

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **March 24th, – March 30th, 2006**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro - Although spring Chinook fishing on the lower Columbia remained slow into Saturday, good catches from sportanglers were finally reported on Sunday. Anglers fishing from Westport, Oregon downstream fared well but biologists are hopeful cool water temperatures were to blame for the slow start. Fair catches have also recently come from Davis Bar across from the mouth of the Willamette River. Plugs are responsible for the bulk of the salmon caught but herring are taking a few fish either on anchor or trolled.

Sturgeon fishing in the Columbia below Bonneville Dam remains poor. Some of the best catches continue to come from The Dalles and John Day pools. Both keepers and shakers are falling to smelt or shrimp for bait. Roll-mop herring is an effective alternate bait.

The lower Willamette water levels are fluctuating as rain fronts move through with temperature at the Falls only 43 degrees as of Monday, March 20th. Winter steelhead counts are over 4,100 but the spring chinook numbers are unchanged at three fish. It is hoped that warm spring showers will raise the water temps and when they do, springers will be on the move and on the bite.

Chinook fishing this week has been seasonally slow but steady as the numbers of springers improve in the lower Willamette. Sellwood Bridge is getting a great deal of attention from early-season hopefuls. Six springers were checked at the ramp at Willamette Park on Saturday, March 18th. Boat and bank fishers are catching chinook along with the occasional steelhead, though numbers of the later are dwindling. Trollers are finding herring to be the most effective.

Sturgeon fishing has been slow in the lower Willamette and Multnomah Channel but it's still a better bet than the Columbia.

Steelheading on the Clackamas has been decent one day, tough the next. The fish are there and persistence will take them. Bobber and jig is effective between rain freshets with cured salmon eggs effective otherwise. Sandy steelhead fishing is slow although a total of 3 springers are rumored from the river.

Pro guide Bill Kremers (541 754 6411) reports, "The other fishery that will be taking off is trout fishing on lower McKenzie River. A few March Browns are already hatching and the hatch should get better and better in the coming weeks. There is usually a caddis hatch to go along with the March Browns. A few flies I like for the McKenzie this time of the year are Prince nymphs, size 14 and 16 pheasant tails and hare ears, a size 8 bead head hare ear and a variety of soft hackles and some caddis and mayflies dayflies."

Trout have been stocked at St. Louis Pond, Dexter Reservoir, Roaring River Park Pond, Timber Linn Lake and Waverly Lake.

The Bonneville and The Dalles Pools exhibited the best results for walleye last week with better than a keeper per boat tallied in each reservoir.

Northwest – Steelheading was great on the Wilson last Friday, March 17th with several nice broodstock fish taken. By the weekend, the bite had dramatically slowed. The decline in crowds reinvigorated the bite and the Nestucca, Trask and Wilson were fishing again by Monday. Moderate

amounts of precipitation is forecasted over the weekend and should keep north coast streams stable or on a slight rise. Favorable water conditions coupled with good tides should create optimum conditions for weekend steelheaders. Most North Coast streams with the exception of the mainstem Nehalem should be options. The Nestucca is crowded but continues to put out good catches of broodstock and wild steelhead.

Sturgeon anglers were out in force on Tillamook Bay over the weekend. Comfortable weather and early morning tides motivated anglers and success was fair. There are more shakers present this year on Tillamook Bay than last but sand shrimp remains a favorite for sturgeon of all sizes.

The ocean was even calm enough for some recreational bottomfishers out of Garibaldi. Success was good for the few that participated but crabbing remains challenging for sport and commercial users.

Although halibut fishing doesn't open until the 11th of May, some central Oregon coast charters are reporting more than half the all-depth days are booked. Offshore fishermen are hoping this season will be a repeat of the last with limits of big, flat fish the rule.

Following extensive stocking last week, Cape Mears Lake, Coffenbury Lake, Cullaby Lake, Hebo Lake, Lake Lytle, Loren's Pond, Lost Lake (in Clatsop County), North Lake, Smith Lake, South Lake, Spring Lake, Sunset Lake, Tahoe Lake, Town Lake, and Vernonia Pond were planted with trout.

Good tides begin late in the week for clam diggers. Clatsop Beaches should produce favorable results although heavy surf is forecasted through the weekend.

Pro guide Jim Stevenson (503-881-5289) mentioned that there are still fish in the Siletz River although it was getting low and clear. The next storm from will help to correct that situation for a while.

Southwest - The smaller South coast streams are low and clear, offering little to anglers this week. River projections and weather forecasts indicate the rain showers affecting Northwest Oregon will not improve conditions on the South coast.

While snow fell on the Umpqua Monday, March 20th, steelheading remained worthwhile. The mix has not yet tipped too far in favor of wild fish so the odds of catching one or two for tablefare are good.

The bite on the lower Rogue hasn't developed as anglers had hoped. Better fishing is available on the Grants Pass stretch. Drift fishers and plug pullers are hopeful for an improvement by the weekend.

Pro guide Ken Streater (800-797-4293) wanted readers to know that the Chetco River among others reports some of the best late season fishing in many years with eight to ten pounders being landed regularly.

Bradley Lake, Empire Lake, Empire Lake, Johnson Mill Pond are being planted with hatchery trout this week.

Eastern - Water levels remain good for Eastern Oregon steelheaders. The Grande Ronde and Imnaha Rivers are producing the best results. The Willowa and Umatilla Rivers are also producing fish. Ladd and Roulet Ponds have received small numbers of surplus steelhead.

Pro guide Rick Arnold (541-480-1570) wrote this week indicating brown trout fishing is picking up on Lake Billy Chinook.

Pro guide Jeff Knotts (509-366-4052) reports, "Irrigon walleye fishing was pretty slow over the week-end. We took a couple of nice fish on blade baits in 40 foot water and saw only one other fish scored for about 20 boats. The surprise for us came in the catch of some truly monster perch and while we only caught nine of these fatties they kept it interesting. They came on blade baits also."

