

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 10

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NORTHWEST FISHING

EX PNW'S REEL LIFESTYLE

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EDITOR'S CORNER:

It's hard to focus on fishing as I write this; a terrible catastrophe has hit Spokane. Out of control fires, hundreds of structures destroyed, and thousands of people evacuated and staying with friends, family, or in shelters. My heart goes out to all those who have been impacted by the fires. Thankfully, as of this writing, there has been no loss of life. I pray that it remains that way.

Spokane will need our prayers and also our help. Now and in the months to come, the citizens of Spokane will need ongoing support, and getting back to a state of "normal" will take time and hard work. Please find it in your heart to contribute whatever time, talent, and treasure (donations) you are able. We are all one tragedy away from being in need ourselves.

- Mike Carey, Northwest Fishing



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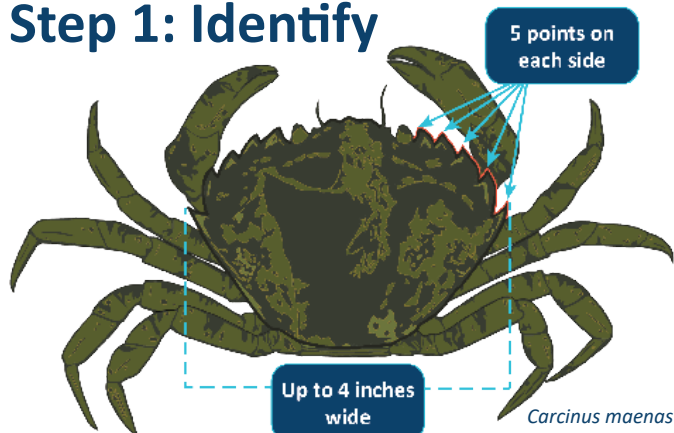
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Laurie Luoma, with one of a pair of hatchery rainbows she caught on a mountain lake. Photo by Gary Lewis

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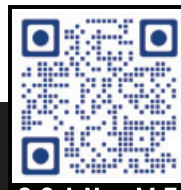
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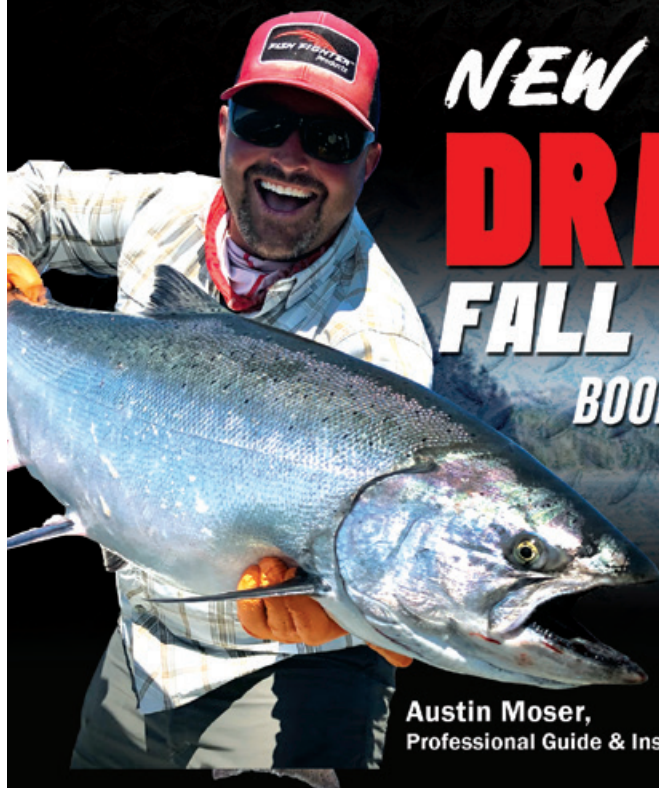
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THE CURE FOR *High Lakes Trout*

GEAR



HOW TO TURN EGGS FROM HATCHERY TROUT INTO MORE HATCHERY TROUT.

We had a mild, dry winter with little snowpack. Now in the heat of summer, wildfire smoke shrouds the lowland valleys, and a lot of people who would rather be fishing are staying home.

Up in the mountains, the air is clear and beautiful. If there is smoke in the air, it filters the light and provides an otherworldly feel on the high lakes.

