

The Guide's Forecast - volume 13 issue number 43

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **November 4th – November 10th, 2011**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- Salmon fishing at Bonneville remains active although anglers working the area are releasing almost all of the fish. Of the 5 boats fishing there on the weekend, 16 chinook were reported caught but all were released. Plugs remain the most effective but fish are near spawning.

Sturgeon action continues to slow although keepers are still coming from the bank and boat fisheries. A keeper for every 10 rods in the boat fishery and every 8 rods for bank anglers.

Water temperature has dropped to the low 50s at Willamette Falls. Fish passage is at a near standstill. Steelheading has slowed in the upper Willamette. Catch and release sturgeon fishing is good in the Portland Harbor. Retention for sturgeon likely won't open until early next year.

Fishing remains slow on the Clackamas and slow to fair on the Sandy. Cedar Creek is the likely area to target coho for Sandy River anglers although fish are turning dark.

Fly casters on the lower McKenzie are enjoying steady action for trout on nymphs and the occasional surprise summer steelhead hookup.

The Santiam system is fairly high and is forecast to rise sharply around November 10th. Fishing is slow.

Northwest – Tillamook chinook remains a late-season option although action has been slow with the exception of last Friday. Staging fish made a strong showing for bay anglers in the morning but afternoon winds had boats scurrying for shore. By Saturday, the bite had slowed as fish made their way into area rivers.

The Ghost Hole and Bay City remain the best bet for weekend anglers as a mid-morning high tide should push fish in, destined for the Wilson and Kilchis Rivers. Although November fishing has not been all the productive in recent years, it seems this year will be different.

North coast streams only witnessed a mild rise in river levels over the weekend but it was enough to stimulate a good bite in tidewater and get fish moving upstream in preparation for spawning. Trask tidewater fished good for bobber fishers on Saturday and remains fair.

As the north coast enters the wet season, driftboat opportunities will continue to expand. The Wilson, Kilchis, Trask and Nestucca Rivers should offer up some of the best late season salmon options in that order. Plugs become very effective in freshwater but back-bounced eggs and shrimp will also be a favorite technique employed.

Chum salmon have made a showing in Tillamook Bay, surprising herring trollers on some days. Chum historically provided excellent sport opportunity on the Miami and Kilchis Rivers and anglers may still pursue them for catch and release through mid-November.

Nehalem Bay remains open for chinook but is nearing its wild coho quota. Check the ODF&W website before targeting wild coho. The first winter steelhead will likely nose into the North Fork Nehalem in the coming weeks.

Bay crabbing slowed last week with the strong tides but should improve this week. Netarts will likely remain the best option as winter storms saturate larger estuaries with fresh water.

Southwest – Offshore bottom fishing has been excellent when boats have been able to get out. The ocean is closed to crabbing through November.

Trollers in Winchester Bay have been catching fish daily but the number of fish has started to wane. Crabbing is good in the bay.

Chinook fishing has remained steady in the lower Coquille River for boaters trolling herring.

Crabbing is excellent in Coos Bay from boats as well as from the docks although Dungeness are not yet in prime condition. Chinook catches have slowed.

Chinook are in evidence but off the bite on the lower Rogue. Steelheading has been good on the middle river. The flies-only restriction on the Rogue above Shady Cove has ended. Bait fishers can now feed real salmon eggs to steelhead which are dining downstream of spawning chinook. No bait is allowed below Shady Cove to the old Gold Ray Dam site but artificial lures are OK to use in addition to flies.

Brookings area trollers have been making steady catches of chinook. Jetty anglers throwing spoons are also hooking up with a 50-pounder landed last week. The Chetco is scheduled to open above River Mile 2.2 on November 5th but the opening is contingent upon water levels.

While water levels are still fairly low, chinook fishing was very good at the Elk River late last week but slowed as hundreds of anglers stormed the area. The Sixes River is producing fair to good catches of chinook in tidewater.

Diamond Lake is closed as of the 1st of November. It will re-open April 23, 2012.

Eastern – The lower Deschutes is fishing well for trout on nymphs with best results early and late in the day. Steelheading has been slow for the most part.

John Day anglers are beginning to see a surge in steelhead success. Boaters working the mainstem with bobber and jigs along with trollers dragging plugs in the reservoir directly upstream of the dam are reporting good action. Better than a fish per boat was reported last weekend with a slightly higher chance at releasing a wild fish than retaining a hatchery one. This fishery will peak later this month.

