

Bobber Doggin' November 9, 2019

Our plans for a bobber dogging outing for single soldiers at JBLM are coming together. The plan is to take single soldiers from JBLM on a chum fishing outing. We have made contact with an organization called Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers (BOSS) at JBLM and they are excited about this opportunity for their members. The plan is to meet at Swantown Marina with our boats at 10:00 AM on the morning of Saturday November 9 go to Mill Creek in Hammersley Inlet or Little Skookum in Totten Inlet (depending on the where the chum are to be found) returning to Swantown around 4:00 PM. We are planning on taking 2 soldiers per boat so the more boats we have the more we can take out. The plan is for us to provide all the fishing gear and for the soldiers to have a license, appropriate clothing and something to eat and drink.

If you are interested and want more information please let me know as soon as possible so I can let the folks at BOSS know how many we can accommodate. When you do respond it will be helpful if you could let me know how many people you can take on your boat. Contact info is ramorrow@pacifier.com

Allen Morrow

Real Chum Fun

*"It's like bobber fishing for bluegill
but you catch 10-pound-plus, tough-nosed chum salmon."*

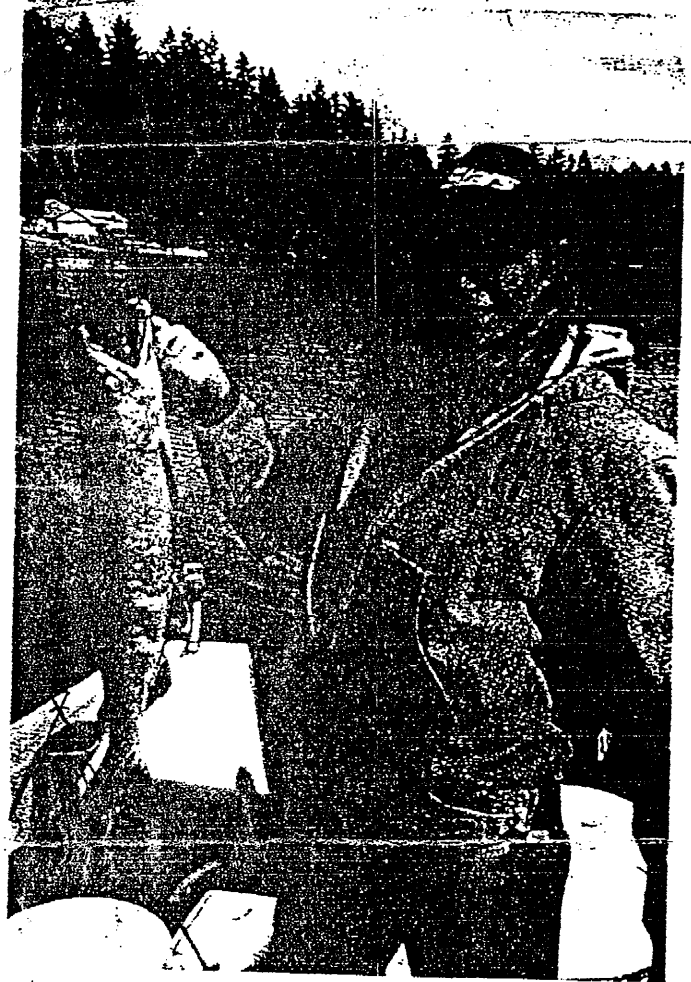
Greg Cloud

Tired of the old chum salmon "snag fisheries" in Puget Sound and Hood Canal? Tired of pitching your arm off throwing spinners and having little success on fair hooked fish? Here's a system that really works! I mean really, really works. Bobber and bait. You say, "what? Chums don't bite bait." Wrong. Not just any bait but small herring, fresh or frozen and small anchovies fresh or frozen. When I mean small, four inches long is just about the upper limit. Anything larger and the "take" percentage goes dramatically down. Strips work, but not as well as whole.

Interested? Well, here's how I developed this technique. Many years ago I was fishing Anderson Island in December for blackmouth. I had dipped some beautiful, fresh winter herring and was drawing a big fat goose egg for salmon. I kept seeing fish at 50 feet on the depth finder and kept presenting a typical south sound tight-spinning whole herring. Zip. Nothing. A boat was drifting by on the inside of my zone, had two rods out (legal at the time!), both lines vertical and both rods go off. What? The guy yelled at me to come get one of the rods. Ok, why not? We both landed his fish and both were in the upper teens. I gave him his fish and rod back and went back to where I had been spotting the fish at 50 feet.

