

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **June 6<sup>th</sup> – June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

**Oregon Fisheries Update:**

**Willamette Valley/Metro-** High flows and high fuel prices have curbed fishing effort in metro area fisheries. Oversized sturgeon success is improving with few anglers in pursuit. Fresh shad to use as sturgeon bait has been hard to come by. Adult returns are a fraction of previous years; an indicator that all ocean dependent species suffered from poor conditions when first entering the sea.

As the flow gradually drops at Willamette Falls, the water temperature is rising. Closure of the entire Willamette for spring chinook leaves steelhead and sturgeon as the only options. Sturgeon fishing has been slow but steelheading has been fair on the middle Willamette with water conditions and color good.

Fly fishers experienced slow but steady action on the McKenzie River over the past weekend. Mayflies are currently the hatch of interest here. Steelhead numbers are improving in the lower river.

Clackamas anglers are taking a few summer steelhead with water conditions high but color improving. Only 20 summers had entered the trap at the hatchery by the end of May.

The high waters of the Sandy are fishable and have produced a few springers.

Trout fishing has been worthwhile in the high waters of the North Santiam above Detroit.

Extensive trout planting for Free Fishing Weekend will include Benson Lake, Faraday Lake, Harriet Lake, Hartman Pond, Henry Hagg Lake, Huddelston Pond, North Fork Reservoir, Silver Creek Reservoir, Small Fry Lake, Timothy Meadows Reservoir, Alton Baker Canal, Blue River above Reservoir, Blue River Reservoir, Breitenbush River, Carmen Reservoir, Detroit Reservoir, E. E. Wilson Pond, Fall Creek, Foster Reservoir, Hills Creek, Junction City Pond, Leaburg Lake, McKenzie River above Leaburg Lake, Quartsville Creek, Roaring River Park Pond, Salmon Creek, Salt Creek, North Fork Santiam River above Detroit Reservoir, Sunnyside Park Pond, Trail Bridge Reservoir, Walling Pond, Walter Wirth Lake and the Middle Fork Willamette River above Hills Creek Reservoir.

**Northwest –** Tillamook Bay spring chinook anglers experienced great success in the lower bay late last week. Last Wednesday and Thursday, Rich and Doug Slusher from Larkspur, California took four springers in 2 days trolling herring with three of the fish over 20 pounds. This weekend, early morning minus tides will offer up the best opportunity in the upper bay with spinners or tidewater holes with bobber and bait.

**Pro guide John Kirby** reported a 27 pounder taken at the Oyster House this week on a trolled herring.

Lower Columbia River sturgeon fishing has been challenging with cold water keeping most fish off the bite. Fish seem to be present but baitfish have yet to enter the river so fish seem unresponsive to most offerings. Both Hammond and the Tongue Point fisheries are equally slow.

The North of Falcon ocean chinook opener is underway with friendly seas greeting anglers on

June 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>. Few fish were taken but they were in the 15 to 25 pound class. Spoons produce the bulk of the catch from Tillamook Head to Gearhart.

The all-depth halibut season north of Cape Falcon closed on June 1<sup>st</sup> with high success rates although most halibut retained were under 20 pounds.

The forecasted ocean swell coupled with a wind chop will make weekend ocean fishing for salmon, halibut or bottomfish less than appealing.

**Pro guide Bill Kremers (541-754-6411)** reports halibut scattered over the last all-depth opener out of Newport but that good catches were possible.

Big Creek Reservoir, Big Creek Reservoir, Cape Meares Lake, Cleawox Lake, Coffenbury Lake, Hebo Lake, Olalla Creek Reservoir, Thissel Pond and Town Lake are scheduled to be stocked with hatchery trout.

**Southwest** – All-depth halibut fishing was slow to fair out of Winchester Bay over the past weekend but with friendly seas, persistent anglers returned to port mid-day with limits. Boats fishing inside the 40-fathom line took some large lingcod. Shad have not yet entered the Umpqua in fishable numbers.

Beaches continue to deliver surfperch limits and as spawning approaches, red tails are beginning to enter bays and estuaries.

Decent minus tides will continue late mornings through the weekend, allowing clam diggers additional opportunities on beaches and in bays.

Sportfishing effort, even when conditions were perfect recently, has been very light in the Brookings area. High fuel prices are being blamed. A short hop just outside the harbor has been delivering limits of rockfish and lingcod. Chetco anglers are experiencing good fishing for cutthroat, particularly in tidewater where bait is allowed.

The ocean coho salmon season opens June 22nd for a bag limit of two finclipped fish per day. Release any chinook inadvertently landed.

