

The Guide's Forecast - volume 10 issue number 12

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **November 21st – November 27th, 2008**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- Although sturgeon action in the gorge has slowed from previous weeks, this fishery still offers the best chance at a keeper sturgeon from the bank or boat fisheries. About 1 keeper for every 3 boats was tallied there last weekend and bank anglers are averaging about 1 keeper for every 8 rods.

Flow in the lower Willamette has started to moderate with the break in precipitation. The water temperature was 57 degrees with visibility 2.5 feet as of November 17th. The river is mostly free of debris and sturgeon fishing should be improving, especially in the Multnomah Channel.

Nothing is happening on the Clackamas and prospects aren't appealing for the coming weekend. It may be several weeks before anglers can expect any results from steelhead outings.

Thanksgiving, the traditional winter steelhead kickoff, will probably bring some hopefuls on the Sandy. There should be a few in the river now and the river has cleared.

Walling Pond and Walter Wirth Lake are scheduled to be planted with legal and larger trout this week.

Northwest – Salmon anglers got the rain freshet they have all been waiting for in last weekends flood event. District rivers dropped in shape quickly with weekend angling best on smaller streams like the Kilchis River. Ham Hamilton's party fished the lower Kilchis on Saturday, hooking 5 fish and landing 3 of them; two were chinook and incidentally lost but the group caught and released 3 wild chum salmon.

From **Jim N.** from the 14th - FYI for your subscribers on the Kilchis River. There is a log jam in the lower river before the bridge that goes across up river of the 101 takeout. The lower drift is closed until this jam is removed.

We also saw a notice from the 17th (http://www.osmb.state.or.us/OSMB/safety/navigation_hazards.shtml) but are unsure of the current state.

Targeting chum salmon is illegal after November 15th. There appears to be a good return this year.

The Wilson River hit a fishable state on November 17th although some debris occasionally fouls plugs and baits. Action was good initially but dropped off quickly as expected with this years poor return of adults. Large fish are still being caught as evidenced by a 44-pounder taken on the Wilson River on Tuesday. Chinook are well distributed throughout the river but the brightest fish will be taken in the lower drifts. Flows are expected to remain excellent in the coming week.

Confirmed catches of steelhead have now taken place on a few north coast streams including the Wilson River. As flows drop, they should become susceptible to drifted baits and backrolled Tadpolly plugs. Plug fishing can often result in any number of species this time of year, making them a good option. It's important however that anglers positively identify wild coho as they are also showing up in the catches and must be released unharmed.

Tillamook Bay itself produced a few chinook amongst the floating debris over the weekend. Trolled herring scored results for a few Ghost Hole anglers. The rain freshet could stimulate a sturgeon bite in the estuary, now that the crabs were likely drawn to the sea.

Afternoon tides are ripe for good crabbing out of Hammond this weekend. Keep your crab on ice for the Thanksgiving holiday appetizer.

Southwest – The wild coho fishery has slowed at Siltcoos Lake despite fresh fish entering. Most are trolling spinners but plugs have also accounted for a few coho which are averaging 10 pounds.

Recent rains are expected to improve sturgeon fishing in the Umpqua tidewater. Crab are being caught in Winchester Bay and jetty fishing has been fair. Upriver, with smallmouth bass and chinook fishing done, coho are picking up the seasonal slack. The better action is on the North Umpqua but as with most places this year, finding a keeper hatchery fish is a challenge although catch-and-release angling for wild coho is rewarding.

Chinook fishing has been slow for most anglers on the Elk and Sixes Rivers although the guides are getting into a few. Water conditions are low and clear but subject to rapid change on these volatile streams.

With estuary fishing wrapped up on the Rogue, the most productive stretch continues to be the Grants Pass stretch where half-pounders and adult steelhead are being caught. The first winter steelhead have entered and will soon entertain anglers here.

While offshore conditions were friendly mid-week, it will start to kick up again through the weekend, keeping Brookings boaters in port. Steelhead are showing in catches along with fall Chinook on the Chetco. Plugs and drifted bait took fish over the past weekend.