Hummm! How about a dead drifted vertical bait? Couldn't hurt to try. I counted out the line, 47, 48, 49, 50. In 15 minutes I landed two beautiful, silver-bright chums. What did I do? I put the experience away and promptly forgot about it. In talking with Jim Ames a couple of years ago (WDFW chum biologist) on his experiences of catching chums off of the Nisqually River, he had occasionally caught these fish on small vertical non-moving baits on fifteen feet of line. Hummm! Worth a try.

Two years ago when we had the huge run of chums to Puget Sound over 600,000 fish returned to my favorite fishing area—the south sound. I decided to anchor up in some current where the chums were coming around a corner. Ten to twelve feet of water looked good, lots of fish in the "zone", and now let's see what happens. Well, I put six feet of line under a bobber, and couple of 1/0 hooks in a 3-inch anchovy and allowed the tide (current) to take the system back. Wow, 35 feet in back of the boat and the bobber goes down! I set up on it and low and behold landed a beautiful, chrome-bright chum. First bait too! Before a friend of mine showed up I had hooked and released five chums, all fair hooked. They just didn't grab it, they ate it. I showed him the system, gave him some bait and watched him get right into fish.

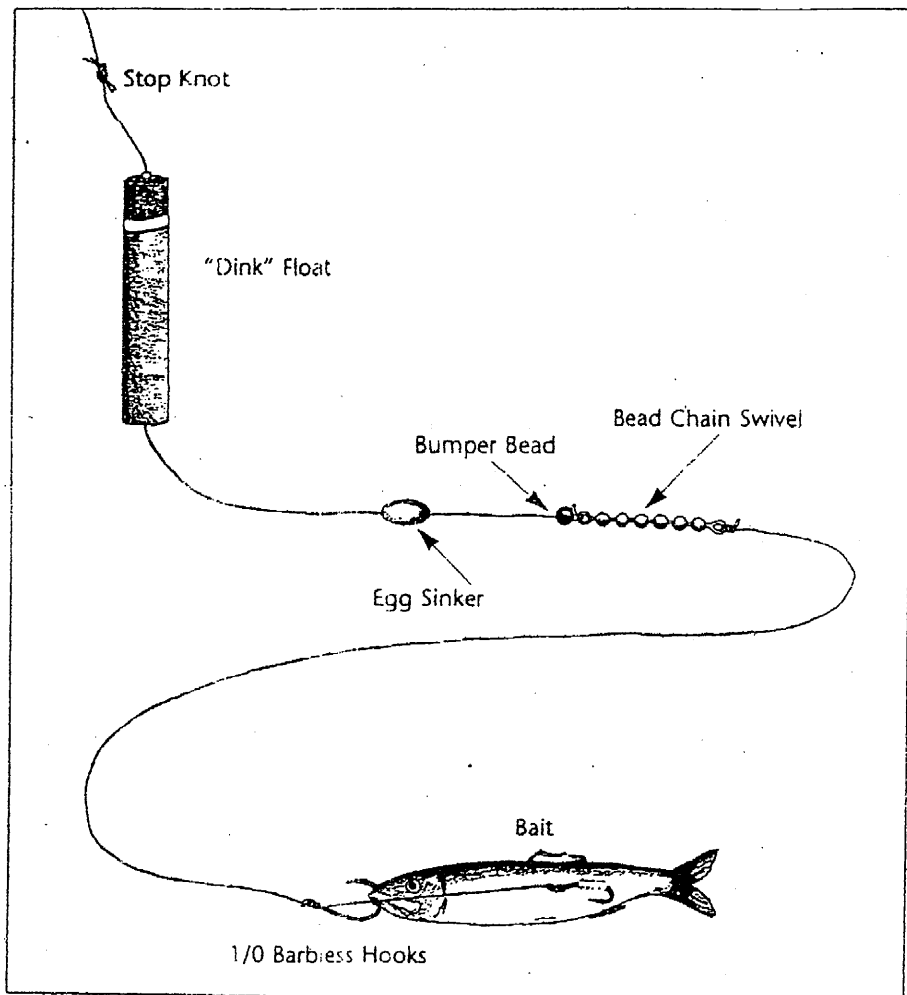


Cathy with her first chum salmon on bait. This one was kept but 15 more were released in four hours.

I have had some really good trips with this system including a 25 fish (released) day. A fairly common trip will be 10 to 12 fish.

