

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **March 30<sup>th</sup> – April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

**Oregon Fisheries Update:**

**Willamette Valley/Metro-** Winter steelhead continue to trickle over Willamette Falls in single and low double digits bringing the total to 4,200 as of March 20th. Over 200 summers have been counted. Spring Chinook numbers have not yet hit double digits this year at the falls although one has been caught near Wheatland Ferry. Upper Willamette catches of smallmouth bass improved again this week as this fishery gets underway.

Catches of steelhead and spring Chinook in the lower river are slow but steady. Anglers working the Multnomah Channel reported high effort but poor success reports **pro guide Jim Stevenson (503-881-5289)**. The gillnet fleet is sidelined at least until the next run size update in late April. This should improve success rates as we near peak season for Willamette Valley springers. Sturgeon fishing slowed over last weekend.

The Clackamas had cleared on Tuesday this week and barring a deluge, it should fish this weekend although the catch rate has been very low.

Water in the Sandy River is high, fast and opaque. It will take some time to recover.

Catch and release winter steelhead fishing is fair to good on the Santiam and a few summers have been landed.

Scheduled for stocking with hatchery rainbow trout are Blue River Reservoir, Dexter Reservoir, Dorena Reservoir, Foster Reservoir, Freeway Lake East, Timber Linn Lake, Walling Pond, Walter Wirth Lake and Waverly Lake.

**Northwest –** Most north coast rivers still have fresh steelhead returning in fair numbers. Experienced anglers are in agreement of a lack of the wild component of fish on some rivers. Broodstock fish seem to be present in fair numbers on the Wilson and Nestucca Rivers however.

After the weekend rainfall, the Wilson came back into fishable, productive shape by Tuesday **reports pro guides Dave Johnson (503-201-4292) and Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)**. A mix of hatchery and wild fish were caught with only an occasional run-back in the catch. Some area streams close on March 31<sup>st</sup> so check regulations carefully before venturing out. Coinciding with this closure, spring chinook opens on the Wilson, Trask and Tillamook Bay. A rare springer shows up this early in the season but the bulk of the run returns in mid-May. Selective regulations allow for the taking of 2 fin-clipped chinook per day in the basin.

The ocean remains too big for pleasurable fishing and no sign of subsiding seas by the weekend. Upcoming tides do not favor productive sturgeon fishing and crabbing in the area remains poor.

The Siuslaw has a few bright winter steelhead available amongst the dark fish as the season winds down. Fishing is fair and native fish are making up the bulk of the catch **reports pro guide Jeff Jackson (541-268-6944)**.

**Southwest –** Offshore bottom fishers were able to get out early on Sunday to enjoy fine ling cod action. Boats headed in early, however, when conditions got rough. Bottomfishing outside the 40-fathom line is closed at the end of the month, re-opening in September.

South coast rivers were on the rise mid-week but are predicted to be dropping into the weekend.

Spring Chinook catches are improving on the lower Umpqua as the season gets underway here.

About 80% of the winter steelhead hooked on the Elk and Sixes rivers recently have spawned and are running back to the ocean.

Chinook to 44 pounds have been taken in the Rogue River below Agness where the season is just beginning. Steelheading is very good on the middle and upper Rogue with hundreds of winters going over Gold Ray Dam daily.

Although late in the season, winter steelheading continues to be good on the Chetco for a combination of fresh winters and down-runners. It closes March 31st.

Southwest ocean beaches are delivering outstanding action for surf perch. Offshore bottom fishing has been excellent out of Brookings when the ocean allows for safe bar crossings.

Scheduled for trout planting this week are Bradley Lake, Johnson Mill Pond and Upper and Lower Empire Lake. Steelhead juveniles are scheduled to go into Expo Pond and Reinhart Park Pond 600. Diamond Lake will be planted with trout this week if the ice is off.

**Eastern** – Lower Deschutes fly rodders are catching fair to good numbers using nymphs although March Browns are beginning to hatch. The middle Deschutes is high and will probably remain so until irrigation begins in mid-April. Spring Chinook fishing will open here April 15th. Exercise caution as one bank angler reported an aggressive rattle snake recently citing the possibility that they could be protecting their clutch of eggs this time of year.

**Pro guide Rick Arnold (541 480-1570)** reports on Lake Bill Chinook. Rich states, "Just got in from calling on some Bi-Mart stores in the valley.....we got the Monster Bull Trout DVD in 16 stores! Bull trout remain the big fish of choice until the general fishing season opens. We have had a red-hot day and then struggle the next. More big bulls than past years but the pattern has been a little sketchy. Kokanee numbers are way down in LBC this year."

Sturgeon retention has closed from The Dalles Dam to John Day Dam. The limited sport quota has been met.

**Pro guide Bill Kremers (541 754 6411)** reports fair walleye fishing in the Rufus area although the wind has been a factor. Working worms on the bottom is producing some fair sized fish.

Baker Pond will be planted with a few trout 16 inches or larger.

**Pro Guide Mac Huff (800-940-3688)** let's us know that it is a fairly typical "Spring Break" in northeast Oregon - stormy. However, the weather has broken for a few days, the rivers are dropping and the catching is quite good.

The Willowa River had similar results to the lower Grande Ronde with about 6 hours per steelhead.

**SW Washington** – Anglers are reported fair catches of spring chinook from the Lewis River. Conditions are improving and so should the catches.

The Cowlitz and Kalama River are still putting out late run winter steelhead. Summer run steelhead

should begin to show in higher numbers in coming weeks.

