

Northwest Oregon and Washington's most complete and accurate fishing forecast

Forecasting for the fishing week of **October 21st – October 27th, 2005**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- The Columbia reopens to the retention of Chinook salmon on October 20th from Buoy 10 to Pasco, Washington. Catch rates are likely to be low as the bulk of the run has passed and fish are of poor table quality. Coho and steelhead season remains open on the mainstem and returning numbers will likely surpass preseason predictions.

Sturgeon fishing remains best in the gorge and bank anglers have some of their best opportunity this time of year. The Portland to Longview stretch is producing better this year than in recent history. Smelt remains the bait of choice.

Count on about 12 inches of visibility at the Sandy River unless the rain this week develops and roils the water once again. A few coho are being taken by anglers who put in their time, but many of the fish present are coloring up.

The Clackamas remains in good shape with decent clarity but fishing is very slow.

Good numbers of late-season summer steelhead are stacked on the North Santiam around Minto and Packsaddle with very little pressure on them.

Mid Columbia/Deschutes River - Steelhead fishing has held up well upriver on the Deschutes with fish scattered in good numbers up to Warm Springs. Trout fishing on the upper river closes November 1st.

The John Day Pool and John Day Arm are beginning to produce some respectable numbers of steelhead. Anglers target John Day River steelhead using jigs while trollers use plugs just upstream of the dam. This fishery will gain momentum over the next several weeks.

North Coast - Chinook numbers are improving on Tillamook Bay but the seaweed situation continues to hamper angler success. Upper bay spinner trollers are getting fish close to low and high slack tides but tides will weaken, making lower bay trolling more effective. Chinook are beginning to show in the Wilson tidewater but anglers need to be aware that the lower river is difficult to access from the entrance at Tillamook Bay. A sandbar at the entrance will give tidewater residents the best access. Fish are being taken in the Trask tidewater however.

Nehalem Bay remains sporadic but herring trollers at the bay entrance are taking a few fish.

The Nestucca River seems to be producing best above the Pacific City Bridge. The Boat Ramp and Guardrail holes are remarkably unproductive. No rain in sight will keep the driftboating season on hold.

Crabbing continues to improve on North Coast estuaries and a weaker tide series next week will allow for additional soak times and heftier catches.

Mid-Coast - Bottom fishing closed inside the 40 fathom line for boaters as of October 18th. Rock and jetty fishermen aren't affected by the closure however. Fishing for Pacific halibut outside of 40 fathoms also remains open on Fridays through Sundays through October South of Cape Falcon.

The Siletz turned on following the last rainfall but has been very slow this week.

Offshore boaters may expect to wait out rough seas this weekend out of Depoe Bay and Newport. Chinook fishing is fair on the Alsea River with periodic hot moments daily.

Determining the biological differences between wild and hatchery salmon is the goal of the new facility that opened this week at the old Fall River Hatchery location on the Alsea River.

The wild coho fishery is expected to improve in the next few weeks for trollers fishing Siltcoos and Tahkenitch lakes.

South Coast - A few chinook are being taken on the lower Umpqua by trollers dragging plug-cut herring. Coho are coming in but about half are wild. Chinook fishing on the Siuslaw is slow but steady.

The Coquille River has frustrated trollers recently but rewarded a few bobber fishermen with some bright chinook.

Grants Pass remains the best stretch to fish steelhead on the Rogue River. Very few chinook are being taken in the bay. Coho fishing is fair above Lobster Creek.

Crabbing is good and improving in South coast estuaries.

Eastern Oregon - Steelheaders continue to wait for good action on the Grand Ronde and Imnaha Rivers. As water temperatures cool and flows increase, these fisheries will become more viable. Trout fishing remains fair in most lakes as fish begin to feed heavy in preparation for over-wintering.

Trout fishing- The ODFW reports planting only Mt Hood Pond this week with 400 eight-to-10-inchers and with 50 rainbows in the 12 inch range.

SW Washington- The Cowlitz is reporting exceptional returns of coho. This river gets the later "B" run of fish allowing anglers to harvest quality hatchery fish this late in the season. The in-season projection is 5 times greater than what biologist believed was due back to the river this year.

The Lewis River is much the same but this stock is earlier returning so a higher percentage of the fish are dark in color. This run seems to be about 4 times greater than anticipated.

Some summer steelhead remain in the river but the first winter fish aren't due for several more weeks.

North Puget Sound- With the recent rains, bright **coho** salmon have been moving from the saltchuck to the rivers in increasing numbers. The problem for anglers is that most rivers in the area have been running high and dirty after all that rainfall. "The coho runs should be hitting their peak right now in the lower Skagit River, but the river has been super dirty," said Brett Barkdull, WDFW fish biologist.

