

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **April 7th, – April 13th, 2006**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- Columbia River salmon anglers are reporting steady catches but anglers remain restricted to fishing below the I-5 bridge. Surprisingly, some of the best fishing has taken place in the troll fishery when flows aren't strong enough to work plugs in the current. To put this fishery in perspective, boat anglers that manage 2 to 3 fish for a days play are doing quite good. Dam passage at Bonneville remains lower than biologists hoped for and managers will meet this afternoon to discuss the fate of the sport and commercial fisheries. **Pro guide Brad Shride (206-463-9230)** reports this, "I have been down fishing on the Columbia River for Springers out of the Cathlamet area. There are some Springers around in the 10 to 12 pound range with an occasional 15 to 20 pound Springer. This week the afternoon bite has been the ticket to multiple hook-up success. Trolling cut plug herring has been the offering of choice but the tides this week have been very conducive to anchor and plugs on the out going tide. Chrome, chartreuse and chrome, chartreuse with orange seems to be the color of choice. Put in your time and you will be rewarded with a Spring Salmon. I will be heading to the Cowlitz River after this is over. I heard they are having a meeting Tuesday to consider whether to keep it open for another week or close it on the main stem of the Columbia River."

Active hazing of sealions is taking place at Bonneville Dam but most question the effectiveness of the tactics employed. For more information on what exactly they are doing about the marine mammal issue at Bonneville, go to:

<http://www.nwd-wc.usace.army.mil/tmt/agendas/2006/0405.html>

Speculation in this space a couple of weeks ago turned out to be correct. The harassment of sea lions on the Columbia by ODFW officials, escalated from noise to rubber bullets, has proven mostly ineffective. Since these voracious mammals are decimating salmon, steelhead and most recently breeder sturgeon populations, the State officials have applied for a Federal permit to use real bullets.

Water temperature at Willamette Falls has hit the 50-degree mark but the warmer water has not yet been reflected in a dramatic increase in spring Chinook passage as hoped. The year-to-date total was a only 30 at the last report on April 4th although trollers and anchor fishers are experiencing an improvement in the action on the lower river.

Sellwood Bridge remains popular and crowded. While the improved water temps haven't motivated springers to migrate, it has improved the sturgeon bite. The lower river and Multnomah Channel has produced lots of shakers and several keepers.

Steelheading was fair to good on the Sandy for weekend anglers. There are still finclipped fish available thanks to the broodstock program. The pressure is high with many anglers trying for fish before the run winds down.

It's slow going on the Clackamas but a few steelhead are being landed here as well.

Trout have been stocked this week at Henry Hagg Lake, Huddleston Pond, St. Louis Pond, Trojan Pond, Alton Baker Pond, Cottage Grove Pond, Cottage Grove Reservoir, Creswell Pond, Detroit Reservoir and Dexter Reservoir.

Mid Columbia - The Dalles Pool remains the best option for walleye anglers but the Bonneville Pool was also productive with almost a fish per rod recorded over the weekend.

Northwest - River levels remain low on most north coast streams and steelhead effort and success has dropped off. With the good fishing this season anglers experienced in the region, it is logical to believe the next rain freshet will bring further steelhead success. Late winter fish, summer steelhead and an early spring Chinook are all options. Downstream running steelhead will also grab gear so practice safe catch and release tactics.

Sturgeon fishing has slowed somewhat and pressure was heavy last weekend with favorable weather and the opener of spring Chinook season. Success will not be significant until later in April. Big tide exchanges will bring the best results.

Crabbing remains challenging on most north coast estuaries and the ocean hasn't been an option for sport boats lately.

It's getting late in the year for steelheading on the Siletz. The few taken above tidewater over the weekend were natives.

Trout were planted this week at Carter and Cleawox lakes.

Southwest- Many South coast rivers closed for steelhead on April 1st. Be sure to check the regulations before venturing out.

South Umpqua steelheaders are enjoying excellent water conditions and good catch rates this week. Boaters and bank anglers experienced a slight improvement in spring Chinook catches over the weekend but the run is getting off to a slow start.

Springers are getting stronger in numbers, as the water temps continue to rise. Lower Rogue boaters are reporting 2-3 landings a day, with anchovy and spinners working best. This fishing should get stronger this week as river levels are dropping a bit and temperatures are approaching ideal. On the Upper Rogue, near Grants Pass, steelhead fishing remains consistent but may be slowing down just a bit.

The Chetco, Sixes and Elk rivers are seeing drops in steelhead numbers but increasingly good spring chinook fishing. These rivers need to increase in temperature about two degrees for fishing to be ideal. The size and quality of the early fish is phenomenal, which bodes well for the next few weeks on all southern Oregon rivers!

Bradley Lake, Lower Empire Lake, Upper Empire Lake and Powers Pond were planted this week with hatchery trout.

Eastern Oregon- Northeast Oregon and southeast Washington are now suffering from similar high-water problems that the west side was dealing with a few weeks ago. **Pro guide Mac Huff (800-940-3688)** reports, "The Grande Ronde seems to be at the upper limits of good fishing, but the results are defying expectations and steelheaders continue to find success, even in the current high-water conditions."

