

Fishing spots in *the Petersburg/ Wrangell area*

Fish coastal waters by boat or along shorelines, drive or hike to roadside streams or lakes, and hike or fly in to remote lakes. Weather and one's determination are key factors for a memorable sport fishing outing. The next sections offer general information, methods and recommended gear for each type of fishing spot.

You will find up-to-date weekly fishing reports, emergency closures, and more, posted on our website at: www.state.ak.us/adfg/sportf/region1/r1home.htm

And you can e-mail the area sport fish biologist in Petersburg at: doug_fleming@fishgame.state.ak.us

In Salt Water

Maps on page 20 and 22 show some productive saltwater fishing areas. These coastal waters are most effectively fished by boat. (Roadside saltwater sport fishing is available but limited for king salmon, coho salmon, pink salmon, rockfish, halibut, shellfish, cutthroat trout, and Dolly Varden.) Public boat launches are maintained in Petersburg, Wrangell, and Kake.

Boats used in local marine areas are typically 14 ft or longer and seaworthy. A small horsepower 'kicker' engine along with the main engine, a VHF or CB radio, and full Coast Guard-required equipment are suggested.

TROLLING—the traditional method for catching salmon. Trolling involves horizontally towing a flasher or dodger (optional) trailed by bait or artificial lure behind the boat. Many prefer trolling close and parallel to shoreline. Trolling rods are 6–8 ft long with medium to heavy action. Conventional reels, filled with at least 200 yards of 20- to 40-pound-test monofilament line, work well. Lead weights are used in various shapes and sizes from 2 to 24 ounces, depending on conditions.

Herring is the bait of choice, fished whole with a slight bend, in a cut-plug fashion, or in filleted strips on a single or tandem hook (size 2/0 to 5/0) rig on a 2- to 8-ft leader. Spoons or plugs that imitate baitfish are good artificial lures.

Trolling with downriggers is often effective in deeper waters, especially for king salmon. It's not unusual to catch halibut when using downriggers.

When the fish strikes, line is released from the downrigger weight, and direct battle with the fish begins. The weight release allows the angler to use a more sensitive, limber fishing rod and lighter line.

BOTTOMFISHING—effective for catching halibut, rockfish, lingcod, and other bottom-dwelling fishes below a drifting or anchored boat. Bottomfishing uses 5- to 8-ft rods with heavy action, conventional reel, and 40- to 100-pound-test monofilament or braided line. The heavier gear adds strength for freeing snagged terminal tackle and hefting large fish from a rocky bottom.

FLYFISHING—generally most productive for near-surface feeding fish such as coho and pink salmon or certain rockfish species. Use a high capacity fly reel with at least 100 yards of backing, matched on an 8- to 10-ft fly rod (7-weight or heavier). Streamers and other fly patterns which imitate baitfish may be effectively presented with high density, shooting head, sink-tip or standard sinking lines.

SPINNING OR BAITCASTING—used by saltwater anglers from boat or shoreline to catch salmon, rockfish, sea-run trout, or Dolly Varden.

This gear is particularly effective when fish are seen at the surface or in

shallow nearshore waters. Tackle size depends on the size of fish pursued: 7- to 9-ft rods, with matched spinning or baitcasting reels and 10- to 20-pound-test monofilament line, perform well. Spoons, spinners, small metal jigs, and herring or other bait will catch fish.

In Fresh Water along the Roadside

The expanded area road system offers increased access to some great roadside sport fishing for salmon, trout, and char. Salmon and steelhead are caught primarily in streams—sea-run and resident rainbows, cutthroat, and Dolly Varden are caught in streams and lakes. Many streams and lakes are within five minutes' walk from local roads. The maps on page 20 and 22 show some of the better roadside fishing spots around Petersburg and Wrangell.

Fishing methods vary by species and location. Drift fishing, flyfishing, and spinning or spincasting are all effective in streams. Skiffs, canoes, or inflatable rafts are used to flyfish, troll, and spin or spincast on lakes, and ice fishing can sometimes be done in winter. Shoreline fishing can also be productive along lakes, if access is not impeded by shallow lake margins, swampy muskegs, or dense vegetation.

DRIFT FISHING—the most popular method for catching steelhead and salmon as well as other trout and Dollys in area streams. A promising stretch of water often flows into or out of pools or undercut stream banks—areas that frequently hold fish.

Depending on what you are fishing for, a 6- to 9-ft rod with light to medium action and matching spinning or baitcasting reel with 4- to 15-pound-test monofilament line, is effective. (Hip boots or chest waders are needed to cross or cover most streams.)

