

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **May 12th, – May 18th, 2006**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- Salmon have begun to stream over Bonneville Dam easing biologists worries of a failed spring run. A re-calculation of the run has resulted in a modified run size range of a minimum of 65,000 to a maximum of the preseason forecast of 88,400. These numbers are likely to be modified again this season.

With high numbers of salmon passing Bonneville Dam, Wind River and Drano Lake fisheries are producing excellent results right now. Plugs usually fish the best here but herring has produced numerous salmon this week. With closed seasons downriver, this fishery will likely remain productive through the weekend.

The estuary will re-open to sturgeon retention beginning May 13th. The best success will likely be out of the Tongue Point area using shrimp for bait. Catches were decent before the May 1st closure but only a few places produced good catches.

The gorge sturgeon fishery is excellent for keepers and smelt remains a top bait. The new deadline at Marker 85 doesn't seem to be a factor for success and oversized fish should be a good option for anglers using fresh Willamette caught shad for bait.

Willamette Falls fish passage remains on track to achieve the predicted run size of 46,000 fish. To date, over 10,000 salmon have crossed making upriver fisheries viable options- especially the mainstem Willamette near Salem reports **pro guide Jim Stevenson (503-881-5289)**. The water remains cool enough to curtail algae growth.

Herring trollers scored 2 good days of fishing in the Multnomah Channel on Monday and Tuesday. Coon Island and Fred's Marina posted good catches with the bulk of the catch being the smaller 4-year old salmon. This is typical for this time of year but look for action to pick up in the Oregon City area later this week.

Motivated sturgeon anglers were taking shad in the Multnomah Channel and Oregon City as well. Fresh shad can't be beat for oversized sturgeon in the gorge and the Willamette is the only waterway open at this time. A few keeper sturgeon are still being taken from the lower Willamette.

Algae growth which looked as if it might be an early problem in the Clackamas has cleared up. Fishing for summer steelhead has been spotty and spring Chinook catch rates are low states **pro guide Kent Anderson (503-550-6303)**.

With winter steelhead fishing on the wane on the Sandy River and few summer steelhead to be found, anglers are targeting springers with very limited success. Anglers fishing higher in the system have connected with some salmon and summer steelhead however.

The North Santiam is at decent boating and fishing level. Summer steelhead numbers continue to gradually improve. On the South Santiam, 485 summer steelhead have been recorded so far this season at Foster Dam and fish are being recycled downstream every few days. There has been no report of springer action here.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife announced a kid's fishing event from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, May 13 at the Sunnyside Park Pond near Sweet Home. 800 trout have been stocked in the

pond for the event as part of the Youth Angling Enhancement Program.

Trout will be planted this week in Benson Lake, Hartman Pond, Henry Hagg Lake, West Salish Pond, Alton Baker Pond, Clear Lake, Detroit Reservoir, Dexter Reservoir, East Freeway Lake, E. E. Wilson Pond, Foster Reservoir, Green Peter Reservoir, Junction City Pond, Leaburg Lake, upper and lower McKenzie River, Roaring River Park Pond, Salmon Creek, Walling Pond and Walter Wirth Lake.

Northwest – The Chinook have arrived in Tillamook. The holdover tide series beginning late last week produced good catches of spring Chinook along the inside of the north jetty for herring trollers. The last half of outgoing produced the best but the tides are shifting to morning minus tides making upper bay spinner trolling the better option this week. Fish have been running smaller than usual but it seems the lack of a high ocean harvest has benefited estuary fishers.

The all-depth halibut fishery opened today and the port of Garibaldi will be a busy place. Seas will be safe to fish in larger vessels but a significant swell and small wind chop is in the ocean forecast. Halibut chasers may opt to drop crab pots in the ocean as Tillamook and Netarts Bays are poor choices for recreational crabbers. Prepare for bar restrictions by bringing salmon gear for Tillamook Bay.

Keeper sturgeon were still coming out of Tillamook Bay last week and tides will be conducive to good action in the morning this week. Also occasionally in the catch were starry flounder and surfperch.

Area rivers remain low although the Trask did produce light catches of spring Chinook late last week. Tidewater remains the best option however as flows will remain low. The Nestucca is also responsible for a few springers and summer steelhead reports **pro guide Jesse Zalonis (503-392-5808)**.

Razor clam diggers will have excellent early morning tides on Clatsop Beaches this weekend. ODF&W announced the additional opening of Oregon Beaches south to the mouth of the Siuslaw River near Florence beginning today.

Trout stocking will resume the week of May 15th.

Southwest - Action for sturgeon shows no sign of slowing on the lower Umpqua. Morning minus tides this weekend will create some favorable conditions for sturgeon anglers below Reedsport. Spring Chinook fishing in the mainstem is fair. Charter boats are returning before noon with limits of large ling cod. Recreational offshore salmon fishing has been fair to good when conditions allow for safe bar crossings. Chinook have been averaging in the high teens.

Surf casters hitting the surf are scoring good catches of redbait surf perch. Anglers may keep 15 of these fish per person each day.

Rogue River anglers are experiencing fair spring Chinook fishing with the water at a good level and clarity. Hopes are high that this run is late and will still take off soon.

Bottom fishing out of Brookings was excellent over the weekend, producing a mixed bag of black rockfish, cabezon, greenling and ling cod. Offshore crabbing is good for large Dungeness in 70 to 80 feet of water although limits are rare.

Beginning May 13 on Diamond Lake, anglers can take 20 trout per day with two daily limits in possession and no size restrictions. Fishing at will close from September 5th to October 31st to allow the tui chub to be eliminated with rotenone.

No trout are scheduled to be planted this week.

Eastern - The lower Deschutes River remains high from snowmelt but flows are less than 5,500 c.f.s. Trout fishing is good along the recently-opened stretch bordering Warm Springs Reservation.

