

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **April 13th – April 19th, 2007**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- Warmer weather has coaxed water temperatures at Willamette Falls to 53 degrees- a temperature biologists deem as ideal for catch rates. Winter steelhead counts are nearing 4,400 and 400 summers have been counted. Warmer water has a greater number of springers on the move although only 60 have crossed so far this season.

Springer catches have improved but far from consistent. Trollers are taking the lion's share of the catch from Sellwood Bridge through the Portland Harbor. Sturgeon fishing has been slow with mostly shorts being released for anglers' efforts. **Pro guide Brandon McGavran (360-607-1327)** reports remarkable action, going 8 for 11 Tuesday this week.

Columbia River fishing has finally shown signs of improvement. Although far from the epic years of 2001/2002, fair catches are coming from the Woodland to Westport stretch of the river. Hatchery fish outnumber the wild ones but most are cookie-cutter 12 to 14 pound salmon. Trollers are faring better than anchor anglers- likely due to the high flows.

Weekend creel checks indicate improving sturgeon fishing in the Columbia River gorge and a keeper for every other boat in the Portland to Longview stretch. Warming water temperatures are credited for the improvement.

Fishing has been slow on the Clackamas with no additional springer catches reported.

The Sandy River is under a great deal of pressure for as few fish as it has been producing over the past week.

Winter steelhead are spawning on the North Santiam although fresh fish will continue to enter through Mid-May when they're all counted as summers. No springers have yet been counted at Foster Dam on the South Santiam.

On Saturday, young anglers are encouraged to take advantage of Cottage Grove Pond where 750 catchable trout will be planted. The event is free and will run from 9:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Scheduled to be planted with rainbow trout this week are Haldeman Pond, Trojan Ponds, Dorena Reservoir, E. E. Wilson Pond, Foster Reservoir, Freeway Lake East, Green Peter Reservoir, Junction City Pond, Timber Linn Lake, Walling Pond and Walter Wirth Lake.

Northwest – Good catches of winter steelhead are still coming from Tillamook area streams. Anglers versed in low water tactics are taking advantage of the sparse river traffic. The Nestucca and Wilson Rivers are producing the best results with plug fishing responsible for most of the take. Although recent rain freshets caused slight rises in river levels, visibility remains extremely clear.

Pro guides Jesse Zalonis (503-392-5808) and Kent Anderson (503-550-6303) report the winter steelhead run is winding down on the Nestucca but occasional decent catches are possible. **Pro guide Dave Johnson (503-201-4292)** managed to hook 15 mostly-bright steelhead Tuesday and Wednesday this week.

Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) found the mainstem Nehalem in great shape earlier

this week but most fish past their prime.

No springers have been reported from Tillamook Bay. Sturgeon fishing has been fair at best with some keepers coming from Bay City. Crabbing remains poor. The ocean outlook is not favorable to recreational boaters.

Rockfish and ling cod limits were taken late last week by sports boaters launching out of Newport. Rockfish were cooperative out of Depoe Bay but lings have been tough to locate.

Scheduled for trout stocking this week are Bay City Reservoir, Cape Mears Lake, Carter Lake, Cleawox Lake, Coffenbury Lake, Cullaby Lake, Devil's Lake, Hebo Lake, Lake Lytle, Smith Lake, South Lake, Tahoe Lake, Town Lake and Woahink Lake.

Good clam tides begin early next week with spring clamming success running high. The tides will begin early in the morning.

Southwest – The start date of the offshore halibut season was omitted last week. The fishery inside the 40 fathom line opens May 1st seven days a week from Cape Falcon to Humbug Mountain. In this same area, the first all-depth option is May 10 – 12. From Cape Falcon to Leadbetter Point, it's an all depth fishery until the 14,264 pound quota is met or July 15th, whichever comes first.

Steelhead action has slowed on the Umpqua. The anticipation for the springer run to get underway is high.

Efforts for springers are low on the Rogue. The only thing lower is the catch rate, which went from a few on Friday last week to none reported over the weekend. A single Chinook has crossed at Gold Ray, however. Steelhead fishing is holding up in the middle and upper stretches and good catches were made over the weekend at the mouth of the Applegate.

Bottom fishers out of Brookings did very well for ling cod last week as the ocean cooperated to create smooth trips. Limits of rockfish and lings were common. Surf perch remain on the bite and plentiful from ocean beaches and jetties.

The offshore ocean salmon season from Port Orford to the California border will run from May 5th to September 4th. This is great news to anglers following the dismal outlook in 2006.

Bluebill Lake, Saunders Lake, Cooper Cr. Reservoir, Galesville Reservoir, Emigrant Lake, Lost Creek Reservoir, Applegate Reservoir, Lake Selmac and Willow Lake are scheduled to be planted with hatchery trout.

Eastern – With many different insects hatching recently, fly fishing has been good on Fall River. Caddis dries have been particularly effective.

