



# TECH BULLETIN

## OREGON / WASHINGTON

# OCEAN SALMON FISHING

2003 Salmon Regulations Included



By Buzz Ramsey

Saltwater salmon fishing has rebounded, thanks to improved ocean conditions and the subsequent rebuilding of many fish populations. Poor ocean conditions, loss of freshwater habitat, and managing harvest based on hatchery abundance (rather than wild escapement) all contributed to the former coho salmon decline. In addition, native coho are now protected from overharvest, thanks to the Federal Endangered Species Act.

Fisheries can exist while at the same time protecting the wild, sometimes endangered salmon, when anglers can tell the difference. Like hatchery steelhead, most artificially raised coho have their adipose fin removed and can be quickly identified. This has allowed managers to initiate selective fisheries where anglers release the wild (unclipped) coho and retain the hatchery ones. Fin clipping is allowing fisheries to reopen and putting sport anglers back on the water.

### Finding Ocean Salmon

Experienced skippers run west until they find a rip-line, where two ocean currents meet. Coho tend to school along rip-lines because baitfish, such as herring, congregate there. A rip-line can be visible on the surface and quickly discerned because of a water color change or line of floating debris. Even so, it's a big ocean. Up-to-date information about the areas where coho are congregating can be gleaned from local tackle shops, other anglers or charter boat captains. Keep in mind that coho will normally

## OCEAN SPORT SALMON SEASONS, 2003

### Single-Point, Single-Shank BARBLESS HOOKS REQUIRED

#### LEADBETTER POINT

##### SEASON

June 29 through earlier of Sept. 30 or coho quota, open Sunday through Thursday. In early August managers will consider opening 7 days per week based on harvest rates. Closed between Cape Falcon and Tillamook Head beginning August 1.

**QUOTAS:** Coho quota of 112,500. Chinook guideline of 12,700.

**BAG LIMIT:** Two salmon per day, only one may be a chinook.

**All retained coho must have a healed adipose fin clip.**

**SIZE LIMIT:** Min. lengths are 16" coho; 26" chinook; and 20" steelhead.

**SPECIAL REGULATIONS:** Closed within the Columbia Control Zone (cz).

#### CAPE FALCON

**GENERAL SEASON:** March 15 - Oct. 31 for chinook only except as noted for the Selective Coho Fishery.

**BAG LIMIT:** Two salmon per day. **Closed to the retention of coho salmon except during Selective Coho Fishery.**

**SIZE LIMIT:** Min. lengths of 20" for chinook and steelhead.

**SPECIAL REGULATIONS:** No more than 2 single-point barbless hooks.

**Note:** Tillamook Triangular Control Zone is open March 15 to July 31 for fin-clipped spring chinook and Aug. 1 to Nov. 15 for any fall chinook. Special regulations, length and bag limits apply in state waters (0-3 miles) off Tillamook Bay.

**SELECTIVE COHO FISHERY:** June 21 through earlier of Aug. 24 or quota of 88,000 coho. Open 7 days per week.

**BAG LIMIT:** Two salmon per day. **All retained coho must have a healed adipose fin clip.**

**SIZE LIMIT:** Min. lengths of 16" for coho and 20" for chinook and steelhead.

**SPECIAL REGULATIONS:** No more than 2 single-point barbless hooks may be used. The all-salmon-except-coho season reopens the earlier of Aug. 24 or attainment of coho quota.

**Note:** The Tillamook Triangular Control Zone is open during the selective coho fishery under the above selective fishery regulations.

#### HUMBUG MOUNTAIN

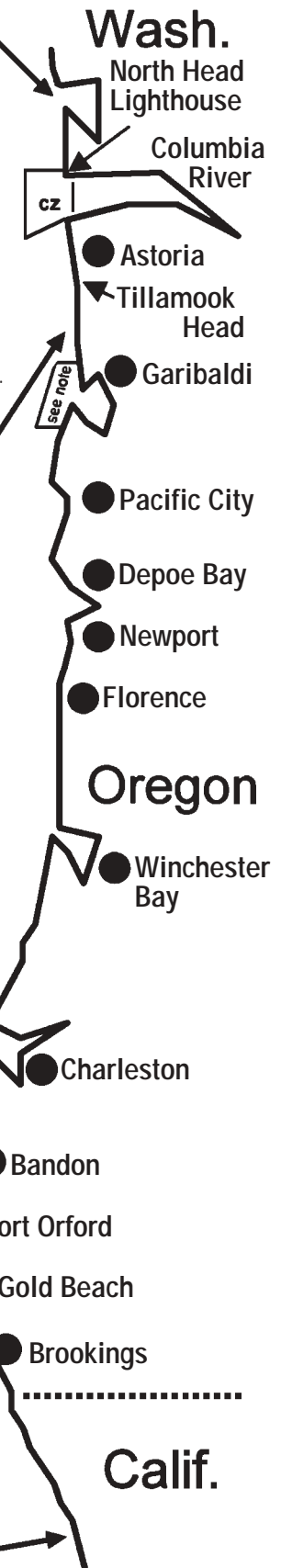
**SEASON:** May 17 through Sept. 14.

