

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **November 14 – November 20th, 2008**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- Although the Columbia River Gorge remains a viable place to target keeper sturgeon, effort is decreasing with success and inclement weather. Sturgeon should begin to migrate downstream as waters cool.

The lower Willamette is on the rise as visibility drops. This combination has made a marked improvement in sturgeon fishing.

The North Santiam, high a week ago, has risen more with rain this week. With a low steelhead return this year, there are better choices for fishing.

Eagle Creek turned into a river over the weekend. Coho are present but most are dark and moving fast. A few fresh fish may be available when the flows drop.

Metro anglers used to anticipate this time of year in hopes of an early winter steelhead to the Sandy or Clackamas Rivers. Changes in broodstock have altered adult returns making February and March better alternatives for these higher quality fish.

Trout stocking will resume in the Willamette Zone next week.

Northwest – Anglers witnessed brief periods of glory on Monday when north coast river levels dropped into ideal shape for driftboaters. Good catches of fall chinook were witnessed in the Wilson River with the Trask also producing some fish.

Heavy precipitation has brought north coast rivers near flood stage but improving weather may produce the best catches of the season as early as this weekend for driftboaters. As a general rule, fish higher in the river system during high flows and target fresher fish in the lower sections as the river drops. Some dark fish will be present and should be released as they make poor tablefare.

Salmon fishing in Tillamook Bay remains poor and anglers should focus efforts in the river systems into mid-December. The Wilson, Kilchis, Trask and Nestucca Rivers, in that order, should produce fair-at-best fishing for the next few weeks.

Crabbing is likely to drop off on most coastal estuaries as the fresh water influx will likely send keepers back to the salt. This may stimulate sturgeon in Tillamook and Nehalem Bays however with sand shrimp a top bait.

Like inland streams, steelhead production is shifting to later returning broodstock making coastal rivers a poor option for an early steelhead. The Wilson, Nestucca, Kilchis, Three Rivers, North Fork Nehalem and Necanicum still receive early steelhead plants however. Adult returns of winter steelhead often mimic fall coho returns and those have shown a recent rebound.

The lower Columbia should still remain an excellent option for sport crabbing despite the current high-water event.

Southwest – Storm fronts interspersed with brief breaks has southern Oregon coast rivers rising

and falling all week. This makes for tough fishing in unpredictable conditions. Heavy rain on Tuesday was followed by a break and rivers could fish well this week.

Despite a break in the precipitation forecast for the weekend, offshore forays will be unlikely with wind and wave action too high to cross the bars.

Pro guide Bill Kremers (541-754-6411) predicts that when the Alsea returns to a fishable state, the best fishing will be from Five Rivers down but that the majority of fish present will be coho.

Trollers continue to take coho at Siltcoos Lake with the Fiddle Creek arm productive recently. Tahkenitch is also open for wild coho fishing.

Anglers fishing the jetty at Coos Bay have been doing well for rockfish and large kelp greenling. This activity is not recommended if the surf is up, however.

Anglers on the Elk and Sixes Rivers have been doing well as the levels allowed chinook to move upstream. The Elk was 4.6 feet and green on Monday, November 10th, while the Sixes was a little off color. This week should be great as the rivers drop but in the absence of precipitation, these smaller tributaries will quickly become too low to fish.

Chinook are gone from the Rogue estuary with the action all upriver now. Levels on the Rogue peaked Wednesday at about 6,000 cfs at Grants Pass but are scheduled to drop through the weekend. Coho, adult steelhead and half pounders are available in the middle river.

The Chetco, which opened above River Mile 3 on November 5th, produced limits of chinook for the majority fishing it, even when it was high. Wrapped Kwikfish will be most effective as the river drops to prime condition this week.

Eastern – Trout fishing on the Deschutes has been fair to good. With little going on in the way of hatches, nymphs have been effective for hookups. A few steelhead are being caught but it has been spotty as most summer steelies have moved out of the lower river.

The John Day was low and slow-moving over the weekend although catch-and-release steelheading was fair for wild fish holding in deeper holes.

Pro guide Steve Fleming (888-624-9424) reports the John Day River is looking good for water, 400 CFS, 42 degree water, gin clear water, and probably won't change much.

Pro guide Mac Huff (800-940-3688) reports that Northeast Oregon received substantial rains last week over several days, raising water levels sufficiently to bring steelhead upstream from the Snake River.

