The most unique fishing derby in the country, the King of the Reach Live Capture Derby, is right around the corner with the derby scheduled for the weekend of October 26-28th. Join other anglers in pursuit of hard fighting upriver bright fall Chinook salmon on the Hanford Reach, and win prizes while aiding biologists in improving future hatchery production. As this stretch of river is closed this time of year, the only other people you will see fishing are fellow derby participants. With thousands of dollars in prizes available to anglers, along with lots of unpressured fish to catch, it’s no wonder this derby has attracted anglers from as far away as Florida!

A collaborative project between the CCA Tri Cities chapter, Grant County PUD and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the King of the Reach derby has evolved from a small crew of volunteers attempting to build an angler broodstock collection event, to a full on derby with nearly 200 participants. Participating anglers are asked to catch and collect wild fall Chinook salmon, keeping them alive in coolers with provided aerators, and then deliver these fish to WDFW and Grant County PUD staff at Vernita Bridge and White Bluffs boat ramps. These fish are then taken aboard a hatchery truck and delivered to the Priest Rapids Hatchery where they will be utilized as wild broodstock.

Infusing wild salmon genetics into the Priest Rapids hatchery fall Chinook stock is extremely important. Not only do these genetics improve the fitness and quality of fish released, but they also reduce introgression on the spawning grounds, which is a key component to maximizing production at this hatchery facility. In 2017, 15% of all hatchery reared fall Chinook released on the Reach had at least one parent caught during the King of the Reach derby.

Along with a fun time, the King of the Reach derby is all about angler driven science. 2018 is expected to see a smaller return of fish to the Reach compared to the huge returns of 2013-15, but that is even more of a reason to show up and help this iconic run of Chinook. With a similarly sized return last year, anglers caught nearly 500 fish over the three-day derby. Aside from quality fishing, derby participants are offered snacks and hot lunch provided by CCA volunteers and donors, along with the opportunity to win dozens of prizes.

This year’s derby ticket is just $25, and we’re even offering a special drawing just for those who add a CCA membership to their ticket purchase. Tickets are available via PayPal (www.ccawashington.org/KOTR), and while registration for the derby is available onsite, pre-registration is preferred.
Sea Lion Legislation Makes Strides in D.C.

In early August, bipartisan legislation to protect salmon and steelhead from excessive sea lion predation in the Columbia River basin took a big step forward when the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation passed the Endangered Salmon and Fisheries Predation Act (S. 3119), sponsored by Senators Maria Cantwell (D-WA) and Jim Risch (R-ID). S. 3119 is nearly identical to H.R. 2083, which is sponsored by Reps. Jaime Herrera Beutler (R-WA) and Kurt Schrader (D-OR) and passed the full U.S. House of Representatives on June 26 by a strong, bipartisan vote of 288-116.

“We greatly appreciate the bipartisan efforts of Senators Cantwell and Risch to move this critical legislation forward in the U.S. Senate,” said Gary Loomis, founder of CCA in the Pacific Northwest. “Current law is failing wild and endangered Columbia River basin salmon and steelhead populations, some of which face an imminent risk of extinction if nothing is done to address the unnatural levels of sea lion predation and restore balance to this unique ecosystem. Every member of the U.S. House of Representatives—Republican and Democrat—from Oregon, Washington, and Idaho voted for this legislation and now we need the six U.S. Senators from these states to come together around this bipartisan, compromise legislation before it is too late.”

S. 3119 and H.R. 2083 would amend the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) to provide Northwest states and Columbia River treaty tribes streamlined authorities to effectively address excessive sea lion predation where the problem is most acute, including below Bonneville Dam, at Willamette Falls, and on tributary spawning grounds. Over the past decade, the legislation has enjoyed strong support in the U.S. House of Representatives, but yesterday’s Senate committee action represents the first major step forward in the U.S. Senate.

