

Creel Notes from the



P.O. Box 639, Mercer Island, WA 98040

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International Federation of
FLY FISHERS
Conserving, Restoring, Educating Through Fly Fishing



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Where to start?

The Keystone Cops continue.

As most of you should now be aware WDFW has pretty much shut down all fishing in Puget Sound as well as streams, rivers and lakes draining into Puget Sound.....the notice is reproduced in this issue. Reading the notice you may conclude, as have I, that at the present one can still fish for sea-run cutthroat trout in Puget Sound. There was no mention on refunding our fishing licenses. WDFW will now approach the federal government on bended knee for permission. Something appears to be broken here.

Strike Five and You Are Out.

Last week the feds again took it on the chops in the sorry saga of the various federal agencies attempts to avoid responsibility under federal law for restoration of salmon and steelhead in the Columbia Rivers system. This time Federal District Judge Simon delivered the blow. Five times this court has rejected government proposals as inadequate and mostly a re-hash of previous plans. The last NOAA Fisheries proposal was based on attempting to foist on the court a novel theory that because the affected species are "trending toward recovery" the proposed plan should be approved. This was dealt with by Judge Simon as the junk science that it is. Judge Simon calls out NOAA Fisheries. Among other things Judge Simon notes: "Indeed, NOAA Fisheries created the Interior Columbia Technical Review Team ("ICTRT"), which consists of a number of highly -qualified scientists in several different disciplines. The ICTRT has already identified minimum viable abundance numbers for nearly all populations of the various listed species, **yet the methodology NOAA Fisheries employs essentially ignores their findings without explanation.**" (Emphasis added).

As a general rule judges defer to the expertise of agencies; however, it would appear NOAA Fisheries conduct in this case has caused both Judge Redden and Judge Simon to make an exception in this case. Judge Simon's opinion makes for interesting reading.

Despite having their heads handed to them 5 times over the last 15 years, yes, this particular litigation was filed in February, 2001, I expect little change as long as the Departments of Commerce and Energy are the policy drivers. Judge Simon's opinion allows the current plan to stay in place for two more years. There are an enormous amounts of money on the table and this is far from being "over".

How about Puget Sound? How are we doing there? Recently my attention was directed to an interesting document of which I was not previously aware. The document is *Northwest Fisheries Science Center. 2015. Status review update for Pacific salmon and steelhead Listed Under the Endangered Species Act: Pacific Northwest.* https://www.nwfsc.noaa.gov/assets/11/8623_03072016_124156_Ford-NWSalmonBioStatusReviewUpdate-Dec%2021-2015%20v2.pdf this document is dated December 21, 2015.

Three hundred and fifty six pages long I have had the time and energy to read only portions in large part because it is so damn depressing. Read it. The section addressing Puget Sound steelhead begins on page 245. The document is a pdf and easily navigated.

Some snippets: The following statement is in reference to the distinct population segments of Puget Sound steelhead. **Continued on page 2**

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[I]n general, steelhead abundance across the DPS remains well below levels needed to sustain natural production into the future.” page 252

This document bases much on evidence derived from what are held out as scientific surveys/studies some with, at least to my simple mind, confounding calculation. Then I stumble across this gem. “Unpublished estimates from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife suggest that the influence of hatchery in several populations are now low. As a consequence, the risk posed by hatchery steelhead program in the DPS has declined since the 2011 review”

Well, gee, I guess steelhead hatchery fish aren’t so bad after all. Then in the paragraph following is this statement. “More recently, Warheit’s (Warheit 2014) report summarizing evidence for introgression of hatchery steelhead from segregated programs into natural steelhead populations in Puget Sound showed a wide range of such effects, **with some natural populations nearly completely hatchery-**

derived.” (Emphasis added) Page 267 Well, if we have managed to kill off all the wild fish what more can there be to lose?

Flash then to the WDFW’s recent release of over one-half million hatchery steelhead in Puget Sound streams and rivers all blessed by NOAA.....

WDFW spokesperson states “We are pleased that NOAA-Fisheries agrees our hatchery plans are scientifically sound.” HUH? Does *Alice in Wonderland* come to mind?

