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VOLUME 4, ISSUE 4

COVER STORY 37

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Photo by Rob Holman



**5 WINTER FISHING OPTIONS
IN CENTRAL WASHINGTON**

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EDITOR'S CORNER:

Welcome to winter fellow anglers! Don't let the cold and snow (or rain for those of you in Washington and Oregon) stop you from getting out and enjoying your favorite sport. Fishing is one of those unique activities that can be enjoyed year-round. Of course, it means more gear for more types of fishing... oh the sacrifices we must make! In this issue, we look at both hard water and wet water fishing options, and ways to stay safe in whatever kind of fishing you decide to pursue.

By the way, you likely noticed we've changed our name from Reel Life to Northwest Fishing. We decided the magazine name should align with our TV show. We'll still have the same great crew of writers and content coming to you ten times a year. Enjoy this month's articles!

As for me, my fishing trips take a back seat to upland bird hunting in November and December. It's been a warm, dry winter thus far in Central Montana, making pheasant hunting a challenge. But my dog Duke and I have bagged a few and logged a lot of miles. Come January 1st, I'll be pulling out the ice fishing gear and listening to the cracks and groans of expanding ice instead of the cackling of wild pheasants. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Stay safe out there! **Mike Carey, Northwest Fishing**



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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Mike Carey

PUBLISHER

Rob Holman

COPY EDITOR

Sarah Holman

CONTRIBUTORS

Rob Holman

Randy Castello

Josh DeBruler

Brent Knight

Eric Magnuson

John Kruse

COVER PHOTO CREDIT

Rob Holman

TEAM NWF (NWFTV)

Hillary Holman

Eric Magnuson

Luke Hatfield

Barry Dubnow

Hannah Pennebaker

Randy Castello

Matt Carey

Chris Decker

Jason Olsen

ADVERTISING

Eric Magnuson

Hillary Holman

ARTICLE SUBMISSION INQUIRIES

mikec@nwfishing.net

PUBLISHED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH COHO MEDIA GROUP

LAYOUT & GRAPHIC DESIGN

Sarah Holman

ADVERTISING

ericm@nwfishing.net

SOCIAL MEDIA INQUIRIES

hillaryh@nwfishing.net

ACCOUNTING

Rob & Hillary Holman

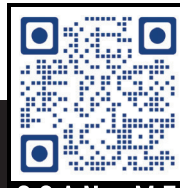
PROJECT MANAGER

Hillary Holman

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



Northwest Fishing
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Photo by Elizabeth Westwong.



Washington Department of
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WINTER FISHING OPTIONS IN CENTRAL WASHINGTON

BY JOHN KRUSE



Central Washington offers some great opportunities for anglers this year including river fishing, open water fishing in big lakes or reservoirs, and ice fishing in smaller lakes. Here are five solid bets for you this winter.

LAKE CHELAN

This 50-mile-long lake in North Central Washington is known for its lake trout, the largest often caught during the winter months. One person who knows this for a fact is Wenatchee resident Phil Colyar, who hauled a 35-pound, 10-ounce Mackinaw out of this lake in 2013. It's a state record that stands to this day.

While lake trout fishing gets a lot of attention, there are other fish that can be caught during the winter months as

well. Brad Wagner, owner of Bobber Down Guide Service out of Wenatchee (www.fishwenatchee.com) reported one of his guides took a couple of clients out on a trip and they came back with not only lake trout, but several kokanee and burbot.

Wagner says the kokanee last year were averaging 14 to 15 inches long. So far post-spawn, the kokanee are running around 12-inches long and most of them are being caught up the lake.

As for the burbot, they were a common sight at the lake until about 15 years ago when a virus nearly wiped them out. Wagner says the burbot population has bounced back though and if you jig for them in rocky areas about 150-feet below the surface, there is a good chance you will tie into one.

RUFUS WOODS RESERVOIR

The record lake trout may have been taken at Lake Chelan but the record resident rainbow trout was caught out of Rufus Woods Reservoir. Norm Butler accomplished that feat on Veteran's Day of 2002 when he reeled in a 29.6-pound triploid rainbow trout from the 51-mile-long impoundment of the Columbia River above Chief Joseph Dam at Bridgeport.

Many anglers will jig for these trout out of boats near the net pens operated by the Colville Tribe. You can fish from shore on the Colville Reservation side of the reservoir, but you will need a tribal fishing permit to do so. You can also fish from shore on Washington State land just above Chief Joseph Dam or from a federal site called Brandt's Landing on the Douglas

County (east side) of the reservoir a few miles above Chief Joseph Dam.

Many anglers will still fish for their trout here sitting by a campfire. Rick Graybill, a local expert, likes to fish a shrimp and a marshmallow just off the bottom from shore. Others fish worms and marshmallows or even powerbait. If fishing from a boat near the net pens, Graybill will cast spinners, drift Corkies, cast flies, or jig for the trout with either a small piece of worm or shrimp on the jig.

If you have an RV, you can take it to the net pens where a campground has been developed with hook-ups. There is also a boat launch there, but a day or annual pass is required. You can find out more details at colvilletribes.com/lake-rufus-woods.

ROSES LAKE

Located near Manson, this small lake was stocked heavily in early November with over 10,500 rainbow trout. There is a public access and launch at the south end of the lake and if you don't have a boat, you can have some success fishing from there before the lake freezes. After the lake freezes, this fishery

really shines as an ice-fishing destination. Not only for trout, but also for warmwater species like bass, perch, crappie and bluegill. Better yet, you are allowed to use two rods here as long as you have your two-rod endorsement.

BONAPARTE LAKE

Chris Marcolin, a pro-staffer for Mack's Lure, told me Bonaparte Lake offers opportunities for a variety of trout, including tiger, brook and rainbow trout that can be caught under the ice. Anglers can also reel in kokanee, smallmouth bass and if they're lucky, catch one of the lake trout there.

The Third Annual Bonaparte Lake Ice Fishing Derby will take place on January 25th, 2025 with Ground Zero being Bonaparte Lake Resort. Last year, over 400 people attended the event and close to 350 adults and youth contestants fished in it. Stay tuned for details about this through the Bonaparte Lake Resort Facebook Page at facebook.com/bonapartelakeresort.

RIVER WHITEFISH

Another option this winter is to head to South

Central Washington for mountain whitefish. The season opened for them on December 1st and runs through the end of February on the Yakima, Naches and Klickitat Rivers.

Rob Phillips is the long-time outdoors columnist for the Yakima Herald-Republic and has spent some time wading the cold waters of these streams hunting for whitefish. While you can catch these scrappy fighters with small spinners during the summer it's a different technique that works in the winter.

Phillips recommends fishing a small nymph close to the bottom with a maximum size hook of #14. Black, brown, and yellow are all good colors, but the important thing is to tip the hook with a live maggot because the whitefish really like that bait.

So, there you have it. You can catch everything from whitefish to lake trout to kokanee to burbot to rainbows, tiger or brook trout as well as bass and panfish. Bundle up and head to one of these destinations and go fishing this winter!