The Klickitat River opens for salmon on April 1<sup>st</sup>. Like its neighboring systems, returns are expected to be down. Only a small handful of salmon have bypassed Bonneville.

**Soapbox Update** - Here's a chance to give a little back to the River. The fin-clipping party at the **Whiskey Creek Volunteer Fish Hatchery** is April 14th this year. About 100,000 spring Chinook smolts will also attend the party and they need volunteers to fin-clip 'em. The festivity starts at 9 AM with barbequed chicken and hamburgers served at mid-day. It generally wraps up by 2 PM. While the hatchery is undercover, it's wet work, so dress for warmth and wear waterproof boots. For more information, call Jerry Dove, President the Tillamook Anglers at 503-842-6519 or Email at [jdovetillanglers@tillanet.com](mailto:jdovetillanglers@tillanet.com).

**Columbia River Fishing Report** – Columbia River guides are less than impressed with the results coming from the Westport/Tenasillahe Island reach. **Pro guide Jody Mather (503-805-9386)** reports poor fishing in the turbid waters of the lower Columbia. Jody reported the Cowlitz is responsible for the bulk of the mud but water conditions should be on the mend. If good numbers of fish were present however, the bite would be better.

**Pro guide Brandon McGavran (360-607-1327)** reports slow fishing in the upper reaches near Vancouver. Water releases upstream and a cooling down in water temperature has kept fish from biting regularly. Brandon commented that beach plunkers are still taking some fair numbers of fish as the adults tend to hug the shoreline in these faster flows.

Passage at Bonneville Dam is still low but that's to be expected with the water and temperature conditions we have. Only 20 adults have passed thus far- still more than we had last year at this time.

Sturgeon fishing remains poor in most stretches of the Columbia. Fishers below Bonneville are still waiting for temperatures to increase and hope to take advantage of the additional retention day when the keepers do decide to bite. The Columbia closed to sturgeon retention at midnight, Wednesday, March 28 from The Dalles Dam to the John Day Dam having met quota for this stretch. Meanwhile, anglers are still pursuing keepers in the Portland Harbor stretch of the Willamette River.

Walleye anglers are experiencing a slow down in activity but some large fish are coming from the Rufus area. **Pro guide Bill Kremers (541 754 6411)** reports, "I am walleye fishing at Rufus this week. Today the wind is blowing at 28 mph so tough fishing. We did land a 12 pound walleye this morning before the wind got too strong. Was fishing a Rufus Special rigged with a nightcrawler and fishing with a 2oz bottom walker. The weather is supposed to improve tomorrow and Thursday so hoping for good fishing. The walleye are still in the pre spawn phase, so there should be some good fishing here for a couple of weeks."

A meeting of ODFW and WDFW officials on March 27th resulted in a 'final proposal' which is likely to become etched in stone as the 2007 salmon season on the Columbia this year.

It looks like it'll be a one-fish limit again this year with the Buoy-10 Season Below Tongue Point August 22nd to September 3rd. Mainstem from Tongue Point to Bonneville Sport Season is most likely to be August 1st through September 4th below the Lewis River mouth. Above the Lewis is August 1st through the end of the year.

The proposed Columbia Coho offshore season is proposal is for seven days a week North of Cape Falcon with a two hatchery fish limit. In the Columbia from the mouth to the Cowlitz is August 1st

though December 31st with a daily bag limit of two (or possibly more) hatchery fish. This fishery is not expected to reach quota.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Anglers should see better times in the lower Columbia spring chinook run. Timing and an improved weather forecast should improve the outlook for success. Water clarity is a big issue but now, anglers are fighting cold water temperatures. The Washington tributaries are responsible for the bulk of the trouble. Dam releases on the upper reaches of the system are keeping fish from migrating fast and migrating closer to the shoreline than normal. Brandon McGavran recommended prawn spinners in the faster flows and target your effort around the tide change when flows slow somewhat.

The gillnets are out and should remain that way until a run size update later in April. This should allow fish numbers to rebound in the river and ample opportunity once the water conditions improve. All sections of river should begin to produce fair results in the coming week with Altoona and Westport good choices to begin with. The Longview and Rainier stretches should also begin to produce more consistently as well with the mouth of the Willamette and Davis Bar kicking in after the weekend.

Faster flows are better left to spinners and spin-n-glos. Fish will bite Kwikfish in the faster flows but herring will likely out-produce plugs in the colder water temperatures. You will want to target these springers on the bottom, trolling in 15 to 20 foot of water.

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report** – Winter steelhead counts at Willamette Fall were 4,254 as of March 27th. In addition, 253 summers and 14 spring Chinook have been counted. As of March 28th, the temperature was stubbornly holding at 50 degrees and visibility at the Falls was 2.6 feet Further downriver is reported as off-color and the water is even more turbid in Multnomah Channel. Spring chinook hookups had been a rarity this week. The only reliable springer catches have been by sea lions. Sturgeon fishing was worthwhile during the last Thursday through Sunday retention period. Several different baits took fish with smelt and squid attracting keepers but sand shrimp was the hot bait.

**Pro guide James Stevenson (503-881-5289)** reported on March 27th, " (I) fished lower Willamette,( head of slough) this date, saw two fish caught 5 minutes apart, not my boat. Willamette had colored up from recent rains, but visibility was still good enough to catch a fish. Bound to get better."

**Avid angler Roger Kroening** adds this, "FYI : fished head of Multnomah Channel Monday(26th) beginning at 7 A.M. for 5 hours...counted 25 boats in immediate area; estimated 50 lines in water to include two guide boats; observed one salmon landed and one lost. Boater returning from mouth of Willamette observed 1 salmon caught. Locals tell me that now that nets out of river that we should get a better bite by end of week. We shall see."

