

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **April 3<sup>rd</sup> – April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

**Oregon Fisheries Update:**

**Willamette Valley/Metro-** Most of the area's anglers are poised to pursue Columbia River spring chinook. Although fishing dropped off dramatically last Friday and Saturday, the action should be substantially better in the coming weeks. Anglers were quick to blame a rising river as mandated upriver spill is pushing juveniles to sea while hampering angling success. Wednesday's opening day success was excellent however with dialed in anglers taking 2 to 5 hatchery springers each. The best fishing was above I-5 but see the full length version for much more detail.

With water temperatures in the high 40's at Willamette Falls, summer steelhead and spring chinook counts have been improving. Although it's still early for dependable results for springers, fair results continue to come from the Multnomah Channel and a few fish are still being taken in the Portland Harbor. Fewer than half the boats sturgeon fishing have been taking legal-sized keepers.

North Santiam steelheading has been slow. It will improve as numbers of summer fish cross the Falls.

Spotty March Brown hatches mid-day on the McKenzie have rainbows and cutthroat looking up.

Winter steelhead have been taken on the Clackamas by anglers floating jigs. Fishing will improve when the water clears.

The Sandy has remained slow over the past week.

Scheduled to be planted with trout are Canby Pond, Henry Hagg Lake, Trojan Ponds, Alton Baker Canal, Cottage Grove Reservoir, Creswell Pond, Dexter Reservoir, Foster Reservoir, Freeway Lake East, Walling Pond, and Walter Wirth Lake.

Youth fishing events will be held at Creswell Pond and Canby Pond starting at 9 AM on Saturday, April 4<sup>th</sup>. For information, visit ODFW's Web site at [www.dfw.state.or.us](http://www.dfw.state.or.us).

**Northwest –** Steelheaders have been rewarded with quality water conditions over recent days and although the action was not wide open, fishing was consistent with wild fish dominating catches one day and a hatchery presence the very next.

Most recently, the Wilson River fished fair for plug pullers on Tuesday with Buzz and Wade Ramsey taking two hatchery fish to 12-pounds on the Mills Bridge to Sollie Smith run. The river is forecasted for another rise at mid-week but could come back down to fishable stage late in the weekend.

The Trask fished only fair for natives early in the week with boaters working the river downstream of Loren's Drift did best.

The Nestucca River has been spotty but fish are well distributed throughout the river reports **pro guide Jesse Zalonis (503-392-5808)**. Summer steelhead are due to arrive in the coming weeks and ODF&W is currently planting steelhead juveniles in the river so be prepared for bait stealing smolts.

Many coastal systems close to steelhead fishing beginning April 1<sup>st</sup> so check regulations before

heading out.

Bass fishing may be an option as afternoon temperatures begin to rise and recent trout plants have large bass willing to take artificials.

The offshore forecast does not look friendly for anglers pursuing bottomfish and that's also where the best crabbing would be given the amount of freshwater north coast watersheds have experienced in recent days.

Razor clam digging was good on last weekend's minus tide series. The next series will occur beginning April 9<sup>th</sup>.

Devil's Lake is scheduled to be stocked with trout.

**Southwest** – This coming Saturday is shaping up to be the best bet for an offshore launch with the forecast indicating the seas calming and wind moderating. Target lingcod for early spring which will be on shallow reefs and rockpiles at this time of year.

Spring chinook hookups are improving on the mainstem Umpqua as the season gets underway here.

Coquille River steelheaders have continued to make decent catches but most of the fish hooked are those which have spawned out and are returning to the ocean.

Crabbing has picked up slightly in Coos Bay although this is historically a poor time of the year.

Rough ocean conditions has kept boats at bay most of the week but rock and jetty fishing has been productive for lingcod and rockfish.

Pressure was down while catches of winter steelhead were fair to good on the Elk and Sixes right up to the closure on March 31st.

The lower Rogue has picked up for spring chinook as water conditions improved. Plunkers seem to be doing best here. While early, numbers indicate a good season to come. April is historically when the springer run peaks on the Rogue. Steelheaders on the upper Rogue have experienced an improvement in action recently.

The Chetco closed to steelheading on April 1st.

Sru Lake is scheduled to be planted this week.

**Eastern – Pro guide Rick Arnold (541-480-1570)** reports slow to fair fishing for bull trout and browns at Lake Billy Chinook but five-fish kokanee limits are being taken.

The lower Deschutes has been fishing pretty well for reddsides with either Blue-Winged Olives or March Browns hatching depending on the weather. March Browns are hatching well on the middle river around Bend.

Lake Billy Chinook has continued to provide an early-season kokanee fix for anglers here although the fish are averaging only 8 to 10 inches.

**SW Washington** – Effort remains low on the Lewis River where ideal conditions produced poor results for anglers at midweek. Steelhead should be present right now but returns have been low in district streams.

The Cowlitz River is producing steelhead with an average of a steelhead for every 3 bank rods tallied at Barrier Dam over the weekend. Boat anglers did even better.

Cathlamet trollers are taking a few fish on herring and the current tide series is setting up for good plunking opportunities for bank anglers and boaters working plugs off of wing-dams. Minus tides keep fish hugging the shoreline, especially in the higher flows now being experienced on the lower Columbia.

**Columbia River Fishing Report** – Although opening days are really no gauge of how the week is going to go, the Wednesday, April 1<sup>st</sup> opener was a good one on the mainstem Columbia River near I-5. Action was consistent for anglers working the bottom with plug cut herring in the stretch from the airport to the Portco Boat landing on the Vancouver side of the river. Most boats are starting this troll just upstream from the set of large houses with private docks on the Vancouver side of the river and trolling across the shallower flats on the Washington side of the channel. I started my troll right out from the Hayden Bay Marina on Wednesday which is the lowest moorage basin on the Oregon side just above the I-5 Bridge. At first light, the water felt primed but we never saw a net all the way down to the Railroad Bridge downstream of the bridge. We had one take on a blue label herring just before going under the bridge. It didn't stick.