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KAYAK INNOVATIONS

BY JOSH DeBRULER



The word “kayak” means “surface” or “top” in the Inuktitut language, a dialect spoken by the Inuit people. The Inuits started paddling around kayaks some 4000 years ago in pursuit of wild game. Today, the kayak market is a rapidly growing industry in the fishing world. Over the past two decades, kayak companies have made giant leaps in bringing new and innovative products onto the fishing scene. These advancements have made what was once just a simple human-powered watercraft, into now, what is a very formidable fishing machine.

Why a kayak and not a traditional fishing boat you ask? There are more than just a handful of reasons why kayak fishing might suit your needs better than

a larger vessel. Here are some of the more popular justifications:

Portability. Kayaks are quite easy to move around, and they generally won't require a trailer. Even my 13 ft Hobie Revolution can be toted on top of a car as small as a Prius with the proper roof rack installed.

Simplicity. Kayaks are the minimalist's best friend. There's no combustible engine requiring loads of maintenance, fuel, and oil. In a kayak, you are the motor. Now, that's not to say kayaks can't start losing some of their minimalistic qualities. There are loads of add-ons, knick-knacks, and even electric motors that can sometimes blur the line between a kayak and a traditional fishing vessels. More on that later.

Maneuverability.

Kayaks can get into tight spaces and shallow waters that might not be suitable for larger boats. This is great for things like the seabass fishery, where rockfish like to hang out in shallow kelp beds along the straights of Juan De Fuca or the north coast of Washington state.

Kayaks are work.

You heard me right, kayaks are physical work, yet that's why many of us love them. Getting in a solid workout in your pursuit of fish is part of the appeal for many of us anglers. I can tell you firsthand there's nothing like landing ashore with a stringer filled with 30 lbs of fish and a body that lets you know you just earned your catch in every way conceivable.

GETTING PREPPED.

Winter is a great time to either prep up your current kayak for the not-so-far-off warm season, or to even investigate a new boat if your wallet permits. Let's take a look at some of the more recent kayak innovations and see which ones might suit your needs for the upcoming fishing season.

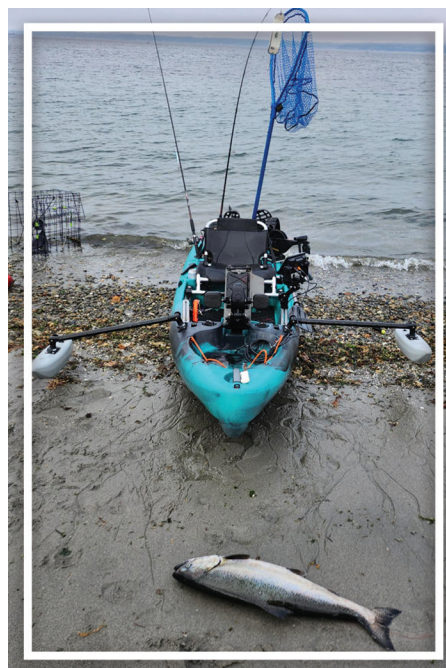
PEDAL DRIVES

The pedal drive was hands down the most groundbreaking innovation when it was introduced by Hobie around 20 years ago. It tackled one of the

biggest issues with kayak fishing, which undoubtedly was having your hands tied up with a paddle instead of a fishing rod. Not only do they allow your hands to be free, but they also allow you to stay at a given location on the water despite it's current. There's nothing worse than drifting when you don't intend to and being pushed away from fish or being dragged over a snag point.

There are two main types of pedal drives to consider when choosing a kayak, the one you chose will largely depend on personal

preference. The options are the push pedal drive or the rotational pedal drive.



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PUSH PEDAL DRIVE

The push pedal drive works exactly as the name implies. You push forward with one foot and alternate to the next foot as you move along the water. A few things to keep in mind when using these drive systems. The distance between the peddles and the seat can be adjusted. You'll want to make sure you have this fine-tuned before putting in a significant number of miles on your kayak. Wrong positioning can lead to undue strain on the knees and leg muscles. Foot positioning is important too. For example, having your feet too low on the

peddles can also lead to excessive strain on the knees. Finally, a fair amount of training on calm waters with little to no current should be done before plunging into fishing adventures that will require you to travel long distances over the water or require you to kayak against strong currents. The goal here is to ease yourself in and build up the muscles required for a type of leg movement that isn't exactly natural to us.

A big pro about the push pedals is that they use a fin system. This system consists of two flexible fins that move side to side as you peddle.

Some of the newer systems have a feature that will allow the fins to flex backward toward the stern of the boat if you were to accidentally get into shallow waters where the fins might otherwise drag and potentially break on the bottom. Fins also hold up well in weeds and kelp and rarely present a significant risk of getting tangled in underwater vegetation.

ROTATIONAL PEDAL DRIVE

If you're a cyclist or better yet, a recumbent bike cyclist, then you'll already be familiar with the movements necessary for

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the rotational pedal drive kayak. This drive system works just like a recumbent bicycle. You sit in the seat of your kayak and peddle in a rotational motion mimicking the movement of what you would find on a bicycle crank. These pedal drive systems are favored by some kayakers as this is a movement that we are typically a bit more familiar with, however, some argue that the efficiency of the rotational system is lacking when compared to the push drive systems. Another thing to consider is that rotational systems use a prop for propulsion as opposed to a fin system.

Props are prone to tangles with weeds and kelp, so the angler running one of these systems should be cautious of underwater obstacles like these.

BACKING UP

Both push and rotational drive systems offer reverse as an option. However, these come at a cost. Many of the cheaper peddle kayaks don't offer a reverse option, so this is a factor to consider when shopping around for a kayak.

RUDDERS

All peddle drive kayaks come with a rudder to control the left and right movement. Instead of using





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your paddle to turn, you will use a lever (typically to your left) that will allow you to direct your boat.

INTEGRATED TRANSDUCER MOUNTS

Traditionally, if you wanted to mount a transducer on your kayak for your fish finder, you'd have two options. The first option would be to either buy (or rig up) a transducer mounting arm that will mount to the rail of your kayak and run down the side and into the water. This works, though it creates drag in the water and could get in the way



of your fishing. The second option would be to mount a transducer inside your hull at the bottom. The transducer would need to be encapsulated in something like plumbers' putty and then fixed to the bottom plastic of the hull. This creates an airtight environment for the transducer and allows the signal to be emitted

uninterrupted into the water. Both options work yet are not ideal. Integrated in-haul transducer mounts eliminate these cumbersome and sometimes difficult-to-install systems. These integrated mounts provide predrilled holes with a fixed path for your wires to travel from the fish finder monitor at the top of the boat, down through the hull, and then to a protected compartment at the bottom of the kayak. Here the transducer itself is submerged in the water yet protected by a plastic plate

A large blue and red raft with "KILLGORE ADVENTURES" and "HAPPY HOUR" written on it, carrying several people in life vests down a river. The raft is moving through white water rapids. The background is a rocky riverbank.