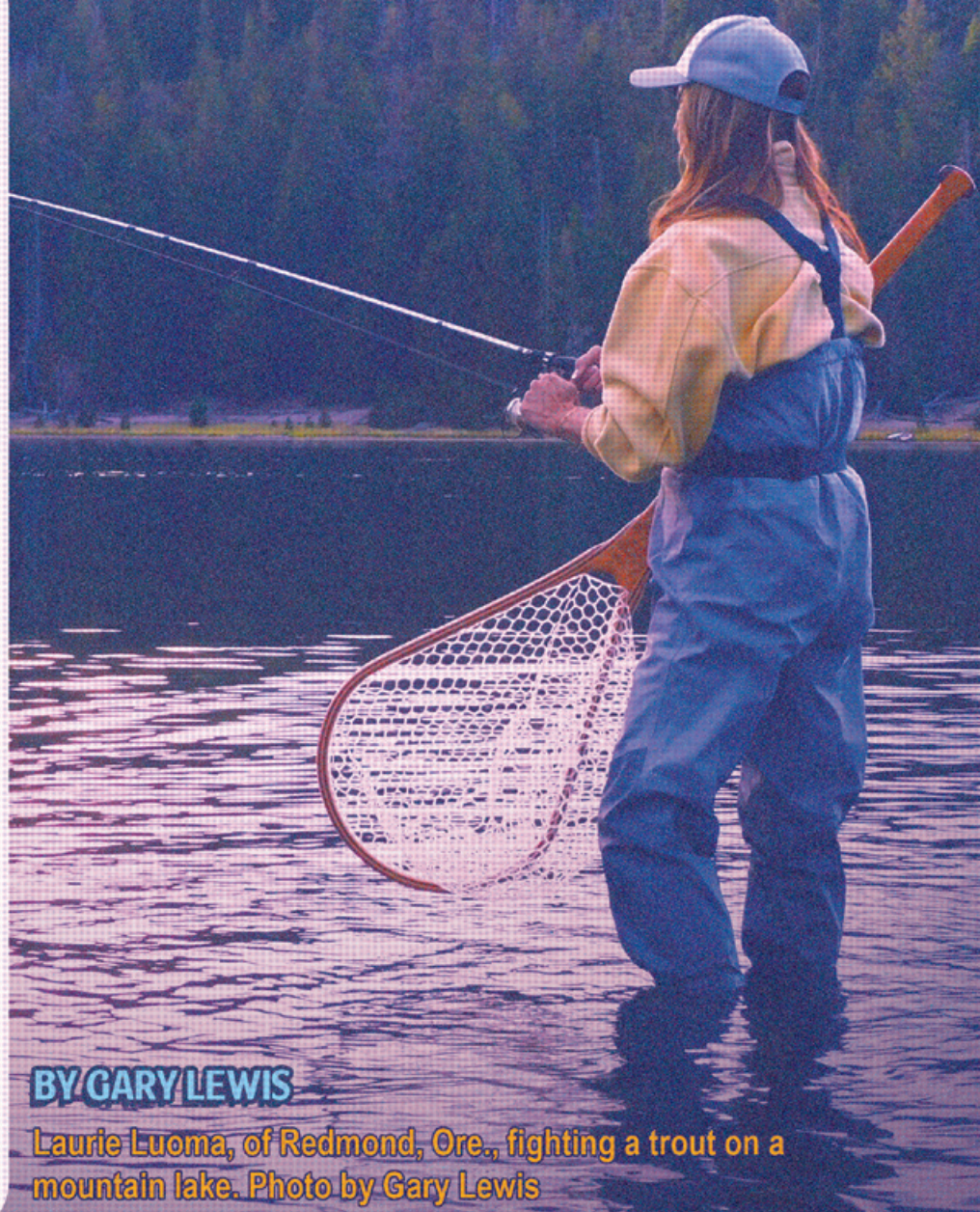
Here in central Oregon, the trout fishing has been fantastic. Fly-rodders, lure fishermen, and bait anglers have been having the best trout season of their lives.

I have started tying egg loop knots and curing eggs on a smaller scale. Our hatchery programs turn out legals, "trophy" trout (14 to 18 inches), and brood stock fish that can go six pounds or more. Some of those hatchery fish have eggs in them, which look like bait to me.

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BY GARY LEWIS

Laurie Luoma, of Redmond, Ore., fighting a trout on a mountain lake. Photo by Gary Lewis



WHY SPAWN SACS?

Trout eggs are few and fragile, and the skein is weak, but they are a dynamite way to turn hatchery trout into more hatchery trout.

Use spawn netting to conserve the eggs for a longer time in front of the fish. While an egg-looped bait might stay on the hook for three or four casts, the spawn sac bait can go for 40 or 50 casts and multiple fish.

I kept the eggs from a 30-inch lake trout and put them in a paper towel in the refrigerator, and forgot about them till I was in Alaska. My wife was home and cured the eggs for me (her first time curing eggs), and we put them to use on a fall trip to one of my favorite lakes. I wound up catching a pair of beautiful brook trout. Opening our mixed bag of rainbows and brookies that evening, I harvested bait for the next trip.

Try to get eggs from four or five trout before starting the cure. First step in preparing the eggs is to allow them to air dry on a paper towel for a day or so. The cure itself can be any one of dozens of commercial powder or liquid offerings or a person



can prepare their own with Borax, brown sugar, and salt. Lately, we have been using Pro-Cure's Last Supper blend, augmenting it with sea salt and krill powder.

Donning latex gloves, I roll the eggs in the cure, making sure the cure adheres to both sides of the skein. Next, I sprinkle on extra salt and krill powder. Then I let that combination drain/air dry for about a day. After that, the eggs are ready for the spawn netting.

For these smaller baits, I will use a No. 8 or No. 10 egg hook with an egg-loop knot. The bait should be the size of a dime. I get two to four baits out of a skein and four to eight baits per fish.

Cut a small rectangle of netting (I use Atlas Mike's)

and lay the bait on it. Then gather the edges and tie it with stretchy string (like Kwikfish Stretchy Thread). Trim off the extra string and netting, and you have a dime-sized bait ready to fish.

Baits can be stored in Ziploc bags, plastic boxes, or glass jars. Use the baits as-is or add a little more Borax to toughen them up.

Curing eggs for a spawn sac presentation allows the angler flexibility in doctoring the baits to specific conditions or to provoke a reaction bite. Eggs sink, which makes spawn sacs a great choice for a float (bobber) presentation. But because eggs sink, they are prone to hang up on rocks in a drift-fishing presentation.



The "cure" for that is to add a foam egg (like a Mad River Fish Pill) to the spawn sac.

Jason Hambly, of Pro-Cure Bait Scents, in Salem, Ore., recommends adding krill powder to any trout bait. Garlic, too, is a proven trout favorite. I like to add a touch more garlic to a bait intended for cold water presentations. When the temperature drops in December in these parts, it can be harder to get fish to move. But they seem to move for garlic.

Salt, brown sugar, and anise are other scents that could be added to spawn sacs. It makes a lot of sense to bring several flavors and experiment with what works in varying conditions.

STILL WATER RIGS

For our fisheries, I like a finesse presentation using a smaller No. 10 egg hook and a light three-pound test leader. When targeting bigger trout, consider sizing up to a No. 8 egg hook, nickel-size baits, and a five- or six-pound-test 20-inch leader.

Attaching bait is as simple as running the point of the hook beneath the netting knot, then securing it with the egg loop.

In a lake, the bait can be presented under a float when targeting a specific feeding zone. I like to use a sliding sinker fished over a ledge on a travel zone, such as along a drop-off.

WHERE TO FISH

In August and September, plan trips to hit one or more fisheries. Think early morning and late evenings. Eat an early dinner and fish the last two hours of the day. Get up at dawn, fish for the first hour of the day, and then go get breakfast.

In the Cascades, top destinations include Diamond Lake, Detroit Lake (even as it draws down), Cultus, Elk Lake, Olallie Lake, and Timothy. But there are a hundred more. Open a map or get a copy of the Fishing Central Oregon book or Fishing Mt. Hood Country. The Department of Fish and Wildlife stocks all the drive-to and hike-in Cascade lakes.

