

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **November 10<sup>th</sup>, – November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2006**

**Oregon Fisheries Update:**

**Willamette Valley/Metro-** Heavy rain will have anglers tying rigs, sharpening hooks and cleaning reels this week in the Willamette Valley.

Flow regulation on the Columbia River however gives desperate anglers a chance to participate safely in the sturgeon fishery. Gorge anglers are still taking good numbers of keepers- particularly near the deadline. Oversized fish are still being landed and but smelt tipped with shrimp or squid is taking the majority of biters.

Success for boat and bank anglers in the John Day Pool is gaining momentum and the action should continue to improve as the month progresses. Trollers take steelhead using plugs going with the theory that darker colors work best on dark days, metallic colors on bright days.

Daily counts of all anadromous fish at Willamette Falls were at or near zero at the end of October. As of November 1st all steelhead will be counted as winter-run fish. At this time last week, flows were just over 10,000 cfs at the falls.

Sturgeon like muddy water, but heavy wood debris coming downstream will make boating too dangerous to consider until it clears out.

Last week, we remarked that the Clackamas "doesn't fish well over 12.5 feet." At this writing, it's over 22 feet and rising.

The Sandy crested early Tuesday afternoon, and while muddy, will return to fishable color when the freezing level drops. Unfortunately, it won't offer any opportunities until winter steelhead start running.

The North Santiam is a raging torrent and will remain higher than normal as the level at Detroit Reservoir must be reduced over 40 feet in the next three weeks for flood control.

No trout stocking is scheduled for Oregon waters this week.

**Northwest –** Chinook fishing in the Tillamook district was red-hot prior to the current weather system moving on shore. Unfortunately, it hit the day the North Coast Rendezvous began but anglers fishing in the fundraiser still did well on Thursday. Severe weather hit by Friday and success plummeted.

The Wilson River hit an all-time high on Monday evening, cresting nearly 23 feet. Trailers and vacant boats were swept downstream and all north coast streams and estuaries are too dangerous to navigate. Unbelievably, smaller streams like the Kilchis and Necanicum may reach fishable levels by Friday. When the north coast streams do clear, the fishing will be excellent for fall chinook. Fresh fish will be available in all reaches of floatable waters and bank anglers will have excellent access to fresh fish in all watersheds. Leafy debris may frustrate some anglers until flows drop further.

The Nestucca, Trask, Wilson, Kilchis and Necanicum should all produce excellent catches of chinook over the weekend barring any other major rain events. Wild coho will also be present in good numbers and have been running large this year. Caution should be taken to properly identify your

catch before harvest.

Big numbers of bright chinook were in the upper reaches of Alsea tidewater late last week. Bobber fishers scored excellent results on Thursday but the rising river put fish off the bite by Friday. Driftboaters should score excellent results by the weekend.

The Siletz River crested at about 23 feet in the early morning hours of November 7th. It was 2.5 last week. Although the run was sub-par this fall, action for driftboaters working the lower stretches should prove productive for backbouncers and plug pullers.

Even with all the fresh water influx, lower Columbia River crabbing will remain productive. Tides will moderate this weekend and anglers should take advantage of the late afternoon incoming tides when crabbing.

**Southwest** – While bobber fishermen would argue to the contrary, rain was needed on the South coast. Chinook holding at the top of tidewater are running upstream with the freshet, salmon holding offshore are entering estuaries and rivers which are getting flushed of leaves.

Certainly, this is a 'blowout' week. All Southwest rivers are over the banks with heaviest rainfall occurring the afternoon of November 7th and more on the way.

The smaller, more volatile systems will fish first during even brief respites in precipitation. The Elk and Sixes rivers will drop and clear quickly when rain subsides. With an extended break or moderation, the larger systems will be fishable last. Chinook are on the move and fishing will be good when water conditions allow.

**Eastern** - Rain triggered a "glacial outburst flood" on the White River, which flows from Mt. Hood into the Deschutes, causing damage to Highway 35 bridge under which it flows. The Hood River, carrying large trees downstream, took out the bridge at Red Hill Road.

Grande Ronde steelheading is underway but success is not outstanding. It typically peaks closer to Thanksgiving and when the weather stabilizes, action should pick up.

**Southwest Washington-** Along with many NW Oregon streams, Washington's best options will be put on hold until flows subside. The Cowlitz and Lewis Rivers were an anglers best options until the storm front hit and may not fish again until the middle of next week. Late run coho should still be available when rivers clear.

Washington steelheaders still have options however as Ringold/Hanford Reach steelhead are falling at a rate of one every 4 hours for boaters during the week. Weekday bank anglers are taking a steelhead every 6 hours in the area.