Pinehollow Reservoir, Rock Creek Reservoir and Taylor Lake are scheduled to be planted in the Deschutes watershed.

In thin, the last week of steelhead fishing in Eastern Oregon and Washington, **Pro guide Mac Huff (800-940-3688)** reports fishing has varied with water conditions with most anglers putting in three to four hours per fish.

Pro guide Rick Arnold (541-480-1570) says Bull Trout fishing is sporadic but they're taking fish

over 10 pounds.

SW Washington – Many area streams are producing light catches of spring chinook and steelhead. The Lewis, Kalama and Cowlitz Rivers are the primary targets and these streams will only improve in coming weeks.

Over 200 chinook have passed Bonneville Dam with one taken recently in Drano Lake. Check regulations as Wednesday closures become effective starting April 11th.

Soapbox Update - Do Something Good and Necessary For Oregon Salmon, Steelhead & Trout Now And In The Future!

Thanks to you and our partner organizations you made a difference in HB2975 --- that was our practice run.

House Bill 3525 may be the most destructive piece of legislation we'll see this session. Called "the Oasis bill" it asks that we drain some 1/2 million acre feet of water from the Columbia River. This is as much water as the state of Idaho has committed in the Federal Plan for Salmon, and is desperately needed by outgoing baby salmon.

HB3525 has a hearing scheduled Friday in Salem, your legislators need to hear from you today!!! Pulling this much water out of the Columbia and its' associated watersheds would be a disaster in the making for our migrating salmon and steelhead smolts. It's unconscionable that a bill that has these kinds of deleterious effects to the region's largest watershed would be getting a hearing at all but the reality is the hammer may drop on Friday and find its' way to a vote.

WE HAVE TO KILL THIS IN COMMITTEE NOW. Here's how you can make a difference.

Two key sponsors of the bill, Representative Mike Schaufler (D-Happy Valley) and Representative Debbie Boone (D-Clatsop County, near Tillamook) have no dog in this fight. Call them or email them and ask why they sponsored this bill. If you're a constituent let them know how displeased you are with their support of a bill that carries the prospect of damaging fish. Without proper flow the out migration of salmon and steelhead smolts is seriously hindered. Lower summer flows=higher temperatures=more disease and more predators! A sure recipe for extinction.

HB3525 is expected to be heard on Friday, April 13th at 1:00 PM in the State Capitol, Hearing Room C by the House Energy and Environment Committee. It's the "first reading" which means it's just getting off the ground but we need to stop this before it gets "legs" and finds its' way to the Senate.

The members of the House Energy and Environment Committee are: Chair ,Rep. Jackie Dingfelder from Portland who clearly understands the importance of water and fish, rep.jackiedingfelder@state.or.us; Vice-Chair Chuck Burley ,Bend, a Forester who's district could be adversely affected by the passage of this bill ,rep.chuckburley@state.or.us; Vice-Chair Ben Cannon ,Portland, who needs to hear from us , rep.bencannon@state.or.us;

Rep. Terry Beyer ,Springfield/Eugene ,Rep. Beyer's support is critical, if you're from the Eugene area please contact her today , rep.terrybeyer@state.or.us; Rep. Bob Jenson ,Pendleton ,Has the support of the agricultural community ,rep.bobjenson@state.or.us; Representative Greg MacPherson ,Lake Oswego ,another key vote ,rep.gregmacpherson@state.or.us; Representative Greg Smith ,Heppner , If you check out Rep. p. Smith's legislative website you'll find he represents a range of farm and ranch operations in Eastern Oregon - rep.gregsmith@state.or.us

If none of these committee members is YOUR legislator then go to the "find a legislator" link <http://www.leg.state.or.us/findlegsltr/> and contact your legislator today!

This is going to be an uphill battle but your input, your letters, your calls made a positive difference in the direction of HB2975. LET'S DO IT AGAIN! Let's show our legislators in Salem that it's NOT money that rules this state but people, concerned Oregon citizens that demand that we do the right thing on behalf of our fish and wildlife resources. HB3525 is bad for fish and it's bad legislation for Oregon.

Your voice counts, weigh in today. Please!

Thank you

NSIA Government Affairs

Liz Hamilton, Executive Director
Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association
PO Box 4
Oregon City, OR 97045
503 631 8859
866 315 NSIA
nsializ@aol.com
www.nsiafishing.org

Columbia River Fishing Report – Recent reports for spring chinook from Woodland to Longview indicate the run is beginning to peak. Multiple opportunities are happening for top guides with most fish hitting the deck in the keeper category. **Pro guide Brandon McGavran (360-607-1327)** reported great catches even when the weather turned south on Wednesday. Brandon went 7 for 8 on the 11th with an opportunity for a triple except one got off. Brandon noted that he was marking fish on the screen when the bites took place and emphasized taking advantage of the slack water areas where anglers can get out of the fast current. Herring trolled just off of the bottom has been taking the majority of fish. Downriver, near Aldridge Point, guides have been reporting sporadic action. Trolled herring are taking the majority of fish in this area as well and anchor anglers are not producing big numbers. Clifton Channel alongside Tenasillahe Island has not been producing great results this season.

