

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **November 23<sup>rd</sup> – November 29<sup>th</sup> 2007**

**Oregon Fisheries Update:**

**Got eggs?** We'll **GIVE** them to you **FREE!** That's right. Starting after Thanksgiving, come down to the coast and enjoy a night or two at The Guide's Guesthouse in Bay City, Oregon. Centrally located, The Guide's Guest House, brand new construction completed in May of 2007, can comfortably sleep up to 4 people with full kitchen and bathroom. Keep your driftboat safe and sound and with every night booked, you'll receive a jar of Bob Rees' personally cured Tillamook Bay chinook roe for your fishing needs! Prices start as low as \$37.50/person for a group of 4! It's a deal! Call Bob or Nancy at (503) 377-9696 or email [brees@pacifier.com](mailto:brees@pacifier.com).

**Willamette Valley/Metro-** Although action has somewhat slowed for both boat and bank anglers, sturgeon are still a strong option in the Columbia River gorge this weekend. Smelt will remain a top bait but squid will also produce fair catches of both shakers and keepers. There are still some oversized fish being caught.

Flow at Willamette Falls more than doubled from November 16th to the 19th and the water muddied. These are good conditions for sturgeon fishing. Trout fishing was excellent above Springfield for rainbows prior to the water rising and roiling and it should be good again from Albany to Jasper as the water drops and clears. This is excellent fly fishing water when it's in shape.

Rain blew out the McKenzie but trout fishing should be good below Blue River once the water recedes.

Steelhead at this time of year on the Sandy are considered quite early, particularly since the implementation of broodstock program. There have been a few reported marking the traditional kick-off date of Thanksgiving for the beginning of the winter steelhead season.

The Clackamas is a long shot for a fresh winter Thanksgiving Day steelhead but summers are still being caught between McIver Park and Feldheimers. Unfortunately, a bright one is a rarity.

Steelheaders who like to fish high, fast water will enjoy the North Santiam this week. Late summers will be available along with a few native winter fish.

Walling Pond and Walter Wirth Lake are scheduled to be planted with hatchery trout.

**Northwest –** The Kilchis River was the first to fish on Sunday and Monday but even with ideal water conditions, a strong run has yet to show. The massive mud slide of 2003 has certainly taken its toll with very few chum and chinook salmon adults returning to the river this season.

The lower Wilson, in tidewater, proved to be a good place to catch chrome-bright chinook on Monday and Tuesday with plugs taking the lion's share of the catch. Faster flows draw harder strikes but I recently switched out the VMC perma-steel hooks for 2/0 bronze Mustad treble hooks and ever since, my strike to land ratio has improved dramatically. These hooks have a wider gap and can be sharpened to a stronger, sharper point and with all the fresh water, they last as long as perma-steel hooks do. I strongly recommend you look at these Mustad hooks! The river remained some-what colored but will be almost too clear for high success rates by Friday.

Chinook will be present throughout the river but the brightest fish will be downstream of Mills Bridge and holding in the deeper pools and eddies. Eggs may be a better bait in the clearer conditions.

Tillamook Bay was still producing fair catches with the bulk of the fish migrating on the east side of the estuary. The weekend high tides will make the Ghost Hole and Bay City likely places to intercept tide-riding chinook.

The Nestucca also fished well early in the week but hopefully, the high tides will bring in another shot of fresh fish to close out the season. Crabbing has tapered and the strong incoming tide will also slow success.

In Tillamook County, Town and Cape Meares Lakes both received plants of surplus hatchery summer steelhead recently. They may be somewhat reluctant to bite but may surprise some trout anglers this weekend.

Poor numbers of chinook in the Siletz are cause for The Association of Northwest Steelheaders to petition ODFW to close it to fishing until it shows sign of recovery.

An impressive series of minus tides with maximum ebb after sundown has razor clam diggers excited for the holiday weekend. You'll need headlamps or lanterns to achieve any level of success. The other side of this lunar coin is extreme high tides, over 10 feet mid-day Friday, which has prompted the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department to issue warnings regarding 'sneaker' waves on ocean beaches coast-wide.