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that keeps it from getting banged up by underwater objects.

INCREASED BUOYANCY & STANDUP-ABILITY

Kayaks that have stand-up ability aren't necessarily a new concept, yet it is a concept that is being more widely integrated into peddle kayaks and kayaks that are electronic motor compatible. These kayaks typically have increased hull buoyancy and hull width to allow the operator to stand up while fishing. Some are built with an open deck to increase the surface area for your feet while standing. Standing up provides a great advantage while fishing by allowing the angler to have better positioning for site fishing and affords a significant amount of increased comfort by allowing the angler to stretch their legs and move to new positions.

ELECTRONIC MOTORS

Finally, we get to electronic motor drives. This is where we see the line between

traditional fishing boats and kayaks start to get fuzzy. "Human-powered watercraft" is the term that has traditionally defined the kayak. Integrating an electronic motor certainly moves us away from that category, but still, the convenience of electronic motors is appealing to anglers who want their focus to be on fishing and not on peddling or paddling.

Motor-compatible kayaks have a few options for mounting the motor, and that will be determined by your specific kayak. Generally, the options for mounting are the stern, the bow, or a couple of feet aft of the seat in the same port your peddle drive would normally sit in. Steering is achieved by either a motor tiller or a steering lever that controls a rudder.

Motor-compatible kayaks are built to support the weight of the motor, the batteries, the angler, and his or her gear. This means they are generally larger

and heavier than your standard fishing kayak and more often than not, they will require a trailer to be transported to and from your fishing grounds. Pulling a trailer for a kayak? Why not just get a regular boat? Well, that's a valid question and is why I personally stick to kayaks that can be thrown on top of something as small as a Subaru outback. However, if you're ok with charging and relying on batteries, you don't mind using a trailer, and are ok with the extra volume and weight you'll have to tote around, then motorized kayaks might work for you.

Spring will be here sooner than you expect, and hopefully, this info will inspire you to look at some of the many options out there in the kayak fishing world. Remember, the best way to beat the crowds is to get away from them. Peddling (or paddling) your kayak out into the open water will allow you to do just that.



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CHASING THE CHILL

YOUR GUIDE TO PREPARING FOR AN ICE FISHING ADVENTURE BY ERIC MAGNUSON

Ice fishing, often described as a serene and rewarding experience, is more than drilling a hole in the ice and waiting for the fish. It's an adventure that combines the thrill of the outdoors with the patience of angling. But to truly enjoy your trip and ensure your safety, preparation is key. Whether you're a seasoned pro or a beginner, this guide will walk you through the essentials of planning and executing the perfect ice fishing outing.

UNDERSTANDING THE ENVIRONMENT & WEATHER

Before embarking on

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an ice trip, it is crucial to understand the unique challenges posed by the frozen landscape. Understand the environment you're heading into, and how the weather has been, and will be for the day. You want the area to have sustained a decent string of cold temperature days to put a solid 4 inches of ice before venturing out.

SAFETY FIRST

The first rule to ice fishing is ensuring the ice is safe, as a minimum of 4" in is recommended for safe walking. Carrying a spud bar early, and late season is

non-negotiable, as you can check the thickness while walking out. Local fishing reports, weather conditions, advice from seasoned anglers, and even tackle shops provide valuable insight into ice conditions and safety. Additionally, investing in safety gear like ice cleats for walking, flotation devices, flotation suits, ice picks, and some rope won't only enhance your mobility on the ice, but also offer crucial protection if the unthinkable happens and you fall through. Extra clothing and a blanket with you are good as well.

GEAR CHECKLIST

ICE RODS & REELS ☐

Ice fishing rods are shorter than traditional rods, offering better control in a confined space of a shelter, or standing directly over the hole. Paired with a compact and durable reel, these rods and reels are typically designed for cold weather and built for conditions and the fight of winter fish. (Don't forget the use of Tip Up's!)

BAIT & TACKLE ☐

Top lures and prolites for most ice anglers are a spoon, such as a Swedish pimple, or a small 3mm/6mm tungsten jig tipped with a couple of maggots, waxxies, or your favorite plastic. Colors in shiny metallic, or glow are the most proven.

ICE AUGERS & DRILLS ☐

You can't fish without a hole, and creating that hole is impossible without an auger if it's manual, or even powered. Hand augers are plenty for most ice we get, and they're affordable and lightweight. I tend to stray away from the weight of gas and the mess, and instead, run a composite auger on a 20v drill. Please never use chainsaws, and in Washington state keep

the hole no bigger than 10 inches.

ICE SHELTER ☐

Having a portable pop-up shelter on the ice offers protection from the biting winds and keeps you warm and dry. Some are equipped with insulated materials to hold heat from the heater and sun lights can be installed; they are a nice, cozy add-on when on the ice.

WARM CLOTHING ☐

Layering is essential for ice fishing. Start with a moisture-wicking base layer, adding insulating layers like fleece, and top it off with wind/waterproof wear. Don't forget thermal socks and good insulated boots, gloves, beanies, and a face covering to retain body heat. I always recommend overdressing, because you can always take it off, but you can't if you don't have it.

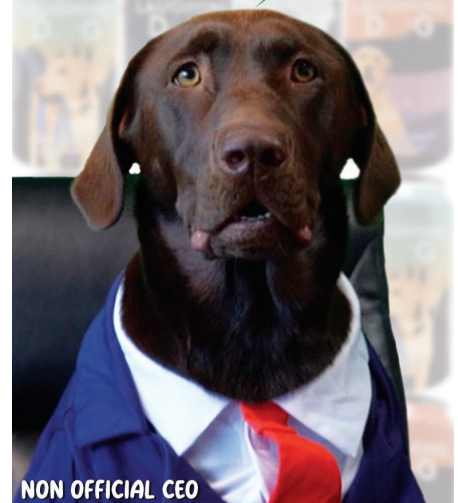
PLANNING YOUR TRIP ☐

Once your gear is ready, it's time to plan the trip. Here are a few tips to ensure a seamless experience.

Research your destination: Selecting the right body of water may determine the bite, its thickness, and species. Maps will be your best resort or just common

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knowledge of the lake over time. Other options include checking local reports from tackle shops, Facebook pages, state websites, etc. And always make sure to check the regulations for rules and limits!

MONITOR THE WEATHER

Harsh winter conditions can change rapidly, so keeping an eye on the forecast is critical to avoid venturing out into the storm, high winds, and extreme cold. Having a blanket in your car and safety gear at all times is a must, and always let family and friends know where you plan on fishing when you leave, and when to expect your return.

PLAN YOUR ROUTE ON THE ICE

Venturing out on this ice, may it be by foot, snowmobile, or ATV, make sure to know if there are springs on the body of water, stay away from streams and inlets as the moving water makes for weak ice.

