

The Guide's Forecast - volume 13 issue number 41

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **October 21st – October 27th, 2011**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- Chinook fishing at Bonneville continues to slow although weekend boat anglers still tallied over 2 salmon per boat fishing in the area. Some bright fish are still being taken but as fish counts plummet, so will the opportunity for fresh fish.

Sturgeon anglers working the gorge are still tagging keepers, especially near the deadline at Bonneville Dam. Success rates will continue to fall however as keepers get culled from the population and fish begin to enter a more lethargic period as temperatures drop. Squid and shrimp remain the favored baits.

Flows at Willamette Falls remain moderate with water temperatures in the mid-50s. The better fishing is above the falls for smallmouth bass and trout.

Slow but steady results are reported by fly anglers targeting fall trout on the McKenzie where the occasional steelhead hookup has been exciting.

The North Santiam is somewhat high but the flow is steady. There are some steelhead and a few coho in the river but South Santiam prospects are somewhat better.

Fishing is slow to fair on the Clackamas. Rain brought a few coho into Eagle Creek where the crowds have followed.

Coho catches have been slow to fair on the Sandy River.

Northwest – With other estuaries slowing, Tillamook will become the main focus of salmon anglers well into November. Fishing on Tillamook has been good this season with the later returning component of the run seemingly as strong as the early run. These late chinook are often destined for the Wilson and Kilchis systems and although they tend to be smaller in size, they do seem plentiful.

Weaker tides had anglers focused along the north jetty, inside Tillamook Bay, where catches were good on Tuesday for herring trollers from Lyster's Corner to the bay entrance. Charlie Wooldridge of Bay City tagged a rare hatchery coho and wild chinook.

Wild coho remain plentiful on the north coast but most fisheries are closed with exception to the Nehalem and Siletz on the north coast. The Nehalem is likely to close very soon.

Although inconsistent, the Nestucca has good numbers of chinook present with a fair percentage of hatchery origin. The Nehalem saw fair chinook catches on Saturday but slowed thereafter.

The Salmon River is still surprisingly producing good catches of chinook but action should slow in the coming weeks.

The Alsea should be peaking over the next few weeks, especially for bobber fishers working the tidewater areas.

The ocean has been friendly enough to take advantage of deep reef bottomfishing, with limits of quality lingcod coming out of Garibaldi recently. Ocean crabbing closed on October 15th with

impressive catches coming from those participating in this relatively new sport opportunity. Bay crabbing remains fair in Tillamook, Nehalem and Netarts estuaries and excellent in the lower Columbia River.

Southwest – Offshore fishing for rockfish has been very good out of central Oregon ports while lingcod catches are slow to fair with the ocean open to all-depths for bottom fishing. Ocean forecasts indicate mild conditions through the coming weekend and perhaps one more chance for October albacore.

The wild coho fishery at Tenmile which opened October 1 has yet to start producing decent catches. Effort is light by trollers dragging plugs and spinners.

Chinook results remain decent and steady for trollers in Winchester Bay.

Results for chinook slowed on Coos Bay this week. Catches and boat traffic have been very light. Crabbing has been excellent. At the last update from the ODFW, the wild coho fishery remains open on the Coos system with well over half of the 1,200-fish quota yet to be taken.

The wild coho quota has been met but chinook fishing remains worthwhile out of Bandon.

Fishing slowed in Rogue Bay and the lower river into the past weekend following several fairly productive days. At last report, only the occasional coho and a handful of jacks made up a day's catch. Half-pounders are being caught at Agness. Steelheading has been good on the upper Rogue where it remains flies-only through October.

Trollers are taking a few chinook in Brookings Harbor and the lower Chetco River.

Eastern – Steelhead fishing has been a fair but steady affair on the lower Deschutes with fish scattered throughout. Redsides are responding to both dries and nymphs at times. Despite decent trout results, steelhead continue to get the most attention at this time of year.

Crooked River fly fishers are hooking good numbers of smaller trout.

The John Day Pool will likely begin to light up later in November for steelhead but trollers are taking a fair number of chinook in the reservoir. Catches for chinook will likely taper after this weekend however. Look for steelhead to start in by the middle of November.