This WDFW release of hatchery steelhead comes about due to the approval of NOAA Fisheries, I.e, the Department of Commerce. An agency, which has yet to find its way to a recovery plan for Puget Sound steelhead. Does this foretell the nature of the Department of Commerce’s proposed recovery plan for Puget Sound steelhead?

I wonder if these guys will read the article published in Nature Communications, *A Single generation of domestication heritability alters the expression of hundreds of genes?* https://www.nwfsc.noaa.gov/as-sets/11/8623_03072016_124156_Ford-NWSalmonBioStatusReviewUpdate-Dec%2021-2015%20v2.pdf

But, Hey. All is well. Shortly we can all buy Steelhead license plates for our motor vehicles. I know that will make me feel better.

Atlantic Salmon Fly International Expo

Tuning to something far more pleasant. Mark your calendars. June 3, 4, & 5 will see the Atlantic Salmon Fly International Expo at the Pavilion Event Center, Renton, Washington. More information at: www.asfi-expo.com *this event is hosted by a Seattle based organization; the Northwest Atlantic Salmon Fly Guild (NWASFG).* Go to this event some of the best tiers you will ever see will be there, well perhaps with the exception of one noted WFFC member whose name currently escapes me.

Creel Notes

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Club officers and chairmen can be contacted by logging in the WFFC website then selecting email (upper right corner). Button selec-

Club Aims and Purposes

The purpose of this club shall be:

1. To improve and increase the sport of Fly Fishing in the State of Washington.
2. To promote and work for the betterment of trout streams and lakes.
3. To encourage and advocate the conservation and increase of trout, steelhead, and salmon in state waters.
4. To promote a campaign of education against pollution in streams, lakes or Sound waters of the State of Washington.
5. To encourage and assist others—particularly young persons of high school age—to become fly fishers and true conservationists.

May's Program Speaker



May's Speaker
Jon Covitch

Report from the WFFC Program Director for May, 2016

This month's meeting features Jon Covitch speaking about the "The How, when and where of flyfishing Cuba" whose self description is as follows: "Jon Covitch has spent the last 25 years immersed in the fly fishing industry and has been one the Pacific Northwest's tackle reps for the past 20 years. He currently represents Outcast, Fishpond, Spirit River, Buff and Galvan Reels. In addition to his business as a tackle rep, Jon has traveled to many of the world's best fly fishing destinations, as both an angler and a professional photographer. Jon is an expert on fishing and travel to Cuba, and works with Fly Water Travel as one of their travel consultants. He also is the national fly shop liason for Fly Water. Photos of his adventures have appeared in Outside Magazine, Grey's Sporting Journal, Fly Fisherman, Fly Rod & Reel, and Catch Magazine. Jon lives in Seattle Washington with his wife and two sons" This should be an interesting and educational meeting!

Jim McRoberts will be tying and demonstrating the best flies for bonefish, tarpon, permit, barracuda, snook, and jacks at the 5:30 happy hour.

I have finished filling out our excellent 2016 speaker schedule and the billboard for the rest of the year reads as follows:

June 21st: Chester Allen will discourse on "Fishing for searun cutthroat"

July 19th: Linda Mapes, from the Seattle Times, will present "The Elwha Reborn"

August 16th: Fly fishing seminar and member used equipment sale preceded by a barbecue.

September 20th: Diane Rudolf, world class single hand caster and traveler will entertain us with "Salt water fly fishing around the world"

October 18th Rick Hafele will educate us with "All about emergers"

November 15th John McMillan, son of our member Bill McMillan, and now with Trout

Unlimited will elaborate on "The politics of wild steelhead and hatcheries"

December 13th Christmas party and auction

Plans for our August 16th Fly fishing seminar and used equipment sale are progressing nicely and my thanks to all of you who recently responded to my questionnaire about your preferences in topics. At this time, and in order of your preferences I have lined up speakers for "Where to fish cutthroat in Puget Sound", "How to fish the Yakima", "How to fish the Stillaguamish", "How, when and where to fish the Owyhee", "Aquatic entomology", "How, where, and why to tie the 7 most useful fishing knots", "Review of pay-to-play lakes in Washington, Oregon, and British Columbia", and "How, when, and where to fish the Missouri". I continue to work on setting up "How to fish for Bass and Carp" as well as a few others. This should be a terrific affair so mark your calendars.

