

Spring Rise

Well, it is now official-Spring has finally broke Winter's tenacious grip. With the resulting snow melt, water is flowing and collecting everywhere. In many cases, where folks would prefer it didn't; thus causing considerable damage, and at the very least some major inconveniences. But we need to remain positive and put this all into perspective.

Basements will eventually dry up and roads will be repaired. Farmers, no matter how much coffee shop complaining is done, will get into the fields. By choosing to live in the upper Midwest, this is all just ongoing obstacles we face. Some years are just a bit more extreme than others. While this does cause problems, if you are a fisherman-there is a very bright side to all of this.

That being that the high water we are currently experiencing creates an absolute explosion in the entire aquatic ecosystem. By water inundating vegetated shorelines in the form of grass, brush, cattails, and trees-nature has created the perfect spawning areas for many species. Another major factor is that many larger bodies of water become interconnected with smaller private slough type waters that go largely un-fished and are often teaming with perch-allowing migration to more accessible lakes. All of this newly created cover will serve as a perfect nursery for young of the year fish, protecting them from predators that find them to be the ideal eating size. Allowing them a much higher chance of surviving to a size that we find acceptable for catching...and of course eating a few ourselves. Shouldn't take long as growth rates increase with the explosion of invertebrates that fuel them quickly from juveniles to adults.

We now need to focus on our approach to catching them. This is obviously the fun part, but leaves many a bit puzzled when the water is this high. The first thing we must adjust is our mindset. Don't look at all the newly flooded brush, etc. as a snag prone obstacle, but rather an opportunity to catch more fish. You know they are in there, you just need to modify your tactics accordingly, and wrench them from this cover.

There are a few tried and true methods that work running the gamut from low, medium, and high on the scale of aggressiveness. Deploying slip bobbers is probably the most recognized, laid back and accepted method. Pitching jigs dressed with artificials such as Powerbait and Gulp is downright good and done properly can be relatively snag free. The most aggressive-and in my mind the most fun-tactic is to throw crank baits right into the thick of things. Sounds like an absolutely recipe for disaster and a good way to relieve yourself of a fair amount of cash in the form of lost lures. There is a solution I have found to be nearly foolproof and allows you to recover every lure you manage to hang in wood. Simply replace the standard split rings on your plugs with a titanium Ultimate Smart link (www.ultimateluresaver.com). Unique in that they are a "memory metal" that will open up under steady pressure, thus releasing the offending hook and freeing you lure. Simply snap in a new treble and you are right back in business. No, they will absolutely not release fish in the same manner. Come calibrated to several line strengths so you would break off long before you ever lost a fish to one. I personally find an ideal combination to be the 10lb version matched to 10lb Fireline.

Embrace what nature has given us this year, learn something new, catch fish, and enjoy the experience.