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula- As the calendar gets ready to flip from October to November, salmon anglers are primarily pursuing **coho** in rivers and **blackmouth** in Puget Sound.

Eastern Washington- Snake River **steelheading** continues to be steady in most stretches, reports WDFW fish biologist Joe Bumgarner. "Turbine work at Little Goose Dam has slowed fishing on 'the wall', as the face of the dam is called," he said, " but most other areas are providing steady fishing." Bumgarner also noted there's been little use of the Tucannon River to date, despite an average catch rate there of about four hours of effort per steelhead.

North Central Washington- WDFW district fish biologist Art Viola reports from Cashmere that **steelhead** fishing on the Columbia River above Rocky Reach Dam, which opened Oct. 8, has been "relatively good for this early in the season." He predicted that catch rates will improve as water temperatures decrease.

South Central Washington- The **salmon** fishery in the Hanford Reach of the Columbia River (from Old Hanford townsite wooden power line crossing to Priest Rapids) closes Oct. 22. The Columbia River from the highway 395 Bridge upstream to the wooden power line towers at the old Hanford townsite will remain open for salmon fishing through Dec. 31, but few salmon are harvested after Nov. 1.

Columbia River Fishing Report – The first several weeks of keeper sturgeon fishing has proven to be better than anticipated. Biologists estimate that as many as 2400 keepers could have been culled from the upper river quota this month. The majority of those are coming from bank anglers as fish checkers tally an unusually high number of participants. The option to extend the season to more days per week is no longer an option and as a matter of fact, biologists are questioning whether the fishery will make it to the proposed deadline. More catch and release fishing anyone?

Pro guide Dan Ponciano (360-607-8511) reports steady action for anglers willing to put in a day. Limits can be taken for a good days effort and keepers are quickly culled when the fishery opens to retention on each Thursday. Smelt remains the top bait and the fast water towards the deadline seems to be where the best action is. Bank anglers have access to the prime water and they are taking advantage of it. Weekend checks indicate just under a fish every three bank anglers in the gorge area.

Gorge bank anglers are also putting the hurt on Chinook in that area. The weekend check showed over 2 fish were landed for every bank rod! Now, I don't have stats for the history of this fishery handy but I am next to positive that catch rates have NEVER been this good for Chinook anywhere on the Columbia from the bank! This may give anglers some incentive for fishing the re-opening of the mainstem on the 20th. The press release reads:

CLACKAMAS — Oregon and Washington fishery managers decided Monday to reopen the Columbia River to retention of fall chinook salmon effective Thursday, Oct. 20, because risks to wild stocks will be minimal at this point of the run.

Starting Thursday, retention of adult and jack chinook will be allowed in addition to adipose fin-clipped coho and adipose fin-clipped steelhead according to rules listed in the 2005 Oregon Sport Fishing Regulations from Buoy 10 upstream to the U.S. Highway 395 Bridge at Pasco, Wash. Oregon anglers may harvest two salmon or steelhead per day.

Fishery managers closed the Columbia River to chinook retention from Tongue Point to Bonneville Dam effective Sept. 18, and from Buoy 10-Tongue Point and upstream of Bonneville Dam effective Oct. 1 because harvest of upriver bright fall chinook was projected to exceed the sport allocation of non-Indian impacts to this stock. Reopening of the sport fishery was allowed because commercial harvesters will not likely use the remainder of the maximum allowable impact rate for non-Indian fisheries.

Fish biologists estimate that 584,800 adult fall chinook have or will enter the Columbia River this year compared to the pre-season estimate of 671,400. Both steelhead and coho are expected to return at rates higher than the pre-season projections.

What the press release doesn't tell you is that the bulk of the catch will be poor table fare for most so this fishery may bring out the egg hunters in the bunch. Be sure to phone in snaggers and folks not utilizing the whole fish as this too is a game violation.

Crabbing in the estuary continues to improve and should throughout the rest of the fall season. Fresh bait is best but realize that high numbers of crab will go through a lot of bait in little time.

The Guide's Forecast – Although the salmon re-opener may capture most of the press this week, sturgeon action is what is really worth writing home about. Bank anglers continue to post high catch rates and this trend will likely continue. Bradford Island anglers are seeing the most action as fish gravitate towards the dam effluent seeking higher levels of oxygen and any available food sources. Boat anglers tallied about a keeper for every two boats in the gorge area while downstream anglers in the Portland to Longview stretch only had about a keeper for every 10 boats. Smelt continues to be the bait of choice but savvy anglers will tip their smelt with shrimp or squid for added attraction.

