

# NORTHWEST REEL LIFE

FREE

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& A PLACE TO SLEEP

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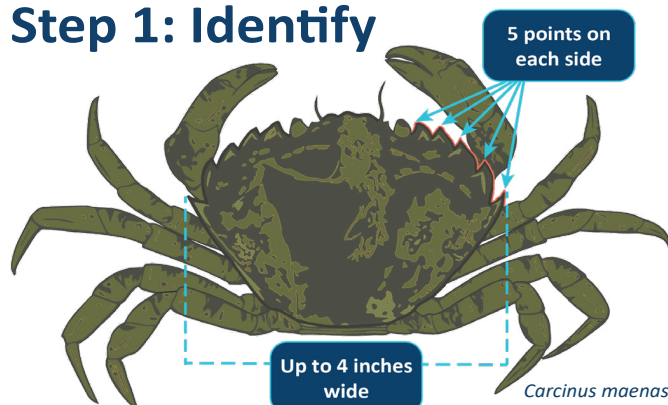


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# EDITOR'S CORNER:

Wow! What an amazing sockeye season it's been. Brewster, Baker, and Lake Wenatchee are having epic seasons and anglers are filling their freezers with delicious salmon. Hopefully you've been able to join the crowds and get in on the fun.

August is the opening bell for coho in the Puget Sound, and in years past I would be gearing my boat up for a couple months of saltwater action. Hannah Pennebaker shares Puget Sound techniques in her article this month.

Having moved to Montana, my coho days are in the past. I'll be enjoying the pictures that will start showing up and remembering fun trips from years gone by. But no worries, I'll be chasing 30-pound chinook at Fort Peck, with a few 10-20 pound lakers thrown in for good measure.

There are of course other fisheries and opportunities for anglers in the month of August. I hope you get plenty of fishing fixes in. Be safe and put those life jackets on the kiddos!

**Mike Carey - [mikec@nwfishing.net](mailto:mikec@nwfishing.net) @Michael Carey Northwest Fishing**



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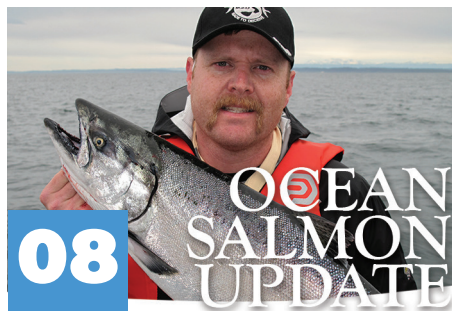
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# NORTHWEST REEL LIFE

*A Digital Anglers LLC & Northwest Fishing Publication*

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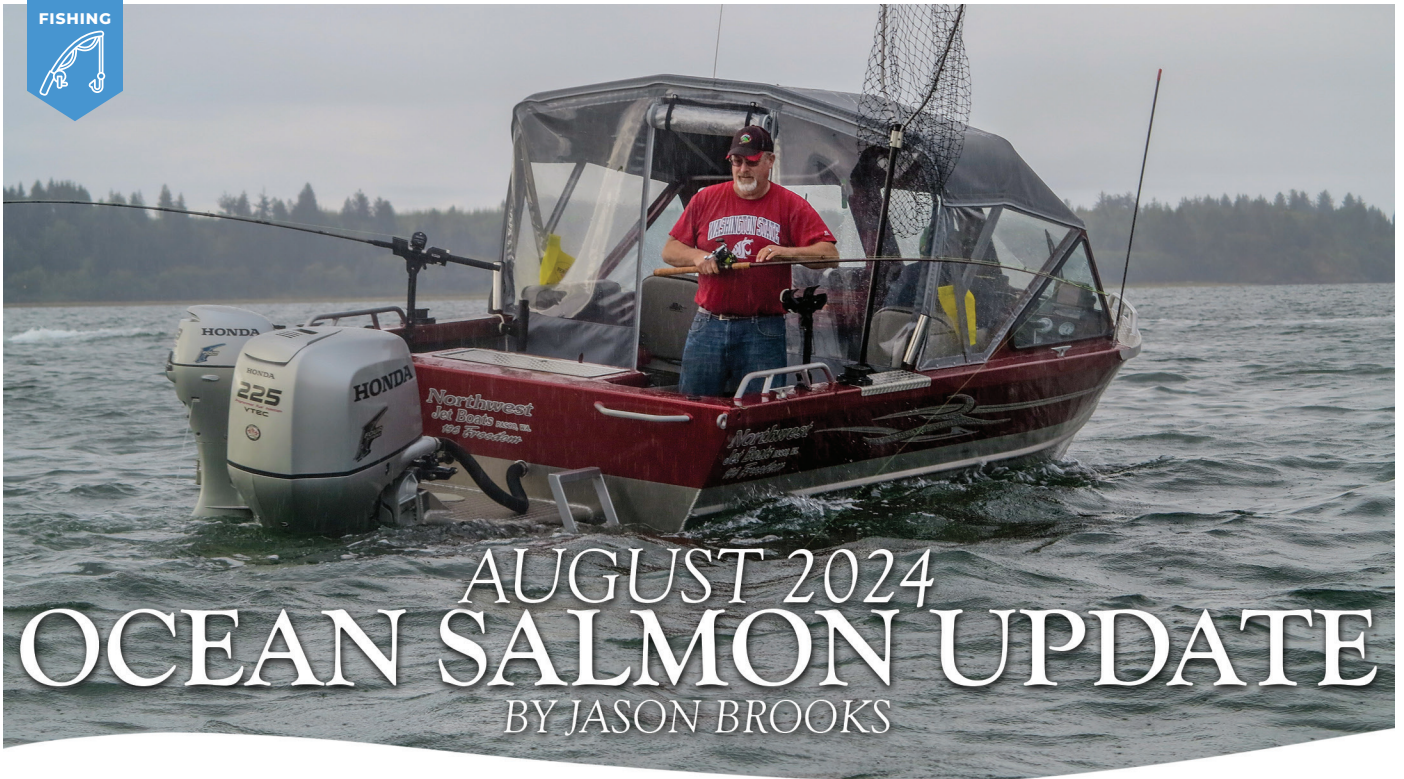