Many anglers are beginning to ask when the river is likely to close. On a compact call the afternoon of the 11th, fishery managers stated the fishery will likely go until the predicted close date- April 15th. Although the early catch rates were not all that great, the bulk of the catch has been the "black-face" chinook. Those are destined for the upper Columbia- fish that eat away at our impacts on listed Snake River fish. The "snow belly" chinook destined for the Willamette River seem to be present in fair numbers in the Willamette itself but oddly absent in Columbia River catches. It's still too early to say just how either of these fisheries is meeting up with pre-season predictions.

Anglers participating in the above Bonneville fishery will have an additional 15 days to pursue their quarry. Although passage is clearly not peaking, salmon should begin to pass Bonneville in good numbers in the coming weeks. As passage climbs, so will success rates at Drano, Wind River and the Klickitat for anglers versed in productive technique for those areas. Trolled herring has caught on in recent years and can be quite productive. It's important to keep your baits near the bottom for best success in these areas. Bounced sand shrimp on the bottom can also produce good results.

Sturgeon anglers are beginning to see some reward from what has consistently become a challenging

winter time for most. Most guides blame the poor winter fishery on cold water temperatures and it seems to hold true. Temperatures have been on the rise with the mainstem hitting the upper 40's in recent days. It has stimulated a sturgeon bite both in the Columbia River Gorge and the Portland to Longview stretch. With smelt being the key bait, anglers are finding fair action for both shakers and keeper fish. On average, anglers are recording 1 keeper and 10 shakers for every 10 boats in the Portland to Longview stretch.

Walleye success is beginning to slow as fish enter the spawning stage of their lifecycle. Fish become quite disinterested in bait and focus their efforts on spawning in the shallower water of the mainstem Columbia. It will be several weeks before the walleye fishery becomes consistent again.

The Guide's Forecast – Holdover tides and run timing should produce better results for anglers working the last few days of the open season for spring chinook on the mainstem Columbia. The river below Longview will likely continue to produce the best results for anglers concentrating on the tide changes and targeting salmon on the bottom using herring. Also troll the slack water areas just off of the current break. These types of waters can often be found behind islands and closer to shore. Hardware may get more attention in the warming water but trolled herring will likely begin to produce the best results. Prawn spinners will also be a hometown favorite for fish.

Davis Bar fishers should also fair well however this fishery is not producing action like it has in the past. With good numbers of fish being reported from downriver fisheries in recent days, this may be a likely point of interception and could produce nicely up until the closure.

Sturgeon anglers may want to try the gorge for the best opportunity for keepers. Smelt will continue to produce the best results but shrimp will be a deadly combo or effective in itself. The Portland to Longview stretch will also be a good option and anglers can spend some time in pursuit of salmon during tide changes- at least until Sunday.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – About 4,500 winter steelhead, nearly 500 summers and 200 spring Chinook have been counted at Willamette Falls with the water temperature un the low 50s. Visibility is over 4 1/2 feet. Given the time of year, water conditions on the Willamette are decent. Flows have picked up a little with recent rainfall and the visibility is over 4 1/2 feet. Spring Chinook catches are fair and will continue to improve as the water further warms. By the end of the month, counts at the Falls will top 1,000 a day.

Sturgeon fishing slowed over the last Thursday through Sunday retention period with more shakers and fewer keeper-sized fish being hooked.

McKenzie fly fishers are doing fairly well for trout.

Although summers steelhead numbers are gradually increasing, there are still to few to target so this remains pretty much a catch and release fishery for native winters. Use the South channel at Lower Guides Island as there's a tree across the North channel. The drift from Stayton to Green's Bridge should be a good one for the coming weekend. As of April 10th, 127 winter steelhead and 43 summers have been counted at Foster Dam on the South Santiam. The first summers were seen here on March 12th.

The Guide's Forecast – Data was revealed at the Compact telephone conference Wednesday this week indicated spring Chinook catch rates are in the lower Willamette of 670 are about 100 fish greater than at this time in 2006 and about 40 more than 2005. Perhaps it'll be a good year for springers after all.

Springers have been taken from Kelly Point up to Oregon City indicating they're scattered. Catch rates will be picking up in the weeks to come. There's always a crowd below Sellwood Bridge although that's been a cold spot this week as has Multnomah Channel anywhere but at the head where a few have been hooked. Most Chinook are being caught on plug-cut blue or green label herring on a short leader (12 inches is about right) behind a Fish Flash with about eight ounces of lead on a dropper.

Trolled herring remains the top bait for spring Chinook in the lower Willamette although more anglers are switching up to sardine-wrapped Kwikfish as the fish begin to respond to lures. As the water warms, many will be using spinners in lieu of bait.

