

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **May 15th – May 21st, 2009**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- Biologists met by phone yesterday to discuss modifications to spring fishing opportunities in order to keep impacts to Snake River salmon in check given the change in run size. The run size has been downgraded to a range of 120,000 to 150,000 salmon, prompting necessary adjustments to help ensure resource users don't go over on their respective impact percents. Fish managers are postponing the mainstem steelhead opener until sufficient salmon passage at Bonneville is realized or until mid-June when the salmon run shifts to the summer variety.

Meanwhile, reports of excellent sturgeon fishing for keepers is coming from the gorge downstream of the Marker 85 deadline. Creel checks indicate 150 keeper sturgeon were caught for 141 rods of which 88 legal sized fish were released. Although productive sturgeon fishing this time of year isn't unprecedented, the recent introduction of the Marker 85 deadline all but cut off the most productive section for keeper sturgeon this time of year. Strong flows may be pushing sturgeon out of the Bonneville area. Quality keepers were falling to smelt the last few weeks.

Daily counts at Willamette Falls fell off as the water temperature dropped. As of May 9th, over 6,000 springers had been counted but only 2,000 summer steelhead. Sturgeon fishing is fair to good below the St. Johns Bridge.

The McKenzie should see some springers soon with good numbers over the Falls but is still too high to fish well.

Both spring chinook and summer steelhead are in the Clackamas though only a few are being intercepted by anglers. It was high and off color but should fish by the weekend.

The Sandy was still off color early this week but was producing a few chrome summer steelhead and the occasional spring chinook up to Cedar Creek reports **pro guide Trevor Storlie (503-307-5601)**. Higher flows have fish looking for softer water and that's where anglers should be targeting them.

A free youth fishing event hosted by the ODFW will be held Saturday, May 16th at Alton Baker Park from 9:30 AM to 1 PM. The park canoe way will be stocked for the event and tackle and bait will be available for those who need it.

Scheduled for trout stocking are Benson Lake, Blue River above Reservoir, Blue River Reservoir, Detroit Reservoir, Freeway Lake East, Green Peter Reservoir, Hills Creek, Leaburg Lake, McKenzie River above and below Leaburg Lake, Roaring River Park Pond, Salt Creek, Sunnyside Park Pond, Timber Linn Lake, Walling Pond, Walter Wirth Lake, Waverly Lake.

Northwest – Sturgeon anglers working the lower Columbia River near Tongue Point went home disappointed as keepers were hard to find in the high cold water. Action isn't likely to pick up until late May or early June when higher concentrations of fish gather for summer feeding. Be mindful of the new measurement standard for the fishery downstream of the Wauna Powerlines.

The Wilson and Trask Rivers yielded spring chinook under ideal conditions over the weekend.

Salmon were also caught in Tillamook Bay as the run builds into mid-June. Fish in the 20-pound class are common.

Registration is still open for the 5th annual Bounty on the Bay event. Guided and non-guided opportunities are available by calling the Tillamook Estuaries Partnership at (503) 322-2222. Tides will be ripe for lower bay herring trolling with the ocean offering up some bottomfishing and crabbing options as well.

The weekend warming trend should calm a rough ocean but as we transition to spring patterns, a north wind will likely whip up wind waves by late morning or early afternoon. It's advised that anglers finish up their ocean recreation by mid-morning this time of year.

With reasonable gas prices, effort for the halibut opener should run high out of Garibaldi beginning on Thursday. Although early indicators are showing fish are averaging smaller this year, the action should be good, especially on opening weekend. Remember, other rockfish are prohibited while in pursuit of halibut in the all-depth fishery.

Howard Prairie Reservoir, Hyatt Lake, Fish Lake, Clearwater Fby, Lemolo Reservoir are scheduled to be planted with trout.

Southwest – Mild incoming tides will occur early mornings over the weekend. Clam tides will start again on Friday, May 22nd.

The first all-depth Pacific halibut fishery on the central coast is Thursday through Saturday, May 14th through 16th. Halibut fishing is open inside the 40-fathom line seven days a week.

Following recent storms, the Rogue hit 14,000 cfs on May 5th but has been dropping and clearing since. The freshet brought in fresh spring chinook and catches have dramatically improved in the lower river using a variety of baits and lures. The Rogue was flowing at about 5,300 at Agness as of May 12th. Most of the fish being caught are three-year-old hatchery salmon in the mid-'teens.

While many seven-fish limits of rockfish have been taken by boats launching out of Brookings, some anglers have returned empty handed. Those who got into fish have also made good catches of ling cod. Recreational shrimping is producing very good catches of coon shrimp. Surf perch fishing remains good in the area.

