2009 Northern Pikeminnow Season Closes

Local News

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Portland, Ore. - Tens of thousands of Northern pikeminnow, rapacious predators of young salmon, were caught this year as part of the 2009 Northern Pikeminnow Sport Reward Fishery Program, which ended Oct. 11. The annual pikeminnow program, sponsored by the Bonneville Power Administration and Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, was originally scheduled to run from May 1 through Sept. 27; however, it was extended for two weeks.

All told, 141,645 pikeminnow were caught this season in the Columbia and Snake rivers, down from a typical 160,000 to 200,000.

“This year the total number of pikeminnow caught was lower than in recent years, but we believe it’s due to the program doing what it was designed to do: reduce the number of pikeminnow in the river,” said Russell Porter, senior program manager for the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. “But that’s not to say that we should stop fishing for them."

The program offers a number of incentives for fishers in addition to bounties ranging from $4 to $8 per fish, rising with the number caught. Anglers pulled 180 specially tagged fish out of the river this season worth $500 each. In addition, from August on, anglers were eligible for weekly drawings of $1,000, for a total of $60,000 paid out. The incentive was designed to hook more of the salmon predators before the end of the sport reward season.

“The real winners are the salmon, because pikeminnow eat millions of juvenile salmon and steelhead every year,” said BPA project manager John Skidmore. “Reducing the number of these predators through this program helps boost salmon and steelhead survival.”

"Anglers in the region told us they liked having the additional award incentives. We want to keep the momentum going to reduce the number of these juvenile salmon predators," said Porter. "Anglers play an important role in keeping pikeminnow numbers manageable so that young salmon have a better chance to migrate out to the sea.

Administered by the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission and funded by BPA, the program is designed to reduce the number of, but not eradicate, northern pikeminnow. Since 1991, more than 3.3 million northern pikeminnow have been removed from the Snake and Columbia rivers through the program. Last year 158,191 northern pikeminnow were turned in. As a result, northern pikeminnow predation on juvenile salmon in 2009 was cut by an estimated 37 percent.

How the program works

Anglers who register and follow the rules of the program are paid $4 per fish up to 100 pikeminnow. The bounty jumps to $5 per fish for each fish over 101 and $8 per fish for 401 fish and above. There are hundreds of pikeminnow in the basin with special tags worth $500 each to lucky anglers.