

2009 Salmon Fisheries Approved

Local News

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MILLBRAE, Calif. - Salmon anglers will have increased fishing opportunities on the coast and in the Columbia River this summer, while most recreational fisheries in Puget Sound will be similar to seasons adopted last year, according to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). Washington's 2009 salmon fishing seasons, developed by WDFW and treaty Indian tribal co-managers, were approved today during the Pacific Fishery Management Council's (PFMC) meeting in California. The fishing package defines regulations for salmon fisheries in Puget Sound, the Columbia River and Washington's ocean and coastal areas. While salmon anglers this year have a variety of fishing opportunities, fisheries will be constrained to meet conservation goals for wild salmon stocks, said Phil Anderson, WDFW's interim director. "As we develop these fisheries, our first priority is to meet crucial conservation objectives for wild salmon," Anderson said. "This year's package of salmon fisheries accomplishes that goal while also providing anglers good fishing opportunities throughout Washington's waters." One of the most promising opportunities this year will be fishing for hatchery coho salmon on the coast and in the Columbia River, said Anderson.

More than one million Columbia River coho are expected to return this summer. As a result of the anticipated run, which would represent the largest return since 2001, the PFMC today adopted a recreational ocean quota this year of 176,400 coho. That's much higher than the 2008 ocean coho quota of 20,350 salmon. The PFMC, which establishes fishing seasons in ocean water three to 200 miles off the Pacific Coast, also set a recreational chinook harvest quota of 20,500 fish. Although similar to last year, the chinook quota is at a near-record low level, said Anderson. Recreational ocean salmon fisheries will begin June 27 off LaPush and Neah Bay and June 28 off Ilwaco and Westport. All areas will have a two-salmon daily limit, only one of which may be a chinook. Anglers fishing off Neah Bay and LaPush will be allowed to retain two additional pink salmon, while those fishing off Westport will be allowed to keep one additional pink salmon. As in past years, only hatchery coho salmon with a clipped adipose fin can be retained in ocean fisheries. In Puget Sound, where summer/fall chinook salmon returns are expected to total about 222,000 fish - a slight decrease from last year's forecast - several new mark-selective fisheries for chinook salmon were added in the summer and winter months, said Pat Pattillo, salmon policy coordinator for WDFW. Selective fisheries allow anglers to catch and keep abundant hatchery salmon, which are marked with a missing adipose fin, but require that they release wild salmon. "Selective fisheries are just one of the management tools we can use in our effort to recover and protect wild salmon populations," said Pattillo. "By adding these fisheries, we were able to meet our conservation goals and allow anglers some great opportunities to fish for hatchery chinook in Puget Sound." Anglers also will have an opportunity to take advantage of an abundant return of pink salmon this year. About 5.1 million pink salmon are expected to come back to Puget Sound streams, nearly 2 million more fish than forecast in 2007. The smallest of the Pacific salmon species, pink salmon return to Washington's waters only in odd-numbered years. "Bonus" bag limits for pink salmon will be established in marine areas 5 through 11, said Pattillo. In the Columbia River, recreational chinook salmon fisheries in the mainstem from the Rocky Point/Tongue Point line upstream to Bonneville

Dam will be open from Aug. 1 through Sept. 13. Beginning Sept. 14, chinook retention only will be allowed upstream of the Lewis River. The Buoy 10 fishery will open for chinook and coho Aug. 1. Chinook retention will be allowed through August. Beginning Sept. 1, the daily limit will be three coho, but anglers must release chinook. Specific regulations for marine areas in Washington and a portion of the Columbia River will be available next week on WDFW's North of Falcon website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/northfalcon/>).