SW Washington – Coho fishing near district river mouths has been productive but seals and sea lions have recently put a damper on success rates in these burgeoning fisheries. Fish have begun to make their way upstream but seem more reluctant to bite the longer they spend in freshwater.

Coho are present in good numbers in the Cowlitz and the Lewis is still putting out fair numbers of both chinook and coho. These two systems should get good numbers of coho for another few weeks.

White Salmon and Klickitat River anglers are taking fair numbers of coho with an occasional chinook in the catch. Coho action should continue as chinook success begins to taper.

Columbia River Fishing Report – Bonneville anglers are still in the fish with both salmon and sturgeon available to most. Sturgeon effort is running high on the catch and keep days with good fishing, or even more so on the catch and release days. Most of the effort remains from The Fishery to the deadline at Bonneville although there is plenty of good opportunity for keepers and shaker action downstream according to **pro guide Dan Ponciano (360-607-8511)**. Dan stated he's been fishing at Skamania Island and Cape Horn, finding good action with a fair number of keepers around. Dan stated there is no super bait with squid and shrimp producing pretty consistently. Success has clearly dropped off since the re-opener but if you're willing to work for them, you can still find what you're looking for.

On the salmon end of things in the Bonneville area, anglers are still tallying fair success but effort has dropped way off this time of year. Dan just saw 3 backtrollers and 5 anchor boats targeting salmon on his last trip but success rates remain relatively high for this late in the season. The ODF&W creel check went as follows:

Gorge Bank:

Weekend checking showed two fall chinook kept for 18 bank anglers.

Gorge Boats:

Weekend checking showed 18 fall chinook adults, seven fall chinook jacks, and four adipose fin-clipped coho kept, plus one unclipped coho released for 10 boats (38 anglers).

Troutdale Boats:

Weekend checking showed one unclipped coho released for 11 boats (20 anglers).

As we've mentioned several times before, quality keepers should be more challenging to come by as numbers of passing salmon drop off dramatically every day.

Downriver, salmon and sturgeon fishing is nothing to write home about but for anglers living in the area, it may still be worthwhile. The creel checks for the Portland to Longview stretch are as follows:

For salmon:

Portland to Longview Bank:

Weekend checking showed no catch for three bank anglers.

Portland to Longview Boats:

Weekend checking showed four fall chinook adults, and one adipose fin-clipped coho kept, plus three unclipped coho released for 19 boats (43 anglers).

For sturgeon:

Portland to Longview Bank:

Weekend checking showed one legal white sturgeon kept, plus 16 sublegal sturgeon released for 52 bank anglers.

Portland to Longview Boats:

Weekend checking showed 14 legal white sturgeon kept, plus 102 sublegal sturgeon released for 83 boats (200 anglers).

As you can see, a nice bump for the boat fleet working the area. There have been recent rumors of a good pod of fish in the Kalama area with more information in the near future on that.

Even further downriver, effort remains light for salmon fishers targeting "B" run coho out of Astoria. From what little we could glean, action isn't all that good with one guide reporting some action ("3 keepers, including one chinook, lost a few others and had a few other bites") for his day effort late last week. This fishery should be viable but the run prediction isn't all that spectacular so anglers shouldn't go in with high expectations. It was surprising however that there were fair numbers of chinook around, especially given the fact the run seems to have been over-predicted. Guides, as usual, targeted the incoming tide, ending up near the Astoria/Megler Bridge close to high tide. Trolled herring is the smart choice but fish should have been receptive to spinners as well.

The crabbing in the lower Columbia is "off the hook" right now, especially given the great tide series we're currently on. It's easy limits for whatever your crew compliment is in all the standard areas; Buoy 20 or 22, or lower Desdemona Sands.

The Guide's Forecast – There are options available to the Columbia River angler but with the exception of lower Columbia crabbing, none are exceptional as we enter the low season for this great body of water.

Salmon effort and success is curtailing with Bonneville still the most viable area to target chinook but coho casters working the Washington river mouths should also find success when local populations are not being harassed by pinnipeds. This has been a real problem in recent days. If seals and/or sea lions are not present spinner casters or egg plunkers should produce fair to good results this week. Effort in the estuary will likely remain light but with a good weather forecast, crabbers working the area may want to spend some time salmon fishing on the incoming tide as well. There is a good chance at picking up a "B" run coho although a limit may be a stretch.

