

## THE PARK AND BLUE LAKE CHAIN FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN

Updated July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016 by Chad Jackson, District 5 Fish Biologist

**Water(s):** Park, Blue, Vic Meyers (Rainbow), Alkali, and Mirror Lakes

**Location:** Park, Blue, Vic Meyers, and Mirror Lakes are part of the Sun Lakes Recreation Area located approximately 12 miles north of the City of Soap Lake and seven miles south of the City of Coulee City, Grant County Washington. Alkali Lake is the southernmost water body in the Park and Blue Lake Chain. It is generally not considered part of the Sun Lakes Recreation Area. Specific township, range, and section locations for each lake are provided below.

**Physical Description of Water(s):** North → South

- a. **Water Name:** Vic Meyers Lake
  - b. **Location:** Grant County, T24N & R27E-Section 12
  - c. **Size:** 12 surface acres
  - d. **Average Depth:** 10 feet
  - e. **Maximum Depth:** 15 feet
  - f. **Water Volume:** 120 acre-feet
  - g. **Inlet Description:** Subterranean flow
  - h. **Outlet Description:** Permanent flow into Park Lake. Outlet includes a wide spot called Mirror Lake and flow from Delaney Springs and Deep Lake.
  - i. **Public Access:** Sun Lakes State Park; includes a primitive boat launch, parking area, public, restrooms, camping, and shoreline access.
  - j. **Land Ownership:** 100% Washington State Parks (Sun Lakes State Park)
  - k. **Established Resorts:** None on lake.
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- a. **Water Name:** Mirror Lake (including inlet to Park Lake)
  - b. **Location:** Grant County, T24N & R27E-Section 12
  - c. **Size:** 11 surface acres
  - d. **Average Depth:** 2 feet
  - e. **Maximum Depth:** 7 feet
  - f. **Water Volume:** 22 acre-feet
  - g. **Inlet Description:** Permanent flow from Vic Meyers Lake, Delaney Springs, and Deep Lake
  - h. **Outlet Description:** Permanent flow into Park Lake.
  - i. **Public Access:** Public can access this lake, but there is no amenities.
  - j. **Land Ownership:** 100% Washington State Parks (Sun Lakes State Park)
  - k. **Established Resorts:** None on lake.
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- a. **Water Name:** Park Lake
  - b. **Location:** Grant County, T24N & R27E-Sections 10, 11, and 15
  - c. **Size:** 342 surface acres
  - d. **Average Depth:** 38 feet
  - e. **Maximum Depth:** 85 feet

- f. Water Volume:** 13,049 acre-feet
- g. Inlet Description:** Permanent flow from Vic Meyers Lake. Outlet includes a wide spot called Mirror Lake and flow from Delaney Springs and Deep Lake.
- h. Outlet Description:** Permanent flow into Blue Lake (~175 meters in length).
- i. Public Access:** (1) Sun Lakes State park; includes a primitive boat launch, parking area, day use area, public restrooms, camping, and shoreline access. (2) Washington Department of Transportation (DOT) land along State Route 17 on the west side of the lake. Shoreline fishing access and camping allowed. No other amenities. (3) Sun Lakes Park Resort (private); includes four-lane concrete boat launch and dock system, day use area, restrooms, camping, and shoreline access
- j. Land Ownership:** 70% private and 30% public
- k. Established Resorts:** Sun Lakes Park Resort (private) and Sun Lakes State Park (public)

- a. Water Name:** Blue Lake
- b. Location:** Grant County, T24N & R27E-Sections 20, 21, and 29
- c. Size:** 532 surface acres
- d. Average Depth:** 40 feet
- e. Maximum Depth:** 69 feet
- f. Water Volume:** 21,353 acre feet
- g. Inlet Description:** Permanent flow from Park Lake (~175 meters in length).
- h. Outlet Description:** Permanent flow into Alkali Lake (~0.75 miles in length). A water control structure and rotating drum type fish screen is located at the top of the outlet stream. The control structure and rotating drum acts as an upstream fish passage barrier.
- i. Public Access:** (1) A WDFW access site on the southeast side of Blue Lake. Access site includes a primitive boat launch, large parking area, and restrooms. (2) DOT and WDFW land along State Route 17 on the west side of the lake. Shoreline fishing access and camping allowed. No other amenities. (3) Three private resorts (Blue Lake, Laurent's, and Coulee Lode) with boat launches, dock systems, day use areas, restrooms, camping, and shoreline access.
- j. Land Ownership:** 70% private and 30% public
- k. Established Resorts:** Three private resorts (Blue Lake, Laurent's, and Coulee Lodge)

- a. Water Name:** Alkali Lake
- b. Location:** Grant County, T23N & R26E-Section 1 and T24N & R26E-Section 36
- c. Size:** 293 surface acres
- d. Average Depth:** 8 feet
- e. Maximum Depth:** 14 feet
- f. Water Volume:** 2,449 acre feet
- g. Inlet Description:** Permanent flow from Blue Lake (~0.75 miles in length)
- h. Outlet Description:** Annual flow into Lake Lenore. Outlet is dry except for

the months of March through April. Outlet flows through rock fill under State Route 17.

