

Fishing Scenario ID # 229

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Omak Lake Cutthroats



Dave Graybill photo

"There are days when everything's right and Omak will produce a hook-up every five minutes. And one of the fish I left in the lake – not by choice – towed my boat. "

Dave Graybill, "[The Fishin' Magician](#)"

Fishing Coaches advisor for the Omak scenario

Located on the Colville Indian Reservation in North Central Washington, Lake Omak has fast-paced early season fishing for huge Lahontan cutthroat trout. By carefully following this Gameplan – and FC's "[12 Fishing Rules](#)" of course – a boat with three anglers may can reasonably expect to hook-up with 40 fish per day, most between 19- and 22-inches, with several closer to 24. Eight-pounders are not uncommon here, and Omak produced the current state record of 18 pounds! Despite this, the lake is un-crowded even on weekends!

FC Members...without excellent fisheries management by the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, this great opportunity would not exist. So, as their guests...say thanks by treating the resource with respect. Cramp down your hook barbs, revive and release fish carefully ([C&R](#)), and fill out creel census reports! For more information, see www.colvilletribes.com



Omak Lake

Timing Details

- 1. June 1 through 14. *Note: June 1 is when the North Embayment opens for fishing, also the day Omak regulations allow for limited catch and keep.*

- 2. Stay flexible in your trip timing and planning. Some conditions are difficult to determine far in advance, so the more quickly you can prepare to go – or cancel – the better you can adapt to Timing Details. Try to cut your lead-time to 36 hours.

*We recommend you **don't** go to Omak when:*

- a. High winds create dangerous conditions. Check within 36 hours of launching.
- b. A cold front is on the way.
- c. Weather forecasts predict a drop in high air temperature of more than 7 degrees from the previous day! For a., b. and c., check [Omak Weather](#).
- d. When the moon is full.



Dave Gravbill photo

- 3. Remember the "Fourth Trip" Rule – how it can take as many as four trips to a specific scenario location to learn it well enough to catch up to full potential. For your first three trips, focus on following the Game Plan, also on learning and experimenting! Ideally don't give up, even if you get skunked, until after four trips.

Special Regulations:

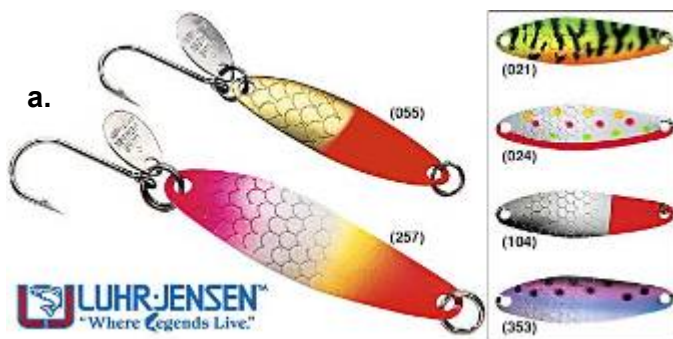
- 1. A Colville Tribal permit is required to fish: one day, \$7.50; three days, \$18.00; seven days \$25.00; one year pass, \$35.00. Permits can be purchased in Pateros at Pateros Ace Hardware, just off Highway 97, (509) 923-2622; in Brewster at The Triangle Shell, (509) 689-3473; and at the Walmart store in Omak, (509) 826-6002.
- 2. Beginning June 1, the daily limit for Lahontans is three fish, and not more than one of these can be over eighteen inches. Note, however: the alkaline nature of Lake Omak influences the taste of these fish, and many Omak anglers do not consider them table fare.
- 3. Only artificial lures and flies, no bait fishing.
- 4. Closed from dark until dawn.
- 5. *Note: No alcohol or firearms are allowed on the reservation.*



Omak Lake

Equipment/Rigging

- 1. A "big lake-worthy" boat, and all safety gear. (See [FC boat list.](#))
- 2. Manual or electric downrigger. (For a description of downriggers go to www.scotty.com.)
- 3. An electronic fish finder.
- 4. Spinning or conventional tackle heavy enough to troll four-inch lures, and *land the big fish that eat them*. Reels should carry *minimum of 10-pound test line*: fluorocarbon or a flourocarbon leader of 15 to 20 feet may provide an advantage in this clear water lake. (Tip: because of the abrasion caused by clipping to downriggers, Dave spools his own trolling reels with 20-pound Power Pro Dacron™, adds 100 feet of 16- to 20-pound Magna-Thin (Stren™), then ties to this 15 to 20 feet of 10 to 12-pound test flourocarbon leader.)
- 5. Lures: Omak fish can be selective about size.
 Get one or more of the following lures in three *and* four inch sizes:
 - a. Needle Fish™ in pearl and pink finish (www.cabelas.com see trolling spoons)
 - b. Swimmer Tails™, in the green finish with gold head.
 (http://www.rosstackle.com/swimmer_tail.htm)
- 6. A pair of smooth-jawed needle-nose pliers to cramp down the hoot barbs on these large lures. (See page 6.)