Antelope Flat Reservoir, Clear Lake, Cottonwood Pit, Fall River, MF Pond, Rock Creek Reservoir, Shevlin Pond, Taylor Lake and Walton Lake will be stocked with rainbow trout this week.

Green Peter and Odell are slow to fair for kokanee. Wickiup is producing large kokes for both trollers and jig fishers.

Southwest Washington- The Cowlitz River remains poor for salmon and steelhead.

Catches on the North Fork of the Lewis River and Kalama River have improved with about 1 Chinook reported for every 2 boat anglers. Bank anglers are also taking fish in both systems.

Drano Lake bank anglers are averaging about 1 Chinook for every 4 rods while boat anglers are taking one Chinook for every 2 rods.

Soapbox Update – Our right to fish is under attack. Our salmon returns have drastically diminished because our dams are killing between 60%-90% of these salmon. And fishermen are unjustly taking the blame.

We need concerned river community citizens to speak out for our businesses and families. Please sign the petition to our members of Congress and governors urging them to implement real salmon solutions: <http://www.salmonsolutions.org/>

From Ilwaco, WA to Hood River, OR – this battle is about our communities, economies and livelihoods – no one is spared. The threat becomes more real everyday. This spring run is on course to be the worst ever – a recent count of chinook at the Bonneville Dam was 2,300 compared to an average of more than 80,000 at the same time over the past decade. We need to pressure our leaders to stop adopting short-term fixes that threaten our jobs and way of life and instead develop sustainable solutions for salmon recovery including:

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

We have the solutions, now we need the voices. Sign the petition to your representative and governor TODAY. <http://www.salmonsolutions.org/>

Please remember to spread the word to family, friends and colleagues – everyone you can think of in your area – urging them to sign the petition and stand up for our communities.

Columbia River Fishing Report – With salmon seasons still closed until proper run size updates can be completed, sturgeon remains on the table and anglers are having a hey-day with them! Action has been fast and the quality of keepers has been high in the gorge where anglers were averaging over 2 keepers/boat on the weekend check. **Pro guide Bill Kremers (541-754-6411)** reports, "I sturgeon fished in the Gorge last week on Friday. The fishing was fairly good as we landed two keepers for three anglers. We did have to move a couple of times to find a good spot. The Columbia is running very high so anglers need to bring lots of weight. Since shad fishing is still closed and smelt are in short supply we used a variety of bait from old shad and smelt to clam necks and squid. Plus we also used cotton balls filled with Pro-Cure krill and sand shrimp scents."

Some guides were motivated enough to try for shad in the Willamette to use in the Columbia River

oversized fishery. Oversized fish (or what remains of them after the sea-lion carnage this winter) should be staging in the gorge in preparation for the spring spawn. Good flows should allow for a good seeding of sturgeon eggs this spring.

Keeper fishing opens back up to estuary fishers on Saturday, May 13th. Although fish will be present, if history repeats itself, the best action will be in limited areas upstream of Tongue Point. The shallow areas produced some of the best results prior to the closure (May 1st) using sand shrimp. Shrimp will likely be the bait of choice in the early season as well.

Seasons are scheduled to change on May 16th but anglers will want to check local regulations as there may be a possibility that the I-5 to Bonneville fishery may not open if enough salmon don't cross Bonneville Dam in time. I think this scenario is not likely however. New regulations read:

TONGUE POINT UPSTREAM TO THE I-5 BRIDGE: This section of the Columbia River is closed to all salmon, steelhead, and shad angling. This section of the river is scheduled to reopen to angling for shad, adipose fin-clipped summer steelhead, and adipose fin-clipped chinook jacks ($\leq 24"$) on May 16, 2006.

I-5 BRIDGE UPSTREAM TO BONNEVILLE DAM: This section of the Columbia River is closed to all salmon, steelhead, and shad angling. This section of the river is scheduled to reopen to angling for shad on May 16, 2006.

Upstream of Bonneville, the Wind River and Drano Lakes fisheries are well underway. Herring trollers are scoring excellent results with the improved salmon passage and action should continue good in this area. It appears the run has peaked although it isn't uncommon for Bonneville to witness a second peak just after the first one. Regardless, Wind River/Drano Lake anglers will keep a watchful eye on passage to determine their best chances at a limit of these small but quality fish. Fish passage can be viewed here: <http://www.fpc.org/>

Anxious plunkers may find some success with the minus tide series through the 18th. Popular beaches to try for summer steelhead include Jones Beach near Westport and Sauvie's Island Beaches (Columbia side). Small, hot colored spin-n-glos work well and the stronger the current, the closer you will want to fish near the bank. High flows coupled with strong outgoing tides will put fish on the beach!

The Guide's Forecast – Sturgeon will continue to be the highlight in the gorge area. Most anglers are likely familiar with the new Marker 85 deadline but that doesn't seem to be slowing success. Although smelt seems to be in short supply, it is the better bait for the gorge fishery. When you are running low, cut your smelt in half and tip them with shrimp or squid. Anglers are still limited to the Thursday – Saturday retention season but the catch and release options remain excellent when the competition decreases for the remainder of the week. Those wishing to target oversized fish should bring fresh shad with them to use as bait. Heavy flows will require heavy lead.

Estuary anglers will have a full 7 day/week season but fishing will likely not be wide open. Ocean fresh sturgeon will be available and anglers should target keepers in the shallower water (<8 feet) for best success. The islands above Tongue Point produce the best results in the early season.

Motivated plunkers will have some steelhead opportunity along lower Columbia River beaches beginning May 16th. Strong tides coupled with heavy Columbia flows should concentrate steelhead along beaches. The further upstream you choose to fish, the longer the outgoing tide will work to your benefit.

