

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **September 29th, – October 5th, 2006**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- The coho bite in the Meldrum Bar stretch has been hot or cold with hundreds of fish in the river now. Peak migration is just past its peak in this area but catchable numbers are still present.

Sturgeon retention on the Willamette and Columbia re-opens in October on Thursdays through Saturdays with the first opportunity October 5th. The Columbia River Gorge will offer the best opportunities- especially for bank anglers.

Scores of coho can be seen rolling on the Sandy which can be frustrating if they're off the bite. Good numbers of fish are moving through Cedar Creek although catches are spotty in crowded conditions. Pocket water fishing with small egg clusters will take some fish.

Lots of coho are showing in the Clackamas, particularly at the mouth, but few of these finicky fish are being hooked. Early morning spinner casters are likely to take the most fish. Some decent summer steelhead are still being taken upstream. Eagle Creek is extremely low.

The North Santiam is a little high but should remain stable at this level until the fall rains. Steelhead prospects are good.

Henry Hagg Lake, West Salish Pond and Detroit Reservoir are scheduled to be planted with trout.

Northwest – The ocean on the north coast has been extremely calm allowing anglers to target chinook in the seaweed free zone just outside of Tillamook Bay. Fishing was excellent on Saturday but has been spotty ever since. A 51½ pounder was weighed in at Garibaldi Marina over the weekend. High pressure should offer more calm seas over the weekend.

In Tillamook Bay, chinook catches have become more consistent but seaweed continues to be a problem. Catches have comprised of more 5 year-old fish than in years past. These larger fish have been going 30 to 40 pounds and have been oddly absent the last 2 years in this fishery.

Crabbing on Tillamook Bay is competitive so limits are hard to come by. Fresh bait will produce the best results. Netarts and Nestucca estuaries are producing more consistent results.

Nehalem Bay is relatively poor for this time of year. Seaweed is also a factor here.

The Nestucca and Salmon Rivers near Pacific City have plenty of chinook present but the bite has been sporadic. The combination of eggs and shrimp under a bobber in the tidewater sections are taking the majority of fish.

Crabbing out of Hammond on the lower Columbia is excellent. Salmon effort is non-existent.

Albacore tuna are still an option and good numbers were taken within 20 miles last weekend.

Incoming tide is bringing fresh fish and fall chinook action is starting to pick up on the Siletz.

Offshore tuna fishing has been fair to good this week out of Newport and Depoe Bay. Most boats are returning to port with albacore catches in the teens. Salmon are being hooked at the 30 to 65-foot depths with most chinook in the 20 pound range.

Chinook are being taken in the Yaquina River. Fishing is slow at the Alsea where increasing numbers of sea lions await the coming chinook. Crabbing is great out of Newport and Waldport.

Southwest – Pressure is on at Siuslaw tidewater where trolled spinners are effective in taking modest numbers of chinook.

Ocean chinook catches have slowed out of Winchester Bay. Crabbing is yielding limits. The mainstem and South Umpqua are still kicking out smallmouth bass by the score.

Crabbing is excellent in Coos bay while chinook fishing is fair but improving.

Trollers in the Rogue estuary have seen an improvement in hookups this week. The Grants Pass stretch remains slow. Summer steelhead continue to be taken on the upper river but they're getting fairly colorful.

All-depth halibut, closed September 17th off the central coast, remains open South of Humbug Mountain. Nearshore halibut fishing is closed coast-wide.

Chetco anglers are catching good numbers of Chinook, with some really large ones in the mix. Chinook stacking offshore should provide excellent fishing when the Chetco Terminal fishery opens October 1st through 12th.

Tuna runs 50 or so miles offshore out of Brookings are yielding only fair catches of tuna.

Eastern - The Deschutes is at its peak for steelhead now until the middle of October or so when flows will change with rainfall. Currently, the water is low and clear with fish well distributed in the lower river. Trout fishers may expect to see large Mayflies and October Caddis hatches. With cool nights moderating the water temperatures, fly rodders on the middle Deschutes are doing well with Blue-Winged Olive and Pale Morning Dun patterns. Nymphing remains effective all day. The October Caddis hatch is just starting up on this stretch but will become the predominant pattern in the next couple of weeks.

