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NORTHWEST FISHING

• COVER STORY

COHO

PROSPECTS FOR 2026

WDFW's Coho Predictions for fall

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WASHINGTON COASTAL

RIVER SALMON

*Reasons for Optimism,
Tempered by Long Term Challenges*

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EDITOR'S CORNER:

How's everyone's salmon season going? September was my favorite month when I lived in Washington. I would fish every weekend, often times both Saturday and Sunday. Gearing up the night before was a satisfying ritual, as I checked the tides, winds, and strategized my plan of attack. The coho were going to get every bit of knowledge and experience I had gained over the years of fishing Puget Sound. From fishing the rip tides of Possession, to trolling off the oil docks of Edmonds to Shilshole Marina, or running over to Jeff Head, each spot held memories of fish caught over the years that would click "on" giving me an instant feeling of confidence. "Remember that stormy early afternoon we watched the sailboat blow over – and hit two sets of doubles in 15 minutes as the wind howled and white caps appeared with the ominous clouds of a fast approaching squall?" "Or the time we were off of Picnic Point and got that 15 pound hook-nose coho at 130 feet of wire?" Ah, memories shared with friends are the best memories of all. Go out and make your own!

- Mike Carey, Northwest Fishing



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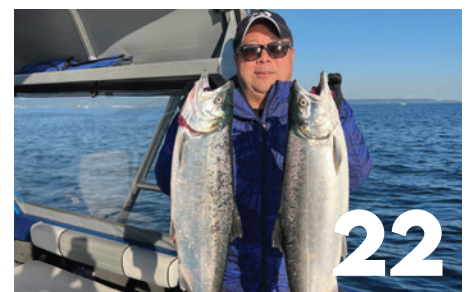


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Photo by Jeff Betz



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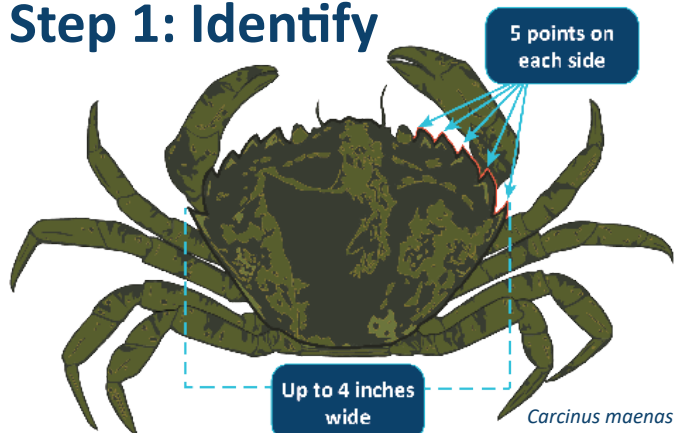
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FOX 13 Seattle's Bill Wixey with a coho salmon
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FIND BIG *Smallies* Fast ON THE MID-COLUMBIA

LEARN HOW TO QUICKLY READ AND TACKLE BIG FISH IN UNFAMILIAR WATERS.

BY GARY LEWIS

If an angler is hunting big fish on the Columbia, the challenge is to read the water fast. It's a lot like how tournament anglers have to adjust when fishing a lake for the first time.

My biggest ever largemouth came from the mouth of the John Day River. We were done fishing for the day, but we wanted to throw a cast at a clump of willows. The big fish, a female, was staged right where she could ambush minnows running out of the mouth of the river. She ambushed the wrong thing that day. After we weighed her, we put her back.

The river is home to a few largemouth, but smallmouth bass are the primary target.

AN OPEN-MINDED APPROACH

Once I interviewed a couple of bass pros about how they find big fish fast. Ish Monroe, an MLF pro from Hughson, California, said, *"Most people miss out when they don't approach the water with an open mind."*

Dean Rojas, from Lake Havasu, Arizona, pointed out that western reservoirs are characterized by lots of rock and clear water. That sums up the Columbia. Rocky points, rip rap, cliffs, and beaches illustrate where bass are likely to be in the summertime.

Sometimes we get hung up on what color of bait works best in what kind of water.

"In clear water, I use more natural colors," Ish said.

"In dirty water, dark colors like black and blue or bright colors like chartreuse work better."

Shade is most important, Monroe said, *"and thick cover."* But the third component is access to deep water. *"In shade and heavy cover, bass just sit in it and wait for the bait to come to them."*

One of the best tools for the traveling bass angler is Google Earth. A quick virtual tour of a reservoir can reveal structures that might not be seen at full pool. Old photos can reveal structures that were flooded when the dam was built.

The McNary Dam, which holds Lake Wallula, was finished in 1954.



The John Day Dam, which created Lake Umatilla, was completed in 1971. The Dalles Dam was completed in 1957, creating Lake Celilo. All three lakes flooded small ranches, small towns, small roads, and the mouths of creeks. Those roads and foundations are all still there, but are not evident except at extremely low water.

A better way to see the structure is with Navionics. The same water, examined with a Navionics chart, reveals the road beds, old foundations, and submerged bridges. Imagine bass bedding on the old road and schooled up in an old schoolhouse.

A few days before a trip, I like to check Weather Underground (wunderground.com) for the 10-day forecast. This site tracks cloud cover, temperature, precipitation, wind, wind direction, and the barometer. It is hard to quantify how barometric pressure affects bass fishing, but it does. When the barometric pressure is high, fish tend to be slow and sluggish. In general, I like to hit the water when the pressure has been stable, around 30.00 for three days, ahead of a low-pressure front.

Fishing tends to be best when the pressure is dropping, is low, or slowly rising. When the pressure is higher, expect fish to pull back into cover or suspend in deeper water. In these cases, downsize the bait and try for pinpoint casting into heavy cover. Or use a slow spybait presentation in deeper water.

Sometimes the biggest fish come when stalking close to the bank. One time on the big river between Biggs and The Dalles, I was fishing with Jim Goerg and Michael Gibney. I was drowning a new swimbait, and Gibney and Goerg were using tubes. At the head of an island, Gibney stepped up to the trolling motor. "20 feet deep here." **Wham!** My rod bent with a 12-inch bass.

Gibney's rod shivered, and he set the hook. I brought my fish to the boat quickly, but there was no stopping Gibney's fish. "*I don't know what this is, but it's not a bass,*" he said. "*And it's not a salmon.*"

A six-foot, six-inch three-power Lamiglas and a Pflueger Maxx XT spinning reel loaded with 20-pound braided Power Pro is good medicine for a four-pound bass, but Gibney was definitely under-gunned



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PROSPECTING THE BACK BAYS

Bass often hide in surface weeds, which can grow a thick mat of vegetation at the surface.

