

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **November 25th – December 1st, 2005**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- The gorge remains the best place to target keeper sturgeon. Action remains steady but has slowed from recent weeks reports **pro guide Bill Kremers (541-754-6411)**. Smelt and shrimp continue to be the best bait to use but squid is also a strong option.

Sturgeon fishing is picking up a little in the lower Willamette although most fish hooked are undersized. A few keepers have come to knowledgeable anglers plying the waters of Multnomah Channel. As always, stay on the move to find a concentration of larger fish.

Bank hopefuls are sparse at Meldrum Bar, a fairly reliable indicator of the fishing action - or lack thereof. There has been one confirmed steelie banked and rumor of a couple of others. The water is far lower than anglers would like as counts at the Falls remain in the low single digits. A decent rainfall will bring on the winter steelhead, but it won't be a Thanksgiving delivery this year.

Clackamas success often mimics Meldrum Bar results, which have not yet appeared. It doesn't look promising for holiday steel.

Sandy River steelheaders will also need to plan on their first encounter with a winter fish a little later in the season. A shift in hatchery plants will cause greater reliance on the later returning broodstock steelhead.

Mid Columbia/Deschutes River - The John Day fishery continues to offer great opportunity for steelheaders that know the game. Bobbers and shrimp will take fish in the John Day itself and trolled plugs in the water above the John Day Dam. Creel counts indicate this fishery is nearing its peak.

The Deschutes River itself is still a viable option for steelhead. Good weather has afforded ample opportunity but effort has dropped.

North Coast - Salmon fishing is still an option on Tillamook Bay although action has slowed since the last rain freshet. Anglers fared very well early last week with fresh Chinook available throughout the Wilson and Kilchis Rivers. Since the rivers have cleared, anglers are losing interest in river fishing and changing effort back to the estuary itself. Herring trollers did score a few fish in the Ghost Hole over the weekend. Fresh Dungeness was an added bonus for aggressive crabbers as keepers became much more scarce as the weekend carried on. As we enter the low tide exchange through the weekend, anglers should not expect great results on the bay or in tidewater. River forecasts are calling for a possible rise by the weekend but unless precipitation is significant, action will remain mediocre at best.

Crabbing on Netarts and Tillamook Bays should be good with the low tidal exchanges. Crabbers can get away with running gear in deeper water and away from competing traps to increase their catch.

Crabbers were out in full force in the Columbia River estuary over the weekend. Crabbing was good as it usually peaks this time of year but like many other areas, effort was high. It should stay good for the next several weeks so get out there if you're able. It appears that commercial crabbing won't get underway until December 15th.

Mid-Coast - Mild tides favor crabbing over the long holiday weekend. Yaquina Bay is producing fine catches while Waldport is slow to fair.

Pro guide Jim Stevenson (503-580-4162) reports, "The Siletz River had fresh and dark Chinook prior to the water dropping and all methods were taking fish. The run is about over but precipitation could stimulate a few late stragglers."

The wild coho fishery is open at Tahkenitch and Siltcoos with plenty of fish remaining in quotas at both locations. Pressure and catches are higher at Tahkenitch where trollers are taking fish on plugs and spinners around feeder streams.

The Siuslaw appears to be wrapped up as the ODFW fish counter at that location saw no fish taken over the weekend.

South Coast - Rivers on the South coast have fallen to summer levels with clarity beyond that preferred by fish or fisherman.

The Elk and Sixes won't fish well for chinook until the next decent rainfall.

Anglers on the upper Rogue are taking summer steelhead, most of which are in decent condition and coho, most of which are dark.

Chetco River chinook fishers continued to score through Saturday, November 19th, with decent numbers of fish reported still available. A few steelhead have been landed as well, although the river is dropping rapidly. Weather predictions include only a chance of rain early next week.

Crab molted late offshore in the Brookings area, delaying commercial harvest. The crab must test at 25% or better meat-by-weight for the season to open. Otherwise, it's delayed until January 15th, 2006, in which case it opens regardless.

Eastern Oregon - The Grande Ronde is finally beginning to produce traditional and expected steelhead fishing success states **pro guide Mac Huff (1-800-940-3688)**. Fly guys that are able to detect the light takes are approaching catch rates of 2 to 4 hours per fish and gear guys are eclipsing these figures.

