

The Guide's Forecast - volume 13 issue number 46

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **November 25th – December 1st, 2011**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

The Guide's Forecast is thankful to have you as subscribers! Happy Thanksgiving!

Willamette Valley/Metro- Anglers fishing the mainstem Columbia have been put off by dropping catch rates and inclement weather. Neither is expected to improve although anglers may find varying degrees of success pursuing catch and release sturgeon opportunities in the Bonneville Pool. Keepers should remain available in the Portland to Longview stretch but will be challenging to come by. Waters adjacent to the mouth of the Willamette are also a fair option.

As water temperatures on the Willamette drop to the mid-40s, level and flow will be increasing over the coming week and beyond as it will be slower to react and recover from the storm.

The McKenzie River has been fishing well, providing some dry fly action afternoons but as with other valley rivers, it is rapidly rising.

Sandy and Clackamas rivers will be unfishable and won't be recovering until sometime next week. There isn't much to pursue here anyway, until broodstock steelhead begin to make a showing early next year.

Travelers are reminded to dial 511 for Oregon travel and road information.

Northwest – Prior to the winter storm, district rivers were fishing good for fresh chinook. The lower Wilson was a top producer with the Kilchis also putting out fair numbers of chinook and incidental chum salmon. Tidewater of the Wilson produced the most consistent results for backtrollers and backbouncers with fresh fish into the high 20-pound class reported.

Tillamook Bay itself produced fair results for a dwindling fleet. Action remained on the east side of the bay where the Ghost Hole and Bay City were producing half way through the incoming tide. Although there will likely continue to be effort in the bay into December, it will be several days before conditions are favorable for salmon catches.

Tillamook Bay often sees its first significant catches of sturgeon in November and with fresh water inundating the estuary, juvenile crab, which often compete for anglers bait while sturgeon fishing, will likely be washed to the ocean making for good opportunity for anglers targeting the west channel and middle bay. Sand shrimp is the top bait when pursuing sturgeon.

The North Fork Nehalem will be one of the earliest rivers to recover after the storm series and should provide good opportunity for steelheaders working the reach nearest the hatchery. Steelhead have already been taken near the hatchery and workers have caught a handful in the trap already. The Necanicum River will offer up similar opportunity when systems pass through.

Anglers will have to use extreme caution when floating rivers after the high water events. Dynamic channel carving and high water will recruit large wood debris into the watersheds, causing navigational hazards that are life-threatening. Boat safely and always wear a lifejacket when on board.

The Nestucca River had traffic prior to the high water and may provide a rare bright chinook and early winter steelhead when it clears again. Target steelhead downstream of Three Rivers or in

Three Rivers itself as the early run is likely destined for this small tributary.

Crabbing is out for most north coast bays but the lower Columbia and Netarts Bay remain options. More severe weather however will make them treacherous to recreate in. Use extreme caution and only crab on an incoming tide.

Southwest – Rock and jetty fishing is both productive and hazardous at this time of year. While there are plenty of rockfish, sea-going perch and even lingcod just a short cast away, winter wave action can be dangerous. Check conditions ahead of time and keep a constant eye on the water.

Ocean conditions are expected to be very rough this week with combined seas over 20 feet.

Winter storms and high water will put coastal rivers out of shape this week but this surge of fresh water will pass, waters will recede, and, when this occurs, many ocean tributaries will contain fresh winter steelhead.

Umpqua levels increased sharply over the past weekend and as with other southwest streams, will be highest on Thanksgiving Day. Even prior to the blowout, fishing was slow.

Chinook fishing, which has slowed over the past couple of weeks at Coos Bay and in the lower Coquille, is out of the question this week. Winter storms will undoubtedly dump enough fresh water into bays and estuaries to drive Dungeness out to sea.

With the Rogue level and flow predicted to more than double into Thursday this week, it will be a while before this larger river recovers from the storm sufficiently to fish again. The first to find success after the freshet will be plunkers.

Currently, the Chetco River is rising even more rapidly than forecasted. At this rate, expect flows over 20,000 cfs at Brookings on Thanksgiving Day. While the level is predicted to moderate into the weekend, it remains to be seen if it actually drops to fishable level. When it does, chinook fishing should be good. Wayne Smith of Yreka, California landed his salmon of a lifetime on November 19th. The 47-inch chinook was estimated to weigh near 65-pounds, landed on a T-55 Hog Nose Flatfish on the lower Chetco River fishing with **pro guide Andy Martin (206-388-8988)**.

The Elk and Sixes rivers will be the first to recover from the storm.

Eastern – Deschutes anglers scored redsides and the occasional brightly-colored steelhead over the past weekend. Weather this week will not be conducive to fishing the east side.