Southwest Washington- Fishing for chinook salmon closes on many SW Washington streams beginning October 1st. Many other regulation changes take effect also so check local regulations before heading to your favorite stream.

Late returning coho should begin to show on many Washington tributaries. Although second run coho are not expected to make a great showing, catchable numbers should be present on the Cowlitz and Lewis Rivers.

Soapbox Update – Inland fishermen and business owners, like gas station owner Bob Fately of Brewster, are educating their friends, neighbors, and leaders that we can have both a revitalized salmon economy while keeping farms thriving and irrigated. They are trying to cut through the smokescreen created by people who pit farmers against fishermen, who fear positive changes to our rivers.

[Click here](#) to send our new Eastern Washington petition to your upriver friends and contacts.

Since the delivery of your signatures to Governors Gregoire and Kulongoski and our Representatives last spring, we've seen a renewed sense of hope for fishable rivers, and we have been urged by many campaign supporters to extend our message to Eastern Washington. The Salmon Solutions campaign is currently running print and radio ads in Clarkston/Lewiston, Tri-Cities, and Walla Walla and those communities need your help!

Tell your friends: we can have both salmon and farms!

<http://action.earthjustice.org/campaign/salmonletter/forward>

Thanks for your continued support of fishable Columbia and Snake Rivers. With your help we will continue to work for improved conditions for both salmon and steelhead as well as for our farms and local economies.

Sincerely,

Buzz Ramsey, Recreational Fisherman and Business Owner

Columbia River Fishing Report – Anglers will have to wait another week before reports come in on Columbia River fishing. Passage numbers are still low enough to force a closure for Chinook although catch and release fishing in the Bonneville area is great! Backtrollers are taking good numbers of fish, especially in the morning using kwikfish.

The few anglers participating in the catch and release fishing for sturgeon in the Bonneville area are scoring great results.

Crabbing in the lower Columbia is excellent and competition is light. The crabbing should only get better into the fall months.

The Guide's Forecast – Look to next weeks forecast to indicate how the sturgeon opener will go in the Columbia River gorge. Combination catch and release Chinook fishing, coupled with catch and keep opportunities should provide some decent sport next week. Stay tuned.....

Go crabbing if you are bored. The lower Columbia is giving up limits of quality keepers if you have good bait.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – With water temperature moderating to 60 degrees and flows improving, Chinook counts at Willamette Falls have climbed to 650 and coho to nearly 450 with counts improving almost daily.

Waters of the North Santiam are up to 2,000 cfs at the headwaters below Detroit Reservoir. This is creating a situation on the river where it's a little high but still quite fishable. The flow and level are unlikely to change until the Fall rain starts.

We're approaching the time of year when fishers start to line the banks below Leaburg Dam on the McKenzie River to score summer steelhead.

The Guide's Forecast – The water in the lower Willamette dropped several feet overnight on Monday, September 26th and shut down the coho bite at Meldrum Bar, such as it was. Mid-week, coho could still be seen in the area but were totally lock-jawed. While low water doesn't seem to be impeding migration over the Falls and into the Clackamas, rain would certainly improve the prospects of hooking fish.

Prospects of hooking a steelhead or two are good on the North Santiam from Fishermen's Bend upstream. Take a camera, both for a shot of your fish (which you are encouraged to send to TGF) and to capture the Fall foliage. It's beautiful up there.

The McKenzie is rewarding steelheaders with fair-sized summer steelhead. Both bank and boat anglers are taking a few and it should be good for at least the next couple of weeks.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Sandy water visibility was down to two feet. Plenty of coho are present but only a few biters. Drifting cured salmon eggs in pocket water has been effective for some anglers as has a single corky fished with yarn holding some scent. All areas of the river hold coho now from the mouth to Cedar Creek.

Clackamas anglers are catching a few coho with 'few' being the operative word and spinners being the most productive lure. Good numbers of fish are in the system now with the greatest concentration at the mouth. Very early or late in the day is best. While summer steelheading is usually considered about done for the year approaching October, some nice, bright fish are being caught upstream. Unlike coho, the majority of metalheads are willing to take a well presented bait or lure. In any case, the water is low and clear so a stealthy approach would be wise. Eagle Creek is extremely low.

