

HUMBOLDT AREA SALTWATER ANGLERS

A VOICE FOR SALTWATER SPORTFISHERS

2020 SPRING NEWSLETTER

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The mission of Humboldt Area Saltwater Anglers is to represent North Coast fishermen's historic and ongoing right to sport fish along the Northern California coast; advocate reasonable and rational sport fishing seasons and regulations; educate our members and the general public about the economic and cultural contributions of sport fishing to our local economies; and promote sustainable stewardship of the resource.

**HUMBOLDT AREA
SALTWATER ANGLERS
PO BOX 6191
EUREKA, CA 95502**

hasa6191@gmail.com

Larry DeRidder - president

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Ross Taylor - secretary

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All photos and articles in this issue are donated by HASA members and interested parties.

Submission of article topics and photos should be sent to summerchum@yahoo.com.

Comments are always welcome and should be sent to summerchum@yahoo.com.

HASA would like to expressly thank our friends for their time and contributions to our newsletter .

All HASA issues can be viewed at <https://humboldtasa.com/mdocuments-library/> and <http://humboldttuna.com/smf/index.php>

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This is issue #39.



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President's Message



About a dozen years ago I was surprised (and flattered) to receive a call inviting me to join several other local fishermen, all of whom knew far more about our local fisheries and fishing politics than I, to plan the rollout of what shortly afterwards became HASA. That first year I was secretary and treasurer for the board, possibly because I was too naive to decline when asked. Little did I realize that in 2020 I'd be asked to be President! Promptly after taking office, I received proof of the good will and respect my predecessors have created at the state level. HASA was contacted by NOAA Southwest Fisheries Science Center to provide input on how the COVID-19 situation was affecting sport fishers on the North Coast. They were under a tight deadline to provide data for policy makers and trusted that HASA would provide up-to-date and reliable information. Four of our local charters were willing to spend time on the phone with us, so that we could relay summarized information back to NOAA. I'd like to thank Tony (Shellback), Marc (Coastline Charters), Tim (Reel Steel) and Jake (Seahawk Sport Fishing) for spending time with us on short notice.

As I write this, we seem to have missed the worst possible COVID-19 outcome, that of a substantial local outbreak, complete with numerous local fatalities. We're inching our way toward normalcy, but at the same time seeing an increase in local diagnoses. Remember to pay particular attention to social distancing this year. May 1 the 2020 fishing season started and the ramps are open. Bay Area ramps are open as well, so we're not being inundated with out-of-town fishers, potentially bringing us more virus. Hopefully the scientists and health care workers on the front lines will have a useful treatment and preventive option in the near future.

Behind the scenes there is always more going on that most of us realize. I'd like to thank the members who took part of their personal time to attend our annual meeting and provide input to the board. Troy Nicolini of the NOAA National Weather Service reports that a bar camera is in the works, though they need a larger solar panel. He is hoping it will be functioning before the shelter-in-place restrictions are lifted. There seems to be some movement on the very complex Eel River situation, and just today the news indicated we could have an international underwater communication cable come ashore here.

Though we did have to cancel our April fund raiser we haven't given up on the concept. We have reservations to hold our next fund raising dinner on March 20, 2021. Mark your calendar and reserve the date. As you likely know, our spring fund raiser provides nearly all our annual income. As an alternative, and to keep our members involved, we're hoping to sponsor a series of fishing photo contests through the summer season. The first two contests began May 15. There is also a donation button on the HASA web site. And if there is enough interest combined with good weather, we're hoping to have an end-of-season potluck. As always, our success depends on the support of you, our members. Please continue to send articles and photos to our editor, Joe.

Larry DeRidder

HASA Letter Concerning COVID-19

April 8, 2020

Good morning/afternoon/evening...

We hope this finds each of our members well amid this growing crisis. We urge each household to take the advisements of the CDC, county, state, and federal governments seriously and maintain safe social distancing and hygiene practices, and as well as the shelter in place orders.

We at HASA continue to represent our fisheries interest at the various meetings as we have been doing over the years. No doubt the mode of meeting and locations may change to adapt to the new environment of travel restrictions and precautions. Rest assured we here at HASA are staying abreast of the situations with CDFW, PFMC, and (other state agencies we work with,) and will continue to pass along the latest information as to season regulations as information becomes available.

Sadly, the growing threat of COVID-19, and precautionary measures taken to slow the virus spread has caused HASA to cancel the annual fundraiser dinner that was scheduled for April. Thankfully, we already have the date and space reserved for March 20, 2021. We look forward to gathering with you to celebrate the resiliency of our organization and our fishing through this crisis.

Understanding how important our fishing community is and how important it is to stay connected with each other, we welcome each of you to post your favorite fish stories, fishing jokes, recipes, and pictures on our Facebook page, or email them to us at hasa6191@gmail.com so we can share them with each other. We are looking at planning an end of summer potluck and yard sale get together on Woodley Island, in the spirit of our founding members getting together, hoping of course that things will have calmed down by then, and social gatherings are again permitted.

As we are a non-profit organization, it is also important to continue fundraising. Thankfully, we do have a reserve to be able to use as a buffer, but we do not wish to deplete that completely. Thus, in place of the annual fundraiser this year, we are launching a "Biggest Fish" Contest, once fishing seasons open, where participants can send in photos of your fish for prizes. We are also going to be hosting a few online auctions. Look for details pertaining to both on our website (<https://humboldtasa.com/>) and Facebook and HTC page, as they come available.

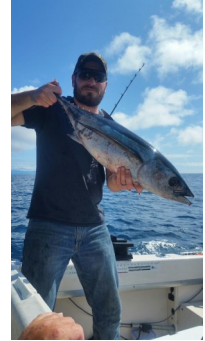
Again, we encourage our members to stay vigilant and safe during this time. Reach out and communicate via email, Facebook, and HTC.

The HASA Board and Executive Director

2020 Summer Fundraisers

By Jennifer Schwartzberg, HASA Executive Director

Humboldt County is only one of many California counties who have felt the impact of COVID-19, and HASA is no different from the many other non-profit businesses feeling the financial pressure and yet answering the call in our own way. We have continued to serve our members, represent Humboldt sport fisheries, and maintain a presence among those informed of the rapid changes within Government policy as everyone adapts to the ever-evolving situation. Where we would send representatives to Sacramento, Santa Rosa, or up and down the coast for regional meetings, now those meetings are being held remotely, and we are still there, still staying informed, still giving a voice to the many sport fishermen here in Humboldt and Del Norte counties.