We then got called up to a better bite above Portco in the shallower flats and got a nice 16 pounder on the first pass. Although it wasn't what you would expect for this time of year given the run prediction, we did see consistent nets flying which was a far cry from what we witnessed last Friday and Saturday when the flows were up. Our next pass drew a blank but the pass after that we hit 2 more, back to back hatchery fish in the 12 pound range. That concluded our day as we quit by 10:30 a.m.

Although most of the guide boats and sport anglers were working the Washington side of the river, a few boats were working the Oregon side and posting results. One guide boat had 3 fish on his first pass. When it's on, it's on and if you don't have other boats to compete for the biters, you can post some real results real fast.

Regardless of where you fish, you have to have your bait ON THE BOTTOM to catch fish, especially in the outgoing tide. These fish are so close to the bottom, your leads should be dragging the bottom while your trolling. Back when I was a fish checker for ODF&W, one of the most successful anglers I checked actually had one side of his lead ball worn down so much, it looked more like a pyramid lead than a cannonball lead. These fish are bottom-huggers! Have I made my point?

I have been running a mix of blue and green label herring and since I didn't get any bites on my first 2 half-day trips, I haven't found pattern yet although it's clear that we are drawing bites on both sizes of bait. Most anglers are finding consistent success with green label herring.

Anglers in the lower river fared ok late in last week's opener but no recent reports from downriver were available at the time of this writing. One thing that anglers need to keep in mind is that last year, the first flushes of fish didn't see any competing baits or lures downstream of the powerlines near I-5 last year because it was closed down there. Now, three days per week, anglers will be working the water downstream of last years deadline so in theory, fewer biters should be available in the I-5 to Bonneville stretch. None-the-less, if the run actually does come to fruition, there should be enough action to keep everyone happy. Despite Wednesday's results, catch rates were still tracking behind last years.

It's too early to tell if the run isn't coming in as predicted or even if it does, whether we'll get additional days on the water, possibly into May. You'd think so wouldn't 'ya, but we're not the ones running the agency.

The Bonneville fishery has yet to take off but should kick in soon. Dam counts at Bonneville are tracking behind last year but in years prior to last year, the run seems to have been later and later. As of March 31<sup>st</sup>, only 160 adults had crossed the facility. Ironically, the gillnet fleet didn't take that many salmon on their last opener. They did however, snare a sailboat.....

Sturgeon fishing remains a poor option on the mainstem but anglers fishing The Dalles Pool and the John Day Pool need to prepare themselves for a quota shut-down in the coming weeks. The Dalles Pool will close to the retention of sturgeon beginning April 19<sup>th</sup> while the John Day Pool will close to retention beginning April 13<sup>th</sup>. Even though quotas are small, they typically get met in April each year.

**The Guide's Forecast** – If this run is going to come in as scheduled, this should be a good week on the lower Columbia River. That said, if the river forecast is also accurate, we're due for another release of water on the lower river which may put fish off the bite again like what we experienced last week. Also, Wednesday's catches are typically inflated since we're coming off of a 3-day closure. The first day of the opener is typically the best when we have derby fisheries like this one.

As fish theoretically migrate upstream in greater numbers, success rates should continue to rise in the Portland area and upstream to Bonneville Dam. With a relatively easy fishery above I-5, the highest concentrations of people will likely continue to be around the Portland Airport. How convenient will it be that the 42<sup>nd</sup> street boat ramp is still under repair? Didn't they get the memo?

Although that shallower water on the Washington side has been the best water to target biters in, as more fish come in, the deeper water and other areas should begin to produce more regularly. The deep water just upstream of the bridge on both sides of the river as well as the middle of the river should become more consistent. Also, the water below the I-5 Bridge was very consistent when trollers did a cross troll from the Washington side to the Oregon side and down to the railroad bridge. Hogliners working the line below the bridge on the Oregon side are taking an occasional fish but trolling is more consistent this year.

If you are only able to fish a few rods, stick to the smaller green label herring. Although blue label herring will work ok if you can't locate green label herring, it seems the fish are rather keyed in on smaller baits this time of year. Match the hatch you know. Hardware isn't working well with water temperatures hovering around 43 to 44 degrees. We'll have to wait a bit longer before spinners and wobblers will work.

And here's some advice given up by **pro guide Bill Kremers (541-754-6411)**. Bill suggests: "fish close to bottom, in some areas the fish are in twenty feet of water and forty feet in other areas, so find the depth the springers are holding in. Chartreuse dyed herring seems to be working better than plain herring. I been using flashers (mostly red) on half the rods, just enough to get their attention. Be persistent, the river is still cool and main run has not showed up yet, so be prepared to spend some time on the water. And finally move around, if one spot is slow, try another area, then maybe come back to your favorite spot later in the day."

Although likely another week away, Bonneville could become a viable option in the coming week. I wouldn't get too excited until I see the passage numbers bump up a little bit but be prepared for this fishery if it's a place you like to fish.

Don't bother sturgeon fishing in the mainstem this week. There are some fish available but until the temperatures warm up a bit, biters will be scarce. Use the freshest smelt you have or herring heads as anglers throwing the front half of their salmon baits overboard will have some fish keyed in on those appetizers.

