

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **May 11th – May 17th, 2007**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- Demonstrating that water temperature can make all the difference, spring Chinook are streaming over Willamette Falls, pushing the YTD counts to 7,126 as of May 4th. Daily numbers dropped off recently, however. Summer steelhead totals are about 1,600 for the year. Water temperature is 55, visibility five feet as of May 7th. Spring Chinook fishing has been slow in the lower Willamette and Multnomah Channel. Anglers are reporting best success using prawns for bait but warming temperatures should trigger a hardware bite. Sturgeon fishing has been fair. A few shad are being taken.

Fishery managers remain confident in their pre-season prediction of 78,500 fish on the Columbia River. The salmon fishery will remain closed but adipose fin-clipped steelhead and jack salmon may be retained beginning May 16th from Tongue Point to the I-5 Bridge.

Pro guide David Johnson (503-201-4292) reports, that he previously predicted he thought the bite would switch back to prawns as the water on the Willamette warmed. It did.

Sturgeon success remains spotty in the gorge and in the Portland to Longview stretch. Very little effort is taking place downstream of the Wauna powerlines due to the retention restriction which will be lifted on Saturday. Catches are likely to be light for keepers.

Fishing has been very slow in the lower Clackamas for both springers and steelhead. Cool water temperatures seem to be a factor as anglers are reporting higher success rates in the warming afternoon waters. **Pro guide Kent Anderson (503-550-6303)** reports a few Springers and summers scattered in the lower stretch (below Carver).

Spring Chinook fishing has yet to take off in the lower Sandy but conditions are right to kick it off. **Pro guide Brandon Glass (503-666-5370)** reports pretty good summer steelheading in low and clear conditions.

It's still early for decent summer steelhead action on the North Santiam. As of May 7th, 250 summer steelhead have been counted at Foster Dam on the South Santiam with springers yet to be seen.

Water temperature at Hagg Lake is in the high 50s to low 60s. This will have smallmouth bass on their beds now with largemouth spawning around the 1st of June.

Scheduled for trout stocking this week in the South Willamette Zone are Alton Baker Canal, Carmen Reservoir, Clear Lake, Detroit Reservoir, Dexter Reservoir, E. E. Wilson Pond, Fall Creek, Foster Reservoir, Freeway Lake East, Junction City Pond, Leaburg Lake, the McKenzie River above Leaburg Lake, Roaring River Park Pond, Salmon Creek, Walling Pond, Walter Wirth Lake and the Willamette River Middle Fork above Hills Creek Reservoir.

In the Northern Willamette Zone, Benson Lake, Blue Lake, Hartman Pond, Henry Hagg Lake, Huddleston Pond, Sheridan Pond and West Salish Pond will be planted.

Northwest – Tillamook spring chinook made a brief showing on the last minus tide series but success dropped as tides weakened. A calm ocean brought some success to bubble fishers but bottomfishing was excellent on the weekend for offshore charter boats.

All-depth Halibut opens off the central Oregon coast this Thursday through Saturday, May 10th through 12th. Forecasted trade winds will likely make the ocean lumpy through the first opener. There have been a few surprises in the Tillamook Bay bubble including a halibut near 50 inches taken recently.

Offshore anglers have been getting a few Chinook hookups this week- particularly out of Newport. Bottom fishers launching out of Depoe Bay over the weekend took easy limits of rockfish. The ocean was friendly on Saturday, less so on Sunday.

Rock and jetty anglers are doing well using jigs and curly-tail grubs for rockfish and occasionally hooking lings.

Razor clam digging went well for diggers last weekend and the next minus tide series beginning on the 13th should produce similar results.

Southwest – Spring Chinook action on the lower Umpqua started to ramp up on May 1st and has shown steady improvement since that date. With water temperatures around Elkton in the upper 40-degree range, smallmouth bass fishing remains slow.

Rogue River anglers saw an improvement in the spring Chinook bite starting the middle of last week. Pods of fish are moving in but the action is spotty. Evenings have been most productive. Shad are being caught around Yellow Creek.

Offshore Chinook salmon fishing opened May 5th from Humbug Mountain (between Port Orford and Gold Beach. It runs through September 5th. Offshore coho opens June 23rd for a quota of 50,000 fish.

Ocean conditions finally allowed some offshore adventures last week out of Brookings. Anglers found rockfish plentiful and a renewed lingcod fishery with larger specimens coming from deeper water. Large redbtail surf perch are being caught off ocean beaches.

Expo Pond, Reinhart Park Pond, Emigrant Lake, Medco Pond, Spaulding Pond, Burma Pond, Dutch Herman, Howard Prairie and Hyatt are scheduled to be planted.

Eastern – Fly angling on the lower Deschutes has been fair to good with nymphs drawing strikes. Don't neglect terrestrials on windy days, however. Salmon flies are hatching in good number on the middle river.

Pro guide Rick Arnold (541-480-1570) tells us that Wickiup has put out some big browns and large kokanee. that Timothy Lake is putting out good numbers of smallish planters. Suttle is producing fair to good numbers of kokanee but it will only improve as the water temperature increases.

ODFW announced the emergency closure of the lower Umatilla River spring Chinook season effective Thursday, May 10th at 12:01 AM making Wednesday the 9th the last day for anglers to fish.

Hanel Pond is scheduled to receive 500 twelve-inch hatchery trout.

SW Washington – The Kalama and Lewis Rivers remain excellent prospects for salmon anglers with best success coming from driftboaters. Bank anglers are nearing season high catches as well.

Drano Lake and the Wind River fisheries are peaking with a fish for every 3 to 5 rods coming from Drano Lake anglers in the boat and bank fisheries, respectively.

White Salmon and Klickitat River anglers are beginning to see fair catches of spring chinook near the

river mouths.

Columbia River Fishing Report – Numbers of spring chinook are growing at the Bonneville fish passage window. Recent numbers are very encouraging that the run may indeed come in higher than expected. Fishery managers are reluctant however to modify their run prediction until a later date to see if the passage numbers increase or decrease. Peak passage will likely happen this week if it hasn't already and from there, we'll have a good grip on what we can expect for a final run size. One thing however is very encouraging- the jack counts are WAY up for this run. At present, jacks make up better than 10% of the run size and they typically only increase as the migration passes its peak. This is great news for the next two years returns to the Columbia. Can it be? Was the Columbia once again managed so that higher survival rates could be accomplished? Stand by, Federal operators may some day get this program right!

