



TECH BULLETIN

CALIFORNIA / BAY AREA

SAN PABLO DAM RESERVOIR

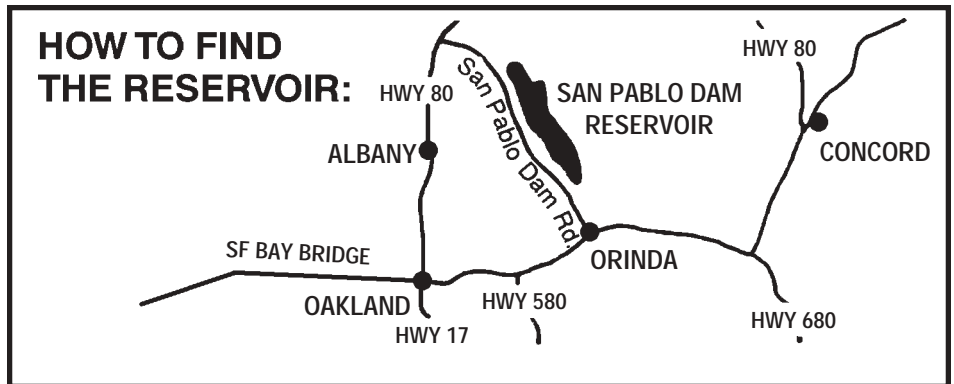
Compiled from the Diaries and Logs of the Luhr Jensen Fishing Research Team.

By Jack Spinali

No other impoundment in Northern California offers Bay area anglers more bang for the buck than the San Pablo Dam Reservoir. Located in the Berkeley Hills between Highway 24 and Interstate 80 some 60 miles from Oakland, trout, largemouth bass, catfish, sturgeon and crappie abound within its relatively small boundaries.

Good management, balanced with ecological concerns for a quality resource, has produced a fishing hole equal to any that mother nature has conceived. Not only is fishing good year 'round, it also has the additional qualities most anglers salivate for. Fish are big, plentiful and have the spirit and courage generally ascribed to their country cousins that live in wilder, more remote areas of California.

A walk along the shoreline proves it. Most of the stringer chains have trout on them as shore anglers claim their



share of the action. At the boat ramps where all craft check in and out, trollers and still- (bait) fishers complement the shore anglers' accomplishments . . . and then some. There is little doubt in anyone's mind that most of the extremely large rainbows are caught by those who use their boats to troll the reservoir's inviting structure, or still-fish off the deep holes and special reefs that beg to be tried.