The Crooked River fished well for fly anglers over the past weekend, producing decent numbers of large trout along with a few whitefish.

Grande Ronde steelheaders should also see some fair opportunity when flows subside after the storm pushes through. The Imnaha and Umatilla may also be good late season options.

SW Washington – Like Oregon streams, SW Washington will be challenged by high, off-colored water conditions into the weekend. Smaller streams will be the first to fish but most small streams will have spawning salmon in them, which anglers should avoid.

Following the flood, the Cowlitz should be a great option for early run winter steelhead and

winter steelhead have also entered the hatchery facility on the Kalama River. The Lewis will also be an option although hatchery returns of winter steelhead have been low in recent years.

The coho fishery at the mouth of the Klickitat is starting to fade but when weather conditions improve, trolling for steelhead in the John Day Pool should remain a strong option.

Columbia River Fishing Report – Little sturgeon effort has taken place this week with the weather being the way it is. Bonneville effort continues to drop however, bank anglers are still vying for dropping numbers of keepers. It remains one of the better, albeit, fair-at-best opportunities for keeper sturgeon in the area. The Portland to Longview stretch and the mainstem adjacent to the mouth of the Willamette are the other options. Catch rates in the Portland to Longview stretch are similar to those of the gorge. Shakers are keeping anglers entertained.

Crabbing is a strong option in the estuary when weather allows. Keeper males are numerous around Buoys 20 and 22 as well as lower Desdemona Sands Light Marker. We just need the weather to cooperate in order to harvest. Commercial crabbers will remain absent in the lower Columbia as the ocean season will also be delayed until at least mid-December due to low meat of harvestable crab.

The Guide's Forecast – Sturgeon anglers will struggle for keepers if they are brave enough to take on the weather. The Bonneville area will remain the best option for bank anglers while the Portland to Longview stretch will be best for boaters.

Fresh crab for Thanksgiving? I wouldn't recommend it. Rough weather won't be conducive to safe boating although a south wind blowing doesn't have a big impact on crabbers working the water near the Oregon shore. None-the-less, it's a big body of water and no fresh crab is worth any amount of risk. Tides are quite extreme until later in the month anyway. It will be a good week to take off of outdoor recreation.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – The Willamette River will be slower to react to rainfall this week and will take longer to recover than lesser rivers in the valley. On the other hand, anadromous fishes like the freshet and will be on the move. While there hasn't been a single Chinook counted at Willamette Falls since November 3rd, counts for both coho and winter steelhead showed a significant increase on November 20th.

The McKenzie continues to rise with the flow doubling in volume over the past week.

North Santiam levels are rising rapidly. In an alert for Bill Sanderson who guides that river, he warned of high levels this week and, never one to over-dramatize a situation, wrote "The increased rain has made the river awkward for recreational use." No bull, Bill. We like it.

Hagg Lake closed for the season on November 20th. It re-opens on the first Saturday in March, 2012.

Walling Pond and Walter Wirth Lake were stocked this week with legal-size and larger hatchery rainbow trout.

The Guide's Forecast – While there may be a few summers to be caught below Dexter if the water doesn't get too high, there aren't a lot of fishing opportunities to be had on the Willamette over the coming week.

To quote The 'Caddis Fly: Oregon Fly Fishing Blog" online, "Look for the trout and steelhead fishing on the Willamette and McKenzie to remain good until monsoon season arrives." It's here.

Scratch the Santiams off your fishing wish-list until they recover from recent storms and snowmelt.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Clackamas water levels are predictably high and angry mid-week but are forecast to be dropping and clearing through the weekend and into the week to come.

Sandy levels are rising this week and the water is dirt. In addition to runoff from rainfall, snow upriver is contributing to river flows.

The Guide's Forecast – Winter steelhead will be in the river as the water levels start to drop on the Clackamas River. Try bobber and jig or spinners to tempt them. It's early so results should only improve as the weeks go by. Eagle Creek will be worthwhile for winter steelhead (and close-quarter fishing) but not for a few more weeks or so.

As the Sandy River recovers, fishers should consider gearing up in anticipation of winter steelhead, a few of which will surely enter with the additional water in the river.

North Coast Fishing Report – Currently, Tillamook is under water. Prior to the flood event, fishing was pretty good in the district with the lower Wilson one of the best prospects after the last high water event. Guides working the lower tidewater section (below Sollie Smith Bridge) averaged around 2 to 3 fish per boat for a full day effort with fish coming off of plugs and backbounced bait. Anglers could still play the tides with incoming tide typically producing the best catches but outgoing tide seemed to be the better bet last week. In the higher flows, boats on anchor did about as good as those actively working the water. Chum and coho were in the mix as well as it seemed all species had marching orders to head upstream when the opportunity arose.

