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It's salmon time!

By FRED DAVID

Only the weather can dampen the spirits of Lake Ontario salmonid fishermen this Sunday when the first mini-fleet leaves the shores in search of coho and chinook salmon.

Anglers, realizing the sport in catching a salmon over its table value, will sail from the mouth of the Salmon River at 7 a.m. in an attempt to locate the salmon. The armada will

assemble at the Lighthouse launch area and cover the shoreline and extend several miles out. You're invited to bring your trolling equipment and look too.

The salmon should begin schooling to prepare a spawning run up lake tributaries. The angling sport has yet to be developed in the lake's Oswego County area. Interested fishermen, lead by Syracuseans Ray Finney and Dick Streich, are anxious to get local lake methods developed and schools located. They'll lead Sunday's search.

Interest is still high despite recent warnings that Lake Ontario salmon should not be eaten until tests for PCB, an industrial waste, is done on the fish. The chemical is associated with skin irritations, still-born births and some deaths.

The coho and chinook salmon are a fighting fish that test the ability of anglers. New York State has been in the Lake Ontario salmon "business" for six years and this fall's season is expected to be the biggest yet.

Meanwhile, fishermen are expected to continue their anxiety in the fishery. The tributary season begins Aug. 15 when snagging becomes legal. Estimates of 25,000 persons and more are expected to visit lake trips each weekend this season in search of salmon.

The snagging regulation was allowed to utilize the river run when the salmon stop feeding. The salmon die after spawning.

Snatching regulations call for hooks with a gap of no more than 3/4 of an inch. Other

than snatching, the only other legal method of taking salmon from the rivers up to the first falls or dam impassable by fish is the conventional way. Guns, clubs, catching with hands, bow and arrow or nets are illegal.

Conservation officials have separated the Salmon River (Oswego County) into two areas for fishermen. A no-snagging section has been designated in the upper reaches and will be clearly marked before Friday's snagging opener.

Although angling is permitted on the river all year, the busiest season is the snagging one. So to give the conventional fishermen a chance at enticing the fasting salmon, a 1.7-mile portion is reserved for fly or lure fishermen only.

The restricted portion runs from Pineville Bridge on County Rt. 48 upstream to a point 50-yards upstream from the abandoned railroad bridge abutment.

Regulations for this special section allow only single hook point per line and any fish snagged, regardless of specie, must be returned.