Friday's catch was strongly weighted towards male steelhead, indicating a fresh batch of fish are moving up the river with hens close behind.

Trout fishing- With trout stocking wrapped up for the year, the PowerBait crowd must rely upon rainbows remaining in residence until planting of brood trout and steelhead occurs in valley lakes mid-winter. Not at Hagg Lake, though, as it closed last weekend.

Most lakes on the East side are closed or the access roads are no longer open. The Crooked River is providing fine trout fishing as is the Fall River on the stretch below the Falls; it's closed above.

SW Washington- Coho numbers are falling on SW Washington Rivers so anglers are anxiously awaiting steelhead on the Cowlitz and Chehalis Rivers. Thanksgiving is the traditional kick-off and often times winter steelhead returns parallel coho returns. Optimistic anglers are banking on a quality run on the Cowlitz. On years of good returns, early catches are common.

Columbia River Fishing Report – Anglers have been taking advantage of the nice weather when targeting keeper sturgeon in the gorge. High winds do hamper anglers on occasion, making the Willamette River a more viable option- particularly in the Portland Harbor. **Pro guide Bill Kremers**

(541-754-6411) reports, "I did some sturgeon fishing last Thursday at Bonneville. There is still some good sturgeon fishing there if the winds are not blowing too hard for both keeper and oversize fish. We were using smelt and squid for the keeper size fish and if you want something bigger, try a shad. Also sturgeon fished on the lower Willamette on Saturday as the wind was blowing too hard in the Gorge. The Willamette is currently three degrees cooler than the Columbia. We did manage several undersize fish and most of fish have to grow another 4 or 5 inches before they reach legal size."



Oversized from Bonneville, about 8.5 feet

Further upstream, John Day steelheaders are heading into their prime season. Mainstem trollers are taking fish on red herring-bone wiggle warts. Blue pirate flatwarts are also working but hard to find. Mainstem John Day anglers are taking fish on bobber and jigs but sand shrimp beneath a bobber is equally, if not more deadly. Target the slots that hug the bank. All you need is 4 to 7 feet of water to effectively be fishing on top of steelhead. A slow free drift is critical to get fish to bite but depth must be precise as well. Start at 1.5 foot above the bottom and work your way UP the water column. Biters usually inhabit the bottom 3 feet however. The flows are too slow to drift bait in most places.

The Guide's Forecast – The gorge fishery will begin to wane a bit as those fish have been hit hard over the last several weeks. Anglers will have to become more aggressive to find keepers and improvise on their choice of baits to take quality keepers. The Columbia is running unusually warmer than the Willamette which should keep legal sized fish in place.

Steelheaders should find favorable conditions as this fishery enters its peak time. Good sized steelhead are available in both the mainstem Columbia and John Day Rivers itself. The mainstem fishery is the most relaxing and can be quite productive if you have a hot plug. Stick to the metallics on the sunny days and flat reds, greens or blues on the cloudy days. When air temperatures begin to meet water temperatures, action will be best.

On the John Day itself, shrimp fished under a bobber will likely produce the best results. If you are in an area where you can get a long, free drift, jigs will work well too. Pink/white jigs produce consistent results but anglers are encouraged to bring darker colors like purple and black if fish decide to be finicky.

The date when commercial crabbing was to commence was originally December 1st, but we got word near deadline that it will be postponed until the 15th. This means more big Dungeness for sport crabbers. Go get 'em.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Bank hopefuls are sparse at Meldrum Bar, a fairly reliable indicator of the fishing action - or lack thereof. There has been one confirmed winter steelie banked and rumor of a couple of others. The water is far lower than anglers

would like as counts at the Falls remain in the low single digits with fewer than 100 winter steelhead counted as of November 19th. A decent rainfall will bring on the winter steelhead, but it won't be a Thanksgiving delivery this year.

Sturgeon fishing has picked up slightly in the lower Willamette although most fish hooked are undersized.

A few keeper sturgeon have come to knowledgeable anglers plying the waters of Multnomah Channel. As always, stay on the move to find a concentration of larger fish.