Razor clam diggers should take advantage of the minus tide series beginning on the 11th. The best clamming will be at the beginning of the series (11th – 15th) although surf forecasts may inhibit digging success. Razor clamming is now open to the mouth of the Siuslaw River just north of Florence.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – The Willamette is under maximum pressure from boaters in search of that elusive salmon. It's a plan to arrive in the pre-dawn hours to launch if only to secure a parking place in the lot.

Spinners are taking fish now although hardware usually isn't used until water temperatures are in the 60s. Trolled herring has been productive over that last few days for boaters in Multnomah Channel and downstream of the St. Johns Bridge. Fish are being taken at 25 to 30 foot depths. ODFW checkers over the weekend report 115 boats fishing St. Johns and Multnomah Channel took 65 Chinook.

There's such a mix of baits and techniques with nothing emerging as the "hot one." Wrapped Kwikfish, prawn spinners, even Alvins are accounting for a few. While all these fishing methods have been effective at times it's worth noting that with the clear water, daily counts at the Falls have off catch rates are very low this week.

Regarding the upper Willamette and Santiams, **pro guide Jesse Zalonis (503-392-5808)** writes, "The Santiam has both springers and summer runs, and with the recent falls counts on the rise, look for fishing to get good here in just a few days. These fish love shrimp, and wild colors. We typically steelhead fish until we see a bunch of chinooks, and then go to town. Look at the lower river on the main system, then follow them up. We have reports, that there are some fresh springers around Lebanon."

The Guide's Forecast – While the water temperature is OK at 58 degrees, visibility is over 5 1/2 feet. The clear water combined with increased pressure is a tough combination that can put off the bite. Persistence and versatility is the key. It may be tough to get a springer on the hook but it'll never happen if you're not on the water.

Algae is starting to be problematic for plunkers on the bank below the mouth of the Clackamas.

Anglers have caught a few shad at Oregon City and in Multnomah Channel, signaling the start of the run. In a couple of weeks it'll be possible to catch 100 or more in a day. There's no limit on these fish except perhaps the size of one's freezer. Shad are excellent bait for Dungeness crab and the best for oversized sturgeon.

Some folks like to eat shad and they're smoked and canned commercially in the Portland area. Shad are a member of the herring family and share similar table qualities. Consequently, pickling these bony fish is another option.

Chinook salmon are entering the Santiam River now. There have been catches at the confluence of the North and South Santiams as well as the lower stretch of the South. Be aware that the South Santiam is even higher than the North as water is being released to benefit the Willamette, but chinook are being taken daily. Early mornings have been most productive.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – The Sandy has been tough this week. Very few springers and fewer than usual summers is making for slow fishing days.

An occasional springer has been reported from the Clackamas but the odds of hooking one have been better in the lower Willamette. Catches of summer steelhead over last weekend were few.

Pro guide Kent Anderson (503-550-6303) reports, "Not much to report other than slow fishing on the Sandy and Clackamas.

I have not fished the Sandy the past week but have talked to a couple reliable sources and heard poor reports from both. I fished the Kings for Kids tourney last Friday. Hooked 2 fish, lost one (never saw it) and landed a 12 1/2 lb summer steelhead (31 1/2"). Both fish hit plugs. Lots of smolts right now, stealing shrimp as soon as it hits the water. Floated from Barton to Riverside. Water is in great shape, no crowds, but very few fish present (or at least willing to bite). Can't wait to get back to the Nushagak!!!!"

The Guide's Forecast – Small wonder the algae problem went away in the Clackamas. At less than 50 degrees, the water is too cold to sustain it. The spring chinook don't care for water that cold, either, and it'll take an increase in temperature to improve the catch rate. Fish from Barton to the mouth for the best shot at a springer.

The Sandy water temperature was just 49 degrees earlier this week which has slowed fishing here as well. If the warmer temperatures in the weather forecast come to pass, fishing in the Sandy will also heat up. Targeting summer steelhead this weekend will be the best bet. The springer taken this week near the mouth is encouraging - they're coming.

North Coast District Fishing Report – Springers are on the minds of many- particularly Tillamook Bay anglers. To prove the viability of the Tillamook fishery, the 5th annual Kings for Kids Tournament took place on Friday, May 5th. With 30 guides participating in the event, the top 3 guides all fished in the Tillamook area. Although numbers weren't great, the winning fish came from the inside stretch of the north jetty on the outgoing tide. Herring trolled on the bottom took all the fish in about 35 to 50 foot of water. Blue label herring seem to be a bit small this early in the season but they are working fine- likely due to the fact that these salmon are feeding on smaller baits at this time of year.

Upper bay anglers are taking a few fish as well, using both spinners and plugs. I fished in the upper bay today but only heard of 3 taken about 1 hour prior to low slack in front of the oyster house boat ramp. Fish are also present in the Trask tidewater area and spinners as well as a few bobber fishermen are taking fish. Plug trollers are also scoring an occasional springer in the tidewater sections.

Sturgeon are still a good option on Tillamook Bay and keepers have been coming from the middle bay and west channel. We took a 45 incher on 5/10 and lost another one we know was larger than that. Effort has dropped off for sturgeon and the fish are spread out. Shrimp is clearly the bait of choice.

Crabbing remains poor in the North Coast Estuaries but ocean crabbers are taking some nice keepers but limits are not common.

The ocean is forecasted to be a bit rough for comfortable bottomfishing and halibut anglers. The best day is supposed to be Thursday (weather-wise) and action should be good on the opening day for the all depth fishery. Squid is a top bait but we usually tip our baits with a herring or sardine too.

The Guide's Forecast – Salmon anglers should take advantage of the nice tide series this week on Tillamook Bay. Tides are ripe for spinner trollers in the upper reaches of Tillamook Bay although the NW wind is becoming all too common by mid or late morning. If winds kick up making trolling challenging, anglers have the option to go to the jaws and work herring on the incoming and high tides. The ocean fishery will likely not be a strong option as bar and ocean conditions will not be favorable for safe angling.

