



Spirit Lake Report

Periodic Update on Spirit Lake by the **SPIRIT LAKE PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION**

April 2023 Vol. 8

SLPOA Mission: *To develop the capacity within our community to provide a sustainable lake habitat that will allow all people who live, work and play within its environment an optimal North Idaho experience.*

Spirit Lake Fisheries Update – Carlos Comacho, Idaho Fisheries Biologist

Chinook Salmon

Chinook salmon were first stocked into Spirit Lake in 2016 as part of a statewide study to evaluate the performance of hatchery-stocked Chinook. Chinook are typically anadromous, which means they migrate to the ocean to grow and become an adult before returning to freshwater streams to spawn. However, they can do well in lakes without a pathway to the ocean. This landlocked form of Chinook does best when there is an abundant food source, such as kokanee. There are several lakes throughout Idaho, including Coeur d'Alene Lake, with Chinook populations that support popular fisheries.

Photo: Chinook Salmon from Spirit Lake caught in November 2021.



The statewide study aimed to understand how hatchery Chinook can be best used to improve certain fisheries around the state, while providing an additional angling opportunity for trophy-sized fish. A secondary goal was to evaluate the performance of growth, survival, and angler catchability of triploid (sterile) Chinook relative to diploid (fertile) Chinook. For Spirit Lake, this study provided an opportunity to see if hatchery Chinook could be used as a tool to improve the kokanee fishing. Kokanee often exist at high density and small size in Spirit Lake. The added predation by Chinook could result in a lower density, but larger average size of kokanee—something desirable to anglers.

From 2016 to 2019, approximately 2,500 triploid and 2,500 diploid 4–6-inch Chinook were stocked directly into Bronze Bay each year. Additional stockings not related to the study of 3–5-inch diploid Chinook occurred in 2020 (3,000 fish) and 2021 (5,000 fish) about five miles upstream of the lake in Brickel Creek. Unfortunately, survival from all stocking events was poor with few fish caught by anglers or during IDFG surveys. Of the four lakes within the statewide study, Spirit Lake had the lowest Chinook survival. Given the information learned, IDFG does not have plans to continue stocking Chinook into Spirit Lake. However, Chinook live to be approximately five years old and may still be encountered in Spirit Lake until 2025.

Anyone wishing to try to catch a Chinook in Spirit Lake should try trolling flies in the summer or jigging spoons through the ice. Anglers could expect to see Chinook anywhere from 10 to 28 inches. Please remember the daily bag limit is 2 fish and the minimum length limit is 20 inches for Chinook in the Panhandle Region. No Chinook smaller than 20 inches in length may be harvested. (Continued on page 4)

Become A Member – Join SLPOA

Online at www.friendsofspiritlake.com Or
Send your contact information along with a check for \$40 to
PO Box 363, Spirit Lake, Idaho 83869

WE NEED YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS

We are working toward emailing communications like this newsletter in order direct more of your membership fee to projects maintaining and improving the lake environment.

You can send us your contact information and comments online at www.friendsofspiritlake.com

President's Message from Karen Cowan

Twenty twenty-two was a year of gaining momentum as an organization. Our membership and your board of directors have risen to the challenges we face in maintaining and preserving our precious Spirit Lake. We had 3 major goals for 2022. I would like to report our progress and present the 2023 plan of action.

Membership: Increasing membership in 2022 was vital to our plan for the continued longevity of SLPOA. In 2022 we set an ambitious goal of 80% of membership paying their \$40 dues. Last year 67% of membership paid. Our board works for free but we need the dues to cover the cost of doing business. In 2022 we barely met our budget and at this time **only 26% of membership have paid 2023 dues.** We have big projects planned. Please pay your dues and help spread the word to friends and lake neighbors today. Thank YOU, to everyone who has paid for 2023!

Board of Directors: Having a strong board of directors is essential to move our vision forward in 2023. We added 5 new board members in 2022. Our Advisory Board gained expertise in areas needed to support success. We have a dedicated and talented group but we still need additional board members. Reach out if you are interested in joining our board with the unique purpose of maintaining and protecting the environmental health of Spirit Lake.

Weir/Dam Fund Raising and Replacement Project: Our board of directors are so grateful to the membership for their support of this project. We have been successful in raising funds for our much-needed dam from 2019-2023. A total of \$203,440 has been raised at this time and we have met our anticipated cost of the project. Jerry Peterson and I have been working to get the next steps completed. Permits have been approved by the Arm Corp of Engineers and the Idaho Dept of Lands. The survey work for the Idaho Dept of Lands encroachment easement has been completed and should be finalized soon. 3 contractors, approved by the City of Spirit Lake, have been given plans and are working on bid submittals. Jerry believes we will begin to receive those bids within the next week. We have established a great working relationship with the city and believe we will be ready for fall construction.

2023 Plan of Action: Our board of directors met in November and finalized a plan of action for 2023. It is based on feedback from membership and our newly revised strategic plan.