At the headwaters of the North Santiam, Detroit Reservoir is steadily falling. At the current rate, the reservoir will be at low winter level early in December. Barring substantial rain or snowmelt, the river below will reflect this seasonal drawdown.

The Guide's Forecast – The temperature of the Willamette remains two or three degrees cooler than that of the Columbia, a situation which is due to reverse. When that occurs, a dramatic improvement in the lower Willamette Sturgeon bite will follow. Sturgeon seek refuge (and food) in the Willamette when the waters are even slightly warmer than that of the Big River. Currently, the Willamette is a chilly 46 degrees at the Falls.

While summer steelhead remain available in fair number and decent condition in the North Santiam, they are reluctant to cooperate with the minimal angling effort. A few winter steelhead are in the system in insignificant number, all of which are of natural rather than hatchery origin. Come February, a worthwhile catch and release metalhead fishery will be an option for anglers at this location.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Without steelhead in the lower Willamette, it doesn't look promising for holiday steel on the Clackamas River. The ODFW reports, "with a few winters showing at Willamette Falls it's possible that the determined angler could find an early fish in the lower Clackamas." Yeah, they could find the anglers prowess so intimidating that they'll jump into the boat and surrender, too, but neither event is likely to occur. Try elsewhere for now, although the potential exists for worthwhile fishing later in the season. I spoke with a couple of experienced steelheaders who predicted fishing would be a good possibility in mid-December on the Clackamas.

Sandy River steelheaders will also need to plan on their first encounter with a winter fish a little later in the season. A shift in hatchery plants will cause greater reliance on the later returning broodstock steelhead. The Sandy will deliver after the first of the year and should be a hottie come February.

Here's some good news for future seasons: About 10,000 coho entered the hatchery at Eagle Creek on the Clack and 11,000 on the Sandy. While that's 21,000 silvers you and I didn't catch, it bodes well for seasons to come.

North Coast District Fishing Report – Although weekend effort was at near summer time highs, the catch did not follow suit. It was hard for anglers to be too disappointed however as weather almost made up for a hard day of fishing. Limited success was to be expected given the fact north coast rivers have been in prime shape for almost 2 weeks now, giving ample opportunity for wild Chinook to hone in on their destinations.

River fishing was good early last week as the previous weekends rain freshet kept action decent into mid-week. Rivers dropped quickly however and the bay became more of an option than the gin-clear upper reaches. Bobber tossers did take a few (and I mean a few) fish over the weekend in the lower Wilson River but most people headed to the Ghost Hole in anticipation of fresh fish.



Pictured are Josh and Jeff on the lower Wilson River on 11/16.

Only an occasional angler was rewarded with a sea-lice infested fall fish as tides weakened, so did the migration. Many anglers came prepared to take the best of the bay by bringing crab gear with them. Fresh water had worked its way out of the system by Saturday and crabbers fared pretty well. By Sunday however, the crab fishery was feeling the effects of a hard hit weekend and catches dropped off dramatically. We took 18 keeper crab on Saturday and only 7 on Sunday for 6 pots. The crab however are in excellent shape. Fresh salmon carcasses were responsible for my catches.

The ocean swell was very friendly over the weekend which allowed me to crab close to the ocean. The ocean itself doesn't open until 12/1 but surveys indicate many of the crab will be soft-shelled. Not so in the estuaries of NW Oregon however.

Heavy concentrations of anglers are working over holding fish in the lower Kilchis and Wilson Rivers. This brings out the worst in people as concentrated fish breed greed. Of course there are good numbers of legal sport anglers but the few wreck it for many. Be sure to do your resource justification by reporting any snagging activity. It shouldn't be tolerated - these poachers are stealing from YOU!

Chum salmon season is closed - don't even go there. One guide reported seeing great numbers of waiting cutthroat trout. Spawning chum and Chinook offer up ample feed for these fish. A fly angler could have a hay-day using egg patterns below spawning salmon. 'Tis the season!

The Guide's Forecast – Don't look for fishing to improve over the holiday weekend. Several factors will limit success:

* Recent rains have sent the bulk of the fish upstream to spawn...Yeah!