Springer fishing has been slow to fair on the lower Rogue, best at the Hatchery Hole. Fishing has been very slow for chinook and steelhead on the upper Rogue.

Diamond Lake has continued to fish well for trout averaging 12 to 15 inches. As of June 1st, it is totally ice-free

Scheduled to be planted with trout are Upper and Lower Empire Lake, Eel Lake, North and South Tenmile Lake, Hyatt Reservoir, Section 5 of the Rogue River, Lost Creek Reservoir, Medco Pond, Lake Selmac, Expo Pond, Clearwater, Cooper Creek Reservoir, Galesville Reservoir, Hemlock Lake, Herbert's Pond, Lake in the Woods, Lemolo Reservoir, Loon Lake, Marie Lake and Plat I Reservoir.

**Eastern** – Anglers on the lower Deschutes are encountering high, roiled water, although the color is improving and trout are looking up at stoneflies now.

Many Central Oregon lakes are beginning to free of ice. Paulina and East Lakes put out some large brown trout last week and Paulina is beginning to improve for kokanee although the fish are smaller than usual. Five-year old A.J. Frazee holds the current season's best rainbow trout

from Twin Lakes, tipping the scales at 5 pounds, 10 ounces. Lake fishing in this region will begin to peak as the weather warms into late June.

**Pro guide Rick Arnold (541-480-1570)** reports Paulina and East lakes finally iced-out and both went off with some bigger browns. And that East Lake has produced some very large brown trout.

**Pro guide Steve Fleming (1-888-624-9424)** reports a tough week, on the John Day in high water but that conditions should improve by the coming weekend.

**SW Washington –** District rivers are running high from melting snow pack but good numbers of steelhead are present on the Cowlitz and North Fork of the Lewis. Backtrollers are targeting steelhead along the river edges where softer currents are more likely to hold migrating adults. The daily steelhead limit on the Cowlitz and North Fork Lewis raised to 3 fish/angler last month.

Salmon fishing remains poor on most SW Washington streams and is closed to the taking of salmon on many so check regulations before venturing out.

**Columbia River Fishing Report –** Traditionally, the lower Columbia River is grabbing all of the headlines this time of year. It's still the case but in this instance, the headlines would read, "Why aren't Sturgeon Biting in Columbia River Estuary?" Of course it's all speculation but extraordinary amounts of cold water are coming down the river from upstream impoundments to flush our salmon and steelhead downstream and relieve upriver reservoirs from excessive snowmelt that is now taking place. None-the-less, we're having to cope with unlikely scenarios like short lived incoming tides that are largely negated by downstream spill and lots of debris fouling lines in many parts of the river. It's challenging and we really don't know when things will change. The river temperature just hit 56 degrees but some say vessels with deeper mounted transducers are reading temperatures closer to the mid-40 degree range.

The fish are quite present. We're marking more fish on fish finders that I have a great deal of confidence in. Fish are rolling in shallow and deep water but they are just not keyed in on any specific types of bait. Just like in trout fishing, you still have to "match the hatch" for sturgeon. If the anchovies aren't in the river, they not going to feed heavily on anchovies. If sand shrimp populations are not present in the numbers they have historically been, the fish won't be keyed in on shrimp. Some sturgeon are coming up with empty bellies, some are coming in with juvenile Dungeness crab in them. We're all banking on the fish to get motivated in the near future and we're all quite anxious for that to happen. If there's one thing I can be pretty sure of it's the fact the catch is down and therefore, this season is likely to last into late, late June or possibly even July. We'll have May catch information in the coming days.

Guides are challenged to find limits for their customers. I have had very few limit days and many days, if I am getting 2 or 3 keepers, I feel pretty good about it. What's alarming is the fact we're having just 6 to 15 opportunities on most days. There are more oversized sturgeon showing in the catches. Most of the oversized fish are in the 60 to 70 inch range.

All depths seem to be equally productive (or unproductive) but most recently, a fair bite has been taking place out of Hammond along the green line and downstream of the single piling on lower Desdemona Sands. Crabs are present but when you are not getting crabbed out in the deep water, it's because the sturgeon are present. The two species don't play well together. It's just a matter of whether or not the fish will bite (see headlines above).

