

WDFW NEWS RELEASE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
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February 9, 2007

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Richland angler reels in record-breaking walleye

OLYMPIA - Mike Hepper, a veteran angler from Richland, has set a new state record for the largest walleye caught in state waters, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has confirmed.

Hepper, 64, caught the 19.3-pound walleye Feb. 5 on the Columbia River above McNary Dam, and had its weight certified that day at a meat market in Pasco.

The fish was 33.7 inches long, with a girth of 22.24 inches, said Paul Hoffarth, a WDFW fish biologist who verified the catch.

The state's previous record was an 18.9-pound walleye caught downriver in the John Day Pool in 2002.

"The mid-Columbia River is widely recognized as one of the best places in the nation to catch walleye," said Keith Underwood, WDFW gamefish records coordinator. "Mr. Hepper was clearly in the right place at the right time to catch a trophy fish."

Hepper, a retired high school teacher, said he has been fishing most of his life, specializing in walleye fishing for nearly four decades. He caught his 19.3-pounder on a spinner-and-worm combination.

"It's great to get the record, but I know there's a bigger one out there," he said.

Walleye, the largest member of the perch family, are a popular gamefish throughout North America.

Tennessee holds the record for the largest walleye, a 25-pounder caught in 1960.

Washington's new record-size walleye ranks sixth in the nation compared to those in other states.

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