Look for grass mats or weed mats with open water beneath them. This could be broken-off tule reeds, patches of lily pads, or dead weeds of any variety - anything that provides protection above and freedom of movement below. Anglers walking the shore can often do better than fishermen in boats. Flip or pitch into vegetation. A lure with fast-sinking action causes reaction strikes. If the rig sinks and hits the bottom without a strike, try again close by. Use a heavier rod for punching because fish hooked in these close quarters can come with five pounds of weeds. Get no closer to the shoreline or the weed bed than a long cast. Stay off the trolling motor. Stay quiet on the boat. Try not to open and close the rod lockers in shallow water.



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.



MICHAEL GIBNEY RELEASES A SEVEN-FOOT COLUMBIA RIVER STURGEON THAT HE CAUGHT ON LIGHT TACKLE

for the mystery fish he'd hooked. We followed the fish into 70 feet of water, dangerously close to the nets.

Twenty-five minutes later, we caught a glimpse of a seven-foot sturgeon, with a three-inch green pumpkin red flake tube in its mouth. Close to the boat, another huge sturgeon rolled. The fish blasted for deep water again, and Gibney handed me the rod.

Fifty-two minutes after the beast grabbed the tube, we had him alongside the boat, where I backed the hook out with pliers. He kicked away with a splash that drenched the bass pro.

Gibney wiped the water from his glasses, and we went back to the head of the island. I switched to a tube. Gibney tied on a silver-sided jerk bait. He rocketed a cast past an underwater ridge of rock, and we watched, stunned, as two 6-pound smallmouths attacked. Gibney's bait was almost out of the water, but one of the 6-pounders grabbed my bait and spit it back out, then the other slammed it and threw the hook. A third fish, the consolation ten-incher coming out of nowhere, clamped down, held on, and coughed up a crawdad on the way in.



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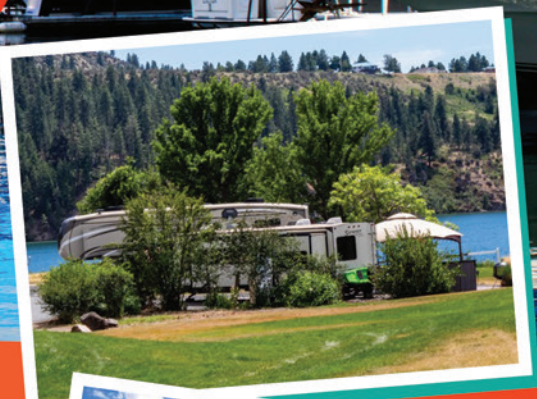
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WASHINGTON COASTAL RIVER SALMON PROSPECTS

REASONS FOR OPTIMISM,
TEMPERED BY LONG TERM CHALLENGES

BY BRENT KNIGHT

Washington's coastal rivers occupy some of the most productive salmon country in the Lower 48. From the Willapa and Chehalis systems north to the Quinault, Queets, Hoh, and Quillayute system in Forks, these waters support Chinook, coho, chum, and other salmonids while sustaining tribal fisheries, recreational anglers, commercial fishing communities, and ecosystems built around returning salmon.

For 2026, the outlook is encouraging in several important respects. Forecasts released by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) point to substantial returns of coho and other salmon to the Washington coast, and ocean fishing opportunities reflect relatively strong expectations for several stocks. At the same time, the picture differs considerably by river

and species. Natural-origin Chinook remain a particular concern in some watersheds, while changing ocean and freshwater conditions continue to create uncertainty.

A STRONGER COASTAL COHO PICTURE

Coho are one of the brightest parts of Washington's 2026 coastal salmon outlook.

WDFW forecasts an overall Washington coastal coho return of approximately 419,000 fish in 2026. That total includes both naturally produced and hatchery salmon returning to coastal watersheds.

Individual systems illustrate the scale of the expected return. Preliminary forecasts put Willapa Bay coho at approximately 127,000 fish, including about 100,600 hatchery-origin and 26,500 natural-origin fish.

Grays Harbor also has a substantial projected coho return. Preliminary forecast tables indicate roughly 71,900 natural-origin and

93,300 hatchery coho, producing a combined forecast of about 165,000 fish. Farther north, forecasts include approximately 60,000 coho for the Quinault system, 31,500 for the Queets, and 6,500 natural-origin coho for the Hoh.

These forecasts do not guarantee equally good fishing everywhere. River flows, ocean survival, harvest rates, run timing, and in-season abundance can all influence what anglers ultimately experience. Still, the numbers provide legitimate reasons for optimism about coastal coho fishing during the 2026 season.

The ocean fishery provides another indication of that outlook. Washington's recreational ocean salmon fishery received a 102,900-fish hatchery coho quota for 2026, up from 99,720 in 2025. WDFW described the forecasts for important Chinook and coho stocks contributing to the ocean

fishery as strong enough to provide good recreational opportunity.

WILLAPA BAY SHOWS BOTH OPPORTUNITY AND CONCERN

Few places demonstrate the complicated nature of Washington salmon management better than Willapa Bay.

The 2026 preseason forecast calls for approximately 28,120 Chinook returning to Willapa Bay. However, only about 2,779 are projected to be natural-origin fish, compared with approximately 25,341 hatchery-origin Chinook. The natural-origin forecast is below WDFW's listed escapement goal of 4,353 fish.

That contrast explains why a seemingly healthy total salmon return does not necessarily mean managers can liberalize fishing across the board.

A large hatchery return may create harvest opportunities while a comparatively weak natural stock requires protection. In Willapa Bay during the 2026 season, recreational regulations therefore require anglers to release wild, or unmarked, Chinook.

Coho present a more favorable picture. The forecast of 127,123 Willapa coho includes a natural origin return of 26,499 fish, compared with a listed WDFW escapement goal of 13,600. Chum salmon are also expected to return in significant numbers: the 2026 Willapa forecast totals approximately 110,837 chum, the great majority of them natural-origin fish.

Willapa therefore illustrates an important point about discussing "salmon prospects." There is rarely one simple answer. One species, or even one component of a species, may be doing relatively well while another remains constrained.

GRAYS HARBOR AND THE CENTRAL COAST

Grays Harbor and its tributaries, including the Chehalis and Humptulips systems, are another major focus for coastal salmon anglers.

Coho prospects appear relatively promising based on preseason abundance estimates. Chum numbers are also notable. WDFW's 2026 forecast projects approximately 93,877 chum returning to Grays Harbor, including more than 87,000 natural-origin fish.