Of concern however is the odd absence of sturgeon in the Columbia River Gorge. Guides are wondering where these fish may be. Oversized and legals are typically present in good numbers for gorge anglers at this time. Granted, with the new Marker 85 deadline, a significant productive portion of the gorge has been off-limits but good fishing should still be going on below this new deadline. ODF&W creel checks back up guide observations with 3 legal sturgeon kept and over 400 shakers released for 17 boats in the gorge. In the Portland to Longview stretch, sturgeon action is fair with eight legal white sturgeon kept, plus 93 sublegal sturgeon released for 38 boats. The river remained closed downstream of Wauna but as you will read in the next section, the re-opener for sturgeon from the Wauna Powerlines to Buoy 10 begins on Saturday.

Walleye action in the John Day Pool remained surprisingly good last week with almost a 3 walleye per boat reported over the weekend. Anglers in this stretch also realized just how good a spring chinook fishery could be when the fishery is actually open. Numerous hook-ups were realized for the few people participating in the fishery. It is of course, now closed.

The Guide's Forecast – A couple of big openers happening in the coming week. The biggest is of course the re-opening of the consumptive sturgeon fishery downstream of the Wauna Powerlines. Some of the better fishing is likely to take place in the Wauna area itself. Quality keepers are likely beginning to filter into the estuary but Willamette River catches indicate a good number of fish present in this area. On the opener, (Saturday, May 12th) it'll likely take the collective of anglers to find where the biters are likely hiding out and what strategy is best to pursue them. Only time will tell us what to expect for results this year.

Also opening on May 16th from Tongue Point to the I-5 Bridge is summer steelhead. Forecasted numbers are real close to where we were last year (around 300,000 fish) and the fishery will likely perform like it has in the past. Passage is still a bit weak at Bonneville but will likely improve as the month wears on. Knowledgeable anglers for this fishery look for counts approaching 300 fish/day at Bonneville before they get excited about pursuing these fish. Surprises have happened in the past however and a good set of strong minus tides will greet beach plunkers on the opener to give us a real good taste as to how the run is going to shape up this time of year. If you have a boat, the islands in the lower Columbia, like Tenasillahe are likely hot spots but beach anglers can also take advantage of adequate bank access at Prescott Beach east of Westport, Oregon or in the Rainier or Sauvie's Island areas. Hot colored spin-n-glos are the hot ticket and the stronger the tide, the closer you should fish to the shoreline.

Keep hoping for high numbers of salmon to pass Bonneville Dam but by the time the calculations are in, the bulk of the run will have passed. None-the-less, more opportunity is better and managers will meet again to discuss the actual run forecast- stay tuned.....

The warming trend in the NW should finally compel smallmouth bass to again take up the bite in the John Day and upstream pools. Crankbaits and worms will likely take fair numbers of fish along the shoreline.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – With water temperatures hitting the magic mid-50 degree range as April drew to a close, spring Chinook were predictably streaming over Willamette Falls at something over 1,000 a day. As it should be.

But something quite unpredictable happened over the last week or so.

Counts at the Falls during the first week of May declined dramatically. May 4th through 7th, counts didn't break out of double digits. On Saturday, the 5th, only 27 springers were counted. Numbers have improved in the past few days with 491 crossing on Tuesday this week, but that's a ways from 1,000 a day. Total for the year is 8,063 with steelhead counts 1,954.

Pro guide David Johnson (503-201-4292) reports, "I kind of finished up my Willamette season but I may be back if I hear a good report. As I previously predicted I thought the bite would switch back to prawns as the water on the Willamette warmed. It did. 9 of the last 12 fish we hooked were on prawns, either behind a diver or bounced on the bottom.

"As the water temp goes up look to use more spinners or prawns with or without spinners. Wobblers shouldn't be over looked either."

Water temperature are at 58 degrees at the Falls as of May 7th with visibility 5.5 feet, springer totals are 7,572. About 1,870 summer steelhead have been counted.

Avid angler 'Dobe' adds this, "A couple of friends set up a guided trip with Julie's Guide Service to fish Bonneville sturgeon last Sunday but it got changed at the last minute so we fished salmon at Oregon City. Only saw about 7 netted, but, we were 1 of the seven. Must have been 200 boats between the 205 and the Clackamas. Julie did a great job but it made buoy 10 look like a empty parking lot."

The Guide's Forecast – Anglers in the lower river are experiencing very slow Chinook fishing this week. Prawn spinners have been most productive with backbounced eggs a close second. Historically, water temperatures of 55 degrees or better will have anglers switching to hardware which is more effective in warmer conditions. Springers are scattered with catches coming all over the lower River. Oregon City, Sellwood and Multnomah Channel at the head and lower end have all given up a few. Very few. Many anglers are going fishless with most areas giving up only one or two fish per day. Sturgeon fishing improved on the St. John stretch during the last retention period. Sand shrimp has been the hot bait but it's a good idea to take a variety.

A bright note is that shad counts have started ramping up with over 2,600 crossing at Bonneville on Tuesday this week. When the floodgates open in a month, shad will be crossing by the hundreds of thousands every day. They won't go through the enclosed ladder at Willamette Falls so we have only catch rates to gauge the numbers in the lower river. Shad fishing has started around Oregon City and near Coon Island in Multnomah Channel. While daily catches have been in the low double digits recently, it'll be possible to fill a cooler with these fragrant fishes in a couple of weeks. Traditional shad lures are darts and tiny Dick Nite spoons but these members of the herring family which migrate in the millions in waters of the Columbia and Willamette will hit anything shiny. Many anglers do well with a single bead above a nickel Siwash hook.

As the Falls counts go, so goes the fish density in the Santiams. Spring Chinook are now being taken

above Stayton. Anglers will find fishable numbers of summer chinook providing fair action on the North Santiam which is going to get a lot better in weeks to come.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Steelheading has shown slight improvement but should continue to pick up as water temperatures improve. A few springers were picked up last week, but as with the Willamette, the fishing seemed to shut down earlier this week.