Egg imitations, small plugs, spoons, and spinners will yield good results. Proper drift is achieved when the cast is quartered upstream and the weight touches the stream bottom regularly every one to three seconds. A strike can actually be felt or is indicated when the line stops. Water conditions dictate the weight needed. Too much weight causes snags; too little creates unnatural drift. Split-shot, pencil lead, or lures from $\frac{1}{16}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce provide ample weight. Some anglers use a bobber or other float 1 to 4 feet above their offering to fish various depths.

FLYFISHING—effective in stream riffles, runs, pocket water and pools for all freshwater game fish in the area. For steelhead and salmon, use 7- to 9-weight fly rods and corresponding lines on reels with a good drag system.

For other species, 3- to 7-weight rods work well.

Egg and shrimp imitations are effective for steelhead, salmon, other trout, and Dolly Varden. Dry flies which imitate adult mosquitos, other black flies, mayflies, or stoneflies are effective lures for trout and Dolly Varden during hatches in late spring and summer. Sinking patterns which imitate juvenile salmon, sculpin, and insect larvae also catch fish on a regular basis.

SPINNING AND SPINCASTING—frequently used techniques for catching game fish in fresh water. Use the same tackle for spinning and spincasting as for drift fishing.

ICE FISHING—a limited winter pastime for some brave anglers. Trout and Dolly Varden are found in several roadside lakes and streams in winter, but use extreme caution when venturing onto ice. In mild winters, ice cover may be too thin for ice fishing to be safe.

Remote, Fly-in Lakes

Remote lakes and streams are numerous and are especially inviting to anglers seeking solitude in a pristine nature setting. Maps on page 20 and 22 show some of the larger and better fish-producing remote waters, and the accompanying tables detail access, facilities, and species available.

Remote locations are reached by floatplane, boat, or hiking trails. Remote waters are not for all anglers, as most have no public facilities or services near them. Some of the more popular remote systems do have Forest Service cabins nearby.

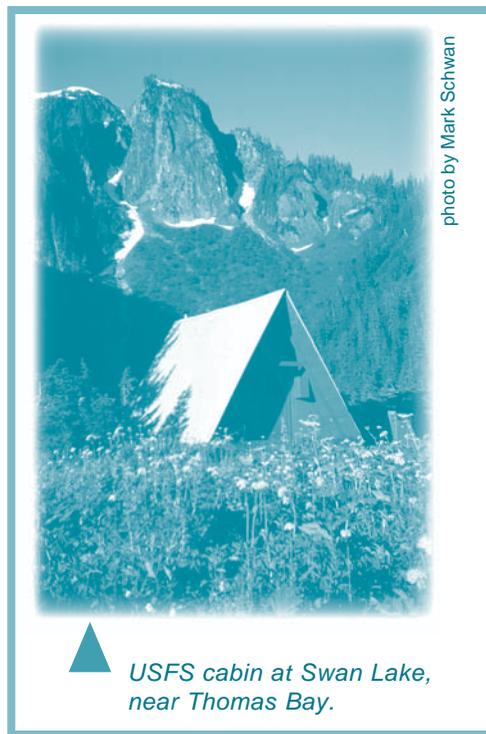
Salmonids found in roadside waters also inhabit remote systems. Two remote lakes were stocked with Arctic grayling in the 1960s and again in 1972. Brook trout were stocked in Crystal Lake in the 1940s.

The same methods as used in roadside waters are effective in remote waters. The main difference is in the extra planning and choice of equipment for fishing trips to remote areas.

Small inflatable rafts or float tubes may be the only practical fishing vessels at some fly-in lakes. Choose pack rods, back-packs (floatplane pilots prefer internal frame or soft packs), or other compact equipment.

Follow these tips for a successful sport fishing trip in a remote area:

- Make sure someone responsible (not accompanying you) knows your schedule and mode of travel.
- If you hire a charter flight or other transportation, make sure the pilot knows when and where to pick you up.



▲ *USFS cabin at Swan Lake, near Thomas Bay.*

- Take along enough food for at least four extra days and a gun or other means of obtaining food, if necessary.
- Carry a good supply of waterproof matches, additional fire starter, insect repellent, and/or a head net.
- Carry a complete First Aid kit, along with visual signal devices (flares, mirror, etc.)
- Don't drink water unless it has been boiled for at least ten minutes.
- *Don't* travel alone. ■