

*Olympic National Park may eventually be the means of saving a nucleus of all of our anadromous fishes on the Pacific Coast as present safeguards are entirely inadequate.*

Arthur S. Einarsen, 1938, Oregon State College

**Fish shown on cover:**  
steelhead trout  
mountain whitefish  
coastal cutthroat trout  
Chinook salmon  
bull trout  
sockeye salmon



## For More Information

**If you have questions about information in this guide, please contact:**

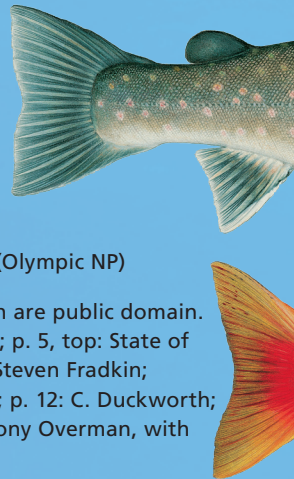
Fisheries Management Division  
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Written by Sam Brenkman (Olympic NP)

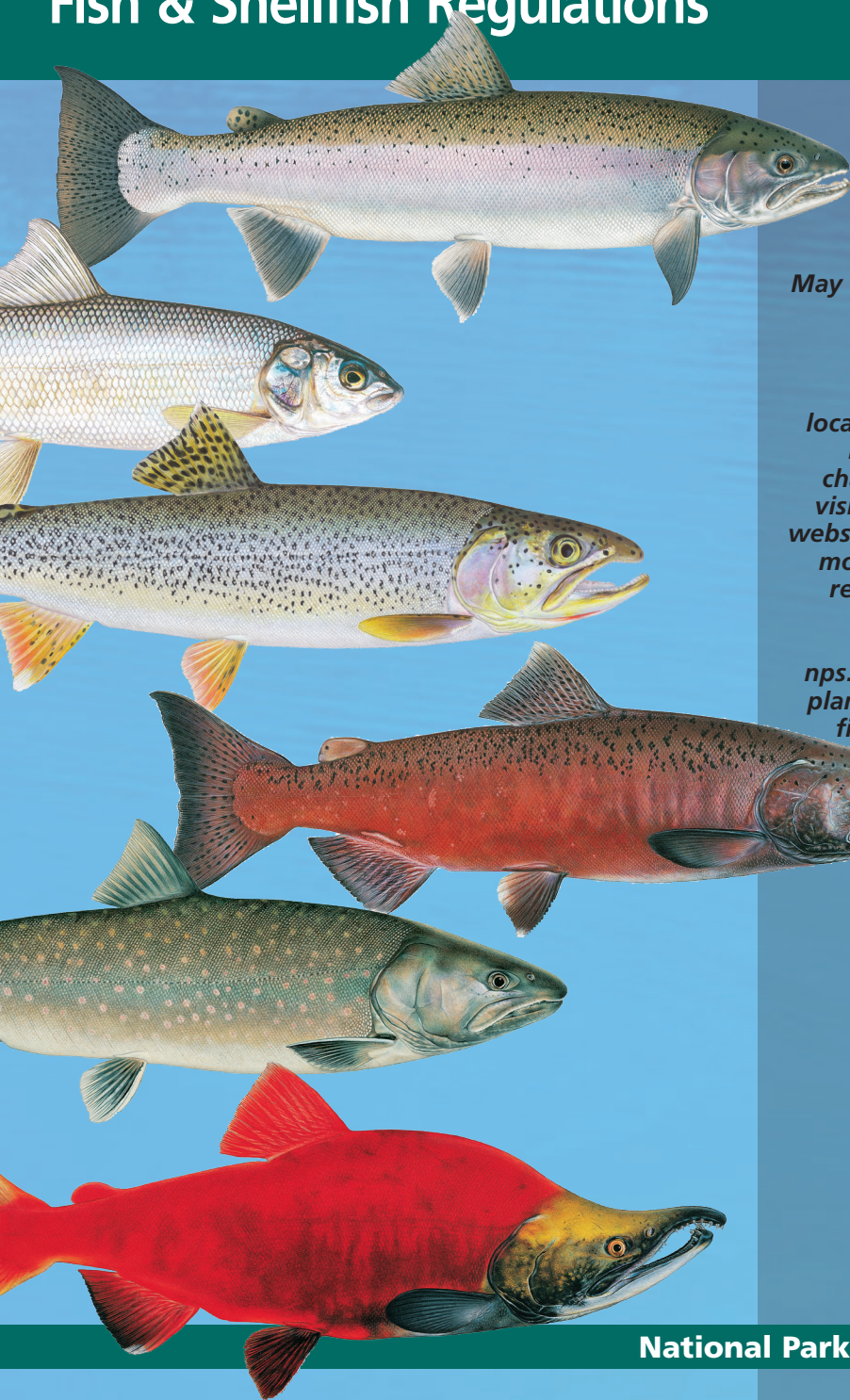
Designed by Carolyn Duckworth (Yellowstone NP) and Jerry Freilich (Olympic NP)