The best prospect at the moment is the Willowa River, which, so far, has missed all of the spring freshets and remains at late-winter water levels and is relatively low and clear. The catch rate there likely remains near last week's rate of four-hours per fish.

Southwest Washington- Improving catches are coming from the Cowlitz River- particularly downstream of the I-5 Bridge. Although this fishery is just a week or two away from peaking, effort is worth the while.

The Lewis River is producing some catches of hatchery spring Chinook near the facility itself.

The Wind and Drano Lake fisheries are non-existent due to low dam passage at Bonneville Dam. Although this should improve soon, expectations are low considering this year's return.

Soapbox Update –

12th Annual Hawgs-N-Dogs Spring Chinook Salmon Classic

On April 14th you could win this boat... on April 15th you could be fishing from it! To find out how, click here... <http://www.nsiafishing.org/Events.htm>

Remember, even if you don't win the boat of your dreams (must be present to win) or the big fish prize the real reason for showing up is the fish. NSIA is your organization fighting for the fish, fighting for the sport fishermen, and for the scientists that protect the fish. This year, we are offering a free membership for entering the derby. Everyone leaves a winner. Bank or boat fishermen can be signed up, if you fish according to the fishing regulations in your state. See link above for more information, rules, etc., or call Julia Chapman at 503 631 8859.



Columbia River Fishing Report – With sturgeon fishing still slow on the mainstem Columbia below Bonneville, anglers are taking advantage of what spring Chinook season remains open. Fishing has been decent and as a matter of fact, catch rates are similar to years when we had good returns although dam passage has fishery managers worried that the run may once again come in underpredicted. Managers will be taking a hard look at the sportfishing impacts on Thursday afternoon and determine if the fishery will close or remain open.

Guides are stating they have been pleased with their results although consistency is not something they can offer. A typical day has been between 2 and 4 keeper fish for a full boat, full day of fishing. Catch statistics indicate a better than 80% retention rate for hatchery fish with close to an equal split of Willamette and Columbia River springers in the mix. Many guides are noting that anchor fishing using plugs has not been as productive as it has in the past. Some fish are being taken from the wing jetties and there is a surprising absence of sealions some are saying. It may be an indication that indeed, the run is lower than forecasted. Brookfield remains a stand out place to anchor in the lower river either accessed by launching from Aldrich Point or Tongue Point. Trolling herring has been the best bet and anglers fishing in the lower river downstream of Longview have

been posting the best catches. Clifton Channel and the extended slot just downstream of the Aldrich Point Boat Ramp between Westport and Astoria. Bank fishers in the same area are finding some success but relatively low flows due to cooler weather and an intact snow-pack are keeping salmon off of the bank and in deeper water. The next minus tide series won't take place until the middle of the month, which may be too late for sportanglers.

Upriver, **pro guide Dan Ponciano (360-607-8511)** indicated a mixed bag of opportunities for metro area anglers. Dan stated he has been having fairly consistent success for spring Chinook with an average of around 2 fish/day trolling herring with a fish flash just downstream of the I-5 bridge. Davis Bar across from the mouth of the Willamette has also been a productive spot to fish. While I was on the phone with Dan, he was giving me a blow by blow of another oversized sturgeon being consumed by a sealion. It's a growing problem that fishery biologists are aware of and doing everything they legally can about dealing with the problem. Most of the focus is going towards saving salmon since that is where the money is.....I guess we'll just have to wait until sturgeon are listed as endangered before we can really move on this issue. Dan was participating in the catch and release fishery on 4/5 and found fair results landing around 15 sturgeon with a couple of keepers in the mix. Recent catch statistics had indicated that sturgeon fishing remained poor below Bonneville Dam but it looks like it may be picking up. Most anglers will continue to focus on salmon while it remains open but this is one of the reasons we don't have a good idea as to what's going on with our lower river sturgeon. Little effort is taking place in the estuary as well where traditionally (at least a few years ago), April could have been a good month to fish.

The Guide's Forecast – What's on the minds of most sportanglers this week is whether or not the season will continue into next week. Although catch rates are on the increase, even on an over predicted run, sportanglers are not very close to reaching their impacts for the fishery. We often get surprised on how quickly this can happen but it looks like the fishery will continue on for now.

Good catches were recorded in the Cathlamet area over the weekend and biologists are hoping to see a spike in the Longview to Portland stretch to indeed indicate there are good numbers of fish present. No one is expecting to be surprised by returning numbers but dam counts at Bonneville are tracking slightly higher than last year. We have to keep in mind however that sealions were present IN the fish ladder at this same time and that is not an issue right now.

So as we come into the peak of the spring Chinook season, we should continue to see good catches in the river around Cathlamet and an improvement upstream to the deadline at the I-5 Bridge. As the 4 year-old component of the Willamette run enters the Columbia, action should pick up for the smaller fish near the mouth of the Willamette and the mouth of the Multnomah Channel near St. Helens. Several larger 5 year-old fish were recorded in last weeks catch but fish over 20 pounds seem to be a bit rare this year.

