Catch Trout, Salmon, Halibut During Free Fishing Weekend

Local News

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Olympia, Wa - Anglers are reeling in halibut from the ocean, chinook salmon from the Columbia River and trout from lakes and ponds throughout the state. Starting June 4, hundreds of rivers will also open for trout fishing, followed later in the month by some of Washington’s premiere salmon fisheries.

Sound like fun? Those interested in fishing but don’t have a fishing license will be able to get in on the action during Free Fishing Weekend, scheduled June 11-12.

During those two days, no license will be required to fish or gather shellfish in any waters open to fishing in Washington state. Also, no vehicle use permit will be required during Free Fishing Weekend to park at any of the 600 water-access sites maintained by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

“Free Fishing Weekend is a great time to revive an old hobby or to introduce friends and family to fishing,” said Craig Burley, WDFW fish division manager. “Adults can introduce kids to fishing on a wide variety of waters around the state.”

While no licenses are required on Free Fishing Weekend, other rules such as season closures, size limits and bag limits will still be in effect. For example, no crab fishing will be allowed in Puget Sound during Free Fishing Weekend, because no areas will be open for crabbing at that time.

In addition, all anglers will be required to complete a catch record card for any salmon, steelhead, sturgeon or halibut they catch that weekend. Catch record cards and WDFW's Fishing in Washington rules pamphlet are available free at hundreds of sporting goods stores and other license dealers throughout the state. The rules pamphlet is also available online at http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regulations/ .

Of course, the state’s fishing opportunities don't begin or end with Free Fishing Weekend. Several major fisheries open just days after free fishing is over for the year:

June 16 – Summer chinook season opens on the Columbia River upriver to Priest Rapids Dam.
June 18 – Selective fisheries for hatchery chinook begin off the Washington coast from Ilwaco north to the Sekiu River.
June 26 – Coastal salmon fisheries expand to allow the retention of wild chinook, hatchery coho and pink salmon.
July 1 – Crab fisheries open in most areas of Puget Sound. In addition, salmon fisheries open in several areas of Puget Sound, including the Strait of Juan de Fuca.
As many anglers and others who enjoy the outdoors know, beginning July 1 a pass will be required for motor-vehicle access to state recreation lands managed by WDFW, the Department of Natural

Resources or State Parks. The new Discover Pass will go on sale later this month at recreational license dealers statewide and online at https://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov . The Discover Pass, which costs $30 per year or $10 for a one-day pass, was recently approved by the Legislature to keep parks and recreation lands open despite steep budget cuts. Visit www.discoverpass.wa.gov for details.

But most anglers and hunters will not need a Discover Pass to access WDFW lands or boat-launch sites. That’s because a free Vehicle Access Pass comes with the purchase of a saltwater, freshwater or combination fishing license; big-game or small-game hunting license; western Washington pheasant permit; trapping license; or Watchable Wildlife decal. These license holders must simply display the free Vehicle Access Pass on WDFW lands.

For more information about fishing, hunting and wildlife viewing available this month, see the Weekender Regional Reports posted on WDFW’s website at http://wdfw.wa.gov/weekender/ . These reports are updated throughout the month to provide up-to-date information about recreational opportunities around the state.