Sadly, we cancelled our annual fundraiser dinner due to the mounting restrictions and safety precautions of COVID-19, but we are already looking forward to our Annual Fundraiser in March of 2021. For those of you who purchased tickets to the 2020 fundraiser, we encourage you to hold on to those tickets and they will be honored at the 2021 dinner. I also do ask you, if you have not done so already, to reach out to me via hasa6191@gmail.com so I can keep a registration list for ticket tracking. Many of our sponsors and donors have agreed to allow us to hold over the donations for next year, so we're already off to a good start for the 2021 dinner.

Understanding that our 2020 annual fundraiser dinner was cancelled, HASA does still need to fundraise for working expenses. For this we added a donation button to our webpage, and encourage our members to share and give according to their personal situations.

We have also organized "The Biggest Fish" contest for fishermen to enter photos for bragging rights and money. The Big Fish contests scheduled throughout the summer may be: Lingcod, Pacific Halibut, California Halibut, Black Rockfish, Chinook Salmon, Albacore, and Exotic Fish. Entries can be purchased on our website for \$10; please see the website for rules and details.



We also hope to hold an online auction or two this summer. We are still looking for the best items to auction. If you have any suggestions, please email me at hasa6191@gmail.com.



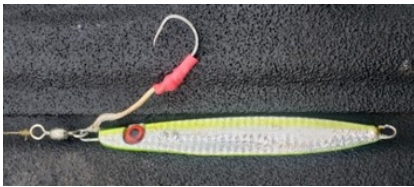
Finally, we are holding on to hope that once group gatherings are permitted, the HASA membership can come together for a potluck and rummage sale. This may be closer to the fall if it gets to happen at all. Our focus is keeping our members safe and supporting our community as we navigate through this unusual time of COVID-19. We continue to encourage our members to stay safe and maintain social distancing and shelter-in-place orders according to our county and state direction whether out fishing or on land. Together we will get through this.

Fishing Advice: My Favorite Rockfish Rig

By Chris Edgar

After years of pursuit of lingcod and rockfish I have found one rig that works especially well for me. It works well for both rockfish and lingcod, can cover good ground with a current or be used to jig known structure or drops. I tie up multiple rigs and have them available on the boat or kayak so I can change out a damaged rig quickly if I'm in a hot spot.

The rig consists of 30-50lb mono, a barrel swivel and a snap swivel. I take about 3 feet of the mono and tie the barrel swivel at one end and the snap to the other. The snap swivel will be the bottom and the barrel the top. This can be done without the snap swivel but I prefer two swivels just in case you hook a fast spinner; it also keeps the fish from getting leverage on the lure preventing losses. The next part of this rig is a dropper loop tied closer to the top of the rig. This provides multiple presentation and change of depth; albeit minimal I believe it entices more strikes. I make sure to tie my dropper loop at least 3 inches in diameter for two reasons, to give more action and to pass through my preferred soft plastic which is the B2 squid. I pass the loop through the squid, add about 3 beads and attach the hook. The beads are not necessary but it keeps the hook at or just past the tentacles which helps prevent short strikes. The last piece of this puzzle is a flat lead anchovy jig; I keep multiple colors and weights on me for changes in water color, depth and drift speed. Depending on the brand some come with a split ring attaching the hook some don't; most of the time there is a treble attached to the bottom of the jig. I cut off this treble hook or remove it from the split ring and replace it with a single siwash. In recent years I've come to love the assist hooks and, as you know, you can only have two hooks when pursuing groundfish, so I opt out of a bottom hook and attach the assist hook to the top of the jig. I think this is the bee's knees because I don't think I have missed any strikes and also lessens the chance of getting snagged.

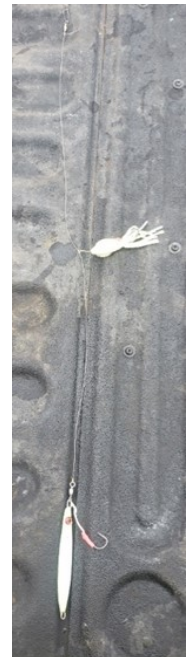


Fishing this rig is quite simple and doesn't require much work on your part. I drop it till I feel bottom and as I drift I lightly lift and drop touching bottom each time. I've fished this fast, slow and all throughout the water column not just on the bottom. When fish are suspend the fluttering jig works great with a long slow jiggling action. I use this rig mostly in the depth range between 30 and 130 feet, making it great for small craft or kayak use.

By no means is this the only rig I use or catch fish on, but I always have one of my rods rigged with this set up ready to go because it always produces. Believe it or not I catch most of the rockfish on the jig and I catch most of my lings on the B2 when fishing this particular rig. I like it because of the versatility and the range of species I catch.



I hope this helps some of you catch more fish. Tight lines and fair weather my friends.



2020 Salmon Season Process

By Joe Polos, HASA Salmon Rep.

Last fall when heading back to Woodley Island Marina aboard the Kisutch after a little shakedown cruise around the bay, Scott again asked me if I was interested in being the HASA salmon rep. I'm not sure if he just wore me down asking or it was the pleasure of being out on the bay, or a combination of the two, but I said yes. I was not naive to the whole salmon season setting process as I had been involved in it for about 15 years early in my career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. But it was from a very different perspective, serving on the Klamath River Technical team representing the Department of the Interior, and primarily supporting the Klamath Fishery Management Council. I was part of the team that was involved in the number crunching side of the process and not the negotiations for sharing the ocean allocation of Klamath fall-run Chinook Salmon. There were many welcome faces, some from my tech team days and some old fishermen that I knew from the past Klamath Management Council days as well as many new faces to meet and get to know.