**Roger** reports again from March 28th, " ...just returned today from head of channel again...boy, things need to change soon...observed 20-25 boats in and around channel from power lines upstream to red buoy just downstream from channel....probably about 50 rods in water...observed one wild fish caught and released...and one old timer reported he lost a fish on a lure. "Big Gulp" was the only guide boat I saw as well. So, appears about 1 fish per 25 fishing rods at this time...same last few days. Will let you know of changes as begin fishing again next Monday...going crabbing at Newport where at least I will catch something...."

Go Roger ... thanks for the reports!

Trout have been rising to feed on March Browns at the McKenzie. Hatches and catches will improve as

the weather warms.

The North Santiam remains a little high which is normal for this time of year. Until Detroit Reservoir fills in the first week in May, it'll remain that way. Foster Dam on the South Santiam had counted 75 winter steelhead and 11 summers as of March 26th.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Multnomah Channel has been producing the most springer hookups over the last week, so Caterpillar Island would be as good an area as any to try. The bite is likely to remain slow until the water temperature rises at least a couple of degrees. Troll green label herring (the supplies of which seem to be improving) or sit on anchor if the outgoing tide provides sufficient current. Count yourself as one of the lucky ones if you hook up with a springer, but it's still early to expect a hot bite. Sturgeon have come from Oregon City, St. Johns, Portland Harbor and Multnomah Channel. Move if bites aren't imminent or if only shakers seem to be in the area. There's a much better chance of hooking up with a keeper sturgeon than a springers but be sure to include sand shrimp in your arsenal. Check the Random Links below for a truly slick method of hooking these soft baits.

We're four to six weeks away from decent steelheading and spring Chinook action on the McKenzie.

Steelheading for wild winters is fair in the Santiams, better in the North. Fishing will be worthwhile when the numbers of hatchery summer steelhead improve. The North Santiam has offered an outstanding summer fishery some years, only fair in others. We're hoping for a stellar season.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports** – Before rain put the Sandy River out of shape over last weekend, steelhead were being taken with a couple of summers in the mix. Cedar Creek has produced a few one day, nothing the next. Either way, the creek has been productive only early and late in the day.

Flows are steadily moderating as the water level drops in the Sandy, but it will probably be too roiled to fish well by the coming weekend. When the water conditions improve, it should be worthwhile.

**North Coast Fishing Report** – Steelheaders were dealt another high water blow for weekend angling but prior to the precipitation, fishing had improved and has once again improved after the weekend. Wilson River anglers did best on Tuesday (3/27) with a dropping and clearing river. **Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** landed 5 steelhead with 2 of the broodstock variety. Boats fishing on the 26<sup>th</sup> did catch fish but most boats averaged just one. **Pro guide Dave Johnson (503-201-4292)** reports, "Fishing at the end of the week on the coast was pretty good, with all the rain we had on Saturday the rivers went out of shape but the end of this week should be pretty good again. Try sidedrifted or drift fishing. Remember that some coastal streams close after the 31st."

Guides fishing the Nestucca River report much of the same success. Although fishing has been consistent on the Nestucca, there seems to be lack of wild fish present. Large fish also seem to be an anomaly this season. Plugs have been an effective method however as most boats are sidedrifted. **Pro guide Kent Anderson (503-550-6303)** reports that the seals have been a bit absent recently but they may just be effective at hiding. Maybe a case of lead poisoning has hit the herd?

Mainstem Nehalem anglers have been fighting high water all winter. There has been some good action over there on occasion but most of the fish are making tracks taking advantage of the conditions for good migration.

Rough ocean conditions have kept anglers off of big blue and sturgeon effort remains justifiably light on Tillamook Bay. Success has been lacking and crabbing remains poor as well. There doesn't seem to be

much reason to target fish in the bay. Spring salmon opens on April 1<sup>st</sup> however. The earliest salmon I have ever caught has been April 14<sup>th</sup>.

**The Guide's Forecast** – River levels on most north coast streams are calling for good steelheading options for most river systems. The Wilson and Nestucca should continue to put out fair numbers of broodstock and wild steelhead. A recent theft of wild Nestucca broodstock for the program could put that operation of track. Please help with collection of these fish if you value the hatchery production over there.

The Nehalem may also begin to produce some good catches but the lower reach may be petering out for success. Anglers in the know for floating the upper reaches of the Nehalem should find some good opportunities for wild fish. The Salmonberry River could also be a good option but check regulations for rivers that close on April 1<sup>st</sup>.

Although tides are ripe for sturgeon fishing over the weekend, action on Tillamook Bay has not been impressive. Keepers are more rare than previous years but the upper end of the west channel seems to be the place to target them. Sand shrimp will remain the best bait.

The ocean forecast does not favor offshore activity this weekend. Bottomfishing would be excellent if the weather cooperated. Ocean crabbing is also the best option when seas subside.

**Central & South Coast Reports** – Ocean salmon angling opened March 15th off the central and Southern Oregon coast. The few boaters trying for them have been unable to hook up despite biologists assurance that offshore numbers are good. It should improve later in the season. Most ocean anglers are concentrating on bottom fish.

The winter steelhead run is all but over on the Alsea with mostly spawned-out fish being hooked now.

**Pro guide Jeff Jackson (541-268-6944)** reports, "Fish are still trickling in, but numbers have cooled off. The Siuslaw is in great shape. The lower river is fishing the best, from the Forks down to Tide. Native fish are making up most of the catch."

