

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **October 16th – October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2009**

**Willamette Valley/Metro -** Trollers are beginning to master coho fishing near tributary mouths like the Sandy and Washougal on the Washington side and action should continue steady through the middle of November. Chinook catches have tapered in the Bonneville area and sturgeon anglers are only finding an occasional keeper. Bank anglers will likely fare best as fish congregate in the faster flows upstream of the boating deadline.

Coho counts, not updated since October 5th, indicate about 700 per day crossing at Willamette Falls as the temperature and water level drop. Water conditions will change this week with precipitation. Sturgeon fishing should improve in the lower river as the water cools.

The North Santiam has continued to frustrate anglers despite the fact the many coho over the Falls should be destined for Santiam tributaries.

The McKenzie Two-Fly Tournament on October 10th netted \$4,000 for lower river improvements. Fishing for reddsides is good on the upper river.

Anglers may retain limits of three hatchery coho on the Clackamas, Eagle Creek, Sandy River, the upper Willamette and its tributaries through the end of the year. Several limits were taken on the Sandy over the past weekend. The last day to retain chinook on the Sandy is October 31st.

Scheduled for trout planting are Mt Hood Pond, Detroit Reservoir, Walling Pond and Walter Wirth Lake.

**Northwest –** Effort has dropped off at Buoy 10 but persistent anglers found easy limits upstream of the Astoria/Megler Bridge on Saturday. By Sunday however, the bite had already slowed. The Buoy 10 fishery should dramatically slow after this weekend but a strong incoming tide should provide one last opportunity for those seeking quality coho this late in the season.

Crabbing is excellent in the lower Columbia but with an evening minus tide over the weekend, crabbers must be adamant about pulling pots shortly after high slack or lose them to the strong ebb tide.

Tillamook anglers will find challenging conditions as foul weather hits the north coast. Most anglers are coming up empty but herring trollers in the Ghost Hole are finding occasional success. Frank Ness of Lake Oswego landed a 24-pound buck on Friday but a good portion of the fish being landed are smaller 3-year old fish, weighing in around 15 pounds or less. Stronger tides over the weekend and the likelihood of a closed bar that will prevent an ocean harvest should improve bay fishing over the weekend. Tillamook Bay should be peaking this week although a low return will still limit success rates.

Ocean crabbing closes today but this fishery provided awesome opportunity for those with ocean going craft. Limits of commercial-sized legals were the norm; all a product of a regulation change instigated by a vested sportsman and a willing fish and wildlife agency.

The Nestucca remains only fair for chinook with effort dropping off from previous weeks.

Rain in the forecast is expected to raise north coast rivers only about a foot in height. It shouldn't take much rain to stimulate a run of fish upstream but rivers will remain almost too low to boat.

The lower stretches of the Trask and Nestucca Rivers should produce the best but a more significant rain is needed to really jumpstart the driftboat season.

**Southwest** – Razor clam harvest has re-opened on the coast from Yaquina Bay to the California border. The best clamming takes place north of Tillamook Head near Cannon Beach but toxicity levels remain too high for safe consumption in that area.

Coho and chinook catches have been improving in Winchester Bay and salmon are starting to move upriver.

Coquille anglers are seeing a brief flurry of action for coho and chinook just prior to high tide. Less than half of the wild coho quota has been taken. Chinook and the occasional coho are being boated by Coos trollers with the bite near high tide here as well, although wild coho may not be retained.

Chinook catches remain good in Rogue Bay and upriver to Agness. Coho numbers are increasing. The Rogue estuary fishes best inside the jaws on the outgoing tide. The long awaited removal of Savage Rapids Dam will provide new water for anglers to master as well as bolster fish populations.

The chinook run in the Chetco which is a late-starter historically, is fair and will improve in weeks to come. The river will remain closed below Highway 101 until the first week in November unless rain raises the water level. The ocean laid down over the past weekend allowing boats to take advantage of excellent rockfishing and make good catches of large ling cod.

The Elk and Sixes should start fishing for chinook with rain this week.

Scheduled trout stocking has concluded for the year in coastal zones.

**Eastern** – Catches were slow in eastside streams and river over the past weekend with the weather changing but should improve with rain this week.

Chinook are being hooked in addition to steelhead in the lower Deschutes now.

It's been chilly on the Grande Ronde with about 25% of anglers taking home steelhead. The department has increased the daily bag limit of steelhead to 5 per day as dam passage indicates a near-record run is likely to many district rivers. Check the ODF&W website before heading to your favorite destination as complex regulations are always changing to maximize conservation benefit.

**SW Washington** – Many district streams remain low, presenting challenging conditions for anglers in pursuit of late run coho. Fall rains should stimulate returning coho numbers and improve the bite. Many fish are dark but fresh fish should be arriving soon. The Lewis River is likely the best bet with the lower stretches of the Cowlitz a close second.

Coho passage at Bonneville has triggered the Klickitat coho fishery at the mouth. An occasional chinook and steelhead are also being taken. This fishery should continue to improve into November.