- i. **Public Access:** WDFW access site with parking area, restrooms, and shoreline fishing access.
- j. **Land Ownership:** 50% private and 50% public
- a. **Established Resorts:** None

**Park, Blue, and Vic Meyers Lakes:** These three lakes are managed as production trout fisheries. The management objective of a production trout fishery is to maximize the abundance of yearling trout ( $\geq 12$  inches) to support high angler harvest rates ( $\geq 2.5$  trout/angler) and overall exploitation ( $\geq 75\%$  of standing crop) from spring through fall. Escapement or carryover of yearling trout to older age classes (e.g., ages 2-3) is typically low (~10-20%) due to high angler exploitation. These three lakes are open seasonally to fishing from the fourth Saturday in April through September 30<sup>th</sup>. The objective of the seasonal fishing restriction is to protect fingerling trout stocked in the spring that grow to a catchable size by late fall from angler harvest and to create an opening day “buzz” for anglers.

Park and Blue lakes are among the state’s most popular destination trout fisheries. Both lakes support thousands of angler-trips on the opening day of fishing alone. Annually, between 40-60% of all anglers creel on opening day originate from outside of Grant and Adams counties. Many of those anglers originate from western Washington. Four private resorts and one state park cater to Blue and Park Lake anglers. Several anglers also camp and fish along the many pull offs of State Route 17 that borders the west side of both lakes. Vic Meyers Lake supports a modest level of trout fishing annually. This lake is popular with shoreline anglers and anglers looking for a less crowded lake to fish on the opener.

The production trout fisheries in Park, Blue, and Vic Meyers are maintained through annual plants of fingerling (2-3 inches) Rainbow Trout. Park and Blue lakes also receive low density plants of fingerling Brown and tiger trout too. Vic Meyers Lake receives low density plants of fingerling Brown and Brook trout. Stocked fingerling trout forage aquatic food items (e.g., zooplankton and aquatic insects) in the lake to grow to a catchable size ( $\geq 12$  inches) by the following spring. These catchable or yearling trout constitute the bulk of the angler’s harvest on opening day and throughout the season. Trout that carryover to older age classes can achieve sizes greater than 20 inches. Fingerling trout are used for stocking (as opposed to catchable trout; 11-13 inches at release) because as yearlings they are more aesthetically pleasing (e.g., nicer coloration, sharper fins, robust, etc.), behave more like wild trout, and tend to be better table fare. Fingerling trout cost significantly less to stock than catchable trout (e.g., ~\$0.20 per fingerling versus ~\$1.50 per catchable). Also, catchable trout take up more hatchery space resulting in fewer fish that can be raised for release into lakes. The below table summarizes annual stocking numbers and rates of fingerling trout into Park, Blue, and Vic Meyers lakes.

<b>LAKE</b>	<b>SIZE (Surface Acres)</b>	<b>SPECIES</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>	<b>RATE (Fish/Acre)</b>
Park	345	Rainbow Brown Tiger	142,000 7,500 5,000	448
Blue	523	Rainbow Brown Tiger	220,000 7,500 5,000	445
Vic Meyers	12	Rainbow Brown Brook	3,600 500 1,200	347

Production trout fisheries offer the greatest recreational fishing opportunity when maintained as monocultures in lakes free or relatively free of competing, predatory, and/or other undesirable fish species (e.g., sunfish, bass, bullheads, carp, etc.). These species negatively affect fingerling trout survival and growth, which results in poor fishing success. Quality trout fishing in Park, Blue, and Vic Meyers lakes is sustained through periodic treatments with the aquatic pesticide rotenone (termed rehabilitations). Rehabilitations eradicate or mostly eradicate competing, predatory, and/or other undesirable fish species from a lake so that all aquatic food items are applied to trout growth and survival. Park, Blue, and Vic Meyers lakes have been rehabilitated nine times over the past six decades. Rehabilitations have occurred in 1952, 1959, 1963, 1969, 1976, 1981, 1986, 1996, and 2006.

**Alkali Lake:** This larger (293 surface acres) but fairly shallow lake experiences periodic summer and/or winter fish kills. During the summer this lake also becomes infested with aquatic vegetation making fishing difficult. As such, Alkali Lake in most years supports only a low level warmwater fishery for primarily bass and panfish. When Park, Blue, Vic Meyers, and Mirror lakes are rehabilitated, Alkali Lake serves as a receiving and detoxification basin for any treated water draining from Blue Lake.

**Mirror Lake:** This small (11 acres) lake is not stocked with or managed for trout fishing. Mirror Lake is actually a wide wetland-like water body located within the inlet to Park Lake. This lake is very shallow with an average and maximum depth of two and seven feet, respectively. When Park, Blue, and Vic Meyers lakes are scheduled for rehabilitation, Mirror Lake is also treated because it has a surface water connection with both Park and Vic Meyers lakes and would be a source of re-infestation of the fish species being targeted.