Diamond Lake has been fishing very well and may reward anglers in the coming season with even better fishing than it did last year. The ice is getting soft, however, and still a couple of weeks away from melting sufficiently to provide open water.

Cleawox Lake, Eckman Lake, Thissel Pond are scheduled to be stocked with trout.

Eastern – Anglers may now access Big Lava Lake on the south side with the north expected to open in a few weeks.

The river went to 11,500 last Tuesday (5th), but we caught Master Angler (20"+) fish on the bank using spinnerbaits. Not many, but two landed that day reports ***Mah-Hah Outfitters, pro-guide Steve Fleming, (toll free), 1-888-624-9424.***

SW Washington – The Lewis and Kalama Rivers are now closed to spring chinook fishing but summer steelhead are appearing in both systems and numbers should grow into June.

The Cowlitz is giving up spring chinook and steelhead with the best catches coming from Barrier Dam.

The Wind and Drano Lakes fisheries are in full scale with good catches coming from both fisheries. Jacks are making up a significant portion of the catch and limits in both fisheries have jumped to 6 jacks per angler as part of one's daily limit.

Columbia River Fishing Report – With sturgeon fishing the best thing going, anglers are catching on that the fishing has been really good lately. Gorge fishers from Troutdale to the Marker 85 deadline have been scoring limits of quality keepers lately. As a matter of fact, success rates are setting a new precedent for this time of year in recent years. Since the Marker 85 deadline has been in place, anglers have been figuring out how to target keepers in this stretch but this action goes way beyond learning how to fish this area. There are simply a lot of fish around. Catch rates described in the fisheries update section of this newsletter tell the story of last week. People were turning keepers loose after retaining their limit or releasing keepers in hopes of catching larger ones. It's been a great few weeks for sturgeon anglers, especially those that caught onto this bite early on.

Attention is still focused on how the spring Chinook run is progressing. Fishery managers are all but declaring this season a mis-prediction and still give the run a window of between 120,000 and 150,000 adults to cross Bonneville. We have until June 15th to achieve that goal or the sport fishery went over our impacts which could have future implications. What's really impressive however is the number of jacks passing Bonneville Dam. With still a month to go, we have a new jack record ever since records were being kept on spring Chinook jacks; that dates back to 1960. The 2010 spring Chinook return won't happen until December but this is certainly a good sign for next years fishery. All we have to do now is figure out how to predict the returning adults more accurately.

With this downsizing comes the penalty of stalling the mid-May steelhead and sockeye opener. Fishery managers decided on Wednesday to hold off on the opener below the I-5 Bridge as sport anglers are currently over our Chinook impacts as we speak. Adequate dam passage much happen or the summer Chinook counting period of June 15th must come before we can safely begin to target summer steelhead. Although people certainly start fishing for steelhead in May, June and July are better months to angle for these fish. Recreational shad fishing will open on the prescribed date.

Down in the estuary, early keeper seekers continue to come up disappointed with only a rare keeper showing in the catches. With the high cold flows we're currently experiencing, this is no surprise. A rare keeper is coming from the section upstream of Tongue Point while the below Astoria Bridge fishery is next to non-existent. This should change as the water warms.

Bottomfishers working the south jetty in calm seas and tides have fared well for seabass and some lingcod. Not many people are targeting these fish but spring action is typically great this time of year. This weekend may offer up some more opportunity for this fishery with the weak tides and ocean forecast.

The Guide's Forecast – Go sturgeon fishing. Although this action is likely to taper quickly, keepers should still be readily available for the next few weeks. It may just be that the strong flows have fish concentrating in bigger numbers well downstream of their near Bonneville haunts. This can change at any time and obviously, as keepers get culled, your chances go down. Bring smelt and do some exploring but know that there are a lot of quality fish in the gorge right now. It would be hard to believe the fishing could get any better than it was last week.

Don't even think about plunking or fishing for steelhead. This fishery will remain closed until further notice. Shad fishing opens up on May 16th but shad likely will be late as well this year since temperature drives that run. Willamette shad should show pretty soon however as that river warms more quickly than the mainstem Columbia does.

Don't expect great results if you're targeting sturgeon in the estuary. You'll have to search for them and sand shrimp is really the only bait available. Seek keepers in the shallower water where temperatures aren't quite as cold.

Watch the ocean but there should be some good opportunity for bottomfishing in the coming days. Work jigs along the outside of the south jetty. The fishing has been good. Use herring if you plan on targeting lingcod but you'll have to seek deeper water for those fish. Ocean crabbing should be fair out of Astoria.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – As of May 12th about 6,200 spring Chinook and 2,570 summer steelhead had been counted at Willamette Falls. The water temperature 53 degrees is rising, the best numbers crossed when water temp was 54 or better. Water visibility has improved to over four feet, which shouldn't effect sturgeon fishing but may improve results for steelhead in the lower river.