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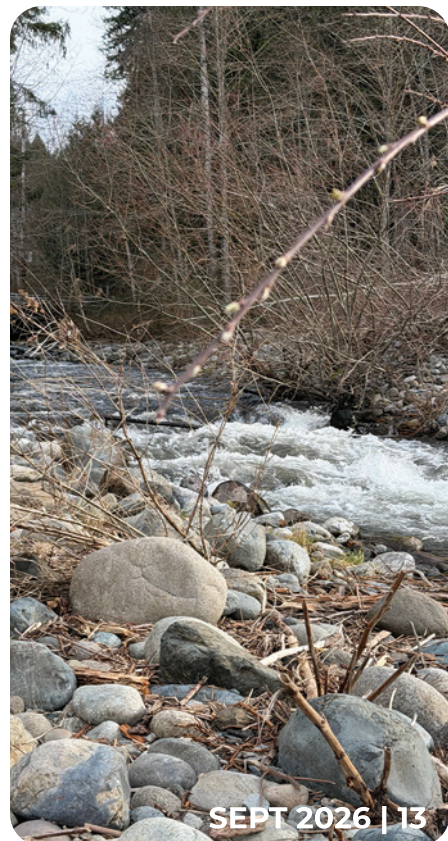
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As elsewhere on the coast, however, abundance is only part of the management equation. Fisheries must be designed around conservation requirements, escapement objectives, treaty obligations, and the expected effects of different fisheries on individual salmon populations.

Washington's annual North of Falcon process brings WDFW, tribal co-managers, federal managers, anglers, commercial fishing interests, and other participants into the season-setting process. Forecasts are developed early in the year and then used in negotiations and modeling that ultimately determine where, when, and how salmon can be harvested. That means a large overall forecast does not automatically translate into a long season or generous limits on every river.

NORTH COAST RIVERS REMAIN WILD-SALMON STRONGHOLDS

Moving north along the Olympic Peninsula, rivers such as the Quinault, Queets, and Hoh retain something increasingly valuable: substantial natural salmon production and extensive habitat within or near protected lands.

The 2026 preliminary coho forecasts illustrate the importance of these systems. The Quinault forecast includes approximately 23,600 natural and 36,500 hatchery coho. The Queets forecast includes roughly 10,400 natural and 21,100 hatchery fish. The Hoh forecast calls for approximately 6,500 natural coho.

These rivers are important not simply because they produce fish for harvest. They are also benchmarks for understanding how salmon populations function in watersheds that retain comparatively

intact forests, floodplains, tributaries, and spawning habitat.

Protecting that habitat will be increasingly important as environmental conditions change.

THE BIGGEST UNKNOWN MAY BE THE OCEAN

Salmon spend part of their lives in freshwater, but much of their survival story is written at sea.

Ocean temperature, currents, upwelling, prey availability, predators, and marine food webs can dramatically affect the number of juvenile salmon that survive long enough to return as adults. Those conditions can change rapidly, making even scientifically sophisticated forecasts imperfect.

That uncertainty deserves particular attention in 2026. NOAA Fisheries reported in March that a large marine heatwave had persisted off the West Coast since

the previous summer, only the third time such a broad area had remained exceptionally warm for so long into winter without an El Niño event. NOAA notes that marine heatwaves can reduce salmon survival because warmer ocean conditions are generally associated with lower productivity, although the effects can vary by species and location.

Freshwater conditions pose another long-term challenge. Climate change is altering both rivers and the ocean, including the availability of cold-water habitat salmon during freshwater stages of their lives.

For Washington's coastal watersheds, maintaining cold tributaries, reconnecting floodplains, improving fish passage, protecting spawning gravel, restoring estuaries, and preserving functioning forests will therefore become even more important.

HABITAT IS THE LONG-TERM INVESTMENT

Fishing regulations can control harvest, and hatcheries can provide fish for fisheries, but neither can fully substitute for productive habitat.

Salmon need connected habitat throughout their life cycle: clean spawning gravels, cold tributaries, complex river channels, floodplain wetlands, estuaries, and productive marine waters. Habitat restoration is therefore a major component of salmon recovery efforts throughout the West Coast.

Significant investment continues in this area. In 2026, NOAA Fisheries announced up to \$99 million through the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund for state and tribal conservation and recovery projects benefiting Pacific salmon and steelhead.

Those projects may not produce immediate results visible during a single fishing season, but over decades they may prove more important than any particular annual forecast.

WHAT ANGLERS SHOULD EXPECT IN 2026

For Washington coastal salmon anglers, the 2026 season offers genuine reasons for enthusiasm.

Coho numbers are encouraging in several major systems. Hatchery production should provide meaningful harvest opportunity, and the recreational ocean fishery entered the summer with slightly higher quotas for both Chinook and hatchery coho than in 2025. Willapa Bay also has strong projected hatchery Chinook and coho returns, while coastal chum forecasts exceed 200,000 fish between Grays Harbor and Willapa Bay. But optimism should remain measured.

Natural Chinook abundance continues to limit opportunity in some areas, and anglers should



expect selective fisheries, changing regulations, and river-specific restrictions designed to protect weaker stocks. Forecasts are estimates rather than guarantees, and actual returns can diverge significantly from preseason expectations.

The larger story is that Washington's coast still possesses something extraordinary: rivers capable of producing substantial numbers of wild salmon alongside hatchery-supported fisheries.

The challenge is ensuring they remain that way.

If habitat restoration, responsible harvest management, hatchery reform, tribal and state co-management, and climate adaptation can work together, Washington's coastal rivers can continue supporting salmon, and salmon fishing, for generations to come. The 2026 forecasts provide reasons to look forward to the coming runs, but the future of these fish will ultimately depend less on any single year's numbers than on the condition of the rivers and ocean they depend upon.