Incoming tides for most of the week will favor herring trollers. Fish flashes seem to be a common theme again this year as anglers realize they must pull out all the stops in order to be competitive in this fishery. Plug cut blue label herring or green label herring rigged whole and fished near the bottom is the way to go. Anchor fishing with plugs is certainly not out of the question but for some reason, it is not producing the results that it typically does. Maybe we culled out all the plug biting Kwikfish over the last several years? As water temperatures rise, the bite should steadily increase. Although we all know numbers of fish are going to be down this year, the good water conditions are allowing for ample numbers of fish to be harvested and this week should be no exception.

With poor dam passage, the Wind and Drano Lake fisheries will still be a while before they heat up. Predicted returns will allow for a decent fishery but it is likely still a few weeks away. Effort is light but keep your eye on dam passage for an indicator as to when you should participate in this fishery.

It will be hard for anglers to pull themselves away from salmon fishing to pursue sturgeon but it looks as if this fishery may once again become a viable option. Smelt should begin to produce some fair results in the Portland to Troutdale stretch and the gorge could begin to take off in the not-so-distant future. The mouth of the Willamette and vicinity still seems to be a good option- especially for shakers.

The walleye bite seems to be hanging on and anglers pursuing this species are better off targeting them in the Dalles reservoir. The Bonneville Pool is also putting out a few of the keepers and water temperatures will also effect these fish as we move into spring.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Water temperature at Willamette Falls has hit the 50-degree mark but the warmer water has not yet been reflected in a dramatic increase in spring Chinook passage as hoped. The year-to-date total was a only 28 at the last report on April 3rd, although trollers and anchor fishers are experiencing an improvement in the action on the lower river. Sellwood Bridge remains as productive as anywhere and the crowds reflect it. About a third of the boats trying are actually bringing a salmon over the gunwale. Multnomah Channel has been kicking out a few and bank anglers are experiencing fair results below the mouth of the Clackamas.

While the improved water temps haven't motivated many springers to migrate, it has improved the sturgeon bite. The lower river and Multnomah Channel has produced lots of shakers and several keepers. The Willamette will remain open for sturgeon through July with retention allowed on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

Steelheaders have caught both summers and winters below Dexter Dam on the middle fork of the Willamette River. Only the occasional fish is being hooked, but at least it's a start.

Numbers of summer steelhead are improving on the South Santiam, though worthwhile fishing remains a few weeks away. Better numbers have to be crossing the Falls to improve the probability of decent action here. The count at Foster Dam as of April 3rd was 78 with about a two-thirds of those recycled downstream to allow anglers another chance at them. No springers had been counted as of that date. The entire system is a little higher now as the Corps of Engineers has increased flows to provide better steelhead spawning conditions.

The Guide's Forecast – Salmon trollers and anchor fishermen experienced a moderation in takedowns over the weekend which decline continued into this week. Reports from Oregon City to Kelly Point are fairly uniform with boats putting in a long days with little or no results from their efforts. As of today, March 6th, the water temperature is holding steady at 50 degrees with the visibility up to 2.8 feet. This week the only consistently productive time was the first wee hours of the morning. If this trend continues, you might as well hit the water pre-dawn, motor to the Sellwood or head of Multnomah Channel and head for home when the light's on the water. A major factor to consider at this time of year is the water temperature. While it has been crowded in Multnomah Channel recently, the water will be a degree or two warmer there.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Experienced anglers on the Clackamas are enjoying some pretty good results for a mix of wild and finclipped steelhead. Pressure on the river is fairly light with more attention on the Chinook run. A few springers are being caught weekly in the lower Clack.

Steelheading was fair to good over last weekend on the Sandy for weekend anglers. There are still a few finclipped fish available thanks to the broodstock program, but it's mostly a catch-and-release show for wild fish now. The pressure is high with many anglers trying for fish as the run winds

down.

The Guide's Forecast – Spring Chinook fishing is becoming a more rewarding pastime on the Clack with salmon available in modest number up to Carver. Reports this week verify that a few summer steelhead are also entering now.

Fishing on the Sandy has slowed and many of the winter steelhead present turning dark or have already spawned. The good news is that a few summers were picked up this week and that's a fishery that will be ramping up far weeks to come. Anglers remain hopeful that spring Chinook will enter in sufficient numbers to create a viable fishery here.

North Coast District Fishing Report – Steelhead anglers are losing hope for North Coast streams. An extended period of dry weather has most coastal systems low and clear. The lower stretches of the Trask, Wilson and Nestucca systems may continue to put out some quality fish but a good soaking would certainly benefit the situation. Guides working the area are happy to get 2 or 3 opportunities for a days effort and much of the metro focus has switched from the coast to spring Chinook in the Portland area. **Pro guide Jesse Zalonis (503-392-5808)** has this to report, "The Nestucca is winding down, right on schedule... There are still some fresh fish available, but very few. We are seeing a bunch of spawners, with an occasional fresh winter run. We are also seeing a summer run caught, but it is rare. It is still a little early for them. The river is also getting quite clear, so being a little stealthy will be a better option, and lighter gear the rule. Look for more of the same, and then a brief lull, before we see a good push of summer fish, and springers to follow. I will fish the remainder of this week, and off to the Santiam I go."

