

The Guide's Forecast - volume 13 issue number 44

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **November 11th – November 17th, 2011**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- With the closure of fishing for salmon from a floating device above Beacon Rock, chinook season on the Columbia near Bonneville is effectively over. Most chinook are dark now and close to spawning.

Sturgeon season remains open but catches have slowed. Bank anglers yielded a keeper for about every 10 rods while boat anglers didn't quite do that good. The bite will likely continue to slow. Sturgeon anglers fishing downstream of Portland on the mainstem Columbia are still catching a few keepers but that too is likely to slow. Good catch and release sturgeon fishing remains in the Portland Harbor.

With the water temperature dropping, fish passage remains low at Willamette Falls. A few coho are being counted along with 15 winter steelhead. Steelhead passing Willamette Falls beginning November 1st are considered winter-run fish.

McKenzie levels have dropped and held steady for several days but this will change with weekend rains.

North Santiam levels will be fairly high through November. Start looking for winters in December.

Clackamas water levels are little changed and fishing is slow for mostly dark fish. Many are waiting for winter steelhead.

Results have been slow to fair on the Sandy. The next round of rainfall should improve prospects.

Northwest – Chinook fishing really took off late last week with the North Coast Rendezvous tallying over 100 fish for the 2-day event. The jetty produced the best action on Thursday but the Ghost Hole and Bay City took off on Friday. Since the event, bay action has slowed but Jeff Nickol of Hood River took the biggest salmon of his life on Sunday. The 28½ pound buck hit a herring near Lyster's Corner along the jetty about 2 hours before low slack.

Good tides through the weekend and the prospects of rain on Sunday should continue to motivate salmon to enter Tillamook Bay. There have been a surprising number of chum salmon caught and released with fish jumping like coho near Bay City.

Tidewater of the Wilson has been producing good catches of bright chinook lately. Chinook are well distributed in most tidewater sections of Tillamook area rivers and sloughs. Bobber and eggs tipped with shrimp will continue to produce results through the weekend.

If the weather models remain accurate, rivers may rise early next week, jumpstarting the driftboat season with unprecedented action likely on the Wilson, Trask, Kilchis and Nestucca Rivers. The Necanicum River near Seaside should also produce results. Chum and coho salmon will also likely be present and must be released unharmed unless they are missing an adipose fin.

Wild coho season remains open on the Nehalem but few fish are being taken. An occasional chinook remains in the fishery but this season is winding down.

Strong tides should damper crabbing success but clammers willing to use lights at night should

find favorable conditions on the minus tide series beginning tonight.

Southwest – With rough ocean conditions in the forecast this week, boats may not be able to get out to take advantage of the seasonally excellent bottom fishing. Halibut closed for the year on Monday this week.

Crabbing remains excellent in Winchester Bay although chinook catches have slowed dramatically. Chinook are being caught below Roseburg. North Umpqua steelhead catches are slow.

Action for chinook is slow on Coos Bay although crabbing has been excellent for somewhat lightweight Dungeness. Results will be good for crabbers until the fall rains start.

Trollers dragging herring behind a flasher are making slow but steady catches of chinook on the Coquille.

Chinook fishing is slow to fair on the lower Rogue. Steelhead and half-pounder catches are spotty at Agness.

Steelheaders on the middle Rogue are taking a few but most are wild, requiring release. Low, clear water has slowed the steelhead bite on the upper Rogue. Side-drifters seem to be doing best below the Shady Cove boat ramp where bait is allowed. Above Shady Cove to the old dam site, only artificials are allowed and plug pullers have done well although egg flies are still effective.

The Chetco River opened above Milepost 2.2 on schedule November 2nd with precipitation in the forecast. Water levels rose sharply on November 6th and are forecast to come way up around mid-month, falling thereafter (creating optimum fishing conditions) but shutting down action in tidewater. A couple of fish in the 40 and 50-pound range were taken over the past week.

Rainfall has improved water conditions and catches on the Elk and Sixes river but more water is needed to encourage fresh fish holding offshore to enter. Fly anglers do well for chinook here.

Eastern – Steelheading is fair on the Deschutes with smaller offerings most effective. While there was a decent chinook return this season, most are spawning. Caddis patterns are most effective for red-sides with fishing good at this time of year.

Results have been good on the Crooked River recently. Fish haven't been large but numbers are good for those using a nymph fished with a strike indicator.

