

The Guide's Forecast - volume 13 issue number 16

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **April 22<sup>nd</sup> – April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

**Oregon Fisheries Update:**

**Willamette Valley/Metro-** After two additional fishing extensions, the lower Columbia River is now closed to spring chinook. Fishery managers decided on the hard closure last week as numbers continue to just trickle over Bonneville Dam. More opportunity may come in May but dam passage must jump significantly to begin the conversation. Success rates remained fair at best prior to the closure but bank anglers fared well under the high water conditions. The Columbia above Bonneville remains open through Sunday, April 24<sup>th</sup>.

Willamette flow was up on Tuesday this week with visibility reduced to 1.5 feet and water temperature down to 48 degrees. Plunking may be the best bet until it clears. Passage of spring chinook and steelhead remains fair. Good action was witnessed near St. Johns prior to the rise in river levels. Now is the traditional peak for spring chinook on the Willamette but with the late run timing, the best action may still be a few weeks away.

McKenzie water levels, high at mid-week, will be falling until the next round of rainfall. Prospects will be good when anglers catch a break with March Browns on the hatch.

Fishing has been fair on the Clackamas River with spinners and jigs taking steelhead. Sandy fishing has been slow. It's too early to target spring chinook in these rivers but that will change in May and action should continue into June with the high spring flow.

There are decent numbers of steelhead in the Santiam system. Try the South Santiam for the best chance of a hookup with an early hatchery summer fish.

**Northwest –** Steelheaders saw another good shot of fish come into the Wilson and Nestucca Rivers this week. Monday produced good results for small crowds of people on the Wilson downstream of Siskeyville. Sidedrifters continue to produce the best results in the higher flows but plug pulling may become a good option when flows drop.

Steelhead season is winding down but the Nestucca and Wilson should remain the best options. Anglers are likely to find fair numbers of spawning or spawned-out fish, these should be released unharmed. Summer steelhead should begin to show in the catches however but number far fewer than the winter run.

Although the districts first spring chinook has yet to be reported, adults should be available in the Tillamook system. The Trask, Wilson and Nestucca are the best options when flows are high but good tides exist for bay trollers as well. The run will start in stronger by mid-May.

The 8<sup>th</sup> annual Bounty on the Bay will move a few weeks closer to peak season. Anglers will have an opportunity to catch the north coasts' most premier species, spring chinook. The event is June 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> with a seminar on the evening of the 3<sup>rd</sup> detailing proper preparation and presentation of herring for trolling by local professional John Kirby. Register at [www.tbnep.org](http://www.tbnep.org).

Sturgeon were taken in Tillamook Bay last week with tides conducive to good action through the weekend.

Calm seas have finally allowed offshore anglers to take advantage of willing bottomfish species. Lingcod and seabass made up the bulk of the catch and action should remain good as long as

seas remain calm. Offshore crabbing is reported as poor.

**Southwest** – The Pacific Fishery Management Council has determined offshore chinook fishing will remain open off the central and southern Oregon coast to Humbug Mountain near Port Orford through September 30th. Rough offshore conditions have prevented effort for ocean salmon most days this season.

Ocean conditions have been cooperative this week, allowing charter and recreational offshore boats to take limits of rockfish and lingcod out of central Oregon ports. Ocean conditions should remain good into the coming weekend.

Trout season opens in the Southwest Zone on Saturday, April 23rd with Diamond Lake a prime destination. ODFW biologists estimate over 400,000 holdover trout are in the waters of Diamond Lake with over half of those 16 inches or better. A five-fish limit will be in effect until May 1st when anglers may keep eight per day, only one of which may be over 20 inches. Conditions for the opener are still up in the air with ice on the lake. Phone 541-793-3333 for the latest conditions.

Although the lower Rogue was running high early in the week, it is forecast to be dropping through the weekend to come. Spring chinook fishing was steady over the past week and is expected to be productive through April and into May. Herring or anchovy, fished straight or using a Rogue River spinner rig have been effective in landing springers. About a third of the salmon landed have been wild, requiring release. With springers just starting to nose into the upper Rogue, steelhead remain the target of choice.

Boaters launching out of the Port of Brookings did well for rockfish on a variety of lures with many reporting seven-fish limits. A few lingcod were taken as well but have been more difficult to locate. Offshore forecasts early this week predict good conditions through Saturday.

**Eastern** – While the water level remains a little high on the lower Deschutes, redbase results are decent with March Browns and Blue-Winged-Olives hatching and drawing attention from rising trout. Nymphs are effective early and late in the day.

Early season kokanee fishing has been slow at Green Peter Reservoir with the water level low. It will improve as it fills and the water warms.

Deep water jigging has been producing limits of kokanee this week at Wallowa Lake with some big fish in the mix.

**SW Washington** – The Cowlitz River is a district highlight with both bank and boat anglers catching fair numbers of steelhead in the primed system. Effort and catch is highest around the trout hatchery.

As for spring chinook, they are a rare catch in SW Washington streams. The Cowlitz and Lewis systems are seeing a few however.

Boaters are anxiously waiting for salmon numbers at Bonneville to improve to stimulate catches at Drano Lake and Wind River. Effort is low and so is the catch. Fishing will improve here in early May, assuming passage at Bonneville begins to ramp up.

**Columbia River Fishing Report** – The Columbia closed with a bang on Tuesday with good chinook catches reported in the Troutdale area. Although water levels remained high, action was

good upstream of the I-5 Bridge for both anchor anglers and trollers. Reports of limits came from some areas of this stretch although not everyone would have classified the bite as white hot.

**Pro guide Dan Ponciano (360-607-8511)** reported great action on Monday backtrolling plugs along the Washington side near Portco. His group of 4 took limits by the afternoon. He wasn't so lucky the next day (of course) but slipped over to the Oregon side to see a few other boats taking fish on anchor off of Hayden Island.

Trollers upstream reported good action near Chinook Landing. Better than 1 fish for every three boats was checked out of this popular boat ramp. With the Willamette blown out for the weekend, effort and catch were more likely upstream of the mouth of the Willamette than downstream. It appears that the fish are going to make a show.