Southwest Washington - The Cowlitz is still putting out a few late winter steelhead- both recycled and on their first run. Spring Chinook anglers are also finding greater success but still have to work for results. Divers and a combination of shrimp and eggs are taking the majority of salmon. A more detailed report comes from **Brad Shride (1-877-483-0047)** "I fished the Cowlitz River for Steelhead this week. Fishing was not red hot but okay for some fresh late arriving Steelhead and some that had been recycled down river for the sportsmen. We fished from Blue Creek all the way to Mission for three days and had pretty decent success casting bait and side drifting eggs and sand shrimp. We saw a few Springers rolling in some of the deeper and softer water where they like to hang out. Successful Springer fishermen were the guys that pulled plugs or divers and sand shrimp and Egg combo's, all day! We pretty much stuck with the Steelhead fishing. Wednesday we ended up with 3 nice Steelhead from 5 pounds to about 10 pounds. This was with two fishermen a father and son team from Montana. Thursday we had four Steelhead at days end with four fishermen and had other fish hitting our offering. These four guys never let up on the fishing. The persistence paid off and besides I wouldn't let them. I had extra rods rigged for when they broke off or they needed more bait. Back at the ramp and at the end of the day their efforts showed. Thursday's fish ranged from about 3 pounds to about 11 pounds. On Saturday I had three fishermen and only ended up with one fish but we had other chances. The pressure from other boats and more fishermen showed by the end of the day. We were off the river by 1:30 PM."

The Kalama continues to put out a few broodstock and wild fish.

Washington clam diggers will also have ample opportunity along coastal beaches. Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks, Copalis and Kalaloch open for evening digging (after noon) from March 25 – 27. Twin Harbors and Mocrocks will remain open an additional day through the 28th.

Soapbox Update – Hello TGF Subscribers!

I've been a fishing guide for over 20 years on the Columbia and Sandy Rivers.

I've seen first hand that from Ilwaco, WA to Hood River, OR, our salmon are disappearing and with them go our hopes for restoring our economies, protecting our families, and securing the future of our river communities. **We need to act now.**

[Click here to join me in signing a letter urging our members of Congress and Governors to stand with us for real salmon solutions.](#)

Have you read the papers? Spring Chinook returns on the lower Columbia are the lowest they have been in years and fishermen, commercial and recreational, are getting the blame.

Dams are killing 60-90% of our salmon while all fishing combined account for less than 10%- but fishermen are still getting the blame for low returns. Our leaders should direct the big utilities to make dams more fish friendly by:

- 1) **Washing more water over the dams**
- 2) **Increasing the flow and speed of our rivers**
- 3) **Retiring obsolete dams**

Now government officials are threatening our right to fish. Finger pointing is doing little to return salmon to our rivers and good paying jobs to our towns.

[Please click here to sign a letter to your representative and governor urging them to stand with us to protect our way of life.](#)

Thanks so much for your help.

Jack Glass
Fishing Guide,
Sandy River, OR

Columbia River Fishing Report – Spring Chinook fishing is picking up on the Columbia River but catches are tracking at about half of what they were last year. Cool inclement weather and a poorer run forecast may have more anglers staying at home instead of contributing to the harvest of these fish. These same conditions may be keeping many of the fish in the ocean waiting for more friendly migration conditions. A whopping 2 fish have crossed Bonneville Dam and the sealions aren't even in the fish ladder! Warmer water conditions may stimulate a bite. The best fishing of the season was rumored to take place last Sunday when several boats were said to have taken a fish or at least had an opportunity for salmon in the lower Columbia. Higher percentages of upriver Chinook are beginning to show in the river and the steelhead counts in the last test fishery were high enough to keep the commercial fleet from getting back out there in full force. The next test fishery will take place on March 26th and assuming all goes well here, it seems likely the gillnets will be fishing into April on the mainstem.

Anglers fishing out of the lower river boat ramps like Aldrich Point and Westport are reporting some of the better catches but catch records indicate the Portland to Longview stretch has fish in it as well. Plug fishermen are doing the best sitting on anchor and with this technique a favorite amongst anglers a friendly tide series conducive to this type of fishing is due starting on the 24th. The afternoon outgoing tides will increase water flows and draw salmon closer to the banks where bank anglers will have a good crack at them. Although it would be a bit unrealistic to get too enthused about bank fishing, tides are ripening and so is the run timing for a decent opportunity for both bank and boat anglers to score results. Bank anglers should target Jones Beach just east of Westport, OR, beaches around Longview or even Sauvie's Island will offer some opportunity for the beach plunker. Of all the techniques NW salmon and steelhead anglers employ, plunking is the one where scent has the most application. It is the only technique that requires the fish to come to you! Scent is important and can make you a stand-out success!

Sturgeon anglers certainly have nothing to get excited about. Catch rates below Bonneville Dam remain idle as fish take advantage of other estuaries that offer better feeding opportunities and fewer predators. The best sturgeon bite remains above Bonneville with Bonneville Pool itself a producer but The Dalles and the John Day Pool in the running as well. None of the reservoirs are producing big numbers of keepers but between shaker action and keeper action (and compared to the lower Columbia) fishing has been ok. Anglers in these upriver reservoirs also have the option to pursue walleye. Catches have been averaging really close to a keeper per boat. As temperatures rise, so should the bite.

Referring to the carnage on the Columbia as the "Bonneville buffet," an ODFW bulletin this week indicates officials will start a hazing campaign in an effort to protect migrating fish and breeder sturgeon from these voracious mammals. It is widely believed A) That this will fail as it has elsewhere and B) That the Oregon and Washington State officials are exhausting every option in

preparation to an appeal to the Feds for permission to escalate the war. Let's hope it works.