**Columbia River Fishing Report** – Sturgeon fishing remains a highlight for Columbia River anglers. Effort was way down last week with the inclement weather. It can be especially challenging in the gorge where weather can intensify with the geography. **Pro guide Dennis Mallory (503-313-4665)** weathered the storm on Sunday in search of a sturgeon option for his customers. Dennis reported landing about 5 keepers, a couple of oversized fish and a small handful of shakers. Given it was a catch and release day, there was very little competition. Dennis also found out why there wasn't anybody else out there that day- when he rounded the corner downstream of the deadline, he had "the perfect storm" hit him full frontal. Dennis stated he had several bouts of green water go over his bow! The group did have a successful day (and lived to tell about it) using smelt tipped with squid. Dennis stated that the squid is what gave them an advantage but they were also

fishing near the deadline in the swifter flows where the keeper sized fish have been hanging out.

Sturgeon anglers are also finding fish in downstream locations. The stretch from Beacon Rock to Horsetail Falls has also been productive but the fish seem to average smaller here. The crowds are down in this locale so anglers don't have to feel as crowded in this reach. With competition not so intense, innovative technique is not as critical. Smelt will remain the key ingredient but if you tip your smelt with squid or shrimp, your chances increase significantly.

Upstream, steelheaders are anxious to get the season underway. Dam counts have subsided but there are still good numbers of "B" run steelhead going through the impoundments. The John Day pool produces the best catches but innovative anglers can find success downstream of other impoundments. John Day Pool anglers target their quarry upstream of the John Day Dam and often utilize the John Day River itself of a change of pace. The John Day River itself is a bit more challenging to navigate but steelhead are concentrated in higher numbers. Anglers will have to match their technique to water conditions with bobber and jig or bait one of the most popular in lower flows. Recent precipitation may cause anglers to switch to other methods but the John Day River gauge indicates river flows won't fluctuate much from the recent weather front. Trollers working the mainstem Columbia will troll wiggle warts and deeper diving Hot Shots for steelhead. You'll want to work the upper 12 feet of the water column matching colors to overhead conditions. Bright colors on sunny days, dark colors on darker days.

Although crabbing was great prior to the high water, it may take a small hit on the recent rain freshet. The lower Columbia however is a powerful body of water and the incoming tide will likely still influence crab migration still making it a productive fishery. Upstream impoundments on the majority of the Columbia will prevent any major freshwater influx but the Willamette may have a small impact.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Sturgeon anglers will find the best fishing on catch and release days (Sunday – Wednesday) in the Columbia River Gorge. If you are looking for keepers like most anglers, Thursdays will be the best days to fish. Most of the keepers are still located in the faster flows near the deadline but anglers versed in productive water downstream of Beacon Rock can still take limits if they are willing to hunt for fish. Smelt is the obvious choice but tipping with shrimp or squid will increase your chances. Anglers should also find some success from the Portland to Longview stretch and the lower Willamette may offer some action up as well. Your best bet for keepers however will remain the gorge- close to the deadline if you are looking for keepers.

Steelheaders are coming into their season in the John Day area. Trollers should work the water just upstream of the John Day Dam but to break the monotony of trolling, venture safely up the John Day Arm and reading the water, work the slow, deep slots using bobber and jig or shrimp to entice both wild and hatchery fish. As we near Thanksgiving, the season should peak with fish in the high teens available to lucky anglers. Some of the best catch rates of the season will be witnessed in this fishery.

Crabbers shouldn't be worried about the recent influx of fresh water on the lower Columbia. Soft tides this weekend may make for some productive limits of quality sized keepers. Fresh bait will produce the best and it's a good idea to use turkey legs when seals are present. Downstream of Hammond should produce the best results. Buoys 20 and 22 along with lower Desdemona Sands downstream of the light marker will be the most productive areas.

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report** – Regular readers recall that once or twice a year, this column recommends not fishing, but preparation during a week fraught with too much of that most precious resource with which Oregonians are blessed: water.

This'd be one o' those weeks.

At this time last week, flows were just over 10,000 cfs at Willamette Falls. As of November 7th, it was 28,700 cfs with visibility less than one foot.

The numbers of summer steelhead entering the trap at Foster Dam on the South Santiam have been falling weekly since July. But summer steelies are still on the move with the total nearly 6,200 in the first week of November.

**The Guide's Forecast** – The Willamette will fish for sturgeon safely for the Thursday through Saturday retention period only if most of the trees and deadheads have washed out. Lower Multnomah Channel will surely hold a keeper or two. Muddy water has a positive effect on the sturgeon bite.

Fishing will be out of the question this week on the North or South Santiam.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports** – The Clack and Sandy, both hard hit by the storm front, remain out of shape. This is actually as good a time as any for these rivers to be blown as the next run of significance to anglers is winter steelhead and it would be optimistic to try either river as early as Thanksgiving. But they will.

