IFW Fishing Report For April 8, 2016

Region A – Sebago Lakes Region

“The fishing in the southern part of the state is really exceptional for this time of year,” says IFW fisheries biologist Francis Brautigam.

Brautigam was recently out on Sebago talking with anglers who were fishing. Most of the boats had 2-4 landlocks, and were reporting excellent fishing. Three-year-old salmon on Sebago are running in the 16-18 inch size. Smelt runs on Sebago and throughout the region are earlier than usual.

“On Sebago, as soon as we got some nice weather, people were out there,” said Brautigam. “The water is 35 degrees, and people are picking up some pretty nice salmon, including some that are reaching 23 inches.”

Anglers trolling Sebago have also been getting some nice togue in the slot range from 23-33 inches. “Anglers are saying how much fun it has been to bring in a 5 to 8 pound togue trolling with fly gear,” said Brautigam.

There is also some excellent fishing on many other ponds, particularly waters that were stocked in anticipation of youth fishing events that later got cancelled due to poor ice conditions. “There wasn’t a lot of ice fishing activity this winter,” said Brautigam who suggested Crystal Lake and Lower Range Pond as destinations for some quality brook trout.

Flows for river fishing have been on the high side, and they still are a little on the muddy side. “Still a bit early for river fishing,” said Brautigam.

On Little Sebago, anglers are talking about the big rainbows they are catching.

“We’ve been stocking rainbows there since the late 2000’s, and the last few years we are getting more and more reports of good rainbow catches in the springtime,” said Brautigam. “Anglers are catching rainbows in the high teens with streamers.”

If you are looking for a little variety, anglers on Kennebunk pond in Lyman are catching brookies, rainbows and brown trout.

Region B – Central and Midcoast Area

If you want wet a line, you may want to head towards some of the coastal streams that are part of Region B.
“The coastal rivers like the St. George, Medomak and Pemaquid were heavily stocked this spring and have fish that range up to 16 inches. Inland, you should try the Nezinscot,” said IFW fisheries biologist Jason Seiders. “The fishing should be fantastic.

Another spot that is getting some good early season reviews is Lake St. George.

“The fish we saw in our trap net surveys were in the best condition we’ve seen in a decade,” said Seiders. “That, coupled with the lack of ice fishing pressure, has the lake fishing really well. Anglers are catching good numbers of salmon, with a lot of the fish in the three to four pound range.”

Smelts are the key to landlock health in Lake St. George, and the smelts in Lake St. George are shoreline spawners.

“This trolling near the shore is your best bet,” said Seiders, who added that the salmon are looking like footballs.

If you are looking to bass fish this spring, one spot you may want to try is the Great Meadows Stream, which flows from North Pond into Great Pond. This used to be closed to watercraft due to a milfoil infestation but it is now open to paddle craft. You can put in at a hand carry launch at the Route 225 bridge. The current there is slow, so you can also paddle back to where you put in.

“There is tremendous bass fishing there, particularly as you get close to the mouth of the stream,” said Seiders. “It’s also a beautiful area to paddle with lots of shorebirds and waterfowl, and it’s a great area for some really large fish.”

**Region C -- Downeast**

With the short ice fishing season this past winter, springtime Downeast should bring a lot of opportunities.

“Early season should be terrific,” said IFW fisheries biologist Greg Burr. “With the light fishing pressure we had this year, there should be some very good early season fishing.”

Burr said that there have been a few anglers out, but they are “not catching a whole lot. That should start to turn as soon as we get a little warmer.”

Most of the lakes in the region are now ice-free and open. West Grand Lake went out last Saturday, one of the earliest ice outs ever. Grand Lake Stream was also fishing well early, but the recent rains have bumped up the flows to 1200 cfs which is not conducive to river fishing.

As far as where to go salmon fishing this spring, Burr thinks that West Grand, Beech Hill, Branch, Donnell, Green, Tunk and Long Pond should all have some very good salmon fishing this spring.