**Southwest** – The only place on the Umpqua producing any fishing action is the North Fork where fishing for hatchery coho has been fair. Catches of steelhead and chinook river wide has been poor. The South Umpqua will re-open to angling on December 1st.

Fishing will resume this week on the Elk and Sixes, with the latter coming into shape first. The Elk dropped from 9.2 to 6.1 overnight on Tuesday, November 20th and should provide good chinook fishing by Thanksgiving Day.

Waters of the Rogue are high and roiled. Larger rivers such as this are slow to recover so it may not fish for the coming weekend.

The Chetco peaked on November 17th at a little over 13 feet and 20,000 cfs at Brookings. It has been dropping and clearing since that date and shows promise for chinook and possibly winter steelhead for the long holiday weekend.

**Eastern** – Deschutes anglers saw a slight improvement in steelhead catches over the past weekend with both hardware and flies drawing a few strikes. The water is off-color and deteriorating below White River and snow fell in Maupin on Monday this week.

While the Fall River is closed below the falls until spring of next year, trout fishing will remain good here all winter long.

Although John Day anglers are experiencing consistent fishing, action is not what it typically is for the peak season window. Wiggle warts are taking the bulk of the fish with the Michael Jackson color a favorite. The mainstem John Day should improve when the river begins to rise.

**SW Washington** – Most area streams are tapering for late-run coho. Bright fish are beginning

to become challenging to find and anglers are awaiting winter steelhead on the Cowlitz to make a show. Recent steelhead returns to the Cowlitz have not been favorable but Thanksgiving is usually a good starting point for anglers to put in some effort.

Check the WDF&W website for scheduled razor clam digs on Friday and Saturday from Long Beach and north.

**Columbia River Fishing Report** – Inclement weather kept many from recreating over the recent week and catch rates indicated as much. As expected, catches in the Columbia River Gorge fell for both bank and boat anglers and as temperatures drop, so will the bite. Effort is waning but keepers are still likely to fall for another few weeks but the cooler water temperatures in the near future will certainly have them migrating to warmer waters downstream.

In the middle of peak season, steelheaders working the John Day area in both the mainstem Columbia and the John Day Arm itself are witnessing slower catches than in recent history. Despite the good numbers passing the dam, most anglers are getting between 2 and 6 chances for a days effort landing about half of those opportunities. Black wiggle warts with glitter (Michael Jackson) and flame tiger striped are taking good numbers of fish but a steelheaders favorite is also a good choice as colors don't seem to make a big difference in this fishery. With mild weather in the forecast and effort likely to climb this weekend, the fishery is ripe for a good catch.

Crabbing remains good in the lower Columbia, likely the best on the coast. The soft tides contributed to good catches this week and even in last weekends blustery weather, a south wind didn't prevent hard-core crustacean seekers from taking limits of crab.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Columbia River sturgeon anglers should continue to see a slide in the gorge fishery although it is still likely to be one of the better producing sections of the mainstem. As temperatures continue to drop, the section from the mouth of the Willamette to Longview will produce better results. Smelt will be the top ticket but sand shrimp should also produce well. The Multnomah Channel is also becoming a stronger bet.

Bring your heaters and troll plugs in the John Day Pool and John Day Arm over the weekend. The action should heat up as the weather turns mild and the run peaks. It's pretty clear that action isn't what most veteran anglers are used to for this fishery but it's certainly enough to keep a rod interested. It's trolling, how hard can it be?

Although many will be motivated to get after the crab on the lower Columbia River, you may find more challenging conditions than you had hoped for. Extreme high tides will narrow the window of opportunity for productive crabbing this weekend. You'll have short windows close to high and low tides but be prepared for quick pot pulling as many often lose their pots to these extreme tides if buoys aren't rigged properly or ropes aren't long enough to counter these extreme currents. When the current is flowing at its peak, try the shallower water at Trestle Bay. It's out of the current and you don't need water deeper than 20 feet to be crabbing effectively.