2023 Strategic Plan Action Items

- Goal 1: Objective: 1.1 lake cleanup: scheduled for June 3, 2023
- Goal 2: Objective: 2.1 weir project: funding complete, preparing for construction phase
- Goal 2: Objective: 2.3 lake quality monitoring: ongoing
- Goal 3: Objective 3.2 invasive plant and animal species: ongoing
- Goal 3: Objective 3.1 Action Step 3.1.1 Brickel Creek: ongoing
- Goal 3: Objective 3.3 Research other lakes/counties approach to wake boat concerns
- Goal 2: Objective: 2.4 Causeway study
- Administrative: Increasing membership and board members, social media, website management: ongoing

Save the Date: August 12, 2023

SLPOA's Annual Meeting and 50th Anniversary Party!

We will provide a barbeque for our membership and guests. This celebration will be at Sedlmayer's from 2:00-4:00 PM. More information will be sent out soon. I hope everyone will attend to celebrate 50 YEARS of accomplishments!

Kootenai County Back Country/Marine Patrol – Paul Sturm, SLPOA Board Director

Sergeant Ryan Miller, Recreation Safety Supervisor of the Back Country Patrol / Marine Patrol, has generously provided answers to and information for some of the questions that we have received from our members. We are grateful to Sergeant Miller and the work of the Marine Patrol to keep Spirit Lake a safe and enjoyable place for recreation.

Enforcement: According to Sgt. Miller, “On average, 7 percent of the vessels stopped are issued citations. Education is foremost but sometimes that requires a citation. Kootenai County Leads the states in citations. Spirit Lake Total Citations for 2021:15; 2022:18.”

The role of our members: Sgt. Miller suggested that “Property owners can best help the Marine Patrol by educating themselves and family members or friends on laws and ordinances. Boater safety classes can be hosted by groups where deputies will teach class and then issue boater certifications (not required in Idaho but good in states that do require them). Classes are free but need to have 10 or more to justify cost to the county.”



Some relevant resources for members include:

- The Handbook of Idaho Boating Laws and Responsibilities. <https://parksandrecreation.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/idaho-handbook-entire.pdf>
- Current Kootenai County Boating Ordinances. [CHAPTER 2 COUNTY PARKS AND WATERWAYS \(amlegal.com\)](#).
- Current Idaho State Boating Laws. [078 – Idaho State Legislature](#)
- U.S. Coast Guard Regulations. uscgboating.org
- Carriage Requirements for specific boats. [Boating | Department of Parks and Recreation \(idaho.gov\)](#)
- If homeowners/boaters wish to notify all marine deputies/supervisors of issues on the waterways please e-mail marine@kcgov.us. Deputy complaints should be referred to [Deputy Traw \(jtraw@kcgov.us\)](#) and Ryan Miller (rmiller@kcgov.us) directly.

Erosion and Dock Damage: Sgt. Miller indicated that “Idaho Department of Lands is the authority over docks and erosion. Although important to the Sheriff’s Office, it is secondary to safety. The majority of KCSO Marine patrols focus is on safety over property.” According to Sgt Miller, “Other agencies around the country are facing similar issues. It’s unknown what the best course of action is. So far, nothing appears to please all users and homeowners.”

Lake Cleanup Planned – Sponsored by SLPOA Board of Directors

When/Where: Saturday, June 3, 2023, at City Boat Launch at the Millpond Bridge, Time TBA

Purpose: To remove existing debris that presents a hazard to navigation and recreation.

Important Information:

- The removal of old docks, and owner debris is the responsibility of the property owner.
- This is a one-day cleanup event. For the safety of people using the Boat Launch no materials may be deposited before the start time of the event on June 3.

Lake Cleanup is a service provided by SLPOA and requires many hours of volunteer time to plan, coordinate and carry out. The budget for planning, promoting, collection, removal and disposal of material is budgeted at \$8000, which will come from the Association’s dues and savings. The Dam Replacement (Weir) Project consists of dedicated funds that cannot be used for lake cleanup. Lake cleanup will not impact the Weir Project.



Friends of Spirit Lake
Spirit Lake Property Owners Association
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Spirit Lake, ID 83869

Spirit Lake Fisheries Update — continued from page 1

Photo: Age-0, Age-1, and Age-2 (top to bottom) kokanee caught during trawl sampling



Kokanee

Kokanee abundance has been declining in the past few years. This trend was also seen in other locations in the region during the same time period and is likely caused by environmental factors and not Chinook predation. A survey of spawning kokanee in 2021 yielded adults ranging from 7 to 15 inches with an average of 11 inches. However, they were few in numbers. Trawling surveys from 2022 showed kokanee abundance has increased due to strong year classes of young kokanee. This should result in improved angler catch rates in 2023. The daily limit is 25 kokanee.

Black Crappie

There is a nice year class of Black Crappie in the lake right now. Crappie populations are notoriously boom and bust anywhere they are found. Anglers should take advantage of this group of fish while they are available. Most fish in June 2022 were 8-10 inches, but the occasional 12-inch fish was also caught. Look for schools of crappie to be suspended off the bottom on the east end of the lake or hiding in downed treetops and vegetation.

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Good luck and feel free to give us a call if you have questions or concerns.

Photo: Spirit Lake Black Crappie caught by an angler in June 2022