**North Coast District Fishing Report** – You wanted rain? You got rain. Any avid angler knows the troubles we've seen here in the Tillamook district. This segment of the report will be short as nobody (in their right mind) has been out fishing in recent days. Damage during this record flood has yet to be tallied but like the flood waters, it is likely to be monumental. We just hope it's not a sign of things to come. Prior to the flooding, the fish were on the march. North Coast Rendezvous anglers scored fair results on Thursday of last week with the best numbers coming from the Tillamook tidewater. The onshore flow made fishing in the bay challenging and by Friday, fishing turned downright crummy. When waters are on the rise, fish are on the move and not motivated to bite. My last day of fishing was on Wednesday when I had out the crew from Turnstone Environmental to conduct a chinook census (they usually do Marbled Murrelets and Spotted Owls). The group located 3 nice chinook and lost another at Bay City on the morning incoming tide. Herring was the ticket and we couldn't get the fish to bite spinners like they did the day before. The Bay City bite heightened our excitement because the previous days were excellent for chinook along the jetty close to low slack in the afternoon. Fully anticipating good afternoon fishing, we headed west and fished the ocean for a short while until heading into the bay for the low slack bite. As I mentioned in last weeks report, the fish were clearly staging as we saw them all over the screen. They weren't biting very good however as we only took a 4<sup>th</sup> when in previous days, this was the area to be.

In lieu of fishing reports that just aren't there, we'll take a minute to examine the pluses and minuses of this flooding event. Granted there is a lot we don't know yet about how this flood will affect the geomorphology of the river or our future populations of salmon, there are some good things that could come out of all this disaster:

1. The high rain event will cause land slides, bringing essential fish habitat with it. Not only will large wood enter the rivers and small tributaries creating the complexity needed for juvenile salmonids but critical gravel will also enter, lowering the gradient of the watersheds and create more areas for salmon to spawn. These lower gradients will slow flows and allow gravel to recruit in the tailout sections of pools where incubating salmon eggs will successfully hatch.

2. The large amount of organic input will flow to the sea acting like a giant fertilizer base for aquatic insects to break down and create a necessary jump start to productive ocean conditions that feed our juvenile salmon when they first enter the ocean. I don't think it's any coincidence that the Pacific Ocean experienced unprecedented productivity just after the flood of 1996 occurred. Just as it is critical for salmon carcasses to fertilize freshwater ecosystems, it is as important that organic material make it to sea to feed the microorganisms that feed our out migrating juveniles. Discourage anyone you see cutting up logs along our ocean beaches and estuaries.
3. These types of rain events are fairly common this time of year. Our fall Chinook have evolved in these conditions and they will survive. Although some early spawners will have likely lost their brood, these late returning fish- especially of the Wilson and Kilchis Rivers will do fine as they spawn later into November, December and even January. Barring any further major high water events, survival may be good for future returning adults.

Now, the bad news:

1. We just lost our wild spring chinook fry. Wiped out, gone. Their eggs just went into the gravel only a few weeks ago. It's not enough that these fish have to endure excessive water temperatures often exceeding 68 or 70 degrees, fighting off fungus, gasping for dissolved oxygen that just isn't there. High water events like this put the nail in the coffin for an already severely depressed run of wild fish. These wild spring chinook are on the brink of extinction when at one time, their numbers often rivaled the fall run of salmon. When we modified these watersheds to favor salmonids whose lifecycles didn't require extended periods of residence time in freshwater, the fall chinook thrived. Of the 6 runs of wild salmonids that return to the North Oregon Coast, the fall chinook (along with the chum salmon), require the least amount of residence times in fresh water. The other 4 runs of fish, coho, steelhead, spring chinook and cutthroat trout over-summer and/or over-winter for at least one season. They not only fall prey to high water events like this one, but even more critical, lethal water temperatures during the summer months.
2. Logging levels in the Tillamook are still the highest in the last 50 years. Now, Tillamook County Commissioners (2 out of 3 of them anyway) want to increase harvest levels over the widely accepted Tillamook Forest Management Plan (FMP) that was set to play out for the next 10 years. We are 5 years though a trial period and recent forest modeling shows that in order to maintain critical fish and wildlife habitat, no modifications to the FMP should be made. New science is also available showing the important function that these trees in the rainforest provide. From a document available from the US Forest Service web site at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/psw/programs/cufr/TreesInOurCity/> research indicates that 100 mature trees remove 112,000 gallons per year of storm water run-off. With the massive cut now going on in the Tillamook, rainforest function has significantly been compromised, exacerbating the intense flooding events that we have been experiencing in just the last 10 years. With 2, 100-year floods and 1 500-year flood experienced in the last decade, do you see a dangerous trend developing?
3. I still believe, even more critical than the winter run-off issue to our wild salmon populations, is the excessive summer temperatures these fish have to endure. A functioning rainforest has the capability of re-injecting cool water back into our fish bearing streams during the warm summer months when juveniles are rearing and adult spring chinook are spawning. The key word here is **functional**. There has to be a forest in order for it to function. Look at these forest ecosystems from the eyes of a juvenile salmon or steelhead. Easier yet, look at these forest fish farms like a dairy farm. The more productive pastureland dairy cows have, the more milk a farm can produce. This is called carrying capacity. If wild salmon are restricted to only small reaches of streams that meet the minimum standards for the survival of these fish, it limits the watersheds carrying capacities. When temperatures exceed 68 degrees, fish die within **days** of this occurrence- FACT.