Trying times. So right out of the gate this was looking like it was a bad year to become the HASA salmon rep. Early indications looked like it was a poor Klamath fall-run Chinook salmon return in 2019 which did not bode well for 2020 fishing seasons. Concerns for a repeat of the 2017 season when the Klamath Management Zone (KMZ) recreational salmon fishery was completely closed were starting to be heard.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) hosted its annual informational meeting where information on the previous year's Chinook salmon returns to California rivers was presented along with some highlights of what will be coming up at the Pacific Fishery Management Council's (PFMC) meeting the following week. At this meeting, held on February 27, 2020, in Santa Rosa, we learned of the 2019 Chinook salmon returns to the Sacramento and Klamath systems and harvest by the recreational, commercial and Tribal fisheries. We also received guidance from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for the development of 2020 ocean salmon fishing seasons. NMFS recommended that all fisheries harvesting Klamath fall-run Chinook salmon (ocean recreational and commercial, inriver recreational, and Tribal) would be constrained to a maximum combined exploitation rate of 25% to allow for a minimum natural spawning escapement of 36,200 adults. Under better populations conditions, the minimum natural adult spawning escapement is 40,700 adults. Under the PFMC's salmon management plan, reduced maximum exploitation rate and decreased minimum natural spawning escapement target are referred to as "de minimis" fishing provisions which allow for some fishing even though the natural spawning escapement floor will not be met. Following the dismal news on the Klamath fall-run Chinook status, I was hoping that we might be able to wrangle a couple of 3-day openings in the KMZ during the Memorial Day and 4th of July holidays.

PFMC salmon season development is a well-orchestrated process where information on salmon stock sizes and input on fishing seasons/alternatives are analyzed and the impacts on the various managed salmon stocks are then presented. Based on this information, seasons are modified, and analyses redone in an iterative process until three alternatives are adopted by the PFMC at the end of the March meeting. These alternatives then go out for public review and comments received during the public review process are considered during the April meeting, where a final recommendation will be adopted.

The development of salmon seasons is conducted by the Salmon Advisory Subpanel (SAS), which is made up of representatives of all salmon fishing interests along the west coast. During the first day of the March PFMC meeting, the SAS was told that the California recreational salmon fishery had an allocation of 501 Klamath fish. With this information, the recreational salmon reps sat down to develop three season alternatives. An additional complication to the alternative development was, from a KMZ perspective, with the low projection of Klamath fall-run Chinook there was a lot of interest to limit impacts on Klamath fall-run Chinook in the KMZ and possibly Fort Bragg areas to allow ocean rec fisheries south of Point Arena to fully utilize the harvestable surplus of Sacramento fall Chinook. This means less opportunity for KMZ fishers where impacts to Klamath fish are higher and therefore “more costly” when developing seasons.



Three initial alternatives were developed: one favoring the KMZ, one favoring southern areas, and one sharing the impacts more evenly. For the KMZ, this meant one month fishing, two weeks fishing, or two 3-day holiday weekends. The purpose of these initial alternatives is to get the ball rolling and to evaluate the harvest impacts. These alternatives were then passed on to the PFMC who forwarded them on to the Salmon Technical Team (STT) for analysis. The STT analysis is a very elaborate and complicated task where they analyze all the proposed seasons along the Washington, Oregon and California coasts and impacts on all managed salmon populations. Impacts from changes in one area or fishery (commercial or recreational) can influence the impacts of other areas and fisheries so alternatives need to be continually adjusted to meet sharing agreements and harvest management objectives.

As the week progressed, there were some detours along the way to get to three alternatives by the end of the meeting: (1) a recalculation of the allowable ocean fishery impacts increased the California recreational share to about 1,100 Klamath fish (better news), (2) a misunderstanding of sharing among Oregon and California fisheries (frustrating, but folks were working well together and figured out an amenable sharing agreement), and (3) the fishery management agencies near the end of the meeting wanted an alternative that met an adult natural spawning escapement of 40,700 Klamath fall-run Chinook. This last alternative was added late which was quite frustrating since this required decreasing Klamath ocean fishery impacts and, since the KMZ has the highest impact rate, it was easiest to make the major adjustments here. The justification for developing a conservative alternative for Klamath fall-run Chinook salmon was that the minimum natural spawning escapement of 40,700 was not met in 4 out of the last 5 years (not an unreasonable request, but it would have been nice if this was known at the beginning of the process). By the end of the meeting, three alternatives were adopted by the PFMC and the days open to fishing in the KMZ ranged from 19 to 56, much better than the two 3-day holiday weekends I had anticipated at the beginning of the process.

The April PFMC meeting was conducted remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. PFMC staff did a spectacular job managing this meeting given the constraints of not having everybody there for a face-to-face meeting (although the opportunity to sit down with other fishers and just talk/problem solve was definitely missed). Two issues due to COVID-19 related impacts, set the course for a fairly streamlined development of a final recommendation: (1) recreational

fisheries did not open in April in the Fort Bragg, San Francisco, and Monterey areas and (2) fishery agencies dropped their interest in the more restrictive fishing alternative due to the financial impacts anticipated by the recreational fisheries delayed opening. The missed opportunity to the closed April recreational fisheries to the south of the KMZ was a windfall for the KMZ as these impacts resulted in additional days of fishing for the KMZ. The PFMC adopted a season that resulted in a KMZ recreational season of 65 days, June 6-August 9. CDFW staff also recommended that if the zones south of the KMZ experienced further closures into May due to COVID-19 issues, the missed Klamath impacts would be transferred to the KMZ as additional fishing days. Since the ocean salmon fishing opened down south on May 1, there will not be any additional days added to the KMZ season.



There was a lot of great collaboration, primarily among California recreational and commercial fishermen, to craft the season that we have and also with Oregon representatives as we worked to balance sharing impacts among the states. And not enough can be said about the great support and guidance we received from the technical staff of CDFW as well as the STT.

For all my years away from this process, one thing that hasn't changed is that fishers just want to fish and they are also aware of the need for conservation. They just don't want to be the only ones bearing the conservation burden. I'm looking forward to seeing folks next year and we can talk about all of our fishing adventures that are soon before us.



Fishing Advice: Pacific Halibut

By Lonnie Dollarhide (Flatwater)

Pacific halibut fishing along the north coast is truly a trophy fishery we're all proud to have and partake in. Other than fishing albacore, Pacific halibut is my favorite species of fish to try and catch. On some days offshore halibut fishing can be tough and on other days they make an angler look good when they're on the chew and bite anything you have down there just off the bottom.