Bob Burdick, 2nd VP for programs

Member Jaunt at David Lake, Montana



4-23-2016 Ex WFFC Pres. Don Clough gloating. Photo courtesy of Don Gulliford

Upcoming Events

Chopaka Lake Lake Hannan Leech Lake

Our annual spring rite at Chopaka Lake is coming up Memorial Day weekend May 28, 29, 30!

We will be camping at the "unimproved" area on the lake, as usual, with a lot of friends. The weather there is famously variable, so be prepared for hot sun, a little rain, and occasional gusty wind. Most of the time it's just really nice.

The fishing is focused on the dry fly action that happens almost like clockwork every day, with mayflies hatching in "gentleman's hours" usually around 11:00 or so. Chopaka Mays, Parachute Adams, Paraduns, Blue Wing Olives, and emergers of all types are the tools of choice. Later on, in the afternoon usually, the damsels get going. Adults fished along the reeds can be great fun! And if your day is long enough, you can do the night fishing thing with black leech patterns on intermediate lines. Hold on to your rod for those hits!

We will have happy hour each day around 5. Bring your favorite appetizers to share. On Saturday, the club grill will be set up for everyone to use, so bring something to char. Pot luck side dishes are always welcome! The club will provide beer, pop, and cheap fireside wine. People with a musical inclination are encouraged to bring their instrument of choice, and vocalize around the fire. There will be a pancake breakfast Sunday morning, and a tempura happy hour Sunday evening! A lot of volunteers work really hard at this one, and everybody has fun!

Camping at Chopaka is on a first come basis for sites, and you should bring all the water you will need, firewood too. It can be a bit crowded in the camp area on Memorial weekend, but hardly anyone there in the days after. There is always plenty of room on the lake, and you can fish by yourself if you don't mind rowing a ways.

Sign up on the club web site for head count, and let us know if you can haul gear over (and back) with you. We need to get canopies, coolers, grill, cooking equipment etc. set up and taken down. Thanks for all the help in advance, see you there!

Dave Schorsch

Our club will be joining others Saturday May 21 on beautiful Lake Hannan!

This private lake is open to us and our friends from the Overlake Flyfishers from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm for Saturday only. We will be sharing a lunch around 1:00 at the boat launch area. A large pot of chili and chips will be there along with soft drinks. Side dishes are always welcome. There is a strict no alcohol policy on church grounds, which should be respected.

The fishing is for rainbow, resident cutthroat, and brook trout. We did very well there last year on intermediates with anything green and buggy, and several fish taken on mayfly nymphs. The lake is very clean, with weed beds everywhere. Some good sized fish too!

To get there, I take the Woodinville/Duvall road to Duvall, turn left on the main drag (hwy 203), go north about four miles to the SECOND Cherry Valley road, go up hill and follow Lake Fontel road to the end at Camp Hamilton. Please check a map if you have not been there, although it's pretty easy to find. You will need a small boat or tube to fish. Sign on web site for lunch head count. See you there!

Our annual outing to Leech lake is coming up soon, and I'd like some input on what dates in June work for the most members. I'm thinking the weekends of June 18-19, or 25-26. I've spoken to the folks at White Pass Village Inn, and they have space available both times. I know a lot of people will be up at HiHium the week of the 12th, so the later date might be better. Let me know. Thanks.

Dave Schorsch

Owyhee River Trip

Owyhee River trip report:

Fellow club member Ben Davidson and I traveled to the eastern edge of Oregon to fish the Owyhee river May 1 - 5. What started out as a group of several had evolved through work obligations, illness, and other life realities to just the two of us. Undaunted, we headed out for what was my second trip there, and Bens first. Nine hours later, we arrived to find the campground empty and the river turbid.