John Day River and John Day Pool steelheading is ramping up with boaters reporting nearly a fish per boat average on the last creel check. Over half of the fish caught are wild however and must be released. This wild to hatchery ratio is likely to be maintained throughout the season.

SW Washington – Cowlitz River anglers are still catching fair numbers of coho and chinook. The chinook are dark and so are many of the coho. Steelhead action is fair around the trout hatchery with better numbers likely to show later this month.

The Kalama has some coho and steelhead with the best catches coming from boat anglers. The mouths of the Kalama, Lewis and Cowlitz is still producing an occasional bright coho.

The Klickitat continues to entertain casters seeking coho and the action will likely hold up through the end of the month. A higher percentage of fish are likely to be dark as the weeks progress.

WDF&W will open up a 2-day season at Long Beach, Twin Harbors and Mocrocks on November 11th and 12th. Check WDF&W websites for further restrictions.

Columbia River Fishing Report – Action continues to slow for sturgeon and is nearly non-existent for salmon on the mainstem Columbia right now. With the closure of the Beacon Rock to Bonneville Dam for angling from a floating device, all effective boat fishing is now over. Most of the fish present are at or near spawning, making for poor table fare in any case. Effort downstream for salmon is pretty limited to coho and that fishery has its limits in years, such as this, when returning numbers of hatchery fish are down.

The John Day Pool is the exception however, where plug trollers are taking an impressive number of steelhead just upstream of the dam. This fishery is just coming into its peak but anglers must realize that a large percentage of these steelhead are wild and must be released unharmed. Some of the fish in this fishery are sizable however and are in good shape. As a general rule, anglers will troll darker colors on cloudy days and metallic colors on bright days.

Back downriver, sturgeon anglers have witnessed a slowdown in action on the mainstem Columbia with gorge bank anglers posting some of the best results; another indication that keepers are gravitating to the faster flows closest to the dam. Here are the catch statistics from the ODF&W creel check last weekend:

Gorge Bank:

Weekly checking showed four legal white sturgeon kept, plus 49 sublegal sturgeon released for 47 bank anglers.

Gorge Boats:

Weekly checking showed one legal white sturgeon kept, plus 111 sublegal sturgeon released for 13 boats (34 anglers).

Troutdale Bank:

No report.

Troutdale Boats:

Weekly checking showed 10 sublegal sturgeon released for two boats (six anglers).

Portland to Longview Bank:

Weekly checking showed one sublegal sturgeon released for 15 bank anglers.

Portland to Longview Boats:

Weekend checking showed five legal white sturgeon kept, plus 59 sublegal sturgeon released for 34 boats (95 anglers).

As you can see, shaker action, no matter where you're fishing, remains pretty good right now. The Portland to Longview stretch of water is also as good a place to target keepers as anywhere right now.

Anglers are reminded there are other strong options for catch and release fishing right now. Not only is the lower Willamette a good option but the Bonneville Pool often produces good catches of sturgeon this time of year. Smelt or shrimp is an effective bait in the pool and motivated anglers should find fair success. The fishery is likely to open back up to catch and keep in early 2012.

In the estuary, crabbing remains a good option but on the current tide series we're on, peak success will be brief, as we near the high and low slack time frames over the course of the daylight hours. The standard areas are producing well; Buoys 20 and 22 as well as lower Desdemona Sands.

The Guide's Forecast – It will be another week of highly motivated anglers reaping little reward for their efforts on the mainstem Columbia. Leave the salmon gear at home and plan on moving a bunch to find keepers if you're sturgeon fishing.

Although statistically it's likely a toss-up between Bonneville and the Portland to Longview stretch for keeper sturgeon, the gorge is likely to offer up the best opportunity for action. Shakers typically accumulate in good numbers in the gorge this time of year and there are still some oversize in the area. Anglers will have to up the ante in bait choices as fish move into a more lethargic period of the year as water temperatures drop. Smelt, shrimp and squid will remain favorites but ripe salmon parts such as gills, guts and belly strips often produce good results this time of year. There should be a fair number of rotting salmon carcasses in the area.

For anglers working the Portland to Longview stretch, smelt and shrimp or a combination thereof, is likely to produce some of the better results. Fishing near the old Trojan Plant is often consistent, seeking out some of the deeper holes where fish are less likely to be effected by the colder water and more likely to stage where food is likely to accumulate in greater amounts.