Once they reach 70 degrees, they die within **hours**. The more stream reaches that meet the temperature requirements for wild fish, the higher the carrying capacity, the higher the survival rates.

And that's my 2 cents. Thanks for listening. Now, how about that forecast?

**The Guide's Forecast** – So much good fishing ahead. Where do we start?

If it's Friday morning, and you're reading this, I am already on the lower Kilchis and likely have a couple of chromers in my box already. It's hard to believe but unless the Kilchis has had some major slides, we could be fishing it as soon as Friday. I looked at it late on Wednesday and it was dropping and actually clearer than I had anticipated. NW Oregon rivers should clear in this order:

Necanicum near Seaside, North Fork Nehalem, Kilchis, Trask, Nestucca, Wilson and last (if at all) the Nehalem. The best bets for fresh fish will be the Kilchis and Wilson but the Trask and Nestucca should offer up some decent opportunities. With the prolonged period of high water, fresh fish should be available throughout the watershed. Even higher up in the watersheds, fresh fish should be available to bank anglers. Keep in mind the fresher fish will be in the steelhead type water to begin with so target them using drift gear- eggs and shrimp along with drift bobbers like large corkies or spin-n-glos.

One of the options which won't be available for a while is the disabled anglers platform at the Nehalem fish hatchery. Damaged by floodwaters, the hatchery manager, Joe Watkins, assures anglers that it will be repaired "as fast as we can."

Driftboaters need to exercise extreme caution as a lot of trees and limbs have come down and river blockages are highly likely to impede navigation, especially on smaller rivers such as the Necanicum and North Fork Nehalem. The Kilchis is also likely to be hazardous for drifting. With flows high, boaters should target areas of interception like soft water tailouts or the inside slower water of runs. These fish are calorie counters and will take the path of least resistance especially given they don't feed upon entering fresh water. Although not an advocate of anchor fishing in these coastal streams, it can be the most productive method to employ as fish are on the move and will come to you if you have the patience. As the water drops, fish will begin holding in their typical water with chinook seeking the deeper runs and eddy's. This is NOT the time to anchor. You should be backtrolling and backbouncing your way downstream giving equal opportunity to anglers throughout the drift. This is also your best chance to find success. Kwikfish work well either on anchor or backtrolled but when fish begin to hold, backbouncing eggs and shrimp is a hard combination to beat.

Keep in mind that a slug of wild coho are also due back to these rivers and anglers will occasionally intercept them. Be sure of your identification and release all wild coho. Chum salmon will also be in many of the Tillamook streams- they must also be released unharmed.

And speaking of chum, this may be a good year for sportanglers seeking a good time with one of the hardest fighting fish on the Oregon Coast. The Miami and Kilchis Rivers offer the best opportunities for chum fishing but be aware of the property you are wanting to fish. Respect private property rights and fish only where signs indicate you are allowed to trespass. Green drift gear (yarn and corkies) will work the best for these fish.

Crabbing? Forget it unless you plan on heading to Netarts Bay. It could actually be good over there as there are few freshwater streams to push the sea-spiders to the salt chuck.

Tillamook Bay sturgeon fishing may be in the near future.....stand by!

**Central & South Coast Reports** – The Alsea crested at 16.5 on Tuesday morning but has been dropping since. It may fish on Friday at about six feet, but is predicted to rise to near 12 feet with the next front over the weekend. Most of the heavy wood debris has washed downstream to the bay, leaving the river relatively clear of wood and trees.

The North Fork Umpqua is providing fair to good steelhead fishing. While the smallmouth bass remain on the bite in the mainstem Umpqua River above Scottsburg, fishing for steelhead, coho and Chinook is poor.

The Siuslaw near Mapleton will produce Chinook once the water clears.