North Coast District Fishing Report – Some of the best fishing of the season took place over the weekend out of Tillamook Bay. On Saturday, some fishers claim they saw 50 fish taken by 8:30 am! No matter what the number, significant numbers of Chinook were caught on Saturday (figures, I didn't fish) and consistent catches, although not as great as last Saturday, have been witnessed from the ocean fishery. I did get to fish on Sunday and Monday taking 6 Chinook on Monday, releasing one wild coho and losing another Chinook. We didn't see many other fish caught and we never had a bite until about 10:00 that morning. With little NW swell, we were able to fish along the south jetty where we took 3 of our fish. The other bites came in the deep water SW of the green buoy that marks the end of the sunken jetty on the south side. When Monday rolled around, I guess I used up all my luck the day before. We had one bite and landed one fish- we caught that one reeling up as it took it on the surface as we were headed to the north tip on a hot bite! In recent days, some of the better fishing has been taking place NW of the north jetty in about 28 to 35 feet of water. There is a bit more seaweed to contend with as this is right at the mouth of Tillamook Bay so you'll have to check your baits more frequently. Plug cut herring has been out-producing whole herring for me. I am sure this will vary day to day.

Inside Tillamook Bay, anglers working the water have been able to produce fair catches of Chinook and an occasional coho. Anglers are reporting good numbers of coho jumping but unwilling to bite. Most anglers are not targeting coho with smaller spinners and the seaweed is making casting spinners a challenge. The best action has been coming on the second half of outgoing tide and a variety of colors are taking fish. Red/white and the chartreuse green dot spinners are producing consistent results but pink tipped rainbows and metallic colors with red tip are also producing consistent results when the sun begins to shine on the water. The middle of the bay and upper bay have been producing the best results and the extreme upper bay at the Oyster House Hole has been the best spot to avoid large amounts of seaweed. Remember, it's mostly Trask and Tillamook returning fish that we are targeting right now making the upper bay the best choice for finding them.

McMinnville resident Alex Bunch, a 12-year-old 4.0 student at Duniway Middle School, out-fished his Dad, Andrew, as well as the rest of the adults on the boat on Saturday, September 23rd on Tillamook Bay. The 36-pound Chinook measuring 41 inches fell to a spinner trolled on the upper

bay.



Tidewater bobber fishers have also been doing fair- particularly on the Trask River. If you can get away from the trash fish (these sculpin are mostly found around rocky areas like rip-rap) and you are willing to be patient and have good eggs, consistent results should follow. The Trask has been producing best from the 2-bit Hole downstream to the Piling Hole just below Jack Salmon Point.

Crabbing has been spotty as I have been crabbing in the south channel (along with several other people) and been getting about 6 to 8 keepers per 6 hour soak of the pots. I talked to one crabber that scored great results at Lyster's Corner when over-nighting his crab pots. The eddy here can sustain heavier tide flows but the last time I crabbed so low in the bay, we got mostly females. Most agree however, crabbing is challenging right now on Tillamook. Netarts and Nestucca estuaries remain the better bet.

This week, tuna have been 30 to 40 miles out of Tillamook Bay and catches have been light. Predictions for offshore conditions this weekend favor a Saturday run.

The Nehalem continues to disappoint for what most anglers would expect for this time of year. This system still has the capability to turn on as early October can be a great time to fish here but it's not shaping up to a banner year in this system.

Nestucca Chinook anglers report slow fishing in tidewater with occasional flurries of action. Several fish were caught Wednesday this week by bank fishermen on bobber and eggs at the Airport (Boat Ramp) hole.