South coast rivers were on the rise mid-week but are predicted to be dropping into the weekend.

Lower Umpqua anglers caught a few springers over the weekend. The mainstem Umpqua improved for steelheaders late last week with drift boaters once again hitting the river. Steelhead are being taken by both boat and bank anglers. Steelheading is good in the North and South Umpqua for bait fishers. Water conditions are excellent this week and no significant precipitation in the weather forecast, so it should be a great weekend. Counts of hatchery steelhead are running far above average at Winchester Dam on the North Umpqua. Steelheading has been fair to good on the South Umpqua but many of the fish present are unclipped. Sturgeon fishing picked up but will slow again as the water clears. Crabbing is reported as good in Winchester Bay.

The North and South Coquille and Coos rivers have experienced slowing in steelhead action, but the pressure is light and chances of hooking up is fair to good. Coos river steelheaders are doing fairly well in water that's high but is showing good color. Most of the steelhead are dark in the Coquille, but water conditions in the South fork are excellent, offering the opportunity to cull are bright one.

The Elk and Sixes were dropping mid-week and rewarding plug-pullers with the traditional late-winter. These rivers close at the end of the month.

On the lower Rogue, attention has turned almost entirely to spring Chinook even though catches are

sparse this early in the run. Spinner and anchovy combos, eponymous Rogue River Rigs, predominate as the bait of choice. Chinook have been taken in the river below Agness and up to Lobster Creek where the season is just beginning. Cold water is preventing the lower river spring Chinook fishery from heating up, although a few springers are being hooked daily. April will offer some springer excellent fishing. Steelheading is very good in the middle and upper Rogue River as hundreds of winter fish cross daily at Gold Ray Dam and the total has topped 8,000. With upper river water temperatures in the mid-40s, plug pullers, lure and bait fishers are doing equally well with plenty of bright fish available.

Steelheading is winding down on the Chetco with many down-runners in catches now. Steelhead which have spawned and are returning to the ocean are particularly aggressive but not suitable for table fare. Their slim, snake-like bodies are easy to spot. There's a late run here, though, so a few bright fish are still available.

Many South coast rivers are closed as of April 1st. Check the regulations.

**Central and Eastern Oregon – Pro guide Rick Arnold (541-480-1570)** writes, "Bull trout remain the big fish of choice until the general fishing season opens. We have had a red-hot day and then struggle the next. More big bulls than past years but the pattern has been a little sketchy. Kokanee numbers are way down in LBC this year."

BWO hatchers are becoming thicker on the Fall River and will only improve with warm weather. Catches are good mid-day with trout looking up.

Warm weather has turned on the Bull Trout in the Metolius. Large, weighted nymphs or streamers are effective.

High water has made fly fishing challenging on the middle and lower Deschutes despite daily hatches. This may remain a problem until irrigation begins in mid-April.

**Pro Guide Mac Huff (800-940-3688)** let's us know that it is a fairly typical "Spring Break" in northeast Oregon - stormy. However, the weather has broken for a few days, the rivers are dropping and the catching is quite good. The Grande Ronde in Washington is averaging about 6 hours per fish and water levels should continue dropping at least through Saturday. The Grande Ronde in Oregon produced no fish for anglers checked by the creel checker last week, so the fish are very scarce in this portion of the river.

The Wallowa River had similar results to the lower Grande Ronde with about 6 hours per steelhead. Water conditions and outlook is also similar, clean and dropping and should continue through at least Saturday.

Two more weeks remain in the season in northeast Oregon and some of the best catching occurs during these last two weeks.

**Northwest Trout –** Scheduled for stocking with hatchery rainbow trout in the Willamette Valley are Blue River Reservoir, Dexter Reservoir, Dorena Reservoir, Foster Reservoir, Freeway Lake East, Timber Linn Lake, Walling Pond, Walter Wirth Lake and Waverly Lake. Devils Lake in Lincoln City has been planted this week.

Trout are being taken by trollers at Henry Hagg now that the hatchery fish have acclimated to water deeper than the few feet in which they were raised. Small spoons such as needlefish and wedding rings tipped with nightcrawler are drawing strikes. Limits are possible for those putting in their time.

Trout which were scheduled to be stocked for spring break in Southwest Oregon failed to reach legal size so will be planted on 9th. This effects only Ben Irving, Cooper Creek, Galesville, Platt I and II Reservoirs and Herbert's Pond.

**Northwest Bass & Panfish** - Fishing for smallmouth in the upper Willamette is good and will continue to improve as the weather warms. Largemouth are becoming more active in valley lakes and pond. Fishing in temperate coastal lakes is good.

### **Washington fishing reports:**

**From the WDF&W Weekender Report March 21<sup>st</sup> – April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2007**

#### **North Puget Sound**

Spring has arrived, but the winter **blackmouth salmon** fishery is still going strong. Anglers from Point No Point to the San Juan Islands continue to do well fishing for chinook, but time is running out in some areas to get in on the action.

"Over the past several weeks, anglers have done great in just about every marine area in the region," said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. "That should continue, but there are only a few days of fishing remaining in the San Juan Islands and only few weeks left in Admiralty Inlet. So now is the time to get out on the water."

Anglers in Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands) have through the end of March to hook a blackmouth, while those in Marine Area 9 (Admiralty Inlet) have through April 15. Anglers in both marine areas have a daily limit of one salmon, and chinook must measure at least 22 inches in length.