Coos and Coquille trollers have experienced a slowing of action for Chinook, but the few being taken have been nice, bright fish.

Chinook fishing will be good on the Elk and Sixes rivers when they drop and clear. These smaller ocean tributaries are volatile and are expected to fish as early as Friday.

The lower Rogue River and bay are high and muddy, offering no prospects to fishermen this week. Steelheaders in the Grants Pass stretch of the Rogue River are taking good numbers of fish but most of these are wild and must be released. Upper Rogue anglers, however, are making good catches of steelhead, the majority of which are of hatchery origin. The Rogue from Shady Grove to the Hatchery Hole, formerly restricted to flies only, allowed the use of all manner of bait and lures starting November 1st and all have been effective at times. While flies or lures may be used below Shady Grove, the use of bait is restricted.

While the Chetco was blown out and muddy mid-week, it should fish well for Chinook this weekend if there's no heavy precipitation in the interim.

**Central and Eastern Oregon** – Steelheading was good on the lower Deschutes from Warm Springs to the mouth over the weekend and prior to the deluge.

Streams and rivers closed for trout fishing November 1st.

**Northwest Trout** – Following the heavy precipitation, Green Peter is fishing fairly well for trout although the reservoir is high. No Oregon water were planted with hatchery trout this week.

### **Washington fishing reports:**

#### **From the WDF&W Weekender Report:**

**North Puget Sound:** As the **coho** season winds down, **chum salmon** are starting to show up in the region's rivers. Anglers fishing the Snohomish, Skykomish and Stillaguamish rivers are doing well when it comes to chum, said Chad Jackson, WDFW fish biologist. "I've even heard some reports of chum weighing more than 20 pounds," Jackson said.

Some coho are still being caught in those rivers, but the fish are beginning to turn dark, said Jackson. Chum fishing, however, should continue to improve in the coming weeks, peaking toward the end of November. Anglers fishing the Snohomish River and portions of the Skykomish and

Stillaguamish rivers have a daily limit of two salmon measuring at least 12 inches but must release **chinook** and **pink** salmon.

Elsewhere, anglers will soon have an opportunity to catch lunker **trout** in Beaver Lake near Issaquah, thanks to the release of about 3,000 hatchery rainbows that average approximately three pounds each. The release is scheduled for the week of Nov. 13. Beaver Lake, which is one of several westside lowland lakes open to fishing year-round, is best fished by small boat, although anglers can also be successful fishing from shore, said Jackson. The daily bag limit is five fish, and bait anglers must keep the first five trout they catch.

On the saltwater, four marine areas of Puget Sound will reopen to recreational **crab** fishing starting today (Nov. 1). Marine areas 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca), 9 (Admiralty Inlet), 10 (Seattle/Bremerton), and 12 (Hood Canal) will reopen for sport crabbing seven days a week through Jan. 2.

The crab season has continued uninterrupted in marine areas 4 (Neah Bay), 5 (Sekiu), and 13 (south Puget Sound) since those areas opened June 18. Fishing in those areas will remain open seven days a week through Jan. 2, unless the catch quotas for those areas are reached before then. Marine areas 7S (San Juan Islands), 7E (Anacortes to Bellingham), 7N (Bellingham to Pt. Roberts), 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay), 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) and 11 (Tacoma-Vashon Island) will remain closed for the season.

**Blackmouth** fishing continues to be slow, although recent creel checks in the region did show a few bright spots. Two anglers at the Washington Park ramp were checked with two chinook Oct. 23, while eight anglers checked two chinook at the Bellingham ramp Oct. 28.

Anglers participating in the selective blackmouth fishery in marine areas 8-1 and 8-2 can keep up to two hatchery chinook per day, so long as the fish measure at least 22 inches in length. Wild chinook salmon, which have an intact adipose fin, cannot be brought aboard the boat.

In marine areas 9 and 10 anglers can keep one chinook as part of a two-salmon daily limit in each area. Anglers in Marine Area 7 also have a two-salmon daily limit but 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.

**South Sound/Olympic Peninsula:** Shellfish takes center stage in November as more areas of Puget Sound open for sport crabbing, and clam diggers get the go-ahead for a second fall clam dig on coastal beaches. Anglers can catch a mixture of chum and coho salmon in area waters.

Recreational **crab** fishing will reopen today (Nov. 1) in four marine areas of Puget Sound, including marine areas 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca), 12 (Hood Canal), 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) and 9 (Admiralty Inlet). Crab fishing in those area will be open seven days a week through Jan. 2. Also open seven days per week are marine areas 4 (Neah Bay), 5 (Sekiu) and 13 (south Puget Sound), where fishing has continued uninterrupted since those areas opened June 18.