SW Washington – With the recent flooding event, salmon fishing came to an abrupt halt at mid-week. The rain freshet should stimulate another batch of returning coho making the Cowlitz and Lewis Rivers a good late season option for large adults.

The Cowlitz is also a fair candidate for an early winter steelhead as anglers are hopeful for a repeat of another great year. Some of the larger adults return the earliest on this river system.

The Klickitat River is typically peaking for coho this time of year but dam counts don't indicate a high probability of a productive late season fishery.

Columbia River Fishing Report – Sturgeon fishers are still showing results in the Columbia River Gorge even though the fishery has been underway for several weeks now. Typically, success rates begin to fall as keepers get culled from this fishery but both boat and bank anglers are showing good results for weekend fish checks.

Last weekend, these were the results of the creel check:

Gorge Bank:

Weekly checking showed 24 legal white sturgeon kept, plus two legal, six oversize and 23 sublegal sturgeon released for 185 bank anglers.

Gorge Boats:

Weekly checking showed six legal white sturgeon kept, plus one oversize and 185 sublegal sturgeon released for 11 boats (complete trips).

Troutdale Boats:

Weekly checking showed one legal kept and 89 sublegal sturgeon released for six boats (complete trips).

Portland to Rainier Bank:

No report.

Portland to Longview Boats:

Weekend checking showed three legal white sturgeon kept, plus 97 sublegal sturgeon released for 24 boats (incomplete trips).

Smelt remains a top choice for bait but many anglers are tipping their baits with shrimp. With these creel results, it still appears that keepers are most likely to be found in the swifter flows in the upper reaches below Bonneville Dam. Faster flows typically produce more keepers this time of year while shaker action is focused closer to Multnomah Falls and Cape Horn.

Steelhead fishing in the John Day area is usually peaking this time of year and although there are fish to be caught in this region, it's becoming pretty clear that this is not a typical year for this fishery. It's odd because the Columbia saw so many returning adults this season. This fishery should be going gangbusters this week but it's not producing the catches it normally does.

Recent reports showed 33 bank anglers with 4 hatchery fish (3 wild ones released), and 25 hatchery keepers, 31 wild ones released for 80 boats in this fishery. Although those results are not bad, success rates have been significantly higher in years past.

Crabbing on the lower Columbia has been nothing short of phenomenal. The action is great and the crab have filled out nicely. Crab anywhere downstream of Hammond and the fresher the bait, the better!

The Guide's Forecast – The recent warming trend will likely keep sturgeon interested in feeding and in the gorge. A percentage of the population seems to migrate downstream when the season's first cold snap sets in. Stay in the swifter water if targeting keepers but shaker action should remain quite good downstream of Beacon Rock.

Sturgeon fishing above Bonneville typically picks up this time of year as well but no recent reports are available.

Anglers shouldn't be discouraged by sub-par steelhead results in the John Day Reservoir. The action is still worth the trip as plug trollers are taking the bulk of the fish just above the impoundment. Action in the John Day Arm itself should be fair unless water conditions change significantly. Bobber and jigs are a staple here but if flows increase, bobber and bait could be a strong alternative.

It's not the best tides for Columbia River crabbing out of Hammond but the recent rain freshet should not hamper success even though it was a good deluge. Crab out of the heavy flows until the tide begins to slack out near high and then crab in the deeper water but don't leave your pots out for a long soak as they may get sanded in on the strong exchanges.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – The water of the lower Willamette has risen, the flow has increased while the visibility has dropped below four feet. These conditions are conducive to an improved sturgeon bite although a rise in the water temperature from the low 50s would increase the odds of a hookup with a keeper. Expect to catch a number of 'shorts' in the pursuit of a larger fish.

The McKenzie River is still high and muddy on Thursday this week.

The North Santiam crested at about 10 feet on Wednesday this week but has started to fall.

The Guide's Forecast – Sturgeon fishing will continue to improve into the fall and winter months. Squid and sand shrimp have been favored baits recently which should account for some keepers. Take extra lead to hold in the stronger current this week. Debris will be a problem for a while.

The McKenzie River, flowing at over 10,000 csf at Vida as of the morning of Thursday, November 13th, was still on the rise. It probably won't fish by the weekend.