Anglers wishing to cash in on the Chinook re-opener may find good action but the quality of fish available will be less than desirable. Bank anglers in the gorge were scoring high numbers of Chinook and that will likely continue. Backrollers will also post respectable numbers. Most days, dam passage hovers around 500 fish but over 1,000 passed on the 17th. As quickly as this fishery heats up, it will slow down and anglers will have to cull through bunches of fish to find quality ones.

Steelhead anglers fishing the John Day Pool will find increasing numbers of fish to target. Traditionally this time of year, boat anglers target steelhead in both the mainstem John Day River using bobbers and jigs and by trolling plugs in the pool above the John Day Dam. As temperatures cool and fish slow their migration, success rates will climb. This fishery lasts well into November and it is just getting started now.

With steelhead scattered in the Deschutes clear to the dams, there's still good fishing to be had upstream. The stretch from Warm Springs to Trout Creek has offered fine fishing in places this week.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Keeper sturgeon are few and far between on the lower Willamette. The best shot at one is in Multnomah Channel, but it pales in comparison to the Columbia Gorge for those willing to make the trip. The Willamette is subject to the same three-day-per-week retention period as the Big River.

Despite stable if slightly high flows in the North Santiam, good numbers of steelhead stacked around Minto and Packsaddle Park and fishable numbers clear to Mehama, angler interest remains low.

The Guide's Forecast – It remains to be seen if the lower Willamette becomes a reliable sturgeon fishery anytime soon. It's unlikely until significant rainfall freshens and muddies the water. Such conditions are often favored by sturgeon.

The North Santiam levels won't change much until precipitation further raises the level. Summer steelhead will continue to wind down and while winter fish will enter, they will all be wild.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – It's unlikely the rainfall this week will be sufficient to draw fresh coho into the Clackamas River which has been slow all year. Hopefuls should arm themselves with small, bright-colored corkies, spinners and pack cured salmon eggs as a backup. Eagle Creek will see a shot of coho with a freshet, but it happens quickly, creating a narrow (and usually crowded) window of opportunity.

With the Sandy still muddy due to a slide upriver, anglers have concentrated effort at the mouth of Cedar Creek where clearer water enters the mainstem. This created massive pressure over the weekend but coho were caught at that location. A few silvers are falling to coho anglers downstream where visibility was about one foot on Tuesday this week. Using bright-colored lures or spinners to tempt coho in the off-color water seems to be the best approach. These fish are rejecting bait this week. Go figure.

North Coast District Fishing Report – The Tillamook district is posting better catches by the week. This week, with the greater tide series, better numbers of fish have shown in Tillamook Bay. Every day is different and most guides are consistently only getting between 1 and 3 fish for a full day's effort. There have been some good bites in the upper and lower bay. The highest concentration of anglers has been in the upper bay around the picket fence and in the Ghost Hole. Seaweed is absolutely unbearable during peak incoming and ebb tides. This makes lower bay herring trollers very frustrated as they can only fish for very brief periods of time before weeds foul their gear. Spinner trollers have the option to whip their rods to clear their gear of the troublesome seaweed- at least for a brief time before it is fouled again.

In the upper bay, the opening of the picket fence has produced the best results- especially close to low slack. There were probably about 10 fish taken for a dozen boats in this area on 10/18 but on the 19th, this area only gave up 2 fish for that many boats. The most consistent bite has been taken place at Bay City and the upper Ghost Hole on the second half of incoming tide. When the tide begins to slow, the fish begin to show! And the seaweed begins to become concentrated in "weed-lines" making targeted troll lanes effective areas to target Chinook washing in with the tide. It is still imperative that anglers keep the weed from fouling their gear as it always seems to be present. The ocean was open for a brief period of time on Wednesday (10/19) but it has remained closed for most days this week and the forecast doesn't look promising for ocean anglers. With spinners the clear advantage, the chartreuse green dot spinners with red beads or the red/white blades have been producing the best results. Herring does have its place however as anglers (including us) have been consistently taking fish on plug cut baits when the weed subsides closer to the slack of both the high and low tides.

Nehalem Bay continues to be sporadic and the numbers seem to be dwindling overall. Although fish will continue to enter the system into early November, the bulk of the fall run of fish have passed through the estuary and are ripening in the lower stretches in anticipation of the next significant fall rain- but aren't we all?

Nestucca River is also quite sporadic as many Pacific City veterans are disappointed with the lower river results. Anglers are packed at the airport hole near the P.C. Bridge and success is only minimal. Bobber pitchers above the Woods Bridge are finding some fish but more seem to be present rather than willing.

