

The Guide's Forecast - volume 13 issue number 38

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **September 30th – October 6th, 2011**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- Although the wobbler fishing is slowing down for mainstem anglers, Bonneville backtrollers continue to find fair to good success using sardine wrapped plugs in the deep water. This fishery should improve even further into early October although anglers will have to become more choosy as fish near the end of their life-cycle.

The much anticipated fall sturgeon fishery upstream of the Wauna Powerlines begins on October 1st. Anglers may retain 1 keeper sized fish per day from Thursday though Saturday through the end of the year or until the quota has been reached. Fishing is expected to be good. Bonneville typically produces the best catches.

Over 1,000 fall chinook and a similar number of coho have been counted at Willamette Falls as daily numbers increase. The Middle Fork is producing a few steelhead.

Steelhead are hitting spinners on the McKenzie but stay clear of spawning salmon.

Trout fishing is good on the upper North Santiam where chinook are spawning and October Caddis are hatching.

Coho fishing remains slow on the Clackamas although spinner casters lining up at the Bowling alley Hole are taking the occasional fish.

With coho numbers building in the Sandy, spinners and drifted yarn have resulted in a few hookups.

Northwest – Tillamook Bay has been producing good numbers of chinook but wild weather on Sunday and Monday inundated the bay with seaweed and eelgrass. High tide offers the only reprieve from the weed and chinook have been taken in the Ghost Hole and at Bay City during the peak part of the incoming tide.

Portland angler Frank Ness landed a 37-pound birthday buck at Bay City on Saturday. The fish took a plug-cut herring trolled in 11 feet of water on the incoming tide. The upper bay has produced poorly in recent days.

The Nehalem produced excellent fishing late last week with higher numbers of chinook clearly present compared to the previous several years. Bigger tides and a little rain should stimulate more movement into the basin.

Wild coho numbers are starting to show in better numbers on many north coast streams. Check the ODF&W web site for updates on basin quotas.

The Salmon and Nestucca Rivers should be consistently productive through this weekend. Bobber fishers and tidewater trollers will likely produce the best results.

Recent rains were not significant enough to raise summer low levels on most north coast streams. Therefore, chinook and coho will likely remain in the lower reaches of these systems, including tidewater. Bigger tides should draw in even more biters this week.

The Alsea and Siletz Rivers have also been productive although fishing is not consistent day to day.

Crabbing remains fair to good in most north coast estuaries but a rough ocean isn't allowing sportanglers to take advantage of the bounty at sea right now. Evening minus tides should be fair for razor clam diggers north of Tillamook Head.

Southwest – In a September 26th News Release, the ODFW announced that all-depth fishing for rockfish and lingcod will re-open on October 1st.

Nearshore halibut remained open at this writing with 25% of the quota remaining available as of the latest data on September 18th.

Chinook catches have been good in Winchester Bay. The remaining wild coho quota is dwindling with good catches on the lower Umpqua River and will likely close in the near future. Crabbing has been good in the bay.

Following a slow week, the past weekend turned on for anglers in Rogue bay and the lower river when the ocean laid down and fish moved in. Boats are taking primarily chinook although coho make up a significant component in catches. Results have been very good at times. The upper Rogue is consistently delivering summer steelhead to anglers throwing egg patterns to fish feeding below spawning chinook.

Officially, the Chetco River Fall Chinook State Waters Ocean Terminal Area Recreational Fishery opens this year on Saturday, October 1st for 12 days and fish to 40 pounds or better. Chinook fishing in the lower Chetco has been good for a mix of Chinook adults and jacks.

Trout fishing at Diamond Lake is good with Power Bait effective although deep trollers are also taking fish.

Eastern – It's been busy on the Deschutes at the Sherars Falls fish trap recently with over 100 chinook, steelhead and coho counted on September 25th alone. Steelheading on the lower river is good. For trout, it's mostly a caddis show with long-rodders experiencing fair to good results.

Kokanee fishing is about done at Odell with low catch numbers and the majority of fish in full spawning colors.

SW Washington – On the Cowlitz, coho catches were good prior to the recent weather change but have since become challenging. Sea-run cutthroat trout action should also be picking up.

Chinook are available on many district streams but regulations vary by watershed so check carefully before heading out.

Salmon and steelhead counts are continuing to decline but action at Drano and the lower Klickitat should continue to pick up. Coho action should pick up when temperatures begin to drop in the coming weeks.

Columbia River Fishing Report – With the estuary fishery winding down, the main focus remains on Chinook upriver of Warrior Rock. Wobbler anglers are still scoring occasional fish but success rates have dropped off significantly from previous weeks. Anglers are reporting some occasional issues with moss fouling gear.