**Columbia River Fishing Report** – Although the coho season is clearly winding down, anglers on Saturday (10/10) did extremely well for coho in the Buoy 10 fishery. Limits were common for trollers working bait and spinners above the bridge on the Washington side. It was once again

the deep water that produced the best results on Saturday with gear right on the bottom producing the best action.

By Sunday, anglers were wondering where they all went as many thought that it would stay good for at least another day. There were a few fish taken but you had to be innovative to produce good results. Anglers that found success left the deep water and found fish in the shallows for the next few days.

Now that the weather has clearly changed, rain falling in most of NW Oregon and SW Washington should change the tune of success for estuary anglers. East wind was a problem before the weather front hit the Oregon shoreline but now with a low pressure system sitting on top of us, coupled with more water volume coming down the river systems, adult coho are likely to make a fast run to their natal streams. With most of these "B" run fish destined for Washington hatcheries, those lower Columbia tributaries should soon be laden with coho adults.

Anglers upriver continue to intercept coho near tributary mouths with plug trollers taking the bulk of the biters. The mouth of the Sandy and Washougal (Washington side) Rivers are producing the best results and judging from the fish passage at Bonneville, better action may lie ahead. Hot colored plugs in pink, red and orange seem to be producing the best results but blue and green pirates can also take biters.

Although the chinook season is still open, the quality of fish are clearly on the downturn and success rates are falling as well. Bank anglers working the Bonneville area were doing quite well on a fish per rod basis although the Monday field check showed no fish for 11 bank rods. Boat anglers are also taking fish but the action has dramatically slowed from the previous weeks.

The sturgeon re-opener may not be as good as experienced anglers have seen in the past but action is still good enough to justify a trip. Thursday's anglers seem to be faring the best. As is often the case, the initial day of a re-opener after a multi-day closure tends to be the best day to catch your target species. Creel checks last week showed: Thursday (10/8) 41 keepers for 143 bank rods and 14 keepers for 11 boats, Friday 37 keepers for 166 rods and 12 sturgeon for 26 boats, Saturday 8 sturgeon for 21 boats with no bank check. This weekly trend is likely to continue although with keepers getting culled every week, the action will likely slow into the month.

Walleye anglers are beginning to hit the river again for the fall harvest. Creel numbers indicate that Troutdale anglers are finding some consistent success with the best check coming on Sunday (10/11) with 2 boats tallying 8 walleye. This is typically a good time to take walleye before the water gets too cold. The Multnomah Channel can also be a good option this time of year.

Finally, crabbing out of Hammond is as good as one could hope for this time of year. It peaks in October and November with quality keepers coming from the Oregon side downstream of Hammond.

**The Guide's Forecast** – The Columbia should come to a sleepy halt for some of its most popular fisheries. Starting with the Buoy 10 fishery, action may be fair over the weekend as it was often the case that many coho die-hards would wait for the first good tide series in the middle of October to pursue "B" run coho. Pretty good tides will happen this weekend on the lower Columbia making for some of those good opportunities from Hammond to the Bridge on the flood tide. To boot, low tide is early in the morning making for an all morning/early afternoon opportunity in case you can't get it done right away in this fishery. This will be the last hurrah for anglers in this area but there is a good chance action could be quite impressive. The fish should

be large as well with fish reported over 20 pounds recently. Although spinners have recently hit the spotlight, green label herring should also produce good opportunities as well. Fresh anchovies are not an option but you may be able to find some frozen ones or bring a herring jig as fresh schools of bait are rumored to still be in the lower river. Just be sure to be at or above the Astoria/Megler Bridge at high tide.

Upstream, trollers should continue to hit fish at the mouths of many SW Washington tributaries as well as the mouth of the Sandy River. Hot colored plugs trolled at a medium speed and close to the river mouths should produce strikes for the next few weeks. With more "B" run fish on their way, this fishery will likely be peaking around the first of November or the last week of October. Spinners will also take fair numbers of fish either trolled or casted.

The chinook program should be on its way out in the coming week. Darker fish are dominating the catches although a rare bright one is still an option. Even though action has slowed for salmon, a combination salmon and sturgeon trip may make for some good entertainment over the weekend in the gorge.

And speaking of sturgeon, the swifter flows are the better areas to target keepers in the Bonneville area. Lots of shakers will be available throughout the gorge and Cape Horn is a consistent producer of small fish this time of year but the faster flows are holding the larger fish this time of year. An occasional oversized fish is also being hooked.

For those in the know about walleye, now is a good time to go in pursuit before water temperatures put them down for the winter. Worms worked near the bottom are the best bet with most fish responding well to the addition of a spinner along with your bait.

If you like crab, the estuary is the place to be near Astoria. The only problem with that is the weekend tide series is pretty strong, allowing for only a small window of time near high slack to take advantage of the healthy crab populations down there. There will be better weekends, both weather-wise and tide-wise so I recommend you save it for a better time. No doubt however, you will do well if you crab with quality bait at the prime time of the tide.

