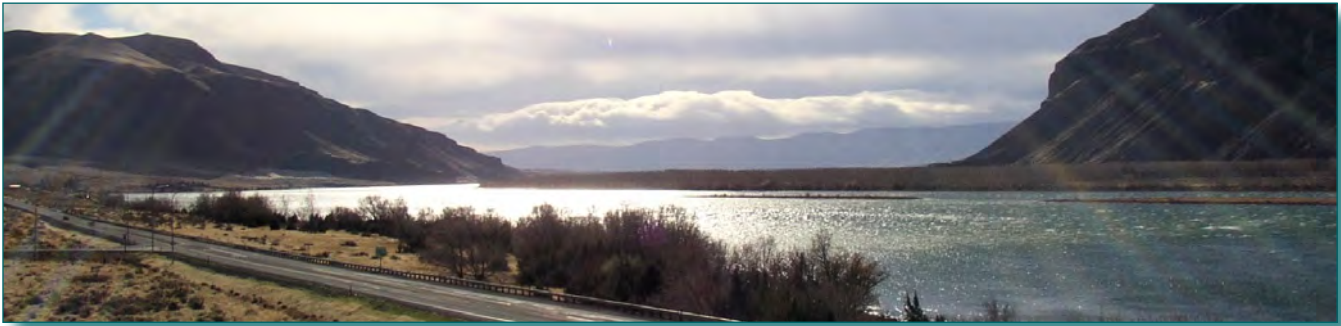


June 2009

Washington Freshwater Angler Survey



IT'S JUNE, AND FOR MOST OF THE NATION that means fishing season is in full swing. In the State of Washington, anglers have their choice of more than 4,000 rivers and streams, 7,000 lakes, and 200 reservoirs for freshwater fishing. According to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), approximately 300,000 anglers take part in opening weekend for lake fishing in April. By the first weekend in June, most rivers and streams are open to fishing and the season is well under way. While Washington anglers study new fishing regulations and the best places to wet a line, Responsive Management has been studying Washington anglers to assess how often they fish, what they fish for, and how their participation in the sport may have changed over time.

The Responsive Management study, conducted for the WDFW, consisted of a scientific survey of Washington resident freshwater anglers. The purpose of the survey was to gather information about participation in freshwater fishing, the species most commonly fished for, the most preferred species, and opinions on various regulations and WDFW efforts, in order to inform future decision making and planning by the Department. Resident anglers who hold licenses that allow for freshwater fishing, whether a combination or freshwater license, were surveyed. The scientific survey was developed cooperatively by Responsive Management and the WDFW and was conducted in April and May 2008. Responsive Management obtained a total of 1,517 completed interviews. Findings are reported at a 95% confidence interval.

For the entire sample of Washington licensed resident anglers, the sampling error is at most plus or minus 2.51 percentage points.

Participation and Avidity

Nearly two-thirds of Washington licensed resident anglers (62%) fished all five of the past 5 years. About half of licensed resident anglers (52%) say that their amount of fishing in the past five years in Washington has remained about the same; otherwise, slightly more say that it has declined (26%) than say it has increased (21%).

Anglers who fish for bass, panfish, walleye, catfish, perch, or other such fish are the most avid (with 15.2 mean days fished), followed by steelhead anglers (13.8 mean days fished) and anglers who fish for trout, kokanee, or silvers in lowland lakes (11.2 mean days fished).

Species Fished

Trout is the most fished freshwater species in Washington (82% fish for any type of trout, excluding cutthroat), with rainbow trout being the leading type of trout (78% of all anglers fish for rainbow trout). Distantly following trout among species fished are salmon (38%); kokanee or silvers (37%); brook, brown, or golden trout (35%); steelhead (32%); and bass (30%).

Satisfaction

Satisfaction is high for fishing in Washington, with large majorities being satisfied with their fishing in



Preferred Method of Fishing According to Type of Fish

Type of fish	Most Preferred Method	Second-Most Preferred Method
Rainbow trout	Bait only (25%)	Artificial bait (23%)
Brook trout	Flies (38%)	Bait only (29%)
Brown trout	Bait only (45%)	Flies (36%)
Summer steelhead	Lures only (30%)	Bait only (23%)
Winter steelhead	Lures only (30%)	Bait only (27%)
Resident cutthroat trout	Flies (38%)	Bait only (24%)
Salmon	Lures only (31%)	Bait only (28%)
Kokanee or silvers	Lures only (30%)	Bait only (27%)
Bass	Lures only (43%)	Artificial bait (26%)
Crappie	Bait only (33%)	Lures with bait (27%)
Perch	Bait only (71%)	Artificial bait (18%)
Sturgeon	Bait only (81%)	Lures with bait (5%) and Artificial bait (5%)
Walleye	Lures with bait (44%)	Bait only (19%)

eastern (85% are satisfied) and in western (78%) Washington. Although dissatisfaction is quite low for game fishing in eastern Washington (13%), it is a little higher for fishing in western Washington (21%).