The Guide's Forecast – This should be another productive week for Tillamook fishers. With a strong showing of 5 year-old fish, hopefully the 4 year-old brood is just as strong. The 5 year-olds tend to show first so anglers may begin to see more of the Tillamook and Trask River bound 4's come in this week. They should begin to show in force in the ocean and upper bay. With the ocean forecasted to continue to be friendly in the coming week, most of the effort will likely be outside. Keep in mind when high numbers of anglers fishing outside, biters get culled from the fishery before they make it to the upper bay. That's not to say that bay fishers won't have some good

opportunities in the coming week but it may pay dividends to seek out virgin water when hunting these Chinook. Be prepared to fight seaweed too but if you can get your gear fishing, results should be decent. Hatchery coho may be kept until the end of October although more wild coho are likely to begin showing so take care in their release.

Some of the better tides will occur at night which may bode well for in-bay escapement when anglers can't target them. This may allow tidewater anglers some extra opportunity using bobbers and eggs along with sand shrimp in the Trask. The Tillamook tidewater is the perfect place to troll spinners seaweed free and fair numbers of fish should be present in this gentlemen's fishery.

With effort high, crabbing should continue to be a challenge for Tillamook area anglers. Most people that are crabbing are fishing too but those willing to just crab with rings can take limits if they work at it. A minus tide series will start in the middle of next week, taking place at night so an overnight soak wouldn't be the best idea.

Anglers fishing the Nehalem system may find their best luck at the jaws in the softer tide series this week. Night tides will favor upstream trollers so the town of Nehalem and Wheeler will offer some possibilities into the weekend.

Central & South Coast Reports – Fresh Chinook continue to enter with each tide on the Siletz and while boats outnumber fish, catch rates have continued to improve this week. Once the domain of anchor fishermen soaking Kwikfish, boaters may be seen trolling and bobber fishing effectively here. The only downside of angling diversity here is that in crowded conditions (a daily occurrence here), trollers must stay alert to avoid playing bumper boats with those on the hook.

Sport tuna boats out of Newport on Tuesday this week were surprised by rough conditions as the forecast was for two foot swells at 10 second intervals. Fog made radar a necessity for safe navigation. Tuna catches were fair to good, but ocean conditions chased most back to port early. Yesterday (09/27) the ocean was flat but the fog persisted. Albacore catches, however, were poor. This week may be the last opportunity of the year for tuna.

Chinook fishing on the Alsea has been a crapshoot. Scores of chinook were caught on Saturday, the 23rd, but only a handful Sunday and Monday. When it's good, though, it has been great. Crabbing is productive in the bay.

Steelheading is fair to good in the North Umpqua, slow in the mainstem Smallmouth bass are taking all manner of bait or lure in the South Umpqua and main river. Chinook fishing has slowed out of Winchester Bay. A few chinook are being taken daily inside the bay on trilled herring or spinners.

Siltcoos and Tahkenitch lakes are open to the taking of wild coho. This is the third year for this fishery, made possible by the healthy recovery of these fish, determined by ODFW biologists to be larger than necessary numbers to produce a good spawn. Anglers may keep one adult and one jack per day up to five adults for the year combined for both lakes. Trolling spinners is effective.

Coquille trollers are doing well for Chinook with a few coming in over the 30-pound mark. Crabbing is excellent in Coos bay while Chinook fishing is fair but improving.

In "normal" years, this time of year would be considered past the peak of the run for Fall Chinook in Rogue tidewater. But none of the runs this year have really been normal, so perhaps it shouldn't come as a surprise when trollers saw an influx of fresh, bright fish and an upswing of catches over the last week. Jacks and coho are also entering now, putting smiles on anglers faces and creating more than a few Fall barbecue alerts. Trolling an anchovy with a spinner on it's nose is still the top

producer. Catches of Chinook and steelhead have been very good up to Agness and bait-dunkers have done well this week for Chinook in the Grants pass stretch. The Rogue closes for Chinook retention from Gold Ray Dam to Hog creek on October 1st. Steelhead fishing is an option on the upper Rogue, but only flies may be used until November 1st although they may be delivered by any manner of rod and reel.

Chetco anglers are doing well for Chinook in tidewater and are finding jacks in the mix.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Steelheading on the Deschutes remains rewarding. Water levels are at summertime low and will remain so until irrigation use ceases in mid-October.

Fall River opened below the Falls on September 27th. Blue-Winged-Olives and midges have been effective here.

