



# TECH BULLETIN

## WASHINGTON

# PUGET SOUND SALMON

Compiled from the Diaries and Logs of the Luhr Jensen Fishing Research Team.

*Puget Sound sport salmon fishing takes place in an ever-changing environment. Conditions vary hourly due to tide and current fluctuations, and you must be prepared to make instant revisions in tackle and/or fishing methods in order to be successful.*

One popular and proven day-in and day-out Sound salmon fishing technique is trolling, a method considered unbeatable by many anglers, especially those seeking a derby-winning fish in an area with which they are unfamiliar. Trolling allows you to cover a large area of water thoroughly in a short period of time and pinpoint concentrations of fish with a minimum of effort.

Generally, all of Puget Sound is prime trolling area. Anglers should note, however, that certain spots traditionally have been established as mooching areas and it's important to be courteous by either avoiding them while trolling or staying well away from the line of drifting boats. Point No Point and Point Defiance are two such areas.

Anglers everywhere realize just how critical trolling speed is to consistently catching fish. Many lures and/or attractors have optimum speeds which must be maintained to operate correctly, and fish themselves react to different lure speeds under different conditions. Luhr Jensen's *Luhr-Speed™ Trolling Speed Indicator* is the most accurate device available anywhere today. It reads both in knots and in miles-per-hour and is accurate when attached to any boat hull, large or small. Because the speed sensor is well below the water surface, this unit is virtually unaffected by wind or wave action, ensuring accurate readings time after time.

The chart on this page locates several prime fishing areas where trolling will pay fishy dividends. On the reverse side is a large diagram with specific instructions on how to rig various trolling gear for salmon. Following are some guidelines that deal specifically with Puget Sound salmon trolling.

### TIDES

Salmon feeding activity and fishing is best during the period from one hour before, through and for one hour after a tide change. A 24-hour tide cycle has two highs and two lows so there are at least two daylight tide change periods to fish each day which provide optimum conditions. Charting one tide period, we would have low slack (the time of change), flood (run-in), high slack (change), ebb (run-out) and back to low slack. If the tide fluctuation between high and low is minimal, say 3 to 8 feet, baitfish and salmon will be active throughout the tide cycle along rips, in eddies and many times in open water. But, the period before slack tide, during the slack and after, still will provide you with top angling as salmon will feed most actively when they don't have to battle currents. You'll have about three hours of prime fishing time around each change and it's extremely important to fish these periods intensely.

### LOW LIGHT PERIODS

Although the time period around a tide change is considered best for fishing, two other times consistently produce salmon... the low light periods of early morning and dusk. During times when bright sunlight is not present, baitfish and salmon often will be found in the top 30 feet of water. Combining a tide change period with one of these low light periods will produce the *absolute best conditions*.