Crabbers need to be wary of a strong incoming tide but the incoming tide is coming off of a relatively high, low tide, meaning that the incoming flow really won't be all that intense. None-the-less, as we near high slack, the crabbing will be best and the flow may still take buoys underwater if they are not properly rigged or if they are dropped in too deep of water. Salmon carcasses will produce the best results but there are so many crab in the lower estuary right now I think you can use about any meat substance and expect good results.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Water temperature at Willamette Falls has continued to drop and is currently 50 degrees. Only two Chinook have been counted since the beginning of November although coho have continued to trickle through. All steelhead counted as summers through October so with all counted as winters starting November 1st, just over 20 are upstream and the summer count is finalized at 21,477.

The McKenzie River has dropped into great fishing shape this week but these conditions will be short-lived as the next round of rain starting Friday this week shows no signs of stopping in long-range models.

North Santiam levels are high and forecast to rise in the coming week. South Santiam flows are less than half of those on the North and contain a greater number of hatchery summer steelhead as nearly 5,000 have been counted at the hatchery. It's still OK to use bait in the South Santiam.

This week ODFW planted brood trout and will be planting more into winter. St. Louis Ponds #3 and #6 received 150 brooders and Henry Hagg Lake was stocked with 110 brood trout weighting between 8 and 15 pounds. Ironically, Hagg Lake will close for the 2011 season on November 20th and re-open in March, 2012 although it has been fishing well and will continue to produce right up to the closure. According to the ODFW website, Junction City Pond was be stocked again this week with 750 legal and 50 one-pounder rainbow trout. In addition to the 60 summer steelhead from Leaburg hatchery stocked late last week, Other locations tentatively scheduled to receive brooders include Waverly and Timber Linn lakes near Albany, Walter Wirth Lake and Walling Pond near Salem and Sheridan Pond in Sheridan.

The Guide's Forecast – While the action for summer steelhead had slowed, the Middle Fork Willamette is still producing a few nice fish and is the area to try if this is your river of choice. Try the Town Run as it has been most productive (and is receiving the most boat traffic). The Middle Fork Willamette River above Hills Creek Reservoir is closed to angling until April, 2012.

McKenzie anglers will enjoy beautiful fall foliage and decent results for trout until fall rains force river levels up. There are also summer steelhead remaining in the system.

Try the South Santiam for summer steelhead and the possibility of a coho hookup while you can. It appears that long-awaited fall rains may be starting. North Santiam fishing is slow and the water is high, often to the point of being hazardous.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – There has been no help and only lower water where it is needed on the Clackamas River. While a few coho will and have entered regardless as it is their nature to do so, fishing has not improved and may even have slowed a bit this week. As of Monday, the flow had dropped below 1,000 cfs and the water temperature had dropped to 46 degrees.

Sandy River water levels have been dropping this week and while a few fresh coho have entered, fishing has been slow. Prospects are expected to improve in the coming week.

The Guide's Forecast – Relief in the form of daily precipitation is indicated in long-term weather forecasts. Hopefully, it will be enough to raise the low, clear water of the Clackamas, encouraging fish movement and enticing fresh fish into the system. While coho are never aggressive biters, improved level, flow and a little color will improve the odds of a hookup. Rain will likely bring fish into Eagle Creek for those who like to have plenty of people to talk to while they're fishing.

Rain starting this weekend should improve prospects for coho on the Sandy River. Fresh fish will enter and dark coho will move upstream. Cedar Creek is likely to produce some fish as water conditions improve but has been a zoo whenever there are fish present.

North Coast Fishing Report – It's a see-saw time of year on Tillamook Bay. After a strong showing of chinook for the North Coast Rendezvous and fair fishing through the weekend and Monday too, the bay died abruptly after a quick morning bite in the Ghost Hole on Wednesday. It remains and east side show with the Ghost Hole and Bay City producing the most consistent results for the last week.