The Owyhee is a tail water fishery below a depression era dam built for irrigation. Lake Owyhee is 52 miles long, in a canyon cut from Basalt/scorio/sandstone layers that form amazing, almost magical structures of rock. The river runs through the lower end of this canyon, before being sucked nearly dry in the giant Treasure valley agricultural area 20 miles distant. It's the first 8 miles or so of the stream that interest fly anglers. It is heavily infested with every significant insect for trout, and constantly fed a buffet of little fish through the dam from the enormous lake above. This is extremely fertile water, in spite of pretty radical water level changes due to seasonal irrigation demand. The Owyhee is Brown trout heaven.

Ben and I set up camp, and soon realized that we had enough food for at least 4 more guys. The only debate was which meals we wouldn't have time to eat. Beer supply was adequate. Fell asleep listening to tons of fish crashing around in the shallows of the lake behind the tent. Next morning started on water with only 18 inches (at best) of visibility. Not sure why, the river level was perfect, but we did notice that the lake was the same thickness. Just dense with silt or algae, I guess. We fished big streamers first, looking at the water color, and picked up a handful of nice fish in the first run of the day. A couple of 16 to 19 inch browns each, one unusual rainbow, and missed some big ones. How many fairly small streams can you say that with? When I say big ones, I mean BIG ones, the kind that push a bow wake as they come out from under the brush.

Continued on page 5

Fishing was not fast, to say the least. Lots of moving from spot to spot, lots of hiking and rock hopping. The water color didn't bother the fish as much as the anglers, they seemed to see the big flies just fine, sometimes chasing the streamers from across the stream. We both had several grabs, flashes, and follows that didn't hook up for every one that did. And it was clear that you only got one shot at each fish, they never struck twice. So the end result was fish a run, hike to the truck for a beer, fish another run, hike for beer, repeat. By the end of day two, it became obvious that the fishing was much better in the morning than the rest of the day. The bugs that were hatching were being ignored for the most part, and even the droves of Boise anglers that float "thingamabobbers" over weighted nymphs were getting thin pickings. When you did get tight to a fish, it was usually out from under trees, or behind a rock that wasn't obvious.

So with the birds raising hell at 3:45 am, we started earlier, and sure enough had a lot better luck! Fishing a run that gets pounded every day, we both landed substantial fish all the way down it. Same with another deep, rocky run farther downstream. We tried matching the hatch on a frog water tailout where several fish were rising to micro flies, without success, then finished the day with the big streamers again. On one small pool, I landed 3 healthy fish in 20 minutes on an olive Clouser, while Ben was downstream handling assaults on his black Dali Lama. A much better day indeed!

Happy hour at camp included something different. After a few beers and dinner, we went down to the lake shore and cast flies at the splashing fish. Total mystery fish, but some of them are huge! We caught dozens of crappie, and a couple nice sized bass! All right behind the tent! A fun way to end the day. We left the spawning carp alone. Packed up next morning, and 9 hours later home. A good trip with good company. Maybe next time we can get more folks to join us.

Dave Schorsch

Dry Falls Snake Encounter

Dry Falls outing 4/17/16

I detest snakes. I've never been bit, but none- the- less get shivers and shakes anytime I run across snakes while hunting in Washington, Oregon, or Montana. Until our recent outing on dry falls, I had never encountered one of these critters while fishing. However, anchored in my pram on Dry Falls, and minding my own business in the middle of the day, I noticed a strange movement in the water some distance off. Watching intently, a dark shape gradually defined itself while swimming my way!

It's side to side movement finally triggered my brain's recognition as indicative of a snake. A big snake. A rattler? And it was swimming right toward the transom of my pram! Fast! And then it stuck it's head over the transom and prepared to board. No amount of flailing using a spare rod was deterring it. The faster I whacked the quicker it's attempts to board became as my anxiety mounted. And then just as I was considering making my own exit overboard, providence appeared in the form of Pat Becker. Calmly rowing by,

