

Hey Everyone:

Here is an update on another very popular fishery in the region, Dworshak Reservoir. Sean Wilson, the biologist leading our monitoring effort up at Dworshak has put this information together regarding what to expect up there this season. I've included his write-up below.

But, before getting to that, I want to clarify an item from yesterday's spring Chinook update. When I mentioned Washington and Oregon fisheries have been closed I was referring to the fisheries on the Columbia River. The sport fishery in Washington, in the lower Snake River, was still open when I sent the email out. I expect that will close now but please check with WDFW. I apologize for any confusion.

All right, I hope you find this information useful for planning a trip to Dworshak this year.

Dworshak Reservoir Fishing Report – Sean Wilson IDFG Senior Fishery Research Biologist

It's been quite a while since we've had a winter like this past one, but spring is here, the weather is warming and anglers are getting out to chase "bluebacks," "smallies," or whatever else may bite. Here's the lowdown on Dworshak Reservoir and how the fishery is shaping up.

Kokanee

Last year there were more kokanee than typical, but of average size. Catches like the one pictured were common for several hours of fishing. This year there could be a typical number of kokanee, but of above average size.



Last season was a great year for kokanee anglers. We had a higher than average number of two year old fish, which resulted in one of the highest catch rates we have documented in the last 30 years. We also had a record number of larger, three year old fish. All of this added up to good fishing last season.

This fishing season, we expect there will be approximately 210,000 two year old kokanee. This is very close to the average two year old fish abundance in Dworshak Reservoir since 2000. In addition, we could have about 3% of the two year old fish from last year carry over as three year old fish this year, which would be a little over 10,000. If this is the case, anglers could expect one fish in each limit of 25 to be a larger 3 year old fish.

One current unknown is how many kokanee were entrained (lost through the dam) this year. High entrainment would mean lower than average survival, and fewer fish than expected. We had heavy snowpack this winter which resulted in the Corps of Engineers releasing high volumes of water out of the dam this spring. This can result in high levels of kokanee entrainment. While we did see evidence of a couple of entrainment events in late April, these appear to have been

short in duration. We won't know for sure until our surveys in late July, but at this point it appears we'll still have plenty of fish for a decent fishery.

While I was on the water in early May, we marked very few fish on our sounder and the fishermen we spoke to were having a hard time locating fish as well. While this may indicate a lack of fish in the reservoir, I also noticed what few fish I marked were holding very shallow. Surface temperatures at the time were ideal for kokanee, meaning that many of the fish could have been holding close to the surface, where they are difficult to impossible to find with down looking sonar. This happened last April, when the fish seemed to disappear for about a month, until water temperatures warmed enough to force the fish back down in the water column. Any fish that haven't been flushed out of the reservoir this spring will be much easier to locate as the water warms.

While kokanee numbers may be down from last year, size is on the increase. Most fish are already above the long-term average of 10 inches, and they should be just starting to grow for the year. We have already measured fish over 12 inches, including one that was brought to a check station that was 14 inches. With good growth, we could see fish averaging 12 inches by summer.

Smallmouth

If you're not a kokanee fisherman, there's still plenty of reasons to fish Dworshak Reservoir. Bass fishing has been good the last two years, and this year is shaping up to be more of the same. Water temperatures have been cooler this spring, compared to the last two years, and larger fish moved into shallow water on the lower end of the reservoir by late April. As a result, the fishing has been slow, but the fish caught have been larger than average. Smallmouth we checked in April averaged over 15 inches long, with some over 18 inches. As the water continues to warm, the larger fish will move into deeper water and smaller fish will move up along the banks. As this happens, catch rates will pick up, but average size will go down. Water temperatures have been much cooler on the upper end of the reservoir, so these movements will be happening over the next few weeks.

Even with cooler temperatures and some tougher angling conditions this spring, some dandy smallmouth continue to be caught. Anglers fishing a tournament at the end of April did quite well. Most of the tournament anglers returned with limits of medium to large fish. A tournament angler caught this 8 lb. 6 oz. smallmouth pictured here which was tagged and released by IDFG biologists.