Basic tackle is a spreader bar, J-hook with a well scented B2 Squid and herring or the famous God Father Halibut Rigs with a circle-hook using either herring, salmon belly or squid as bait. On the days with some chop and current out at the halibut grounds I prefer the spreader bar set up. On the calmer flat days with no drift the God Father Rig is my go to set up. It's important to never drag your bait right on the bottom. If you do you will be hooking or snagging the big skates which aren't too much fun to bring up anywhere from 300 to 400 feet of water. Best advice is to drop to the bottom and when there reel up a foot or so. You always want your weight to stay in contact with the bottom to get the proper bounce. It's important to do plenty of bait checks because the other fish down there will nibble off your bait. Also on the tide change it's important to have a fresh bait on.

There are two different kinds of bites. One where the halibut slam the bait and the rod bends over big time. When this happens I feel more than one halibut is after the bait. The other bite is when you see your rod tip bouncing kind of like a trout bite. When I see this I never grab the rod out of the holder I just start reeling as fast as I can. When I can't gain any more line it's usually hooked. Watching the rod tip is the key to success. Take your eyes off it for a second you can miss a bite.

When out fishing for halibut you want to find fuzzy stuff on the bottom of your screen. When you do drop down and get other fish bites that's a good sign, meaning there's life down there. At times you're going to have to pick up and move some to find the right things on the bottom. Pacific halibut are a funny creature, they're days we fish a spot and can't buy a bite. Go back the next day to the same spot and get limits. When they're on the chew about any bait will work. I have seen everything from sanddabs, baby skates, whole crabs to salmon in their bellies. Good luck to everyone this year and stay safe.



Spring Groundfish Review - May 2020

By Tom Marking, GAP representative

PACIFIC HALIBUT: The halibut world is sort of turned upside down this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We in California will not be affected with our season structure so long as people stay socially separated and don't create a problem with the local health officer that would require a shutdown of the ramps. It will be a challenge for the Charter Fleet to maintain separation and try to protect themselves and their clients, but we'll see how this plays out. CDFW also has concerns for their dock samplers, to protect them from illness, so you can expect the CERF samplers to be a bit standoffish this year at the dock. Washington is still closed and shut down their halibut opener in March, when thousands of anglers showed up in Neah Bay and the Quileute Reservation to fish the opening. The Governor, due to a request from local officials, shut down all fishing to stop travel from Seattle to the coastal cities. That order is still in effect. Oregon shut off out of state travel into Oregon for anglers and hunters for the same reasons.



We had a tough season here last year, as did Oregon for catching P. halibut. We only had about 43% harvest success. Hopefully, the weather will cooperate more this year for better success. The "lights out" albacore season last year also shifted effort from offshore halibut fishing. Trawlers now have access to the shallower area again since the RCA boundaries have been eliminated for mid-water and modified flatfish nets. The 30-100 fathom area off Eureka is a popular area for them to trawl for canary, widow, and various rockfish species, so you will see them towing in our customary recreational halibut fishing areas.

California halibut are already being caught in the Bay, so that provides some opportunity for those with smaller vessels and those who don't do well with offshore swell. Drifting with bait and trolling with bait or lures both seem to be popular.

ROCKFISH: CDFW did not propose any changes to the bag limit for this year. We still have 10 fish bag limit; with a sub-bag limit of 4 black rockfish, 3 canary rockfish, and no retention of yelloweye rockfish. For the next biennial cycle of 2021/2022, the sub-bag limits for black and canary rockfish are proposed to be removed. A vermilion sub-bag limit of 5 fish will likely be implemented since that species is being harvested beyond the allowable limit and this restriction is necessary to reduce impacts. This will not affect us much in the North, but this is a very prevalent species in the South and constitutes over half the bag limits. CDFW had proposed a sub-bag of two fish, but combined efforts of the fishing associations in the south were able to get that back up to five. Also, elimination of the cabezon 3-fish sub-bag limit is proposed for the next cycle so they can make up your entire bag, if you are so inclined. This was done over the objection of some charter guys in the SF area. Their concern is not over cabs, but the effort in shallow water that could increase impacts to the minor nearshore rockfish species, that were very close to their harvest limits for the past few years. This could lead to early closures or more restrictions if these limits are exceeded.

Commercial rockfish effort will see major changes. CDFW is proposing substantial increases for the commercial non-trawl fleet for all species of rockfish, except yelloweye rockfish. Modification of the RCA boundaries, both seaward and shoreward, are being proposed, so that they have more access to presently closed areas. The commercial guys are proposing the RCA be only 40-80 fathoms, which would open lots of currently closed bottom areas. Also, commercial salmon trollers have requested that they be allowed to retain rockfish caught while salmon fishing (up to 50% of their salmon catch), as an incidental fishery. This is similar to the incidental catch of P. halibut in the salmon troll fishery north of Pt. Chehalis in WA, and sablefish harvesters in the northern areas. This will be analyzed for yelloweye impacts, but with the allowable catch limit for yelloweye being increased this should not be a problem. Speaking of yelloweye, they are rebuilding and still projected to be rebuilt by 2028, so that is good news for all sectors.



The final decision on all these proposals will be decided by the PFMC at the June meeting. If you have any opinions for these proposals, go to the pcouncil.org website and write a public comment within the next few weeks.

Stay safe out there and remember to bring along and use your descenders. Tight lines folks.

Just you, your fishing rod, and boat...

We can make it happen!

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Mercury in Sport-caught Food Fishes from Northern California

By Ross Taylor

In 2016-2018, Humboldt Baykeeper conducted a study to test the methyl-mercury levels in commonly sport-caught food fishes from Humboldt Bay. Ross Taylor and Associates, a fishery biology consulting firm based out of McKinleyville assisted with the study. This study was funded by the California EPA as a follow up to a statewide study conducted by the State Water Resources Control Board's Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program (SWAMP) in 2009 and 2010 which tested methyl-mercury levels in commonly caught coastal fishes. The SWAMP study tested nearly 3,500 samples collected from 46 fish species captured at 68 locations along the California coast. For the Humboldt Baykeeper project, the focal fish species included leopard shark, bat ray, California halibut, lingcod, black rockfish, walleye surfperch and jack smelt. Several species of clams were also included in the study at the request of the Wiyot Tribe due to their cultural importance to the Tribe. These included Martha Washington, littleneck and horseneck clams. In a final part of Baykeeper's study, 80 fishermen around Humboldt Bay were interviewed regarding their fishing habits, species kept and how frequently they and their families eat fish caught from the bay. These interviews included various user groups on Humboldt Bay, including the Latino and Hmong communities, the Wiyot Tribe, dock fishermen, jetty fishermen and boat-based anglers.