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report** – Summer steelhead counts at Willamette Falls topped 250 as of March 28th, the latest data available, while winter counts approached 1,900. Springer counts were 15 on that date. Water temps were 48 degrees on March 30th with the visibility up to three feet. Conditions are quite similar at Multnomah Channel. Sturgeon fishing has been fair to good. The low return on the Columbia thus far has made spring Chinook fishing on the lower Willamette seem worthwhile though in actuality it has been slow to fair but is improving. Springer fishing is allowed only on Thursday through Saturdays. Sturgeon may be fished seven days a week but may be retained only on those same days.

The March Brown hatch has been occurring in fits and spurts due to the rainy weather. Fishing has been fair to good for reddsides and cutthroat despite this fact with March Brown dries effective at times and nymphs taking trout otherwise.

North Santiam flows are expected to remain around 1,500 cfs at Packsaddle for the next week or so. The river has changed over the winter, so consider taking part in the Learn the River trip on Saturday, April 4th. Just tow your driftboat to Green's Bridge at 9 AM or earlier to arrange a shuttle. Launch will be at 10 AM sharp.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Sellwood remains the 'go-to' area for springer trolling but as slow as it's been recently, it may be worth trying some different spots such as the head on Multnomah Channel, Oregon City or downstream off Kelly Point Park. Troll herring, flasher optional or a wrapped Kwifish. The water is still too cold for hardware to be effective. Get fresh smelt if you can find them for sturgeon bait although frozen can be effective. Other baits to try include squid and herring doused with the scent of your choice.

Sunny weather and a dropping water level should have the McKenzie fishing well this coming weekend. This may be the window for the March Brown hatch to finally fire up in earnest.

With the bulk of the wild winter steelhead crossing the Falls destined for the North Santiam. Catch and release fishing should be fair to good with the stretch around Stayton Bridge most productive.

### **Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports –**

While some steelhead were caught over the past weekend, the Clackamas seems to have turned off this week. It's tough to write a reports or make any predictions when no catches are being made.

Steelheading has picked up on the Sandy and, as a bonus, pressure has been light. The Dodge Park area and below the mouth of Cedar Creek remain most productive. With the water holding around 40 degrees, results will improve as the water temperature rises.

### **Trout Events**

Youngsters age 11 and older must be accompanied by an adult to take advantage on an upcoming free fly fishing classes in April and May. Participants will learn all aspects of the experience from casting to cleaning and even cooking your catch. the location is Roosevelt Middle School 680 E 24th Avenue in Portland. Classes will be on Wednesdays, 6:30-8:30 PM, April 22nd, 29th & May 6th. On Saturday, May 9, at 9:00 AM, participants will fish at a local pond. We don't usually announce events

such as these so far in advance, but registration is required in advance by phone at 682-3255 or by email at [hampson@4j.lane.edu](mailto:hampson@4j.lane.edu).

Youth trout fishing events will take place at Creswell and Canby ponds on Saturday, April 4th from 9:30 to 1 PM and on the same day at McNary Channel Ponds near Hermiston from 10 AM to 1 PM. All the ponds will be well stocked with staff and volunteer angling education instructors will be on hand to answer questions and offer assistance.

Scheduled to be planted with trout are Canby Pond, Henry Hagg Lake, Trojan Ponds, Alton Baker Canal, Cottage Grove Reservoir, Creswell Pond, Dexter Reservoir, Foster Reservoir, Freeway Lake East, Walling Pond, and Walter Wirth Lake in the Willamette Zone. Devil's Lake is scheduled to be stocked with trout in the Northwest Zone.

**North Coast Fishing Report** – Anglers still in hot pursuit of steelhead are being rewarded on the Wilson River this week. River conditions were ideal for the better part of the early week and although results varied, there was some fair action for broodstock and wild steelhead from Siskeyville downstream. Plugs seemed to be most effective for anglers even though the water height was a bit higher than most like when targeting steelhead using plugs. Sidedrifters scored some fish as well but not as many as one would think for as good as the water conditions were. I drifted the Wilson on Monday with only a single fish hooked on a plug a few bends upstream of the Sollie Smith Boat ramp. Other anglers did report better results but very few hatchery fish came on this day. It seemed to be a wild fish day.

Buzz Ramsey fished with son Wade over his spring break early in the week and they did well on a morning float taking 2 nice broodstock steelhead on plugs from Mills Bridge to Sollie Smith. They also fished the Trask River the day before after completing a mediocre Wilson float and only had a few more chances at fish.

The Nestucca fished fair as well with pro **guide Jesse Zalonis (503-392-5808)** reporting: "The Nestucca has been spotty, with fish spread throughout the entire river. With the recent rains, they have been moving each day, with a bite here, and a bite there. When you find them, gear is dependent on water color and height. The extreme, artificial only stretch of river will close in a few days, but it is a good option for bank anglers over the next few days up to closing. We have not seen, or heard of any summer steelhead yet, but we should hear of one from the lower river, or Three Rivers soon."

Few anglers were willing to bear the weather in pursuit of sturgeon despite good tides this week. I think people are finally starting to get the hint, you have to work for them this year. The tide series ends this weekend.

Razor clamming was good over the weekend and early in the week. Rough weather and the back end of the series will put clams down until mid-month.

Offshore bottomfishing has not been an option lately unless you're working the inside of the jetty with jigs or bait.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Another rise in river levels is expected on Thursday, which could put rivers in good shape by the weekend. With the April 1<sup>st</sup> closure of several district streams, fewer favorites are options but the Wilson, Nestucca and Trask River remain good options into April. We'll see effort wane on these systems as focus shifts to the Columbia for spring chinook. Summer steelhead should begin to enter the Wilson and Nestucca Rivers in modest numbers.

The Trask River will also be an option although the vast majority of fish on this system will be wild and must be released. It is however the best option for an early spring Chinook.