The North Santiam has dropped a little from its unfishable conditions last week and I predicted to continue to drop for the next couple of weeks. No spring Chinook have been counted at Foster Dam but

the salmon should show soon.

The McKenzie was flowing at nearly 5,900 cfs mid-day on Thursday, May 14th.

The ODFW will implement an unusual pilot project on a five-mile stretch of the South Yamhill River above the town of Willamina. This stretch will open to retention of hatchery trout for the first time in over 10 years. Prior to the May 23rd opener, The ODFW will stock 2,000 eight to 12 inch trout and repeat the procedure two weeks later.

The Guide's Forecast – The lower Willamette should be fair for sturgeon but anglers are advised to take a variety of bait as there was no clear preference during the last retention period. Productive areas include the stretch from Milwaukie to Oregon City, the Toyota hole and above St. Johns Bridge. A few shad have been caught in the Willamette near Oregon City but it'll be weeks before the fishing becomes worthwhile. Springers are being caught on bobber & eggs below Dexter Dam. Jigs are hooking a few summer steelhead but it's still a bit early for them. Steelheading will improve into June.

There is a mix of summer steelhead and springers in the North Santiam but fishing has remained slow. It is expected to improve as greater numbers enter the system.

Despite the waters of the McKenzie running high and swift, trout fishing has been decent with nymphs most productive.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Despite summer steelhead and a few spring Chinook in residence at the Clackamas River, fishing has remained slow.

The Sandy is in good shape now after blowing out last week. Fishing has been slow although a few anglers are catching the occasional spring, summers and winter steelhead in varied condition.

Pro guide Trevor Storlie (503-307-5601) reports, "The Sandy is a mixed bag right now. We have native Winter Steelhead, Hatchery Winter Steelhead, Summer Steelhead and Springer's in the river right now. Fishing over here is not on fire but you do not know really what you will end up with. I have got sporadic reports of Springer's being caught all the way up to Cedar creek. It is one here and there stuff but it will pick up throughout the next 2 weeks. Water conditions are perfect for fishing from the bank or boat. Weather pending. With this higher water look to the edges of the river to be holding the fish. Due to the Sand deposits on the lower stretches of the river, work the small seams in the current that is the only place these fish seem to be holding. Don't for get about the Sandy River Springer."

Here is a 19 pound hatchery steelhead caught by Jim Shepard last month side drifting the Sandy.



North Coast Fishing Report – The springers have arrived although not in any great numbers. Driftboaters were treated to a rare circumstance when they were able to drift the north coast favorites (Trask, Wilson and Nestucca, in that order) to target spring Chinook. Although success was sporadic, fish were caught in the Wilson and Trask and although not confirmed reports came from the Nestucca, it's likely a few were present.

Flows were beginning to drop but recent rains are spiking flows once again. As the season goes on, more fish are likely to show but this weekend could offer up some more good opportunities on the Wilson, Trask and Nestucca Rivers. Fish should be well scattered in the higher flows but Chinook will still congregate in the deeper slots when flows drop again.

Fish have been caught in the estuary as well. **Pro guide Russ Morrow (503-310-9733)** landed a 22-pounder last week and numbers should be building in the coming weeks. Sturgeon

effort in the bay is low as numbers are likely headed north for the summer feeding frenzy in the lower Columbia. Only a rare summer steelhead is in the catches as most anglers are targeting salmon.

Like most ports, bottomfishing is excellent when boats can get out.

The Guide's Forecast – The all-depth halibut opener began on Thursday morning. We'll have to report on success in the next edition although it 's likely to be good on this opening weekend. The halibut grounds out of Garibaldi is about 24 miles to the west of the tips of the jetty.

Tides are ripe for a lower bay herring show over the weekend. Although still a few weeks away from peak season, action should be fair with high hopes coming from anglers fishing the Bounty on the Bay event this Saturday. Call Kaylee is you want to attend this great fundraiser for the Tillamook Estuaries Partnership (www.tbnep.org).

Driftboaters have options this weekend as well. Focus efforts downstream of the hatchery on the Trask and the lower stretches of the Wilson may offer up some opportunity as well. Plugs will take fish as well as backbounced bait. You should work the tailouts in the morning, especially when flows are high. Summer steelhead should be available on the Wilson and Trask Rivers but you'll have to downsize your gear.

Mild tides and a favorable ocean forecast should bode well for bottomfishers. You still need to use caution when navigating the bar but you may want to bring your crab pots as well. Garibaldi should be a busy port this weekend.