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# Olympic National Park Fish & Shellfish Regulations



*Effective  
May 1–April 30  
each year.*

*Please see  
locally posted  
regulation  
changes and  
visit the park  
website for the  
most current  
regulations.*

*[nps.gov/olym/  
planyourvisit/  
fishing.htm](https://nps.gov/olym/planyourvisit/fishing.htm)*

**National Park Service**

# The Reason for Fishing Regulations

## *Protect Native Fish Populations Provide Fishing Opportunities*

Three primary objectives guide Olympic National Park's fisheries management program:

1. Manage aquatic resources as an important part of the park ecosystem.
2. Preserve and restore native fishes and their habitats.
3. Provide recreational fishing opportunities for the enjoyment of park visitors, consistent with the first two objectives.

Three types of regulations protect native fish populations:

1. **General (pages 6–7):** Become familiar with the general regulations, which include information on seasons, licenses, legal gear, fish consumption advisories, closed waters, and size and possession limits.
2. **Area Specific (pages 8–13):** Become familiar with regulations for specific areas in the park.
3. **Species Specific (pages 14–15):** Become familiar with the different fish species commonly encountered in the park, their identification, and regulations specific to each species.

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***Help preserve Olympic fisheries for the future.***

## Olympic National Park has . . .



- ◆ 12 major watersheds and more than 4,000 miles of rivers and streams.
- ◆ 800 high-elevation lakes, two large lakes, and more than 70 miles of intertidal habitats along the Pacific Coast.
- ◆ Lake Ozette—the third largest natural lake in Washington State.
- ◆ 31 native freshwater species from 11 different families of fish.
- ◆ At least 70 unique populations of Pacific salmon, trout, and char.
- ◆ 6 non-native fish species: brook trout, yellow perch, largemouth bass, yellow bullhead, American shad, and Yellowstone & Westslope cutthroat trout.
- ◆ 5 fish species on the federally threatened species list: bull trout, Puget Sound steelhead, Puget Sound Chinook salmon, Hood Canal summer chum salmon, and Lake Ozette sockeye salmon.

## Geography

Olympic National Park is home to all salmon species native to the Pacific Northwest. Encompassing nearly one million acres of designated wilderness on the Olympic Peninsula of northwestern Washington, Olympic National Park is a designated World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserve that contains one of the largest contiguous areas of relatively pristine habitat throughout the range of several west coast fish species. In fact, Olympic National Park supports some of the most extensive runs of wild salmon, trout, and char remaining in the Pacific Northwest.