The North Santiam, high and wicked, won't fish this week.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – While there's little of interest to anglers on the Sandy or Clackamas River with coho closed and following a disappointing Chinook season, a decent winter steelhead run is being predicted this year.

Coho entered Eagle Creek in good number during the rain and it produced for a while. It may take some doing to find anything in there now, however, as the coho have moved upstream.

The Sandy was still blown as of mid-day Thursday and was still 15 feet on the Bull Run gauge.

North Coast Fishing Report – Boaters working the Wilson River on Monday finally did find some good fishing for a brief stint before the river began to rise again by Tuesday. Although a far cry from the action we've seen in years past, some boats did limit out and many boats had enough opportunities to limit out if they got all the fish that bit their lures and baits. Throughout the system, from Mills Bridge through tidewater, action was fair for fresh fish although there were a few darker fish in the mix.

The Trask, Nestucca and Kilchis Rivers also produced a few fish but effort was highest on the Wilson so naturally, so was success rates.

Stormy weather kept boats from bay fishing on Tillamook for most of the week and with the debris laden waters right now, fishing will be challenging in the near future. I would consider the bay fishery over at this point.

Sturgeon may become a viable option when the flows drop enough to be safe once again although no recent reports are available.

Obviously, the ocean has not been an option and crabbing is shot with the fresh water influx.

The Guide's Forecast – Although a good shot of fish have already made their way upstream, good action can be expected on many coastal river systems when flows drop back into shape. In order of productivity, these rivers should fish best on these days:

Friday, November 21st

Necanicum River near Seaside. CAUTION! Watch for downed trees but fresh chinook should be available from the Sitka Spruce put in to the Relief Pitcher take-out of Johnson's Gravel Pit if you have a trespass permit.

Kilchis River from Kilchis Park to Highway 101. Action should be fair for anglers backtrolling plugs or backbouncing salmon eggs and shrimp.

Saturday, November 22nd

Trask River from Cedar Creek put in to the Highway 101 take-out. The action should be fading but late season chinook are NOT out of the question on this river system. Plugs and bait should be most effective.

Sunday, November 23rd

Wilson River should be an excellent option, particularly the upper drifts from Siskeyville downstream. Look for chinook to hold in the tailouts of this river system in the higher flows but bypass the tailouts in the more clear conditions as that is where spawning fish are likely to be residing. As flows drop, target fish in the lower reaches of the system, into the tidewater area by early next week.

Nestucca River should also produce some limited results. Upper drifts (4th Bridge down) early in the river level drop and Farmer Creek to Cloverdale on the dropping flows. This is another good river system to target holding (bright) chinook in the tailouts in the higher flows only. Tadpolly's can work well under these conditions and willing steelhead will also take these as an option on a rare occasion this time of year.

As for other recreational opportunities, forget crabbing and sturgeon anglers motivated enough to test the waters may be rewarded with keepers in the west channel by early next week. Unfortunately, the best tide series will take place at night.

Central & South Coast Reports – Harvesting of mussels remains closed coast-wide due to a naturally occurring toxin, scallops are In question but clamming is safe according to the Oregon Department of Agriculture which monitors bivalve safety.

Many rivers are high and unfishable at this time and most are higher than forecasted. Look for smaller streams and rivers to drop and clear ahead of the larger ocean tribs.

The Siletz, as with many Oregon rivers and estuaries, has been a disappointment this season. If there's a push of late fall Chinook they'll be taken as the river falls into shape late this week.

Crabbing has been fair to good out of Newport. Apparently, there wasn't enough rainfall to shut it down.

Pro guide Bill Kremers (541-754-6411) reports that he is "waiting to see what the rain today will do for the river levels on the Alsea. Its a little early yet for winter steelhead, but there should be some late fall chinook and native coho showing up. My guess is that there well be more coho than chinook. The best fishing will be from Five Rivers on down."

The Alsea crested over nine feet the morning of Thursday, November 13th but is forecast to drop to fishable levels by the weekend.

The wild coho fishery is fair to good for trollers at Siltcoos Lake who are using spinners for the most part. Tahkenitch is also open but has been slower.

Crabbing has remained good at Coos Bay with limits being taken this week despite heavy rains. It remains to be seen if it holds up through the weekend but without precipitation in the forecast, there's reason for optimism.