**Region D – Rangeley Lakes**
Spring is here in the southern part of the region, but as you go further north, it is still winter, with ice covering most of the lakes and ponds.

Ice is out on Porter, Crowell, and Norcross, and there have been a few people fishing,” said IFW fisheries biologist Bobby Van Riper. “There also were some anglers out on Temple Stream which we will be stocking next week.”

Recent winds and rain should open up some other ponds soon, if not already.

“Ice on many of our ponds hasn’t been safe since the middle of March, and now it’s beginning to break up,” said Van Riper, “Clearwater will be open soon if it is not already.”

Stocking in the area hasn’t really begun yet, but there are still some ponds that have quite a few holdover fish from the lighter than normal fishing pressure this past winter. However, be aware that these fish are fairly sluggish due to water temps that are still in the 30s and low 40s.

**Region E – Moosehead Region**

Thoughts of an early spring have disappeared in the Moosehead region.

“There was a lot of anticipation in March about getting some extra open water fishing due to the warm winter, but those thoughts have been put on ice in the Moosehead Lake area,” said IFW fisheries biologist Tim Obrey. “Right now, many of the lakes and ponds south of Dexter are ice free, but we still have winter-like conditions to the north and west.”

The general rule of thumb in this region is that Sebec Lake will be ice free about 7-10 days after the Piscataquis River opens up, and then another 7-10 days for Moosehead to be ice free.

“Based on this theory the ice would be out of Maine’s largest lake around the 11\(^{th}\) of April,” said Obrey, “Unfortunately the theory doesn’t account for having the river re-freeze like some of it did earlier this week.”

Obrey said it won’t be much longer, especially with the heavy rain we just had, as it will start to eat away at the remaining ice on our lakes. He also said that Brookfield plans very high flows on the East Outlet and Moose River in the near future which will make them unfishable for a while, but will also open large areas near the mouths of the rivers.

“The recent rains will also fill lakes and ponds which will pull the ice away from shore and create some good areas for anglers to drop a line,” said Obrey, “This is a great time to hit some of the smaller ponds and lakes.”

“The water is still very cold and the trout, salmon, and togue will be cruising the shoreline. Any place where a brook or stream enters a lake should have some open water after this weekend. The brooks and streams themselves will be very high, but they are usually very cold this time of year and not as productive as lakes and ponds. We’ll have to wait until water temperatures rise and flows settle before the stream fishing improves.”
Region F – Penobscot Region

If you look at lakes and ponds in the Penobscot region, it still looks like winter with most lakes and ponds still frozen. However, there a few places you can fish.

“Cold Stream Pond went out last Thursday, and this week we saw a few guys fishing,” said IFW fisheries biologist Nels Kramer.

On East Musquash, the lake is half open, but there is still ice at the boat ramp so anglers haven’t had a chance to get out there. The recent rains and winds should take care of that if they haven’t already.

About the only anglers who seem to be out fishing right now are some of the younger kids taking advantage of the kid’s only waters.

“The kids have been catching some nice trout in the outlet of Cold Stream Pond,” said Kramer, “I’ve also got some reports of kids catching some good fish in the Burlington Fire Pond.”

Region G – Aroostook Region

If you are planning to go fishing in the northern part of Aroostook county, you are going to have to wait a bit longer.

“We had two mornings earlier this week where the temperature was below zero,” said IFW fisheries biologist Frank Frost, “and we still have full ice cover on our lakes and ponds.”

Rivers and streams have opened up, but most are still too high to fish. It also may take a while for rivers to subside to a fishable level as there is still two feet of ice on lakes and ponds, and snowpack to the north and west.

About the only area that you can fish is in the Fish River below the falls. There are also some very minor ice openings in areas where tributaries flow into lakes.

With all this cold weather, when will the ice leave?

“Probably the first week of May, depending on the weather. For the last twenty years or so, that’s generally been the week of ice out,” said Frost.