Marine Area 11 (Tacoma) will remain closed for the season along with several other areas in Puget Sound where area catch quotas were reached during the summer season.

In addition, **razor clam** diggers can look forward to the second opening of the fall season, which gets under way Friday, Nov. 3, on evening tides at three of Washington's ocean beaches. Long Beach, Twin Harbors and Moccrocks will be open Friday, Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 3-5 now that marine toxin tests have confirmed the clams are safe to eat. A fourth evening of digging is also

scheduled Monday, Nov. 6 at Twin Harbors only. No digging will be allowed before noon any of those days.

Two beaches - Copalis Beach and Kalaloch Beach - will remain closed to clam digging in November. The beach at Copalis will be closed due to the low number of clams in the total allowable catch, said Dan Ayres, WDFW coastal shellfish manager. Kalaloch Beach, located within Olympic National Park, will also be closed to digging because park rangers will be busy monitoring the elk-hunting season.

WDFW and Olympic National Park have both tentatively scheduled more digs Dec. 2-3. Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks and Kalaloch beaches would open to razor clam digging pending the results of a new series of marine toxin tests. Copalis Beach will again be closed to clam digging. One beach, Twin Harbors, would be open one additional day, Dec. 4.

Another opening is also scheduled over the New Year's holiday, with evening digs tentatively scheduled Dec. 31 at all five ocean beaches - including Copalis - and continuing Jan. 1 at Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks and Kalaloch. Again, Twin Harbors would also remain open for an additional evening dig, Jan. 2.

Under WDFW rules, harvesters may take no more than 15 razor clams and must keep the first 15 taken, regardless of size or condition. Each digger's limit must be kept in a separate container. Meanwhile, fisheries managers are forecasting a strong, healthy run of fall chum salmon, according to Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. An estimated 600,000 chum are expected to return to South Puget Sound, he said. Hal Michael, WDFW regional fish biologist, said he watched anglers reel in good numbers of chum from Kennedy Creek on his recent visit there. Johns Creek in Mason County is also a good bet, he said. "They're arriving in all the usual places, and a little earlier than usual," he said.

WDFW staff and the Hoodport Hatchery report that schools of chum are gathering out in front of that facility, where the chum fishery has been open since Oct. 16. Starting today (Nov. 1), anglers can also target hatchery chum in several other areas, including the Dosewallips River and Duckabush River in Jefferson County, and Minter Creek in Pierce/Kitsap Counties.

**Coho** fishing has also been productive in some areas. On Hood Canal, anglers checked at the Tahuya Ramp averaged about one coho per angler for the week of Oct. 16-22. Anglers checked at the Fuller Bridge boat launch near the mouth of the Satsop River brought in one-third to one-half a fish per person during the same period, according to Wendy Beeghley, WDFW fish biologist.

**Southwest Washington:** The first **winter steelhead** of the season have begun to arrive at the Cowlitz Salmon Hatchery, but most area anglers have more immediate concerns. Catch rates for late-run **hatchery coho** are still averaging half a fish per rod in the Bonneville Pool and several Columbia River tributaries, while anglers continue to catch good numbers of legal-size **sturgeon** from Bonneville Dam downriver to the Wauna power lines. In addition, **sea-run hatchery cutthroat** are making a strong early showing in the Cowlitz River below Blue Creek.

"Area anglers have quite a few options to choose from right now - from sturgeon to sea-run cutthroat," said Joe Hymer, WDFW fish biologist. "It's always great to see winter steelhead start showing up, but that fishery doesn't really get going until around Thanksgiving."

Hymer noted that 11 winter **steelhead** had returned to Cowlitz River hatcheries as of Oct. 29, the earliest showing statewide. Consistent with the shift to winter-run management, the catch limit for hatchery steelhead reverts to two legal-size hatchery steelhead per day - down from three fish under the previous rule - on both the Cowlitz and Lewis rivers as of today (Nov. 1).

But while anglers are still catching a few summer-run steelhead here and there, late-run **hatchery coho** have been providing most of the action on the lower Columbia River and its tributaries. During the week ending Oct. 29, one boat angler in two took home a hatchery silver from the Cowlitz and Lewis rivers as well as Lake Scanewa and the Bonneville Pool. Bank anglers fishing on the Cowlitz caught 27 adult coho, 13 hatchery steelhead and seven adult **chinook salmon**, according to creel checks conducted by WDFW that week. On the Kalama River, 29 bank anglers checked seven hatchery coho and released five others.

"The chinook salmon are getting pretty dark, but there are still some nice, bright hatchery coho coming into the fishery," said Hymer, who reminds anglers that they can keep up to four adult hatchery coho per day on the Cowlitz.