Tidewater bobber fishers should also have some good options on the Wilson and especially the Trask Rivers. Although smolts will still be present in these systems, eggs and shrimp should produce some decent results. Spinner and plug trollers will also have some decent opportunity- especially before low

slack hits. Area rivers remain too low for productive driftboating although **pro guide Jesse Zalonis (503-392-5808)** offers this report, "The Nestucca has some fresh summer steelhead available, and we have seen just a handful of springers. We are going to fish over the next few days and we will see what happens. We had a good little shot of rain, so certainly the fish moved. As for the summers, they tend to be quite aggressive when they are fresh, so use light gear and small baits. When you find one, you'll know it."

For halibut chasers, you may want to bring alternative gear in case the ocean is too rough or bar restrictions are in place. Sturgeon are a good option in the middle bay or west channel so long as you have sand shrimp for bait. The inside of the north jetty will also be a viable option if you are waiting for the tide to change out of Garibaldi.

Don't bother taking your crab pots if you can't fish them in the ocean.

Central & South Coast Reports – Offshore salmon fishing has yet to heat up unlike the bottom fishing which remains excellent. Unless there's an improvement in the weekend outlook, however, the ocean is unlikely to be friendly to boaters.

The best bet on the Umpqua remains sturgeon fishing below Reedsport. Expect to release oversized fish in an effort to catch a legal keeper. Striped bass fishing is fair and improving. Spring chinook angling on the mainstem has been slow.

Spring chinook fishing on the Rogue has shown little improvement over the last week. To further complicate matters, the area has been subject to high winds building in the course of the day. Anchovies fished on a spinner rig on the incoming tide has been most effective although bank anglers are taking a few every day. Fewer than 500 springers have crossed at Gold Ray Dam. The lower river holds the best promise for a hookup.

A permit will be required to float the Rogue River in the Graves Creek to Watson Creek stretch starting Monday, May 15th in accordance with the regulated use season. The cost is \$10 and permits may be obtained at the Smullin Visitor Center at Rand. Calling the center at 541-479-3735 to reserve a permit is advised.

The ice that has prevented fishing or even stocking at Diamond Lake has been breaking up over the last week. Planting will take place this week and the temporary 20-fish limit will go into effect for the summer season starting Saturday, May 15th. Lake of the Woods, a popular early destination for anglers targeting brown trout, also became fishable recently and is expected to offer fair to good fishing this weekend. Night fishing is legal at Lake of the Woods, an unusual exception to the regulations in Oregon.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Now that the lower Deschutes flows have moderated to 4,000 CFS (as of May 11th), the water is much more approachable. Fly anglers are reporting good to very good results using Stonefly and Prince nymphs. The Deschutes remains closed above Benham Falls. Fishing is only fair in the upper river below that point.

Catch rates at Fall River have dropped off sharply following a productive winter season. This one is usually a springtime winner.

While Big Lava Lake is open, the access road will remain closed until mid-May.

Northwest Trout - The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife announced more kid's fishing events on Saturday, May 13th. At Sunnyside Park Pond near Sweet Home. 800 trout have been stocked in the pond for the event which runs from 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. Commonwealth Lake in Cedar Hills received 2,000 trout for the event at that location which will run from 9A.M. until 2 P.M. These opportunities for kids are made possible by the Youth Angling Enhancement Program.

Another 2,500 trout will be stocked next week at West Salish Pond in Fairview for a youth fishing event May 20. The event will take place from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Pro Guide Bill Kremers (541-754-6411) fished Green Peter for kokanee and writes, "The fishing has slowed down some compared to last week. The reason being is that they have dropped the Green Peter about twenty feet in the last week to flush the smolts down the Willamette. Most the kokanee being caught are down between thirty and forty-five feet. Also the chinook they planted a couple of years ago are finally starting to grow up as several have been caught in the 14 to 18 inch range. The goal is to have chinook up to 30 inches in lake in a year or two. Anglers just have to learn the different between the chinook and the hatchery trout and let the salmon grow up."

Trout will be planted this week in Benson Lake, Hartman Pond, Henry Hagg Lake, West Salish Pond, Alton Baker Pond, Clear Lake, Detroit Reservoir, Dexter Reservoir, East Freeway Lake, E. E. Wilson Pond, Foster Reservoir, Green Peter Reservoir, Junction City Pond, Leaburg Lake, upper and lower McKenzie River, Roaring River Park Pond, Salmon Creek, Walling Pond and Walter Wirth Lake.

SW Washington - With fishing for **spring chinook salmon** closed for conservation purposes on the lower Columbia mainstem, more anglers are beginning to shift their attention to the tributaries. And their timing could be good, said Joe Hymer, WDFW fish biologist. During the second week of April, 109 adult springers returned to the Cowlitz Salmon Hatchery as catch rates continued to improve on portions of the Cowlitz, Lewis, and Kalama rivers. "We've had a good early showing at the hatchery and the numbers should keep ramping up in the weeks ahead," Hymer said.

Some of the best spring chinook fishing was reported in the lower Cowlitz below the mouth of the Toutle River. Heavy rain during the second weekend in April muddied those waters, but fishing should pick up once the rivers clear, Hymer said. Summer and late winter **steelhead** are also returning to the Cowlitz and Kalama rivers, providing the opportunity for a mixed bag.

Fishing for hatchery steelhead reopened April 16 in the East Fork of the Lewis River from the mouth to the upper boat ramp at Lewisville Park and in the Washougal River from the mouth to the Mount Norway Bridge at Vernon Road. Selective gear rules - no bait, single barbless hooks - are in effect through May 31.