Central & South Coast Reports – Winchester Bay sturgeon fishing has continued to hold up even as the waters clear following recent storms. Spring Chinook fishing on the mainstem has once again improved around Elkton with the water dropping and clearing. Sufficient numbers of springers have entered the North Umpqua to provide a worthwhile fishery for anglers working the river below Winchester Dam.

Despite a disappointing return this season, the deluge which fell on the southwest coast re-energized the spring Chinook fishery on the Rogue River. While catches doubled in the lower river late last week, action has started to taper off while results are improving in the Grants Pass stretch with cured eggs outfishing plugs. Fish will be on the move rather than holding in deeper holes. Springer fishing on the upper Rogue is slow to fair. Only about 1,000 springers have been counted at Gold Ray Dam as of the most recent report.

Another round of early morning forays awaits boaters launching out of Brookings this weekend with wind predicted to come up later in the day. Anglers will be rewarded with a decent nearshore ling cod fishery which has provided almost every angler trying with a least one of the toothy fish. Seven-fish limits of rockfish have been common. Beach anglers continue to enjoy fish surf perch fishing with a variety of baits and plastics filling stringers.

Recreational shrimping is new to many, as it was this writer. Brookings area sporting goods stores can provide the proper equipment and advice. Some who have put out traps overnight have filled five-gallon buckets with coon shrimp.

Water conditions are so perfect food so abundant that Diamond Lake trout increase in length an incredible two inches per month. The ice is rapidly melting and it should be possible for boats launching at the north ramp to push through the slush to find some trout.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Pro guide Steve Fleming (888-624-9424) reports, "The river went to 11,500 last Tuesday (5th), but we caught Master Angler (20"+) fish on the bank using spinnerbaits. Not many, but two landed that day. The river stayed high and dirty, so we used a Private Lake till yesterday when the river was around 7000 CFS. We boated 14 smallmouth bass for two anglers, with an 18 1/2", 19 1/2", and a 22" X 15 1/4" all on spinnerbaits. The river should be fishable all week, with the water temp around 50 degrees. It is getting cleaner, and dropping everyday. Should be some big fish caught in the next week. Work the clean water areas close to the bank, and fish slow down deep."

Wickiup fished very well over opening weekend with trolled plugs taking good numbers of large trout, many of which were over 20 inches. South Twin Lake is also fishing well for trout averaging 15 inches.

While Blue-Winged Olives remain the predominate hatch on the lower Deschutes, stone flies are just starting to hatch. Fishing for redsides is best mid-day and again in the evening. The lower Deschutes has been producing some large trout - 20 inches or better - to fly casters who find the right offering at the right time. Stonefly nymphs have been effective at times on the lower river and few stonefly adults are hatching on the middle Deschutes. Fishing on the middle river has slowed.

While it will be some time before the Deschutes starts producing any summer steelhead, anglers are catching them now on the lower Hood River.

Lave Lake has been open about a week and is reportedly fishing very well.

Odell was very slow for the opener and has remained so with the weather very cold.

Washington fishing reports:
For the period of May 13-26, 2009

North Puget Sound

Spring fisheries are under way and anglers have their pick of several fishing opportunities in the region. Halibut and lingcod seasons are open, shrimping is still an option in one marine area and hungry trout are biting at many of the region's lakes.

WDFW is adding more **trout** this month to several of those lakes, including Lone Lake in Island County; Green, Meridian, Sawyer and Shady lakes in King County; Egg and Mountain lakes in San Juan County; Pass and Vogler lakes in Skagit County; Ballinger, Goodwin, Ketchum, Loma and Panther lakes in Snohomish County; and Squalicum and Terrell lakes in Whatcom County.

"Plenty of trout remain in a lot of the lakes, and we will continue to stock some of those lakes throughout the season," said Jon Anderson, WDFW resident trout manager. "Fishing should continue to be good through spring and into summer."

Under statewide rules, anglers have a daily limit of five trout on most lakes. Released legal-sized trout, caught with bait, count toward the daily bag limit. Complete information on stocking schedules for rainbow, cutthroat and triploid trout is available on WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/index.htm>.

On Puget Sound, anglers are hooking some nice **lingcod** . Catch counts at the Armeni Ramp indicate 41 anglers caught six lingcod May 9 and 16 anglers checked five lings the following day.

Elsewhere, 48 anglers at the Washington Park ramp brought home 16 lingcod May 9, while 25 anglers checked at the Coronet Bay ramp caught 10 lings May 10. During the hook-and-line season (May 1-June 15), there's a one-fish daily limit for lings, with a minimum size of 26 inches and a maximum size of 40 inches.

