

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **March 31st, – April 6th, 2006**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- Biologists remain in a quandary as to what actions they should take in the Columbia River spring Chinook fishery. Commercial seasons remain closed and a sportfishing closure will get considerable attention next week. Fish passage at Bonneville is alarmingly low although accurate run size updates aren't feasible until around mid-April. Sport catches had improved in the lower river with Altoona to Longview offering the best options. One boat reported a 6 fish limit on Sunday trolling herring in Clifton Channel. They were however the exception.

Sturgeon fishing remains best in the reservoirs above Bonneville Dam. Only a few keepers are being taken in The Dalles and John Day Pools. Keeper catches below Bonneville remain poor. Walleye catches in these pools remains fair but has dropped off slightly from previous weeks.

Flows on the lower Willamette have increased slightly from 16,800 on March 24th to 20,000 cfs as of March 17th. As hoped, the recent warm rains and relatively mild weather has increased temperatures at Willamette Falls to 48 degrees.

Catch rates should steadily increase as water temperatures climb above 50 degrees and good reports continue to come out of the Sellwood area. Sturgeon fishing is good for shakers but a keeper is a rarity.

Clackamas anglers are seeing fair, steady results for winter steelhead along with a few spring Chinook taken near the mouth. Action will improve as the water temperature rises. Steelhead are spawning on Eagle Creek so use your best judgment.

Pro guide Trevor Storlie (503-307-5601) reports Sandy River steelhead anglers had a good fishing last week with a mix of nearly 50/50 wild to hatchery fish. Good numbers of fish should have moved to the Marmot area where low water techniques like bobbers and jigs should take good numbers of fish. A few more spring Chinook have been taken in the lower river.

With Willamette waters warming, smallmouth bass have begun to shake off their winter lethargy and move about in search of food. While catches have been light, it won't be long until this fishery turns on. Valley ponds will soon be an option for both bass and panfish.

Following heavy stoking of hatchery trout in Oregon lakes in anticipation of spring break, planting this week will consist of Alton Baker Pond, Cottage Grove Reservoir, E. E. Wilson Pond and Junction City Pond.

Northwest – Steelheaders on the North Oregon Coast had to deal with low water conditions over the weekend. Catch rates have dropped but some fresh schools of steelhead are moving in with the fair afternoon tides. The Wilson, Trask and Nestucca are the top producers reports **pro guide Jesse Zalonis (503-392-5808)** but the Nehalem should come online by midweek with wild fish making up the bulk of the catch. Check the regulations for the North Coast streams that close on April 1st. Spring Chinook fishing opens in Tillamook Bay, the Wilson and Trask Rivers on the 1st but don't expect much until mid-April at the earliest.

The late afternoon tides have yielded good numbers of sturgeon on Tillamook Bay. A 58½ incher was taken by Jase Beard of Wyoming on 3/28. Sand shrimp are producing the best results although

mud shrimp are a close second.

Crabbing is fair in Tillamook Bay but better outside in the ocean. A big swell was present early in the week but some bottomfishers got outside for rockfish action on jigs and herring.

Razor clammers did excellent over the weekend on Clatsop Beaches during the evening tides. The tide series shifts to the morning series starting on the 30th and if the surf cooperates, diggers should score easy limits.

Devil's Lake will be stocked with 6,500 hatchery rainbows this week.

Here's your chance to give something back to the Nestucca. The annual fin-clipping party is Saturday, April 8th at the Whiskey Creek Volunteer Salmon hatchery where 105,000 spring Chinook smolts will be processed. No experience is necessary and the job usually wraps up in early afternoon. They'll have doughnuts starting at 8 A.M., coffee and soft drinks on hand and will stop mid-day for a barbeque lunch. The hatchery is just South of Netarts. It's a good time and a very good cause.

Southwest - Fishing for ling cod and rockfish from jetties and rocky outcroppings has been worthwhile recently when wind and wave action have allowed. Surf perch fishing on ocean beaches has also been good.

Rivers will rise and fall slightly with passing showers this week but overall should be in decent shape for steelhead and spring chinook hopefuls. Rivers are forecast to gradually drop over the weekend.