Sturgeon fishing in the upper bay seemed to slow a bit as a Friday (March 30th) trip yielded only 2 shaker sturgeon and a wild steelhead from the tidewater section of the Wilson River. We looked around a bit for sturgeon in the bay but they eluded us. They may be starting a northerly migration back to the Columbia as food sources become more available up there.

There have been no rumors of spring Chinook in the Tillamook area although there was a fair amount of effort on the April 1st opener.

The ocean has been a bit too rough for big effort of bottomfish out of Garibaldi but fair catches have been had recently when weather permits. Ocean crabbing is better than bay crabbing but folks need to be very aware of some of the large sneaker swells that take place in traditional crabbing areas outside of the jaws. Crabbing is fair at best inside Tillamook and Netarts Bays.

The Guide's Forecast – It's not looking all that promising for weekend anglers on the North Oregon Coast. Although showers are in the forecast, there isn't enough precipitation to raise river levels and have a positive effect on steelheading. Tides are not in the favor of anglers either but the Nehalem remains the best bet in these types of conditions and action could be consistent up there. The lower portions of the Wilson, Trask and Nestucca Rivers should also receive small spurts of fresh steelhead as well but don't look for gangbuster fishing. I have had some wonderful experiences this time of year with great weather, low traffic and adequate fishing. It's a great time of year to be out there. Be sure to check the regulations as changes on several coastal systems took place on the first of April.

The small tide exchange will offer up some opportunity for anxious anglers wanting an early spring Chinook in the Tillamook system. Jetty fishing should provide the best opportunity but again, don't have high expectations. The earliest I have taken a Tillamook springer is the 14th of April. Your time this weekend may be better spent finishing your taxes.....hmmmm...that reminds me.....

Sturgeon fishing likely won't be much to write home about either. Pressure was a bit high last week

and the tides more favorable. If you do go sturgeon fishing, you should plan on hunting for them as they seem quite scattered these days. With little new fresh water in the system, crabs are again becoming an issue- even higher in the estuary.

The ocean forecast looks a bit volatile so even though the tides may be friendly to a Tillamook Bay bar crossing, the ocean condition does not look all that friendly to ocean crabbing or bottomfishing. It will be better to wait for friendlier conditions- and the bar may not be open at all in the first place!

Central & South Coast Reports – Recreational offshore salmon anglers were just grazed by the axe fell hard on commercial fishermen when cutbacks were proposed to protect the endangered Klamath River run. In spite of their vocal and visual protests, commercials who worked over 200 days in 2004 and fewer than 100 last year will be allowed only 36 days to eek out a living in 2006 South of Manzanita on the Oregon coast.

The word "preliminary" is being bandied about with sufficient frequency that it would lead one to believe nothing has actually been decided. If the season goes this way, it will be a financial blow to those who earn a wage fishing, related businesses and at market where limited supply means higher prices. The other side of the issue is that such restrictions means more fish for sports anglers and charter boats and a greater number of Chinook entering bays and rivers.

North of Manzanita, commercials and sporties face about a 35% reduction in ocean salmon catches over 2005.

Offshore bottom fishing is good for rockfish and lings. Crabbing, however, has been slow in bays and estuaries and only fair in the ocean where a limit is rare. These trips are always dependent upon safe ocean conditions, so check 1610 on the AM dial out of Depoe Bay or call 541-765-2122 for bar conditions and weather restrictions. Surf perch fishing is very good coast-wide and will remain so through April and May.

Most of Oregon's coastal rivers closed to steelheading on April 1st. to protect spawning fish. A few of the larger rivers or portions thereof remain open through April, but spawning beds should not be disturbed.

As the season winds down on the Siletz River and many of the fish present prepare to spawn, the quality of the fish available will decline. The few taken above tidewater over the weekend were natives. Summer steelheading will be worthwhile in May.

Although the Alsea mainstem and North Fork will remain open for steelhead through the month of April, the run is winding down here. Anglers may expect to find a mix of bright and dark fish.

The Siuslaw River will offer some possibilities for metalheads in the upper stretches up to the closure on April 15th.

While the Coos river remains open through April, only the South Coos has been kicking out a few fish recently. Low, clear, cold water is creating challenging conditions The South Fork Coquille is fair for steelhead.

Spring Chinook are the main target of anglers on the mainstem Umpqua River as numbers improve, although winter steelhead are also available. Most boaters are anchor-fishing bait or lures effectively, although weekend results were only fair due to water which is only in the mid-to-high 40s. Shad have started entering here and numbers will only improve through April. The North Fork is fair for bright steelhead but it's been slow on the South Fork. Sturgeon fishing below Reedsport

has been very good for those willing to wrestle of few six-to-nine-footers for the chance to find one small enough to keep legally.

