

Anchor Fishing for Salmon on the California Delta

Chinook salmon make their way up the California Delta in large numbers between August and November of each year. They eventually spawn in the upper regions of the Sacramento, American, Feather, Mokelumne, and Cosumnes Rivers. A relaxing way to target these large game fish is anchor fishing.

Anchor fishing won't yield the same numbers of fish you would catch trolling, but it is a more relaxed style fishing.

Tackle

Rod

You'll want to use about a 6.5' to 8.5' medium heavy rod rated for 10-30 lb test. A fairly soft tip is needed to detect the action of your lure.

Reel

Any mid sized casting reel will work just fine. Spinning reels can also be used. I like to use Abu-Garcia Ambassadeur model 6500 reels.



Main Line

For my main line, I use 65 pound test braid. If you use braided line, be sure to use a long limber rod that will help to absorb the shaking action of a fighting salmon.

Net

Use the biggest net you can find, as long as it fits within the current regulations.

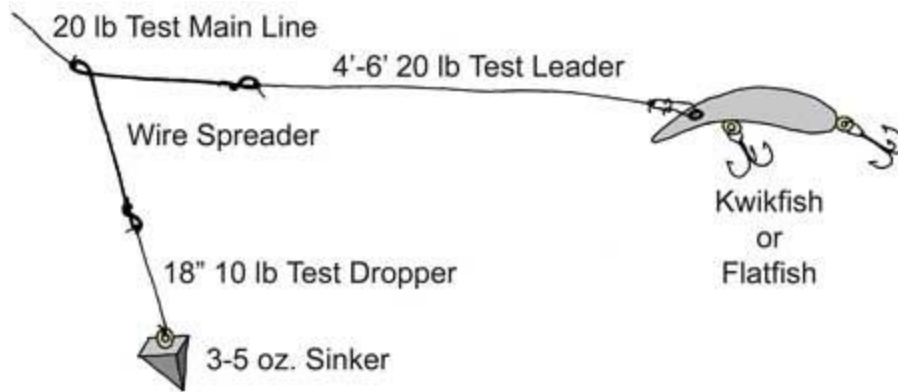
Setup

Most people use a "V" shaped metal wire called a spreader to separate their lures and sinkers. The advantage to using a spreader is that keeps the lure up in the strike zone while the sinker remains near the bottom.

On the top end of the spreader I tie a 4' to 6' leader to a Kwikfish or Flatfish. The K-14 Kwikfish is the standard that most people use. In slower water you will need to go smaller and in faster water you will need to go bigger. You are looking for a nice steady wobbling motion. Adjust the

size of lure to match the current where you are fishing. I use 20 lb test monofilament or fluorocarbon as leader line.

On the bottom end of the spreader I typically use about an 18" leader tied to a 1 to 4 oz. sinker. I use a light line like 10 lb test on this leader in case I get snagged. That way, the bottom leader breaks and I still get my spreader and lure back.



Location

Anchor fishing is best where the current is constantly moving out towards the sea. The lower stretches of the delta where the tides reverse direction are not very good for anchor fishing. Most anchor fishing is done on the Sacramento River above Clarksburg.

Some Popular Locations

- The 'Freeport Line' just below the green Freeport Bridge in Sacramento. This spot is only good if there is enough current, usually on the outgoing tide.
- Just below Discovery Park past the mouth of the American River.
- The area downstream of the mouth of the Feather River by the Verona recreation area. Fish along the color line and downstream above the wing dams.

Technique

Starting Out

You need to find an area that is between 12' and 25' deep. This is the best depth for catching salmon in the river. You also need to find an area where there is enough current to give your lure sufficient wiggling action.

Once you find a good location, anchor and get your rig set up. Add some scent to your lure before putting it into the water. Use scents to mask your human odors. The amino acid L-Lysine that is found on your hands is also produced by salmon predators like sea lions. Salmon are going to shy away from anything that reminds them of a predator. This is why I always wash my hand with scent-free sportsman's soap before handling my tackle. It's the little things that can make the difference between a good outing and getting skunked.

Many anglers add a sardine fillet to their lures. This method is commonly referred to as a "Sardine Wrap". There are also scent pads and scent pastes that you can add to your lure. You can look up the sardine wrap online for videos.

Slowly let your lure down until you feel a soft thud that indicates that your sinker has hit the bottom. Set your rod in a secured rod holder.

The Salmon Strike

The salmon will slam the lure hard. The fish will basically hook itself on the treble barbed hooks when it turns away. Be sure to give it a really hard hook set after you pick up the rod, just to make sure.

Bite Window

Late morning and late afternoons seem to be the best times to catch salmon. I've found that between 8:00 am and 10:00 am is a good time to find a bite window. Another good time to fish is between 3:00 pm and 5:00 pm.

The tides also play a role in finding aggressive salmon. In general, the outgoing tides seem to make fish more active and prone to biting. The times around tide changes also seem to be good times to catch fish.

Times that salmon will bite are very unpredictable. They tend to bite during stretches that last about 20 minutes. Salmon will bite like crazy for about 20 minutes, and then without warning will stop biting all together. You need to take advantage of the times when they are biting! After the bite shuts off it can take several hours before the fish start biting again.