Fishery managers will stick to their guns and keep the recreational fishery closed until steady chinook passage is well underway at Bonneville. Managers met on Wednesday to discuss additional options for the sport-fleet above Bonneville. Catches have been low to date (obviously, with the poor Bonneville Dam passage). Washington and Oregon decided to extend the upriver season through May 1<sup>st</sup> in hopes that upriver anglers will have a better shot at fish once they begin crossing Bonneville.

Sturgeon effort remained subdued on the mainstem, especially with the salmon season about to close. Success rates remained best in the Portland to Longview stretch with only a few anglers reporting success for keeper fish. Shaker action was fair at best in most stretches of the river.

Although extreme tides kept most crabbers for soaking gear over the weekend, those that did still scored fair numbers of keepers in the estuary. Anglers trying for crab were most likely heading west to the sunken jetty or south jetty at the mouth of the river where bottomfishing was "game-on" with the calm seas recently. Black rockfish and lingcod fell easy to experienced anglers working the jetty over the weekend and early in the week.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Salmon anglers are on hold for a while until better numbers of adults begin crossing Bonneville Dam. When that happens, anglers both upstream and downstream of Bonneville will become more excited. With only 1754 fish over Bonneville Through the 19<sup>th</sup>, nobody is excited about much. Managers and anglers are banking on another late run of fish and with cold, high water, that is a real possibility. Did anyone else think we'd see more steelhead than salmon over Bonneville Dam for this time of year?

Steelhead catches were noteworthy this spring with some weeks, anglers tallying more steelhead than spring chinook on the bank. It's shaping up to be a banner year for summer steelhead. Steelhead season opens in mid-May so anglers will want to get geared up for this season.

Sturgeon anglers aren't doing much in these water conditions. When flows begin to slow but more importantly, when temperatures begin to rise, interest will grow again. That may not be for a while however.

Although the offshore swell is forecasted to remain tolerable, wind wave action is supposed to keep things a bit uncomfortable for bottomfishers. There may be brief periods on the morning where conditions are favorable but don't bank on great weather conditions for bottomfishing effort.

Crabbing offshore is fair at best and likely a bit better in the river near Buoys 20 and 22. Be aware however that strong morning outgoing tides are still likely to wreak havoc with your gear.

It may be easy to lose pots or get them sanded in this weekend unless you stay on top of your gear and work it hardest close to low slack and incoming tide.

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report** – Flows at Willamette Falls started moderating over just the last couple of days although water visibility has been slow to recover from the recent rise. Fish passage, which had slowed during the high water event, has started to recover. As of April 19th, over 6,300 winter steelhead had been counted along with about 1,450 summers. Nearly 150 spring Chinook have passed the Falls. In high, muddy water, effort for spring Chinook on the lower Willamette and Multnomah Channel has produced spotty results.

Stocked with hatchery trout above and below Leaburg for the coming weekend, the McKenzie River above Leaburg Lake will not be stocked until early May

With water levels high and flows in the torrent stage, the Santiam system will not be an option this week or next.

Most trout fishing is limited to lakes and ponds. With rare exception, catch-and-keep fishing for hatchery trout is limited to still waters (with rare exception such as the Middle Fork Willamette and a portion of the McKenzie, the wisdom of the latter of which is a subject of heated debate in certain circles [In which debate we do not get involved]). Despite the fact that most lakes and ponds are stocked early in the year and trouting is open year-around in the majority of these locations, April 23rd is considered the 'opener' and, ironically (but to the benefit of thrifty shoppers) tackle sales will take place in anticipation of this date. Stock up for stockers.

Here are the waters, most of which have been open since January, but are scheduled to be planted for 'Opening Day:' Benson Lake, Bethany Pond, Blue Lake, Canby Pond, Commonwealth Lake, Dorman Pond, Haldeman Pond, Harriet Lake, Hartman Pond, Henry Hagg Lake, Huddleston Pond, Mt. Hood Pond, Salmonberry Lake, Sheridan Pond, Trojan Ponds, Blue River above Reservoir, Blue River Reservoir, Carmen Reservoir, Clear Lake, Detroit Reservoir, Dorena Reservoir, E. E. Wilson Pond, Fall Creek, Foster Reservoir, East Freeway Lake, Green Peter Reservoir, Junction City Pond, Leaburg Lake, McKenzie River above and below Leaburg Lake, Roaring River Park Pond, Salmon Creek, Smith Reservoir, Timber Linn Lake, Walling Pond, Walter Wirth Lake, Willamette River Coast Fork and Willamette River Middle Fork above Hills Creek Reservoir.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Lower Willamette spring Chinook fishing will be a tough proposition this weekend with water very likely to be muddy. As of mid-day Thursday, April 21st the turbidity level was 13 and dropping. While some say it'll fish at 12 or less, that's a pretty murky condition; 10 or less is better. It might be marginal on Saturday before it starts raining and the cycle starts all over again. Accurate reports, good or bad, that's the rule posted on the wall at the mythical TGF World Headquarters. When trying, keep dragging herring until the water warms as it's still barely 50 degrees. Plunkers fishing the bank below the mouth of the Clackamas may have a fair shot. With the Middle Fork of the Willamette getting stocked with rainbows trout at several locations from Hills Creek Reservoir up to Camper Flat Campground, there should be some willing hatchery fish around for the taking.

Hatchery trout are easy targets. This information comes as no newflash to our readers, we're sure. Fish the Leaburg Dam stretch on the McKenzie for hungry planted trout this weekend. Use of bait is allowed by both salmon and trout anglers from Hayden Bridge to Leaburg Dam starting April 23. Hatchery trout won't be released below Hendricks Bridge, so seek those fish below the dam. Those to whom a catch-and-release experience with a McKenzie redside is more appealing, March Browns have been on the hatch.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports** – The Clackamas River has been high this week and while steelheading had been fair to good prior to this week's increase, there has been little effort this week.

Sandy River levels have been very high through April from rainfall, snowmelt and glacial runoff, Catches and effort have consequently been low.

**The Guide's Forecast** – With the Clackamas on the drop and forecast to fall and further clear through the coming weekend, prospects for steelhead are pretty rosy. In addition, a couple of springers have been landed near the mouth and with Chinook entering the Willamette daily, the probability of a hookup on the Clack increases daily. But don't chase reports; chase the fish and make the reports!