Thiesfeld said the most productive region continues to be the southern portion of Marine Area 9. According to WDFW creel checks at the Everett boat ramp, 324 anglers were checked with 94 salmon during the third weekend in March. At the Kingston public ramp, 43 anglers brought home 10 chinook that same weekend.

Blackmouth fishing also remains good in marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) and 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner), Thiesfeld said. Anglers in those two marine areas 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. The selective chinook fishery in marine areas 8-1 and 8-2 remains open through April 30.

Anglers did well during the recent inaugural Anacortes Salmon Derby. Ronald Henning of Puyallup took home the event's \$5,000 top prize after landing a 22.08-pound chinook. Bob Burress from Burlington captured second place and was awarded \$1,500 for his 21.30-pound chinook, while Matt Minnis of Eastsound finished third and earned \$500 for his 19.24-pound salmon. Proceeds from the event go toward scholarships to benefit young adults interested in pursuing an education in fisheries or a related natural science. For more information visit <http://www.anacortessalmonderby.com>.

Saltwater anglers looking for a change of pace will soon have an opportunity to hook a **halibut**. The halibut season gets under way April 9 in marine waters throughout the region. The fishery will be open five days a week, Thursday through Monday, with a daily limit of one halibut. There is no minimum size limit for halibut caught in any area.

Meanwhile, the catch-and-release fishery for **steelhead** on the Skagit and Sauk rivers continues through April. Anglers on the Skagit can cast for **steelhead** from the Dalles Bridge to the Cascade River, while those on the Sauk can fish from the mouth of the river to the Darrington Bridge.

Brett Barkdull, WDFW fish biologist, reminds Skagit River anglers fishing from boats, sleds or any other floating device equipped with a gas or electric motor that it's illegal to fish while under power during the catch-and-release season. Rules and regulations for the Skagit River fishery, as well as other freshwater and saltwater fisheries, can be found in WDFW's *2006/2007 Fishing in Washington* pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

Looking forward to the **summer salmon fishing** season? There's still time to provide input on proposals for this year's fisheries. Two public meetings have been scheduled for the last week of March as fishery managers continue to develop the 2007 salmon seasons.

Anglers and others can provide input on Willapa Bay and Grays Harbor salmon seasons during a March 26 meeting, which is scheduled to begin at 10 a.m. in the Natural Resources Building in Olympia, 1111 Washington Street S.E. The following day, the public will have an opportunity to discuss salmon fisheries that take place in other coastal areas, Puget Sound and the Columbia River. That meeting is scheduled to begin at 9 a.m. at the Lynnwood Embassy Suites Hotel, 20610 44th Ave. W.

The final fishing package for Washington's waters will be finalized in early April. More information about the salmon season-setting process can be found on WDFW's North of Falcon website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/northfalcon/>).

### **South Sound/Olympic Peninsula**

Nothing says "spring" like the arrival of spring chinook salmon, except possibly the start of fishing seasons for lingcod and halibut. Anglers will have the opportunity to fish for all those species - along with blackmouth and steelhead - in the weeks ahead.

**Lingcod** fishing got under way March 17 in marine areas 1-3, south of Cape Alava. Anglers should note the minimum size for lingcod in these three areas is 22 inches, rather than 24 inches as in years past. "The most recent stock assessment supported a decision to reduce the minimum size for recreational lingcod," said Heather Reed, WDFW fish biologist.

That's not the case in Marine Area 4 (Neah Bay), where the minimum size for lingcod remains 24 inches. That area opens for lingcod fishing April 15.

All four marine areas will be open seven days per week through Oct. 13 with the following restrictions:

In Marine Area 2 (Westport/Ocean Shores), recreational fishing for rockfish or lingcod is not allowed in waters deeper than 30 fathoms from March 17 through June 15.

In Marine Area 3 and 4 (La Push/Neah Bay), recreational fishing for rockfish or lingcod is not allowed in waters deeper than 20 fathoms from May 21 through Sept. 30, except on days the halibut fishery is open.

In Marine Area 1 (Ilwaco), rockfish and lingcod are not allowed on any vessel with halibut on board from May 1 through Sept. 30.

Retention of canary and yelloweye rockfish is prohibited in all waters. Additional information about the lingcod fishery is available on the WDFW Fishing Hotline (360-902-2500) and the department's website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

Looking for bigger fish to fry? This year's **halibut** fishery opens April 9 in marine areas 6-11 and 13 (Port Angeles and Puget Sound), running five days a week - Thursday through Monday - through June 16. Best bets in April for catching a big flatfish are marine areas 6, 9 and 13, said Michele Culver, regional director for the coastal area. "The fishing should be good, and we've heard that April is the best time to go," Culver said.

Later halibut openings on the coast and other areas are described on the WDFW website under Halibut Reports at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/halibut/>, or the Fishing Hotline at (360) 902-2500.

Meanwhile, **blackmouth** fishing just keeps getting better, especially from the eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca down to Point Defiance in Marine Area 11, said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. Creel checkers counted 30 blackmouth March 18 at Ediz Hook boat ramp, near Port Angeles in Marine Area 6, where anglers have been averaging about one fish for every two rods. "Fishing for blackmouth is extremely good right now," said Thiesfeld. "People should really get out there."

Catch rates for wild **steelhead** have been mixed on the Olympic Peninsula as the fishery nears the finish line on several rivers. "Fishing has been decent for steelhead on the Sol Duc and Calawah rivers, but poor on the Hoh where warmer temperatures and rain have put the river out of shape," said David Low, WDFW fish biologist.