Besides recovering spring chinook, Tacoma Power employees at the Cowlitz Salmon Hatchery also corralled 247 adult steelhead during the second week of April. They released 63 spring chinook and 112 steelhead into the upper Cowlitz River at the Day Use Park on Lake Scanewa. Seven steelhead were released into the Tilton River at Gust Backstrom Park in Morton.

Will the mainstem Columbia River reopen to spring chinook fishing below Bonneville this season? "It's possible, but it all depends on the dam counts," Hymer said. As of April 16, only 205 adult springers had been counted above the dam, compared to 851 last year - the previous record low for that date. "Everyone's just hoping that this is also the latest run on record and that the fish will start moving above the dam."

Hymer noted that fishing for hatchery chinook jacks and hatchery steelhead is still scheduled to reopen May 16 from the Rocky Point/Tongue Point line upstream to the Interstate 5 Bridge. **Shad** fishing from

Bonneville Dam downstream will also reopen May 16.

Given the low counts at Bonneville Dam, spring chinook fishing farther upriver has been understandably slow but should improve, depending on fish moving upstream of the dam. The upper end of Bonneville Pool to McNary Dam is scheduled to remain open for hatchery spring chinook and hatchery steelhead through the end of April.

Sturgeon fishing below Bonneville, however, has started to pick up - particularly in the Columbia Gorge - as river flows and temperature continues to increase, Hymer said. On the lower Columbia from the mouth to the Wauna powerlines, sturgeon anglers are reminded the fishery switches to catch-and-release only May 1-12 and then reopens May 13 with a minimum 45-inch size limit. Sturgeon fishing in The Dalles Pool switched to catch-and-release April 8 when anglers reached their 100-fish quota for that area, but there are still fish left to be caught in the Bonneville and John Day pools, Hymer said.

Anglers should be aware that sturgeon fishing will close May 1 in three spawning sanctuaries on the Columbia River designed to protect female sturgeon during the spawning period. The three sanctuaries, which will be off-limits to all bank and boat sturgeon fishing through July 31, are located:

- * Below Bonneville Dam, downriver approximately 5 miles to Navigation Marker 85 on the Washington side of the river.

- * Below John Day Dam, downriver 2.4 miles to the west end of the grain silo at Rufus, Ore.

- * Below McNary Dam, downriver 1.5 miles to the Highway 82 Bridge.

Bass also like the warmer water, and boat anglers have been catching three per rod - and one **walleye** for every two rods - in the John Day Pool. Boat anglers have also been catching some walleye in the Bonneville Pool.

Looking forward to the lowland lakes opener April 29? Those eager to start fishing for **trout** should know that hatchery crews have recently planted several year-round waters that are open right now. Mayfield Lake received 5,975 catchable-size rainbows April 7 and Swofford Pond got 4,025. Lacamas Lake in Camas was planted with 4,500 rainbows and 14,162 brown trout, averaging over half a pound apiece.

North Central Washington – The April 29 fishing season opener should provide good **trout** catches at several northcentral region waters, particularly in Okanogan County. Bob Jateff, WDFW district fish biologist of Omak, picks seven lakes to provide top fishing opportunities. Blue Lake on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area, a selective gear rule water with a one-fish daily catch limit, has rainbows to 18 inches and browns to 16 inches. Fish Lake, also on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area, has rainbows 11-12 inches with carryovers up to 15 inches. Leader Lake in the Omak/Okanogan area has rainbows up to 13 inches. Big Twin Lake in the Winthrop area, a selective gear rule water with a one-fish daily catch limit, has rainbows up to 18 inches. Conconully Lakes in the Omak/Okanogan area have rainbows 11-12 inches, with carryovers up to 15 inches, and some one-and-a-half-pound triploid rainbows. Pearygin Lake in the Winthrop area has rainbows up to 11 inches. Aeneas Lake in the Tonasket area, a fly-fishing-only water with a one-fish daily limit, has both rainbows and browns up to 18 inches. Also expected to produce well is Douglas County's Jameson Lake near Mansfield. Jateff reports that Jameson has 11- to 12-inch rainbows and with carryovers up to 15 inches.

WDFW Fish Biologist Jeff Korth of Moses Lake says the major trout waters in the Columbia Basin that open on April 29 and traditionally provide good opportunities, "are all in the late stages of being over-run with spiny-rayed fishes like perch, sunfish, bass, bullheads, and sculpins." Blue, Park, and Warden lakes have all had poor survival of fingerling trout, he noted. "However, the growth of those fingerlings

that do survive will be very good and the resulting yearling trout should range from 12 to 15 inches on opening day," he said. Korth said all three are also receiving additional stockings of hatchery-reared yearling trout measuring 9-10 inches this spring. Most of the smaller lakes that open April 29 are in fairly good shape and should have good fisheries this spring, he added. "Many of the March 1 and April 1 opening waters are still fishing well, especially the Hampton Lakes and the selective gear rule waters with one-fish daily catch limits, like Dusty, Lenore, Lenice, Nunnally, and Dry Falls," he said. Korth reminds anglers that starting May 1, selective gear rule waters will include a requirement to use knotless nets; see the new fishing rules pamphlet for all the details.

South Central Washington - Almost all southcentral region **trout** lakes are open year-round, but additional catchable-size rainbows and triploids are stocked in them now, along with the April 29-opening waters, so it's a good time to fish them. Anglers can check WDFW's catchable trout weekly updates for the most recent plants at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/weekly/>. WDFW Fish Biologist Jim Cummins notes that higher elevation lakes, such as Dog, Clear, and Leech in Yakima County, and Lost Lake in Kittitas County, are not expected to be accessible for fishing and planting until May due to heavy mountain snowpack, unless the weather turns unseasonably warm. Those lakes will be planted with triploids when the roads are free of snow. Dog and Clear Lakes will also be planted with catchable rainbow trout.