Consistent with the SWAMP report, the leopard shark caught in Humboldt Bay in 2016 was extremely high in methyl-mercury at 1.292 parts per million (ppm) (Figure 1). The California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment's (OEHHA) 1.31 ppm threshold was set as an overall "do not consume" advisory for California sport fish. The no consumption advisory for fish with levels of methyl-mercury above 0.44 ppm was set to protect the most sensitive fish consumers, children and women of childbearing age, to protect from developmental neurotoxicity. Ten samples from Baykeeper's 2005 study were included since these two

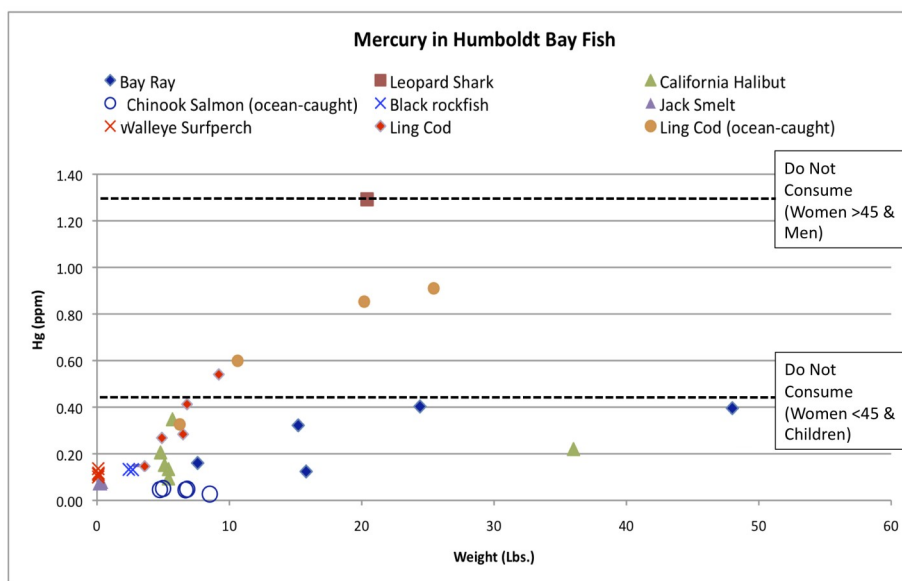


Figure 1. Total mercury results for eight species of fish, caught between August 2016 and September 2017. **NOTE:** Chinook salmon and lingcod are from Baykeeper's 2005 study and were captured in ocean in front of bay entrance (salmon) and at Cape Mendocino (lingcod).

species are commonly caught by our north coast anglers: five lingcod from Cape Mendocino and five Chinook salmon from just outside Humboldt Bay (Figure 1). Note as the size (weight) of the lingcod increases, so does the level of methyl-mercury. The average mercury levels for each species are presented in Table 1, along with guidelines for consumption.

Table 1. Average mercury levels in parts per million (ppm) for fish species caught in or near Humboldt Bay during 2016-2017 and guidelines for consumption.

Species	Average Mercury Levels, ppm	Recommended Servings* per Week, Women <45 & Children ¹	Recommended Servings* per Week, Women >45 & Men ¹
Oysters	0.026	7	7
Chinook salmon	0.043	5	7
Clams	0.045	5	7
Jack Smelt	0.079	2	7
Local Albacore	0.110	2	5
Walleye Surfperch	0.115	2	5
Black Rockfish	0.131	2	4
California Halibut	0.192	1	3
Bat Ray	0.281	1	2
Lingcod <10 lbs.	0.330	1	2
Lingcod >10 lbs.	0.787	AVOID	1
Leopard Shark	1.192	AVOID	AVOID

*Serving sizes: adults = 8 ounces uncooked (4 ounces cooked); children = 4 ounces uncooked (2 ounces cooked).

¹ Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment’s Nov. 2017 Advisory Tissue Levels <https://oehha.ca.gov/media/downloads/fish/report/atlmhgandothers2008c.pdf>

Due to the interest generated by the Humboldt Bay study, Humboldt Baykeeper received a second California EPA grant to focus on testing mercury levels in sport-caught ocean fish from Cape Mendocino and reefs north of Trinidad (Patrick’s Point and Reading Rock). The objective of this second study is to collect sufficient samples (at least 9 samples per species) from focal species to allow for inclusion in the OEHHA fish consumption advisories. Focal species included lingcod, copper rockfish, vermilion rockfish, quillback rockfish, canary rockfish, cabezon, California halibut and Pacific halibut. Funds have also been allocated to test Pacific lamprey harvested in the lower Eel River by Wiyot tribal members.

During the summer and early fall of 2019, a total of 49 tissue samples were collected from fish caught at Cape Mendocino and Reading Rock, and 34 of these samples were analyzed in February of 2020. The results of most concern include the following: four lingcod with methyl-mercury values greater than the 1.31 ppm “do not consume” threshold. These were a 16.5 pound fish = 1.49 ppm, a 25.5 pound fish = 1.59 ppm, a 14 pound fish = 1.94 ppm and a 23 pound fish = 2.84 ppm. Other fish that tested over 1.31 ppm of methyl-mercury included a 3.7 pound copper rockfish (1.91 ppm), a 9.7 pound vermilion rockfish (1.42 ppm) and three quillback rockfish of 1.5 to 3.5 pounds (1.38, 1.40 and 1.41 ppm).

In addition to testing samples for methyl-mercury, a subset of samples will also be tested for selenium because recent research has indicated that high selenium levels can offset the harmful effects of methyl-mercury and conversely, low selenium levels can exacerbate methyl-mercury’s harmful effects. This research has shown that mercury sequesters selenium to form insoluble compounds and as long as the molar ratio of selenium is greater than that of mercury, potentially negative effects of mercury toxicity are reduced or negated. The 2019 samples with

methyl-mercury levels above the 1.31 ppm “do not consume” threshold are likely candidates for selenium testing. HASA has agreed to assist with the selenium testing by donating \$500 directly to the laboratory to test selected samples. Sampling for this second study will be completed this year and Humboldt Baykeeper anticipates full analyses of all samples to be completed by the end of 2020.