Eastern – Water on the Deschutes dropped and cleared over the weekend and it is in decent fishing condition as of mid-week. Pressure is very light this time of year and action is slowing.

Trollers are taking steelhead in the John Day Pool and lower John Day Arm. The action is not as good as it usually is for this time of year, which is surprising given the excellent return to the mainstem Columbia. Cooler fall temperatures often send fish upriver instead of taking up temporary residence in mid-Columbia tributaries.

Green Peter is fishing well for rainbows on the troll.

SW Washington – Subsiding flows have motivated steelheaders plying the waters of the Cowlitz and Lewis Rivers. The Cowlitz is the best early season bet with fish frequently taken in the teens during the early season. There have already been numerous steelhead taken.

Adult coho are still available on the Cowlitz and Lewis Rivers also but most are turning too dark for good tablefare. Fishery managers are excited about the near-record return of coho jacks, indicating a high probability for a large return next fall.

Columbia River Fishing Report – Sturgeon remains the best option in the Willamette Valley for both boat and bank anglers. A cold front may slow the bite slightly but action should remain fair for most of the week. Smelt remains the top bait but tip your baits with shrimp for the best

chance at a keeper. The Willamette should turn on soon but the faster water towards the deadline is producing the best catches.

Upriver, the John Day fishery is peaking but far from the action anglers experience in previous years. Plugs are still taking fair numbers of fish and many of the keepers are running large. If you have experience fishing here, don't expect the kind of results you have seen before but it remains a viable fishery through the month of November.

Weekend tides, especially the afternoon ones should be good for crabbers seeking to score appetizers for the holiday weekend. Place pots out of the channel downstream of Hammond near Buoys 20 and 22. The crab condition is improving and the numbers are there. It's likely there will be competition there so bring your "A" baits.

The Guide's Forecast – Just a few more weeks of sturgeon fishing before cold water turns the bite south. Inject your baits with scent but the lower you go into the gorge, the better the action but the fewer the keepers.

Steelheaders should troll deeper diving wiggle warts in search of quality steelhead in the mainstem Columbia just upstream of the John Day Dam. The more water you cover, the more fish faces you'll cross and hopefully, that will transition into bites. Try metallic plugs in sunny weather and greens or black/browns/reds in overcast skies. You want to fish the upper 13 feet of the water column.

Drop those crab pots for tasty holiday cuisine. A stiff south wind is in the forecast for Saturday so stick close to shore or time your outing accordingly for safety reasons. A good crab haul is NOT worth risking your life for!

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – The water temperature at Willamette Falls dropped below 50 degrees this week. Hopefully, rainfall will warm the river a bit. Sturgeon fishing is always better at this time of year when the water in the lower Willamette is higher than that in the Columbia as the larger sturgeon will move in to provide action in the late fall and winter months.

Far fewer summer steelhead entered the North Santiam than average this year which has kept catches quite low.

The Guide's Forecast – Herring Shrimp and squid will continue to be effective baits and the area around Kelly Point has been productive but keepers are being caught at various locations from the mouth up to and including just below the Falls. As always, keep moving to find the larger biters. Bank anglers have also been landing some keepers on the lower river.

While trout fishing is closed on the McKenzie, there may still be a few summer steelhead in the system.

Fishing is poor to slow at the North Santiam and the catch-and-release for winter steelhead won't be underway until next year as those fish run late. In addition, the river is high from recent rains and the draining of Detroit Reservoir. Even locating one of the few summers in the river is a daunting task. There are certainly better places to fish.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Since the Clackamas is closed for coho and winter steelhead yet to show, there's little of interest to anglers here. This hasn't prevented a few

from trying and while no winters have been taken yet, it won't be long. There will be a few fishers trying at Thanksgiving for sure. Eagle Creek remains open for coho but the few fish available are too dark to keep. The majority ran the length of the creek during the last deluge.