The Guide's Forecast – Anglers have many factors working in their favor for the upcoming tide series on Tillamook Bay:

- 1) No rain in sight means fish won't be making a hard run to area rivers,

- 2) A weak tide series will make herring trolling more productive for longer periods of time in the lower bay and along the jetty. The ocean will likely remain closed,
- 3) A weak tide series should slow the movement of vegetation. Seaweed will still be present but troublesome spots should be less frequent. And finally,
- 4) Run timing- In recent years, the latter half of October has been the more productive time to fish. Kilchis and Wilson fish begin to show in respectable numbers making the lower bay the go-to place to fish.
- 5) The best part of the tide will be in the morning- a natural time for salmon to feed.

What more information do you need? My recommendation would be to spend most of your time targeting salmon from the Garibaldi area. With the weaker tides, fish will concentrate heavier in the lower bay. Herring will be an obvious choice but anglers that have confidence in spinners shouldn't discount their effectiveness in the lower bay. Low slack bites should be impressive this week along the north jetty inside the bay.

River fishermen may find rolling Chinook present in the Trask and Wilson Rivers but it may be challenging to get them to bite. The weaker tides will slow their aggressive behavior although a low slack in the a.m. will certainly bode well for persistent bobber anglers. No rain in sight for driftboat anglers. It'll have to wait for at least another week!

Nehalem should begin to slow down although tides are again favorable for anglers working the jaws with herring. Bobber anglers may also find some reward above Nehalem as fish stage in hopes of a much needed rain.

The Nestucca is much the same with the majority of action likely to come from the water above the Woods Bridge. There may be a few Chinook making their way up above the head of tide. It may however be challenging to find quality Chinook in this reach (Three Rivers to Cloverdale). Crabbing remains fair from Nehalem to Nestucca Bays but limits are not common.

Central & South Coast Reports – A few chinook are being taken from the Salmon River from the 101 Bridge to the hatchery but many are dark now as this run is winding down.

The Siletz, which was productive following the last rainfall, has been very slow this week. Most of the October pictures posted at Coyote Rock are from the first week of the month.

Rough seas have hampered offshore sports fishermen and this weekend will be no exception. Large commercial vessels are returning to port with holds full of albacore since warm water is about 35 miles offshore, but the ocean won't allow such a trip in smaller vessels for a while.

Fine numbers of chinook and coho are available offshore if boaters can catch a calm day to safely fish the ocean.

In order to protect the black rockfish which have been taken in numbers exceeding the quota, bottom fishing is closed inside the 40 fathom line for boaters as of October 18th. Rock and jetty fishermen aren't affected by the closure and may continue to keep all species.

The bottomfish limit in 2006 will be reduced by 13% over 2005. Meetings are being conducted to determine what the limit will be next year. The goal is to prevent an early closure as happened this year. Sportsmen who make an effort to attend help to protect the fishery for all of us. Your

voice will be heard.

Halibut fishing outside of 40 fathom line remains open on Fridays through Sundays through October South of Cape Falcon and bottom fish may also be kept if taken from these greater depths.

It's great to get some good news about fishing regulations for a change. If proposed 2006 halibut rules go into effect as expected, anglers will have more three-day all depth opportunities (every week rather than every-other-week) as well as a three-fish-per-week bag limit.

All coastal bays and estuaries will offer fine crabbing as the tides moderate with the Dungeness large and hard-shelled at this time of year.

The wild coho fishery at Siltcoos and Tahkenitch lakes has yielded a few fish to trollers, but is expected to improve in the next few weeks. Harvestable numbers allow this fishery with Siltcoos expected to produce the better fishing.

Alsea chinook fishers have experience classic Fall chinook action recently. Time spent on the water lulls them into a state of inattention, then, as if some cosmic switch is flipped, it's "Fish on" up and down the river. This action can last from a few minutes to as long as an hour, but historically, when it's over anglers might as well head for home and hope to hit that magic window of opportunity another day.

Determining the biological differences between wild and hatchery salmon is the goal of the new Oregon Conservation Research Hatchery which opened this week at the old Fall River Hatchery location on the Alsea River. In addition to determining the difference in genetic makeup, the effect of interbreeding will be studied.

A few chinook are being taken on the lower Umpqua by trollers dragging plug-cut herring. Coho are coming in but about half are wild. Chinook fishing on the Siuslaw is slow but steady.

The Coquille River has frustrated trollers recently but rewarded a few bobber fishermen with some bright chinook. Bobber fishermen working the top of tidewater in the Coos River are landing chinook but the majority of them are dark, indicating the curtain falling on the South coast season. The Chetco River has been productive for chinook recently with a 62-pounder landed this week.