Action at Bonneville continues to pick up with the peak likely just around the corner. Anchor anglers are still doing well but backtrollers are scoring better numbers of fish. Passage at Bonneville is slowing and counts have been much lower than most have expected for the run that was forecast this season. A final run tally is still months away but I've heard no rumors of season modifications due to a downsizing of the forecast. I guess we'll have to stand-by on this news.

The sturgeon opener upriver of Wauna is generating some excitement. Anglers haven't had a consumptive opportunity in this area for a while now. October fishing can be very good for anglers in this area and bank angler success rates are often some of the best of the year for this fall gorge fishery. There should be considerable effort for these fish on the re-opener.

Downriver, the coho bite continues to fade. Effort is fading with it but October anglers know that a second push is on the way. The "B" run fish, mostly destined for SW Washington streams should turn on in the very near future. When I lived in Astoria, we always targeted the mid-month minus tide series but hatchery fish should be available for much of the month. Fishing will still likely be best around mid-October but anglers should expect catchable numbers building in the coming weeks.

Crabbing in the estuary has been fair and should boom in the coming weeks. The softer tide series are the ones to target but we're still several days away from this favorable setting.

Clam tides are good this week but a large surf is keeping sensible people focused on other recreational opportunities.

The Guide's Forecast – There isn't a whole lot to look forward to on the lower Columbia River in the coming week with the exception of both salmon and sturgeon opportunities in the gorge. After coming off of peak fishing for Chinook and coho, it all seems a bit anti-climatic.

For salmon fishers, Bonneville will remain good and may even improve in the coming two weeks. Although passing numbers are waning, there are still over 4,000 adults per day crossing the facility. As water temperatures cool and migration slows, fish seem to become more territorial and more likely to bite. The first two weeks of October are often the most productive but as we progress into the month, fresh fish will become harder to find.

Downriver, don't count on another influx of fish for the wobbler fishery; numbers will continue to wane. Also, it may be a bit early for the second run coho to make a strong showing but they should begin to appear in catchable numbers. Anglers may want to wait until we enter a period of low-tide exchange the following week, when crabbing will be a good option as well. There are clearly a lot of hatchery coho yet to come. In the meantime, anglers will likely find some varying degrees of success trolling or casting spinners and plugs near the tributary mouths.

The Bonneville sturgeon fishery should start off with a bang. Bank anglers disproportionately do well in October but boaters will take their fair share as well. It seems the best fishing occurs the closest to the deadline; another reason why bang anglers can dominate these catches. Remember: the Willamette River will remain closed into 2012 and yes, that includes the Multnomah Channel.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Water temperatures have continued to drop at Willamette Falls with the latest reading 64 degrees. While the over 1,500 coho that have been counted at the Fall is decent, those numbers are eclipsed by the record runs of the previous couple of years. Most promising, though is the number of coho jacks which, at

nearly 1,200 as of September 26th, is an indicator of a good adult run in the season to come. The other count of interest is that of fall Chinook adults at 11,157 as of that same date.

The McKenzie Two-Fly Tournament which took place last weekend is an interesting affair. Choose only two patterns, photograph them and don't lose them in the course of the days - that's all you've got. Congratulations to John McCreery and Darlene Dolby for taking first place. They won lodging at Wild Billy Lake.

If the North Santiam flows are on schedule, it will more than double Mondays flows today at 3,650 cfs. This is a hazardous flows for boats. Additionally, boaters are advised of a 2.5-mile closure of the North Santiam with construction taking place at Minto Dam. There is no boating allowed from Niagara Park to Packsaddle Park with those ignoring the closure risking injury or worse as coffer dams are blocking bank access and may force boats over a waterfall.

Henry Hagg Lake, Detroit Reservoir and Foster Reservoir are scheduled for trout planting this week.

The Guide's Forecast – Steelheaders on the Middle Fork have continued to hook summer steelhead almost every day. It's not red hot but it's not a bad alternative to end-of-season yard work. Smallmouth bass results have been very good in many locations above Willamette Falls.

The October Caddis hatch is in full swing on the McKenzie now with matching patterns effective. There are still steelhead available to those targeting them.

Coho are entering the lower North Santiam and are most available from Green's Bridge to Jefferson. While all the standard techniques will take fish here (when they're inclined to strike), spoons are a local favorite.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Clackamas levels and flows improved only briefly with recent rain and are once again low and clear. Coho have begun entering the Clack but numbers are too low to expect much action with them on the river. Water is too low at Eagle Creek for that stream to be on the radar at this point. With the summer steelhead run all but over, recycling of fish from the hatchery facility at McIver has ceased.