Spring Chinook season opened on April 1<sup>st</sup> but only a rare salmon will be caught until mid-May. Dropping rivers may actually be one of the better places to target salmon as they will likely be concentrated in deeper holes until adequate flows send them upstream for over-summering.

A fluctuating ocean forecast shows a brief window of opportunity for bottomfishers and crabbers on Saturday. It's not really a reliable forecast this far out however so don't plan on an opportunity. If one is able to get out, fishing is likely to be good and crabbing fair.

**Central & South Coast Reports** – Water levels of southwest rivers are dropping with the weekend looking promising.

Crabbing has been slow in most bays as well as in the ocean as catches continue to slow into springtime.

The mainstem Umpqua has been producing fair catches of spring Chinook but results will improve as the water warms. The first spring Chinook Crossed at Winchester Dam on March 20th and nearly 6,000 winter steelhead have been counted which is about an historical average. Steelheading has been fair to good on both the North and South Umpqua. Striper fishing is fair and improving in the estuary.

Clam diggers at Charleston took limits or near limits during the last series of minus tides. The next series of clam tides will begin Thursday, April 9th. The entire coast remains open for mussel harvest. See Random Links, below, for some preparation ideas. Crabbing in the bay is slow but still best of any estuary as are sturgeon catches.

Steelheading has slowed at this time of year on the Coquille with most of the fish in the river spawned out down-runners. The better results are coming for the South Coquille but there are better places to fish at this time.

The lower Rogue has continued to produce a few spring Chinook daily. It's too early for good numbers but most anglers consider a shot at a Rogue Chinook makes the effort worth it. Boat anglers are taking the better numbers with the ubiquitous Rogue River Rig a top producer. Most of the springers being landed are hatchery keepers. While the Grants Pass stretch has been devoid of fish life, the upper river is fair to good for winter steelhead with counts at Good Ray Dam approaching the 4,000 mark. With the river forecast to be on the drop for the weekend, steelheading should be decent for anglers using plugs or drifting bait.

Anglers are hoping a proposal by Tidewater Contractors to conduct mining operations at four locations on the Elk River is quashed as was a previous scheme to mine a southwest river. A comment period is open to the public through April 26th, during which anyone may request a public hearing in writing.

Elk and Sixes rivers are closed to fishing until May 23rd.

Bottom fishers should be able to launch out of the Port of Brookings on Saturday this week. That will be the mildest day offshore, sunny to boot and fishing for rockfish and ling cod should be excellent. The Chetco is closed to all fishing but will re-open on May 23rd. Winchuck Beach has continued to produce limits of surf perch to beach anglers.

**Central and Eastern Oregon – Pro guide Rick Arnold (541-480-1570)** reports from Lake Billy Chinook, "I was recently out at LBC for bulls the week after the Redmond Show. We didn't do very well on the bulls, only landing one 18 in. hen, before we decided to target the kokanee. By the way, the limits are now 5 per person per day. It took us about an hour and a half to fill them but we probably had almost twice that many on. The hot ticket for us was the Pro-Troll 1.5 watermelon kokanee killer pulled behind a Shasta Tackle Slingblade in nickel/blue. The kokes were small (8-9 in.) but we got enough to make a couple of meals. The magic depth was 15-30 feet off downriggers.

"A trip a week after that produced 4 bulls to around 4 LB. and one surprise brown trout.....my first caught up in the Metolius Arm. I still think the best is ahead on the bulls this spring. Look for things to probably pick up in April. Don't forget your Warm Springs Indian permit to fish the arm."

The lower Deschutes offers fair to good fishing for reddsides but it's a better experience on days when the wind isn't blowing, which has been a rare day recently. Sunny days will put down the Blue Winged Olive hatches but will bring on March Browns with the latter hatching in greater number in the coming weeks.

## **Washington fishing reports**

**From the WDF&W Weekender Report April 1-14, 2009**

### **North Puget Sound**

Anglers are starting to gear up for some upcoming fishing openers, such as halibut and trout, but they shouldn't set their salmon rods aside just yet. There's still time to get out on the water and catch some blackmouth, which could continue to provide decent fishing for anglers in the region.

"The hatchery **blackmouth** season is in the home stretch," said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. "Now is the time for anglers looking to hook a blackmouth to get out on the saltwater and take advantage of the remaining weeks in the season."

Several anglers fishing the **Anacortes Salmon Derby** recently did just that. A total of 114 fish were weighed during the derby, which took place March 28-29. Brian Darling took home the \$12,000 grand prize with his 18-pound, 62-ounce fish. Jamie Morrow's 17.86-pound salmon was good enough for a second-place finish and \$4,000, and Bill Lavelle was awarded \$2,000 for his third-place fish, which weighed in at 17.70 pounds.

Selective fisheries for hatchery blackmouth - resident chinook - continue through April 15 in marine areas 7 (San Juan Islands) and 9 (Admiralty Inlet), while fisheries in marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) and 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) run through April 30. Anglers fishing in any of those areas can keep two hatchery blackmouth as part of their two-salmon daily limit and must release wild chinook, which have an intact adipose fin.

Saltwater anglers itching for the opportunity to hook a big flatfish don't have to wait much longer. The **halibut** season gets under way April 23 in marine waters throughout the region. The fishery will be open five days a week, Thursday through Monday, with a daily limit of one halibut. There is no minimum size limit for halibut caught in any area.

Meanwhile, anglers can still cast for **steelhead** in the region. Catch-and-release fishing is open on the Skagit River from the Dalles Bridge at Concrete to the Cascade River through April 30. The Sauk River also is open from the mouth of the river to the Darrington Bridge. Anglers fishing the Sauk can still keep two hatchery steelhead through April 30, but all wild steelhead must be released.