Only 25% of the boats trying in the lower Rogue River are boating spring Chinook. Plunkers are finding similar slow but steady fishing with the best results coming to those trying near Lobster Creek, although a few are being taken daily as high as Agness. Water conditions are perfect; the Chinook just haven't shown in decent numbers. Cold water continues to slow the bite which will improve as the water warms with spring showers. Steelheading is slow to fair around Grants Pass but most of fish present are natives. It is legal to keep wild steelhead here up to five a year, but most steelheaders release them to spawn. With over 6,000 winter steelhead counted at Gold Ray Dam and hundreds passing daily, fishing in the upper Rogue has picked up recently, creating a worthwhile fishery. Plugs and bait are taking fish in decent number.

While mentioned in the Fisheries Forecast, it's worth reminding anglers again. The price of this seminar is right and everyone will pick up some worthwhile techniques from these local experts: Free hot dogs and hot fishing tips will be available at Roseburg Performance Marine on April 22nd starting at 11 A.M. with a different topic hourly. Local guides Greg Eide, Chris Young and custom rod-builder Travis Howard will be providing detailed information about river fishing, trolling in Rogue Bay, proper rod selection and spring Chinook techniques. The seminar will conclude around 3 P.M. when a drawing for a fully-equipped custom rod will be held.

Central and Eastern Oregon – The March Brown hatch has started below Maupin on the lower Deschutes, which patterns, in combination with the regular arsenal of nymphs and caddis, is providing fair to good action for trout. If the weather continues warm here, Blue-Winged Olives and March Browns are expected to start hatching upstream into the middle river as well in the coming weeks.

Although the water remains too cold for the world-class, 100-fish-per-day action that has made the John Day river a popular smallmouth bass fishery, early hopefuls are taking a few. Scented soft plastic baits fished very slowly right on the river bottom seems to be the key to tempting lethargic smallies. Expect to find water temps in the mid-40s until seasonal weather warms it up.

Northwest Trout - Trout have been stocked this week at Henry Hagg Lake, Huddleston Pond, St. Louis Pond, Trojan Pond, Alton Baker Pond, Cottage Grove Pond, Cottage Grove Reservoir, Creswell Pond, Detroit Reservoir and Dexter Reservoir in the Willamette Zone. Carter and Cleawox lakes on the North coast received hatchery trout this week.

The Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife has scheduled a series of opportunities through springtime for kids to learn about fishing. The next of these youth clinics will be this Saturday, April 8th at St. Louis Ponds near Gervais, then again on April 15th at Alton Baker Pond in Eugene. Trout will be stocked and 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 - Fishing: Growing numbers of **spring chinook salmon** in the lower Columbia River are sending a mixed message to anglers and fishery managers monitoring this year's run. On one hand, catch figures below the Interstate 5 Bridge have jumped since the end of March, rising from 2,100 fish to 3,100 fish in just two days. Anglers fishing the lower river have been averaging one chinook for every 5.6 rods - a fairly good start, especially compared to last year's catch rate of one fish per 17 rods during the same period.

But fish passage above Bonneville Dam is a different story. As of April 3, only 41 springers had cleared the dam, even fewer than last year at the same time. Fishery managers from Washington

and Oregon will meet Thursday, April 6 to discuss these trends and their implications for this year's run. "Spring chinook appear to be moving over Bonneville Dam later these last few years - and that's especially pronounced this year," said Wolf Dammers, a WDFW fish biologist. "Anglers should be alert to any changes that may result from this first 'checkpoint' on the fishery."

For information on any fishing rule changes, Dammers recommends anglers check the WDFW Fishing Hotline (360-902-2500), the department's Emergency Fishing Rule website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) or reports from the Columbia River Compact (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/crc/crcindex.htm>) before heading out.

Dammers said the best bet for anglers trolling for spring chinook is the mainstem Columbia near Cathlamet, where creel checks show 544 anglers caught 147 spring chinook from March 27 to April 2. Bank anglers have also been catching an increasing number of spring chinook in the lower Cowlitz River, and are still picking up some hatchery **winter steelhead** in the upper river.

Given the low dam counts, the spring chinook fishery above Bonneville Dam has largely been on hold. "Most folks are biding their time, waiting for the springers to arrive," Hymer said. A selective fishery for hatchery springers and steelhead opened March 16 on Wind River and Drano Lake, but few anglers have begun fishing those waters. The same is true for the White Salmon and Klickitat rivers, which opened under selective fishing rules April 1. Fishing on the Klickitat River is restricted to Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays, downstream of fish way number 5, with a limit of one hatchery salmon or steelhead per day.

Also slow is **sturgeon** fishing, which will switch to catch-and-release April 8 on the Columbia River and its tributaries from The Dalles Dam to John Day Dam. Fishery managers expect the annual harvest guideline of 100 legal-size fish to be taken by then.

Warmwater anglers, meanwhile, have been averaging one **walleye** per rod in The Dalles Pool and two-thirds of a fish in the Bonneville Pool, where they're also catching 2.5 bass apiece. Trout fishing has also been good at Kline Pond, which was recently planted with 3,348 rainbows weighing half a pound each. Ninety-three bank anglers reported catching 131 fish and releasing 72 others there in recent days. WDFW also planted Silver Lake near Castle Rock and Swofford Pond near Mossyrock with more than 3,300 fish - each - March 27.