Folks looking for shellfish would be better suited gearing up for some evening clam digs. East winds are forecasted for Friday night which should calm the ocean surf and make for some productive digging. It'll be cold so prepare for that! Bring dry clothes for changing into after your dig!

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report** – Sturgeon fishing has continued

to improve as the fish from the Columbia seek warmer water in the lower Willamette. As sure as turkey on Thanksgiving, plunkers will line the bank at Meldum Bar this holiday weekend in hopes of intercepting an early winter steelhead.

The waters of the North Santiam are high and swift. Steelhead fishing in the North Santiam is fair for late summers and the occasional early native winter steelhead. The ODFW donated an additional 50 summer steelhead to the Fair Share Gleaners of Sweethome, bringing the total for 2007 to 187. The donated salmon and surplus steelhead feed low income families in Linn County.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Those Meldrum plunkers would actually stand a much better chance of hooking a sturgeon at that location, particularly with the water high and muddy, just the way sturgeon like it. Boat anglers have a better chance of hooking up with a keeper, of course, which have come from all over the river once again this week. Sand shrimp and squid continue to deliver.

Water conditions at the North Santiam are unlikely to change much for a while as Detroit Reservoir levels also increased with rainfall. That increase must be corrected for Detroit to function as flood control if needed. Drift boaters should exercise extreme caution as there are changes in the course of the river, turbulence, trees and debris that can ruin your day.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports** – Numbers of steelhead is declining and the quality of the summers in the Clackamas has been deteriorating. This one is a long shot for an early winter fish and there's nothing of interest to anglers at Eagle Creek this weekend.

The Sandy holds a little better promise for an early winter steelhead but this is yet another river which has switched from hatchery bred and reared steelhead to planting the first generation progeny of wild steelhead (broodstock) whose offspring maintain the same timetable as natives, that is a return to their home river in December, January and even February. The majority of the summer steelhead present are well past their pull date.

Both the Sandy and Clackamas rivers closed for coho at the first of November.

**North Coast Fishing Report** – Hopes were high for a grand slam driftboat season this month when a good dousing put rivers out of shape, but only briefly. Last Saturday, the Kilchis began to turn fishable color although leafy debris kept plugs and baits from fishing effectively for very long. I put in a few hours in the lower Kilchis never to draw a strike. We took off for crabbing in the late morning, only to find Netarts Bay plugged with red rock crabs! I was told later that we were simply crabbing in the wrong place as keeper Dungeness were present in the bay, we just had to know where to find them.

By Sunday, I would be sure it was "game-on" with 2 experienced brothers from San Francisco. It was Slusher Brother central as these guys have been fishing with me for nearly 14 years! With the poor results I had experienced on the Kilchis, coupled with some light precipitation that had fallen over the course of Saturday, I decided to spend a better part of the day in the bay and trolled the Ghost Hole, Bay City and the West Channel. Our grand total was 2 bites with one fish landed, both at Bay City in the middle of the outgoing tide. We decided on a late start so we could hit what has been the best part of the tide- the middle of the incoming. We made several effective passes in the late afternoon but to no avail. One particular thing I noticed, most recently, whole herring have been getting more attention than plug cut herring have. It could be coincidence but even though I fish more plug cut herring on board, the whole herring are the ones going down.

Well, I had these experienced sticks for 3 days and I was going to take advantage of it. Day 2 was spent on the lower Kilchis River and traffic wasn't too bad. We backrolled plugs and backbounced bait only to come up with 1 chum, 1 chinook and 2 other quick slaps on the plugs. We never got a take on bait that day. Driftboaters upstream did not do all that well either. An odd absence of fish for prime conditions. Although it is quite clear that coast wide, chinook numbers were down, there should have been biting fish on the Kilchis with the conditions we had. The only factor I can point to was the massive mud slide we had on our state forest lands back in 2003. It happened in December when the bulk of the chum eggs and a good portion of the chinook eggs were incubating and now, the returns for both are very poor. Silt kills fish and this slide did it's share.