According the Curry County Pilot Newspaper, weekend rains brought lots of chinook into the Smith River. Here's one over 50 pounds taken by Ron Fairchild of Brookings, which may have been better suited to gene pool contribution than to the table, but as they say, it'll smoke up real nice.



Grants Pass remains the best stretch to fish steelhead on the Rogue River. Many of the steelhead gathering below spawning chinook in order to gobble eggs are wild. For those trying to cull a hatchery fish, roe or egg imitators are logical choices. Very few chinook are being taken in the bay although Coho fishing is fair to good above Lobster Creek.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Fly anglers on the Deschutes will find trout binging now in preparation for the long winter to come. This makes nymphs effective all day but with October Caddis hatching, a dry imitation will work well when they're rising to them. Fishing will remain good for the next few weeks any day there isn't a dramatic change in the level or flow. Anglers are reminded that the last day for trout fishing on the upper Deschutes, Wallowa and other Eastern streams and rivers is October 31st.

The stretch of the Grand Ronde above and below Troy has been productive but spotty. It would seem more water is needed to draw additional steelhead into the system. According to ODFW counters, anglers were putting in 11 hours per fish last week but that catch rate has improved slightly over the last several days.

Fly fishing for trout is reported as good at Fall River, Crooked River and the Metolius.

Northwest Bass & Panfish - It's time to hit the Willamette for smallmouth bass as they are on their Fall feeding binges now. This should make for some great fishing, barring a dramatic change in the weather, for the next several weeks. Try soft plastics, crankbaits and spinnerbaits to determine smallies' preference as it can change daily ... even hourly.

Temperate coastal lakes will provide largemouth and panfish action through the end of the month and if Fall is mold, well into November.

Northwest Trout - The ODFW reports planting only Mt Hood Pond this week with 400 eight-to-10-inchers and with 50 rainbows in the 12 inch range.

Washington Fishing Report:

North Puget Sound:

With the recent rains, bright **coho** salmon have been moving from the saltchuck to the rivers in increasing numbers. The problem for anglers is that most rivers in the area have been running high and dirty after all that rainfall. "The coho runs should be hitting their peak right now in the lower Skagit River, but the river has been super dirty," said Brett Barkdull, WDFW fish biologist. "It's tough to catch fish in water with two feet of visibility." The situation has been much the

same in the Skykomish, Snohomish and other area rivers, said Chad Jackson, another WDFW fish biologist. "Fishing has been spotty, largely based on river conditions," Jackson said. "If the rivers drop back into shape, we should see some good coho fishing in the next few weeks."

Chum salmon have also started showing up in the catch, and should enter area rivers in large numbers by the end of October, Jackson said. The Stillaguamish and Snohomish rivers are both expected to have strong runs of chum salmon this year, he said. Until then, Jackson reminds anglers that the Reiter Ponds section of the Skykomish River is now open to retention of hatchery steelhead and other game fish.

As more coho move into the rivers, catch rates for salmon in marine areas dropped accordingly, said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW recreational salmon-fishing manager. "A test fishery in Marine Area 8-1 found that an angler would have to put in an eight-hour day to catch one legal **blackmouth**," Thiesfeld said. "That's a pretty hard day's work. On the other hand, the selective fishery in marine areas 8-1 and 8-2 on the eastern side of Whidbey Island will be open through April, so the opportunity will be there when the fishing does pick up."

Meanwhile, sport **crabbing** reopened Oct. 12 in marine areas 9 (Admiralty Inlet), 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) and 11 (Tacoma-Vashon) on a Wednesday-through-Saturday schedule through Dec. 21. Marine Area 12 (Hood Canal) also reopened for sport crabbing seven days per week through Jan. 2, with other areas to follow. The only two areas that will not reopen for crabbing are marine areas 8-1 and 8-2, where WDFW surveys show the areas' harvest share was exceeded during the summer months.

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula:

As the calendar gets ready to flip from October to November, salmon anglers are primarily pursuing **coho** in rivers and **blackmouth** in Puget Sound.

A lack of rainfall had delayed river fishing, but salmon are finally on the move in both North and South Olympic streams. Up north, finicky chinook and coho had been lying low in the bays or holed up in pools for weeks as the Sol Duc, Bogachiel and Hoh rivers and their siblings remained clear and low. Flows are getting back to normal now, and so is the fishing. "We should be at about the peak of the coho entry into the rivers," said Mike Gross, WDFW biologist. "The fish are moving, and we're starting to see some pretty good action." The key, now, is for the rivers to stay in shape - enough water to keep them flowing but not enough to blow them out. The limit is six salmon, chinook or coho, but only two can be adults. In the Quillayute River system (Sol Duc, Bogachiel, Dickey and Calawah), a third adult fish can be kept if it is a marked (hatchery) coho. "If the rivers are at the right levels, you can't go wrong with the North Olympic Peninsula," said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW recreational fishing manager. "People call me from all over the country and I send them up to Forks as the day-in, day-out best place to fish in this state." An upper section of the Hoh from Willoughby Creek to Morgans Crossing opened Oct. 16. Coho fishing has been slow in the Dungeness since it opened on the same day, but that shouldn't last, Thiesfeld said. The Elwha, which has been open since Oct. 1, also should be good, he said. The Dungeness limit is four coho, the Elwha six coho with no more than four adults.