The Humboldt Bay report is available at: <https://www.humboldtbykeeper.org/images/PDF/MercuryFinalReport.pdf>

The full SWAMP report is available at: http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/swamp/docs/coast_study/bog2012may/coast2012report.pdf

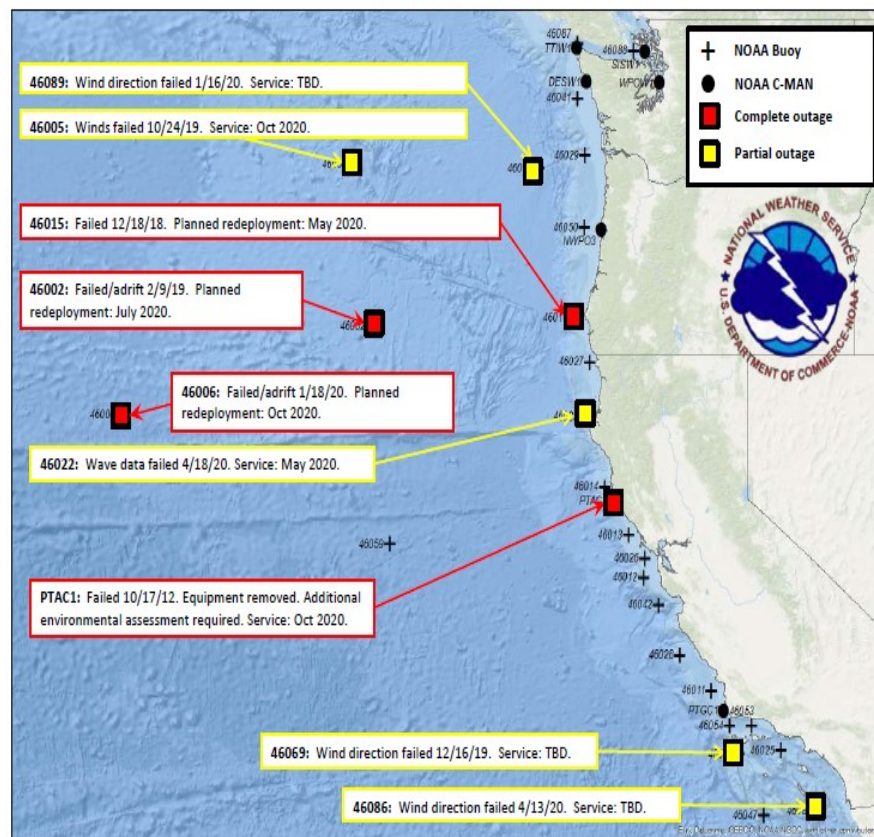
West Coast Buoy Status

From Kathleen M. Zontos, National Weather Service, Eureka, CA

The NWS buoys will be serviced as weather permits, giving priority to those out of service (coastal buoys first, then offshore buoys). At this time, the Eel River Buoy (46022) is expected to be serviced in early May and #46015 redeployed in mid-May.

West Coast NOAA Buoy and C-MAN Status

As of: April 24, 2020



Fishing Advice: Fishing Out of Humboldt Bay

By Reef Twibell

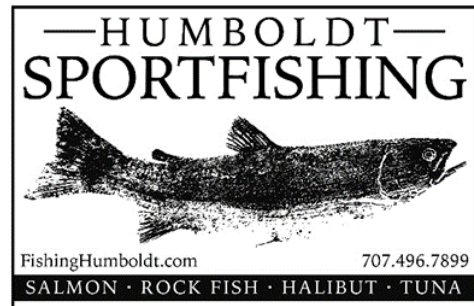
It is best to cross the bar on the slack or the flood tide. We all pretty much use the same thing but the name of this game is all about location. - where do you put your boat in the big blue ocean? Trust what you know, what you've been given (fishing report info) and what you have done in the past to produce success.

When presenting your gear really watch the current and the wind - how do these variables affect your boat? What we've found is certain currents and certain wind directions create better or worse fishing days - find the pattern that works best for you.

Otherwise, be safe and enjoy being on the water

Every trip on big blue is different...we'll see you out there.

Reef Twibell is the owner of Humboldt Sportfishing. Check out his web site at: FishingHumboldt.com.



Fishing Advice: Surfperch Fishing

By Steve Haines

Best success for me has been North of the Eel River Mouth for about a mile stretch of beach. Of course, you want to fish the troughs that are within casting distance of the beach. Best bait for me has been medium sized sand crabs and "Gulp" imitation sand worms in reddish brown color made by Berkley. Fishing 2 to 3 hours before, and up to the high tide, gets me the most action. Hope this information gets you your ten legals.



Incidentally, this is a great way to get out and have fun while practicing your social distancing. Tight lines and good hunting.



Editors Notes: Surfperch Regulations: The recreational fishery for [surfperch](#) (family Embiotocidae) is open year-round. The daily bag and possession limit is 20 fish in combination of all species (except shiner perch), with not more than 10 fish of any one species. [Redtail surfperch](#) (*Amphistichus rhodoterus*) have a minimum size of 10½ inches total length. Identification Guide: Common Surfperches in California (<https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=36617&inline>)

Remember to always check ocean conditions, especially for sneaker wave conditions (<https://www.weather.gov/eka/>)

Other local beaches for surfperch fishing include: Samoa, Mad River, Clam Beach, Big Lagoon, Dry Lagoon, Gold Bluffs Beach, Enderts Beach, and Kellogg Road Beach.

Potter Valley Project Feasibility Study Update

By Scott McBain and Dirk Pedersen

You may have seen this in the local news over the past few days, but a Feasibility Study Report Project Plan was recently filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for a group of Humboldt, Mendocino, and Sonoma County entities to assume control of PG&E's Potter Valley Project on the upper Eel River. The project consists of a 76,000 ac-ft storage reservoir created by Scott Dam (see photo at right), the 65 ft tall Cape Horn Dam (middle photo) that diverts water into the Russian River basin, and the Potter Valley Powerhouse that generates power from diverted water. This project has been in place since 1908 and has been unprofitable for many years. PG&E began the FERC relicensing process in 2017, but in response to bankruptcy filing and unprofitability of the Potter Valley Project, PG&E withdrew their relicensing application for the project in 2019. PG&E solicited other entities to purchase the project, with no takers. As a result, FERC issued a notice soliciting other potential applicants to take over the relicensing process to acquire the project from PG&E.



