

## Over a Million Reasons to Fish Buoy 10

*By: Buzz Ramsey*

Now is the time to plan, gear-up, and fish the mouth of the Columbia River for a mixed bag of Chinook and Coho. The reason: the Columbia River is expecting 700,000 Coho and another 500,000 Chinook to flood the big river from now through late September.

Since the waters extending west from Buoy 10 to Buoy 4 (known as the Columbia River Control Zone) are closed to all fishing regardless of run size, the area just east of the number 10 Buoy and an imaginary north/south line extending from it is the first place you can ambush salmon as they enter the Columbia River mouth.

The most productive tide for catching fish from this area, which can be one of the best for Coho salmon, is from low slack tide through the flood and especially during times when there is a tide exchange of 8 feet or more, which is the distance from low to high tide.

If you arrive at Buoy 10 at low tide or just after, when there is little or no current, try a forward troll. Once the tide starts to flood in, you should begin backtrolling against the current. The idea is to hold your position (with your bow pointed west) as fish move into the Columbia with the flooding ocean water. Most fish, especially Coho, will run 10 to 20 feet from the surface.

If you're plans include the catching of Chinook too, you will likely find the best success for them trolling in the North and South

Channel adjacent to Desdemona Sands. This is the area where all salmon hold, Chinook and Coho, before committing to their upriver journey. Desdemona Sands is the large sand island located in the middle of the river, adjacent to the Astoria-Megler Bridge.

Study your tide book when planning a trip here because this area produces best when there is a small tide exchange (7 foot or less from high to low) and when the AM high tide coincides with daylight. During any given day the best bite will occur from just before high tide through the outgoing tide cycle – with the peak action happening during the first half of the ebb.

The proven method near Desdemona is to troll downstream, going with the flow of the tide, parallel to the island in 20 to 30 feet of water with a whole or plug-cut herring rigged six feet behind a Delta, Easy or Deep Six diver. Since Chinook like to hug bottom, it's important to keep your gear working there. If you want to target Coho in this area, try working your gear near bottom in 15 to 20 feet of water.

Herring is the most popular bait at Buoy 10 and is available in different lengths (identified by the color of the package label) with the “Blue Label” size being the most popular. Larger “Purple Label” herring plug-cut to provide the slow roll salmon like is my favorite when targeting Chinook. Try rigging your herring on a 5 to 6 foot mooching leader consisting of two 5/0 or 6/0 single hooks like Eagle Claw style 182, snelled in tandem.

Spinners work to, sometimes even better than herring, with the larger sizes (like a Toman Thumper spinner) best for Chinook. Popular spinner colors for King salmon include red & white and chartreuse green dot. An important tip that will help eliminate the line twist associated with trolling a spinning bait or lure is to rig a bead-chain swivel halfway down your leader.

Last season we tagged out on Chinook early (only one of your two salmon can be a Chinook here) when fishing the Buoy 10 Salmon Derby. Wanting to then target only Coho, we switched to small divers and herring tipped with bubblegum pink worms. There is just something about adding a pink worm to a herring that drives Coho crazy. Our best producing worms for tipping were the scent-filled ones like Gulp! and PowerBait.

### Safety First at Buoy 10

While the weather and water can be calm and predictable at Buoy 10, be aware that fog, waves, wind and fast moving ship traffic can raise the odds of a mishap. For example, sea-going freighters move faster than you might think and have the absolute right-of-way – so keep your eyes peeled and move out of the shipping channel far in advance of their arrival.

To find fish, combat tough weather and remember successful fishing locations I have a Humminbird combination GPS/fish finder unit mounted on my boat.

Hope to see you there!