

Outing to the Umpqua River to Target Smallmouth Bass

On Thursday July 23, I will lead an outing for the Rogue Flyfishers and Southern Oregon Fly Fishers to the Umpqua River to fish for smallmouth bass. Bass are extremely abundant in the mainstem Umpqua and South Umpqua Rivers and can provide fast action for anglers. Many of the fish tend to be small, but a day of fishing usually produces several big ones. While many of our local fisheries slow down during the heat of summer, the smallmouth bass fishery in the Umpqua is going strong, making it a great destination for fly fishers during July and August.

We will meet at 9:00 AM in the Dairy Queen parking lot off Hwy 138 immediately west of Interstate 5 Exit 136 and then caravan to the river from there. We will float a section of the river just west of Sutherland between the Umpqua Landing and James Wood Boat Ramps. You will need a driftboat, pontoon boat, raft, or other craft suitable for use on a river to make the float. This is generally a relatively easy float, but with low water, there will be some shallow, rocky riffles that will require precise maneuvering. For those that don't feel comfortable rowing down the river or don't have a boat suitable for running through rapids, it is productive to fish the miles-long pool at Umpqua Landing with a small boat, float tube, or other watercraft, entering and exiting the river at that one ramp.

Five or six-weight rods are ideal for the smallmouth bass in the Umpqua. An intermediate or slow-sinking line is most useful, but having a second rod with a fast sinking or sink-tip line is beneficial to get the fly down quickly in deeper or faster areas. You should also bring a floating line if you want to fish surface flies. Straight 8 to 10-pound monofilament or fluorocarbon is adequate for a leader. A wide variety of flies will work, but Woolly Buggers, Clouser Minnows, and small streamers are generally top producers. If conditions are right, small poppers can produce some exciting top-water action. Olive, brown, and yellow are typically good colors. A small, brown over yellow Clouser Minnow is often a very effective fly. Be sure to bring food, plenty of water, sunscreen, a hat, and all your usual fishing and boating gear.

If you have not fished the Umpqua for bass, come give it a try. If you have, come spend a fun day fishing with your fellow club members. Please email me at tmdrhaight@outlook.com to let me know if you plan to attend, so I can better plan the logistics. If you have a seat available and are willing to take a passenger, please let that as well.

David Haight