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Anglers get ready to reel in big money

Northern Squawfish Sport-reward Season Pays Off For Anglers, Salmon

Bonneville Power Administration

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PORTLAND, Ore. - Time to dust off the pole, break out the bait and get ready to reel in some major cash while helping save precious salmon when the 1996 Northern Squawfish Sport-Reward Season opens Monday, April 29 at 1 p.m.

Northern Squawfish Sport-Reward Season is the time of year when the Bonneville Power Administration offers a \$3 reward for every northern squawfish 11 inches or longer turned in along the Columbia and Snake rivers.

After the 100th fish turned in, anglers will receive \$4 for each squawfish. The reward goes up to \$5, starting with squawfish 401. Again this year, specially tagged fish will be worth \$50 and frequent prizes will be awarded for the longest squawfish.

Northern squawfish are major predators of salmon, devouring millions of salmon smolt each year.

Obviously, fishing for northern squawfish pays off for the salmon, but is it really worth it for fishermen? Just ask Ulyess Woody of Cottage Grove, Ore., who earned more than \$20,000 in four months by fishing for squawfish last year. In fact, during the 1995 season, 3,078 squawfish anglers enjoyed success and BPA paid out more than \$780,000 worth of rewards.

Nearly 200,000 squawfish were caught in 1995. Each year, northern squawfish anglers save hundreds of thousands of baby salmon.

"Besides helping protect a precious natural resource, fishing for northern squawfish definitely pays off for anglers," said Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Biologist Eric Winther. "Last year a number of experienced anglers caught more than 500 squawfish."

However, inexperienced anglers should not shy away. BPA, The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Authority have enlisted the help of one of the region's best northern squawfish anglers to help train individuals or groups interested in earning some money for themselves - all for a good cause. Northern Squawfish expert Loel York will be available at registration sites throughout the season to offer his skillful advice. For more information, call (503) 887-6985.

For up-to-date catch totals and other project information, anglers can call the Washington Department of

Fish and Wildlife s Squawfish Hotline, (360) 737-2091 in Vancouver or toll free, (800) 858-9015.

BPA and the region's ratepayers sponsor the Northern Squawfish Management Program which is part of a comprehensive effort to protect and recover fish and wildlife affected by hydropower development in the Columbia River basin.

BPA's funding covers research studies, staffing, rewards and program evaluation. The Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission administers the overall Northern Squawfish Management Program. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife manages the Northern Squawfish Sport-Reward Fishery Project and registration stations. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife conducts program evaluation.

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NORTHERN SQUAWFISH QUICK FACTS

Details for the 1996 Northern Squawfish Sport-Reward Season

Dates:

April 29 - Sept. 15

Where:

Open waters include the lower Columbia and Snake rivers up to Priest Rapids Dam in Washington and up to Hells Canyon Dam in Idaho.

Also open are back waters, sloughs and up to 122 meters (400 feet) into the tributaries on the Columbia and Snake Rivers. Maps are available at registration sites or by calling the Squawfish Hotline (see below).

Registration:

Twelve registration stations will be open, as well as additional satellite stations, to accommodate as many anglers as possible. Registration stations are operated by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and will be open seven days a week, 1 to 9 p.m. When stations are closed, anglers may self-register at all registration stations. A map of registration sites is available by calling the Squawfish Hotline.

How to participate:

Anglers should contact their local state fishery agency for information regarding fishing regulations and license requirements.

Each angler must register in person at a registration station each day prior to fishing. Fish must be kept live, on ice or in fresh condition and returned to the registration site.

Prizes:

Anglers will receive \$3 for each northern squawfish, 11 inches or longer.

After the first 100 caught, the reward increases to \$4 each.

After 400, they are worth \$5 each. In addition, specially tagged northern squawfish will fetch \$50 and frequent prizes will be awarded for the longest squawfish.

For additional information:

Call the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Squawfish Hotline 360-737-2091 in Vancouver or toll free 800-858-9015.

Wanted: Northern Squawfish

Northern squawfish are a large member of the minnow family, with a long snout and a large mouth. They are a dusky green color, with a silvery-bronze belly. Northern squawfish are shaped like a walleye, but walleyes have spiny dorsal fins and the lower half of their tail fins are white tipped.

The Columbia's northern squawfish is not the same as the threatened Colorado squawfish.

Northern squawfish eat millions of salmon smolt each year. Researchers believe reducing their numbers is one of the best ways to help protect NW salmon runs.

Does it really work?

Anglers have removed more than 977,000 northern squawfish from the Snake and Columbia rivers since the program began in 1990, saving millions of young salmon. The catch rate for 1995 is the best to date - nearly 200,000 squawfish were caught last year.

So what's the bottom line?

Early estimates indicate that about 16 percent of the total population of predator-sized squawfish were harvested by anglers last year, compared to 8 to 12 percent in previous years. The long-term benefit of the Northern Squawfish Sport-Reward program since it began in 1990 is even more impressive. Biologists project that there will be 36 percent fewer juvenile salmon devoured by squawfish because of the program. That means a lot more salmon will survive their run to the sea in 1996.

BPA's northern squawfish program is an experiment. The goal of the program is not to eliminate squawfish, but create a better balance between the numbers of squawfish and salmon.

Who manages the program?

BPA and the region's ratepayers sponsor the Northern Squawfish Management Program which is part of a comprehensive effort to protect and recover fish and wildlife affected by hydropower development in the Columbia River basin.

BPA's funding includes research studies, staffing, rewards and program evaluation. The Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission and the Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Authority administer the overall program. Registration stations are managed by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife conducts program evaluations.

For more information, contact John Skidmore at BPA, 503-230-5494, jtskidmore@bpa.gov.