Sometimes it's fun to experiment with something new, to do something different.

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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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After moving to Great Falls, Montana, I've been spending much of my time exploring the various fisheries in my new State. The past year, my focus shifted to one of my favorite fish to eat, good old "marble eyes", AKA walleye. It turns out that Montana isn't just a trout state. The more I learned about Montana walleye, the more excited I became. While a walleye is a walleye and state borders don't change that, I have noticed a few differences between fishing for walleye in Montana as compared to Washington.

I have many fond memories of fishing the Potholes, Banks Lake, and the Columbia River. All are beautiful destinations and hold healthy walleye populations. Over the years, I learned a lot about walleyes from Shelby Ross of Ross Outdoor Adventures. So, when I began exploring walleye fishing in Montana, I felt I had a pretty good idea of what I was doing. How pride goes before the fall! Walleye in Montana are... different. Underwater structure is different as well. While the Potholes in Washington features long stretches of submerged dunes that are made

for trolling, reservoirs in Montana tend to be more vertical, with structures rapidly dropping off from shallow to deep water, and fewer long flats are present. And when you do find a flat area, it's easier to find yourself dropping off from shallow to deep in a matter of seconds. Likewise, the Columbia River is significantly different from the Missouri River. Big, deep water vs. shallow water with distinct holes distinguishes the two rivers entirely different to approach and fish.

I'd read that the Missouri River was a challenge to unlock, and I found out just how true that was.



One section below the Hauser Dam is prime trout water, with riffles, pockets, and runs that would make a line-flinger light up. And yet, walleye can be found in this very stretch of water, just waiting for someone to toss a plug their way. Go downriver farther to my neck of the woods, Cascade to Great Falls, and you'll find deep holes of 15-20 feet and then stretches of sand bars waiting to trap an unsuspecting prop boater (best to have a jet boat in these waters). Farther down, as you reach Fort Benton and Loma and the river, free of dams until Fort Peck, reminds me of the Cowlitz River with fast

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runs, distinct tail-outs, and gorgeous pockets that just dry out "fish me!"

In other words, a walleye angler fishing the Missouri will need to be flexible with a number of different techniques. Bottom bouncing, jigs under floats, jigs with no floats, plugs, spinners, bait, no bait – whew! I'm going to need a bigger tackle box.

Meanwhile, in Montana, when we talk about lake fishing, we are often really talking reservoirs. A whole new set of challenges to learn. Yes, you can find nice flats to troll your bottom bouncers and diving plugs, but be ready for sudden

and dramatic depth changes. These bodies of water have covered up river valleys and can reach depths of 120-200 feet in short order. In addition, you'll find some very juicy bottom structure, underwater rocky humps that you'll want to mark and come back to in your walleye search. Jig fishing these drops and humps is your best option here. Put away the trolling and use that spot lock anchor button and work these promising underwater drop offs with a jig. Try tipping your jig with a minnow or a leach to entice even the stubbornest of walleyes.



Something else I have noticed that is quite different between Washington and Montana walleye are growth characteristics. While Potholes and the Columbia are generally a numbers game, in Montana, my experience has been that quality and not quantity has been the norm. I can confidently say that every location I've fished for walleye has yielded not a limit of eaters, but rather, I tend to catch a couple of eaters and then a pig, 22-26", fat quality fish. Why this is so, I can't say. Maybe less pressure and more feed allow for greater growth and more quality fish? Maybe pike keep the small fish in check? A recent trip I took to Nelson reservoir yielded a dozen pike in the 28-33" range, and only four walleyes, one of which was a beautiful 23" specimen.

Those pike must be feeding on something to produce so many big fish...

Montana has a healthy walleye fisheries program, and the hatchery at Fort Peck took 62 million eggs last year, enough to stock the needs of the entire state's walleye fisheries. In addition, Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (FWP) has introduced cisco, a herring-like forage fish for walleyes, into Fort Peck and Tiber reservoirs, resulting in an eye-popping winning weight of 143 pounds in the 2025 fishing derby at Tiber reservoir.

What isn't different between Washington and Montana walleye is the taste. Anglers can enjoy delicious fresh walleye year-round, either in open water or in the winter through the ice. Unfortunately, both states also share a common problem: contaminated waters. I strongly urge you to follow guidelines on fish consumption and limit the fish you keep to under 22". Doing so will reduce your risk of contamination like mercury and Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances. Stay safe and enjoy the incredible walleye fisheries each state has to offer!

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FISHING THE PALOUSE

BY JOSH DEBRULER

Far down in the southeastern corner of Washington state, there's a river that is surrounded by millions of years of geological wonders. The journey begins at its headwaters in the Bitterroot Mountain Range of Northern Idaho. It meanders southwest and cuts through a landscape of grassy hills, formed by millions of years of wind-driven sediment that lay atop Pleistocene era lava flows. For miles, it flows through a steep canyon carved out by the great Missoula flood that occurred during the rupture of an ice dam during our last glacial maximum. Finally, in Southeast Washington, it ends its solo journey at its confluence with the Snake River.

Historically, the waters at the confluence of the Snake and the Palouse were

turbulent, characterized by rapids and fast-moving water. When Lewis and Clark embarked upon the confluence of these two rivers during their expedition, they wrote about the ferocity of the water and how members of the group who didn't know how to swim opted to go ashore and lug supplies on foot. Today, the waters here run much slower due to the construction of the Monumental Dam about 14 miles downstream on the Snake.

The slow-moving water near the confluence makes great habitat for a variety of fish like walleye, channel catfish, yellow perch, blue gill, smallmouth bass, and northern pikeminnow. What's more, the fertile wheat land surrounding the Palouse offers a specific advantage for anglers targeting catfish.

Peppered up and down the river are shoreline grain elevators where grain is transferred from barge to land, and during harvest season, these spots attract large numbers of Channel Catfish. Anglers can boat to these grain elevators and target fish that feed on grain spill-over.

Catfish can also be targeted near shore in shallow, calm flats and deep holes with rocky bottoms. Channel catfish can be caught with night crawlers, bread dough balls, chicken livers, crawfish, shrimp, and stink baits, but the most consistent bait for me remains cut fish. Typically, a 1-2 inch chunk of yellow perch will do the trick.