So what's the likely hotspot when the lowland lakes season opens April 29?

"So many lakes in the southwest region are open year-around that the April opener doesn't have quite the same significance here as in other areas of the state," Hymer said. "Still, I know a lot of people are looking forward to fishing Mineral Lake. It kicks out some very nice fish."

North Central Washington – Anglers who stuck it out through the rain and cold of the April Fools' Day fishing season opener in the Columbia Basin caught lots of big, fat **rainbow trout**, reports WDFW district fish biologist Jeff Korth of Moses Lake. "But that weather literally put a damper on the length of the average fishing trip and overall catch per angler averages that we measured April 1," he said. "That was especially true at the waters on the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge, like the Hamptons and the Pillar-Widgeon chain. There were a lot of anglers out at those lakes, but they didn't stay long."

Korth says boat anglers, including those in float tubes, trolling hardware or flies tended to do much better than the boat or shore anglers using bait. Anglers at Upper Hampton Lake averaged almost three over-15-inch yearling rainbow trout each. Those at Lower Hampton averaged two 15-inchers each. Widgeon Lake anglers averaged a little less than three 10-inch-plus yearling rainbows each, with some 15-inchers checked. Those at Pillar averaged 1-1/2 near-14-inch rainbows each. Few fish were checked at the other eight lakes in the Pillar-Widgeon chain, but those that were averaged

about 13 inches.

Opening day weather was better up at Dry Falls Lake, Korth says, but fewer anglers were checked there; those that were averaged a little over two fish each, mostly 14-inch rainbows with a few 18-inch rainbow and **brown trout**. "I expect catch rates to be much better in these lakes with more favorable weather conditions," Korth said.

Meanwhile, WDFW fish hatchery crews are busy this month stocking waters that open April 29 with more catchable-size trout, including sterile **triploid rainbows**. The triploids average one-and-a-half pounds when they go into the lakes, and since they don't reproduce, they quickly eat their way to trophy size if not harvested in the first year. Wapato Lake in Chelan County and Conconully Lake and Reservoir in Okanogan County are among the waters receiving triploids in the next weeks. Stay tuned to the next edition of the Weekender Report for more information on the north central region's fishing hot spots for the biggest season opener of the year.

South Central Washington - The annual **smallmouth** bass spawning run into the Yakima River has begun, reports WDFW fish biologist Jim Cummins, and that means the start of some great fishing. "Tagging studies several years ago confirmed that adult smallmouth bass enter the Yakima River in early spring and stay in the Yakima until late June, early July, when they migrate back into the Columbia Rive," he said, noting that the fish run about one-and-a-half to four pounds each. "Fishing for them is generally excellent in April and May." He recommends quarter-ounce tube jigs or 'gitzits' in a smoke with red flake color, bounced on the bottom of the river in rocky areas with deep slow water that is close to fast water like an eddy. "Or, when the bass are most active and in highest concentrations, surface lures like a jointed Rapala will also catch them," Cummins said.

Starting May 1, smallmouth bass regulations on the Yakima will become more liberal. The current rule is that from the mouth of the Yakima at Highway 240 Bridge to Granger Highway 223 Bridge, there is no daily limit, no minimum size, and only bass less than 12 inches or greater than 17 inches may be retained, with no more than one over 17 inches. On May 1 the rule changes to no daily limit, no minimum size, and only three bass over 15 inches may be retained. This change standardizes the rule for bass over 15 inches with the Columbia River rules. But more importantly, the new rule should increase harvest on the extremely dense smallmouth bass population by allowing more smaller fish to be kept. "We want more bass harvested, because predation by bass on rearing and out-migrating juvenile fall chinook salmon is a major contributor to the decline of fall chinook," Cummins said.

Fishing for Yakima River **catfish** usually starts a little later in mid-April, Cummins noted. "Chicken liver or fresh-cut bait sucker fished on the bottom in the deeper areas on the outside bends of the river should catch catfish" in the lower 20 miles of the Yakima, he said. "Fishing for catfish is usually best when the river is rising and getting muddy. It can remain pretty good through July. Catfish from six to ten pounds are relatively common, while some fish over 20 pounds are also caught."

Cummins noted that eating lots of catfish may be a health risk since Yakima River bottomfish have been found to contain DDT levels that exceed federal standards. The Washington Department of Health advises no more than one meal per week of Yakima River bottomfish. For more information see the advisory on page 32 of the 2005-06 fishing rules pamphlet at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>.

WDFW District Fish Biologist Eric Anderson reports completion of another round of **rainbow trout** plants in many of the region's year-round open lakes and ponds. In Kittitas County, Easton, McCabe, and Naneum ponds received catchable-size rainbows. In Yakima County, waters receiving trout include the I-82 Ponds 4 and 6, Mud and Rotary lakes, and Sarge Hubbard Park, Tims, and Yakima Sportsmen's ponds. Later this month sterile triploid one-and-a-half-pound rainbows will be stocked

in several waters across the region. Stay tuned to the next edition of the Weekender Report for more information on the southcentral region's trout fishing hot spots as the season heats up.

