

The Guide's Forecast - volume 5 issue number 46

Northwest Oregon's most complete and accurate fishing forecast

Forecasting for the fishing week of **May 14th - May 21st, 2004**

Fisheries Update: Sturgeon fishing in the gorge is going very well with effort low due to sporadic openers. It has been difficult getting momentum to build in this fishery which bodes well for the few taking advantage of it. The 7 day/week sturgeon fishing below the Wauna Powerlines opens on 5/15. The fishing has been best out of John Day for those guides trying to locate them for the opener.

Spring chinook in Tillamook Bay is becoming a bit more consistent. The spinner bite in the upper bay was decent this last week but it should switch to a jetty fishery as a weaker tide series makes its way into the weekend.

Crabbing in Tillamook Bay is slow but much better when one can dump a crab pot in the ocean.

All depth halibut started today, May 13th, and will continue Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays through May and beyond to a quota of about a quarter-million pounds. Offshore bottom fishing remains excellent.

Tillamook County springers are here and we are just a week or two away from the peak. Spinner fishing in the upper bay may produce some results this weekend but prepare yourselves for limited maneuverability with the huge minus tide series. Get signed up for the best Tillamook Bay spring Chinook seminar EVER and learn a new twist on an old technique. And while you are at it, sign up for the Tillamook Bay fishing tournament to benefit restoration projects while winning valuable prizes such as free guided fishing trips and a smoker from Buzz Ramsey at Luhr Jensen! Go to <http://www.theguidesforecast.com/tep.shtml> and take part in this monumental bonanza!

Springer fishing is slow but steady on the Umpqua where anglers are also being entertained by shad, smallmouth bass and sturgeon. the Rogue River springer fishery finally got underway over the weekend. Early reports are of very good catches near Grants Pass. Although it got a late start with counts at Gold Ray Dam low for this time of year, a good run of spring chinook is expected on the Rogue.

Clackamas River anglers have had some good days with steelhead over the last week but springer fishing is slow. Conversely, the Sandy is providing only spotty summer steelheading but chinook have been cooperating well. Drifted or back-bounced bait has been most successful.

Fishing is hit or miss on the Santiams despite decent water conditions. Steelheaders who stay versatile, offering a variety of baits and lures, will fare best. Spring chinook are stacking up in the lower river.

Bass are active in the upper and lower Willamette River, offering opportunities to largemouth and smallmouth anglers. Tanmille Lake is productive now and a near record

Willamette Zone water stocked this week include Alton Baker Canal, Clear Lake, Detroit Reservoir, E E Wilson Pond, Foster Reservoir, Freeway Lake East, Green Peter Reservoir, Junction City Pond, Leaburg Lake, McKenzie River Lower, McKenzie River Upper, Roaring River Park Pond, Walling Pond, Walter Wirth Lake, Benson Lake, Hartman Pond, Henry Hagg Lake, Huddeston Pond (Willamina) North Fork Reservoir, Timothy Meadows, and Trillium Lake. In addition, Clear Lake, Duncan Reservoir, Fall River, Frog Lake, Lost Lake, MF Pond, and Taylor Lake have been planted in the Central Zone.

Soapbox Update: Take full advantage of the spring Chinook seminar **pro guide Bob Rees (503-812-9036)** is conducting on the shores of Tillamook Bay during the most productive tide series of the season! Jump aboard our first annual spring chinook fishing derby and have the opportunity to win valuable prizes and fish with the former Governor of Oregon- John Kitzhaber and the ex-chief of fisheries, Jim Martin. Jim will also deliver an informative lecture and Q&A session on the ***Histories and Trends of Tillamook Salmonids***. Check out our complete details by going to: <http://www.theguidesforecast.com/tep.shtml>