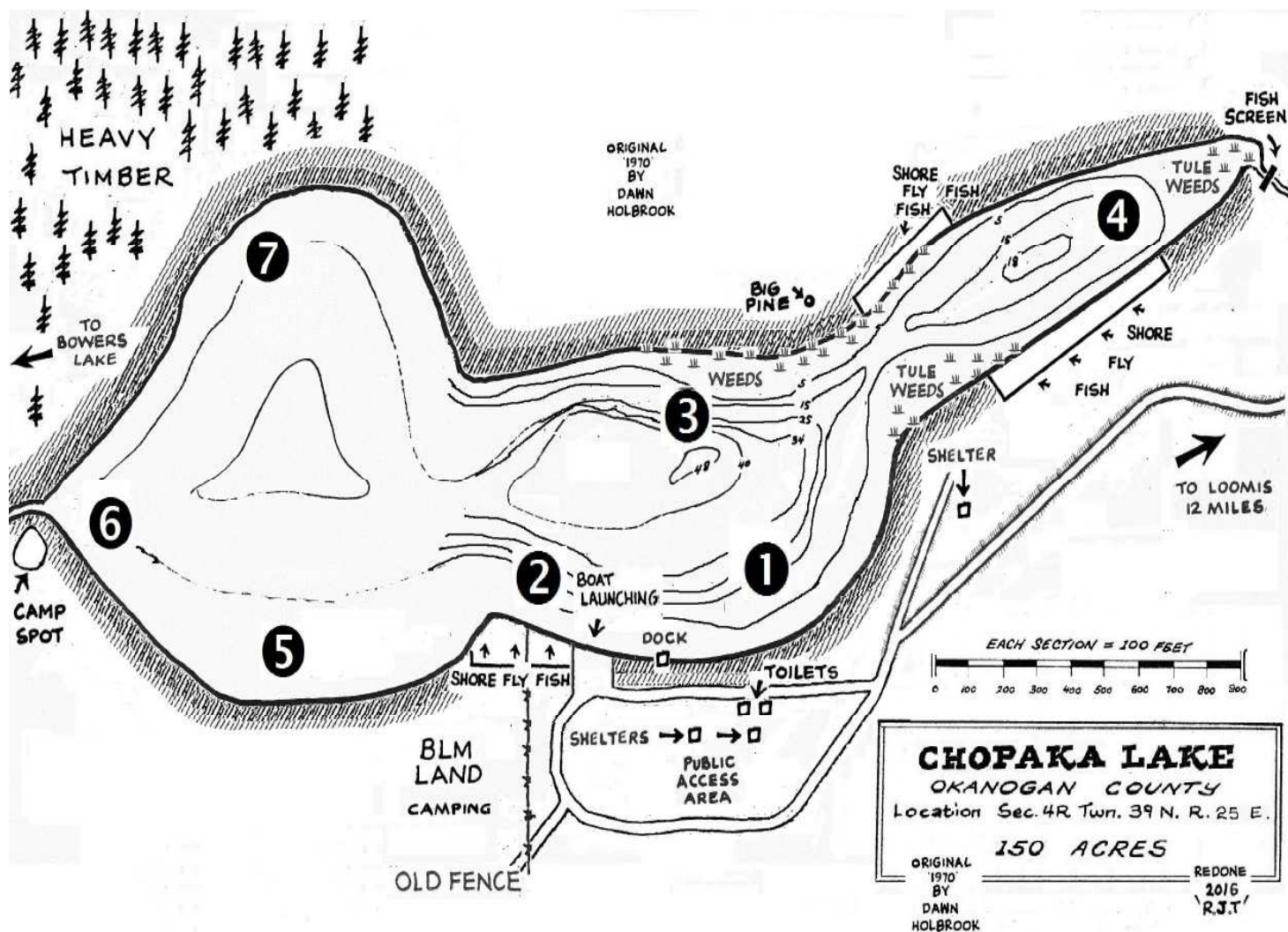
she digested my predicament, maneuvered her craft in close, and with one swoop of her net removed this aggressive bull snake from my proximity thereby saving me from a cold swim. Thank you Pat!

Bob Burdick



BEST SPOTS ARE NUMBERED

- 1** The water at this area is 10 to 15 feet deep and is excellent for drifting and casting or trolling a fly. Frequently overlooked by many anglers. It has produced well for me.
- 2** This should probably be included with area 1 as this also produces well and at times has been very good dry fly fishing from the bank. Stand back from the shore (20 feet or so) - Fish will feed within 10 feet of the shore.
- 3** Area 3 is my favorite area. Both wet and dry are very effective. Out from the north shore is a deep hole which produces well in hot weather. Cruising fish take dries right in on shore. You should anchor about 110 feet from shore and lay your fly right on the bank. The shore provides very good dry fly action on down to Area 4.
- 4** The water is very shallow at this end of the lake and offers some very challenging angling both wet and dry. Sometimes when the wind has been right it has been possible to drift along within casting distance from the shore and fish all the way to the end of the lake
- 5** These areas hold fish and are not subject to the pressures of the
- 6** other end of the lake. There is a very nice camping place at Area 6, where the inlet stream is found. A good way to cover this water
- 7** is for one angler to cast the shore while the other trolls a fly.