### TROLL WITH THE CURRENT

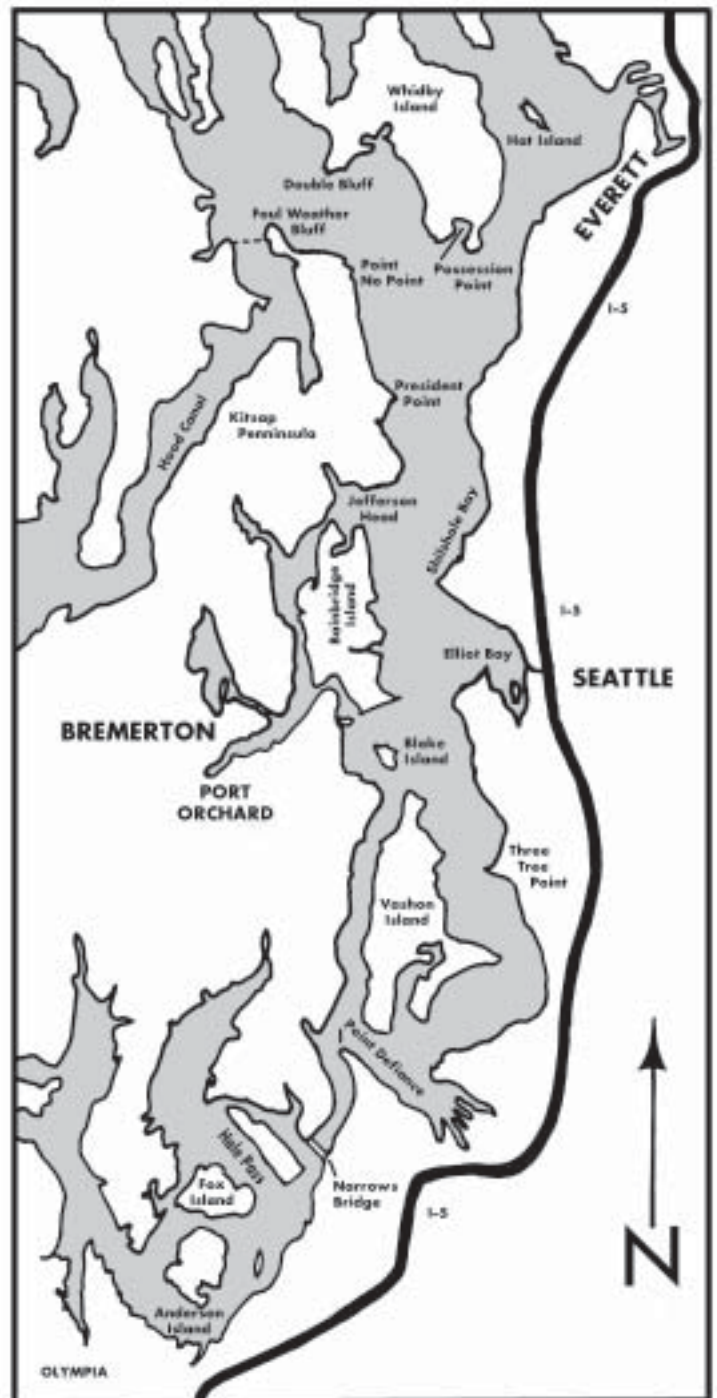
Salmon, as do other fish, always face into the current, so troll *with* the current rather than against it. By doing so, you will constantly be presenting your spoon to salmon from the front where

