

The Guide's Forecast - volume 12 issue number 47

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **November 26th – December 2nd, 2010**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- Sturgeon fishing continues to slow with the cold weather setting in. Fish will still be present but with a slowing metabolism, are unlikely to bite.

The temperature at Willamette Falls was in the mid-40s with the visibility 1.3 feet Tuesday this week. Over 180 winter steelhead have been counted.

The lower McKenzie fished well for trout over the past weekend as it will again during weather breaks. Nymphs will be effective.

North Santiam anglers are catching a few coho and steelhead but hatchery winters don't return here.

Many Thanksgiving weekend hopefuls will be on the Clackamas River. Prospects are fair. Fresh winter steelhead have been taken in Eagle Creek making it one of the better prospects for the long weekend.

While there will be some winter steelhead in the Sandy River, most of the fish here are later-running broodstock.

Northwest – Although the late season chinook run is clearly down, fish are still available on the Wilson and Kilchis Rivers. Anglers fishing the lower reaches of these systems are producing some chinook but the onset of the cold weather has tapered the bite.

Driftboaters are experiencing some of the best conditions possible for this time of year, with the exception of cold weather. Once air and water temperatures rise, the bite should turn fair to good again. Although the Wilson and Kilchis will remain the better options, a few bright fish may still be available on the Trask and Nestucca Rivers. Angler effort may soon shift to steelhead however as reports of hatchery fish are coming from many north coast systems.

Good numbers of hatchery steelhead are already being recycled at the North Fork Nehalem hatchery with 49 dropped back off at the Aldervale Ramp on Tuesday. It's a good start for this early in the run, indicating that early returns throughout the north coast could be good. In high water the North Fork Nehalem and Three Rivers will be the best bets and although these fish have to go through mainstem river stretches before entering these tributaries, they will likely bite best in the smaller streams.

Steelhead should also be available on the Necanicum, Wilson and a few strays are likely on the Trask. Late run coho and chum may also be intercepted so check characteristics carefully before harvesting.

Sturgeon are likely in the west channel of Tillamook Bay but tides aren't conducive for productive fishing. Evening minus tides are late at night. High surf should keep clam diggers off the beach for the remainder of the tide.

Coho fishing officially closes on November 30th in the Siletz River. Catches of coho were light but managers believe fair numbers of fish have returned to the system. Steelhead should be forthcoming although the peak won't happen until after the New Year.

The Alsea River should be a fair early season bet for steelhead with the water closest to the hatchery likely to produce the best catches.

Crabbing remains excellent on the lower Columbia although inclement wind and weather should have boaters wary. Hungry seals and sea lions are in the area so secure baits or they'll be taken before the crabs have a chance at them.

Southwest – Rough offshore conditions have prevented ocean access recently. When boats have been able to get out, rockfishing has been good but ling cod catches are few as boats must remain inside the 20-fathom line.

Crabbing has remained good in most bays and estuaries with Dungeness hard but many undersized. Ocean crabbing resumes on Wednesday, December 1st.

Chinook fishing is very slow in Winchester Bay with action moving upriver. Coho fishing has been fair in the mainstem although most are wild, requiring release here. It's too early for winter steelheading on the North Umpqua although there are some colorful summers around. Look for winters to start up in January.

Coho fishing has been slow to fair in Siltcoos Lake. Trollers using plugs and spinners are finding it challenging to get fish to bite in cooler water temperatures.

Coquille steelheaders are anticipating the start of the winter run.

Chinook catches are winding down on the South Coos. Bobber and bait have taken a few but they are darkening.

The Elk and Sixes have chinook scattered with prospects fair to good this week.

Nothing of interest is happening in Rogue Bay and the lower river around Agness. Fishing is spotty for a mix of summer steelhead, coho and cutthroat in the middle Rogue. The upper river has continued to fish well for summers with recycling of fish is planned this week prior to Thanksgiving.

Nearshore rockfishing has been good out of Brookings when ocean conditions have allowed. The Chetco was high and muddy on Tuesday this week although it should produce chinook as the level drops.

Eastern – Steelheading has been spotty on the lower Deschutes, better for experienced anglers. Fish deeper as the water cools. Trout fishing is fair to good.

Crescent Lake is likely to produce Thanksgiving weekend mackinaw.

The Grande Ronde should be peaking about now but cold weather has slowed the bite and anglers are easily frustrated by iced up guides while working the river. **Pro guide Mac Huff (800-940-3688)** reports steelhead fishing on the Grande Ronde will be a tough proposition this week.

SW Washington – The Cowlitz remains the best option for salmon and steelhead anglers with the Barrier Dam producing the best catches. Steelhead numbers should continue to climb.

Numerous regulation changes happen after the last day of November on most district streams. Check regulations accordingly.

The Klickitat River remains a good prospect for coho anglers although a higher percentage of the catch are likely to be colored. There are several regulation changes near the end of the month so check regulations carefully.

Columbia River Fishing Report – As we enter the slumber state for the mainstem Columbia, there isn't much to report except for a declining sturgeon bite and the possibility for fair to good fishing in the John Day Pool.