The next day (11/19), on the Wilson, was a different story. With the water visibility still below 2 foot, the day started off with a bright buck in the box in the first 20 minutes of fishing. Sardine wrapped Kwikfish ruled the roost this day. We ended the day with 5 fish hooked, landing 4 of them. There were a good number of fish taken before high slack at 10:00 am with a long lull in between but half-way through the outgoing, we got another 3 hook-ups, landing all 3. I know it's hard to believe that we could have such a high strike to land ratio on Kwikfish but the faster flows draw harder strikes but I recently switched out the VMC perma-steel hooks for 2/0 bronze Mustad treble hooks and ever since, my strike to land ratio has improved dramatically. These hooks have a wider gap and can be sharpened to a stronger, sharper point and with all the fresh water, they last as long as perma-steel hooks do. I strongly recommend you look at these Mustad hooks!

Most boaters upriver didn't fare with the same results. Driftboaters found it difficult to find biting fish as it becomes even more clear that numbers are down this year. Although the Wilson may be one of the brighter spots this season, the Trask did put out some fish on Monday and a rare one on Tuesday.

The Nestucca River, depending who you talked to was either a biological desert or was fair at best. **Pro guide Kent Anderson (503-550-6303)** found some favorable results last week but depending on whether the river was on the rise or fall, dictated his success. Overall, it wasn't nearly as good as it gets but plug fishers fared ok on the Nestucca downstream of 1<sup>st</sup> Bridge.

Tillamook Bay anglers were still catching some fish as of Tuesday. Anglers reported between 12 and 15 fish from the Ghost Hole on the morning tide. Traffic is also slowing here but for a bit of a poor showing this year, the Ghost Hole may still be a good bet. It also fished well on Sunday morning and a rare fish is still being caught in the West Channel.

The ocean may lay down on Friday but salmon season is closed and crabbing is closed. Crabbing does open up on December 1<sup>st</sup> so rockfish remain the only option if seas are friendly.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Anxious driftboaters will be out in force this weekend but don't count on high catches. Crowds will be quite impressive with the holiday and all but waters will be dropping and clearing and by the time most anglers are ready to fish, many of the (few) biters will have already been culled from the river. The Wilson and Nestucca will remain the best options and the lower drifts will produce the best results for bright fish. Fish will be concentrated in classic chinook water- the slow, deep and dark holes that you know hold salmon. Brighter fish will also be found in the faster flows and nothing will be more true than the saying, "the early bird will get the worm".

Plugs will lose their edge and backbouncers working the eddies and deep holes will dominate what little catching that will be going on. I could get surprised on the high tide series we have coming up but that will most likely benefit boaters working the lower tidewater stretches over the

driftboat fleet- and I do mean fleet! Be courteous this weekend, we do have much to be thankful for!

The Kilchis will be too low for productive fishing and the Nehalem continues to disappoint although this rain freshet may be what Nehalem anglers are looking for. It's water clarity may make it the best option over the weekend. It may be hard to find bright fish however.

Tillamook Bay anglers should find some action over the weekend. The strong tides are likely to draw in some of the season's last salmon. The east side of the bay should produce the best catches with the Ghost Hole and Bay City most likely to produce. Some fish are still entering the mouth of the Wilson up by the Memaloose Ramp so don't hesitate to fish the upper bay as well. Again, don't expect fishing like we had last year, it just isn't going to happen.

Crabbing will be a debacle this weekend. The extreme tides will take the pots of novice crabbers out of sight. Be sure your gear is properly rigged or you'll almost certainly lose it to the extreme tides.

**Central & South Coast Reports** – Mussel harvest is closed north of Siletz Bay due to high levels of naturally-occurring toxins. Beaches and bays south of that point remain open.

ODFW announced that it didn't host a discussion meeting regarding the Catch Sharing Plan because of the possible reduction in allocation - as much as 50% - from those in 2007.

Chinook fishing remains very slow on the Alsea and what few fish have been caught are in poor condition. There are far better prospects elsewhere on the coast.

Siuslaw Chinook fishing has been slow to fair following recent rains. It is dropping and clearing and should provide some action by the weekend.