Watch for crossing wet or dark patches if possible, and never if you can avoid it, access ice from the docks, as the sun can warm the docks and weaken the ice surrounding it. Always try to access from a shoreline. Don't forget to try **20 | NWFISHING.net**

and follow the same path back, since you know it was safe prior.

Before we go, just remember fish are active early morning and late afternoon hours so be prepared for long days. With schools of fish always on the move, fish near structures, weed beds, and drop-offs, and drill as many holes as you can to cover more water. This is where a fish finder comes in handy to find these spots quickly. Be as quiet as possible while moving from hole to hole, fish do spook easily as we've witnessed on cameras.

Fish behavior will change throughout the day with temps and lighting, so vary the depths of your presentation until you find the most active fish. Again, it's easy to solely focus on fishing and forget about your comfort. Stay warm and appropriately dressed, bring a thermos of something hot, and always carry water and snacks to enjoy a day on the ice all while respecting the environment by disposing of trash and packing out what was packed in. Respect nature, wildlife, and other anglers.

Ice fishing can be more than a hobby, but

also a way to connect with nature, test your patience, and enjoy the camaraderie of fellow anglers. Every outing can be a learning experience with unique challenges and rewards. As you sit on the ice, surrounded by the quiet beauty of the frozen landscape, the cold becomes a distant memory. As I always say, "The tug is the drug!" and the joy of reeling in a fish are moments that make the preparation worthwhile.

With this overview, you're ready to tackle the ice, create memories, and perhaps catch the fish of a lifetime. Bundle up, grab your gear, and embrace the chilling adventure that awaits you!



LAYERS FOR SUCCESS

GEAR



BY ERIC MAGNUSON

One of the most important keys to ice fishing, is clothing and staying warm. I'm not going to touch on name brands, as I will on the importance to proper clothing is while ice fishing. As many of us use different brands of gear while out in the element's, I want to share with you the proper way to dress and what I do for a day on the ice. And that all starts with the LAYER SYSTEM, so here's a few tips that could help you in the cold.

BASE LAYER:



This is where it begins, that layer that hug's your skin close, and a good material that will wick moisture and sweat away. A wool, or synthetic blend long underwear is what I recommend, as we do sweat out there. Key is to get that moisture away from your skin to feel dry, warm, and comfortable. My base Layer is long underwear from GH Unders, and do the job very well.

MID LAYER:

This layer is the insulated layer, may it be a fleece, hoodie, and a vest. Or two hoodies, as I prefer a hood for coverage. If I have two hoodies on I can remove one, or the vest if I get warm from walking, or drilling holes. Bottom mid layer I like a sweatpant, or to be honest a pair of Fleece pajama pants are perfect. Something light, movable, and warm.



OUTER LAYER:



This is the protection from the snow, rain, and wind, and typically wind and water proof. This is crucial to keep me dry, and from the wind penetrating through my other layers. I wear a jacket and bibs, both are wind and water proof. But the best feature, is they will float me if I happen to fall through the ice. This Jacket and Bib suit comes from Ice Armor by Clam, they are breathable, comfortable, warm and dry. I very seldom wear the jacket, as the bibs and my mid layer is typically plenty. But the jacket comes in handy for those brutal winds, or very wet days. Our suits at times have to act a second hut, and they do just that to keep us going in the elements.

As these layers are important, don't overlook a good wool sock, good boots, stalking cap, gloves, and a neck gator. As I say at my seminars, "Overdress, cause you can always take it off, but you can't put it on if you don't have it"! Stay warm, Stay dry, and most importantly, Stay topside.



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Winter Steelheading

Fishing for the Elements

by Brent Knight

My favorite time of year is upon us. Soon, winter steelhead will be entering our rivers to begin their migration to their natal spawning grounds. If you are a “steelheader” then you savor this time and are excited to begin your piscatorial pursuit of this elusive species. For me, there is no greater pursuit than winter steelhead.

Summer steelhead often enter the rivers in the summer and hold over until winter and even spring. Winter steelhead migrate into their natal rivers during the winter months, starting as early as mid-November, and often hold over to spawn in the spring. In some systems, the two collide and spawn with one another.

Unlike salmon, after spawning steelhead can return to the ocean to begin their cycle again and are known to spawn as

many as 3-4 times during their lifecycle. Steelhead are less predictable and often harder to catch than salmon. They can be very finicky and the weather and changes in the water flow and clarity can vastly transform the approaches that we take to catch them. This might be the reason that we love them so much; they are not easy to catch and sometimes can be very hard to find.

While many of you might love to chase steelhead as I do, you likely dread the early mornings, the darkness of winter, the cold, and the wet. Let’s face it, getting out into the elements when they are at their worst is not for the faint of heart. It takes grit and determination and the overwhelming lure of this fish to motivate us to leave the comfort of our homes to brave the elements. The key to a great day on the

water is staying warm and dry.

Since I started pursuing winter steelhead about 15 years ago, much has changed in the technology of the gear that we use. At the forefront of this technology, is the availability of clothing that will not only allow us to endure the elements, but to embrace them in absolute comfort. Many of us have a garage full of clothing that we have bought to stay comfortable.

I know that I spend a lot of time chasing winter steelhead on a river north of Seattle that is nestled in the mountains. It is often cold and wet when I float this river, with average daytime temperatures between freezing and the mid-40s on the average day. Some days are much colder and many days bring snow, sleet, rain, and wind.



The author with a wild winter steelhead

I have found that the combination of cold and slowly getting wet over hours of floating is exacerbated by the reliable late morning and afternoon winds that blow through the river valleys. While we may start warm and dry, we often finish the day damp and cold. That warm cup of coffee at the end of the float is always a welcome sight.

So, how do you keep warm and dry? This is the million-dollar question, and I am here to tell you that it does not mean
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spending \$1000s on high-end gear. The key that I have found is to layer and to make sure that you have an impervious outer layer to wear when it rains and the wind blows. The addition that I made to my repertoire last year was a battery powered, heated vest.

I bought this online for around \$60 and it was the best money that I have spent. I am known to wear 3-4 layers below the waist and 6-7 above, and even then, I tend to get cold. This investment has been the single greatest factor in staying warm on the worst of days.


Here is my suggestion on how to dress. I will clarify that my opinion is based on either walk-and-wade fishing or floating a river in a drift boat. You will obviously stay warmer if you are moving, which you do very little when fishing from a drift boat. Start out with a good base layer of long underwear, both top and bottom. Wear a warm pair of pants or sweats over the bottoms, preferably something that is not cotton. Remember, cotton is rotten, meaning that when it gets wet, you get cold. I wear a pair of Simms M's Thermal Mid-Layer

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Bottoms which will set you back about \$90. They are fantastic and keep you warm. Over these pants, I wear two pairs of socks and stocking foot waders with wading boots. My lower half, including my toes, rarely gets cold.