Sandy levels have been dropping and are near seasonal normal. There still isn't much happening with the broodstock fishery a disappointment this season and spring Chinook yet to appear in catchable number. Take a pass on this one for a while.

**North Coast Fishing Report** – Steelheaders got another good opportunity for late run winter steelhead on the north coast when water levels dropped into shape early this week. Great action was reported by anglers working the river downstream of Siskeyville on the Wilson with those side-drifting eggs producing the best results.

River conditions remained in prime shape through mid-week but catches predictably tapered off by mid-week. Spawning fish can be found throughout the system but will primarily be hanging out in the tail-outs of most pools. Fresh fish will be found in the faster water, including shallow riffles with a broken surface.

The Nestucca also received another shot of fish with anglers producing best in the higher reaches early in the week. Like the Wilson, catches tapered somewhat by mid-week. The Trask is full of native fish and water conditions came into fine shape by mid-week. With the Willamette out of shape, effort was higher than normal this week. Wild fish dominate this system but a few hatchery strays have been reported recently.

We're getting to the end of this run and catch ratios will reflect that in the coming week. With such a strong return this season however, the run should remain strong for about another week. Summer steelhead are beginning to show in the catches as well so some quality fish will certainly be in the system.

Although spring chinook effort is extremely light, there are anglers trying out there. No reports of spring chinook yet but it's likely just a few days away.

Sturgeon effort remains fair in Tillamook Bay with some fair catches reported over the weekend. The west channel and middle channel is producing the most effort with some fairly nice sized fish coming in. Sand shrimp will always be the best producer here. High water is keeping the juvenile crab at bay.

Reports of good surf perch fishing are starting to come in. This is the time of year when perch congregate near the surf for feeding and breeding purposes. Sand shrimp will be a favorite for this species as well.

Minimal effort for bottomfish out of Garibaldi but those that went, did quite well. Lingcod and black seabass made up the bulk of the catch. The offshore wind forecast doesn't look as favorable in the coming week.

Alder Lake, Big Creek Reservoir, Buck Lake, Dune Lake, Elbow Lake, Erhart Lake, Georgia Lake, Hebo Lake, Lost Lake (Lane County), Mercer Lake, Munsel Lake, North Gerogia Lake, Perkins Lake, Siltcoos Lagoon, Siltcoos Lake and Sutton Lake are scheduled for trout planting.

Postponed several times, this is finally a go for this Saturday, Siletz River Clean-up day, Saturday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>. More information at ifish.net, <http://ifish.net/board/showthread.php?t=356764>

**The Guide's Forecast** – With flows dropping, more stealth techniques will need to be employed when targeting steelhead this week. Another bump is forecast for early next week but we are getting towards the very end of this run. Good numbers of fish should be available however with the Wilson, Nestucca and Trask top producers through the weekend. Plugs are likely to become more favorable as flows drop and fish become more territorial as they stake out their spawning beds. The lower reaches of these systems will fish better as flows drop. Some summer steelhead should be on the Wilson and Nestucca Rivers however.

Look for spring chinook to start to show although weak tides may keep them in the ocean or the lower reaches of the estuary. Tides should be strong enough through the weekend however to allow for a possibility in the upper bay. Troll herring, spinners or backtroll plugs if the outgoing tide is conducive to it. It's early enough however to consider yourself pretty lucky if you catch one.

You can catch the last few days of a good minus tide series this weekend if you're interested in sturgeon fishing. The long lasting tide should produce the best towards low slack but use sand shrimp on the bottom to find fish. There are a fair number of keepers present in the Tillamook Bay estuary.

Don't bank on any good crabbing in Tillamook County this weekend. Between tides and a big freshwater influx, there won't be many inspired sea spiders for harvest. Watch ocean conditions as well. Wind waves are expected to dominate the waterways over the weekend. Here is the offshore forecast:

**Fri...**N wind 5 kt...rising to 10 to 15 kt in the afternoon. Wind waves 2 ft. NW swell 5 ft.

**Fri Night...**N wind 10 to 15 kt...veering to NE after midnight. Gusts up to 20 kt. Wind waves 3 ft. W swell 5 ft.

**Sat...**S wind 10 to 15 kt...rising to 20 to 25 kt in the afternoon. Wind waves 3 ft...building to 5 ft in the afternoon. W swell 5 ft...shifting to the SW in the afternoon. Chance of rain.

**Sat Night...**S wind 15 to 25 kt. Wind waves 3 to 5 ft. SW swell 5 ft to 7 ft after midnight. Rain.

**Sun...**SW wind 15 to 20 kt. Wind waves 3 ft. W swell 8 ft.

**Mon...**SW wind 15 to 20 kt. Wind waves 3 ft. W swell 9 ft.

**Central & South Coast Reports** – Offshore fishing for Chinook salmon will remain open through September 30th with a bag limit of two per day. Chum and pink salmon may also be kept although catches of either is a rarity.

On the coho scene, ocean fishing will be allowed starting July 2nd and continue through the last day in August or a quota of 15,000 hatchery fish are caught. In addition, there will be an all coho ocean fishery for a quota of 3,000 which is set for Thursdays through Saturdays starting the first of September and will continue through the 10th if that quota is not met. To save you the trouble of checking your calendar, that's six days to catch wild (or hatchery) ocean coho.

Charter and recreational boats have been doing well bottom fishing with limits or near-limits of rockfish, decent ling cod catches, the occasional cabezon and a few nice lings. Ocean crabbing off the central coast has been poor recently, however.

Rock fishers casting off the south jetty at Winchester Bay are taking kelp greenling, rockfish and the occasional large ling cod. Crabbing has been slow but everyone seems to be getting a few keepers. While the mainstem Umpqua had been producing spring Chinook in the Scottsburg area, with the river high and roiled this week, fishing has been poor. Sturgeon like off-color water, however, and catches have picked up in the lower river and upper bay. Steelheading has been fair at times for wild fish on the flies only stretch of the North

Umpqua although it was high and roiled at mid-week. South Umpqua steelheaders have been taking decent numbers of fish and most of these are hatchery keepers. The South Umpqua is also high this week but should be in decent condition by the weekend. Forecasts indicate the Umpqua system will take another hit in the coming week and will blow out again.