The Guide's Forecast – Look for spring Chinook fishing to improve this week as tides and run timing should improve the situation. If the weather (and temperature) improves, it could be a productive week for salmon on the lower Columbia. Bank anglers will also have a fair crack at fish but even though it will do you good to get out after the fish, don't have too high of expectations assuming the run will come in near forecast. The lower river beaches from Rainier downstream will produce the best results but beach casters on Sauvie's Island also stand a chance at getting some fish. Netters are recording a fair number of the later returning 4-year old fish which is a good sign for this year and next. It is still way too early to be putting out any predictions but catch is clearly slower than last year but the water is colder than last year as well.

Boaters should concentrate their efforts in favored anchor areas using plugs. A decent flood tide will hit in the morning which makes trolling herring or spinners an option in several different locations. Tenasillahe Island (Clifton Channel out of Westport) is an ideal location to intercept a salmon this time of year and Davis Bar offers some hope as well. Crowds will be down so anglers may find fair catch results with the decrease in angling pressure. Believe it or not, flows on the Willamette are down a bit which tends to cause springers to bypass the Multnomah Channel and head right to Kelly Point Park before turning right. For this reason, the mouth of the Willamette may offer some opportunity through the weekend as well although the Willamette may get a bit colored.

Sturgeon fish? Are you crazy? If you do have to get out after sturgeon, the reservoirs upstream of Bonneville Dam are the best place to go. It isn't that often that we'll see catch rates for keepers higher in the upstream impoundments versus downstream of Bonneville but this is the second year in a row that it's happening.

Anglers in the know in how to pursue walleye also have a viable option this week in these upstream reservoirs. The walleye bite continues to improve as the water warms. **Pro guide Bill Kremers (503-754-6411)** offers these words of wisdom: "One of the fisheries that should take off in the coming week is walleye fishing on the middle Columbia River - below the John Day Dam and by Boardman and Umatilla. Trolling nightcrawlers with a Chartreuse Rufus Special is what I'll be using. Troll slow, use a 1 and 1/2 ounce bottom walk weight. Also try and troll as far behind the boat as possible, as walleye are sensitive to motors."

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – As of March 22nd, the latest data available, water temps at the Falls had risen to 45 degrees, up two degrees from the previous day and ever nearer the magic 50-degree-mark which temperature is historically the average for this time of year..

A handful of springers have been caught daily by both boat and bank fishers over the last week. The spring chinook run is predicted to number 46,500 this year.

Herring has emerged as an effective alternate sturgeon bait to hard-to-find and insanely expensive smelt this year.

The Guide's Forecast – With water temperatures climbing in the lower Willamette, so the numbers of fish crossing the Falls increases. Although spring chinook totals are still in the single digits, summer steelhead counts are climbing daily with totals about 130 so far. Spring chinook catches will improve steadily as the water temperature improves and we move into the productive portion of the run.

Spin 'n' Glos are frequently and effectively used by bank fishers as are prawn spinners. Boats either troll herring or anchor fish, the latter most commonly while soaking prawn spinners or Kwikfish.

Keeper sturgeon are being landed in the lower Willamette from Multnomah Channel and from the head of the Channel to the mouth although in modest number. Expect to burn some bait in the pursuit as catching 20 shakers for every legal fish is not unusual. Stay on the move to find quality fish.

Many of those hatchery summer steelhead crossing the Falls now are bound for the Santiam River. As a sure sign of spring, three have already been recycled downstream from Foster Dam on the South Santiam. It won't be long, now.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – The Clackamas has been fair for steelhead with anglers favoring jigs and bobbers to encourage a bite.

The Sandy was very slow over the weekend, but started to pick up on Tuesday this week for a combination of clipped and unclipped steelhead. A few springers have been taken between the mouth and Troutdale.

The Guide's Forecast – Following the next weather front prospects will improve on the Clack and with the attention focused on springers on the Willamette, pressure is expected to be light. With improved numbers of steelhead in the system, summers entering now and springers on the move, a mix will be available.

With the Sandy fishing well now, anglers are urged to seek steelhead during the week if possible. It is often the cast with all the rivers which hold anadromous species that heavy weekend traffic will put off the bite. Additional springers will enter the Sandy as the run picks up steam.

North Coast District Fishing Report – Another decent week for area steelheaders on the North Oregon Coast with good catches of both wild and broodstock steelhead available. Fishing started off excellent for Wilson River anglers last Friday. Multiple hookups were common for those putting in a good effort. We landed 5 of the 6 fish we hooked and 4 of the fish were broodstock fish. We drifted from Siskeyville downstream to Sollie Smith Bridge. By Saturday and certainly Sunday, action had slowed on many north coast streams. The weather was some of the nicest we've seen in a while! More weather headed in on Monday and the fishing was beginning to become steady again. Most boats dedicated to a day of fishing were taking between 2 and 5 fish on several streams. I fished with Buzz Ramsey, now with Pure Fishing, and Robert Campbell of the Fisherman's Marine and Outdoor store in Oregon City drifting both the Wilson in the a.m. and the Nestucca in the afternoon. With Buzz on the oars and Mr. Campbell working his magic, we took 3 steelhead on the Wilson with one being in good enough quality to keep. It was a summer run buck of about 7 pounds. We took most of the fish on the bobber and jig combo but my fish hit a metallic blue K-11 Xtreme Kwikfish. By noon, we were at the boat ramp and off to the Nestucca for another drift. The float from 4th Bridge to Farmers Creek yielded another 4 fish with Buzz taking the best quality wild hen while waiting for us to return with the shuttle rig! Most of the fish we caught today were on the dark side but we have several more weeks of bright fish to come!

Water levels have stabilized where small streams are still too clear for great results and larger systems like the Nehalem are too big and colored for good catches. This makes the bulk of the river systems like the Trask, Wilson and Nestucca the best options with ample numbers of fish present.

Sturgeon anglers were out in force this weekend on Tillamook Bay and results varied. Several anglers are taking advantage of good numbers of fish in the upper bay. Sand shrimp are responsible for the bulk of the catch.