With a couple of winter steelhead already on the record from the Sandy, there will likely be a few out targeting them this coming weekend. Thanksgiving, the traditional winter steelhead kickoff, should reward a few anglers with chrome, but since these are broodstock fish, the holiday fishery won't produce large catches of steelhead. These fish return later than hatchery steelhead.

North Coast Fishing Report – For as poor a season as we have had for fall chinook on the north coast, this was the week to get after them on many coastal rivers. As I listed in last weeks edition, the Kilchis was the first to fish last week with good results coming from this system as early as Friday. Saturday, the conditions were better however and we fished the lower portion of the Kilchis getting 9 bites for a morning run. Of those 9 bites, we landed 3 chum salmon and broke off a chinook while losing another. There was a log jam that blocked access until Sunday morning but one boat rowed upstream to the logjam and found excellent fishing, having this portion of the river all to themselves. That changed quickly however and the river fished great for a handful of anglers into the early part of the week.

By Monday, the Wilson was fishing good and although catches were not consistent, some boats did pretty well in certain holes in the lower stretch. The tidewater stretch produced good catches with one boat reporting 7 take-downs, landing 3 chinook and a wild winter steelhead. **Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** reported good fishing on Wednesday with 5 chinook hooked and finally landing his 2 fish limit fishing downstream of Donaldson's on the Wilson River. Plugs have been the choice of many but experienced backbouncers are taking fair numbers of fish on shrimp and eggs as well. Although no one is likely targeting steelhead, there may be fishable numbers present by the weekend.

No reports from the Trask or Nestucca Rivers but it's likely that some fish were caught with the Trask leading the 2 as best option. Both systems get runs of later returning fish but the Nestucca seemed to be especially hard hit by the chinook downturn this season. Hopefully, and likely, the winter steelhead run should be much better.

There were still boats fishing Tillamook Bay for chinook by mid-week. One guide boat, **pro guide John Kirby (406-930-1133)** reported 3 chinook from the Ghost Hole early in the week and also landed a chum salmon on a herring. He did admit however that he didn't see many other boats catch fish. Chinook were reported each day of the early part of the week indicating more fish are destined for the Wilson and Kilchis Rivers. We may just have a few fish around into early December.

Still no reports of sturgeon anglers but the debris is starting to clear which should make sturgeon fishing a decent option when the tide series improves. Crabbing is shot with all the fresh water we have had in the recent week.

The Guide's Forecast – Water level predictions, if they hold true, indicate that the rivers should fish well at least through the weekend. The Wilson looks like it should remain at ideal stage although the "big shot" will have made its way through the system this week. The best returns are always on the heels of the first clearing of a major rain event.

Plugs and eggs will remain the best options for chinook this week on most coastal streams. The Kilchis will likely remain a bit low but still driftable, especially the lower portion. The Trask and Nestucca should also produce an occasional fish.

Anglers interested in pulling an early winter steelhead should look to the Wilson, Kilchis, Nestucca, Three Rivers, North Fork Nehalem and Necanicum Rivers for such action. Although white hot steelheading is a thing of the past on these systems, anglers working the water hard have a fair chance at a silver prize. Bait or plugs seem to work equally well for early season steelhead.

Really, the only crabbing option on north coast estuaries is Netarts Bay. It should be a fair option however.

Good sturgeon tides may produce some fair action for anglers by mid-week of next week. Low slack happens at sunset or just after so you should know the Tillamook estuary if you plan on pursuing these fish under these conditions.

Central & South Coast Reports – Rough seas this weekend will prevent anglers from accessing the ocean. When conditions have allowed, rockfishing has been very good and many anglers have scored ling cod as well. The ocean re-opens for crabbing on December 1st.

Chinook fishing has continued to be poor to dreadful on the Siletz but optimism is high for a decent winter steelhead run although no reports of such have come in as yet.

Crabbing has been rewarding in Yaquina Bay where limits of large Dungeness have been taken recently although some sorting of softshells is still required. There hasn't been enough rain to negatively effect salinity of crabbing prospects fall and winter months are usually productive.