Pro guide Kent Anderson (503-550-6303) shares this, "No great fishing on the Clackamas but a few Springers and summers scattered in the lower stretch (below Carver). Last week fished Weds, Thurs, Fri, and Sunday. 1 steelhead, 1 springer (lost) on Weds, nothing for me on Thurs but heard about a decent bite in the AM on the Willamette @ OC (I fished from 2 - 6:30 pm), 1 springer during the Kings for Kids Tourney (Friday) and blanked again on Sunday (but heard of a few caught below Carver). Clackamas water temps have been bouncing around from 46 - 51 degree (warming in afternoon) and all my fish have been caught in the afternoon. Hopefully with this weeks weather we might finally get the water temp up and the fish to start biting !!!"

Anglers have started trolling the Sandy between Oxbow and the mouth this week as the Columbia River has been backing up into the lower river, an annual situation which signals the start of this fishery. It has been slow so far. Summer steelheading has improved over last week.

Pro guide Brandon Glass (503-666-5370) adds this, "Well the Sandy has been very low and clear, but the Summer Steelhead catching has been pretty good. The Spring Chinook has been slow with a few being caught from the mouth to Cedar Creek. I would like to see the Columbia rise back up to Vancouver level of 9' or higher. Water temp has been near 56 degrees which is great, but the fish aren't there yet."

North Coast Fishing Report – As expected, action for spring chinook is still hit-and-miss but there was a decent surge of salmon on the early part of last weeks minus tide series. Since the "hold-over" tides began, fishing has slowed and anglers are concentrating their efforts on the lower end of the bay and ocean. We finally hit our first springer on Sunday- netting the estimated 16 pounder at the south tip of the jetty on a trolled herring in 32 feet of water. The ocean was very friendly that day as we took advantage of the crabbing and bottomfishing finishing up the day with 2 ling cod, 1 sea-bass and 15 keeper crab besides the springer. We started out the day digging clams in front of the Seaside Aquarium taking about 50 razors for 4 of us. Needless to say, we had a seafood feast that night!

The NW wind decided to rear its ugly head this week with the warming Willamette Valley temperatures. Strong winds kept many boats in port but fortunately, the north jetty can protect you from the whipping wind while effectively pursing springers at the jaws. Too bad the action just hasn't been that good. It's a good sign however for the upcoming tide series.

Sturgeon fishing remains a crap shoot as well. Earlier in the week, I had reports of some fair fishing in the upper bay. The following day produced no results for the same anglers however. It's been that way all season.

Bottomfishers did great over the weekend in the calm seas. Fog did roll in on Monday making for less than ideal conditions for ocean-goers. Crabbing has picked up in the ocean adjacent to the jetties but remains poor in the estuaries. The ocean crab are in great shape however but double picking the pots (4 pots total) still only yielded 15 or 16 crab per day.

Area rivers remain too low to float but there may be some fish in the extreme lower stretches and in the tidewater areas. The Trask should be the first pick followed by the Wilson River.

Perch fishing has been popular casting to the floating restrooms in the Ghost Hole. Sand shrimp is producing the best.

The Guide's Forecast – Springers will be on the minds of many in the coming weeks and we should be entering peak season! Great tides will again greet anglers beginning early next week. The strong early minus tides should bode well for anglers working the upper bay using spinners and working Kwikfish. As the week progresses, more opportunity will present itself with the prolonged period of outgoing tide. Prior to this minus tide series, the fishing should pick up for anglers taking advantage of the weak tide series over the weekend. Herring trolling in the lower bay (and ocean if the bar is safe to cross) should be good. Remember to target the last hour of outgoing tide but the entire second half should begin to produce more consistent results.

Don't count on sturgeon to provide very promising results. It's just not a big sturgeon year on Tillamook Bay.

The NW wind is forecasted to continue to blow along the coast making for challenging conditions for the halibut opener on Thursday. It may be a tolerable ride out there if the wind holds off until the late morning and thankfully, you'll be able to ride it back in after you get your flatties. Bottomfishing should continue to be excellent but remember the regulations that anglers can not have bottomfish and halibut on board at the same time.

Be sure to drop your crab pots on the way out to the halibut grounds. The fresher the bait, the better the catches.

Central & South Coast Reports – Ocean crabbing has been producing undersized and female Dungeness with very few keepers in the pots.

Rock and jetty anglers are doing well using jigs and curly-tail grubs for rockfish and occasionally hooking lings.

Evenings have been most productive for springers on the lower Umpqua River. Water temperatures at the Rogue River remain low due to recent snowmelt. Springers are into the North Umpqua and are crossing at Winchester Dam in improving numbers. Shad have been showing decent movement over the past week as they are being caught up to the town of Umpqua now. Most anglers drift lightweight darts or jigs often adorned with brightly-colored plastic curly-tail grubs. These smelly fish are hard to beat for crab bait. Chilly water continues to stall the legendary Umpqua smallmouth fishing. Sturgeon fishing in the estuary is very slow in the estuary and crabbing is poor. Spring Chinook anglers fishing the estuary have hooked a few striped bass. The South Umpqua is closed until May 26th.

Rogue River anglers saw an improvement in the spring Chinook bite starting the middle of last week as pods of fish are moving in but the action is spotty. The best bite has been late in the day. Plunkers in the lower River are taking a few daily as are anglers in the middle river. With only a single springer reported returning to Cole River Hatchery, there are too few to target in the upper Rogue. Winter steelheading is history here.

Offshore Chinook salmon fishing opened May 5th, running through September 5th from Humbug Mountain (between Port Orford and Gold Beach. Salmon fishing was fair to good on the opener for those who could get out. The ocean has not been friendly with winds kicking up recently. It runs Offshore coho opens June 23rd for a quota of 50,000 fish.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Pro guide Rick Arnold (541-480-1570) sent this, "Here is what I have heard after opening:

"Wickiup kicked up a couple of big browns going 11 and 14 Lb. Also some bigger kokanee were showing up to 20 in. That means there will be some 3 LB. kokes by summer at the Wick.

