

The Guide's Forecast - volume 12 issue number 45

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **November 12th – November 18th, 2010**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro - With salmon fishing effectively over on the lower Columbia, effort will shift to sturgeon for the remainder of the year. Sturgeon catches continue to taper below Bonneville as fish seemingly move into the lower Willamette this time of year. Anglers are likely to target the mouth of the Willamette as the mainstem Columbia continues to cool.

Catches were good and pressure high at the re-opener of sturgeon retention on the lower Willamette last week. Anglers took 580 keepers which filled the quota, closing the lower Willamette and Multnomah Channel until January 1, 2011. Steelhead remain available on the Middle Fork of the Willamette.

Trout fishing has remained good on the McKenzie when water conditions are conducive where brilliant fall foliage graces the banks.

Steelheading has been fair on the North Santiam but the river is high this week and will remain so through the coming weekend.

Clackamas water levels are up following precipitation over the past weekend and while dropping, fishing remains slow with the coho season about done for the year.

Winter steelhead will be the next fishery on the Sandy but it will be a while as these are broodstock adults with returns delayed until late winter.

Henry Hagg Lake has been fishing well but anglers have only though November 20th, after which it's closed until spring.

Northwest – Wild weather has subdued effort on the north coast, even though fall chinook should be peaking on many river systems. The Wilson and Kilchis River chinook runs aren't materializing like they do most years, this fishery should be peaking now with ideal conditions for driftboaters underway. Some chum are still being caught but anglers can no longer target chum salmon after Monday. Trout fishing closed on October 31st.

The Nestucca River produced some good catches last week even though the run was forecast to be down this season. Plug pullers and backbouncers fared well during the North Coast Salmon Rendezvous last week.

Tillamook Bay continues to challenge anglers but a few bright fish are still being produced in the west channel, Ghost Hole and in the upper bay. Spinners or herring should continue to take fish into early December. Female fish, although bright, sometimes exhibit poor quality flesh this time of year. Bright bucks will provide the best tablefare for the remainder of the season.

Sturgeon should be available in Tillamook Bay as fish continue to exit the lower Columbia and seek better feeding conditions in other estuaries this time of year. With all the recent freshwater, juvenile crabs should not be the problem they typically are for shrimp plunkers. The west channel should be a prime place for interception.

If 2010 steelhead returns come in high, anglers should begin to see chrome returns to the North Fork Nehalem, Necanicum, Kilchis, Wilson, Three Rivers and the Nestucca Rivers within the next

10 days. None have been reported yet.

An excellent tide series over the weekend should produce easy limits for crabbers on the lower Columbia. Expect plenty of competition however.

Southwest – Tidal exchanges this weekend will be mild but offshore conditions may prevent ocean forays.

Trollers are catching fair to good numbers of wild coho at Siltcoos Lake with plugs being most effective this season.

Weekend rainfall relieved low water conditions on the Coos and Coquille. Chinook catches are expected to be good this week. Crabbing has been good in Coos Bay but too much fresh water will reduce catches.

Chinook catches picked up following rainfall last Sunday on the Elk and Sixes but leaves in the water and high winds have been hampering efforts.

Chetco anglers are taking good numbers of bright chinook with several breaking the 40-pound mark. Bobber and bait fishers, back-bouncers and plug pullers are all taking fish. When ocean conditions have allowed crossing the bar out of Brookings, limits of rockfish were taken and ling cod fishing improved.

The Winchuck River opened for chinook retention over the past weekend. While there was no sign of an early return late last week, rainfall will get this fishery underway and an excellent return is forecast this season.

Eastern – Steelheading has improved on the lower Deschutes with fewer anglers on the river now. With the water cooling, the bite is soft. Most of the steelhead are wild but are running large.

A good late fall and winter fishery, the Crooked River is producing well for fly anglers targeting large rainbows.

The Grande Ronde, Wallowa, Imnaha and Umatilla Rivers are all strong possibilities for late run summer steelhead. Bobbers and bait or jigs should produce nicely for persistent anglers.