Another method to deploy during the channel catfish spawning season (late spring-early summer) is running a small jig past a male catfish who sits guard over a nest.

This often triggers a defensive strike from the male. This is a site -fishing type of method, so to be successful, you'll want a decent pair of polarized sunglasses and will need to be accurate with your casting.

Fishing the Palouse after June 16th in Washington State means 2 pole fishing is permitted. Since fishing for Channel catfish can often be a long waiting game, the two-pole endorsement offers up a great opportunity for rigging one rod up for the more passive catfishing while then using a second

rod for something more active, like casting swim baits for walleye or smallmouth. It's good to equip your catfish rod with a bell at the tip to indicate a strike that you may not have noticed otherwise.

If you're interested in catching a variety of fish and don't want to deal with the hassle of switching from one set-up to another, no need to worry, there is a simple solution. A nightcrawler, a hook, and a worm tied together on a simple drop rig is a setup that I use for shore fishing on the Palouse, and have caught walleye, panfish,

pike minnow, and large catfish on. It's a one-size-fits-all set-up and works wonders in the calm waters of the Palouse. It's also a great setup for kids, so long as they have the patience to sit and wait for a bite.

I've seen some pretty nasty winds at the Palouse, and each time I've been pleasantly surprised by the lack of effect the wind had on the water. This could be because of a sheltering effect from the canyon walls surrounding the water, the lack of depth in the river itself, or a combination of both.

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Either way, the lower Palouse is a safe and excellent spot to launch a kayak or any other type of boat for a day of fishing.

There are multiple boat launches on or near the lower Palouse:

Lyons Ferry State Park offers a boat ramp and shore fishing opportunities.

Riparia boat ramp on the Snake River is just east of the confluence of the Snake and the Palouse

Ayer Boat Basin is on the Snake River and about 7 miles west of the confluence.

It has two boat ramps, a large parking lot to accommodate vehicles and trailers, and a campground for visitors,

So, if you're looking to get out and explore some of the most beautiful and geologically rich lands that our state has to offer, and you wouldn't mind coming home with a cooler full of a variety of fish, then the Palouse is where you should be heading on your next trip!



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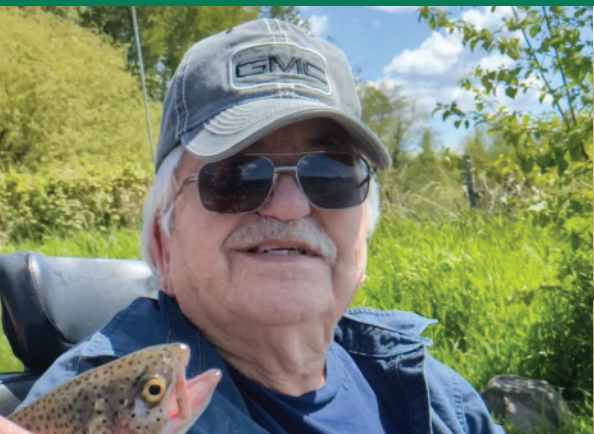
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10 Rules of COHO TROLLING



BY MIKE CAREY

It's coho time in the Sound, with resident coho open, and soon the ocean runs will start showing up. Fishing for these silver bullets will only get better, peaking in early September.

With that in mind, I was looking back through previously released articles and found this helpful article I wrote several years ago. The time has passed, but the rules still hold true. And while I won't be fishing the Sound this year, my thoughts will be with anglers throughout the Pacific Northwest enjoying this special fishery.

So here is my "Ten Tips" to help you catch more coho this year!

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September is a special time for me. Like the change in the weather, I can feel a change in myself, a pent-up anticipation that has slowly been building over the summer and like clockwork, bursts forth in full bloom. It's coho time in Puget Sound!

Yes, this is a great time of the year to be a salmon angler in Puget Sound, if the runs are strong and the fishing is open.

Looking at my fishing reports data from trips going back twenty years, it becomes pretty obvious that September is the time to put away freshwater gear and focus on salmon.

August can be productive, but September can be (and often is) lights out.

My reports show multiple trips with limits by 9 am, red hot fishing, and lots of pictures of shiny chrome coho. As the season progresses into later September, the fish show a steady increase in size.

By late September to early October, the 6-8 pound coho are replaced by beautiful 10-14 pound hooknose monsters. It's the time of year to stock up the freezer on tasty coho!

For those new to this fishery, you'll find a wealth of information on techniques and locations scattered on the web.

I've broken down some of my thoughts on coho trolling into Ten Rules of Coho Trolling.

Coho tend to be a pretty cooperative salmon when it comes to catching them. As these fish stream in from the ocean, heading through the Strait of Juan De Fuca and into Puget Sound, they are putting on the feed in preparation for their runs up to the spawning grounds.

It's not unusual to find coho stuffed with herring. Don't get me wrong, there are days they, like other salmon, will have lock-jaw.

But that truly is the exception, not the rule. Speaking of rules, I offer a list of rules I've developed over the years to catch more coho.

You'll likely have your rules to add to this list. Or you may disagree with some of them. But hopefully it will give you some additional ideas when targeting coho in the Sound.

RULE #1

As Russell Wilson would say, "Separation is in the preparation". - When you put your boat in the water, you should have everything

ready to go. No fiddling around with gear or bait the morning of a trip. My fishing ritual is to have everything ready to go the night before.

It's like a general plan for battle. My rods are ready and geared up. My bait has been cut and cured. My boat is prepped and clean, batteries are charged, gas tank is full, snacks are bought, and there's ice in the coolers for the fish.

This evening before prep time is actually a ritual I cherish because like Russ, I'm visualizing success and making a plan in my head.



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I try to never go fishing without a plan.

RULE #2

Start early, go shallow. - I try to be on the water as early as possible. Ideally, that means running lights on and gear going in the water while it's still dark or just turning light. I will run my gear in the top 10-30 feet of water to start.

This is the time of day when a salmon fly in the prop wash can be deadly. I like Arctic Fox Trolling Flies. Denis Peirce ties a nice fly in a variety of effective salmon colors. Try running the fly back 40-50 feet and troll fast (more on that later) with the fly practically skipping on the surface.