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – NOTE:** In an effort to cut Oregon's budget, state workers have been asked (read: are required) to take a series of unpaid days off. The first of these is Friday, October 16th, during which time most state offices will be closed. Expect this action to recur periodically through May of 2011. This action is projected to save the state of Oregon roughly \$2 million.

Water temperature has continued to dip in the lower Willamette, to 54 at the latest reading on October 14<sup>th</sup>, as the flow at the Falls has started to increase with rain this week. This should also increase turbidity and improve sturgeon prospects. Coho continue to cross the Falls in remarkable numbers although locating them in the upper river and tributaries continues to be a challenge. While the counts continue to lag a week or so behind, a conservative projection would put the to-date total well over a record-demolishing 22,000. The greatest number recorded previously was 17,900 in 1970 and that was the total for the entire season. While no coho have been released above the Falls since the late 1990s, these upriver fish are believed to be the progeny of hatchery fish, hence the generous three-coho bag limit and extension of this fishery through the end of the year.

Biologists are as stumped as anglers as to where the coho above Willamette Falls are headed. Traditional destinations include the Santiam, Yamhill and Molalla river among others but with a record number upriver, no one knows for sure their primary destination(s). In an effort to find

out, a number of coho are being radio tagged in order for biologists to track them. Anglers who catch one of these fish with a brightly-colored 'spaghetti' tag trailing from their back near the dorsal fin is requested to release it. We're as anxious as anyone to hear the results.

McKenzie flows have increased by nearly 500 cfs overnight on October 14th while boosting the temperature slightly. Steelhead are scattered and a few coho are present on the North Santiam.

Rain, precipitation anticipation and the need for more is discussed frequently of late amongst anglers and within these reports and forecasts. According to the NOAA, it's coming for better or worse. Heavy rain is predicted in northwest Oregon starting late Friday and continuing through Saturday. A total of one to three inches is forecast to fall during those periods. Coho fishers rejoice; tidewater bobber anglers show concern that this could conclude their favorite type of fishing. We're gonna wait and see.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Few have cracked the code on upper Willamette coho although a bass fisherman landed three during an Oregon Bass and Panfish tournament and bagged this limit in just 20 minutes. This might lead creative anglers to re-think where these fish are located above the Falls.

The spike in water level and flow disrupted angling on the McKenzie only briefly and as water dropped the morning of the 15th, steelheading was worthwhile. This trend would continue through the week between freshets.

There's no reason to anticipate an improvement in action on the North Santiam although rainfall could conceivably make a difference. It sure couldn't hurt his fishery any.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports** – Clackamas coho anglers may anticipate some improvement with recent rain. While there are bright fish available, most are beginning to show some color so a fresh fish infusion with precipitation this week will be welcomed. Only a small percentage of the run has returned to Eagle Creek so the bulk of the run has yet to come. Rain has not had much of an effect on Eagle Creek as yet where fishing is something south of slow.

Experienced anglers who are usually making good catches of coho at this time of year on the Sandy are only doing fair at best. Many of the fish present are darkening but with decent numbers remaining in the Columbia, it is hoped that rain this week will entice fresh, bright coho and that they'll be more willing to bite.

**North Coast Fishing Report** – Tillamook is deep on the minds of many anglers this time of year and the coastal estuaries should be brimming with fall chinook. The problem is, they are not. We knew coming into this season that it would be a down year for fall chinook coast-wide. In the fall of '04 and '05, when smolting fall chinook migrate to the ocean, the ocean was in a state of disrepair. Ocean conditions have since made a dramatic comeback but the 4-year and 5-year old broodstock that comprise the bulk of our coastal fall chinook stocks are due back now, from those poor production years.

Well, the news is, they're not coming. Not in any great number anyway. The conservation measures now put in place were put there for a reason; to continue to allow some sport and commercial opportunity while allowing adequate escapement to perpetuate future returns. What's surprising is that effort still seems to be up as anxious anglers are still in pursuit of some of the largest fish that return to Oregon's waters. It's good to still see people recreating but most are going home a bit disappointed for the effort that they are putting in.

The awesome weather certainly had something to do with the effort. The ocean was "chamber of commerce" calm over the weekend with fair chinook catches on Friday but tapering dramatically by Saturday. The last part of the outgoing tide on Friday produced a fair bite for chinook at the jaws. Some coho (mostly wild) were caught as well but it was a fair chinook bite. By the time the bar had laid down at low slack, the ocean became quite nice to fish on although the best bite had already come and gone. By Saturday, the ocean was glassy calm but there was little to no bite near low slack or in the ocean on this day. The ocean crabbing however has been nothing short of epic. Ocean crabbing is now closed however and big blue is no place you want to be either. It's upside down out there.

Most recently, fair catches were reported in the upper bay on Wednesday with only a handful of boats brave enough to take on the weather. A strong south wind blew everything off my porch but anglers working the upper bay are somewhat protected with the hillside providing some level of protection (less now that it has been logged off). There was rumor of a fair bite on Tuesday in Garibaldi with one guide reporting 2 chinook for 4 rods; both fish taken in the Ghost Hole on herring. The guide, Chris Vertopoulos, considered calling the day early except he then proceeded to catch a fish.