Puget Sound – Fishing: The recreational halibut season starts April 9 in marine areas 6-11 and 13 in Puget Sound, giving anglers a chance to catch some big flatfish in inside waters. The season, which is starting earlier than in years past, runs on a Thursday-through-Monday schedule through June 18. "This fishery tends to start out strong," said Greg Bargmann, WDFW marine fish manager. "Fishing should be good for the opener, but a lot depends on the weather."

Meanwhile, **blackmouth** fishing in the region is winding down. Marine Area 9 (Admiralty Inlet) closes for blackmouth April 15, while marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) and 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) close at the end of April. "What has been a pretty good blackmouth season is now in the home stretch," said Steve Thiesfeld, Puget Sound recreational salmon manager for WDFW. "Anglers looking to hook a blackmouth better get out on the water and take advantage of the remaining weeks of the season."

Catch counts in the region have been low recently. Only four chinook were checked in by 33 anglers April 1 in Everett. The following day, 46 anglers hauled in just one chinook. The best angler-to-fish ratio was in Bellingham, where nine anglers accounted for five chinook on March 31.

Anglers fishing Marine Area 9 have a daily limit of one salmon, while fishers in marine areas 8-1 and 8-2 have a daily limit of two salmon. All wild chinook must be released. Unlike hatchery fish, wild chinook have an intact adipose fin. Blackmouth anglers should avoid Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands), which closed at the end of March.

Steelhead catch-and-release fisheries continue through the end of the month on the Skagit and Sauk rivers. Recent reports from both rivers indicate the Skagit has picked up a little, while the Sauk has slowed a bit. 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.

Olympic Peninsula – Fishing: For thousands of anglers, the lowland lakes trout opener set for April 29 marks the beginning of this year's "fishing season." Others, though, are already on the water catching lingcod, salmon, steelhead and other fish already in season.

Most charter boats fishing **lingcod** out of Westport are generally returning with two-fish limits for everyone on board, said Greg Bargmann, WDFW marine fish manager. Most lings are running 6-8 pounds. "The weather's been a bit rough for the smaller, private boats, but the charter boats are doing well," he said. Lingcod fishing opened March 18 in coastal waters south of Cape Alava (marine areas 1, 2 and 3) and will open April 16 in Marine Area 4 (Neah Bay).

Just a few miles down the Strait of Juan de Fuca, the 2006 Sekiu Spring Salmon Derby will run April 8-9, with weigh-in at Olson's Resort. First prize for the biggest **salmon** is \$1,000. For more information, call the Sekiu Chamber of Commerce at 877-812-4933.

Then again, the recreational **halibut** season starts April 9 in marine areas 6-11 and 13 in Puget Sound, giving anglers a chance to catch some big flatfish in inside waters. The season, which is starting earlier than in years past, runs on a Thursday-through-Monday schedule through June 18. "This fishery tends to start out strong," Bargmann said. "Fishing should be good for the opener, but a lot depends on the weather."

Meanwhile, **steelhead** anglers have been averaging more than a fish per rod fishing rivers on the north coast of the Olympic Peninsula. On the upper Hoh River, 49 anglers reported catching - and releasing - 60 wild steelhead during the last five days of March. On the Sol Duc River, 27 anglers reported catching 42 steelhead - all but one of them wild - and releasing all but four of them.

"Mostly, it's a catch-and-release fishery at this point in the season," said Thom Johnson, a WDFW fish biologist. "Most anglers have their annual limit of one wild steelhead - if they plan to keep one - and are now just fishing for the joy of fishing."

Johnson noted that the Sol Duc, Bogachiel, Quillayute and Calawah rivers will remain open to steelhead fishing through April 30. The Hoh River, from the mouth upstream to the Olympic National Park boundary, closed to all fishing April 1, as did the South Fork Hoh. The entire river is scheduled to close for steelhead fishing April 15.

Steelhead aren't the only salmonids moving up the Sol Duc River right now. Twenty **spring chinook salmon** had arrived at the Sol Duc Hatchery as of April 4, and anglers have reportedly caught at least that many en route, said Brian Russell, hatchery manager.

"The first springers are arriving earlier than usual this year," Russell said. "That could be a sign of a strong run, or it could mean they're just starting early." Anglers fishing the Sol Duc River are required to release any wild, unmarked chinook they intercept, and are advised to check the *Fishing in Washington* pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) for other rules affecting the fishery.

Rather dig **razor clams**? WDFW is 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 scheduled to open April 28-30 on morning tides, followed by a one-day dig May 1 at Twin Harbors and Mocrocks. All digging on those beaches must be completed by noon.

Whether Kalaloch Beach will also open to digging is in question, because the clam harvest on that beach has been unusually low during recent digs, said Dan Ayres, WDFW coastal shellfish manager. An announcement about digging on that beach will be issued once biologists have completed an investigation, he said.