Freshwater anglers looking to cast for **trout** will soon have numerous lakes to choose from. The lowland lakes trout season gets under way April 25, when many lakes - stocked with thousands of legal-sized trout - will open for fishing. Information on stocking schedules for rainbow, cutthroat and triploid trout is available on WDFW's website ( <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/index.htm> ).

Before heading out, anglers should check the rules and regulations for all freshwater and saltwater fisheries on WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm> .

## **South Sound/Olympic Peninsula**

This month, anglers can look forward to halibut fishing on Puget Sound, the expansion of lingcod fishing on the north coast and two proposed razor clam digs on ocean beaches. Also coming up - the April 25 opening of the statewide lowland lakes trout-fishing season.

The recreational halibut season opens April 23 in marine areas 6-11 and 13 (Port Angeles and Puget Sound). These fisheries will be open five days a week - Thursday through Monday - with a daily limit of one halibut. There is no minimum size limit for halibut caught in any area. Additional openings will follow in May on the coast and the western Strait of Juan de Fuca. For more information, check the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/halibut/> .

Anglers should note that the Hood Canal Bridge will close for six weeks starting May 1. The Washington State Department of Transportation is offering a number of transportation options to help drivers during this time. Information is available at <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/SR104HoodCanalBridgeEast/2009closure.htm>

On the coast, anglers fishing for **lingcod** have been pulling in some decent-sized fish - as long they can get out, said Erica Crust, WDFW ocean port sampler. "With March so stormy, boats have had a tough time crossing the bar at Westport. But on good days, most people are catching their two-fish daily limit," Crust said.

Other anglers, though, are waiting until April 16, when Marine Area 4 opens. "Neah Bay is historically a good fishery for lings," said Crust. "If the weather cooperates, we should see some excellent fishing there again this year."

Crust reminds anglers that recreational fishing for bottomfish or lingcod is not allowed in waters deeper than 30 fathoms in Marine Area 2 (Westport/Ocean Shores) from March 14 through June 15. However, anglers may retain sablefish and Pacific cod in these waters from May 1 through June 15. Retention of canary and yelloweye rockfish is prohibited in all areas.

The minimum size for lingcod in marine areas 1-3 is 22 inches, while the minimum size in Marine Area 4 is 24 inches. All areas are open seven days a week. Additional information about the lingcod fishery and other bottomfish is available on the WDFW Fishing Hotline (360) 902-2500 or online at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm> .

Anglers still looking for **blackmouth** are running out of time. Several areas still open to fishing will close April 10, although Marine Area 13 will remain open through April 30. Recent creel checks near Sekiu and Port Angeles showed an average of one fish for every three anglers.

Time is also running out for **steelhead** fishing on the north coast of the Olympic Peninsula. The retention fishery closes at the end of the day April 15 on the Hoh River, but will remain open through April 30 on the Quillayute River system. Anglers checked on the Calawah and Sol Duc rivers were averaging about one fish per rod over the March 28 weekend while 78 anglers on the lower Hoh caught 59 steelhead (38 wild fish released).

Meanwhile, WDFW hatchery crews are stocking 115 lakes throughout the region with nearly 700,000 legal-size trout to prepare for the April 25 lake-fishing opener. Twenty-nine area lakes and ponds are also stocking up on 1.5-pound triploids. More information and schedules are available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/>. Long's Pond, a juvenile fishing lake in Thurston County, will be planted with 1,750 catchable trout, along with 150 one-pounders in preparation for "spring break," which begins Friday, April 3 for most area schools.

Rather dig **razor clams** ? WDFW is tentatively planning two morning digs in April, provided marine toxin tests show the clams are safe to eat. Tentative dates and tides:

- Friday, April 10 (7:45 a.m., -0.7 ft.) Twin Harbors
- Saturday, April 11 (8:25 a.m., -0.7 ft.) Long Beach, Twin Harbors
- Sunday, April 12 (9:05 a.m., -0.5 ft.) Long Beach, Twin Harbors
  
- Saturday, April 25 (7:27 a.m., -1.3 ft.) Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis, Mocrocks
- Sunday, April 26 (8:10 a.m., -1.6 ft.) Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis, Mocrocks
- Monday, April 27 (8:55 a.m., -1.7 ft.) Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis, Mocrocks

April 1 marks the beginning of a new license year, so diggers must purchase an applicable 2009-10 fishing license. Anyone age 15 or older must have a license to dig razor clams. Licenses can be purchased at <https://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov> , by telephone (866) 246-9453, or in person at more than 600 license vendors throughout the state. A list of vendors is available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/lic/vendors/vendors.htm> . Updates on the razor clam season are available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/razorclm/season.htm>

## Southwest Washington

The **spring chinook** catch is continuing to pick up on the lower Columbia River, but not nearly as fast as the number of anglers on the water. An aerial survey conducted on a weekday in late March tallied 1,600 boats and 600 bank anglers on the river - up from just 600 boats and 300 bank anglers at the same time last year. So while creel census estimates showed that anglers kept 2,224 chinook salmon that week, only about one in 10 anglers took home a springer.

"The number of boats and anglers has really ramped up in the past couple of weeks," said Joe Hymer, a WDFW fish biologist. "But fishing has been like the weather - it will heat up one day, and then cool off the next. There's a lot of pent-up demand out there, and everybody's just waiting for that warm spring day of good fishing."

Hymer said he is still fairly optimistic that day will arrive soon. Nearly 300,000 upriver spring chinook are expected to return to the Columbia River this year, which would make the annual run the largest since 2001. An additional 37,000 springers also are expected to return to the Willamette River, up from 27,000 last year.

"As in recent years, spring chinook seem to be running a little late," he said. "If the run is as forecasted, we'll see catch rates improve considerably in the days ahead."