On the west side of the park are major coastal watersheds that include the Bogachiel, Dickey, Hoh, Queets, Quinault, and Quillayute rivers. To the north are the Elwha, Gray Wolf, and Sol Duc rivers and to the east are the Dosewallips, Duckabush, Hamma Hamma, and North Fork Skokomish rivers. These rivers drain directly into the marine waters of the Pacific Ocean, Strait of Juan de Fuca, or Hood Canal/Puget Sound. In the park's rugged terrain that ranges in elevation from 8,000 feet to sea level are two large lakes—Lake Crescent, the crown jewel of the park, and Lake Ozette, the third largest natural lake in Washington State.

*. . . great salmon threshed in the water all night long. . . At every few yards was to be seen the remains of a fish where cougar, coon, otter, or eagle had made a meal.*

**Private Harry Fisher, along the Queets River during 1890 O'Neil Expedition**

## Ecology & Economy

Olympic National Park's population of salmon species (salmonids) are critically important to the park's ecology. For example, they provide food for more than 130 species of aquatic and terrestrial wildlife species. The carcasses of spawned salmon may also contribute 20 to 40 percent of the phosphorus, nitrogen, and carbon in freshwater systems.

Olympic National Park has exclusive jurisdiction over recreational fisheries in the park. Fisheries biologists work with the State of Washington and eight treaty tribes each year to establish harvest and gear regulations. Fishing in Olympic National Park emphasizes the quality of recreational fishing rather than providing fish for human consumption. Anglers, in return, have the opportunity to fish for wild, hatchery, and non-native fish in a natural setting.

Recreational fishing has long been a popular activity on the Olympic Peninsula, and now is a multimillion-dollar industry for local communities.

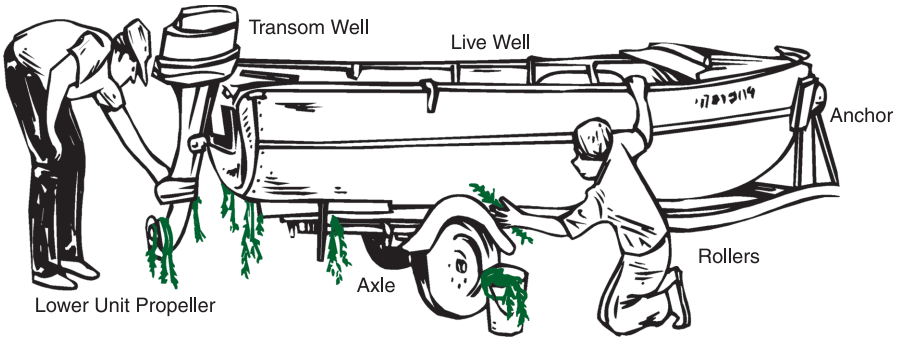
Within Olympic National Park, virtually all of the waters support highly popular sport fisheries. This popularity is fostered by the park's proximity to several metropolitan areas (e.g. Seattle, Vancouver, Victoria, Portland) that have experienced significant population growth in recent years—a trend that is projected to continue. Because of this and other regional fishing closures, fisheries managers expect increased recreational fishing pressure on the Olympic Peninsula.

Salmon returning to Olympic National Park also are harvested outside of the park during many weeks of the year in economically important commercial and subsistence fisheries. Salmon have a significant role in the cultures of treaty tribes that surround the park: Elwha Klallam, Hoh, Jamestown S'Klallam, Makah, Queets, Quileute, Quinault, and Skokomish.

### *Hoh River*



# Aquatic Invasive Species



## PREVENT THE SPREAD OF AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES

Before you enter Olympic National Park and any time you move to another body of water within the park:

### CLEAN YOUR BOAT

Mud, plants, and animals on watercraft, trailers or vehicles can cause the spread of invasive species such as milfoil, zebra mussels, and Quagga mussels. Invasive mussels cause millions of dollars of damage to boat and water systems by clogging pipes and engines. They also impact the native ecosystem and sport fisheries.