Let's move to the top half of the body. Start with a base layer, a long-sleeve shirt. This should be tight-fitting to keep the heat against your body. I wear a second layer of long-sleeve shirt over this, generally a light fleece or mid-layer garment. At this point, I put on the battery-

powered heated vest that is mentioned above. This is the keystone to keeping your core warm and remaining comfortable for the entire day.

After this, a puff jacket or fleece, followed by an impervious outer layer jacket, round out the ensemble. When it comes to the outermost layer, there is great debate. I will wear a Gore-Tex jacket when the weather is not forecasted to be super wet. This will generally stay dry enough, but I have yet to find a high-end Gore-Tex jacket that is water"PROOF".

For really wet days, I rely on rubber. My go-to is something made by either Helly Hansen or Grundens that is designed for commercial fishing. There are many options and most cost less than a high-end jacket from Simms, Patagonia, or another leading brand. The key is to go with something that will keep the rain and wind out. Also, layering as outlined above allows you to dress and undress for comfort, as conditions change during the day.

I don't want to sway anyone to a particular brand of clothing as we all have our

preferences. I can attest to what has worked best for me based on years of trial and error as well as talking to guides who are out in the elements every day. Getting cold is a strong motivator to find a way to keep warm, so a lot of testing goes into determining what works best. I will leave it to you to listen to the research and advice of someone who has invested heavily in this process or choose to learn on your own. Hopefully, this is helpful, and you successfully chase steelhead in 2025, while remaining warm, dry, and comfortable. Good fishing!



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When I saw that I pulled the coveted “Writers Choice” slot for my assignment this month, I was busy trying to keep a small boat right-side up during our recent “Bomb Cyclone “(Yes, I was messing with my phone). I got to thinking, that if I survive the next couple of hours, a piece on heavy weather boating may be in order.

First, if the weather is questionable, don't go. No fish is worth losing your boat or even your life for. Before any recreational boating trip, check the weather forecast and plan accordingly. Even if that means stopping at Skagit Seafoods to buy your next

meal's main course. In the long run, it would be much cheaper than trying to run into conditions beyond the capability of your boat.

In my case, it's my job, and my options are limited. I'm retired from a 38-year suit and tie gig but I couldn't do retired life. Now I run a mailboat in the San Juan Islands, and unless I can't get the boat out of the slip, the mail must go through. In addition to first-class mail, I also deliver freight, packages, time-sensitive prescriptions, perishable items, and other necessities for landlocked islanders.

I recognize that sometimes the weather just happens, going from a bit of a chop to holy crap in minutes.

Here are a few thoughts on preparations and handling emergency situations on the water.

As mentioned earlier, check the weather forecast or maybe try an app such as Windy to make sure the conditions will be safe for your planned adventure. Remember, if you're questioning your ability to get to your fishing spot and back, the fishing will be uncomfortable at best.

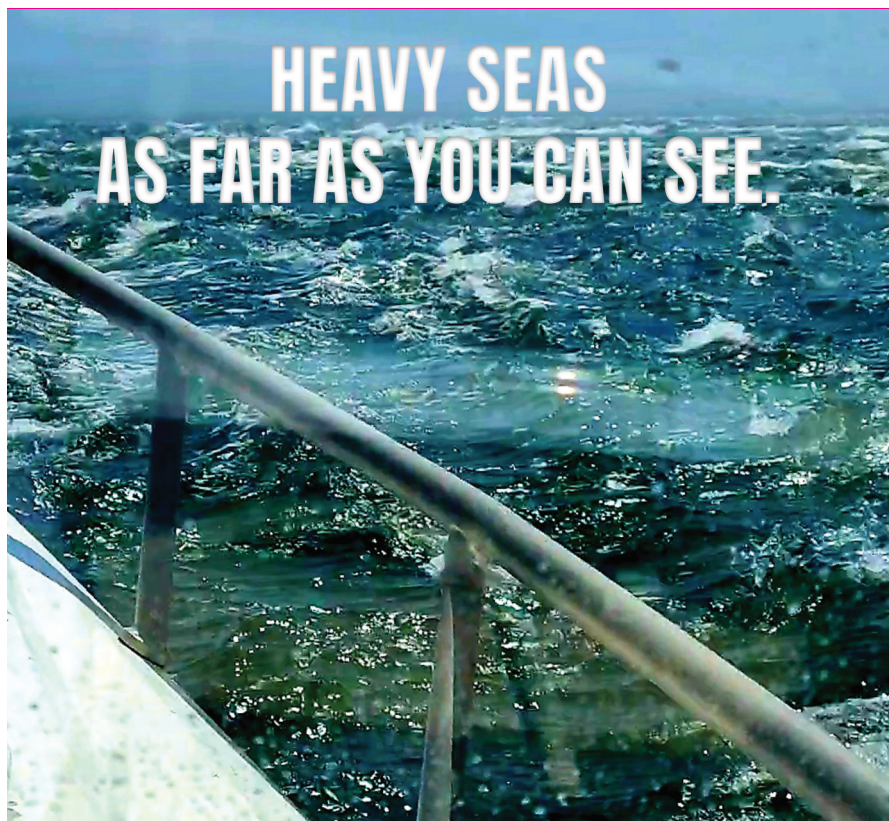
Make sure you have the correct size PFDs (personal flotation device) for each passenger onboard. It is also a good idea to conduct a VHF radio check and carry a fully charged cellphone.

If boating in the PNW, I strongly suggest that you purchase the appropriate Vessel Assist membership for your area and boating style.

Make sure you have adequate fuel onboard. It is amazing what you can get your boat to do when the motor is running. I also suggest that you equip your boat with a fuel/water separator and use a fuel treatment with every fill-up.

There could be times when you have to anchor because of the high seas. Have an anchor, chain, and rode, sized for your boat ready to deploy in the case of an emergency. If you lose your motor, deploy the anchor from the bow before you drift into a dangerous situation. Never anchor from a stern or spring line cleat.

If you have a defroster, turn it in at the first hint of unfriendly weather. If you don't have a defrost system, consider having a portable 12-volt fan and treat the windows with an anti-fog product. Check your wiper blades for damage before each trip. Also, ensure that the wiper motors and arms are functional. When you're running in heavy seas you need to be able to read the seas ahead of you.



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If the forecast includes a freezing spray advisory, leave your boat on the trailer. Even with a forced air defrost system you will not be able to keep the windows clear of ice. In addition to the resulting reduced visibility, moving around on a rocking ice-covered deck is close to impossible and flat-out dangerous.

When you first realize that you'll be running in heavy water, have everybody onboard put their PFDs on. If practical, lower your center of gravity. Keep someone on watch, but have the rest of your

passengers sit on the floor. Weight distribution can be critical in how your boat handles big water.

Running in heavy seas is a mental challenge at best. You're managing the impact of the wave you're on while reading the seas at least 3 waves ahead of you. Don't panic and plan your actions. Focus on the seas while keeping your passengers calm.