Motivations

The top motivations for fishing in Washington's lakes, rivers, or streams over the past 2 years were to be with family or friends (23% said this was their main reason), for the fun of catching fish (19%), for relaxation (19%), and for the sport (19%).

Methods

Substantial percentages of anglers use bait for rainbow, brook, and brown trout; summer and winter steelhead; resident cutthroat trout; salmon; kokanee or silvers; crappie; perch; sturgeon; and walleye. Substantial percentages also use lures for summer and winter steelhead, salmon, kokanee or silvers, bass, crappie, and walleye; artificial bait for rainbow trout, bass, and perch; and flies for brook trout, brown trout, and resident cutthroat trout. The following table shows the preferred method of fishing according to the type of fish (of those types of fish for which a large enough sample answered the question).

WDFW Efforts and Priorities

The survey asked anglers to indicate if they thought that the WDFW should devote more, the same, or

less time to various types of fishing management. For all types of fishing, a greater percentage want more time devoted to it (ranging from 23% to 41%) than less time (ranging from 3% to 9%). In the ranking of the percentage wanting more time devoted to it, the steelhead fishery is at the top (41% want more time devoted to steelhead management), followed by trout in lowland lakes (36%) and trout in streams and beaver ponds (32%).

Regulations

A large majority of Washington licensed resident anglers (68%) agree that Washington's fishing regulations are clear and easy to understand; however, 28% disagree. And a majority of Washington licensed resident anglers (57%) support the current regulation that allows anglers to harvest wild steelhead in 11 specific rivers that meet or exceed spawning requirements for wild fish (anglers are allowed to keep one wild steelhead per license year); however, 27% oppose.

Trends

Responsive Management conducted a similar study of freshwater fishing for WDFW in 2003, and because of consistent methodology, Responsive Management statisticians were able to make direct comparisons of 2003 and 2008 study results to evaluate trends over time. There are no marked differences between 2003

and 2008 on many dimensions, but four areas did show changes:

Species Fished and Species Preferred: A slightly greater percentage of anglers fished for kokanee or silvers in 2008 (37%) compared to 2003 (30%), and a slightly lower percentage fished for searun cutthroat trout in 2008 (15%) than in 2003 (18%).

Fishing Locations: A slightly lower percentage of anglers fished in eastern Washington in 2008 (52%) than in 2003 (58%), and a slightly higher percentage fished in western Washington in 2008 (63%) compared to 2003 (58%).

Satisfaction: A slightly greater percentage of anglers are very satisfied with fishing in eastern Washington in 2008 (45%) compared to 2003 (38%), although overall satisfaction (very or somewhat) is about the same. In western Washington, a greater percentage of anglers are very satisfied with their fishing experiences in 2008 (37%) compared to 2003 (29%), and a greater percentage are overall satisfied (very or somewhat) in 2008 (78%: 37% very satisfied, 41% somewhat satisfied) than in 2003 (72%: 29% very satisfied, 43% somewhat satisfied).

Mentoring and Fishing Companions: A slightly lower percentage took a child fishing in 2008 (52%) compared to 2003 (57%). Awareness of the WDFW's Kids Fishing program is slightly greater in 2008 (36%) compared to 2003 (33%).

The Future

In 2009, Responsive Management will develop a marketing plan for the WDFW to give strategic direction to the Department's Fish Program and its ability to maintain and increase fishing participation and the sale of fishing licenses in the state. One of the primary goals of the research will be to determine the most effective methods of marketing fishing to current anglers, lapsed anglers, and non-anglers.

The full Washington Angler report, including complete results on other facets of freshwater fishing, including membership in organizations, sources of information, opinions on fishing contests, and regional findings, is available at http://www.responsivemanagement.com/download/reports/WA_Angler_Report.pdf (985KB PDF).