Since conditions have changed little since the last retention period, sturgeon fishing is expected to be slow again this week.

Hatches are creating some dry fly opportunities on the McKenzie between 10 AM and 2 PM daily.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Clackamas steelheaders have picked up a fish here and there, but spring Chinook have been slow to enter water which still hovers in the mid-40s. Springers are slow to enter a tough to catch in water that cold. Bait is the better option. Rain this week has brought the water level up a little, but the color remains good. Most of the steelhead hooked recently have been of hatchery origin. Few anglers are trying Eagle Creek as it's non-productive with the run winding down. About 100 steelhead were recycled downriver on Tuesday this week so there are a few extra fish in the river to target.

Steelheading on the Sandy has been slow with a few summers and a very few springers in the mix. Though most fish hooked have been bright, the majority of steelhead in the system are unclipped, requiring release to complete the spawning cycle. Catch rates have been best on the upper River.

North Coast Fishing Report – Effort is really waning for north coast steelhead but dedicated guides are still putting forth effort and finding some decent success. **Pro guides Jesse Zalonis (503-392-5808) and Kent Anderson (503-550-6303)** are reporting from the Nestucca River. Jesse states, "The Nestucca has slowed. There are also some seals around. We are seeing mixed results, with some fresh winter fish, a few summer fish, and some run backs as well. With the lower conditions, being stealthy will help. All small water gear will work, with smaller offerings, and lighter lines. We have not seen any chinook as of yet, but rumors of a couple rollers in tidewater. Kent followed up saying, "One last report from the Nestucca. The river fished well the first week of April with most days landing 4-6 steelhead with a few additional chances. Last weekends rain brought the river up a few inches and most of the fish in the lower part of the river jetted upstream. I fished on Tues (4/10) from 4th Bridge to 3 Rivers and had 5 chances landed 2 wild hens. All fish were caught side drifting and all were hooked above 1st Bridge. We are starting to see a few summer steelhead in the catch. There will still be a few wild and broodstock winters entering the river but the run is definitely winding down for the year. I have one more trip on Friday then it's Springer time." **Pro guide Dave Johnson (503-201-4292)** reports, "I fished local here on Tuesday and Wed and we hooked 15 steelhead as well as some other takes for the two days of fishing using the usual techniques, plugs, bobber/jig and sidedrifting. Most the fish were in great shape. Friday I fished the Clack for steelhead and we went two for four on winter fish. In the times I've fished over there it doesn't seem like the fish are in as good this year as they have in the past."

With the low flows, the larger Nehalem was in great shape for fishing late last week. **Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** floated it prior to the weekend but called the trip challenging. Chris did find some fish but the majority of the fish they landed were already spawned.

On Friday, April 6th, I targeted sturgeon in the bay only to come up with one shaker and losing another nice fish I believe was a keeper. We snagged (yes, snagged) an ambitious sea-run cutthroat as well on a sand shrimp soaking on the bottom. The later part of the day, we launched the boat at Sollie Smith Bridge to fish the lower Wilson River for steelhead. The water was exceptionally clear but we did come up with one steelhead that took a K11 X-treme Kwikfish in some deeper water. We had the lower section to ourselves but the bay had some effort at Bay City that day. There were a few, and I do mean a few, keepers taken in the deeper water in the Bay City slot.

The Guide's Forecast – With these recent reports, it's pretty clear that the steelhead fishery is on its way out. However, we are currently experiencing quite a rain system in Tillamook as I write. This should have an impact on river levels making for a final push for spring steelhead on the primary streams. Depending on how much rain we receive, the upper Trask, Wilson and Nestucca Rivers could all see another nice push of fish over the weekend. Volatile weather systems may continue to feed the river system keeping river levels up and fresh fish moving. Drifted baits will become the first option but as flows subside, plugs will once again become an effective method for taking these late-run fish.

With this rain, we could see the first spring chinook taken from the Tillamook area. The Trask is the likely river to produce the first fish as they get the largest plants but the Wilson is another likely candidate. In higher flows the chinook will often lie in the steelhead water but as flows drop down into green water, they will be found in their traditional haunts- deeper, slower water where backbouncers will have a fair crack at them using eggs and shrimp. Deep diving plugs like the K15's wrapped with sardine fillets will also have an impact but you'll have to work hard to find a biter this early in the season.

More good sturgeon tides in the early part of next week but sturgeon certainly haven't made the appearance that they have in recent years. Bay City and the upper west channel are the places to be (if there really is a "place" to be).

Don't expect to get out on the ocean this week. Rough ocean conditions and cold fronts will keep most recreational craft in port this week. Crabbing will be best outside but it's best to wait for more favorable weather. High seas are in the forecast.

Central & South Coast Reports – Catches of winter steelhead have slowed at the Siletz. Steelheading is about over on the Alsea.