Mainstem Umpqua steelheaders continue to see fresh, willing fish enter the system but the attention is shifting to the springers which are available up to Elkton. Steelheading has been slow in the North and South forks. Sturgeon fishing below Reedsport was good again this week.

Coos and Coquille anglers are seeing fair results for steelhead. The Smith River has been productive for steelhead at times but is a volatile system subject to rapid changes with weather fronts.

Spring chinook anglers are seeing a gradual improvement in catches on the lower Rogue. Fishing is better for winter steelhead in the Grants Pass stretch but is still reported as only fair. Steelheading is expected to improve in the upper river.

Hatchery trout are scheduled to be planted in Bradley Lake, Upper and Lower Empire Lake and Johnson Mill Pond.

Eastern - Eastern Oregon steelhead season is starting to wind down for the year and area anglers were greeted with rapidly rising rivers last week. Needless to say, success rates plummeted under these conditions reports **pro guide Mac Huff (800-940-3688)**. Action will likely continue to drop off.

Smallmouth bass fishing has started up on the John Day River, but muddy water starting the 27th put off such pursuits for a few days. It will be worthwhile when the weather breaks.

Southwest Washington- The Cowlitz River remains the best option for spring Chinook anglers although the Kalama River is also producing some results.

Lewis River springers are being caught from the hatchery to the mouth.

The Wind and Drano Lakes fisheries will be a hard sell to anglers with dam passage at the low levels we are witnessing. Most Washington spring Chinook fisheries will experience the downturn in

success that Oregon streams will witness.

Soapbox Update – Sign the letter to urge implementation of real salmon solutions:

<http://www.salmonsolutions.org/>

Columbia River Fishing Report – As the end of March arrives, most anglers anticipate consistent, good spring Chinook fishing to happen anytime now. It's hard to get motivated however as sporadic catches are being reported from Portland to Westport, Oregon. No one angler seems to be bringing game to the fishery but one guide boat reported a 6 fish limit last Sunday from Clifton Channel along Tenasillahe Island in the lower Columbia River. He was trolling herring and was the exception rather than the rule.

Fair catches are being reported from St. Helens at the bottom end of the Multnomah Channel indicating some spring Chinook use of the Channel itself this year. With the water remaining on the cool side, herring seem to be a key element in the success of anglers this season.

Willamette anglers are glad to see the gillnet fleet grounded for another week allowing ample escapement of springers into the Portland Harbor and upstream. See the Willamette report for more details. Test netting indicates insufficient numbers for commercials to return to the river for harvest and managers are again questioning their predictions with such low counts at Bonneville and Willamette Falls. Although a run size update has no merit until later into April, biologists are keeping a close eye on how the fisheries perform. Modifications may come in the near future.

Sturgeon anglers remain discouraged as the best fishing remains in the pools above Bonneville Dam. Catches of keepers remain low in the upstream impoundments but on a success per rod basis, The Dalles and John Day Pools remain the most productive.

Walleye fishing remains popular in The Dalles and John Day Pools but the Bonneville Pool produced the best results with close to 3 keepers retained per boat. Upstream pools are still producing some results but success has clearly dropped off.

The Guide's Forecast – Morning tides will rule through the weekend which is good for anglers but it's too bad that the outgoing tide will not last long into the morning hours. Flood tide may continue to produce results on trolled herring however with Clifton Channel and the mouth of the Multnomah Channel offering some of the best options for fishing springers this week. This time of year and given the water temperatures, the smaller, green label herring will be the way to go. Anglers that go the extra mile with fish flashes or spinner blades in front of their herring will likely obtain the best results. Beach goers may find the stronger minus tides are better left to clam digging but if there is any truth to an early springer closure, anglers may want to take advantage of the swifter currents which will draw fish into the shallower water during their upstream migration. Spin-n-glos are the go-to lure but there is no better justification than plunking to add scent to your lures. Tuning spin-n-glos may seem over the top to some but successful plunkers will tell you that a true spinning lure will out-produce a wobbly one. Jones Beach upstream of Westport and the Rainier beaches will offer the better opportunities and the outgoing flow will last longer along beaches further upstream.