### CLEAN YOUR GEAR

1. Remove ALL visible mud, plants, and fish from your boat, trailers, waders, boots, and nets.
2. DO NOT dump any water from other sources into Olympic National Park waters. Drain your boat hull and live well in a safe location away from all park surface waters.
3. NEVER empty bait or release fish into a body of water unless they came out of it.
4. CLEAN AND DRY EVERYTHING that comes in contact with water before entering a new body of water.

## PRESERVE THESE SCENIC AND PROTECTED WATERWAYS

*Lake Crescent*



# General Regulations

## 1 Fishing Season

All waters in Olympic National Park are closed to the removal of fish and shellfish (including freshwater crayfish and freshwater mussels) except as described on pages 8–12 (freshwater fish) and page 13 (marine fish & shellfish). All waters described on pages 8–12 are open to fishing from one hour before official sunrise to one hour after official sunset.

## 2 Fishing Licenses

- A Washington State Recreational Fishing License is NOT required to fish in Olympic National Park EXCEPT when fishing in the Pacific Ocean from shore. No license is required to harvest surf smelt.
- A Washington State catch record card is REQUIRED to fish for salmon or steelhead and they must be accounted for as if caught in State waters.
- A Washington State Shellfish/Seaweed license is REQUIRED for harvest of shellfish from the Pacific Coastal Area. Harvest of seaweed, kelp, and unclassified species is prohibited (see Marine Fish and Shellfish Regulations, page 13).
- Fishing guides must apply for a commercial use authorization to conduct fishing trips in Olympic National Park. Please call 360-565-3028 for an application.

## 3 Legal Gear

- Recreational fishing in freshwater areas of Olympic National Park is restricted to artificial lures with a single point barbless hook, except as described on pages 8–12.

- Anglers must only use a single rod, reel and line that are under immediate control.
- Seines, traps, drugs, explosives, and nets (except to land a legally hooked fish or dip-net smelt) are prohibited.
- Only knotless nets may be used to land fish.
- In marine waters, up to 2 barbed hooks may be used for non-salmonid species.

## 4 Fish Consumption Advisory

**Locations and Fish:** Mountain lakes (brook trout and Lake Ozette (largemouth bass, yellow perch and northern pikeminnow).

**Pollutant:** Mercury. Some fish exceed the human consumption threshold for mercury.

The National Park Service recommends following the Washington Department of Health guidelines for safe consumption of recreationally caught fish, available at [doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/Food/Fish/Advisories](http://doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/Food/Fish/Advisories).

## 5 Boats & Rafts

Fishing from boats or other floating devices is permitted on the following rivers: Ozette, Queets below Tshletshy Creek, Hoh downstream from the launch site located ~1/2 mile from the park boundary near South Fork confluence, Hoh in the Pacific Coastal Area, Quinalt below the North Shore Quinalt River Bridge, Elwha below Glines Canyon Dam site, and Quillayute and Dickey rivers. Motorized craft are only allowed on the Quinalt below the North Shore Quinalt River Bridge, in the park's coastal portions of the Quillayute, Dickey, and Hoh rivers (in the Pacific Coastal Area), and in Lake Crescent and Lake Ozette.

## 6 Waters Closed to Fishing

- ♦ The portion of Kalaloch Creek downstream from Highway 101 bridge and the area used for domestic water supply (as posted).
- ♦ Sol Duc River from 100 yards upstream to 250 yards downstream (or as posted) at the Salmon Cascades.
- ♦ Elwha River current fishing regulations at [nps.gov/olym/planyourvisit/fishing.htm](https://www.nps.gov/olym/planyourvisit/fishing.htm)

## 7 Bait

Bait is defined as any artificial or natural substance that attracts fish by scent and/or flavor. Most freshwater areas of Olympic National Park are managed as "Selective" or "Quality" fishing areas where bait is prohibited. Areas open to bait fishing are listed on pages 8–13.