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# AUGUST 2024 OCEAN SALMON UPDATE

BY JASON BROOKS

When it comes to fall salmon, anglers consider August to be part of the time of year when pumpkin spice lattes and crisp mornings are the norm. The eighth month of the year is technically still summer but anyone who has headed to the ocean this time of year can feel the chill of an early fall coming on. Fog and rainstorms are normal, along with high winds and rough seas but then there are the days of bright sunshine and hot temperatures that remind us it is still summertime, even if only for a few hours in the afternoon. Much like the weather, salmon

fishing can change in an instant... Mostly in the form of regulations.

August ocean salmon fishing is all about the rules and emergency closures and openings. The fish are regulated by quotas and estimated returns to natural rivers so be sure to check the regulations and emergency rules daily and be ready to change your location to fish as often as you switch out your cut plug herring. Knowing the rules also means knowing where you are fishing.

**MARINE AREA 1** is slated to be open for salmon fishing in August for both chinook and coho and

this is where anglers will be targeting fish stacked up to enter the Columbia River. Known as Buoy 10, the famed August fishery at the mouth of the Columbia River continues out beyond this buoy marker but is considered Marine Area 1. Depending on sea conditions and bar crossing, fishing can be good out in the open ocean. Especially for coho as the chinook are mostly staging in the brackish water and rushing into the Columbia with each tide change. Coho will stay just offshore a bit longer as they prefer to enter the river in September and into late fall.



Keep an eye on the Buoy 10 rules and regulations as well as any emergency closures or adjustments. If you have the right boat and navigation skills to cross the deadly Columbia River bar, then Marine Area 1 could save your trip if they close or restrict the Buoy 10 fishery. The same goes for about every ocean area you need to know before you go.

**MARINE AREA 2** gets a little more complex come fall. You can still hit the open ocean from the tiny town of Westport. Extremely popular in July when it first opens Westport becomes a mecca of salmon anglers come August. The complexity comes from the Marine Area itself which is broken down into three segments. Marine Area 2 is the open ocean and is slated to be open, but most likely for coho as the chinook quota gets eaten up quickly as the fish pass by heading to the Columbia or start to stage for Grays Harbor and Willapa Bay. This is where Marine Area 2 is broken down into sub-areas.

**MARINE AREA 2-1** is Willapa Bay which has three separate zones known as zones 4, 5,

and 6. Zones 4 and 5 are closed and zone 6 is most of the bay itself. A kelp and grass shallow water bay where salmon will stage for weeks before heading up the Willapa River and to hatcheries. Wild chinook must be released, and anglers can use two rods each with the endorsement. A dropper weight system is used since this is shallow water and the amount of eelgrass makes it hard to use downriggers. Watch your gear closely and change out baits often but it is hard to beat hooking a large chinook in shallow water which is why this fishery can be immensely popular.

Grays Harbor is Marine sub-Area 2 known as **MARINE AREA 2-2** with zones 1, 2, and 3. Zone 1, known as the Grays Harbor Control zone, closes in mid-August to salmon fishing, which allows fish to enter the harbor. Zone 2 is the Humptulips North Bay fishery zone and is limited to 1 fish, no wild fisher per day. The other zone known as the East Grays Harbor Zone 3 is mostly a coho fishery in front of the Johns River as all chinook must be released. The Grays Harbor area is not exceedingly popular as you also

compete with commercial and native fisheries but can be productive for those that try it. One of the most unique fisheries in the Grays Harbor area is the Westport boat basin fishery which is fishing in the marina where the fleets of charters and commercial boats are stored. Coho returns here thanks to a release effort with a recent addition of 50,000 late coho expected to return in October and November starting in 2026. For now, the fish arrive in late August and into September and can be caught right off the docks at Westport.

**MARINE AREA 3** is known as LaPush and is very remote. With limited launches and extreme weather area 3 is mostly accessed on days with optimal ocean conditions. It is slated to be open in August for both chinook and coho, but this is one fishery that is often adjusted with an emergency rule. Chinook are prime and targeted in July which often means an August closure but coho here are making their way to the many rivers that have both robust hatchery returns and wild runs as well.

Wild coho are not allowed to be kept keeping those runs going so be sure to only keep clipped silvers. This is also a staging area for chums and in the salt, they can be misidentified easily as their purple bars are light and sometimes even non-existent this time of year. Chums must be released so be sure to look at the fish closely and know what you have caught.