SW Washington – Coho catches remain fair on the Cowlitz with a few bright fish still available. The Lewis and Kalama Rivers also have coho but the majority are running dark.

Winter steelhead have begun to return to the Cowlitz River, a good indication that this years return may be good.

The Klickitat River remains a strong option for bright coho with fish likely to be caught through the Thanksgiving weekend.

Columbia River Fishing Report – The Columbia is showing signs of its inevitable winter slumber. With salmon fishing well past its prime, sturgeon remains the main focus and it took a downturn last week, although we have to take into account the crummy weather that ensued. There certainly still is some fair sturgeon fishing however, with the best catch and most effort

taking place in the Columbia River Gorge. Bank anglers continue to keep their focus near the deadline while boaters are a bit more spread out.

Bank anglers tallied 8 keepers for 124 rods while boaters produced 4 keepers (2 of the 4 were released) for 15 boats. Water temperatures are beginning to drop, which will further effect the bite. Walleye fishing is also beginning to taper.

There may still be a rare bright coho taken at any of the SW Washington tributary mouths but the Cowlitz seems to still hold the most promise. Don't go with high expectations however.

The best fall fishery on the Columbia this time of year is crabbing. There is some indications that the action is slowing but even if it was slowing a bit, limits should still be quite possible for those putting in an honest effort.

In the John Day stretch, trollers working the John Day Pool and the lower John Day River should see increasing numbers of steelhead come to the boat. We are entering prime time for this fishery and a break in the weather should provide some good opportunity. Catch rates should be good this week.

The Guide's Forecast – Not too much excitement will be generated with the upcoming opportunities on the lower Columbia River. The exception may be crabbing downstream of Astoria where tides and conditions should provide ample opportunity for enthusiasts to take advantage of great numbers of keepers available.

If you do decide to take advantage of soft tides target sandy areas around Buoys 20 and 22. With the weak outgoing and influx of tides over the course of the day, almost any time of the day should provide good opportunity. It's best to stay away from other crabbers if you can but be sure to fill those cages with quality bait for the best results. Be aware that if you don't cage your bait, there's a good chance that seals may take advantage of the easy meal.

On the fishing side of things, sturgeon remains an option but with dropping air and water temperatures, success rates are likely to continue to dwindle. Larger populations of sturgeon are likely to continue to migrate to the Willamette River this time of year but the bad news is, the Willamette River closed to retention this week so it becomes a catch and release fishery until the new year. Catch success may still justify a trip to the gorge this week however, especially since the weather is forecasted to be better than last week. Bank anglers should focus their efforts near the deadline while boaters have a bit more water to target keepers with.

Steelheaders may wish to make the trek to the John Day Pool where trollers should be entering the peak season for adults. Plugs will take the lion's share of the fish with metallic plugs working the best on sunny days and solid colors working in the early morning and overcast days. This fishery should produce good results through early December.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – It was a short winter sturgeon season on the lower Willamette and Multnomah Channel as unexpected numbers of boats hit the river to catch the entire quota over the three-day opener. With the take reduced 40% this year, anglers were allowed to keep about 3,600 fish in 2010. This fishery is scheduled to reopen January 1, 2011 although it's still legal to catch-and-release sturgeon seven days a week. The lower Willamette is high and off-color at this writing. Over 100 winter steelhead have been counted at the Falls.

McKenzie water levels have been up and down with precipitation, taking a jump Wednesday this week. It's currently very high but dropping and clearing. Summer steelhead were caught below Leaburg before the water level came up.

Look for decent numbers of coho in the North Santiam below Green's Bridge and at the mouths of tributaries. There are still plenty of summer steelhead in the system as well.

According to the ODFW website, "A total of 2,800 two-pound rainbow trout were released this week at six Willamette Valley locations – Walling Pond, Walter Wirth Lake, East Freeway Lake, West Salish Pond and St. Louis Ponds #3 & #6."