**BAG LIMIT:** Two salmon per day. **Closed to the retention of coho.**

**SIZE LIMIT:** Min. length 20" for chinook and steelhead.

**SPECIAL REGULATIONS:** No more than 2 single-point barbless hooks. Closed within Klamath River Control Zone all year.

#### HORSE MOUNTAIN



be found fairly close to the water's surface. This is especially true during the early morning hours when most fish will be schooling within the top 15 feet of water.

### Tips for Catching Coho

Herring is the most popular saltwater bait. Try rigging your herring five feet behind a diving planer, like a *Deep Six*®, *Pink Lady*® or directional *Dipsy Diver*®. Downriggers or two- to six-ounce trolling sinkers also can be used to hold your bait down. Successful anglers rig the herring to spin on a mooching leader consisting of two hooks, like a 5/0 and 6/0 Eagle Claw style 182, snelled in tandem.

Coho prefer faster spinning baits than do chinook. You can add even more action to your herring by trolling it in combination with a bait actionizer, which consists of a mooching leader combined with a spinner blade. The blade is attached to a plastic clevis, positioned ahead of your bait. The only commercially-tied herring actionizer is the *101 Herring Rig*™ available in a solid-tie model (for plug-cut herring) or slip-tie (for whole herring). Remember to let the fish mouthe your herring several times before setting the hook.

Scattered fish can be drawn to your bait by using an attractor such as a dodger. Dodgers are rigged in-line between your diver, weight, or downrigger and the bait. When trolled at the right speed, a dodger will have a side-to-side, swaying action. You need to rig your dodger at least 4 feet behind your weight for it to have enough freedom to work properly. If you use a downrigger to hold your line deep, position the dodger 10 feet behind the line release.

Dodgers are available in different sizes with



**Coyote Spoon™**

the 0 or 00 the most popular. The larger size 0 will draw hungry salmon in from a farther distance and only pull slightly harder through the water than the smaller 00 size. The dodger's side-to-side action will attract fish and add a pulsating action to the lure or bait trolled behind it. A short leader from your dodger-to-lure combination will impart a faster action than a longer leader of say 36 inches. The most popular dodger colors are #0013 *Chrome*, #0150 *Chrome/Silver "Prism-Lite"* and #2150 *Chrome/Silver Disco Tape*.

### Coyote Spoon™, A Bait Alternative

Catching salmon on artificial lures is a very popular alternative to bait and offers consistent action when compared to fouled or improperly rigged bait. The *Coyote Spoon*™ has been the number one saltwater lure and will out-fish bait when given a chance. A simple-to-fish combination that really works is to troll your *Coyote Spoon* 60 inches behind a *Deep Six* diver.

Although numerous *Coyote Spoon* finishes work for salmon, the most consistent colors are #0580 *Chartreuse "Fishscale"*, #0878 *Chartreuse/Fire Red "Tiger"*, #0851 *Silver/Fire Red "Tiger & Tail"*, #0773 *Pearl/Green "Tiger"*/Chart-Green *"Hot Tail"*, #0188 *Glo/Flo Green "H&H"*, #0150 *Chrome/Silver "Prism-Lite"* and #0457 *Glo/Army Truck*.

The *Coyote Spoon* can be trolled alone on a

flat line, 60 inches behind a diver or trolling sinker, or 36 inches behind a dodger or flasher. This lure comes in three sizes. The 3.5 size is more popular for coho, while the 4.0 and 5.0 sizes are the better choices late in the season or when chinook salmon are present. If you try spoons, remember that unlike when using bait, you will need to set the hook immediately when getting a hit.