The fish Chris caught that day were around 15 pounds each and that too is pretty common this year. A good crop of 3-year old fish are in the creel this season, indicating that the run should rebound dramatically in the coming years. Looking at how productive the coho return is and jack counts at Bonneville, it's pretty clear that survival was way up the last few years compared to the '04 and '05 years. Those 3-year old fish coming into the bay this year typically only make up a small portion of the return and that's just not the case this year. My best day, a 5-chinook day, 3 of the 5 fish we took were under 15 pounds. Four year old fish typically run 18 to 24 pounds and 5-year old fish from 25 to 35 pounds. This years 3-year olds will be next years 4-year olds so I think you get my drift. Better times are ahead.

But make no mistake, fish can be caught this year but persistence is key. Keep the seaweed off your line and make sure you're fishing effectively during the peak part of the tide. Keep an eye on the tides with weak tides being the better choice for herring trollers on the lower end of the estuary and big tides bringing fish in to the upper reaches. More on this weekend's tide series in the next section.

Other area fisheries are going silently into the night. With little consumptive opportunity, the Nehalem remains open for hatchery coho but the bulk of the fish being taken are of wild origin. The limited wild coho season on the Nehalem system closed with great success.

The Nestucca and Salmon Rivers are still fishing fair. Anglers came out in droves expecting the recent rains to bring in the mother lode of fish. Not this year and catches remain fair on these systems but there won't be any mother lode coming this season.

Rain this week has indeed jumpstarted the river season although currently rivers remain relatively low to drift, that could change with any of the next weather systems that are forecast to hit the Oregon Coast. The Trask on Wednesday night was coming close to 6.5 foot but expected to moderate until a little later in the week. The initial rise will likely draw chinook and coho upstream, providing some fair opportunity to boaters and bank anglers. The next river rise is expected to bring the river up even more and may really jump start the river fisheries. Keep your eye on river levels and fish them on the drop. We'll need a 2 foot or better rise in the river levels to really get these fish underway.

Smaller streams like the Necanicum and Kilchis will likely remain too low to float. More water is likely on the way but river levels typically don't get consistently high enough until November. Every year is different however.

With high effort and catch in the nearshore ocean crab season, it may be a while before north coast estuaries produce fair catches of Dungeness crab again. So many quality keepers were taken from areas adjacent to the prime coastal estuaries that we may not have a productive fall season but winter is just around the corner.

Razor clam digging remains closed along the most productive areas of the north coast. Digging has re-opened south of Yaquina Bay however always check the ODF&W or ODA website before heading out.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Bigger tides could stimulate better returns this week. Couple the better tides with improved river conditions for migration and fair numbers of chinook could come to the coastal estuaries this week.

With Tillamook high on the list of best possibilities, the upper and middle bay should begin to fish well about half way into the incoming tide. We begin the transition from salmon destined for the Trask and Tillamook River to those heading for the Wilson and Kilchis. This pattern typically changes the strategy of most anglers as you'll see effort begin to drop off in the upper bay and increase from Garibaldi to Bay City. Certainly fish will continue to migrate into the upper reaches of Tillamook Bay and also into the Trask and Tillamook Rivers but overall, action should improve in the lower bay.

Herring is the bait of choice for later season action but spinners will still take fish in the upper and middle bay. The standard red/white will work well but the greens with white becoming more popular this time of year. Don't bother breaking out the metallic colors until we see the sunshine again.

It's usually about here where I post the offshore weather but the outlook is so scary, you may not believe what I cut and paste so to put it to you mildly, you won't be going into the ocean anytime soon so don't even think about it!

For driftboaters, the best conditions may hit before the weekend but the Trask and Nestucca Rivers will be the best options for chinook seekers. The Wilson may be another option but the run typically doesn't peak until later in November although I have had substantial success here this time of year, especially with the good tides beginning this week.

Sturgeon can sometimes begin to make their way into north coast estuaries this time of year. I've seen some oversized sturgeon rolling in the west channel but I think it's still a bit early for good sturgeon success on Tillamook Bay. Next month may be dramatically different however.

Bay crabbing sucks! Especially after the great catches we saw in the ocean most recently. It'll be a few months before it picks up again.

**Central & South Coast Reports** – Bottomfishing is now open at all depths for bottom fishing with only ocean conditions limiting how far boats may venture. Up to seven rockfish may be retained per day while the ling cod limit remains at two which must be 22 inches or better. Cabezon may no longer be retained by boat anglers but rock and jetty anglers may continue to keep them.

Razor clamming has re-opened from Yaquina Bay to the California border with naturally-occurring toxins returning to safe levels. Mussels may now be taken from Bastendorf Beach (Charleston area) to the California border but harvest north of that area remains closed.

With fall coming on, bay crabbing is on the upswing providing good to excellent results. Good thing, too, as today, October 15th, is the last day for ocean crabbing. The ocean will re-open for Dungeness on November 30th.