Northwest Trout – Detroit Reservoir and West Salish Pond are both scheduled to be planted with trout. In the last trout stocking of the season, Henry Hagg got a delivery of 8,000 rainbows this week courtesy of the ODFW. Hagg Lake closes on the weekend before thanksgiving and will re-open the first Saturday of March next year.

Washington fishing reports:

As supplied by the WDF&W web site, the Weekender Report:

North Puget Sound

The coho salmon catch continues to be spotty in both saltwater and freshwater fisheries throughout most of the region. "Based on the catch rates in the sport fishery, we haven't seen a big push of coho come into Puget Sound," said Tim Flint, salmon resource manager for WDFW. "But there are coho around, and the number of fish moving into the region should be improving."

Anglers in marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) and 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) are finding some coho. Recent creel checks at the Everett and Edmonds boat ramps show anglers are averaging about one silver for every seven rods. The catch in Marine Area 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) has been slightly better. Anglers are averaging one silver for every six rods, according to creel checks at the Armeni and Shilshole boat ramps.

Anglers who participated in the Edmonds coho derby earlier this month also managed to hook some silvers. A total of 450 anglers weighed in 122 coho during the event. Brandon Choate was the derby's big winner. The 13-year-old angler hauled in a 13 pound, 9.5 ounce coho, taking home first prize in both the adult and kids divisions. For his effort, Choate was awarded \$2,500 and a \$200 gift certificate. Ken Forland, who weighed in a 13 pound, 3 ounce coho, finished second and pocketed \$1,000, and Steve Bratton's 11 pound, 6 ounce silver was good enough for third place and a West Coast Resorts fishing trip.

Crabbing in the region is still an option, but only in one marine area for a limited time. The eastern and northern portions of Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands) are open for crab Wednesday through Saturday each week through Sept. 30. See WDFW's sport-crabbing website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/crab/>) for more information. Freshwater anglers have plenty of opportunities. The Snohomish and portions of the Stillaguamish, Snoqualmie, Skykomish and Skagit rivers are open for salmon fishing, and should start to heat up for coho. Steve Foley, WDFW fish biologist, said anglers are having some success on the Snohomish River. "There's been pretty good

fishing for coho recently," Foley said. "Fish are jumping around and moving up river, and some anglers are doing pretty well."

Anglers fishing the Snohomish River, as well as the Skykomish, Snoqualmie and Stillaguamish rivers, have a daily limit of two salmon measuring at least 12 inches and must release chinook and pinks. Anglers on the Skagit River are allowed three salmon daily measuring at least 12 inches, and must release chinook. Anglers should check WDFW's 2006/2007 Fishing in Washington pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) for more information on those and other fisheries in the region.

Rather cast a line at a lake? Lake Washington is open for coho, although fishing has been slow, Foley said. "There should be plenty of coho in the lake. We've seen good numbers of coho moving through the Ballard Locks, well over a 1,000 a day last week," he said. Anglers are allowed two coho per day (minimum size 12 inches) from waters north of the Highway 520 Bridge and east of the Montlake Bridge.

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

Now that salmon fishing is closed in most ocean areas and not yet open on many area rivers, the focus has turned to the hatchery coho fishery heating up in the western Strait of Juan de Fuca. Through mid-September, catch rates in Sekiu averaged about a half a fish per rod, but approached a fish per angler some days.

"Coho really respond to the onset of increasing rain during the fall, and we've started to see that during the past week," said Laurie Peterson, a WDFW fish biologist. "Once we start getting more rainfall, the fish will likely start to move further into Puget Sound and catch rates should pick up." Anglers are expected to test the bite Sept. 23 at the Sekiu Coho Derby at Olson's Resort. For information, call 360-963-2311.

Although most ocean salmon fishery closed Sept. 17, Marine Area 1 remains open through Sept. 30. Through Sept. 17, anglers fishing out of Ilwaco averaged one fish for every two rods - nearly all coho, said Wendy Beeghley, another WDFW fish biologist.