Pressure increased on the Sandy River as coho hopefuls using cured eggs, spinners and plugs have been hitting the water in hope of intercepting the early coho which are entering. A few have seen success. The water is clearing as summer ends and glacial runoff ceases for the season.

The Guide's Forecast – Rain this coming week should encourage better numbers of coho into the Clackamas and should boost catches on the lower river. The occasional late season springer is being caught below Rivermill Dam but the majority of river Chinook are unsuitable for retention this late in the season.

Sandy anglers are taking the occasional coho on spinners and small plugs from boat and bank. The season is just getting started and will only improve into October. While coho will make their way upriver even with a lack of precipitation, rainfall will always boost fish movement and often improve the bite. With rain in the forecast, the coming week hold promise for the Sandy. Drift eggs under a float in deeper sections or throw spinners to entice coho from the Sandy.

Coho have been taken as high as Dodge Park for sure but nothing at this time in Cedar Creek. While some coho entered with the last round of rainfall, expect fish (and crowds) to hit Cedar in

the coming week as precipitation starts once again.

North Coast Fishing Report – After a short series of storms hit the north coast over the weekend, Tillamook Bay filled with seaweed, making it nearly unbearable to fish effectively in what started off to be a good season. I fished on Tuesday, but only found a small window of time to effectively troll baits in the lower estuary. From low slack through about 4.5 hours of incoming tide, seaweed dominated the catch with little reprieve in the middle. Finally, as we neared high slack, anglers were able to take care of most of the weed by running shallower or running spinners where one could shake off the debris and get back to fishing. Fishing however stayed fair for just a short period of time until weed came back into play on the outgoing tide.

Recently, catches were fair on the east side of the bay, with Chinook falling in the Ghost Hole and at Bay City. The South Channel remains relatively void or willing biters but guides and anglers are still trying to intercept fish over there when all else fails. Some wild coho are beginning to show but anglers are catching about as many on the east side of the bay targeting Chinook. They seem to bite spinners better than bait this far up in the estuary. The upper bay has produced poorly for Chinook in recent days but should change on the current tide series we are experiencing right now.

Although we had measurable amounts of rainfall from the recent storm front, river levels remain at summer low levels. Most of the rain soaked into the parched forest floor with little run-off to the rivers. As a result, fish were on the move, but they did not move very far. Rivers remained draggable but very few people put a boat on the river this week for that very reason.

The Nehalem was reported as white hot on Thursday with some boats taking easy limits by 9:00 a.m. near Nehalem Bay State Park. It seems there were some Chinook staging in the area that day. Coho numbers are improving as well although for both fisheries, success rates are not what one would call consistent. The jaws has been pretty rough to fish and where a high degree of the effort is taking place. Wheeler and the stretch near the city of Nehalem has been fairly kind to people putting in an effort in that area.

Coho quotas for the open systems is available online but desperately needs updating.

Crabbing remains fair to good in Tillamook and Nehalem Bays. The ocean has been too rough to recreate in.

The Salmon River is peaking right now with fair results reported from the area. The higher tide series has effort focused more upriver than the lower estuary.

The Nestucca has seen a few fish recently but anglers are still shying away from historical effort given the recent poor success rates the last few years. There are catchable numbers available.

The Guide's Forecast – Through the weekend, anglers will be working with extreme tides plying the waters of Tillamook Bay in pursuit of Chinook and coho. With the extreme tides come a strong movement of seaweed to hamper your effort. Anglers will want to center their focus on high tide, when fish are moving in and seaweed is not the problem it typically is during the peak part of the incoming tide. The upper bay may also offer some reprieve while producing some fair to good catches as we near the late afternoon high tide. Plugs and spinners may be a good option over the weekend. Spinners allow an angler to whip the rod-tip in order to shake the seaweed from your gear and get back to fishing.

Although Saturday may offer a brief opportunity to fish and crab in the ocean, another weather system is threatening to blow it all up again by Sunday. Hopefully we don't have to write off the rest of our ocean season so stay tuned on that one.

Tidewater fishing on the Trask should produce favorable results for bobber tossers as well this week. Although a low slack typically produces the best bites, incoming tide and high slack can produce good results too. The Nestucca and Salmon will be another two favorite bobber systems on this tide series.

Keep after the salmon on Nehalem Bay. It's shaping up to be a good season over there this year. Chinook are showing in some of the strongest numbers in recent years and there's nothing to make me believe it's going to change anytime soon.

There seems to be a fair number of sturgeon in the middle of Tillamook Bay as well as the south channel. You may be fighting sculpin and juvenile crabs doing it but soaking a sand shrimp may be worth your while on this tide series in either one of these two spots.