Crabbing remains a challenge for crustacean seekers in and outside of Tillamook Bay. The resource was a bit limited in the first place but commercial pressure has taken its toll.

The Guide's Forecast – Fluctuating water levels will make weekend fishing interesting on the North Oregon Coast. Many rivers will remain options with the exception of the mainstem Nehalem. Anglers will have to choose their mode of transportation as smaller streams and the upper watersheds of the larger systems will be more conducive to wading while fresher fish should be moving in with the favorable tide series in the lower stretches. The Wilson, Trask and Nestucca Rivers will likely remain the most viable options for weekend anglers. If river levels remain somewhat low on these streams, the more stealthy approach of bobbers and jigs or small baits will take more fish. Steelhead will also fall to plugs- the K11's especially and can be found in the deeper slower haunts or shallower, broken surfaced waters. The first pluggers through the stretches will have the best chances at fish- that is, if water levels remain low and clear. The North Fork Nehalem, Necanicum and Kilchis should all be wade-able options and the upper Trask and Wilson will be primed with waiting steelhead. Wear subtle clothing when fishing in these areas. The clear streams have fish spooked enough without a big red jacket coming down the trail!

Sturgeon anglers are in for a nice tide series this weekend- I am just not sure how the weather is going to cooperate however. Wind is not the sturgeon fisherman's friend. It makes bites hard to detect. Fish seem to be scattered throughout the Tillamook estuary but the upper bay seems to be attracting a good deal of attention. Sand shrimp will remain the best bait for the quarry.

Crabbers will likely continue to struggle for limits and the tides will not necessarily be good for crabbing. Early morning high tides will make an overnight soak/early morning pick the best option.

Clammers to the north may have some opportunity for some razor harvest although the surf conditions aren't looking too promising. Practice safety first but view the marine forecast and consider staying home if the swell height exceeds 9 feet. A pounding surf keeps clams down and out of reach. The minus tide series begins on Friday, March 24th and lasts through the 28th.

Central & South Coast Reports – While it appears that the Siletz and Siuslaw will feel the brunt of the next weather front, river South of there are forecast to change very little over the weekend. The Siletz with its broodstock component should fish well after the front passes as it's on the drop.

Pro guide Jim Stevenson (503-881-5289) adds this: "Fished the Siletz a couple of times, a few fish around, side drifting, water getting low and clear. Took my new son-in-law has been trying to catch a steelhead for 12 years, going with some other guides during that time, he caught his two about 15 minutes apart, I guess he likes his new father-in-law now. I'm not getting too excited about salmon yet."

Warmer weather will improve fishing conditions on the South coast as water temperatures have become a greater challenge than low levels. Temperate spring showers would solve both problems simultaneously, however.

Steelheading is best on the mainstem Umpqua River. Experienced anglers continue to find limits of winter steelhead but guides seem to be faring best. Sturgeon fishing remains very good below Reedsport although it's still a challenge to find fish **short** enough to keep. Recently, anglers have caught sturgeon to 10 feet in length.

As mentioned in a earlier issue, a survey by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife of a 92 mile stretch of the Umpqua River. Results thus far reveal an average year for catch rates although many of the native fish have been quite large. Umpqua River anglers caught nearly 400 wild steelhead and

harvested 270 with the largest native measuring 42 inches. The mainstem Umpqua is one of the Southern Oregon rivers from which anglers may keep one wild steelhead a day up to five per year. Officials also observed that more anglers are banking it rather than boat fishing this year due to high water.

Action has stalled on the Coos and Coquille with cold water temperatures putting off the bite.

The lower Rogue has a few spring chinook in the mix with fresh winter steelhead now, but best results are coming to anglers in the Grants Pass stretch where metalhead fishing has been reliable. Some steelies have spawned, as the occasional downrunner is seen in catches. Drifting bait, throwing lures and pulling plugs are all taking fish now. The upper river is low, clear and cold, but this time of year steelhead are just gonna run. About 3,500 have crossed at Gold Ray Dam. Pressure on the Rogue down low is light although both bank and boat fishers are taking the occasional springer.

Chetco steelheaders report excellent flow and color with drift boaters experiencing the better results. Catches are good although about 50% of the fish hooked recently have already spawned.

Pro guide Ken Streater (800-797-4293) adds this: "Southern Oregon is looking good. River levels for the past week have been a bit more predictable on the Rogue, Elk, Sixes, and others. Steelhead fishing throughout the region has been good to great, with boats on upper rivers and at the mouths reporting multiple hook ups per boat on just about every trip. The Chetco river among others reports some of the best late season fishing in many years. Eight to ten pounders are being regularly landed.

"Additionally, big news on the lower Rogue, as the spring Chinook are starting to roll in! A handful have been caught and the numbers survey looks good as well, with nearly twice the run size as last year predicted. The dire regular Portland and national press we hear about a lousy spring Salmon run does not necessarily apply to driftboat fishing on Southern Oregon rivers."

Central and Eastern Oregon – Steelheaders on the Grand Ronde have been having some banner days recently with cured salmon eggs and dark-colored corky 'n' yarn taking fish in fairly clear water. The stretch below the hatchery has been particularly productive.

Pro guide Rick Arnold (541-480-1570) sent this report: "We continue to have some good bull trout action at Lake Billy Chinook in spite of the barrage of weather fronts that have been coming through. Bull trout from 4-11 LB. have been hitting flasher/herring rigs and plugs, to a lesser degree. Look for the action to get better as the weather stabilizes and the water temps rise a bit."

Long-time subscriber and contributor "**Dobe**" sent this East-side report, "Just got back from Crane, 29 miles South of Burns, from two days of sage rat shooting. In case any of your readers are rat shooters, they are out by the thousands and the shooting is great. Justin Aamodt 541-573-6080, guides rat shooting outings and can provide excellent shooting. I stopped by Chickahominy reservoir on the way back and can report that about 90 percent of the lake is ice free. However the area around the boat ramp is froze solid, meaning that it will be a couple of weeks for it to be usable. Also, the locals around Crane said Mann Lake was free of ice now. Roads in the area are still very muddy. Watch it if you venture off the gravel."

