Snake River Opens Sept. 1 for Fall Chinook Fishing

Local News

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OLYMPIA - Two sections of the lower Snake River in southeast Washington will open for fall chinook salmon fishing Sept. 1 with some changes from last year's season, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) announced today.

A good return of upriver bright chinook this year will allow the department to open the fishery on marked, hatchery-reared fish, said Glen Mendel, district fish biologist for WDFW.

The hatchery chinook fishery, which is not listed in WDFW's Fishing in Washington sportfishing rules pamphlet, is scheduled to remain open through Oct. 15, but could close earlier if the allowable incidental impact to wild chinook is reached. The fishery is allowed under a federal permit that prescribes strict limits on the incidental catch of wild salmon protected under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Anglers can expect some changes from last year's fishery, which was the first Snake River fall chinook fishery in nearly 30 years, Mendel said. Those changes include expanding the open area and new regulations.

The hatchery chinook fishery will be open from the Highway 12 Bridge (near the mouth of the Snake River) upstream to the no-fishing zone below Ice Harbor Dam, and from the Highway 261 Bridge crossing on the Snake River (approximately one half mile upstream from Lyons Ferry Hatchery) upstream to the no-fishing zone below Little Goose Dam.

In most of the open area, the daily catch limit will be two hatchery adult chinook (24 inches or greater), and four chinook jacks (less than 24 inches) either wild or hatchery-marked. Hatchery fish can be identified by a clipped adipose fin and a healed scar.

One exception is along the "wall" and walkway area upstream from the juvenile fish bypass return pipe (below Little Goose Dam), where the daily limit will be one hatchery adult chinook and up to two chinook jacks, Mendel said.

"Anglers must stop fishing for salmon once they retain the daily limit of adult hatchery salmon," he said.

In addition, a night closure will be in effect for all species within the boundaries of the fishery, including steelhead. Retention of steelhead is traditionally allowed beginning Sept. 1.

Coho salmon, adult wild chinook and wild steelhead must be immediately released unharmed.

Anglers must use barbless hooks when fishing for chinook or steelhead in the Snake River. No chinook or steelhead can be removed from the water unless the fish is retained as part of the daily catch limit.

Other fishing rules on the Snake River can be found in WDFW's Fishing in Washington pamphlet, available at license dealers and WDFW offices or at http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm . Descriptions of fish species also can be found in the sportfishing rules pamphlet.

"It's important for anglers to be able to identify their catch because wild chinook salmon, coho salmon and wild steelhead are in the Snake River during this fishery," Mendel said.