Just be sure to have the clicker on the reel because these strikes can be vicious. I love the sound of a clicker going off in the morning!

RULE #3

Watch your fish finder, drop your depth – As the morning progresses, drop your downriggers down. I've read the "rule of thumb" is ten feet every hour until you're trolling your gear around 40-60 feet. That's fine, I guess, but I also use my fish finder.

If I see bait and fish marks



down 50-70 feet, I'll drop down to those fish even if it's early in the morning.

As the day goes on, I may even drop my downrigger ball down to 110-120 feet deep.

Depth can be a tricky thing because when coho fishing I troll fast, which leads us to the next rule.

RULE #4

Troll fast! - In my experience, coho love a fast troll. I have an itroll throttle

control and will set it on "hunt" mode to keep my boat going fast, around 3.3 to 3.9 mph.

A few years back I did a lot of underwater filming and noticed a distinct increase in salmon aggression when the flasher was whipping around in a complete rotation.

If it was only doing a lazy rotation, or not doing a full rotation, coho would tend to swim behind the gear, just watching.

But speeding up and getting that flasher fully spinning would elicit vicious strikes. I will troll both with and against the tide and catch fish going both ways.

Just be sure to increase your throttle going into the tide to maintain that 3.5 mph speed. I'll also program my itroll to give a periodic 3-5 second slow down and then speed back up to "wake up" coho that may be lazily following but not biting.

It can often trigger a bite. Oh, another thing that will often trigger a bite – if you're checking gear, pop

your line off the release and set the rod in the rod holder. Let the gear come up on its own.

I have caught a lot of coho that will chase the gear as it ascends to the surface.

Don't reel your gear in until it hits the surface.

RULE #5

Coho are hungry, feed them! - Coho love a strip of herring on just about any lure. I will add strips to hoochies, flies, and even a small strip on the hook of a spoon (but not too much, you don't want to kill the spoon's action).

Be sure to brine the herring strips a day ahead of time in rock salt and/or commercial herring brine. Add scents and bite enhancers as well. Check your gear every 20-30 minutes and freshen up with a new herring strip. If you get a bite but no release, bring it in and check it!

The one exception to this rule I have is if the dogfish are in thick, I will go without bait.

RULE #6

Experiment – My "go to" setup is a magnum green splatter glow hoochie, herring strips, 26-30" leader,

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and an 11" dodger (pick your color...). I always start with this setup. On a second rod, I may run a different color and smaller hoochie.

If there is no action and I am seeing fish on the fish finder, I will start trying spoons and plastic lures like the old Big Al's Cripple Herring. Sometimes the coho just want something with more action. This year, I'm going to be trying the new Old Goat OG2 5" salmon lure.

The Old Goats have been awesome on kokanee, and I think they will be deadly on coho. They have an amazing action that I think coho will love.

RULE #7

Fish Where They Ain't (anglers that is) – coho in Puget Sound can be found pretty much anywhere. We all have favorite starting locations and it's human nature to follow the crowds of boats because "hey, they must know something I don't".

Maybe...and maybe not. I try to start my troll away from clusters of boats. Why be surrounded by additional lures in the water? You want to troll over fish that aren't seeing offerings non-stop.

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So, move away from everyone else – and if you take my advice and troll fast, you will, very quickly.

You'll still find the fish if they are there, and cover more water to find the biters. When you do, don't be afraid to mark the fish on your fish finder and troll around and right back over the same spot. Again, in viewing underwater footage, I invariably see groups of 4-6 coho following my gear.

A solo fish is very rare. So, work over those spots when you pick up a fish.

RULE #8

Mid-day and tide changes are good – I know I said earlier I like to hit the water

at daybreak, but there are days when that just doesn't happen. The good news with coho is that it doesn't matter. You can (and will) catch coho all morning and into midday.

Tide bites are the period before and after a low or high tide, and these times can be very productive. My favorite tide sequence is a high tide at around 9-10am. The flood tide pushes fish and as the tide slows down it triggers a feeding opportunity below for the coho salmon.

Bait becomes easier to pick off without a steady flow of water, and the coho bite often turns on. If you miss that crack of dawn bite, fear not; the coho will

cooperate. I've caught my biggest hooknose fish from 11am to 1pm.

RULE #9

Playing and netting your fish – OK, you have a big fish on and are trolling at 3.5 mph. What do anglers often do? Why, slow down, of course. Bad move. In today's age of barbless hooks, slowing down is an invitation to let the fish go. The second there is slack in that line, the hook can slip out.

Trolling for coho is not a fishery that is about the fight; it's about catching fish. If you want an epic battle against coho (and they are a hoot), catch them in rivers, or mooch for them. Trolling with an 11" flasher gives these fish a focal point with which they can get slack line.

We don't want to do anything to help them out, like slowing down. Once they are on the surface, do your best to keep the flasher out of the water. This will help prevent the fish from getting slack line between the hook and the flasher. Make sure you have a net with a long handle and a big opening.

This will help as the netter reaches out.

Remember, the netter scoops as the angler guides the fish into the net. Don't make the mistake of the netter reaching to net the fish! Once the fish is close to the boat, slowing down a bit is OK, by the way- just keep that flasher out of the water.

RULE #10

Take good care of your fish – Non-anglers have no idea what freshly caught salmon tastes like. As anglers, we are blessed to be able to have the freshest salmon on the planet. So, take good care of your caught fish. Bonk the fish enough to stun it, then cut a gill and bleed the fish out for a few minutes.

After that, into the ice cooler it goes. Don't hang it off the side of the boat to bake in the sun. At the end of the day, gut and cut into steaks, or filet the fish out. If possible, vacuum-seal whatever fillets you don't eat for dinner.

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It's Yellow Perch Time

By Mark Yuasa



Washington Department of
FISH & WILDLIFE



We've rounded the corner on summer, and the clock is ticking as the pre-fall chore list or heading back to school obligations become the front burners instead of on-the-water activities.

Summer days are winding down, but that doesn't mean you have to throw in the towel on fishing. Late summer and fall are prime times for yellow perch fisheries in many statewide waterways.

Yellow perch are colorful and identified by their golden-yellow, orange, and brass-colored bodies with distinct olive-green, vertical, triangular bars along each of their sides.