The recent shot of rain also had a favorable effect south of the Olympics, moving salmon through Grays Harbor and into the rivers, said Scott Barbour, WDFW biologist. The fish are thick in the Chehalis, Wynoochee and Satsop rivers, which opened Oct. 1, and the Humptulips River, which opened Oct. 16. Chinook, which must be released in the rivers and bay, have been more aggressive than coho, which appear to be bent on reaching the hatcheries. Finding a clear stream during unpredictably rainy autumns is a key to angler success, Barbour said. Best bets now are the Wynoochee and the upper Chehalis River near the Montesano boat launch, or around the mouth of the Satsop River. The limit is six fish, of which no more than two can be

adults. Coho are still being caught in the Puyallup River, when it's clear enough, and the Skokomish River.

Nearly all of Puget Sound will be fair game for blackmouth fishing with the season already open in Seattle/Bremerton and set to start Nov. 1 in the Strait of Juan de Fuca, Admiralty Inlet and South Puget Sound. Thiesfeld recommends trying the usual spots -- Midchannel Bank, Possession Point, Point No Point, the Racetrack, Jefferson Head and Manchester. Sekiu and Port Angeles can also be good, but check on the weather. Blackmouth generally range between the minimum 22 inches to 7 or 8 pounds. "That's a nice fish to bring home for dinner when nothing else is going on," Thiesfeld said. "There aren't many places in world right now where you can go chinook fishing, especially in protected waters. That's why blackmouth fishing has always had a strong following here in the Puget Sound. It's a unique opportunity to go out and catch salmon in the wintertime." For more information on these and other fisheries, check the WDFW Fishing Hotline (360-902-2500), the department's website or the [Fishing in Washington](#) rules pamphlet.

Fishing for game fish in many rivers and streams will close Oct. 31 and not reopen until June 1.

It's not too early to start making plans for the next **razor clam** dig, tentatively scheduled for evening tides Nov. 12-14, at all five ocean beaches, with an extra day of digging Nov. 15, at Mocrocks and Twin Harbors. As always, final approval is contingent on the results of marine toxin tests conducted the week of the scheduled opening. The final test results will be announced about one week before the proposed opening. For updates on the planned [razor clam dig](http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/razorclm/season.htm) (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/razorclm/season.htm>), see the WDFW website or call the Shellfish Hotline at 1-866-880-5431.

Most waters of Puget Sound reopened to recreational **Dungeness crab** fishing on Oct. 12. New sport crabbing rules adopted by the commission last May helped to slow the catch, leaving enough crab available to extend the season through the end of the year. Crabbing reopened in Marine Area 12 (Hood Canal) seven days per week through Jan. 2 and on a Wednesday-through-Saturday schedule in marine areas 9 (Admiralty Inlet), 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) and 11 (Tacoma-Vashon) until Dec. 21, when it will switch to seven days a week. In addition, marine areas 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca) and 7 (San Juan Islands) will reopen for sport crabbing on a Wednesday-through-Saturday schedule from Nov. 16 through Dec. 21, then switch to seven days per week through Jan. 2. Crabbing has continued non-stop in three other marine areas - 4 (Neah Bay), 5 (Sekiu) and 13 (south Puget Sound) - which will remain open seven days per week through Feb. 28, unless the catch reaches state harvest share before that date. The daily catch limit is five crabs at least 6¼ inches wide, males only and in hard-shell condition.

Southwest Washington:

The best catch rates for **sturgeon** in the lower Columbia River are generally posted in October, and this year is no exception. One in four bank anglers fishing downstream from the Bonneville Dam caught a legal-sized fish during the three-day period ending Oct. 15, said Brad James, WDFW fish biologist. "Bank anglers are doing really well right below the dam right now. Catch rates are down somewhat from the previous week, but the fishing is still very good," said James, noting that the fishery is open Thursday, Friday and Saturday each week. Clearly the word is out. Fish checkers counted 251 anglers on the Washington side of the river and 397 on the Oregon side Oct. 8. James reminds anglers that they must release any sturgeon measuring less than 42 inches or more than 60 inches long.