The Guide's Forecast – Currently high and muddy, the middle Willamette is expected to continue producing summer steelhead when conditions improve. Coho catches are expected to improve at mouths of tributaries with the recent freshet.

The McKenzie may fish by the fish the weekend. The water color is currently decent although the level is high. When it recovers, try midge patterns on the lower McKenzie during sun breaks. Redsidings have been responding to them recently. Expect steelheading to continue here through December.

Coho have responded to spinners on the North Santiam. With Chinook spawning now, egg imitators are always a good bet for steelhead.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – The Clackamas and Sandy Rivers are high and muddy this week. A few summer steelhead were taken between Feldheimers and Barton Park prior to the recent blowout.

The Guide's Forecast – The Eagle Creek Hatchery reports a low coho return this year. It is increasingly likely that coho will be dark as the season progresses.

Coho will be upriver on the Sandy in the stretch from Lewis and Clark to the mouth of Cedar Creek. Many are in the creek itself but expect to see plenty of dark fish at this time of year. Spinners have taken the most fish here.

North Coast Fishing Report – Although the Tillamook district remains a bit of a disappointment, fish are being caught in the bay and several different rivers. Success however is not what one would expect for such ideal conditions.

Most recently, on Tuesday night, another shot of rain swelled district rivers, making the smaller streams more favorable at the time of this writing. The Kilchis fished fair on Wednesday with a mix of a few Chinook and some chum salmon showing in the catches. Effort has dropped off with the news of a poor showing of later returning (Wilson and Kilchis) stocks of Chinook. Although some fish were caught on the Wilson on Wednesday, the river was still a day out for productive fishing. The Trask was busy with anglers as it has been one of the most productive in the region lately. The Trask typically starts to slow about this time of year but a remnant run of winter Chinook likely still utilizes the watershed.

Tillamook Bay itself is still producing fish but like most of the district, it's sub-par compared to previous years but not unprecedented. One guide reported light effort throughout the estuary with the exception of the Ghost Hole. Noting a strong outgoing tide, the guide went to the upper bay and worked plugs in the outgoing tide, netting a nice 35-pounder on Wednesday morning.

The guide worked the west channel after low slack, taking another 20-pound fish on the flood tide, yielding 2 fish by 10:00 a.m. and not another bite afterwards. There was an occasional fish taken in the Ghost Hole on Wednesday.

The Nestucca produced good results last week and likely this week as well. A low return has been predicted for this basin, discouraging anglers from participating in this fishery. For those braving the predicted low return, they were rewarded with good catches under low pressure. The Nehalem has not been fishing due to high water and very little of the river is open for driftboating.

Although I haven't witnessed any sturgeon effort, I spent a good number of passes working the west channel last week, marking fish that weren't biting trolled herring. I had to assume there were some sturgeon present as is often the case this time of year and under the conditions that now exist.

Bay crabbing is poor in all estuaries with high freshwater influence. Netarts Bay is producing some keeper crab but it wasn't the best option with the high tide series we're now just coming off of.

The Guide's Forecast – The targeted chum season in the Tillamook district closes on November 15th. This fishery has much less participation than the good 'ol days. Chinook fishing should continue to offer up decent opportunities through the month but it's clear by now that the run is not coming in like the early component has. None-the-less, fishable numbers of Chinook do exist in the district with these rivers likely to produce these results:

Trask River- should fish good this week but will get a lot of pressure due to recent success. Fish will begin to turn dark but fresh fish should be available in the lower reaches, especially when flows drop. Coming off of a strong tide series does not bode well for ocean fresh fish in any good number but the river should fish into early December recognizing a dwindling run.

Wilson River- This river should be in full bloom, but isn't. The river is forecasted to drop through the weekend and effort will likely be high as most anglers know the history of this river for this time of year. Fish should be well distributed, allowing opportunities for both bank and boat anglers. Fish should be in better shape in this watershed but some dark fish are likely to be encountered in the upper reaches. The tidewater stretch and just upstream will likely produce the best results in the dropping flows.