Anglers also can drop a hook for other bottomfish, such as **halibut**, **rockfish**, and **cabezon**. The halibut season is open five days a week, Thursday through Monday, with a daily limit of one halibut and no minimum size limit. For rockfish, there is no minimum size, but anglers must keep the first legal rockfish caught. Anglers fishing for cabezon have a daily limit of two fish and there is no minimum size limit.

Shrimping is still an option, but only in Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands) for a limited time. The northern and central portions of Marine Area 7 will close at 9 p.m., May 15, while the southern portion of the marine area will close at 9 p.m., May 16.

Shrimp fisheries in marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay), 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner), 9 (Admiralty Inlet) and 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) are closed. More details on the shrimp fishery are available on WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/shrimpreg/>.

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

Meanwhile, **gray whales** continue to lure whalewatchers to the region. The large marine mammals have been milling about the Whidbey and Camano islands area the last several weeks during their annual journey north. Farther south, a **humpback whale** was recently seen traveling between Vashon and west Seattle.

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

Hood Canal Bridge closure: People heading to or from the northern Olympic Peninsula should note that the Hood Canal Bridge is closed through mid-June. The Washington State Department of Transportation offers a number of transportation options to help drivers during this time. Information is available at <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/sr104hoodcanalbridgeeast/>.

From saltwater to freshwater, fishing opportunities abound for anglers in the region. Halibut fishing is expanding, lingcod and shrimp fisheries are under way, and there are still plenty of rainbows, browns and cutthroat in area lakes.

With river fishing coming up soon, anglers should note that the statewide opening date has changed from June 1 to the first Saturday of the month, which falls on June 6 this year. Many popular regional streams and rivers are affected by this regulation, including the Bogachiel, Chehalis, Hoh, Sol Duc, Wishkah and Wynoochee rivers.

Meanwhile, on the saltwater, fishery managers have scheduled another day of **shrimp** fishing on Hood Canal Saturday, May 16. The four-day Hood Canal season was scheduled to be open May 2-13, on Saturdays and Wednesdays only.

"Angler participation on Hood Canal has decreased somewhat in recent years, so we're able to offer an extra day," said Mark O'Toole, WDFW fish biologist. Catch rates for the area were similar to last year, with anglers averaging about 62 prawns per pot compared to 64 in 2008. The daily limit is 80.

Shrimp fishing in Marine Area 11 (Vashon Island to the Narrows Bridge) was limited to one day - May 2. WDFW counted 478 buoys with an average catch of 47 prawns per pot. More information

on shrimp seasons and rules is available on the WDFW shellfish hotline at 1-866-880-5431, or online at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/shrimpreg>.

On the coast, **halibut** fishing got off to a good start near Ilwaco and Westport earlier this month, but has since slowed because of recent rough weather, said Wendy Beeghley, WDFW fish biologist. "Halibut anglers are looking for calmer seas before heading out and, hopefully, that will happen soon," Beeghley said.

The halibut fishery in Ilwaco (Marine Area 1) is open three days a week, Thursdays through Saturdays until 70 percent of the quota is reached, or until July 18. The fishery will then reopen on Aug. 7. Westport (Marine Area 2) is open on Sundays only until the quota is reached.

Anglers will have a new opportunity to catch halibut starting May 14, when fishing begins in La Push and Neah Bay (marine areas 3 and 4). The fishery will be open two days a week, Thursdays and Saturdays, through May 23, or until the quota is reached. If sufficient quota remains, the fishery will reopen June 4 and 6, with another scheduled June 18 depending on the quota. "These are popular areas, so the fishing should go quick," Beeghley said.

Another halibut fishery opens May 21 in Marine Area 5 along the western Strait of Juan de Fuca (Sekiu). The fishery is open five days a week, Thursdays through Mondays, and runs through July 3.

Along the eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca, anglers in the Port Angeles area (Marine Area 6) pulled in 25 of the flatfish over the May 9-10 weekend. Halibut fishing in marine areas 6-11 and 13 is open five days a week, Thursdays through Mondays, closing June 5.

And coming up, those with a competitive streak can try for a \$5,000 first prize at the 9th Annual Halibut Derby sponsored by the Port Angeles Salmon Club. The two-day derby will be held May 23-24 near the Dungeness Spit. Ticket information is available at <http://www.swainsinc.com/> or (360) 452-2357. On the fence about entering? Consider Silverdale's Ray Frederick, who pulled in an 80-inch, 224-pound barn door at the Kitsap Poggie Club's annual halibut derby earlier this month. Frederick hauled in his winning catch off Point Wilson.

All areas open to halibut fishing have a one-fish daily catch limit, no minimum size. For additional information, call the Fishing Hotline at (360) 902-2500 or check the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/halibut/>.