* Poor tides will limit the number of fish entering the system, and
We are past the peak of the run. There are more to come but we need either another significant rain or good tide exchange. Neither look to be coming our way this weekend.

If you find yourself needing to go fishing, the Ghost Hole or West Channel will offer the best opportunities to catch a fresh Chinook. No one is fishing the West Channel so we don't have reports but it does have history this time of year. The terminal area is still open but success will likely be limited.

Bring your crab gear as the weak tide exchange will offer up some good opportunity for decent catches. It will be best to get away from the crowds and use quality bait for best results.

River anglers should not expect quality fish. Adults are pooled up, ripening for the upcoming spawn. They should not be harassed repeatedly as they are the future of our fishery.

The Nestucca is not done yet but like most North Coast streams, it is in need of another significant rain event. The Nehalem is done!

Sturgeon began to make a show in the Tillamook estuary last year about this time. Good bait may be hard to come by however as tides don't favor shrimp pumpers and fewer shrimpers are in the biz.

Central & South Coast Reports – Travel Alert - While the coast range will not get snow nor are roads forecast to be icy, travelers on the Siskiyou Pass will encounter snowy conditions. Be cautious and be sure to carry chains. For the 411 on road conditions, **Dial 511**. Really!

The forecast includes only showers on the central Oregon coast, which for anglers on the Siletz spells disappointment. With the seasonally early chinook run wrapped up, rain is needed to jump-start the winter season.

Pro Guide James Stevenson comments, "Prior to water dropping Siletz had a fair number of fish in it, some dark some very bright. Fished primarily eggs, back bouncing, bobber, or diver and bait all methods produced fish. Clearing cold weather has dropped the river and water getting very clear and so has gone the productivity. Many fish have spawned with many carcasses along the river bank, good for the future. Not sure of future prospects, a good raise in the river could provide one final hurray."

Mild tides favor crabbing over the long holiday weekend. Yaquina Bay is producing fine catches while Waldport is slow to fair. The delay of commercial crabbing mentioned in the Columbia report, above, is effective coast-wide. Commercial efforts will start on December 15th *or later!*

The wild coho fishery at Tahkenitch and Siltcoos has plenty of fish remaining in quotas at both locations. Pressure and catches are higher at Tahkenitch where trollers are taking fish on plugs and spinners around feeder streams. The fishery will remain open until anglers bag 300 wild coho at Tahkenitch and 200 at Siltcoos or December 15th, whichever comes first. Anglers who'd like a chance at the unique fishery need to do so soon.

The Yaquina and Alsea rivers are done for Fall chinook and the Siuslaw appears to be wrapped up as the ODFW fish counter at that location was idle over the weekend.

Pro Guide Bill Kremers (541 754 6411) offers these Alsea winter steelhead tips, " ... like most of us, I am waiting for some rain to bring the steelhead in on the coastal rivers. Once the Alsea River gets about 4.0 feet I am ready to go. The Alsea River is my favorite early season winter steelhead river has a majority of its run is hatchery origin. If the river is below 4.8 feet I like to fish below Five Rivers. If the river is higher then I like fishing the Fall Creek area, unless it is over 6.0 feet, then the place to fish is on the North Fork close to the hatchery. "

While the Coquille River remains open for hatchery coho up to Lampa Creek, no reports have been forthcoming. Winter steelhead have started entering although the South Fork is closed for them until December 1st. The entire system will turn on for steelies with the next significant precipitation.

With winter steelies starting to show on the North Umpqua, Thanksgiving hopefuls should have the

best shot at an encounter around Sawyer's Rapids. Limits are the rule in Winchester Bay.

Rivers on the South coast have fallen to summer levels with clarity beyond that preferred by fish or fisherman. The Elk and Sixes won't fish well for chinook until the next decent rainfall.

Anglers on the upper Rogue are taking summer steelhead, most of which are in decent condition and coho, most of which are dark. Bait may be used from Cole Rivers Hatchery to Shady Cove but angling is limited to flies only from the park down to Gold Ray Dam. Nearly 8,200 summers and an even greater number of coho have crossed at Gold Ray. Fishing above there is reported as good.