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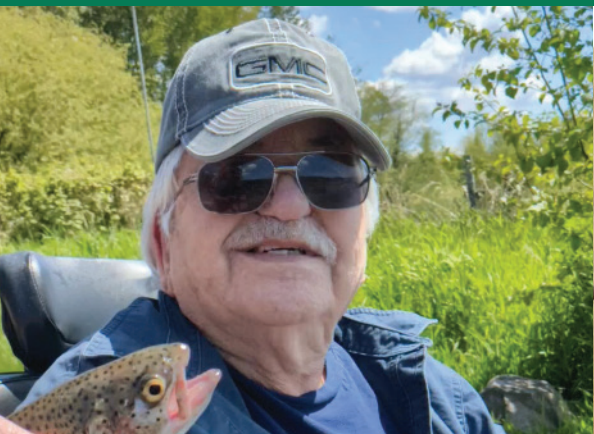
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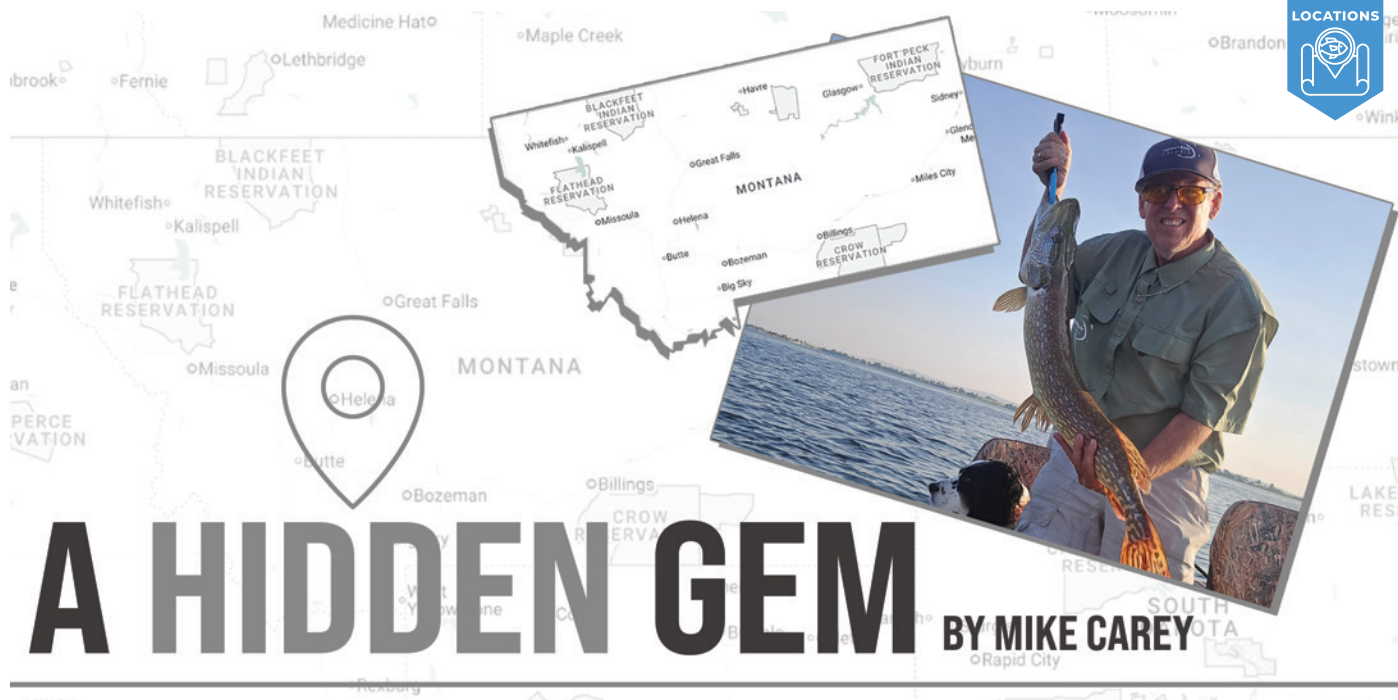


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Tucked away in the northeast corner of Montana is a body of water that is often overlooked by those not in the know. It's a 4,000-acre reservoir stocked with 100,000 walleye every year and teeming with well-fed northern pike, yet anglers drive by oblivious as they head to the famed waters of Fort Peck Reservoir.

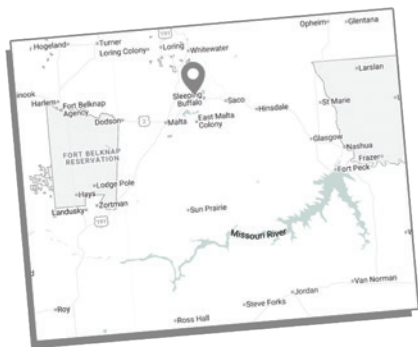
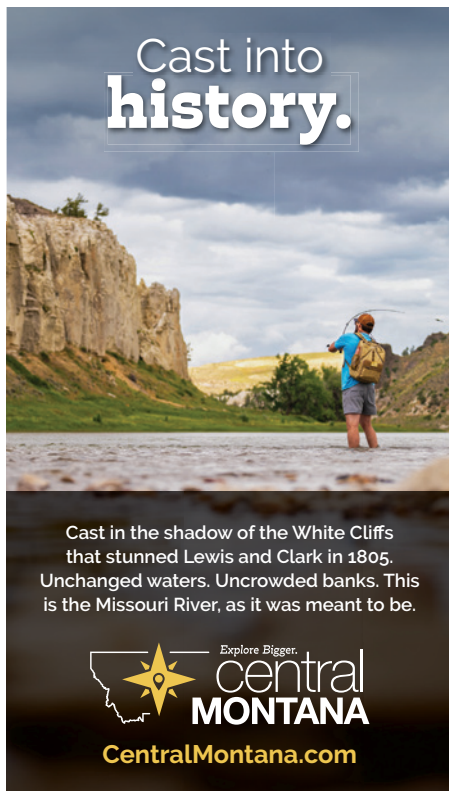
It's an understandable oversight. After all, Fort Peck is the destination for anyone traveling to this part of the state. It's a long drive from everywhere - why would you want to stop an hour short of Glasgow and miss out on the amazing fishing Fort Peck has to offer?

During my first three years of living in Montana, I would make the 5-hour drive to Glasgow and go right by Nelson Reservoir, thinking how could I fish there and lose a day on Fort Peck? Then I started to do a little research and realized that this (much) smaller body of water had a high regard by those in the know. Nelson Reservoir was viewed as an alternative option when the winds were blowing hard and keeping anglers off Fort Peck.

Nelson Reservoir was created from the Milk River in 1914 when the dam was constructed, and enlarged in 1921, providing off-stream irrigation. The reservoir has 30 miles of shoreline at

full pool, with a maximum depth of 47 feet and fills to 4,320 acres. There is a free campground - first come, first served - pit toilets, and a concrete boat ramp with a small dock. A word of caution regarding this launch: it has to be one of the shallowest angled ramps I have ever used. I had to back all the way into the water to eventually launch my 16-foot jon boat. If you have a larger boat, you will definitely benefit from having someone's help by driving the boat off your trailer!

Motoring out at the crack of dawn, I enjoyed a golden red, orange, and yellow sunrise, with a few scattered



clouds catching and reflecting the morning rays over the calm lake. I have the Garmin Boating App on my phone, which I think is a must for anyone fishing in lakes and reservoirs. Sure enough, I had a depth map on my phone and had already selected a few likely-looking locations to try. Montana is a two-rod state for lakes and reservoirs, and I always take advantage of the chance to put out a second line. My target for the day was walleye. I rigged both rods up with Macks Lure setups, a green/yellow walleye pop on one rod, and a silver smile blade on the other. 2-ounce bottom walkers got my gear comfortably down to the 20-30 foot deep starting range. After feeling the bottom-walker bounce the bottom, I reeled up a couple feet and set the rods in rod holders. One rod had a nightcrawler for bait, and the other had a leech (which I must say; I have found just about out-fish nightcrawlers!).

