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Anglers can earn bigger bucks while saving endangered salmon

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Bonneville Power Administration

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PORTLAND, Ore. – As of today, the reward for catching the predatory Northern Pikeminnow is going up. That's according to the Bonneville Power Administration, which has been funding a reward program for the past several years. Northern Pikeminnow are notorious because they have voracious appetites for baby salmon and do not discriminate among species of fish, including endangered species.

For the first 100 Northern Pikeminnow caught under new rewards of the 2001 Northern Pikeminnow Management Program, anglers will receive \$5. Previously, the reward was \$4. Any further fish caught, up to 400, will now net anglers \$6 a fish, also up a dollar. With catches of more than 400 predators, the reward now jumps from the previous \$6 to \$8. The big reward, however, comes by catching a tagged fish. The reward used to be \$50. It's now a whopping \$1,000. The new rewards apply only to the remainder of 2001 and fish caught July 10 or later. Catches prior to July 10 are subject to the previous reward structure.

BPA has upped the ante on the 2001 sport reward fishing program as one of several efforts it is making to help endangered salmon survive in a year when some fish measures, such as spill, could not be fully implemented because of power emergencies.

"Experience has shown us that increasing the reward increases the catch," said John Skidmore, BPA's manager for the reward program. "We're hoping that the increased incentives in 2001 will mean between 10,000 and 20,000 more Northern Pikeminnow are caught. This could mean saving the lives of a substantial number of salmon smolts, possibly as many as a million."

"There's a reason for the tagged fish reward besides being a large incentive to increase catch," Skidmore said. "The tagged fish are only in the mainstream of the Columbia, which is where the predators do their damage. We want to ensure anglers fish there." The reward for tagged fish helps reduce chances for fraud by providing a strong incentive for anglers to catch their fish in the designated spots. The fishing sites extend from the mouth of the Columbia up to Priest Rapids Dam on the Columbia River and up to Hells Canyon Dam on the Snake River. (See end for instructions for sites, etc.)

Each year, hundreds of anglers catch thousands of Northern Pikeminnow nine inches or longer. The size limitation is designed to control, but not eradicate, the species. Last year's catch was more than 190,000 fish. The current season ends this September 30.

The Northern Pikeminnow Management Program is part of the Northwest Power Planning Council's Fish and Wildlife Program. It is funded by BPA and co-managed with the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Yakama Nation.

For information about fishing rules, registration, sites, hours, etc., call the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Sport Reward Hotline at 1-800-858-9015 or check the web site at www.pikeminnow.org.

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