Crabbing should remain fair in Tillamook, Nehalem and Netarts estuaries, especially later next week when we return to less measurable tide exchanges.

Central & South Coast Reports – Worth repeating is the mid-week announcement by ODFW official regarding the lifting of the 20-fathom bottom fishing restriction. Rockfish and ling cod fishing will be all-depth for the remainder of the year with good results expected.

As of today, September 29th, The ODFW indicates the nearshore halibut fishery which re-opened around mid-August, has not yet met quota so go get 'em if offshore conditions allow.

The wild coho fishery in Tenmile Lake opens October 1st. This is mostly a trolling show with small plugs or spinners accounting for the majority of hookups. Tenmile is often a game of patience as the bite often runs hot or cold. Those

looking forward to a boat ride will never be disappointed. A health advisory was issued this week for South Tenmile

where a toxic blue-green algae bloom is taking place.

Anglers on the Alsea system have been taking a mix of Chinook and coho although this fishery can get very crowded at times.

Trollers using wrapped Kwikfish in tidewater on the Siuslaw have been seeing some action with best results at first light. Those throwing bobber and bait are also been getting a few fish.

Catches of fall Chinook slowed at Reedsport recently but word of an evening bite may boost results. Despite a lack of updates from the ODFW, with the wild coho quota barely filled, this fishery may close at any time. Over 45% of the quota was taken in the first four days of this opportunity. Watch for signs at lower river boat launches regarding the

closure if it occurs. North Umpqua steelheading is fair and better than most reports to the contrary indicate. Despite reports elsewhere regarding fishing results on the South Umpqua, it closed to all angling in mid-September and will not re-open until December 1st.

With offshore conditions looking promising in forecasts, plans are being made for tuna trips out of Charleston. Ocean water temps have been in the low 60s right up to shore this week (see **Random Links**, below). Albacore fishing often holds up off the Oregon coast well into October. Chinook fishing slowed this week in the Coos system but anglers are supplementing salmon catches with Dungeness from the bay. Try deeper areas of the bay but use caution in the shipping channel. Trolled, plug-cut herring behind a flasher has been most effective recently. The wild coho fishery is wide open here with the 1,200-fish quota nowhere near being met. One native coho may be retained per day up to five for the season through the end of November or fulfillment of the quota.

Lower Coquille Chinook catches have also slowed but a few fall fish are still being landed daily. Legal crab are being taken by boats in fair to good number as well as by dock crabbers at Bandon.

With water levels low on the Rogue, Chinook are holding in the estuary providing good results for trollers in the bay. Bank anglers are catching Chinook destined for the hatchery at Indian Creek. Rain forecast to fall in the area starting This coming Saturday and continuing to varying degrees throughout the week may change the dynamic here. Chinook are scattered on the middle Rogue which has resulted in spotty results for plug-pullers and back-bouncers recently. Best catches have been in the Grant Pass stretch over the past week. Results in the flies-only stretch of the upper Rogue have been fair with catches slowing recently.

While the big news on the Chetco is the Hawg Season (Chetco bubble fishery) opening October 1st and continuing through October 12th, Chinook fishing is fair in the estuary with a handful being landed daily. Once the bubble fishery opens, large Chinook are common with 40 pounders a given and the occasional 50 pounder expected. The Chetco River remains closed above River Mile 2.2.

Insufficient precipitation has fallen in the southwest corner of the state to get Chinook fishing underway on the Elk River. There are at least a couple of days in the weather forecast for the coming week which indicate decent rainfall but it remains to be seen if this will be enough to trigger the kickoff.

Middle and Lower Empire Lakes, Powers Pond and Saunders Lake are scheduled to be planted with trout.

Central and Eastern Oregon – The lower Deschutes remains most productive for steelheaders. At the trap operated at Shearars Falls, 100-fish days have been the norm since mid-September as steelhead, Chinook and a few coho head upriver with results for summers improving on the Warm Springs to Trout Creek drift where pressure remains light. Early and late day results will be best. Fly anglers will see a mix of October and smaller caddis hatching although trout haven't been looking up much.

October Caddis are thick on the Metolius with corresponding patterns drawing mixed results from trout.

Green Peter is producing fair catches of kokanee in mixed condition. It's getting late in the season to expect much in the way of quality kokanee from most locations.

High Cascade Lakes are providing excellent results for Brook Trout on spinners or flies and these fish are exhibiting the most beautiful coloration of the year in the fall.

