

# Lake study a shocking experience

With the results of a year-long Moses Lake creel census still being tabulated, many questions still remain about what has happened — or rather what is happening — to the fish in Moses Lake. A group of concerned people are trying to find answers to these questions.

There was a strange-looking boat traveling Moses Lake last week. During parts of three days, a Polor Craft moved along slowly, close to shore, sending out 120 volts from two rods that angled from the boat's bow. When a fish boiled to the surface, a man armed with a long-handled net would scoop the critter from the water and into a water-filled garbage can in the boat.

How many of you saw this strange method of fishing? If you did see the boat, you were witness to the first stage of a year-long shocking and netting study of Moses Lake. I had the pleasure of visiting with project volunteer, John Parrish, and volunteer project chairman, Ron Sawyer, as we watched the shocking boat in action.

The Moses Lake and Potholes Fish and Wildlife Study Committee in cooperation with the Washington Department of Wildlife has received a \$37,500 WDW Volunteer Project Grant. The project will be manned by WDW Region 2 Fish Biologist, Jeff Korth, a biologist from the Warmwater Fish Research Team from Olympia and volunteers from Moses Lake.

The project will be aided by the use of a WDW shocking boat.

Also, an 18-foot long Smoker Craft donated jointly by the Smoker Craft Company and Cascade Marina will be used to set nets and gather project samples.

The first stage was to identify bluegill and crappie nesting areas.

The water quality, food availability, water temperature, water clarity and anything that has a bearing on fish production in those areas will be monitored according to Ron Sawyer, volunteer project chairman and owner of Cascade Marina.

## with Clay Feet...

By Dennis L. Clay



"We will be watching for fish spawning activity and nest building," Ron said, "We will try to find out how many fish per nest are being produced and how many survive."

Ron said project workers will go out every two or three days, "watching to see when the fish hatch and how successful they are." They will also monitor how many and what kinds of predators are around the nests.

Next month, the project workers will try and come up with a sampling procedure to follow the juvenile fish. "They are so small it is hard to catch them until they are three or four months old," Ron said.

What about stomach samples of larger fish? Ron indicated that "stomach samples are not a part of the work now."

"We certainly would like to know what walleye are eating in the lake, for instance, that is a big concern and how many fish the walleye are eating. We probably won't be able to do that this year even though we would like to," Ron said.

The sampling last week, which included both nets and shocking, turned up mostly carp—I'm sure that result will not surprise anyone. Second in fish numbers were brown bullheads.

"The only thing about the fish numbers that surprised me was the amount of smallmouth bass," Ron said, "There were hundreds of smallmouth bass. Very few were under 6-inches, most were 6-inches and above and we found a couple that were close to three pounds."

There were a few largemouth bass located, under 10 in all, with three in the three pound category. The team found a couple areas of 10 to 20 perch and the perch were reported to be very small.

Only three walleye were found in three days of shocking and netting, so Ron feels the team's "cap-



The WDW shocking boat moves along the shore of Moses Lake to identify bluegill and crappie nesting areas. The shock does not damage the fish, which are released after measurements and scale samples are taken. In the Shocking boat are, L to R; Jeff Korth, Bob Anderson, volunteer, Sally, WDW warmwater fish research team and Greg Huff, volunteer. Assisting in the chase boat are John Parrish, left and Ron Sawyer.

ture methods may not be good for walleye."

Not a single trout was found and again the method of capture may be the reason.

OK, so what about the reason for this first stage shocking expedition—how many bluegill and crappie did the team find?

"We found about 25 adult bluegill and some juvenile bluegill," Ron said, "We found only one crappie."

When a person looks at this count of the study, two questions come to mind. Number one; Why so

few bluegill and crappie? That's the reason for the study and what the project workers hope to find out.

The second question is also puzzling; Why so many smallmouth bass?

Ron offered a possible answer, "Apparently, whatever the problem with Moses Lake is for bluegill and crappie, it isn't a problem for smallmouth bass or maybe they are part of the problem. Maybe we have a more aggressive fish species that have overtaken the lake which would be the walleye and smallmouth bass at the expense of the bluegill and crappie."