Offshore Chinook angling opened on the central and South coast on March 15th, but few fish have been hooked. Only one has been brought into the port of Charleston. Anglers attention has been focused on the outstanding bottom fishing.

Coho opens offshore on June 23rd with an allowable catch more than twice that of 2006. From Cape Falcon South, 50,000 silvers may be taken compared to a quota of 20,000 last year. Ocean fishing will be permitted through September 16th or fulfilling the quota. South of Humbug Mountain to the California border, the cutoff is September 4th.

Anglers are reminded that many South coast rivers closed on the 1st of April and won't re-open until May 26th as wild steelhead are spawning during this period.

North and South Umpqua steelheaders are doing well for late-season winters but are seeing an increasing number of dark fish and downrunners. Chinook are being taken in the lower Umpqua but it's slow so early in the run. The first few springers have been counted at Winchester Dam. Despite slow fishing, most anglers are targeting Chinook in the mainstem Umpqua. Crabbing and sturgeon fishing in

Winchester Bay is poor.

Steelheading has stalled on the Coos River with little effort and few fresh fish entering. Coquille anglers are finding a few winter steelhead but many of the fish being hooked have spawned and are returning to the ocean. The South Fork is most productive as the run draws to a close here.

Precipitation triggered stronger flows on the upper Rogue which in turn improved the rate of steelhead migration upstream. As hundreds a day cross Gold Ray Dam, the winter steelhead total is approaching 11,000. Only seven spring Chinook have been counted, however. Steelheading in the upper river is holding up well but it's spotty in the Grants Pass stretch. Bait and lures are taking fish equally well. While spring Chinook fishing remains slow, the number of enthusiasts is increasing on the lower Rogue. Rainfall mid-week is expected to improve catch rates. Spinner/anchovy rigs have been as effective as anything for these fish which have been slow to take in the cold water.

The Chetco River is closed to steelheading.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Pro guide Mac Huff (800-940-3688) reports, "Eastern Oregon and Washington are in their last week of steelhead fishing for the 2006-07 run. The week holds a fair prospect for good fishing, even with current (Monday) moderately high water conditions.

"The forecast for the rest of the week is for drier, cooler weather which will turn of the water supply, then the question is how quickly the upriver pool of water in the Grande Ronde exit the valley at La Grande and water levels begin to drop downriver.

"Water levels are probably between 5,000 and 6,000 cfs (the station is presently off line) now at Troy and last week's creel survey was excellent at 4 hours per fish in Washington. There were a fair number of anglers on the river with an average of 3 hours of effort, which means there were a lot of people with rods that were not fishing and those that put in the effort were having terrific days. By the Sunday the river was rising the bite had dropped off, but as the water begin to fall later this week fishing will get back to "normal" spring success.

"For the past few weeks Wednesday, Thursday and Friday have been the best fishing because that was when water conditions were best. The weekends tended to slow down as water levels began to rise from warm weather, precipitation or both. Best bet this week to fishing of this fine season is to fish late in the week and if the weekend water conditions remain good, that will be a bonus."

Pro guide Rick Arnold (541-480-1570) reports from Lake Billy Chinook, "The bull trout fishing remains sporadic with tough days followed by killer days. We have been sticking more bulls over 10 LB. than years past though the numbers of fish overall are down somewhat. The kokanee fishing is really tough as populations are at historic lows.

"Got a chance to fish Crescent Lake for a evening and a morning on Fri-Sat. Got into some nice browns to 6 LB. The lake water level is up from the last several years and that will help.....still very far from full pool and won't fill this year."

Northwest Trout – Trolling for trout has improved at Henry Hagg with fish responding to various lures.

Trout fishing at Detroit is slow and the ramp ay Mongold remains slow due to low water.

From the ODFW on April 12th, "In the South Willamette Watershed, ODFW region staff is hosting a

youth angling event Saturday, April 14 at Cottage Grove Pond in Cottage Grove, OR from 9:30am to 1:00pm. ODFW Angler Education instructors will be on hand to assist young anglers. All the supplies will be provided including rods, reels and bait. ODFW will even clean your catch for you. ODFW will stock 480 legal size rainbow trout and 250 trout twelve inches or greater. To get to Cottage Grove Pond, take the Dorena Lake exit from I-5 (Exit 174) and head east on Row River Road approximately 1.5 miles. The pond is accessed from an asphalt pathway behind the weigh station on the north side of Row River Road."

Trout have been planted this week in the Northwest Zone at Bay City Reservoir, Cape Meares Lake, Carter Lake, Cleawox Lake, Coffenbury Lake, Cullaby Lake, Devil's Lake, Hebo Lake, Lake Lytle, Smith Lake, South Lake, Tahoe Lake, Town Lake and Woahink Lake. In the Willamette Valley, Haldeman Pond, Trojan Ponds, Dorena Reservoir, E. E. Wilson Pond, Foster Reservoir, Freeway Lake East, Green Peter Reservoir, Junction City Pond, Timber Linn Lake, Walling Pond and Walter Wirth Lake have been stocked.