The wild coho fishery, open in Siltcoos and Tahkenich lakes, should improve now that we've had some heavy precipitation. Trolling plugs, spinners and spoons is effective here.

Chinook fishing has been slow to fair in the lower Umpqua and Winchester Bay although crabbing has improved. Steelheading on the mainstem is expected to improve as the water level drops, but has been slow all season this year. Coho prospects are better than those for steelhead on the North Fork with numbers improving.

Coos and coquille Chinook angling is slow with few fishers even showing interest now. The Coquille may deliver a Turkey Day winter steelhead, however. The East Fork Coquille will open for steelheading on the first of December.

Elk River water levels dropped to 5.3 on November 21st but is still a little off-color. Prospects are good for the holiday weekend but fishing was slow on Tuesday this week.

Half-pounder fishing hit the skids with high water on the lower Rogue but the freshet has brought a few winter steelhead in. Coho and a few adult steelhead are being taken on spoons and spinners in the Grants Pass stretch. The upper Rogue has continued to produce fair catches of late-season summer steelhead.

There's every reason for optimism when the Chetco drops into shape. It should be producing good catches of Chinook and fishes best when the flow hits 4,000 cfs or so. Plunkers will take fish on Thanksgiving with all methods effective by the coming weekend.

**Central and Eastern Oregon** – A good, flushing rain as we had recently is what brings fresh steelhead into the Grande Ronde. It will be dropping this week so conditions are positive, but be prepared for the possibility of extremely cold weather.

**Northwest Trout** – Hagg Lake closed to all fishing on November 18th. It will re-open in March, 2008. Diamond Lake is also closed.

The low waters of Diamond Lake are providing fair to good trout fishing as it has been repeatedly planted all year.

Walling Pond and Walter Wirth Lake have been stocked this week with a combination of eight to 10 inch rainbows and a number of 12-inchers.

### **Washington fishing reports:**

**From the WDF&W Weekender Report November 14<sup>th</sup> – November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

#### **North Puget Sound**

A few late-season **coho salmon** can be found in the region's rivers and streams, but freshwater anglers are mostly reeling in **chum**. Meanwhile, several marine areas in the region also are open for **salmon**, and some anglers fishing the saltwater are finding nice **blackmouth**.

"The **blackmouth** fishery isn't going as strong as it was during the first week of November," said John Long, WDFW fish biologist. "But even though it has slowed, I have heard reports of a few nice fish caught in the region."

Anglers participating in the recent Bayside Marine Salmon Derby in Everett took advantage of the hot bite earlier this month. A total of 267 anglers weighed in 129 fish during the two-day event, which took place Nov. 3-4. Don Allen was the derby's big winner. The Marysville resident hauled in a 17-pound, 15-ounce chinook, taking home the \$2,000 first prize. Rich Olson, who weighed in a 13-pound, 13-ounce chinook, finished second, while Bill Hayes' 11-pound, 6-ounce chinook was good enough for third.

Four marine areas in the region are open for blackmouth, which are resident chinook. Anglers fishing marine areas 9 (Admiralty Inlet) and 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) are allowed to keep one chinook as part of a two-salmon daily limit. Those fishing in marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) and 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) also have a two-salmon daily limit, but can keep up to two hatchery chinook per day. Wild chinook salmon, which have an intact adipose fin, cannot be brought aboard the boat in areas 8-1 and 8-2.

Long reminds anglers fishing for blackmouth that **crabbing** also is a possibility. Marine areas 4 (Neah Bay), 5 (Sekiu), 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca), 9,10, 11 (Tacoma/Vashon), 12 (Hood Canal) and 13 (south Puget Sound) are open to sport crabbing seven days a week through Jan. 2. Marine areas 8-1 and 8-2 will reopen for crab fishing on a daily basis Nov. 22-25 during the Thanksgiving holiday.

Crabbing will not reopen this year in Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands), where the summer catch

slightly exceeded the annual quota.