Columbia River Fishing Report - With all the closures, there is still some good news coming from the upper and lower reaches of the water below Bonneville Dam. The sturgeon are present! **Pro guide Dan Ponciano (360-607-8511)** reports the gorge sturgeon fishing is as good as he has ever seen it! Dan has reported low effort and good catches and he credits the catch and release fishery for his success. Some of the most pleasurable days for Dan is during the catch and release days (Sunday - Wednesday) when he can catch double digit fish up to 58 inches for his

customers. Dan suggested targeting the keeper fish in the water below The Fishery (Beacon Rock) using smelt or shrimp or the combination. Dan also suggested using eel when/if it becomes available. The eel are beginning to run making it an excellent bait this time of year but it is extremely hard to find. Dan stated the fish are scattered but the keepers are coming from Horsetail to Beacon Rock and the oversize fish are coming from the power water. Since shad are not available to those targeting oversize fish just yet, guides are taking oversize fish using smelt or eel. Dan also stated that during the catch and keep days, he is getting his customers good numbers of quality keepers with many in the 50+ inch range.

Further downriver, the opener is just around the corner (5/15) and the sturgeon seem eager to bite. Although fishing below the Astoria/Megler Bridge is challenging, the John Day Ramp is getting a lot of attention and should produce good results for the opener. Sand shrimp is key when targeting these fish in the shallow water and smelt will take fish a little later into the season. Some guides, while searching for fish prior to the opener were posting 30 and 40 fish days. The fish are also scattered in this section of river so a search will definitely be in order for the opener.

Steelhead season opens back up on the Columbia on May 16th.

Perhaps the closure of the Columbia was well-timed, as salmon run has either stalled or the numbers are simply not going to materialize. Only 10,000 springers have been counted at Bonneville over the last 10 days.

The Guide's Forecast - The best place for sturgeon right now continues to be the gorge fishery. Eel will be a top bait but most anglers will not have access to this so smelt will be a strong option. Tip your smelt with a sand shrimp and your chances for success go up. This, along with the opener of the estuary fishery will be responsible for some quality keepers over the weekend. The larger fish seem to be keyed in on eel however. If you find a rare shad from the Willamette fishery in your bait cooler, it will be a sure thing for an oversize fish in the faster water. This would be the area above Beacon Rock.

Let the derby begin! Although you have until July 24th (or until the quota is met) to catch keepers in the estuary fishery, it looks as if there will be plenty of fish available for recreational anglers come May 15th. The water above Tongue Point will provide some of the best opportunity for anglers but anglers should count on having to move around to catch fish. Be sure to match the hatch as this is just as important in the estuary fishery as it is on the Deschutes River during the Salmonfly hatch. Keep shrimp fishing shallow although you may be able to get away with it in some of the deeper water. Fish smelt or anchovies (if available) in the deeper water where you are more likely to encounter trash fish. The water below the Astoria/Megler Bridge is also open but don't count on the success downstream that you are likely to encounter above Tongue Point.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report - Although counts at Willamette Falls have been pretty good the last couple of weeks, they're absolutely great now as thousands of spring chinook wend their way upriver. Add to that several million shad in the lower river and crowds will follow.

In the seasonal mix of boats, eager kids, bank fishermen and dogs, a surprisingly high number of salmon, shad and steelhead are being caught. Perhaps not so surprising given the numbers of fish available.

Conditions are prime with water temps in the high 50s and clarity well over five feet. It's springtime on the Willamette River. Anglers willing to adapt to crowded conditions are almost sure to have a good time.

Shad are particularly appealing to kids as these members of the herring family will eagerly strike anything shiny and while their table quality is doubtful, they're scrappy on appropriate tackle. Popular lures include Dick Nite spoons, chartreuse plastic grubs or just a shiny swivel with a bead. Because shad won't pass through the enclosed ladder at Willamette Falls (or so-called 'pipe'), they stack up in the Oregon City area. Bank and boat fishing are both effective with shad available well into June.

While shad roe is considered a delicacy by some and is very similar to herring when smoked, most of these fish serve as bait for oversized sturgeon or end up enticing Dungeness in pots or rings. While the oily, smelly shad is appealing to crabs, bait-stealing seals and sea lions don't like 'em.

Spring chinook, either due to the sheer numbers present or seasonal proclivity, have been cooperative with anglers in the lower Willamette over the past week.