### Prohibited in all park waters:

- ♦ Possession of illegal bait.
- ♦ Using live or dead minnows, chub, or other freshwater bait fish.
- ♦ Attracting, collecting, or feeding fish by using fish eggs, roe, or food.
- ♦ Digging for bait or harvesting intertidal organisms.

## 8 Salmon Size & Possession Limits

- ♦ 12-inch minimum size limit. All fish retained larger than 12 inches count towards the daily catch limit.
- ♦ Daily possession limit: 2 daily limits in fresh form
- ♦ Hatchery steelhead and salmon may be caught and released until daily limit is retained.

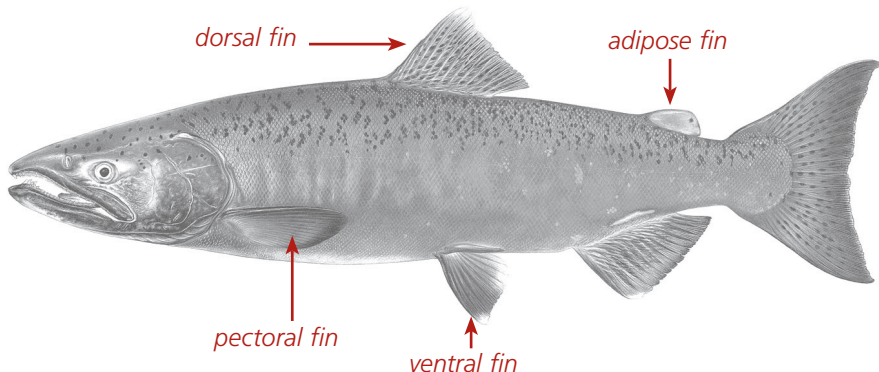
## 9 Identifying Hatchery Fish

Hatchery salmon and steelhead (except Queets River hatchery steelhead) are identified by a healed scar where the adipose or ventral fin was removed (see below). Harvest is only allowed in areas and seasons listed on pages 8–12. Queets River Hatchery steelhead are identified by a dorsal fin height of less than 2-1/8 inches.

## 10 Catch & Release All Wild Fish

All wild steelhead (unmarked and identified by intact adipose fin) must be released in Olympic National Park. All other wild (unmarked) fish species must be released unless specifically allowed on pages 8–13.

Fishing for bull trout and Dolly Varden is prohibited in all park waters. They must be safely released if accidentally caught.



# Marine Fish & Shellfish Regulations

Fish Species	Minimum Size	Daily Limit	Season
Herring/sardine/sandlance/ anchovy/surf smelt	None	10 pounds all species combined	Year-round
Lingcod	22"	2 but no more than 9 bottomfish total, regardless of species	2nd Saturday in March—3rd Saturday in October
Rockfish	None	7 BUT release all yelloweye & canary rockfish No more than 9 bottomfish total, regardless of species	2nd Saturday in March—3rd Saturday in October
Greenling	None	9 BUT no more than 9 bottomfish total, regardless of species	2nd Saturday in March—3rd Saturday in October
Cabezon	18"	1 BUT no more than 9 bottomfish total, regardless of species	2nd Saturday in March—3rd Saturday in October
Surfperch	None	12	Year-round
All other intertidal fish (unclassified)		CLOSED	

Shellfish Species	Minimum Size	Daily Limit	Season
Goose neck barnacles	None	10 pounds whole or 5 pounds stalks	November 1—March 31
Horse clams	None	7 (must keep first 7)	November 1—March 31
Littleneck/butter/manila clams/cockles	1½"	10 pounds in shell or 40 TOTAL clams	November 1—March 31
Mussels	None	10 pounds in shell	November 1—March 31
Razor clams	None	15 (must keep first 15)	To Be Announced
Dungeness crab	6"	6 males only BUT NO soft-shell crabs	Pots: December 1— September 15 Other gear: year-round
Red rock crab	5"	6 of either sex BUT NO soft-shell crabs	Pots: December 1— September 15 Other gear: year-round
Abalone, geoducks, octopus, oysters, sand shrimp, scallops (all species), sea cucumbers, sea urchins (all species), shrimp (all species), all other intertidal invertebrates (unclassified)		CLOSED	
No harvest of any fish or invertebrates for bait			