Rain blew out the Coquille River and it is not expected to recover until some time next week.

Although coho fishing has slowed on the mainstem Umpqua, spinner flingers continue to take a few on the upper section. The South Umpqua opens on Saturday, November 15th. Summer steelhead prospects look good at the opener.

Heavy rains have put the Elk and Sixes rivers out of shape mid-week but these small tributaries will recover quickly and offer good fishing by the weekend. Prior to the blowout, anglers faced rough ocean conditions but wind, wave, weather and river will be improving into the weekend and Chinook fishers will be able to reap the rewards of a late Chinook run here. The ODFW will be conducting creel surveys from the mouth up to the hatchery on Elk Creek to determine the impact of catches on those which return to spawn. The Elk provides catches of about 4,000 fall Chinook to anglers each season.

Thanksgiving is the historic kickoff for winter steelhead on the Rogue River and the fish seem to be right on schedule. A couple of winters were taken in the lower river over the past week but there are insufficient numbers to target them in earnest yet. There's little else going on in the lower Rogue and estuary following heavy rain. Anglers on the Grants Pass stretch are seeing better numbers of adult summer steelhead and half-pounders which are falling for a variety of bait and lure. Larger steelhead hooked in this stretch are likely to be wild, however, requiring release. On the stretch of the Rogue above Gold Ray Dam, which was flies-only until recently, now allows the use of lures but not bait.

Ironically, flies remain most effective. Bait is allowed above the shady Cove Boat Ramp up to Rogue Elk where steelheading has been decent for anglers drifting small baits of high-quality, cured eggs.

Long-range offshore forecasts indicate that launching for an ocean access may be possible by Sunday. If so, boats out of Brookings will have no problem limiting on rockfish and most should score ling cod limits. While rain blew out the Chetco River this week, it is forecast to drop into decent shape by the weekend and is expected to fish well for fall Chinook. Large Kwikfish

wrapped with a sardine fillet have taken many limits when the level has been even halfway decent.

Central and Eastern Oregon – The lower Deschutes is still producing a few steelhead and is under very little pressure. Most of the fish are highly colored but the occasional bright fish is still being caught. Steelheading should stay worthwhile for the rest of the month with the action moving upriver as the fish migrate. Trout are keyed on the Blue-Winged Olive hatch but are getting very little attention with steelies still available. As of November 1st, trout fishing closed from the northern boundary of the Warm Springs Indian Reservation to Pelton Dam including all of river adjacent to the Warm Springs Reservation.

The Grande Ronde is a beautiful River surrounded by remarkable country and an abundance of wildlife. With any luck, anglers may even spot bighorn sheep on the mountainsides. Steelheading, however, has been slower than in seasons past. A report follows.

Pro guide Mac Huff (800-940-3688) writes, "So... Northeast Oregon received substantial rains last week over several days, raising water levels in the Grande Ronde River, but happily only enough to finally bring steelhead upstream from the Snake River.

"Fishing through October and the first week of November was steady, usually producing a few fish, but seldom the numbers we are used to connecting with by late October. Finally last week produced some consistent multiple-hookups-per-hole days and much better numbers of fish on the lower river. Early this week some of those numbers were turning up in the Troy area and Oregon and Washington portions of the river each produced catch rates below 10 hours per fish.

"Fly anglers can still turn up steelhead to a dry fly with a little patience. Last week we turned up several with water temperatures at 42 degrees and air temperatures of 44. Just give 'em a chance."

Pro guide Steve Fleming (888-624-9424) reports, "The John Day River is looking good for water, 400 CFS, 42 degree water, gin clear water, and probably won't change much. We went out Saturday and got our first "goose egg". Another boat was on the water and they also blanked, but got one the day before. Floated by a couple of bank fishermen and they landed two the day before, but none on Saturday. So fishing is slow, but conditions are very good and fish are all the way up and through the system to Kimberly."

Northwest Trout - While no trout planting is scheduled this week, Walling Pond and Walter Wirth Lake will be stocked with legal and larger rainbows next week. Over the winter months, broodstock planting will take place. Lakes and ponds stocked with these jumbo-sized fish will be only in the subscription version of the newsletter as the information isn't available earlier in the week nor is it listed in the ODFW stocking schedule which we use for the Oregonian report and the free, short version of TGF.