Sturgeon fishers have a few options as it appears there may be keepers available in the Kalama area. Bonneville remains a good option too but success rates will continue to deteriorate every week. Smelt, squid and shrimp or combinations thereof should continue to produce results. Some anglers are reportedly using salmon scraps such as bellies to entice keepers and an occasional oversize fish. One of the best aspects of fishing this time of year is the wind is often not the factor that is can be other times of the year.

If you like crabbing, it's great now and likely to get even better. Launch out of Hammond and be smart about the weather. It's about as easy as it gets right now.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Through October 17th, the latest data posted online by the ODFW, a total of 1,834 fall Chinook and 3,163 coho had been counted at Willamette Falls. Summer steelhead passage is all but over with the total just short of 21,500. Water temperatures have been fairly stable at the Falls with the latest reading 57 degrees with little change in the flow.

The McKenzie spiked with recent rainfall but is currently dropping and offers good prospects for fine fall trout fishing.

North Santiam water levels will be dropping this week but will remain sufficiently swift for drift boaters to take warning. The South Santiam has dropped and is in decent shape for fishing.

Mt Hood Pond is scheduled to be planted with trout this week.

The Guide's Forecast – Fish the upper Willamette where rocks create current breaks as ambush points where smallmouth bass will lie in wait for passing forage. Try backwaters and sloughs for largemouth. This is the time of year when bass of both species will feed heavily in preparation for the coming cold weather.

McKenzie fly anglers can expect decent results in the week to come with periodic hatches creating dry fly opportunities and otherwise productive nymphing.

Summer steelhead numbers are good in the Santiams with the South Santiam offering the best shot at hatchery fish. While the entire system is closed to Chinook, coho have started entering although numbers are too low this early in the season to target them with much optimism. The North Santiam above Detroit Reservoir is a good place to see numbers of brightly-colored kokanee which are spawning at this time of year.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Clackamas River water levels are low and clear having benefitted little from the marginal rainfall so far this year. The river will benefit from precipitation when it finally comes. It remains to be seen if coho will be in a biting mood at that time.

Although rainfall brought a little fresh water in and improved the flow and coho action on the Sandy River recently, water levels have since dropped, improving visibility but slowing the coho bite this week. It's still the best shot in the valley at a coho hookup.

The Guide's Forecast – Coho fishing will be slow until fall rains get some water in the Clackamas. Steelhead are few and far between. With Eagle Creek very low, coho will not be a target until the water level rises.

Try downstream of Cedar Creek or Oxbow Park for the best chance of a coho hookup on the Sandy River and to avoid banking elbows with other anglers on the Sandy River.

North Coast Fishing Report – While many salmon fisheries on the north coast are beginning to wind down, Tillamook remains a strong option, sometimes, well into December. That said, action remains good on the current weak tide series with most angler effort focuses on the lower bay, along the jetty on the outgoing tide. The bite was good again on Wednesday morning with fair fishing coming from the trollers going with and against the tide. Although most of the biters are being taken near the bottom, especially on the outgoing tide, some fish are coming from suspended baits as well. With the weak tide, fish are crossing the bar throughout the entire outgoing tide with the best action actually coming from the middle 3 hours of the ebb. On stronger outgoing tides, salmon will wait for the current to slow, i.e. the last hour of outgoing tide, before coming across the bar and into the estuary. High slack can also be a fair time to fish in this area but not as productive as outgoing tide.

Out of Tillamook Bay, we have had some productive fishing at high slack along the south jetty but the swell recently has been too big. Wild coho are still prevalent in Tillamook and many estuaries on the north coast so be mindful of your fish identification as some of the coho have been running quite large and can be easily misidentified as chinook. The ocean, north of the bay entrance has also produced some catches but I've had more confidence on the south side. Unfortunately, that is the area that has the higher swell build-up as well; some swells were 14 feet yesterday. The ocean closed to sport crabbing on Saturday.

