

Smelt Update

Thursday – February 19, 2009

Conditions:

Smelt showed up in the Cowlitz River this week. Commercial fishers were successful Sunday night and last night. Most of the catch came from the Kelso area or just upstream. There had not been much indication of smelt presence in the Columbia River prior to the fish showing up in the Cowlitz.

The Cowlitz has been running low and relatively clear. Water temperatures remain marginal at 40°F in the Cowlitz River and 39°F in the Columbia River.

WDFW test dipped mid-day on Wednesday, February 18th. Catches ranged from no fish to a fish per dip just upstream of Kelso. Catches likely would have been better after dark.

Sport fishing prospects for this coming Saturday are iffy. The fish presently in the river may move on by then and it's unknown how many more fish will recruit by Saturday. The best time to dip should be early morning and evening due to the clear water conditions than tend to keep the fish away from the bank.

Catches:

Columbia River:

Sport: There were no reports of smelt being dipped by sport fishers this season.
Commercial: 115-lbs reported for the mainstem Columbia River. Reporting is incomplete for this week. Season total increased slightly to 4,380-lbs.

Cowlitz River:

Sport: There has been no catch observed since January 17th.
Commercial: 2,900-lbs landed Sunday, February 15th and 7,250-lbs landed Wednesday, February 18th. Cumulative catch since January 3rd is 10,150-lbs.

Sport Seasons/Regulations:

Tributaries - Sport dipping is only allowed on the Cowlitz River, from 6 AM to 10 PM Saturdays through March 31st. The daily limit is 10 lbs per person per day. This is equivalent to ¼ of a 5-gallon bucket.

Mainstem Columbia River daily limit is 25 lbs per person per day and the fishery is open 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

Commercial Seasons:

Columbia River: 7-hour fishing periods on Mondays and Thursdays.
Cowlitz River: 6-hour fishing periods on Sunday and Wednesday nights.
Fishing Rule updates are also available by calling (360) 696-6211, then press *1010

Here are some web sites that provide daily river data:

Cowlitz River water flow and levels: USGS Web site:

http://waterdata.usgs.gov/wa/nwis/uv/?site_no=14243000&PARAMeter_cd=00060,00065

Columbia River estuary water temperature: CORIE Web site:

<http://www.ccalmr.ogi.edu/CORIE/network/woody/>