Trollers picked up a few fish on Wednesday morning in the Ghost Hole. Not unexpected given the pattern of the bite the last several weeks. The early part of the incoming tide has been one of the most consistent bites the entire season here and it is likely to finish out that way too. Chinook and ironically, chum salmon have rounded out the catch lately, with anglers taking fish throughout the incoming tide. The main incoming push has clearly been the best time to fish with only an occasional fish taken as we near high tide. After the early push of fish comes through the Ghost Hole, Bay City then turns on, although not quite with the same vengeance. The lower end of the slot towards the Ghost Hole has been producing the best but we caught a nice 18-pounder closer to the pilings on Sunday. We ended up going 3 for 5 on Sunday with our first fish a chum, caught in the Ghost Hole. We followed up that action at Bay City with 2 bites, landing the 18-pounder. After the tide turned and started going out, we waited out the strong part of the outgoing before heading to the jetty for the last part of the tide. About 2 hours before low slack, we tied into a nice buck that went nearly 30 pounds right in Lyster's Corner. This "Corner" is a

favorite amongst fishing guides as it is the first place fish concentrate after crossing the bar into the estuary as the flow is slow as this area corners around from the main part of the bay. When the flows are still a bit stronger than you want them to be, this is a good place to target fresh, incoming fish. We did hook another fish as the tide slowed further. This one also took a herring on the bottom (about 45 foot of water), almost to the Coast Guard Tower. It was a late afternoon tide so there weren't many boats around and only 1 or 2 other fish taken during that time frame.

One thing is clear, the Ghost Hole and Bay City are consistently producing the best catches and this is common for this time of year. One thing that hasn't been consistent in recent years is the late season bite that we're experiencing this season. The late component of the Tillamook Bay run (mostly destined for the Wilson and Kilchis Rivers) has been somewhat absent in recent years. This year however, they are present in good numbers and the rest of November should provide decent opportunity. These Wilson and Kilchis fish utilize the east part of the bay as they head across Kilchis Flats towards their respective river mouths in the southeast corner of the estuary. Unfortunately, these flats are exactly that, flat and shallow, making for challenging fishing although it's an untapped opportunity that no one seems to be taking advantage of.

The west channel has been slow for much of the last few weeks with one guide reporting 4 trips over there in one week, drawing no strikes even though he was there during the peak part of the tide. The upper bay is nearly as dead although there is a rare fish being taken at Ray's Place Piling close to the top of the high tide.

Some of the best news of the week is that eelgrass and seaweed is starting to subside. You'll still have to pay attention to it working down your line but most days, it's not nearly the issue it was during the month of October.

Meanwhile, tidewater bobber fishing remains a good option with those practicing the technique, reporting good results. It's really time to focus on the Wilson tidewater as the freshest fish are destined for this area. A good bite was reported at the Hospital Hole on Wednesday however as it is not unprecedented to get November fish returning in fair numbers to the Trask River. None-the-less, the Wilson will likely continue to offer up the best opportunities for the remainder of the bobber season. The stretch below the Highway 101 Bridge is the best option with the freshest fish utilizing that reach until a good rain freshet comes through.

Bobber fishing is also a good option on the various sloughs in the Tillamook area. Dougherty Slough for example, dumping into the Trask near the Hospital Hole with its source the Wilson River, is holding good numbers of chinook right now. Bobber tossers are taking fish throughout the lower reaches and will continue to do so until the first rain breaks the river loose.

The Nehalem remains fairly quiet with both wild coho and chinook opportunities still viable. Guides that worked the system for a good part of the fall fishery are starting to show more regularly on Tillamook Bay, a sure sign that things are winding down on that system. ODF&W stream surveyors are finding lots of spawning chinook on productive tributaries.

The Nestucca has been quiet too although some viable fish remain in tidewater. Many fish are beginning to turn dark however as anglers on this system, along with several other systems, await a decent rain freshet to bring in more fish.

The Alsea tidewater has good numbers of fish present and bobber anglers are taking fish in fair numbers in the upper reaches of tidewater. Many of the fish are coloring however with bucks still making for fair table fare.

It's not the best time for crabbing as success has been only fair. Strong tides will likely continue to curb success but the crab that are available, should be in fine shape.

The Guide's Forecast – It's been a good late season on Tillamook Bay with sole focus on chinook salmon destined for the Wilson and Kilchis Rivers right now. There are good numbers of chum salmon in the Tillamook system with anglers nearly as likely to catch one of those on a herring as a chinook lately.

It's been a consistent pattern and there isn't any reason to believe it's going to change now. The Ghost Hole and Bay City remain king during the November fishery as fish are headed for the SE corner of the bay where the mouths of the Wilson and Kilchis are. It's hard to target chinook when they bypass Bay City after the peak part of the incoming tide.