While few anglers have been fishing for salmon on the lower river in recent days, interest may pick up now that Washington and Oregon have agreed to allow **chinook** retention from the mouth to the highway 395 bridge in Pasco, effective Oct. 20. Both states agreed that allowing chinook retention at this point in the run poses little risk to wild stocks. Although most chinook

have moved upriver, anglers still have a chance to catch some nice upriver brights - particularly above and below Bonneville Dam, said Cindy LeFleur, WDFW Columbia River harvest coordinator. Gear and daily catch limits are the same as those listed in the [Fishing in Washington rules pamphlet](https://fortress.wa.gov/dfw/erules/efishrules/index.jsp) (<https://fortress.wa.gov/dfw/erules/efishrules/index.jsp>). LeFleur reminds anglers that many area tributaries remain closed to chinook retention, and that coho retention ended Oct. 16 on the Elochoman, Kalama and Washougal rivers.

But salmon anglers are finding some success on the Cowlitz and Lewis rivers, which remain open for retention of chinook, hatchery **coho** and **steelhead**. At Lake Scanewa, above Cowlitz Falls Dam, one in three boat anglers have been catching hatchery coho. Bank anglers at the Lake Scanewa day use park have also been catching some fish.

To help boost success rates, Tacoma Power employees recently released 2,500 coho adults and 754 jacks into the upper Cowlitz at the day use park, 399 coho adults and 104 jacks at Franklin Bridge in Packwood, and 171 coho adults into the Cispus River above the mouth of Yellow jacket Creek. They also recycled 1,200 summer steelhead adults and 36 **cutthroat trout** downstream of the boat launch at Interstate 5.

Speaking of cuts, John Weinheimer, WDFW district biologist, strongly recommends Goose Lake north of Carson. "The fishing there has been terrific," said Weinheimer, touting coastal cutthroat up to 1.5 pounds each, along with good-sized brown, rainbow and eastern brook trout. Cold Lake, near Toutle, is also a good bet, he said. "Fifteen-inch rainbows are the norm," said Weinheimer, who advised anglers to check out the sport-fishing rules before they go. For those and other fishing regulations, see WDFW's [Fishing in Washington pamphlet](https://fortress.wa.gov/dfw/erules/efishrules/index.jsp) (<https://fortress.wa.gov/dfw/erules/efishrules/index.jsp>) or call the Fishing Hotline at (360) 902-2500.

Anglers who want to learn about - and comment on - future salmon and sturgeon management issues on the Columbia River should consider attending a public meeting Oct. 20 in Cathlamet. The meeting, hosted by the Washington and Oregon fish and wildlife departments, will be held from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Julius Wendt Elementary School, 265 South Third St.

Eastern Washington:

Snake River **steelheading** continues to be steady in most stretches, reports WDFW fish biologist Joe Bumgarner. "Turbine work at Little Goose Dam has slowed fishing on 'the wall', as the face of the dam is called," he said, " but most other areas are providing steady fishing." Bumgarner also noted there's been little use of the Tucannon River to date, despite an average catch rate there of about four hours of effort per steelhead. The mainstem Snake above the interstate bridge at Clarkston has also yielded about a four-hour-per-caught-fish rate. The mainstem Snake from Lower Monumental dam to Little Goose dam, and the Wallula area (state line to the mouth of the Walla Walla River), both measured just under 10 hours of fishing effort per steelhead during the latest creel check. The Walla Walla River had a 12-hours-per-fish catch rate, and steelheaders on the mainstem Snake from Ice Harbor dam to Lower Monumental dam averaged almost 14 hours of effort per fish caught.

Now is a good time to fish eastern Washington's streams and lakes since many close at the end of October. The Tucannon River impoundments in Columbia County, several lakes in Stevens and Pend Oreille counties up north, and many stretches of streams and rivers still have **trout**. Water and air temperatures are conducive to good fishing, with fish fattening up before winter on fall insect hatches. WDFW Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area manager Juli Anderson reports that fly fishing at Z-Lake, a walk-in only water on the area west of Telford Road, is excellent north of the shallow end, with "nice, pink-fleshed" rainbows ranging up to 14 inches. Amber Lake in southwest Spokane County remains open for catch-and-release trout fishing through November.