This will be another week sturgeon anglers won't have to worry about making a trip for salmon. Don't waste your efforts in pursuit of these fish although rumors of a few keepers are coming from the downstream areas close to Tongue Point. These cold waters will certainly challenge anglers however. We have had some good days by the third week of April but March.....? It may be a stretch given this years sport and commercial success rates. If you are desperate, the John Day or The Dalles Pool may be for you.

Go to the Bonneville Pool if you are still seeking biting walleye. Success in this pool will likely taper this week as well.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Temperatures at Willamette Falls has remained steady at 48 degrees. The water is low and clear but persistence is paying off in the lower Willamette.

Multnomah Channel to the mouth of the Willamette has produced a number of fish daily. The Oregon City area slowed this week. Sellwood bridge has been running hot and cold. Perhaps warm and cool would be a better description since even on good days catches have been in the single digits most days this early in the season. The best reports continue to come out of the Sellwood area and on a hot day Friday, March 24th, rewarded boaters with scores of springers.

Kapt Ken Johnson reports on the lower Willamette bank fishing scene, "Not much to report here at Meldrum Bar...Fish are still being caught though. The water level, in my opinion, is still about 4'-5' LOW, and the Willamette appears fairly clear. The rain, so far, hasn't affected the water clarity at all. Fishing action is varied depending on where you are and who you talk to. The guys at "The Blacktop" "say" their not catching anything. OK.....!?! The rest are being caught on the beaches at Meldrum Bar up to the Clack, so they must not be making it up to The Blacktop. One or two a day is the rule, with some 3-4 fish days now showing up. Still, the number of fishermen in this area for this time of year appears to be fairly low compared to years past. Then there is the rumor that the Chinook Fishery may close soon! Honestly, I haven't been keeping up on that part of the discussion because I'm up to my elbows in trying to sell my house and move! However, there are fish to be caught and the ones I've seen are beautiful and BRIGHT! Get out there and git yerself some!"

Steelhead arrive at the Santiam 10 days to two weeks after passing over Willamette Falls. Steelies that have started spawning should be given wide berth.

The Guide's Forecast – Count on catch rates to steadily increase in the lower Willamette as water temperatures climb above 50 degrees. Trolled prawn rigs or herring are good choices while the water temp is in the 40s but spinners will be effective in 50-plus-degree water temps. While the Sellwood Bridge is a crowded fishing spot, it's also the most productive. The head of Multnomah Channel is certainly worth a try as is into the Channel as this is the course most springers take to access the Willamette. The water will generally be a couple of degrees warmer than the river. Down low on the river, try the Kelly Point Park area near the mouth.

Unless the sturgeon fishing turns around, there's no good reason to encourage the pursuit of these fish over spring chinook this weekend.

A few more summer steelhead have shown at Foster Dam on the South Santiam. While these counts are only in the teens, it holds promise for the season to come. The waters of the North and South Santiams are warming seasonally although levels are that of mid-summer. Yeah, it's still slow here.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Catch rates haven't changed much from last weekend. A few steelhead have been taken but it takes work to find fish here. Spring chinook hookups have fallen off in the lower river.

Steelheading action has been fair but steady on the Sandy. **Pro guide Trevor Storlie (503-307-5601)** advises anglers to stick with the Stick with the bobber 'n' jig combos in the upper end for best results, and confirms five spring chinook taken.

The Guide's Forecast – The clock is ticking on the spring chinook run and while it's early to expect many salmon to enter the Clack in sufficient numbers to target them, this is the main topic of discussion amongst anglers here.

Showers over the next few days won't have much of an impact on the water condition of the Sandy. As numbers of summer steelhead increases, so will encounters with them as jigs are equally effective terminal tackle for summers or winters. It's be a few weeks until numbers increase sufficiently to create a worthwhile springer fishery.