Lingcod, rockfish and **cabezon** fisheries in marine areas 5-13 got under way May 1 and will run through June 15. During the hook-and-line season for lings (May 1-June 15), all fish must measure at least 26 inches, but no more than 40 inches. The spearfishing season for lingcod runs May 21-June 15, with no size limits. The fishery is open seven days a week with a one-fish daily limit. For rockfish, there is no minimum size, but anglers must keep the first legal rockfish caught.

For more information on regulations and restrictions, anglers are advised to call the Fishing Hotline at (360) 902-2500 or check the 2009-10 *Fishing in Washington* pamphlet at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regsfishregs.htm>.

On the freshwater, there's still plenty of trout to catch in local lakes. With more than 6,000 triploid trout planted in 29 lakes around the region, anglers should have a good chance of catching some large fish over the next few weeks. Averaging 1.5 pounds each, these trout have the potential to grow to trophy size.

Lakes stocked with more than 300 triploids include Kitsap Lake (Kitsap County), Benson, Haven and Wooten lakes (Mason County), Ohop and Tanwax lakes (Pierce County), and Clear and Lawrence lakes (Thurston).

Weekly reports and information on WDFW trout-stocking are available online at: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/weekly/>. For tips on fishing options, by water and county, see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/prospects/index.htm>

On the Olympic Peninsula, **spring chinook** have been slow to return to the Sol Duc River, but recent rain should help bring in more fish, said Brian Russell, WDFW hatchery manager. "So far, the fishing hasn't been red-hot, but there are some nice springers in the river," Russell said. Some of these fish will also be available to anglers in the Hoh River because of their tendency to "dip in" to the lower Hoh as they migrate to the Quillayute system, Russell said. Spring chinook season opens May 16 on the Hoh, running Wednesdays through Sundays with a limit of one adult chinook per day. The Sol Duc is open daily with a limit of two adult fish per day. Anglers must release all wild chinook and coho salmon.

Southwest Washington

The mainstem Columbia River remains closed to retention of spring chinook and summer steelhead, but anglers are reeling in increasing numbers of both species on tributaries above and below Bonneville Dam. Sturgeon fishing is also improving in the lower Columbia River as fish that overwintered below the dam begin moving downriver to the coast.

"Fishing for hatchery **spring chinook** is pretty hot right now at Drano Lake and the Wind River," said Joe Hymer, a WDFW fish biologist. "I'd recommend hitting those fisheries soon, because the springers now seem to be in a hurry to get home."

Including jacks and fish released, boat anglers at Drano Lake averaged one hatchery spring chinook for every three rods (four rods for bank anglers). On Wind River, boat anglers averaged a springer for every 5.4 rods. Since May 11, anglers have been able to keep up to six jack salmon as part of their daily limit for those waters. (See recent rule changes on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>.)

Anglers fishing the Cowlitz River are also reporting decent catches of hatchery spring chinook - especially near the barrier dam - along with some early **summer steelhead**. The Kalama and Lewis rivers recently closed for retention of spring chinook, but both remain open for arriving hatchery summer steelhead. Several other rivers will open June 6 for additional hatchery spring chinook and summer run steelhead angling opportunities as noted in the Fishing in Washington rules pamphlet.

But the hatchery summer steelhead season on the mainstem Columbia River has been postponed until further notice, due to concerns about hooking mortality on upriver spring chinook salmon. That action, approved May 13 by fishery managers from Washington and Oregon, was based on an updated forecast of 120,000 to 150,000 spring chinook - about half the number originally expected to return this year.

Cindy LeFleur, WDFW Columbia River policy coordinator, said postponing the steelhead fishery was necessary to ensure passage of wild spring chinook upriver. She said June 16 is the latest date that the steelhead fishery will open.

"It's a puzzle," LeFleur said of this year's spring chinook return. "We've had very high jack counts in the past couple of years - normally a strong indication of strong adult returns the following

year. But the adults just haven't arrived in the numbers we expected. This year, the jack counts have been even higher - literally off the charts - so we're going to have to figure out what that means for next season."

Meanwhile, sturgeon fishing has picked up in the Gorge, where an aerial survey tallied 150 boats fishing May 9. The 10 anglers surveyed there had two legal-size fish and had released 12 sublegals. Four anglers fishing for sturgeon near Vancouver had no legal-size fish, but had released two sublegals. Anglers fishing the Bonneville Pool have also been catching some legal-size sturgeon.

Anglers fishing for sturgeon in all areas are advised to check the Fishing in Washington rules pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) for current seasons and regulations. New fork-length measurements now in effect statewide are explained on page 15 of the pamphlet.