Also, a portion of Marine Area 3 (LaPush) opens Sept. 23 through Oct. 8 for a late-season salmon fishery. See WDFW's 2006/2007 Fishing in Washington pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) for details on boundaries and rules. The LaPush Last Chance Salmon Derby on Sept. 30 and Oct. 1 will feature \$4,300 in prizes, including \$1,000 each for the top coho and chinook. Call 360-374-2531 for information.

Salmon fishing opened Sept. 16 in Grays Harbor, but anglers must release any chinook they catch through Sept. 30. The daily limit is two fish, with a minimum size of 12 inches. Starting Oct. 1, anglers may keep one chinook salmon as part of their daily catch limit.

The salmon have been elusive lately in Puget Sound, with almost no chinook being recorded and only a few coho biting. But WDFW fish biologists predict the onset of fall rain should move the fish into inland waters as the season continues in marine areas 11 (Vashon Island to the Tacoma Narrows Bridge), 12 (Hood Canal), 13 (South Puget Sound) and 10 (Bremerton), with a daily limit of two fish. New opportunities for fall fishing open as the salmon make their way back up area rivers. Several area rivers open for salmon fishing on Oct. 1, including the Chehalis, Elk, Hoquiam, Humptulips, Johns, Satsop and Wishkah in Grays Harbor County; Kennedy Creek (upriver to the Highway 101 bridge) in Thurston County; Nemah River in Pacific County; and the Skokomish River in Mason County. Many of these rivers are open to coho fishing only, so anglers are advised to check WDFW's 2006/2007 Fishing in Washington pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) for details. The White River in Pierce County also opens Oct. 1 for trout fishing.

Recreational crab fishing remains open in marine areas 4 (Neah Bay), 5 (Sekiu and Pillar Point) and 13 (South Puget Sound) seven days a week through Feb. 28. In early October, WDFW will announce if crab fishing will reopen in other waters where the catch has not met area quotas.

Southwest Washington:

Anglers must now release any chinook salmon they catch on the mainstem Columbia River from Rocky Point to Pasco, but the window of opportunity is still open for fall salmon on most area tributaries. Growing numbers of coho are also pushing up many of those rivers - notably the Cowlitz, Lewis and Kalama - as sturgeon anglers on the mainstem Columbia await the Oct. 5 start of a new retention fishery from Bonneville Dam downriver to the Wauna powerlines.

"This is prime time for the tributaries," said Joe Hymer, a WDFW fish biologist. "The rain we've had recently is helping to move fish up the rivers."

Of 129 boat anglers on the Cowlitz River from Sept. 11-17, creel checkers counted 29 chinook salmon, 15 hatchery coho and seven hatchery steelhead. Another 60 bank anglers contacted during that period took home one chinook and five hatchery coho. On the north fork of the Lewis River, 221 bank anglers were checked with 32 hatchery coho but no adult chinook. Eighty-seven bank anglers pulled 14 hatchery coho and five chinook from the Kalama River the same week, while those fishing the lower Klickitat River scored 11 chinook for 19 rods.

Hymer said anglers should start seeing more bright, late-stock coho in the catch during the weeks ahead, noting that all unmarked wild coho must be released from the mouth of the Columbia to the Hood River Bridge and all tributaries in between. But anglers hoping to take home a chinook need to move fast. Many tributaries to the Columbia - or sections of those rivers - are scheduled to close for chinook retention Oct. 1 to avoid interfering with spawning salmon. Waters closing to chinook retention that day include:

Elochoman River, upstream from the Highway 4 Bridge

North Fork Toutle from the Kidd Valley Road Bridge near Highway 504 upstream

Green River

Cowlitz River from Blue Creek to Mill Creek

Kalama River from the natural gas pipeline crossing upstream

Washougal River from the Little Washougal River upstream

White Salmon River from the posted markers half a mile above the Highway 14 Bridge upstream

Other changes beginning Oct. 1 include:

On the Lewis River, all fishing will close from Colvin Creek (near the salmon hatchery) upstream to Merwin Dam.

At Drano Lake, night closures will take effect and all non-tribal fishing will be prohibited Wednesdays.