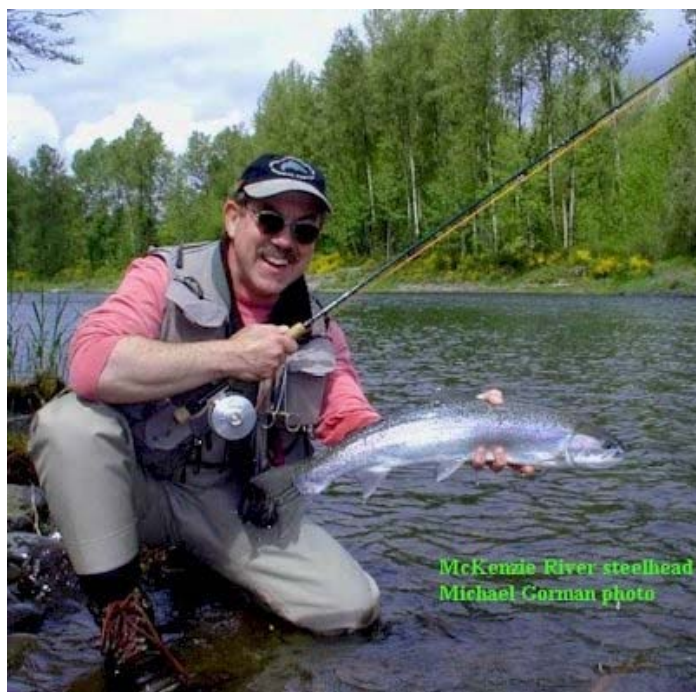
Steelheading on the North Santiam is a hit-or-miss proposition with reports of good numbers of summers amidst accounts of strikeless forays. The fish are there, but it's best to be prepared to try different techniques. If spinners aren't garnering strikes, try small baits or scented corky & yarn. Smaller baits and lures have been most effective over the last week. South Santiam levels are good now with similar reports of spotty results. Springers are numerous in the lower river.

Pro guide Michael Gorman (541-758-1687) sent this report, "The North Santiam seems to be the more predictable choice for steelhead since the water levels are steadier and lower than that of the South Santiam. On the North, there seem to be a good number of steelies from Stayton to Green's Bridge, but fish are daily moving over Bennett Dam towards Lyons and Mill City. Clear water may demand light leaders and smaller flies and lures. Summer steelhead are already being recycled downstream from the fish trap at Foster Dam on the South Santiam, but rising, high water can make the "bite" temperamental. On both rivers trout fishing does not open until May 22.

"The McKenzie River Green Caddis is hatching in good numbers on a daily basis now. Every trout in the river is on dining alert when these big bugs make their appearance. My clients are catching a mixed bag of hatchery trout, some beautiful native "redsidings" rainbows and a few native cutthroat. A large green Stimulator is effective when the trout will take a floating dry fly. Use a large green caddis pupa pattern when they prefer an emerging or subsurface fly. Best presentation is to cast across the stream, followed by a mend to straighten the fly line, then, a twitching movement of the fly as it swings across the current. If you can time your fishing for an overcast day, so much the better.

"Steelhead fishing on the McKenzie River and Willamette below Dexter has been fair to good, depending on the river flows. As we begin the new week both rivers are coming down and are quite fishable. A black or purple Egg-Sucking Leech fished deep can entice the steelhead on both rivers."

Here's Michael Gorman with a bright McKenzie steelhead:



The Guide's Forecast - Spinners have emerged as the top-rated enticement as the water temperatures in the lower Willamette have moderated. From the mouth of the Clackamas River to St. Johns Bridge, scores of chrome beauties are destined to for memorable barbecue fare. Fish early or stay late for best results.

The Santiams remain a crap shoot. Stay versatile and continue to offer a variety of baits and lures to tempt the summers steelies, which population will continue to increase. When fishing bluebird days, first light will present the best opportunity to entice fair-weather metalheads. The lower river will offer excellent spring chinook opportunities as fish continue to stack up.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports - The Clackamas and Sandy rivers have finally shown promise some as each comes into its own with the season.