Grande Ronde steelheaders are doing fairly well fishing deep in low water levels.

There is very little pressure on the Imnaha River although there are steelhead to be caught.

SW Washington – Barrier Dam anglers are catching a mix of chinook and coho, most of which are dark and are being released. Steelhead and cutthroat trout are hitting at the trout hatchery. Ten winter steelhead have been counted at the salmon hatchery as of last week.

The Kalama and Lewis have both chinook and coho available although most are turning dark. The best chance at a bright coho remains on the Lewis.

Klickitat River anglers are taking fair numbers of coho and action should remain fair for another few weeks.

Columbia River Fishing Report – With the Columbia falling into a deeper slumber, effort continues to drop even though there is still some fair opportunity available for salmon and sturgeon.

Salmon fishers still working the Bonneville area are challenged to find bright fish although there seems to be no problem catching good numbers of chinook in the area. The weekend check yielded 16 fall chinook adults released for five boats. Salmon are still readily taking plugs either backrolled or sitting on anchor even though passage numbers continue to be low. Counts of chinook passing Bonneville total only a few fish over 100 each day for the last several days. Fish in the area are likely to be spawning in the area. There may be a few chum salmon in the area as well. They will occasionally take plugs as well. Be sure to release them unharmed as well.

Sturgeon anglers on the lower Columbia are still witnessing the best catches in the Bonneville area. Keepers are still falling to a combination of shrimp/squid/smelt with some anglers reporting success using discarded salmon parts such as gills or belly strips. There are rotting salmon carcasses in the area, ya know. Anglers should check fish and wildlife regulations before using any parts of a salmon for bait, there are some stipulations.

Sturgeon fishing throughout the lower river is an option as the weekend creel check indicates. From top to bottom, here is the info collected from our fish and wildlife agency:

Gorge Bank:

Weekend checking showed 10 legal white sturgeon kept, plus three oversize and 28 sublegal sturgeon released for 82 bank anglers.

Gorge Boats:

Weekend checking showed three legal white sturgeon kept, plus two legal and 156 sublegal sturgeon released for 16 boats (47 anglers).

Troutdale Bank:

Weekly checking showed one sublegal sturgeon released for five bank anglers.

Troutdale Boats:

Weekend checking showed one legal white sturgeon kept, plus one legal and 91 sublegal sturgeon released for 19 boats (32 anglers).

Portland to Longview Bank:

Weekend checking showed six sublegal sturgeon released for 31 bank anglers.

Portland to St. Helens Boats:

Weekend checking showed five legal white sturgeon kept, plus 82 sublegal sturgeon released for 48 boats (100 anglers).

Fall often brings a flush of fish to the Trojan area and although most of the action is from shakers, an occasional keeper falls to deep water anglers. Like Bonneville, this action will likely slow in the coming weeks but this area is certainly one of the better options in the Portland to Longview stretch to catch a keeper.

Further downstream, crabbing remains good and will likely get even better if one can believe that. Coming off of a series of strong tides, action slowed or was limited to a shorter period of the tide with buoys and crab buried in the strong flows we experienced last week.

The Guide's Forecast – Whether salmon or sturgeon fishing, don't look for action to get any better than it is right now. Quality salmon are a thing of the past and the action should drop off as well as fish near the spawning phase of their lifecycle. Bonneville will remain the best option but new regulations will prohibit most anglers from fishing their more favored spots. Here is a copy of the regulations from the ODF&W web site:

COLUMBIA RIVER MAINSTEM, TONGUE POINT/ROCKY POINT LINE UPSTREAM TO BONNEVILLE DAM:

Effective Oct. 1 through Dec. 31, this section of the Columbia River is open to the retention of fall chinook, adipose fin-clipped coho and adipose fin-clipped steelhead. Anglers are reminded that salmon angling from a floating device is prohibited between Beacon Rock and Bonneville Dam during Nov. 1 through Dec. 31. The daily bag limit is two adult salmon/steelhead in combination and five jack salmon. Jack salmon are chinook less than or equal to 24 inches and coho less than or equal to 20 inches. It is unlawful to angle for jack salmon after the adult daily bag limit has been reached. Retention of chum and sockeye is prohibited.

There remains some anglers still targeting salmon at the mouths of lower Columbia tributaries. SW Washington systems, getting the late run coho, are the primary target. Spinner fishers and egg dunkers make up the most popular techniques employed by anglers and it's one of the places where fresh fish are still likely to be intercepted. Do pay attention to regulation changes this month as each system differs and changes are frequent this time of year.