The retention fishery for steelhead closes at the end of the day April 15 on the Hoh, but will remain open on the Quillayute River system through April 30.

Anglers on the Calawah averaged a fish per rod in creel checks conducted March 16-18. During the same period, 83 anglers checked on the Sol Duc had caught 62 wild steelhead, while 65 checked on the Bogachiel had hooked 18. Low said a few **spring chinook** salmon also have been taken in the Sol Duc.

The rain and warm weather also affected rivers in the Grays Harbor area, where the water was high and the catches marginal, said Low. "Anglers were out trying different methods, but fishing just wasn't ideal." The key factor for all areas is the weather, said Low. "Fishing should be better by the weekend if the rain holds off and the temperature goes down."

Before heading out, anglers are advised to call the WDFW Fishing Hotline (360-902-2500), or check the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm> for retention rules and dates.

An April morning **razor clam** dig may be a possibility, said Dan Ayres, WDFW coastal shellfish manager, who noted that the recent clam dig held March 16-18 was highly successful. "Most diggers got about an average of 14 clams, nearly meeting their 15-clam limit," he said. "We'd like to provide some morning clam-digging opportunities in April, but first we'll have to assess how many clams are available for harvest."

Anglers looking forward to the upcoming **summer salmon fishery** may want to attend a public meeting March 26 in Olympia where salmon seasons for Willapa Bay and Grays Harbor will be discussed. The meeting, which will provide opportunities for public comment on current proposals, is scheduled to begin at 10 a.m. in the Natural Resources Building, 1111 Washington Street S.E. The final fishing package for Washington's waters will be finalized in early April. More information about the salmon season-setting process can be found on WDFW's North of Falcon website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/northfalcon/>).

### **Southwest Washington:**

Landings of **spring chinook salmon** are beginning to pick up on the lower Columbia River, but not nearly as fast as the number of anglers fishing for them. Creel checkers interviewed nearly a thousand anglers from the I-5 bridge downstream during the week ending March 18. Together, they accounted

for 34 spring chinook (including eight that were released) and eight **steelhead** (of which three were released).

Then again, anglers averaged one springer for every two boats fishing near Vancouver two days later.

"The action is starting to pick up throughout the lower river, especially around Vancouver and Cathlamet," said Joe Hymer, a WDFW fish biologist. "Catch rates should continue to improve in the days ahead."

Recent catch rates might have been higher, but for the high, turbid water on the lower Columbia and many of its tributaries, Hymer said. "Murky water, caused by snow melt, is posing something of a challenge for anglers," he said. "I'd strongly advise using a flasher - or *something* to get the fishes' attention - until visibility improves."

Anglers fishing below the I-5 bridge can keep a total of six hatchery salmon per day - including two adults - but must release any wild, unmarked fish they encounter. Hatchery steelhead and shad may also be retained within the limits described in WDFW's *Fishing in Washington* rules pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>). The spring chinook season is expected to remain open through April 15.

Fishing is also picking up on the Cowlitz River, although late-run hatchery steelhead have been providing most of the action. Seventy bank anglers reported catching 13 steelhead and no chinook during creel checks during the week ending March 18. Seventeen boat anglers landed 10 steelhead and released three others during the same week. Those fishing Blue Creek and the waters around the Olequa boat ramp generally had the best results.

Four spring chinook returned to the Cowlitz Salmon Hatchery that week. The first springer of the season also returned to the Merwin Dam fish trap on the Lewis River. Anglers took a few spring chinook from the Lewis, while those fishing the Kalama River caught - and released - a few wild steelhead.

Back on the mainstem Columbia River, fishing opened March 16 for hatchery chinook and hatchery steelhead from the Tower Islands (six miles below The Dalles Dam) to McNary Dam. But the chance of catching a chinook salmon in those waters will remain slim until more springers pass Bonneville Dam, said Hymer, noting that the count stood at 19 fish as of March 16. For up-to-date accounts of fish passage, he recommends checking the Army Corps of Engineers website at <https://www.nwp.usace.army.mil/op/fishdata/home.asp> or the DART website at <http://www.cbr.washington.edu/dart/adult.html>.

Chinook fishing also opened March 16 on the Wind River and Drano Lake, although returns to those waters - plus the Klickitat River, which opens April 1 - are expected to be down this year. For that reason, anglers fishing the Wind River may retain only one - rather than two - hatchery spring chinook per day under new regulations adopted this year. In addition, the Wind River will remain closed to all fishing upstream from a point 400 feet below Shipherd Falls until the catch-and-release steelhead season begins in September. For more information, see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>.

Boat anglers fishing the John Day Pool caught nine legal-size **sturgeon** during the week ending March 18, but fishing was generally slow farther downriver. Boat anglers targeting warmwater fish above John Day Dam averaged a **bass** and a **walleye** per every 4.5 rods, while those fishing The Dalles and Bonneville pools averaged more than half a walleye per rod.

This year's Columbia River **smelt** run appears to be small as predicted. Little sign of smelt has been detected in the Columbia and none in the Cowlitz River in recent days. The sport season comes to a close at the end of March.

While most lakes in the region are open year round, many are nonetheless stocked with **trout** in advance of "opening day" - which falls on the last Saturday in April. At Klineline Pond, bank anglers averaged 3.2 trout per rod after the pond was planted with brown trout March 12. Those fish averaged more than half a pound apiece. Lake Sacajawea in Longview was planted with 4,300 catchable-size rainbows a day later. For more information about trout plants in the region, see the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/regions/reg5/index.htm>.

