

The Guide's Forecast - volume 14 issue number 17

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **April 20<sup>th</sup> – April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012**

**Oregon Fisheries Update:**

**Willamette Valley/Metro-** Columbia River sport anglers finally got a taste of what the possibilities are this week as flows finally began to subside enough to interest spring chinook into biting. Anglers fishing near the estuary did the best on Monday, claiming quick limits around Rice Island and Altoona. Limits were also experienced for some lucky boats at Davis Bar in the last few days with most fish being taken on trolled herring. Improved catch rates are likely to wane once again however as spring spill begins, sending the future crop of wild and hatchery salmon to sea under ideal conditions.

Although water conditions were pretty decent, the Willamette was a bit of a disappointment for most Spring Chinook anglers last weekend. There were a few flurries of fish caught from the Multnomah Channel, the Portland Harbor, downtown, Sellwood and up to Oregon City but expectations were a bit higher. It appears the run is a bit behind schedule and our best fishing is still yet to come. The river is on the rise again and the color could be better, but fish will be caught if you put some time in. Like the Columbia, a rise in the Willamette is expected which will further hamper weekend success.

Good catches of late winter and early summer steelhead continue on the Clack and many experienced anglers are reporting excellent fishing. Clackamas summer steelhead absolutely love bait and a whole sand shrimp will put more steelhead in the creel than any other offering, but do not disregard roe or the ever-popular pink worm. The river from McIver Park down to Barton has been the most productive as of late, but expect that to shift river wide as more summer fish enter the system.

Fishing for late winter steelhead on the Sandy remains fair to good and could continue for another week or two. Although summer steelhead are still returning to the Sandy, their numbers in the recent past have been less than impressive. That said, spring chinook will be on the heels of the last winter-run steelhead and the second half of May usually affords consistent fishing.

Middle Fork Willamette has dropped to fishable levels with redsides and summers available.

Redsides are responding to nymphs on the McKenzie. The water is high but will be dropping this week. Summer steelhead are entering the system.

Water in the North Santiam has cleared but remains cold which means slow steelheading.

Free family fishing events will occur on Saturday, April 21st at St. Lois Ponds, Hebo Lake and McNary Ponds (Hermiston).

Trout fishing is slow at Hagg Lake.

**Northwest –** Steelhead interest and success is beginning to wane on the north coast. After one of the most successful seasons in memory, the quality of fresh fish is beginning to fade as anglers look for other opportunities to fill their freezers.

The Wilson and Nestucca will remain the best options for consumptive opportunity with a rare late winter steelhead entering and an occasional summer fish available as well. Coho and steelhead smolt releases are underway so expect competition for your offerings on some

hatchery fish streams.

The season's first spring chinook is due to be caught. Unsubstantiated rumors are already circulating but no confirmed catches have happened so far. Weekend tides look favorable for upper bay anglers but another rain freshet may push chinook into the Trask, Wilson and Nestucca in that order of magnitude. The hatchery hole on the Trask often puts out the season's earliest catches.

Sturgeon may also be an option on Tillamook Bay this weekend. The minus tide series may stimulate action in the west channel as well as the upper bay. Crabbing may not be productive, however clamming should produce good results in most estuaries and along Clatsop Beaches for razors.

There may be some offshore opportunity over the weekend although early morning bar crossings could be hazardous. A bounty of rockfish, lingcod and chinook await anglers when conditions allow. Crabbing may be fair to good in 30 to 50 foot of water although there is a clear absence of large keepers from the intense commercial effort all winter.

**Southwest** – When the ocean has laid down over the past week, allowing boats to fish offshore, catches of rockfish and lingcod have been excellent. One cabezon per day may be kept as part of the seven rockfish per day limit.

Casting from ocean beaches has been producing 15-fish limits of surf perch with best results near river or bay mouths.

Salinity levels have improved in Winchester Bay which has resulted in better catches of Dungeness crab. Spring chinook catches were decent early this week but dropped off as water levels once again started to rise.

Coos bay crabbers are seeing improved catches with boats doing well and dock nets and traps taking fair numbers.

Spring chinook anglers are enjoying a good week with the flow dropping to less than 9,000 cfs and the water temperature topping 50 degrees. Springers to 30 pounds have been landed. The river level is forecast to rise a little over the coming weekend and if that occurs, action may slow for a few days. Fishing has been spotty at best on the middle Rogue. Upper river anglers continue to take winter steelhead and the occasional spring chinook.

The latest update from Diamond Lake is that nothing has changed. That is, ice and snow still cover the water's surface and the April 28th opener will require ice fishing gear.

**Eastern** – Deschutes level and flow have stopped to the seasonal norm and is providing good results for redsides. March Browns are hatching afternoons with trout responding accordingly, If one pattern doesn't produce, keep changing flies to find the favored pattern.

The Crooked River was at perfect level and flow for fishing early this week and should be productive over the coming weekend.

Smallmouth bass fishing is fair to good and improving on the John Day River.

**Soapbox Update:** Bounty on the Bay is now open for 2012 registration!

It's a great event that benefits a great organization. It's all about the fish! Check out the registration web site at: <http://www.tbnep.org/events/bounty-on-the-bay>

**SW Washington** – The Cowlitz is producing good numbers of steelhead and spring chinook are starting to make a stronger appearance.

The Kalama and Lewis Rivers will also begin producing better numbers of spring chinook and summer steelhead over the next 8 weeks. Some spent winter run fish will also begin showing in the catches.

Although still way behind schedule, fish counts at Bonneville are beginning to swell, meaning improved opportunity ahead for Wind and Drano Lake anglers. Catchable numbers will be present by next week.

Clam diggers along the Long Beach Peninsula and north will have another opportunity for razors this weekend. Check newly released regulations at the WDF&W website for more specific information.

**Columbia River Fishing Report** – Well, it finally happened. The fish have shown up, much to the fishery manager's relief. Action has been fast and furious in recent days with easy limits coming from guides and anglers throughout the lower reaches of the Columbia. It's amazing what happens when fish are actually in the river. Peak season is upon us!

From the estuary to the mouth of the Willamette, the Columbia River bound 12 pounders have arrived. Good news came first from the estuary where lower river guides were on top of easy limits as early as Monday. A few guides claimed to have limited out in just one hour. Plugs are the mainstay of lower river guides under these conditions and they have paid dividends in recent days. Although tides were not ideal for working plugs, the relatively high flows kept plugs wiggling and fish moving under these conditions. Rice Island near Tongue Point, Altoona and Puget Island all produced good catches early this week. Although trolling has been an option, it hasn't been necessary as fish congregate in the shallower waters in these types of high water events. Just make sure you have green on your plug and oh yeah, a sardine wrap never hurt anyone either.

Upriver, reports of consistent fishing near wing jetty 62 near St. Helens are accurate. Boats were floating out with some regularity on Tuesday and Wednesday, taking both Willamette and upper Columbia bound springers on plugs and herring. Plugs were responsible for the most deaths and strategically placed anchors along the islands in 6 to 16 feet of water produced results. Anglers would wait for a slacker tide before breaking out the herring rods and didn't find trolled baits to be quite as effective as anchor fishing.

Even further upriver, guides working Davis Bar and Caterpillar Island have been producing good catches, even 1-fish limits as early as Sunday in this reach. Trolled herring rules the roost in this segment of the river and as long as you kept your baits on the bottom and behind flashers, you seemed to be hitting the fish. Most trollers were working depths of 18 to 22 feet. Although action has been reported upriver of I-5, it seemed much more consistent downstream but that will likely change by the weekend. Guides that hit Davis Bar at daybreak on Wednesday reported outstanding action.

