



Central Kenai Peninsula Fishing Report September

September is finally here and fall is setting in fast. Chilly foggy mornings, leaves changing colors and falling, and most importantly- the salmon spawn!

This time of year is many of the local fishermen's favorite- with reduced crowds and an increase in fishing opportunities. One of those opportunities includes silver salmon, a species that usually ranks at the top of an angler's list to target due to their aggressive nature, along with the myriad of different techniques one can effectively utilize to target them. The first run of silvers was a very good one (for the third year in a row) and as that first run wanes the second run is already arriving! Fishing has been very good anywhere from Skilak Lake to the mouth of the Kenai, and that's not going to change anytime soon.

The reds have FINALLY slowed down and are quickly getting up river and gearing up to spawn. Oh- and the kings have been dropping too- so the bead bite is on big time for those mighty rainbows!

Recently the Snow River Ice dam released, giving the Kenai an added boost of water. So pay close attention to water levels and flow rates when you are gearing up to head out fishing.

Kasilof River

The Kasilof River has also seen some very good silver fishing over the last few weeks, and although this run doesn't last as long as the Kenai, anglers have another month to target this underrated fishery. All the same techniques that work on the Kenai will work on the Kasilof, and it never ceases to amaze me just how shallow of water silvers will choose to inhabit at times. They barely need a foot of water or so to feel comfortable in the tainted water of the Kasilof, so start shallow and work your way out.

Middle & Lower Kenai

On the Lower and Middle Kenai, the first run of Silver Salmon are in and many think that they are moving up river already, with limits being a little harder to come by. But persistence is the key. Find gentle sloping gravel bars, natural funnels, and eddies when targeting silvers. Gear fishermen can catch them on spinners, plugs, and bait on the bottom or under a bobber. And silvers are very fly friendly to a fly angler equipped with a 7-9 weight rod and a handful of bright colored leeches. Pink, chartreuse, and purple are great colors to start with, but if your fly is being ignored try other colors as well because silvers can be very picky at times. Also try different presentations by removing weight and slowing your strip way down. And don't forget to follow through with your cast as silvers have a nasty habit of following the fly or lure all the way to the boat before grabbing it right at your rod tip!

As mentioned, the Snow River ice dam release may affect water levels on the middle river. It shouldn't reach flood stage, but changing water levels may make the resident rainbows and dollies start to transition a little from the places they had been feeding before. Expect fish to really key in on the sockeye spawn until the silvers spawn way late into the year. The added flesh washing back into the river gives anglers another option if they are willing to think outside the box. Try your standard 8-12mm

beads in various sections where sockeye and kings spawn and get ready!

Upper Kenai

The Upper Kenai water levels have been extremely low for this time of year until the Snow River glacial dam released recently- so expect water levels to change dramatically. Kings are spawning and the Upper River is full of red-colored sockeye salmon looking to spawn. Match the hatch on beads- try 6-8mm natural roe to start with- and get ready for some great trout fishing! Practice appropriate catch and release tactics and consider going barbless with bead hooks- it makes a big difference on keeping these beauties beautiful!

Coho are also showing up- fish your big black leeches or your big colorful flies and hang on!

The Russian River has been very low, but with rain and water levels rising, it should pick up as far as fishing goes.

Summary

Let's not forget about steelhead on the southern peninsula streams! We are lucky to have the northernmost run of steelhead in North America just down the road from us, and those fish have begun entering Deep Creek, the Ninilchik, as well as the Anchor River. Dead drifting large 10-14mm beads is the most common method for targeting these ocean run rainbows in this area, but streamers, flesh, and even nymphs can work well at times too. Keep a very close eye on the water levels as high water levels create dirty water on these watersheds. The best time to plan your fishing is to wait until the water drops and clears, turning the bite on!

As mentioned, fall is here- layer up, be prepared for always changing weather and conditions with water levels expected to be rising fast over the next few days.

Fishing report compiled by Brendyn Shiflea of Pretty Fly For a White Guy with in river action reports and pictures submitted by guides Lee Kuepper of Alaska's Angling Addiction, Mark Wackler of Fishology Alaska, and Brian Kaferstein of Alaska Wildland Adventures. However, Brian slept through the deadline to submit his fishing report for the 9/1 deadline, so his report is not included in this one. All are current board members of the Kenai Chapter of Trout Unlimited.