The Kilchis fished fair early on the drop, with anglers taking a mix of chinook and chum salmon in the lower stretches. As flows dropped, so did effort and interest quickly turned to the Wilson for a more bountiful opportunity. Now however, there isn't a fishable river in Tillamook County and it looks to stay that way for several more days. According to weather models, it may be Sunday before rivers like the Wilson fall into fishable shape again.

The Nestucca had pressure prior to the big water with an occasional bright chinook showing in the catches. Anglers are restricted to water below First Bridge but that's where most of the action for fresh fish would be taking place anyway.

The North Fork of the Nehalem has been awaiting their first returns of winter steelhead and they were detected earlier this week. Steelhead were taken this week and fish were in the trap on Tuesday. Heavy precipitation will hit this system too but given its relative size compared to other watersheds, it will be one of the first options when river systems begin to fall.

Crabbing on the north coast has been put on hold for obvious reasons. Netarts Bay remained a strong option back when it was safe to go out and crab. It won't be an option until winds subside. Other estuaries will be blown out for some time. Crab have likely made their way back to the salt chuck but even a walk on the bottom in these conditions must be some kind of ride.

We regret the lack of information in this section of the report. We, at The Guide's Forecast, strive to bring you the most up-to-date information and for obvious reasons, we don't have that. That reminds me, did you see the video of the chum salmon swimming across the road in northern Washington? I bet that's happening here in Tillamook County in some instances too. Go here for a cool video:

<http://www.grindtv.com/outdoor/blog/31184/video+shows+salmon+crossing+flooded+washington+state+roadway/>

The Guide's Forecast – Needless to say, it will be a while. The Tuesday forecast has already been upgraded to something more significant. River models indicate it may be Sunday before systems like the Wilson fall into fishable shape. That said, smaller systems could be an option by Friday or Saturday.

Four of those small stream options on the north coast are:

The Necanicum River- Even though it's flooding at the time of this writing, it generally falls into shape in quick order when the precipitation ceases. This will be a good early season option for winter run steelhead. I've had one of my best "fresh fish" days on December 10th. Fresh steelhead should be available although it won't be slam dunk fishing. This system is one of the more dynamic on the north coast, meaning it's highly likely that downed trees and rootwads may cause serious navigational hazards to a driftboat. Be very cautious if you drift this river and be prepared for the worse. Use a lightweight boat and bring your boots as you may have to wrangle your boat around some pretty snarly snags. Fresh and colored chinook as well as coho and a rare chum may also be present in this watershed. Check regulations and use your best judgment as to whether or not the fish is worth keeping.

The North Fork Nehalem River – Some years, a strong run of winter steelhead returns to the hatchery on Highway 53. It looks like an average to above average run already but it's way too early to be even this speculative. Largely accessible only by bank, most effort takes place at the hatchery where good numbers are often caught in the early season. This reach may be productive as early as Turkey Day but more likely Friday or Saturday when levels get back down to around 40 to 50 inches. In bigger water, use bigger baits and brighter drift bobbers. Boaters will want to work the stretch from the private launch at the Clatsop/Tillamook County line to Aldervale but motivated fish won't hang up long in this stretch.

The Kilchis River – Really the only small stream chinook option on the north coast, this system should have another good batch of fresh fish enter when flows drop again. Look for this river to fish as early as Friday but maybe more like Saturday. You don't need much visibility to catch fish but until flows drop, the river will likely be inundated with leaves which will foul your gear. Plugs will likely be especially effective but eggs on anchor (in high flows) or slowly backtrolled will also present opportunities for anglers. Fish should be well distributed throughout the system but as flows drop, the lower reaches will produce the best. There should be a rare winter steelhead, fair number of chinook available and chum salmon present too. Also, an occasional coho may be caught. Be careful in your fish identification. It could be a costly mistake.

Three Rivers – Tributary to the Nestucca, this small system should be one of the first to clear with early run winter steelhead butting heads against the trap at the hatchery. Like the North Fork Nehalem, it will be a zoo there but catchable numbers should be present. Another strategic place to intercept winter run fish will be the mouth of Three Rivers near Hebo. Plunkers can do pretty good here, especially when using eggs in higher flows.

Following a drop in flows, the Wilson will be a major player in angler success. Don't look for it to fish before Sunday under the current weather prediction models. Those of course are subject to change at any given minute. Like the Kilchis, the Wilson should have fresh chinook available throughout the system, giving bank anglers an even chance at fresh chinook as well. Some early run winter steelhead may also be available but fish river edges for these fish, especially in higher flows.