Anglers fishing out of Chinook Landing were also reporting good success on Monday but it seemed that successful anglers that went fishing in the late afternoon did better than the early

risers. You could almost time the bite as it went upriver but afternoons seemed to be consistently better early this week. Of course that is all changing now.

Bonneville Dam counts are starting to ramp up. Although still way behind previous years passage numbers, adult counts are starting to climb and should become rather impressive in the coming days. It's almost justifiable to target springers in the Wind River and Drano Lake fisheries.

Here's the ODF&W creel check for the weekend. Chinook numbers are finally starting to look stronger than the steelhead numbers:

**Gorge Bank:**

Weekend checking showed no catch for two bank anglers.

**Gorge Boats:**

Weekend checking showed 12 adipose fin-clipped spring chinook kept for 15 boats (43 anglers).

**Troutdale Boats:**

Weekend checking showed six adipose fin-clipped spring chinook kept, plus three unclipped spring chinook released for 28 boats (57 anglers).

**Portland to Longview Bank:**

Weekend checking showed 64 adipose fin-clipped spring chinook adults, one adipose fin-clipped spring chinook jack, and 19 adipose fin-clipped steelhead kept, plus eight unclipped spring chinook and one unclipped steelhead released for 470 bank anglers.

**Portland to Longview boats:**

Weekend checking showed 58 adipose fin-clipped spring chinook kept, plus nine unclipped spring chinook released for 123 boats (311 anglers).

**Estuary Bank (Clatsop Spit to Wauna Powerlines):**

Weekend checking showed two adipose fin-clipped spring chinook kept for 22 bank anglers.

**Estuary Boats (Tongue Point to Wauna Powerlines):**

Weekend checking showed 45 adipose fin-clipped spring chinook adults, two adipose fin-clipped spring chinook jacks, and one adipose fin-clipped steelhead kept, plus seven unclipped spring chinook released for 46 boats (113 anglers).

**The Dalles Pool:**

Weekly checking showed one adipose fin-clipped spring chinook kept for 53 bank anglers.

**John Day Pool:**

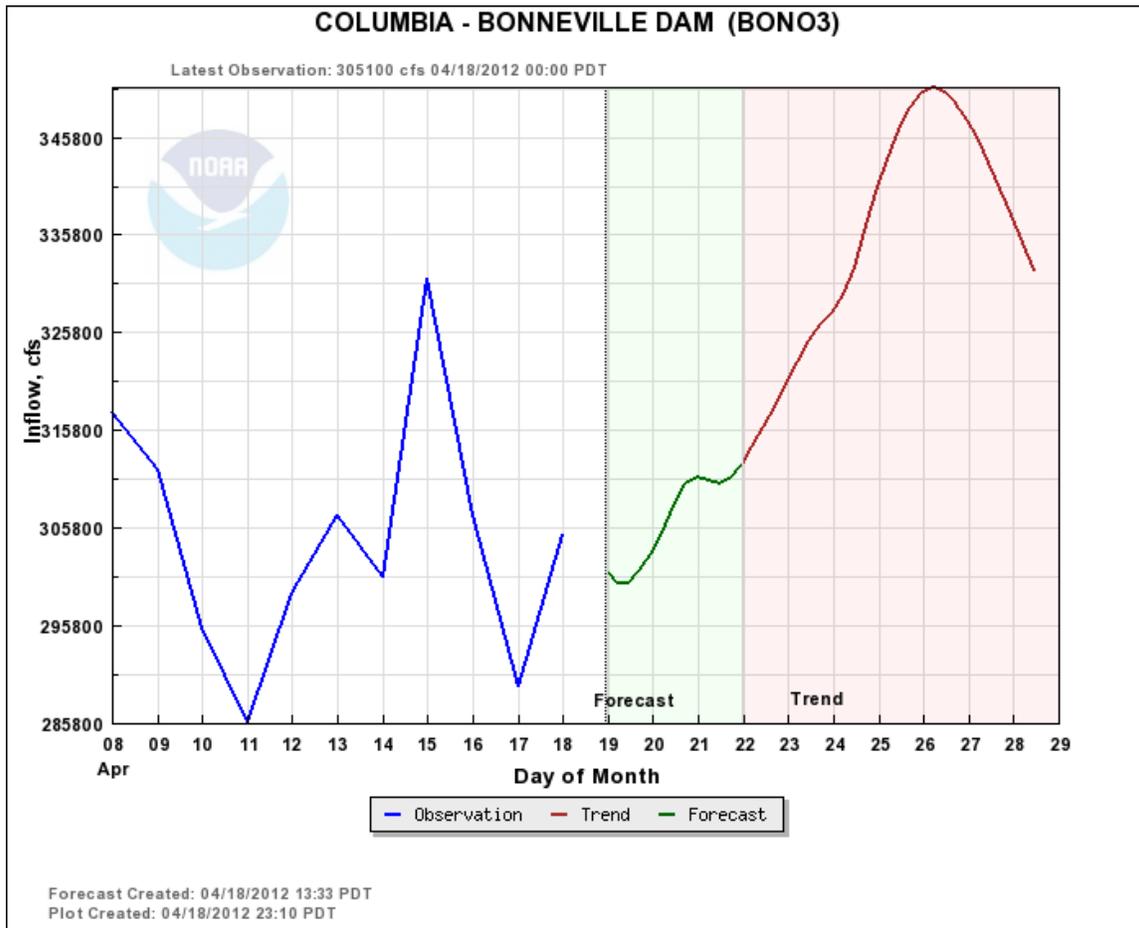
Weekly checking showed no catch for four bank anglers.

Sturgeon effort remains low, especially with so many salmon finally in the river. It seems it's all salmon, all the time right now!

**The Guide's Forecast** – Now that the fishery is finally underway, anglers will be chomping at the bit to get after them this weekend. You might imagine, you won't be alone on the river this weekend.

It should be a river-wide blow-out with good fishing likely from Bonneville Dam downstream to the estuary. The Columbia was originally forecasted to go way, way up but most recent models have it relatively tame although it seems to be changing all the time. Here is the latest predictor

and although it's not out of reach, the rise in river level may quell the bite by the weekend somewhat:



Approaching 350,000 cfs won't do anybody any favors but it could prolong the season. If the river does come up that high, anchor fishing in the weeds may be the best bet for anglers over the weekend. Use sardine wrapped plugs, fished in shallow water to target your quarry.

Trollers will still have a decent crack at good fishing but only because numbers of fish are going to be dramatically on the rise this weekend. Target the slower moving water, close to the shoreline (15 to 20 feet of water) and you may still want to employ a fishflash in order to attract fish from a longer distance in what will likely be some off-colored water. Hopefully we haven't seen our big flurry when most of Oregon and Washington's anglers were at work.

Success is all going to hinge on water levels but one can't deny the sheer power of numbers. It may be best to be prepared to work off of the anchor as fish will certainly be on the move under these conditions. Don't be afraid to work plugs in as shallow as 5 to 7 feet of water as slower flows will attract good numbers of fish.

Anglers will be waiting with baited breath on the decision for another extension. As catch rates ramp up, so will restrictions as the states can't afford to overshoot harvest rates in either the sport or commercial fisheries.

Although it's still a bit early for hardware to become effective, it may begin to play a role as

water temperatures warm. It's best to stick to plugs and herring when the tide starts to slow the river current.