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report for October 2011

North Puget Sound

October is usually primetime for coho fishing in the region, where anglers should continue to find fish in the marine areas. However, the best action for coho likely will be in the rivers later in the month.

"Anglers can still find **coho** in the marine areas in early October, but fishing in the rivers will steadily improve as the month progresses," said John Long, statewide salmon manager for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

Several rivers are open in October for salmon fishing, including the Nooksack, Skagit, Cascade, Stillaguamish, Snohomish, Skykomish, Wallace, Snoqualmie and Green. Because regulations vary for each river, anglers should check [WDFW's sportfishing regulations pamphlet](#) before heading out.

In the marine areas, anglers fishing for coho should try Point No Point, Jefferson Head, Possession Bar and Shipwreck. Fishing regulations for those areas – and other waters of marine areas 9 (Admiralty Inlet) and 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) – change in October. Beginning Oct. 1, anglers fishing Marine Area 9 will have a daily limit of two salmon, but must release all chinook. Those fishing Marine Area 10 will have a two-salmon daily limit, but must release wild chinook.

Anglers looking to get an early start on the region's **blackmouth** season might also want to head to Marine Area 10, said Long. Another option for blackmouth anglers is Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands), where anglers can keep one chinook as part of a two-salmon daily limit beginning Oct. 1. However, anglers fishing Marine Area 10 must release wild coho.

Other salmon fishing options include marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) and 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner). Anglers fishing those marine areas in October have a daily limit of two salmon but must release chinook.

Later in October, some saltwater anglers will turn their attention to chum salmon, said Long, who recommends trolling slow for chum and using a flasher with a green coyote spoon or a green, purple or pink mini-hoochie.

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

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

Meanwhile, **crabbing** closes one hour past sunset Sept. 30 in marine areas 7-North (Gulf of Georgia) and 7-South (San Juan Islands/Bellingham) – the only areas in the region currently open for crab. The region's other marine areas are already closed for a catch assessment.

Sport fishers who crab in marine areas 7-North and 7-South after Labor Day must record their catch on winter catch record cards. Winter cards are now available at sporting good stores and other license vendors across the state.

Crabbers are reminded that their summer catch record cards are due to WDFW by Oct. 1 and must be returned whether or not the cardholder caught or fished for crab during the season. Crabbers who fail to file catch reports for 2011 will face a \$10 fine, which will be imposed when they apply for a 2012 Puget Sound crab endorsement. Completed cards can be mailed in or recorded online. Additional information is available on [WDFW's website](#).

WDFW will announce winter crab seasons for Puget Sound in early October, after completing its assessment of the summer fishery.

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

Summer has come to a close, but salmon fishing is still going strong in the region, where marine and freshwater opportunities continue throughout October.

In the Strait of Juan de Fuca, anglers fishing Marine Area 6 (Port Angeles) can keep one **chinook** as part of a two-salmon daily limit beginning Oct. 1. Anglers are reminded that Marine Area 5 (Sekiu) is only open for salmon fishing through Sept. 30.

Farther south, anglers fishing in marine areas 11 (Tacoma/Vashon Island) and 13 (South Puget Sound) will have a two-salmon daily limit beginning Oct. 1. Note, however, all **wild coho** caught in Marine Area 13 must be released.

In Hood Canal (Marine Area 12), fishing regulations change Oct. 16, when anglers will have a daily limit of four salmon, but only one of which can be a chinook.

Grays Harbor (Marine Area 2-2) also is an option for salmon anglers. The harbor remains open through Nov. 30 with a daily limit of two salmon, but chinook and **chum** must be released.

In freshwater, area rivers that open for salmon Oct. 1 include the Elk, Hoquiam, Johns, Satsop and Wishkah rivers in Grays Harbor County; and Kennedy Creek in Thurston County. Anglers should check the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) [sportfishing rules pamphlet](#) for specific regulations on these rivers.

Regulations are also changing on the Skokomish River in Mason County. Beginning Oct. 1, anglers may keep up to four adult salmon as part of a six-fish daily limit, but must release all **chinook**. All **chum** must be released through Oct. 15.

Elsewhere, anglers fishing in the Quillayute system – which includes the Bogachiel, Calawah, Dickey and Sol Duc rivers – can keep two adult salmon, plus two additional **adult hatchery coho** as part of the six-fish daily limit. In Clallam County, the Dungeness River opens to salmon fishing Oct. 16 with a daily limit of four coho only.

Don't forget to dig out those clam shovels. Tentative dates for **razor clam** digs will likely be announced this month. Keep checking [WDFW's razor clam webpage](#) for details.