"Crescent continues to kick out some browns, kokes and macks. Odell producing lots of kokes to jigging but haven't heard about the macks yet. Paulina has just opened but not doing much yet, East is slowly opening and should be ice free soon with the warm temps."

Subscriber, avid angler and **all-around good guy 'Dobe'** reports, "Tuesday, the 8th, fishing buddy Les and I drove over to Ochoco Res and put in all day trolling for rainbows. We finished up with 9 nice fat ones 12-16 inches, all caught on spinners and nightcrawlers. The crowd was more my size with only about 10 boats on the water. The water is starting to drop a little but the Res is still near brim full. Water temp was 58."

Northwest Trout – Young anglers will be able to catch fish and get a chance to win one of five new rod and reel combos during a youth angling event at Commonwealth Lake in Cedar Hills near Beaverton Saturday, May 12th from 9:30 AM to 2 PM. For this ODFW-hosted event, 2,000 legal sized and 375 larger trout have been planted. Staff and volunteers will be available to instruct and answer questions. Rods and reels will be provided to kids if needed. The event is free and open to the public.

Another free event for kids will take place this Saturday at Sunnyside Pond thanks to the nice folks at the Albany Chapter of the Northwest Steelheaders, It will run from 9 AM to 1 PM with tackle and bait provided. The steelheaders will clean and cook the fish at the site. The pond is located next to Foster Reservoir in the Linn County Sunnyside Park and Campground, about 4 miles east of Sweet Home.

The free youth event at Junction City Pond located next to Highway 99W about 3 miles south of Junction City will also be on Saturday, May 12th, from 9 AM to 1 PM, this one sponsored by the local Moose Lodge. A derby and raffle will be held with the ODFW on hand to help and answer questions.

Scheduled for trout stocking this week in the South Willamette Zone are Alton Baker Canal, Carmen Reservoir, Clear Lake, Detroit Reservoir, E.

E. Wilson Pond, Fall Creek, Foster Reservoir, Freeway Lake East, Junction City Pond, Leaburg Lake, the McKenzie River above Leaburg Lake, Roaring River Park Pond, Salmon Creek, Walling Pond, Walter Wirth Lake and the Willamette River Middle Fork above Hills Creek Reservoir. Dexter Reservoir will receive another 10,000 legal-sized rainbows this week.

In the Northern Willamette Zone, Benson Lake, Blue Lake, Hartman Pond, Henry Hagg Lake, Huddleston Pond, Sheridan Pond and West Salish Pond will be planted.

Northwest Bass & Panfish - Columbia smallmouth bass are preparing to spawn, and event that will likely occur at the end of the month. They're smacking all manner of lure in this most vulnerable and aggressive state. Catch and release these fish which are full of future generations of smallies.

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report May 2nd – May 15th, 2007

North Puget Sound

Now that the blackmouth salmon fishery has come to a close, saltwater anglers have shifted their attention to halibut and other bottom fish while they await the popular upcoming shrimp season. Out on the freshwater, steelhead fishing is no longer an option in area rivers, but anglers can participate in the lowland lake trout season, which recently got under way throughout the region.

Overall, **trout** anglers did well opening day (April 28) of the lowland lake season. According to creel checks, the lake that produced the largest catch in the region was King County's Wilderness Lake, where 152 anglers took home 328 trout. In terms of the highest catch rates, King County's Cottage Lake and Snohomish County's Wagner Lake top the list. Seven anglers at Cottage and two at Wagner caught their limit of five trout on opening day.

Elsewhere, anglers at Cascade Lake in San Juan County averaged 4.7 trout per rod, while those at Island County's Goss Lake average 4.5 fish per rod. In Whatcom County, anglers at Toad Lake averaged 4.4 trout per rod, while those at Cain Lake averaged 4.3. Anglers at Armstrong Lake in Snohomish County also did well, averaging 4.3 trout per rod. In Skagit County, anglers at Heart and McMurray lakes averaged 4.2 fish per rod while those at Erie Lake averaged 4.1 trout.

"Effort was slightly down throughout the region, but anglers who got out on the water opening day did well at a number of lakes," said Kirt Hughes, regional fish program manager for WDFW. "We heard from several anglers that fishing at some lakes was much better than last year."

Under statewide rules, anglers have a daily limit of five trout on most lakes. Released legal-sized trout, caught with bait, count toward the daily bag limit. Complete information on stocking schedules for rainbow, cutthroat and triploid trout is available on WDFW's website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/index.htm>).

Out on the saltwater, the **halibut** fishery is in full swing. The season is open five days a week, Thursday through Monday, with a daily limit of one halibut and no minimum size limit.

Anglers also can drop a line for other bottomfish, such as **lingcod**, **rockfish** and **cabezon**. During the hook-and-line season (May 1-June 15), there's a one-fish daily limit for lings, with a minimum size of 26 inches and a maximum size of 40 inches. For rockfish, there is no minimum size and anglers must keep the first legal rockfish caught. Anglers fishing for cabezon have a daily limit of two fish, and there is no minimum size limit.

Meanwhile, the **shrimp** season is set to open throughout the region May 5. In marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay), 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner), 9 (Admiralty Inlet) and 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) the fishery is open Saturdays and Wednesdays only from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m., and will close when the quota is reached, or May 31, whichever comes first. In Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands), the fishery is open Wednesdays through Saturdays until the quota is reached. Details are available on WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/crabreg/>.

Before heading out, anglers should check the rules and regulations for freshwater and saltwater fisheries in WDFW's 2007/2008 *Fishing in Washington* pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

There's still a lot of trout remaining after an opening day generally marked by sunny skies and good fishing. In addition, a final season razor clam dig is set for May 4-6, shrimp season gets under way May 5 in most areas of Puget Sound, the halibut season is expanding to the north coast and anglers

continue to reel in lingcod and spring chinook salmon.

According to opening-day reports, Anderson Lake in Jefferson County gave up better than four fish kept per angler, while Clear Lake in Pierce County and Munn and Ward lakes in Thurston County yielded three fish per rod. While the fishing effort was down somewhat in Grays Harbor due to off-and-on rainy conditions, Vance Creek Pond and Aberdeen and Failor lakes produced some of the largest fish of the opener, averaging 28 inches.