Do target the incoming tide with the first accessible fish available in the Ghost Hole about an hour after incoming tide. A weak low slack will happen along the jetty by Sunday and early next week but the issue with that is when we have a weak outgoing tide, chinook don't wait for low slack to cross the bar, they'll cross on the last half of the outflow when the tidal inertia really isn't all that bad. On strong outgoing tides, they'll wait until the tide slows closer to low slack but the low tide on Sunday is about sunrise and it's a big 3.2 foot low slack. Chinook will have made their way well into the estuary by the time low slack hits, making the incoming tide in the Ghost Hole the best option. First light is never a bad time to target fish either however; again, the Ghost Hole.

Follow the fish up the bay as the tide progresses but you'll have a hard time finding them upstream of Bay City as the cross Kilchis Flats on the east side of the bay heading towards the mouths of their natal departure. Herring will work the best during these times but don't overlook spinners in the shallower water if you choose to pursue fish up-bay. There is an outside chance a chinook may be present in the west channel, there was some guide presence there on Wednesday but I didn't hear how they did over there.

Bobber fishing in tidewater should remain productive, especially in the Wilson, until the rains arrive. That rain event, as insignificant as it is supposed to be, isn't forecast to happen until Saturday with peak flows happening later on Sunday. The Wilson River is only forecast to come up about a foot although that is certainly enough to get the juices flowing, stimulating a large move upstream. The Wilson and Kilchis will be prime candidates for a blood-bath but the Trask and Nestucca should also be great options although fish are likely to be darker on these latter mentioned systems. Until those systems swell, it will be a tidewater show but fresh fish should begin to make an appearance. These fish know when a weather event is about to happen.

The Nehalem won't be a strong option but there should still be some fresh fish on the next rain. Wild coho remains open but we've been saying for weeks that this unique fishery shouldn't last long. A lack of effort (likely due to a lack of success) is the culprit. Check regulations for upstream constraints as there isn't much of a reach available for driftboating.

Chums will be in the Wilson, Kilchis and Miami Rivers. After November 15th, it is illegal to target them. Action should be good on the next rain freshet as there is clearly a bunch of these fish in the estuary, staging a comeback on the next weather system.

The Nestucca will likely fish good again when the flows come up. It's only open downstream of First Bridge, where you're most likely to encounter fresh fish anyway. Until the rain hits, tidewater should provide some sport for bobber casters using shrimp and eggs. You'll likely encounter a mix of mostly dark fish with a few bright ones intermixed. It'll be the same on the Siletz and Alsea Rivers as well. These systems don't get much of a late run of fish.

Crabbing may remain challenging although the incoming tide strength isn't quite what it has been with a weak low tide throughout the weekend. It's a high, high tide but on Saturday, it's only flooding in about 5 foot with high slack on the Tillamook Beaches around noon. Assuming these systems do get some significant rainfall, well, it won't help out the bay crabbing on any system. Netarts Bay however should remain productive.

A nice set of minus tides will offer up some decent clamming opportunities in most estuaries and along Clatsop County Beaches beginning on Thursday. The surf isn't predicted to be exceptionally high but it's not going to be extremely calm either. Use common sense and don't plan on an easy limit. You will need your lanterns if you plan on clamming near low slack.

Central & South Coast Reports – Charter boats were able to get out Wednesday this week and produced fairly easy limits of rockfish and near-limits of ling cod now that there is no restriction on the depth at which we may pursue bottomfish offshore. Ocean conditions are not looking good for a launch this coming weekend. Halibut fishing is closed for the year with the extended nearshore quota filled.

Ocean crabbing will open the 1st of December and while Dungeness will be in prime condition, windows of opportunity to launch will be more rare than an Oregon opah.

Until rain moved fall Chinook upriver, bobber and bait rigs will be affective in Alsea tidewater. For those familiar with the area, be aware that all facilities at Kozy Kove are closed, including the boat ramp.

No reports of success in the wild coho fishery at Tenmile Lake have been forthcoming, despite this fishery being open over six weeks now. Hopefully, rain will change all that. Tahkenitch Lake reported produced a single coho this week.

Siltcoos Lake has a mix of bright and dark coho and while a decent fish is being taken here and there, most trollers are blanking. Need we say rain will help? Wild coho may also be kept in the Siltcoos River from the lake outlet to the Highway 101 Bridge. A few are being taken but precipitation will kick it up a notch.