Also inside the bay, the upper reaches have been less than productive on these small tides. Quite common, fish don't seem to be very motivated to bite around Memaloose, maybe due to a warmer water environment because of more river influenced water or the lack of salt content, which seems to trigger a more aggressive feeding response for fish. Regardless, upper bay trollers have not found many motivated fish lately. The west channel has been producing an occasional fish however, particularly around high tide and even more particularly in the early morning hours. It's true in this location, the early bird gets the worm, that's assuming that you know where the "worms" are most likely to reside in that channel; that's been the upper end near the oyster pile. Herring is the best tool in the west channel. The Ghost Hole and Bay City has not been as productive as they were a week or so ago but occasional flurries are still happening here. There's even a fish or two falling to spinners at this location.

Although we may be a bit data shy for the tidewater fishery in Tillamook, it's likely that with the current tide series we're on, that fish are present but not very willing to sacrifice themselves. The Wilson River does have fish present but the Trask may likely remain the best bet for this time of year.

Fly anglers are reporting good results on the Nestucca River although all users would agree that fishing is not all that consistent. There does seem to be a strong hatchery component however, raising questions by district biologists as to why the natural populations is seemingly survival challenged.

Nehalem experts are saying chinook are present in the lower system but not in great numbers. Biologists working the sample nets upstream are saying they're seeing next to nothing coming upstream. Coho numbers even seem to be more sparse than expected and no word yet on when the wild coho fishery may close but biologists last week didn't think it would last this long, they predicted a closure earlier in the week. Weekend effort must have been down.

Recent reports from the Salmon River indicated a fresh batch of biters came into the lower reach. Bobber tossers and herring trollers should have done well this week even though it is getting late in the season for this watershed.

Crabbing remains good in most estuaries and with the upcoming period of dry weather in the forecast, it will likely remain that way.

On that note, no sign of driftboat opportunity ahead.

The Guide's Forecast – With no measureable precipitation in the forecast, it looks like a estuary and tidewater show for the next week anyway. Action should remain fair to good on the Tillamook system but with the weak tide series coming to a close, anglers will want to diversify their hunt in order to score results.

Tide strength begins to intensify by the weekend and with that, so comes the eelgrass and seaweed. A good push of fish may result however as this week has good history in this estuary. The incoming tides will come later in the morning, allowing anglers to take advantage of the best parts of the tides throughout the day. The least productive period of the tide is the first 2 hours of the incoming tide. That will take place before sunrise through the weekend.

Look to the Ghost Hole and Bay City as strong options on the incoming tide with herring likely to produce the best results. As the tides intensify, the upper bay should once again become an option on the latter part of the incoming. The mouth of the Wilson River is often a great option at high tide. And here's a secret, the lower ends of the Wilson and Trask as well as the Tillamook

River, often produce good catches on the first part of the outgoing tide as I've had some great plug experiences, working over shallow water on the first part of the strong outgoing ebb. Don't wait too late however as the strong outgoing tide can catch you by surprise if you're running a prop.

Other north coast systems should see a slow decline in success. The Nestucca may be somewhat of an exception however as in healthy years, action into early November is not unheard of. The problem is however, this doesn't appear to be an exceptional year on the Nestucca.

The Salmon River should dry up and the Nehalem up north is clearly experiencing a less than stellar fall run, even though it seems the summer run was remarkably good.

Crabbing in the estuaries should hold up through the weekend but strong tides will likely put the crawlies down after that.

The minus tide series starting on Tuesday should make north coast razor clam digging interesting although most would agree that clam populations are clearly down from previous years. The minus tides may also draw sturgeon into Tillamook Bay but as long as saline levels are high due to lack of a rain freshet, it will be hard to compete with crab when soaking your bait (sand shrimp) looking for a keeper.

Central & South Coast Reports – Ocean crabbing was excellent when boats could get out right up to the closure as of October 16th. While no offshore crabbing will take place until the 1st of December, coastal estuaries and bays are providing the best catches of the year now. Yaquina Bay has been producing limits of large keepers this week.

Bottom fishing for rockfish without depth restrictions has been producing limits and catches of large ling cod have been nothing short of outstanding.

