

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

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

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- The summer Chinook fishery on the lower Columbia River remains open for sportfishers. A run size update allowed for additional time but success has recently slowed. Anglers in the know were experiencing multiple opportunities when anchored in the right migration lane but dam passage has slowed and the bulk of the run has passed through the lower river. This fishery should remain viable through mid-July however.

Summer steelhead counts continue to rise and beach plunkers should have a good shot at shore-hugging fish on the upcoming minus tide series. Jones Beach near Westport and Rainier area beaches should produce fair results using hot colored spin-n-glos. Small plugs will take fish as well.

Shad counts have also passed their peak and catches have dropped off. Oversized sturgeon are still taking fresh shad but can be choosy with the large food source available to them.

Counts at Willamette Falls are nearing 35,000 spring Chinook and over 14,000 summer steelhead. Springer effort and catches are light in the river.

Steelhead remain the best bet for Santiam anglers. Chinook are present in small numbers but reluctant to bite.

A few keeper sturgeon have been taken by boat and bank anglers in the Gladstone/Oregon City stretch of the lower Willamette. Shad numbers are thinning but it's still possible to catch a few.

The Clackamas water level dropped again over the last week. Steelhead and salmon fishing is slow.

There are very few Chinook in the Sandy and flows continue to drop. Salmon fishing may be best at the mouth for trollers with some interception of Columbia River Chinook. The mouth of Cedar Creek may also produce some results for early morning casters.

Big Cliff Reservoir, Breitenbush River, Detroit Reservoir, Leaburg Lake, McKenzie River, Salt Creek, North Fork Santiam River. Faraday Lake, North Fork Reservoir and Trillium Lake are scheduled to be stocked with trout.

Northwest – The lower Columbia River estuary closed to retention of sturgeon beginning July 5th. Fishing for quality sized keepers was good out of Hammond prior to the closure for anglers using anchovies and sand shrimp. Catch and release is still a great option in this area but sand shrimp may be hard to find with demand dwindling.

The July 3rd opener for salmon, north of Cape Falcon proved productive for anglers getting an early jump start. Some boats took limits of hatchery coho and a few Chinook were in the catch. Most boats averaged 1 coho per rod. The CR Buoy was producing the best and waters south in 180 to 220 foot of water. The wild to hatchery ratio was nearly equal. The smaller sized coho seemed to respond best to anchovies. Fish to 8 pounds were caught.

The last minus tide series along Clatsop Beaches begins on Friday. The season closes on July 15th and will remain closed north of Tillamook Head through September 30th. Digging should be good although clams are on the smaller side.

Salmon fishing out of Garibaldi was once again possible with calming seas early in the week. Catches were improving and a few more Chinook are starting to show in the catches. Coho were being found north of the Tillamook Bay entrance in 280 to 320 feet of water. Ocean crabbing is much better than Tillamook, Netarts and Nehalem Bays.

Bottomfishing has dropped off but one boat landed 25 tuna approximately 60 miles west of Garibaldi. Another all depth-halibut opener runs July 6th – 8th from Cape Falcon to Humbug Mountain. 25,000 pounds remain on the quota.

Although spring Chinook in the Tillamook district has significantly slowed, 260 salmon were recycled from the Trask hatchery early this week. Even stealth tactics will have limited success on the low waters of the North Oregon Coast.

Three Rivers on the Nestucca system will remain open from the mouth upstream to the hatchery weir deadline through July 9 for adipose fin-clipped summer steelhead and adipose fin-clipped spring chinook. This area will close to all angling from July 10-Sept. 30.

Southwest - Razor clam digging remains open on all Southwest beaches to the California border. A series of minus tides will start Saturday, continuing through the week. Bailey Beach has been reliably producing limits of large razors.

Coho trollers out of Winchester Bay found fair fishing over the weekend when the bar and fog allowed safe crossing. Smallmouth bass fishing in the Umpqua River continues to improve. Anglers may easily catch scores of fish in a day.

Offshore salmon fishing turned on late last week, rewarding anglers with the best Chinook bite so far this year. Huge sardines are feeding the salmon and spurring their growth. Offshore Chinook may be taken through October, but coho closes July 31st North of Humbug Mountain and closed on July 4th south of that point.

Offshore bottom fishing has been phenomenal out of Brookings, yielding black rockfish up to six pounds. Limits are the rule on charter boats. Ling cod catches have been fair to good but should improve as the season progresses.

Catches remain good for ocean crabbers with most Dungeness still in good shape.

Section 5 of the Rogue River will be stocked with catchable-sized trout.

Eastern - The Salmonfly and Golden Hatch is done on the Deschutes with Caddis and Mayflies starting up. Trout fishing is good on the lower river. Caddis and Pale Morning Duns are hatching on the middle Deschutes.

