

BPA NEWS

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BONNEVILLE POWER ADMINISTRATION
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Anglers remove more than 100,000 predators from river system during the pandemic

Portland, Ore. – The Bonneville Power Administration and its partners report that in 2020, for the 23rd consecutive season, the Northern Pikeminnow Sport Reward Program met its annual goal to remove 10% to 20% of pikeminnow, 9 inches or longer, in the Columbia and Snake rivers that prey on juvenile salmon and steelhead.

- Fish removed 103,114
- Registered anglers 2,450
- Average angler catch 6.5 fish/day
- Total paid to anglers \$839,461
- Top angler
 - Total earnings \$48,501
 - Fish removed 5,579

The program, funded by BPA and administered by Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission and the states of Oregon and Washington, has run for 30 years, typically from May 1 through Sept. 30. In response to the COVID-19 outbreak last spring, governors in Washington and Oregon closed or limited fishing in some areas and curtailed access to some boat ramps. Those facilities were reopened later in May and the sport reward program began 11 days later than usual. To help make up for the delayed start, the season was extended to Oct. 11, 2020.

“The COVID-19 pandemic presented some unique challenges for implementing a sport-reward fishery that relies on recreational angler participation,” said Eric Winther, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Columbia River Predator Control Program project leader. “We realized in the spring that circumstances would require some flexibility in how we operated the registration stations and that many of our return anglers might have to rethink their own recreation plans. All things considered, despite the late start to the season, anglers were able to spend a full five-month season on the rivers and remove thousands of pikeminnow for the program.”



When the season opened May 11, registered anglers again had the opportunity to make \$5 to \$8 for each northern pikeminnow at least 9 inches long, and specially tagged northern pikeminnow were worth \$500. Program managers temporarily increased the reward to a flat \$10 per fish late in the season to spur angler participation – which was a bit lower than normal due to the pandemic – and to take advantage of favorable river conditions during the season’s 11 -day extension in October. However, the program will resume its pre -pandemic bounties when the northern pikeminnow season kicks off again in spring of 2021.

The goal of the sport reward fishing program is to reduce the number of larger northern pikeminnow in the Columbia and Snake rivers. Since 1990, anglers paid through the program have removed more than 5.2 million predatory pikeminnow.

“Northern pikeminnow is a native species that eats millions of juvenile salmon and steelhead each year in the Columbia and Snake river systems,” says Eric McOmie, BPA program manager. “When we remove the larger northern pikeminnow, more young salmon and steelhead have a better chance of making it to the ocean and eventually returning to the basin as adults.”

Biologists estimate that the program has reduced predation on young salmon and steelhead by up to 40% from pre-program levels.

The 2021 season is expected to operate from May 1 through Sept. 30, 2021. For more information about the program, call 800-858-9015 or visit www.pikeminnow.org.

About BPA

The Bonneville Power Administration, headquartered in Portland, Oregon, is a nonprofit federal power marketer that sells wholesale, carbon-free hydropower from 31 federal dams in the Columbia River Basin. It also markets the output of the region’s only nuclear plant. BPA delivers this power to more than 140 Northwest electric utilities, serving millions of consumers and businesses in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, western Montana and parts of California, Nevada, Utah and Wyoming. BPA also owns and operates more than 15,000 circuit miles of high-voltage power lines and 261 substations, and provides transmission service to more than 300 customers. In all, BPA provides nearly a third of the power generated in the Northwest. To mitigate the impacts of the federal dams, BPA implements a fish and wildlife program that includes working with its partners to make the federal dams safer for fish passage. It also pursues cost-effective energy savings and operational solutions that help maintain safe, affordable, reliable electric power for the Northwest. www.bpa.gov

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