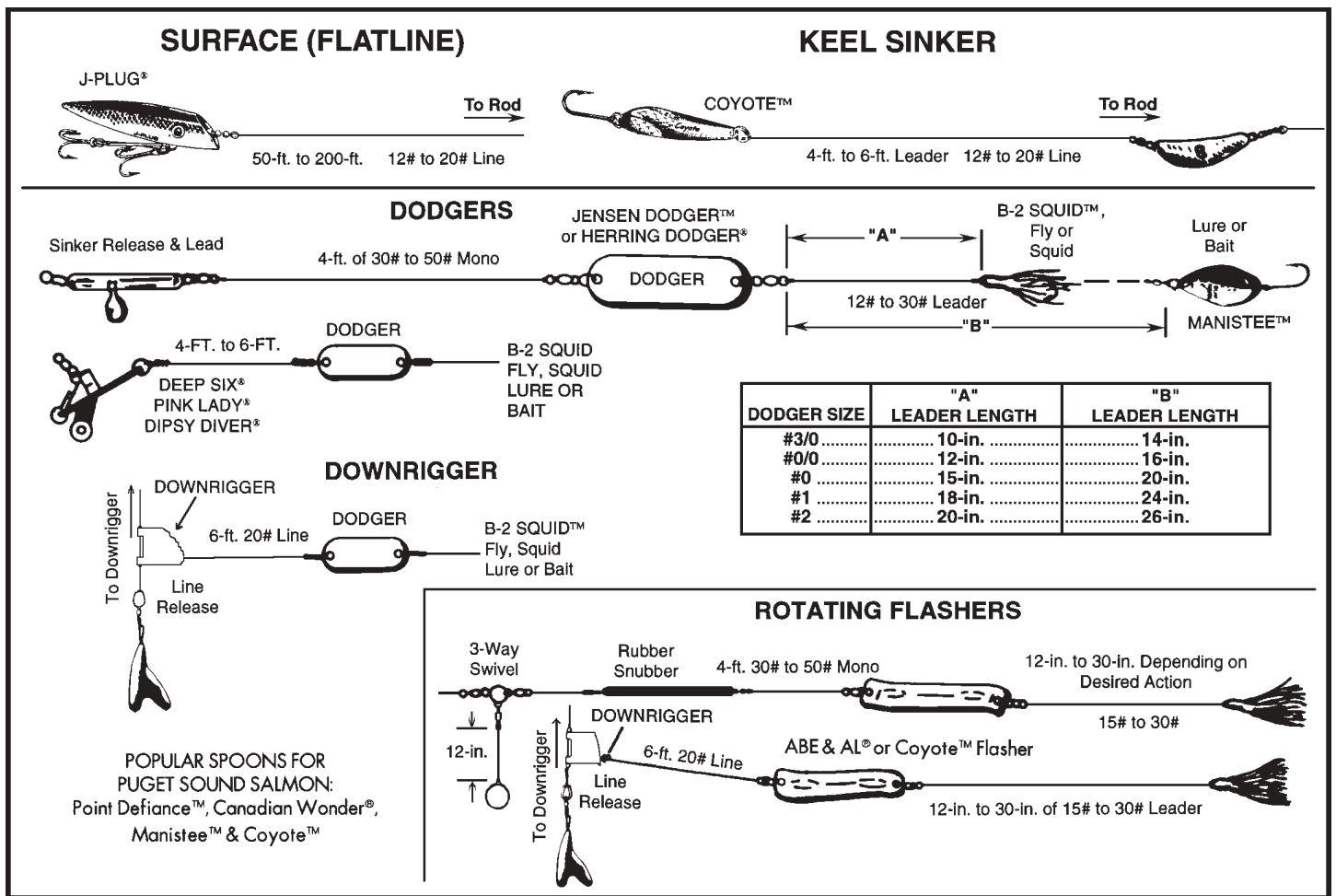
it can easily be seen, rather than from behind where they can't see it coming.

### COLOR AND DEPTH

Both coho (silver) and chinook can be very fickle when it comes to color, displaying a fondness for one color pattern at a particular time and then changing preference completely within a few hours or on a different day. How and what a salmon sees is influenced by the amount of available light, water clarity and mood of the fish.

Colors change depending on depth. Red is filtered out of the light spectrum in about the first 30 feet, yellow and chartreuse at about 60 feet with green and blue the last colors to turn gray. White turns at about 60 feet and black is always black, regardless of depth. Thus, a deep water salmon will see mostly blues, greens and dark shapes while a salmon in shallow water will see all colors. When prospecting for salmon, run lures having red or





metallic finishes toward the surface, yellow, chartreuse or *Prism-Lite*® finishes at medium depths and greens and/or blues at the deepest level. Note that blues and greens are effective at all depths because they imitate natural baitfish colors.

### CHECK YOUR GEAR

Even if all other conditions are right, you won't catch salmon if your lure is tangled or has picked up weeds or jellyfish. Salmon, in particular big chinook, are very wary of anything unnatural in the water. The best advice is to check your gear every 30 minutes (10 to 15 minutes if debris is present) to make sure it's clean and running correctly.

### DODGERS vs FLASHERS

The big difference between dodgers and flashers is the way they run through the water when being trolled. A *Les Davis Herring Dodger*® or *Jensen Dodger*™ has a side-to-side swaying action while a flasher such as the *Coyote*™ or *Abe & Al*® develops full 360° rotations. These provide you with two completely different types of attractors, each giving off specific flash and vibration patterns.

