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Northern pikeminnow season opens May 15

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Bonneville Power Administration
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: FRIDAY, May 12, 2000
PR 55 00

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PORTLAND, Ore. – The 2000 northern pikeminnow season opens Monday, May 15 with good news for anglers.

Instead of paying on northern pikeminnow 11 inches or longer, anglers will be paid on fish 9 inches or longer. The rewards will be the same. The more fish an angler catches, the more they're worth: the first 100 are worth \$4 each; after 100 they're worth \$5 each; and after 400 they're worth \$6 each. Special tagged northern pikeminnow will be worth \$50 again this year.

The season runs through Sept. 24. Northern pikeminnow may be caught along the mainstem lower Columbia River up to Priest Rapids Dam in Washington and the Snake River up to Hells Canyon Dam in Idaho.

There will be eight registration stations open from noon to 8 p.m., seven days a week along the rivers. In addition, there also will be satellite stations operated for limited hours. Anglers can self-register at all sites if the station is not open.

BPA and the region's ratepayers sponsor the Northern Pikeminnow Management Program as a part of the comprehensive effort to protect and enhance fish and wildlife affected by hydropower development. The Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Columbia Basin Tribes implement the program.

Northern pikeminnow are major predators of young salmon, devouring millions of smolts each year. Biologists believe reducing the number of pikeminnow is an effective way to increase the number of juvenile salmon that migrate to the sea. Keeping tabs on the balance between the numbers of pikeminnow and the numbers of salmon is a major goal of the Northern Pikeminnow Management Program.

Since 1990, sport-reward anglers have caught over 1.3 million northern pikeminnow in the Snake and Columbia rivers. As a result millions more young salmon survived that would have otherwise been eaten. Biologists estimate that the northern pikeminnow program has cut predation on young salmon by about 25 percent. In the 1999 season, more than 115,000 northern pikeminnow were caught.

For more information call the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Sport Reward Hot Line at 1-800-858-9015 or check out the new Web site (www.pikeminnow.org). Anglers can view the rules, site hours, directions to the sites, check the catches from the 1999 season by registration station and get fishing tips all on the Web site.

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