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report April 4th – April 17th, 2007

North Puget Sound

Anglers are starting to gear up for **halibut**, but they shouldn't set their **salmon** rods aside just yet. There's still time to get out on the water and participate in the blackmouth fishery, which could continue to provide decent fishing for anglers in the region.

"We're entering the final weeks of what has turned out to be a great **blackmouth** salmon season," said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. "And anglers are still finding chinook in some spots, especially in Marine Area 8-1."

Anglers in marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) and 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) have through April 30 to hook a blackmouth. Anglers in those 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 only other area open in the region for blackmouth is Marine Area 9 (Admiralty Inlet), where anglers have through April 15 to fish for salmon. Anglers in Marine Area 9 have a daily limit of one salmon, and chinook must measure at least 22 inches in length.

Saltwater anglers itching to drop a line for a big flatfish don't have to wait much longer. 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, freshwater anglers can still cast for **steelhead**. The catch-and-release steelhead fishery on the Skagit and Sauk rivers continues through April. Anglers on the Skagit can fish 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>).

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

Some anglers are looking forward to halibut season, while others wait for trout fishing to open April 28 on hundreds of lowland lakes across the state. Then again, many of those anglers are already on the water catching lingcod, steelhead and other fish in season.

The recreational **halibut** season starts April 9 in most areas of Puget Sound (marine areas 6-11 and 13). These fisheries 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. Best bets in April for catching a big flatfish are marine areas 6 and 9, 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.

Most charter boats fishing **lingcod** out of Westport are averaging one to 1.5 fish for everyone on board, said Carol Henry, WDFW marine resources analyst. Most lings are running 6-8 pounds. "The weather's been a bit rough for the smaller, private boats, but the charter boats are doing well," she said. Lingcod fishing opened March 17 in coastal waters south of Cape Alava (marine areas 1, 2 and 3) and will open April 15 in Marine Area 4 (Neah Bay). Additional information about the lingcod fishery and other bottom fish is available on the WDFW Fishing Hotline (360-902-2500) and the department's website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

Meanwhile, WDFW hatchery crews are stocking 110 lakes throughout the region with 615,000 legal-size, jumbo and broodstock trout. Thirty-three area lakes and ponds are also stocking up on 1.5 pound triploids. For a complete trout-stocking schedule for the region, see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/regions/reg6/index.htm>.

Youngsters ages 5-14 can take advantage of a one-day fishing event at Long Lake Park in Thurston County on April 21 - a week before the season opener. The area open to fishing includes the waters within the swimming buoy line between the fences at the north and south boundaries of the swim beach. Children must be pre-registered in order to participate. Information on registering and the event is available by calling Lacey Parks and Recreation, (360) 491-0857.

Over on the Olympic Peninsula's north coast rivers, **steelhead** anglers on the Sol Duc and Upper Hoh are still averaging one fish per two rods as the season winds down. Fifty anglers on the Sol Duc reported catching 25 wild steelhead and releasing 21 of them on the March 30-April 1 weekend, when 99 anglers fishing the Upper Hoh caught and released 55 wild steelhead. Steelhead fishing will be open through April 15 on the Hoh River and through April 30 on the Sol Duc.

Even better, 46 anglers on the Bogachiel reported catching 35 wild steelhead and releasing all but seven of them. On the Calawah, three anglers caught and released nine wild steelies. Steelhead fishing will be open through April 30 on the Quillayute River system, which includes the Bogachiel, Calawah, Sol Duc and Quillayute rivers.

The arrival of the first **spring chinook salmon** at the Sol Duc Hatchery signals the start of another season ahead. "This springer showed up a little bit later than last year, but now they're on their way," said Brian Russell, WDFW hatchery manager. Russell said he expects somewhat lower numbers from last year's 1,003 count.

Saltwater anglers can compete for prizes at the 2007 Sekiu **Spring Salmon Derby**, scheduled April 7-8 with weigh-in at Olson's Resort. First prize for the biggest salmon is \$1,000. Anglers 12 and younger can also try their luck by signing up for the Kids Derby Ladder. For more information, call Olson's resort at 360-963-2311, or the Sekiu Chamber of Commerce at 877-812-4933.

Rather dig **razor clams**? WDFW is tentatively planning a dig for April 19-22 - the first of the season

scheduled on morning tides. If marine toxin tests are favorable, one beach - Twin Harbors - will open for digging Thursday, April 19, joined by Long Beach on Friday, April 20. Those beaches plus Copalis, Mocrocks and Kalaloch will open for digging Saturday, April 21. All beaches except Kalaloch will be open for digging Sunday, April 22. All digging on those beaches must be finished by noon.