Chetco River chinook fishers continued to score through Saturday, November 19th, with decent numbers of fish reported still available. A few steelhead have been landed as well, although the river is dropping rapidly. Weather predictions include only a chance of rain early next week.

Crab molted late offshore in the Brookings area, delaying commercial harvest. The crab must test at 25% or better meat-by-weight for the season to open. Otherwise, it's delayed until January 15th, 2006, in which case it opens regardless.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Travel Alert - Cascade Pass is forecast to receive snow Friday through Sunday. Travel with caution and pack chains. For road and travel conditions, **Dial 511**.

The Grande Ronde is nearing its peak with favorable conditions for fly and gear anglers. **Pro guide Mac Huff (1-800-940-3688)** reports, "The Grande Ronde is finally beginning to produce traditional and expected steelhead-fishing success. Fly guys that are able to detect the light takes are approaching catch rates of 2 to 4 hours per fish and gear guys are eclipsing these figures." Mac continues, "Friday's catch was strongly weighted towards male steelhead, indicating a fresh batch of fish are moving up the river with hens close behind."

"A few October caddis are still flying, but that hatch is definitely waning. Floating lines remain a staple for fly anglers, but sink-tip lines will often do the trick in runs with cobble bottoms

"Productive fishing continues through April 15. Winter roads don't stop you from going skiing, so see you on the river for some great fishing."

Most lakes on the East side are closed or the access roads are no longer open. The Crooked River is providing fine trout fishing as is the Fall River on the stretch below the Falls; it's closed above. Steelheading is holding up well on the Grande Ronde. The Owyhee River is productive for long-rodders using tiny flies and nymphs but prepare for extreme conditions and avoid leader-fraying ice. The reward may be a big brown looking to pack away calories for the long winter.

Southwest Washington:

Jeff at JB's GUIDE SERVICE (509-366-4052) reports, "fishing at McNary for steelhead slowed for me this past week. However as late B-runners work their way upriver, we anticipate doing battle with more nice sized steelhead like we caught Monday. Fishing with Roger Strawick we boated a nice 38 inch fish on a black and orange K-13 Kwifish. I have been hearing about some decent catches coming off the jetty at Charbeneau Park on bobbers and shrimp."

Trout -

Klineline Pond - 35 bank anglers with 24 cutthroats kept and 11 released. Fishing with bait is very slow; best success using lures.

Icehouse Lake near Bridge of the Gods - Planted with nearly 1,000 cutthroats averaging over 1.5 pounds each last week.

Eastern Washington:

During the Snake River steelhead trout catch season, from September through mid-April, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) fish biologists team up with their colleagues from the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to regularly check fishers along the Snake River and its major tributaries in southeast Washington (including the Touchet and Walla Walla rivers). These fishing creel surveys are usually conducted weekly, but are dependent on fishing pressure, weather, and staff availability. Additional creel data from the Clearwater and Salmon rivers in Idaho should be obtained from the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

You can see the numbers at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/snake/index.htm>

Northwest Trout - With trout stocking wrapped up for the year, the PowerBait crowd must rely upon rainbows remaining in residence until planting of brood trout and steelhead occurs in valley lakes mid-winter. Not at Hagg Lake, though, as it closed last weekend.

Reader Email

Kaptn Ken Johnson reports this week from on the lower Willamette bank fishing prospects below the mouth of the Clackamas: "Beautiful Winter Weather here on the Fishing Front as hardy souls tough it out and suffer from the bitter cold of the 50+ degree days in hope of hooking their Thanksgiving Turk...errrrrr, uhhhhh, Steelhead. Last year, the day before Thanksgiving, I personally caught a 11 pound chromer just in time to share space in the smoker with "Tom."

Unfortunately, I am not sure there is going to be too many Steelies on the table this year for the Thanksgiving feast. I can't be there every minute of every day, but as of TODAY, I have only heard rumors of one Winter Steelhead being caught so far THIS YEAR. And that was someone bank fishing with a Blue "Pill" just off the bottom fishing near the middle of the Meldrum Bar just about straight across from the boat ramp itself.