Steelheaders are finding bright summer steelhead on the Clackamas, enticing strikes with bobber & jig combos or spinners. Salmon fishing, however, has been slow. Gladstone and Dog Creek areas have been productive.

Conversely, it's the steelheading that's spotty on the Sandy while fishermen are reporting very good springer fishing by drifting baits of cured salmon eggs, sand shrimp or a combination thereof through deep holes. The popular fishery near Cedar Creek has been a hotspot.

Pro guide Trevor Storlie (503-695-6515) adds this, "The Sandy is booting out good numbers of Springers. The entire river seems to be fishing good. With the recent rains expect the good fishing to continue. Good eggs seem to be the hot ticket. Don't forget about the 1st Annual Sandy river Spring Chinook Derby going on this weekend at Winks Bar and Grill. Fisherman must be signed up at Winks or Jacks Snack n Tackle by no later than 4:00 Friday night. We have already got almost a 100 people entered. All the of the proceeds go to the Sandy river wild brood stock recovery program. This will be a fun event with trophy girls, live band and a big beer garden. Don't miss this one. Hope to see you all there."

The Guide's Forecast - The Clackamas holds promise for a stellar summer steelhead experiences the length of the river. Spring chinook will be available from Carver to the mouth.

Anglers anxious for chinook should the Sandy while it's hot. With the numbers of salmon available, try to find the path less frequented. Bank anglers should be working Oxbow Park upstream. Ply the deep holes with bobber and bait or backbouce to find biters. Salmon will be spread out to cedar Creek. Steelheaders will have plenty of open water as chinook fishermen eschew the steelhead water in pursuit of springers.

North Coast District Fishing Report - The Tillamook springers continue to trickle in as many guide boats are becoming more consistent every day- sorry to say that I am the exception to that rule! We fished the lower bay and ocean today from sun-up to 10:30 only drawing one strike. With a good handful of boats present, we only heard or saw 4 fish caught and one boat had 3 of those! Of the 4 fish we saw taken, 2 were in the ocean and 2 were along the north jetty on the inside. The ocean was tolerable today but the tip of the south jetty was quite dangerous this morning. We had several waves that broke close to the boat so I recommend that you stay on alert if you choose to fish the ocean. We are just getting off the minus tide series which continues to make the bar a bit treacherous for crossing. Anglers should be reminded of the tragedy that struck a little less than a year ago when the Taki Too went down just at the north tip of the jetty. Ocean bound traffic needs to take additional safety precautions by using your lifejackets. There is no room for error here! Back to fishing..... the grab we got today hit a whole blue label herring but most of the fish taken in the lower bay fishery have fallen victim to plug cut herring fished close to the bottom of the bay or ocean. The ocean is a good bet (weather permitting) at first light but as soon as the tide begins to trickle out, you should find yourself on the inside of the bay hugging the north jetty with baits on the bottom. Seaweed will hinder you a little later into the tide although it is not nearly as bad as the fall fishery- yet!

Anglers more interested in spinner fishing in the upper bay still have opportunity although with the waning tide series, comes a lack of interest in biting springers. Target your day around low slack knowing that the last half of outgoing and the last half of incoming are going to be the most productive times to fish. The Oyster House Hole holds the most promise but there are springers available in the tidewater sections of the Trask and some in the Wilson. The Trask fish will be easier to find as they have fewer holes to hold up in. Bobber anglers have decent opportunity in the Trask tidewater but the lower exchanges of the weekend will definitely make lower bay fishing a better opportunity.

Rain on the coast means summer steelhead in the rivers. Anglers will find some on the Wilson and Nestucca Rivers, although these tributaries will really shine next month.

Halibut opens on 5/13 through Saturday so don't be alarmed by the crowds when pulling into Garibaldi. Most of them will be heading out for offshore halibut- which should be good as well. Especially if the weather cooperates.

Crabbing in the bay is poor but really good in the ocean. Success with dungeness is reported as slow to terrible in other coastal bays and estuaries.