Nestucca River- should stay a viable option but like the Trask, this run typically peaks earlier and should be on the way out. There should however be some fresh fish coming in the lower reaches and fish should be well distributed throughout the system. However, bank and boat anglers are quite limited due to this years restrictions.

Kilchis River- the Kilchis may already be too low by the weekend to produce good catches of Chinook. The short distance downstream of Highway 101 may produce limited catches but the tide will play a large role in the success of anyone participating in this fishery.

Smaller streams such as the Necanicum, North Fork Nehalem and Three Rivers should also contain fish and new ones should have moved in on the latest rain freshet. There will be larger numbers of dark fish present however.

The soft tides coming up make for good crabbing conditions, given your estuary is not inundated with fresh water. The soft tide coming up won't be so good for sturgeon fishing however but it's

likely that fish are present in fair numbers in Tillamook Bay. Anglers may want to gear their boats up in prep for the next tide series just around the corner.

The surf is big and there's no good reason to recreate on the ocean. Put it out of your mind.

Central & South Coast Reports – The tragic drowning of one person and another missing when washed off the South Jetty at Yaquina Bay is sad but jarring reminder to use extreme caution when recreating anywhere near the ocean at this time of year.

While tides this weekend will be mild, offshore conditions will keep boats off the ocean. When offshore conditions have allowed, bottomfishing has been productive with limits or near-limits of rockfish and ling cod catches picking up despite the 120-fathom restriction. Yaquina River trollers have taken Chinook recently at the top of tidewater.

The Umpqua system is blown out and won't be fishable by the weekend. Winchester Bay is slow for coho and Chinook as the fish have moved upstream.

Coos Bay Chinook catches have tapered off now that most of the fish have migrated upriver. While bay crabbing has been yielding good numbers of Dungeness, a freshet can have a negative impact.

Only hatchery coho may be kept at the Coquille. Chinook fishing has slowed here as well and crabbing is also expected to slow with fresh water in the lower river.

The dynamic nature of the Elk and Sixes river allow these systems to recover quickly from the impact of a deluge. Elk Chinook catches have been good and this will be the first to come into shape. While fishing has been good at times, the bulk of the Chinook run is yet to come.

Lower Rogue water levels have been on the rise this week, roiling the water. Typical for this time of year, the river is full of fall foliage. The Dodge Park to Touville drift has produced a few half-pounders. The middle Rogue will produce steelhead on drifted roe and coho on spinners when water conditions improve. Try the upper

Rogue for the better chance of a steelhead hookup over the coming weekend. Lures may now be used in addition to flies above the Shady Cove Boat Ramp with bait allowed below.

Many Brookings charter boats are wrapped up until spring. Chetco River, swollen but the last round of rainfall, is dropping and expected to fish well for Chinook by the coming weekend. Try back-bouncing or pulling plugs. The Chetco has good numbers of fall Chinook available from Loeb State Park downstream. With a limit of two per day, this is a worthwhile destination which should continue to produce Chinook through November.

Although the Winchuck opened last weekend for Chinook fishing and over twice the average number are expected to return, no reports have been received this week.

Central and Eastern Oregon – The lower Deschutes is high and muddy. It may fish this weekend but plan to try above Maupin for the best chance of finding some water visibility.

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report for November 2010

North Puget Sound

Anglers will continue to find some coho in the region's rivers and streams, while out on Puget Sound more areas are scheduled to open for chinook fishing, as well as late-season crab opportunities.

At 8 a.m. on Nov. 15, marine areas 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca), 9 (Admiralty Inlet), 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) and 12 (Hood Canal) will reopen for sport crabbing seven days a week through Jan. 2, 2011.

Crab fishing will also remain open seven days a week through Jan. 2 in marine areas 4 (Neah Bay), 5 (Sekiu), and 13 (south Puget Sound), where the fishery has continued uninterrupted since June 18.