For years, CCA chapters in Oregon and Washington have been a leading voice in the sport fishing community in support of federal legislation to reduce excessive sea lion predation in the Columbia River basin. The legislation has gained broader support as the dire need for action has been confirmed, including by a recent Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) study finding that endangered Willamette River winter steelhead face a 90% chance of extinction if nothing is done to reduce sea lion predation in the Willamette River. The extinction of Lake Washington winter steelhead, largely due to excessive sea lion predation at Ballard Locks, is a prime example of the consequences of inaction.
Baker Lake Harvest Imbalance Continues to Confound

Despite having the data and tools available to fix the harvest imbalance on Baker Lake sockeye, for yet another year the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) has failed to adequately represent the recreational angling community.

While we all support equitable harvest sharing, for five of the last six years WDFW has allowed a significant imbalance of sockeye harvest favoring the Skagit Basin tribes. In a letter CCA sent to WDFW on September 19, 2017, we pointed out several tools that are readily available for WDFW and the tribal co-managers to ensure equitable harvest sharing. All of the tools that were recommended are effectively used elsewhere in the state to manage salmon fisheries. In other words, these were not new recommendations or ideas.

It is also worth noting that CCA has worked hand-in-hand with several other sportfishing groups and individual advocates on this important issue. It remains a mystery as to why WDFW is unwilling to advocate on behalf of conservation and the sport fishing community—their largest paying constituency.

On the near horizon, WDFW is planning to schedule a public workshop this fall to address all proposals for achieving equity and balance in the harvest of Baker Lake sockeye. We will keep our members updated on this important meeting. CCA remains committed to working with WDFW and our tribal co-managers to develop and implement protocols to help ensure this fish run is healthy and sustainable for future generations.

**This Baker Lake sockeye salmon shows telltale gillnet marks. According to staff and volunteers, over half of the fish turned in at the recent CCA Baker Lake Sockeye Shootout derby displayed similar marks.**
Modern Fish Act on the Move

This July, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 200, a bipartisan bill that includes the Modernizing Recreational Fisheries Management Act of 2017 (Modern Fish Act). This historic vote marks the first time the priorities of the recreational fishing sector are included in the reauthorization of our nation’s primary marine fisheries law, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The Modern Fish Act will give federal fisheries managers the tools and data they need to appropriately manage recreational fishing.

“We are grateful to our champions from both sides of the aisle in the House for recognizing the needs of recreational anglers and advancing this important fisheries management reform,” said Patrick Murray, president of Coastal Conservation Association. “This is truly a watershed moment for anglers in our never-ending quest to ensure the health and conservation of our marine resources and anglers’ access to them.”

CCA Summer Fishing Derbies Recap

CCA Washington hosted two fishing derbies in late July, with participants competing for bragging rights along with thousands of dollars in prizes. Despite near record setting high temperatures, both derbies had great participation and hosted incredible post derby barbecues.

With nearly 70 participants and 26 fish weighed-in during two days of fishing, the 6th Annual Summer Steelhead Challenge was a fantastic derby with fish caught in both the mainstem Columbia River and throughout the lower river tributaries.

The 3rd Annual Baker Lake Sockeye Shootout was a great success as well. Participation has steadily grown at this derby, and in 2018 we had over 60 participants who weighed-in 40 fish! Once again, thank you to the great donors, sponsors, and volunteers that made this derby a success!

Unfortunately, our derby scheduled for July 19-20, the 7th Annual Pete Flohr Memorial Salmon Derby was canceled due to an emergency closure to summer Chinook fishing on the upper Columbia River. We look forward to a return of this fishing derby next summer.

Yamaha Becomes CCA Washington Sponsor

Yamaha, the industry leader in outboard motors, is the new title sponsor of the CCA Washington STAR Tournament Series. CCA Washington currently hosts four derbies annually and will be growing their derby presence in the coming years. We will begin to feature new branding for our derby series with Yamaha logos incorporated. For more information on Yamaha outboard motors or to find a dealer near you, please visit www.YamahaOutboards.com.
Insanity Reigns on the Lower Columbia River

Despite the continued efforts of the gillnet industry, the 2018 summer Chinook season was gillnet free on the Washington side of the river for a second consecutive year. In June, the Washington Fish & Wildlife Commission voted, 5-4, to continue keeping non-selective gillnets out of the river for the second year in a row. This conservation victory most certainly benefited wild summer Chinook, which have struggled to meet tributary spawning escapement goals for the past ten years.