Northwest Trout - Spring break is always cause foe extensive stocking and last week ODFW officials burned plenty of fuel ensuring kids would have hatchery trout to catch, Despite heavy planting last week, a decent number of lakes and ponds got more fish this week including Cape Mears Lake, Coffenbury Lake, Cullaby Lake, Hebo Lake, Lake Lytle, Loren's Pond, Lost Lake (in Clatsop County), North Lake, Smith Lake, South Lake, Spring Lake, Sunset Lake, Tahoe Lake, Town

Lake, and Vernonia Pond in the Northwest Zone. Trout have been stocked at St. Louis Pond, Dexter Reservoir, Roaring River Park Pond, Timber Linn Lake and Waverly Lake in the Willamette Zone this week..

Volunteer instructors and helpers and even free loaner rods and reels will be available for those who need it from 9:30 a.m. until 1 p.m. Saturday, March 25th at Garden Lake at Creswell Ponds (South of Eugene) this week as part of the Youth Angling Enhancement Program. This is a great way to help kids get started fishing. For information call 541-726-3515.

SW Washington - After a promising start, the **spring chinook** fishery on the lower Columbia River slowed during the third week of March even as the number of anglers multiplied. Creel checks of 961 salmonid anglers fishing below the Interstate 5 bridge turned up 33 chinook and nine **steelhead** - or about one chinook for every 30 rods. By comparison, surveys in the same area a week earlier revealed a catch rate for every 16.8 rods.

"The action has been fairly decent in an area one day and then slow the next," said Joe Hymer, a WDFW fish biologist. "It's too early to draw any meaningful conclusions about the run from two weeks of sampling, but catch rates should get more consistent as the fishery progresses."

On the Cowlitz River, 69 bank anglers interviewed from barrier dam to the mouth caught one spring chinook and seven winter steelhead during the week of March 13. Most of the fish were caught from Olequa downstream. Thirty-seven boat anglers interviewed on the Cowlitz that week had caught 13 winter steelhead, most taken around Blue Creek. Meanwhile, 34 bank anglers checked on the Lewis River accounted for just one steelhead and no chinook salmon. Nineteen boat anglers caught just one chinook.

As of March 17, only two spring chinook had been counted at Bonneville Dam, so the upriver fishery has not yet gotten under way, Hymer said. Bank anglers fishing in The Dalles Pool did, however, hook up with 13 steelhead that week, 10 of them hatchery fish. Boat anglers focused on **walleye**, averaging about a fish per rod in the Bonneville Pool and a fish for every two rods in The Dalles Pool. Bass are also beginning become active above Bonneville Dam.

Undersized fish continued to provide most of the action in the **sturgeon** fishery above and below Bonneville Dam, although anglers are pulling some "keepers" from Bonneville, The Dalles, and John Day pools.

For upriver salmon anglers waiting for the spring chinook run to arrive, Hymer recommends keeping an eye on fish counts at Bonneville Dam posted on the Army Corps of Engineers website at <http://www.nwp.usace.army.mil/op/fishdata/home.asp>. The fishery in the mainstem Columbia River will be open through April 30 from the Tower Island power lines, approximately six miles below The Dalles Dam, to McNary Dam. The limit for chinook salmon is six marked (fin-clipped) fish, only two of which can be adults. All chum and sockeye must be released.

Under new rules approved this year, anglers will also be required to release any wild, unclipped chinook salmon they catch on Drano Lake, lower Wind River, White Salmon River and Klickitat River. Wind River and Drano Lake opened for hatchery chinook retention March 16, while the Klickitat will open April 1. Once it opens, the spring chinook fishery in the Klickitat River will be open Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays from the mouth to the Fisher Hill Bridge. The other areas will be open seven days per week except Drano Lake, which will be closed Wednesday beginning in mid April.

Anglers looking for some action in the Vancouver area might want to try Kline Pond, which was planted with 1,000 catchable-size **brown trout**. In the week that followed, 39 bank anglers pulled 62 browns and 52 **rainbows** out of the pond in Salmon Creek Park.

North Central Washington – April 1 marks the opening of more Columbia Basin **rainbow trout** fisheries and WDFW District Fish Biologist Jeff Korth predicts a good season at many of them. Among the best and largest of these waters are Upper and Lower Hampton lakes on the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge, eight miles north of Othello. Both were rehabilitated in the fall of 2004, re-stocked with fingerling rainbow trout last spring (21,000 in Upper, 8,000 in Lower), and have had no fishing since. Korth says this year's opener should be very good. Lower Hampton has a primitive boat launch. Upper Hampton is a walk-in lake, however Korth says it's not too far to carry a float tube. Just below the Hampton lakes is Hen Lake, stocked with 750 rainbow fingerlings last year, which should produce similar results.

The Pillar-Widgeon chain of lakes on the refuge should also be productive. Those lakes were also rehabilitated in 2004, re-stocked last year, and have remained un-fished until this season. "These 10 small, walk-in lakes are spread over about a square mile of beautiful canyon land," Korth said. "They will provide some good fishing for the persistent angler, with bank fishing on most, but float-tube fishing is a definite advantage. The best of the lot will probably be Widgeon, Sago, and Pillar, but never count any of the other waters out." Fingerling rainbow stocking rates were: Pillar - 2,500, Gadwall - 750, Shoveler - 750, Lemna - 450, Poacher - 150, Snipe - 600, Cattail - 1,500, Sago - 300, Hourglass - 300, Widgeon - 1,600.