The daily catch limit in Puget Sound is five Dungeness crab, males only, in hard-shell condition with a minimum carapace width of 6 ¼ inches. In addition, fishers may catch six red rock crab of either sex per day, provided those crab measure at least 5 inches across. Additional information is available on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/crab/index.htm>.

In the rivers, most reports indicate anglers are hooking **chum salmon**, although a few **coho** continue to be caught in some streams. Among the hot spots in the region are the Snohomish and Skykomish rivers.

For **trout** anglers, Beaver Lake near Issaquah could be the best place to cast for rainbows over the next couple of weeks. About 3,000 hatchery rainbows – averaging approximately 3 to 5 pounds each – are scheduled to be released into the lake the week of Nov. 12. Beaver Lake, which is one of several westside lowland lakes open to fishing year-round, is best fished by small boat, although anglers can also be successful fishing from shore, said Chad Jackson, WDFW fish biologist. The daily bag limit is five fish, and bait anglers must keep the first five trout they catch.

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

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

**Chum** and **blackmouth** salmon will still occupy center stage for the next couple weeks, but anglers will soon turn their attention to winter **steelhead**. Meanwhile, a **razor clam** dig is tentatively scheduled to open the day after Thanksgiving and **crab** fishing is open seven days per week in most areas of Puget Sound.

As the **chum** fishing season nears its peak, many of the big fish are making their way into South Sound streams. Chum salmon can now be found in virtually every small stream in the area, including such popular fishing spots as the mouth of Kennedy Creek on Totten Inlet and near the Hoodspout Hatchery on Hood Canal. According to recent creel checks, anglers were catching at least one fish per rod at both sites. Anglers are reminded that the daily limit in the Hoodspout "hatchery zone" is four salmon, with a maximum of two chinook.

Anglers working Perry Creek in Thurston County also averaged a fish per rod over the Nov. 10 weekend. Other areas opening to chum-salmon fishing, effective Nov. 1, include the Dosewallips and Duckabush rivers in Jefferson County, and Minter Creek in Pierce/Kitsap counties.

While heavy rains and high tides have temporarily stalled salmon fishing in coastal rivers along the coast, catch rates should improve once the weather gets better, said Scott Barbour, WDFW fish biologist. "Most rivers are out of shape right now, although the Calawah and Sol Duc on the Olympic Peninsula are fishable and anglers are still finding some coho and chinook," he said.

By the time conditions improve, anglers can start thinking about the **winter steelhead** season, Barbour said. December is the big month for hatchery steelhead on the North Olympic Peninsula – including the Quillayute River system and Hoh River – but early returns start showing up around Thanksgiving, he said.

Rather be out on the bay? **Blackmouth** fishing remains steady in south Puget Sound, where 24 anglers near Point Defiance recently caught 15 chinook. The daily limit is two salmon, although only one chinook may be retained.

On the coast, Rob Reifsnnyder of Spanaway won the \$500 first prize for catching the biggest fish during Westport's month-long Boat Basin Salmon Derby. Reifsnnyder's hatchery coho weighed nearly 15 pounds.

The next **razor clam** dig is tentatively scheduled Nov. 23-24 on evening tides at Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis and Mocrocks. Two more evening digs are planned Nov. 25-26 at Twin Harbors. Final approval for all digs is contingent upon marine toxin tests that show the clams are safe to eat. Kalaloch Beach will remain closed to razor clam digging throughout the 2007-08 season.

Evening low tides during the planned dig are at 5:21 p.m. Friday, Nov. 23 (-1.3 ft.), 6:11 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 24 (-1.7 ft.), 7 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 25 (-1.8 ft.) and 7:48 p.m. Monday, Nov. 26 (-1.6 ft.).

Harvesters are allowed to take no more than 15 razor clams and must keep the first 15 they dig, regardless of size or condition. Each digger's clams must be kept in a separate container. A license is required for anyone age 15 or older. Any 2007 annual shellfish/seaweed license or combination license is still valid.

