



Central Kenai Peninsula Fishing Report 6-25-2015

Fires raging alongside the Kenai River as we turn from spring to summer... Is this a flashback to last year? Nope. We are starting the 2015 fishing season off with a rerun of last year- fires and fish, fires and fish. Here we go again....

The spring and early summer has seen uncommonly warm weather, and has made for some long hot fishy days- and unfortunately wildfires across the State of Alaska, including several on the Kenai Peninsula.

The majority of the Kenai Rive opened June 11th, so we are wrapping up the second week of action on the Kenai. The Kasilof River got off to a great start in late May and early June with King Salmon catch rates noticeably higher than the past few years.

Kasilof River

On the Kasilof, fishing the tide has been unpredictable, but the mile or so stretch surrounding Crooked Creek campground has held lots of Kings, and provided consistent action. Drift boat anglers should try both spin & glows as well as Kwikfish from size K-13 to K-15. One day the spin & glows will be hitting, and the next day Kwikfish will be the hot ticket. Bank anglers armed with a casting or spinning rod can find some success drifting corkies and yarn through likely runs, and fly anglers can expect a grab or two while swinging leeches, with a bit of patience of course. The first run of Kings will be dwindling away over the next week, but a second run of native Kings will show up only a couple weeks later. This fishery is heavily affected by the set net fishery, so pay attention to openings and closings to strategically time your trip to the river!

Sockeye have begun to enter the Kasilof, and the "Sockeye twitch" will be most successful in the couple hours before high tide. Expect sockeye numbers to increase dramatically over the next couple weeks as the run builds and as the personal use set-net fishery comes to a close.

Middle & Lower Kenai

While the Lower River (Bings to Cook Inlet) was already open, a majority of the Middle River (Skilak Lake to Bings Landing) opened to fishing June 11th. The trout fishing was quite spectacular, with no shortage of healthy 20" rainbows being found. Remember to fish the deeper water during June to avoid those spawners that haven't quite finished up in the shallows. Leeches and flesh flies dead-drifted under an indicator are staples in this fishery for the next few weeks. That said, leeches, sculpins, flesh, beads, baitfish, and just about anything else has worked at some point or another over the past two weeks.

The fishing has been fair to good since the opener, with recent warmer weather bringing the water levels. Fishing has become streaky with the bite turning on and off throughout the day. Many of these trout will migrate into lower stretches of the Kenai for the mid-summer before migrating back upstream for their fall feast of salmon spawn and carcasses. Reminder- Lower Skilak Lake Launch has been closed due to the fire activity in the area.

Upper Kenai

Moving up to the Upper Kenai (Kenai Lake to Skilak Lake), the river opened June 11th. The first run of sockeye salmon have been coming through pretty thick, with the Kenai/Russian River area filling up quickly. Schools of fish can be seen moving up river, which resulted in the Sanctuary opening and the limit increasing to six fish. Prior to the limit increase, anglers were limiting out with their three fish in short order. Be warned- it is crowded. Best to fish early or late weekday hours to avoid the major crowds.

Trout fishing will remain good on the Russian River throughout the summer and into fall. Both nymphs & dry flies, as well as flesh flies will get plenty of attention for the next month or so, until beads take over in August. Try walking upstream of the crowds and find seams, pools, cut banks and even the shallow riffles can surprisingly hold nice fish.

On the Kenai, leeches, wooly buggers and small flesh flies have all been productive for trout. As more and more salmon are caught and cleaned, the flesh bite may continue to pick up.

Summary

Reminder- pay close attention to the regulations and emergency orders. With the hot summer days, we have seen the Kenai rising rapidly, which can affect boating and fishing safety. Be aware of the water levels and be safe out there! In addition, remember that we are currently in a state-wide burn ban- so no campfires!

Fishing report compiled by Brendyn Shiflea of Pretty Fly For a White Guy with in river action reports and pictures submitted by guides Lee Keuper of Alaska's Angling Addiction, Mark Wackler of Fishology Alaska, and Kyle Kolodziejski of Keen Eye Anglers. All are current or past board members of the Kenai Chapter of Trout Unlimited.