Anglers looking for a place to catch steelhead might want to consider Kress Lake in Kalama. According to the Longview Daily News, a man was fishing the lake earlier this month when a 10-pound steelhead literally jumped into his boat. There's good reason to believe that account: WDFW has planted more than 100 surplus winter-run hatchery steelhead in Kress Lake since May 1. Both Kress Lake and Swofford Pond are also expected to receive weekly plants of surplus summer-run steelhead through June.

Mineral Lake in Lewis County received 3,450 catchable-size rainbow trout on May 6. Kline Pond will be closed to public fishing May 15 through 4:49 p.m. May 16 for a youth fishing event.

Eastern Washington

Snake River **spring chinook salmon** fishing is finally heating up, but the opportunity may not last long, said Glen Mendel, WDFW District Fish Biologist.

"We're seeing more chinook crossing the Lower Monumental and Little Goose dams, and with the nice weather lots of anglers are after them," Mendel said. "Catch rates for shore anglers were running 17 to 26 hours per fish, depending on where they were fishing."

Mendel said 33 hatchery marked chinook were checked and another seven had been released on May 9. "Unfortunately, the numbers of chinook crossing Bonneville Dam are not as high as we expected," Mendel said. "Anglers should keep checking WDFW's website for any possible changes in the fishery."

Sprague Lake continues to provide great **rainbow trout** fishing. Out of 34 anglers recently checked by WDFW enforcement officers, 30 nice trout were caught. Sprague anglers are reminded that only two of the daily catch limit of five trout can be over 20 inches. At the rate the rainbows are growing in Sprague Lake that might mean a relatively short day of fishing there.

North Spokane County's Eloika Lake is producing decent catches of **bass** and **crappie**. Bass anglers at southwest Spokane County's Down's Lake have also been doing well, and bass fishing success along the Snake River is increasing.

Trout-stocked lakes in the northeast district of the region are warming up and providing more and better fishing. Many in Ferry, Stevens and Pend Oreille counties are on the Colville National Forest, where camping facilities make them a good bet for Memorial Day weekend outings. Plan ahead by checking out the particulars on lakes listed in the 2009 Washington Fishing Prospects at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/prospects/>.

Traveling anglers with boats in tow are reminded to clean their vessels before launching and after retrieving them from any waters to avoid spreading aquatic nuisance species like milfoil or

zebra mussels. Mike Whorton, WDFW eastern region enforcement captain, said that once non-native species become established in a new environment where natural enemies, pests, or disease that kept them in check in their native environment are missing, they may spread rapidly and cause unanticipated negative biological and economic impacts. Whorton reports that officers throughout the region will be conducting emphasis patrols at WDFW water access sites now and through the summer to check for aquatic nuisance species, including mandatory check stations on roads leading to recreation areas and boat launches. For more information about aquatic nuisance species, see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/ans/>.

It's time to sign up for the June 13 "Fishing Kids" event at Whitman County's Gilchrist Pond near Colfax. This is one of several events across the state sponsored by WDFW, the C.A.S.T. (Catch A Special Thrill) for Kids Foundation, and several local groups designed to introduce youth 5 through 14 years of age to sport fishing. Sign-up forms are available at <http://www.castforkids.org> or call Whitman County 4-H at (509) 397-6290.

Northcentral Washington

Jeff Korth, WDFW fish program manager for the north central region, reports recent cool water temperatures have made for very good **trout** fishing in the Columbia Basin.

"Blue and Park lakes have very good catch rates with three to four 13-inch rainbow trout per angler," Korth said. "Dry Falls, Lenice, Nunnally and Beda lakes, all early-opening selective gear fisheries with one-trout daily catch limits, are all still fishing well."

Korth noted that Douglas County's Jameson Lake was "barely touched on the April 25 opener," but has close to 40,000 rainbow catchables stocked. In Chelan County, Korth reports Lake Chelan **kokanee** are "firing up" with fish running 11-12 inches this year.

Okanogan County fishing is good, especially in the Methow Valley, reports Cal Treser, WDFW enforcement officer.

"The **bluegill** are starting to bite on Leader Lake along with a few **crappie**," Treser said. "Pearrygin and Patterson lakes are good just fishing from shore, with some 12 to 14-inch rainbow trout at Pearrygin and up to 18-inchers at Patterson. Fly fishermen at Big Twin, which is a selective gear rule lake, are doing very well with chironomids, some catching and releasing 20 fish in a morning."

Korth also notes that since the April 1 opener, Spectacle Lake, southwest of Oroville, has been very good on yearling and carryover rainbow and brown trout.