Although the water level is very low (as it always is in fall as it's drawn down in preparation for winter rainfall), trout fishing has been very good with many limits taken on Power Bait. It will close on November 23rd this year.

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report **November 12th – November 25th, 2008**

North Puget Sound

Heavy rains and high winds made fishing difficult in mid-November. Many freshwater fisheries are on hold as anglers wait for several swollen rivers to drop back into shape. Fishing effort also is down on Puget Sound as saltwater anglers wait for blustery conditions to subside.

"Fishing has been tough recently throughout the region, mostly due to the poor weather," said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. "We've seen a big drop in angler effort out there, but that will likely pick up once weather conditions become more favorable."

Once the weather does improve, Thiesfeld recommends fishing for **blackmouth salmon** - resident chinook - in marine areas 9 (Admiralty Inlet) and 10 (Seattle/Bremerton). Anglers fishing Marine Area 10 can keep one chinook as part of a two-salmon daily limit. Those fishing in Marine Area 9 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 Marine Area 9.

Thiesfeld reminds anglers that there are still a lot of shakers out in the Sound, and suggests using larger spoons and plugs to minimize the catch of those juvenile chinook. "Treat those fish with extreme care when releasing them because they are next year's crop of blackmouth," he said.

Sport **crabbing** also is an option out on the Sound. Marine areas 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca), 9 (Admiralty Inlet), 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) and 12 (Hood Canal) recently reopened for sport crabbing seven days a week through Jan. 2. Crab fishing also remains open seven days a week through Jan. 2 in marine areas 4 (Neah Bay), 5 (Sekiu), and 13 (south Puget Sound), where the fishery has continued uninterrupted since June 18.

Sport crabbing will not reopen this year in marine areas 7 (San Juan Islands), 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay), 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) or 11 (Tacoma/Vashon Island), where the summer catch reached 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 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>.

Meanwhile, freshwater anglers waiting for rivers to become fishable again might want to try casting for **trout** at Beaver Lake. About 1,800 hatchery rainbows - averaging approximately 3 to 5 pounds each - were recently released in the lake. Beaver Lake, 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. The daily bag limit is five fish, and bait anglers must keep the first five trout they catch.

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

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

Fall rainstorms temporarily stalled **chum** fishing in mid-month, but anglers can look forward to catching some winter-run **steelhead** once rivers drop back into shape. Meanwhile, the late-

season **Dungeness crab** fishery is now under way in a number of marine areas, and a **razor-clam** dig is coming up soon.

Salmon fishing on coastal rivers has been hampered by recent heavy rains, but catch rates should improve once the weather gets better, said Scott Barbour, WDFW fish biologist. "Virtually every river is out of shape right now, but on the bright side, the rain is also bringing in the fish," 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. Starting Dec. 1, wild steelhead retention rules go into effect on those rivers. Before heading out, anglers are advised to review retention rules in WDFW's 2008/2009 Fishing in Washington pamphlet (<http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

Four evening **razor clam digs** are scheduled at Copalis and Mocrocks Nov. 13-16, while Long Beach and Twin Harbors are scheduled for three evening digs Nov. 14-16. Kalaloch Beach in Olympic National Park is closed for the fall season due to a low abundance of razor clams.

Evening low tides during the dig are at 6:27 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 13 (-1.6 ft.), 7:15 p.m. Friday, Nov. 14 (-1.8), 8:04 p.m. Saturday Nov. 15 (-1.6), 8:54 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 16 (1.2).

Clam diggers are encouraged to take lights or lanterns with them due to the timing of the low tides. He also recommends checking weather and surf forecasts before heading out. Digging is restricted to the hours between noon and midnight.

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 2008 annual shellfish/seaweed license or combination fishing license is valid. Another option is a razor-clam only license available in annual or three-day only versions. Descriptions of the various licensing options are available on the WDFW website at <https://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov>. Clam diggers are not required to display their licenses on outer clothing.

Meanwhile, as the **chum** salmon season nears its peak, the big fish can be found in virtually every small stream in the area. The most popular fishing spots include the mouth of Kennedy Creek on Totten Inlet (where 68 anglers were checked with 13 fish on Nov. 8 and 9) and near the Hoodspout Hatchery on Hood Canal (where 91 shore anglers recently landed 177 chum). Anglers are reminded that the daily limit on the Hoodspout "hatchery zone" is four salmon, with a maximum of two chinook.