Sturgeon anglers will have to choose between Bonneville and the Trojan area for keepers. Bonneville is more likely to produce keepers but you'll have to get close to the deadline for a reasonable chance. Bank anglers certainly stand the best chance at a keeper in the Bonneville area with the swiftest water producing the best catches. Anglers looking for where the real action is should be focusing efforts on the Willamette River, especially in the Portland Harbor.

Although morning incoming tides are still somewhat strong, they will be more conducive to crabbing than the series we're just coming off of. A 7-foot flood is a tolerable tide to work crab gear although still strong enough to think the best action is going to take place near high or low slack. Check weather frequently however as SW and NW winds can put a real crick in your crabbing plans. Crab lower Desdemona Sands or near Buoy's 20 and 22. It should be easy pickings!

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – There's been a slight increase in flow at Willamette Falls, there is still very little in the way of fish passage. Hopefully, a little additional water will draw some coho into the lower river. At the end of October, 2009, over 24,000 coho had crossed the at the Falls, in 2010, nearly 20,000. Final October coho count this year, 3,251. Admittedly, the last two seasons were exceptional but 2011 numbers are a disappointment,

The McKenzie River has been holding at fairly steady level and flow below Leaburg Dam but will be on the rise with the next round of precipitation.

North Santiam water level is high and is predicted to gradually rive over the coming week. Levels are more manageable on the South Santiam.

The Pacific Northwest Fly Tyers Rendezvous is a free event to be held at Glenn Otto Park on Saturday, November 5th from 9 AM to 4 PM. It's a great opportunity to meet other tiers, learn new techniques or find out how to get started in fly tying.

Walling Pond and Walter Wirth Lake were planted with legal and larger-sized trout this week.

The Guide's Forecast – Despite an increase in boat traffic on the Town Run stretch of the Middle Fork Willamette, fishing for steelhead is slow. It still holds a great deal more promise than the river below the Falls.

Redsides and cutthroat are active and responding to nymphs and, at times, dries on the lower McKenzie. It's well worth the trip for long rodders at this time of year. While fly fishers are hooking the occasional late-season summer steelhead, those targeting them are hooking up regularly.

The South Santiam holds fair to good numbers of hatchery summer steelhead and should produce a fish or two before fall rains wrap it up.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – There has been little change in water level or flow at the Clackamas River but, according to forecasts, the low, clear water will change with precipitation in the coming week.

Water levels on the Sandy came up early this week but have been dropping since.

The Guide's Forecast – Fishing is expected to improve along with water levels. Expect to see fresh fish moving into the river in the next few days. Eagle Creek has been producing a few coho.

Anglers experienced an improvement in coho hookups this week on the Sandy River. It appears that the run is finally underway and results are expected to improve. Cedar Creek is producing some coho and is predictably jammed with anglers.

North Coast Fishing Report – After a hit-and-miss late season chinook bite, a good bunch of chinook rolled through the east side of the bay last Friday, fueling a short-lived but productive morning before heavy winds blew anglers off the bay. And short-lived it was as nice weather came back for the weekend, the fish did not.

For the next several days, Tillamook anglers struggled on the bay although the weather was quite pleasant for anglers to fish in. The Ghost Hole and Bay City remained favored areas to fish but produced limited results. The jetty and upper bay produced equally poorly.

There was some good bobber fishing in the Trask tidewater over the weekend but it too died off shortly thereafter. A small rain freshet over the weekend drew some fish upstream although drifting conditions were less than ideal and they didn't last long for a driftboat fleet that is anxious to get a season underway.

Although there are still fish destined for the Trask and Tillamook Rivers likely to still come in, it is the Wilson and Kilchis drainages that tend to get the lion's share of the returning adults this time of year. That's what makes the Ghost Hole and Bay City such popular target areas for herring trollers this time of year as fish get pushed to the east side of the bay before entering these systems which both have mouths in the extreme east side of the estuary.

There have been fish taken recently on spinners, even at Bay City but the vast majority of anglers are using herring to entice biters. Herring can be an equally effective tool in the upper

bay but spinners may be a more effective way to fish if the eelgrass and seaweed are wreaking havoc on an anglers attempt to effectively fish.

The west channel has been slow for chinook and the coho have finally all but disappeared. It was a great year (mostly catch and release) for spinner casters over there, targeting wild coho, with many reporting double-digit days.

The ocean has been rough but is now closed to all salmon fishing, even the Tillamook Bay Bubble. It was good fishing out there when the weather allowed.

