



Welcoming
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The Fishin' Magician

There are some very exciting fisheries either just opened or about to break loose here in our region. Just two weeks ago the spring salmon fishing had just gotten started on the lower Columbia and now there are enough fish here to start the season. Anglers are also eager to get fishing for kokanee on Lake Chelan, and it should begin very soon.

Over 2,000 spring salmon have passed over Rock Island Dam and the majority of them are headed for the Icicle River. The hatchery needs just 1,000 fish to sustain the run, so there will be plenty of fish available to sport anglers. The Icicle is one of the most scenic salmon fisheries anywhere. Every time I float the Icicle with friends it reminds me how beautiful it is here in Leavenworth. As it gets light enough in the morning there is wildlife all around us as we float or sit at anchor in one of the holes. Then the snow capped peaks become visible and it really is breathtaking. Of course having a big spring salmon take your herring gets your heart beating, too.

I had a particularly spectacular day on the Icicle River last season. Fishing with Shane Magnuson, Upper Columbia Guide Service, and Kevin Winters, we caught a total of five springers. I landed two within minutes of each other that both weighed over 30 pounds! I never thought I would see a 30-pounder from the Icicle, and getting two had all three of us shaking our heads. Even with the late high water we had last year anglers that floated the Icicle and fished from the shore had a great season. Conditions should be similar this year, and even slightly more springers are expected to reach the



Icicle this season, with good numbers of four and five year fish in the run.

The Yakima River has also opened to spring salmon fishing. There are two sections of the river available to sport anglers, and there are 5,000 springers expected to return to the Yakima this year. I suggest that anglers go the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife web site and check the "rule changes" section for the exact boundary details. The area below Rosa Dam is a very popular area for bank anglers on the Yakima and success is good here. I need to mention that this fishery is made possible by the funding provided through the Columbia River Salmon/Steelhead Endorsement Stamp. This dedicated fund paid for the necessary monitoring and enforcement to allow sport fishing. It is also paying

for an important hooking mortality study. The details about this study, which is important that anglers learn is also explained in the news release in the rule changes section on the department's web site. There is an excellent brochure available at sporting goods stores that describe the Columbia River Salmon/Steelhead Endorsement Stamp program. Pick one up next time you shop at your favorite store.

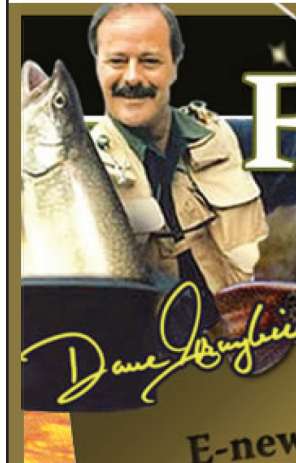
Fishing for kokanee at Lake Chelan is still very slow, but as the water temperatures warm in the lower basin, it won't be long before anglers will be seeing some good action. Everything is pointing to a good kokanee season on Chelan this year. Anton Jones, of Darrell and Dad's Family Guide Service called me with a great story while I was in Mexico. He was just letting his lines out when something smacked his F-7 Flatfish. The fish was leaping behind the boat and he managed to scoop it up with his long handled net. He thought it was a rainbow at first but on closer inspection realized they had a kokanee, and it measured 17 1/2 inches! That's a big kokanee for Lake Chelan and I hope there are more around when I get up there to try for them. Jones also landed an 8 1/2-pound Chinook right after he got the kokanee. I have heard of other Chinook being taken at Chelan this year, and that makes me doubly excited to get on the water there. I should also mention that last time I passed through Chelan the lake level was up a bit and launching at Mill Bay should now be possible.

Smallmouth bass fishing at Lake Chelan is typically getting very good by now, and that's not the only place that bass anglers are finding worth the trip right now. Banks Lake has been producing both largemouth and smallmouth and Moses Lake has been excellent this year. I am in the habit now of taking my bass fishing gear along when I fish all three of these lakes. Even if my main target is salmon, kokanee or walleye, I can switch to bass fishing at all of these lakes if the other species aren't cooperating.

If you have kids and would like to introduce them to trout fishing, don't miss the Kids Fish-In Day at the Leavenworth National Fish Hatchery coming up on June 2nd. This popular free event gives kids the chance to learn some things about water safety, knot tying and fish identification and catch two fish. The fish are cleaned and iced for the trip home, too. It's a perfect introduction to fishing for families. To register, all you need to do is visit friendsofnwhatcheries.org, go to the registration page and fill out the form. There are several other events for kids and derbies coming up in June. Click on the Pepsi banner on my Home Page to see the list and contact information.

There are so many great fishing opportunities in our region now it's hard to decide which one to try. I'll just have to chose one and go. It'll be fun no matter what I choose!

Reach Dave at: www.FishingMagician.com or Fishboy@nwi.net



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