The winner of the Kid's Derby at Aberdeen Lake landed a 28.5-inch rainbow, weighing 12.3 pounds, and an angler won the derby at Failor Lake with an 11-pound, 27 inch rainbow. "The youngsters at Vance Creek were catching quality rainbows up to 28 inches," reported Rick Ereth, WDFW fish biologist. "A 13-year-old girl caught the largest fish-a 29 inch, 13.3 pound steelhead."

Weekly reports and information on WDFW trout-stocking plans are available online at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/weekly/>.

Meanwhile, recreational **shrimp** fishing opens Saturday, May 5 in most areas of Puget Sound. The exception is the Discovery Bay Shrimp District near Port Townsend, which will remain closed to both spot and non-spot shrimp fishing due to extremely low catches in pre-season testing, said Mark O'Toole, WDFW fish biologist.

"Each year before the season opens we monitor the catch rates and conduct an assessment of several popular shrimp-fishing areas," O'Toole said. "The number of shrimp in Discovery Bay was too low to open the fishery this year."

Another change this year occurs in Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands), where shrimping will be open four days a week rather than daily in order to extend the season. In addition, Marine Area 11-extending from the northern tip of Vashon Island to the Tacoma Narrows Bridge-will be open on Saturday, May 5 only, to keep the recreational catch within the area's spot shrimp harvest quota.

Various fishing schedules will be in effect in the following areas:

- Marine Areas 4 (east of the Bonilla Line), 5, 6 (excluding the Discovery Bay Shrimp District) and 13 will be open daily beginning May 5 at 7 a.m. until the quota is reached, or through Oct. 15, whichever comes first.
- Marine Area 7 will open May 5 at 7 a.m. and will be open Wednesdays through Saturdays only until the quota is reached.
- Marine Areas 8, 9, and 10, will be open from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturdays and Wednesdays only, until quotas for those areas are reached, or until May 31, whichever comes first.
- Marine Area 11 will be open from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, May 5 only.

Hood Canal (Marine Area 12) will be open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays and Wednesdays through May 16, or until the quota is reached, whichever comes first. Additional dates and times may be announced if sufficient quota is remaining.

A strong tidal exchange expected on opening day will mean more challenging fishing conditions, O'Toole said. "It's the luck of the draw on the tides, and this year we're not so lucky on the Saturday opener, although the tides will be more favorable by the next week," he said. More information on shrimp seasons and rules is available on the WDFW shellfish hotline at 1-866-880-5431, or online at <http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/fishcorn>.

While the tides may test shrimpers on opening day, they're a boon for **razor clam** diggers heading out May 4-6 for the final dig of the season, said Dan Ayres, WDFW fish biologist. "The low tides will offer excellent digging opportunities, especially with the favorable weather and surf that is forecast for the weekend," Ayres said.

Digging will take place on two ocean beaches. Twin Harbors will open for digging on morning tides May 4, joined by Long Beach May 5 and 6. Each day's dig on those beaches must be completed by noon. "We're pleased to have clams available on these two beaches for a final dig in May," said Ayres. "We've had a great season this year. Even in April, individuals were averaging about 14 clams a trip. This last dig is the icing on the cake."

Ayres advises those who don't have a 2007-08 license, to buy one before heading out. Fishing and hunting licenses are available on-line (<https://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov/>), via WDFW's toll-free phone line (1-866-246-9453) and from retail dealers throughout the state (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/lic/vendors/vendors.htm>).

Clam enthusiasts should start digging at least one hour before low tide. Low tides during the planned dig are as follows:

- Friday, May 4, 8:35 a.m., -0.9 ft: Twin Harbors only
- Saturday, May 5, 9:12 a.m., -0.8 ft: Twin Harbors, Long Beach
- Sunday, May 6, 9:50 a.m., -0.6 ft: Twin Harbors, Long Beach

Under WDFW rules, harvesters may take no more than 15 razor clams and must keep the first 15 taken, regardless of size or condition. Each digger's limit must be kept in a separate container. After conducting the annual stock assessment this summer, WDFW will announce the annual razor clam public meetings, which are scheduled for September. The 2007-08 season will likely begin sometime in October 2007.

Recreational **halibut** anglers with a competitive streak can head up north later this month to try for a \$5,000 first prize at the 7th Annual Halibut Derby sponsored by the Port Angeles Salmon Club. The two-day derby will be held May 26-27 near the Dungeness Spit. Ticket information is available at <http://www.swainsinc.com> or (360) 452-2357.

Halibut fishing in Marine areas 6-11 and 13 will continue to run five days a week Thursday through Monday until June 16. Anglers can also cast their lines wider this month as the following fisheries open:

- **Marine Area 1 (Ilwaco)** opened May 1, seven days a week until 70 percent of the quota is reached, or until July 15, whichever comes first. The fishery will reopen on Aug. 3 and continue three days a week, Friday through Sunday, until the remaining quota is reached, or Sept. 30, whichever comes first. It is unlawful to fish for, retain, or possess any bottom fish, except Pacific cod and sable fish with halibut on board.
- **Marine Area 2 (Westport/Ocean Shores)** opened May 1, five days a week, Sunday through Thursday, until 95 percent of the quota is reached. During this time, fishing will be open seven days a week in the northern nearshore area south of the Queets River. Once the catch reaches 95 percent of the quota, fishing in the nearshore area will be limited to Fridays and Saturdays until the remaining quota is taken - or Sept. 30, whichever occurs first.
- **Marine areas 3 and 4 (Neah Bay and LaPush)** will open May 15, three days a week, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, until the May quota is reached. The fishery in that area will then reopen on selected dates in June within certain boundaries.
- **Marine Area 5 (Seiku)** will be open May 24 through Aug. 3, five days a week, Thursday through Monday.

Marine Area 12 (Hood Canal) is closed to fishing for halibut and a number of other species due to low dissolved-oxygen conditions.

All areas open to fishing have a one-fish daily catch limit and two-halibut possession limit, regardless of

whether those fish are fresh or frozen. There is no minimum size limit for halibut caught in any area. For additional information, call the Fishing Hotline at (360) 902-2500 or check the WDFW website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/halibut/>).