The Nehalem system still has a few chinook rolling into it and the wild coho fishery remains open, likely at least through the weekend. The tally as of Wednesday was almost 80% of the quota which is surprising to many. In previous years it seems this quota would have been met by now. District biologists aren't worried however as the rest of the coast seems to be having their basin escapement expectations met. Fish seem oddly absent however, worrying some of the local folks.

The Nestucca remains open as well with chinook still stacking up in the upper reaches of tidewater. There have been fish move upstream but you have to pay attention to the angling restrictions as the stretch above First Bridge remains closed.

The Salmon River has slowed.

Crabbing was slow over the past week with limits hard to come by as extreme tides kept crabs buried for longer periods of time. That should change with the current tide series we're now on.

Last minute update – Fishing picked up Thursday (11/3) along the jetty outside Tillamook Bay on the second half of the outgoing tide. Herring trollers took numerous fish and even limits. Soft outgoing tides are likely to produce similar results into the weekend.

The Guide's Forecast – Tides will once again dictate how fishing goes on Tillamook Bay this weekend. Well, there's one other factor, rain...

The tides are shaping up to be fairly good and action has been slow enough lately to think that it should pick up again, and in a pretty good way. A nice mid-morning incoming should produce some fair to good results for anglers targeting the east side of the bay. I know I sound like a broken record but you just can't overlook the consistent success we've seen in the Ghost Hole and at Bay City this season. Chinook are clearly utilizing this side of the bay this year.

Anglers will have a good portion of the incoming tide to work with, with the middle part of the incoming through high slack producing the best results. Trolled herring will remain a top technique, just be sure to keep your baits fishing near the bottom but if you have enough rods to play around with (yes, 1 rod per angler), don't hesitate to make a pass with your baits off the bottom if you're not in the midst of a hot bite. Keep your effort focused on the Ghost Hole and Bay City but as we near high tide, don't overlook the middle bay, particularly around Ray's Place Piling and possibly near the mouth of the Wilson River at high tide. Although outgoing tide doesn't have the history of producing outstanding results, some fish will be willing to bite a well presented bait. Spinners will still work in November waters but if it was my rod trolling, I'd stick with herring.

Driftboaters will be waiting with baited breath to see how high the current rain event is going to swell north coast rivers. At the time of this writing, rivers were on the rise with a predicted peak on the Wilson at about 4.2 feet. Although not a significant rise in river level, it may be enough to bring fresh fish into the lower reaches of the rivers with the Wilson and Kilchis obvious

destinations. The Trask and Nestucca should also receive a fresh batch of biting chinook but since the rise may be insignificant, good fishing likely won't last too long. Bay anglers may be able to take advantage of it more than driftboaters.

It shouldn't be long however, that driftboaters will have what they are looking for. Long-range forecasts indicate a more significant rise in river levels is on the way. Significant precipitation is forecast for early next week, showing a river peak of 5.0 feet by the 9th of November. Of course, we know how accurate our long-range forecasts are in the Northwest. We're on stand-by.



Although Trask River fish are traditionally earlier returning fish, don't overlook the Trask as a strong option on the next rain freshet. Although you may run across a few more dark fish than the Wilson or Kilchis, it's clear that the Trask component of the Tillamook Bay run was quite strong this season. Tillamook River chinook also likely made a good return although this is mostly a bank show for what few anglers will be participating.

The Nestucca should also see a fair showing of fresh fish when we finally do get that anticipated rain freshet. You'll have to work low in the system however, obeying the First Bridge and upstream restriction put in place this year.

Don't look for outstanding crabbing results this weekend but it should be better than last weekend. Weaker tides will play a role in crabbing success this weekend but better tides will grace determined crabbers around mid-month.

Central & South Coast Reports – Bottom fishing has been excellent this week when boats have been able to get out. While crabs are off the menu in the ocean until December 1st and ling cod haven't been biting well, rockfish limits have come quickly with no depth limit offshore.

It's not unheard of for albacore to be caught in November; it was done just last year. This season, however, warm water has moved out of the reach of recreational boaters and it appears that tuna fishing is over for the year.

Many streams and rivers closed for trout at the end of October which means no more pursuit of sea-run cutthroat. Among those now closed are the Coos and Coquille rivers but be sure to check the regulations before trout in moving waters.

While the wild coho season opened over a month ago on Tenmile (October 1st, to be precise), the 875-fish quota has not yet been impacted. This fishery will not get started until there's some rainfall to move the coho. In the meantime, fishing for yellow perch has been pretty good in Tenmile.