In the Buoy 10 fishery in the Columbia River estuary, the daily catch limit for salmon will increase to six fish, although only two of those fish can be adults, of which only one can be a chinook. Anglers must release chum, sockeye, and wild coho. The Buoy 10 fishery is the only area of the mainstream Columbia still open for chinook retention below the Highway 395 Bridge in Pasco.

But for many anglers, the most important change set for October is the opening of the white sturgeon retention fishery from the Wauna powerlines to Bonneville Dam. Limited to catch-and-release fishing since August, anglers fishing in that area will be allowed to keep sturgeon measuring 42 inches to 60 inches on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays only. More than 9,400 of the area's 12,800-fish annual harvest guideline remain to be caught, setting the stage for a strong fall season, Hymer said.

"I can't remember when this many sturgeon were available for the fall fishery," Hymer said. "Bank and boat fishing just below Bonneville Dam should be especially productive."

Meanwhile, Hymer suggested a few other fishing options for anglers looking to try something different. One is the catch-and-release fishery for gamefish - including steelhead - that runs through Nov. 30 on a stretch of the Wind River. Closed for a number of years, the fishery is now open from 100 yards upstream of Shipherd Falls to boundary markers approximately 800 yards downstream from Carson National Fish Hatchery (except from 400 feet below to 100 feet above the coffer dam and all tributaries). Anglers must follow the selective gear rules in effect. "Historically, that area had a good steelhead fishery," Hymer said. "For anglers looking for a change of pace, this might be worth a try."

Another fishery that hasn't received much attention is sea-run cutthroat trout on the Cowlitz River, from Blue Creek downstream. Anglers can catch and keep five hatchery cutts, which often measure from 12 to 20 inches, Hymer said. "Those fish will take flies, lures or bait and put up a heck of a fight," he said. "Mostly it's a bank fishery, and you're not going to run into a lot of people." Other options? Anglers are still catching leftover catchable-sized rainbow plants and hefty triploids at Swift Reservoir on the Lewis River, and a crew from the Skamania Hatchery was busy planting 3,000 cutthroat in Goose Lake during the week of Sept. 18. "Those cutts, averaging a pound each, should provide excellent fishing until the snow gets too deep," Hymer said.

Finally, high mountain lakes are still accessible for fishing throughout the region. "It's a good time to head into the high country," Hymer said. "The mosquitoes are finally down, the crowds have thinned, the foliage is in fall colors and the trout are putting on the feed bag to prepare for winter."

Eastern Washington:

Snake River steelheading near the confluence with the Clearwater River near Clarkston has been steady for early morning or late evening boat anglers and for shore anglers. The daily limit is three hatchery steelhead (rainbow trout over 20 inches marked with a clipped fin). Any wild (unmarked) steelhead, or chinook and coho salmon must be released.

Trout fishing at many of the region's lakes is excellent now with cooler air and water temperatures. Chris Donley, WDFW central district fish biologist, reminds anglers that most trout lakes in Spokane County close at the end of the month and September is "prime time for catching."

"Amber Lake shifts to a two-month long catch-and-release season starting the first of October, and it will provide some good fly fishing," Donley said. "Clear Lake stays open through October and it has a phenomenal brown trout population that really hasn't been tapped."

Donley also said that Rock Lake, in Whitman County, is open year-round and has a good population of brown and rainbow trout. Lake Roosevelt is another year-round water that's always good for big rainbows. "Some of the best crappie and perch fishing is also happening now at waters like Long Lake or Downs, Bonnie, Eloika, Diamond and Waitts," Donley said.

Daily bag and size limits, as well as catch-and-release and selective gear rules were lifted Sept. 13 at McDowell Lake in Stevens County, so anglers can harvest as many rainbow and brook trout as possible before the lake is treated next month to remove an infestation of tench. McDowell Lake, which normally closes Oct. 31, will close Oct. 2 for the rehabilitation.

The U.S. Forest Service boat ramp at Browns Lake in Pend Oreille County is currently closed for long-needed repairs, but will re-open by October, the final month of fly fishing on the lake for cutthroat trout. Until then, a primitive access at the far end of the lake near the big cedar grove is still available for float tube launching.