Charter boats out of Charleston have been taking limits of rockfish in a few hours, adding good catches of ling cod as well for their clients.

Crabbing on the lower Coquille and in Coos Bay has been slow for weeks although the weather has been improving and results are expected to pick up. Steelheading is about wrapped up on the Coos and Coquille rivers although there and while there are a few diehards trying, they're not doing very well.

Surf perch fishing has been good this week for primarily striped surf perch although catches or pinkfin (also called red-tail) perch will be increasing in weeks to come. Results are expected to improve as weather warms and seas remain relatively calm for longer periods.

Water level on the lower Rogue rose earlier this week to well over the nine-foot level at Agness the morning of April 20th. It is dropping and will continue to do so for the most part over the week to come. Weekend anglers may expect to find water levels a little higher than normal but quite fishable and with fresh springers entering daily, a good chance of a hookup awaits bank or boat anglers giving it a shot. Winter steelheading has been fair to good on the middle Rogue and while local fishers are trading tales of springers caught in the Grants Pass stretch, these catches have not been confirmed. Flows on the middle river will be a little slower to recover from the high, swift condition at mid-week. It will be showing improvement over the coming weekend, however. Snowmelt has the upper Rogue at high spring levels but steelheading remains worthwhile and a spring Chinook was confirmed in a recent catch near Coles River Hatchery. The Rogue River above Lost Creek Dam will re-open to trout fishing on April 23, 2011.

Diamond Lake opens for the 2011 trout season on Saturday, April 23rd. Here is the report and some pictures from the resort as of mid-week:

"April 20th, just 3 days away from opening day and this is the picture from the north boat launch ramp. The lake is still 99% covered with 4 to 6 inches of ice and 14 to 18 inches of slushy snow on top of the ice. There is some open water at the south end of the lake at Short and Silent

Creeks, and at the north end of the lake at the ODFW weir. (remember to stay 200 feet from the weir) The snow covering is soft and slushy so snowshoes or skis will be needed to go out on the lake to ice fish. Be safe and wear life jackets when venturing out on the ice. Snowshoes and ice augers are available for rent at our marina. All the USFS campgrounds and boat ramps are still snowed in. Diamond Lake Resort has limited camping spaces anglers can rent. The Resort will also be running a snowcat shuttle between the Resort and South Shore Pizza for anglers. Call 800-733-7593 x 222. We will keep you posted as the lake continues to thaw."



Pictures from Diamond Lake Resort website April 20th. See below for more info.

Visit the Diamond Lake Resort website (<http://www.diamondlake.net/fishingreport.html>) for the latest reports and to see photos of a few of the dandy rainbow caught by lucky anglers in seasons past. But all trout are as large as those pictured (average is 15 inches) but there are over 400,000 holdovers awaiting fishers on opening day. The daily bag limit will be five through April but will increase to eight per day starting May 1st 'cause there's just so many of 'em.

While the ODFW doesn't drill holes in the ice at Diamond Lake to funnel platers into the waters there, locations scheduled for trout stocking this week include Bradley Lake , Middle and Lower Empire Lake, Powers Pond, Lemolo Reservoir, Applegate Reservoir, Medco Pond, Spaulding Pond, Fish Lake, Burma Pond, Dutch Herman Pond, Expo Pond and Reinhart Pond.

**Central and Eastern Oregon** – Wickiup Reservoir will open to fishing Saturday, April 23rd with open water and useable boat ramps. It is expected to be very busy are the opener.

#### **Washington fishing reports:**

***From the WDF&W Weekender Report for April 2011***

#### **North Puget Sound**

Thousands of anglers are gearing up for the lowland lakes trout opener in late April, but many remain focused on the marine areas of Puget Sound, where blackmouth salmon fisheries are still under way.

As March comes to a close, fishing continues to be slow for most anglers targeting **blackmouth**, said Steve Thiesfeld, Puget Sound salmon manager for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). "For the most part it has been a real grind for anglers fishing Puget Sound," he said. "But there have been a few bright spots. One angler recently caught a 27-pound hatchery

chinook in the San Juan Islands and several participants in the recent Anacortes Salmon Derby did pretty good as well.”

A total of 101 fish were weighed during the **Anacortes Salmon Derby**, which took place March 26-27. Mike Champion of Bellingham took home the \$15,000 grand prize with his 18.96-pound fish. Patrick Barton of Bellingham hooked a 18.74-pound salmon that was good enough for second place and \$5,000, and Brett Engholm of Bellingham was awarded \$2,500 for his third-place fish, which weighed in at 18.44 pounds.

“While anglers definitely have to put in some time on the water, it can be worth it for an opportunity to catch a large blackmouth,” Thiesfeld said.

Anglers fishing marine areas 7 (San Juan Islands), 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay), 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) and 9 (Admiralty Inlet) have a two-**salmon** daily limit, but must release wild chinook salmon. Thiesfeld reminds anglers that Marine Area 9 is open only through April 15, while Marine Area 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) is already closed to salmon fishing. Freshwater anglers looking to cast for **trout** will soon have numerous lakes to choose from. The lowland lakes trout season gets under way April 30, when many lakes – stocked with thousands of legal-sized trout – will open for fishing. Information on stocking schedules for rainbow, cutthroat and triploid trout is available on [WDFW's website](#).

Anglers should note that the **halibut** season gets under way in May. The 2011 recreational halibut seasons approved for Washington's marine areas are:

- **Columbia River (Ilwaco):** Marine Area 1 will open May 5, three days a week, Thursday through Saturday until 70 percent of the quota is reached, or until July 17. The fishery will then reopen on Aug. 5 and continue three days a week (Friday through Sunday) until the remaining quota is reached, or Sept.30, whichever occurs first. The 2011 catch quota is 15,418 pounds.
- **South Coast (Westport/Ocean Shores):** Marine Area 2 will open on May 1, two days a week, Sundays and Tuesdays. During the fourth week in May the fishery will be open Sunday only (May 22). Beginning the following week the fishery will resume the Sunday, Tuesday structure until the quota is reached. The northern nearshore area will be open seven days per week, until the quota is reached. The 2011 catch quota is 43,500 pounds.
- **North Coast (La Push/Neah Bay):** Marine areas 3 and 4 will open on May 12, two days per week, Thursdays and Saturdays, through May 21. If sufficient quota remains, the fishery will reopen the week of June 2. If sufficient quota remains after that opener, the fishery will reopen starting June 16. The 2011 catch quota is 108,792 pounds.
- **Strait of Juan de Fuca/Puget Sound:** Marine areas 6 through 10 (Strait, Port Angeles, Admiralty Inlet and Everett) will be open May 5 through May 29. Marine Area 5 (Sekiu) will be open May 26 through June 18. These fisheries will be open three days a week, Thursday, Friday and Saturday closed Sunday through Wednesday except for Memorial Day weekend when they will be open Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The 2011 combined catch quota for these areas is 58,155 pounds.