Some anglers got pretty excited about the June 1<sup>st</sup> opener for Chinook in the north of Falcon fishery. The last time we had this fishery, it was surprisingly productive but with low Chinook counts predicted for most coastal waters in the Northwest, I wasn't as optimistic this year. A few boats did go out and the did score on some quality Chinook. It was rare for boats to have more than 2 or 3 opportunities however but the Chinook were ranging in size from 15 to 22 pounds. Spoons took the bulk of the catch and for some reason, seem most effective in this fishery. The ocean was very friendly on the first but by the 2<sup>nd</sup>, boats that ventured south to Tillamook Head and Seaside were not impressed with the 3 foot wind chop that greeted them on the return trip north. It's not a great cove to get trapped in with a strong headwind. Keep that in mind before heading out. Check the ocean forecast and don't always count on that to be accurate.

And speaking of ocean fishing, the halibut season in the north of Falcon to Leadbetter Point zone is now closed. It closed on June 1<sup>st</sup> but is scheduled to reopen later this summer with another quota. The most recent trips yielded plenty of halibut but they ranged in size from 10 to 25 pounds with an occasional 40 pounder in the mix. Bottomfishing near the south jetty has been hot or cold and it's best to target these fish during the slack tides.

Upriver, sturgeon anglers are still getting a few keepers in the gorge but most of the effort has switched over to catch and release of the oversized fish. Guides have been finding 3 to 6 fish per trip with fresh shad obviously taking the bulk of the catch. Shad are almost harder to come by than the sturgeon! It's best to target these fish on sunny days and if you are trying to get good numbers for crab or sturgeon bait, you may be trying for a while. The upper deadline is Marker 85 but there is clearly enough flow to have a productive springtime fishery.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Estuary sturgeon fishing is showing no signs of improving. As a matter of fact, just when I thought it really couldn't get any worse, it does! There are short lived bites here and there and the action will pick up sooner or later but with more cold weather due in the coming days, prospects for weekend success are looking fairly grim. As previously stated, action is similar in both upriver and downriver fisheries so choose the body of water that you are most comfortable with. To be truly successful, you'll have to bring shrimp, anchovies and maybe smelt working both deep and shallow water areas. Right now, there are just too many variables to be making good predictions but if you have better things to do with your weekend, you may want to reconsider your fishing plans. Of course what's really too bad about this is the fact it's free fishing weekend and it may be hard to recruit new anglers into the recreation with results like we're seeing now.

Shad fishers may not be so impressed either. Cooler weather and a cloudy forecast should challenge anglers this weekend. The run is coming into its peak so enough fish should be available to make it interesting. It's just too bad that these fish respond better to lures in sunny weather versus cloudy.

Oversized fishing should remain solid in the coming weeks although some days will certainly be better than others. Maybe with the inconsistency with the shad run, action could be more stable for these large fish. High flows should keep the downriver fishery working effectively for several more weeks.

The ocean forecast doesn't look all that pretty. Ocean Chinook can wait for calmer seas and no bottomfish, even lingcod is worth the wind chop that is forecasted this weekend.

Salmon and steelhead fishing in the Columbia remains closed for another week.

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report** – Watching the Willamette flows

this year can be deceiving. We have watched it change from 25,000 to 48,000, in May, then start to drop into June. Keep in mind, however, that there was little variation from 12,000 cfs at this time last year.

The good news is that most years we have to wait several days for an accurate Willamette Falls spring Chinook count. This year, the daily and YTD counts are available almost immediately.

Actually, that's not true. There is no good news regarding Willamette spring Chinook numbers. It's too late to hope for a late push which will bring the accounting to anything approaching a fair season. In addition, missing in action are a high percentage of the hatchery returns. What the long term implications of such a bleak 2008 remains to be seen. Biologists have no answers. On a brighter note (and we can use one), steelhead counts are good at a little over 7,300. This bodes well for the upper Willamette steelhead fishery. The shad run has started.

The Santiams will remain too high to fish well through the weekend but for those so inclined, there are plenty of steelhead to be caught.

Since 1998, the ODFW has opened Oregon waters to all while dropping license and tag (now referred to as Harvest Card) requirements. In 2008, Free fishing weekend June 7th and 8th, where one may take friends, neighbors and kids fishing without licenses or tags, is likely to have popular fishing spots jammed with novices. It's a great opportunity to introduce a newbie to the sport; if bothered by crowds, wait a couple of days.