**MARINE AREA 4**, the last of the “ocean” areas had a rough start to the chinook fishing. As of July 11th, only 25% of the quota had been caught which normally that time of year the quota is getting close to being filled. I fished this area on July 12th and 13th, when the daily limit of chinook went to 2 per day and we did not hook a single adult chinook. The seas were rough and kept my little 18-foot boat limited to trolling along the kelp line and

near shore but those that could make it further out did well. This indicated the chinook were here but out deeper than usual. Coho were being caught but not in respectable numbers which could indicate a later return this year which is great since area 5 to the east is slated to be open into October for coho. Come August the rules for chinook change in Marine Area 4 with it only being open west of the Bonilla-Tatoosh line. Coho is slated to remain open until mid-September in all Marine Area 4.

Regardless of where you decide to go, be sure to head out to the open ocean for some great fall salmon fishing. Of course, before you go be sure to check the emergency regulations as these fisheries are subject to quotas and can close quickly. They can also open or be extended as well and

  
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just maybe you will find a bonus opportunity out in the ocean. Either way, be ready for some cold, wet, and rough weather as well as bring sunscreen as afternoons are known to burn off the fog and remind us it is still summertime.







It's great when strangers become friends, those who are passionate about something can share that passion with others and the feeling of joyfulness can be had by all. That was certainly the case on one of our recent fishing adventures here in the great state of Montana. I'm in the not-so-unique position of being an avid fisherman and also someone who enjoys a good slice of pizza. I am in the unique position of having been able to fish with some fine folks from Mackenzie River Pizza Co. and blend the two joys. Amanda Thompson, the general manager of the Helena, MT location, and Allison Collins, out of the Bozeman, MT location with some regional supervision duties, spent the day with Mike Carey and me on the picturesque Canyon Ferry

Reservoir just south of Helena, MT.

What I really enjoyed about the experience was the ability to share something I am passionate about with these two ladies who had never fished using the techniques we employed for the day. Allison had some experience with fly fishing (who hasn't in Montana?) while Amanda was a little more green to the whole fishing experience. Both caught on tremendously quickly! Changing gear when needed or putting new bait on a hook quickly became an old hat for all of us. We trolled the southern portion of the reservoir for walleye using a combination of crankbaits and bottom bouncers. Each person picks out their lure of choice, which colors and patterns would hopefully work the best, and of

course, goading the others for their poor choice of lure. After a little explanation and demonstration on how to ensure the weight had hit the bottom and the gear was set up properly, we were off and fishing.

The bite was steady all day. No huge fish, the regulations actually state only one fish over 15 inches can be retained, but the anticipation of the catch with the thrill of the familiar walleye "tug, tug" on the other side of a bottom bouncing set up more than made up for any lull. That, in combination with an abundance of beautiful weather, gorgeous scenery, and light-hearted conversation made for a really great fishing experience. It was one of those days with the perfect blend of sun and shade from the clouds overhead.

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Just as you felt maybe it was getting a little warm, a cloud would provide just enough coverage to keep you comfortable. To the east, the mountains within the Helena National Forest loomed over Canyon Ferry, a reminder of just how imposing but welcoming the mountains can be. And of course, the friendly banter amongst everyone on the boat helped pass the time when we would have a period of little to no fish. We talked about everything from of course fishing and pizza, to getting our own young children interested in fishing, and hockey, our backgrounds that led us

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to Big Sky country, our jobs and the people we work with, and too many other topics to mention. We spent the morning and early afternoon on the water catching fish, even with a bonus rainbow trout thrown in, and decided to call it a day with preparation for a delicious meal in the restaurant. One last note on the trout (you couldn't expect an article based in Montana without a reference to a nice rainbow, right?) - it was fortunate enough to escape what was presumably an attack by an eagle or osprey at some point. It had two noticeable gashes on the left side of its body.

A reminder that nature is always moving and present even if we are locked into the towns and cities with which we live.

Our time in the restaurant was as enjoyable as the fishing. I've been to the Helena location plenty of times and really appreciate the atmosphere and fishing themes in the restaurant. Something I had not known before talking with Amanda and Allison, is that each restaurant has its own driftboat as a decorative piece in the building. It's hard to miss a hanging boat in a restaurant and even harder to not appreciate the craftsmanship it took to build it. Fly fishing and Montana-themed decor are abundant in the dining room and bar area. From the lodgepole-style wooden tables and chairs to the dry fly engraved decorative glass that separates the booths. The restaurant has a warm and welcoming feeling with a carved wooden bear greeting you and asking you to wait for your hostess to seat you. An immersive dining experience to all things adventure. And of course, how could I not highlight the food?



The offerings are right on point with the Montana and fishing themes you'd expect. I had to order my all-time favorite pizza, the Madison, named after the Madison River in southwest Montana. Bacon, mushrooms, and ricotta cheese? I should've ordered two. And to wash down the pizza, exclusive to Mackenzie River, the Drift Boat Amber Ale. A little earthy, a little sweet, it's just a great-tasting beverage to sip on while you're enjoying some food and maybe watching a game, taking in the scenery, or chatting with friends. My other go-

to menu offerings include the lodgepoles with pesto, trout dip with crostini, the stockman pizza, their version of a meat lover's pizza (with steak strips!), or the Flathead pizza, named after of course Flathead Lake near Glacier National Park. Perhaps I'll get some of that on my next visit.