All areas that will be open to halibut fishing have a one-fish daily catch limit, with no minimum size, a possession limit of one fish while on the vessel, and a possession limit of two fish in any form once the angler is on the shore.

Halibut fishing will remain closed in marine areas 11 (Tacoma) and 13 (southern Puget Sound) to protect three species of rockfish listed for protection under the federal Endangered Species Act. Marine Area 12 (Hood Canal) will remain closed due to low dissolved-oxygen conditions.

### **South Sound/Olympic Peninsula**

April will see the traditional opening of the statewide lowland lakes trout fishing season, the expansion of lingcod fishing on the north coast and up to two rounds of razor-clam digging on ocean beaches.

One morning razor clam dig has been approved at two beaches -- Long Beach and Twin Harbors -- April 7-9. Digging dates and morning low tides are:

- April 7 (Thursday), 9:37 a.m. (0.1 feet); Long Beach, Twin Harbors
- April 8 (Friday), 10:19 a.m., (0.2 feet); Long Beach, Twin Harbors
- April 9 (Saturday), 11:07 a.m. (0.4 feet); Long Beach, Twin Harbors

Later in April, razor clammers could have another opportunity if marine toxin tests show the clams are safe to eat. Tentative opening dates and low tides for that dig are:

- April 19 (Tuesday), 8:07 a.m. (-1.8 feet); Long Beach, Twin Harbors
- April 20 (Wednesday), 8:54 a.m. (-1.7 feet); Long Beach, Twin Harbors
- April 21 (Thursday), 9:42 a.m. (-1.4 feet); Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis and Mocrocks
- April 22 (Friday), 10:33 a.m. (-0.8 feet); Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis and Mocrocks
- April 23 (Saturday), 11:27 a.m. (-0.2 feet); Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis and Mocrocks (Digging allowed until 1 p.m.)

No digging will be allowed after noon on any of the razor-clam beaches, except on April 23 when digging is allowed until 1 p.m. on the four beaches. Fishery managers agreed to an extra hour of digging April 23 because low tide won't occur until 11:27 a.m. that morning, said Dan Ayres, coastal shellfish manager for Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). 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 harvester's clams must be kept in a separate container. Noting that 2010-11 state fishing licenses expire March 31, Ayres reminds diggers age 15 or older that they must purchase a 2011-12 license to participate in the April openings. Various licenses, ranging from a three-day razor-clam license to a multi-species combination license, are available [online](#), by phone (1-866-246-9453) and from sporting goods stores and other retail license dealers around the state.

Also on the coast, the **lingcod** fishery is under way in marine areas 1 (Ilwaco), 2 (Westport-Ocean Shores) and 3 (LaPush). Beginning April 16, Marine Area 4 (Neah Bay) also will open for lingcod. For more information on lingcod fishing regulations, check the [Fishing in Washington pamphlet](#).

Meanwhile, fishing for **blackmouth** is still an option. Marine Areas 5 (Sekiu) and 6 (eastern Strait) are open through April 10, although Marine Areas 11 (Tacoma-Vashon), 12 (Hood Canal) and 13 (South Puget Sound) will remain open through April 30.

Anglers fishing marine areas 11 and 12 have a two-salmon daily limit, but must release wild chinook. Those fishing the Strait of Juan de Fuca -- marine areas 5 and 6 -- and Marine Area 13 have a daily limit of one salmon.

In freshwater, anglers still have an opportunity to hook **wild steelhead** on the Olympic Peninsula. As in years past, anglers may retain only one wild steelhead per license year on the Bogachiel, Calawah, Clearwater, Dickey, Hoh, Quillayute, Quinault and Sol Duc rivers. Wild steelhead retention continues through April 30 on most of those rivers. The exceptions are the Clearwater, Hoh and Quinault rivers, where wild steelhead retention runs through April 15.

Anglers should be aware that portions of the Dickey River closed in mid-March. For more information on steelhead fishing regulations, check the [Fishing in Washington pamphlet](#).

Lake fishing opportunities expand at the end of the month, when the **lowland lakes trout season** gets under way. Many lakes – stocked with thousands of legal-sized trout – open for fishing April 30. Information on stocking schedules for rainbow, cutthroat and triploid trout is available on [WDFW's website](#).

Anglers should note that the **halibut** season gets under way in May. The 2011 recreational halibut seasons approved for Washington's marine areas are:

- **Columbia River (Ilwaco):** Marine Area 1 will open May 5, three days a week, Thursday through Saturday until 70 percent of the quota is reached, or until July 17. The fishery will then reopen on Aug. 5 and continue three days a week (Friday through Sunday) until the remaining quota is reached, or Sept.30, whichever occurs first. The 2011 catch quota is 15,418 pounds.
- **South Coast (Westport/Ocean Shores):** Marine Area 2 will open on May 1, two days a week, Sundays and Tuesdays. During the fourth week in May the fishery will be open Sunday only (May 22). Beginning the following week the fishery will resume the Sunday, Tuesday structure until the quota is reached. The northern nearshore area will be open seven days per week, until the quota is reached. The 2011 catch quota is 43,500 pounds.
- **North Coast (La Push/Neah Bay):** Marine areas 3 and 4 will open on May 12, two days per week, Thursdays and Saturdays, through May 21. If sufficient quota remains, the fishery will reopen the week of June 2. If sufficient quota remains after that opener, the fishery will reopen starting June 16. The 2011 catch quota is 108,792 pounds.
- **Strait of Juan de Fuca/Puget Sound:** Marine areas 6 through 10 (Strait, Port Angeles, Admiralty Inlet and Everett) will be open May 5 through May 29. Marine Area 5 (Sekiu) will be open May 26 through June 18. These fisheries will be open three days a week, Thursday, Friday and Saturday closed Sunday through Wednesday except for Memorial Day weekend when they will be open Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The 2011 combined catch quota for these areas is 58,155 pounds.