# Identify Olympic's Native Fish

## Cutthroat Trout—CT

- ◆ dark spots on light background
- ◆ only species with red slash on lower jaw



**Distribution:** parkwide

**Regulation:** catch & release only; see regulations for Pacific Coastal Area

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## Bull Trout—BT

- ◆ back and sides olive-green to brown with cream spots
- ◆ light spots on dark background
- ◆ clear dorsal fin



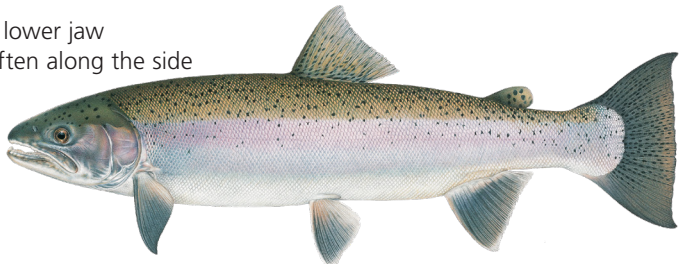
**Distribution:** parkwide except Bogachiel, Dosewallips, Duckabush, Ozette

**Regulation:** fishing prohibited

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## Steelhead Trout—ST

- ◆ no red slash on lower jaw
- ◆ reddish stripe often along the side



**Distribution:** parkwide except Dosewallips, Duckabush, North Fork Skokomish

**Regulation:** catch & release only for all wild steelhead; can keep 2 hatchery steelhead

**See page 7, item 9 for details about identifying hatchery steelhead.**

## Chinook Salmon—CH

- ◆ black gums around the teeth and lower jaw
- ◆ spots on both lobes of the tail

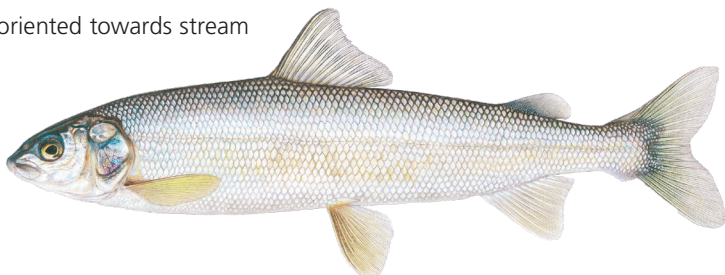


**Distribution:** parkwide except Dosewallips, Duckabush

**Regulation:** catch & release only; see regulations for Pacific Coastal Area

## Mountain Whitefish—MW

- ◆ small mouth oriented towards stream bottom
- ◆ no teeth
- ◆ large scales



**Distribution:** parkwide except Dosewallips, Duckabush, Elwha, Ozette

**Regulation:** catch & release only



### Non-native Fish

Fisheries biologists at Olympic National Park are increasingly concerned about the effects of non-native fish on native fish communities.

Mountain lakes had no

fish until they were stocked between 1913 and 1975. At least 10 different fish species were planted via helicopter, airplane, horses, and by backpackers. More than 14.5 million fish were planted into Lake Crescent alone. Today, non-native brook trout and non-indigenous rainbow trout occur in 5 of 12 major watersheds in the park. These non-native fish significantly threaten native fish, particularly the federally threatened bull trout.

# Olympic National Park's Fishery

## Management Challenges

Fishery managers in Olympic National Park face one consistent challenge: protecting and conserving native fish species while providing recreational fishing. This dual mission has led to a long history of apparently contradictory fisheries management activities:

**Hatcheries:** On the Olympic Peninsula, hatcheries release millions of hatchery salmonids each year to enhance recreational and commercial fisheries, often without regard to their impacts on native fish. Hatchery fish interbreed with wild fish, thus altering wild populations, reducing fitness, and reducing genetic variation among populations.