My jon boat has a 50 HP jet to move it, and a Minn Kota Power Drive on the bow. I jokingly call this jon boat my "old man" boat because I specifically wanted a 16 foot boat I could use on both the Missouri River and

smaller lakes, and it had to be light enough that I could handle it as I got older. So far, it's worked out perfectly, and I really enjoy fishing in it. It's also a blast to be running a river on a jet boat again! It's a Lowe Aura L1648M from Elephant Boys in Spokane, and I was very pleased with the set-up and service.

Starting 1.2 mph, I set the course and sat back to wait and see what might be around. My dog, Duke, looked at me and settled in for a nap. Duke is a great pheasant dog, but when it comes to fishing, he is more interested in naps and treats than fish.

I decided to run bottom-bouncers, picking out a couple 2.5 oz. On one rod I ran a Macks Lure wally-pop in green/yellow with a smile blade, and on the other a set of orange and yellow beads with a smile blade. One rig had a nightcrawler on a slow death hook, and the other a leech on a single hook. I'm really growing to like leeches as bait. They are tough and stay on the hook well, stretch out nicely while trolling, and have a nice motion to them in the water. In addition, them being shorter than nightcrawlers, I have been

getting more consistent hook-ups. Finally, the perch are less interested in them, so I get fewer perch nipping my bait.

It didn't take too long before my rod doubled over and the line started pulling out of the reel. Grabbing the rod out of the rod holder, I felt the solid weight of a good fish. The line was peeling off the reel. "This is a nice fish, Duke!" Duke looked up from his nap, as if to say "Hey, I'm sleeping here." I think "This is one nice walleye", when it takes a run and clears the water, revealing a very strong Northern Pike!

OK, game on! I proceeded to work the freshwater barracuda to the boat and scooped him into the net - yes! For my personal best, I measure the fish in the net and it hits 30". Not a monster by pike standards, but a lot of fun to catch. After reviving the toothy beast, I released him back to the water. Although I understand pike is good to eat, I'm only keeping walleye on this trip. In any case, it's a great way to start the morning. The excitement over, Duke goes back to his bed, a little more awake and interested in what's going on.

I methodically work different depths and land a nice 21" keeper walleye. But the pike just keep biting, getting in the way of my walleye fish fry. Every time either rod doubles back, I'm hoping it's a nice walleye, and every time it turns out to be another nice pike!

I do end up with three keeper walleye, more than enough for my fish fry, but wow, what a day for catching pike! I end up with easily over a dozen caught and more lost. The pike are healthy 28-33" specimens.

There are Nelson Reservoirs all over the Pacific NW - lakes and reservoirs that are overlooked and driven past enroute to more well-known, popular destinations. The moral of this story is don't overlook that lake you drive past, it might just be your next great adventure.



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WASHINGTON'S

COHO

PROSPECTS FOR 2026

BY MARK YUASA

As summer begins to fade away, excitement is blooming heading into fall with a large coho forecast expected to peak in the weeks ahead.

The front end of the migratory coho run - commonly labeled as silvers by anglers for their bright, chrome-colored body - entered the Strait of Juan de Fuca and Puget Sound in early August with fair to good catches reported.

Coho (averaging 4 to 15 pounds, with some exceeding 20 pounds) create a lot of fervor, and when hooked, they'll leap out of the water and make erratic zigzagging patterns across the surface.



Washington Department of
FISH & WILDLIFE



Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) salmon managers indicate that the 2026 coho prediction has the potential to generate the highest statewide recreational fishery catches seen in more than 20 years. Fingers crossed! The 2026 statewide combined hatchery and wild coho forecast is 1,827,748, up from 1,588,658 in 2025. In Puget Sound, the coho forecast is 897,190, up from 727,058 in 2025; 722,134 in 2024; and 760,029 in 2023.

During the North of Falcon salmon season setting process earlier this year, WDFW staff presented the 2026 Puget Sound coho forecasts and abundance trends.

For hatchery coho, it showed a 4% improvement, and wild coho are up 53% compared to the 2025 forecast. The recent 10-year average for hatchery coho is up 45%, and wild coho is up 55%. The total Puget Sound coho (hatchery and wild combined) is up 49% from the 10-year average run size and up 22% from the 2025 forecast.

The coho buzz began back in June when Marine Area 10 (Seattle and Bremerton Area) saw good fishing for resident coho. Krill, a major part of a coho diet, has been plentiful in Marine Area 10, as well as baitfish such as herring. The ample feed kept many of the resident fish congregated in the area, and are now

being joined by their larger migratory cousins.

Marine Area 10 is open for coho daily through Sept. 30 with a two salmon daily limit, and anglers must release Chinook and chum. Fishing is also open daily from Oct. 1 through Nov. 15 with a two salmon daily limit, and anglers must release Chinook. Shilshole Bay reopens on Sept. 1. To know when it's best to hit the water, be sure to monitor the WDFW catch sampling webpage at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/reports/creel/puget>.

A good number of coho have already entered the Strait of Juan de Fuca at Marine Area 5 (Sekiu-Pillar Point) and Marine Area 6 (East Strait of Juan de Fuca). These two areas are the barometer of when the peak return of coho will move into Puget Sound.

The Marine Area 5 salmon fishery is open daily through Sept. 24 with a two salmon daily limit, and anglers must release Chinook, chum, sockeye, and wild coho. Then the area is open daily for all coho retention from Sept. 25 through Oct. 15 with a two-salmon daily limit, and anglers must release

Chinook, chum, and sockeye.

In Marine Area 6, the salmon fishery is open daily through Sept. 24 with a two-salmon daily limit, and anglers must release Chinook, chum, sockeye, and wild coho. Then the area is open daily for all coho retention from Sept. 25 through Oct. 15 with a two-salmon daily limit, and anglers must release Chinook, chum, and sockeye.

The best fishing in the Strait tends to be located about one to 10 miles out in the shipping lanes at

depths of 200 to 500 feet or deeper. Remember to stay within the U.S. side of the shipping lanes. Look for tide rips and current breaks where krill and baitfish tend to concentrate and attract coho. Also, watch for schools of coho jumping and rolling on the surface.

Moving inland, Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands) is open daily for all coho retention from Sept. 1 through Sept. 30 with a two salmon daily limit, and anglers must release Chinook, chum, and sockeye.

Looking for popular inner-sound locations for

coho? Try Marine Area 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island, and Skagit Bay), which is open for coho daily through Oct. 11 with a two salmon daily limit, and anglers must release Chinook and chum. And, just to the south near Everett is Marine Area 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner), which is open for coho daily through Sept. 25 with a two-salmon daily limit, and anglers must release Chinook and chum.

Marine Area 9 (Admiralty Inlet) from Port Townsend south to Apple Cove Point-Edwards Point southernmost boundary

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line, and all points in between, are open daily through Sept. 18 for hatchery-marked coho with a two-salmon daily limit, and anglers must release Chinook, chum, and wild coho. Fishing is also open for all coho retention from Sept. 19 through Sept. 30 with a two salmon daily limit, and anglers must release Chinook and chum.

