Pikeminnow program pays off big and helps save salmon

Local News

Posted by: David Haviland

Posted on : November 24, 2010 at 5:00 am

Portland, Ore. - Anglers hooked large payoffs during this year’s Northern Pikeminnow Sport Reward Fishery Program, raking in over $1.2 million by catching 173,112 of the voracious salmon eaters. The program provides cash for catching pikeminnow, a large member of the minnow family, in the Columbia and Snake rivers. These predators chow down on millions of young salmon and steelhead every year. Research shows that reducing the number of pikeminnow helps salmon and steelhead survival. One angler earned $81,366 during the six-month season, breaking the individual record for catching specially tagged fish that are worth up to $500. He hooked 13 tagged fish and earned $6,500 in the process. “This program provides an opportunity to earn income, which is especially important during these tough economic times, and it’s good for salmon,” said Russell Porter, senior program manager for the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. “We appreciate the effort of all those anglers who participated, and we look forward to another successful year in 2011.”

Anglers get paid $4 to $8 for northern pikeminnow nine inches and larger caught in the lower Columbia (mouth to Priest Rapids Dam) and Snake (mouth to Hells Canyon Dam) rivers. The more pikeminnow an angler catches, the more the fish are worth. The first 100 are worth $4 each; the next 300 are worth $5 each; and, after 400 fish are caught and turned in, they are worth $8 each. As an added incentive, specially tagged fish are worth $500. The annual program started May 1 and was originally scheduled to close Sept. 30. Program managers extended the season by 10 days this year, allowing rewards through Oct. 10, 2010. The official fish numbers became available last week. Since 1991, more than three million pikeminnow have been removed from the Snake and Columbia rivers through the sport reward program. Last year, anglers caught approximately 142,000 pikeminnow. As a result of these efforts, pikeminnow predation on juvenile salmon is estimated to have been cut by 40 percent.

The program is administered by the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission and is funded by the Bonneville Power Administration. Watch a video with fishing tips and program details. Get more information at www.pikeminnow.org. *The Bonneville Power Administration, headquartered in Portland, Ore., is a not-for-profit federal electric utility under the Department of Energy that operates a high-voltage transmission grid comprising more than 15,000 miles of lines and associated substations in Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana. It also markets more than a third of the electricity consumed in the Pacific Northwest. The power is produced at 31 federal dams operated by the Army Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation and one nuclear plant and is sold to more than 140 Northwest utilities. BPA purchases power from some smaller projects, including wind generators, and has more than 3,000 megawatts of wind interconnected to its transmission system.*