All areas that will be open to halibut fishing have a one-fish daily catch limit, with no minimum size, a possession limit of one fish while on the vessel, and a possession limit of two fish in any form once the angler is on the shore.

Halibut fishing will remain closed in marine areas 11 and 13 to protect three species of rockfish listed for protection under the federal Endangered Species Act. Marine Area 12 will remain closed due to low dissolved-oxygen conditions.

### **Southwest Washington**

Starting April 8, Columbia River anglers will get at least eight more days to catch hatchery-reared **spring chinook salmon** below Bonneville Dam under a decision announced today by fishery managers from Washington and Oregon.

The popular fishery, which closed for a catch assessment April 4, will reopen to fishing Friday, April 8, through Friday, April 15. Fishery managers will meet again April 14 to determine whether to allow additional fishing time.

The eight-day extension will give anglers another chance to catch hatchery-reared spring chinook still available for harvest, said Cindy LeFleur, Columbia River policy coordinator for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

"Fishing conditions on the Columbia River have been pretty rough in recent weeks, leaving the sport catch well below the harvest guideline," LeFleur said. "These extra fishing days will give anglers some time to make up for the high water and turbid river conditions that have undercut catch rates to date."

Through April 4, anglers had caught and kept a total of 4,500 spring chinook. Approximately 3,800 were upriver fish, compared to a 7,700-fish harvest guideline for upriver chinook set at the beginning of the season.

The area set to reopen for spring chinook fishing April 8 extends from Buoy 10 upriver to Rooster Rock for boat and bank anglers, and to the fishing boundary below Bonneville Dam for bank anglers only. When the fishery is open, anglers can retain one marked, hatchery-reared adult chinook salmon as part of their daily limit.

Anglers may also retain **shad** and hatchery-reared **steelhead** when the spring chinook fishery is open. However, all wild salmon and steelhead not marked as a hatchery fish by a clipped adipose fin must be released unharmed.

Along with the eight additional fishing days, lower-river anglers could get another chance to catch spring chinook in May, once fishery managers update the run forecast. While the preseason forecast projected a return of 198,400 upriver fish, the fishery has been managed with a 30 percent "buffer" to guard against overestimating the run.

"If the fish return at or above expectations, we will look toward providing additional days of fishing on the river later in spring," LeFleur said.

The fishing extension starting April 8 does not affect the spring chinook season above Bonneville Dam, which is open seven days a week through April 24 between the Tower Island powerlines below The Dalles Dam and the Washington/Oregon state line, 17 miles upriver from McNary Dam. Bank fishing is also allowed from Bonneville Dam upriver to the powerlines located about 6 miles below The Dalles Dam through April 24.

Anglers fishing above Bonneville Dam can retain up to two marked, hatchery-reared adult chinook salmon or hatchery steelhead as part of their daily limit.

News of any additional fishing days will be announced on WDFW's website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/>), the Fishing Hotline (360-902-2500), the Region 5 hotline (360-696-6211\*1010) and through local news media.

Meanwhile, WDFW Fish Biologist Joe Hymer has some other fishing opportunities to recommend:

- **Fish a tributary:** This is the time of year when anglers start picking up increasing number of **spring chinook** in the Cowlitz, Lewis and Kalama rivers. **Winter steelhead** are still providing lots of action on the Cowlitz – especially near the trout and salmon hatcheries – and **summer steelhead** are moving into several other tributaries to the lower Columbia River. Note that the lower East Fork Lewis River and the Lower Washougal River open to steelhead fishing April 16. Check the [Fishing in Washington](#) rule pamphlet for current rules before you go.
- **Head upriver:** In April, the daily number of **spring chinook** passing Bonneville Dam usually jumps from hundreds to thousands of fish, which move into the Bonneville, The Dalles, and John Day pools and a number of tributaries in between. Wind River, Klickitat

- River and Drano Lake are all good bets for spring chinook in April. **Walleye** fishing is also picking up in The Dalles Pool and the John Day Pool.
- **Catch some trout:** Hundreds of lowland lakes open for trout fishing April 30 throughout the state, drawing tens of thousands of anglers out for their first cast of the year. While most lakes in southwest Washington are open year-round, "opening day" does mark the start of trout fishing in such perennial favorites as Mineral Lake (Lewis County), Swift Reservoir (Skamania County) and the Rowland Lakes (Klickitat County). Meanwhile, fishing is already good for **kokanee** running 12-15 inches in Merwin Reservoir on the North Fork Lewis River.
  - **Fish for sturgeon:** In the last days of March, catch rates for legal-size sturgeon showed a marked improvement in the lower Columbia River below Bonneville Dam. This trend should continue in the weeks ahead as higher flows over Bonneville energize both the fish and the fishery. Note, however, that the Sand Island Slough near Rooster Rock will be closed to fishing at least through April 30. Also be aware that the retention fishery for sturgeon in the John Day Pool closes April 10, when the catch is expected to reach the 500-fish harvest guideline.
  - **Dig some razor clams:** One morning razor clam dig has been approved for April 7-9 and a second is tentatively scheduled April 19-23, pending the results of marine toxin tests. The first is scheduled for Long Beach and Twin Harbors only, If test results are favorable, those beaches will reopen for digging April 19-23 and two others – Copalis and Mocrocks will be open April 21-23. For more information, see the WDFW [razor clam](#) webpage.

Anglers and clam diggers over age 14 are reminded that a 2011-12 license is required to participate in any of the April openings, since 2010-11 licenses expire March 31. Licenses ranging from a three-day razor-clam license to a multi-species combination license are available [online](#), by phone (1-866-246-9453) and from sporting goods stores and other retail license dealers around the state.

### Eastern Washington

Some of the region's best fishing will begin at the end of the month with the lowland lakes season opener on April 30, but there's plenty of good fishing to be had until then.