Recreational **crab** fishing got under way Nov. 1 in five marine areas of Puget Sound and will be open seven days a week through Jan. 2. Crab fishing is open in marine areas 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca), 9 (Admiralty Inlet), 10 (Seattle/Bremerton), 11 (Tacoma/Vashon) and 12 (Hood Canal). Three other marine areas – 4 (Neah Bay), 5 (Sekiu) and 13 (south Puget Sound) – have been open continuously since June 18.

The daily catch limit in Puget Sound is five Dungeness crab, males only, in hard-shell condition with a minimum carapace width of 6¼ inches. In addition, fishers may catch six red rock crab of either sex per day, provided those crab measure at least 5 inches across. Additional information is available on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/crab/index.htm>.

### **Southwest Washington:**

Rough weather over the Veterans Day holiday served as a reminder of coming winter weather conditions – and the **winter steelhead** fishery often associated with them. Although area anglers continue to reel in good numbers of **sturgeon** and **hatchery coho**, many have begun to gear up for the hatchery steelhead season that will run well into the winter months.

"We're getting more calls about the winter run steelhead fishery," said Joe Hymer, a WDFW fish biologist. "The focus is definitely shifting in that direction."

Fishing for **hatchery steelhead** is already open on several tributaries to the lower Columbia River. In addition, the Grays River opens from the mouth to the Highway 4 Bridge Nov. 15. While a few winter steelhead have returned to area hatcheries, the fishery doesn't usually get going until around Thanksgiving, Hymer said. Weekly escapement reports can be found at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hat/escape/escape.htm>.

"A lot depends on river conditions and the general timing and strength of the run," Hymer said. Most of this year's returning hatchery fish were planted on the Cowlitz, Lewis, Elochoman and Kalama rivers. For information on last year's smolt plants, see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/harvest/06-07/smolts.htm> on WDFW's website. As in past years, anglers must release wild steelhead with an intact adipose fin.

Meanwhile, catch rates for **hatchery coho** have remained fairly strong both above and below

Bonneville Dam. "Some coho are starting to turn dark, but bright fish are still showing up in the catch," Hymer said.

Two of three boat anglers fishing in the Bonneville Pool near the mouth of the Klickitat River took home hatchery coho during the week ending Nov. 11. Those fishing the Lewis River maintained a similar average – and also caught an equal number of fall chinook, which they were required to release. Bank anglers fishing near the salmon hatchery on the Lewis River averaged about one coho for every three rods, including fish released.

Bank anglers are also catching some coho at the barrier dam and below on the Cowlitz River, where the catch limit is six hatchery adult coho per day. WDFW recently extended the six-fish bag limit above Cowlitz Falls Dam, where fishery managers are working to reestablish a naturally spawning coho run.

"The higher catch limit on the upper Cowlitz is consistent with the recovery effort, because it will help to control the number of hatchery fish that reach the spawning grounds while supporting the recreational fishery," said Pat Frazier, WDFW regional fish manager. "So long as anglers keep catching those hatchery fish, we can move more of them above the dam without interfering with the restoration effort," he said.

Flows increased and visibility decreased on some lower Columbia tributaries after a storm blew through western Washington the day after Veterans Day. With the return of winter conditions, Hymer recommends that anglers check stream-flow conditions on two websites before leaving home:

[http://www.nwrfc.noaa.gov/river/river.cgi?zoom??1.1.1.1.0\\_1.1.1.1\\_1?zoom?62,343?165,253](http://www.nwrfc.noaa.gov/river/river.cgi?zoom??1.1.1.1.0_1.1.1.1_1?zoom?62,343?165,253) and <http://waterdata.usgs.gov/WA/nwis/current/?type=flow>.

Then again, the recent storm might have improved the **sturgeon fishery** below Bonneville Dam, said Hymer, noting that high, dirty water can invigorate the bite. Bank anglers fishing just below the dam averaged a legal-size sturgeon for every 8.5 rods during the week ending Nov. 11. Boat anglers fishing in the Camas/Washougal area also took home some legal-size fish.