Tuna fishers haven't given up yet with albacore landed Wednesday this week out of Newport and plans have been made to go out again Thursday or Friday.

Significant minus tides will occur starting October 26th but it will be well after the sun goes down. Mussel and clam harvest is open on the entire coast.

Nearshore halibut season remains open through the end of October. While bottomfish may be on board at the same time as halibut, be aware that while there's no depth restriction on rockfish or ling cod, halibut may not be targeted at depths greater than 240 feet.

Of all rivers and bays in southwest Oregon, only the Coos and Siletz remain open at this writing but that's about to change. The Siletz and Coos are scheduled to close at the end of day on Friday, October 21st with the quotas filled.

The wild coho troll fisheries at Tenmile and Tahkenitch have yet to start producing reliably although the Siltcoos has kicked out a few recently.

Chinook fishing has been slow on the Siuslaw but fresh fish have been entering in modest number. Results will improve here in the coming weeks as a good return is expected and fishing will continue here through November.

Results for Chinook on the Alsea have been p and down but should improve as fresh fish will be moving in with the next rainfall.

While rain moved some Chinook out of Winchester Bay and lower Umpqua mainstem tidewater, catches have remained fair to good. Most are still trolling herring but spinners have also been effective at times. Crabbing has been excellent in the bay and will remain so until the heavy fall rains start in earnest. Bobber fishing has been fair to good in the mainstem above tidewater with a few hatchery coho landed as the wild fishery has been closed all of October, the first to fill quota.

Chinook are being taken in fair to good number in the upper Coos River and its tributaries although catches are a mix of bright and dark fish. Chinook results are fair near the jaws of Coos Bay but these salmon are invariably fresh and bright. Wild coho catches seem to be best from the boat ramp at Empire up to the Coos River.

Trollers in the Coquille estuary have been doing well for Chinook this week on spinners. Crabbing is good with even dock nets and traps taking many good-sized Dungeness. Bobber and bait fishers are taking Chinook in the Coquille River.

Chinook results are only fair at best in Rogue Bay this week. Netter results are coming to those fishing from the Highway 101 Bridge up to the mouth of Indian Creek as where both Chinook and coho catches have been decent. Half-pounder catches are good at Agness. With the middle Rogue closed to Chinook above the Hog Creek Boat Ramp, steelheaders are trying but fishing has been slow. Upper Rogue results are much better as anglers take steelies with egg patterns in this flies-only stretch.

Trollers in lower tidewater from the jetties to Brookings Harbor are picking up some fall Chinook. This fishery is just getting underway and will improve in weeks to come. The wild coho fishery is closed.

While the occasional Chinook has been taken from the Elk River this season, insufficient rain has fallen to jump-start this fishery in seasonal style.

On Wednesday this week, the ODFW stocked Tiger Trout, a unique, sterile hybrid of brook trout and brown trout in Fish Lake in southern Oregon. Reports of the exact number stocked varies from 1,500 to 1,700. These fish will be about 10 inches in summer next year, 16 inches in 2013. The fishery will be catch-and-release only.



(Wikipedia photo)

Fishing has slowed at Diamond Lake but is still worthwhile for still fishers and trollers. Insects are not a problem at this time of year although it's sometimes windy which can make fishing a challenge.

While Bradley Lake is listed on the trout planting schedule this week, that stocking has been canceled due to low water and high weeds. Those 800 'trophy' trout have instead been dumped into Empire Lakes.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Steelhead are scattered on the Deschutes. Catch rates vary one day to the next but the seasonal assessment seems to be that the run is about average. The lower Deschutes is rising now that irrigation efforts are shut down for the year. Chinook and steelhead are entering the Sherars Falls Trap daily with coho showing commonly in single digits.

Trout results have been good for fly fishers on the Crooked River. While the majority of the fish have been running on the smaller side, there seems to be plenty of them and the river is in excellent shape for angling.

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 outmigrating 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 Icycle 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

Lethal virus detected in wild Pacific salmon:

http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/nationworld/2016533103_salmon18.html

Seriously large catfish in UK:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2045950/Woman-angler-took-fishing-spend-time-boyfriend-smashes-record-catch-215lb-catfish.html>

GOOD LUCK!