North Coast District Fishing Report – Steelhead fishing on most coastal systems has slowed with the dropping, clearing rivers. Although fish are still present, the clear water has most anglers waiting for the next rain freshet. We are also entering the scenario where the first boat through is experiencing the best results. Low water tactics are taking the most fish with bobber and jigs producing fair results. The Nestucca continues to hold its color better than most streams but as **pro guide Jesse Zalonis (503-392-5808)** reports, "The Nestucca has been sporadic, but good at times. Fish are there, you just have to find them. We are still getting some beautiful fresh winter fish, and caught the first summer run today. That is a good sign. Lets hope that is a sign of good things to come. The lower river is seeing some heavy pressure due to good weather and spring break. We have been doing best with light gear and small baits of eggs and Fish Pills. With the recent good weather, and the warmth, look for the rest of the season to be good with fresh fish available for the next couple of weeks. Fish summer gear, and small offerings, and you will find a willing fish some place."

With the condition of most North Coast streams, the main Nehalem may offer the best opportunity for anglers to tie into steelhead this week. With its extensive watershed, it not only offers good opportunity for high productivity, it keeps its color nicely and can handle larger numbers of boats-particularly during spring break. Keep in mind that the Mohler Sand and Gravel pit is closed on weekends making Roy Creek your only downriver take-out option.

Sturgeon fishing was productive for some on Tillamook Bay on the most recent minus tide series. In the last 3 trips, we have put 9 keepers in the boat fishing sand and mud shrimp in the middle part of the estuary. The largest keeper we have taken this season was a 58½ incher on 3/29. The last 2 hours of the outgoing tide has been the most productive on the bay but anglers had better know their way around when trying to negotiate the estuary in these conditions. I did more bay dredging than motoring the other day.....sorry, no pictures to prove anything and NO, I never got stuck (for any length of time, anyway).

Crabbing continues to be sub-par in Tillamook Bay although we did find some success just outside of the jetties this week. We did best north of the north jetty but found out that some of those sneaker waves can put a different perspective on your fishing trip. The shallower you place your pots, the more susceptible you come to sneaker waves that have the capability of taking your life. USE EXTREME CAUTION!

We also took advantage of a fairly friendly ocean and jigged a few bottomfish from dinner reef just a short ways off of the north tip of the jetty. Lead jigs took the most black seabass (we took 5 on the 29th) but no ling cod were present.

The Guide's Forecast – A slight weather system may move into the North Oregon Coast at mid-week bringing a slight rise in river levels. If this actually happens, and area rivers swell by even 1 foot as predicted, it should bring in another crop of fresh steelhead to the system. The lower Wilson, Trask and Nestucca Rivers will produce the best results and anglers need to keep themselves informed as to what rivers will remain open after April 1st. The good news is that fin-

clipped spring Chinook will be legal after April 1st and there have already been a few reported that were incidentally caught while steelhead fishing. Right now, bobbers and jigs are offering the best alternatives to steelhead anglers in the low water conditions. If the weather system delivers another good shot of water to these rivers, all methods from side drifting to plug pulling will be "game-on" again. The higher the flows, the higher in the watershed you should fish.

Sturgeon tides have switched to the morning tide series and action should remain consistent into the weekend. Sand shrimp will likely produce the best results but mud shrimp produced nicely too. I actually used both baits in combination to come up with the success that I have had. Call ahead to Garibaldi Marina (503-322-3312) to check bait availability. They are one of the only shops in town that have mud shrimp.

The ocean may remain friendly enough for offshore anglers to pursue bottomfish. Be sure to check the ocean forecast before heading out. It is available at:
<http://seaboard.ndbc.noaa.gov/data/Forecasts/FZUS56.KPQR.html>.

Clam diggers have some more good opportunity for Clatsop area beaches. The tide series is in the early morning so that's who'll get the "worm". Surf conditions are predicted to be mild so good digging is a real possibility.

Central & South Coast Reports – Anglers are reminded that many Oregon coastal rivers will close in whole or in part to steelhead fishing on April 1st and several South coast streams are subject to closure on this date. Some of the closures are listed below but check those regulations to avoid an expensive mistake.

South coast bays and estuaries are providing limits of Dungeness now as they have recovered from the last round of storms. Beaches remain closed to razor clamming from the North jetty at Tillamook Bay to the California border.

Alsea and Siletz rivers are forecast to rise slightly prior to the coming weekend. While prospects on the Alsea are poor, the Siletz should be a worthwhile destination as metalheads move up into the system.