The fishing adventure concluded with new friends sitting around the table breaking bread, sorry, pizza, with one another. I am grateful for the experience out on the water and in the restaurant. It's something I hope you get to share with people

in your life on a regular basis - a blend of recreation and comradery. When you get the opportunity, I can't recommend enough a day of fishing with others concluding with some quality food at one of the great restaurants in our area. Interested in experiencing it for yourself? Mackenzie River Pizza Co. has locations throughout the northwest and beyond, check them out and taste for yourself. Did I mention you should order the Madison?

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# 5 COASTAL SALMON RIVERS TO CHECK OUT

BY BRENT KNIGHT

Summer is upon us and for many of us, that means that our home rivers are closed to fishing to protect ESA-listed wild Chinook. As a result, we are looking forward to fall when we begin to see runs of Coho and Chum salmon flooding into our rivers with increasing opportunities to catch them. Fingers crossed! It is anyone's guess what WDFW will do and many of us are eagerly awaiting news concerning our seasons, emergency closures, and changes in general. Keeping this in mind, let's look at five

coastal river systems to check out that could present great opportunities.

Let's start on the Northern Coast and work our way South. For the sake of this article, the focus will be from Forks in the North to Grays Harbor in the South. There are other coastal river systems South of Grays Harbor, but we are going to focus on the most popular systems.

## QUILLAYUTE RIVER SYSTEM

The Quillayute empties into the Pacific Ocean at La Push, Washington. The Quillayute River is formed by the confluence of the Bogachiel River, Calawah

River, and the Sol Duc River near the town of Forks, WA. The Dickey River joins the Quillayute from the north, just above the river's mouth at the Pacific Ocean. Though it is world-renowned as a winter Steelhead mecca, this system also receives returns of all five species of salmon. With spring and summer Chinook salmon returning in lower numbers than expected, the Quillayute river system, including the Bogachiel, Calawah, Dickey, Sitkum, and Sol Duc rivers, as well as Thunder Creek closed to all fishing on July 15.



Historically this system produced great returns of spring and summer chinook, but like so many of our rivers, the runs are now endangered. The Coho and Chum will return in September and hopefully, there will be opportunities to catch and retain hatchery fish.

### **HOH RIVER**

At 56 miles long, the Hoh River originates at the snout of Hoh Glacier on Mount Olympus and flows westward through the Olympic Mountains of Olympic National Park and Olympic National Forest, then through foothills in a

broad valley, emptying into the Pacific Ocean at the Hoh Indian Reservation. The final portion of the Hoh River's course marks the boundary between the south coastal segment of Olympic National Park and the Hoh Indian Reservation. Returns of Steelhead and Salmon make the Hoh River a fishing destination worth exploring. While there are fish in the Hoh River year-round, Steelhead are mostly targeted in the Winter, Chinook, and Coho are mostly targeted in August through November, and Dolly Varden and Cutthroat Trout are targeted anytime

the water is in shape. According to the 2024-2025 regulations, parts of the Hoh will open for Salmon fishing on September 16th, presenting some great opportunities to target Coho.

### **QUEETS & QUINAULT RIVERS**

The Queets and Quinalt Rivers and their tributaries flow from the Olympic National Park into tribal lands. While opportunities exist in the upper reaches of these systems and within the park, they are most noted for their tribally guided lower sections. Note that the rivers are governed by WDFW, the



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Federal Government, and the Tribes, depending on where you are, so pay close attention to the rules.

The Quinault and Queets Nations have built some very robust hatchery programs, and they control the lower stretches of the rivers. Anglers can fish for all five species of Salmon as well as Steelhead and Trout. Fall Coho on the lower Quinault is a very fun fishery and can result in a freezer full of fish to last the winter. Note that you must book a trip with a tribal guide to fish the waters that lay within the reservations.

### **HUMPTULIPS RIVER**

The Humptulips River is located in Grays Harbor County, just North of Aberdeen and Hoquiam. Its main tributaries are the East Fork Humptulips River, about 20 miles long, and West Fork Humptulips River, about 30 miles long. After the forks join, the main river is approximately 20 miles long and provides some of the best salmon habitat in Washington. This river is not a secret and is often very congested, when open. I will say that the “Hump” as it is called is one of my favorite rivers for fall Salmon fishing. It is

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renowned for its runs of Chinook, Coho, Chum, and Steelhead. As with other coastal rivers and due to low returns of wild Chinook, opportunities are limited. According to the current regulations, parts of the river should open in early September for hatchery Chinook and Coho. As this river can get very congested, it is best to know what you are doing and even better, book a trip with a guide.

### **CHEHALIS RIVER SYSTEM**

The Chehalis River originates in several forks in southwestern Washington, flows east, then north, then west, in a large curve, before emptying into Grays Harbor, an estuary of the Pacific Ocean. The river is the largest solely contained drainage basin in the state. Both the Wynoochee and Satsop Rivers flow into the Chehalis between the towns of Elma and Montesano. While the Chehalis has many other tributaries, the Satsop and Wynoochee are likely the most popular and offer fantastic fall Coho fisheries. The mainstem Chehalis, near the mouth of these

rivers, can be epic when conditions are favorable and some of the largest Coho in the state can be caught here. This system is also known for large limits of Coho allowed but check the most up-to-date regulations for specific details and don't forget to look for emergency closures.