Although the chum fishery is producing results for anglers, the overall run size is lower than expected, said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. "We now expect to see about 350,000 chum returning to south Puget Sound, which is about half our original forecast," he said. "We'll learn more as the season progresses."

Other areas now open to chum-salmon fishing include the Dosewallips and Duckabush rivers in Jefferson County, and Minter Creek in Pierce/Kitsap counties. Thiesfeld advises anglers to check WDFW's 2008/2009 *Fishing in Washington* pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) for other stream openings and closures.

Thiesfeld also noted that November's **blackmouth** fishery off Sekiu (Marine Area 5) has been producing results for those making the trip north. "The effort's been low, but folks going out have been averaging a fish per rod," he said.

Recreational **crab** fishing got under way Nov. 1 in four 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) and 12 (Hood Canal).

Crab fishing will also remain open seven days a week through Jan. 2 in marine areas 4 (Neah Bay), 5 (Sekiu), and 13 (south Puget Sound), where the fishery has continued uninterrupted 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:

Winter-run **steelhead** are moving into Columbia River tributaries where anglers are still catching hatchery **coho**, but fishing success for both species depends a great deal on the weather. Rainstorms, followed by clear skies, have made stream conditions highly variable in recent days.

"The Kalama River has been running high and dirty, but fishing conditions could improve there and elsewhere if the rain lets up," said Joe Hymer, WDFW fish biologist. "Especially at this time of year, it really pays to check river conditions before you head out."

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
and <http://waterdata.usgs.gov/WA/nwis/current/?type=flow>.

Thanksgiving traditionally marks the start of the fishery for winter-run hatchery **steelhead**, although the season is already under way on several tributaries to the lower Columbia River. On the Grays River, fishing for hatchery steelhead opens from the mouth to the Highway 4 Bridge on Nov. 15.

But the best bets for hooking up with hatchery steelhead or **coho salmon** right now are the Lewis and Cowlitz rivers, where dams help to moderate stream flows, Hymer said. On the Lewis River, anglers have been averaging about one hatchery coho for every two rods, although about half of those fish were released because they had turned dark. Some bright winter steelhead have also been showing up in the catch. Bank anglers had the best luck fishing near the salmon hatchery.

Bank and boat anglers are also catching hatchery steelhead - some weighing in the teens - downstream from the trout hatchery on the Cowlitz River. They are also still catching some hatchery coho, although that run is clearly winding down. As of Nov. 5, more than 47,000 adult coho had returned to the hatchery, already one of the top 10 returns to that facility on record. In addition, nearly 10,300 coho jacks were counted by that date, the second-highest return since 1990.

Sea-run hatchery **cutthroat** are also keeping anglers busy fishing below the Cowlitz Trout Hatchery. More than 4,700 cutthroat had returned to the salmon and trout hatcheries through Nov. 5, and more are still on the way.

The fishery below the trout hatchery is ideal for anglers who permanently use a wheelchair, because Tacoma Power built a fishing site specially for them at the hatchery outfall. The daily trout limit is five fish per day, with a minimum length of 12 inches. Most returning fish average 14 inches, Hymer said.

Anglers are still reeling in some legal-size **sturgeon** from the Wauna power lines upstream to Bonneville Dam, but the fishery - like the water temperature - is starting to cool down. Hymer suspects the action will shift to the area around the Willamette River, where higher water temperatures are more inviting to chilled sturgeon.

In October, anglers made 16,000 fishing trips to catch Columbia River white sturgeon and took home 3,000 legal-size fish, Hymer said.

Eastern Washington:

Sprague Lake, on the Lincoln-Adams county line, continues to produce fast and fat catches of **rainbow trout**, at least for anglers willing to brave recent rain and wind. Chris Donley, WDFW district fish biologist from Spokane, said hatchery trout stocked last spring are at least 16 inches long and many are one-and-a-half pounds. Donley reminded anglers the daily catch limit is five trout.

Southwest Spokane County's Amber Lake remains open for catch-and-release-only fishing through November for **rainbow** and **cutthroat trout**.

Snake River **hatchery steelhead** fishing continues to be productive, according to anecdotal reports at this time. The latest WDFW creel surveys will be posted at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/snake/index.htm>.

