

Allen Bushnell

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Fish Rap

Today is the day! Area anglers eagerly await the annual opening of rockfish season. This year, despite the early showing of halibut, it is especially exciting due to the lack of salmon fishing in the state. We expect the Santa Cruz Small Craft Harbor to be busy today and over the weekend as the trailer boats and skiffs line up to launch in pursuit of action and fresh seafood dinners.

Mike Schell at Bayside Marine says there is "a lot of interest" in the opener this year. He has seen a steady stream of customers gearing up for the opener.

"Everyone is looking for something to go fishing for," Schell remarked.

He adds that halibut are still being caught in front of the harbor, and by Capitola in 45-65 feet of water. Most of the flatties have been "small but legal sized," according to Schell.

We may see some rain this weekend, but the ocean looks to be flat and the winds low for the opener. If you are launching for the first time this year, be sure to check your boat engine and pumps, electronics and safety gear before you get out there.

Jim Rubin from Captain Jimmy Charters is looking forward to a good rockfish season this year. He will fish the local reefs when productive, traveling north to Franklin Point near Año Nuevo or south to Point Joe near Carmel. Kenny Stagnaro on the Velocity has a similar approach. Last year, the Velocity found limits of rockfish for its clients more often than not,

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even though it entailed some longer boat rides. These days, each long boat ride is like a free whale-watching tour anyway, according to Stagnaro.

For the skiff and kayak anglers, one productive approach has always been to work the edges of the kelp beds near Capitola, Pleasure Point and Steamer Lane. It may take some time between bites, but the patient angler can almost always catch dinner for the family with this method.

The Kid's Fishing Derby sponsored by the Pajaro Valley Rod and Gun Club was a great success, according to President Bruce Kobara. More than 150 kids enjoyed the day and over \$1,000 worth of prizes were awarded. Despite a Department of Fish and Game trout plant that morning, only a small number of fish were actually caught during the Derby. The largest fish caught was a 6-pound bass by Sean Rivas. Said Kobara, "It probably was only a 5-pound bass, because it had a 1-pound trout sticking out of its mouth."

-- Allen Bushnell

Bushnell's fish report can also be heard on KSCO 1080-AM, Friday mornings at 6:45 a.m. Please send your fishing reports or pictures, questions and comments to: scruzfishing@yahoo.com.