Crabbing improved this week in Winchester Bay although upcoming rainfall may be sufficient to reverse this upswing.

Anglers fishing from the south jetty have been making fair to good catches of rockfish while the few boats crossing into the ocean have reported limits of ling cod and good rockfish results. Chinook trollers in Winchester Bay have been mostly going through the motions as actual hookups have been rare. While there are Chinook and a few hatchery coho in the Umpqua mainstem, fishing has been slow. The upper mainstem near the forks is producing decent smallmouth bass catches but this fishery is drawing to a close as water temperatures drop. Steelheading is slow in the flies-only stretch of the North Umpqua. The South Umpqua which has been closed to protect spawning Chinook, will re-open on December 1st.

Trollers dragging spinners and bobber fishers suspending cured salmon eggs are doing best on Coos Bay but that doesn't mean well. Fishing has been slow. Crabbing has continued to yield limits of Dungeness in fair to good condition.

Hatchery coho may be kept in the Coquille system now that the wild coho fishery has closed. Chinook and coho catches are slow, however. Crabbing is good below the 101 Bridge.

While the lower Rogue is slow, there is a mix of Chinook, steelhead and coho in the river. Just not very many at this time of year. With the Rogue Closed for Chinook above the Hog Creek Boat ramp near Grants Pass, that means most of the middle Rogue and upper river. Steelheading on the middle Rogue has been fair to good with plug-pullers doing the beat. Holy water fly fishers report excellent catches and prolific BWO hatches. Coho have made it into the upper Rogue with a significant number entering the hatchery over the past week. Anglers on the upper river are picking up a few and continue to hook decent numbers of steelhead.

Rain started right on schedule in the southwest - coincident with the opening of the Chetco above River Mile 2.2, which has been postponed in the past when water levels were too low. Over the past weekend, fishing was fair for some, great for others as flows increased to 2,500 cfs late in the weekend. The freshet filled the river with leaves which was troublesome but worth the hassle for above average results. Flows are 1,500 cfs at Brookings at this writing mid-day Thursday, November 10, and predicted to be dropping through the weekend. Another round of precipitation will raise levels slightly and if forecast are accurate, the Chetco may blow out in 10 days or so. In the meantime, prospects for fall Chinook are very good for the coming week. Plugs will be effective but be prepared to backbouce roe for best results.

While the Chinook season is getting started on the Elk and Sixes, catches will continue to improve in coming weeks. The number of fish hooked this week is somewhat better in the Elk River but will remain slow until rain starts to fall and until that time, fish will remain only in lowermost tidewater.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Warm Springs to Trout Creek has provided productive steelheading for some this week although action has slowed for most anglers. One indication is the cessation of counts at Sherars Falls, although numbers of steelhead and Chinook were good, on the last day of October, indicating there are still some fish available in the lower river. On the plus side, boat traffic is light now.

Flows are low on the Imnaha although a flurry of steelhead action occurred on Wednesday this week. As the season progresses, sudden changes in river conditions are possible as well as the onset of wintery conditions.

While a few steelhead have been taken on the Grande Ronde, catches have been lower than average so far. Numbers haven't been great over the dams, either with hatchery steelhead, normally in the majority, about even with wild fish so far this season.

The Crooked River has been fishing very well this week, Hatches of midges, Scuds and occasionally Baetis are creating a lot of interest with resident trot. Check the weather and dress appropriately.

There is fairly heavy boat traffic on the John Day, but fishing is spotty. It seems bobber fishers are doing better then plug pullers. Fishing seems to have slowed over the past week.

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.

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 the department.

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 Hoodport Hatchery area of Hood Canal and the mouth of Kennedy Creek in Totten Inlet. Other areas where anglers can find chum salmon include the Dosewallips and Duckabush rivers in Jefferson County and Minter Creek in Pierce/Kitsap Counties. Those three rivers open for salmon fishing Nov. 1.

Meanwhile, salmon fisheries remain open through Nov. 30 on the Bogachiel, 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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Doug Rees: doug@TheGuidesForecast.com

Michael Teague: Michael@TheGuidesForecast.com

Random Links

New Catch Magazine (commercial, but beautiful):

<http://www.catchmagazine.net/>

GOOD LUCK!