Fishing for lingcod - as well as **rockfish** and **cabezon** - also got under way May 1 in several areas around Puget Sound and the Strait of Juan De Fuca. Inside waters now open for fishing include marine areas 5 (Sekiu, Pillar Point), 6 (East Juan De Fuca), 11 (Tacoma, Vashon Island) and 13 (South Puget Sound).

During the hook-and-line season for lings (May 1-June 15), there's a one-fish daily limit, which must be a minimum size of 26 inches and a maximum size of 40 inches. For rockfish, there is no minimum size and anglers must keep the first legal rockfish caught. Anglers fishing for cabezon have a daily limit of two fish, and there is no minimum size limit. Before heading out to try and hook these fish, anglers should check the new *Fishing in Washington* pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

On the coast, **lingcod** and **rockfish** fishing off Westport and Neah Bay has generally been good the past few weeks, according to Wendy Beeghley, WDFW fish biologist. But much depends on the unpredictable nature of spring weather in the Pacific Northwest. "A few weeks ago people had trouble getting their limit because of the weather was rough," Beegley said. "Since then, people have enjoyed both the weather and the catch."

On the Olympic Peninsula, warm sunny days and rising rivers seem to be helping anglers hook up with **spring chinook salmon**, said David Low, WDFW fish biologist. "I hear people are catching some nice springers in the Sol Duc."

Southwest Washington:

The lowland lakes **trout** season is now off and running after an opening day full of sunshine and good fishing. Northwestern Reservoir in Skamania County, Horsethief Lake in Klickitat County and Fort Borst Park Pond, a juvenile-only fishing spot in Lewis County, were regional hotspots, yielding better than three fish kept, per rod. At Mineral Lake in Lewis County, anglers released lots of fish but checked in several trout over nine pounds, said John Weinheimer, a regional WDFW fish biologist. He noted that fishing was also good at Swift Reservoir, particularly in the upper reservoir from the boat launch upstream.

"It's safe to say that there are still lots of big rainbows and other trout left in lakes throughout the region," Weinheimer said. "And we plan to keep planting more as the season goes on."

Fish stocking details, by county and lake, are available in the Hatchery Trout Stocking Plan on WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/index.htm>. A report on catch rates posted opening day is available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/do/newreal/release.php?id=apr3007b>.

But some anglers have bigger fish to fry. The first two weeks of May are historically the best time to catch a hatchery **spring chinook salmon** on tributaries to the Columbia River, and some anglers are getting a head start, Joe Hymer, another regional WDFW fish biologist, said.

On the Kalama River, boat anglers averaged one chinook for every three rods in creel checks conducted during the last week of April. Bank anglers averaged a fish for every six rods. On the Lewis River, boat anglers averaged a chinook for every four rods, while bank anglers landed one per every six rods during the same week. Some spring chinook are also being caught on the Cowlitz River.

Catch rates have been slower at Drano Lake and the Wind River, where both boat and bank anglers have been running about one chinook for every six rods, Hymer said.

"The run hasn't been building as fast as usual in the tributaries above Bonneville Dam," he said. "The next few weeks should tell the tale."

With nearly 31,000 spring chinook past the dam through April, the Columbia River mainstem is scheduled to close for salmon angling above Bonneville Dam to McNary Dam on May 3. Fishery managers from Washington and Oregon are scheduled to review the catches and upriver run size later today (May 2); any updates on the fishery will be posted on the WDFW website.

Below Bonneville, the mainstem Columbia River remains closed to fishing for salmon and steelhead, but will open for **hatchery steelhead** and **hatchery chinook jacks** from the I-5 Bridge to the Rocky Point/Tongue Point line May 16. Shad angling from Bonneville Dam downstream also will open that same day. Hymer noted that the first shad was counted at the dam in late April, along with a total of 1,300 spring chinook jacks through April - the highest count for that period since 2003. "That bodes well for next year's spring chinook fishery," he said.

Meanwhile, anglers are still catching some legal-size **sturgeon** both above and below Bonneville Dam. From May 1-11, all sturgeon intercepted downstream from the Wauna powerline crossing near Cathlamet must be released. But starting May 12, anglers may retain sturgeon seven days per week in that area. The minimum size increases to 45 inches and the maximum length will remain at 60 inches. The fishery will remain open through July 4 or when the quota is met.

To provide sturgeon sanctuaries to spawn, the following areas are closed to fishing for sturgeon from May 1 to July 31:

- Bonneville Dam downstream to Navigation Marker 85.
- John Day Dam downstream 2.4 miles to the west end of the grain silo at Rufus Oregon.
- McNary Dam downstream 1.5 miles to the Hwy. 82 (Hwy. 395) Bridge.

Casting for **bass** and **walleye**? Boat anglers fishing the John Day Pool averaged more than nine bass and two walleyes per rod during the last week of April. Those fishing the Bonneville Pool also reeled in seven bass per rod along with some walleye.

Rather dig **razor clams**? Two ocean beaches will open for the last razor clam dig of the spring season starting May 4. See the South Sound/Olympic Peninsula report for details.

Eastern Washington:

Fishing began April 28 on more **trout** lakes in this region than any other season opener, and the creel check results from that day are good indications of what's available in the weeks and months to come. WDFW northeast district fish biologist Curt Vail of Colville reported some of the best fishing in the state at two Stevens County waters - Cedar and Deep lakes both saw averages of the five-trout daily catch limit per angler checked. The catches at Cedar Lake, just north of Leadpoint near the U.S.-Canada border, are mostly 12-inch rainbows from fry plants, with many carryovers from 17 to 25 inches. Deep Lake, nine miles southeast of Northport, has rainbows averaging 11.5 inches and cutthroat averaging 11 inches.

Other Stevens County lakes produced well on the opener, too. Mudgett Lake, a couple miles south of Fruitland, averaged 4.4 trout per angler with rainbow fry plants running 12 inches and carryovers up to 15 inches. Starvation Lake, 10 miles southeast of Colville, averaged 3.7 trout per angler, most 12-inch rainbows with some 15 to 17.5 inches. Rocky Lake, three-plus miles south of Colville, averaged 3.2 trout per angler, most eight to 10-inchers with carryovers running 11 to 15 inches. Waitts Lake, four miles west of Valley, was a little slower with an average of 1.5 trout per angler, but the rainbows

averaged 14.5 inches, the brown trout averaged 16.4 inches and 21-inchers of both species were caught on the opener.