Sturgeon fishing will remain a waste of time, at least on the mainstem Columbia. There are good numbers still present in the lower Willamette.

No matter what the ocean swell is, a minus tide series will not bode well for bottomfishers out of the mouth of the Columbia. Tides are just too extreme to expect good results. Better tides lie ahead for the bounty on the south jetty.

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report** – Willamette water flow is increasing at the Falls and the lower Willamette is on the rise. The visibility, at three feet, had yet to be effected as of April 18th but there may be some impact as upstream roil works its way down. Fish passage has been fair but steady with over 2,200 summer steelhead and about 6,200 winters counted. Spring Chinook passage has been improving daily with a total of 185 over the Falls as of the 18th. The water temperature has been 50 degrees for a week but is a little warmer in the lower river with temperate weather this week.

**Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** will be a regular TGF contributor. We welcome his knowledge and experience. This week, he writes, "Although water conditions were pretty decent, the Willamette was a bit of a disappointment for most Spring Chinook anglers last weekend. There were a few handfuls of fish caught from Multnomah Channel, the Portland Harbor, downtown, Sellwood and up to Oregon City but expectations were a bit higher. It appears the run is a bit behind schedule and our best fishing is still yet to come. The river is on the rise again and the color could be better, but fish will be caught if you put some time in. From St. Helens up to Milwaukee, trolling green or blue label herring, either whole or plug cut is the set-up of choice. Most use a flasher of some sort but "naked"(without flasher) works well for many. Prawns fished plain or with a spinner blade will also fool a few fish and will fool even more as the water warms. As of Monday April 16 the temp in the harbor was 50 degree's. Most experts and salmon biologist's agree, 50-55 degree's is a Chinooks prime comfort zone. Bait will produce better on the lower end of the spectrum, but when the river thermometer hits 55, get the hardware out. Since the early days, many Willamette Spring Chinook have fallen to the green or blue tipped rainbow spinner. A few springers have hit the deck's at Oregon City but catches of both late winter and early summer run steelhead are running about 50/50 with the salmon. Bank fishermen at Meldrum Bar and the Blacktop are seeing more steelhead than salmon in the creel samples. Expect fishing to be average at best this coming week with the forecast high flows, but reports from the lower Columbia indicate that more Willamette "snow belly's" are still entering the estuary."

Avid angler **John Shmilenko** adds this, "Fishing has been okay at Sellwood in the past week. I got 5 last Friday and about 2 a day since then. The "rock pile" and "Knights Point" have both been good as well as "the flats" (abernathy flats is directly accross the Willamette Park boat ramp and adjacent to the Oaks Park floating homes). I am hopeful that it will turn on any day (maybe today?). Again, I feel that it should get really good at any time. There is not a lot of pressure w/ The Columbia being open."

The McKenzie water level rose significantly overnight on the 16th and has not been dropping as rapidly as we would have liked. Expect some swift flows for the weekend and fish accordingly.

The river remains open to catch and release trout fishing from Hayden Bridge until the valley trout season opens on April 28th. The river above Leaburg Lake will also open on that date. Barring another high water event, fishing is expected to be good.

Warm spring weather has snow melting in the mountains so water is being released from Detroit to accommodate this snowmelt. As a consequence, the North Santiam rose sharply earlier this week. The South Santiam had a similar rise and flows are currently swift. The entire system is forecast to be dropping over the coming weekend but the water will still be too high to fish well.

The Fifth Annual Eugene Spring Fly Fishing Festival will be held on Saturday, April 21st from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Campbell Community Center located at 155 High Street (next to the river at Skinners Butte). This family event is a free day of fly fishing, fly tying, and fly casting intended to introduce people of all ages to the sport of fly fishing.

In addition to the free family events listed in the Fisheries Update, above, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and Georgia Pacific, in cooperation with the Association of Western Pulp and Paper Workers and several other local organizations and businesses, are sponsoring a day of fishing at Olalla Reservoir near Toledo, Ore. on Saturday, April 21. This event will take place from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. and is also free. In addition to a stocked fish enclosure for kids and family fishing with loaner gear and volunteer instructors, there will be youth and adult fishing derbies, kayak tours, nature hikes and more. Prizes will be awarded in the fishing derbies! And yes, this one's free, too. Call (541) 265-8306 ext. 253 or (503) 947-6023 for information.

Benson Lake, Blue Lake, Canby Pond, Harriet Lake, Hartman Pond, Henry Hagg Lake, Mt Hood Pond, Cottage Grove Reservoir, Detroit Reservoir, E. E. Wilson Pond, Foster Reservoir, Freeway Lake East, Green Peter Reservoir, Junction City Pond, Roaring River Park Pond, Timber Linn Lake, Walling Pond, Walter Wirth Lake and Waverly Lake are scheduled to be stocked with hatchery trout.

**The Guide's Forecast** – On the lower Willamette, Try nearshore trolling for springers with Green Label herring in the Portland Harbor as this seemed to be very effective this week. Wednesday the 18th was a particularly good one for boating Chinook here. Trollers dragging plug cut herring behind a flasher have scored at Sellwood as well. While there are no guarantees in the fishing game, if you're not having success with Chinook, a really good bet for action on the lower Willamette is the catch-and-release sturgeon fishery. These fish respond to a variety of baits including herring, sand shrimp and smelt (if you can find some at less than the spot-price for gold). Above the Falls, as the Middle fork comes into shape, try numphing for trout which has been taking good numbers despite the water coming out of Hills Creek Reservoir being a little murky. Summer steelhead have been landed as well in this stretch and the numbers will only improve in the coming weeks. The Middle Fork above Hills Creek Reservoir will open on April 28th.

Scads of caddis hatches on the McKenzie have trout both stuffed and apparently bored with them. Try a large stonefly or Prince nymph for best results while the rafts of bugs go by unmolested.

As the South Santiam starts to drop into shape, fish the upper river for best results. Fishing will improve as numbers build in the system; the hatchery only had about 30 summers return as of Wednesday this week.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** reports, "Good catches of late winter and early summer steelhead continue on the Clack and many experienced anglers are reporting excellent fishing. Clackamas summer steelhead absolutely love bait and a whole sand shrimp will put more steelhead in the coffin than any other offering, but do not disregard roe or the ever-popular pink worm. The river from McIver Park

down to Barton has been the most productive as of late, but expect that to shift river wide as more summer fish enter the system. Any day now a lucky angler is going to catch the first springer, but expect the bulk of the run to show in late May/early June. When water temp's hit 52 degree's, springers start to push upriver in consistent numbers. Good fishing will be had through July 4th as long as flows remain steady.

"Fishing for late winter steelhead remains good to fair and could continue for another week or two on the Sandy River. Summer steelhead adults have made a poor showing in recent years but that run is about to jump start. But Spring Chinook will be on the heels of the last winter steelhead and the second half of May usually affords consistent fishing. As with the Clack, bait is the best choice early in the season with sand shrimp being the favorite, then cured roe and prawns taking up the rear but still a good choice. Sandy River springers also have a weakness for a sardine wrapped K-14 Kwikfish, much more so than their finicky Clackamas River cousins. Expect Chinook fishing to hold up here into early July when flows begin to drop to low summer levels. "

**The Guide's Forecast** – Results for winter steelhead have been good on the Clackamas from McIver to Gladstone and prospects are expected to remain good despite an increase in water levels predicted over the next few days. Summer steelhead have also been landed this week with the available numbers improving as the season progresses. Over 600 winters have returned to the hatchery facility. Eagle Creek winter steelhead results have been very slow and won't be improving this late in the season. Spring Chinook will be entering the Clack in the coming weeks.

