Sanitation Concerns Prompt Actions by WDFW on the Skokomish River

Local News

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OLYMPIA – The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is taking measures to encourage better sanitary practices by anglers fishing the Skokomish River to protect both human health and fish and shellfish resources.

With hundreds of recreational salmon anglers fishing the river each day, an accumulation of human waste and trash is creating potential health and water quality problems, said Jim Scott, assistant director for WDFW’s fish program.

To improve the situation, the department is increasing the number of dumpsters and portable toilets in the areas along the river that are most affected.

"We know that the state Department of Health has closed a portion of the Skokomish River delta to shellfish harvesting due to multiple sources of fecal coliform bacteria," Scott said. "We can’t say for sure that human waste is contributing to the problem, but we want to eliminate that possibility by offering more waste-disposal means for anglers."

WDFW is also posting signs in the area asking anglers for their assistance in keeping the area safe and clean, Scott said.

"We’re telling the public that we need their cooperation to keep the Skokomish River open to fishing," Scott said.

That includes fishing legally in addition to improving sanitation, he said. Since the fishery opened Aug. 1, WDFW enforcement officers have been monitoring the river, where numerous fishing violations have occurred. In a recent emphasis patrol, officers issued 56 citations for violations such as using illegal gear, snagging fish and exceeding catch limits.

"Our intention is to conduct an orderly fishery on the Skokomish," Scott said. "Continued fishing opportunity depends on the behavior of anglers and the choices they make."

The Skokomish River is currently open for recreational salmon fishing seven days a week from the mouth of the river to the Hwy. 101 Bridge.