When running into a head sea, in general, you want to approach a wave just off of head-on. If the crest is breaking, you want the bow just behind the break and adjust the throttle as



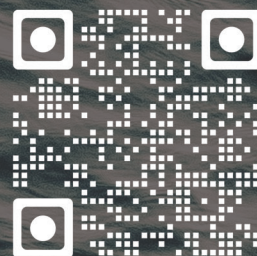
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required to let the wave roll under your boat. Constantly read the seas ahead of you. Every wave will be different.

When running with a following sea, you're constantly feathering the throttle and keeping the boat pointed down swell. You never want to let a breaking wave overtake you. The wave's energy will feel like it's pulling your boat backward and filling it with water. Again, hand on the throttle when running with a following sea and keep the boat more or less perpendicular to the swell or waves. Don't run on the down face of the wave ahead of you. As the boat approaches the trough, it will slow down and the energy of the



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next wave could cause your boat to broach.

Broaching is where the wave behind you lifts your stern enough that you lose directional control and possibly roll your boat.

Running in the trough is kind of a combination of running into an oncoming sea and running with a following sea. You're constantly managing the throttle and the wheel while looking for breaking waves. You want to let the breaking wave pass by just in front of your boat. You may have to throttle up to turn the boat and take a wave just off center of head-on, then realign with the trough.

A key to successfully navigating heavy seas is to know your boat and not be afraid to change plans if you need to change your destination for safe harbors. Most people don't file a float plan anymore but it is a great idea to let someone on shore know what your general plans are for the day. If you get into heavy weather, designate someone to communicate your changing plans. As a skipper, you need to focus on managing the boat, not yapping it up on the phone or texting. On that note, keep a tidy ship. Things rolling around the cabin, or sliding around the deck can be both distracting and dangerous.

The safest way to manage heavy seas is to enjoy them through the windshield of your tow vehicle. If you do get stuck having to run in unfriendly conditions, keep cool and rely on your preparations. Become one with the sea, you can't change the conditions but you can understand their impact on your vessel and plan accordingly. As a skipper, at the end of the day, you are responsible for making sure your passengers make it home to spin man verses the sea tales. Be the legend!

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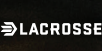
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5-STAR

Fishing Destinations

BY ROB HOLMAN

FORT PECK



LAKE PEND OREILLE



CLEARWATER



POTHOLES



ZEBALLOS



Calling a fishing destination “5-star” can mean a lot of things to different people. Some people are all about fishing and only fishing. Five stars to them mean spectacular fishing opportunities for that prized species on their list. For them, it could be good numbers, rare fish, or even that “trophy” size catch. If this means sleeping in a car on the side of the road it makes no difference to them. It’s all about “The Fish”.

Other people are looking for a trip the whole family can enjoy, a vacation with a side of good fishing. They want some amenities, some nightlife, maybe some local culture and sightseeing. Then a couple of days on a blue water charter.

Throw in all the factors like; do you want a guided/charter experience or are you more into self-guided adventures? What time of year? What species? What’s on the bucket list? Boat or shore? Fly fishing? Budget? Well, you get a lot of answers for what a 5-Star Fishing Destination entails. And guess what? Everybody’s right. Your dream fishing destination is a personal thing. Whether you’re a trophy hunter or dream of ten-inch trout on a quiet Alpine Lake, who can say it’s not “5 star”? Fishing is many things for everyone, but here are some of our favorites from over the years and why we think of them as “5-star”.

(Hint: the reasons aren’t all the same.)

Starting from East to West:

FORT PECK, MT **DIY Road Trip Adventure**

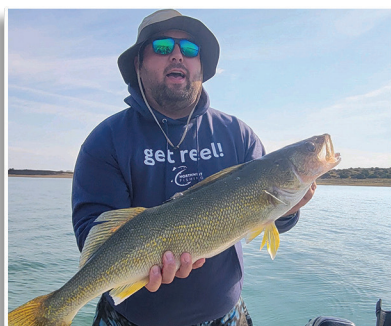
For some people seeking out fishing destinations, the adventure of getting there is more than half the fun. Fort Peck Montana is nearly 1000 miles from Seattle and a 15-hour drive straight through. It is so far East that it’s not really PNW anymore. The road to Fort Peck has its share of roadside attractions, beautiful scenery, and fun stops if you plan your time accordingly. If your 5-star fishing destination means a nice long road trip, you should put Fort Peck on your list.

Why Fort Peck? Last year a new state record came out of Fort Peck that caught the attention of anglers across the U.S.

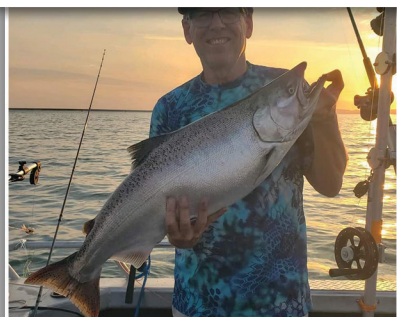
You might be surprised that the record was for Chinook Salmon, a 32.62 Chinook to be exact. That's a nice fish anywhere! And traveling across the northwest to this unlikely spot for a chance at 30-pound plus Kings is what makes this one of our 5-star destinations. The fishing opportunity doesn't stop with salmon at Fort Peck. Walleye, Sturgeon, Northern Pike, Lake Trout, and Small Mouth Bass all abound in one of the most beautiful, uncrowded fishing destinations in the United States. You'll have an opportunity to catch a "personal best" of multiple species all on one trip.

And from experience, they grow them large in Big Sky country!

Fort Peck Reservoir is a big lake (about 134 miles in length, 1520 miles of shoreline, and roughly 220' deep when full) created by the Fort Peck Dam on the Missouri River. Boats are recommended but there are a lot of marinas and campgrounds to plan your trip around with many having shore fishing opportunities. Glasgow, Montana serves as a good base camp with various lodgings, restaurants, and re-supply options and is just 17 miles from the Fort Peck Marina.



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The Cottonwood Inn & Suites has a variety of options for lodging; from RV Parking to hotel rooms, and amenities include boat parking, a casino, and a restaurant. You can learn more about Fort Peck, and how to fish it at <https://fwp.mt.gov/fish>.

LAKE PEND OREILLE, ID ***North Idaho Trophy Hunting***

Lake Pend Oreille is the largest lake in Idaho and in the top 50 for the U.S.. It is really deep (over 1000 feet in some areas) and is known for naval submarine testing. This is beautiful country, with a host of fishing options, but what many come for are the Kamloops. Kamloops is a Gerrard strain of rainbow trout that are known as some of the biggest trout around, and are highly sought after to round out an avid trout anglers trophy checklist. Your chance for "Big Fish" is what makes Lake Pend Oreille a 5-star fishing destination.