Fly anglers will find excellent fishing at East Lake where Callibaetis patterns are producing fine catches.

Smallmouth bass fishing is great on the lower John Day River. Scheduled for planting this week in the Deschutes watershed are Badger Lake, Campbell Lake, Deadhorse Lake, Olallie Lake and Spring Creek.

Southwest Washington- The Cowlitz River remains the best summer steelhead prospect in the area. Washington fish managers raised the daily limit to 3 steelhead on the Cowlitz.

The North Fork of the Lewis and Kalama Rivers are not producing good catches of summer fish.

The lower Columbia River should produce fair catches of wild and hatchery fish in the tide series beginning this weekend.

Columbia River Fishing Report – With the Columbia River closed to the retention of keeper sturgeon below the Wauna Powerlines, salmon will once again become the focus on the lower Columbia River. Prior to the closure, the fishing was quite good with my last trip yielding 5 keepers, several shakers and 5 oversized (just oversized) sturgeon. Action for me was best out of Hammond and downstream using sand shrimp in the shallows and anchovies in the deeper water. There are rumors circulating that catch and keep fishing may once again open to finish off the remaining quota of keepers for the estuary. Although these are just rumors, once fishery managers take a hard look at our lower river harvest, there may indeed be some additional time allocated to finish up the quota. The quota was managed for a preliminary harvest of 15,000 fish with a 1,000 fish buffer. We'll know pretty quickly how much of that buffer we ate into, if any at all. More on that as the news breaks!

Salmon fishing out of the mouth of the Columbia was better than I had expected. Although success has been hit or miss, many boats are taking limits of salmon of which most are coho. As a rule, boats have been starting at the CR Buoy and heading SW anywhere from 200 to 280 foot of water. Some Chinook were taken in 260 foot of water on Wednesday. The early morning bite has been best as that is when the salmon are feeding the most. As the day progresses, the bites are less aggressive and the fish are harder to hook. Smaller anchovies are working great and the herring have been running large which deter smaller coho from biting. If you are targeting Chinook however, they are a great bait. The Chinook will be at the top in the early morning and dive to deeper depths as the day progresses.

Upriver, **pro guide Dan Ponciano (360-607-8511)** reports the river has dropped and fishing has become more challenging. Gravel bars are beginning to show that we haven't seen for months! The inconsistent flows have wreaked havoc on the Bonneville fisheries. Salmon fishing has dropped off dramatically and not just because passage has slowed. Dan reported a significant drop in effort and stated no more than 10 boats were fishing between the Shad Rack and the upper deadline.

Shad fishing has even been more challenging recently. Dan had to move three times before he got into the right lane but he finally found some fresh bait for his anglers to target oversized sturgeon with. This time of year, oversized sturgeon are becoming more picky as they are gorged with bait and Dan stated floater shad are non-existent. This is unusual for this time of year- but then again, isn't this year a bit unusual anyway?

The Guide's Forecast – Ocean coho is the best thing going right now. Calm seas are currently forecasted through the weekend so salmon anglers may have some good opportunity. Anglers will have to mind the early morning minus tides however which may make the bar crossing a bit hairy. The bar will be safer to pass once the peak outgoing is passed but anglers must exercise caution at ALL times. Head straight to the CR Buoy and begin trolling SW. Don't hesitate to pull up your gear and run back to the CR Buoy as you don't want or need to deviate much from that. You may want to get away from the crowds but be mindful of the drift as you don't want to end up in Seaside if the NW wind kicks up in the afternoon. You should be able to get your fish in the recommended 200 to 280 foot of water.

If you are looking for some great catch and release action, the lower Columbia out of Hammond will provide some good opportunity using shrimp in the shallows and anchovies anywhere. Shrimp will be harder to come by so anchovies will become standard bait. Fresh herring are available for the offshore salmon fishery and may also be good sturgeon bait - especially if the crabs are intense.

Stay tuned to TGF for updates on further catch and keep opportunities in the lower river. A decision should be forthcoming. Crabbing in the ocean should also be fair in the calming seas. River crabbing is poor in the lower Columbia.

The upriver salmon fishery is definitely winding down and will likely continue that way. It remains open but catches are expected to be light. Fluctuating flows will also dampen success but steelhead action should begin to heat up once flows stabilize.

Shad fishing will also wind down but anglers should still have no trouble getting into fish provided you anchor in a productive lane. Fresh shad will remain the best bait for stuffed sturgeon and floaters should begin to show and provide some additional productive baits for sport anglers.