Rockfishing has been consistently yielded limits to recreational boats launching out of Newport to fish soft plastics on jig heads around Seal Rock.

The Siuslaw has been largely unproductive and it remains to be seen if rain will make any difference.

Trollers in Winchester Bay are enjoying very good action with coho although most are wild, requiring release here.

Pack crab rings or traps to supplement your daily take. Coho have moved into the mainstem and are providing action for mostly wild fish up to and above Elkton. North Umpqua summer steelhead catches remain strong. Fishing is closed in the low, clear waters of the South Umpqua.

The best bay crabbing on the coast may just be at the Coos with many limits or near limits reported by all participating. Chinook fishing is fair, best on the South Fork. Results for Chinook were good in the lower Coquille late last week but have slowed recently.

The lower Rogue, from the sand spit just inside the jaws up to Agness, is the place to be in mid-October for some of the best Chinook and coho action in Oregon but only on days when the wind isn't blowing. Salmon will move in only when the ocean lays down and high wind makes for miserable trolling conditions regardless. Chinook catches have been spotty at Agness recently but steelhead and half-pounder catches have been decent anywhere below the mouth of the Illinois. Summers are hitting well in the middle river below Gold Ray Dam with plugs and spinners taking fish. With Chinook just starting to spawn here and there, steelhead are just beginning to show a preference for eggs and imitators. The Rogue remains open for Chinook retention only below the Hog Creek Boat Ramp. Water in the upper Rogue is cold which has slowed steelhead metabolism and stalled catches although the far upper river has been fair to good for large trout.

Matt Kramer of the Medford Mail Tribune was the first to take his driftboat through the passage opened by the removal of Savage Rapids Dam on Friday. He made the trip unscathed but those who followed were not so fortunate. See Random Links, below, for details.

Chinook fishing has continued to improve in Chetco tidewater with best results coming at the beginning of an outgoing tide. Coho have started to enter and hatchery fish only may be retained and such fish are rare here. While the ling cod bite slowed offshore at this time of year, anglers launching out of Brookings when ocean conditions allow will find rockfish limits remain pretty much a slam dunk and action starts just outside the bay entrance. When seas are marginal as forecast indicate for the coming weekend, boats launch at first light, fish like mad then duck back into port before wind and waves come up. Use caution but it's a smart game plan. Lings are moving closer to shore in preparation for spawning and will provide action for rock and jetty fishers whenever the surf lays down.

More rain is needed to get the Elk and Sixes fall Chinook fishery underway. Weather forecasts predict precipitation off and on for the week to come so hope fir the best.

**Central and Eastern Oregon – ODFW sez:** "Beginning on Sunday, Oct. 18, the bag limit for adipose fin-clipped steelhead will increase from three to five fish per day and will remain in effect through April 15, 2010 in the following areas:

"Grande Ronde River from the Oregon/Washington state line to the mouth of the Wallowa River;

"Wallowa River from the mouth to Trout Creek;

"Imnaha River from the mouth to Big Sheep Creek.

"In the Snake River from the Oregon/Washington state line to the angling deadline below Hell's Canyon Dam, the bag limit will be five adipose fin-clipped steelhead of which no more than three may be 32 inches total length or greater.

"The states of Idaho and Washington have implemented similar regulations in the Snake River and tributaries."

Wow. Five steelhead per day. Good luck out there and prepare to fire up the smoker!

Over 540,000 steelhead have crossed John Day Dam, about 380,000 have been counted at McNary and nearly 300,000 are past Ice Harbor. It looks like it'll be a killer year on the Grande Ronde.

Green Peter is continuing to produce decent catches of kokanee although some are showing color and loose scales indicative of the upcoming spawn.

Steelhead catches on the Deschutes slowed with when water started rising but has been steadily improving since The first snow of he year fell in Maupin this week but it didn't last long on the ground and it seemed to turn on the steelhead bite. Fish are getting hooked daily at Sherars Falls and some days recently have been very good.

### **Washington fishing reports:**

***From the WDF&W Weekender Report October 14<sup>th</sup> - October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2009***

#### **North Puget Sound**

Anglers fishing the region's rivers and streams are still reeling in some coho salmon, while saltwater anglers have turned their attention to blackmouth and chum salmon. "We're now transitioning to blackmouth and chum in the marine areas," said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. "It's been a slow transition so far, but it could pick up as more chum move into the region and opportunities to hook blackmouth increase."

Anglers fishing for **blackmouth** - resident chinook - in Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands) can keep one chinook as part of a two-salmon daily limit, but must release wild coho. Those fishing in Marine Area 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) also have a two-salmon daily limit, but must release wild chinook.

Anglers fishing for **chum salmon** may want to try waters around Point No Point (north end of the Kitsap Peninsula) and Possession Bar (southern portion of Whidbey Island). Those two areas are often hot spots for chum salmon, Thiesfeld said. Anglers fishing those areas, or other waters of Marine Area 9 (Admiralty Inlet), have a daily limit of two salmon but must release chinook.