Mainstem Umpqua steelheaders continue to see fresh, willing fish enter the system but the attention is shifting to the springers which are available up to Elkton. Steelheading continues to be slow in the North fork due to cold water but will improve with warmer weather. Conditions on the South Umpqua have improved along with the steelheading. Sturgeon fishing below Reedsport was very good this week and should be a hot producer early mornings this weekend. Expect to hook mostly oversized fish in pursuit of one that will keep.

The angler survey mentioned here last week will continue through April 30 on Umpqua, the purpose of which is to track wild steelhead on 90 miles of the river. According to that survey, as of mid-March, Umpqua River anglers caught nearly 400 wild steelhead and kept 270, the largest of which was over 42 inches.

Another survey started taking place this week, although this one is by telephone. Once in spring and again in Fall, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service calls outdoorsy folks to find out what activities they enjoy. The results of this poll will be released in spring of 2007.

Coos River steelheading was fair this week with the run winding down. Fishing is best at Coquille River up into the forks where the fish were released as juveniles. Friday is the last chance to fish these rivers as they'll close to steelheading this coming Saturday.

The Smith River has been productive for steelhead and should be in fine shape for the weekend. This is a volatile system, however, and as such is subject to rapid changes with weather fronts.

Spring Chinook anglers are seeing a gradual improvement in catches on the lower Rogue. Anchovies are favored here, particularly trolled with a spinner on the nose, a combination aptly-named the Rogue River Rig. Plunkers are also getting a mix of steelhead and spring Chinook, but results are only fair. It's still early for springers here with the bulk of the run yet to come. Early catches are a good sign. Fishing is improving for winter steelhead below Grants Pass, however and steelheading is expected to improve in the upper river with Gold Ray Dam counts topping 4,000. Bait and lures have been equally effective recently. When the water warms a few degrees, the bite will turn on. Hooking the occasional steelhead which has already spawned is to be expected at this time if year. The Rogue is open year-around for steelhead.

Pro Guide Ken Streater (800-797-4293) adds this, "Springers are coming! Although a bit slower than normal, multiple hook ups were reported on the Lower Rogue this week, with some fish into the 30-pound range. These feisty and tasty critters are among the best fish on earth to catch. The water temperature is still a bit cold for the heart of the run to come upriver, but if we get some warm weather in the next week or two watch they should come running! Winter steelhead are still going strong, with the Chetco, Elk, and Upper Rogue highlighting the continuation of a very good season. By the way, Oregon river fishing for salmon is forecast to be strong this season, in spite of media representations of otherwise. Salmon closures mentioned in the news do not apply to southern Oregon rivers! "

Chetco steelheaders are being blessed with a combination of great river level, color and good numbers of late-running fish. Unfortunately, this is another of the rivers which will be closed as of April 1st.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Pro Guide Bill Kremers (542-602-0881) wrote to say he'd be unable to Email a report 'cause he'd be out fishing, but invited TGF to call him on the water at Rufus and we did just that. In 46-degree water, fishing has been spotty, he said via cell 'phone. He caught three walleye on Tuesday, March 28th, with the largest scaling at seven pounds. Winds on Wednesday kept him off the water and Thursday efforts yielded only trash fish and one shaker sturgeon. Kremers closed his live, on-the-water report with, "It'll turn on any day."

Pro Guide Mac Huff (800-940-3688) reports, "The weekend's weather was a boon for back country skiers, but the bane of steelheaders throughout Wallowa County.

"Rivers began rising overnight on Friday and through Saturday and by Sunday most steelheaders had packed it in.

"A hand full of anglers continued to fish the Grande Ronde on Sunday, according to a report from Boggan's Oasis and seven landed fish were reported for the day, a somewhat amazing result, considering that the river climbed from about 2,500 cfs on Friday to more than 5,000 cfs on Sunday.

"The Wallowa River survived the warm up and rain surprisingly well, with only a minor change in the water level in the Wallowa and major tributaries above Minam. The Minam River approximately doubled in volume, but there was plenty of fishing above the confluence. The catch rate for the Wallowa dropped to about four hours per fish, half of the previous week's average. Anglers told the creel checker that 176 steelhead were landed during four days of checking, including the weekend. Nineteen of the steelhead were wild and 157 were hatchery fish.