The Siltcoos River has been producing fair to good catches of wild coho above the Highway 101 Bridge although many of the fish in the system are turning dark. A few have been caught near the outlet in Siltcoos Lake as well. Fish holding below the Highway 101 Bridge (where fishing isn't allowed) and will move upriver with the next rainfall.

Trollers are finding fair to good results for Chinook in the lower Umpqua and Winchester Bay although fish have started moving upriver with a recent freshet. Action will be moving upstream as the bay fishery waned. Steelheading is slow on the North Umpqua.

Chinook fishing has slowed in the Coos system although fish caught recently have been in excellent condition. Bay crabbing remains excellent and rockfish catches are good inside the bay.

Catches of Chinook have slowed in the Coquille although crabbing is excellent in the estuary with best catches occurring below the Highway 101 Bridge. Catches of rockfish have been good for those casting from the South jetty and crabbing is good in the bay.

Lower Rogue anglers are catching a few Chinook as well as adult and 'half-pounder' steelhead but overall, fishing is fairly slow. Steelheading is fair to good on the middle Rogue. With bait allowed on the Rogue from the hatchery to

Shady Grove, those taking advantage of the rule change are hooking good numbers of steelhead, most of which are sporting festive fall colors while some are chrome with just a blush at the cheek. Only artificial lures are allowed from Shady Cove to the old Gold Ray dam site.

Chetco trollers are catching fair numbers of Chinook and bank anglers are even taking a few. The fall run is just getting underway here with results expected to improve in the coming weeks. The Chetco is scheduled to open above River Mile 2.2 on Saturday, November 5th, but this opening has been delayed in the past due to low water conditions and the river is looking pretty skinny this week. Long-range forecasts show the river rising in the week to come which bodes well for upriver access.

Chinook are being taken on the lower Elk and Sixes this week but until sufficient rain falls to distribute them, there may actually be more hopeful anglers than fish near the mouths of the rivers.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Trout fishing has been good on the lower Deschutes while steelhead catches have been spotty.

Some large lake trout are being taken at Crescent Lake.

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report for November, 2011

Put a turkey on your table – or razor clams

For anglers, Thanksgiving traditionally marks the start of winter steelhead fishing in western Washington, where anglers can also reel in coho and chum salmon moving in from the ocean. On the eastside, fly fishers are flocking to a hot catch-and-release steelhead fishery on the Grand Ronde River, where anglers can retain up to three marked hatchery fish per day on the lower river starting Nov. 1.

Rather serve shellfish? Seven areas of Puget Sound are currently open for crab fishing, and two more – marine areas 11 (Tacoma) and 13 (South Puget Sound) – are scheduled to reopen Nov. 21.

In addition, four ocean beaches – Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis and Mocrocks – will open Oct. 28-29 after noon each day for the first razor clam dig of the season. Pending the results of marine toxin tests, additional digs are tentatively scheduled Nov. 11-12 and Nov. 25-26, providing plenty of opportunities to put clams on the table for the holiday.

North Puget Sound

Anglers are still finding coho in the region's rivers, but most of the action will shift to steelhead in the coming weeks. On Puget Sound, the late-season crab fishery is under way, and more marine areas are scheduled to open for chinook.

Beginning Nov. 1, marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island, and Skagit Bay), 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) and 9 (Admiralty Inlet) open for **chinook** salmon fishing. Anglers fishing those marine areas, as well as Marine Area 10 (Seattle/Bremerton Area), have a two-salmon daily limit, but must release wild chinook salmon.

Anglers are reminded that Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands) closes to salmon retention Nov. 1.

Saltwater anglers have been reeling in **chum salmon** as October comes to a close. Salmon anglers may want to try fishing waters around Point No Point (north end of the Kitsap Peninsula) and Possession Bar (southern portion of Whidbey Island) – two areas of Marine Area 9 that are often hotspots for chum salmon in early November.

Before heading out, anglers can check [creel reports](#) for information on catch and effort in Puget Sound. Recreational fishery samplers with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) collect the information each week at fishing access sites throughout Puget Sound.

While on the Sound, why not drop a crab pot? **Sport crabbing** reopened in marine areas 4 (Neah Bay), 5 (Sekiu), 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca), 7, 8-1, 8-2, and a portion of Marine Area 9 north of a line that extends from Olele Point to Foulweather Bluff.

