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Melting ice; great shore fishing

Melting Ice Means Great Shore Fishing

DWR lists waters to try in southern Utah

The calendar says spring arrived three weeks ago. But anglers in southern Utah know different.

They know spring is “really” here when the ice starts to come off the surface of southern Utah’s fishing waters. When that happens, they know hungry trout will be cruising the shorelines of lakes and reservoirs in the area, looking for their first meal of the spring.

They know some of the best fishing of the year is here!

Try these waters

Mike Ottenbacher, regional aquatic manager for the Division of Wildlife Resources, says the ice has melted off several reservoirs in southern Utah. And it will be melting soon at many others.

If you want to get in on the action, Ottenbacher suggests trying the following waters:

- **Otter Creek State Park:** Otter Creek Reservoir will likely be ice-free by the time you read this, and some nice rainbows will be cruising its shoreline. A good water year in the Sevier River Basin has filled the reservoir almost to capacity. That means conditions will be good for fish this year. The trout will grow fast through the summer. If the wind is blowing on the reservoir, try fishing the stream immediately below the reservoir. Or you can go farther downstream and fish the portion of the stream that flows through the Kingston Canyon Wildlife Management Area.
- **Minersville Reservoir:** The ice is gone and the trout are back! Minersville Reservoir has suffered through some tough times in recent years. Poor water quality (probably related to some fires in 2007) and low water caused most of the trout in the reservoir to die during the winter of 2008 - 2009. The trout the DWR stocked in 2009, however, have survived and have grown well. Sampling at the end of March 2010 showed good numbers of 14- to 18-inch trout. A few older fish—more than 20 inches long—were also found during the sampling. An added bonus is a growing population of smallmouth bass. Good numbers of chunky bass should be available later this summer when the water warms up and the bass become active.

(more)

- **Newcastle Reservoir:** The ice is off this reservoir west of Cedar City. You can catch a variety of fish here, including rainbow trout, smallmouth bass and wipers. Try for the trout now, and then go for the smallmouth and wipers after the water warms up a bit.
- **Enterprise reservoirs:** Two reservoirs located west of Cedar City. The upper reservoir is back in production after several years of low water because of work on its dam. The ice is gone, and the water level is coming up at both reservoirs. Both contain rainbow trout; the lower reservoir was stocked with catchable-sized rainbows in late March.
- **Quail Creek State Park and Sand Hollow State Park:** These two reservoirs down in Dixie—Quail Creek and Sand Hollow—stay ice-free through the winter. Both contain largemouth bass and bluegill. Quail Creek Reservoir also has some rainbow trout. The bass and bluegill fishing picks up in mid-April and early May when the water nears 60 degrees.
- **Lake Powell:** Lake Powell is a perennial spring favorite. There isn't any water in Utah—or the rest of the West—that compares to it. Look for fishing to improve around “spring break” time and to keep getting better. The rising water level is flooding the vegetation that has grown at the lake in recent years. And that means better habitat for the fish and great fishing in 2010.
- **“Future” spring fishing spots:** Heavy snowpack and cold spring weather in southern Utah means ice-off will be a little later than normal at many waters this year. Some spots to try as they open up later this spring include Fish Lake, Panguitch Lake, and lakes on the Beaver Mountain and Boulder Mountain. The large amount of snow received in southern Utah this past winter should result in full reservoirs and lakes. And that means great fishing through the summer.

Ice-off and spring fishing tips

The neat thing about fishing at ice-off and during early spring is that about any technique or type of gear you use will work. And you don't need a boat to be successful. In fact, in the spring, fishing from the shore is often better than fishing from a boat. Gravel shorelines and rocky points near shore attract large rainbow trout that are cruising the shorelines looking for a place to spawn.

For the latest tips on the best techniques to use and “hot” lures, flies and baits to try, check out the latest fishing reports at www.wildlife.utah.gov/fishing/reports.php.

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