

LAKE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Water: Chopaka Lake

Management Type: Trout Only

Location: Six miles north of Loomis via Toats Coulee Road, Section 4, T39N, R25E and Section 33, T40N, R25E

Size: 149 acres, 79 feet maximum depth, 6,556 acre-feet

Water Source: Ground water (underground springs), surface water (Nine Mile Creek diversion)

Outflow: Chopaka Creek (intermittent)

Management History: Chopaka Lake is one of the premier fly-fishing trout waters in the state of Washington. Anglers from all over the Northwest come to the lake to fish for rainbow trout, which can attain sizes as large as 24". The lake opens on the last Saturday in April and closes October 31st. The lake is fly-fishing only with a one fish limit, and motors are not allowed. Fingerling (3"-4") rainbow plants normally produce yearling trout 12"-14", age 2 fish 14"- 16", and age 3-4 fish 16"-20". Daily catch rates of ten to twelve fish were common, even with an increase in fishing pressure over the years.

However, within the last three to four years, more and more anglers have expressed concern about the presence of smallmouth bass in the lake and subsequent effects on the trout fishing. Historical evidence indicates that the bass may have been illegally planted in the 1980's, but that the trout fishing held up well in spite of the increasing competition. Recently though, the bass numbers have grown to the point where fingerling rainbow plants in the spring produce very few yearling fish, due to heavy bass predation. Catch rates have gone from 10-12 fish per day per angler to 1-2 fish per day. Some large fish do remain in the lake, but the age structure in the trout population has been altered to the point where the older fish are the only individuals remaining. Recent efforts to reduce the bass population and subsequent effects on the rainbow trout, was met with limited success. Up to 50 adult smallmouth bass were removed by angling methods, but it was felt that the bass population was too substantial to be impacted much by the removal process.

Current Management Objectives:

Management at Chopaka should concentrate on a single species, quality trout, fly-fishing only water. Maintain present opening day status with an October 31 closure. Efforts should be made to provide multiple fish days with a majority of the trout within the 14"-18" size range. Fish planting should be geared to providing adequate numbers, but without sacrificing the condition and robust nature of the population.

Fishery Objectives:

<u>Species</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Category</u>	<u>Fish/hour</u>	<u>Fish/angler</u>	<u>Ave size</u>
Rainbow	Quality	Fly-fishing	1-2	5-6	20% 12"-14"
					60% 14"-18"
					20% 18"+

Angler use objective (# angler days): 1000-2000

Stocking Objectives:

<u>Lake</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>Total Fish</u>	<u>Fish/Acre</u>	<u>Fish/pound</u>	<u>Planting Month</u>
Chopaka	Rainbow	8,000	54	50+	April/May

Management Strategy:

- Check yearling growth in spring; should be about 12-13 inches, adjust stocking rate and fish size as necessary
- Maintain at least 50% of the catch at fish within the 14"-18" range
- Monitor angling activity and catch rates periodically throughout season
- Consider use of sterile, triploid rainbow trout for stocking
- Closely monitor any invasive species and react immediately to control population by all means before treating with rotenone (angling, electroshocking, netting, and regulation changes).