Many special activities are planned for Free Fishing Weekend at various locations around the Willamette Valley. Find a list here: <http://www.dfw.state.or.us/RR/willamette/>

**The Guide's Forecast** –According to recent reports, there are sufficient numbers of shad in from Oregon City to Willamette Falls to make a trip worthwhile. If boat fishing (which is the best way), it is necessary to anchor 'on' the fish as they travel in a narrow band upstream. Dick Nites have been effective in 15 to 20 feet of water. Coon Island in Multnomah Channel has yet to start delivering although some sturgeon have been caught. In the main river, the best results during the last retention period were reported near the mouth off Kelly Point Park, but be aware that the Columbia is so high it is backing up into the lower Willamette. Try sand shrimp or squid as baits. Steelheading has been a crap shoot with the most hookups coming to shad fishers below the mouth of the Clackamas and those have as frequently hook Chinook which must be released.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports** – Clackamas level and flow moderated this week, then spiked again on June 3rd. It was still over 15 feet at Estacada the morning of Thursday, June 5th. That's a lot of water, so use care and fish accordingly. Summer steelhead and spring Chinook fishing have been slow to fair.

High water on the Sandy was showing decent color earlier this week but rain on Wednesday this week brought the river up and knocked it off-color. Prior to that, anglers caught a springer or two, so hopefully there will be a decent fishery here when the weather finally moderates.

**North Coast Fishing Report** – It's still springers on the mind for Tillamook district anglers as peak season is theoretically underway. Catches have dropped off from the previous week but some fish have been taken in the upper bay. **Pro guide John Kirby** reported a 27 pounder taken at the Oyster House this week on a trolled herring. The action switched from the lower bay to the upper bay this week with the minus tide series we are just now coming off of. Spinners have taken some fish as well.

The lower stretches of the Trask, Wilson and Nestucca Rivers should also be holding fish for bobber pitchers. Trollers can also take fish in the larger holes while adults await the next rain freshet to march themselves upstream to over summer.

Halibut catches have been excellent out of Garibaldi as well but fish seem a but smaller than they usually are. It won't be such a friendly week for recreational halibut fishers from most northern ports.

**The Guide's Forecast** – We'll still have some large minus tides through the weekend for north coast clamming and decent salmon fishing in the upper Tillamook Bay. Tidewaters of the Wilson, Trask and Nestucca Rivers should be holding decent numbers of fish now. Do watch your navigation however as there will be lots of sandbars nearly exposed.

After the weekend, trollers will see softer tides for the last good push of springers coming across the Tillamook Bay bar. Troll herring on the bottom targeting the last 3 hours of outgoing tide. Most recently, the fish seem to be crossing over the bar about half way into the tide. Remember, only fin-clipped fish can be retained and although the selective fishery goes into July, most of the hatchery fish will be passing through the estuary by mid-June.

**Central & South Coast Reports – Pro guide Bill Kremers (541-754-6411)** reports, "Halibut was my main target this past week. Fished out of Newport and this time we fished on the south end of the Rockpile in hopes of landing bigger fish. We landed 49, 45, 39 inch halibut on Thursday and Friday and released a few smaller halibut in the 30 - 33 inch range. The halibut here are scattered as the easy pickings is now over at both the Chicken Ranch and the Rockpile so you have to put in your time. Normally I catch most of my halibut south the of the SE corner but on these trips we had better fishing north of the corner a couple of miles. Once again we were using a combination of fresh herring and squid that we injected Pro Cure garlic plus. Then on Monday did some light tackle (steelhead spinning rods) for bottom fish by Johnson Rock south of Newport. That is a blast, lots of action as we caught fish (mostly the black sea bass) from bottom to right on top. On our return to Newport we stopped and catch about 6 dozen herring at high slack to replenish my supply for my next trips."



Crabbing is gradually improving in Yaquina Bay where red rock crab will inevitably be in the mix with Dungeness. Herring have been taken in good numbers so get 'em while you can.

All-depth halibut is not open during Free Fishing Weekend but will re-open June 12th through 14th with a substantial percentage of the spring quota remaining to be taken.

Bottom fishing will be open inside the 40-fathom line for a variety of quarry including rockfish, ling cod, greenling and cabezon. Nearshore halibut is also open but those fish are seldom targeted and are caught only occasionally.

Minus tides will allow clam diggers to work ocean beaches and bays for all types of bivalves this weekend.

With no shellfish tag required and prime clamming conditions, enthusiastic participation is expected with experienced diggers converting novices this Saturday and Sunday. While crabbing is also allowed without a harvest card this weekend, catches have been poor.

Although spring Chinook are moving into Winchester Bay, fishing has been slow. Shad are starting to show in catchable number on the mainstem Umpqua but high water has hampered effort. Spring Chinook catches have been decent on the North Umpqua while smallmouth bass fishing is starting to heat up on the South Umpqua.

Another fishing opportunity open for all is for sturgeon in Coos Bay where catches have been good recently.