Marine Area 11 (Tacoma and Vashon Island) is open for coho daily through Sept. 30 with a two salmon daily limit, and anglers must release chum and all Chinook (closed for Chinook retention on Aug. 15). Fishing is also open seven days per week from Oct. 1 through Nov. 15 with a two salmon daily limit, and anglers must release Chinook.

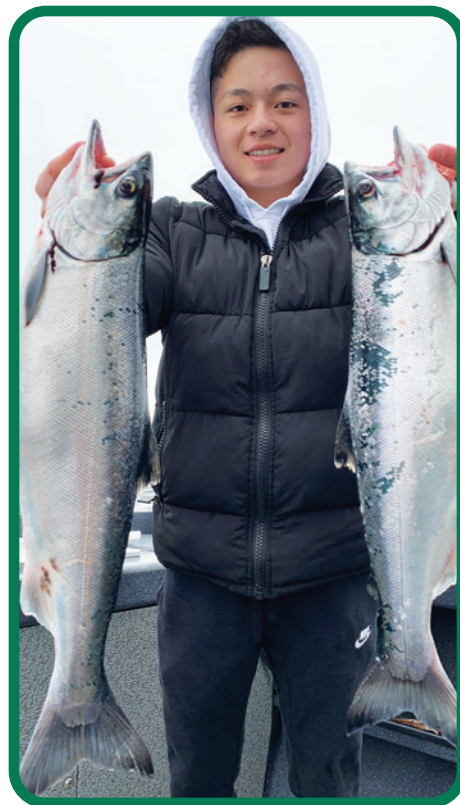
Marine Area 13 (South Puget Sound) is open daily for hatchery-marked coho through Sept. 30 with a two salmon daily limit, and anglers must release chum, wild coho, and wild Chinook. Fishing remains open daily beginning Oct. 1 with a two-salmon daily limit, and anglers must release chum, wild coho, and wild Chinook. Anglers may fish with two poles with a Two-Pole Endorsement.

In Marine Area 13, Squaxin Island is a popular area for those targeting hatchery coho.

COHO BANK FISHING ACCESS

As these fish turn the corner around Port Townsend and enter Puget Sound, bank anglers can find numerous publicly accessed shorelines and piers that are within easy casting distance of silvers. When accessing these areas, make sure to be courteous and respectful around private property shoreline boundaries.

Top locations in the northern region include Point Wilson in Fort Worden State Park north of Port Townsend; Fort Flagler State Park on Marrowstone Island; Marrowstone Point Lighthouse; and the western and eastern shorelines of Whidbey Island around Fort Casey, Lagoon and Bush points, Bait Box Hole just north of Possession Point, and West and North beaches at Deception Pass State Park. The Oak Harbor Marina also has two net pens where hatchery coho are raised and released annually. In 2022, 30,000 fish were released from the net pen, and fish that survived will return this season to the area.





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In northern and central Puget Sound, try Point No Point on Kitsap Peninsula; Browns Bay; Salsbury Point; Edmonds Marina Pier; Mukilteo Lighthouse and the public pier at the Mukilteo Ferry Landing; Richmond Beach and Meadow Point Beach at Golden Gardens; Shilshole Bay Pier; Seacrest Pier in

West Seattle; West Point at Discovery Park; Carkeek Park, Lincoln Park and Alki Point Lighthouse in West Seattle.

In southcentral and southern Puget Sound, head to Browns Point Lighthouse Park and Dash Point State Park; Dolphin Point off the east side of Vashon Island; Blake Island State Park;

Three Tree Point; Point Robinson Lighthouse, Point Beals, and KVI Beach on Vashon Island; Southworth and Manchester areas; and public piers at Des Moines, Redondo, Les Davis, and Point Defiance Park Boathouse.

STAY CLEAR OF LARGE SHIPS IN SHIPPING LANES

Many coho tend to congregate in the shipping lanes, and fishing is legal in the ship traffic lanes as long as the lanes are kept clear for ships, according to the Board of Pilotage Commissioners of Washington.

Shipping lanes should be cleared when ships - who have the right of way - are five minutes away (about two miles) to avoid impeding traffic. Be aware of your surroundings and monitor vessel traffic on VHF radio channel 14.

Lastly, anglers should stay out of ferry lanes when ferry boats are present.

The U.S. Inland Navigation Rules and COLREGS Rule 10 state: Vessels less than 65 feet in length shall not impede the passage of vessels transiting the traffic lanes. For more information, refer to the Board of Pilotage website at pilotage.wa.gov.



WESTPORT BOAT BASIN COHO FISHING

On Washington's central coast, the Westport Boat Basin coho-only fishery is open daily through Jan. 31, 2027. The best timing is September through October as coho raised in the marina's hatchery net pens begin to return.

The daily limit is six salmon, and no more than four may be adult fish. Anglers must release Chinook. No night fishing and an anti-

snagging rule is in effect, and any hooks where the weight is molded directly to the hook - such as twitching jigs, swim jigs, or casting jigs - are not allowed. Only single-point barbless hooks may be used. The Catch Record Card (CRC) code for the basin fishery is 2-2W.

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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FISHING A LAKE FOR THE FIRST TIME

BY MIKE CAREY

We passed cattle lazily grazing along the lush green rolling hillside, while antelope watched us cautiously, ready at a moment's notice to bolt to safety. The dust from the gravel road made it an easy choice to keep the windows up, while in the distance the Rocky Mountains drew ever closer as my son Matthew and I made our way towards our destination. A lone sign indicated we were approaching the boat launch, and our adventure was about to begin.





One of the great joys in my life is exploring new destinations to go fishing. I, like most people, have my favorite spots, but I make sure to set aside some weekends for adventures to parts unknown. I never tire of seeing what is around the next bend. New lakes hold a special fascination. What will we find when we get there? How will the fishing be? Will we find lunkers, and, more importantly, will this be a new place to add to my personal “favorite fishing spots”?

I’m guessing there are a lot of anglers that share my enthusiasm for finding new places to explore. I think it goes hand-in-hand for most hard-core anglers. We all dream of finding those hidden gems that few know, let alone fish.

If you’re like me, you probably have some methods for researching these destinations. If you’re new to fishing or exploring new spots, I’d like to share some strategies that I’ve developed to optimize precious time on the road and on the water (not to mention gas and travel expenses).

First, how does one find these new fishing locations? In today’s age of the internet and social media, it’s pretty easy to learn about new spots. While there are those who would never consider revealing locations, others are more open to sharing information. I fall in the latter category. My reasoning is over the years I’ve been blessed to learn of new places to fish from other anglers willing to share. I feel it’s the least I can do to “pay it forward”.

