

## Pre Spawn Reservoir Walleye Location

What I am going to relate to you are some basic guidelines to locating Pre Spawn Walleyes in Reservoirs. I'll focus on areas that concentrate active and therefore catchable fish. Most of this knowledge was gleaned from fishing the impoundments of the Missouri River but these rules will easily apply to all types of Reservoirs regardless of the region they are to be found.

While current plays a significant role in the movements of Reservoir fish during all seasons, during the Pre Spawn Period it is the *major attraction*. They are genetically programmed to travel towards current (upriver). This can actually begin as early as the previous fall, particularly in the case of males. The fish move here in order to stage in areas adjacent to current in anticipation of their upcoming spawning rituals. Once they have arrived they tend to be on the aggressive side and at times can be quite easy to catch. The larger females will not be far behind and although a bit more selective in their feeding habits they can still be had, under the right conditions.

The most obvious place to look is the stretch of river directly below the Dam. While this is always a good bet, you can also be assured that nearly every boat on the water will be piled up within a couple miles downstream. If you are interested in seeing how many States are represented and what everybody is running for boats and equipment this year, then this is the place for you. If you would like to get into some Walleyes that are much less pressured and picked through, do not be afraid to head downstream to begin your search. You won't have to share the given number of fish available in each spot with numerous other anglers and the fish are generally easier to entice.

Major creek arms are a magnet for fish during this time of year and there will usually be at least some influx of water on all but the driest of years. The larger arms typically provide some of the best spawning sites available in most impoundments. The first few outside points that intercept the old creek channel leading into these arms are always a good place to start. Look for large points that provide a feeding flat where the creek channel and river channel meet. Add some rocks and or remnant wood and you are really in business. This serves as a large buffet table when conditions are optimum and allow the fish quick access to nearby deep water where they can lounge and relax between feeding forays.

Bends in an otherwise straight stretch of the old channel are another high percentage spot. The curve will force water flow up and over the old banks and onto the adjoining flats. During periods of increased releases this effect intensifies and the fish will move up and turn on in a moments notice. When the current speed kicks up be ready to get up shallow to take advantage of it. By shallow I mean water that is skinny as a couple of feet or less. Forget everything you have learned about structure fishing and get yourself and your baits up where the fish are chowing down. If you don't you'll miss out on some of the most furious action you will ever experience.

Small intermittent creeks are a vastly overlooked option. All that is required is a minute amount fresh water coming in to stack fish directly in front and downstream of the confluence. This water will be warm and dirty and you'll find that it will supercharge the fish. Each time out, study the shoreline and make note of large draws and any other surroundings that will concentrate water flow after a rain. These spots may not otherwise be that exciting but after a rain or snowmelt they can come alive. An additional attraction is that there will be a small delta of a slightly higher

bottom created by inflowing material and wood debris.

All of the previously mentioned locations are made good or better largely due to the presence of at least moderate current. This can't always be counted on and if you can figure out the Corp of Engineer's reasoning behind anything that relates to our Reservoirs please let me and everyone one else in the Upper Plains States know. With lack of current the Walleyes will not be as shallow and active but they can still be found and made to bite.

I have found Walleyes to be extremely lazy and opportunistic. They tend not to expend much energy unless the odds are stacked in their favor. When not chasing down a meal they will fall back to the nearest deep water and rest. In a reservoir environment this is usually tight to the old river channel. They can be hard to mark on your electronics due to the fact they are on sharp slopes and won't show up in the blind spot created by the break. Rest assured they are there and take the time to fish for them, even though lethargic, they can be tempted. Similar to an overweight person on the couch, while not willing to drag themselves to the kitchen for a snack, if you walk by with plate full of their favorite cookies I can guarantee you that they will reach out and grab one. This applies to both fish and humans.

There are multiple presentations that will work in conjunction with the above scenarios. This is an immense topic best left for another discussion. I hope I have shed a little light on this subject and it will lead to more success and therefore more enjoyment on your early season Reservoir outings.

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