One of the top locations to catch a batch of yellow perch is Lake Washington, which is situated right in the backyard of downtown Seattle.

Yellow perch are a very stable population in the lake that covers nearly 22,000 acres and stretches 20 miles from Kenmore on the northern tip to Renton in the southeastern most section.

What makes these fish even more appealing is the fact that they're available to catch year-round, with late summer through early fall being the most productive fishing period.

Yellow perch average 7 to 10 inches (made up of three- and four-year-old age class fish), although some will be as large as 12 to 14 inches or longer. The official WDFW state record – wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/basics/records – of 2.75 pounds caught by Larry Benthien at Snelson's Slough in Skagit County on June 22, 1969, could

eventually be broken and come from King County's largest watershed.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) biologists say this is largely based on ample feed and lots of "elbow room" for yellow perch to grow in Lake Washington, the second largest natural-bodied lake in Washington.

Yellow perch spawn in the spring well ahead of many other warm-water fish species in the lake. The female perch are the largest and tend to grow much faster (maturing in three to four years) and are long-lived up to eight to 10 years.

Lake Washington has a diverse ecosystem, and you can also catch cutthroat and rainbow trout, catfish, carp, peamouth chub, brown

bullhead, smallmouth, and largemouth bass, and black crappie. Another abundant fish is the "rock bass", a species of the sunfish.

FISHING GEAR & TIPS

Yellow perch is one of Washington's several "panfish" species, which are very popular across the state because they're easy to catch and a great introductory fishery for beginners, young kids, and an overall fun family fishing activity. They are outstanding eating quality similar to the white, flaky flesh of walleye.

On lightweight fishing gear, yellow perch will put up a good fight, and they'll often stay active all day. It is not unusual to see thousands of perch schooling in shallow water areas of the lake, and while reeling one in, you could see many others following it up to the surface.

Even during the middle of a summer afternoon, yellow perch aren't spooked by all the boaters and jet- or water-skiers zipping around Lake Washington.

The best period to target yellow perch begins around July, when the water heats

up, and will peak in August through October. As winter arrives in November, yellow perch become harder to catch since they usually move into deeper water locations.

Yellow perch tend to school in shallow water areas, 15 to 35 feet, and you'll find them close to the shoreline or on the edge of drop-offs. Look for them hiding in shaded spots along the cover of weed beds, milfoil, aquatic weeds, and lily pads, or under docks or overhanging trees and brush. At night, they'll often look for cover in these locations to avoid predators



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such as smallmouth and largemouth bass.

Yellow perch mainly feed on small fish, crayfish, snails, clams, and smaller invertebrates.

What makes this fishery fun for everyone is the fact that there are so many locations accessible by boat or from the shoreline and public docks around Lake Washington.

The lake has plenty of elbow room to fish around Seward Park; Gene Coulon Park in Renton; Yarrow Bay in Kirkland; Magnuson Park; Andrews Bay; Newport area; Webster Point in Union Bay; Juanita Bay; Foster Island in the Montlake Cut; and docks at Mount Baker Park, Madison Park, Stan Sayres Pits, Leschi Park, Luther Burbank on Mercer Island, Kirkland, and Kenmore.

You can find a list of public fishing piers on Lake Washington on WDFW's website:

wdfw.wa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/01996/wdfw01996.pdf.

Fishing gear consists of a light-to-medium-action trout fishing rod with a spinning reel attached to four- to six-pound test main line. Simply stick to a piece of worm on a 15- to 24-inch

leader with a small salmon egg-style hook to a drop-shot egg-style weight.

Once you catch your first perch, you can use a small chunk of the meat or — believe it or not — even an eyeball. Colorful, tiny three-inch plastic worms or small-skirted crappie jigs and lures tipped with maggots, wax worms, or shrimp will also catch fish.

Yellow perch are light biters and tend to nibble on your bait, so don't set the hook hard and let them play with the bait. Then wait for your rod to bend before you gently reel them up. Yellow perch are bait stealers, and don't be duped when you occasionally reel up bare hooks. The great news is that once you drop it back down, you'll likely be rewarded with an actual fish!

ADDITIONAL LAKES TO CATCH YELLOW PERCH

Besides Lake Washington, there are many other statewide lakes where you can find yellow perch.

A standout yellow perch fishery in Eastern Washington is Curlew Lake in Ferry County, located northeast of Republic. For more than a decade, the yellow perch population has continued to rapidly grow,



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and combined with the average size (9 to 10 inches) has generated considerable enthusiasm by anglers.

“Curlew is a special place because it has ideal habitat, good water quality and plenty of food that creates a fast growth rate for the yellow perch population,” said Danny Garrett, a WDFW biologist.

Other east of the Cascades yellow perch fisheries include Moses Lake and Potholes Reservoir in Grant County; Leader Lake, Palmer Lake, Whitestone Lake, and Washburn Island Pond in Okanogan County; and Roses Lake and Wapato Lake in Chelan County.

Shifting back to the west side of the state, yellow perch can be found in Lake Sammamish near Issaquah; Lake Whatcom near Bellingham; Sawyer Lake northwest of Black Diamond; Lake Goodwin northwest of Marysville;

Lake Stevens east of Everett; Beaver Lake and Pine Lake near Issaquah; American Lake near Fort Lewis; Lake Kapowsin southeast of Puyallup; Angle Lake south of Sea-Tac Airport; Lake Desire in Renton; and Lake Meridian in Kent.

Before heading out, check the WDFW regulation pamphlet for specific rules at wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regulations. You can also find yellow perch information on the WDFW website at wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/species/perca-flavescens, including an informative video at youtu.be/-V5d--VkQ4Q.

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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BY ERIC MAGNUSON

LONG LAKE WALLEYE



There are lakes you fish because they're close to home, and then there are lakes that become part of who you are. For me, that's Long Lake, known to some as Lake Spokane. Growing up on that lake, from the shores of my grandparents' place at Willow Bay, or at my favorite Aunt and Uncle's place just before Tum Tum. I have so many fond memories of this lake and how it's changed over time. Stretching nearly 24 miles, located northwest of Spokane, this reservoir has a personality that changes with every season.

