

OF THE OUTDOORS:

Released Water Means Bite's On

BY GARY HOWEY
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High water with heavy flows following a rain makes for tough fishing.

These seem to be the norm this year as there's high water everywhere, coming down every creek, river as well as in all the ponds and lakes.

The bad side of this is that all the water running into the lakes and rivers, muddies up the water, making it hard to fish without getting your crankbaits, jigs and live-bait rigs all gunked up.

The old wives tale, "with every bad there comes some good" is very true in this instance, as water flowing into any body of water means the fish will be on the move.

It might take a few days for the water to settle down and the swift current to subside, but you can bet when there's a rise in the water level, with water being released downstream the fish will become active.

The reason for this is pretty



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basic: the influx in water will bring new food sources down stream.

Worms, insects, zoo plankton as well as the baitfish and fingerlings that were

tucked safely into the creeks and backwaters are now being flushed downstream into the rivers and lakes, bringing a smorgasbord to the fish that will be moving towards the incoming water on their way to see what's on the menu.

In the river, sandbars and vegetation that were once high and dry will now become flooded and the insects and other material that was lying in these areas are now in the water.

In a river, this influx of water and new food sources will attract the fish to the slack water located

behind sandbars and points.

Fish, both big and small will move towards the incoming water to feed on what's being washed or forced downstream.

The biggest benefit of high water in reservoirs located on the Missouri River will reach capacity and water will need to be released through the dams.

Some of the deepest water in the system with the most hospitable water temperatures is located directly above the dam and because of this, there will be large concentrations of fish in these areas.

Once the gates are open to release the excess water from the lake a tremendous amount of water is released, flushing thousands of gallons of water and fish through the gates into the river system below.

On the Missouri as well as on other river systems, our dams are used for generating electricity and in order to drop the elevation of the lake, excess water may need to be run through the turbines of the dam as well, drawing fish on the upstream side through the generators, down into the river.

Fish sucked through the turbines can be cut up or injured and then deposited in the fast water down stream, dumping new fish into the river as well as adding a new food source downstream.

As the water levels rise and currents increase, the fish will move upstream into the more oxygenated water to feed on what's being washed through the dam.

When water is being released, the fishing below generally improves, as numerous species of



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Andy Johnson of Yankton is pictured with a 10.5-pound walleye he caught on a crawler while shore fishing below Gavin's Point Dam after a high water release.

fish will have been relocated below the dam.

It's always good to keep an eye on the information that the local paper has as far as the amount of water or CFS that's being released through a dam, as a large increase is usually a pretty good indicator that there may be new fish coming through the turbines.

You never know what you might catch once new water has come into the river, as this is when anglers will start to pick up

numerous varieties of fish, some which may not have been common in the area before the water release.

Prior to high water releases, the fishing below the dam may be slow, but several days after high water releases fish will become active.

When fishing below a dam that has released new water, you'll want to keep your tackle pretty basic, as you won't need anything fancy to catch fish during this time.

Try to use as light weight of line as possible with a simple live bait rig consisting of a hook, split shot or lightweight sinker tipped with a crawler, leech or minnow being a good bet when fishing after water releases.

Some anglers like to use heavy weights to hold their bait in the current, keeping it on the bottom.

Unfortunately that may be where your rig stays as the heavy current can jam the weight tight into the rocks and other bottom obstructions where it may become part of the bottom structure once you've snagged up.

The lighter rigs will drift along with the current like the baitfish that have come through the dam, eventually settling in the slack water pockets where the game fish will be waiting for lunch to arrive.

No matter how you fish, be it from boat or shore, the next time there's a big water discharge, give the fishing downstream a try as there's bound to be fish moving up to see what all the fuss is about.

Gary Howey, Hartington, Neb., is the producer/host of the *Outdoorsmen Adventures* television series, which can be seen throughout the upper Midwest and on www.MyOutdoorTV.com. For more information on the outdoors go to www.outdoorsmenadventures.com.

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