Summer steelhead have been taken this week on the Sandy River although the majority landed have been wild, requiring release here. Summers are responding to both spinners and cured roe. snowmelt caused a rise in the water level starting Monday this week and with the freezing level forecast to be above 10,000 feet over the entire weekend to come. While the water color has been decent this week, there is likely to be a lot of water in the system over the coming weekend as well and there is a possibility of some discoloration from glacial melting. The Sandy Hatchery reports over 1,200 winter steelhead have been processed. Summers have been hooked on the lower river along with a few spring Chinook. Lower river fishers are advised that access to the Sandy River Delta Recreation Area at the east edge of Troutdale will be closed starting Monday, April 23rd through Thursday, April 26th due to construction in that area.

**North Coast Fishing Report** – Steelheaders have about wrapped it up on the north coast although there are still some late winter fish being caught. Reports from the Wilson earlier in the week indicated still some good action for those fishing on the lower reaches of the system. One angler reported landing 5 steelhead although just 2 of the 5 were in good shape. A few small late season river spikes likely drew in one last push of fish.

On the Nestucca, **pro guide Kent Anderson (503-550-6303)** tallied his last batch of steelhead early this week. He is folding it up and will soon be heading to the Nushagak for his summer program. (He still has a few openings left for Alaska Salmon Camp antics by the way.....). Kent reported consistent success for his last week on the Nestucca. Although the last day was a bit of a flop due to a rise in river levels, he was consistently seeing 3 to 5 opportunities a day over the weekend with a mix of spent fish but still some bright wild ones in the mix. Kent was still side-drifting to the end and hatchery fish clearly dropped off the radar in his final weeks. He thought he had the river to himself on his last day; and he meant the entire river.

Other systems may remain open but few are taking advantage. The next focal point will be Tillamook Bay spring chinook and it shouldn't be long before we see fishable numbers of those. It may just be that the Willamette and Tillamook Bay peak at the same time this year.

No founded rumors thus far for Tillamook springers but it won't be long. My earliest spring chinook in Tillamook fell on April 14<sup>th</sup>. There are certainly some salmon around but they may already be in the river after the latest rain freshet.

It hasn't been a great week for options other than steelhead. We always experience a lull in activity this time of year. Bottomfishing would be a nice filler if the ocean was cooperative.

Trout remain in Cape Meares Lake and Lake Lytle. Unfortunately, the Cape Meares trout often fall victim to hungry cormorants waiting for this year's downstream migrants now underway.

Alder Lake, Big Creek Reservoir-1 & 2, Buck Lake, Dune Lake, Elbow Lake, Erhart Lake, Georgia Lake and Hebo Lake are scheduled for planting with trout.

**The Guide's Forecast** – With unsettled weather still on the horizon, river levels are expected to remain a bit volatile but somewhat high into the weekend. Anglers could be looking at higher than normal river levels over the weekend which will put what few remaining steelheaders there are, in a bit of a quandary. None-the-less, fish, and some of them still of notable quality will be well distributed throughout the river systems on the north coast with the Wilson and Nestucca remaining the top prospects for both hatchery steelhead (summer and late winter fish) and wild steelhead. Although still a shot in the dark, there may be some lucky angler that gets into an early returning spring chinook. There are confirmed reports of summer steelhead from the Nestucca River.

The Trask is a great late season producer of steelhead and there should be good numbers available throughout the system. These fish will respond to plugs pretty efficiently this time of year and will likely seek the deeper, darker water at this time. Don't be afraid to go big in your offerings as these fish are typically large in nature anyway.

Although spring chinook are not far off, there have been unsubstantiated reports of chinook from the Trask, Wilson, Nestucca and Tillamook Bay entrance. Although possible, with so few people targeting them, it seems unlikely that all of these systems has produced fish. The upcoming minus tide series may produce a fish in the upper reaches of Tillamook Bay but it's unlikely there will be a whole bunch of these fish around this early in the season.

The tides will also make bar crossings a bit less than desirable. There is a bounty of bottomfish and offshore chinook awaiting better ocean conditions and those shouldn't be far away. Here is the forecast for ocean conditions through the weekend, how about that Friday forecast:

**FRI**

W WIND TO 5 KT...VEERING TO N IN THE AFTERNOON. WIND WAVES 1 FT. W SWELL 6 FT. RAIN LIKELY.

**FRI NIGHT**

NW WIND 5 TO 10 KT. GUSTS TO 15 KT IN THE EVENING. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 7 FT...BUILDING TO 9 FT AFTER MIDNIGHT. CHANCE OF SHOWERS.

**SAT**

SE WIND 5 TO 10 KT...VEERING TO SW IN THE AFTERNOON. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 8 FT.

**SAT NIGHT**

NW WIND 5 TO 10 KT...EASING TO TO 5 KT AFTER MIDNIGHT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 7 FT.

**SUN**

N WIND 10 TO 15 KT. WIND WAVES 3 FT. W SWELL 6 FT.

**MON**

NW WIND 10 TO 15 KT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 6 FT.

Razor clamming may prove productive over the weekend, especially with a small swell in the forecast. Clatsop Beaches should produce good digging. Crabbing in most north coast estuaries will be fair at best, even in Netarts.

**Central & South Coast Reports** – Offshore launches should be possible in the coming weekend with the ocean forecast showing sells four to six feet and mild breezes. Bottom fishing has been excellent for rockfish and ling cod but be certain not to stray beyond the 30 fathom curve.

Ocean Chinook has been spotty for offshore trollers over the past week with some boats returning to port with limits while others have blanked. Commercial efforts have been doing consistently well.

The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission will make the final decision on the 2012 Halibut regulations on Friday, April 20, 2012, but no changes of the recommended dates are expected. Assuming that is the case, the first spring all-depth fishery will take place May 10-12, May 24-26 and May 31-June 2nd. Additional backup dates are on the schedule through June and July and it's probable that at least some of those will be open as the quota is increased this year to 120,821 pounds. The summer season is scheduled to begin in August.

The Siletz is producing steelhead but the majority are spawned out and heading for the ocean. There have been reports of a few summers hooked over the past week, however.

Crabbing in Winchester Bay is slow to fair, yielding some keepers as the incoming tide pushes back muddy water flowing from the swollen river. The mainstem Umpqua took quite a jump in level and flow overnight on April 17th. Prior to that freshet, spring Chinook fishing was fair to good. The river level is ahead of the forecast curve and may be low enough to plunk by the weekend. If so, fishing should be good. The North Umpqua provided a good number of steelhead hookups before the water came up and is likely to do so again when it drops into shape although most of the winters in the system are spawned-out downrunners. The freshet this week brought steelhead into the South Umpqua which will respond to angler efforts as the water drops to a fishable level. Percentages of hatchery fish are highest here although the South Umpqua but be aware that the South Umpqua will close to fishing at the end of April.

Steelheading will remain open on the Coos and Coquille rivers through the end of April. Although there are a few fresh fish trickling in this late in the year, the majority in these systems will have spawned and, while fun to catch, aren't any good for the table.