Water conditions are improving on the Rogue River as levels continue to drop. Currently in the mid-50-degree range, water temperatures are conducive to Chinook hookups although action has been hot or cold recently. Spinner/anchovy combos, used almost exclusively here, have been responsible for most landings. The Grants Pass stretch has been slow. Steelheaders on the upper Rogue have taken a few summers and fewer springers although the fish have been in prime condition. The upper Rogue is a long shot for springers with counts at Gold Ray Dam down this season.

Chetco anglers targeting sea-run cutthroat are doing well in tidewater where bait is allowed. Only flies and artificial lures are allowed upstream, but early in the season the best prospects will be in the estuary.

Surf perch fishing in the Brookings and Gold Beach areas has been excellent and is expected to provide 15-fish limits to anglers this weekend. Boats launching early out of Brookings Harbor should enjoy good results with bottom fish.

Nearshore rockfish, just outside the harbor entrance, are running large. Most are well over two pounds with many hitting three. Afternoon winds will have fishers returning to shelter mid-day this coming weekend but early morning conditions look promising.

Anglers are catching trout right in front of the resort at Diamond Lake, although with the entire lake now ice-free, larger fish are coming from the south end of the lake with many running over 20 inches. In addition to an estimated 50,000, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife stocked more than 43,000 rainbow trout, a mix of legal and trophy-sized fish, and 6,800 one-pound trout.

Many special activities are planned for Free Fishing Weekend at various locations in southwest Oregon. Find a list here: <http://www.dfw.state.or.us/RR/southwest/>

**Central and Eastern Oregon – Pro guide Rick Arnold (541-480-1570)** reports the latest: "Paulina and East lakes finally iced-out and both went off with some bigger browns. Last Wed. John Hofferd caught a 14 LB. 4 oz. hen brown late in the afternoon from Paulina. Sat and Sun. Paulina produced two more nice browns that went 14 LB. and 17.5 LB. Ron Lane caught an 11 LB. 11 oz. hookjaw brown from one of our Central Oregon lakes that he didn't disclose. Kokanee fishing is picking up a little at Paulina but the fish are smaller than usual.

"East lake has produced some nicer browns with a documented 12 LB. male brown leading the parade. My good buddy, Rick Coffin, took his grandson to Twin Lake and the little guy caught a 5 LB.+ rainbow for the biggest trout of the year so far for the Twins. Wickiup continues to produce a few big rainbows and some nice browns to 6-7 LB.

"I picked up a nice 19.5 LB. mack to mount from a customer that caught her at Odell a couple of weeks ago. Crescent should continue to improve as waters warm a little more."

**Pro guide Steve Fleming (1-888-624-9424)** reports a tough week, "I got on the river Tuesday and we boated three Master Angler Smallmouth, but all the other trips have been taken at the Private Largemouth Lake. Bummer!! The river is dropping and based on USGS prediction it should be 8000 CFS by Wednesday, and we have done good at that CFS or less is there is three feet of clean water at the bank. The water has been 50 degrees, and the bass are huge, but won't go on their beds for a couple of weeks. Now is the time to get after them, when the water allows it."

Spring Chinook catches are improving on the Deschutes at Sherars Falls as water levels drop. Salmonflies are out in good number with the peak of the hatch, delayed by unseasonably heavy and extended rainfall, delayed. Tour Greek remains blown out and the rain falling today, June 5th, is expected to continue off and on through the weekend which will keep the Deschutes below that point roiled. Above Trout Creek to Warm Springs, redsides are responding to Salmonfly imitations. Wade with caution in the high water.

**Northwest Trout** – See fisheries forecast, above for extensive Free Fishing Weekend trout planting and individual zones for special activity.

**Washington fishing reports:**  
**From the WDF&W Weekender Report May 28 - June 10, 2008**

#### **North Puget Sound**

Spring fishing seasons are winding down in the region, but saltwater anglers still have their pick of **halibut**, **lingcod** or **shrimp** fisheries during the next few weeks. In the freshwater, anglers can cast for trout, and soon will have an opportunity to turn their attention to **chinook salmon**.

Portions of the Skagit, Cascade and Skykomish rivers open for **chinook salmon** fishing June 1, said Brett Barkdull, WDFW fish biologist. The Skagit will open to hatchery chinook retention from the Highway 530 bridge at Rockport to the Cascade River. On the Cascade, anglers will be allowed to fish from the mouth of the river to the Rockport-Cascade Road Bridge. Both stretches are open through July 15.

The daily limit on the Skagit and Cascade rivers will be four hatchery chinook, two of which may be adults (chinook salmon at least 24 inches in length). Barkdull reminds anglers that statewide rules require anglers to stop fishing for salmon once they have kept two adults.

