Great Catch Rates Prompt Early Chinook Closure in Puget Sound

Local News

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The popular fishery for chinook salmon will close early in two areas of central Puget Sound after a month of soaring catch rates.Starting Monday at 12:01 a.m., anglers fishing in marine areas 9 and 10 will be required to release any chinook salmon they catch under a new rule issued by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). The closure - 12 days earlier than scheduled - does not affect fishing for other salmon species, including coho, sockeye or pink salmon. Various piers in the two areas will also remain open to chinook retention. State fishery managers said the early closure was necessary to hold encounters with wild chinook salmon within allowable limits. Although standing rules for the fishery require anglers to release all wild chinook, not all of those fish survive the encounter."Catch rates for hatchery chinook have been running two to three times higher than last year, and encounters with wild chinook are also way up," said Pat Pattillo, WDFW salmon policy coordinator. "It's a shame to close this fishery early, but we have a responsibility to protect wild chinook salmon in state waters."As of last Sunday, anglers fishing in marine areas 9 and 10 had caught 8,728 hatchery chinook, compared to 5,006 at the end of last year's fishery. Those fishing areas include waters off Seattle, Edmonds, Bainbridge Island and Port Townsend.Additional information about the closure is available on WDFW's website at http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regulations/ .