

California trout opener a cherished tradition for Golden State anglers

May 10, 2022



The traditional trout season opener the last Saturday in April remains one of California's most celebrated and anticipated outdoor traditions, drawing thousands of anglers to trout fishing destinations such as Burney and Dunsmuir in the north, Bridgeport and Bishop in the eastern Sierra, Mammoth Lakes in the south, and many other mountain communities and picturesque hamlets throughout the state.

This year, California's traditional trout season opens on Saturday, April 30, one hour before sunrise throughout many counties in the state.

In recent years, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has expanded trout fishing opportunities year-round in many waters, yet the traditional trout opener remains popular. April 30 will mark the start of the catch-and-keep season on many streams and creeks, as well as the reopening of much of the eastern Sierra to trout fishing for the first time since last fall.

Most lakes, rivers and streams have a limit of five trout per day and a 10 trout possession limit. Regulations differ on season opening and closing dates, bag limits, minimum and maximum size limits and gear restrictions. Anglers are strongly advised to check specific area regulations and opening dates in the 2022

California Freshwater Sport Fishing Regulations (PDF) available online. All anglers 16 and older must possess a valid California sport fishing license to fish within state boundaries, which can be purchased at CDFW's Online License Sales and Services website or through a licensed sales agent.

CDFW has been stocking trout in several dozen locations in the weeks and days leading up to the opener. To find more details on the specific waters planted, please see CDFW's Fish Planting Schedule. These efforts will continue throughout the season even as CDFW fishery managers work to minimize impacts resulting from a disease outbreak at two eastern Sierra trout hatcheries (PDF). Anglers are reminded that California is in the third year of a drought and may see drought conditions impact their favorite trout fishing waters, especially as summer approaches. CDFW's "Hoot Owl" Water Watchlist web page offers some voluntary guidelines for freshwater fishing during a drought year and may list specific waters where fishing should be avoided midday and other recommendations.

CDFW has many resources available to new and experienced anglers alike regarding trout fishing throughout the state. Recently, the Recruit, Retain, Reactivate (R3) team released a new R3 Harvest Huddle Hour (R3H3) prerecorded video, Introduction to Trout Fishing, which introduces different tools and techniques anglers can try out for trout fishing this season.

For anglers interested in learning more about wild trout and where to find them in their specific region, the Heritage and Wild Trout Program has resources explaining wild trout management and maps of Designated Wild and Heritage Trout Waters helping you find these special fish. For anglers that feel up to a challenge, CDFW offers the Heritage Trout Challenge, which requires anglers to catch six different forms of California native trout from their historic drainages!

Once you've gone out and caught your limit of trout, visit CDFW's R3 California Wild Kitchen web page to find guidance and recipes on how to clean and prepare your trout for you and your family.