"The end of the season is near, let's go fishing."

Another cold weather reports this week came from **Pro Guide Rick Arnold (541-480-1570)** who wrote, "A few die-hards are getting onto Crescent Lake, ice and snow permitting. Recently a 10 LB. hookjaw brown was caught and released there. Call ahead before venturing up there. Bull trout continue to dominate the main fishing scene for lakes here in Central Oregon before we hit the opening in April. Several bulls around 10 Lb. have been landed and a 13.5 LB hen topped recent catches."

Snow may be a possibility mornings at Lake Billy Chinook, but for those willing to brave the conditions, the rewards are some pretty decent bull trout action as these fish are active despite colder than normal water temperatures.

Here, Diane Barber shows off a Billy Chinook Bull which was caught and released on March 26th:



Steelhead are spawning now on the Deschutes and are best left unmolested. Fly-rodders are mostly nymphing now with fair to good results as the water is up and down with passing showers. The March Brown hatch is just around the corner.

Smallmouth bass fishing has started in the John Day system but with water in the low-to-mid 40s, the bite is slow and very light. Any day during which the water is dropping and clearing will allow a few to be caught. Historically, the biggest smallies of the year will fall in April, so stay tuned for weekly updates!

Northwest Trout - Spring break is historically motive for heavy and widespread plantings of hatchery trout in Oregon lakes. The last couple of weeks reflected that tradition. Holdovers should be available in the coming weeks.

Planting this week has taken place at Alton Baker Pond, Cottage Grove Reservoir, E. E. Wilson Pond and Junction City Pond in the Willamette Valley. Devil's Lake in Lincoln City has been stocked with 6,500 hatchery rainbows this week. North Lake and South lakes in the Northwest Zone weren't stocked as scheduled the week of March 20th due to snow but will receive trout when the weather allows.

While seen other locations were rejected from such consideration as too small or shallow, the Oregon Marine Board recently gave the OK to use of electric trolling motors on Walter Wirth Lake in Cascade Gateway Park, a popular and frequently-stocked fishing hole in Salem which also has a population of bass and panfish. Kenneth Vance, a disabled Salem angler initiated the action.

Adults are discouraged from participating in the Young people's event Saturday, April 8th at St. Louis Ponds near Woodburn. According to an ODFW bulletin dated March 24th, "The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is stocking 1,500 rainbow trout into St. Louis Pond as part of the Youth Angling Enhancement Program, now in its second year. ODFW staff and volunteers will be available from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. to provide access to fishing equipment and angling instruction. Contact the Clackamas ODFW office at 503-657-2000 for more information."

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.

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/>

Reader Email

Subscriber and curious angler Rosce F. inquired via the Contact Form at the TGF website, "Last week you reported that one of the guides boated a summer run steelhead. How do you tell the difference at this time of year?"

Pro guide Bob Rees responded, "The summer steelhead we took last week in the Wilson River was boated by Robert Campbell of the Oregon City Fisherman's Marine and Outdoor store while fishing with Buzz Ramsey and I. We identified it as a summer run due to the right ventral fin missing which is indicative of this run of fish. Most of the broodstock winter run fish have an adipose fin missing and some are missing the maxillary as well. Summer fish are missing their right ventral fins on the Wilson River. They will usually be void of gonads as well or the eggs or sperm sacks will be very underdeveloped."

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

Canada hunters thin overpopulation of seals :

http://reuters.myway.com/article/20060325/2006-03-25T222702Z_01_N22382147_RTRIDST_0_NEWS-SEALS-DC.html

Judge Rules for Fish in Klamath River Dispute:

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-klamath28mar28,1,1643047.story?coll=la-headlines-california&ctrack=1&cset=true>

From Cape Meares to Brookings, volunteers help visitors spot gray whales on the Oregon coast easily from 10 AM to 1 PM through Saturday, April 1st. Here are the locations:

<http://www.statesmanjournal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060330/OUTDOORS/603300351/1034>

Weekly Quote – "There will be days when the fishing is better than one's most optimistic forecast, others when it is far worse. Either is a gain over just staying home." - Roderick Haig-Brown

GOOD LUCK!