When the ocean gets rough, fresh fish stop coming in and springer fishing in the river slows down. With a fair ocean forecast in the next several days and catches steady over the past week, results for spring Chinook should be good over the coming weekend. Anchovy and spinner combinations have been responsible for most of the hookups on the lower river. Despite a decent population of winter steelhead available on the middle Rogue, catches have been only fair but

with the river level dropping through the weekend and spring Chinook moving through, there may be some improvement. The upper Rogue continued to produce winter steelhead catches this week and while a number of these fish are brightly colored at this time of year, they're great sport. Spring Chinook have been entering the upper Rogue over the past week or so with several hookups reported by plug-pullers.

North and South Tenmile Lake, Bradley Lake, Upper and Middle Empire Lake, Powers Pond, Arizona Pond, Garrison Lake, Laird lake, Ben Irving Reservoir, Clearwater Forebay #2, Cooper Creek Reservoir, Galesville Reservoir, Hemlock Reservoir, Lake of the Woods, Lemolo Reservoir, Loon Lake and Plat 1 Reservoir are scheduled for trout planting.

**Central and Eastern Oregon** – Starting April 29th, the Northern boundary of the Warm Springs Reservation upstream to Pelton Dam opens for trout and steelhead which means 100 miles of the lower Deschutes is available to anglers through October.

With the Crooked River in at good level and flow, trout and whitefish are providing steady action to anglers fishing dries and emergers.

With nice weather in the forecast, expect to see some traffic at Crescent Lake as trollers target those large Mackinaw. Plugs resembling kokanee are most effective here.

Trollers at Lake Billy Chinook are doing well for bull trout but there's an opportunity here for fly fishers as well. Throw large streamer patterns that imitate juvenile kokanee to tempt bulls.

Rainfall mid-week caused a slight rise in the John Day River mid week which was offset by raising the water temperature slightly and improving the smallmouth bass bite. Catches have been decent with several fish landed in the 18 to 20 inch range.

Green Peter kokanee have been falling for hoochies trolled behind a flasher this week with fair to good catches reported.

Wallowa Lake has started producing limits of kokanee to jig fishers working 100-foot levels. Despite the reputation here for larger-than-average kokanes, this year they have been running 10 to 14 inches.

### **Washington fishing reports:**

***From the WDF&W Weekender Report for April 2012***

#### **North Puget Sound**

One of the state's most popular fishing openers is scheduled for later in the month, when the lowland lakes trout season gets under way.

The lowland lakes **trout** season begins April 28, when many lakes – stocked with thousands of legal-sized trout – will open for fishing. Information on stocking schedules for rainbow, cutthroat and triploid trout is available on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) [website](#).

But, until then, fishing for blackmouth in Puget Sound takes top billing in the region.

Overall, fishing in March was slow for salmon anglers in the region, said Steve Thiesfeld, Puget Sound salmon manager for the WDFW. "It's been very spotty," he said. "We'll get reports of decent fishing one day, and then it cools off for several days. So they're out there, but people definitely need to put some time in on the water to have any success."

Anglers fishing marine areas 7 (San Juan Islands), 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay), 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) and 9 (Admiralty Inlet) have a two-**salmon** daily limit, but must release wild chinook salmon. Marine Area 9 is open only through April 15, while Marine Area 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) is already closed to salmon fishing.

Thiesfeld said anglers might want to consider fishing the Strait of Juan de Fuca – Marine Areas 5 (Sekiu) and 6 (eastern Strait) – where salmon fishing has been much better. However, time is running out to hook a salmon in those waters. The two areas, which have a daily limit of one salmon, are open only through April 10.

Meanwhile, it's not too early to start planning for halibut fishing, which opens in May. The 2012 recreational halibut seasons approved for Puget Sound are:

- **Marine Area 5:** From May 24-28, the fishery will be open Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday for Memorial Day weekend. From May 31 through June 23, the fishery will be open Thursday, Friday and Saturday. WDFW has also set Thursday, May 23 as the opening day of the 2013 season.
- **Marine Areas 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10:** From May 3-19, the fishery will be open Thursday, Friday and Saturday. From May 24-28, the fishery will be open each day (Thursday through Monday) for Memorial Day weekend. From May 31-June 2, the fishery will be open Thursday, Friday and Saturday. WDFW has also set Thursday, May 2 as the opening day of the 2013 season.
- **Marine Areas 11, 12, 13:** These areas will remain closed to halibut fishing this year to protect threatened and endangered rockfish species.

In all marine areas open to fishing, there is a one-fish daily catch limit and no minimum size restriction. Anglers may possess a maximum of two fish in any form, and must record their catch on a WDFW catch record card.

For more information on the halibut fishery, including seasons in Washington's ocean areas, click [here](#).

Prefer shellfish? Sport fishing for **spot shrimp** in Puget Sound opens May 5. Shrimp fishing opportunities in various areas of Puget Sound will be similar to last year, although there is one change this season that was made to avoid an extreme minus tide, said Mark O'Toole, a shellfish biologist for WDFW.

Unlike previous years, the shrimp fishery will not reopen on the following Wednesday after the May 5 opener. Instead, the fishery will reopen in most areas on Friday, May 11. "With such an extreme low tide on that Wednesday (May 9) it only made sense to shift the second day of fishing to Friday," O'Toole said. "We don't want to leave shrimpers stranded 100 feet from the boat ramp on a low afternoon tide."

In all areas of Puget Sound, fishers are limited to 80 spot shrimp per day. Spot shrimp seasons for various areas of Puget Sound are:

- Hood Canal Shrimp District (Marine Area 12): Open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on May 5, 11, 12 and 16.

- Discovery Bay Shrimp District (Marine Area 6): Open from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. on May 5, 11, 12 and 16.
- Marine areas 4 (east of the Bonilla-Tatoosh line), 5, 6 and 13 (excluding shrimp districts): Open daily beginning May 5 at 7 a.m. The spot shrimp season closes when the quota is attained or Sept 15, whichever comes first. The exception is Marine Area 13, which closes for spot shrimp May 31.
- Marine Area 7: Opens May 5 at 7 a.m. and will be open May 11, 12, 17, 18 and 19.
- Marine areas 8, 9, 10 and 11: Open May 5 and May 11 from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Additional dates and times will be announced for these areas if sufficient quota remains.

For a description of the marine areas and fishing rules, including regulations for coonstripe and pink shrimp fishing seasons, see WDFW's [Recreational Shrimp Fishing website](#).

Anglers are reminded that all 2011-2012 Washington state fishing licenses expire at midnight March 31. To keep fishing, anglers 15 years of age and older must purchase a 2012-13 license. Licenses and permits are available [online](#), by phone (1-866-246-9453) and from sporting goods stores and other retail license dealers around the state.

### **South Sound/Olympic Peninsula**

The popular lowland lakes fishing season gets under way later in the month. Many lakes – stocked with thousands of legal-sized trout – open for fishing April 28. Information on stocking schedules for rainbow, cutthroat and triploid trout is available on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) [website](#).

Until then, anglers have plenty of other fishing opportunities in the region.

One option is to dig some razor clams during an opening approved at several ocean beaches April 7-9. Opening dates and morning low tides are:

- April 7, Saturday (7:36 a.m., -1.2 ft.): Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks, Kalaloch
- April 8, Sunday (8:23 a.m., -1.5 ft.): Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks, Kalaloch
- April 9, Monday (9:11 a.m., -1.5 ft.): Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Kalaloch

No digging will be allowed after 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 harvester's clams must be kept in a separate container, said Dan Ayres, coastal shellfish manager for WDFW.