With all these rivers, please remember to check the regulations before you make plans or head out to fish. Things change often and it is very important to make sure that a river is open to avoid disappointment. Also, do yourself a favor and book a trip with a guide. I just cannot emphasize this enough. Your opportunities for success will greatly improve if you learn from a local guide and you are more likely to take fish home to eat later.

In closing, you are welcome to message me if you need to be connected to a guide. I am easy to find on Facebook ([facebook.com/brent.knight.148](https://www.facebook.com/brent.knight.148)) and am happy to help. Good fishing!!!



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# PAN FISHING 101

BY PROF. ERIC MAGNUSON  
(NOT A REAL PROFESSOR)



Fishing for Crappie and Bluegill, often referred to as panfish, provides both novice and seasoned anglers with an exciting challenge and a delicious reward. These popular freshwater species can be found in lakes, rivers, and ponds across Washington State, making them accessible targets for anglers of all skill levels. So grab your tackle box, and join me as we explore the effective techniques and setups tailored specifically for crappie and bluegill fishing.

## Understanding Crappie & Bluegill

*Crappie:* Crappie are highly sought after for this tasty white meat and can grow to impressive sizes with the white Crappie and the black Crappie being the most common species. They are known for their tendency to school around submerged structures such as trees, brush piles, and docks. If fishing from the boat, I'm typically a fan of casting small jigs, and bobbers around these structures searching for bites - and also using my electronics to tell me - what's below, and what

are they schooled around? With fishing docks, I begin by jigging shallow and work my way deeper until I feel that "thump!" Usually, they are just suspended a few feet off the bottom below the docks, but at certain times of the day, they are just a foot below the docks, and hugging the boats making it a little tougher shooting your jig under them, trying not to spook em'.

*Bluegill:* Bluegill is smaller than crappie but just as popular among anglers. They are characterized by their distinctive blue gill covers and can be found



hanging out in shallow waters, around vegetation, and structures submerged in water. Bluegill are prolific breeders and often travel in schools, during their spawn, they will have a minefield of beds in the shallows as they become very aggressive in protecting their eggs. It's very fun targeting these, especially practicing catch and release. For many of us, the Bluegill was the first fish caught as a kid that sparked the interest.

### **Essential Equipment:**

*Rod and Reel:* For panfish, a light or ultra-light spinning rod and reel combo works

best. This setup allows for casting bobbers and small baits accurately and provides the sensitivity needed to detect subtle bites.

*Fishing Line:* Use light line, monofilament, or fluorocarbon. Typically in the 4-8lb range, as lighter lines allow for a better presentation of small baits and lures while maintaining enough strength to handle larger fish, I often choose monofilament in the 4-6lb test to allow a little stretch with my hook set, especially fishing crappie with their paper-thin mouths.

(Hence the name "Lantern-mouths.")

*Terminal Tackle:* Small hooks such as a number of 6-10 for bluegill, and slightly larger for crappie 4-8, tipped with worms is the most simple way to approach these fish. Split shot weights and bobbers are another effective way to locate fish and to find the depth to adjust your bait too, keeping it in the strike zone.

*Baits and Lures:* Though we can't use live bait, the most effective bait for both bluegill and crappie is a



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worm. Cured crickets and minnows work well, but you may have to work your bait more to attract the fish. When it comes to working your baits, we typically refer to artificial baits such as jigs, small crankbaits, spinners, and soft plastics like grubs. Soft plastics come in so many profiles, that you can define the bite with a minnow profile, to a buggy pattern.

#### **Techniques For Crappie:**

*Vertical Jigging:* Drop a jig or your vertical presentation down near submerged structures, trees, and docks, areas where Crappie are likely to congregate. Use either slow retrieves after

casting with an occasional twitch, or gentle jigging motions to act like a wounded, or swimming minnow to entice bites.

*Fan Casting Bobbers:* Cast small bobbers around structure docks, brush piles, and/or just outside of major weedlines. I try to have at least 3 rods rigged up with my favorite bobbers, each at different lengths below the bobber to find the depth at the fish are suspended. Anywhere from 2-4 ft below the bobber is a good starting point. When you find the depth, stick to it, and if the bite dies down, continue to move until you get back to the school.

*Dock Shooting:* Perfect for targeting Crappie hiding under docks. With a light jig or worm under a float, skip the bait under the docks and other overhead cover where Crappie lurk. I have a ton of success using this technique when I find the Crappie are sucked close to the bottom of boats in a marina.

#### **Techniques For Bluegill:**

*Bobber Fishing:* Attach the small hook baited with the worm, and/or your favorite micro jig and plastic under the bobber and cast towards shoreline vegetation and those submerged structures. Slipping that bait even a

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foot or less directly under your float as you reel across the tops of their beds. Being able to adjust your float to the depth of the bait to find where the Bluegill are feeding is important.

*Micro Jigging:* Very similar to jigging for crappie but with much smaller jigs and hooks, again casting and retrieving slowly varying the speed to find the most effective presentation, and jigging vertically with different cadences until you find what they want.

*Micro Crankbait:* Yes, cranking for Bluegills. We have found much success fishing Micro Crank Baits such as the Z-Cranker from Eurotackle. Trolling right outside the weedlines adjacent from their beds, and they will smoke them baits as they are very aggressive during their spawn.

### **Tips For Success:**

*Location:* Use electronics and maps if possible to locate submerged structures, such as weed beds, drop-offs, brush piles, and sunken trees, where Crappies and Bluegills gather.