Also, my opinion is the more we share locations the more we bring new anglers into our community. In this age of diminishing resources, it may seem counter-intuitive to do this; however, more anglers equal a stronger voice when decisions affecting fishing are made by fishery departments. Also, the more locations known to all, the more we spread out and reduce pressures on locations in general. Terminal fisheries will always be crowded, but other “secondary” locations can find relief of pressure as anglers find new spots.

Do your research ahead of time. Northwest Fishing has an every-growing database of fishing locations and techniques to search through. I find YouTube to be a good resource. Social media giant Facebook can be hit or miss, with anglers

willing to share information and others practicing their smart aleck responses.

OK, you've found your new location; at first blush it looks like the kind of lake you're looking for. You've researched the fish populations and you're excited by what you found. It's time to drill down to the essential information before you load up your boat and hit the road!

What do I consider essential information and how do I find it? Since I'm likely fishing with my boat, number one I need to know I can safely get my boat

there and launch it. What are the roads like? What about the launch? Does it have a concrete ramp? How about a dock? What about parking? Besides YouTube videos, the best source to answer these questions is without a doubt the Google maps satellite view. It has been a game changer for me! For any place you want to go, you can switch into satellite view and zoom in to see exactly what you can expect when you arrive. I would never go to a new lake without first checking out this resource.

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Next on my list is a depth map. This will likely be trickier. You may find a map on the internet to print out if you're lucky. There are other sources, too: Navionics makes a phone app that has a surprising number of lake map contours in it. The app is reasonably priced. Just be sure to save the image prior to heading out, as if you're in a remote location, it may not pull up. There is an option to save data to your phone - well worth it.

Next, if this is an overnight adventure, are there nearby camping spots or towns that have hotels to stay at?

Small towns may only have a couple options to choose from. There's nothing worse than arriving at a town only to find no place to stay.

What to bring, or "Dang, I wish I had brought my kokanee lures!"

This one is on you - you're going to presumably a remote location, traveling for an hour or three. Won't you feel silly if you didn't bring the right gear (been there, done that!). This all circles back to our earlier discussion about knowing what species the lake holds and deciding what you want to target.

If you're like me, you have lots of gear for lots of types of fishing. Suppose you get there and discover the kokanee you planned on trolling for really are 6-8" long, but guess what, there's a smallmouth fishery for 3-5 pound fish... but you left your bass gear at home. It's that old adage - be prepared. Maybe throw in a couple bass rods and a tackle box of bass gear, just in case. For Matthew and I's adventure, we fished for kokanee and when the wind picked up, moved into more sheltered waters and realized the lake had a darn good pike fishery.



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Unfortunately, we didn't have much in the way of pike gear to toss at them. Bottom-line, don't have blinders on figuring you're only going to do one type of fishing. Being adaptable to what you find is key to a better fishing trip.

I hope the above ideas help in your quest for new and exciting waters to find and fish! I encourage you to share what you find with others and make the fishing world a better place for all of us.

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FALL DUCK POPPERS

Hunting season is right around the corner! Get ready with a tried-and-true duck popper recipe from Shelby Ross, owner of Ross Outdoor Adventures. Easy, delicious, and the perfect way to turn your next harvest into a crowd favorite.

**Makes approximately 32 poppers*

INGREDIENTS:

4 large duck breasts: 1" cubed, 8 cubes per breast
8 skewers; each skewer will hold 4 poppers, any more is too many & they won't cook evenly

8 large jalapenos; each large jalapeno makes 4 poppers (small makes 2) buy accordingly

1 cream cheese brick; approximately 1 TBL scoop for each popper

16 strips of thin sliced bacon, halved to make 32 smaller strips

1 bottle Sesame Ginger Teriyaki marinade

Seasoning of choice, may use salt & pepper

RECIPE BY SHELBY ROSS

PREP:

1) Pre-soak your duck for 1 to 2 days ahead of time in a bowl of water in the fridge. Change water 3 to 4 times each day as this removes the excess blood and influences the flavor. Drain, then set aside to marinate

2) Prepare your marinade; use what you like. Shelby uses Sesame Ginger Teriyaki. Put your duck in the marinade and let it sit overnight or as long as you can allow. Shelby will often freeze the duck in the marinade for a later time in Ziplock baggies or freezer-safe containers, which will also minimize freezer burn.

3) Cut off ends of the jalapenos and cut into halves. Scrape away all of the seeds, then quarter the halves. For smaller jalapenos, do not quarter, just use the half.

4) Scoop approximately 1 Tablespoon of cream cheese onto the center of the jalapeno

5) Add 1" cube of marinated duck breast

6) Wrap in the halved strip of bacon; Shelby uses Honey Maple bacon and insists that whatever kind of bacon you like, it MUST be thin sliced. The cooking time for the thin bacon is optimal for rare to medium rare duck.

7) Skewer each popper onto the skewer with no more than 4 poppers per skewer

8) Season the outside of the bacon with preferred seasoning; Shelby likes to use Alpine Touch's Prairie Fire

Shelby uses a charcoal grill made out of a 5 gallon metal bucket with charcoal grate half way up and a grill grate on the top. He keeps a spray bottle close by to control the temperature of the fire and so the bacon does not burn. When at home, Shelby uses a Traeger. He flips the poppers halfway through to obtain the required grill marks for flavor and presentation.



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WORDS FROM THE PUBLISHER. WRITTEN BY ROB HOLMAN.



This is the first time I have written for our magazine from the perspective of being the Publisher, and at the start of our sixth year publishing they finally talked me into it. When Mike Carey and I decided to take our stories and approach to a print publication, many people thought we were crazy. People told me, “print is dying”. And to be honest, it probably wasn’t the best “business” decision. While other publications fought to stay relevant and build up their digital presence, we had created a solid digital presence, had a strong broadcast TV presence, and were relevant on social media. So why go the other way? I can’t think of another example of a media company that went from a website to a print magazine. I’m sure they are out there, but I don’t know who they are. Usually it’s the other way around.

So we added work load, risk, expense to our plates and six years later we are still here while many publications have stopped printing. Six years. More than half a decade. It’s not a long time and it’s a really long time. From the start we wanted our publication to be free to the public. Advertiser supported. We believed people would value our approach to positive, opportunity information covering the fishing lifestyle of the Pacific Northwest. That there’s still a place for feel good stories about fishing success that aren’t riddled with politics or product placement. That people want something physical to hold onto, that doesn’t cost \$10 on the news rack.

The publishing business is hard. Paper cost money, writers cost money, mailing costs money. Many publications have shut down or gone fully digital in the six years we’ve been publishing.

Advertisers, usually the ones that cry loudest to “buy local”, spend their money on Google Ads or buy the latest influencer on social media. Big budget industry support and ad dollars - manufacturers & retailers - is very often focused on trends, clicks, and egos. Needless to say, advertising support for print isn’t what it used to be. It’s not valued the way it used to be and it’s a hard business to make a buck in.