Sport crabbing will not reopen this year in marine areas 7 (San Juan Islands), 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay), 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) and 11 (Tacoma/Vashon Island), where the summer catch reached the annual quota, said Rich Childers, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) shellfish policy coordinator.

The daily catch limit in Puget Sound is five Dungeness crab, males only, in hard-shell condition with a minimum carapace width of 6¼ inches. In addition, fishers may catch six red rock crab of either sex per day, provided those crab measure at least 5 inches across. Additional information is available on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/shellfish/crab/>.

While on the Sound, why not fish for blackmouth? Beginning Nov. 1, opportunities for blackmouth will increase, as marine areas 8-1, 8-2 and 9 open for chinook. Anglers fishing those marine areas, as well as Marine Area 10, have a two-salmon daily limit, but must release wild chinook salmon. Anglers are reminded that Marine Area 7 closes to salmon retention Nov. 1.

Saltwater 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 of Marine Area 9 are often hotspots for chum salmon in early November.

Meanwhile, several rivers are open for salmon fishing, including the Snohomish, Skykomish, Stillaguamish, Snoqualmie and Wallace. Anglers fishing those rivers have a daily limit of two coho. The Skagit, Cascade, Green (Duwamish) and Nooksack also are open for salmon but regulations vary for each river. For details, check WDFW's sportfishing regulations pamphlet at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regulations/>.

For trout anglers, Beaver Lake near Issaquah could be the best place to cast for rainbows in November. About 2,300 hatchery rainbows - averaging 2 to 3 pounds each - are scheduled to be released into the lake Nov. 8. Beaver Lake, which is one of several westside lowland lakes open to fishing year-round, is best fished by small boat, although anglers also can be successful fishing from shore.

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

Nov. 1 Update: Coho retention on the Nisqually River closes Nov. 1.

Anglers fishing for salmon often turn their attention to chum in November, when the run usually peaks around the middle of the month. But shellfish also take center stage with more areas of

Puget Sound re-open for sport crabbing and two razor clam openings on the calendar for November.

The first evening razor clam dig has been approved at Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis, Mocrocks and Kalaloch. Opening dates and evening low tides are:

- Nov. 5, Fri. - 6:41 p.m., (-1.4 ft.), Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis, Mocrocks, Kalaloch
- Nov. 6, Sat. - 7:26 p.m., (-1.6 ft.), Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis, Mocrocks, Kalaloch
- Nov. 7, Sun. - 7:11 p.m., (-1.5 ft.), Twin Harbors
- Nov. 8, Mon. - 7:55 p.m., (-1.2 ft.), Twin Harbors

Later in the November, razor clammers will have another opportunity at Long Beach and Twin Harbors. Tentative opening dates and evening low tides for that dig are:

- Nov. 20, Sat. - 5:39 p.m., (-0.4 ft.), Long Beach, Twin Harbors
- Nov. 21, Sun. - 6:17 p.m., (-0.7 ft.), Long Beach, Twin Harbors

Clam diggers are reminded that they should take lights or lanterns for the nighttime digs and to check weather and surf forecasts before heading out. No digging will be allowed before noon on any of the five razor-clam beaches. Harvesters are allowed to take no more than 15 razor clams and must keep the first 15 they dig, regardless of size or condition. Each digger's clams must be kept in a separate container.

All diggers age 15 or older must have an applicable 2010-11 fishing license to harvest razor clams on any beach. Licenses, ranging from a three-day razor clam license to an annual combination fishing license, are available on WDFW's website at <https://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov> and from license vendors around the state. More razor clam digs are tentatively scheduled Dec. 3-6 and Dec. 31-Jan. 2.

Rather catch crab ? At 8 a.m. on Nov. 15, marine areas 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca), 9 (Admiralty Inlet), 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) and 12 (Hood Canal) will reopen for sport crabbing seven days a week through Jan. 2, 2011.