### **Eastern Washington:**

The Dayton Juvenile Fishing Pond re-opened March 16 for **rainbow trout** fishing, thanks to a community effort to improve the waterway. "Volunteers helped dredge and re-contour the pond, deepening it to nearly 10 feet, and removed shoreline brush and cattails that limited access to only a few narrow locations," said Mark Schuck, a WDFW fish biologist. "The project was partially funded by a grant from Washington Department of Ecology to improve water quality flowing from the pond. A new outlet control and pond level structure was installed last December that allows water to be pulled from the bottom of the pond, thus returning cool water to the Touchet River. This is just one project of many to improve water quality in the Touchet River ESA-listed steelhead and bull trout."

Schuck said rainbows from WDFW's Lyons Ferry Hatchery were stocked in the newly refurbished pond and lots of juvenile fishers are taking advantage of the new opportunity. "The kids in Dayton once again have a great place to learn the joy of fishing," he said. "The new water depth from the dredging should help keep the pond a great place to fish well into the summer - and for years to come."

Schuck also noted fishing is good at the Tucannon River impoundments in Columbia County - Beaver, Big Four, Blue, Deer, Rainbow, Spring and Watson lakes. All are being re-stocked this week with 8-10-inch rainbows from WDFW's Tucannon Hatchery.

Amber Lake in southwest Spokane County is fishing very well now, according to WDFW district fish biologist Chris Donley of Spokane. The **rainbow trout** are running 11 to 22 inches, with most in the 15- to 20-inch range. And there's an occasional cutthroat trout in the catch. Amber opened March 1 for catch-and-release fishing with selective gear only. It shifts to a catch-and-keep season for two trout daily on April 28.

Lincoln County's Coffeepot Lake is also fishing well now, Donley said, with many anglers reporting eight to 15-fish days. The majority of the rainbows are over 15 inches, running up to 22 inches. Coffeepot has selective gear rules with a daily limit of one trout with a minimum size of 18 inches. Donley says there's also a good **yellow perch** population at Coffeepot that few anglers are tapping. "Since you can't use bait there," he said, "catching them can be a challenge but they're there for the taking."

North Silver Lake in Spokane County is providing some fair fishing, with one or two rainbows caught per hour or so of effort. Donley said the lake will be re-stocked with hatchery catchable-size fish next week. North Silver is under selective gear rules with a two-trout daily limit and 14-inch minimum size.

Year-round Rock Lake in Whitman County continues to produce good catches of rainbows. WDFW enforcement officer Lenny Hahn recently reported several limits from both shore and boat anglers, including two fish over 24 inches and five pounds each. A 14.5-pound **German brown trout** also was recently caught at Rock Lake.

Hahn also noted fly fishermen at Hog Canyon Lake were recently doing well on rainbows, while the action at Fourth of July Lake was reportedly slow. Both winter-season trout lakes close March 31.

Lake Roosevelt has been "hit and miss" for rainbow trout and **walleye**. The Spokane arm of the reservoir - where the Spokane River flows in above Seven Bays - has been hot for walleye staging there to go up into the reservoir to spawn. "The Spokane arm closes April 1," Donley said, "so now's the time to hit it."

Ice is finally gone from northeastern Spokane County's Newman Lake and at least one legal size (36-inch minimum) **tiger muskie** has already been caught, reports WDFW fish biologist Randall Osborne. Osborne says action on Newman's other warmwater fish species - including **black crappie**, **yellow perch**, and **largemouth bass** - will be a little slower until water temperatures warm with the progression of spring. He noted the cold water at this time of year is a reminder for anglers of all ages to dress in warm layers and always wear life jackets while fishing.

### **North Central Washington:**

**Steelhead** fishing on the mainstem Columbia River from Rocky Reach Dam to Chief Joseph Dam closed March 17. WDFW district fish biologist Bob Jateff of Omak reports anglers were able to remove an estimated 685 adipose-fin-clipped hatchery steelhead during the nearly five-month season.

Fishing for **whitefish** will continue until March 31 on both the Similkameen and Methow rivers. Jateff advises anglers to consult the WDFW website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) or hotline (360-902-2500) for emergency closures during the whitefish seasons.

Two Okanogan County lakes worth noting will be open for fishing starting April 1, Jateff said. -- Spectacle Lake near Loomis should have excellent fishing for 10 to 12-inch **rainbow trout**, and Washburn Island Pond near Brewster will provide opportunities for **largemouth bass** and **bluegill**, he said.

April 1 is also when a number of lakes in the Okanogan switch over from a catch-and-keep season to a catch-and-release season with selective gear rules in effect, Jateff said. Davis Lake near Winthrop, Big and Little Green lakes near Omak, and Rat Lake near Brewster will all have that rule change and should continue to provide good trout fishing.

Rufus Woods Lake, the Columbia River reservoir off Chief Joseph Dam near Bridgeport, continues to provide catches - from boats and from shore - of **triploid rainbow trout** ranging from one to three pounds. There are boat launches at both the state park and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers site just above the dam.

WDFW district fish biologist Art Viola of Cashmere says fishing is getting a slow start in his area because water temperatures remain low. "Anglers are catching some of the 11- to 12-inch **cutthroat trout** we stocked in the Rock Island Ponds last fall," he said, "and trout fishing should pick up at Roses Lake soon."

Columbia Basin **rainbow trout** fishing waters that opened March 1 are reportedly being fished more as warmer spring weather entices more people outside. Quincy and Burke lakes, on WDFW's Quincy Wildlife Area near the town of Quincy, are picking up speed after a slow opener.