### Tips For Targeting Chinook

Like coho, chinook can be found near the surface during the first few early morning hours, especially when feeding on schools of baitfish. After this time period has passed, coho may continue to work fairly near the surface but the more wary chinook will almost always move to the safer sanctions of deep water, 60 to 120 feet down. You can deep mooch or troll using a diver. The *Deep Six* is now available in a *Double-Deep* model, in a three-, four- or seven-ounce version that will dive to the depth needed for chinook. Because the *Double Deep Deep Six* dives at a steeper angle, it's excellent for fishing areas crowded with other boats (such as Buoy 10) where its steeper dive will allow you to keep your gear working tight to the boat.

Of course downriggers (like those offered by Cannon) are the ultimate device for getting your outfit to the right depth for chinook and most anglers who target chinook, depend on their use.

Rotating flashers, like an *Abe & Al*® or *Coyote*, are more popular for attracting salmon in deep water than dodgers. It's just a fact that large flashers will attract more fish. Just as when using a dodger, your leader length will influence the amount of extra action imparted to your trailing lure or bait. Since chinook prefer a slow moving lure, try 36 to 48 inches of leader from the flasher to the lure or bait.

You can tell chinook from coho by the large oval spots on their back, along with their heftier build and all-black inside lower jaw. The mouth of a coho will be a mixture of both black and white, with a body shape similar to that of a steelhead.

Remember, the best bite for king salmon (chinooks) will almost always be during the first few hours of daylight, so if you want a "big-boy" you should leave the dock early.

### Downrigger Fishing Tip

If the catching is tough, one tip you might try when trolling with downriggers is to let your bait swim to the surface naturally, rather than reeling it up after tripping it from your downrigger release. This will often produce strikes, sometimes when all else fails.

### Special Regulations and Restrictions

The majority of fall chinook stocks are healthy, so hatchery fall chinook are not fin clipped and selective fisheries have not been instituted for them. Because the various races of fall chinook forage in different locations, area closures rather than selective fisheries are used to reduce the impact on the troubled races.

Protecting the weakest stocks of salmon has added a measure of complexity to the fishing seasons. For example, the area off the Oregon and Washington coastline is divided into six fishing zones where daily limits, seasons and quotas for both chinook and coho are managed

separately. Restrictions are in place to provide harvest of healthy stocks while offering protection to the weak (perhaps endangered) salmon.

### Gently Release Wild Coho

You can reduce the mortality associated with the catch and release of wild coho by handling the fish you must release with care. The adipose fin is the small fin located between the dorsal and tail fin. Almost all hatchery coho have this fin missing. This can be easily seen (or not) when your fish nears the boat.

Don't take a fish you intend to release out of the water. If you must, you can net the fish but don't remove the net from the water either. Instead, use it to restrain the fish while you remove your hook. (Frabill net company has designed a net especially for this purpose.) However, most fish can be easily released from the side of your boat. A sturdy pair of long-nose pliers will help you get your hook out quickly.

### Ten Tips That Will Improve Your Saltwater Salmon Success

1) Fish where fish are. This seems obvious, but a common mistake made by many is to spend too much time fishing unproductive areas hoping for a bite that never materializes. Fish move with the tides and available feed . . . keep looking and learn their patterns.

2) Do not leave fish to find fish. Who hasn't made this mistake?

3) Follow the birds and watch for nervous gulls. Seagulls flying in an erratic pattern indicate that they are seeing baitfish and/or salmon in the water below them.

4) Note the direction of bird activity. When sea birds are flocked together working a bait school, the direction they are flying indicates which way the bait and salmon are moving.

5) Glean local knowledge. Certain areas offer the best salmon bite on the incoming tide, others on the outgoing. Learn these patterns by experience and by communicating with other anglers. The salmon bite will almost always improve on a building or flooding tide.

6) Keep your gear in the strike zone. If you have a modern fish finder, like those offered by *Bottomline*®, note where the fish are and work your bait at that depth or (since fish look up) just above them. Don't move your bait to another depth unless you have good reason.

7) Be there at first light. The best bite will be early in the morning and/or during a tide change.

8) Sharp hooks pay off. For more hook ups and better-hooked fish, keep your hooks sharp at all times. One of the best tools for this is a *Luhr Jensen Sharp Hook File*™. To keep your file from rusting, spray it often with a silicone lubricant.

9) Leader length can make the difference. If you are getting strikes but not hooking up, the length of line from your bait to dodger may be too short and moving too fast; lengthen it. Likewise, if you're in coho and not getting hits, try shortening the length of line from your bait, to dodger. A fast moving bait may turn them on.

10) Troll in an erratic fashion. Trolling at the same speed and in the same direction is the least effective pattern. You can increase your success by trolling in a zigzag pattern, but watch your speed. Slower is better.