Some days it's calm and forgiving. Other days, it demands patience and humility. But one thing remains constant: the opportunity to catch incredible walleye if you're willing to learn the lake. Walleye aren't flashy fish. They don't explode on a topwater lure or leap skyward like a trout or bass. Instead, they reward anglers who pay attention to subtle details. That's exactly what keeps me coming back year after year.

Spring is when my anticipation begins to build. As water temperatures climb into the mid 40s and low 50s, walleye transition from spawning areas and begin feeding aggressively. I focus on rocky shorelines, gravel flats, and the mouths of smaller bays. Areas around Nine Mile Falls, and just below, I focus on stretches with gradual drop-offs adjacent to gravel beds; this will often produce consistent action. Fish are usually holding in 8 to 20 feet of water, especially during low-light periods. This is a great time to take advantage of

the night fishing near the Spokane House launch. Pulling crankbaits such as large Bandits really gets the big fish's attention. Typically fishing anywhere from 12'-17' feet directly in the rocks, making sure them Bandits are tickling them as you troll. You will lose lures, but the rewards are worth it. Just please be cautious of that stretch of river as there are plenty of boulders, and good current. I have found 3' of water quickly in my Hewescraft, and it can get hairy. During spring, a jig tipped with a soft plastic paddle tail or curly-tail grub is

also hard to beat. Natural colors like pearl, chartreuse, white, and motor oil consistently produce fish. Slowly hopping the jig along the bottom often triggers strikes. A live nightcrawler on a jig can make an already productive presentation even better when fish are less aggressive.

As spring gives way to summer, walleye begin following schools of baitfish toward deeper structure. Long tapering points, submerged humps, rock piles, and channel edges become prime real estate.



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Most fish settle into depths between 18 and 35 feet, although early mornings and evenings often pull them shallower to feed.

Summer is trolling season, and it's difficult to beat a well-presented bottom bouncer paired with a crawler harness. Smile blades in silver, gold, chartreuse, orange, and red finishes all have their moments depending on water clarity and sunlight. Keep your speed between .8 and 1.0 mph, making gentle turns to vary lure speed and trigger following fish. I really like to bottom bounce long sandy flats, or gravel areas, finding a lot

of these fish not too far from the main river channel.

Crankbaits also shine throughout the summer. Deep-diving models that imitate perch, or juvenile trout can cover water efficiently. Productive colors often include firetiger during stained conditions and natural perch or silver patterns when the water is clear. If electronics reveal fish suspended over deeper water, trolling crankbaits slightly above them is often more productive than dragging lures directly through the school.

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Fall is my favorite time on Long Lake. Boat traffic fades, temperatures cool, and the walleye feed heavily before winter. Fish move back toward shallower structure, often holding around rocky points, submerged rock piles, and weed edges in 10 to 25 feet of water.

This is when jigging becomes incredibly effective again. Sonic Baitfish, blade baits, jigging minnows, and traditional lead-head jigs all produce. Slow, deliberate movements often outperform aggressive retrieves as cooling water slows a walleye's metabolism.

Every tap feels meaningful, and every fish seems a little heavier.

Many anglers put their boats away once winter arrives, but a few of us dedicated walleye fishermen know some of the year's best fishing is still ahead. Long Lake remains open year-round, and walleye continue feeding despite the cold water. They simply become more predictable.

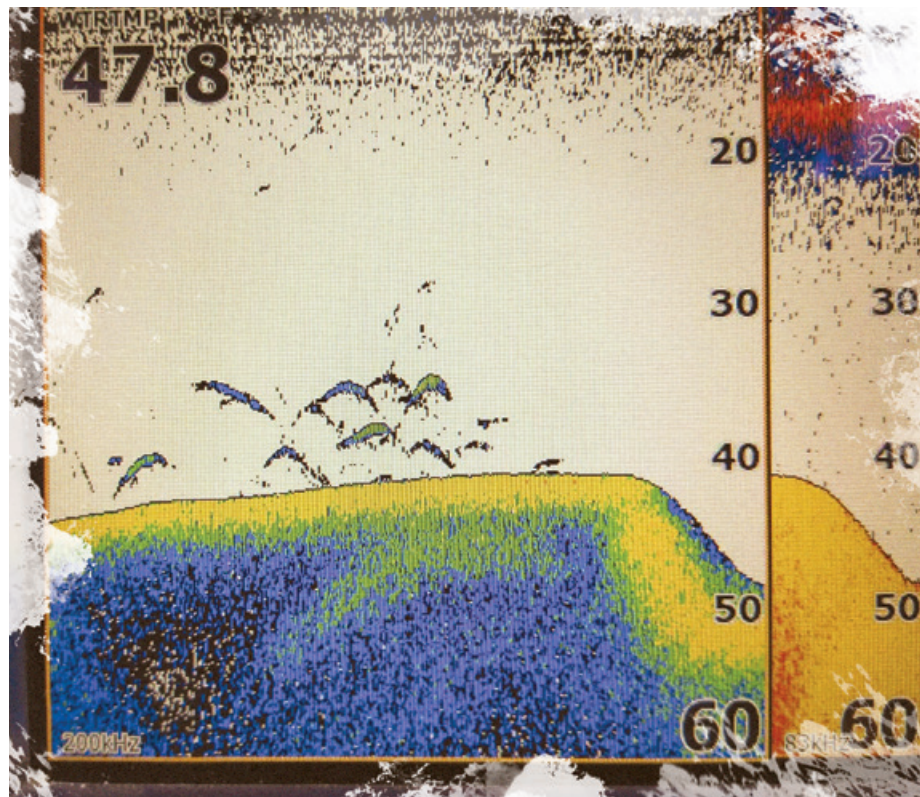
Winter fish often concentrate along steep breaks, and along the river channel around edges, and rocky structure in 20 to 40 feet of water I have found most success.

Vertical jigging with SonicBaitfish, jigging soft plastics, or blade baits worked painfully slow can be incredibly productive. Patience becomes your greatest lure. Sometimes, a bait barely moving is exactly what a cold-water walleye wants. A presentation of a plastic that mimics a leech is deadly.

Throughout the year, electronics become one of your greatest tools. Modern sonar and forward-facing technology help identify baitfish, underwater structure, and subtle depth changes that often hold active fish. Still, technology only tells part of the story. Learning

how wind pushes bait, how changing weather affects feeding windows, and how seasonal movements repeat themselves every year is what truly builds confidence on this lake.