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The daily catch limit in Puget Sound is five Dungeness crab, males only, in hard-shell condition with a minimum carapace width of 6¼ inches. In addition, fishers may catch six red rock crab of either sex per day, provided those crab measure at least 5 inches across. Additional information is available on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/shellfish/crab/>.

Recreationists on the Sound can also pursue blackmouth - resident chinook. Beginning Nov. 1, anglers fishing marine areas 5 (Sekiu), 11 (Tacoma-Vashon Island) and 13 (South Puget Sound) can keep one chinook as part of a two-salmon daily limit. However, salmon fishing in Marine Area 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca) is only open through Oct. 31.

Elsewhere, anglers fishing Hood Canal (Marine Area 12) have a daily limit of four salmon, but only one of those fish can be a chinook.

November is when the action heats up in the region for chum salmon . Popular fishing spots include the Hoodport Hatchery area of Hood Canal and the mouth of Kennedy Creek in Totten Inlet. Other areas where anglers can find chum salmon include the Dosewallips and Duckabush rivers in Jefferson County and Minter Creek in Pierce/Kitsap Counties. Those three rivers open for salmon fishing Nov. 1.

Meanwhile, salmon fisheries remain open through Nov. 30 on the Bogachiel, Sol Duc, Calawah, Dickey, Clearwater and Hoh rivers. Also open for salmon fishing through November, are the Elk, Hoquiam and Johns rivers and Joe Creek in Grays Harbor County; and the Bear and Niawiakum rivers in Pacific County. In Mason County, the Skokomish River is open for salmon fishing through Dec. 15.

Anglers should be aware that the Nisqually River, from the mouth to the military tank crossing bridge (located one mile upstream of mouth of Muck Creek), closes to coho retention Nov. 1. For more information, see the rule change at <http://bit.ly/buK23R>.

Winter steelhead fisheries get under way in November on several rivers, including the Bogachiel, Calawah, Sol Duc, Quillayute and Hoh. Beginning Nov. 1, anglers fishing those rivers have a daily limit of three hatchery steelhead. "Traditionally, the winter steelhead fishery doesn't really get going until later in November," said Bob Leland, WDFW's steelhead program manager. "Anglers can certainly find some steelhead early in the month, but around Thanksgiving is when fishing usually starts to improve."

Grays Harbor-area rivers, such as the Satsop, Wynoochee and Humptulips, also are good bets for anglers once steelhead start to arrive, said Leland.

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

Southwest Washington

Thanksgiving Day traditionally marks the start of the popular winter steelhead fishery, although some anglers started working their favorite rivers well ahead of time. A number of area rivers have been open to fishing for hatchery steelhead for months, and catch totals have been rising since mid-October.

That tally will likely increase even faster now that the first big storm of the season has soaked the region with heavy rains, said Joe Hymer, a fish biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

"Steelhead move upriver on pulses of water, and the storm really helped to prime the pump," Hymer said. "Now that the ground is good and wet, we can expect to see more and more fish move upstream every time the sky opens up and the rivers start to swell."

Major destinations for hatchery-reared steelhead moving up the Columbia River are the Cowlitz, Kalama, Lewis (east and north forks), Washougal, Elochoman and Grays rivers, along with Salmon Creek in Clark County, he said. Other waters opening for steelhead fishing Nov. 1 are Abernathy, Coal and Germany creeks, the Coweeman River and Cedar Creek in Clark County and Mill Creek in Cowlitz County.

Only hatchery-reared steelhead, which have a clipped adipose fin, may be retained in regional waters. All wild, unmarked fish must be released unharmed.

But until Thanksgiving - or whenever steelhead begin to arrive en masse - late-run coho salmon may be the best target for anglers who want to catch fish. While the coho run has peaked, those fish should generate some action on the mainstem Columbia and many of its tributaries right through November, Hymer said.

"These are fairly large fish, some weighing up to 20 pounds apiece," he said. "The trick is getting them to bite. The best time is when they are moving upriver, drawn by high water. Otherwise, it can be hard to get their attention."