Southwest Washington:

Catch rates for **spring chinook salmon** have been picking up on the lower Columbia River, but not as fast as they did last year. Boat anglers fishing from the Interstate 5 Bridge downstream to Buoy 10 averaged one chinook for every 12.5 rods during the week ending April 1. That compares to an average catch rate of one chinook for every 5.6 rods during the same week last year, when anglers caught an estimated 2,000 springers in just seven days of fishing.

Through March 2007, nearly 34,000 angler trips produced just 1,200 chinook kept and 350 released.

"Anglers have been catching spring chinook in fits and starts," said Joe Hymer, a WDFW fish biologist. "Just when the fishing starts to pick up, it slacks off again. But the run is still building and the fishery could take off at any time."

Like last year at this time, boat anglers fishing the Columbia River off Cathlamet have had the highest success rates. The average catch there last week was one spring chinook for every 8.7 rods, compared to one for every three rods during the same time last year.

Overall, spring chinook fishing on the lower Columbia River has been fairly consistent with this year's pre-season run estimate of 164,000 fish, said Hymer, noting that an estimated 225,000 fish returned to the river last year. With the season in the lower river scheduled to run through April 15, fishery managers from Washington and Oregon are assessing the catch through March in relation to pre-season estimates.

Meanwhile, some spring chinook are starting to show up in the catch on the Lewis River, where the first summer-run hatchery steelhead of the season recently found its way to the trap below Merwin Dam. More summer steelhead and spring chinook should start arriving to the Lewis and Kalama rivers in the weeks ahead, Hymer said.

Late-run winter steelhead are also still providing some action on the Cowlitz River.

Eleven boat anglers, mostly at Blue Creek, reported catching six steelies during a creel survey ending April 1. Forty bank anglers caught 10 steelhead and released three others during the same week. No spring chinook were found in the creel but that should change soon. Hymer reminds anglers that no fishing is allowed within a 100-foot radius of the new outlet structure located downstream of the Blue Creek boat ramp at the Cowlitz Hatchery.

Above Bonneville Dam, fishing has been slow for steelhead and spring chinook salmon on the Columbia River and its tributaries. Anglers have been catching some steelhead in the John Day Pool, but Hymer noted that the chance of catching a springer above Bonneville is still low given that only 87 fish had been counted moving past the dam as of April 2. "That number should increase significantly in the next couple of weeks, said Hymer, noting that more than 8,600 spring chinook passed the dam in a single day last year. He advises anglers to keep an eye on the "dam counts" - available on the Army Corps of Engineers website (<https://www.nwp.usace.army.mil/op/fishdata/home.asp>) or the DART website (<http://www.cbr.washington.edu/dart/adult.html>) -- to gauge upriver fishing prospects for spring chinook and steelhead in the days ahead.

Fishing for legal-size **sturgeon** has been slow in most areas of the Columbia River except around Vancouver where it's been improving. The Dalles Pool is "catch-and-release" only through the end of

the year. Boat anglers are, however, averaging a half to three-quarters of a **walleye** per rod in the Bonneville, The Dalles and John Day pools. Boat anglers fishing behind John Day Dam are also catching some **bass**.

Hundreds of lowland lakes are now being stocked for the statewide **trout** opener April 28, but many waters around the region offer good fishing right now. Two year-round waters - Silver Lake in Cowlitz County and Swofford Pond in Lewis County - were just planted with catchable-size rainbows at the end of March. Silver Lake received 7,448 of them and Swofford Pond got 3,600. For the latest information on fish plants, see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/weekly/> on the WDFW website.

Trout anglers are also advised that the Lewis River Power Canal will open to fishing from the fishing pier upstream to the access road at Swift Dam on April 28.

Eastern Washington:

WDFW fish hatchery crews are busy stocking **trout** in lakes throughout the region in preparation for the April 28 lowland lakes fishing season opener. But they're also stocking waters that are open year-round, and those may be ones to hit now.

Year-round Eloika Lake, north of Chattaroy off Highway 2 in north Spokane County, recently received 5,000 catchable-size (8-12-inch) brown trout from the Spokane Fish Hatchery. Eloika is actually known best for its spring largemouth bass and crappie fishing. Many Eloika anglers voluntarily practice catch-and-release with the bass to allow them to grow to the four to six-pounders occasionally landed. Crappie anglers at Eloika must follow a nine-inch size minimum and 10-fish daily catch limit.

Year-round Long Lake, the 5,000-plus-acre reservoir also known as "Lake Spokane" off Long Lake Dam, recently received 2,500 catchable-size (8-12-inch) **brown trout** from the Spokane Hatchery. Last fall Long Lake received 12,000 **cutthroat trout** fry and 25,000 brown trout fry that are usually of catchable size by now. Largemouth and **smallmouth bass** are also fair game in Long Lake, although the bass season shifts to catch-and-release May 1.

Year-round Rock Lake, near Ewan in northwest Whitman County, has already received some of its 2007 allotment of 30,000 catchable-size (8-12-inch) **rainbow trout** and 20,000 brown trout. Last fall Rock Lake was stocked with 40,000 rainbow fry and 35,000 brown trout fry.