Korth reported that Para-Juvenile, McManaman, Halfmoon, and Morgan lakes, all in the lower portion of the drainage below the Hampton lakes, were well stocked last year with both rainbow and **cutthroat trout**. However, they won't provide as much fishing action. "Sunfish, perch, and bass currently impact trout survival," he said. "So, expect a few large fish, especially the cutthroat." Korth also noted that Morgan and much of Halfmoon are on private land, so access is from the west end of Halfmoon Lake. Para-Juvenile is only for anglers up to 14 years of age. Fingerling stocking rates (rainbow, cutthroat) were: Para-Juvenile - 2,400, 1,500; McManaman - 1,400, 1,000; Halfmoon - 3,000, 1,000; Morgan - 4,000. North and South Teal, Herman, and Lyle lakes have all been "infiltrated with spiny-rayed fish," Korth said, so rainbow trout survival has been poor. "Fishing pressure has been relatively light at these lakes so there's a good chance some bigger carry-overs will be caught," he said. Fingerling rainbow stocking rates were: North Teal - 6,300, South Teal - 9,000, Herman - 10,600, Lyle - 3,000.

Dry Falls Lake in Sun Lakes State Park, about three miles west of Coulee City in northern Grant County opens April 1. This lake is under selective gear rules and a one trout catch limit. Well stocked with rainbows, Dry Falls catch rates have recently been "on a slide for as yet unknown reasons," Korth said. Sterile, triploid rainbow fingerlings were stocked in the lake from 1999 through 2004. "So the possibility for some true four- to seven-year old monsters is very real," he said. From 2000-2004, half the rainbow fingerlings stocked have been triploids, with an annual total of 10,000 rainbows. Except for the 2003 yearlings, the normal, diploid rainbow are adipose-clipped, and the triploids are not clipped. There are also 2,000 **brown** and **tiger trout** (a cross between a brown and brook trout) stocked annually.

In Okanogan County, several rainbow trout-stocked lakes open to catch-and-release fishing on April 1 - Davis, Little Twin, and Campbell lakes in the Winthrop area, Little Green Lake in the Omak area, and Rat Lake in the Brewster area. WDFW District Fish Biologist Bob Jateff reminds anglers that all of these lakes are under selective gear rules and anglers should check with locals before traveling to them since some will likely still be partially frozen on April 1. Big Green, near Omak, is another lake that opens April 1 for catch-and-release, but due to a fall 2005 rehabilitation treatment, it will not be re-stocked with trout until May of this year. Spectacle Lake northwest of Tonasket, which opened March 1, will be receiving 35,000 catchable-size rainbows by the first week of April. Spectacle will also receive 1,000 one-to-two-pound triploid rainbows in April. Jateff said Spectacle, which normally closes July 31, will have a new closing date of Sept. 30 starting this year.

Jateff also reminds anglers that the **steelhead** season on the Upper Columbia, Methow, Okanogan,

and Similkameen rivers is scheduled to close March 31. "Steelheading should start to pick up before then in all areas as the water temperature warms up and fish become active," he said. "The jig and bobber fishermen seem to be doing the best, but fly anglers using flies with a strike indicator are also effective. Anglers who can cover a lot of ground are generally more successful, because they access areas where fish have not been disturbed as much."

Bass, bluegill and crappie are the attraction at Adams County's Hutchinson and Shiner lakes and Coyote, Bobcat, and Hayes creeks and ponds - all opening April 1. These small warm-water fisheries usually warm up early to provide excellent fishing. Only non-motorized boats are allowed on Hutchinson and Shiner, and Coyote and Bobcat creeks and ponds are walk-in access only. Access for both areas is off McMannaman Road. Mike Schmuck, WDFW warm-water fish biologist, said other year-round warm-water species fisheries also are producing now. "With warmer weather, the bite should be picking up," Schmuck said. "Anglers have been using black Rooster Tails to catch bass at Stan Coffin Lake on our Quincy Wildlife Area in Grant County." Schmuck reminds anglers that Stan Coffin is a catch-and-release bass lake. All warm-water fishing in the northcentral region is now described on WDFW's website at http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regions/reg2/reg2_prospects.htm.

South Central Washington - WDFW enforcement officers recently reported "excellent" **walleye** catches on the Columbia River below John Day Dam southeast of Goldendale. Some fishing boats checked had landed five to seven walleye. The daily limit is 10 walleye with no more than five over 18 inches and no more than one over 24 inches. One 47.5-inch **sturgeon** was checked below McNary Dam, and fortunately officers were able to release the fish unharmed. The angler was verbally warned for the undersized sturgeon. Minimum size for sturgeon in that stretch of the Columbia River is 48 inches, maximum size is 60 inches and the catch limit is one. Recent Yakima River drift-boat patrols showed only light fishing activity. Some **bass** have recently been harvested on the Snake and Columbia rivers. Warm-water fish species were also the target of anglers recently checked at Worth Lake, northwest of Mesa in Franklin County. A total of 35 **rainbow trout** fishers recently checked at Mattoon Lake averaged four trout apiece. Trout fishermen at Myron Lake in Yakima County were recently cited by WDFW officers for exceeding the bag limit, violating gear rules, and fishing without licenses. Myron has a one trout catch limit and selective gear rules (no bait, single barbless hook) are in effect.

"All of these selective-gear waters will see a change on May 1 that anglers should be thinking about now as they gear up for spring and summer fishing," said Jim Cummins, WDFW fish biologist. "Those changes will require anglers to use knotless nets to reduce abrasion and scale loss and therefore increase survival of released fish." Cummins said most fly fishers already use knotless nets, but others will need to gear up.

Two Franklin County fisheries recently received more hatchery stock. Dalton Lake was stocked with 2,500 catchable-size (8-12 inch) rainbows and Marmes Pond was stocked with 100 catchable rainbows. Anglers can check the weekly stocking report for the latest information at Catchable Trout Plant Weekly Reports (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/weekly/>).

Puget Sound – The region continues to be decent for **blackmouth** anglers. Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands) has been productive with reports of nice-size fish, some pushing 25 pounds, said Steve Thiesfeld, Puget Sound recreational salmon manager for WDFW. "Given the reports we've received lately from the San Juans, anglers should try and take advantage of the few remaining fishing days in that area," Thiesfeld said. Blackmouth fishing closes March 31 in Marine Area 7.

