



FRESHWATER CAST · MONDAY CAST

Merritt Reservoir: Cool Dawns, Local Wind & Walleye First Light

Snake River · Cedar Bay · Friday Sep 28 – Sunday Sep 30, 2026 · bank / kayak / boat · times MT

Highs ~75° Mon → ~70° Tue → ~71° Wed (NWS LBF)

Primary: walleye · soft recreational pressure

E0 stations near this water · no prices

No named trail event pulled for Oct 2–4

Early October on Merritt Reservoir — cool dawn windows, quiet weather, and a Fri–Sun bite that rewards first light before weekend traffic builds.

● MIDWEEK OUTLOOK

NWS band pull (north / Box Butte representative) — applied to Merritt Reservoir keeps a **quiet early-October pattern** for this Friday **Cast** window (Fri–Sun) at Merritt Reservoir. **Friday ~78°F / ~50°F**, sunny, wind S 15 to 25 mph. **Saturday ~76°F / ~46°F**, sunny, wind NNW 5 to 15 mph. **Sunday ~73°F / ~51°F**, sunny, wind SSE 5 to 15 mph. Storm chances stay **near zero** across the window. Reader clocks below are **CT** (water-local).

For walleye: lean **first light through mid-morning** on windward points, creek arms, and ramp-adjacent structure before afternoon warmth or breeze rearranges the bite. Weekend recreational pressure usually runs heavier than midweek — **no named B.A.S.S. / FLW / ABA trail event pulled** for this water on Oct 2–4.

FRIDAY OCT 2

~78°F

Low ~50° · ~0% storms · S 15 to 25 mph

Sunny — fish the cool dawn window first

Sunrise **7:20 AM** · Sunset **7:00 PM CT**

Best bite: first light–mid-morning on points and creek mouths

SATURDAY OCT 3

~76°F

Low ~46° · ~0% storms · NNW 5 to 15 mph

Sunny; use any breeze for windward presentations

Sunrise **7:21 AM** · Sunset **6:58 PM CT**

Best bite: dawn shallow; mid-day slide deeper if the sun climbs hard

SUNDAY OCT 4

~73°F

Low ~51° · ~0% storms · SSE 5 to 15 mph

Sunny — another clean fall day; expect more weekend traffic

Sunrise **7:22 AM** · Sunset **6:56 PM** CT

Best bite: first light again before the Sunday crowd piles on

WINDOW NOTE

Fri–Sun only

Next Cast cycle covers Mon onward

Monday trend: watch the local NWS grid for cool-down or wind shift

No storm train flagged for this corridor at pull

Clarity unconfirmed; protected arms often fish clearer after calm nights

● DAM / LEVEL CHEAT SHEET

Merritt Dam (USBR / NGPC SRA) forms Merritt Reservoir on the Snake River. At this Friday morning pull, a clean public live elevation/release table was thin in text form — treat pool as **confirm-before-you-go** on NGPC / USBR notices, and fish wind plus forage around Cedar Bay. Schedules **can change without notice**. Soft level → bite notes only.

NODE	PULL SNAPSHOT	OPS SIGNAL	BITE CONTEXT
Merritt Reservoir USBR · Snake River	Live elev/cfs thin on text pull	Confirm NGPC / USBR before midday plan	Dawn points and cedar banks locate walleye
Cedar Bay (home pin) NGPC SRA public ramp	Primary access	Confirm ramp on-site	Dawn Cedar Bay banks and nearby points
Sandhills arms Protected pockets	Clarity unconfirmed	Soft level notes only	Duck in between shower cells

Honest thin board: Live elevation and hourly release were thin on the public text pull. Confirm the latest agency notices before you go. Dam restricted zones are off-limits.

CEDAR BAY FRI–SUN

Dawn points; fish shower edges, skip lightning

SRA ETIQUETTE

Idle no-wake; share with campers

● HOW TO FISH IT

BANK

Cedar Bay SRA shoreline and legal public banks near the ramp are the weekday bank plays at Merritt. Dawn jig along points and gravel while Sandhills air is still cool, then slow down if overnight showers leave a stain. Watch slick pine needles and mud, give trailered traffic room at the SRA lane, and move to the next legal pocket if another angler owns your starting seam. Pack a rain shell — midweek cells can rearrange the morning fast.

KAYAK

Protected arms off Cedar Bay suit a kayak when showers and breeze build on the main pool. Launch at the SRA, work transitions at first light for walleye, and duck into an arm between cells rather than crossing open water under lightning. Wear a PFD, stay clear of the trailer lane, and use post-shower quiet minutes as a feature. A short honest paddle beats a stubborn hour on one empty cedar bank.

BOAT

Dawn points off Cedar Bay; keep radar honest on showery days and shorten runs when cells stack. Idle no-wake near campers, watch unmarked rock and timber, and change depth when marks slide after mid-morning. Soft weekday pressure is real if you beat the afternoon sun bump — do not waste the cool window. After a cell passes, fish the first clean color change outside Cedar Bay before you resume a long main-pool run. A thermos and a second rod already rigged save the dawns when the first school shows and your hands are cold.

● LURE BOX**TOP**

Walking bait / small spook — bone or chrome on calm dawn pockets

#5–#7 Rapala — silver/black or firetiger along points before sun clears

Skip topwater once chop or stain builds

MID

Jigging Rap / blade — glow, perch, or firetiger on 10–18 ft breaks

Shad crank — chartreuse/white when water stains

Spinnerbait — white/chartreuse on windward weed edges

BOTTOM

1/4–3/8 oz jig + soft plastic — paddle tail in smoke, chartreuse, or black/blue

Crawler harness / bottom bouncer — when breeze puts a roll on

Drop-shot — clearer pockets at first light

● WALLEYE LIFE STAGE

Cooling Sandhills nights pull Merritt walleye shallow early, then mid-depth. Secondary bass and pike share edges.