Rather than undergo the uncertainty of a FERC decommissioning process or a new outside owner, the following organizations developed a group to investigate potential acquisition of the project from PG&E: Sonoma Water, Humboldt County, California Trout, Round Valley Indian Tribes, and Mendocino Inland Water and Power Commission. This group was founded to search for a “two-basin solution” that would improve fishery conditions on the Eel River and maintain water supply reliability on the Russian River, among other shared objectives. The group commissioned a Feasibility Study in October 2019 to determine if there was a potential way to take over and operate the project differently that would meet these shared objectives. The results of the Feasibility Study indicated that the answer is “tentatively yes”, and the group will be working to conduct further studies as part of pursuing a new FERC license to operate the project. The proposed project plan would be to retrofit Cape Horn Dam to improve upstream and downstream fish passage, remove Scott Dam to restore natural anadromous fish access to 100–300 miles of additional habitat in the upper watershed (see Rice Creek in bottom photo), and improve water supply infrastructure on the Russian River side. Diversions from the Eel River to the Russian River would still occur, but during the wintertime when water is more abundant, and diversions would cease during lower flow periods. If this project plan moves forward to implementation it should greatly increase salmon and steelhead production from the upper Eel River watershed. Many challenges lay ahead, including additional studies, developing financing for the infrastructure modifications, and completing the FERC relicensing process. HASA will continue to monitor progress on the project and provide periodic updates on this very important development that will hopefully have long term benefits to north coast fisheries.



California Current Integrated Ecosystem Assessment

By Larry DeRidder

We all get frustrated from time to time when we read of seemingly insane government spending of our tax dollars. Years ago I encountered reference to a government funded project to build a machine to analyze the body odor of Australian Aborigines, and all I could think was "Are they serious?" Every year brings new examples. But I recently encountered quite the opposite - a really fascinating summary of a whole series of studies, called "California Current Integrated Ecosystem Assessment - California Current Ecosystem Status Report, 2020". Boring title, interesting content. To those of our members who participate at Pacific Fishery Management Council meetings this is likely old news. I found it to be a fascinating review of 2019 plus hints of what to expect in the future. This was the 8th report in the last nine years and summarized a huge swath of data related to fishery resources and fishing in the Pacific Northwest. Topics reviewed include: climate and ocean drivers such as El Niño, hypoxia and ocean acidification, harmful algal blooms, copepod biomass and krill size, adult and juvenile salmon abundance, California river flows, groundfish abundance, and just about any other aspect of our society that interacts with sport fishing in the Pacific Ocean, with plenty of specifics for our region.

Summarized highlights include:

- (1) In 2019, the system experienced weak to neutral El Niño conditions, average to positive Pacific Decadal Oscillation, and very weak North Pacific circulation.
- (2) Anchovy densities continued to increase along most of the coast.
- (3) Krill densities off central and northern California and Oregon were very low.
- (4) Juvenile rockfish demonstrated low abundance.
- (5) Indicators are consistent with average to below-average salmon returns in 2020.
- (6) Above-average reports of whale entanglements occurred for the 6th straight year.

If you are interested in learning more, the report can be found at <https://www.pcouncil.org/documents/2020/02/g-1-a-ica-team-report-1.pdf>

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SQUID – It’s Not Just For Bait.

Submitted by Joe Polos

Kalamaria Yemista (Stuffed Squid hors d’oeuvre)

- 2 pounds of squid
- 1 bunch scallions, chopped
- 1 cup chopped spinach
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 Tbs chopped parsley
- ¼ Tsp oregano
- ½ cup cooked rice
- Olive oil
- ½ cup sherry
- Juice of 1 lemon
- ½ cup clam broth
- Lemon and parsley for garnish

Wash and clean squid. Cut off the tentacles - chop and save tentacles. In a large skillet heat ¼ cup olive oil and brown scallions, garlic and parsley; add chopped squid tentacles. Continue browning and add oregano, sherry, and more olive oil if needed to braise the ingredients. Add chopped spinach and rice and simmer for 20 minutes.



Stuff squid loosely with rice and spinach mixture and arrange in skillet. Add lemon juice, clam broth, ½ cup of olive oil, and 1 cup of warm water. Simmer for 30 minutes. Allow to cool, slice into ½” rings, and arrange on platter garnished with lemon wedges and parsley.

Kalamaria Yemista (Stuffed Squid entrée)

- 3 pounds of squid (serves six)
- Flour
- ½ cup olive oil
- 1 cup vinegar

Wash and clean squid. Cut off the tentacles, chop and then stuff them into the squid body. Dice some of the bodies if needed to fill the squid body. Flour the squid. In a hot skillet, sauté the squid in oil until pink. Add vinegar, cover and simmer over low heat for 30-45 minutes or until the sauce is thick in consistency. Serve with rice pilaf and boiled greens with oil and lemon juice.



Save any extra squid for your next fishing trip.



Fishing Advice: Surf Smelt Fishing

By Yoshi Uemura (Opportunity)

Surf Smelt are so much fun to catch, I try and do it many times each season. They run along the North Coast beaches from about April through September; sometimes earlier sometimes later. The Surf Smelt typically run up onto the beaches with the breaking surf during daylight hours and the Night Smelt after dark. Night Smelt may be caught earlier in the year than Surf Smelt. Smelt are also called Day Fish and Night Fish.

Surf Smelt are typically about 8 inches long. Night Smelt are typically 4 to 5 inches. Surf conditions usually dictate if they are going to run or not; they typically like calmer surf conditions. They like a gravelly beach with a decent amount of slope angle. Surf Smelt run mostly during higher tides usually when the tide is falling and about mid-day to late afternoon. Night Smelt are typically caught after dark, mostly between 9 PM and midnight on an outgoing tide. I try to get to the beach before high tide. I look for the harbor seals or the birds typically found working the surf. I also look for the gravelly sections of beach and then it's game on. You regularly see the flash of the Smelt in the breaking waves. At night with a flashlight it may be even more obvious. If you fish around sunset you sometimes get both Surf Smelt and Night Smelt in the net at the same time. You may even catch Surf Perch on occasion but you need to throw the perch back.



I use both A-frame nets and cast nets to capture both Surf Smelt and Night Smelt. I have both a standard size recreational A-frame net and a $\frac{2}{3}$ size A-frame net. Both with $\frac{1}{4}$ inch mesh. My cast net for Day Smelt has bigger $\frac{3}{8}$ inch mesh. The big mesh will gill the smaller Night Smelt and they may be hard to clear from the net. My cast net for Night Smelt has a smaller $\frac{1}{4}$ inch mesh. Both are 6 foot. I recommend you take two buckets; a larger one to dump the net of Smelt into and one to store the Smelt in after you separate the sand, gravel and debris from the Smelt. Have some ice to keep them fresh.