Meanwhile, anglers fishing the Cowlitz River have been reeling in lots of late-run hatchery **winter steelhead** - along with an occasional springer - from the mouth of the Toutle River upstream. At

Blue Creek, WDFW surveyed eight boat anglers with 13 steelhead, while 24 bank anglers at the barrier dam had five and had released three. The Kalama River has also been producing decent catches of hatchery steelhead.

**Walleye** fishing is also starting to pick up in The Dalles Pool, where boat anglers have been averaging a fish per rod. In the John Day Pool, the average has been a fish for every three rods.

But the spring chinook fishery on the lower Columbia River will continue to draw the most attention from anglers in the weeks ahead, Hymer said. For that fishery, he recommends sinking a flatfish or cut plug herring fairly deep - 20 to 30 feet - and resisting the urge to set the hook too quickly. "The fish are fairly lethargic in the current cold-water conditions," he said. "My advice is fish deep, and give the fish time to grab your lure or bait."

Hymer reminds Columbia River anglers that **shad** and fin-clipped **steelhead** may be retained only on days open to fishing for adipose fin-clipped chinook.

Through April 18, salmon fishing is open three days a week - Thursday through Saturday - downstream from the west power lines on Hayden Island to Buoy 10. From the power lines upstream to Bonneville Dam, the fishery is open Wednesdays through Saturdays through April 22.

Below Bonneville Dam the daily salmonid bag limit is six fin-clipped fish, no more than two adult salmon or steelhead or one of each. No more than one may be an adult chinook. Wild chinook and wild steelhead must be released.

A daily limit of one hatchery adult chinook is also in effect on the Kalama and Lewis rivers, where hatchery returns are expected to be relatively low. One hatchery adult chinook will also be the daily limit on Deep River whenever the section of the Columbia River downstream from Hayden Island is open for salmon fishing.

Since March 16, salmon fishing has also been open seven days a week from Bonneville Dam to McNary Dam, where anglers may retain two marked, hatchery-reared adult salmon or steelhead (or one of each) per day. The same daily limit is in effect for the bank-only fishery from Bonneville Dam upstream to the Tower Island power lines and on the Wind River and Drano Lake, which also opened March 16.

Hymer reminds anglers fishing - or planning to fish - for hatchery chinook salmon or steelhead on the Klickitat River that the season has been expanded by an extra day each week, starting April 1. Klickitat River anglers will be able to fish Sunday in addition to the weekly Monday, Wednesday and Saturday schedule previously announced.

A number of new statewide fishing rules go into effect May 1, including a new anti-snagging rule, which replaces the current Non-Buoyant Lure rule. This rule requires anglers to use one single-point hook unless fishing from a floating device, where two single-point hooks are allowed. Hooks must measure  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch or less (point to shank) and must be attached to or below the lure or bait. Weights may not be attached below or less than 12" above the lure or bait. This new rule applies to all gear, whether it floats or sinks, and whether or not bait is used. In most areas, the anti-snagging rule applies to all species with the exception being the mainstem Columbia River, from Bonneville Dam to McNary Dam, where it applies only to anglers fishing for salmon and steelhead.

New *Fishing in Washington* rule pamphlets will be available in printed form and on the WDFW website later this month, but for now anglers can check to see if the new anti-snagging rule applies to a specific water under WAC 232-28-619 at

[http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/rule\\_proposals/adopted\\_wac\\_revisions\\_2009-10\\_sportfish.pdf](http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/rule_proposals/adopted_wac_revisions_2009-10_sportfish.pdf).

## Eastern Washington

Year-round and March-opening **trout** lakes in the region are producing more catches as ice slowly disappears and more open water is available. Many more lakes throughout the region will open April 25, but there is no shortage of waters to fish until then, says WDFW central district fish biologist Chris Donley.

Sprague Lake, on the Lincoln-Adams county line off Interstate 90, is probably the best bet, Donley said. Boat anglers willing to brave early spring rain, wind, snow, sleet and hail are reeling in two-pound **rainbow trout**. The good fishing should continue at Sprague throughout the year with additional trout stocked periodically. More than 3,000 one-third to one-half pound rainbows from Lyons Ferry Hatchery were planted there in mid-March.

Meanwhile, Liberty Lake near the Washington-Idaho border is providing open water catches of **yellow perch** and one to two big **brown trout** per angler. The lake, which opened March 1, just received about 350 quarter-pound rainbows from the Spokane Hatchery.

Coffeepot Lake in Lincoln County is ice-free and being fished now, Donley said. Rainbows, perch and **black crappie** are the targets at Coffeepot, which is under selective gear rules and a daily catch limit of one trout of at least 18 inches.

Amber Lake in southwest Spokane County is completely open and providing good catch-and-release fishing for both rainbow and **cutthroat trout**. Amber shifts to a catch-and-keep season on the last Saturday of April, with selective gear rules and a daily catch limit of two trout of at least 14 inches.

Downs Lake, in southwest Spokane County, has had open water for some time now and respectable catches of winter-carryover rainbow trout in the 15-to-16-inch range. Downs recently received 2,500 eight to ten-inch **tiger trout** from the Columbia Basin Hatchery.

Year-round Rock Lake in Whitman County continues to provide catches of rainbow and brown trout. It was just stocked with 3,321 quarter-pound brown trout.

The Tucannon River impoundments on WDFW's Wooten Wildlife Area in Columbia County in southeast Washington have been receiving plants of "catchable" rainbows (about one-third pounders) and "jumbos" (about one-half pounders) from the Tucannon and Lyons Ferry hatcheries. Blue Lake just received 30 more jumbos and 3,800 catchables; Rainbow Lake, 3,000 catchables; Spring, 2,100 catchables and 100 jumbos; and Watson, 3,000 catchables.