*Time Of Day:* Early morning and late evening are prime times for Panfish, as they

are active and feed in those low light conditions. We do find them of course throughout the day, but tend to have the hottest bites early and later.

*Patience And Observation:* Panfish can be finicky. Be patient and pay attention to subtle bites or changes in bait behavior. They may want a micro Tungsten jig one morning, and the next they want a larger jigging spoon. Feeding habits can change by the hour too, so don't be afraid to even try beaded head flies.

*Catch And Release:* Practice selective harvest and release larger breeding fish to sustain a healthy population. I always release any Bluegill over 9in, and release the majority of Crappie over 12in. Very rarely do I keep fish, but every now and then they are a good fish fry. (Please check regulations on your lake's fishing)

Fishing for Crappies and Bluegill is not just about catching fish; it's about enjoying the outdoors and honing your skills, whether you prefer the challenge of targeting Crappies with jigs or the simplicity of bobber fishing for Bluegill, there's a technique that suits every anglers style. With the right equipment, techniques,



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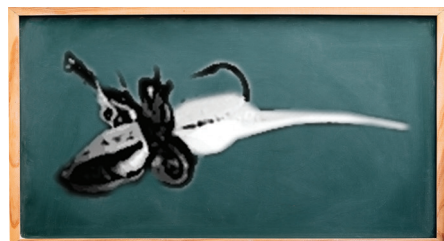


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# GEAR UP FOR PUGET SOUND COHO

BY HANNAH PENNEBAKER

Grab your rods and coolers, it's time for Puget Sound coho! As far as saltwater salmon go, coho tend to be aggressive and eager biters. You can find them in most areas of the Sound, and the bite will only improve as the season progresses. Coho are plentiful and tasty! They taste good when caught in rivers, but you can't beat a chrome coho fresh from the salt. Having the right strategy, the proper gear and good preparation will help you get a boatload of coho this summer!

Trolling is the most popular way to catch these Puget Sound coho. It's a great way to cover water and adjust your depth based on the fish's location. Having the right gear is certainly important, but having a good strategy makes all the difference. I recommend getting an early start and fishing shallow. As the day progresses, fish deeper. Watch for marks and don't be afraid to drop your gear right down into the fish. Pay close attention to your fish finder.

Coho will school up most of the time, so don't be afraid to circle back to wherever you get bites. Coho like a shorter setback than you'd think. I usually use a 50 to 75-ft setback. Trolling speed for coho can be a controversial topic. Speeds anywhere from 2.5 mph to 3.5 mph will work. Here again, is where having a fish finder is crucial. In addition, study tide tables ahead of time. It's no secret that coho love a good

tide change. Targeting tide changes early in the morning often results in a full cooler.

So, what gear do you need? There are several different ways to go. You can use trolling flies, herring, spoons, plugs, or spinners. Sometimes coho can be picky, so it's best to employ a variety of lures. You'll want to run your lures behind a flasher. Many different tackle companies make flashers that work well. Don't forget to smear your flasher and lure with a bit of scent! Coho are smart and some scent can fool

them into grabbing your lure a little longer. Most days, coho just can't resist herring. They're out there feeding before going into rivers to spawn, so they're hungry! Don't be afraid to add a herring strip to any lure. You can brine up herring strips ahead of time and attach them to hooks, tie herring bellies to your plugs, or stuff your plugs with herring and tuna. Some fishermen dye their herring during the brining process, others don't.

Knowing the right spots to fish is an important part of your prep work

that you should research ahead of time as well. The fish start flooding into the Sound through the Strait, so fishing will be best up north early in the season. My experience fishing for saltwater coho is within Marine Areas 9 and 11, so we will discuss those locations here. The oil docks, shipwreck, and Picnic Point are all well-known producers. You can launch your boat at Edmonds, Mukilteo, and Whidbey Island. Just be mindful that you don't accidentally cross into another Marine Area once you have fish on board.

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Sometimes you can keep wild fish in one area, but not in another. In Marine Area 11, common spots include the Yacht Club, Dash Point, and Browns Point. In both areas though, I'd caution against just following the crowd. Don't be afraid to study maps and find your own spots. Points and bays are always good places to start.

Preparation is key! Make sure to check for emergency rules before heading out. Don't forget to brine your bait ahead of time and grab ice to ensure your catch stays cool. Grab those life jackets and check the weather forecast. The Sound can turn nasty at the drop of a hat, especially for small boats. Preparation can make all the difference between a cooler full of coho and a day of disappointment. I'll leave you with a story to help drive this point home. One day, I was out on the Sound

fishing for coho on Mike Carey's boat with another friend. The day had started well- we got on the water at the crack of dawn and saw lots of fish on the meter. We started getting our 3 fishing rods set up when my friend said "Uh oh... I forgot my fishing license!" Mike and I immediately stopped setting up the 3rd rod and told my friend he was on boat-driving duty for the rest of the day. It went from a (potential) 6-fish day to a 4-fish day for us. Preparation is everything! Do your research, make a checklist, and give yourself plenty of time to get ready. Have fun and go catch a cooler of coho!



AUGUST 2024 | 25



# THE AGING SPORTSMAN & A PLACE TO SLEEP

BY RANDY CASTELLO



Ok, I'm sitting here in our group camp while the rest of the gang is out chasing walleye. I love walleye fishing; how did this happen? The progression is a long one and then the wife just had knee surgery and needed an extra hand. The table was set.