Anglers, however, can continue to chase blackmouth in marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) and 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) through April. Fishing in those two

areas has been slow but steady. "It's not as hot as it was in January, but those two areas continue to kick out some nice blackmouth," Thiesfeld said. Anglers fishing marine areas 8-1 and 8-2 have a daily limit of two salmon, but wild chinook must be released. Unlike hatchery fish, wild chinook have an intact adipose fin.

The Everett ramp continued to be one of the busiest locations in the region, with 59 anglers checking in 12 chinook March 18, and 116 fishers hauling in 13 blackmouth March 19. Another busy ramp was Bellingham's, where 31 anglers accounted for five chinook March 18, while 73 fishers checked in 18 blackmouth the following day.

Saltwater anglers looking for a change of pace will soon have an opportunity to hook a **halibut**. The halibut season opens April 9 throughout the region - five days earlier than last season. Fishing is open five days a week, Thursday through Monday, with a daily limit of one halibut and no minimum size limit.

This time of year, **steelhead** anglers in northern Puget Sound are limited to catch-and-release fisheries on the Skagit and Sauk rivers. Reports from both rivers continue to show decent fishing for wild steelhead, particularly in the Sauk. Anglers planning to fish for steelhead in northern Puget Sound should check the *2005/2006 Fishing in Washington* pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) and WDFW's Emergency Rule Changes, which are posted on the same website.

One of the last opportunities for the public to comment on this year's proposed salmon-fishing seasons will be at a meeting in Lynnwood on March 30. The meeting, which is scheduled to begin at 9 a.m. at the Lynnwood Embassy Suites Hotel, 20610 44th Ave. W., is designed to continue developing preliminary proposals for 2006 salmon fisheries. The final fishing package for the ocean, as well as nearshore coastal, Puget Sound and Columbia River waters, will be finalized in early April in Sacramento, Calif. More information about the salmon season-setting process, including salmon forecasts, can be found on the North of Falcon website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/northfalcon/>).

Olympic Peninsula – The arrival of spring signals the start of several new fisheries, while others wind down for the season. The result is a veritable gumbo of fishing opportunities, including razor clams, lingcod, steelhead, halibut and the possibility of catching a spring chinook salmon.

For a start, **razor-clam** enthusiasts should be aware that WDFW has approved a dig on all five ocean beaches March 25-28. Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks, Copalis and Kalaloch will all open for digging on evening tides March 25-27. Two of those beaches - Twin Harbors and Mocrocks - will also open for a fourth day of digging March 28.

As during previous digs this season, no digging will be allowed before noon at any of those beaches. Low evening tide will be 3:14 p.m. March 25 (+0.3 ft.), 4:07 p.m. March 26 (0.0 ft.), 4:55 p.m. March 27 (-0.2 ft.) and 5:39 p.m. March 28 (-0.1 ft.).

WDFW is also tentatively planning a dig for late April - the first of the season scheduled on *morning* tides. Provided toxin tests are favorable, Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks and Copalis are all tentatively scheduled to open April 28-30 on morning tides, followed by a one-day dig May 1 at Twin Harbors and Mocrocks. An April opening at Kalaloch is in question, however, because the clam harvest on that beach has been unusually low during recent digs.

Meanwhile, **lingcod** fishing got under way March 18 in ocean areas south of Cape Alava and the initial reports are promising. Anglers aboard charter boats fishing out of Westport are averaging about one ling per rod, most running 7 to 10 pounds apiece, said Wendy Beeghley, a WDFW fish biologist. "Charter fishers are doing really well," said Beeghley, noting that about a dozen boats are

working the fishery during weekends. Most private boats are fishing Grays Harbor, she said.

Sampling efforts are currently confined to Marine Area 2 (Westport), but WDFW will start sampling the catch in marine areas 1 (Ilwaco) and 3 (LaPush) on May 1. Marine Area 4 (Neah Bay) will open for lingcod fishing April 16. In all four ocean areas, the catch limit is two fish per day, measuring at least 24 inches. Anglers fishing in Marine Area 2 should be aware of a 30-fathom depth restriction approved March 3 to protect yelloweye rockfish. (See <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm> on the WDFW website.)

Hoping to tie into an even bigger fish? This year's **halibut** fishery gets under way April 9 in marine areas 6-11 and 13 of Puget Sound. The fishery will be open five days per week, Thursday through Monday, through June 18. Best bets for catching a big flatfish in April are marine areas 6, 9 and 13, said Michele Culver, a WDFW fish biologist. "The fishing should be good, and we've heard that April is the best time to go," Culver said. Later openings set for the coast and other areas are described on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/do/newreal/release.php?id=mar0306b>.

Catch rates for wild **steelhead** have been strong as the fishery nears the finish line on several area rivers. On the Hoh River, 152 anglers interviewed from March 17-19 had caught 105 steelhead, all but a few of them wild fish. All of those wild fish were released. The Hoh will close to all steelhead fishing the evening of March 31, as will the Wynoochee, Satsop and some other area rivers. Before heading out, steelhead anglers are advised to call the WDFW Fishing Hotline (360-902-2500) or check the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>.

The Quillayute River system, which remains open through April 30, should continue to provide good steelhead fishing in the weeks ahead, said Mike Gross, a WDFW fish biologist. "Fishing has been pretty good recently, but a little rain would help," he said. On the Calawah, one river in the Quillayute system, anglers averaged a fish per rod in creel checks conducted March 17-19. The same was true for the 49 anglers checked on the Sol Duc River during that period, although 78 anglers checked on the Bogachiel had hooked just 32 steelhead.

Gross said anglers have taken a few **spring chinook** salmon in the Quillayute system, where all wild spring chinook must be released. Anglers have also reported catching spring chinook in several marine areas, although those fish may actually be large blackmouth, said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW Puget Sound recreational salmon manager.