Catch the last early morning minus tide series before the July 15th closure along Clatsop Beaches. The extended area south of Tillamook Head will remain open to digging.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Although the Willamette Falls counts haven't been updated since the 26th, hundreds of steelhead and Springers continue to cross daily. With the water in the lower Willamette in the 70s, it'll only get only get warmer in the next few days. Effort for spring Chinook is nil except in Portland Harbor.

The Santiam system is the destination for many of the steelhead and Chinook passing at Willamette Falls. Numbers are good and recycling is occurring regularly from the hatchery on the South Santiam downstream.

It took McMinnville angler Lee Leavitt 15 minutes to land this 32-inch steelhead on four-pound-test line June 24th on the North Santiam. He credits his success to a boat ride offered by a courteous stranger who turned out to be John Wiltsey, a well known northwest rod builder (Photo by Bruce Leavitt).



Leavitt reports the fishing as very slow in both the North and South Santiam. The numbers are very good but the bite hasn't turned on yet this year. Foster Dam reports over 4,000 steelhead and nearly 1,000 spring Chinook, most of which have been recycled downstream.

The Guide's Forecast – St. Johns has continued to produce bright chinook over the past week and is really the only possibility for anglers hoping for a lower Willamette spring Chinook as the run approaches its nadir. Fish the harbor and downstream to the mouth for the best chance at a hookup. The shad run is also about over, but a few are being taken daily below the Falls. It'll all be bass water soon.

Flows are conducive to good fishing on the North, South and mainstem Santiam. With 15,000 steelhead and 33,000 springers over the Falls, the populations in these water is dense. The fishing has been only fair but will improve and the warm weather will only serve to help it along. This one's a Best Bet in the Willamette Valley.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – The water level of the Clackamas River continues to recede while the water temperature rises. A handful of summer steelhead was taken over the weekend but no reports of spring Chinook catches. About 4,000 springers have returned to the Clackamas Hatchery. Last year at this time about half that number had been counted. About 550 summer steelhead have returned to the hatchery facility/ Water conditions on Thursday, July 6th, were cloudy but fishable.

Water levels at the Sandy River have also dropped with the recent dry weather. Warm temperatures have triggered glacial runoff with the river starting to turn milky. This is the typical condition of the Sandy in the summertime. A few summer steelhead and Chinook were taken over last weekend.

The Guide's Forecast – Steelheading is likely to remain very slow in the Clackamas River over the coming week. The warmer water temps has shut down the spring Chinook bite. Rainfall would rejuvenate the action, but there's none in the forecast at this writing.

The Sandy may continue to provide fair fishing, but the days are numbered as the water conditions deteriorate. Fishing has been fairly productive below Cedar Creel but the lower river has been hot and cold. The mouth has produced some spring chinook catches and may be worthwhile in the coming week. Chinook taken from the Sandy must be finclipped.

North Coast District Fishing Report – Spring Chinook fishing is about a wrap in the Tillamook district although fish are present in the river systems. Rivers are extremely low but about 260 salmon were recycled on the Trask River and should provide some additional opportunity for anglers bobber fishing the few deep holes downstream of the hatchery. Anglers will still need to fish selectively (fin-clip only) through July 31st.

Ocean coho and some Chinook may be a better choice for Tillamook district anglers. Fishers are finding fair numbers of fish NW of the Tillamook Bay entrance. Target salmon shallow until mid-morning and then run your gear deeper if you have trouble finding fish.

Tuna are showing offshore in good numbers. Some guide friends of mine went 60 miles offshore on Wednesday and found 23 quality sized tuna to 25 pounds in calm seas. They were hand-lining fish but the biggest fish came on a trolled hoochie. It's a long run in rough seas so you'll definitely want to choose your days. As the summer progresses fish should move closer to shore.

The Guide's Forecast – Another all-depth halibut opener is scheduled for July 6 – 8 and should be productive out of Garibaldi. The 24 mile run should be great for those equipped although seas

should be very friendly for the run out there. A tuna/halibut day would certainly be a grand slam effort!

Salmon fishing should remain good from Pacific City to Garibaldi. More hatchery coho should show and if ocean temperatures don't fluctuate like they did last year, action should remain consistent. River fishermen have spring Chinook and summer steelhead available to them in the Trask, Nestucca and Wilson Rivers. Three Rivers will remain open through July 9th. Low water tactics are very necessary with bobbers and jigs one of the best options in the clear waters.

Central & South Coast Reports – While there will be at least one more opportunity for all-depth halibut during the spring fishery on July 6th through 8th, the summer all-depth halibut season opens August 4th, 5th and 6th. Pacific halibut sport fishing is open seven days a week at all depths south of Humbug Mountain.