### **South Central Washington:**

As spring weather draws more anglers to local year-round fishing waters, WDFW fish hatchery crews are busy re-stocking **rainbow trout** in some of the most popular spots to keep up with the demand. Starting April, catchable size 8-12-inch rainbow will be planted in Kittitas County waters, including Easton Ponds (3,500), McCabe Pond (600, plus 200 jumbos up to one-third of a pound) and Naneum Juvenile Pond (650, plus 250 jumbos).

Several lakes and ponds in Yakima County will also be planted with catchable-size rainbow starting the same day. They include I-82 Pond #4 (4,000), I-82 Pond #6 (4,000), Mud Lake (250, plus 300 jumbos), Rotary Lake (3,250, plus 400 jumbos), Sarge Hubbard Park Juvenile Pond (450), Tim's Pond (400, plus 200 jumbos) and Yakima Sportsmen's Pond (400).

In April, WDFW will plant several waters with **triploid rainbow trout**, sterile half-pound to one-pound fish that often eat their way to trophy size. These include Benton County's Columbia Park Juvenile Pond (130), Franklin County's Railroad Pond (313), Kittitas County's Fio Rito North Lake (1,021), Mattoon Lake (706), and Yakima County's Clear Lake (2,685), Mud Lake (109), and Myron Lake (345).

Wenas Lake, a popular recreational fishery in the Yakima Valley, is no longer stocked because the landowner has decided to not renew the public access agreement. For the region's complete catchable trout stocking plan, see the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/regions/reg3/index.htm>.

### Reader Email

**Subscriber Roger K.** wrote with a question and a report, "I would like to try Drano Lake this year... never fished it. Can you refer me to certain archived articles in your pub that could help me? Is there another reading source you can refer me to on this topic? I appreciate anything you can do for me.

"Also, fished Mult Channel ...Channel very slow...Friday about 35 boats working it including couple of guide boats...would estimate about 75 rods fishing with 3 fish observed caught for an average of about 1 fish per 25 rods. I fished from sunrise to about 1 PM each day. I am guessing that now that nets are out of river that things should improve. Water has great clarity although rose some between Wed and Fri....anyway, any info on Drano is appreciated."

TGF co-editor Bob Rees replied, "We never really published any detailed articles on this fishery Roger, sorry. Also, I don't really know any detailed articles published on it. I do know returning adult numbers will be down this year which will likely keep the crowds away. Sorry we couldn't help more. I have Cc'd our contributing writer Michael Teague on this request in case he knows of another source."

And Michael Teague has this to say, "I pass on reports from Drano (and Wind) when I receive them, but the reports I receive are sparse. Our ability to supply information on areas we're not fishing personally is pretty much limited to that we receive from guides and readers. The latter are not so willing to share.

"Which makes us even more grateful for your detailed Multnomah Channel report. Thanks!"

Subscriber Gary wrote to Bob Rees to ask, "In this weeks report ,it was stated to fish your herring on the bottom in shallow water ?what depths are they talking about ( 20 feet or less ? )I was trolling today in the Meldrum Bar area of the Willamette in 40 to 50 feet of water with a spinner and prawn and 4 oz. of lead and going out 20 to 25 pulls...is that a correct way or should I use a jet diver and go deeper...the question I guess is should I stay on the bottom no matter what depth I am fishing

"THANKS FOR ANY HELP YOU CAN GIVE"

Bob replied. "You nailed it, in waters 20 foot or less, I fish from the bottom up. In other words, I work the bottom with the lead and fish a shorter dropper line the shallower the water. If you are trolling in the deep water that you specify, I would stick to lead with a flasher and go 12 to 20 pulls with 6 ounces versus 4. You can use the diver (I don't recommend the jet diver however) and go out the same number of pulls depending on the depth of water that you are fishing."

Michael Teague's old buddy Rick Greninger doesn't submit enough reports. If he did, he'd know to include information like the length of the fish <sigh>. It's appreciated just the same. He wrote, "Big fish caught by Gail Jones of McMinnville head of the Multnomah Channel Sat, 3-24-07 2:15 pm on her salmon rod. Harold was re-rigging the big rod with smelt and night crawlers took her 45 min to land it fishing from the boat in the pic and yes you can publish it."



And finally, this succinct question from subscriber 'Dan', "Could you please explain the technique of side drifting?"

Michael Teague responds, "Basically, side drifting is allowing the boat to move with the current rather than casting from an anchored craft, allowing the terminal tackle to drift. But the a (whole) lot mire to it than that. Fortunately, I was just reading a couple of articles on the subject so have included the URLs this week in Random Links, below, for all our readers. Thanks for asking; I don't think you're alone in wondering about this technique."

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)

### **Random Links**

A great method for hooking sand shrimp from Matthew Clark at Pacific Ghost Productions:  
**<http://smallstreamsalmonfishing.com/movies/shrimprig/shrimprig.html>**

How to rig plug Cut Herring (Commercial site):  
**<http://www.pro-cure.com/technique.html>**

Side Drifting A to Z:  
**<http://www.steelheaduniversity.com/side-drifting.htm>**

Steelhead Side Drifting Rigs:  
**<http://www.steelheaduniversity.com/drift.html>**

**Weekly Quote** – "I spent the evening before I left sorting through my tackle. I wanted to get rid of the worthless stuff, but I couldn't bring myself to throw out anything. Nostalgia seems to infuse every aspect of fishing, including the gear." - Bill Barich

**GOOD LUCK!**