Cummins also notes that Lower Yakima River **smallmouth bass** fishing will peak in May. "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 or early July when they migrate back into the Columbia River," he explained. "Fishing for them is generally excellent in April and May. 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, should catch good-sized, hard-fighting smallmouths. The fish run about one-and-a-half to four pounds each. When the bass are most active and in highest concentrations, surface lures like a jointed Rapala will also catch them." Cummins noted that smallmouth bass regulations on the Yakima will change on May 1. Currently, 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. Beginning 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," explained Cummins, "because predation by bass on rearing and out-migrating juvenile fall chinook salmon is a major contributor to the decline of fall chinook."

As water temperatures increase, Columbia River bass fishing is heating up, too, Cummins notes. The Yakima River Delta, Finley Area, Patterson and Plymouth are good areas to fish for both **largemouth** and smallmouth bass, although smallmouth are most often caught, he said. Good bass catches have already been reported for both the Yakima and Columbia Rivers. **Channel catfish** fishing also peaks in the Yakima in May and June. Most rivers and streams remain closed until June 1 to protect spawning steelhead and downstream migrating salmon and steelhead smolts.

Paul Hoffarth, WDFW fish biologist, reports **sturgeon** fishing in the John Day Pool of the Columbia River (from John Day Dam to McNary Dam), is improving, with several legal-size sturgeon caught in April. Hoffarth reminds sturgeon anglers that Washington and Oregon fishery managers approved new spawning sanctuaries below McNary and John Day dams to protect large, breeding sturgeon. Sturgeon fishing will be prohibited from May 1 through July 31 from McNary Dam downstream to the Highway 82 Bridge and from John Day Dam to the west end of the grain silo at Rufus, Ore.

Triploid rainbow trout are being planted in Columbia Park Pond, a juvenile and disability-licensed only

lake in Benton County, and in Railroad Pond, a selective gear fishery, in Franklin County. The Tri-Cities "Fishing Kids" event, scheduled for Saturday, May 6, at Columbia Park Pond in Kennewick, provides beginning fishing instruction for children ages 5 through 14 years of age. For \$5 each, kids receive a t-shirt, Zebco rod and reel, and other fishing goodies. Registration forms are available from the Kennewick Recreation Department online at <http://www.ci.kennewick.wa.us>.

Puget Sound – Anglers can take advantage of **trout**-stocked lakes beginning April 29, when the lowland lake fishing season kicks off. Thousands of legal-sized trout have been stocked in many of the region's lakes. Complete information on stocking schedules for rainbow, cutthroat and triploid trout is available on the WDFW website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/index.htm>).

Anglers should focus on fishing higher in the water column for the first few weeks of the season because the stocked trout tend to remain in the top 3 to 5 feet of water after being placed in a lake, said Jon Anderson, WDFW resident trout manager. "After a few weeks, drop the hook deeper where the fish are feeding," he said.

Out on the saltwater, the **blackmouth** catch has slowed and the season is wrapping up. Only the selective fishery in marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) and 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) remains open, and those two areas close April 30. By most accounts, the pilot selective fishery, which opened last October, was a success, said Steve Thiesfeld, Puget Sound recreational salmon manager for WDFW. Preliminary numbers through March 31 indicate that anglers made more than 10,000 trips, and kept about 950 hatchery chinook, which can be identified by their missing adipose fin. The mark rate for hatchery chinook was about 59 percent.

"Creel surveys indicate the fishery had a low impact on wild fish," Thiesfeld said. "Angler compliance with the rules was very good and our sampling crew did an excellent job monitoring the fishery. These elements are absolutely essential for a successful selective fishery."

As the fishery's closure nears, catch counts have tapered off. Only four chinook were checked in by 55 anglers over a five-day period at the boat ramp in Everett. No other blackmouth were counted at ramps throughout the region during recent catch counts.

During the selective fishery, anglers have a daily limit of two salmon, but wild chinook must be released. Unlike hatchery fish, wild chinook have an intact adipose fin. The 8-1 and 8-2 selective fishery is scheduled to begin again in October and run through April 2007, said Thiesfeld.

Halibut fishing opened April 9 throughout the region. Mutiny and Admiralty bays, as well as Eastern and Partridge banks are the best bets for flatfish early in the season. Halibut fishing is open five days a week, Thursday through Monday, with a daily limit of one halibut and no minimum size limit.

Anglers also can drop a line for other bottomfish, such as **lingcod**, **rockfish** and **cabezon**, beginning May 1. During the hook-and-line season (May 1-June 15), there's a one-fish daily limit for lings, which must be a minimum size of 26 inches and a maximum size of 40 inches. For rockfish, there is no minimum size and fishers must keep the first legal rockfish caught. Anglers fishing for cabezon have a daily limit of two fish, and there is no minimum size limit. Before heading out to try and hook these fish, anglers should check the *2005/2006 Fishing in Washington* pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

Or, instead of dropping a line, drop a pot. **Shrimp** season opens throughout the region May 6. Details are available on WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/crabreg/>.

In the rivers, catch-and-release fishing for **steelhead** is winding down. Anglers are still hooking some fish in both the Skagit and Sauk rivers, which close to steelhead fishing April 30. Anglers planning to get

out on the river for the final days for steelhead fishing 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 – While hatchery workers were racing to plant millions of trout in time for the lowland lakes opener, anglers have been reeling in halibut, lingcod and spring chinook salmon from waters throughout the region. Razor clam diggers, meanwhile, have been waiting for final word on the season's last razor clam dig, tentatively scheduled to begin April 28.

Eager to catch some rainbow **trout**? Anglers can choose from among hundreds of lakes throughout the state opening to trout fishing April 29. Most are stocked with 8-to-12-inch rainbows, but many also are planted with cutthroat, brown trout and triploid trout weighing up to 1.5 pounds apiece.