Salmon anglers launching out of Newport and Depoe bay have been disappointed with the sparse catches. The ocean has been in the mid-40 degree range off the central Oregon coast, too cold for decent chinook or coho action. Fortunately, a warming trend is in progress, raising optimism for the upcoming week. Those fishing halibut inside the 40-fathom line experienced decent results recently. Bottom fishing remains rewarding with catches of limits of large black rockfish common. Whales were spotted inside Yaquina Bay over the weekend chasing down an evening meal. Seal - it's what's for dinner!

Marine forecasts look good for safe bar crossings this weekend.

Salmon fishing off the central Oregon coast has been very slow, but showed improvement earlier this week. Far more coho are being caught than Chinook. Ocean salmon fishing closed July 5th South of Humbug Mountain but will re-open for a six-day season the 1st of September.

Fishing out of Winchester Bay is improving with several limits of salmon brought to the dock by boaters when they were able to get out. Trolled herring at 50 to 75 feet in 300 feet of water has been most productive for Chinook. Coho are being taken around the 35-foot level in 350 to 375 feet of water. Chinook fishing in the North and mainstem Umpqua remains very slow, but steelhead action is picking up in the North as the water warms. As of mid-June, about 1,500 summer steelhead had been counted at Winchester Dam. Shad fishing is holding up well but the run is on the wane. Smallmouth bass catches continue to improve with Scottsburg a hotspot.

Offshore Chinook may be taken through October, but coho closes July 31st North of Humbug Mountain and closed on July 4th south of that point.

Shad fishing is also good on the Coos and Coquille rivers. The Coquille estuary is offering fair to good fishing for sea-run cutthroat trout.

Surf perch fishing has slowed on the central coast. Some anglers report the pinkfin seem to have just disappeared. Perch fishing remains good on beaches South of the Rogue River.

Large, dense bait balls in Rogue Bay has attracted pelicans who are taking advantage of this early showing. These schools of bait usually don't show until near the end of July which has local anglers and guides optimistic regarding a strong, early showing of Fall Chinook. Two Chinook of hatchery origin is the limit now, but starting July 15th, anglers may take two chinook, fin clipped or not. The numbers of coho offshore is very high which bodes well for that run as well. Let's hope the Rogue has a good Fall season; the springer numbers, catches and effort are all very low. Fishing for summer steelhead in the upper river is fair and improving as there has been a strong early showing. AS of June 30th, a total of 7,785 spring chinook and 1,464 summer steelhead have been counted at Gold Ray Dam.

Surf perch seem to have disappeared in many places but are available in Rogue River bay where they're spawning. A few Chinook have been caught here but results will improve in late July.

Steps are being taken to remove Savage Rapids Dam on the Rogue River which would improve wild fish migration more than 20 percent according to a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service study. The dam would be removed sometime in 2009.

Limits of large razor clams are likely to be common at Bailey Beach (North of the Gold Beach jetty) this weekend with the minus tide series that's forecasted.

Central and Eastern Oregon – no update this week.

Northwest Trout – The ODFW is stocking 500 rainbow trout into Sprague Pond as part of the Youth Angling Enhancement Program, now in its third year. Representatives from ODFW, other agencies and volunteers will provide fishing equipment and angling instruction from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. This event is specifically for the kids, according to ODFW Natural Resources Specialist Ted Wise. Sprague Pond is located approximately one mile north of Crane Prairie Reservoir. from Highway 97, go west at the yellow blinking light toward Sunriver and follow that road for approximately 21 miles. The road becomes Forest Road 40. Turn left at Cow Meadow sign and left again at the first dirt road intersection. This last turn leads to the parking area at Sprague Pond.

Detroit Reservoir has been planted with thousands of rainbow trout over the weeks recently and is reliably producing limits. Kokanee fishing is fair. Hagg Lake is producing fair to good catches of trout to 15 inches for both boat and bank anglers.

Odell is producing fair to good catches of kokanee and stocked trout. The kokes are running small this year. The best action is at first light but remains fair as the day wears on. It's over when the wind comes up.

Big Cliff Reservoir, Breitenbush River, Detroit Reservoir, Leaburg Lake, McKenzie River, Salt Creek, North Fork Santiam River, Faraday Lake, North Fork Reservoir and Trillium Lake are scheduled to be stocked with trout in the Willamette Valley this week.

North Puget Sound

The Tulalip Bay "bubble" **salmon** fishery continues to be slow, but anglers south of the bubble are finding plenty of coho. "We're still waiting for the bubble fishery to heat up, but in the meantime fishing for resident coho has been great in Marine Area 10," said Steve Thiesfeld, a WDFW fish biologist. "I heard reports of one boat releasing 30 coho salmon. Hopefully, that's a sign that there will be a lot of those early season fish around this year."