The Idaho state record Kamloops rainbow trout was caught out of Pend Oreille by Wes Hamlet in 1947. That's a long time for a record to hold up, but that doesn't stop anglers from pursuing glory every year in tournaments, by



LAKE PEND OREILLE, ID

boat, and from shore. Pend Oreille is also home to massive schools of kokanee (a favorite food of the Kamloops), and populations of pike, bass, perch, walleye, crappie, and mackinaw. The lake has a history of big fish taken from it in addition to the trout record, these include a 43-pound 6-ounce mackinaw in 1995, and a world record 32-pound bull trout in 1949.

The idyllic town of Sandpoint sits on the shores of Lake Pend Oreille, nestled in forests between the mountains and the lake. A destination town for skiers in the winter and boaters in the summer, Sandpoint is a great home base for the family fishing destination vacation with some boujee amenities not

too far from some small-town, rustic escapes. The theme park, Silverwood, is less than 30 minutes away. If you're looking to plan a trip with something for everyone, shopping, hiking, dining, and trophy fishing, Sandpoint and the neighboring town of Ponderay are great options. The word is out, and the popularity of the area has grown immensely so plan ahead! Jeff and Mona Laybourne of Superfly Tackle not only operate the local tackle store and carry everything you need, but they also make specialized gear to target the lake's prized trophies. They are a wealth of information and can be reached online at <https://superflyflies.com/>.

CLEARWATER RIVER, ID **Steelhead Mecca**

Arguably the most consistent steelhead fishing in the region and your best shot at steelhead retention (catch and keep), the Clearwater River's retention steelhead season runs from early October to mid-April, with prime time being October through January. You can be at this steelhead promised land in just under 6 hours from Seattle.

The river draws steelhead enthusiasts from around the northwest, offering outstanding opportunities for catch-and-release fishing, fly fishing, shore fishing, and of course drift boats and power boats. The Clearwater's "B-run" may be the best bet in the region for a trophy 20-pounder, and B-run fish typically average 12-14 pounds. Many of the fish originate at the Dworshak National Fish Hatchery managed by the Nez Perce tribe of Idaho, located at the confluence of the North Fork and mainstem Clearwater, about 3 miles west of Orofino, Idaho.

While the epic steelhead fishing and amazing stretches of highly fishable water make this a 5-star

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fishing destination, the Clearwater is not a one-trick pony. The Dworshak hatchery bolsters catch and keep chances for King and Coho salmon with sustainable fish production goals. Coho were declared extinct in the river in 1986, but this year there was an overlapping sport season for Coho, Kings, and Steelhead! These October days are prime time and can be some of the most amazing, quality, days of an angler's life. With returning Coho averaging 8-12 pounds, 10 to 20 pounds plus Chinook, and those amazing B-runs in the river at the same time,

CLEARWATER RIVER, ID



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CLEARWATER RIVER, ID

pandemonium has been the theme more than once! Recent years have seen spring run Chinook seasons as well.

This adventure is really about fishing and those special days on the water. There are a variety of options in the area for shore fishing, multiple boat launches, and some great area outfitters. Many folks skip the hassle of pulling the boat and learning the river, instead walking onto a guide's boat and getting right into the hot spots. Many of these area professionals provide a "hot lunch" as well, and around noon

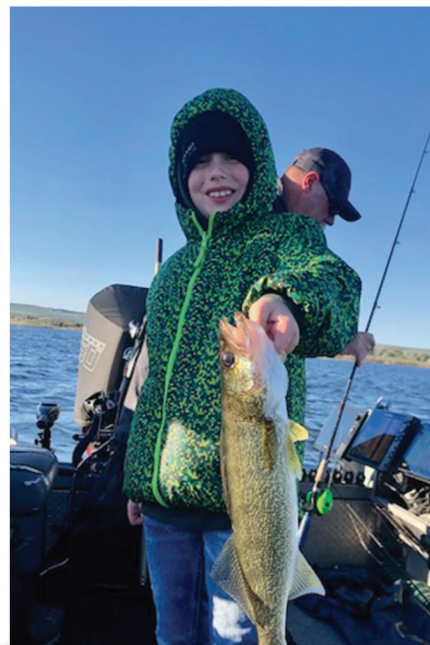
you can smell burgers and brats all around the river. Guides we recommend in the area include Toby Wyatt of Reel Time Fishing reeltimefishing.com, Kyle Jones of Jones Sport Fishing jonessportfishing.com, and Adam Hocking of Steel Dreams Guide Service steeldreamsfishing.com. For lodging Lewiston, Idaho has all the amenities with the Hell's Canyon Grand being our usual choice. Orofino, Idaho, has several good options as well.

POTHOLES RESERVOIR, WA *Walleye Wonderland*

Not everyone's into walleye, but if you are, Potholes Reservoir should be on your list. Located about seven miles south of Moses Lake in Central Washington, Potholes Reservoir offers year-round fishing opportunities for walleye, smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, and panfish. Dinner plate bluegill are not unknown and last year there was some great rainbow fishing. The lake is large and shallow, with most of the lake less than 30 feet deep.

What used to be, and still is to some extent, a large collection of sand dunes, is now a one-of-a-kind regional destination for bass and walleye anglers and recreation of all sorts. As part of the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project, multiple tournaments are held on the Lake annually, most held at the MarDon Resort Marina.

With over 300 days of sunshine, MarDon is popular as a destination for families, and vacationers nearly year-round (boating, camping, resort events, wildlife & birdwatching), with the Fall and Winter



POTHOLES RESERVOIR, ID

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The resort has a variety of lodging opportunities from big RV spots and campsites to beach houses and cabins, you can customize your Potholes Lodging experience to your needs. The marina offers quick access to the Lake, and the restaurant and resort store means you don't need to go anywhere.

The consistent walleye fishing and the flexibility to tailor the trip to whatever you're looking for is what makes this a 5-star fishing destination.

Walleye are delicious table fare, and the big boys can offer a surprising fight. Nothing beats a mess of walleye grilled up after a day of fishing with one of those epic Potholes sunsets on the horizon.

You can fish from the shore or the marina dock, launch your boat, rent a boat, or hire a local guide to experience Potholes Reservoir Fishing. Shelby Ross of Ross Outdoor Adventures is the resident expert on lake conditions and where the fish are.

To learn more about MarDon Reservoir visit mardonresort.com, to contact Shelby Ross of Ross Outdoor Adventure visit: rossoutdooradventures.com.



POTHOLES RESERVOIR, ID

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Zeballos, BC

This one is for those people who want the ultimate PNW fishing experience. You want salmon, you want halibut, you want the smell of saltwater and rugged untouched shorelines. This destination is not for people who want shopping, nightlife, and dance clubs. When you pull into Zeballos, BC you drive into the past. There's one thing to do: Fish, Eat, Sleep, Repeat.