On the Skykomish, hatchery chinook fishing is open from the Lewis Street Bridge in Monroe to the Wallace River through July 31. Anglers fishing the Skykomish will have a daily limit of two hatchery chinook salmon.

**Trout** fishing also will open at several of the region's rivers and streams beginning June 1. Under the statewide rule for trout, there is a two-fish daily limit and a minimum size of eight inches in rivers and streams. However, some of the region's rivers and streams have a rule requiring trout to be at least 14 inches in length to keep. For more rules and details, anglers can check WDFW's *Fishing in Washington* pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

Out on the saltwater, the northern portion of Marine Area 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) opens June 1 to catch-and-release fishing for **salmon**. Fishing will be allowed north of a line from Point Monroe to Meadow Point. Handling rules are in effect for this fishery.

Meanwhile, time is running out to hook a **lingcod**. The fishery runs through June 15 in the region, where fishing has been decent for lings recently. Catch counts at the Armeni ramp indicate 31 anglers hauled in nine lingcod May 24, and 13 anglers checked three lings the following day. Elsewhere, 42 anglers at the Everett ramp brought home seven lingcod May 25, while 69 anglers checked at the Coronet Bay public ramp caught nine. 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.

The **halibut** fishery is winding down as well. The season for the big flatfish is open through June 13. Until the fishery closes, anglers can fish five days a week, Thursday through Monday, with a daily limit of one halibut and no minimum size limit.

Rather drop a pot? The region's **spot shrimp** fishery is limited to the southern portion of Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands) and is scheduled to close May 31. However, shrimpers can soon fish for **coonstripe** and **pink shrimp** in some marine areas, beginning June 1. For details on shrimp fisheries check WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/shrimpreg/shrimpindex.shtml>.

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

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

The ocean **salmon** season begins June 1 off the south coast, where fishing off Westport and Ilwaco will get under way a full month earlier than usual. Also that day, salmon fishing opens in Marine Area 11 (Tacoma-Vashon Island) in southern Puget Sound. Then, on June 3, the north coast opens to salmon fishing off LaPush and Neah Bay.

At the same time, fishers will have an array of other options to consider, including **halibut** fishing off the north coast, **shrimping** in Hood Canal and - starting June 18 - **crabbing** in the western Strait of Juan de Fuca.

"People definitely have plenty of options in terms of how they spend their free time over the next few weeks," said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW biologist. "Regardless of where they live in the region, they shouldn't have to go far to catch fish or shellfish."

The early start for this year's ocean salmon season is designed to give anglers an opportunity to catch hatchery **chinook salmon** off the coast before the bulk of the coho run arrives, said Doug Milward, WDFW ocean salmon manager. With conservation measures in place for coho throughout the West Coast, the June opening will give anglers a chance to catch up to 20,000 chinook while minimizing impacts on coho, he said.

"We could actually have a pretty good chinook fishery in June," Milward said. "There will also be a season in July, but there's a good chance we'll have to close the fishery earlier than in previous years to meet conservation goals for coho salmon."

Salmon fishing in Marine Area 1 (Ilwaco) opens June 1, seven days per week. Marine Area 2 (Westport) also opens June 1, but fishing is restricted to Sundays through Thursdays. On the north coast, fishing opens June 3 in marine areas 3 and 4 (LaPush and Neah Bay) five days per week, Tuesdays through Saturdays.

In Puget Sound, Marine Area 11 (Tacoma-Vashon Island) also will open June 1 seven days a week, joining Marine Area 13 (South Puget Sound), which opened May 1.

Additional fishing regulations, including minimum size limits and area catch guidelines are described in WDFW's *Fishing in Washington* rules pamphlet, available online at [http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regs\\_seasons.html](http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regs_seasons.html).

Meanwhile, north coast **halibut** anglers will get two more days of fishing May 29 and 31 at La Push and Neah Bay (marine areas 3 and 4). These areas will reopen June 17 and 19 with fishing restricted to waters no more than 30 fathoms deep, as specified in the 2008-09 *Fishing in Washington* pamphlet. Marine Area 5 (Sekiu) will remain open through July 21, Thursdays through Mondays only.

Farther east along the Strait of Juan de Fuca, sunny weather brought out hundreds of halibut fishers during the May 24 weekend where fishing was good until the seas got choppy. Nearly 800 participants in the 8th annual Port Angeles Halibut Derby caught more than 100 fish, with the first-prize winner earning \$5,000 for landing a 180-pounder. This area (Marina Area 6), as well as the rest of Puget Sound, will close to halibut fishing June 13. These fisheries are also open Thursdays through Mondays only.

