

Fishing Journal

Information For The Serious Angler

by John Martinis

November 2012

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on Page 5**

**Shimano Reel Sale
Page 7**

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**Chinook Fishing
w/Downriggers
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**Rigging Flashers
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[Click Here](#)**

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March 16, 2013

Successful Chinook Fishing

**Area 9 Opens for Chinook
November 1**

**Area 8-2 Opens for Chinook
November 1**

What a great Coho season we have had in Puget Sound. But the seasons do change and so does the fishing. That's a good thing, because many of you are chomping at the bit to get your Chinook gear in the water.

If you were new to salmon fishing and caught quite a few Coho this year, get

ready for a completely different style of fishing. There is skill and art to catching Chinook. This newsletter will be a good refresher course to those of you who already know Chinook fishing and it will be a course study for all the new salmon anglers.

Anyone who was new to salmon angling this year, don't be disappointed if you don't get instant gratification when you try your hand at Chinook fishing. There is a whole lot of skill at doing this!

So, what are some of the differences between Coho fishing and Chinook fishing? Coho fishing is done in deep water, more or less wandering around until you find a school of fish. Chinook fishing is done at precise depths and fishing close to the bottom. Most of the time when you are Coho fishing, you are no where close to the bottom with your fishing gear. Chinook fishing is done with less trolling speed than you would troll for Coho. Longer leaders will be used for Chinook fishing. All of this stuff matters and I will put it all together so that it makes some sense to you.

Let's talk about fishing close to the bottom for Chinook. Chinook anglers who have perfected the technique of fishing close to the bottom are the ones you know that regularly bring fish back to the dock. Fishing close to the bottom is the art form that I was talking about. Fishing close to the bottom takes a lot of work and skill. You are probably asking yourself, "What is so darn hard about trolling close to the bottom." I would be quite easy if there wasn't any tide or wind in Puget Sound.

Picture this; Puget Sound has a gentle sloping bottom out to 90-100 feet. From



New Puget Sound Salmon Seasons 2012

Area 5: Feb. 16-Apr. 10
CHINOOK - min. size 22".
Other SALMON species - no
min. size. Daily limit 1.

Area 6: Dec. 1-Apr. 10
CHINOOK - min. size 22".
Other SALMON species - no
min. size. Daily limit 2.
Release wild CHINOOK.

Area 7: Dec. 1-Apr. 30
CHINOOK - min. size 22".
Other SALMON species - no
min. size. Daily limit 2
(combined). Release wild
Chinook. See Bellingham Bay
Closure and Fishery.

Area 8-1: Nov. 1-Apr. 30
CHINOOK - min. size 22".
Other SALMON species - no
min. size. Daily limit 2
(combined). Release wild
CHINOOK.

Area 8-2: Nov. 1-Apr. 30
CHINOOK - min. size 22".
Other SALMON species - no
min. size. Daily limit 2
(combined). Release wild
CHINOOK.

Area 9: Nov. 1-Nov. 30
CHINOOK - min. size 22".
Other SALMON species - no
min. size. Daily limit 2
(combined). Release wild
CHINOOK.

Jan. 16-Apr. 15 CHINOOK -

there the bottom drops off rapidly to 300-700 feet deep. The key to good Chinook fishing is staying on the lip of that edge. On that edge is where the bait fish and salmon hang out. If you think about it, that edge is just a tiny sliver of Puget Sound. Now, stay on that edge between 90-120 feet deep and troll close to the bottom. If you haven't done this a great deal, it will take you a while to perfect your technique. One good piece of advice that I will give you, "One person drives the boat and the other person runs the gear." If you do it any other way, you will be in 500 feet of water in less than one minute. Sounds like no big deal until you try to drive the boat at trolling speed back to that 90-120 foot edge. You can get there if you are willing to sacrifice a great deal of fishing time. You have heard me say this so many times before, "Don't be wasting your time by fishing in an unproductive manner because the bite, when it happens, may only last 20 minutes on a good day." Position is so important while Chinook fishing, that I want to emphasize how important this is. Take this very seriously!

Trolling speed goes hand-in-hand with trolling close to the bottom. Chinook trolling speed is 2.5 mph and not less and no more than 3.0 mph. If you can, keep your speed around 2.5mph. Think about it; if you troll too fast, you lose your ability to fish close to the bottom because after 2.5 mph there becomes so much drag on the downrigger cable that fishing close to the bottom becomes difficult. I will be the first person to admit that 2.5 mph is not always practical. 2.5mph is a guideline and not something that is cast in stone. There are some circumstances when the tide is running so fast that you have to troll at a greater speed than 2.5, if you don't you will be going backwards. That's not good because bait fish don't swim backwards in the current. Your gear is supposed to mimic bait fish swimming in the current. Pick up your speed as needed to keep your forward

momentum.