SOMETHING SPECIAL

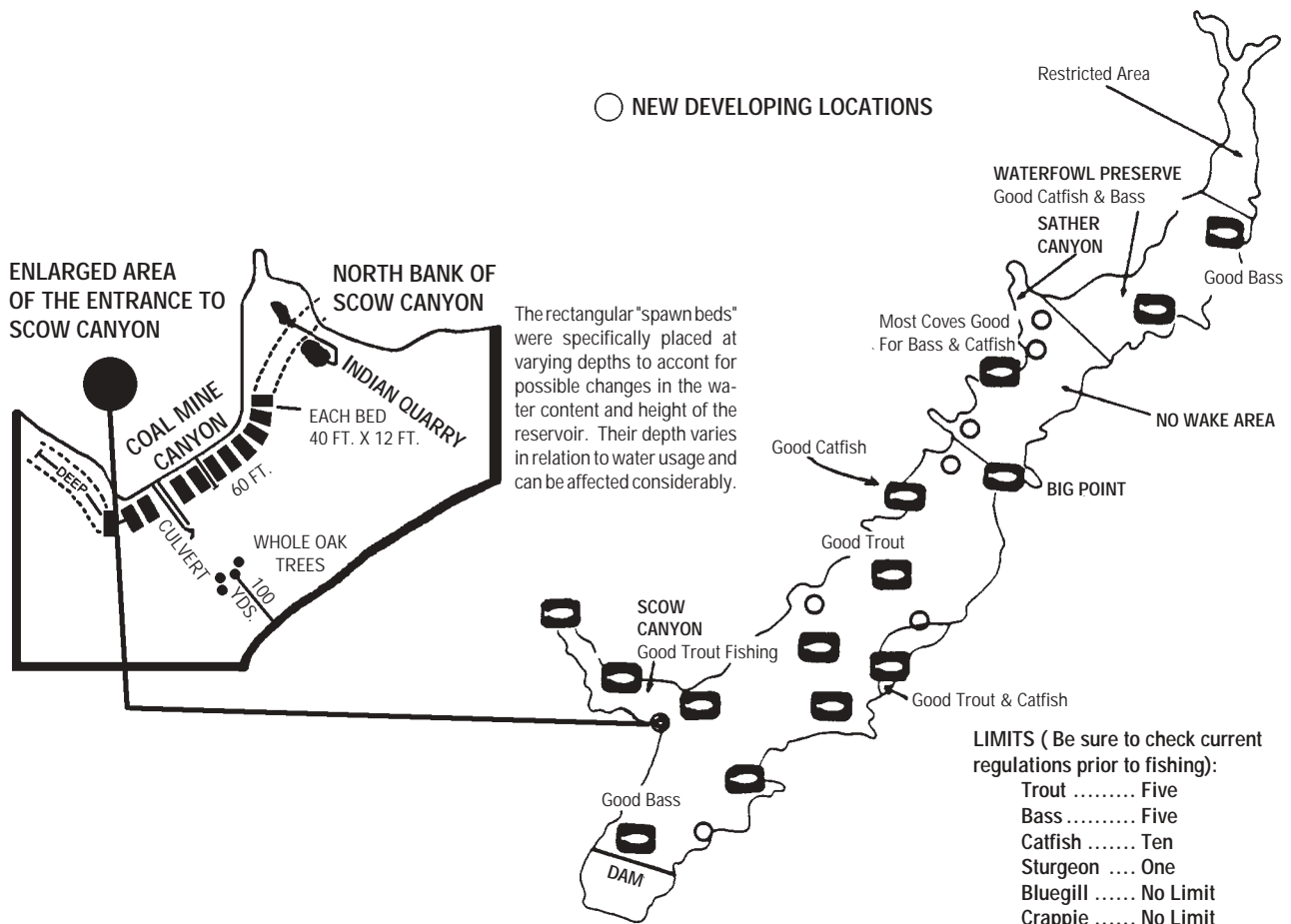
That is all well and good, but a few

intrepid anglers are using a special technique at San Pablo Dam Reservoir, that not only meets the challenge of the lake, but proves the fact that whenever someone does something well, someone else will come along and do it better.

Anglers willing to try this special strategy for trout are in for a treat.

But first, a few reasons why it works. Two things are a fact at the Reservoir: First, the majority of rainbows caught are taken from its littoral zone - the area from shoreline to about forty or fifty

SAN PABLO DAM RESERVOIR



feet from shore. The other fact is that all shore anglers, and some trollers and still-fishers, are exploiting that area for trout. They may not know it is a littoral zone, but they do know the fish hit there so they fish it.

The trick is to get away from all of that fishing pressure, motion, disturbance and hubbub . . . just as the fish do.

The fact is, it's easy! All you need is a boat, good legs, a casting rod, reel and a small lure pack loaded with the right hardware. The nice part of this action is that you can troll or still-fish most of the day, then fish this special way anytime during the day. Best fishing however, is during early morning when the temperatures are cooler.

WHERE

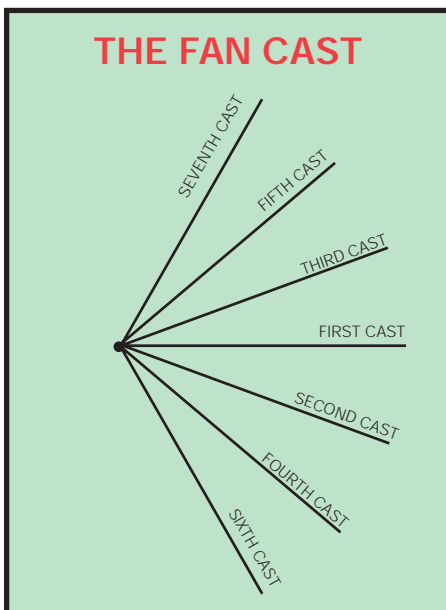
On the northwest side of San Pablo Reservoir, to the right of the dam, directly across from the Clubhouse, lies Scow Canyon. It is the largest finger of the entire lake and impossible to miss. If it's your first trip into the canyon, cruise gently through its center, taking special notice of the shoreline in passing. Remember what you see. Within a few minutes you will arrive at the shallow end of Scow.