Noting that 2011-12 state fishing licenses expire March 31, Ayres reminds diggers age 15 or older that they must purchase a 2012-13 license to participate in the April openings. Various licenses, ranging from a three-day razor-clam license to a multi-species combination license, are available [online](#), by phone (1-866-246-9453) and from sporting goods stores and other retail license dealers around the state.

Also on the coast, the **lingcod** fishery is under way in marine areas 1 (Ilwaco), 2 (Westport-Ocean Shores) and 3 (LaPush). Beginning April 16, Marine Area 4 (Neah Bay) also will open for lingcod. For lingcod fishing regulations, check the [Fishing in Washington pamphlet](#). For information on the deepwater portions of marine areas 1 and 2 that are closed, check the [fishing rule change](#) on WDFW's website.

Meanwhile, fishing for **salmon** is still an option. Marine areas 5 (Sekiu) and 6 (eastern Strait) are open through April 10. "Salmon fishing in the Strait has been good over the last couple weeks,"

said Steve Thiesfeld, Puget Sound salmon manager for WDFW. "I'd recommend fishing those two areas before they close."

Marine areas 11 (Tacoma-Vashon), 12 (Hood Canal) and 13 (South Puget Sound) are also open for salmon fishing in April.

Anglers fishing marine areas 11 and 12 have a two-salmon daily limit, but must release wild chinook. Those fishing the Strait of Juan de Fuca – marine areas 5 and 6 – and Marine Area 13 have a daily limit of one salmon.

In freshwater, anglers still have an opportunity to hook **wild steelhead** on the Olympic Peninsula. As in years past, anglers may retain only one wild steelhead per license year on the Bogachiel, Calawah, Clearwater, Dickey, Hoh, Quillayute, Quinault and Sol Duc rivers. Wild steelhead retention continues through April 15 on the Clearwater, Hoh and Quinault rivers, and April 30 on the other rivers. Anglers should be aware that portions of the Dickey River closed in mid-March. For more information on steelhead fishing regulations, check the [Fishing in Washington pamphlet](#).

Anglers should note that the **halibut** season gets under way in May. The 2012 recreational halibut seasons approved for Washington's marine areas are:

- **Marine Area 1 (Columbia River):** Opens May 3, three days per week (Thursday-Saturday) until 80 percent of the quota is achieved, or until July 14, whichever is earlier. The fishery will reopen Aug. 3 and continue three days per week (Friday-Sunday), until the remaining quota is taken, or until Sept. 30, whichever occurs first. The early quota is 9,516 pounds; the late quota is 2,379 pounds.
- **Marine Area 2 (Westport):** Opens May 6, two days per week (Sunday and Tuesday) for three consecutive weeks. The area-wide fishery will be closed May 27 and 29. If sufficient quota remains, the fishery will open the following Sunday and/or Tuesday and continue until the quota is reached, or until Sept. 30, whichever occurs first. The northern nearshore area will open May 6 and continue seven days per week until the nearshore quota is reached, or until Sept. 30, whichever occurs first. The quota for the area-wide fishery is 40,739 pounds; the quota for the northern nearshore fishery is 2,000 pounds.
- **Marine areas 3 and 4 (La Push and Neah Bay):** Opens May 10, two days per week (Thursdays and Saturdays) through May 19. If enough harvestable fish remain to be caught, the fishery will re-open May 31 and/or June 2 and possibly on additional days (Thursdays and Saturdays) until the quota is reached or Sept. 28, whichever occurs first. The combined quota for both areas is 108,030 pounds.
- **Marine Area 5:** From May 24-28, the fishery will be open Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday for Memorial Day weekend. From May 31 through June 23, the fishery will be open Thursday, Friday and Saturday. WDFW has also set Thursday, May 23 as the opening day of the 2013 season.
- **Marine areas 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10:** From May 3-19, the fishery will be open Thursday, Friday and Saturday. From May 24-28, the fishery will be open each day (Thursday through Monday) for Memorial Day weekend. From May 31-June 2, the fishery will be open Thursday, Friday and Saturday. WDFW has also set Thursday, May 2 as the opening day of the 2013 season.
- **Marine areas 11, 12, 13:** These areas will remain closed to halibut fishing this year to protect threatened and endangered rockfish species.

In all marine areas open to fishing, there is a one-fish daily catch limit and no minimum size restriction. Anglers may possess a maximum of two fish in any form, and must record their catch on a WDFW catch record card.

Prefer shellfish? Sport fishing for **spot shrimp** in Puget Sound opens May 5. Shrimp fishing opportunities in various areas of Puget Sound will be similar to last year, although there is one change this season that was made to avoid an extreme minus tide, said Mark O'Toole, a shellfish biologist for WDFW.

Unlike previous years, the shrimp fishery will not reopen on the following Wednesday after the May 5 opener. Instead, the fishery will reopen in most areas on Friday, May 11. "With such an extreme low tide on that Wednesday (May 9) it only made sense to shift the second day of fishing to Friday," O'Toole said. "We don't want to leave shrimpers stranded 100 feet from the boat ramp on a low afternoon tide."

In all areas of Puget Sound, fishers are limited to 80 spot shrimp per day. Spot shrimp seasons for various areas of Puget Sound are:

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- Discovery Bay Shrimp District (Marine Area 6): Open from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. on May 5, 11, 12 and 16.
- Marine areas 4 (east of the Bonilla-Tatoosh line), 5, 6 and 13 (excluding shrimp districts): Open daily beginning May 5 at 7 a.m. The spot shrimp season closes when the quota is attained or Sept 15, whichever comes first. The exception is Marine Area 13, which closes for spot shrimp May 31.
- Marine Area 7: Opens May 5 at 7 a.m. and will be open May 11, 12, 17, 18 and 19.
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Additional dates and times will be announced for these areas if sufficient quota remains.

For a description of the marine areas and fishing rules, including regulations for coonstripe and pink shrimp fishing seasons, see WDFW's [Recreational Shrimp Fishing website](#).

Anglers are reminded that all 2011-2012 Washington state fishing licenses expire at midnight March 31. To keep fishing, anglers 15 years of age and older must purchase a 2012-13 license. Licenses and permits are available [online](#), by phone (1-866-246-9453) and from sporting goods stores and other retail license dealers around the state.

### **Southwest Washington**

After a couple of months of slow fishing for **spring chinook salmon**, fishery managers from Washington and Oregon are set to decide whether to extend the initial season on the lower Columbia River beyond April 6.

Their decision, scheduled April 5, will be reported on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) [website](#) and on the department's Fishing Hotline (360-902-2500).

"Like last year, the spring chinook run has been late to arrive – and for many of the same reasons," said Joe Hymer, a WDFW fish biologist. "Not only has the Columbia been running high and cold, but all that rain in recent weeks has muddied up the water below the Willamette and Cowlitz rivers."

In addition, the bulk of this year's return is expected to be four year-olds, which arrive a bit later, Hymer said.

Those conditions are clearly reflected in the catch. Through March 25, an estimated 42,600 anglers had caught only 1,176 of the spring chinook available for harvest through April 6. Of that number, about 800 were upriver salmon that count toward the 12,700-fish harvest guideline for the first leg of the fishery.

At the same time, only a few dozen fish have been counted crossing Bonneville Dam.

As anglers may recall, the pre-season forecast anticipated a return of 314,200 upriver spring chinook, which would be the fourth-largest run on record. Hatchery-reared spring chinook returning to the Cowlitz, Lewis Willamette and other tributaries below Bonneville Dam will also contribute to the number of fish available for harvest.