In fact, the 2018 summer Chinook run came in well below projections. With an initial forecast of 67,300 summer Chinook, an estimated 44,000 returned this year. Fisheries managers should be thankful that the proposed gillnet season, pushed heavily by the commercial gillnet industry and their allies on the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission, didn’t occur! Harvest quotas based off of “paper fish” have, in many instances, left runs overfished and a gillnet fishery on the lower Columbia River would have most certainly qualified as one of those overfished return years.

The lunacy of gillnet fisheries don’t end at quotas and suspect run projections though. The lower Columbia River summer Chinook gillnet fishery has been documented by observers as having a 100% bycatch rate in past seasons. Dangerously warm water temperatures in the mid-summer make gillnets even more lethal on non-targeted fish that must be discarded, such as steelhead, sockeye, and sturgeon. Thankfully, the voices of conservationists and concerned anglers helped avert a potential disaster that ODFW and WDFW helped create.

Regrettably, ODFW and WDFW staff did allow a four day gillnet fishery in late August on the lower Columbia despite the river having thousands of ESA-listed steelhead present. This move occurred when river temps were matching 2015’s record highs, and steelhead sport fisheries on the lower Columbia, Drano Lake, and other popular sport fisheries were closed due to lagging returns and concerns over stressing the fish in warm water. Double standard, anyone?

If conservation of ESA-listed fish was truly a concern for ODFW & WDFW, then the continued push to use non-selective gillnets would end, the Columbia River Reforms would be fully implemented, and nonsense like closing a selective fishery to protect threatened fish while allowing a non-selective fishery to hammer on those same fish wouldn’t happen. Until then, we urge you to stay engaged in these important issues and help change the status quo. Keep up the fight!
CCA Members Demonstrate “Volunteer Power”

Being a grassroots organization means that our members come together to affect positive changes for our fisheries. Our members make CCA great and their contributions across the state deserve to be recognized. Whether it’s a nutrient enhancement project, riverside cleanup, improving access sites, or helping with youth fishing events, CCA Washington’s members positively impact their communities. Here are just a few projects that CCA chapter members have worked on this past year to help improve their fisheries and communities.

Nutrient Enhancement: Over the past year, the Pierce County chapter has devoted hundreds of volunteer hours towards nutrient enhancement efforts in the upper Puyallup River watershed. This is in addition to their efforts to help advance new river access projects on the lower Puyallup. Sno-King, Lower Columbia, and Southwest Washington members assist nutrient enhancement programs in their local watersheds as well.

Improving Habitat: The Sea Tac chapter has kicked off a collaborative program, funded by the CCA Building Conservation Trust, which is planting oysters at strategic locations in south Puget Sound. This summer, volunteers planted nearly 200,000 oyster seed, which will help enhance juvenile salmon habitat, improve water quality, and provide recreational harvest opportunities in the coming years. Additionally, this spring, North Sound members helped undertake two successful river cleanup operations on the Lower Skagit River.

Encouraging Future Anglers: Through their involvement in local kids fishing days and other outings, members of the Southwest Washington, Lewis County, and Yakima chapters have helped foster a new generation of anglers. Dozens of chapter members from Southwest Washington attend local kids fishing events, helping the kids catch and clean their fish. While many of our Yakima members have devoted their time to taking disadvantaged youth out fishing through a local Youth Ranch program.

As a CCA member, you are encouraged to join an existing outreach or habitat project, or even create your own new effort through your local chapter. Contact your local chapter leadership team or the CCA state office for details on how you can help make a difference today.
Member Photo Spotlight

Check out these great catches by CCA Washington members and supporting guides. Submit your best photos to info@ccawpnw.org to share in the next edition of the Ripple Effect. Chosen submissions will receive a CCA hat.

CCA Sno-King member Jeff Nance shows off an August Chinook salmon caught while fishing with his sons. This beautiful Tiger Rockfish was brought to the boat by Jon Tachell of the CCA Pierce County chapter. The Dalan family from the CCA Tri Cities chapter with two dandy Brewster pool summer Chinook.

Contact Us

Washington Office
11805 NE 99th Street Suite 1350
Vancouver, WA 98682

877-255-8772

Comments or questions?
Please contact: info@ccaashingtonorg
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