State regulations allow anglers to catch and keep up to six adult coho salmon per day on the Elochoman, Cowlitz, Klickitat, Kalama, Lewis and Washougal rivers, as well as the lower portion of the Grays River. Several rivers also remain open for chinook salmon, although some close Oct. 31.

Effective that day, the No. 5 fishway on the Klickitat River closes upstream to chinook fishing, the Wind River closes to all salmon fishing, and the stretch of the Columbia River from Beacon Rock to Bonneville Dam closes to all fishing for both salmon and steelhead. For additional information on fishing seasons, see the Fishing in Washington rules pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regulations/>).

Other fishing options in the days before - and possibly after - Thanksgiving include:

- **Sturgeon:** Anglers reeled in nearly 1,500 legal-size sturgeon from the lower Columbia River above the Wauna powerlines during the first three weeks of October. As of Oct. 17, there were 841 fish available for harvest for the remainder of the year. The fishery is open Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays until the quota is met. Before heading out, anglers are advised to check the WDFW website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regulations/>) to make sure the fishery is still open for retention of white sturgeon.
- **Cowlitz cutthroats:** October is prime time to catch sea-run cutthroat trout on the Cowlitz River, but the fish usually keep biting through November, Hymer said. The best fishing is from Blue Creek near the trout hatchery on downriver, he said. "Sea-run cutthroat are aggressive, hard-fighting fish," he said. "They'll take flies, bait, lures - practically anything you throw at them." Anglers may retain up to five hatchery-reared cutthroats per day as part of the daily trout limit on the lower Cowlitz River, where the fish generally range from 12 to 20 inches.
- **Swift Reservoir:** Anglers fishing the reservoir have continued to reel in some nice rainbows averaging 12-13 inches. The fishery is open through Nov. 30.

In addition, WDFW has approved one razor-clam dig set to begin Nov. 5 at all five coastal beaches and has tentatively scheduled another opening later in the month.

See the South Sound/Olympic Peninsula regional report above for tentative beach openings. Check the WDFW website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/>) or the toll-free Shellfish Hotline (866-880-5431) for final word on the scheduled dig.

Eastern Washington

Snake River steelheading was slow in October, but could pick up in the weeks ahead, said Joe Bumgarner, a WDFW fish biologist. Anglers have been averaging 30 to 50 hours per steelhead - a far cry from last year when steelheaders were catching fish in a fraction of that time.

Even the mouth of the Grand Ronde River, which traditionally provides some of the best fishing, has been slow. Catch rates for the fall chinook fishery, which tends to be incidental to steelhead fishing, have also been slow on the Snake River system.

Warmer temperatures through late October may be part of the problem, Bumgarner said.

"The good news is that there are lots of steelhead here and the weather is changing," he said. "At last count there were more than 190,000 steelhead over Lower Granite Dam, with 800 to 1,200 a day still coming up. With the rain and colder temperatures we're just starting to get now, November could be the month of steelheading here."

Although many of the region's top trout-fishing lakes are closed by November, there are a couple of exceptions and several year-round-open waters worth trying. Southwest Spokane County's Amber Lake remains open through the end of November for catch-and-release, selective gear fishing for rainbow and cutthroat trout. Waitts Lake in Stevens County is open through February and provides rainbow and brown trout, largemouth bass, and yellow perch.

Big net-pen-reared rainbow trout and some kokanee are available in Lake Roosevelt, the Columbia River reservoir off Grand Coulee Dam, which is open year-round. Large rainbows continue to provide action at Sprague Lake, the big year-round waterway that sprawls across the Lincoln-Adams county line just south of Interstate 90.

Fly fishers have reported that rainbow trout are biting at year-round-open Z-Lake off Telford Road on the WDFW Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area in Lincoln County.

Rock Lake in Whitman County, open year-round, is still producing catches of rainbow and brown trout, along with some largemouth bass.