The catch-and-release salmon fishery in the northern portion of Marine Area 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) closes June 30. However, beginning July 1, anglers fishing in the marine area will have a daily limit of two salmon, with no minimum size limit. Anglers must release chinook salmon, and handling rules are in effect.

Anglers fishing the Tulalip bubble are reminded that the fishery is open each week from Friday through noon Monday and runs through Sept. 25, except for a one-day closure on June 17. There is a two-salmon daily limit and chinook must be 22 inches in length to retain.

Another option is Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands), which also opens July 1 for salmon. "Fish will be scattered," Thiesfeld said. "Anglers will have to track them down, but there should be fish out there." Anglers will have a daily limit of two salmon, and can only keep one chinook, which must be 22 inches in length to retain.

Break out those pots. The **crab** fishery starts July 1 in the region. In marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) and 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner), crabbing will be open July 1-2, close July 3-4, and then resume on a Wednesday-through-Saturday schedule. In marine areas 9 (Admiralty Inlet), 10, and the southern portion of 7 (San Juan Islands), the fishery will be open every day from July 1-8 before switching to the Wednesday-through-Saturday schedule. See WDFW's sport-crabbing website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/crab/>) for more information.

To participate in the fishery, all crab fishers age 15 or older must obtain and carry a current Washington fishing license. In addition, all crabbers - regardless of age - must obtain and carry a catch record card and a crab licensing endorsement to fish for crab in Puget Sound. The crab endorsement costs \$3 for crabbers age 15 and over, but is free to fishers under age 15.

Fishers also can drop a pot for **coonstripe** and **pink shrimp**. In marine areas 8-1, 8-2, the northern and central portions of 7 and a portion of 9 the daily limit is 10 pounds, including heads and tails, of all shrimp species combined. Shrimp heads can be removed, but the heads must be retained while in the field. Details, such as the required minimum mesh size and maximum fishing depths, are available on WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/crabreg/>.

On the freshwater, the Skagit, Skykomish and Cascade rivers are open for **spring chinook** fishing. The Skagit River is open through July 9 to hatchery spring chinook retention from the Highway 530 bridge at Rockport to the Cascade River. The daily limit is two hatchery chinook at least 12 inches in length.

On the Cascade River, anglers also can fish through July 9 from the mouth of the river to the Rockport-Cascade Road bridge, with a daily limit of two hatchery chinook at least 12 inches in length. On the Skykomish, hatchery springer fishing is open through the end of July from the Lewis Street Bridge in Monroe to the Wallace River. The Skykomish fishery also has a daily limit of two hatchery chinook at least 12 inches in length.

On the Baker River, anglers will soon have a chance to catch **sockeye**. Beginning July 1, anglers can fish from the mouth of the river to the Highway 20 Bridge at Concrete. The daily limit is two sockeye at least 12 inches in length. Before heading out to the Baker River, check WDFW's *2006/2007 Fishing in Washington* pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) for more details on the fishery.

Freshwater anglers also can cast a line for **trout** on lakes and several of the region's rivers and streams throughout the region. **Steelhead** fishing on the Skykomish has been good, and anglers now have an opportunity to hook a steelhead at Reiter Ponds. That section of the river (1,500 feet upstream to 1,000 feet downstream of the Reiter Ponds Hatchery outlet) opened June 24 after the hatchery collected enough steelhead broodstock to meet egg-take goals. For more rules and details on the fishery check out WDFW's *2006/2007 Fishing in Washington* pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

Traditional summer fisheries will kick into high gear when annual crab and ocean-salmon seasons get under way in a number of areas next week. And what says "summer" than cracked crab and barbecued salmon?

Eight areas of Puget Sound will open for crab fishing July 1, including marine areas 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca), 9 (Admiralty Inlet), 11 (Tacoma/Vashon) and 12 (Hood Canal) on the west side of the sound. Fishing in those areas will be open daily from July 1-8 before switching to a Wednesday-through-Saturday schedule.

Three other areas that opened for crab fishing June 18 - including marine areas 4 (Neah Bay east of the Bonilla-Tatoosh line), 5 (Sekiu) and 13 (south of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge) - will also remain open seven days per week.

Rich Childers, WDFW shellfish policy coordinator, said a pre-season test fishery in Marine Area 6 found fewer crab than in previous years but also turned up some good news. "Those crab were huge," he said. "The males were running 8-9 inches, with very good, hard shell conditions."

Like last year, the daily catch limit in Puget Sound is five male Dungeness crab with a shell width measuring at least 6¼ inches, plus six red rock crab of either sex with a shell width of at least 5 inches. All undersized crab, female Dungeness crab and all softshell crab of either sex must be returned to the water.