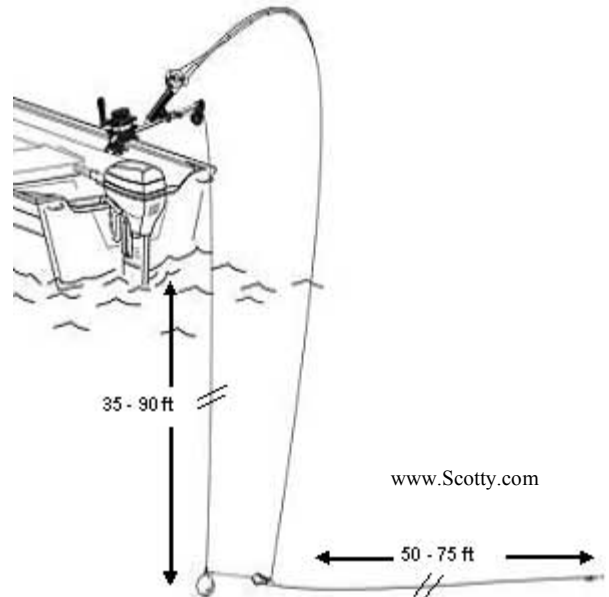




Omak Lake

Techniques

- 1. Anglers using downriggers score the most *and* largest fish here, period.
- 2. Use an electronic fish finder to locate concentrations of fish, which usually orient to the thermocline layer, a seam where water of different temperatures meet. At this time of year, that depth is generally between 35 and 90 feet.
- 3. For **lots** of fish, troll your lure just *above* the thermocline. For a lower-percentage shot at a giant...troll directly *below* this layer.
- 4. Experiment with trolling speed. *Higher speeds typically work better.* Sometimes trolling at nearly the speed that would cause a plug or lure to “roll over” is best.
- 5. Pull lures 50 to 75 feet behind the downrigger ball
- 6. *Watch your rod tip.* Omak cutts can be light biters, and may not even trip the downrigger release. So if you see “taps”...set the hook!
- 7. When you do get a strike or hook up, *immediately troll back through the same area...*Work the spot at *least* twice. You've found fish – don't give up on them quickly.
- 8. EXPERIMENT! If you're not getting into fish in the numbers described, constantly change depths and trolling speed until you do.
- 9. Three Hour Rule: Even on great days, the “bite” is sometimes off for up to two hours. If you only fished during that period, you might mistakenly think the fishing is no good! So, fish for 3+ hours at least, and you're more likely to sample the day's great potential.
- 10. Each day at your destination, talk to (and learn from) four or more fishers, if possible.

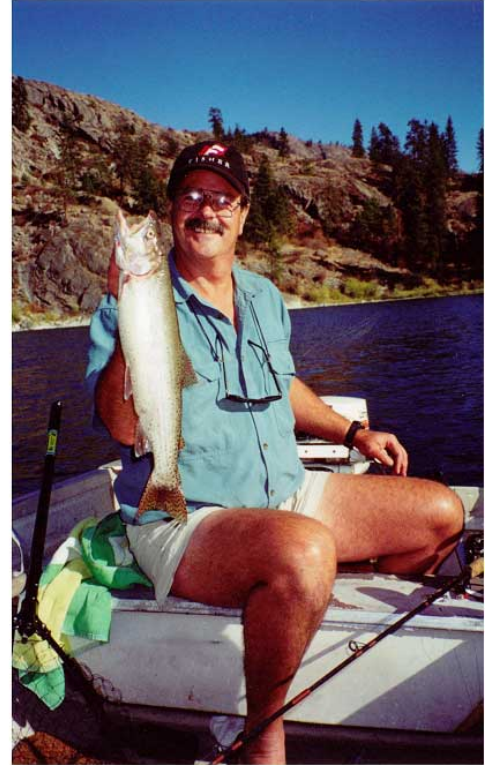




Omak Lake

Location Details

- 1. Omak Lake is located roughly nine miles from the town of Omak. For this scenario, proceed to the North Embayment, also called Mission Bay, where fish congregate in the spring, and where fishers will typically find less wind.
- 2. To reach the launch, take Highway 97 north to toward the town of Omak. The first exit off 97 to the left leads to the junction with Highway 155. Take a right onto 155 and head east for about four miles. You will see a sign on the right for the Paschal Mission Indian School. Take this right and stay on this road. You will pass the road to the school on the left, but keep straight ahead and this road will end at the launch on the East Embayment at the north end of Omak Lake.
- 3. While the entire lake is open to boating, shoreline access from Baines Beach south is closed to non-tribal members.