The gear for successful Chinook fishing is slightly different gear that what is used for Coho fishing. I would highly recommend using two flashers: Purple Haze 11" flasher and the new Gibbs Red Racer 11" UV (Moon Glow) flasher ([Click Here for flashers](#)). I believe that all of us got a good education on how well UV flashers worked for Coho fishing compared to some of our old favorites. There is no doubt in my mind that the same will hold true for Chinook fishing. Its UV full time all the time from this time forward!

It might be time to put the Coho squids away and get some spoons out. I prefer Goldstar Kingfisher 3.5 spoons for Chinook. I would have these Kingfisher spoons in my tackle box: Red Racer is my all time favorite Chinook spoon ([Click Here to see](#)). Other colors that are a must have: Kingfisher 3.5 Cookies and Cream ([Click Here to see](#)) and Kingfisher 3.5 Irish Cream ([Click Here to see](#)). I highly recommend changing the hooks out on these spoons to the Mustad 3/0 9510XXS stainless steel Siwash hooks ([Click Here to see](#)). If you change to these hooks, there will be no rusting problems between fishing trips and they sharpen better than any other hook.

Tie the spoon to the flasher using either 30lb Maxima Ultra Green leader material or with Pline 30-40lb Fluorocarbon leader material. I have been using the Pline Fluorocarbon leader for almost all my fishing and I have been extremely satisfied with its knot strength. Always wet the knot when tying fluorocarbon leader material so that the knot does not burn when you are pulling the knot tight.

The proper length of leader from the flasher to the spoon is 42" for Chinook fishing. That length is measured from the swivel or snap on the flasher to the ring on the spoon where the line leader is tied.

Just Fishing



min. size 22". Other SALMON species - no min. size. Daily limit 2 (combined). Release wild CHINOOK.

Area 10: Oct. 1-Jan. 31 CHINOOK - min. size 22". Other SALMON species - no min. size. Daily limit 2 (combined). Release wild CHINOOK. See Agate Pass Area on previous page. See Duwamish Waterways

Area 11: Nov. 1-Dec. 31 CHINOOK - min. size 22". Other SALMON species - no min. size. Daily limit 2 (combined). Only 1 CHINOOK may be retained.

Feb. 1-Apr. 30 CHINOOK - min. size 22". Other SALMON species - no min. size. Daily limit 2. Release wild CHINOOK.

Area 12: Oct. 16-Dec. 31 CHINOOK - min. size 22". Other SALMON species - no min. size. Daily limit 4 (combined). Only 2 CHINOOK may be retained. Release wild CHINOOK.

Feb. 1-Apr. 30 CHINOOK - min. size 22". Other SALMON species - no min. size. Daily limit 2. Release wild CHINOOK.

Check the Reg's for more information, [Click Here](#) for a complete set of the saltwater rules

The winter Chinook fishery can offer a mixed bag of weather. The most oblivious part is that the weather will be chilly and wet compared to our summer fishing. Don't let that deter you because often winter Chinook fishing is much more productive than summer Chinook fishing. The weather part leads us to places to fish.

Remember, Area 8-2 is never open for Chinook in the summer months. Having Area 8-2 open for Chinook fishing gives us more opportunities even when the weather is a bit snarly. Hat Island (Gedney Island) offers two good areas to fish for Chinook. The bar that runs between Hat Island and Camano Head is referred to as "The Racetrack". This area has been a staple for winter Chinook fishing as long as I can remember. This can be a little tricky to fish because the bar is so narrow. A GPS can really come in handy when fishing this bar so that you don't have to wander around too much. I like to start fishing this bar midway between Hat Island and Camano Island and to be heading toward Camano Head. You can follow the bar to Camano Head, but start turning into Saratoga Passage so that you can maintain that 90-120 foot fishing depth (See Map [Click Here](#)). The only drawback to fishing this area, is that the seals are just atrocious in this area. Many of you had the seal experience while fishing for Coho this year. Not fun!

The area that I prefer for Chinook fishing at Hat Island is on the south side of the Island. The bar on the south side of Hat is easy to follow and the seal problem is not nearly as bad. Start fishing this area at the east end of Hat and follow that bar to the east in 90-120 feet of water. Sometimes I will fish for suspended fish in 120-150 of water. In other words, I will not be fishing the bottom. This will all depend on if I see suspended bait. Just keep your eyes open to see what is happening below the surface. If you are not drawing strikes from the standard Chinook fishing

methods that I described earlier, take a troll out to some deeper water and see what is happening. If there isn't any suspended bait, then go back to the more traditional Chinook fishing techniques.

Possession Bar can be divided into three key areas to fish for Chinook: West side of the Bar, East side of the Bar and the Tin Shed Drift. The west side of the Bar is the area from the Scatchet Head buoy and south until you reach the very southern end of the Bar. The east side of the Bar extends from the Possession Point buoy and south until you reach the very southern tip of the Bar. The Tin Shed Drift is the most southern middle end of Possession Bar. The Tin Shed Drift got its name from the old Haines Warf that you can still see in the middle of Browns Bay. When you are at the Tin Shed Drift, you are lined up with Haines Warf.