I like to use an A-frame net for when the Smelt are spotted in the breaking surf up on the exposed beach. I think the A-frame net is the easiest to use. You stand in front of the breaking wave and you dip the front end of the net into the face of the breaking wave with the front end down into the gravelly sand and then lift up on the front end before the wave starts to wash back out. If you catch any Smelt you can store them in the back of the net near the handle where you hold both the handle and the end of the net. What you do is grab near the end of the net and make a sack with the end that you keep closed with your hand. You just raise the front end of the net up and let the Smelt slide back into the sack. This saves making multiple trips to the bucket when you are in the middle of a bunch of good net catches. However, I find that if it's that good, the net gets really heavy really fast. I usually take any Smelt I catch straight to my bucket instead of storing them in the sack end of the net. If you don't get any fish you just flick the net to the side and fling any debris or gravel off onto the beach. I like to use my cast nets typically for when they are out a bit from shore. I think the cast net is a better all around net as it can be used in many different situations.



The 2019 - 2020 limit for Surf Smelt is **25 pounds** in combination. I use a 5 or 4 gallon bucket and pour 3 gallons of water into it and draw a line at 3 gallons full. That is approximately 25 lbs.

I like to wear a PFD and waders with a waist safety belt when I am in the surf. Be very careful and aware of the wave size as you are in the wave breaking zone. Sneaker waves will get you if you aren't paying attention. A safety strobe, whistle and a portable VFD round out my safety gear. One more thing I try to do is to keep my feet moving when in the surf. This helps me keep my balance and keeps the outgoing surge of sand, gravel and water from knocking me off my feet.

Known beaches for Surf Smelt fishing include but are not limited to:

- South Beach / Cushing Creek
- False Klamath Cove / Wilson Creek (North of Trees of Mystery)
- Mouth of the Klamath Spit
- Gold Bluffs Beach (The best beach for Surf Smelt) The commercial fishers fish here.
- North of Redwood Creek Mouth
- Freshwater Lagoon Spit
- Stone Lagoon Spit
- Luffenholtz Beach *My favorite.* (Occasional car break ins here. Just don't leave anything out.)
- Mad River Beach (Watch out for car break ins here. Really bad.)
- Samoa Beach
- Table Bluff Beach
- Centerville Beach

Yeah, just about any of our local North Coast ocean beaches with a fair amount of slope and some gravel patches.

I like eating smelt better than herring. They have less bones and the bones they do have are easier to remove once cooked. Some people eat them skin, bones and all, especially the smaller Night Smelt. I prefer to clean the Smelt before I cook them. I take a pair of scissors and cut up the belly from the anus towards the head. I then use my thumb to clean out the guts in one clean sweep. Some people cut off the head and some leave the head on; I've done it both ways. Once cleaned, they are then ready to cook. I like them pan fried in a thin layer of olive oil. Sometimes I coat them in egg and Panko and other times I just cook them plain. The skin peels off and the bones separate easily when cooked. I think the Smelt have a nice mild flavor and they lend themselves well to any side dish as they do not over power the other foods you serve up. I've been told that some people deep fry Night Smelt whole and eat them like french fries.

Smelt also works good as bait for salmon, halibut and lingcod; but not as good as herring, sardines or anchovies, in my opinion.



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Humboldt Bay Fireboat

By Kent Hulbert, Humboldt Bay Harbor District Board of Directors.

Humboldt Bay Harbor District operates a dedicated fire boat covering the navigable portions of Humboldt Bay. The boat is staffed with operators and deckhands from the Harbor District and firefighters from Humboldt Bay Fire.



The boat purchased by grant funding in 2010 and delivered in 2012 is a M1 44 foot Moose boat, manufactured near Petaluma on San Francisco Bay. The beam is 16 feet and the draft is 26 inches. The boat, named Fire One, is powered with the twin Hamilton jet/ 600 horse Cummins engines and is capable of speeds to 40 knots. Water pumping capacity is over 3000 gallons per minute through 2 remote controlled monitors as well as hand-lines.

Fire One was designed though a collaboration between Eureka Fire Department (now Humboldt Bay Fire) and the Harbor District to fill a void in fire protection for vessels and docks/buildings along the waterfront. One of the main considerations was to have large enough pump capacity to provide fire flows onto land in the event of a major municipal water system failure. Moose Boats had not built a boat with that capacity before, but they rose to the challenge.



Fire One has been used for several large fires including Fairhaven, Eureka and Fields Landing, its main assignment being to send large amounts of water onto the fire from the bay side. Operations training with the harbor staff, USCG boats and helicopter crews, water rescue swimmers and other fire suppression groups are also done on a frequent basis. Fire One is berthed at Woodley Island.

Most frequent landlubber question: "How much water does that thing carry". Answer: "billions".



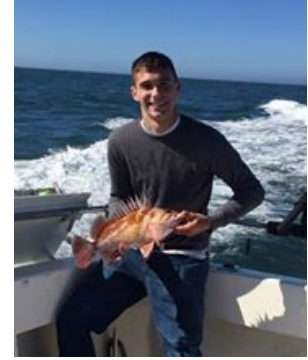
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Note from Newsletter Manager: Thank you for those that submitted articles and pictures. Please keep them coming. To make this a better publication serving our membership I'm asking for HASA members to contribute articles and pictures that you think will be of interest to your fellow fishers. If you know somebody that would like to contribute an article please get them in contact with me. Send along any fishing tips you would like to share or even a unique story of something that happened to you out on the water. We have also started including recipes in the newsletter. If you have a favorite recipe for your catch and want to share it, send it along.



We are also looking for additional advertisers for the HASA newsletters. Our newsletter is sent out to hundreds of anglers each quarter and posted on our website, so it is a good place to advertise your business. Email me (summerchum@yahoo.com) if you or a colleague is interested in advertising in our newsletter; we can provide rates for different sizes of ads from business cards to full page.



Please submit any articles to me at summerchum@yahoo.com, The deadline for submission of materials for the Summer newsletter will be somewhere around mid-July. Please contact me if you have any question.

Thanks
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