

# Coho fishing season opens on Grande Ronde

EO Media Group

ENTERPRISE — For the second consecutive year, anglers will be able to harvest coho salmon in the Grande Ronde River.

The season started Friday, Oct. 1, and the daily bag limit for adult coho salmon over 20 inches is two. For jack coho salmon 20 inches or less, the bag limit will be five with two daily limits in possession. The regulations are in place through Nov. 30 or until further notice from the Oregon-Washington border upstream to the Wildcat Bridge, approximately seven miles upstream from Troy.

Last year's coho season was the first on the Grande Ronde since 1980.

Fish managers don't expect to see coho being caught for a few more weeks. Fish have recently begun to cross the Lower Granite Dam on the Snake River, the last dam of eight, and will need just a bit of



Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife/Contributed Photo  
**Kyle Bratcher of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife holds a coho salmon trapped at the Lostine weir in 2018.**

time to make their way up the Grande Ronde. Managers also expect that most coho catch will be incidental while anglers are targeting hatchery steelhead, and they don't expect additional anglers on the river.

"While we didn't see a lot of directed effort or catch of coho last year, it's nice to give anglers the option for harvest when they do land

one," said Kyle Bratcher, district fish biologist at the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Enterprise office. "With generally low catch rates of coho, we don't see a lot of anglers targeting them specifically."

Creel clerks will be monitoring the fishery regularly to assess potential effects to wild fish and assess success of anglers. Information

gained from creel surveys helps the ODFW minimize impacts to wild fish populations and informs programs that can improve the fishery over time. Anglers are encouraged to engage with the creel clerks when they can, as they have their finger on the pulse of the fishery and can often provide anglers with beneficial information.

In addition to a strong coho return, Bratcher says that fall chinook salmon and bull trout are also encountered on an annual basis during the Grande Ronde steelhead fishery.

"One of the great things about the Grande Ronde from a fish biologist's view is the diversity of fish species," he said.

Bratcher added that "anglers should remember that fall chinook, bull trout and wild steelhead cannot be harvested in the Grande Ronde and must be released unharmed."

Since Lostine River coho

were reintroduced by the Nez Perce Tribe and the state in 2017, Columbia River coho returns have improved including the Lostine River stock, allowing the ODFW to open the first recreational fishery in 2020 and continue with that opportunity in 2021. Officials with ODFW and the tribe expect more than 4,000 Lostine River coho to pass Lower Granite Dam, before returning to the Grande Ronde River Basin.

Coho salmon were reintroduced to provide for harvest in both treaty and non-treaty fisheries and to restore ecological function lost in their absence.

Coho, which are somewhat smaller than their salmonid cousins, the chinook, were once plentiful in the Grande Ronde basin, including the Lostine River, one of the major streams flowing from the Wallowa Mountains.

An estimated 20,000 adult coho returned to the basin annually.

But coho were extirpated from the basin as early as 1912 due to overfishing, dam construction and damage to their spawning and other habitat, according to the ODFW.

State officials tried to restore coho runs several times up to the early 1970s, but though there were enough fish to have a harvest season as late as 1980, the salmon didn't establish persistent runs.

The Nez Perce Tribe, for which coho and other anadromous fish were vital sources of food, reintroduced the salmon to the Clearwater River in Idaho.

Then, working with the ODFW, the Nez Perce in March 2017 released 500,000 coho smolts — baby fish — in the Lostine River near the town of Lostine.

Those smolts migrated down the Lostine, Wallowa, Grande Ronde, Snake and Columbia rivers to the Pacific Ocean.

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## Vigil sheds light on suicide prevention awareness

By RONALD BOND  
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — The Wallowa Valley Center for Wellness recognized Suicide Prevention Awareness Month — which annually falls in September — by shedding light on the issue.

The center held a luminary vigil on Thursday, Sept. 30, the final day of the awareness month, by placing hundreds of lit bags — many of them decorated — on the lawn and walkways in front of the Wallowa County Courthouse in Enterprise.

Tosca Rawls, WVCW



Tosca Rawls/Wallowa Valley Center for Wellness

**Lit, decorated bags lined the sidewalk leading to the front steps of the Wallowa County Courthouse in Enterprise on Thursday, Sept. 30, 2021, as part of a vigil for Suicide Prevention Awareness Month.**

public relations and development director, said the vigil was moving.

"It was powerful. People were emotional," she said. "... We want to give people the opportunity to come, remember and be supported."

The vigil was one of many held across the country to bring awareness to suicide prevention, Rawls said, and to provide a support outlet to those in the community impacted by suicide.

"There's been a couple here in the last six months. That has really rocked this community and been hard on the community," she said. "We really wanted to give people an opportunity to come together and not only recognize those who have been lost but also find hope and support

in coming together."

WVCW placed bags through the community during September and encouraged people to decorate the bags — perhaps in a manner of remembrance or support — and to come to the vigil, especially of they had dealt with a loss through suicide.

The messaging for the event, Rawls said, was "together, we can prevent suicide." She noted that aligns with national messaging from the National Association on Mental Illness.

Part of the message, too, she said, was "letting people know that nobody's alone, that we're all in this together."

In all, about 100 of the 500 bags were decorated, many with words of support or with art. Rawls said, though, that the center

placed all 500 at the courthouse for the vigil.

"We just put all of them out because we thought it would be more powerful, have more lighting," she said.

The sidewalk in front of the courthouse, she added, was pretty full with people as the event reached its 7 p.m. kickoff.

"It was pretty quiet and somber," she said. "We really let people go at their own pace, do their own thing. There wasn't anything formal. "(Show up and remember), and support each other."

She added it was the first time doing the event, but there are no plans on it being the last.

"We plan to make this an annual event during Suicide Prevention Awareness Month," she said.

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