I'm sure there has been a fish or two I haven't heard about, but there are hardly any fishermen there fishing that I can talk to and to lie to me about it!!! Yesterday, there were a total of 5 fishermen that I saw braving the HOT 50 degree sun shiny day. No fish, but the fishing was fantastic. If one was caught, this author didn't hear of it. "The Blacktop" is pretty lonely. Like, no one is there at all! The water is still at least 3-4 feet low or more, and getting LOWER.

The fish counts at Willamette Falls as of a couple of days ago is holding steady at TWO TO THREE STEELHEAD PER DAY with visibility at just under 3' ! That isn't many fish folks!!! The run is still ahead of us I predict. Once this dry spell blows through and we get a couple more feet of water in the Willamette, with hopefully steady but non-torrential rains, the Steelies will come a runnin'. Just to compare fishing conditions a bit from a few years ago to now, three years ago I caught 2-3 Steelies per week, fishing 3-4 times each week.

The water was about 2 feet below where the bank is pretty level for parking and just starts to drop off at the upriver portion of the gravel at Meldrum Bar. The water was about 4-5 feet deeper, at least, than it is right now with pretty good flow. This year, it just isn't going to happen like that if the water stays this low and "Mother Nature" tells the fish to hold up until the water is right. They'll be there, alright, but not in the numbers we all would like to see! Still, you can't catch a fish unless your line is in the water! So, my recommendation is - Go Fishin', no matter what!!! Maybe see you there...I drive a **RED** Ford F-350 4-Door Dually for my grocery getter!"

Reader Carolyn C. wrote from my [Michael's] home town with a frequently-asked question, which is shared here in hopes of helping others, "My husband wanted to go fishing at Hagg Lake but He can

not find out if it is open. Also, are any lakes in the McMinnville area open or can you tell us when they closed. I have tried to look at the Game & Fishing site but could not locate what I was looking for. Thank You for any answers you can give him."

I replied, "Thanks for writing.

"Regarding the lakes, most in the Willamette Valley are open year 'round. The exception is Hagg Lake which closes this weekend [now last weekend, Ed.], opening again the first weekend in March.

"Lakes, rivers and streams not listed specifically in the Oregon Angling Regulations are lumped together in the front of that section (Northwest Zone, South Willamette Zone, etc.). While I don't have a booklet in front of me, it reads something like "All lakes and ponds not listed:", giving a blanket regulation for those waters.

"There are a couple of lakes near McMinnville: Sheridan Pond just south of Highway 18 across from Sheridan and Huddleston (formerly Willamina) Pond in Willamina, neither of which have been stocked since June 6th.

"The good news is that in the upcoming winter planting, Huddleston Pond will receive 350 trout 16 inches or larger on December 19th (or thereabouts). I've fished these winter-stocked trout and it's fun to bundle up and hang out, lawn-chair-style in the off-season.

"While not yet scheduled for winter planting but frequent recipients, I used to fish Walling Pond and Walter Wirth Lake, both in Salem, particularly in the week between Christmas and New Years. The drive's not bad and the company of the folks who frequent these places in the off season is pleasant. These places have historically received excess brood trout and steelhead, many of which are bright keepers. Incidentally, no tag is required for lake-stocked steelhead.

"I hope this gives your husband some options and opportunities. Please write again if I can answer any additional questions. Keep an eye on the column for winter planting of area lakes and ponds."

Write to the TGF staff:

Bob Rees: brees@pacifier.com

Doug Rees: drees@TheGuidesForecast.com

Michael Teague: SailCat@SailCat.com

Random Links

It's that time of year; again! For those who may have missed it, here's that graphical weather forecast from the NOAA:

http://www.nwrfc.noaa.gov/weather/10_day.cgi

And the handy road cams so you can see in advance what kind of conditions you'll face:

<http://www.tripcheck.com/RoadCams/roadcams.htm>

Weekly Quote – "All the charm of the angler's life would be lost but for these hours of thought and memory. All along the brook, all day on lake or river, while he takes his sport, he thinks. All the long evenings in camp, or cottage, or inn, he tells stories of his own life, hears stories of his friend's lives, and if alone calls up the magic of memory." - W.C. Prime, 1888

GOOD LUCK!