"Rock Lake is usually a good bet at this time," said WDFW fish biologist Jason McLellan. "Some really nice browns and rainbows come out of there by those who know how to navigate it in a boat." Rock Lake is notoriously windy and its 2,000-plus acres of narrow, long, and deep waters have basalt shelves that, if not avoided, can be boat-eaters, he explained.

McLellan says recent overcast, windy, rainy and even snowy days of spring might not be comfortable for fishing, but they can actually make for just as good catching as sunny days. Trout and other fish have excellent eyesight, he explained, and there is no evidence that those conditions hamper their ability to see food sources.

Lakes that opened March 1 continue to provide good fishing. Coffeepot Lake, northeast of Odessa in Lincoln County, is yielding rainbow trout mostly in the 15 to 22-inch range. Coffeepot has selective gear rules with a daily limit of one trout with a minimum size of 18 inches. Southwest Spokane County's Amber Lake, under catch-and-release rules, is providing 11 to 22-inch rainbows and an occasional cutthroat trout. Amber shifts to a catch-and-keep season for two trout daily on April 28. North Silver Lake in Spokane County was recently stocked with 2,500 catchable-size (8-12-inch) rainbows. North Silver is under selective gear rules with a two-trout daily limit and 14-inch minimum size.

In the south end of the region, the Tucannon River impoundments open since March 1 - Beaver, Big

Four, Blue, Deer, Rainbow, Spring and Watson - continue to produce good catches of eight to 12-inch rainbows. Fishhook Pond, east of Burbank in Walla Walla County, has also been open since March 1 and has been restocked since then with catchable-size rainbows.

Other southeast waters open year-round that were recently stocked with catchable-size rainbows include Asotin County's Golf Course, Silcott and West Evans ponds; Columbia County's Dam, Dayton Juvenile, and Orchard ponds; Walla Walla County's Jefferson Park and Lions Park (College Place) ponds for juveniles, and Quarry Pond and Bennington Lake (Mill Creek Reservoir); and Whitman County's Pampa and Riparia ponds. For hatchery trout stocking numbers per waterway, see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/index.htm>.

WDFW Enforcement Officer Rob McQuary of Walla Walla recently checked anglers on the lower Walla Walla River and Columbia River. "The **channel catfish** are starting to bite," he reported, " but cold temperatures are keeping the fish from cooperating."

North Central Washington:

WDFW district fish biologist Jeff Korth of Moses Lake reports the "April Fool's Day" fishing season opener in the Columbia Basin produced decent catches of large fish for lots of anglers, although blustery spring weather "may have put a damper on the overall catch-per-angler averages." On the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge north of Othello in Grant County, Upper Hampton Lake anglers averaged about 1-1/2 fish each. Catches were mostly 15-inch **rainbow trout**, with about 42 percent running a little over 19 inches. Lower Hampton Lake anglers averaged less than one fish each, most running a little less than 14 inches, with 40 percent near 20 inches. Most Lower Hampton anglers were releasing eight to 10-inch yearling rainbows caught on lures or flies.

South Central Washington:

WDFW Yakima and Kittitas counties district fish biologist Eric Anderson reports that stocking of year-round fishing lakes with hatchery **rainbow trout** that was scheduled to start this month got an early start because of good numbers of fish at Naches Hatchery.

"Since we're not planting Wenas Lake this year because there's no public access, we're re-distributing the extra fish among the other lakes," he said. "Along with the larger triploid rainbows that are going into the south central region's lakes this week and next, we will have some fantastic fishing action here this month."

Anglers can check the South Central Washington trout stocking schedule on the website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/regions/req3/index.htm>. Anderson also noted that the actual weekly plants are updated every Thursday at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/weekly/>.

Reader Email

Rick Greninger, an old buddy of Michael Teague's from McMinnville wrote, "Harold [Jones, also of McMinnville, Ed.] is having way too much fun while Gail [Jaones' wife who appeared in this space a couple of weeks ago with a keeper sturgeon, Ed.] is in Thailand. Today (April 10th) he went fishing on the Columbia pot of Portland and landed this 36 inch Springer using a Kwikfish wrapped in a sardine around 2:30pm."

Here's the photo that Rick took:



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

Write to the TGF staff:

Bob Rees: brees@pacifier.com

Doug Rees: doug@TheGuidesForecast.com

Michael Teague: Michael@TheGuidesForecast.com

Random Links

Fishermen catch big, old Alaska rockfish <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17979900/?GT1=9246>

ODFW releases Spring Fishing Forecast <http://www.dfw.state.or.us/news/2007/April/05.asp>

Weekly Quote – "I fished a little while ago with a man, not in his first youth, who had wasted the flower of his life on business and golf and gardening and motoring and marriage, and had in his way postponed his initiation to trout fishing far too long!" - Arthur Ransome

GOOD LUCK!