At that point, deep within Scow, you passed (on the left bank) a walkable section of sandy and rocky shoreline. Beach your boat and prepare to work your way along that shoreline.

WHAT WORKS

Spinning setups are light, portable and cast well. They're what work best here. Casting rods seven feet or longer equipped with reels equivalent to a Mitchell 300 or smaller are just fine. Line from the reel should be no heavier than 8-lb. test with leaders at 4-lb. 2-lb. test leaders are most effective, but ultra-lite line demands that leaders be checked frequently, or popped line, lost lures and fish will stain your day.

If necessary, rig up for casting with a barrel swivel before the leader. The appropriate size and weight for lures, as well as hardware size, is directly predi-



cated on the rod, plus the angler's ability to cast safely for a reasonable distance. Some of us need a slightly heavier lure for that critical extra few feet of distance.

Casting lures and hardware should consist of:

- **Super-Duper®** Prism-Lite® series.
- **Needlefish®** - Dot series (also a great troller).
- **Cast Champ®** (for distance).
- Spool of 2- or 4-lb. leader
- **Metric Pro Spinner**

Colors follow the classic rule . . . bright for bright days, dark on dark, overcast days. My collection runs mostly silver, gold and chartreuse. Remember dots on any lure should *always* be dark, not subtle.

HOW

When casting, make the center of Scow (or farther) your target. Count as your lure drops below the water's surface. Allow it to sink for a safe count of five, then retrieve at a speed necessary to energize that particular lure. Increase that count to seven on the next cast and repeat the retrieve as before. Keep repeating and increasing count without scraping bottom.

The object of this exercise is to send the lure as far into Scow as possible, allowing it to swim for a long period of time while moving in a naturally dynamic mode.

Sometimes trout will hit while the lure is sinking, other times on the final few feet of retrieve . . . you never know. One thing for sure, slack line loses fish so be sure to keep your line as taut as possible throughout the retrieve.

After two or three casts straight ahead, recast a couple of degrees left or right. Sooner or later you will have covered the complete 180 degrees of water before you.

This saturation-type coverage should tell you whether or not any fish are lurking in the area. If not, move on a few feet and repeat the process.

Few experiences equal the thrill of running line, bent rod and that special pull of a fighting fish. Scow Canyon at San Pablo Reservoir and a dependable rod and reel plus a container full of the right lures are all it takes.

KEEP HOOKS SHARP!

One of the easiest things you can do to improve your fishing success is to maintain super-sharp hooks on your lures at all times. A fine-toothed file such as Luhr Jensen's **Sharp Hook File™** is the absolute best hook sharpening tool available. Hold the file parallel to the hook point and with gentle, one-way strokes, remove a small amount of metal on at least two sides to obtain a sticky-sharp point with a knife-like cutting edge.

CATCH AND RELEASE

1. Play the fish in quickly so it is not too tired.
2. Handle the fish as little as possible and never let it flop on a hard or dirty surface.
3. Use hemostats or needle-nose pliers to back the hook out the way it went in. Barbless hooks make the process easier.
4. Never release a fish until it is fully revived and acts strong. A tired fish can tumble and get lodged in rocks or moss and suffocate. Carefully work the fish back and forth to pump water through its gills. You will know when it's ready to leave.
5. When taking a picture of your catch, leave it in the water until the camera is ready and then gently cradle the fish in both hands as you lift it out of the water. Never put your fingers in its gills or squeeze it too hard. Keep the fish out of the water only long enough to take the picture.
6. Be gentle and release the fish care fully. **NEVER THROW A FISH BACK INTO THE WATER.**

CHECK RULES & REGS

Because rules, regulations and conditions can change from time to time, it is recommend that you check them out before heading out.

Jack Spinali is an outdoor writer and author from the Bay area who has strong feelings that urban lakes, such as San Pablo Reservoir, are tomorrow's fishing future.