Also helping to boost the catch on the Cowlitz River, Tacoma Power employees transported 620 coho adults to the Lake Scanewa Day Use Site and released another 274 coho adults at Franklin Bridge in Packwood during the week ending Oct. 29. Employees of Tacoma Power and WDFW also released 4,225 coho adults into Riffe Lake at Mossyrock Park, 966 coho adults at the Barrier Dam boat launch and 85 coho adults into Mayfield Lake at the Ike Kinswa Park boat launch.

Hymer noted that the fishery for **sea-run cutthroat trout** is also shaping up nicely on the Cowlitz, where 1,726 cutts had returned to the trout hatchery through Oct. 25. That compares to a return of 459 fish by the same time last year and 5,500 for the entire 2005 season.

"Sea-run cutthroat are aggressive, hard-fighting fish," Hymer said. "They'll take flies, bait, lures - practically anything you throw at them. Fishing should be good from Blue Creek near the trout hatchery on downriver." The catch limit for cutthroat is five per day on the Cowlitz River, where the fish generally range from 12 to 20 inches.

Trout anglers should also be aware that WDFW planted 647 one-pound cutthroat in Riffe Lake and 1,120 **browns** averaging two-thirds of a pound in Swofford Pond on Oct. 24.

Meanwhile, **sturgeon** anglers are continuing to reel in good numbers of legal-size fish in the ongoing fishery between Bonneville Dam and the Wauna power lines near Cathlamet. Creel checks during the week ending Oct. 29 found that boat anglers fishing from Woodland upstream were averaging one legal-size fish for every 4.4 rods, while bank anglers fishing just below the dam took home one legal-size fish for every 7.2 rods.

"The fishery has been running hot and cold, but is generally holding up pretty well," Hymer said. "Last Thursday (Oct. 26), anglers aboard 20 boats caught 38 legal-size fish and released four others. That's two legal-size fish per boat! We can't promise everybody a day like that, but it's still pretty encouraging."

Anglers fishing from the Wauna power lines to Bonneville Dam may only retain sturgeon Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. "Keepers" must be at least 42 inches long but no more than 60 inches.

**Eastern Washington:** Snake River **steelhead** fishing is picking up steam, as evidenced by the latest Snake River steelhead creel survey report <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/snake/index.htm>. Unfortunately, some steelheaders are reportedly keeping wild fish, which is illegal, said WDFW fish biologist Glen Mendel. As stated on page 28 of the Fishing in Washington pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>), anglers must release wild steelhead trout year-round, except where retention is specifically authorized under Special Rules. No such authorization is included in the rules for the Columbia or Snake rivers or other eastside rivers listed in the Special Rules section, Mendel said. The only waterways where some wild steelhead can be harvested are all

in western Washington and are listed under the Statewide Freshwater Species Rules on page 29 of the rules pamphlet.

In the reference to Snake River steelhead, the rule states that no more than three trout 20 inches and over may be retained. By definition, a sea-run rainbow trout 20 inches or more is a steelhead. In the Columbia River the limit is two hatchery steelhead per day under the trout rule. The Snake River rule also states that barbless hooks are required when fishing for steelhead - a requirement designed to protect any wild steelhead that are caught and released.

Wild Snake River steelhead are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Hatchery-marked steelhead, as defined in the rules pamphlet on page 23, are those with a clipped adipose or ventral fin and a healed scar at the location of the clipped fin.

Sections of some tributaries in the Snake River basin - Grand Ronde, Touchet, Tucannon, Walla Walla - are closed to trout fishing Oct. 31 but remain open to hatchery steelhead fishing Nov. 1 through April 15. Check the pamphlet for section details.

Although many fishing lakes in the region are now closed, some waters with public access sites are still open, said WDFW regional access manager Scott Young. Waitts Lake, four miles west of Valley along Highway 395 in Stevens County, is open through February and produces nice **rainbow** and **brown trout**. Eloika Lake, seven miles north of Chattaroy off Highway 2 in Spokane County, is open year-round and has decent **largemouth bass**, **perch** and **crappie** fishing now. Silver Lake, a mile east of the town of Medical Lake in southwest Spokane County, is open year-round with a little bit of everything, including **tiger trout** and **tiger muskies**.

Rock Lake, a mile north of Ewan in Whitman County, is open year-round and is now providing good action on brown trout. And of course there's always year-round Sprague Lake, the eastside's largest natural waterway spanning the Lincoln-Adams county line along Interstate 90. The targets there are **walleye** and rainbows.

Sections of some rivers in the region also remain open year-round for fishing with various access points. The Pend Oreille River, which has net-pen-reared rainbow trout - plus some brown trout, crappie, perch and bass - is open year-round. WDFW maintains a primitive access site near Ruby Creek, on the Pend Oreille about 15 miles south of Ione. The uppermost portion of the Spokane River, from Upriver Dam to the Idaho border, is catch-and-release only through March 15; the rest of the river is open year-round, but anglers should check the rules pamphlet for catch limits and other regulations.