Year-round West Evans Pond in Asotin County just received 150 more nearly one-pound rainbows from the Tucannon Hatchery and Orchard Pond in Columbia County recently received 30 "jumbos" and a thousand "catchables" from the Lyons Ferry Hatchery. Quarry Pond in Walla Walla County will be stocked with more catchable and jumbo trout in early April.

Anglers can check weekly hatchery trout stocking reports on WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/weekly/>. The entire trout stocking plan can be viewed at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/>.

April 24 is the deadline for registering 5 to 14-year-olds for the "Fishing Kids" event on May 2 at Clear Lake in southwest Spokane County. Cost is \$5 and includes a half-hour of fishing instruction, rod and reel, and t-shirt. Registration forms are available at WDFW's Spokane Valley office at 2315 N. Discovery Place, or printable from the Spokane County 4-H website at <http://www.spokane-county.wsu.edu/4h/index.html>.

## Northcentral Washington

The April 1 fishing season opener at more than two dozen small lakes in the Columbia Basin and a few in Okanogan County may initially be an April Fools Day event, says WDFW northcentral regional fish program manager Jeff Korth of Moses Lake.

Several of the Basin fisheries are plagued with fish species that compete with **trout**, so fishing will actually become better a little later in the spring on hatchery-stocked rainbows. And some Okanogan district fisheries are still iced up with one of the region's longest winters on record.

"This is still a good warm-up for our late April statewide fishing season," Korth said, "and it spreads the fishing pressure out a bit."

Upper and Lower Hampton lakes, on the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge north of Othello in Grant County, are the largest waters to open April 1. Lower Hampton has a primitive boat launch, and Upper Hampton has walk-in access that's not too far to carry a float tube, Korth says. Both lakes were rehabilitated in the fall of 2004, but Lower Hampton has an expanding population of sunfish. Upper Hampton has fish-eating birds, like cormorants, as part of its food chain. Lower Hampton should have two sizes of yearling rainbow trout - 12-inch fish from last spring's fingerling plant of 5,000, and 8-10-inch fish from last fall's fingerling plant of 4,500. Korth says the smaller fish will grow quickly and should make for good late spring angling. Upper Hampton has the larger fish, probably 13-14-inch yearlings and some larger carryovers, but catch rates will be lower. Upper Hampton was stocked last spring with 26,500 fingerling rainbows.

The Pillar-Widgeon string of 10 small, walk-in lakes on about a square mile of beautiful canyon land on the refuge also open April 1. Access is just southeast of Soda Lake. Also rehabilitated in 2004, these waters should provide good fishing, both from the bank and from float tubes. Korth says the best will probably be Widgeon, Sago, and Pillar. Fingerling rainbow stocking rates were: Pillar - 2,500, Gadwall - 750, Shoveler - 750, Lemna - 450, Poacher - 150, Snipe - 600, Cattail - 1,500, Sago - 300, Hourglass - 300, Widgeon - 1,650.

Also opening April 1 are Para-Juvenile, McManaman, Halfmoon, and Morgan lakes, in the lower portion of the drainage below the Hampton lakes. Korth says that due to a hatchery fish shortage, only McMannaman and Para-Juvenile were stocked for this season; McMannaman received 1,400 trout, Para-Juvenile 2,400. "Sunfish, perch, and bass currently impact trout survival," he said, "so don't expect many large carryover fish." Morgan Lake and much of Halfmoon Lake are on private land, and access is from the west end of Halfmoon Lake. Morgan Lake can only be accessed via the waters of Halfmoon Lake. Para-Juvenile is open only for anglers up to 14 years of age.

North and South Teal, Herman, and Lyle lakes, also on the refuge south of Potholes Reservoir, open April 1 and despite spiny-ray fish infiltration, some carry-over rainbow trout are caught. Korth says that's probably because fishing pressure is light. Fingerling rainbows were stocked as follows: North Teal - 6,300; South Teal - 9,000; Herman - 10,600; Lyle - 3,000.

Several warmwater species fishing waters in Adams and Grant counties also open April 1 -- Hutchinson and Shiner lakes, and Coyote, Bobcat, and Hayes creeks and ponds. Korth says these waters have very good **bass** and **bluegill** fisheries. Coyote and Bobcat creeks and ponds are small waters, which usually warm up quickly and provide some excellent early fishing. Only non-motorized boats are allowed on Hutchinson and Shiner, and Coyote and Bobcat creeks and ponds are walk-in access only. Access for both areas is off McMannaman Road.

Also opening April 1 is Dry Falls Lake in Sun Lakes State Park, just west of Coulee City in the north end of Grant County. Dry Falls is under selective gear rules with a daily catch limit of one trout. Korth says it had a strong 2008 season, and 2009 should be even better. "Expect to catch yearling

rainbows at 14 inches and about 20 percent in carryovers from 16 to 24 inches," he said. "Catch rates should average five to 10 fish per trip, and the right place at the right time could produce 20-plus fish days." Last year Dry Falls received 9,900 fingerling rainbows for this year's season. Korth also notes there are **brown** and **tiger trout** stocked most years.

Further north in the region, Spectacle Lake, southwest of Tonasket in Okanogan County, opens April 1 for rainbow trout fishing. But WDFW Okanogan district fish biologist Bob Jateff of Twisp says ice cover on Spectacle has been very thick this year, so anglers should check with local resort owners about conditions before heading out. When it does thaw out, Jateff expects good fishing at Spectacle for rainbow trout 10-12 inches, with carryover fish to 16 inches, as well as a few brown trout.

Washburn Island Pond, a diked-off oxbow of the Okanogan River near Fort Okanogan State Park, opens April 1 for **bluegill** and **largemouth** bass fishing.

