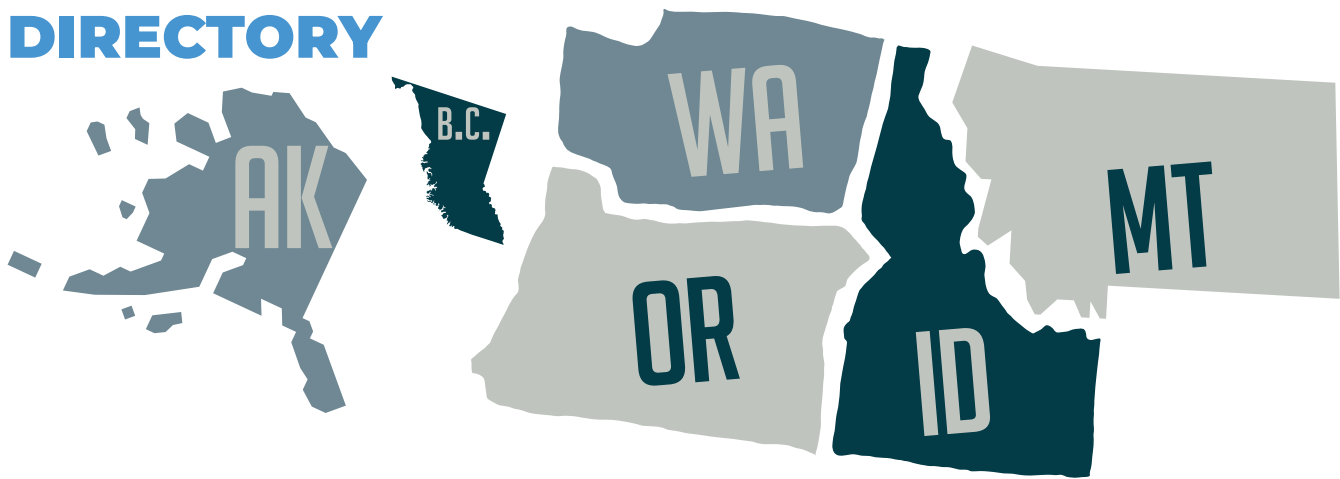
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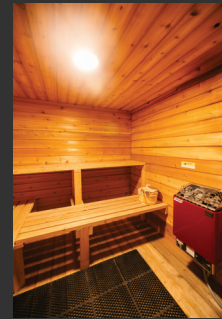
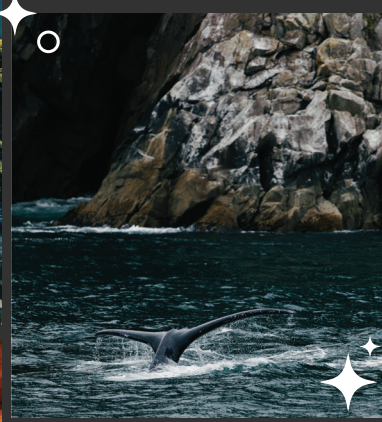
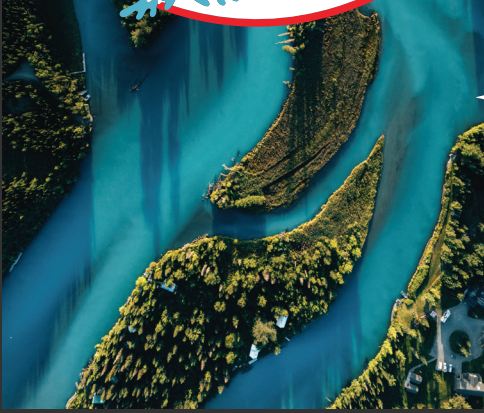
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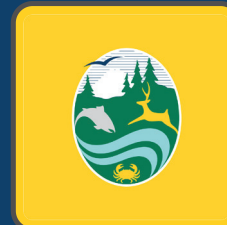
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