

Sage TCX 7126 rod

For a few months during the summer of 2009 there were whispers in the wind of a new #7 weight spey rod from Sage. Rumours spread out from the North West of something special, something unlike any #7 spey rod that Sage had built in the past. Various reps, casting instructors and Sage staff would make reference to the impending release of this weapon, and would back up this claim with sly smiles and “*just wait until you try it*” comments.

Much as I love the lighter spey rods, particularly in the #7 & #8 sizes, I treated this with some skepticism. After all, I have tried numerous #7 rods that had been lauded and heralded by many of the same people that just were not what I liked in a rod. I like fast, responsive, light and most of the other #7 rods I have used have been soft, deeper flexing and just to “blah” for me. My yard stick has always been the Thomas and Thomas 13 ft #7, 3 piece rod and time and time again new rods have failed to match up to the action of this rod for me – and I have used this rod for more than 10 years.

I finally got the chance to fish this new Sage rod on a 4 day camping trip to the Deschutes in September 2009 with the folks out of The Fly Fishing Shop in Oregon. The trip was a mix of spey school and fishing school for a small group of passionate and would-be-passionate steelheaders.

The rod is part of Sage’s TCX series and is 12’ 6” long, rated for a #7. Like the rest of the TCX series, this is one powerful rod, with plenty of guts in the middle sections and a fast, responsive tip. I played with the rod during the day time casting sessions with an assortment of Skagit Flight shooting heads (new lines from RIO for 2010) and then took it off one morning for a serious trial with WindCutter lines and AFS heads.

This rod takes a surprising large range of line weights. I cast and fished this with WindCutter lines from 6/7/8 to 8/9/10 and it works well with all of them. For European style casters the 6/7/8 would feel nice, the 7/8/9 feels lovely to me, yet the 8/9/10 loaded the rod deeply and made for easy casting and would certainly be a great choice for a novice caster, trying to find the feel of this rod. Similarly, the 7/8 AFS was a stonking good line on this rod, but the 8/9 loaded it up beautifully and, again, would be a better call for someone who likes to feel the rod load. The 6/7 was a touch light on the rod, especially for the winds we had on some of the days, but I know many casters that would find the 6/7 the line of choice here.

As far as Skagit lines go, the real winner was the Skagit Flight 525. Oh boy! This combination was about as sweet a thing as I can ever remember casting, and I am not the biggest Skagit fan. I used a 15ft intermediate #8 tip for my fishing, but also cast a 15ft, #8 type 6 and type 8 tip, and all these things launched. The balance with this outfit and the power, loop formation and distance achieved was extraordinary. I also tried the 500 grain Flight and found this to load the rod nicely, and would again be a better choice for the European caster. For the truer Skagit caster, and someone that really likes the rod to load, and that has slow D-loop strokes, the 550 or even the 575 Skagit Flight would be sublime.

At the end of the trip I can tell you that I left as a firm believer. I have finally found a #7 rod that can rival the best ever made. True, it is more of a #7/8, than a perfect #7, but then so is the T&T 1307 I have always loved. This TCX is absolutely marvelous! I love casting with it, I love the lightness of the rod and the balance it has in my head, I love the tip speed it generates and the tight, effortless loops it forms. I love the power in the middle sections of the rod that will allow a caster to handle long belly lines if required, but also that is excellent for bullying a good fish in a tough current. This **IS** my new best friend, the one rod that I will take anywhere I can, and will certainly use as much as possible.

Summary

A short, light and powerful #7 spey rod – superb for grilse, silvers, summer run steelhead, large trout and would be a great rod from the beach, overhead casting to stripers or whatever. Not your cup of tea if you like the slower, more traditional action fly rods, but for someone who enjoys light, fast and responsive rods, it is an absolute “*must have*”.

Rating

Action: 6 out of 6

Cosmetics: 6 out of 6

Overall: 10 out of 10

Line Rating: WindCutter A: 7/8/9, B: 8/9/10 PowerSpey: 7/8, Skagit: Flight 525, AFS: 7/8

Best Line: Skagit Flight 525 or AFS 7/8