

Coastlines

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The Salmonid Run: Anglers and Impacts



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Salmon. I'm Almost tired of seeing that word and talking about . . . salmon.

You see, it's not the salmon that I'm so concerned about. It's the people — the fisherman, the village businessmen, the country landowner, the resident who commutes to work twenty miles away, the kids at school, the family on a weekend trip. If you bring a recreational industry, such as salmon fishing, into a town, the entire community picture will change — in your town, my town, any town.

When the salmonid fishery was first being developed in New York, A group of interested citizens from communities along Lake Ontario went on a Sea Grant sponsored trip to Michigan to find out how people there were dealing with changes brought on by a salmon fishery. Now we have additional information from our own experiences in Pulaski, and other New York communities; information that should be valuable as the fishery continues to develop in Hen-

derson, Mexico; Oswego, Fair Haven, Sodus Bay, Rochester, Hamlin Beach, Oak Orchard, Olcott, Wilson, Youngstown, Cattaraugus Creek and other areas.

Let's take a closer look at the people side of the salmon fishery. Consider a pleasant weekend salmon fishing expedition to Pulaski. Three friends drive into town together, early in the morning. It's still dark out and they don't know their way around very well. Even though it's only 4:30 in the morning, traffic is tied up between Interstate 81 and the village. They drive up to a sports store that bears a sign saying "Welcome Fishermen;" one of three new sports stores that has been established in the past year. One of the fishermen is from out-of-state so he gets in line to buy a non-resident fishing license at the store, while his other two friends look over the special fishing gear on display. They decide to buy a new salmon fishing rig with a high capacity reel loaded with 20 lb. test line and a dozen snatch hooks and

pick up a local map and business directory printed by the Chamber of Commerce. They ask a store clerk where to buy gas and for directions to a diner open for an early breakfast.

The men are pleased to get quick, courteous service at the diner, even though the place is crowded. While getting gas, they get directions to a popular fishing spot from the station attendant and learn from the conversation that he's not a fisherman himself. Before they leave, he suggests they park in the new municipal lot on this side of the bridge or they'll never find a spot; and besides the walk won't hurt them.

Along the road they pass property which has been posted against trespassing. One of them comments that he has never seen so many posted signs before, but another points out that there weren't as many people around before, either. A village policeman stands directing traffic at the entrance to the parking lot, already crowded as the sun begins to

rise. He is one of seven policemen working for the village during the season. Last year there was only one.

They decide not to use the boat they've brought along, having heard foul weather warnings on the local radio station. They unload their gear and walk down to a public fishing access area about a quarter mile away, noting as they go, that the trail underfoot is worn and muddy from use. They are not surprised when they see the huge crowds of fishermen and spectators along the shore, for they have recently heard a television reporter estimate that there were 400 people at a popular fishing hole at 5:00 one previous morning.

After hours of perfecting their techniques, listening to advice, and missing strikes, one of the men hooks a big one, and after 15 minutes of action, his buddy nets the 18 lb. chinook salmon. Following the advice in one of the pamphlets he picked up in the village, he kills the fish by hitting its head with a large rock, thereby preventing it from flopping around and bruising the flesh. He then cleans the fish, places the viscera into one of the designated litter barrels nearby. Although his buddies continue to fish, he is anxious to get the fish on ice so it won't spoil. Finding that his ice chest is too small for his monster, he

drives to a sports store that will freeze and package the fish for him.

Back at the water's edge, fishing activity has died down, so the three decide to have lunch. The three wait until a booth is cleared at the restaurant. They had bought box lunches and snacks in case they went out in the boat, but since they hadn't used it, they decided to save the box lunches for later. As they sit down, a man in an adjoining booth asks if they've had any luck. As they relate the story of the big chinook, the other man smiles and asks if they like his little town. A little surprised to discover they are talking to a local and not another fisherman, they respond "sure, it's a great place." As their lunch is served the man explains that it wasn't easy for his village to accommodate the fishermen. He tells them how the village had to put in "no parking" signs and enlarge the police force, and how the town helped in constructing three new parking lots and how they had to get permission from the state highway people to change the traffic flow downtown. Local residents also had to ask the county to put up "no parking" signs on the county road. Not everyone likes the salmon fishery, he says. Some folks would be just as happy if the salmon weren't here.

He says this with a smile and continues

to tell them how his son got a job working in one of the new sports stores, and how he saw some kids selling coffee and sandwiches just this morning. Folks have really adapted, he says, but it wasn't easy, and there is still a long way to go.

Our fishing partners finish lunch with a much better understanding of what this fishing business is all about. They say they'd like the other fishermen to hear these details so they would understand as well. And their friend in the next booth says he wishes some of his friends would be better informed too.

By the way, he says, there's a good spot over on the North Road that's not nearly as crowded. Thanks.

The Sea Grant Advisory Service has just printed a publication to help Great Lakes communities plan more effectively for the salmonid fishery. Entitled, *Insight 4: Guide for Estimating Recreational Fishing Pressure*, it is listed this month in "I Want More." Also Available through the Oswego Advisory office is a slide set entitled, "The Pulaski Experience" which shows the impact of the salmon fishery on Pulaski, New York, and is particularly suitable for sportsmen's groups, chambers of commerce and local government groups.