The Trask may also have late run chinook available but the majority of fish on this system will likely be dark.

Tillamook Bay may produce some catches early next week but weather will play a factor in angler interest. Anglers should start to consider sturgeon fishing in the bay, where the fresh water influx is likely to draw interest from keeper sized fish. The fresh water will also push out our competition, the juvenile Dungeness crab, where anglers can once again have access to this great sport fish using sand shrimp for bait.

Stay safe this week and enjoy the holiday season!

Central & South Coast Reports – When harsh winter weather moves on (and it will, eventually), fishing from coastal jetties and rocky outcrops will be seasonally excellent. In addition to colorful rockfish, lingcod are moving in to shallow water to spawn. While boat anglers cannot keep Cabazon, bank-bound anglers face no such restriction and may retain them (over 16 inches) as part of the seven-fish rockfish limit. Most importantly for those trying this type of fishing, check wind and wave predictions then, once on-site, never turn your back on the water.

Siltcoos Lake had been producing coho at the outlet and in the river above the Highway 101 Bridge where it's legal to take wild fish. Anglers are reminded that while coho may be taken in this stretch, steelheading is not allowed. Tenmile had yet to get underway prior to the recent storm front and Tahkenitch had only kicked out a few jacks. The situation will change now that the southwest has received a decent freshet. Rainfall is just what was needed to get the wild coho fishery underway in Tenmile and Tahkenitch (although less than stellar results are expected) while Siltcoos Lake should start producing for trollers using plugs or spinners. Watch out for the sea lions.

Heavy rain this week has created freshets coast wide. As this water washes into bays and estuaries, it will reduce the salinity level, causing Dungeness to seek more comfortable, chemically-balanced conditions. Which means the sea spiders are ocean-bound where we can't get at 'em and they won't return until the bays get salty again after the rain stops.

Speaking of crab, readers are aware that the scheduled December 1st opening of the ocean for crabbing was postponed until at least December 15th because ocean Dungeness aren't sufficiently filled out with meat following the summer molt. The mid-December opening date is tentative, however, contingent on crab bulking up. In the meantime, the ODFW will be taking samples of ocean 'dungies' to determine if they'll be suitable for our tables in which case offshore crabbing will open on the 15th as recently re-scheduled.

All the water which has swollen coastal rivers this week will not only encourage additional fall Chinook into many systems (although some are winding down or done at this time of year), but will also bring in winter steelhead. Many steelheaders have been looking forward to this occurrence like kids anticipating Christmas. While the southwest rivers are out of shape this week, forecasts indicate some moderation in the week to come.

Tenmile Creek is due to start getting some winter steelhead with this freshet but be aware that its tributary, Eel Creek, is closed until the 1st of January.

Winter steelhead will be entering the Umpqua system but the vast majority will be wild, requiring release.

Fishing on the upper Rogue holds promise for the coming holiday weekend. Bank anglers will find decent access and should be able to hook a fish or two. Summer steelhead in this stretch remain in decent condition.

Earlier this week the Chetco was still pumping out Chinook in fair to good number. On Saturday, November 19th, a guide boat landed a 65-pounder and looked every inch like an Alaskan fish. In the last couple of days the river has royally blown out but will begin the recovery process starting Friday this week and into the week to come as precipitation moderates and even stops on some days. Fall Chinook fishing will continue as the water drops and clears.

The Elk and Sixes Rivers are currently (that's as of mid-day Wednesday, November 23rd) running muddy. A break in the deluge will have these ocean tributaries fishing earlier than most on the southwest coast. Consider that a respite will have the Elk fishing in 12 hours; 24 hours without rain will bring about a dropping and clearing of the waters at the Sixes River. There are plenty of Chinook to be caught as the run is just getting good here.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Deschutes water levels are up as the water temperature drops. Summer steelhead are scattered through the river. Fly anglers using egg patterns continue to find success casting to steelhead below spawning Chinook. There is a mixture of hatchery and wild fish available.

Snow on the ground hasn't deterred hardcore mackinaw fishers at Crescent Lake. The bite has been a little slow but trollers are boating some nice lake trout. Be sure to check the weather and dress for frigid temperatures at this time of year.

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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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.

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Random Links

Salmon swim up street in Washington State:

<http://www.kval.com/news/local/Road-or-river-Salmon-swim-up-street-134353988.html?tab=video>

New Bedford fishermen nets 881-pound tuna, feds take it:

<http://news.yahoo.com/mass-fishermen-snare-881-pound-tuna-feds-162153107.html>

Colorado outdoors - great photos:

<http://photos.denverpost.com/mediacenter/2011/09/unwinding-in-estes-park-colorado/#name%20here>

GOOD LUCK!