"A lot of anglers assume that if they catch a 20- or 30-pound salmon at this time of year, it must be a spring chinook," Thiesfeld said. "They may be right, but chances are good it's a big old blackmouth."

Either way, chinook fishing has been picking up in several areas, notably the eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca (Marine Area 6). At Ediz Hook in Port Angeles, anglers have been averaging about one fish for every four rods. In the waters off Point Defiance (Marine Area 11), catch rates have been even better some days.

Can't make this month's razor clam dig? Here are some additional **clam-digging** opportunities recently announced by WDFW:

- Illahee State Park, Kitsap County: Sport clam and oyster fishing seasons will open April 1 through July 31.
- West Bewatto (DNR 44-A), Mason County: Sport clam season is extended through May 31.
- Dosewallips State Park, Jefferson County: Sport clam season will open May 15 through July 31.
- Fort Flagler State Park, Jefferson County: Sport clam season will open April 1 through July 15.

- Point Whitney Tidelands, Jefferson County: Sport clam season is extended through July 1.
- Point Whitney Lagoon, Jefferson County: Sport clam season will open Aug. 1-31.

Eastern Washington - Anglers at early-opening and year-round **rainbow trout** lakes throughout the region are seeing good catches of 8- to 12-inch fish, with occasional larger catches either from "jumbo" hatchery plants or winter carryovers. Among the Tucannon River impoundments in Columbia County, Blue, Rainbow and Spring lakes just received 100 more "jumbo" rainbows from the Tucannon Fish Hatchery. Spring and Watson lakes also received a couple thousand more catchables (8- to 12-inchers) each. Walla Walla County's Bennington Lake, a reservoir that is open to fishing year-round, but is drained and filled annually, is now full of water and trout. WDFW Lyons Ferry and Tucannon hatchery crews stocked Bennington with 7,000 rainbows this week. More will be added next month and through June. Walla Walla County's Quarry Pond just received another 2,500 catchable-size rainbows. Asotin County's year-round waters - Golf Course and West Evans ponds - were each stocked with 150 jumbo rainbows. Lincoln County's Coffeepot Lake is producing nice catches of rainbows, but anglers there need to comply with selective gear rules and a two-trout daily catch limit. Spokane County's Amber Lake is also productive for both rainbow and **cutthroat trout**, but it's catch-and-release only until April 29. After April 29, the lake will still be under selective gear rules.

John Whalen, WDFW regional fish program manager, said that all selective-gear waters will change on May 1. "Those changes require anglers to use knotless nets to reduce abrasion and scale loss and therefore increase survival of released fish," he said. "Most fly fishers already use knotless nets, but others will need to gear up."

Snake River drainage **steelhead** fishing continues to be productive in the last weeks of the season. Best catch rates were reported near the mouth of the Grand Ronde River where steelheaders averaged just a little over an hour of fishing per steelhead caught. The Touchet River was almost that good, and the Tucannon River measured just under two hours per fish caught. Anglers on the Walla Walla River averaged a little under three hours per steelhead. Check out the full details of the latest creel survey at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/snake/index.htm>. Steelhead fishing closes on the Snake River mainstem March 31, while portions of tributaries like the Grande Ronde, Touchet, and Tucannon rivers remain open through April 15. Check the [fishing regulations pamphlet](#) for all details.

Reader Email

Subscriber and regular contributor Kapt Ken Johnson chimes in this week with another report from the lower Willamette: "I don't need to go into great detail about fishing this week so I'm going to keep it "Short and Sweet!" Fish are being caught everywhere.

Although the Willamette is a little low for bankers, the water is in great shape upstream and down and Chinook are throughout the system. "Blacktop Bill" is seen here holding his Bright Chrome 17.5 pounder, caught on a Spin-n-Glo and Prawn Combo. Colors are Top Secret, I'm told. Can't tell you where he caught it, though, because I was informed they would take a couple of my favorite "items" and use them for Sturgeon Bait if I did.

This is the Meldrum Bar report, however, so Mum's the word! The areas in question are getting busier and busier. One great, and often overlooked spot to fish on the Willamette is just upriver from the Clackamas River. It's the bank in the NW corner of Clackamette Park starting about 200' from the point of where the Clackamas River meets the Willamette. It is a fairly steep bank bit flat at the top. You don't cast out into the middle of the river here...You cast (lob) about 15'-20' out. The Chinookies hug the shore on their upriver migration and a lot of fish are caught here. It's the only place I used to fish a few years back before I had both knees replaced and started needing a

flatter platform to fish on...Like the floor in my little ol' boat, for example!!!

Fish are being caught in the boats, on the banks and everywhere you can find a decent spot to throw or drop your line. "Blacktop Randy" caught a 7 pound Steelie today, also. The Steelhead are still in the rivers but getting a bit fewer in numbers which is to be expected this time of year. They were talking Summer Steelie's, but isn't this just the end of the Winter Steelhead season??? I don't know...I just fish and hope for the best. The nice little ol' 3-4 pound Sucker Fish I caught two weeks ago made my day!!! I'm easy! See you on the river!"



Going fishing? Got an opinion on something? Outraged by the ocean salmon situation, seal populations or smelt no-show? Shoot us and Email!

Write to the TGF staff:

Bob Rees: brees@pacifier.com

Doug Rees: drees@TheGuidesForecast.com

Michael Teague: SailCat@SailCat.com

Random Links

Yet another great Henry Miller article, this time with a number of stories from his readers capped by an amusing tale of his own:

<http://www.statesmanjournal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060323/COLUMN0401/603230350/1075/OUTDOORS>

Big bass story from Field & Stream. Really, really big:

<http://www.fieldandstream.com/fieldstream/fishing/article/0,13199,1175441,00.html#>



Weekly Quote – "Good fishing is just a matter of timing. You have to get there yesterday". - Milton Berle

GOOD LUCK!