When I was a tater-tot, my parents used to say that I came out of my mom with a fishing pole in my hand. Although it was likely a tall story, it is based on what turned out to be a lifelong obsession and pursuit of anything that swims. Both in elementary school and in high school if I was late

or got caught skipping school it was because I was fishing. Once I could drive, I often went to school with a steelhead or 3 on ice in the back of my car.

My adolescent preoccupation with fishing followed me through to adulthood. My early days of easy 3 steelhead days or immediate chinook limits just primed the pump. I was obsessed, if I saw a puddle somewhere I believed two things; First that there was a fish in it, and second that I could catch it. I think that I was well into my 40s before I realized that I may have to work for the next fish. Prior to that, I had an

unwavering belief that I would hook a fish on every cast, anywhere around the world. I was lucky though; I lived and grew up in the PNW during the heyday of sports fishing.

To that note: I have caught fish all around the world. During my suit and tie days I was fortunate, LOL or maybe it was unfortunate in that I spent a lot of time on the road. I traveled to many regions within the United States, Mexico, and other parts of the world. I always traveled with a 5 or maybe 7-weight fly rod and a travel spinning rod tucked in my carry-on. These being pre-internet days I would research the area that I



was traveling to. Then put together a little travel kit for the road. People at home probably thought that I was nuts and the locals where I was fishing knew that I was wacko, "Fishing, do you always release your catch?"

My business travels brought me to a long-term assignment in Southern California. I was still traveling but my regional assignment had changed. Again, pre-internet I didn't really know what the fishing opportunities would be. As it turned out, I had landed in a fisherman's paradise. I owned a home in Orange County

eventually moving to a small mountain community but I was always close to one fishery or another.

Living in Southern California a sportsman had quick and easy access to a wide variety of both inshore and offshore saltwater fisheries. I got heavily involved in the offshore fisheries, even deckhanding or running the galley on a couple of party boats. My addiction wasn't limited to the salt, there were also many excellent freshwater options. Close to home there were a number of trout, bass, whisker, and panfish lakes.



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With some driving you could be fishing planted rainbows in many lakes or clear mountain streams, fishing for High Sierra brown or golden trout. With a full tank of gas, the angler could be swinging a fly for a large chinook in a formidable coastal or central valley river. The long and short of it, I was in heaven. I had to earn a living but I was truly a fish-a-holic.

Why the trip down memory lane? I probably could have written this without the memory download but that said; I did spare you the sorted details of 40-plus years of fishing trips, I was setting the stage for an unexpected transition and the actual content of this article.

I can't explain it, but in the last 5 or 10 years I have noticed that I've transitioned from an Eveready Fish-a-holic to being content writing about fishing or even sitting around a campfire yapping about it. Oddly during the same period, my ability to sleep pretty much anywhere seems to have gone the way of the dodo bird. Are the two connected, possibly?



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That would be a whole study of its own. The glaring tie may be arthritis. Pretty much everything hurts all the time and daily activities are a chore. Fishing; holding a rod, tying knots, managing snaps, clips and downrigger balls require a focused effort these days. Then sleeping has become a serious problem. Gone are the days of a few quick winks in the driver's seat while parked at a boat ramp. With the onset of arthritis and associated structural problems sleeping in a tent on the ground is completely out of the question.

Unfortunately, the fishing industry hasn't taken a look at limited functionality due to arthritis. At my end, I try to set gear up so that even with hand strength or manual dexterity issues I can rig the gear with some level of confidence. Having most things pre-tied has been a huge help. The use of the commercial troll line snaps for the downriggers allows me to easily connect the downrigger balls. Keeping the boat organized, having a seat with good lumbar support, and having autopilot for the longer runs also helps.





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I already own a gazillion reels so I'm probably not going to go out and buy a complement of reels with ergonomically friendly handles but there are some out there. There are also ergonomically friendly aftermarket handles available for some reels. I think that the key is to sit down and really consider what your capabilities or personal limitations are and adjust your approach as required. Additionally, a good fishing buddy is a must.

Lifestyle versus reality. I'm in the process of assessing the reality of my limitations. Do I need my saltwater boat, and my drift boat, if not do I replace them? Simpler makes sense, then considering our local saltwater seasonal limitations, getting a smaller less maintenance rig may be the way to go. Although officially retired I am very fortunate and I have a retirement career.

The money is nice but the job was a godsend. I just couldn't do retired and I was going stir-crazy. Now I run a boat in Washington's San Juan Islands, am outdoors and with the job being very physical it keeps me active. I mention this because it does have a downside, independent of the weather conditions I run year-round. I'm beat up at the end of the day and instead of fishing on a day off I typically need some recovery time. Eventually, I'm going to have to look at my overall lifestyle including a general lack of sleep and make changes.

As a sportsman, sleep is an interesting subject. In my younger days, the adrenalin of the next hook-up would keep me going for days and when I did need some shuteye, I could sleep standing on my head if I needed to. I probably don't need any more sleep

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than I used to but I do need some comfort. Knowing that the whole tent thing and sleeping on the ground or leaning back in the driver's seat for a power nap was behind me got me to wondering; where am I going to sleep?