For dodgers, the correct fish-attracting speed and action is when the attractor has that side-to-side swaying motion. With your boat moving "dead slow", place a rigged dodger and lure setup (see illustration above) in the water along side the boat where you can watch it and slowly increase your speed until the dodger has developed the desired action.

Optimum rotating flasher speed, on the other hand, is obtained when the attractor is working in regular, full 360° rotations. With your boat in motion, place a rigged flasher and lure setup (see illustration) and increase your speed until the flasher develops the desired rotation. As a rule, flashers generally work better at slightly faster speeds than dodgers.

### COHO vs CHINOOK

There are big differences between chinook and coho in their feeding habits, lure action preference and habitat.

**COHO:** These silver salmon generally can be found at depths of less than 50 feet and commonly from the surface down to 30 feet. Coho are fast-moving and prefer lures with a fast action as well as the increased action provided by a #0 or #00 dodger ahead of a lure. They are wide-ranging and often can be found in open water far away from structure.

During low light periods, coho can be found feeding within a few feet of the surface or along rip tide lines.

**CHINOOK:** When compared with coho, chinook salmon prefer deeper water, larger lures and slower action attractors. They often are caught in water 60 to 120 feet deep or deeper, especially during sunny, midday time periods.

There is a definite dawn bite associated with chinook and a tide

change period in association with first light is an optimum fishing time. Chinook often will shy away from any unnatural object or movement in the water so longer leaders and additional line out frequently are the rule.

### SALMON FISHING TECHNIQUES

**FLATLINE:** With the surface or flatline technique, the lure is tied directly, using its attachment device, to 8- to 20-lb. test main line. No additional weights are used or, at most, a small 1/8- to 1/2-oz. keel-type sinker can be put 6 feet up the line from the lure. The lure is let out behind your moving boat 50 to 150 feet and the troll started.

This technique is particularly effective when salmon are feeding near the surface, such as when they are chasing baitfish schools. Low light periods are usually best for this technique.

**SHALLOW-TO-MEDIUM:** With the addition of a keel sinker 4 to 6 feet up the line from your lure, shallow to medium depths can be trolled effectively. Sinker weights, depending on the depth desired, usually run from 1 to 8 ounces with main line testing from 12 to 30 pounds. As in flatlining, let out 50 to 150 feet of line behind your moving boat and begin the troll.

**DIVERS:** One effective way to get a lure or lure/attractor rig deep without excessive lead weights is with a diving sinker such as the *Deep Six*®, *Pink Lady*® or *Dipsy Diver*®. Standard rigging is with 4 to 6 feet of leader between lure and diver and 20- to 30-lb. test main line to your rod. A second way of rigging a diver adds a dodger with 18- to 24-inch leader between it and your lure and then 48 inches of leader between dodger and diver.

**DOWNRIGGERS:** Lures often are fished off a downrigger, either by themselves or in conjunction with a dodger or flasher. With a downrigger, you will be able to work all depths and will have the added advantage of no weights between you and the fish, once hooked.

Anglers who troll plugs such as a *J-Plug*® by themselves behind a downrigger, especially when seeking wary fish such as chinook, often prefer 10 to 20 feet (some as much as 40 to 60 feet) between line release and lure.

Dodgers can be used as attractors in conjunction with lures behind a downrigger with good results. Herring Dodgers or #001 or #000 Jensen Dodgers are recommended. Be sure to allow at least 6 feet of line between the dodger and downrigger line release so as not to inhibit the dodger's action.

Allow 18 to 25 inches of leader between your lure and dodger (shorter leaders produce more frantic and faster lure action while longer leaders give slower action)

Flashers such as the *Abe & Al* or *Coyote* are yet another kind of attractor which can be used with a lure behind a downrigger. Flashers produce a deliberate, slow roll which often is favored by chinook.