Meanwhile, crabbers are reminded that their summer catch record cards are due to WDFW by Oct. 1 and must be returned whether or not the cardholder caught or fished for crab during the season. Crabbers who fail to file catch reports for 2011 will face a \$10 fine, which will be imposed when they apply for a 2012 Puget Sound crab endorsement. Completed cards can be mailed in or recorded online. Additional information is available on [WDFW's website](#).

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Southwest Washington

Coho salmon are moving up the Columbia River and into area tributaries, where bright chinook are also still striking at lures and bait on some rivers.

But starting Oct. 1, anglers have another option to consider: **Sturgeon** fishing in the mainstem Columbia River from the Wauna powerlines upstream to Bonneville Dam. The fishery was originally scheduled to open Oct. 8, but fishery managers added three additional days – Oct. 1, Oct. 6 and Oct. 7 – to help reach the area harvest guideline.

"This is a great fishing opportunity for fall, especially for anglers who don't have boats," said Brad James, a fish biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). "Bank anglers have done very well, historically, fishing for sturgeon just below Bonneville Dam."

Anglers may retain legal-size white sturgeon Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays only until the area quota is met. The daily limit is one legal-size fish, measuring 38 to 54 inches from its nose to the fork in its tail. There is also a limit of five sturgeon per year.

James said 2,626 white sturgeon are still available for harvest in the mainstem Columbia River under the annual quota for the area. "I wouldn't be surprised if the fishery starts out strong," he said. "Sturgeon have moved out of the estuary and have been chasing juvenile shad that are out migrating past the dam."

Meanwhile, anglers fishing in the lower Columbia River and area tributaries have been catching respectable numbers of early stock **hatchery coho**, which will be reinforced by late-stock fish in the months ahead. In all, about 102,300 late-stock coho are expected to return this year on the heels of 168,500 early-stock fish, said WDFW fish biologist Joe Hymer.

"Like last year, this year's run is about average, but it should provide some good fishing if the forecast proves out," he said.

All areas the Columbia River below Bonneville Dam will be open for chinook fishing as of Oct. 1, including the stretch from the Lewis River down to Rocky Point. The daily limit for adult fish below the dam is two chinook or hatchery coho, two steelhead or one of each.

As in past years, anglers must release all wild steelhead, which can be identified by an intact adipose fin. The same is true for coho intercepted on the Columbia River and its tributaries from the Hood River Bridge downstream. For catch limits and other rules applicable to salmon fisheries on the big river or its tributaries, see the Fishing in Washington rules pamphlet.

For bright late-run coho, Hymer recommends the Cowlitz, Lewis, Grays, Klickitat, Kalama and Washougal rivers. He noted, however, that the Grays River will close to all fishing between Highway 4 and the South Fork on Oct. 16, when the West Fork will also close from the mouth to 300 yards below the hatchery road.

Although the focus of the salmon fishery switches to coho in October, **chinook** should continue biting through the month on a number of rivers. The Lewis and Klickitat rivers were hotspots in late September, as was Drano Lake. Anglers may retain any chinook salmon, clipped or not, on the North Fork Lewis, but Colvin Creek (upstream from the salmon hatchery) will close to all fishing Oct. 1 up to Merwin Dam. Fishing will be closed at Drano Lake throughout October from 6 p.m. Tuesdays to 6 p.m. Wednesdays.

For **trout**, Sept. 30 is the last day to fish Mineral Lake, but Swift Reservoir remains a good bet for rainbows. The area around the Cowlitz Trout Hatchery is also productive for hatchery sea-run cutthroats in October. Those aggressive fish averaging a foot or more can be caught on a variety of gear including bait, flies, or lures.

Anglers should also be aware that Goose Lake north of Carson was planted with 2,832 cutthroats averaging nearly a pound each in late September. It might also be a good time to hit other high mountain lakes when the fall foliage is in full color and the mosquitoes are dying down.

Silver Lake near Castle Rock can also be good for crappie. There is a 9-inch minimum size limit and a daily limit of 10 fish.

Eastern Washington

Snake River anglers continue to reel in good numbers of hatchery steelhead and hatchery fall chinook salmon, especially near the confluence with Idaho's Clearwater River. On the downside, WDFW enforcement officers report low compliance with regulations for those fisheries, and have issued a significant number of citations during recent patrols.

Under current rules, the daily limit for steelhead is three hatchery-marked fish measuring at least 20 inches in length with a clipped adipose or ventral fin and a healed scar at the location of the clipped fin. For salmon, the daily limit is three adipose fin-clipped adult chinook (24 inches in length and larger), and three adipose fin-clipped jack fall chinook (less than 24 inches). Minimum size for chinook that can be retained in the Snake River is 12 inches.