To participate in the fishery, all crab fishers age 15 or older must obtain and carry a current Washington fishing license. In addition, all crabbers - regardless of age - must obtain and carry a catch record card and a crab licensing endorsement to fish for crab in Puget Sound. The crab endorsement costs \$3 for crabbers age 15 and over, but is free to fishers under age 15. Anyone who fishes for crab without carrying a catch record card is subject to a fine of \$80, Childers said.

Those fishing in Hood Canal are also asked to report any Dungeness crab bearing a bright green tag on the underside of their shell. The tagging study is part of research to better understand crab movement in relation to low dissolved oxygen events in southern Hood Canal, said Therese Cain, a WDFW crab biologist.

Sport or tribal fishers who catch a crab bearing the distinctive green tag are asked to call the department toll free at 866-859-8439 and report the tag number along with the date, location, and depth of capture.

Fishers are free to keep tagged, legal-sized male crab during open periods, but are asked to report the tag information from those crab. However, tags should not be removed from crab - such as female, softshell or undersized crab - that cannot legally be retained and must be returned to the water, Cain said.

Another much-anticipated summer fishery begins June 30 when waters off La Push and Neah Bay (marine areas 3 and 4) open for coastal **salmon** fishing. In both areas, the fishery is open Tuesday through Saturday with a two fish daily limit, only one of which may be a **chinook**. Minimum size for chinook is 24 inches and for **coho**, 16 inches. Wild coho must be released.

Recreational ocean fishing quotas of 31,000 chinook and 73,200 coho salmon were approved last April by the federal agency that sets harvest limits in waters up to 200 miles offshore, according to Wendy Beeghley, WDFW fish biologist. Although those quotas are lower than last year's due to lower predicted salmon returns and increased conservation restrictions, Beeghley pointed to some positive signs for the upcoming season.

"The ocean water temperatures have stayed lower this year than last, so that is encouraging," she said. "Also, I've heard some bottomfishing charter boats have caught and released both coho and chinook, so that is also a good sign."

Sekiu/Pillar Point and eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca (marine areas 5, and 6) will be the next to open for salmon fishing on July 1. These waters are open daily, with a catch limit of two fish. Minimum size for chinook is 22 inches and for coho, 16 inches. Wild chinook, coho and chum must be released.

Also opening July 1 for daily fishing is the area of Hood Canal (Marine Area 12) south of Ayock Point where the daily limit is four fish, two of which may be chinook. Anglers must release any chum salmon they catch. In South Puget Sound, the daily limit is two salmon and anglers must release all coho.

The last ocean areas, Ilwaco and Westport (marine areas 1 and 2), open for salmon fishing July 3. In both areas, the fishery will be open Sunday through Thursday with a two fish daily limit, only one of which may be a chinook. Minimum size for chinook is 24 inches and for coho, 16 inches. Wild coho must be released.

Salmon fishing continues in Marine Area 11 (Vashon Island to the Tacoma Narrows Bridge) on a daily basis, with a limit of two salmon a day. Minimum size for chinook is 22 inches, but there is no minimum for other species. Commencement Bay remains closed to salmon fishing until Aug. 12. For more information about rules and restrictions in specific areas, be sure to check the *Fishing in Washington* (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) pamphlet before going fishing.

Meanwhile, the **lingcod** fishery has slowed down on the coast, according to Beeghley. "The charter boats out of Westport were doing pretty well with some boats limiting, but the average was just under one fish per person," she said. "It's typical for lingcod to drop off this time of year. It's better in March and April."

However, the **rockfish** action has been consistently good in both Neah Bay and Westport, Beeghley said. Anglers have also been reeling in the rockfish off Port Angeles where catch reports showed one fish per two rods on June 24 and just over one fish per rod on June 25.

It's been tough fishing on rivers feeding into Grays Harbor, said Rick Ereth, WDFW fish biologist. "We need this weather to break." Steelhead fishing on the Wynoochee River has been slow, although anglers have been catching a few chinook on the mid-to-lower Chehalis River, between Oakville and Elma, especially in drift boats, Ereth. He also noted some 31,000 summer steelhead have been planted in the upper Chehalis below Pe Ell and above Adna, so there's good numbers of fish in the river. "The waters are cooler there and the flows are skinny, since the channel's confined," he said. "Might be a good place to put in a pontoon."

On the Olympic Peninsula, river fishing is also slow, reports WDFW Fish Biologist David Low. Fifty-nine anglers on the Hoh River last week pulled in just 12 spring chinook and four summer steelhead, according to creel checks. "The exceptionally warm days of late have resulted in very high water on the Hoh," said Low. He noted that a U.S. Geological Survey report showed the cubic feet per second discharge in the river rose from 1,700 to 2,600 between June 20 and 27. Similarly, Sol Duc River fishing has been disappointing. "A few fish are being caught higher in the system, but not many," Low said.