Creel checked catches for steelhead weren't all that encouraging for the John Day anglers this week. Of course, the drastic weather change didn't help much. Trolling for steelhead should be peaking right now but it was a slow week for the few anglers braving the elements.

Crabbing in the lower river remains excellent. We took easy limits on lower Desdemona Sands, just downstream of the light marker. Good bait and a 2 to 3 hour soak will yield all the crab you'll need for a holiday feast.

The Guide's Forecast – Fewer than 60 fish remain on the quota for the river downstream of Bonneville. The action has slowed enough to make some believe the quota may not be reached this year. Don't go sturgeon fishing with high expectations but do target the gorge or near the I-5 Bridge if you're seeking keepers.

Once the weather warms a bit, John Day Pool trollers and lower reach bobber and jig anglers should see an improvement in catch rates. It's about peak time for this fishery.

Crabbing tides aren't excellent but for late risers, the high tide is at mid-afternoon and the bounty may seem limitless. It should be easy crabbing if the weather cooperates. Use salmon carcasses for the best results.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – With the Flow up and the visibility down at Willamette Falls, fish counts have dropped to virtually zero.

Whenever McKenzie water conditions allow, nymphs will take trout. There are still some winter steelhead below Leaburg Dam, but the opportunity is drawing to a close, although a few will linger through December.

Good numbers of coho are available in the North and South Santiam and up to three may be kept per day. It is unlikely to find any hatchery coho here but they do not need to be fin-clipped to keep in the Santiams.

ODFW Willamette Zone winter steelhead guide:
http://www.dfw.state.or.us/RR/steelhead_guide/willamette.asp

The Guide's Forecast – A few winter steelhead have been caught by the Meldrum Bar crowd recently and this will offer plunking opportunities into December whenever water levels allow access. Catches are expected to improve here in the coming weeks.

McKenzie anglers may find themselves storm-watching, and for good reason at this time of year. The good news is that the river will fish well for trout through the end of the year but only when

water levels allow the activity. Follow it here: *<http://www.nwd-wc.usace.army.mil/nwp/teacup/willamette/vido.pdf>

A winter steelhead would be unusual this early on the North Santiam as there's only a wild return here, hence the run timing is later in the season than hatchery brats. This makes it a catch-and-release fishery but as such, it can be quite good in January and February. Hatchery summer steelhead are still available, however.

ODFW sez, "Brood trout ranging in size from 8 to 15 pounds were released this week into Sheridan Pond and West Salish Pond." This should offer a good opportunity to get out with the youngsters of out-of-town relatives with the chance for any and all to catch a big one.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – While coho fishing is wrapped for the season in the Clackamas with only the occasional dark fish being taken, fresh winter steelhead are entering the lower river. The hatchery on Eagle Creek reports a disappointing coho return this season.

Coho fishing is history for this year in the Sandy as well. Traditionally hosting a broodstock winter steelhead run, the return is historically later in the season.

The Guide's Forecast – Winter steelhead have been taken this week on the Clackamas. This river offers a fair to good chance for a fish over the holiday weekend.

Winter steelhead have turned up early on the Sandy to the surprise of biologists and delight of anglers. There is actually reason for optimism for a Thanksgiving weekend winter steelhead here.

North Coast Fishing Report – Foul weather has few people motivated to brave the conditions on the north coast but the few pursuing Chinook are catching some fish. Most anglers can only tolerate the tidewater section of the Wilson or the lower stretches of the Kilchis River. Persistent anglers backbouncing eggs or backtrolling plugs had to hunt motivated fish down but there were brief flurries of fair action prior to the cold snap. The Wilson and Kilchis Rivers were in ideal shape early in the week.

Tillamook Bay is rightfully void of trollers. Wild weather and a poor late showing of Chinook has anglers looking for better places of interception. When the weather settles, there will likely be some trollers working the Ghost Hole into early December.

Although the Wilson and Kilchis will get all the press, other systems may still harbor some fresh Chinook. The Trask should offer a random fresh Chinook through the end of year closure but anglers specifically targeting Chinook will likely come up empty-handed 4 out of 5 trips. There are a mix of steelhead and salmon in many north coast systems however so target both species to bring success to your days effort.

Smaller streams are putting out the season's first steelhead catches. Hatchery fish have been confirmed on the North Fork Nehalem, Three Rivers, Trask, Wilson and Nestucca too. The Necanicum is also a likely candidate for an early run fish. The North Fork Nehalem report indicated technicians already recycling 49 fish from the hatchery to the Aldervale Ramp on Tuesday! The early season is off to a great start!

Netarts crabbing is fair to good with some quality sized commercial legals coming from the estuary. Nehalem was receiving some pressure the other day but catches were fair at best with all the fresh water in the estuary. Tillamook has been poor.

Still no confirmed reports of sturgeon from Tillamook Bay but the weather conditions have just been too unbearable. It's likely to have catchable numbers present.