Barbless hooks are required when fishing for chinook or steelhead in the Snake River. All chinook and steelhead with unclipped adipose fins must be immediately released unharmed. Anglers are prohibited from removing any chinook or steelhead from the water unless it is retained as part of the daily bag limit. It is important that anglers accurately identify their catch, because unmarked chinook salmon, coho salmon and steelhead are also present in the Snake River during this fishery.

Anglers should refer to the current sport fishing rules pamphlet (available online at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regulations/>) for other regulations, including possession limits and safety closures. The hatchery steelhead season on the Snake runs through March of next year, but the fall chinook salmon fishery will close Oct. 31 – unless circumstances merit an extension.

October is the last month – and often a very good time – to fish the region's popular trout-stocked lakes, as well as some rivers and streams. Fall insect hatches are providing trout food, so anglers who use flies or lures that mimic that forage often do well.

Many waters in Ferry, Stevens and Pend Oreille counties produce good catches of **rainbow trout** and other species at this time. Some of Spokane County's best trout lakes closed Sept. 30, but there are enough exceptions to keep fishing productive. WDFW central district fish biologist Chris Donley of Spokane notes Clear, Chapman and Liberty lakes provide trout, **bass** and other fish through October. Amber Lake remains open through November for catch-and-release fishing. A number of year-round waters – including Eloika, Long and Newman lakes – have trout, bass, **crappie**, **perch** and more.

Most rivers and streams in the region close Oct. 31, but sections of some major waterways, including the Spokane River, remain open year-round or into next spring, some with specific restrictions listed in the rules pamphlet.

Lake Roosevelt, the Columbia River reservoir off Grand Coulee Dam, provides some of the best year-round fishing. Anglers trolling for big rainbows and walleye should find plenty of action, especially from the Daisy area north. Walleye fishers can also be successful casting jigs near the shoreline or using bottom bouncers.

In the south end of the region, the Tucannon River impoundments on WDFW's Wooten Wildlife Area remain open through Oct. 31, but three of the seven trout-stocked fisheries are currently

not fishable. WDFW area manager Kari Dingman reports Watson and Beaver lakes are dry because the rising river blew out the inlets, and Curl Lake has been drained for maintenance. Rainbow, Blue, Spring and Big Four lakes are still fishable and catches should pick up during this last month with cooler weather.

Dingman also notes that conditions in the Blue Mountains in general are still very dry so anglers and others passing through the area need to be very careful with anything that could start a wildfire.

Northcentral Washington

Since the fishery opened Sept. 28, anglers have an opportunity to catch **hatchery steelhead** on the upper Columbia River above Rock Island Dam, and on the Wenatchee, Icicle, Entiat, Methow, and Okanogan rivers. **Salmon** fishing on the Columbia River from Wells Dam to Brewster also re-opened Sept. 28 and will run through Oct. 15.

WDFW regional fish manager Jeff Korth said about 18,000 adult steelhead are expected to return to the upper Columbia River this year – enough to allow the steelhead fisheries for the eighth straight season. However, both wild and hatchery-reared fish are expected to return in significantly lower numbers than in the past two years, requiring additional constraints on those fisheries.

"Allowable impacts on wild steelhead will be tighter this year, so we may have to close earlier than in the past two seasons," Korth said. Three areas of the Columbia River – Vernita, Priest Rapids and Wanapum – will not open at all for steelhead fishing this fall.

Steelhead fisheries are carefully managed to protect naturally spawning steelhead listed under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). Korth said the fisheries will be closely monitored and fishing rules enforced to protect wild steelhead.

The daily limit on all rivers is two hatchery steelhead, marked with a clipped adipose fin and measuring at least 20 inches in length. Any steelhead with an intact adipose fin must be released unharmed and must not be removed from the water. Anglers must also release any steelhead with one or more round holes punched in their tail fin.

Like last year, anglers must retain any legal hatchery steelhead they catch until they reach their daily limit of two fish. Once they have retained two fish, they must stop fishing for steelhead.

"These selective steelhead fisheries are specifically designed to help maintain a high proportion of wild steelhead on the spawning grounds and enhance recovery of the region's wild steelhead," Korth said. "Anglers can play an important role in that effort by removing hatchery fish above the number needed to meet spawning goals."

Retention of hatchery steelhead on the Similkameen River opens Nov 1. As with the other fisheries, anglers are required to possess a Columbia River Salmon/Steelhead Endorsement as part of their valid fishing license. For all the rules, see WDFW's [Rule Change](#) webpage.