The hot weather will continue to focus lake fishing activity on the warm water species, said Hal Michael, WDFW fish biologist. "Spiny rays such as **crappie**, **bass**, **perch** and **sunfish** like the warmer water and are more active and feeding now," he said. "What they lack in size, they make up for in numbers and aggressiveness."

Southwest Washington

A strong return of **summer chinook salmon** to the Columbia River has been producing unusually high catch rates below Bonneville Dam and raising questions about how much longer the fishery can remain open in the lower river. Anglers should also be aware that catch-and-keep **sturgeon** fishing in the Columbia River estuary ends the night of July 4 and that the upper Klickitat River opens to fishing for adult hatchery-reared **spring chinook** July 1.

Just two weeks after the **summer chinook** fishery opened June 16, fishery managers increased this year's run size projection from 49,000 to a minimum of 70,000 fish based on counts to date at Bonneville Dam. Boat anglers averaged one summer chinook for every six rods and bank anglers scored one fish for every 10 rods during the first full week of fishing. Most of those fish - some weighing up to 40 or even 50 pounds - were taken by anglers fishing below Bonneville Dam, said Cindy LeFleur, WDFW Columbia River harvest manager.

"These are the highest catch rates we've seen for summer chinook since reopening the fishery in 2002," LeFleur said. "Cold, high water in the river made for near-perfect conditions and the fish showed up in much higher numbers than expected."

The downside is that - even after increasing catch guidelines in line with the higher run forecast - anglers are expected to hit their expanded catch guideline below Priest Rapids Dam within the next few days. LeFleur said fishery managers for Washington and Oregon will meet Thursday, June 29 to consider a new closing date for the summer chinook fishery in the lower river, initially scheduled to run through July. Since most of the fish have been taken below Bonneville Dam, the fishery between Bonneville Dam and Priest Rapids Dam may not be affected by any immediate closures.

"Anglers planning to fish for summer chinook below Bonneville Dam after the end of June should make sure to check for any season updates before they head out," LeFleur said. "We hate to cut the fishery in the lower river short, but we need to move enough fish past Bonneville to meet escapement goals and provide fishing opportunities upriver."

For season updates, anglers can call the WDFW Region 5 Fishing Hotline (360-906-6211, ext. 1010) or check for fishing rule changes on the WDFW website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

Along with summer chinook, anglers are also catching increasing numbers of summer-run hatchery **steelhead** and **white sturgeon** in the lower Columbia River. Steelhead fishing on the mainstem has been best from Longview downriver, and has also been picking up in the Lewis River and Cowlitz River - especially in the Blue Creek and Mission Bar areas. That stands to reason. At the Cowlitz Salmon Hatchery, 845 fish have been counted so far this year, compared to 177 last year. At Merwin Dam on the North Fork of the Lewis River, 1,626 summer-run steelhead have been counted, compared to 1,288 last year.

Meanwhile, charter boat anglers fishing out of Chinook and Ilwaco have been averaging nearly 0.75 legal-sized sturgeon per rod, while private boaters have been taking home one legal sized fish for every three rods. Sturgeon fishing below the Wauna powerline is scheduled to close for a catch assessment at the end of the day July 4, but could reopen later in the month if more fish can be taken within the quota, said Brad James, a WDFW fish biologist.

Anglers have also been averaging nearly one legal-sized sturgeon upriver in the Bonneville Pool, along with some summer chinook salmon. June 30 is the last day to fish for spring chinook in Wind River and Drano Lake, although anglers can still fish for hatchery steelhead in the lake and on Wind River downstream of a point 400 feet below Shepherd Falls.

Summer chinook salmon are also beginning to move into the upper Columbia River, where salmon fishing opens July 1 between Priest Rapids and Chief Joseph dams. In addition, anglers will also be able to fish for adult hatchery-reared **spring chinook salmon** on the upper Klickitat River from July 1-31, now that Klickitat Salmon Hatchery is assured of meeting its escapement goal. So far this year, the salmon fishery on the upper river has been limited to jacks, between 12 and 24 inches long.

"The upper Klickitat is one of the few areas in the entire Columbia River Basin where anglers can fish for spring chinook salmon in a glacier-fed white-water stream," said WDFW fish biologist John Weinheimer. "It's perfect for fishing in a drift boat."

Starting July 1, anglers will be able to catch and retain adult hatchery-reared spring chinook salmon from boundary markers just below the salmon hatchery downriver to 400 feet above the No. 5 Fishway. The fishway is located about one-half mile upstream from Fisher Hill Bridge and about 2½ miles upstream from the river mouth. The daily limit for salmon will be six fish, no more than two of which can be adults. Anglers must release any salmon less than 12 inches long, and any salmon not clearly marked as a hatchery fish by a clipped adipose fin and a healed scar.