"Past experience is the best guide to choosing a lake to fish," said Ron Warren, regional WDFW fish manager. "Conditions usually don't change that much and we try to keep our stocking plans fairly consistent from year to year."

For those new to lake fishing - or just want to refresh their memory - Warren recommends consulting two reports, both available on the WDFW website. The first, Washington Fishing Prospects (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/prospects/index.htm>), describes lakes throughout the state and the kind of fish that can be caught there. The second, 2006 Catchable Trout Plants (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/regions/reg6/index.htm>), outlines when and where WDFW is planting more than 21 million trout this year.

Young people, age 14 and younger, have an opportunity to get their lines in the water before the general opener at the **Lacey Family Fish-In**, scheduled April 23 at Long's Pond. The event is free, but kids who pay \$5 get to keep a new rod and reel and a T-shirt. Registration is required; call 360-491-0857. The pond, open only to juvenile anglers, will be closed to all fishing until the day of the event.

Meanwhile, **halibut anglers** have been pulling in dozens of big flatfish since the season began April 9 in all areas of Puget Sound except Hood Canal. Most of the fishing effort has focused around the waters off Port Angeles, where creel checks indicate a catch rate of about one fish for every 5.5 rods. How does that compare to 2005, when the fishery got under way five days later?

"So far, the catch rates are about the same as last year," said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW Puget Sound fisheries manager. "Anglers fishing in Marine Area 6 on opening day had a bit better catch rate and it appears more people turned out than last year, so it's likely that more halibut have been caught."

Marine areas 6-11 and 13 in Puget Sound are open to halibut fishing five days per week, Thursday through Monday, through June 18. On May 1, two coastal areas - Marine Area 1 (Ilwaco) and Marine Area 2 (Westport) - will also open for halibut on different fishing schedules. The Ilwaco area will be open seven days per week until the quota is reached, while the Westport fishery will be on a Sunday-through-Thursday schedule. Marine areas 3 (La Push) and 4 (Neah Bay) will open May 9, with halibut fishing restricted to Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

The coastal **lingcod** fishery is already in full swing. Two-fish limits have been common for anglers fishing aboard charters south of Cape Alava, and Marine Area 4 (Neah Bay) opened for lingcod fishing April 16. Rough weather kept most boats off the water that day, but the action has picked up considerably since then, said Scott Barbour, WDFW fish biologist. "We're seeing a lot of nice fish, generally running 6 to 15 pounds," he said.

That can also be said of several Olympic Peninsula rivers, where **winter steelhead** and **spring chinook salmon** have been competing for anglers' attention. The steelhead season ends April 30 on

the Sol Duc, Bogachiel, Quillayute and Calawah rivers but the spring chinook run should keep building on the Soc Duc and the Quillayute through mid-June, said Mike Gross, another WDFW fish biologist. Anglers are required to release all unmarked chinook and coho, but can keep two fin-clipped adult chinook and up to six fish, counting jacks. "We're looking at a good run this year, with good numbers of hatchery spring chinook," Gross said.

Hoping to dig **razor clams** one last time this spring? Final word on the dig tentatively scheduled to begin April 28 will be announced by April 25 after marine toxin tests have determined whether the clams are safe to eat. If results are favorable, more than 20,000 people are expected to descend on coastal beaches for the opening - the last scheduled during the spring season.

Four beaches - Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks and Copalis - are tentatively scheduled to open for digging April 28-30 on morning tides. A fourth day of digging is also scheduled May 1 at Twin Harbors and Mocrocks. Each day's dig on those beaches must be completed by noon.

Kalaloch Beach will not reopen to razor clam digging this season, due to concerns about the low abundance of clams on the beach in recent months, said Dan Ayres, WDFW coastal shellfish manager. WDFW and Olympic National Park are investigating the apparent low abundance of razor clams on that beach.

Ayres reminds prospective diggers that they will need a valid 2006-07 license to participate in the planned dig, since previous annual licenses expired March 31. And he strongly advises diggers to have that license in hand before they leave home.

"Those who wait could face long lines at licensing outlets on the coast, he said. "Nobody wants to be standing in line to buy a license at low tide."

Coming up soon: Shrimp fishing opens May 6 in most areas of Puget Sound. See the WDFW website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/do/newreal/release.php?id=apr0406a>) for information about fishing schedules for specific marine areas.

Eastern Washington - Many excellent **trout** fishing waters open April 29 in this region and fish biologists believe it will be a great opener if the weather cooperates. Chris Donley, WDFW central district fish biologist, expects the top producing waters to include Badger, Williams, and West Medical lakes in southwest Spokane County and Fishtrap Lake on the Lincoln-Spokane county line. "Badger was rehabilitated in fall 2002 and fishing this season for rainbows and cutthroats averaging 10 to 12 inches with some up to 20 inches should be good," Donley said. "There have been some illegal introductions of black crappie and largemouth bass in Badger and I'd like to know if anglers see any other species."

Badger received 40,000 rainbow spring fry, 30,000 cutthroat spring fry, 5,000 rainbow catchables, 1,214 triploids and 200 rainbow broodstock. Williams Lake was rehabbed in fall 2003, so this will be its peak year of production, according to Donley. "It should be a great fishery with 11- to 20-inch trout. If anglers see other kinds of fish, let me know," he said. Williams received 75,000 rainbow spring fry, 45,000 cutthroat spring fry, 10,000 rainbow catchables, 2,167 triploids, 400 rainbow broodstock. "This is the sixth season for West Medical since our last rehab and the trout fry plants have been missing in the catch the last couple years," Donley said. "I think that cormorants may be starting to have an impact, although I'd like to hear if anyone sees anything other than trout there. The fishing won't hold up through the full season, but this will still be an excellent opening day for West Medical." West Medical received 145,000 rainbow spring fry, 11,000 rainbow catchables, and 2,100 triploids. "This will be the peak production year for Fishtrap, which we rehabbed fall 2003," Donley said. "There are bullheads back in the lake, but fishing should be great for 11- to 16-inch rainbows and fry plants now 10 to 12 inches." Fishtrap received 95,000 rainbow spring fry, 10,000 rainbow catchables, 1,615 triploids, 400 rainbow broodstock.