"When fishing for chum salmon, anglers should try trolling slow and using a flasher with a green coyote spoon, or a green, purple or pink mini hoochie," Thiesfeld said.

Thiesfeld reminds anglers that only portions of marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) and 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) are open for salmon fishing. Salmon fishing in Marine Area 8-1 is restricted to the Oak Harbor area, west of a line from Forbes Point to Blowers Bluff. Anglers fishing Oak Harbor have a daily limit of two coho only.

In Marine Area 8-2, salmon fishing is limited to the south end of the area, south of a line from Randall Point to the south end of the Everett Naval Station dock. Anglers in that area have a two salmon daily limit, but must release chinook.

In the freshwater, there have been reports of anglers catching a few **coho** in the Skykomish and Snohomish rivers. Anglers fishing those two rivers have a daily limit of two salmon, plus two additional pink salmon, but must release chinook.

Elsewhere, Lake Sammamish is open for salmon fishing, with a daily limit of four salmon, up to two chinook may be retained. All sockeye must be released, and fishing is closed within 100 yards of the mouth of Issaquah Creek.

Lake Washington also is open for salmon. Anglers are allowed four coho per day (minimum size 12 inches) from waters north of the Highway 520 Bridge and east of the Montlake Bridge.

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

## **South Sound/Olympic Peninsula**

As area salmon fisheries make the transition from coho to blackmouth and chum, thousands of Washingtonians are preparing for the first **razor clam dig** of the fall season. Evening razor clam digs are scheduled at Twin Harbors (Oct. 16-19); Long Beach and Copalis (Oct. 16, 17 and 18); and Mocrocks and Kalaloch Beach (Oct. 17 and 18).

Digging at all beaches is restricted to the hours between noon and midnight. The best time to start is an hour or two before low tides, said Dan Ayres, WDFW coastal shellfish manager. He also recommends that diggers take lights or lanterns with them.

Because the digs are scheduled on variable days, Ayres reminds people to check the dates to make sure the beach they choose is open for digging. A map showing the locations of razor clam beaches is available at [http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/razorclm/graphics/map\\_beaches.jpg](http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/razorclm/graphics/map_beaches.jpg).

Harvesters may take no more than 15 razor clams and must keep the first 15 they dig, regardless of size or condition. Each digger's clams must be kept in a separate container.

A license is required for anyone age 15 or older. Any 2009 annual shellfish/seaweed license or combination fishing license is valid. Another option is a razor-clam only license available in annual or three-day only versions. Descriptions of the various options are available on the WDFW website at [fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov](http://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov).

Opening dates and evening low tides in October are:

- Friday, Oct. 16 ( 5:50 p.m. -0.5 ft.) Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis
- Saturday, Oct. 17 (6:38 p.m. -0.8 ft.) Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis, Mocrocks, Kalaloch
- Sunday, Oct. 18 (7:23 p.m. -1.1ft.) Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis, Mocrocks, Kalaloch

- Monday, Oct. 19 (8:06 p.m. -1.1 ft.) Twin Harbors

More digs are tentatively scheduled Nov. 4-7, Nov. 14-17, Dec. 2-5, Dec. 31-Jan.3.

Meanwhile, anglers looking for salmon fishing opportunities have a few options as the **coho** season shifts to chum and blackmouth in Puget Sound. "The fishing's been pretty good out of Port Angeles where folks still have some time to catch **blackmouth** and **coho** ," said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. A creel check conducted at the Freshwater Bay Ramp during the Oct. 10-11 weekend showed 18 anglers with seven chinook and six coho. The non-selective fishery runs through Oct. 15 in Marine Area 5 (Sekiu), while Marine Area 6 (Port Angeles) closes Oct. 31. Anglers are reminded that only coho may be retained in Dungeness Bay. In non-selective fisheries, anglers may retain fish whether or not they have a clipped adipose fin.

The daily limit in both marine areas is two salmon of any species, but only one fish may be a chinook.

Farther south, anglers are finding coho in the Skokomish River in Mason County, which has been a good producer in the past few years, Thiesfeld said. Anglers may keep up to four adult salmon as part of a six-fish daily limit, but must release chum salmon through Oct. 15. No chinook retention is allowed.

Other fishing opportunities coming up in Puget Sound include **chum** and **blackmouth** retention in Hood Canal (Marine Area 12) beginning Oct. 16.

Anglers fishing in marine areas 11 and 13 (Vashon Island to South Puget Sound) may retain **wild chinook** as part of their two-fish daily limit, but will be restricted to one chinook starting Nov. 1. All **wild coho** caught in Marine Area 13 must be released through Oct. 31.

On the freshwater, anglers are reminded that starting Oct. 16 only hatchery coho and jack chinook may be retained on a number of area rivers, including the Chehalis, Elk, Johns, Satsop and Wishkah rivers in Grays Harbor County and the Skookumchuck River in Thurston County. The Dungeness River in Clallam County opens to salmon fishing Oct. 16 with a daily limit of four coho only.

Anglers fishing in the Quillayute system - which includes the Bogachiel, Sol Duc, Calawah and Dickey rivers - can keep two adult salmon, plus two additional **adult hatchery coho** as part of the six-fish daily limit. No wild coho may be retained.