"Some waters that open in late-April that are well-stocked, such as Badger, Williams, West Medical, Fishtrap, Fish, and Clear lakes, will likely be excellent again," said Chris Donley, district fish biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). "But until then, try some March 1-opening waters or year-round fisheries."

Coffeepot Lake in Lincoln County is producing 18- to 22-inch **rainbow trout** on chironomids and other flies, Donley said. Regulations at Coffeepot Lake include selective gear rules (no bait, artificial flies and lures only, knotless nets), a minimum size limit of 18 inches and daily catch limit of one trout.

Liberty Lake, in eastern Spokane County, "boomed at ice-out," with catches of **brown trout** that ran 16 to 25 inches, Donley said. Liberty still has lots of good fishing for both those trout and, as the water warms, some of the earliest **yellow perch** and **crappie**.

Downs Lake in southwest Spokane County just received some hatchery "catchable-size" (9 to 12 inches) rainbow trout, and is fishing well for **largemouth bass**. Downs also has yellow perch and crappie.

Medical Lake, near the town of the same name in southwest Spokane County, has brown and rainbow trout.

Catch-and-release fishing for both rainbow and **cutthroat trout** at Amber Lake has been "awesome," Donley said. Amber is under selective gear rules and shifts to a catch-and-keep season on April 30 when the daily limit will be two trout of at least 14 inches. Rainbows with clipped adipose fins caught at Amber must be released even after April 30.

A year-round fishery, Rock Lake in Whitman County, is consistently a good spot for catches of both brown and rainbow trout.

Bill Baker, WDFW northeast district fish biologist, said that year-round Lake Roosevelt keeps producing big rainbows most days, with **kokanee** on some days. Baker also notes Deer Lake in southern Stevens County, which opened March 1, is finally warming and likely producing some catches of rainbow and **lake trout**, with **bass, crappie, perch** catches not far behind. "Most fishing lakes in the northeast district won't open until April 30, and even then, some at higher elevation may still have pretty cold water temperatures, if not some ice or snow." Baker said. "But the usual good producers will be the ones to plan on fishing late in the month."

In Stevens County, those include Waitts, Loon, Deep, Cedar, and the Little Pend Oreille chain of lakes, plus Potter's Pond and a few selective gear fisheries such as Bayley, Rocky and Starvation lakes. In Ferry County, traditional favorites opening in late April include Ellen, Davis, Swan and Trout lakes, plus fly-fishing-only Long Lake. Pend Oreille County waters opening April 30 include Diamond, Frater, Big Meadow, North and South Skookum, Marshall and Sacheen lakes. In the south end of the region, the Tucannon River impoundments, on WDFW's Wooten Wildlife Area, have been producing nice rainbow catches since the March 1 opener. Area Manager Kari Dingman said Big Four, Blue, Deer, Rainbow, Spring and Watson lakes are all well-stocked with hatchery trout and slowly warming up as spring advances. Beaver Lake has water depth and vegetation growth issues that preclude it from viable fish stocking this year.

April 18 is the deadline to register for the May 7 **Kids' Fishing Event** at Clear Lake in Spokane County. For details on the registration form, see the [Youth Fishing 2011 Event Calendar](#) on WDFW's website.

### **Northcentral Washington**

About three dozen lakes throughout the region open to fishing or shift to catch-and-release on April 1.

The bulk of those fisheries are in the Columbia Basin where WDFW District Fish Biologist Chad Jackson predicts a "fair to good" season, depending as always on weather. All but one are within or adjacent to the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge south of Potholes Reservoir, and over half are planted with either spring and/or fall **rainbow trout** fry.

"Those who traditionally fish the April 1 opener should note that North and South Teal lakes will not be fishable this year because we treated those lakes last fall to remove carp and other spiny rays to restore the trout fishery," Jackson said. "We'll be stocking them with fingerling rainbows later this spring so fishing should be good for next year's opener."

There are lots of other fishing spots to try now and the best may be Dry Falls Lake, the only one of the April 1-opening waters not in or near the refuge. It's located in Sun Lakes State Park, northeast of Park Lake and west of Coulee City in the north end of Grant County.

Jackson says anglers should expect to catch 13- to 14-inch yearling rainbows with carryovers 18 inches or greater on opening day at Dry Falls Lake. A total of 10,150 rainbow, 756 **tiger trout**, and 1,026 **brown trout** fry were stocked there in 2010.

"Just remember that Dry Falls has a selective gear regulation and a one trout daily bag limit," Jackson said. As defined in the [Sportfishing Rules Pamphlet](#), selective gear is only unscented artificial flies or lures with one single-point, barbless hook, bait prohibited, and knotless nets. Other April 1 opening waters in the Columbia Basin include:

- Upper and Lower Hampton lakes, in Grant County north of Othello on the refuge, stocked with 28,507 and 5,047 rainbow trout fry in the spring, respectively; Lower Hampton also received a trout fry plant of 4,500 in the fall. Lower Hampton should produce 12- to 14-inch yearling trout catches, probably an average of about three per angler; Upper Hampton may have larger fish, but the catch rates will probably again be slow.
- Pillar-Widgeon chain of lakes in Grant County on the refuge, stocked with trout fry in the spring as follows: Pillar – 2,500; Gadwall – 750; Snipe – 600; Shoveler – 750; Cattail – 1,500; Poacher – 150; Lemna – 450; Hourglass – 300; Sago – 300; and Widgeon – 1,650. Access to this lake chain is just southeast of Soda Lake. Try either the entire chain or at least three or four of the lakes to catch some 12- to 13-inch yearlings and carryover trout in the 18-inch or better range. Shore fishing is available at most, but consider packing in a float tube to increase chances for success. The best tend to be Widgeon, Sago, and Pillar, but all can produce well.
- Hutchinson and Shiner lakes on the refuge in Adams County with excellent **largemouth bass** and **bluegill** fishing. Only non-motorized boats are allowed.
- Coyote, Bobcat, and Hayes creek ponds, located just south of Morgan and Halfmoon lakes, on the refuge in Adams County. These ponds are relatively small and shallow, warming up quickly for good largemouth bass fishing
- Deadman Lake located just off McManamon Road next to Halfmoon Lake, on the refuge in Adams County, for bass and other warmwater species fishing.

