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WINTER SNOWFALL WILL BRING ADDED JOY TO MONO COUNTY’S “FISHMAS”
Opening Day of Regular Fishing Season set for April 29th



(Mono County, CA. - February 6, 2023) — Despite the fact that most of the beloved seasonal holidays are already past, there’s one holiday left that, thanks to record snowfall from winter storms in the Eastern Sierra, promises to bring joy to avid anglers in Mono County. [Merry “Fishmas”!](#)

Fishmas, the traditional name given by locals to the opening of the regular fishing season in Mono County, is celebrated on the last Saturday in April, which this year is April 29. The substantially heavier snowfall this winter means that the lakes in Mono County, most of which are fed almost entirely by snowmelt, will likely be at much higher levels than during the past few years of drought in California. According to the [California Department of Water Resources](#), as of February 1, the central Sierra snowfall is reported to be 193 percent of normal.

While not technically an official holiday, Fishmas is among the most important days of the year in Mono County, both for locals and visitors who come to cast a line in one of the region’s scores of natural alpine lakes, including more than a dozen that are stocked by local and state authorities. Mono County, specifically, will stock almost 17,000 pounds of trout to 17 bodies of water (lakes and streams) starting mid-April through the regular season, which ends on November 15th.

Celebrations of the holiday on April 29 include a Fish of the Month Derby at Gull Lake, the Fishmas Day Derby at Tom’s Place Resort, the Monster Trout Contest at June Lake, and Mono Village’s Fishing Opener Derby at Upper Twin Lake in Bridgeport. If there were a song cataloging the “Twelve Days of Fishmas,” there would be verses to include rainbow trout, brown trout, golden trout, Lahontan cutthroat, brook trout, Sacramento perch, small-mouth bass, and Kokanee salmon. (Locally, catching all four species of trout in the same day or on the same trip—rainbow, brown, golden and cutthroat—is known as a “Sierra Slam.”)

To encourage beginners, the state holds two “free fishing days” per year, typically the first Saturday in July and the first Saturday of September. (All other regulations still apply, so visit [Wildlife.ca.gov](#) for restrictions and policies.) A [free fishing map](#) can also help navigate the fishable waters in the area.

Unlike most of California, the majority of the lakes in Mono County are natural, formed by volcanic and glacial activity over the millennia and are often surrounded by the Eastern Sierra’s jagged landscape that is far more dramatic, vertical and colorful than on the western side.

Because of the location of Mono County's fishing hotspots, there are plenty of opportunities for multigenerational trips, not just for fishing but for non-fishing family members who prefer to hike, explore nature, do a little boating or delve into the region's rich history.

Throughout the regular season, anglers are encouraged to join the effort to keep Eastern Sierra fisheries healthy and [sustainable](#) by practicing "catch and release" - keeping only the fish they need and releasing the rest to reproduce and grow.

Between now and April 29, the select [year-round fishing spots](#) are still under catch-and-release rules.

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[Mono County fishing images](#)

For more on lakes, guides and regulations, visit MonoCounty.org/fishing

For more on Fishmas weekend events, see MonoCounty.org/things-to-do/fishing/fishing-events For a free [Mono County Fishing Map](#) by mail, submit a request at MonoCounty.org/plan-your-trip/visitor-guides/

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About Mono County:

Located approximately 315 miles north of Los Angeles, and 280 miles east of San Francisco, Mono County accesses the east entrance to Yosemite National Park and welcomes visitors year-round. The vast playground of the Eastern Sierra is an easily reached destination via the all-weather US Highway 395, a State-Designated Scenic Byway which traverses Mono County from north to south, offering motorists tremendous vistas right from the steering wheel and countless sideroads, hiking trails, lakes, and roadside villages to explore. United Airlines offers winter service from San Francisco (SFO) and Denver (DEN) to nearby Bishop Airport (KBIH). Chartered service with Advanced Airlines from several Southern California cities to Mammoth Yosemite Airport (MMH) is available winter and summer. For more information or to request guides, visit MonoCounty.org or call 800-845-7922.