Sturgeon fishing has shown some improvement with precipitation recently. Cold water has shut down the smallmouth bass fishery at the Umpqua River and the Chinook season is all but over here. Coho, however, are available in abundance, especially in the North Umpqua but most of these are wild fish which must be released. If sorting through unclipped silvers to find one of hatchery origin isn't appealing, wait a few weeks ... winter steelhead are on their way. The South Umpqua will open on December 1st for winter steelhead fishing. A few late-season summers are available but fishing is only fair. Rain is expected to improve action overall.

The wild coho fishery had been hot or cold recently for trollers at Siltcoos Lake. Action was pretty good on Monday this week while few fish were taken on Tuesday.

Coos Bay has been productive for crabbing with most of the Dungeness in good shape at this time of year. Some sorting is required for soft and many undersized but all agree that it's worth the trouble.

When the ocean laid down earlier this week, ling cod were biting better than rockfish off Cape Arago. Chinook are scattered on the Coquille with a few fresh fish entering recently. Results have been spotty.

Chinook fishing will be good at the mouth of the Elk River when the ocean lays down. It's been too rough to fish lately. While about a third of an inch of rain fell Thursday morning this week, it was also stormy with high winds blowing. Both the Elk and Sixes have been low but with rain this week it's expected to improve results here if the wind decreases.

While the Chinook and coho fishery in the Rogue estuary is over, plunkers on the lower river have been picking up fresh winter steelhead this week and the fishing is expected to improve weekly. Rain served to improve action in the middle Rogue for adult summer steelhead and half-

pounders which are hitting a variety of bait and lures. In the stretch from Gold Ray to Shady Cove where no bait is allowed, fishing has been fair but slowed due to cold water. Above the Shady Cove Boat Ramp bait is permissible and results are a little better.

Brookings anglers will be unable to take advantage of the stellar bottomfish action as seas will not be friendly for several days. Chinook fishing was decent over the past weekend, but dropped off along with the water level this week. Beating the odds, a fly angler landed a 50-pounder recently. If the predicted precipitation comes to pass as predicted it will be worthwhile in the weekend to come. The River started to rise in the morning on Thursday, November 20th, with the level just over 1,400 cfs. When it hits 2,000 cfs, go fishing! Back-bouncing eggs is most effective here in lower flows while wrapped Kwikfish rule when the flow tops 3,000 cfs.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Crescent Lake has been fishing well for lake and brown trout but the days of accessibility are drawing to a close.

Green Peter has been producing a mix of rainbows, landlocked and Kokanee. Use caution if launching a boat as the water is low.

Northwest Trout - Tagged hatchery steelhead are planned for be release this week in Junction City Pond. While these fish are fin-clipped, no tag is required to fish for or keep them.

Walling Pond is scheduled be stocked with 400 legal-sized trout (eight to 10 inches) and 50 jumbo trout (16 inches or better) while Walter Wirth Pond will be stocked with 1,300 legal-sized trout and 150 larger trout (12-inches).

While most valley lakes and ponds are open year around, Henry Hagg Lake is operated by Washington County Parks and Recreation which doesn't have the budget to maintain the facility every day of the year. Sunday, November 23rd, will be the last chance to fish at Hagg. It will be closed for the remainder of the year after that date, opening again next spring. It's fishing well for trout but bank access can be challenging as the water level is always very low at this time of year.

Trollers at Devil's Lake are finding fair results with rainbows. Be aware that all legal trout here are fin-clipped and wild coho which are entering now must be released.

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?2?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 -

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

Instant gratification - Oregon licensees and tags now available online (2009 available December 1st):

http://www.dfw.state.or.us/online_license_sales/index.asp

2009 Sport Fishing Regulations are online and may be viewed or downloaded:

http://www.dfw.state.or.us/fish/docs/2009_oregon_sport_fishing_regs.pdf

Weekly Quote – "I am not against golf, since I cannot but suspect it keeps armies of the unworthy from discovering trout." - Paul O'Neil

GOOD LUCK!