There's one primary business in this town: Reel Obsession Sportfishing. Zeballos is about halfway up the west coast of Vancouver Island in British Columbia. It looks just like the coastal parts of the PNW. On the drive up (about 4 1/2 hours from the ferry in Nanaimo) there are towering cedars and firs, jagged mountains, and pristine streams. There aren't any mini-marts though. This trip is all about decompressing and enjoying some of the consistently best all-around salmon & halibut

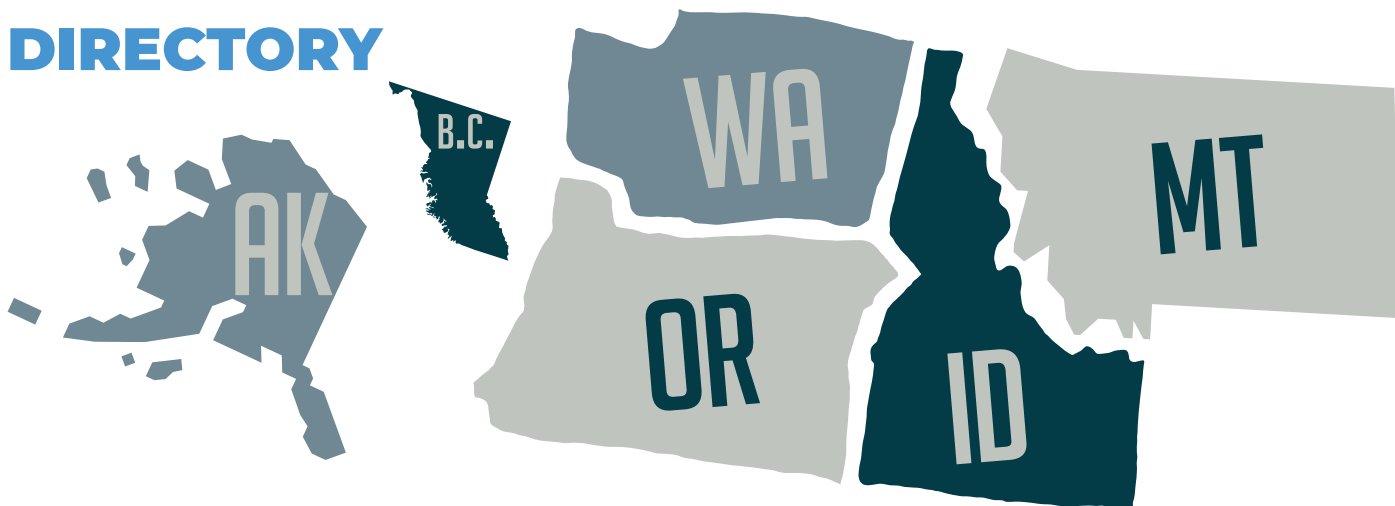
fishing in the region, and the team at Reel Obsession is obsessive in providing an unforgettable experience for their guests.

From the time you arrive, until you depart, they have thought of everything. Wonderful accommodations, amazing chef-prepared meals, top-quality boats, gear, and equipment, and off-the-hook fishing is what makes this a 5-star fishing destination. Owners Adrian and Angie O'Connor have grown their operation to include up to 30 guests daily with groups of two, three, and larger visiting for three- or four-day inclusive trips. Guests start their day with breakfast in the common room then head for the boats, lunches already onboard, and after eight hours of fishing your captain returns you to the dock. Fish are filleted, vacuum packed, and flash frozen – all while you enjoy the latest chef's creation. Then you wake up and do it again.

Located at the end of Esperanza Inlet which leads to Nootka Sound and then the Pacific Salmon Highway, fishing from Zeballos allows multiple options to intercept salmon, access to reliable halibut grounds, and the chance at ling cod and bottom fish nearly every trip. Later in the season, Albacore Tuna trips are possible as are the chances for the prized Tye Salmon (30 pounds or larger). U.S. guests are limited to specific travel limits which usually fill a good cooler. Reel Obsession books up fast each season, we recommend you reach out to them early to plan your destination fishing adventure. For more information about Reel Obsession visit reelobsession.ca.

There you have it, our "5-Star Destinations" fishing list. We're sure you have your own list, but if you haven't tried one of these amazing destinations, give it a shot. It may well be added to your 5 Star List!

DIRECTORY



Destinations

Hell's Canyon Grand Hotel
(208) 799-1000
hellscanyongrandhotel.com
Clearwater River

Lenore Lodge
(208) 790-2128
lenorelodgeidaho.com
Clearwater River

Mardon Resort
(800) 416-2736
mardonresort.com
Potholes Reservoir

Rainbow Valley Lodge
(406) 682-4264
rainbowvalleylodge.com
Madison River

Shoalwater Casino & Hotel
(360) 267-2048
swbcasino.com

Guides & Charters

Austin's Northwest Adventures
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austinsnorthwestadventures.com
From Buoy 10 to Lake Roosevelt

Castcadia
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CDA Lake, Columbia River, Snake River

Chrome Inc.
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chromeinc.org
Columbia River, Cowlitz

D&H Guide Service
(509) 594-1754
Columbia River, Yakima

Double M Outdoors
(503) 956-5489
doublemoutdoors.com
Columbia River: Buoy 10, McNary Dam

Jones Sportfishing
(208) 861-0654
jonessportfishing.com
Columbia, Snake, Clearwater Rivers,
Southern Idaho

Killgore Adventures
1-888-957-6875
killgoreadventures.com
Hells Canyon

Livin' Life Adventures
(206) 714-2112
lavinlifeadventures.com
Columbia, Baker 10, Chelan

Fast Action Fishing Adventures
(425) 753-5772
fastactionfishingseattle.com
Lake Sammamish, Riffe Lake, Green River

Fish Intimidators
(509) 750-6809
Columbia River
Hanford Reach, Snake River, Ringold

Moons Guide Service
(509) 860-6497
moonsguideservice.com
Columbia River, Brewster, Lake Chelan,
Moses Lake, Potholes, Hanford Reach

Reel Obsession
(888) 855-7335
reelobsession.ca
West Coast British Columbia

Reel Time Fishing
(208) 790-2128
reeltimefishing.com
Columbia, Snake, Clearwater Rivers

Ross Outdoor Adventures
(509) 750-7763
rossoutdooradventures.com
Potholes Reservoir, Moses, Banks Lake

Torrey's Sportfishing Adventures
(425) 345-6232
Western Washington

YJ Guide Service
(509) 999-0717
yjguideservice.com
Lake Roosevelt, Palouse River, Columbia
River

Outdoor Gear

Elephant Boys

(509) 443-3686

theelephantboys.com

Ghunders Performance

Base Layers

(360) 612-0506

ghunders.com

Work Sharp Tools

(800) 597-6170

worksharptools.com

Marine

Hewescraft

1(800)326-6594

hewescraft.com

Fishing Tackle

Fish With Gary Tackle Co.

(541) 536-1002

fishwithgary.com

Mack's Lure

(509) 667 9202

mackslure.com

Old Goat Lures

oldgoatlures.com

Wigglefin Tackle

(208) 388-8539

wigglefin.com

Other

BECU

becu.org

Laughing Dog Brewery

laughingdogbrewing.com

Mackenzie River Pizza

mackenzieriverpizza.com

Skip Rock Distillers

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