Marine areas 11 (Tacoma-Vashon Island) and 13 (South Puget Sound) will reopen for sport crabbing at 8 a.m. on Nov. 21.

In each area, crabbing is allowed seven days a week through Dec. 31.

Sport crabbing will not reopen this year in marine areas 10, 12 (Hood Canal) and the portion of marine area 9 south of line that extends from Olele Point to Foulweather Bluff. The annual quotas in those areas were reached during the summer fishery, said Rich Childers, shellfish policy coordinator for WDFW.

The daily catch limit in Puget Sound is five Dungeness crab, males only, in hard-shell condition with a minimum carapace width of 6¼ inches. In addition, fishers may catch six red rock crab of either sex per day, provided those crab measure at least 5 inches across. Additional information is available on the [WDFW website](#).

All crab caught in the late-season fishery should be recorded on winter catch cards, which are valid until Dec. 31. Winter cards are available at license vendors across the state. Those catch reports are due to WDFW by Feb. 1, 2012. For more information on catch record cards, visit WDFW's [catch record card webpage](#).

Meanwhile, several rivers are open in November for salmon fishing, including the Nooksack, Skagit, Cascade, Stillaguamish, Snohomish, Skykomish, Wallace, Snoqualmie and Green.

Some of those rivers – the Skagit, Snohomish and Green – are also good spots for winter steelhead fishing, said Bob Leland, WDFW's steelhead program manager. "Anglers can certainly find some steelhead early in the month, but around Thanksgiving is when fishing usually starts to improve," he said.

Because regulations vary for each river, anglers should check [WDFW's sportfishing regulations pamphlet](#) before heading out.

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

Anglers fishing for salmon often turn their attention to blackmouth and chum in November. But shellfish really take center stage as more areas of Puget Sound re-open for sport crabbing and the razor clam season gets under way on coastal beaches.

October wraps up with a **razor clam** dig at Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis and Mocrocks. More on that opening, scheduled Oct. 28-29, is available at [WDFW's razor clam website](#).

Early in November, WDFW will proceed with another evening razor clam dig if tests are favorable at Long Beach, Twin Harbors and Mocrocks. Tentative opening dates and evening low tides are:

- Nov. 11, Fri. – 6:48 p.m., (-0.4 ft.); Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks
- Nov. 12, Sat. – 7:23 p.m. (-0.4 ft.); Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks

Later in the month, razor clammers will have another opportunity. Tentative opening dates and evening low tides for that dig are:

- Nov. 25, Fri. – 6:27 p.m. (-1.9 ft.); Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis, Mocrocks
- Nov. 26, Sat. – 7:14 p.m. (-1.8 ft.); Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks

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

All diggers age 15 or older must have an applicable 2011-12 fishing license to harvest razor clams on any beach. Licenses, ranging from a three-day razor clam license to an annual combination fishing license, are available on [WDFW's website](#) and from license vendors around the state. More razor clam digs are tentatively scheduled Dec. 10 and Dec. 22-23.

Rather catch **crab**? Sport crabbing reopened in marine areas 4 (Neah Bay), 5 (Sekiu), 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca), 7, 8-1, 8-2, and a portion of Marine Area 9 north of a line that extends from Olele Point to Foulweather Bluff.

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The daily catch limit in Puget Sound is five Dungeness crab, males only, in hard-shell condition with a minimum carapace width of 6¼ inches. In addition, fishers may catch six red rock crab of either sex per day, provided those crab measure at least 5 inches across. Additional information is available on the [WDFW website](#).

All crab caught in the late-season fishery should be recorded on winter catch cards, which are valid until Dec. 31. Winter cards are available at license vendors across the state. Those catch reports are due to WDFW by Feb. 1, 2012. For more information on catch record cards, visit WDFW's [catch record card webpage](#).

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

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

Before heading out, anglers can check [creel reports](#) for information on catch and effort in Puget Sound. Recreational fishery samplers with WDFW's sampling program collect the information each week at fishing access sites throughout Puget Sound.

November is when the action heats up in the region for **chum salmon**. Popular fishing spots include the Hoodspout Hatchery area of Hood Canal and the mouth of Kennedy Creek in Totten Inlet. Other areas where anglers can find chum salmon include the Dosewallips and Duckabush

rivers in Jefferson County and Minter Creek in Pierce/Kitsap Counties. Those three rivers open for salmon fishing Nov. 1.