The Guide's Forecast – If you're targeting salmon, stick to the Wilson and Kilchis Rivers. They'll likely have catchable numbers as long as the river stays in shape. If the river forecast remains accurate (and it likely won't), a rise is likely by the weekend. Anglers working the lower stretches are likely to fare the best. On the Wilson, that would be downstream of the Sollie Smith Bridge or on the Kilchis, from the logger bridge and downstream. In higher flows, fish will be present in the tailouts but as flows drop, look for Chinook in their traditional deep water haunts.

Chinook should also be in the Trask River and the Trask often gets early winter steelhead strays from the Wilson. Bring gear to target both species, fishing for steelhead in the shallower areas. Be wary of spawning Chinook as they often stake out the tail-out sections as well. Plugs will become effective in the lower flows while bait works best in higher flows.

The Nestucca may contain some late season Chinook but steelhead will be blasting through to Three Rivers. Fish can be caught in the mainstem but some degree of luck will be involved. Fish the mouth of Three Rivers for your best opportunities.

Early run steelhead can often times be motivated to take spinners or drifted bait. Target willing biters on the Necanicum, North Fork Nehalem, Wilson and Three Rivers. The Highway 30 streams can also produce fish this time of year. Big Creek and Gnat Creek should have some fish available as well.

If you're going to crab Tillamook County, hit Netarts Bay. If you're really serious about getting a limit, hit the lower Columbia before the commercial pots go in on November 28th. It's pretty easy right now near Buoy's 20 and 22 or out on the lower Desdemona Tongue in 22 to 30 foot of water. Cage those baits however as the seals and sea-lions are on the hunt for an easy meal.

Central & South Coast Reports – Bottom fishing has been producing excellent rockfish catches but only the occasional ling cod with the 20-fathom restriction in place through the end of the year. Ocean forecasts for the weekend will have boaters seeking other activities. It's gonna be a rough one.

The ODFW announced Tuesday this week that the Siletz wild coho fishery will close on November 30th. Only 55% of the 400-fish quota had been taken at the time of the announcement and biologists say there are still plenty of fish in the system for those wanting a last-minute shot at them.

Crabbing has been poor to slow in Yaquina Bay.

While the Alsea traditionally hosts an early return of Winter steelhead, it also a small target and is usually overrun with anglers whenever there are fish available. A fair prospect for the weekend but one of the worst for crowds and pressure on the fishery.

Trollers on Tahkenitch Lake are picking up some coho but results are slow to fair with fish showing some color. The blue-green algae health advisory remains in place. Siltcoos anglers have been doing well recently with rain bringing fresh coho into the lake.

Siuslaw steelheaders are likely to find a fresh winter or two in the coming weekend although prospects will improve into December.

Chinook fishing in Winchester Bay is very slow this late in the season. The mainstem Umpqua will likely hold some fresh winter steelhead for the Thanksgiving weekend angler. Steelheaders seeking winters on the North Umpqua will often think they've scored but are catching late summers. Expect to find winter steelhead here in late December with better prospects in January. The South Umpqua opens to steelheading on December 1st with a good return of hatchery fish expected.

Coos steelheaders have been targeting winters but no reports have been forthcoming of anyone landing a fish as yet. Crabbing has remained very good in Coos Bay.

Thanksgiving weekend is the traditional winter steelhead kickoff on the Coquille but there had been none taken as of mid-week.

Elk River prospects are fair for the weekend but precipitation can affect this volatile tributary dramatically, for better or worse. Bullard's Bridge is scheduled to close November 29th through December 2nd. Take the bypass via Highway 42S, Bandon to Coquille, then 42 to Coos Bay.

The lower Rogue is slow for steelhead and half-pounders. On the middle Rogue, fishing is fair to good for late summers and coho. Fly fishers have been doing well on the upper Rogue although anglers are no longer restricted to flies-only and bait may be used below Shady Creek Boat Ramp. While the drift from Touvelle through the old Gold Ray Dam location has been quite productive, use caution just below the old dam site. A rapid has formed which has taken down a few drift boats. Cole Rivers hatchery was supposed to have recycled summer steelhead downriver earlier this week.

Although fall Chinook have been the target for Chetco anglers recently, and with good reason as some real brutes have been landed, there are inevitably a few winter steelhead taken over the holiday weekend. Chinook catches are winding down anyway at this time of year as fish move upstream into tributaries to spawn. Try small baits of cured eggs drifted in the lower sections of the river. The Chetco was running 2,830 on

Thanksgiving morning and dropping but more rain is on the way for the weekend. Watch the level here: http://waterdata.usgs.gov/or/nwis/uv?site_no=14400000

ODFW Southwest Zone winter steelhead guide:
http://www.dfw.state.or.us/RR/steelhead_guide/southwest.asp

Central and Eastern Oregon – Pro guide Mac Huff (800-940-3688) reports, "Steelhead fishing on the Grande Ronde will be a tough proposition this week. Temperatures are forecast to remain below freezing everyday until at least Saturday. The fish will still be biting, but the fishing will be less fun with your guides iced up.

"This cold weather is unusually early and I anticipate warmer temperatures again into early December, when I

expect these kinds of temperatures until February."

John Day steelheaders have had some good days recently using jigs and sand shrimp under bobbers but keep an eye on the weather and temperatures at this time of year.

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.

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GOOD LUCK!