Extremely mature fish (alligators) will take the system as eagerly as the brights will. Just think of the kid fishery here! It's like bobber fishing for bluegill but you catch 10-pound-plus, tough-nosed chum salmon. You just don't have to cast the system. You can cast away from the boat if you want, but drifting the bait back from a boat anchored in the current works great and frankly is my favorite system. Just drift the float back until

I showed him the ^{float} system, gave him some bait and watched him get right into fish.



Don't throw the anchor overboard with a huge clanking of chain and a big splash. This is a guaranteed put-off to both the fish and others fishing. Again, think stealth.

you feel it's far enough (50-100 feet), and then wind it back in and start over. I don't even hold the rod much. Free-spool the line, point the rod tip back to lessen guide/line resistance and there you go. When the bobber goes down don't be too anxious to "set up." They usually really hold on and don't spit it out. Give them a chance to take it good.

Free drifting along the shoreline can be effective but a word of caution. Chum can get very "boat shy" by doing this. Don't put the bite down by cruising over, around and through fish. Large boat wakes will put the bite down. Be

stealthy and idle around well to the outside of the fish to reset your position. Be courteous to both the fish and the other fisherfolks. If you have much current I think you're better to anchor up-current of the major concentration of the fish. Think about an electric trolling motor to sneak around. Don't throw the anchor overboard with huge clanking of chain and a big splash. This is a guaranteed put-off to both the fish and others fishing. Again, think stealth.

Locate fish by keeping your eyes open. Look for jumping or cruising fish.

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High End Spinning

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Reel Chum Fun

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And again, think stealth. Running up on these fish will send them speeding on their way.

Here are some observations:

Bait selection is very important. Herring or anchovies from 3 to 4 inches are definitely the best choice. Poor bait quality will produce less action. Whole baits beat strips. Strip baits are essentially a filet taken off the side of a whole bait and trimmed to a taper.

Place the lead hook under the chin of the bait and through the top of the head. Place (insert) the rear hook along the side of the fish about two thirds of the way back towards the tail. Tie your leaders accordingly to match the bait size.

Line weight is unimportant. They take a bait on 25-pound leader as well as 10 pound.

Poor bait quality will produce less action.

Hook size is generally unimportant. I like a 1/0 on smaller chums but on the bigger fish, 4/0 works fine. My choice is a tandem 1/0 hook setup on 10- or 12-pound line. Sharp hooks are mandatory. Chums have very hard mouths.

Areas with current are much better than slack water. You can use this system in slack areas but it's tougher. Current really seems to turn these fish on. If you have live bait (oh, boy!), slack

water can be hot. That's right, live bait.

Your choice of bobber. I like something that has a little bit of weight and use a wooden one that I can cast if I want to. "Dink floats" work just fine, especially when rear drifting. If you're not familiar with these things, think about a piece of gray foam about 6 inches long with a plastic tube through it to

Sharp hooks are mandatory.

slip up and down the line. Dink floats show up better in the fog and in choppy water. More vertical rise. The really neat thing about dinks is that with a bobber stop (nail knot made with braided dacron on the main line) the system is extremely adjustable. Just slide the stop up or down the main line and it's instant depth control. For back drifting, it's very good choice.

Leader length below the float is important. Six feet is a good depth in water from 8 to 12 feet deep. If they're in shallow water, shorten up. I've caught them in four feet of water with three feet of leader. If the fish are jumping and you're not getting bites, change the leader length. Sometimes one to two feet difference is critical to get in the zone.

Having the bait spin is unimportant in my opinion but a friend of mine seems to have good success by imparting a spin. Vertical dead drift is fine. I have yet to try the bobber system in the major migratory zones of mid Puget Sound. The fish are likely deeper so the

bobber is a problem. Dead drifting vertical at whatever depth the fish are at should work well. There is room for experimentation here.

I like having a small swivel about 18 to 20 inches up the line from the bait and above that a good-sized split shot or small egg sinker. You don't want the bait to "tail up" in any current. You want it down. See the drawing for a standard set-up.

Ok, that's it! And oh, just in case you were thinking that it's not worth going salmon fishing because of all the news about endangered salmon runs, think again. The 1988-1997 average chum

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salmon run sizes to Puget Sound were over 1.5 million fish and of that 1 million were wild fish. The largest recorded chum run was 1994 with 2.5 million fish. In a recent National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) coast-wide review, the status of Puget Sound chums are "at or near historic abundance." In other words, "the good old days" of chum fishing are right now. Have fun and spread the word. Tight lines and sore arms from catching, not casting! □