Surf perch fishing has been improving when wind and wave conditions allow.

Speak up - Sea-run cutthroat trout have been protected on the North coast as a catch-and-release fishery for over a decade. A proposal has been made to allow retention starting in 2005. Opinions vary as to whether or not this is a good thing as recovery of this species, while excellent in some streams, is marginal in others. A change in the regulations would effect all streams from the Salmon River to the Columbia. Your input is requested by the ODFW at meetings to be held Wednesday, May 19th in Newport at the Hatfield Marine Science center and Thursday, May 20th in Tillamook at the Oregon Department of Forestry office. Meetings are 7:00 P.M. to 10:00 P.M. Call 1-800-720-6339 for additional information.

Anglers may keep two sea-run cutthroat per day in Oregon coastal streams South of the Salmon River.

All depth halibut will open on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays in May starting the 13th. Other dates are scheduled in June and beyond until the 2004 quota of about a quarter million pounds is met.

Offshore bottom fishing is red hot and rollin'.

The Guide's Forecast - Again, a waning tide series will make the lower bay and ocean the strongest option for spring chinook on Tillamook Bay. Troll herring on the bottom for best success being sure to hug the north jetty on the inside during the first hour of outgoing as well as the last half. The last half of incoming tide is good in the Ghost Hole and in front of Garibaldi so plan your outing accordingly. Spinner trollers in upper Tillamook Bay as well as bobber anglers in tidewater will see some fish taken but don't plan on gangbuster fishing in this section of the system. The river systems are at summer low levels already making for wary quarry. Don't waste your time here as all fish present will be very spooked.

Rumors of good sturgeon fishing are still being heard but we have no substantiated reports at this publication. We tried for sturgeon in the upper bay (the Corral) last weekend and were unable to keep our sandshrimp on the hooks for very long. We were getting crabbed to death! We do know crabbing in the ocean is far better than crabbing in the bay despite our troubles sturgeon fishing.

Central & South Coast Reports - Pro guide Michael Gorman (541-758-1687) reports, "With very little rain in the coast Range the Siletz River is low and clear. Boaters will find skinny water. Maximum stealth, light lines, and small flies, lures and baits will enhance your chances of catching an early-run summer steelhead. Gently release the spent winter fish as they return to sea after spawning."

Umpqua sturgeon fishing is improving for large keepers amongst the oversized fish. Springer fishing is good offshore out of Winchester Bay and fair to good in the river. Shad fishing has been good. The South Umpqua opens May 22nd.

Pro guide Steve Dun (541-862-2771) sent this Rogue River report, "... the Springer fishing is still far behind that of previous seasons. Gold Beach to Agness has cooled off a bit but some numbers are still being taken. Further up the Rogue the fish are starting to show up but bites are still few and far between. In a recent half-day outing near the Pearce Riffles, only one fish was taken from a total of 4 boats. Many fish were seen rolling but they are still not in a biting mode as yet. The recent rainfall should help, in addition to higher water levels as more water is released."

Recent rains did, indeed, help, with good catches of spring chinook over the weekend around Grants Pass. While the Gold Ray Dam count is low at about 1,200 chinook for the year, it appears that the recent freshet has finally inspired the chinook to run en masse on this legendary river.

With the winter steelhead run a pleasant memory on the Rogue, a final count of 21,000 has been issued. A greater number of spring chinook is expected once the run gets underway in earnest.

Central and Eastern Oregon - Pro guide Mac Huff (800-940-3688) sends this report from the East side, "Still water is the only fishing opportunity in the Wallowa Valley this week. Wallowa Lake is good for kokanee and rainbow and Marr and Wallowa Wildlife ponds are stocked with rainbows.

"Next weekend streams and Kinney Lake, east of Joseph, open for the season. At this time many of the streams are marginally fishable for trout, but by opening weekend conditions could deteriorate. Without any significant change in turbidity, however, the Wallowa and perhaps the Grande Ronde could provide descent trout fishing.