**Harvest:** Recreational, commercial, and subsistence fisheries influence the number of adult salmonids returning to Olympic National Park streams and rivers.

**Hydroelectric dams:** Dams on the North Fork Skokomish influence fish populations. Two dams on the Elwha were removed to restore ecosystem processes and Pacific salmonids. Elwha River restoration was one of the largest such projects in the National Park Service.



## Monitoring Fish Populations

Fisheries biologists at Olympic National Park monitor seasonal and annual trends in fish populations using these methods:

**Redd surveys:** Biologists walk along rivers and creeks counting salmon nests to determine the numbers of returning spawners.

**Snorkel surveys:** Two divers float downstream and count each fish species.

**Angler interviews:** Biologists interview anglers to estimate fishing effort and catch per hour for various fish species.

**Radiotelemetry studies:** Biologists implant radio transmitters into fish and track their migrations using fixed data stations, manual tracking, and aerial surveys.

**Genetic research:** Biologists collect and analyze fish fin tissues to determine uniqueness of populations and hybridization between hatchery and wild fish.

**Fish pathology:** National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologists share data about parasites, viruses, and bacteria that threaten native fish species.

This monitoring allows fisheries managers to detect trends in high-priority species, non-native and hatchery fish, and federally-listed fish. They also use the data to improve harvest management, fishing regulations, non-native fish control, and habitat restoration.

**Razor clam stock assessments:**

Biologists survey Kalaloch Beach to determine the number of razor clams. Data are shared with the State and Treaty Tribes to determine harvest opportunities.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Where can I see salmon and steelhead?

- ◆ Big Creek, Quinault River – sockeye salmon (Nov-Dec) near bridge crossing the stream.
- ◆ Sol Duc River – summer coho salmon (Sept-Oct) and steelhead (Apr) at the Salmon Cascades exhibit.
- ◆ Hoh Visitor Center – coho salmon (Nov-Jan).

## Do I need a State fishing license in Olympic National Park?

No, unless you are fishing the Pacific Ocean from shore.

## Do children need a license?

No, they do not need a fishing license to fish in Olympic National Park.

## Do I need to fill out a State catch record card?

Washington State catch record card is required for adults and children if fishing for salmon or steelhead. A catch record card specific to waters in Olympic National Park is available from Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife license dealers at no cost.

Salmon or steelhead that are caught and released do not need to be recorded. The catch record card requires a location code for each retained fish. Location codes for waters in Olympic National Park are:

Bogachiel River (398), Calawah River, South Fk (400), Cedar Creek (311), Dickey River (402) Goodman Creek (345), Hoh River, Mouth (350) Hoh River, Upper (348), Hoh River, South Fk (352), Kalaloch Creek (369), Mosquito Creek (373), Ozette River (388), Queets River (394) Quillayute River (404), Quinault River (412) Salmon River (396), Skokomish River, North Fk (834), Sol Duc River & North Fk (406)

## How can I help the park's fisheries?

- ◆ Learn to identify fish species.
- ◆ Keep all fish that you can confirm are hatchery-raised (see page 7).
- ◆ Retain all brook trout.
- ◆ Release all wild fish, following the guidelines below.



*Releasing a Hoh River wild steelhead*

## Handling & Releasing Fish

Please follow these guidelines when handling and releasing fish:

- ◆ Land the fish as quickly as possible to minimize the fish's fatigue.
- ◆ Leave the fish in the water while removing the hook. Do not drag the fish across land.
- ◆ Wet your hands and do not squeeze or hold the fish by the eyes or gills. Minimize time out of water for photos.
- ◆ If the fish is hooked deeply, cut the line and leave the hook in.
- ◆ Safely release fish in quiet water near point of capture.