Campbell and Davis lakes are rainbow trout waters in the Winthrop area that shift on April 1 from a catch-and-keep season to a catch-and-release season. Rat Lake, near Brewster, and Big and Little Green lakes near Omak, also shift on April 1 to catch-and-release fishing only. Rat has both rainbow and brown trout; the Green lakes are predominately rainbow.

Jateff reminds anglers that **steelhead** fishing closed March 31 in the Methow, Okanogan, and Similkameen rivers, along with the mainstem Columbia River from Rocky Reach to Chief Joe dams. As of April 1, the Methow River and tributaries are closed to all fishing until June 1. **Whitefish** season also ended March 31 in the Methow and Similkameen rivers.

Korth reports that several year-round or March-opening waters in the region are now open and fishing well, including Burke and Quincy lakes. Canal, Windmill, and Heart lakes all received catchable-size rainbows last fall. Corral and Blythe lakes were rehabilitated in 2007 and have excellent fisheries this year.

## **Southcentral Washington**

WDFW District Fish Biologist Paul Hoffarth reminds anglers that starting April 1 the Columbia River Ringold area **steelhead** fishery is restricted to bank fishing only. Hoffarth said the restriction is designed to reduce impacts to spring chinook salmon listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The boundary area for the bank fishery is from the WDFW marker one-quarter mile downstream of the Ringold irrigation wasteway outlet to the marker one-half mile upstream of Spring Creek. The fishery will be open through April 15. Hoffarth said last year during the April season anglers averaged one steelhead per 2.7 hours of fishing, and he expects similar success this year.

Hoffarth said on May 1 the Columbia River shoreline adjacent to the Ringold Hatchery will be open for **hatchery spring chinook salmon** fishing. Similar to the April steelhead fishery, this sport fishery will be restricted to bank fishing only to reduce impacts to ESA-listed upper Columbia River spring chinook. The boundary area for the bank fishery is from the WDFW marker one-quarter mile downstream of the Ringold irrigation wasteway outlet to the marker one-half mile upstream of Spring Creek. A night closure and two chinook daily limit will be in effect. This fishery is subject to emergency closure if ESA impacts are exceeded for the Columbia River.

Hoffarth said year-round Columbia Park Pond in Kennewick was just stocked with catchable-size **rainbow trout**. "This fishery is only for anglers under 15 years of age or persons with a disability license," he said. Hoffarth also notes the ninth annual Fishing Kids Event will take place at Columbia Park Pond on May 2. All participants must register with Kennewick Parks and Recreation at 509-585-4293 or online at <http://www.ci.kennewick.wa.us>.

Dalton Lake in Franklin County will be planted with catchable and jumbo trout in early April. Dalton Lake, Columbia Park Pond, and Powerline Lake (Franklin County) will also be stocked with large **triploid trout** in mid April.

Anglers can check weekly hatchery trout stocking reports on WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/weekly/>. The entire trout stocking plan can be viewed at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/>.

WDFW Fish Biologist Jim Cummins said most rivers and streams in the Yakima River basin are closed to fishing until the first Saturday in June to protect downstream migrating salmon and steelhead smolts. "A notable exception is the catch-and-release section of the Yakima River," he said. "Anglers often do very well this time of year in that reach of the Yakima for rainbow trout if the water flows are low. Conditions are very good right now. Check Yakima River regulations in the pamphlet for specifics."

A number of new statewide fishing rules go into effect May 1, including a new anti-snagging rule, which replaces the current Non-Buoyant Lure rule. This rule requires anglers to use one single-point hook unless fishing from a floating device, where two single-point hooks are allowed. Hooks must measure  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch or less (point to shank) and must be attached to or below the lure or bait. Weights may not be attached below or less than 12" above the lure or bait. This new rule applies to all gear, whether it floats or sinks, and whether or not bait is used. In most areas, the anti-snagging rule applies to all species with the exception being the mainstem Columbia River, from Bonneville Dam to McNary Dam, where it applies only to anglers fishing for salmon and steelhead.

New *Fishing in Washington* rule pamphlets will be available in printed form and on the WDFW website later this month, but for now anglers can check to see if the new anti-snagging rule applies to a specific water under WAC 232-28-619 at [http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/rule\\_proposals/adopted\\_wac\\_revisions\\_2009-10\\_sportfish.pdf](http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/rule_proposals/adopted_wac_revisions_2009-10_sportfish.pdf).

## TGF Inbox

Last week, **subscriber Randy** asked about "why are the Bonneville fish counts running 2-3 days behind this year?"

**Subscriber Kris T.** replied:

"I read today's post and noticed at the bottom a reader said counts were two days behind. Here are two sites that have up to date counts available. I believe they are still reviewing tapes and updating counts till April 1st and then have a live person counting.

<https://www.nwp.usace.army.mil/op/fishdata/home.asp>

[http://www.fpc.org/CurrentDaily/7day-ytd\\_adults.htm](http://www.fpc.org/CurrentDaily/7day-ytd_adults.htm)

The second link you can click on graph on the first link of hot links and see current, last year and 10 year averages.

Thanks for the news each week, they are great."

Thanks for the information Kris, what a great help!

Do you have a question, story to tell or information to share? Shoot us an Email!

Write to the TGF staff:

Bob Rees: [brees@pacifier.com](mailto:brees@pacifier.com)

Doug Rees: [doug@TheGuidesForecast.com](mailto:doug@TheGuidesForecast.com)

Michael Teague: [Michael@TheGuidesForecast.com](mailto:Michael@TheGuidesForecast.com)

### **Random Links**

Talk about feeding the fishes:

**<http://www.eternalreefs.com/>**

**GOOD LUCK!**