The **whitefish** season opens today (Nov. 1) on the Kettle River in Ferry and Stevens counties. Fishing gear is restricted to one single point hook, maximum hook size 3/16 inch point to shank (hook size 14). Catch limit is 15 whitefish.

**North Central Washington:** WDFW district fish biologist Bob Jateff of Omak reports **steelhead** fishing has been "pretty good" on the mainstem Columbia River from Wells Dam to 400 feet below Chief Joseph Dam. Recent WDFW enforcement patrols on Lake Pateros - the portion of the Columbia River upstream of Wells Dam - confirmed that claim, finding that a quarter of the boats had fish on board.

Jateff reminds steelheaders that standard gear rules and a night closure are in effect for the lake, and the bag limit is two adipose-fin-clipped hatchery steelhead per day. All steelhead with an intact adipose fin - and those bearing an anchor tag - may not be removed from the water and must be immediately released unharmed. Jateff also notes that both the Okanogan and Methow rivers are now closed to steelhead fishing. On the other hand, the Upper Columbia River opened for

steelheading Oct. 21 from the Rocky Reach Dam north of Wenatchee to 400 feet below the Chief Joseph Dam near Bridgeport. The season there is scheduled to run through March 31 unless impacts to wild steelhead require an earlier closure.

Jateff also reports good catch-and-release fishing for **rainbow trout** at Rat Lake, near Brewster. "Fishing there is excellent for rainbows up to 15 inches," said Jateff, noting that the rules there switch to catch-and-keep fishing Dec. 1 with a daily limit of five fish and standard gear rules. In the Columbia Basin, several trout lakes remain open through November under selective gear rules, including Dry Falls, Dusty, Lenice, Merry and Nunnally in Grant County.

Some year-round waters in the region are a good bet at this time, from Banks Lake on the Columbia River with everything from **bass** to **whitefish**, to Sprague Lake on the Adams-Lincoln county line with trout and **walleye**.

**South Central Washington:** The salmon fishing season on the Yakima River and the upper portion of the Hanford Reach closed Oct. 22 to protect spawning. The closed section stretches from the old Hanford townsite wooden powerline towers to Vernita Bridge and on up to Priest Rapids Dam. But the lower Hanford Reach - from the power lines downstream to the Highway 395 bridge at Pasco - remains open through Dec. 31. WDFW fish biologist Paul Hoffarth reports the upper reach's final week of fishing resulted in about 15 percent fewer **fall chinook** harvested than last year at this time, and the total angler effort and catch on the Yakima was considerably lower than last season. "But chinook counts through McNary Dam are roughly one-third lower than last year," he said.

John Easterbrooks, WDFW regional fish program manager, said there are still some nice **coho salmon** returning to the Yakima or upper Columbia River through the lower Hanford Reach section that remains open to fishing through the end of the year. "The fall chinook are falling off now because it's the tail end of the run," he said, "but anglers are shifting to the **steelhead** whose numbers are just beginning to build." Easterbrooks noted that the fishing season for steelhead in the lower section runs through March 31. "The target is the Ringold hatchery steelhead, produced for this fishery," he said. "Only hatchery-marked - adipose-fin clipped - steelhead can be retained; all wild steelhead must be released unharmed.

### Reader Email

Cap'n Ken Johnson wrote on Monday this week from Nehalem, "Had a rough day here today.....Lot's of heavy rain and totally HIGH wind up to 80+mph!....I'm just going to have to wait until the rain and wind settles to attempt to clean up the debris, leaves, KRAP, etc...I didn't want to fight the crowd at the boat ramp, so I just launched in Downtown Nehalem right on Highway 101 in the middle of town!.....Kept catching "Big Juan's" but they kept breaking off...They Were Big as TREES!!!! Hhhmmmmmmmmmm...Saved a lot of time in launching so close to my place though, and a little gas too, puttin'er in at the Center of Town!!"

Got a question, story to tell or information to share? Shoot us an Email!

Write to the TGF staff:

Bob Rees: [brees@pacifier.com](mailto:brees@pacifier.com)

Doug Rees: [doug@TheGuidesForecast.com](mailto:doug@TheGuidesForecast.com)

Michael Teague: [Michael@TheGuidesForecast.com](mailto:Michael@TheGuidesForecast.com)

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**Weekly Quote** – "The solution to any problem -- work, love, money, whatever -- is to go fishing, and the worse the problem, the longer the trip should be." - John Gierach

**GOOD LUCK!**