For **shrimp** anglers, fishing will reopen in Hood Canal for two more days May 29 and 31. In the Tacoma area, Marine Area 11 will reopen for non-spot shrimp June 1, with a 150-foot maximum fishing depth restriction. For more information, anglers can check online at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/shrimpreg/shrimpindex.shtml>, or call the Shellfish Hotline at 1-866-880-5431.

Looking forward to **crab** fishing? The popular recreational fishery opens June 18 seven days a week in the western Strait of Juan de Fuca (marine areas 4 and 5) and southern Puget Sound (Marine Area 13). Most other marine areas will open July 2 on a Wednesday-through-Saturday schedule, although some waters north of Anacortes will not open until later in summer.

Additional information is available on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/crabreg/crabindex> or <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>.

Poor visibility from snowmelt continues to limit the sport fishing opportunity for spring chinook in the Sol Duc River, said Mike Gross, WDFW fish biologist. Returns to the hatchery are trailing the

numbers seen in recent years by this time, though it is still early. "Hopefully the fishing will pick up as we get into June." Gross said. He reminds anglers that all unmarked, wild fish must be released.

### **Southwest Washington:**

Anglers are still picking up **spring chinook** in a number of area rivers, but interest in fisheries for **sturgeon, shad, hatchery steelhead, trout, and bass** is increasing. On May 24, an aerial survey team counted 411 boats fishing the Columbia River below Bonneville Dam for sturgeon and 275 bank anglers fishing for shad.

Boat anglers surveyed at the Deep River and Knappton ramps averaged one legal-size **sturgeon** for every six rods that week - up slightly from last year. According to those surveyed, half of the fish they hooked were keepers. Bank anglers also caught some legal-size sturgeon between Knappton and Chinook, as did boat and bank anglers fishing upriver to Marker 85 and in the Bonneville Pool.

"The water is warming up and the bite is improving," said Joe Hymer, a WDFW fish biologist. "There's a good reason why more boats and anglers are fishing for sturgeon."

Hymer reminds anglers that a legal-size sturgeon caught between Buoy 10 and the Wauna powerlines must measure 45 to 60 inches from the tip of the fish's nose to the tip of its tail. From the Wauna powerlines upriver to Marker #85, sturgeon may be retained if they measure 42 to 60 inches - but only if they are caught Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays.

That size limit also applies from Bonneville Dam to The Dalles Dam, where sturgeon may be retained seven days per week.

Anglers fishing for **shad**, on the other hand, don't have to worry about either size limits or daily catch limits. Although this year's shad run has been slow to arrive, more than 10,000 passed Bonneville Dam on May 25, which Hymer sees as a sign of better fishing in the days ahead.

"Shad fishing should pick up in a couple of weeks," he said. "These fish weigh three to four pounds apiece and put up a good fight, so it's not surprising that more anglers are fishing for them." Tips on catching and preparing shad are posted on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/outreach/fishing/shad/shad.htm>.

Meanwhile, anglers continue to reel in **spring chinook salmon** and **hatchery steelhead** from tributaries to the Columbia River above and below Bonneville Dam. On the mainstem Columbia, however, steelhead retention below the I-5 Bridge remains closed - as do all mainstem salmonid fisheries - to conserve upriver spring chinook.

The best bet for spring chinook in recent weeks has been Drano Lake, where boat anglers have been averaging a springer - including jacks - for every three rods. Also good is the Wind River, where boat anglers have been averaging a spring chinook salmon for every four rods. Bank anglers have also been catching some fish at the mouth of the Wind and in the gorge. Fishing in the upper river should continue to improve as more fish return to Carson National Fish Hatchery, Hymer said.

On the North Fork Lewis River, anglers fishing under a three-steelhead daily limit have been catching equal numbers of hatchery steelhead and spring chinook. Some are also finding steelhead on the Cowlitz River, where the limit switches June 1 from three hatchery steelhead per day to five trout - including three hatchery steelhead over 20 inches - from the Highway 4 Bridge at Kelso upstream to Mayfield Dam. All chinook salmon must be released on the Cowlitz

River from the mouth upstream to the boundary markers below Mayfield Dam due to a shortfall in hatchery returns. The same is true from the mouth of the Kalama River upstream to the upper salmon hatchery.

Portions of several other rivers will open to fishing for hatchery steelhead June 1, including the Elochoman, Toutle and Green (in Cowlitz County) rivers, and bait may be used in the East Fork Lewis and Washougal rivers. In addition, Lake Scanewa (Cowlitz Falls Reservoir) will open for hatchery spring chinook and hatchery rainbow trout starting June 1. Anglers are advised to check the Fishing in Washington rule pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) for more information about those fisheries.