To guard against overestimating this year's run, the states are managing spring chinook fisheries with a 30 percent buffer until the forecast is updated in late April or early May. Whatever they decide about extending the sport fishery in early April, they will also consider reopening the fishery after the run update.

Hymer reminds anglers that all 2011-2012 Washington state fishing licenses expire at midnight March 31. To keep fishing, anglers age 15 and older must purchase a 2012-13 license and a Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement. Licenses and permits are available [online](#), by phone (1-866-246-9453) and from sporting goods stores and other retail license dealers around the state.

Through April 6, anglers fishing downriver from Bonneville Dam may retain one marked, hatchery-reared adult spring chinook as part of their daily catch limit. Anglers should note that the sport fishery will be closed April 3 to accommodate a possible commercial fishery.

Above Bonneville Dam, the fishery is open to boat and bank anglers on a daily basis through May 2 between the Tower Island powerlines six miles below The Dalles Dam and the Washington/Oregon state line, 17 miles upriver from McNary Dam. Bank anglers can also fish from Bonneville Dam upriver to the powerlines during that time. Anglers fishing above Bonneville Dam can keep two marked adult spring chinook per day.

The mainstem Columbia River is also open for retention of shad through May 15 on days and in areas open for retention of adipose fin-clipped spring chinook.

Fishing for chinook salmon and **hatchery steelhead** is also open on a number of tributaries to the Columbia River under rules outlined in the 2011-12 [Fishing in Washington](#) pamphlet. Hymer said fishing for winter hatchery steelhead is still going strong, particularly on the Cowlitz and Kalama rivers, noting that summer-run steelhead are moving in right behind them.

Anglers are limited to one adult hatchery-reared chinook a day on the Kalama and Lewis rivers, but can keep two hatchery fish a day on the Wind River and Drano Lake. Starting April 1, the lower Klickitat River is open for spring chinook fishing Mondays, Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays only. The daily limit is two hatchery chinook, two steelhead, or one of each.

Sometime in early April, WDFW plans to expand the popular fishing area at the mouth of the Wind River by pushing the outside boundary 100 yards out into the Columbia River. John Weinheimer, a WDFW fish biologist, said the expansion is designed to help relieve crowding at

the mouth of the Wind River, where up to 200 boats a day often compete for space during the peak of the spring chinook season.

Approximately 8,400 hatchery-reared adult spring chinook salmon are expected to return to the Wind River this year, compared to 7,800 last year.

"The public has asked us for years to move the fishing boundary out into the Columbia," Weinheimer said. "We're trying it this year on an experimental basis to see if we can do that without a significant impact on federally protected spring chinook and summer steelhead bound for the upper Columbia River."

Once the buoy line has been moved, WDFW will open the expanded area for fishing and announce the regulation change on its [website](#).

The expansion is being funded by fees paid by anglers for a Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement, which is required to fish the Columbia or its tributaries. The Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement Advisory Board, which allocates that funding, approved spending \$33,300 to hire a biologist and a technician to monitor the catch and analyze the data over a three-month period.

Hymer noted that a similar expansion is in the works at Drano Lake. Building on the bank-only fishing opportunity near the outlet that opens April 16, fishery managers plan to keep a bank-fishing area outside Drano Lake open after the mainstem Columbia closes in early May.

He added, however, that anglers should also expect to see more Yakama Nation tribal fishing in the lake. Starting in mid-April, subsistence fisheries from fishing platforms will be allowed from noon Monday through 6 p.m. Thursday each week through mid-June. As in recent years, a set net fishery also will take place Tuesday night into Wednesday during the same period.

"We ask that both tribal and non-tribal fishers respect each others' space," Hymer said.

As with spring chinook, fishing for **white sturgeon** has been slow, with low participation in recent weeks. Fisheries below Bonneville Dam are open on the following schedule:

- **Buoy 10 to the Wauna powerlines:** Retention of white sturgeon is allowed daily through April 30 and from May 12 through July 8. Through April 30, sturgeon must measure between 38 inches and 54 inches (fork length) to be retained. From May 12 through the end of the season they must measure 41 inches to 54 inches (fork length) to be retained. Catch-and-release fishing is allowed on days when retention is prohibited.
- **Wauna powerlines to Bonneville Dam:** Retention of white sturgeon is allowed three days per week (Thursday through Saturday) through July 31 and from Oct. 20 through Dec. 31. Sturgeon must measure between 38 inches and 54 inches (fork length) to be retained. Catch-and-release fishing is allowed on days when retention is prohibited.

Sand Island Slough near Rooster Rock is closed to fishing at least through April 30.

Rather catch some **trout**? Several popular lakes – including Mineral Lake (Lewis County), Swift Reservoir (Skamania County) and Rowland Lake (Klickitat County) – open for business April 28. In addition, many year-round lakes throughout the region will be stocked with thousands of rainbow trout over the next few weeks – some weighing up to a pound a piece. See how many, and where, on WDFW's [regional stocking report](#).

Now is also a good time to start plying the waters for **walleye** and **bass** from Bonneville Dam up to McNary Dam. "Catch rates for both species should pick up right through spring," Hymer said.

## Eastern Washington

Some of the region's best fishing will begin with the lowland lakes season opener on April 28. Hundreds of thousands of trout will be waiting in lakes throughout the region when anglers hit the water for opening day.

Best bets in the central district include Badger, Williams, West Medical, Fishtrap and Clear lakes, which will be well-stocked and grow fish well, said John Whalen, regional fish program manager for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

In Stevens County, Whalen recommends Waitts, Loon, Deep, Cedar, Potter's Pond, Bayley, Rocky, Starvation and the Little Pend Oreille chain of lakes. In Ferry County, he likes Ellen, Davis, Swan and Trout lakes, and favors Diamond, Frater, Big Meadow, North and South Skookum, Marshall and Sacheen lakes favors in Pend Oreille County.

But anglers don't have to wait until the end of April to catch some nice trout, Whalen said. Lots of lakes that opened for business March 1 are still producing well, he said.

For example, Coffeepot Lake in Lincoln County is producing **rainbow trout** up to 22 inches, mostly on flies. Coffeepot is under selective gear rules (no bait, artificial flies and lures only, knotless nets), a minimum size limit of 18 inches and daily catch limit of one trout.

Liberty Lake, in eastern Spokane County offers good catches of **brown trout** that run up to 25 inches. Liberty still has lots of good fishing for both those trout and, as the water warms, some of the earliest **yellow perch** and **crappie**.

Downs Lake in southwest Spokane County receives hatchery "catchable-size" rainbow trout, but it should also fish well this month for **largemouth bass**. Downs also has yellow perch and crappie. Medical Lake, near the town of the same name in southwest Spokane County, has brown and rainbow trout.

Catch-and-release fishing on both rainbow and **cuthroat trout** at Amber Lake in southwest Spokane County has been good. Amber is under selective gear rules and shifts to a catch-and-keep season on April 28 when the daily limit is two trout of at least 14 inches. Rainbows with clipped adipose fins caught at Amber must be released even after April 28.

A year-round fishery at Rock Lake in Whitman County is consistently good for catches of both brown and rainbow trout.

Year-round Lake Roosevelt keeps producing big rainbows most days, with some **kokanee** and **walleye**. Anglers should keep in mind that the portion of the reservoir from the Kettle arm upstream to Barstow Bridge closes April 1 through the Friday before Memorial Day (May 25).