● NATURAL FORAGE

Most-likely menu: **perch**, **shiners**, and **crayfish**. Hatch reports are thin. Match bait you mark. If you are not marking bait after two honest moves, change water — a new point or creek mouth — before you empty the box changing colors.

● ALSO HOT / ALSO IN SEASON

- **Largemouth bass** — timber and docks with soft plastics
- **Northern pike** — weed edges
- **Yellow perch** — small jigs

● HEAVY TRAFFIC

Soft recreational pressure for Fri–Sun. **No named national or regional trail event** was pulled for Merritt Reservoir on Oct 2–4 at this gather. Expect lighter weekday traffic at Cedar Bay than a sunny weekend, with a bump if midweek sun draws locals. Ramp etiquette still matters — idle near beaches and give bank anglers room. Local after-work traffic can bump Saturday or Sunday if the sun wins the afternoon, so an early trailer still buys the quietest water.

● ETHANOL-FREE FUEL · PURE-GAS.ORG E0 · THIS WATER

Closest Pure-Gas.org ethanol-free listings near Merritt Reservoir (stations only — verify grade at the pump; listings can change):

- **Speedee Mart** — Speedee Mart, 101 W Hwy 20, Valentine, NE (~25.7 mi) · Ethanol-free PHILLIPS 66 91; GPS entered by Tim D
- **Casey's** — Casey's, 112 C St E, Valentine, NE (~25.7 mi) · Ethanol-free CASEY'S 87; GPS Changed by SR using Google, Map
- **Sandhill Oil #3** — Sandhill Oil #3, 1001 Hwy 20 E, Valentine, NE (~25.8 mi) · Ethanol-free SINCLAIR 87 91; GPS Changed by SR using Google,
- **Kwik Stop** — Kwik Stop, 102 Ne 1st St, Mullen, NE (~39.0 mi) · Ethanol-free CONOCO 87 91; GPS Located from address.

No pump prices in this **Cast**. Confirm ethanol-free grade at the pump if that matters for your motor.

If wind or showers rearrange the day, shorten the run and fish the first clean point or creek mouth you can reach safely from Cedar Bay — a tight dawn window still beats a long midday grind on stained water.

● DAY-BY-DAY FISHING NOTES

Friday favors the cleanest dawn window of the three if overnight showers stay light — be on the first point or creek mouth you trust within thirty minutes of sunrise, then decide whether to slide deeper or stay shallow based on bait marks, not the clock alone. If the afternoon breeze stands up, treat windward breaks as a feature: shorten casts, keep the bait in the strike zone, and move along the break instead of camping on one empty cast. Saturday and Sunday often share a pattern in early fall — cooler air helps the morning, then sun or showers compress the shallow bite after late morning. When radar shows cells, fish the edges and the thirty quiet minutes after a cell passes rather than forcing a long open-water run under a dark shelf. Keep a bank or kayak backup close to the ramp so a washed-out main-lake plan still puts a line in the water.

Presentation speed should follow water temperature and wind more than habit. Cooler dawn water usually wants a slower jig or harness; once chop dirties the surface or bait marks rise, speed up just enough to stay in contact. If you are marking bait with no followers, change depth before you change lure color. If you are marking nothing, move — early-fall fish on these reservoirs reward a mobile first hour more than a stubborn second hour on the same empty bank.

● ACCESS AND SAFETY

Trailer etiquette matters even on quiet weekdays: stage off the ramp lane, launch efficiently, and idle out of the no-wake pocket before you plane off. Bank anglers get first courtesy on shared riprap. Kayaks should stay visible and avoid the main takeoff lane when boats are loading. Lightning ends the argument — get off the water and wait. Submerged timber, unmarked rock, and changing ramp exposure with pool are the usual taxes on these waters; idle until you know the bottom. Dam restricted zones, boom lines, and posted closures stay off-limits no matter how good the seam looks from outside the markers.

Pack layers for cool dawns and a rain shell for midweek shower chances. Bring a headlamp for pre-dawn rigging, a spare trailer fuse, and enough fuel to cover a weather-shortened day without gambling on a long run home. If afternoon whitecaps stack on the main pool, reef early and finish the day in a protected arm or from the bank rather than proving a point in open water.

● LOOKING AHEAD

Cool mornings look locked in through early October on the local NWS grid, which usually helps shallow dawn windows and stretches the first-light bite a little later into the morning as nights keep falling. Watch how midweek shower trains rearrange water color — a stain line after a cell can concentrate bait on the first clean point outside a creek mouth for a short window. Keep confirming agency pool and ramp notices as September closes; a quiet change in pool can move the best break a cast or two deeper without any drama on social media. Next **Cast** cycle covers the Thursday–Sunday stretch, when another cool front or a quieter sky can rewrite which bank you start on.

If you only get one morning this window, take Friday's first light unless radar is ugly — then take the first clean dawn after the cells pass. A short, honest trip that puts bait and fish on the graph beats a long midday grind on empty banks. Carry two confidence presentations (one slow bottom, one mid-column) and let the marks choose which one earns the next hour.

● SOURCES

- NWS LBF gridpoint forecast for Merritt Reservoir / Cedar Bay — pulled Fri Oct 2 morning CT
- Agency / park recreation notices for pool and ramp context (thin live elev/cfs on text pull)
- Pure-Gas.org ethanol-free station listings near this water
- Public access: Cedar Bay

Freshwater Cast · Nebraska · Merritt Reservoir · Fri Oct 2 – Sun Oct 4, 2026 · bank / kayak / boat
· times MT