In the north end of the region, in Okanogan County, a few other fisheries open April 1. Bob Jateff, WDFW Okanogan district fish biologist, said Spectacle Lake – nine miles southwest of Tonasket – should be good for **rainbow trout** in the 10- to 12-inch range. During the month of April, Spectacle will receive up to 800 one- to two-pound triploid rainbows.

Washburn Island Pond, located four miles east of Brewster on the Columbia River, offers largemouth bass and bluegill fishing starting April 1. A Colville tribal license is required if fishing from shore, but not if fishing from a boat. No internal combustion engine boats are allowed, only electric motors.

Jateff notes several Okanogan lakes switch to catch-and-release, selective gear rules, and electric boat motors only on April 1:

- Davis, Cougar, and Campbell lakes, located within the Methow Wildlife Area near Winthrop, with rainbow trout 10 to 12 inches and carryover fish up to 15 inches; small graveled boat launches at all three; could still have some ice during the first part of April.
- Rat Lake, located north of Brewster, with rainbow and brown trout 10 to 12 inches; WDFW access site with concrete boat ramp; should be thawed out by first week in April.
- Big and Little Green lakes, located five miles northwest of Omak, with rainbow trout 10 to 13 inches; WDFW access site on Big Green with concrete boat ramp; should be thawed out by first week or two in April.

Many more Okanogan County lakes will open April 30 to provide good trout fishing, including:

- Pearrygin Lake, near Winthrop, with rainbows 10 to 12 inches and carryover fish up to 15 inches; up to 500 triploid rainbows (one to two pounds each) will be stocked before the opener; boat launching facilities available at State Park, resort and WDFW access site.
- Conconully Reservoir and Lake, near town of Conconully, with rainbow trout 10 to 12 inches and carryover fish up to 15 inches; boat launching available at State Park and resorts at both lakes.
- Blue Lake, located within the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area, with rainbow trout 10 to 16 inches and some **brown trout** also available; selective gear rules, electric motors only; camping and gravel boat launch sites.
- Big Twin Lake, near Winthrop, with rainbow trout 12 to 16 inches; selective gear rules and electric motors only; resort and WDFW access site with gravel boat launching facilities.
- Chopaka Lake, near Loomis, with rainbow trout 12 to 18 inches; fly fishing only and no boat motors allowed; Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) campsites and gravel boat launch.
- Aeneas Lake, near Tonasket, with rainbow trout 12 to 16 inches, brown trout up to 18 inches; fly fishing only and no boat motors allowed; WDFW access site with camping and gravel boat launch.

### Southcentral Washington

This is the time of year that area anglers start thinking seriously about **trout**, because the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is planting plenty of fish in local waters right now. Thousands of catchable-size trout are scheduled to be planted in Columbia Park Pond, Dalton Lake, Powerline Lake, Quarry Pond, Marmes Lake, and other lakes in April. Many lakes are also being stocked with jumbo trout, weighing over a pound apiece.

"This is a good time to get outdoors and celebrate spring by catching some fish," said Paul Hoffarth, a fish biologist for the Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). "Thousands of fish around southcentral Washington are just waiting to be caught."

A complete trout-planting schedule for southcentral lakes and ponds is available on the [WDFW website](#).

Hoffarth reminds anglers over the age of 14 that a 2011-12 fishing license is required to fish for trout and other species after March 31, when 2010-11 licenses expire. Licenses ranging from a three-day razor-clam license to a multi-species combination license are available [online](#), by phone (1-866-246-9453) and from sporting goods stores and other retail license dealers around the state.

Most **steelhead** sport fisheries are now closed in the Columbia and Snake rivers, although a "bank only" fishery adjacent to WDFW's Ringold Springs Hatchery near the Tri-Cities is open April 1 through April 15. The daily limit is two hatchery steelhead along the Franklin County shoreline from the WDFW marker a quarter-mile downstream from the Ringold irrigation wasteway outlet to the marker a half-mile upstream from Spring Creek.

Meanwhile, **spring chinook salmon** will be moving into the area in increasing numbers throughout the month of April. On the Columbia River, anglers can keep two adipose-fin-clipped hatchery chinook per day through April 24 from Bonneville Dam upstream to the Washington/Oregon state line, 17 miles upriver from McNary Dam. The lower Yakima River opens to spring chinook fishing May 1.

"Springers usually start arriving in fishable numbers around the middle of April," Hoffarth said. "Anglers should keep an eye out for emergency rules that open and close fishing on short

notice." For updates, he recommends checking the [department's website](#), the Fishing Hotline (360-902-2500) and local news media.

**Sturgeon** anglers are also advised to stay abreast of new regulations. As of late March, anglers could still catch and keep legal-size sturgeon in Lake Umatilla (John Day Dam to McNary Dam), but that fishery will close as soon as the 500-fish quota for those waters is reached. Rather catch warm-water fish? Catch rates should continue to improve on area rivers for **smallmouth bass**, **channel catfish** and **walleye** in April right through spring.

### **TGF Inbox - Reader E-mail**

**Reader Larry R.** wrote to us via the Contact Form at the TGF website, "does anyone fish for springers near buoy ten?"

To which TGF co-editor and pro guide Bob Rees replied, "Few people fish salmon at Buoy 10 this time of year. The run is too drawn out over time so the fish aren't as concentrated in the estuary this time of year like they are in the fall. Plus, with migrating conditions uniform throughout the spring months, the fish are more likely to move quicker now than in the fall when the estuary is considerably cooler than the upper river is. I hope you have a good spring chinook season!"

**Reader Mario H.** wrote to ask, "Do you know when it is good time to catch herring at Newport South Beach boat dock?"

Bob Rees replies, "Although late February and early March can be a good time to catch herring in Newport, returns in recent history have been poor. This trend seems to be happening worldwide unfortunately. Hopefully in the future, this run rebuilds and sport jiggers can find better success. There is some herring jigging that goes on in the summer months however. July can be a good time if you have a boat and are willing to fish near the jetty tips. Good luck!"

### **Write to the TGF staff:**

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### **Random Links**

Take the Willamette Boating Survey:

<http://www.portlandonline.com/ohwr/index.cfm?a=345780&c=39767>

**GOOD LUCK!**