Meanwhile, time is running out for two fisheries set to close Oct. 15:

- **Lake Chelan tailrace:** A new fishery for **hatchery summer chinook salmon** has been open since Sept. 14 in the tailrace of the hydroelectric powerhouse operated by the Chelan County Public Utility District in Chelan. The experimental fishery – designed to give anglers a shot at the hatchery fish moving through – is restricted to the outfall area extending one-third of a mile downstream from the safety barrier near the powerhouse to the railroad bridge at the Columbia River. No fishing is allowed in the Chelan River

between the tailrace and Lake Chelan. See the Rule Change webpage noted above for current regulations.

- **Lower Wenatchee River:** Also closing Oct. 15 is the fishery for hatchery summer chinook salmon that opened on the lower Wenatchee River in August and expanded in September to include the stretch from Peshastin Creek to above Dryden Dam and the Icicle Creek road bridge west of Leavenworth. Anglers can retain two adipose-fin-clipped adult or jack summer chinook salmon, but all other fish must be released. Selective gear rules and night closure are in effect.

Some popular **rainbow trout** lakes in Okanogan County remain open through the winter for daily catches of up to five trout. Campbell, Cougar and Davis lakes in the Winthrop area are all open through March 31. WDFW Okanogan district fish biologist Bob Jateff says anglers at these lakes can expect fish in the 10-12- inch range, with carryovers up to 15 inches.

This is also a good time to hike up to one of many alpine lakes in Okanogan County and cast for **cutthroat trout**, Jateff said.

Southcentral Washington

Steelhead are moving into the Hanford Reach, but most anglers will likely stay focused on **fall chinook salmon** through mid-October. Approximately 90,000 chinook – some tipping the scales at 40 pounds apiece – are expected to return to the Reach this year, and early October is the best time to catch some, said Paul Hoffarth, a fish biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

Anglers were averaging a half a chinook per boat in early September, but that should pick up as more fish move into the Reach and water temperatures cool, Hoffarth said.

"Folks have a great opportunity to catch bright, good-eating fish through the first half of the month," Hoffarth said. "But these fish come to the Reach ready to spawn and they start turning dark later in the month."

The salmon fishery is open through Oct. 22 from the Highway 395 Bridge in the Tri-cities to Wanapum Dam, but closes Oct. 15 upriver from Wanapum Dam. Anglers are advised to check the Fishing in Washington rules pamphlet for daily catch limits and other regulations that apply to specific sections of the Columbia River.

Meanwhile, pressure is growing to switch over to **hatchery steelhead**. Based on a moderately strong forecast, state fishery managers opened the steelhead fishery two weeks early from Highway 395 to the old Hanford wooden powerline towers.

"October is a good time to start targeting hatchery steelhead," said Hoffarth, noting that the fishery runs through March 31. "The water is cooling off and the fish are getting more aggressive."

Another good prospect for salmon is the Yakima River, where fishing for fall chinook and coho usually comes alive around the second week of the month. Best bets for catching fish include waters downstream of Prosser Dam and Horn Rapids Dam, said Hoffarth, noting that fishing is closed within 400 feet downstream of those diversions.

"The salmon start moving slowly into the Yakima, then all of a sudden they're stacked like cordwood," he said. "I think we're going to see a dramatic improvement in that fishery in the weeks ahead."

Rather catch some **walleye**? October is also a great time to hook some of these toothy gamefish below McNary Dam, Hoffarth said. "Fall fishing for walleye is dynamite between Umatilla and Boardman," he said. "Those fish are putting on the feedbag for winter and are eager to strike big lures, night and day."

Meanwhile, **trout** fishing is still an option at many rivers and streams, including the Yakima, Naches, Little Naches, and Bumping rivers in Yakima County. Other possibilities include the upper reaches of Taneum Creek, Naneum Creek, Manastash Creek; the forks of the Teanaway in Kittitas County; or any of a number of high lakes.

Most rivers and creeks have statewide trout catch limits of two trout with an 8-inch minimum size. Many, however, also have special regulations, including like selective gear rules that prohibit bait. Regulations for these and other fisheries are described in the [Fishing in Washington regulation pamphlet](#).

TGF Inbox - Reader E-mail

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Random Links

Your opinion counts. ODFW online PFMC management survey for the 2012 season:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/SFFVJ2Q>

Also, voice your opinion regarding offshore bottom fishing options in 2012:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/S3KP9DJ>

Tuna fishers, take note - a new ocean data source:

<http://www.tempbreak.com/index.php?&cwregion=or>

Oregon Supplemental Salmon Regulations:

http://www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/fishing/docs/2011_Coastal_Fall_Chinook_Seasons_table.pdf

GOOD LUCK!