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

Winter steelhead fisheries get under way in November on several rivers, including the Bogachiel, Calawah, Hoh, Quillayute and Sol Duc. Beginning Nov. 1, anglers fishing those rivers have a daily limit of three hatchery steelhead. "Anglers can certainly find some steelhead early in the month, but around Thanksgiving is when fishing usually starts to improve," said Bob Leland, WDFW's steelhead program manager.

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

Because regulations vary for each river, anglers should check [WDFW's sportfishing regulations pamphlet](#) before heading out.

Southwest Washington

Thanksgiving Day traditionally marks the start of the popular **winter steelhead** fishery, although some anglers will undoubtedly start working their favorite rivers well ahead of time. The first two steelies of the season arrived at the Cowlitz Hatchery during the third week of October and lots more are right on their tails.

Catch totals will take off once the first big storm of the season has soaked the region with heavy rains, said Joe Hymer, a fish biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

"Steelhead move upriver on pulses of water," Hymer said. "Once the sky opens up and the rivers start to swell, we'll see more fish on the move."

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

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

Anglers planning a trip should be aware that the **White Salmon River** is closed to all fishing until further notice. Designed as a safety measure, the closure took effect Oct. 25 – one day before Condit Dam was breached using explosives.

Pat Frazier, WDFW regional fish manager, said the rush of water pouring through the 125-foot dam is expected to destabilize the river banks, and deposit large amounts of sediment and dangerous debris in the river channel. Frazier said the fishing closure will remain in effect until WDFW can assess the conditions and ensure public safety.

Condit Dam, a 98-year-old structure owned by PacifiCorp, is located on the White Salmon River about three miles from its confluence with the Columbia River. Breaching the dam is expected to open up 14 miles of habitat for chinook salmon and 33 miles of habitat for steelhead.

On other rivers, late-run **coho salmon** may be the best target for anglers who want to catch fish. Although the coho run has peaked, those fish should generate some action on the mainstem Columbia and many of its tributaries right through November, Hymer said.

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

State regulations allow anglers to catch and keep up to six adult coho salmon per day on the Cowlitz, Klickitat, Kalama, Lewis and Washougal rivers, as well as the lower portion of the Grays River. Several rivers also remain open for **chinook salmon**, although some close Nov. 1.

Effective that day, the No. 5 fishway on the Klickitat River closes upstream to chinook fishing, the Wind River closes to all salmon fishing as does the stretch of the Columbia River from Beacon Rock to Bonneville Dam.

However, like last year, the lower Grays River and the West Fork – including the area around the hatchery – will be open for salmon through Dec. 31. Steelhead fishing will continue in those waters through mid-March.

For all these waters, anglers should check the [Fishing in Washington](#) pamphlet for specific rules affecting fisheries. In addition, WDFW's [Hatchery Escapement Reports](#) can provide a good indication of the number of fish returning to each river.

Caught your fill of salmon and steelhead for the year? Here are some other options to consider:

- **Razor clams:** The first dig of the season gets under way on evening tides Oct. 28-29 at Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis and Mocrocks. Additional digs are tentatively scheduled Nov. 11-12 and Nov. 25-26, pending the results of marine toxin tests. No digging will be allowed any day before noon. For more information, see WDFW's [Razor Clam Webpage](#).
- **Sturgeon:** Anglers are still reeling in legal-size sturgeon above the Wauna powerlines on the lower Columbia River. Bank angling has been consistent near Longview and below Bonneville Dam, while boat anglers have done best between Camas and Kalama. The fishery is open Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays through the end of the year or until the quota is met.
- **Cowlitz cutthroats:** October is prime time to catch sea-run cutthroat trout on the Cowlitz River, but the fish usually keep biting through November. The best fishing is from Blue Creek near the trout hatchery on downriver. Anglers may retain up to five hatchery-reared cutthroats per day as part of the daily trout limit on the lower Cowlitz River, where the fish generally range from 12 to 20 inches.

Eastern Washington

Steelhead fishing has been excellent on the Grande Ronde River, a tributary of the Snake River in the region and state's southeast corner.

"Many people from all over the state and from out of state are on our Chief Joseph Wildlife Area fishing the Ronde," reported WDFW Blue Mountains Wildlife Area Complex Manager Bob Dice. "Fly fishing for steelhead has been extremely popular there."

Dice reminds anglers that the lower portion of the Grande Ronde, about two-and-a-half miles from the mouth to the County Road bridge, is under selective gear rules (artificial flies or lures with single-point barbless hooks) and all steelhead must be released year-round. The upper portion of the Grande Ronde, from the County Road bridge to the Oregon state line, opens Nov. 1 to daily retention of up to three hatchery-marked steelhead.