Trout, bass, crappie, perch, and other species are available at Spokane County's year-round-open Eloika, Newman and Silver lakes.

Northcentral Washington

The steelhead fishery on the upper Columbia River and its tributaries slowed a bit in late October, but anglers will have another river to try in the weeks ahead. Starting Nov. 1, the Similkameen River will open to fishing for hatchery-reared steelhead from the mouth to 400 feet below Enloe Dam. Selective gear and night closure rules are in effect for the Similkameen River.

Above Wells Dam, anglers have been averaging one steelhead for every ten hours of fishing on the mainstem Columbia River and its tributaries, reports WDFW district fish biologist Bob Jateff of Twisp. "Remember there's mandatory retention of adipose-fin-clipped hatchery steelhead and a four-fish daily limit," he said. "All fish with adipose fins intact must be released and cannot be completely removed from the water prior to release."

Jateff also reported that a few lowland lakes are still open for catch-and-release trout fishing through the month of November - Big and Little Green lakes near Omak, and Rat Lake near Brewster. Selective gear rules are in effect for all three lakes.

Anglers interested in catching yellow perch could try Patterson Lake near Winthrop, said Jateff, noting that the fish average seven to eight inches. "There's no daily limit and no minimum size," he said. "We encouraged anglers to retain all perch caught regardless of size."

Several year-round waters in the region can provide decent fishing opportunity during the month of November. Banks Lake has a little bit of everything - smallmouth and largemouth bass, crappie, yellow perch, walleye, kokanee, even lake whitefish. Moses Lake and Potholes Reservoir have most of the same, plus net-pen-reared rainbow trout.

Southcentral Washington

Fresh from a record catch of fall chinook, anglers fishing the Hanford Reach in late October were having a tough time hooking up with hatchery steelhead. That doesn't bode well for fishing opportunities in November, when steelhead are the main attraction for anglers in that section of the Columbia River, said Paul Hoffarth, a fish biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

"Steelhead fishing has been unusually slow at a time when it should be ramping up," Hoffarth said. "We've been seeing 20 anglers come in with one fish among them."

While the forecast is below the 10-year average, it does not fully account for low number of hatchery steelhead in angler's creels in the Reach, Hoffarth said. Both creel surveys and counts at the Ringold Fish Hatchery indicate a dearth of one-salt fish returning from the ocean for the first time.

Although counts of two-salt fish are generally on track, one-salt fish generally make up about three-quarters of the catch, Hoffarth said. "I hope I'm wrong, but it looks like we could be in for another tough month of steelhead fishing in this area."

Starting Nov. 1, the daily catch limit is two hatchery steelhead, which can be identified by their clipped adipose fins. All unmarked steelhead must be released unharmed.

The slow start for steelhead in the Hanford Reach stands in stark contrast to the record catch of fall chinook from McNary Dam to Priest Rapids Dam this year. Through Oct. 22, when that fishery closed, anglers caught an estimated 10,000 adult chinook, along with 1,360 jacks and four coho, Hoffarth said. He estimates that approximately 90,000 fall chinook returned to the Reach this year.

Anglers fishing the Yakima River also caught an estimated 230 adult chinook, 25 jacks and 23 coho before that fishery closed Oct. 22.

Fisheries remain open for both salmon and hatchery steelhead in most areas of the Columbia River downstream from McNary Dam. For daily limits and other regulations, see WDFW's Fishing in Washington rules pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regulations/>).

Hoffarth said walleye fishing should also be productive through the end of November, before the cold sets in. He recommends trolling upstream at night.

TGF Inbox - Reader E-mail

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

Catch a tuna or buy a whole albacore? Here's what to do with 'em:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tb-jNxvSSrU>

Try the Tuna Bomb Recipe (it's great):

<http://www.ifish.net/board/showthread.php?t=177501&highlight=tuna+bomb>

We've seen lots of ratfish but for those who have not:

<http://allaroundangler.com/blog/archives/3771>

GOOD LUCK!