North Central Washington:

Bob Jateff, WDFW district fish biologist from Omak, said the **hatchery steelhead** fishery on the upper Columbia River that opened Nov. 6 continues with a daily catch limit of two adipose-fin-clipped hatchery steelhead of at least 20 inches. The open area is from Rocky Reach Dam upstream to 400 feet below Wells Dam. Steelhead with an intact adipose fin, and those bearing an anchor floy tag, must be immediately released unharmed without being removed from the water.

Jateff explained this special fishery (not listed in the rules pamphlet) targets the abundant return of hatchery fish that exceeds the number needed to meet spawning goals. Removing hatchery-origin steelhead allows more wild steelhead onto the spawning grounds to help further wild fish recovery efforts. Jateff encourages anglers to keep the first two hatchery steelhead caught to help protect the wild population.

Night closure and selective gear rules apply. While anglers are required to use single, barbless hooks and knotless nets, motorized vessels and bait are allowed. The fishery is scheduled to remain open through March 31, 2009, but could close earlier if the allowable incidental impact to wild steelhead is reached.

Jateff also noted the Similkameen River, from its mouth to 400 feet below Enloe Dam, will open to fishing for adipose fin-clipped hatchery-origin steelhead Nov. 15 and continue until further notice. Jateff said this special fishery (also not listed in the rules pamphlet) is designed to achieve the same goal as the upper Columbia -- reduce the number of excess hatchery-origin steelhead and increase the proportion of natural-origin steelhead on the spawning grounds.

"It will improve genetic integrity and stock recruitment of upper Columbia River steelhead through perpetuation of steelhead stocks with the greatest natural-origin lineage," he said. "So again, we strongly encourage anglers to retain the first two adipose fin-clipped hatchery-origin steelhead caught. And once you've caught your two fish, you're done for the day."

Jateff reminds Similkameen steelheaders to immediately release any steelhead with an intact adipose fin without removing it from the water, and to release any steelhead with an anchor floy tag attached. Selective gear rules and night closure apply. Whitefish gear rules do not apply during steelhead season.

Fall fishing on the [Columbia Basin's Potholes Reservoir](#) , where water levels are rising, is producing **largemouth bass** from the Sand Dunes area and **walleye** for trollers. Big **rainbow trout** from earlier net pen releases also continue to be caught.

South Central Washington:

The fishery for **hatchery steelhead** in the Ringold area of the Columbia River near the Tri-Cities has been picking up this month with anglers allowed to keep any hatchery steelhead with a clipped adipose fin. Earlier in the season anglers were restricted to keeping only those with both a clipped adipose fin and a clipped right ventral fin, said Paul Hoffarth, WDFW fish biologist from Pasco.

"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."

The fishery is open through March 31, 2009 from the Highway 395 bridge at Pasco/Kennewick upstream to the wooden powerline towers at the old Hanford town site.

Reader Email -

Contributor Kapn Ken Johnson writes, "Michael, Once the rains hit last week, the Chinook that were in tidewater, and I think the ocean too, made a mad dash upriver. Now, I think it is a DONE DEAL! All the locals are saying the same thing. It has rained hard for many days and nights starting last Friday early morning (Midnight on...) and for the last several days it has rained steady. This is good for the fish, but the winds aren't co-operating for the fishermen.

Now, a week later, most of us down here think the Salmon Fishery is all but over. Some of the local guys were going to attempt to fish it last Friday, and Saturday too. Only problem was: The WIND. Now, there is no one on the river for Chinook, or Coho, at all. On my weather station last week the average steady wind speed, at just about any given hour, was averaging 12-15mph. That maybe doesn't sound like much wind, and I can "anxiously" deal with 10-15mph winds, but in addition to the "steady winds" there were gusts to 30mph+.

Trolling, mixed with that kind of wind, especially in a small river like the Nehalem, in a light boat with a TOP, does not mix! Even the sleds, with no tops, were being pushed all over the river. Now, where the heck are my Krab Pots and Sturgeon rods???"

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

Fly tying blog with photos, videos: <http://flytyer.wordpress.com/>

Sturgeon and salmon fishing tips from Fish-Works
http://fish-works.com/how_to_fish.htm

Weekly Quote – "Looking good on the stream doesn't mean a thing to the trout." - Jimmy D. Moore

GOOD LUCK!