

Bigger Trout Await Anglers on Biggest Opening Day

Local News

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Olympia, WA - Anglers preparing for opening day of the 2012 lowland lakes season on April 28 can expect to reel in trout that are one-third bigger this year. With opening day fast approaching, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is releasing 3 million hatchery-reared trout averaging 11-13 inches - two to three inches longer than last year. Those fish will join millions of other trout that were stocked last year and have grown to catchable size in lakes around the state. Many of those lakes have also been stocked with triploid and jumbo trout weighing 1½ to 11 pounds apiece. We have made some changes in our trout hatchery rearing programs in response to the feedback we heard from anglers who really enjoy catching larger fish, with these fish, our state's biggest fishing day of the year just got better. - WDFW Director Phil Anderson At least 300,000 anglers typically turn out for the first day of the lowland lakes season, which remains open into the fall. Although many state waters are open year-round, the April opening marks the start of the state's most popular fishery.

To participate, anglers must have a current Washington freshwater fishing license valid through March 31, 2013. Licenses can be purchased online at <https://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov>; by telephone at 1-866-246-9453; or at hundreds of license dealers across the state. For details on license vendor locations, visit the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/vendors/>. Freshwater fishing licenses cost \$27.50 for resident adults 16 to 69 years old. Fifteen-year-olds and persons with disabilities can buy a license for \$8.25, and seniors 70 and older can buy an annual fishing license for \$5.50. Children 14 years of age and younger do not need a fishing license. "Our license fees are lower this year for youth, seniors and people with disabilities," Anderson said. "So, whether you fish from the bank, a pram, or a boat, this fishery is tailor made for a great family outing." Because of the popularity of trout fishing in Washington, WDFW put a higher priority on its trout-rearing program over the past year, said Chris Donley, the department's Inland Fish Program Manager. "For one thing, we invested in more hatchery feed to grow our fish larger," he said. "We hope anglers see the increase in the quality of our catchable trout on opening day." Hatchery crews also spent the past year stocking lakes across the state with more than 10 million fry and fingerlings, which have grown to eight to 12 inches in length. Anglers can also look forward to catching other fish stocked for the lowland lakes season: 102,000 two-year-old "jumbo" and surplus hatchery broodstock trout (1½ to 11 pounds each) Over 100,000 other fish - black crappie, channel catfish, tiger muskie, walleye 47,000 triploid (sterile) trout averaging 1½ pounds apiece Fish stocking details, by county and lake, are available in the annual stocking plan on WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/plants/statewide/>. "With all of these fish ready and waiting in statewide lakes, everyone has an excellent chance of catching some nice fish," Donley said. "Come on out and join the fun of opening day." Tips on fishing areas, listed by county and water, can be found in "Washington 2012 Fishing Prospects: Where To Catch Fish In the Evergreen State," available on WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/prospects/>. Of more than 7,000 lakes, ponds and reservoirs in Washington state, nearly 700 have WDFW-managed water-access sites. 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. Water access site locations can be found on WDFW's website at http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/water_access/. "With our biggest fishing crowds out on this opener, it's especially important for everyone to be patient and safe at boat launches and docks," Donley said. "Everyone in boats, and all children on shore, should use personal flotation devices." Anglers parking at WDFW water-access sites are required to display on their vehicle the WDFW Vehicle Access Pass that is provided free with every annual fishing license purchased. The passes are transferable between two vehicles. Anglers who use Washington State Parks or Department of Natural Resource areas need the \$30 annual or \$10 daily Discover Pass. WDFW's annual "Fishing In Washington" sport fishing rules pamphlet is available at license dealers, WDFW offices and at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regulations/>. Current rules are in effect through April 30, 2012; rules for May 1, 2012 through April 30, 2013 will be posted online and available in printed form by May 1. New fishing rules that go into effect on May 1 will be highlighted on the "What's new for 2012" page of WDFW's 2012-2013 sport fishing seasons and rules pamphlet.