In Pend Oreille County, opening day checks at Diamond Lake, seven miles southwest of Newport, showed a 3.2 trout-per-angler average with most rainbows a little over 12 inches and most browns just under 11 inches. The largest trout caught was a 24.5-inch rainbow. At Marshall Lake, about six miles northwest of Newport, anglers averaged 2.8 trout each, with 11-inch cutthroat trout from fry plants and carryovers up to 14-inches. Yocum Lake, six miles north of Ruby up LeClerc Creek Road, averaged 2.2 trout per angler with cutthroat fry running 10 inches and carryovers up to 13 inches.

Ellen Lake, 14 miles north of Inchelium, was the only Ferry County fishery checked on the opener. The catch rate there averaged 1.6 trout per angler, with nine-inch rainbows from fry plants and some 12-inch carryovers.

WDFW central district fish biologist Chris Donley of Spokane also reported some of the best fishing in the state during the opener at one lake in Lincoln County and two in southwest Spokane County. Fishtrap, West Medical and Williams lakes all saw averages of at least the five-trout daily catch limit per angler, including lots of catch-and-release action. Fishtrap Lake, six-plus miles east of Sprague, produced 12-inch rainbows from fry plants, 16-inchers from carryovers and some recently stocked whopper triploids and surplus broodstock. West Medical rainbows ran from 10-inchers to recently stocked five-pound surplus hatchery broodstock. Williams Lake trout ranged from 11 to 20 inches, including westslope cutthroat.

Lots of limits were also caught at Badger Lake, also in southwest Spokane County, where the opener average was 4.7 rainbow or cutthroat trout per angler. Other Spokane County lakes checked were Fish Lake, two miles northeast of Cheney, with an average of 2.4 trout per angler, and Clear Lake, two miles south of the town of Medical Lake, with an average of 1.8 trout per angler.

Curl Lake in Columbia County opened April 28, joining the other Tucannon River impoundments that opened March 1 in providing a rainbow trout-stocked fishery. Although no creel checks are conducted, catches should be eight to 12-inch and some 14-inch-plus rainbows. All eight of the impoundments are under a no-more-than-two-fish-over-13-inch rule to help spread out the fishery among anglers and over time.

WDFW regional fish program manager John Whalen noted that most of the lakes that just opened will remain so through at least September. "Near-normal winter precipitation is helping maintain water levels at lakes throughout the Spokane area and northern portions of the region," he said. "So fishing and boat launching should be good through the summer."

Whalen also noted that fishing rule changes that went into effect May 1 include Stevens County's Deer Lake where biologists are trying to restore and maintain an historic kokanee fishery. Now at Deer Lake there is a separate daily limit for smallmouth bass of 10 fish, with no minimum size and no more than one over 14 inches may be retained, and the trout daily limit of five includes no more than two trout over 30 inches.

North Central Washington:

The lowland lakes opener April 28 produced some "solid catches" in Okanogan County lakes, according to WDFW fish biologist Bob Jateff, who said fishing should be good well into the summer at many of them.

Jateff reports that Blue Lake, on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area, probably had the best catch rates on the opener, with a catch-and-release average of 10 trout per angler. The daily catch-and-keep limit at Blue

is one fish, and the few **brown** and **rainbow trout** kept by anglers were running 12 to 20 inches. Conconully Lake and Reservoir both posted catch averages of over four trout per angler on the opener, mostly in 12-inch yearling trout with some carryovers to 16 inches. Spectacle Lake, northwest of Tonasket, produced nearly four trout per angler on the opener, mostly 11-inch rainbows.

Pearrygin Lake, on the Methow Wildlife Area near Winthrop, averaged 3.6 trout per angler, including 12-inch rainbows and some whopper triploids. Alta Lake, southwest of Pateros, averaged 3.4 trout per angler, mostly in 11-inch yearlings with some 15-inch carryovers. Wannacut Lake, southwest of Oroville, averaged 3.2 trout per angler, with carryovers up to 18 inches. Leader Lake, west of Okanogan, averaged 2.8 trout per angler, mostly 12-inch rainbows with carryovers to 15 inches and some 8-inch **bluegill**. Fish Lake, on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area northeast of Conconully, averaged 2.3 trout per angler with carryovers to 15 inches.

Jameson Lake in Douglas County also had good fishing on the April 28 opener, with limits of rainbows being taken by both shore and boat anglers. The average size of yearling rainbows was nine inches, with carryover fish to 14 inches.

Jateff said there are also some good selective gear fisheries in the Okanogan that opened April 1. Rat Lake near Brewster, Green Lakes near Omak, and Davis Lake near Winthrop, all have good catch-and-release summer fishing for rainbow trout.

In Chelan County, WDFW fish biologist Art Viola reported excellent fishing on the opener at Beehive Reservoir, where the average catch matched the five-trout daily catch limit. "Catch rates were outstanding at Beehive," Viola said. "However, most fish caught were only 10 to 11 inches long, so many were released." A fall plant of **cutthroat trout** made up about 70 percent of the catch, with the rest in 11-inch rainbows stocked this spring and a few larger fish up to 18 inches.

Clear Lake, eight miles south of Wenatchee, also tallied an average catch of five trout per angler, with rainbows running from 11 to 17 inches. But compared to last year, angling effort was down about 30 percent at both Clear and Lilly lakes, Viola said. Lilly Lake, just down the road from Clear, averaged a little over three trout per angler, most in the 11-inch range. Viola said it would have been better, but the lake winterkilled and this year's stocking allotment was cut in half for the second year. "We hope anglers will remove all or at least most of the fish from Lilly prior to this winter," he said.

Fishing at Wapato Lake, about two miles north of Manson, was also excellent with an overall average of 4.4 trout per angler on the opener. Almost half of the fish harvested were over two years old, while others were directly stocked from the Chelan Hatchery a few weeks ago or carryovers from last year, Viola said. Triploid rainbows over 16 inches were also caught.