Although a 5th wheel or other pull-behind trailer would be luxurious, at this point I still need to be able to pull a boat. Tents, out of the question, and a hotel bed doesn't seem to align with most fishing trips. For many years our ARB shell, TruckVault, and a queen-

size mattress served us well but it was time for a heated change. I use the truck for work every day so a full-size hard-sided camper wasn't going to work. We considered getting a motor home or some form of a van conversion but in the end, decided that they were not in the budget and worse we're out of driveway real estate. Years ago, I did some catering for a series of offroad events in southern California and there were a ton of both ATC and Four Wheel Campers at the events. They are purpose-built off-road campers.

Both manufacturers utilize a lightweight welded aluminum frame and are soft-sided pop-up campers.

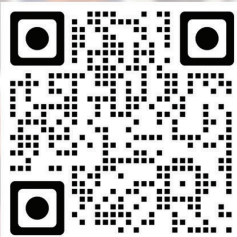
We decided to find a FWC and quickly determined that used campers to fit our full-size truck were few and far between. Order a new one? Well maybe; after researching the cost of the few newer used FWCs available as compared to the cost of a new one, ordering a new camper seemed like a solid financial decision. Add a level of customizations available and we were sold.

FWCs are available as topper, a basic shell model, a fully loaded slide-in camper and as a flat-bed camper with various options available for each model. We ordered a basic shell but customized our order with forced air heat, a larger bed, a forward dinette a flush mount stove top, an 8' awning and shore power. Deposit made; the wait began. We expected the 4-6-month lead-time but after a couple months started getting antsy and second guessing our configuration choices. Eventually, our lead time transitioned to an install date and we were off to Mule Expedition Outfitters in Issaquah for the install.



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With maybe 10,000 miles behind us as a truck camper combo, the truck is consistently getting 20-

22.1 miles per gallon, not bad for a  $\frac{3}{4}$  ton truck with 350,000 plus on it!

To date, we are very satisfied with our customization choices and our Four Wheel Camper far exceeds our expectations. I have to say, I even proposed going camping without any fishing gear! 10 years ago, I would never have considered a camping trip that didn't involve the boat and fishing gear. The way of the future or a phase? Only time will tell. In the meantime, I love telling fishing stories and we have a comfortable place to sleep!



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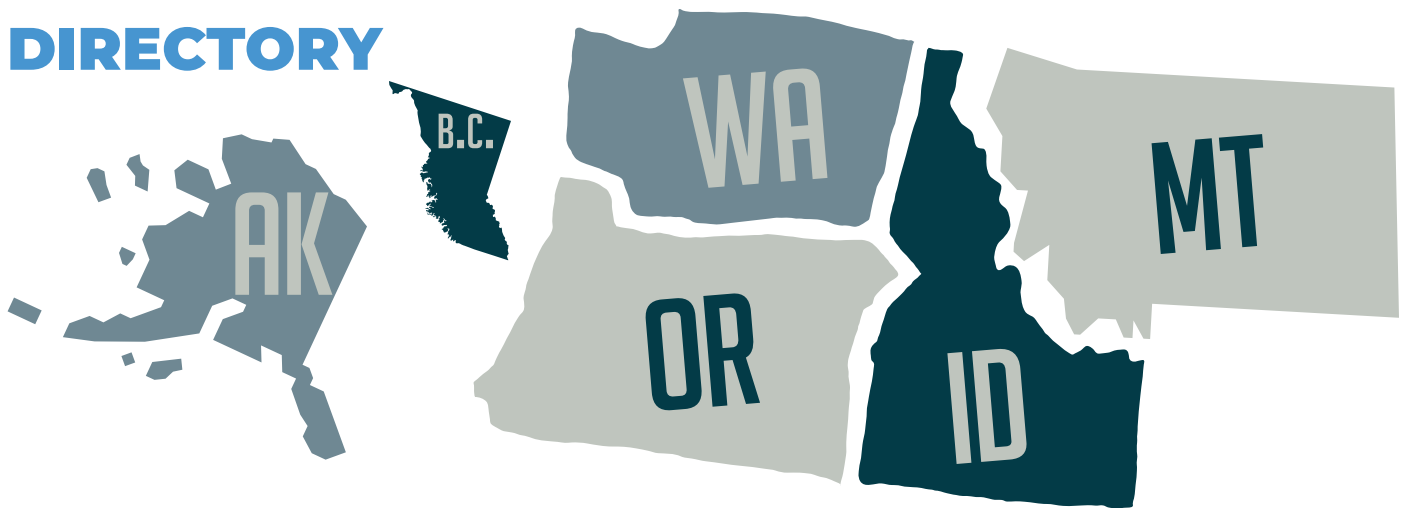
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A NORTHWEST FISHING



# FISHING ADVENTURE



## 8-DAY MEXICO FISHING ADVENTURE

Join Toby and "Baja" Cindy Wyatt & Rob and Hillary Holman as they travel to Loreto, Mexico to film an unbelievable episode of Northwest Fishing!

This trip takes place the first 8 days of November at a cost of \$3900 per person.

Message Toby Wyatt for full details & itinerary.

### TRIP INCLUDES\*

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HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS

FISH PROCESSING

GUIDED FISHING

APPEAR IN A NWF TV EPISODE\*



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*TV show dependent on producer discretion. All participants must sign a talent release. One day of fishing may be exchanged with one day of golf or an island beach tour day with snorkeling.*





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