Anglers fishing in the John Day Pool have been taking home an average of one **walleye** and four **bass** per rod, while those fishing just below Bonneville Dam have been averaging seven **shad** apiece. Mayfield lake has been producing some nice **rainbows**, while bank anglers fishing Riffe Lake have been catching a mixture of rainbows, landlocked **coho**, **chinook** and **steelhead** in the main lake and at the fishing bridge.

Goose Lake was recently planted with 3,600 **cutthroat** and 3,000 **brown trout** weighing up to a pound apiece, giving anglers a good excuse to head to the high country.

Eastern Washington

Summertime **trout** fishing is not a contradiction in terms, says WDFW district fish biologist Chris Donley. "Rainbows and cutthroats can still be found in the same places as in spring, but you have to fish in the early morning or late evening," he said. "They just won't be biting in the heat of the day now, and it's not very fun to sit in a boat or on a dock and bake in the sun without a bite."

Donley said there are plenty of trout left to catch throughout the central counties, but the best are still Badger and Williams lakes in Spokane County, Fishtrap Lake in Lincoln County, and Rock Lake in Whitman County. Rock Lake also has **largemouth bass** and brown trout. Up north, several trout waters with public campgrounds are just the thing for Fourth of July holiday get-togethers, notably Ferry County's Ellen Lake, Stevens County's Pierre Lake, and Pend Oreille County's Sullivan Lake.

Although WDFW has no creel data for Lake Roosevelt yet, **kokanee** should be showing in catches from Keller Ferry on up. As summer air and surface water temperatures rise, fishers should take care to keep their catches on ice immediately to preserve them for dinner. Also, remember that open fires outside of designated areas and all fireworks are prohibited on WDFW water access sites.

South Central Washington

WDFW district fish biologist Eric Anderson reports good fishing for triploid and catchable-size **rainbow trout** at Clear Lake and **kokanee** at Rimrock Lake in Yakima County. "But anglers need to pay attention to fishing rules on the North Fork of the Tieton River, which connects these two lakes, because protected, threatened **bull trout** are in the area," he said. "Some anglers have been catching and keeping bull trout, which makes them subject to stiff fines and penalties under the Endangered Species Act." Anderson said anglers must learn how to identify bull trout and release them unharmed if they inadvertently catch them.

"This is the time of year that bull trout will slowly start migrating to their spawning areas, so they're especially vulnerable now," said Anderson, noting that bull trout tend to be more aggressive and grow to larger size than other native trout like rainbow and cutthroat. They're commonly confused with the non-native eastern brook trout, especially since they are found in many of the same areas of the Yakima basin, he said. An easy way to tell the difference, Anderson said, is that brook trout have black spots on the backside dorsal fin, but bull trout have no distinct spots on the dorsal fin. "Remember 'no black, put it back,'" he advises. "Rainbow and cutthroat trout have dark spots on the body, but bull trout have light cream-colored to orange-colored spots on the body. If you don't know the difference, just be safe and let it go."

Anderson also reminds anglers that in the North Fork Tieton River, fishing is prohibited within 400 feet of Clear Lake Dam and in the spillway channel below Clear Lake.

On the other hand, high lakes are a good destination for hot summer days and there is good fishing for triploid rainbows at Dog and Leech Lakes in the White Pass area of Yakima County and at Lost Lake near Snoqualmie Pass in Kittitas County. All fishers using WDFW water access sites are reminded that open fires outside of designated areas and all fireworks are prohibited.

Reader Email

Regular contributor Ken Johnson who's keeping an eye on the lower Willamette for TGF reports, "WHERE'S THE FISH? Seems to be the question right now. Spinner Throwers were staying home, for the most part, through the Fourth of July weekend. Several boats were anchored upstream from the mouth of the Clackamas River trying for both upriver Shad and Chinook too. Shad are still being caught but it is apparent that the fishery is almost over. Late, but almost over. A few Chinook are being caught but that too has slowed after a flurry of Nookers being caught below the Sellwood Bridge. Water temperatures are hovering around 70 degrees so for you last minute fishermen, Big Chrome Offerings, and herring too, seem to be the "bait of choice. "Good Luck-----Think STURGEON!"

Going fishing? Send us a report or a story! Got an opinion on something? 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

Record Hammerhead Shark
<http://www.wftv.com/news/9451628/detail.html>

Website with decent fishing videos:
<http://www.justkeepfishing.com/vIDEOS.html>

Weekly Quote – "A fisherman is always hopeful -- nearly always more hopeful than he has any right to be." - Roderick Haig-Brown

GOOD LUCK!