Good thing that was never our goal. We don’t want to lose money. Heck, we can’t afford to lose money! But we started NW Reel Life (renamed to Northwest Fishing to match the TV show a couple years ago) to share our love of sport fishing and recruit new people to this amazing lifestyle we enjoy. Northwest Fishing isn’t for the advertisers, and outside a few key long term supporters like The Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife, The Elephant Boys,

Mack's Lure, Toby Wyatt, Austin Moser, Shane Moon, Kyle Jones, and Shelby Ross (we wouldn't exist without them), that's a good thing because I can't say the industry has "embraced" our efforts.

What makes it worthwhile is the folks that collect every issue. The ones that seek us out at the Sportsmen Shows and scour the racks for their missing issues. The subscribers who can't wait for the next issue to be mailed and send us feedback or ask questions about a certain article's location, tips, or writer. That positive encouragement makes it all worthwhile and helps us feel like we are doing some good for the world.

Don't get me wrong, I wake up every day grateful for the opportunities this work has provided me and my family. I am so very grateful for Mike, Hillary, Sarah and all of those who invest so much time and energy into the vision of Northwest Fishing. I just wonder how long a publication, and even dare I say our style of "journalism", will have a place in our disposable, easily digestible, bombastic media landscape. With virtually no barrier to having a "following" on digital

media, and next to no skin in the game, every day I see new personalities popping up hocking the next great thing. In principle, there's nothing wrong with all this. I just wonder when publications like ours will go the way of 3 salmon daily limits and be a thing of history.

We work hard for our advertisers and try to deliver good results for their support. We've worked with hundreds of advertisers of all sizes over the years, and if you're reading this at home and you want one take away: please support the businesses that support us. We can't keep doing what we do - magazine, TV show, website, social media - we can't do any of it without the support of the businesses who use us to get their messages in front of you. There are so many options today, it's hard to know where to put your dollars. So please support our advertisers! And as my dad used to say. "God willing and the creek don't rise", we will be able to keep doing it for years to come. Why? Because we love it.

Rob Holman is Publisher of the Northwest Fishing magazine and can be reached by email at info@nwfishing.net

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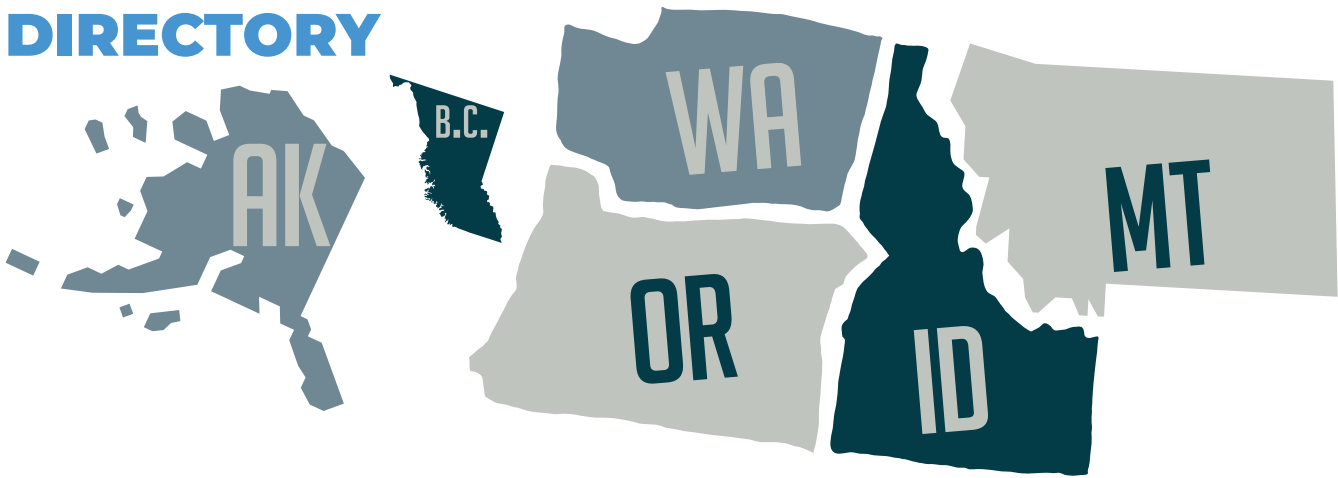
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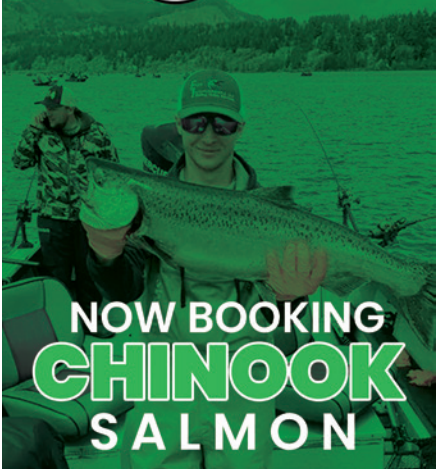
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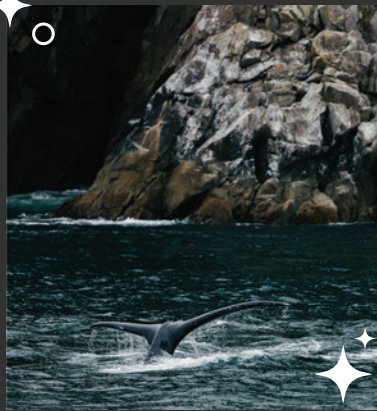
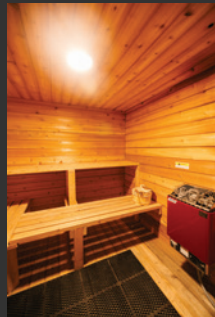
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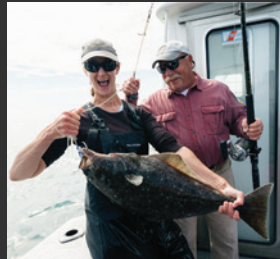




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FALL ISN'T JUST FOR BIG GAME

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- Deer and turkey camp - many units open from now - Dec. 31, maximize your hunting time!
- New hunter? No problem - check out our Hunter Education Deferral Program to hunt this fall with an experienced hunter!



FALL GENERAL SEASON

Sept. 1 - Dec. 31

GMUs: 101-154, 162-186, 203-290, 382, 388, 568-578

Up to 4 turkeys can be harvested in the fall.

See the turkey hunting regulations for bag limits by area.

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

Small game license and turkey transport tag are all that you need. Get yours today!
fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov

Don't forget to submit your turkey hunting activity report online by logging into your WILD account through WDFW's licensing systems.



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