Deer Lake in southern Stevens County, which opened March 1, is finally warming up and likely producing some catches of rainbow and **lake trout**, with **bass**, **crappie** and **perch** catches not far behind.

In the south end of the region, the Tucannon River impoundments, on WDFW's Wooten Wildlife Area, have been producing nice rainbow catches since opening March 1. Area manager Kari Dingman said Big Four, Blue, Deer, Rainbow, Spring and Watson lakes are all well-stocked with hatchery trout and slowly warming up as spring advances.

Anglers are reminded that all fishing rules in the [2011-2012 regulations pamphlet](#) apply throughout the month of April. New rules take effect May 1, 2012, and will be available in pamphlets online and at license dealers later this month.

Anglers are also reminded that all 2011-2012 Washington state fishing licenses expire at midnight March 31. To keep fishing, anglers 15 years of age and older must purchase a 2012-13 license. Licenses and permits are available [online](#), by phone (1-866-246-9453) and from sporting goods stores and other retail license dealers around the state.

April 20 is the deadline for registration for the May 5 **Kids' Fishing Event** at Clear Lake in Spokane County. For details on the registration form, see the [Youth Fishing 2012 Event Calendar](#) on WDFW's website.

### **Northcentral Washington**

Dozens of the region's lakes opened to fishing April 1, most in Adams and Grant counties of the Columbia Basin.

With cold, wet, windy weather on the opener, fishing effort was down, reported Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) district fish biologist Chad Jackson of Moses Lake.

"Dry Falls Lake had the best fishing on the opener for those willing to brave the high winds and cold temperatures," he said. "Successful anglers were primarily using small black chironomids at depths of 15 to 25 feet. Anglers who fished three to five hours on the opener caught-and-released five trout on average. Trout size was fair to good, ranging from 10 to over 20 inches. It appears that last year's cold spring shortened the growing season for trout in Dry Falls Lake, as yearlings should easily be 12-14 inches by the opener, instead of 10-12 inches. Smaller yearling trout size has been observed in other lakes in the Basin this year. Over the next couple months these trout should grow to a nicer size."

Dry Falls Lake, which is in the north end of Grant County near Coulee City, should continue to provide good fishing through the spring. It's a Selective Gear Rule fishery with an internal combustion motor prohibition and a one fish daily catch limit. In addition to **rainbow trout**, Dry Falls gets stocked with **brown** and **tiger trout**.

Jackson said the Hampton and Teal lakes fished poor on the opener averaging from one to two trout per angler. However, trout caught from these lakes were very nice sized, ranging mostly from 14 to 18 inches.

North and South Teal lakes, among the "Seep Lakes" south of Potholes Reservoir and north of Othello, were rehabilitated in 2010 and restocked with rainbow trout fry in 2011. Upper and Lower Hampton lakes, north of Othello on the wildlife refuge, are usually good producers in this early season, but Jackson predicted they only be fair at best. "The Hamptons are in need of rehabilitation to remove nuisance fish species that impact trout fry survival," he said. "There are still some good size trout in the two lakes for the patient angler."

Many of the other waters that opened April 1 are within the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge, including the Pillar-Widgeon chain of lakes. "These small lakes should be fair to good through the spring," Jackson said. "We encourage anglers to fish three to five of these lakes in an outing in order to catch a decent number of **rainbow trout**."

One refuge fishery – Para-Juvenile Lake, seven miles northwest of Othello on the Adams-Grant county line – opened April 1 only to anglers up to 14 years of age. It's a good spot to take kids to catch **bass** and **sunfish**.

Beyond preparation for the vagaries of spring weather, Jackson reminds anglers to have a new fishing license, valid April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013, in hand before participating in this opener.

All 2011-2012 Washington state fishing licenses expired at midnight March 31. To keep fishing, anglers 15 years of age and older must purchase a 2012-13 license. Licenses and permits are available online, by phone (1-866-246-9453) and from sporting goods stores and other retail license dealers around the state.

### **Southcentral Washington**

This is the time of year that area anglers start thinking seriously about **trout**, because the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is planting plenty of fish in local waters right now. Thousands of catchable-size trout are scheduled to be planted in Columbia Park Pond, Dalton Lake, Matoon Lake, FioRito Lake, Powerline Lake, Marmes Lake, and other lakes in April. Several lakes are also being stocked with jumbo trout, weighing over a pound apiece.

"Rotary Lake in Yakima has been particularly good with some trout up to two pounds apiece," said Eric Anderson, a WDFW fish biologist based in Yakima. "As the weather continues to warm and the March winds subside, fishing should pick up in lakes throughout the region."

A complete trout-planting schedule for southcentral lakes and ponds is available on the [WDFW website](#).

Anderson reminds anglers that all 2011-2012 Washington state fishing licenses expire at midnight March 31. To keep fishing, anglers age 15 and older must purchase a 2012-13 license. Licenses and permits are available [online](#), by phone (1-866-246-9453) and from sporting goods stores and other retail license dealers around the state.

Most **steelhead** sport fisheries are now closed in the Columbia and Snake rivers, although a "bank only" fishery adjacent to WDFW's Ringold Springs Hatchery near the Tri-Cities is open April 1 through April 15. Bank anglers may retain two hatchery steelhead per day along the Franklin County shoreline between the WDFW marker a quarter-mile downstream from the Ringold irrigation wasteway outlet and the marker a half-mile upstream from Spring Creek.

Meanwhile, **spring chinook salmon** will be moving into the area in increasing numbers throughout the month of April. On the Columbia River, anglers can keep two adipose-fin-clipped hatchery chinook per day through May 2 (or until the quota is reached) from Bonneville Dam upstream to the Washington/Oregon state line, 17 miles upriver from McNary Dam. The lower Yakima River opens to spring chinook fishing May 1.

"The run appears to be late this year, but springers usually start arriving in fishable numbers around the middle of April," Hoffarth said. "Anglers should keep an eye out for emergency rules that open and close fishing on short notice." For updates, he recommends checking the [department's website](#), the Fishing Hotline (360-902-2500) and local news media.

**Sturgeon** anglers are also advised to stay abreast of new regulations. As of late March, anglers could still catch and keep legal-size sturgeon in Lake Umatilla (John Day Dam to McNary Dam), but that fishery will close as soon as the 500-fish quota for those waters is reached. Anglers planning to fish the lake should keep an eye on the WDFW website for possible updates.

Farther upriver, the sport fishery for white sturgeon above McNary Dam (Lake Wallula) is scheduled to run through July 31.

In both areas, anglers may retain only those white sturgeon that measure between 43 inches and 54 inches when measured from the tip of the snout to the fork of the tail.

Rather catch warm-water fish? Catch rates should continue to improve on area rivers for **smallmouth bass**, **channel catfish** and **walleye** in April right through spring.

### **TGF Inbox - Reader E-mail**

#### **Write to the TGF staff:**

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#### **Random Links**

ODFW Razor Clamming Workshop May 6th:

[http://www.dfw.state.or.us/education/outdoor\\_skills/workshops/razor\\_clamming\\_fort\\_stevens\\_may\\_6.asp](http://www.dfw.state.or.us/education/outdoor_skills/workshops/razor_clamming_fort_stevens_may_6.asp)

The Pikeminnow Bounty Program pays up to \$8 per fish, starts May 1st:

<http://www.pikeminnow.org/>

Steelhead Bank Fishing from Fish-Works: <http://fish-works.com/fish-works/node/18>

**GOOD LUCK!**