Long Lake is full of hidden rock piles, long underwater points, flooded timber, and contour changes that don't always appear obvious on the surface. Every trip reveals something new. Every missed fish teaches another lesson. That's part of its charm.



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SCAN ME

Walleye fishing isn't always about filling a livewell. It's about watching the sunrise paint the water gold, feeling that unmistakable thump on the end of your line, and knowing you earned it through patience and persistence. Long Lake has taught me that success isn't measured only by numbers but by time spent learning a place that never stops surprising you.

Every season tells a different story on Long Lake. Spring brings hope, summer rewards consistency, fall offers excitement, and winter reminds us that the best anglers are often the ones willing to fish when everyone else has gone home. That's why this lake keeps calling me back—and why I know it always will.

And for my last cast, always be aware of the winter water levels. Not every winter is necessarily fishable, depending on the levels. And check regulations before heading out, as Long has separate rules from Roosevelt. Reel In the Memories!



MEET THE NWF TEAM:

AARON GRANT



CONTENT CORRESPONDENT



Let's welcome Aaron Grant to the Northwest Fishing Team! Aaron is a passionate sportfisherman who's been reelin' since he was just a kid. An active outdoors community member and Spokane local, he loves documenting his Washington State trips and catches, while encouraging others out there to get their lines in the water. Chances are high that you'll catch Aaron out fishing with his dad, Archie, keeping the family fishing tradition alive and well. He is also an Alaskan fishing fanatic - crabbing, shrimping, and bottomfishing is the name of his game! Saltwater to freshwater, Aaron embodies the authentic experience of sportfishing. *"Tight lines!"*

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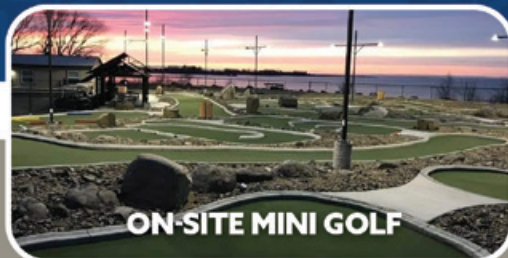
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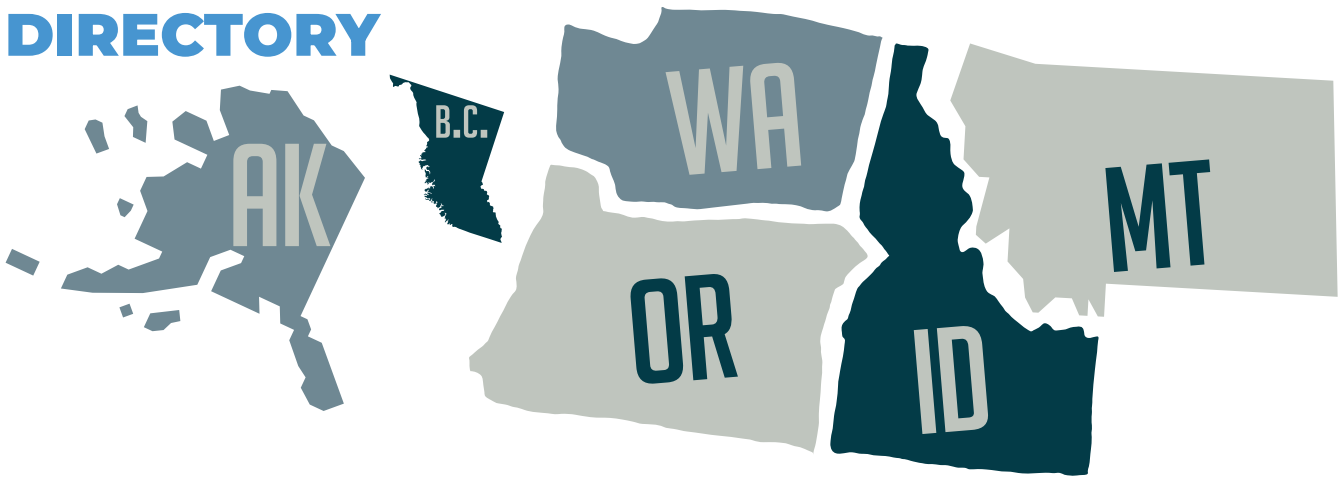
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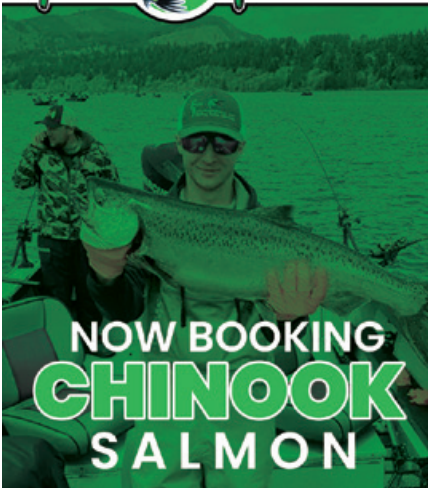
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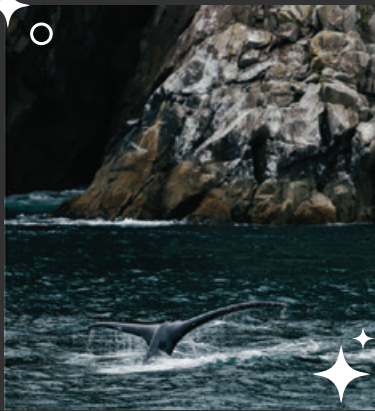
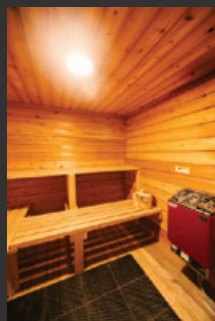
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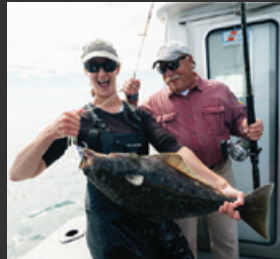
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See the turkey hunting regulations for bag limits by area.

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations/migratory-waterfowl-upland-game>

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