WDFW's Sunland Estates access site on the Columbia River, about eight miles west of George in Grant County, is closed until further notice to assess and repair the boat launch. The launch's poor condition makes it hazardous to launch trailered boats. Anglers can access the river at several alternative sites in the area, including WDFW's Old Vantage Highway, Buckshot and Vernita access sites, Crescent Bar Recreation Area southwest of Quincy, and Wanapum Recreation Area southwest of Vantage on the Kittitas County side of the river.

It's time to sign up for the June "Fishing Kids" events in the region, at the Leavenworth Fish Hatchery on June 6 and at Moses Lake on June 13. These are two of several events across the state sponsored by WDFW, the C.A.S.T. (Catch A Special Thrill) for Kids Foundation, and several local groups, designed to introduce youths, age five through 14 years, to sport fishing. Sign-up forms are available at <http://www.castforkids.org/> or, for the June 6 event, contact Hooked on Toys In Wenatchee at (509) 663-0740, and for the June 13 event contact Moses Lake Park and Recreation Department at (509) 766-9240.

Southcentral Washington

Paul Hoffarth, WDFW district fish biologist from Pasco, reports fishing for hatchery-marked (clipped fin) **spring chinook salmon** in the Ringold area of the Columbia River has recently been better than expected, with an average catch rate of 25 hours per chinook.

"Unfortunately, angler encounters with non-clipped chinook has been higher than normal," Hoffarth said. "Through May 10, an estimated 39 hatchery adults and 18 hatchery jacks have been harvested, and 16 wild adults and 2 wild jacks have been caught and released."

Hatchery chinook fishing seasons not listed in the rules pamphlet will begin on the lower Yakima River May 13 and on the middle reach of the Yakima River May 16. The portion of the lower Yakima River opening by special rule is from the Interstate 182 bridge in Richland (river mile 4.5) to 400 feet downstream of Horn Rapids (Wanawish) Dam (river mile 18.) The portion of the middle reach of the Yakima River is from the Interstate 82 bridge at Union Gap upstream to the Burlington Northern Railroad Bridge about 500 feet downstream of Roza Dam.

The special seasons are allowed because WDFW and Yakama Nation fishery managers are predicting a return of between 10,000 and 15,900 adult spring chinook and 56 percent are predicted to be hatchery salmon, originating from the Yakima/Klickitat Fisheries Project research hatchery at Cle Elum. This more abundant hatchery component of the run is available for harvest, while all wild or natural-origin chinook are protected.

The daily limit is two hatchery-marked chinook (clipped and healed adipose fin) of at least 12 inches. Wild salmon (adipose fin intact) must be immediately released unharmed and cannot be removed from the water prior to release. Gear is restricted to one, single-point, barbless hook with a hook gap from point to shank of 3/4 inch or less. Use of bait is allowed. Fishing for steelhead remains closed. All steelhead must be immediately released unharmed and cannot be removed from the water prior to release. For all rule details, see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>.

Jim Cummins, WDFW fish biologist, notes that spring chinook throughout the Columbia River Basin are late arriving, but fish are starting to enter the Yakima River, and may peak the last couple weeks of May or early June. Fish counts at Prosser and Roza Dams can be viewed at <http://www.cbr.washington.edu/dart/>.

"Water flows frustrated anglers last year and there's the same potential this spring," Cummins said. "Temperatures in the mountains get into the high 70's and the mountain snowpack begins to melt. Best fishing flows are in the range of 600 - 1500 cfs as measured at Roza Dam. Flows higher than 2000 cfs at Roza generally make the river unfishable."

Anglers can check flows at <http://www.usbr.gov/pn/hydromet/yakima>. Cummins also notes the Yakima Greenway Path and several boat launches provide excellent access from Selah to Union Gap. Maps can be found at <http://www.yakimagreenway.org/map.html>. There is also access at Harrison Road and from the Yakima Canyon Highway above Harrison Road. Cummins says boaters should be aware that the river can be a challenge to float, particularly from the Terrace Heights Bridge down to Century Landing at Union Gap. For the lower reach of the Yakima, access maps are posted at http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/salmon/when_where_best_area-yakima.htm.

Cummins reminds anglers that many rivers and streams remain closed until June 6 to protect downstream migrating salmon and steelhead smolt and spawning trout and steelhead.

"Some of our higher elevation lakes are starting to be stocked with catchable size **rainbow trout** now that snow is melting and mountain roads are becoming accessible," Cummins said.

"Lost and Clear lakes in Yakima County are already planted." All lake trout stocking can be found at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/weekly/>.

TGF Inbox

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 Anglers - Sandy River Spey Clave 2009 this weekend:

<http://www.flyfishusa.com/spey-clave.htm>

Avoid Marten Rapids on McKenzie River:

<http://www.kval.com/news/local/43554562.html>

GOOD LUCK!