### **Eastern Washington:**

The best catch rates for Snake River hatchery **steelhead** are above the interstate bridge near Clarkston, where anglers averaged seven to eight hours per fish, according to the latest creel surveys. Steelheaders in that stretch should be careful to avoid drifting into the Clearwater River across the state line into Idaho, which requires a separate license. No part of the Clearwater River can be legally fished with a Washington license only.

Anglers are also doing well fishing from the mouth of the lower Grand Ronde River – a tributary of the Snake River – to the Oregon state line. Creel surveys show that anglers fishing those waters have been averaging 11 to 12 hours per fish.

Other stretches of the Snake River are yielding steelhead at slower, but steady, rates. The Wallula area, from the Oregon state line to the mouth of the Walla Walla River, has required about 13 hours of angling effort per steelhead. Anglers have averaged between 13 and 14 hours per fish from Lower Granite Dam to the interstate bridge at Clarkston, and 17 hours per fish from Little Goose to Lower Granite dams. For all the creel survey numbers, see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/snake/index.htm>.

WDFW fish biologist Glen Mendel reminds anglers fishing on the Snake River that any chinook salmon must be released immediately. That includes surplus fall chinook trapped for production

at Lyons Ferry Fish Hatchery and released back to the river. Like naturally spawning chinook, those fish are protected as a threatened species under the federal Endangered Species Act.

"The hatchery needs a good mix of chinook from throughout the run, so some of the fish trapped earlier are being released to make room for others," Mendell said. The chinook are being released near Lower Granite and Little Goose dams, depending on where they were collected. Mendel said they are marked by clipping the top or bottom of the tail (caudal) fin to identify the fish in case they are trapped again, and to learn more about their movements through fish ladders at the Snake River dams.

#### **North Central Washington:**

Fishing has been slow for **hatchery steelhead** on the Wenatchee River, where angler participation and catch rates have dropped recently. Art Viola, WDFW district fish biologist, said water temperatures have decreased and a number of fish seem to have moved upriver.

"The water temperatures have dropped into the high 30's, and that may be part of the reason the fishery has slowed," he said. "But it's just hard to say exactly why."

Viola said he estimates the catch rate on the river has fallen to well over 10 hours of effort per hatchery (adipose-fin clipped) steelhead caught. The special season for hatchery steelhead runs through March 31 from the mouth upstream to Icicle Road Bridge west of Leavenworth,

#### **South Central Washington:**

Fishing for **hatchery steelhead** in the Ringold area of the Columbia River near the Tri-Cities has picked up now that anglers are allowed to keep any hatchery steelhead with a clipped adipose fin. Throughout October anglers could keep only those fish with a clipped adipose fin and a clipped right ventral fin, said Paul Hoffarth, WDFW fish biologist.

"The dual clippings identify fish reared in the Ringold Hatchery," Hoffarth said. "Until November, we target those fish exclusively to make sure we get enough fish above Priest Rapids Dam to meet escapement goals."

This year, returns to the Ringold Hatchery have been relatively low, Hoffarth said. "But there's lots of other hatchery steelhead with adipose clips that anglers can catch and keep."

The fishery is open through March 31, 2008 from the Highway 395 Bridge at Pasco/Kennewick upstream to the wooden powerline towers at the old Hanford town site.

#### **Reader Email -**

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

Write to the TGF staff:

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#### **Random Links**

Co-nook? Chi-hoho?:

<http://mailtribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071115/LIFE/711150311/-1/OREGONOUTDOORS>

Coyote Rock for sale:

<http://www.nwwaterfrontrealestate.com/list.jsp?WAID=6184&orderBy=WATITLE&direction=ASC&offset=210&LTID=28125>

**Weekly Quote** – " I caught ten rainbows, five browns, three brookies and seven cutthroats and was savoring the "grand slam" that I'd been trying for all my fly fishing life. I was basking in my success and getting ready to post my report to the VFB, FFW, and Hill CountryFly Fishing Lists, when my wife woke me up with, " Jimmy, you promised me you'd fix the shower drain this morning." Ah, retired life, ain't it great!" - Jimmy D Moore

**GOOD LUCK!**