WDFW fish biologist Jeff Korth of Moses Lake reported great fishing at Perch and Deep lakes in Grant County. Both averaged over four trout per angler on opening day with 10 to 14-inch rainbows. Warden Lake also produced well with an average of 2.5 trout per angler on 13.5-inch rainbows.

Korth also reported good catches of catchable-size and triploid rainbow trout at Blue, Park and Vic Meyers or Rainbow lakes in Grant County. All three were rehabilitated last year, and the fisheries were considerably improved over the last couple of years. Blue and Park measured catch rates of about two trout per angler on the opener, and Vic Meyers averaged slightly less than one trout per angler.

South Central Washington:

Trout-stocked waters in the south central region are open year-round, with hatchery stocking continuing through the spring. Anglers can check stocking schedules at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/regions/req3/index.htm> and updates on weekly plants at

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/weekly/>.

WDFW fish biologist Paul Hoffarth reminds anglers that Columbia Park Pond in Kennewick is closed to fishing May 4-5 to prepare for and conduct the 8th annual "Fishing Kids" event May 5, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Hatchery crews will be stocking the pond with rainbow trout on July 4th for more than 1,200 pre-registered event participants. The pond, which is only open to fishing by juvenile anglers (under 15 years old) and persons with disability licenses, will re-open to the public at 4 p.m., May 5.

Hoffarth also notes the Columbia River **sturgeon** sanctuary is now in effect through July 31 from the Interstate 82 bridge at Umatilla upstream to McNary Dam. No fishing for sturgeon is allowed in this area during this time period.

The Ringold bank fishery re-opened May 1 for **spring chinook** through May 31. Fishing is restricted to bank angling only on the hatchery side of the river from the WDFW markers ¼ mile downstream of the Ringold irrigation waste-way outlet to the markers ½ mile upstream of Ringold Springs Creek (hatchery outlet). The daily limit is two hatchery salmon, 12-inch minimum size. Only chinook with a clipped adipose fin and having a healed scar at the location of the fin may be retained. Night closure and non-buoyant lure restrictions are in effect. All wild chinook (with an intact adipose fin) must be released immediately and may not be removed from the water.

WDFW fish biologist Jim Cummins of Yakima reminds anglers that most rivers and streams are closed until June 1 to protect salmon and steelhead smolts that are migrating downstream and to protect spawning steelhead, rainbow and cutthroat trout. "The catch-and-release area on the Yakima River is an exception," he said. "The reach of the Yakima is open year-round, but anglers should check the Sport Fishing Rules pamphlet before fishing."

Smallmouth bass fishing should be good through at least the end of May in the lower Yakima River, Cummins said. "Fishing can be difficult when spring flows are high, but there is some great smallmouth fishing from Benton City down," he said. The recent cool weather in the mountains has resulted in a steady decline in river flows, so now is the time to get the bass gear out and fish the river." Cummins said that although the majority of fish are in the one to two-pound class, a number of fish five pounds and larger are caught every spring. **Channel catfish** are another good bet in the Yakima as water temperatures increase. Anglers can check Yakima River flows at <http://www.usbr.gov/pn/hydromet/yakima/>, where "Daily Data" is the best tab to check. The Yakima River at Kiona is the best flow to check, and water temperatures are also posted.

Reader Email

Subscriber Jon D. wrote to ask, "What ever happened to the "Blueback" fishing on the coastal rivers such as the Salmon and Siletz river? Is there even an opening for this fishery?"

TGF co-editor Michael Teague responded, "Yes, indeed, there is a good and improving blueback fishery on the coast.

"Bluebacks (sea-run cutthroat trout) have been protected by catch-and-release only North of the Salmon River and restricted (by a two-fish-per-day limit) From the Salmon River South to the California border. As a result, numbers have actually improved over the years. I've not fished for them in the Salmpn or Siletz, however.

"While some anglers troll for them in tidewater, I prefer to throw spinners as cuts are aggressive and will readily hit them, Fly anglers also do well casting bright-colored flies for them. Bluebacks seem to have an affinity for flies with some yellow in the pattern.

"Even though these fish are plentiful and willing to take bait, lure or fly, a number of anglers never hook them. This is because sea-run cuts frequent a very different type water than other species of trout.. Coastal cuts won't be found in seams favored by steelheaders. Their favored areas are frequently referred to as 'frogwater' in that there's little current.

"Fly anglers cast to overhanging brush, or above it, allowing the fly to drift underneath. I've had repeated success by casting to the dark, boiling water above where I've been steelheading. On one coastal river, the largest coastal cutthroat I've encountered anywhere were picking up sand shrimp baits off the bottom as I was fishing the lower end of a river for sturgeon. I know because I actually hooked one and got it to the bank where a little slack allowed the fish to throw the 6/0 barbless hook.

"So, go get 'em. Just fish the types of water described above."

I heard from Jon D. again on the afternoon of May 10th. He wrote, "Thanks for the heads up on the coastal Blueback. I fished the Salmon and Siletz 60 years ago as a kid, and only for Blueback's. We used to troll (row) very slowly with Ford Fenders or Pop Gear, using nightcrawlers and /or sand shrimp. I'm getting up in years and handicapped, but I'd like to try there again. Now living in Washington, it is quite difficult to get the real info on what's going on at my favorite streams and rivers in Oregon. The TGF info is just what I needed. Now, if I can just interpret the Oregon reg's correctly, I'll try those two rivers one more time."

Michael replied, "Thank you for the courteous reply, Mr. D.

"If you catch and release, the rivers North of the Salmon are closer and offer decent prospects.

"Good luck out there and please let me know how you do!"

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 - Just say no - Farmed fish fed contaminated material
http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20070508/ap_on_he_me/food_contamination

2007 Salmon Regs
<http://www.dfw.state.or.us/MRP/salmon/index.html>

Online brochure - Warmwater Fishing in Oregon
http://www.dfw.state.or.us/warm_water_fishing/index.asp

Weekly Quote – "The fish is an animal that grows excessively fast between the moment when it is taken and the moment when the fisherman describe it to his friends." - Pierre Masson

GOOD LUCK!