Washington's single biggest fishing season opener April 25 is still one of the best bargains in local family recreation.

Local News

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Several hundred lakes, stocked by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) with millions of hatchery-reared fish, open on April 25 for a four-to five-month-long fishing season. "It's our biggest fishing season opener because it traditionally draws more than 300,000 anglers of all ages," said WDFW Director Phil Anderson. "With the annual freshwater fishing license still under $22 for adults and free for kids 14 and under, it's a great bargain in outdoor recreation." With waters in every county of the state well stocked before the big opening day, Anderson noted that families can also keep travel costs down with good fishing close to home. "This may be the best time ever for those who used to fish to get back into it with family and friends," Anderson said. "Costs remain low and our hatchery stocking is at a peak." WDFW Inland Fish Program Manager Jim Uehara reports more than 19.8 million trout are stocked in lakes and streams throughout the state for this year's fishery, including those planted in waters that opened earlier this spring or are open year-round. Most trout will be stocked before the lakes season gets under way the last Saturday of April.

The lake stocking includes: 41,429 triploid (sterile) trout - each averaging 1-1/2 pounds - being stocked this spring in 94 lakes; 69,450 two-year-old "jumbo" and surplus hatchery broodstock trout being stocked this spring in 149 lakes. More than 7 million trout that were planted last year as 2- to 3-inch fry into 530 lakes, including most lakes opening April 25; More than 8.5 million kokanee fry, expected to show in this year's catch, stocked in 28 lakes; More than 4.1 million "catchable-size" (8- to 12-inch) trout stocked this spring in 370 lowland lakes, including lakes opening April 25; Fish stocking details, by county and lake, are available in the 2009 Hatchery Trout Stocking Plan on WDFW's website at http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/index.htm . Of Washington's nearly 4,500 lakes, ponds and reservoirs, more than 600 have WDFW-managed access sites, which can be found at http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildarea.htm . Among those sites are 275 access points on lakes that will be open for fishing from April 25 through September or October. These sites include boat launches, docks and shorelines, including areas accessible for people with disabilities. Other state and federal agencies operate hundreds more such facilities. "With our biggest fishing crowds out on this opener, it's especially important for everyone to be patient and safe at these boat launches and docks," Anderson said. "Everyone in boats, and all children on shore, should use personal flotation devices." Visitors parking at WDFW fishing access sites are required to display a WDFW vehicle use permit on their vehicle. Every person who buys an annual fishing license receives a free vehicle use permit. The permits are transferable between two vehicles. Additional permits are available to recreational license buyers for $5 each and to other users of the areas for $10. A Washington freshwater fishing license, valid April 1, 2009 through March 31, 2010, costs $21.90 for resident adults (16-69 years old). Fifteen-year-olds and persons with disabilities can buy a license for $8.21, and seniors (70 years and older) can buy an annual fishing license for $5.48. Children 14 years and younger do not need a fishing license. All licenses can be purchased on the Internet (http://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov/), by telephone (1-866-246-9453), or at hundreds of license dealers across the state (listed on the WDFW website at http://wdfw.wa.gov/lic/vendors/vendors.htm). Tips

on fishing areas, listed by county and water, can be found in "Washington Fishing Prospects: Where To Catch Fish In the Evergreen State," available on WDFW's website at http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/prospects/index.htm . Copies of WDFW's annual Fishing In Washington sportfishing rules pamphlet are also available from license dealers, WDFW offices and on the WDFW website at http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm . The current rules are in effect through April 30, 2009; the rules for May 1, 2009 through April 30, 2010 will be posted and available in printed form by May 1. Anglers should note that some new fishing rules go into effect on May 1 and will be highlighted on the "What's new for 2009" page of WDFW's 2009-2010 sportfishing seasons and rules pamphlet.