To complicate things a little more, there is the inner Bar and the outer Bar. The inner Bar is the area that is referred to as the area around either the Possession buoy or the Scatchet Head buoy. The outer Bar would be roughly the area a half mile south of either buoy.

The best way to fish the west side of Possession Bar would be to start fishing a half mile south of the Scatchet Head buoy (outer Bar). Troll south for at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile until you reach the most southern end of the Bar. You will know when you get to the southern end of the Bar because the depth will drop off dramatically to 250-500 feet of water. When you reach that point turn around and troll back to where you began. If you find bait along that trolling path, I would stick with the bait because there will be a good chance of some salmon hanging around that bait.

The Tin Shed Drift is a hard place to fish because the bottom is so irregular. The bottom is straight up and down at this spot on the Bar. To properly fish at this location, you have to troll up against this



ledge. The bottom will come up very quickly because of the steepness of this ledge. Back away from this slightly so that you don't end up on top of the bar is less than 90 feet of water. Maintaining the correct depth (90'-150') is a little tricky; however you will get the hang of it with a little practice. You will find it very hard to maintain your depth while fishing here. So, don't feel that you are fishing incorrectly with the bottom depth bouncing all over the place. If you saw my Chinook video, this is where all the fish were caught ([see video](#)). (New Possession Bar Map [Click Here](#))

Fishing Plugs

If you are catching an unlimited amount of sub-legal Chinook (shakers), it might be time to switch to plugs. If you think about it; when you are towing shakers around undetected, you are wasting valuable fishing time. Many times these shakers are so thick that you cannot get a line in the water without hooking these rather small salmon.

Solution: Use 4"-5" Tomic Plugs. Good colors are 602 and 603. These colors are mother of pearl. One plug has a pink face and the other has a red face. On the 4" Tomic plug use a 4/0 siwash Mustad 9510XXS stainless steel hook. On the 5" plug use a 5/0 hook. (See Tomic Plugs [Click Here](#))

A nice feature of the Tomic Plugs is that they can be trolled at the same speed as a flasher.

Setting up a plug is quite easy; just tie it to the end of your line. No swivels, no leader, fish the plug all by itself.

If you are fishing a flasher on one downrigger and a plug on the other, make sure that you let the flasher and

the plug out the very same distance. You want to rely on the flasher to draw Chinook over to both rigs.

Skykomish River Chum Fishing Open Again

The local rivers have been closed for Chum Salmon fishing the past couple of years, leaving us with not too much to fish for in the Snohomish/Skykomish System in the month of November. At last Chum fishing is open again and it has started with some gusto. When the Skykomish River cleared up the week of October 22, there was quite a few fish in the river and most anglers were hooking-up. By the time you read the Newsletter, I expect the chum fishing to be quite good and it should last through November.

There are a couple of ways you can approach Skykomish River Chum Salmon: Fishing from the beach and fishing from a boat. If you are fishing from the beach, I would recommend purple or green fishing rigs. Drifting rigs that are good for Chum include: Green or Purple Corkys, Chartreuse #4 Vibrax spinners and Purple or Chartreuse jigs. If you are fishing from a boat, I would recommend using K15 Kwikfish plugs in any of the purple combinations.

Using Kwikfish K15 plugs: Cut one inch squares of sardine or herring and cure them with salt. These squares of bait will be used as a wrap on the bottom of the Kwikfish. Take a slice of the bait and place it around the front hook. Wrap the bait securely to the plug with miracle Thread.

Let the Kwikfish out 60 feet behind the

boat and back-troll it. The best water to fish for Chum is in the deeper slots.

Broken Fishing Rods

I noticed a huge upswing in broken fishing rods this salmon season. The majority of them were all broken in the very same manner. Most of these rods were broken attempting to break the line out of a downrigger release. Now remember; these rods were not made so that they could pick up a 12lb downrigger ball. If your line is not pulling out of the downrigger release by a fish, do not attempt to pull the line out with the fishing rod. If you do, the rod will break. Salmon rods are made to reel in salmon under a reasonable amount of tension. They are not made to lift a downrigger ball up. If you don't believe me, try this: tie your fishing line to a downrigger ball and try to lift it off the floor. You can't without the rod breaking in half. Just because the downrigger ball is in the water attached to 100 feet of downrigger line, this does mean that the rod is supposed to lift the downrigger ball up if the line release does not break loose.

With every broken rod comes the same story, "I have done it that way my whole life and the fishing rod has never broken." If the story is always the same and always under the same circumstance, I would say that fishing rods can break easily when attempting to pull the line out of a downrigger release.

So, what do you do if the line does not release when a fish gets on the line? Bring the ball to the surface with the downrigger. Release the line release by hand. Releasing the line release by hand does not sound too sporting, but it is better than breaking your favorite rod in half. If you do this, your salmon rod will last forever.



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