"Fish Lake in Spokane County will also be good for brook and brown trout and a unique opportunity to harvest tiger trout, a brook-brown hybrid," Donley said. "Brook trout should average 8 to 16 inches, a limited number of browns will be 15 to 20 inches, and tiger trout will be 7 to 20 inches." Fish Lake received 10,000 tiger trout fall fry, 20,000 brook spring fry, and 575 brook broodstock. Medical Lake, which is under selective gear rules, has "too many trout competitors and too little suitable forage" to produce as well as other lakes, but it does have some 20-inch rainbows, Donley says. Clear Lake is a mixed species fishery that should provide fair to good fishing on the opener for rainbows up to 18 inches, 10- to 25-inch brown trout, and some rainbow broodstock.

Other central district waters that opened earlier this spring, but continue to provide good catches, include Spokane County's Amber Lake, where rainbows are averaging 12 to 20 inches and selective gear rules are in effect, and Lincoln County's Coffeepot Lake, where rainbows are averaging 12 inches and selective gear rules are also in effect. Donley reminds anglers that on May 1 these and other selective gear rule fisheries will require knotless nets; see the new fishing rules pamphlet for more details.

In the north end of the region, WDFW Fish Biologist Curt Vail of Colville expects two lakes in particular to be stand-outs on the April 29 opener. Rocky Lake in Stevens County and Ellen Lake in Ferry County were both rehabilitated in 2004 so Vail says this should be their first best season. Rocky received 4,500 rainbow fry in spring 2005 and Ellen received 20,000 rainbow fry in spring 2005. Although no sampling had been made at this time, Vail expected those fish to be at least 12 inches and numerous, with good survival. Waitts Lake in Stevens County should also be very good; it received 24,000 net-pen rainbow fry last fall. Vail expects Starvation Lake, also in Stevens County, to be better than last year. His recent sampling there showed last spring's fry plants (17,900) were 11.4 inches. Marshall Lake in Pend Oreille County, which received 35,000 cutthroat fry last fall, should be good. Cedar Lake in Stevens County, which received 18,000 rainbow fry last spring, always produces big rainbows.

Trout lake fishing in the south end of the region opened last month, but hatchery crews continue to stock many waters with catchable-size rainbows. Glen Mendel, WDFW fish biologist in Dayton, reminds anglers that as of May 1 no more than two of the daily catch of five trout can be over 13 inches. The rule change is to prevent waste of smaller trout, since some anglers have been "sorting" fish to take home only the bigger ones, and to spread out the harvest of bigger fish among more anglers. Check the new rules pamphlet for details.

April 28 is the registration deadline for the "Fishing Kids" event on May 6 at Spokane County's Clear Lake. This annual event for kids 5-14 years of age provides beginning fishing instruction, t-shirt, Zebco rod and reel, and other fishing goodies for just \$5 per kid. Registrants must sign-up for half-hour fishing instruction timeslots from 8:00 a.m. through 2:30 p.m. Registration forms are available at WDFW's eastern regional office at 2315 N. Discovery Place in Spokane Valley and Spokane County 4-H at WSU Extension, 222 W. Havana St. in Spokane. Call the 4-H office at 509-477-2638 for more details.

Reader Email

John B. wrote to TGF this week via our Contact Form at the website, "I would like to subscribe to TGF, but first, I would like some information on the areas covered by your reports. I looked at one of your samples and it had pretty good coverage of Northern Oregon. I have an RV Park in Elkton, Oregon on the Umpqua River and would like to have the latest fishing information for this area. Do your reports ever get to this area?"

Pro guide Bob Rees responded, "Although we do occasionally cover your area, our reports for the Umpqua are not consistent or all that detailed. In order to achieve this, we would have to hire a writer that deals specifically to your area. Although we are a successful on-line fishing resource, we don't

have the financial resources to do this at this time. Hopefully, this will change in the future and we can beef up our reports for the many different areas of Oregon that we don't cover in as much detail as we do in NW Oregon. Thanks for your comments!"

Contributing editor Michael Teague adds, "I try to get Umpqua reports weekly, John, and frequently include reports on chinook, steelhead, smallmouth, sturgeon, stripers and shad in season."

Subscriber "BT" wrote asking about fishing on the Nehalem to which **Bob Rees** replied, "Regarding your questions on reports for the Nehalem River.....well, there aren't any! Although steelhead season remains open, almost all of the wild fish have spawned or are in the process of spawning. There are no spring Chinook available and the next run for Chinook begins around the 4th of July.

"There are some sturgeon opportunities but there are also better options for sturgeon on the North Oregon Coast. Cutthroat trout season opens in late May but restrictions apply and catch and release is one of them.

"Good luck and good fishing!"

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

Finally, there's a reason to watch to watch - The Bonneville Fish Cam:

<http://www.nwp.usace.army.mil/op/b/fishcam.asp>

Cool animated knot-tying guide:

<http://www.animatedknots.com>

Weekly Quote – "Twice I had the feeling, which I have talked about to other anglers and they have had it too, of a sudden anticipation of catching a fish so strong that it amounts to certainty. I suppose it is partly the harmony of effective presentation when everything else is auspicious, so that a take seems in that moment to be the only feasible conclusion. But it's not quit as simple as that, it's ore like a shaft of intuition. In must, logically, be an illusion; possible, to, you tend to remember it when it works and forget it when it doesn't. But, for all that, it's a curious experience." - J R Hartley

GOOD LUCK!