

**John Holyoke: Early
birds get bonus at
Kenduskeag stream race**
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For years, you've been telling yourself that one of these days, when you work up the gumption and find an eager partner to join in on the fun, you'll take part in the Kenduskeag Stream Canoe Race.

Or maybe you're like me and keep finding perfectly good excuses to avoid running the race.

I've got to work.

It seems too much like work.

I'm afraid I'd get soggy and wrinkled.

You get the point.

Well, if you're one of those thrill seekers who want to try your luck at Six Mile Falls, planning ahead is a good thing ... and your time to plan ahead is running out.

If you haven't paddled a stroke yet, chances are that you won't be able to get in very good shape before next Saturday, when the 42nd annual race will be held.

But you've still got plenty of time to save yourself some cash.

Here's the deal: If you end up running into a buddy on Friday night and deciding to show up at the Mystic Tie Grange early Saturday morning, race organizers will welcome you with open arms (as long as you show up between 6:30 and 7:30 a.m.).

On race day, you'll pay a premium for your late registration: \$30 per person.

If you sign up earlier, however, you can save a pile of cash ... especially if you've signed up a couple of paddling pals to run the rapids with you.

Preregistration costs just \$18 per person.

So how do you register? Good question.

You can head by the Bangor Parks and Recreation office on Main Street and fill out a form up until 1 p.m. the day before the race and still get in on the bargain deal. If you want more information, call 992-4490.

After registering early, you'll have plenty of time to plan the important stuff, like how many pancakes you'll eat at the prerace breakfast ... or who's going to give you a ride back to the starting line if you lose your canoe on the way to Bangor.

Have fun!

Salmon clubs to hold breakfast

As you've likely heard, the Penobscot River will open for a spring salmon season on May 1, after two monthlong fall seasons in 2006 and 2007.

And as you might expect, many veteran anglers are excited about the prospects.

To celebrate this year's season, area salmon clubs are holding a unified breakfast on the first Saturday of the month — May 3.

Here's what Lou Horvath, the president of the Penobscot Salmon Club, had to say in a recent e-mail:

"Presuming that ALL of you would prefer to angle on the reintroduced first day of the Atlantic salmon season (Thursday, May 1), we've moved the historic opening day Unified Breakfast to Saturday, May 3," Horvath wrote in an e-mail sent to local club members and other interested parties.

"This year it'll be held at the Penobscot Salmon Club in Brewer from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. Aside from GREAT food, many unique angling items will be on display and a number of special raffle items will be available," he wrote. "Weather permitting and water flow acceptable, large canoes will take those interested on a short river adventure. We're also hoping that Steve Forrest will display his award winning peapod.

"Come one, come all, join in the fun, renew old friendships and if you have 'em, bring the kids along as special free raffles will be available for them."

I don't know about you, but that sounds like a morning I don't want to miss. And before (or after ... or both), I'll hopefully be among those wetting a line in the famed Veazie and Eddington salmon pools.

See you there.

When to wade the East Outlet

One of my favorite fly-fishing haunts is the East Outlet of the Kennebec River, and over the years I've fished its many runs in widely varied conditions.

Some days, the flow in this big river is slow and the wading is easy. Other days, when the dam at Moosehead Lake is really gushing, the water is downright scary ... and I opt to stay on shore.

This week I received an e-mail from Dan Legere, the proprietor of the Maine Guide Fly Shop in Greenville, and found a pile of interesting information in his seasonal newsletter.

Legere spends as many days on the East Outlet as anyone, guiding sports in his comfortable drift boat.

And he offered up some tips on his home river.

It's easy to find out how heavy the flow at the dam is — just call 1-800-557-3569 and follow the prompts.

But interpreting those flows takes a bit of experience. Here's what Legere thinks about fishing during various water conditions:

"[At] 550 cubic feet per second (which is minimum flow by law): You can wade almost anywhere and cross the river in many places. Almost too low. A real good time to learn the dimension of the pools and runs," Legere wrote.

"1,000 to 1,500 cfs: Considered by most to be the best wading conditions. All the pools are easily accessible," he says.

"1,500 to 2,000 cfs: Still excellent wading, but some water starts to become less accessible.

"2,000 to 2,500 cfs: Approaching the upper end for easy wading. Still good fishing levels but far less accessible.

"2,500 to 3,000 cfs: Limited wading to a few pools. Fish spread out but new (secret) runs start to hold fish.

"3,000+ cfs: Marginal at best.

"4,000+ cfs: Downright dangerous," Legere concluded.

A word to the wise: Legere knows what he's talking about, and his warnings about the risks of wading during high flows should be heeded.

The East Outlet is a big enough piece of water that it's pretty easy to make a misstep, even when the water is flowing in the medium range listed here.

The fishing is often good, and the wilderness feel is tough to beat.

A simple fact: It's entirely possible to make a fatal mistake while wading this river, and anglers ought to remember that every time they pull on their waders.

Carry a staff. Wear a wading belt. Know your limitations.

And fishing with a buddy is never a bad decision, either.

For the record, Legere says spring hasn't sprung in his neighborhood. Not even close.

Legere said there's still two to three feet of ice on Moosehead Lake (but very little snow, thankfully), and about five feet of snow in the woods.

But on Friday, Legere e-mailed with an encouraging update: East Outlet is now fishable.

"The East Outlet is at minimum flows as the water people start to fill Moosehead with the remaining run-off," Legere wrote.

"The river will never be any lower than it is right now. What an opportunity to learn a river. It will become obvious why you catch fish where you do. You might even find a new run you didn't know was there," he wrote. "You will easily see the deepest parts of the pools, where the deeper runs are, and where the plunge into the pool really begins. You'll see it all."

There is, as you might expect, a postscript: The snow on the banks is still high, and Legere suggests bringing along some snowshoes.

Wading the river itself is pretty easy, he pointed out. If the water level rises, however, anglers may be forced to tromp back through the snow to get to their starting point.

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