For best results, Ayres recommends that clam enthusiasts start digging at least one hour before low tide. Low morning tides during the planned dig are as follows:

Friday, April 28 - 7:36 a.m., -1.8 ft. (Kalaloch uncertain)
Saturday, April 29 - 8:21 a.m., -1.8 ft. (Kalaloch uncertain)
Sunday, April 30 - 9:06 a.m., -1.6 (Kalaloch uncertain)
Monday, May 1 - 9:50 a.m., -1.1 (Twin Harbors and Mocrocks only)

In other shellfish news, WDFW has announced seasons for this year's **shrimp** and **crab** fisheries in Puget Sound. The spot shrimp fishery will start May 6 in most areas of the Sound, while the Dungeness crab fishery is set to open in three marine areas June 18. For details on the shrimp season see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/do/newreal/release.php?id=apr0406a> on the WDFW website; for crabbing information see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/do/newreal/release.php?id=mar3106a>.

But let's not forget that lowland lakes trout opener. In preparation for April 29, WDFW hatchery crews are currently stocking thousands of legal-size, jumbo and broodstock trout in lakes throughout the region.

Want a shot at a 1.5-pound triploid? Aberdeen Lake in Grays Harbor County is getting 200 of them -

along with 20,000 smaller fish in the weeks ahead. Rather catch cutthroat? There will be 300 of them in Mason County's Cady Lake by the end of April. For a complete trout-stocking schedule for the region, see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/regions/reg6/index.htm> on the WDFW website.

Eastern Washington - Columbia County's Tucannon River impoundments that opened to fishing last month continue to be stocked with WDFW hatchery **rainbow trout**, and as spring weather moderates, angler effort and success rates are increasing. The Wooten Wildlife Area campgrounds that are open near the fishing lakes have piles of small logs available for campers to use on site - but not to haul out for personal or commercial use. WDFW area assistant manager Shana Winegeart said that until the post-wildfire salvage logging operation is completed this summer, all downed logs throughout the Wooten belong to the company that purchased the timber sale. "Some logs are being left on the ground as erosion control and to rebuild the mulch layer that was burned in the fire," Winegeart said. "It's critical to leave them there."

Other early-opening in the central district of the region are also producing good catches of rainbow trout and water levels are up considerably with recent snowmelt and rain. Anglers at Lincoln County's Coffeepot Lake need to remember to comply with selective gear rules and a two-trout daily catch limit. Spokane County's Amber Lake, which also offers **cutthroat trout**, is catch-and-release until April 29, and then it's still under selective gear rules.

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

Meanwhile, WDFW fish hatchery crews are busy stocking waters that open on April 29 with more catchable-size trout, including sterile triploid rainbows. The triploids average one-and-a-half pounds when they go into the lakes, and since they don't reproduce, they quickly eat their way to trophy size if not harvested in the first year. Fishtrap Lake in Lincoln County, Diamond Lake in Pend Oreille County, and Deer and Loon lakes in Stevens County are among the waters receiving triploids in the next weeks. Stay tuned to the next edition of the Weekender Report for more information on the eastern region's fishing hot spots for the biggest season opener of the year.

Reader Email

Regular contributor **Kap't Ken Johnson** writes this week, "OK, so fish are being caught in the Willamette but it is Onesies Twosies from the entrance at the Columbia River all the way up to the Oregon City Falls. The official ODFW Adult Chinook counts through the falls in Oregon City stands at 28 fish...That's TWENTY EIGHT Adult Chinook Salmon have crossed the falls at Oregon City since the started counting...At his exact time, last year the count stood at 351 Adult Chinook Salmon across the falls. That is a significant difference so those who have hooked into Nooker can consider themselves pretty lucky. I fished all day Sunday in the Portland Harbor and had a wonderful time trolling all day long. Fishing was great...Catching Sucked! Don't give up, though. There is not a Dogwood in bloom ANYWHERE. In another 3-4 weeks, everything should pick up just dandy. In the meantime, fish are still being caught and it seems mostly along the banks of the Willamette near the Clack. Hey, enjoy the weather at least!!!"

Going fishing? Got an opinion on something? Outraged by the ocean salmon situation, seal populations or ocean salmon fishing? Shoot us an Email!

Write to the TGF staff:

Bob Rees: brees@pacifier.com

Doug Rees: drees@TheGuidesForecast.com

Michael Teague: SailCat@SailCat.com

Random Links

Tom Waits Fishes with John:

<http://www.youtube.com/w/Tom-Waits-in-Fishing-With-John?v=HhIonKUXqfs&search=tom%20waits>

More on the ocean salmon restrictions from the Oregonian:

<http://www.oregonlive.com/news/oregonian/index.ssf?/base/news/114387810838500.xml&coll=7>

Weekly Quote – "One of the great charms, however, of angling in all its branches is that it gives endless opportunity for difference of opinion and discussion among the followers of the various schools. Every good fisherman and every sportsman will urge his own particular view with all his might, but at the same time will be prepared to listen to the arguments of those holding opinions quite opposed to his own, and will ever be ready to respect these opinions and credit his opponent in argument with being convinced that his (the opponent's) view of the question is the right one." - Frederic Halford in [An Angler's Autobiography](#)

GOOD LUCK!