



Pyramid Lake fishing contest: One lucky angler nabs \$10,000 trout

By Forrest Hartman • forrest@rgj.com • October 2, 2010

One Pyramid Lake angler hit the jackpot Saturday, landing a \$10,000 trout on the first day of the \$50,000 Cutthroat Challenge. The second-year fishing derby, sponsored by the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe, continues today.

Tribal planner Scott H. Carey said the idea of the competition is to promote fishing at Pyramid Lake and to offer a different type of derby.

"The typical derbies that have been going on out here for quite a while are 'the biggest fish wins,'" he said. "What we're trying to do with this is preserve the fish."

In the Cutthroat Challenge, anglers are hoping to land one 25 fish marked with tags that can be redeemed for prizes.

On Saturday, David Blake, a boat fisherman from Shingleton, Calif., caught a tagged fish near Warrior Point. And it was a big one.

"Five of those 25 are worth \$10,000 each," Carey said. "We take out an insurance policy with a promotional company from Texas. . . . If someone does catch one of these fish — or five people catch all five of these \$10,000 fish — they're the ones that pay that money off."

Although competitors are allowed to keep the fish they catch — as long as they stay within legal limits — the tribe encourages people to use the catch-and-release technique, ultimately returning the fish to the lake. In part, that's because Pyramid is noted for its stock of Lahontan cutthroat trout, a fish on the endangered species list.

Last year, Carey said, the Cutthroat Challenge drew about 65 competitors. This year, the early turnout was even better. As of 8:30 a.m. Saturday, just over 100 anglers had signed up for the derby.

"Response has been much better this year," said Sharon Stasiowski who was working at the derby headquarters Saturday morning. "We're very encouraged."

Another angler caught a tagged fish near Spider Point and put it on a stringer. But the tagged trout later swam off with the stringer while the angler was trying to catch more fish.

Carey said the tribe is hoping to draw between 100 to 150 competitors over the weekend, and anglers can continue to sign up today. The entry fee is \$65 and the registration deadline is noon.

Carey said the tribe decided to hold the Cutthroat Challenge this weekend because Friday marked the opening of Lahontan cutthroat trout season, which runs Oct. 1 through June 30. People are allowed to fish the lake for Sacramento perch and other fish year round, but the cutthroat trout is Pyramid's big draw.

"You don't find them anywhere else around here," said Paul Horton of Fernley, who was fishing at Pyramid Saturday morning.

One reason the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe likes to promote fishing at the lake, Carey said, is because the money anglers spend helps fund the tribe.

"What we're trying to do is put more back into the lake," he said. "We're trying to treat it as a business. The lake is what pretty much funds the tribal government, provides services for tribal members out here. So, we're trying to just add more value to the lake."

Most of the revenue, he said, comes from fishing and boating permits, and fishing is particularly important in the winter when people aren't as likely

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to be boating for pleasure.

"The fishing is really good compared to a lot of other lakes," Carey said. "We get people from all over the world that come. . . . It's very important. It comprises a huge, huge portion of the money that we make off the lake."

Horton agreed about the quality of fishing. The 43-year-old angler said he's been visiting Pyramid since he was six years old and he rarely comes home empty handed.

"It's one of the best fishing lakes in the world," he said. "Everybody I've ever brought out here has been pleasantly surprised. . . . They've got a lot of large, trophy-sized fish in this lake. I've seen many 12-, 14-, 15-pound fish come out of here."

Carey said fishing at Pyramid provides direct and indirect economic benefits to everyone in the Sutcliffe area.

"It's a big impact for the economy out here, the local businesses and for the tribal members," he said. "Off those businesses, we do receive tax dollars just like the state of Nevada, Washoe County. . . . That goes to help fund the government and provide services to the tribal members."

Carey said the number of people traveling to Pyramid from long distances seemed to slow when the U.S. economy went into a tailspin, but the lake is seeing an increase in local visitors. The tribe encourages that.

"We're only 30 miles north of Reno," Carey said. "You know, we have a great value in our lake. For summer, you can take a family of four out here and it's \$7 (for the day use fee). . . . We haven't raised our permit prices. We're trying to stay competitive because we understand how the economy is."

Carey said people who would like to fish this weekend but don't want to compete in the Cutthroat Challenge are welcome.



Pyramid Lake \$50,000 Cutthroat Challenge

When: The fishing derby began Saturday and continues Sunday. Fishing is allowed on Pyramid Lake from one hour before sunrise to an hour after sunset. Contestants can sign up until noon Sunday.

Cost: \$65. Registration available at the Pyramid Lake Ranger Station (2500 Lakeview Dr., Sutcliffe) beginning at 5:30 a.m.

Details: Call 1-888-225-2668 or visit www.pyramidlake.us.

Fishing at Pyramid Lake

You don't need a Nevada fishing license to fish at Pyramid, but you must purchase a tribal fishing and/or boating permit. They are available at Sutcliffe area



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