Because retention rules and fishing regulations vary on the many rivers and streams throughout the region, anglers are advised to check the 2009-2010 *Fishing in Washington* rules pamphlet at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm> before heading out.

For a change of pace, anglers may want to venture out some evening and try jigging for **squid** , which generally make their way through Puget Sound in fall and winter. "We're heading into the peak of the fishery and Puget Sound has some good piers to fish from," said Greg Bargmann, WDFW marine ecosystem manager. Good bets include the Les Davis Pier in Tacoma and the Elliott Bay pier in Seattle. "Last year, squid fishing success seemed to be down, but squid populations can change greatly from year to year and it's hard to predict success," Bargmann said. "The squid caught during the fall and winter are not the large Humboldt squid in the news earlier this year, but are the smaller market squid which seldom exceed 12 inches in length."

**Squid** fishing is open year-round with a daily limit of five quarts or 10 pounds. Best success usually occurs at night. Legal gear includes a baitfish jig, a maximum of four squid lures or a hand dip net. Each angler must have a separate container. Squid fishing is closed in Hood Canal (Marine Area 12). More information on squid fishing is available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/squid> . Information on fishing piers is available at / <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/piers/> .

## Southwest Washington

Anglers are catching sturgeon from the Wauna powerlines upstream to Bonneville Dam, while late-run coho salmon continue to draw lots of attention above and below the dam. For trout, Swift Reservoir is still a solid bet for rainbows and the Cowlitz River continues to yield some nice, foot-long cutthroat.

Success rates for legal-size **sturgeon** have been highest in the gorge, but catches have been scattered throughout the Wauna-to-Bonneville section of the lower Columbia River that reopened Oct. 1, said Joe Hymer, WDFW fish biologist. The action dropped off somewhat after the first few days of fishing, but Hymer expects fishing to pick up with the arrival of the fall rains.

"The rain stirs things up, and sturgeon respond to that," he said. "It should get things moving again." White sturgeon may be retained from the Wauna powerlines to Bonneville Dam Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays only through the end of the year.

Rain and higher flows should also improve fishing for **late-run coho**, which were already producing decent catches from Buoy 10 to the Bonneville Pool before the skies opened up in mid-October. In the tributaries, fishing has been productive on the Cowlitz River and especially at the mouth of the Klickitat River, where three out of four anglers have been catching coho, along with some **chinook** and hatchery **steelhead**.

Bank anglers have also been catching coho on the North Fork Lewis River, although the majority have been dark fish or wild coho that must be released, Hymer said. "The rain should help move more bright, late-stock coho into the Lewis River, as well as the Kalama and Washougal rivers where fishing has been slow," he said.

Columbia River anglers should also note that Oct. 15 is the last day the anti-snagging rule - which prohibits certain types of fishing gear - will be in effect from Bonneville Dam to McNary Dam. Hymer strongly recommends, however, that anglers check the *Fishing in Washington* rule pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) for other regulations applicable to specific rivers in the Columbia River Basin.

So far, this year's overall coho returns are running close to expectations, Hymer said. "The early run exceeded the pre-season forecast of 467,000 fish and the late run is looking promising," he said. "We expect to see late-run fish returning through November and beyond, but a total return of 700,000 coho to the Columbia River - as originally forecast - still looks like a real possibility."

If that forecast proves accurate, this year's coho run to the Columbia would be the largest since 2001.

At the Cowlitz Salmon Hatchery, Tacoma Power recovered 10,260 coho adults, 910 jacks, 1,354 fall chinook adults, 290 jacks, 26 summer-run steelhead adults and 105 sea-run cutthroat trout during the week ending Oct. 10. With the new collection facility in operation, fish can be processed faster now, Hymer said.

During the same week, Tacoma Power crews released fish at four sites:

- **Mayfield Lake** at the Ike Kinswa State Park boat launch: 912 fall chinook adults and 257 jacks, 89 coho adults and three jacks.
- **Tilton River** at Gust Backstrom Park in Morton: 269 coho adults and 12 jacks.
- **Lake Scanewa** above Cowlitz Falls Dam: 1,128 coho adults and 92 jacks.
- **Upper Cowlitz River** at the Skate Creek Bridge in Packwood: 786 coho adults and 49 jacks.

Reports on fish plants by Tacoma are available at <http://bit.ly/pQBi>.

At Lake Scanewa, 34 boat anglers racked up 25 **rainbow trout**, 12 adult coho and one jack in a recent creel survey. Twenty-eight bank anglers accounted for 15 rainbows, two adult coho and one jack coho. On the upper Cowlitz, 42 bank anglers kept 17 adult coho and released three others.

Meanwhile, boat anglers fishing the mainstem Columbia River near Camas/Washougal have been averaging three **walleye** per rod. Fishing should be good until the river cools, Hymer said.

### **Eastern Washington**

The special season for **fall chinook salmon** that opened Sept. 1 on the lower Snake River will close as scheduled Oct. 15. WDFW district fish biologist Glen Mendel of Dayton reports very few fall chinook have been caught in that fishery.