Glen Mendel, WDFW southeast district fish biologist, said another productive fishing spot has been the Heller Bar area of the mainstem Snake River, just below the mouth of the Grande Ronde.

Snake River steelhead and **fall chinook salmon** fishing overall remains slow, although the month of November often marks the start of more action with cooler air and water temperatures, Mendel said. He also noted that anglers will see new state boundary signs on the Snake at its confluence with the Clearwater River on the Idaho border, thanks to a cooperative effort with Idaho Department of Fish and Game. The signs on the north shore of the Snake where it bends to the west in Washington should help clarify where either state's fishing license is valid.

WDFW Wooten Wildlife Area Manager Kari Dingman reminds anglers that the Tucannon River impoundments on the Wooten close to fishing Oct. 31.

Many of the region's other top-producing trout fishing lakes are also closed by November. But there are a couple of exceptions and several year-round-open waters worth trying.

Southwest Spokane County's Amber Lake remains open through the end of November for catch-and-release, selective gear fishing for rainbow and **cutthroat trout**.

Waitts Lake in Stevens County is open through February and provides fishing rainbow and **brown trout, largemouth bass, and yellow perch**.

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

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

Trout, bass, perch, **crappie**, and others species are available at Spokane County's year-round-open Eloika, Newman and Silver lakes. Newman Lake's public access site boat ramp should be completely repaired and useable by Nov. 1.

Northcentral Washington

Anglers can catch and keep **hatchery steelhead** on the Similkameen River starting Nov. 1, a day after the special fishery for **coho salmon** closes on the Methow, Wenatchee and Icicle rivers. A Columbia River Salmon/Steelhead Endorsement is required to participate in any of these fisheries.

Meanwhile, WDFW Okanogan district fish biologist Bob Jateff reports that a few lowland **rainbow trout** lakes are still open for catch-and-release trout fishing through the month of November, specifically Big and Little Green lakes near Omak, and Rat Lake near Brewster. Selective gear rules are in effect for these three lakes.

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

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

Southcentral Washington

A [recent photo](#) in the Yakima Herald-Republic showed an angler hip deep in the upper Naches River near Cliffdell against a backdrop of fall color, capturing the spirit of the season.

"It's a great time of the year to be out on the water," said John Easterbrooks, south-central regional fish program manager for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). "The scenery's great and the fishing for **wild rainbow** and **westslope cutthroat trout** can be fantastic."

Easterbrooks has been advising anglers who want that experience to act soon, because most area rivers and streams close to fishing at the end of the day Oct. 31. Examples include the Naches, Little Naches, and Bumping rivers and the section of the Yakima River below Roza Dam in Yakima County. Taneum, Naneum, and Manastash creeks in Kittitas County also close to fishing that day.

Oct. 31 is also the last day of the extended **salmon season** in the Hanford Reach, where anglers have caught a record catch of more than 10,000 adult fall chinook and over 2,500 jacks. Anglers were still averaging 1.7 chinook per boat through the middle of the month.

That leaves **hatchery steelhead**, usually the main attraction in November. The season opened Sept. 16 – two weeks earlier than usual – but anglers have been working hard for their fish ever since, said WDFW fish biologist Paul Hoffarth at WDFW's Dist. 4 office in Pasco.

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

This year's forecast is below the 10-year average, but that does not fully account for the low number of hatchery steelhead in angler's creels in the Reach, Hoffarth said. Like last year, creel surveys and fish counts at the Ringold Springs Rearing Facility indicate a dearth of one-salt fish returning from the ocean for the first time.

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

Anglers can retain two marked hatchery steelhead from the Highway 395 Bridge in Pasco to the wooden powerline towers at the Old Hanford townsite. Hatchery steelhead can be identified by a clipped adipose fin and/or a ventral fin clip. All unmarked steelhead must be released unharmed.

For more information about fishing seasons and regulations in the region, see the [Fishing in Washington](#) rule pamphlet.

TGF Inbox - Reader E-mail

Write to the TGF staff:

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Random Links

Beautiful fish and wildlife videos:

<http://www.arkive.org/yellowfin-tuna/thunnus-albacares/video-08b.html>

How to Crab from the ODFW:

<http://www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/fishing/docs/CrabbingFlyer.pdf>

Dam removal in SE Washington:

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2011/10/111028-condit-dam-removal-video/>

GOOD LUCK!