How The Data Looked

1975 Great Lakes Salmonid Stocking¹

		Lake Ontario	Lake Erie
Coho	Y	452,000	25,000
	*f	177,000	—
	F	184,000	74,700
Chinook	f	920,000	85,000
	Y	108,000	31,500
Brown Trout	f	113,000	—
	F	150,000	26,600
	**Lake Trout	F	513,000
Rainbow Trout	F	99,000	—
	f	153,000	—

*Stocked in September (4"+)

**From Federal Hatchery, Jordan Michigan.

Y = Yearlings 6"

f = Spring fingerlings (2-3")

F = Fall fingerlings (4-5")

Lengths and Weights of Sexually Mature Salmon¹ from Lake Ontario

	Length, Inches			Weight, Pounds		
	1971-			1971-		
	1973	1974	1975	1973	1974	1975
Coho age 2 (I+)	14.1	15.3	16.4	—	—	—
Coho age 3 (II+)	24.0	26.2	28.2	5.0	7.1	9.8
Chinook age 2 (I+)	22.1	22.8	23.9	4.2	5.3	6.2
Chinook age 3 (II+)	28.8	30.4	N.A.	9.0	11.2	N.A.

N.A. = Not Available

¹Information supplied through the courtesy of William A. Pearce, Supervisor of the Great Lakes Fisheries Section, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation.

²Information supplied through the courtesy of Tommy L. Brown, Research Associate, Cornell University from a study supported by the New York Sea Grant Institute.

Revenues Generated in Oswego County from Salmon River Anglers²

Revenue Sectors	Residency Groups								
	Oswego County			Non-Oswego County			Totals		
	1973	1974	1975	1973	1974	1975	1973	1974	1975
Marina/Sporting Goods	\$5,633	\$21,767	\$32,216	\$ 9,666	\$ 42,526	\$142,758	\$15,299	\$ 64,293	\$174,975
Automotive Services	—	—	—	19,250	45,926	100,324	19,250	45,926	100,324
Restaurant/Bar	—	—	—	10,658	40,433	90,542	10,658	40,433	90,542
Lodging/Camping	—	—	—	7,435	10,138	24,387	7,435	10,138	24,387
Groceries	—	—	—	4,668	9,080	34,985	4,668	9,080	34,985
Miscellaneous and Liquor	204	1,473	—	4,461	10,156	18,769	4,665	11,629	18,769
TOTALS	\$5,837	\$23,240	\$32,216	\$56,138	\$158,259	\$411,768	\$61,975	\$181,499	\$443,984

Salmonid Catch and Effort Data²

Category	Residence Group								
	Oswego County			Non-Oswego County			Totals		
	1973	1974	1975	1973	1974	1975	1973	1974	1975
Trips	1,535	3,724	2,890	4,130	12,704	19,747	5,665	16,428	22,637
Angler Hours	6,261	13,925	14,708	19,355	60,250	106,351	25,576	74,170	121,059
Salmonids Caught	211	1,802	530	676	6,419	6,525	887	8,078	7,055
Salmonid Catch/Trip14	.483	.184	.16	.505	.330	.16	.491	.312

Origin of Angling Trips²

1973			1975 (Top 10)		
County	Percent	Trips	County	Percent	Trips
Onondaga	31.00%	1,756	Onondaga	23.49%	5,319
Oswego	27.00	1,535	Oneida	12.81	2,901
Oneida	9.00	512	Oswego	12.76	2,890
Monroe	5.00	288	Pennsylvania	5.57	1,263
St. Lawrence	4.00	230	Broome	5.34	1,209
Broome	4.00	225	Madison	4.24	960
Chemung	4.00	222	Herkimer	3.56	806
Other New York Counties	15.00	835	Monroe	3.45	780
Out of State	1.00	62	Cayuga	2.84	644
TOTALS	100.00%	5,665	Jefferson	2.44	552
			TOTALS	76.50%	17,324

1974 (Top 10)

County	Percent	Trips
Onondaga	23.9%	3,862
Oswego	23.0	3,724
Oneida	13.5	2,190
Monroe	5.1	822
Jefferson	3.8	620
Cortland	3.7	611
Broome	2.8	459
Madison	2.3	376
Pennsylvania	2.2	360
Steuben	1.7	278
TOTALS	82.0%	13,302

Interpreting the Data

The figures reflect the impact of angler activity along the Salmon River from the mouth to the village of Altmar during daylight hours. Angler activity at night, and in the tributaries is not accounted for. There also were considerable numbers of non-fishermen (sightseers) in the area, but their impact is not recorded in these figures.

Although the increase in angler trips (an angler trip is defined as any amount of fishing done by one individual during a one-day period) between 1974 and 1975 is much smaller than the increase between 1973 and 1974, the increase in economic impact is far more substantial. Fishing activity by Oswego County residents decreased in 1975, with 78.5% of the fishermen coming from elsewhere in New York. There was also a substantial increase in activity by out-of-state fishermen. This means that new money is being brought into the area, with larger expenditures by each individual. This is easily understood since those traveling longer distances have a greater need for lodging, gasoline, and other supplies. Future informational and promotional programs may benefit from careful study of the geographic origin of fishermen as advertising may be geared to specific localities.



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