"The Grande Ronde River near Troy could have some salmon flies emerging by opening day and if they aren't emerging they are close and still offer a great nymphing opportunity. The Willowa and Grande Ronde each have good caddis and mayfly hatches this month which extend dry fly and nymphing opportunities. The high water knocks loose a steady stream of morsels and bait anglers should have equally good success with a worm or an egg.

"Spring Chinook season is open in the Snake River from Dug Bar boat ramp upstream to Hells Canyon Dam. By the time you read this there will be more than 40,000 spring Chinook over lower Granite Dam and some have made the journey to Hells Canyon Dam where a few reports have returned of salmon hooked and landed."

While Pale Morning Duns are showing occasionally on the Deschutes, fly anglers continue to find nymphs the most reliable producers. Prince and caddis patterns are favored. Golden Stoneflies along with Salmonflies are starting to show in the Maupin area, resulting in the onset of some great dry fly fishing. While these large flies have not yet started to show in great numbers, the upcoming week looks promising in this area. Mayflies and caddis patterns are producing some fine fish in the middle Deschutes.

Northwest Bass & Panfish - Hot for smallies? Bass action is ongoing in the upper and lower Willamette River, on the Columbia 'most anywhere a current break may be found with rocky cover. The Umpqua and John Day River fisheries are heating up and will only improve.

The report for largemouth bass on Tenmile Lake was a good one. Plenty of broad-shouldered bucketmouths have been taken recently which is unusual for this lake as it is managed for numbers of fish rather than size. Bass fishing remains good in the upper Willamette backwaters and sloughs.

Speaking of big bass, the lunker landed by Salem resident Ted Sowers in Fern Ridge Reservoir on May 2nd was quite a fish. The 11 pound, four ounce largemouth fell to a six-inch green and white Senko fished in shallow cover. This pre-spawn female was 24 1/2 inches in length with a 20-inch girth. The current Oregon state record, 12 pound, 1.6 ounce behemoth was landed in August of 2002 by B. Allen Hastings out of Ballenger Pond in Springfield. They grow 'em big in the Eugene area. Sower's bass was released. see 'Random Links' below for the newspaper story and a picture of this brute.

Northwest Trout - Detroit Reservoir has been producing trout limits with a few landlocked chinook in the mix. Kokanee angling has been good at Wickiup with the fish running small for this location but still better than 12 inches. Odell Lake is kicking out kokanee on the troll to those equipped with downriggers. Those not so equipped will need to jig 'em up.

Willamette Zone water stocked this week include Alton Baker Canal, Clear Lake, Detroit Reservoir, E E Wilson Pond, Foster Reservoir, Freeway Lake East, Green Peter Reservoir, Junction City Pond, Leaburg Lake, McKenzie River Lower, McKenzie River Upper, Roaring River Park Pond, Walling Pond, Walter Wirth Lake, Benson Lake, Hartman Pond, Henry Hagg Lake, Huddleston Pond (Willamina) North Fork Reservoir, Timothy Meadows, and Trillium Lake. In addition, Clear Lake, Duncan Reservoir, Fall River, Frog Lake, Lost Lake, MF Pond, and Taylor Lake have been planted in the Central Zone.

Reader Email

We love to get Email! Write to the TGF staff:

Bob Rees: brees@pacifier.com

Doug Rees: drees@TheGuidesForecast.com

Michael Teague: SailCat@TheGuidesForecast.com

Random Links

Salem angler hooks a near-record bass - May 13, 2004 Statesman-Journal story with photo:

*<http://news.statesmanjournal.com/article.cfm?i3D80129>

'Looks like a fun time! The Surf Perch Derby takes place on Saturday, May 15, 2004. Details here:

*<http://www.funbeach.com/events/fish/perchderby/index.html>

"We design lures for the fish, but fish don't buy lures." Fish researchers analyze the science of a lure:
*<http://www.sciencenews.org/articles/20040424/bob8.asp>

Weekly Quote

"Whether catch or release or not, the fish keep growing long after they've been caught." - Ian Mitchell

GOOD LUCK!