North Central Washington:

Daily bag and size limits were lifted as of Sept. 13 at several trout lakes in the region that have undesirable fish infestations and are scheduled for rehabilitation later this year. The lakes would normally close Sept. 30, but fishing has been extended up to treatment schedules. Vic Meyers (Rainbow) Lake, Mirror Lake, and Park Lake in Grant County will remain open until Oct. 30. Blue Lake in Grant County will be open through Oct. 22. Pearygin Lake in Okanogan County will remain open through Oct. 8. Long Lake in Okanogan County will remain open through Oct. 1. Alkali Lake in Grant County, which is normally open year-round, will close Oct. 23-Dec. 31.

Bob Jateff, WDFW Okanogan district fish biologist, reminds anglers that Methow River trout fishing closes Sept. 30. Catch-and-release fishing with selective gear has been fairly good, he noted, with both rainbow and cutthroat trout up to 18 inches being caught on both flies and spinners.

"Fishing in general is picking up now as water and air temperatures drop," Jateff said. "Some of the selective gear lakes like Big Twin, near Winthrop, and Blue in the Sinlahekin, are pretty good and are open through October."

Access to some fishing waters could still be restricted due to wildfires. Contact the U.S. Forest Service Methow Ranger District at 509-996-4000 or see <http://inciweb.org/state/49/> for information about access.

South Central Washington:

Paul Hoffarth, WDFW fish biologist, said that "for the time being," the Yakima River will remain open for the harvest of fall chinook and coho salmon. "Overall the fishing has been slow," he said. An estimated 16 chinook were harvested the first full week of September and six wild steelhead were caught and released. Effort has picked up, primarily at the Chandler powerhouse.

Hoffarth said fishing success typically improves around Oct. 1 through the end of the season. The sport fishery is open from the Highway 240 bridge in the Tri-Cities upstream to Prosser Dam and from the Highway 223 bridge at Granger upstream to Sunnyside (Parker Dam). There is a night closure and non-buoyant lure restriction in effect for all species from Sept. 1-Oct 22. All steelhead (hatchery and wild) must be released unharmed.

The Columbia River Hanford Reach fall chinook salmon sport fishery is open through Oct. 22 upstream of the old Hanford townsite (wooden power line tower crossing). The area from the Highway 395 bridge upstream to the Hanford townsite is scheduled to remain open through Dec. 31, although Hoffarth said few chinook are caught after the first week of November.

"Right now we're starting to see a few chinook caught in the Hanford sport fishery," he said. An estimated 90 adults and eight jacks were harvested the first full week of September. "Fishing usually picks up around the third week of September in the Reach. A good return of fall chinook was expected, but that may be revised based on current fish passage."

The Ringold area (Highway 395 bridge to Hanford) will open for the harvest of Ringold Hatchery-reared steelhead on Oct. 1. These fish can be distinguished by their fin clipped adipose and right ventral fins. All other hatchery and wild steelhead must be released unharmed.

Hoffarth also noted that fishing for walleye can be extremely productive in the fall. The Columbia River below McNary Dam regularly produces good catches at Umatilla, Irrigon, Paterson, Boardman, Crow Butte, and Arlington.

"Many anglers prefer night fishing, but it can be hazardous," Hoffarth said. Be aware of other anglers and barge traffic. Keep your lights in good working condition and wear your life jacket."

Reader Email

Got a story to tell or information to share? We'd love to hear from you!

Write to the TGF staff:

Bob Rees: brees@pacifier.com

Doug Rees: drees@TheGuidesForecast.com

Michael Teague: *?

Random Links

Day-use fees waived on federal lands Saturday:

*<http://www.publiclandsday.org/involved/oregon.cfm>

From the WDFW - Identifying soft-shell crab:

*<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/crabreg/softshell.htm>

Bonus video - BOATRAMP BOY'S Outrageous Seawall Lunker (Language advisory):

*<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Ig95UolQFY&NR>

Weekly Quote – "Why is it almost universally believed that luck remains the fundamental element in going fishing?" - Bryn Hammond

GOOD LUCK!