April 29, 2016

Contact: Larry Phillips, (360) 870-1889;
Ron Warren, (360) 902-2799

**Several Puget Sound-area marine,
freshwater fisheries to close May 1**

Lakes information was updated May 3, 2016

This information will continue to be updated. More details can be found on WDFW's webpage at <http://>

OLYMPIA – Several lakes and the lower sections of most rivers that flow into Puget Sound will close to all fishing beginning Sunday, May 1, when salmon and steelhead fishing also closes in the Sound.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) officials said today they are closing state fisheries in waters where salmon migrate while they work to secure the federal permit required to hold salmon fisheries in Puget Sound. Typically, the state and tribes jointly obtain the federal permit for the Sound, where some fish stocks are protected under the federal Endangered Species Act. The current permit expires April 30.

However, many fishing opportunities remain available in and around Puget Sound. WDFW has posted a list of rivers and sections of rivers that are open to fishing on its webpage at http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/pugetsound_salmon_update/. That page also has a list of Puget Sound-area lakes that are closed to all fishing.

"Since we didn't reach an agreement with treaty tribal co-managers on this year's Puget Sound salmon fisheries, we have to close fishing in areas where we know salmon will be," said Ron Warren, head of WDFW's Fish Program.

For the next few months, those areas include several Puget Sound-region lakes and the lower reaches of streams where salmon smolts will travel on their way to the Sound.

Lakes that will close May 1 to all fishing include Lake Washington, Lake Sammamish, Washington Ship Canal including Lake Union and Portage and Salmon bays (King County), Monte Cristo Lake (Snohomish County), Lake Cushman (Mason County), and Barney Lake (Skagit County).

Examples of rivers where at least sections, if not all, are closed to fishing include the Skagit, Stillaguamish and Snohomish rivers, north of Seattle. Today's action also applies to Puget Sound-area rivers that typically open to fishing in early June, though fishery managers will be evaluating those rivers to determine whether any can open on schedule.

All non-tribal commercial and recreational Puget Sound salmon and steelhead fisheries, including those in Marine Area 13 and year-round fishing piers around Puget Sound, will close May 1 to salmon and steelhead fishing until further notice. More detailed information about marine area closures can be found online at <https://fortress.wa.gov/dfw/erules/efishrules/>.

The department is working with federal authorities and doing everything possible to re-open Puget Sound marine and freshwater fisheries, Warren said.

"We regret having to close these fisheries," Warren said. "We know this is a hardship on many communities around Puget Sound and disappoints many anglers."

In the meantime, Warren urged anglers to consider trying new fishing waters, emphasizing that most Puget Sound area lowland lakes remain open to fishing.

Also, he said recreational fisheries in Puget Sound marine areas that are not affected by the closures include bottomfish, such as lingcod, Pacific cod and cabezon, as well as sea-run cutthroat trout and halibut. These fisheries are covered under a separate permit and are open as scheduled. Anglers should check the 2015-16 Washington Sport Fishing Rules pamphlet, available online at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regulations/>, for details.

Salmon fishing will continue as scheduled in the Columbia River and Washington's ocean waters and north coastal rivers. Information on those fisheries can be found on WDFW's webpage at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/northfalcon/>



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Stamp
here

May, 2016

Meeting Announcement



Meetings are held on the third Tuesday May 17, of each month at the Seattle Tennis Club, 922 McGilvra Blvd. E. The Wet Fly hour begins at 5:30 PM and dinner is served at 6:45 PM.

This month: The presenter at our May 17 meeting will be: Jon Covitch on Why Fly Fishing Cuba should be at the top of your bucket list.