North Central Washington:

WDFW district fish biologist Art Viola reports from Cashmere that **steelhead** fishing on the Columbia River above Rocky Reach Dam, which opened Oct. 8, has been "relatively good for this early in the season." He predicted that catch rates will improve as water temperatures decrease. In addition to the stretch of the Columbia from Rocky Reach to the Highway 17 bridge at Bridgeport, steelhead fishing is open on the Okanogan River from the mouth upstream to one-quarter mile below the railroad trestle below Zosel Dam, and on the Methow River from the mouth (Highway 97 Bridge) upstream to the second power line crossing, and from the first Highway 153 bridge north of Pateros to the confluence with the Chewuch River. Selective gear rules are in effect and the daily catch limit on all three rivers is two adipose-fin-clipped hatchery steelhead of at least 20 inches in length. All steelhead with an intact adipose fin - the small, fatty fin on the back near the tail - and those bearing a disk tag must immediately be released unharmed.

WDFW district fish biologist Jeff Korth of Moses Lake says Lake Lenore is "hot" right now for **Lahontan cutthroat trout**. The average cutthroat there is three pounds, he said, with the big ones running up to seven pounds. Korth reminds anglers that this is a selective regulation fishery with a one-fish daily limit. Korth also notes that this is a good time to fish for **walleye** on Moses Lake, Potholes Reservoir, and Sprague Lake.

South Central Washington:

The **salmon** fishery in the Hanford Reach of the Columbia River (from Old Hanford townsite wooden power line crossing to Priest Rapids) closes Oct. 22. The Columbia River from the highway 395 Bridge upstream to the wooden power line towers at the old Hanford townsite will remain open for salmon fishing through Dec. 31, but few salmon are harvested after Nov. 1. WDFW fish biologist Jim Cummins says fishing is expected to be excellent until then, but fish quality will deteriorate rapidly. The last creel checks indicated it was one adult chinook for every 13 pole hours, with high water making it hard on anglers and fish condition declining fast.

This area (Highway 395 to Hanford townsite) will also remain open for the retention of **hatchery steelhead** through March 31, 2006. Through October, hatchery steelhead harvested must have adipose and right ventral fin clips. Beginning Nov. 1, any hatchery steelhead may be retained in this portion of the Columbia River. Fishing for steelhead in the Ringold area has been slower this year than during the previous three years. Including fish released, last creel checks show that Ringold bank anglers averaged one steelhead for every six rods, with some fall chinook also caught. Starting Oct. 20 **chinook salmon** can be retained on the mainstem Columbia River from Buoy 10 upstream to the highway 395 bridge near Pasco.

The Yakima River **salmon** fishery also closes Oct. 22. The last creel check showed lots of angler effort with about 238 adult chinook harvested. Catch rates averaged one chinook harvested for every 18.5 angler hours. Cummins notes that late October is a popular time of year on the Yakima for many **trout** fly fishers. "It can be frustrating because of the challenge of catching and releasing very selective trout on dry flies, and it can get crowded," he said. "But flows are very low, insect hatches and surface feeding fish are the rule, and the autumn colors and mild weather enhance the fishing experience." Cummins noted that tiny blue winged olive mayflies, which often hatch in large numbers can bring dozens of trout to the surface, but Yakima River rainbow can often spot a counterfeit and refuse to rise to all but the best imitation and presentation.

October caddis and several other mayfly hatches also bring fish to the surface. Dry fly anglers must match the hatch in order to be successful. Some anglers prefer to fish with nymphs, which

can sometimes be more productive, particularly between insect hatches. For current fishing reports and information about fishing guides, facilities, fishing techniques, insect hatches and the most productive flies, search the Internet for "Yakima River trout." Most rivers and streams in the region close to fishing Oct. 31, but the Yakima River is open year around for catch and release fishing upriver from Roza Dam near the Yakima/Kittitas County line.

Reader Email

Write to the TGF staff:

Bob Rees: brees@pacifier.com

Doug Rees: drees@TheGuidesForecast.com

Michael Teague: SailCat@TheGuidesForecast.com

Random Links

Details on the offshore bottomfish closure from the Statesman Journal:

<http://www.statesmanjournal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20051015/OUTDOORS/510150338/1034>

Another fine article from Henry Miller of the Statesman Journal, this time on shellfish. "Most people eat until they're full. I eat until I'm tired."

<http://www.statesmanjournal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20051013/COLUMN0401/510130351/1075/OUTDOORS>

Incidentally, fir those who missed it or don't subscribe to SJ, Mr. Miller is running a lighthearted competition, "smallest fish you've ever caught". Details are here:

<http://www.statesmanjournal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20051020/COLUMN0401/510200355/1075/OUTDOORS>

I wonder if pro guides can enter? Bob?



Weekly Quote – "Fish-story tellers have jeopardized their credibility time and again by inserting into their tales a wanton degree of hyperbole, often introducing the most improbably characters

and events without batting an eyelash. This has earned us all a bad reputation and has made things hard for those of us who would tell a story and not stray one iota from the truth." - Craig Woods

GOOD LUCK!