On the other hand, Snake River **steelhead** action continues to be very good. According to WDFW enforcement officers, night fishing for steelhead has been especially productive near the Snake's confluence with the Clearwater River on the Idaho border. Mendel noted, however, that officers have issued several warnings for illegal use of barbed hooks and other violations on the river.

As of Oct. 7, the daily catch limit on the mainstem Snake River (including boundary waters with Idaho) increased from three to five hatchery-marked steelhead (clipped and healed-over adipose or ventral fin), of which not more than three may equal or exceed 32 inches total length. The five-fish daily limit (but not the upper size restriction) also applies to the section of the Grande Ronde River from the County Road Bridge to Oregon state line. All steelhead caught in the Grand Ronde from the mouth to County Road Bridge (about 2.5 miles upstream) must be released.

Mendel explains that the catch limit was liberalized because only a small number of the large return of hatchery steelhead are needed for hatchery broodstock, and that removing excess hatchery steelhead will benefit wild steelhead listed for protection under the Endangered Species Act.

Meanwhile, many streams and lakes throughout the region close Oct. 31 for **trout** and other species fishing. WDFW enforcement officers checking anglers note that many lakes are producing good catches in the final weeks of the season. Waters closing to fishing Oct. 31 are noted in the Fishing in Washington pamphlet.

### **Northcentral Washington**

WDFW Okanogan district fish biologist Bob Jateff of Twisp reminds anglers that this year's special **hatchery steelhead** fishery on the upper Columbia, Wenatchee, Icicle, Entiat, Methow and Okanogan rivers, includes mandatory retention - anglers must keep any adipose-fin-clipped hatchery origin steelhead at least 20 inches long until they reach the daily catch limit of four fish. After they have retained four fish, anglers must stop fishing for hatchery steelhead.

Any wild steelhead caught - those with an intact adipose fin - must be immediately released unharmed without being removed from the water. Anglers also must release any steelhead with one or more round holes punched in the tail fin.

"This fishery helps remove hatchery-origin steelhead and increases the proportion of wild natural-origin steelhead returning to spawning areas," Jateff said.

The Icicle River will be open through Nov. 15 from the mouth to 500 feet downstream of the Leavenworth National Fish Hatchery Barrier Dam. Anglers fishing the Icicle also will be allowed to retain three **coho salmon** (minimum size 12 inches) per day, but must release coho equipped with an anchor tag.

The Similkameen River will open to hatchery steelhead retention beginning Nov. 1.

Catch and size limits have been lifted temporarily for Okanogan County's Buck Lake, scheduled for rotenone treatment this month to improve future fishing. No size or catch limits are in effect through Oct. 25; Buck Lake will be closed to fishing Oct. 26 until further notice.

Many **trout** fisheries throughout the region close Oct. 31. There are also several that remain open through November, or are open year-round. check the 2009-2010 *Fishing in Washington* rules pamphlet at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm> for details.

### **Southcentral Washington**

The Columbia River closes Oct. 15 to the retention of all **salmon** between the Highway 395 Bridge at Pasco and Priest Rapids Dam. The in-season forecast for fall chinook escapement to the Hanford Reach has fallen below the natural spawning escapement goal of 28,800 adult chinook. All salmon must be immediately released unharmed and cannot be removed from the water prior to release.

WDFW district fish biologist Paul Hoffarth notes anglers can continue to fish for and retain **hatchery steelhead** between the old Hanford town site wooden power line towers and Priest Rapids Dam through October 22. Angling for hatchery steelhead from McNary Dam to the old Hanford town site wooden powerline towers will remain open after Oct. 22 under the regulations listed in the fishing rules pamphlet at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm> . Effective Nov. 1, the daily catch limit is reduced to two hatchery steelhead. Wild steelhead (adipose fin intact) must be immediately released unharmed and cannot be removed from the water prior to release.

Hoffarth's recent weekly creel checks on Hanford Reach steelhead showed a total of 327 steelhead caught with 261 hatchery steelhead retained. For the season so far, 957 steelhead have been caught, 625 hatchery steelhead retained, and 272 wild steelhead have been released.

The Yakima River will close to all fishing for all species on Oct. 22. Hoffarth's weekly creel checks on the Yakima showed effort and harvest picking up with 175 adult chinook, 37 jacks, and 10 adult coho caught. One wild steelhead was caught and released. For the season so far, 214 adult chinook, 37 jacks, and 10 adult coho have been harvested.

Hoffarth also notes **walleye** fishing has been good in the Tri-Cities area. "Nothing incredible, but if you put in a little time you should come away with a fish or two," he said.

### **Reader E-mail**

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

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### **Random Links**

Reborn Rogue shows its teeth:

<http://www.mailtribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20091011/NEWS/910110332#STS=g0tx244x.22cs>

Jig fishing fir coho:

<http://www.gamefishin.com/wa/features/jigsforcoho.htm>

**GOOD LUCK!**