Boat anglers fishing the Bonneville Pool averaged over 12 **bass** per rod, including fish released during the week ending May 25. **Trout** anglers should be aware that several lakes in the region were stocked that week. They include:

- *Merrill Lake in Cowlitz County (May 21) - 224 triploid rainbows, averaging 1.4 pounds each.*
- *Swift Reservoir (May 24) - 60,418 half-pound rainbows May 21.*
- *Battleground Lake (May 20) - 4,000 three-quarter pound rainbows.*

#### **Eastern Washington:**

Rivers and streams will open to fishing June 1 throughout the region, but Chris Donley, WDFW central district fish biologist, warns anglers that high water and flooding from recent snow pack melt makes it not only dangerous, but tough to fish.

"Some of the smaller streams and tributaries of larger rivers are probably okay to reach and be productive," Donley said. "But the best stream fishing is yet to come, when flows settle and slow a little more. It basically means there will be good fishing longer through the summer this year."

Donley noted that Spokane area **trout** lakes are "really rolling" now. "Badger has some nice west slope cutthroat," he said. "Amber and West Medical are producing nice rainbows. Fish Lake has tiger trout. Rock Lake has nice browns and rainbows. All of our trout-stocked waters in this district are producing."

WDFW enforcement officer Lenny Hahn's recent patrols revealed the same. "Most fishermen had three or four trout on their stringers at Badger, West Medical, and Fish lakes," Hahn reported. "Fishermen trolling leaded line with a fly are catching browns at Clear Lake. Fishtrap is good, too, but seemed a little slower."

Donley also noted Bonnie Lake's panfish coming on, as are Downs Lake's **perch** and **bass**. "Once Long Lake (Spokane River reservoir) stabilizes it will have good **crappie** fishing," he said.

"It's really just that time of year when you can't help but catch fish," Donley said.

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

WDFW District Fish Biologist Bob Jateff says fishing in Okanogan County has picked up in recent weeks due to warming water temperatures and increased fish productivity.

"Anglers can do well on Leader Lake for **bluegills** and **crappies** and on Patterson Lake for **perch**," Jateff said. "The Okanogan River and Palmer Lake are good bets for **smallmouth bass** and Whitestone Lake is a good producer of **largemouth bass**."

Jateff reminds anglers that new regulations for smallmouth bass went into effect May 1 - no minimum size, daily limit of 10, but only one over 14 inches may be retained.

Jateff also noted that **trout** waters such as Conconully Reservoir, Conconully Lake, Pearrygin, Spectacle, Wannacut, and Alta lakes should continue to provide good fishing for rainbows in the 10- to 12-inch range with carryover fish up to 15 inches.

Selective gear waters, such as Blue Lake on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area, Rat Lake near Brewster, and Davis Lake near Winthrop, are all providing good fishing for rainbow. Blue and Rat lakes are also producing catches of brown trout.

**Kokanee** fishing has also improved. Palmer and Bonaparte lakes are the best bets for anglers looking to hook fish in the 10- to 13-inch range.

### **South Central Washington:**

River and stream flows remain high throughout the region, making some fishing slow and access potentially dangerous. Yakima River flow data is available from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation at <http://www.usbr.gov/pn/hydromet/yakima/>.

Yakima River **salmon** anglers can check Prosser and Roza Dam chinook counts at <http://www.cbr.washington.edu/dart/adult.html>, although posted counts are often a few days behind. Yakima River salmon fishing is scheduled to close May 31; if the season is extended, based on returning fish numbers and harvest to date, it will be posted at WDFW's Fishing Emergency Rule Updates and News webpage at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>.

Information on water access sites for the lower Yakima River, including new or recently improved boat launches, are available at [http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/salmon/when\\_where\\_best\\_area\\_yakima.htm](http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/salmon/when_where_best_area_yakima.htm).

Lost, McDaniels, and Bear lakes in Yakima County were just stocked with trout. Dog and Leech lakes remain inaccessible for stocking. Clear Lake continues to produce trout catches. Lower elevation fishing waters also remain productive, with continued stocking of eight to 12-inch hatchery rainbows. For all trout stocking details, see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/regions/reg3/index.htm>.

### **Reader Email -**

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

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### **Random Links**

Sturgeon fishing Rigs:

**<http://www.nwfish.com/Sturgeon/rigging.htm>**

**Weekly Quote** – “Blessings upon all that hate contention, and love quietness, and virtue, and Angling.” - Izaak Walton

**GOOD LUCK!**