

Summer 2011 – Puget Sound Salmon Outlook

As the summer salmon season rapidly approaches, what should we expect?

Chinook: The San Juan Islands are already on fire for Chinook and this should continue throughout the summer. The San Juans benefit not only from Washington salmon, but also the Fraser River run that passes through the islands.

A number of nice Chinook have been hooked in Area 4 (Neah Bay), Area 5 (Sekiu), Area 6 (Port Angeles) and Area 10 (Seattle/Bremerton). Area 10 is a catch and release fisherie until July 16th. So, we should see a good season for Chinooks all the way down to the South Sound! Remember most of the Washington Chinook must be released if they are not fin clipped. Read your regulations carefully.

Coho: The last two years have been a dismal season for Coho. But this years forecast is for a return three times larger than the previous two years. Coho will start showing up in good numbers about the last week of August, peak in September, and last until early October.

Sockeye: The Sockeye returning to the Lake Washington system will be at an all time low. So, don't expect a season. Despite the low returns, the tribes are already netting below the Ballard Locks.

Pinks (Humpies): This years Pink return may be the largest in my lifetime. Nature hates a vacuum and it seems the weakness in the rivers of some of the other species of salmon has allowed pinks to prosper. There will be bonus limits in most areas.

Pinks are an under-appreciated salmon. While smaller on an average, they are hard fighters. Use lighter gear and have some fun, as they are plentiful and good eating if properly cared for.

Pinks quickly soften and loose their flavor if not bled, cleaned and iced down in the first twenty minutes after they are caught. If you take care of them, they are good on the barbeque and excellent smoked.

Be sure to save their belly meat, heads and filleted carcasses for crab bait, as there is nothing better.

The Pink returns will start to climb the last week in July, peak in August and tail off by mid-September.

Be sure you buy your Pink gear now, because once the Pinks arrive, most stores will be sold out of gear!

Wishing you good luck fishing and a great summer!

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