Dave Graybill, Fishin' Magician

Services and Facilities:

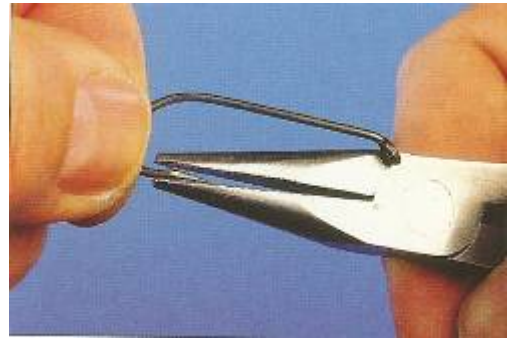
- 1. **Camping**
There's limited camping available on Omak Lake itself, so many anglers prefer to stay in the town of Omak, just a few miles from the turn off to the Mission Road. For information on camping at Omak Lake and campfire uses, contact the Colville Tribal Parks Department at (509) 634-3145.
- 2. **Lodging**
Two local hotels can be recommended. The Rodeway Inn is clean and comfortable and reasonably priced—1-800-700-6625.
A bit more up-scale is the Omak Inn, located just north of the town: 1-800-204-4808.
- 3. **RV Parks**
Carl Precht Memorial RV Park: (509) 826-1170. Mountain View RV Park: (509) 826-0621.
- 4. **Restaurants in Omak:**
The Breadline Café has a surprisingly varied menu, and great atmosphere. From soups and sandwiches to steaks and pasta—(509) 826-5836.
The Main Street Bar and Grill is where Dave goes for "great" steaks, pizza, sandwiches and more—(509) 826-4227.
For additional information on lodging, dining and other services log onto www.omakchamber.org.



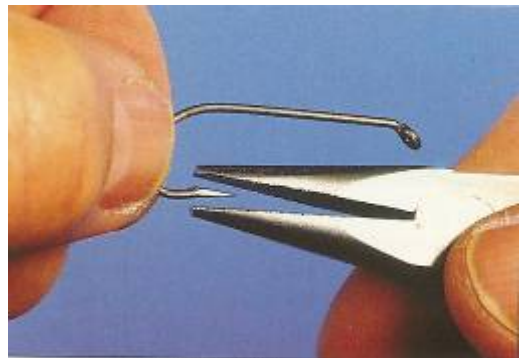
Responsible Catching

While opinions vary as to whether you'll land more fish with crimped barbs, or less, no one argues that improved *catching* makes it critical for anglers to practice the most responsible *releasing* techniques for fish they do not keep. This begins by pinching down the barb of hooks you use in nearly all Fishing Coaches Scenarios, and finishes with the proper landing and reviving of tired fish.

Step 1. Hold the hook by the bend and position the jaws of a pair of flat needle-nosed pliers over the barb. Only the flat hook spear should make contact with the jaw face. (Do not insert pliers far enough to press or scrape against the bend.)



Step 2. Squeeze the pliers to bend the barb down. Use the lightest pressure that will still do the job. Most barbs will not bend completely flat, and some may require touch-up with a file.



Text and illustrations form *Fly Tier's Benchside Reference*, courtesy of Ted Leeson, Jim Shollmeyer, amatobooks.com

Catch and Release Tips

Adapted from the British Columbia Federation of Drift Fishers www.bcfdf.com

Play the fish as quickly as possible.

Remove woolen gloves, as they remove the fish's protective slime, which promotes disease.

Leave the fish in the water whenever possible— and never remove the fish from the water in freezing conditions.

Don't force the hook out. If it can't be easily removed, cut the leader near the hook- It will fall out in a few days.

Never try removing a hook lodged in the fish's tongue or gill- cut the leader near the hook.

Never poke a finger in the fish's gills, or lift it by the gills.

After removing a hook, face the fish upright into [slow] current. When the fish is able to swim away on its own, release it to swim out of your hands. In lakes, move the fish backward and forward to flush fresh water over its gills.

If a photo is desired, quickly lift fish up (not longer than 5 seconds out of the water) holding it under the pectoral fins, and the other hand supporting the wrist of the tail.

Fish kept out of the water for more than 30 seconds will almost certainly suffer brain damage, and may not survive.