

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **April 27th – May 3rd, 2012**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- With the Columbia now closed, angler effort will shift to the lower Willamette for spring chinook. Catch rates slowed by the weekend although some boats fared well in Saturday's Quest fishing tournament. Fishery managers will now be watching dam counts at Bonneville, making a run size update that will dictate further opportunity for both the sport and commercial fleets. Counts are jumping exponentially and are likely to peak late in the coming two weeks.

Although sturgeon are an option, very few will pursue keepers in the mainstem until late in June when the estuary fishery begins to take off. The Willamette remains full of sturgeon for catch and release opportunities.

This is the historical peak week for the Willamette fishery but anglers remain perplexed for the lack of success in recent days. Water clarity is improving as well as temperature but a steady rise in the river levels has put fish off. Dave Wacker of Portland went 2 for 3 at Sellwood Bridge on Monday however, taking both hatchery fish on slow trolled herring in about 25 feet of water. He was fishing with ace John Shmilenko who tallied number 29 and 30 for the season; about half of what he typically has harvested for this time of year.

Steelhead remain plentiful on the Clackamas River but given the high, cold flows this early in the season, spring chinook are likely to make another late season showing this year. River flows on the Clackamas and Sandy Rivers are scheduled to rise through the weekend, making them both poor options for salmon and steelhead. Plunkers stand the best chance to take fish under these conditions but trollers working the lower ¼ mile of the Sandy can take upper Columbia bound chinook this time of year.

Caution is advised on the McKenzie as the water level came up late last week. While water color has remained fair, it was too high early this week to fish well. Summer steelhead have been taken on jigs, spinners and flies.

A few summers have been taken on the South Santiam but it's early yet for best results. A few were reported over the weekend on the North Santiam as well.

Northwest – Although in a transition time of year, steelhead and salmon are available for Tillamook area anglers. Winter steelhead are on their way out with only a few summer fish available in the Wilson and Nestucca Rivers.

Rumors of spring chinook success are now more likely with fish reported from the Trask hatchery to the jaws in the recent week. The Trask will remain a top option with the Wilson and Nestucca fair back-ups. Soft tides over the weekend should concentrate motivated anglers near the jaws where even ocean fishing may be an option if seas remain subdued. Peak fishing is still weeks away however.

ODF&W will be holding a public input meeting tonight at the Oregon Department of Forestry building in Tillamook. Interested stakeholders can provide input on season shaping for the fall chinook and coho fisheries on the north coast, including a controversial citizen-driven proposal to close the jaws at Nehalem, just when summer and fall stocks are beginning to rebound. Early predictions of adult returns are favorable throughout the north coast.

Boaters working nearshore reefs again scored great catches of bottomfish, including lingcod early this week. Three Arch Rocks off of Oceanside provided excellent sport and crabbing was good too for sport pots working out of Garibaldi.

Nearshore halibut anglers can start to target their quarry south of Cape Falcon beginning May 1st. Anglers must stay inside 40-fathoms and follow other important regulations. Check the ODF&W web site. The first 3-day season for halibut anglers north of Cape Falcon (near Manzanita) begins May 3rd. Anglers in this region can target halibut Thursdays through Saturdays through July 15th or the attainment of a 9,500 pound quota, whichever comes first.

Southwest – When the ocean has been cooperative, offshore recreational boats and charters have returned to port with mostly limits of rockfish and ling cod.

Surf perch fishing has held up well over the past week with area beaches producing good numbers whenever ocean swells have moderated.

Offshore Chinook season is open and catches have been good at times. Salmon have been seen jumping around charter boats this week.

The recent freshet flowing into Winchester Bay over the past week once again slowed crabbing results. Spring Chinook catches have been good in the Umpqua mainstem despite higher water levels.

Fishing has been up and down with the river level on the lower Rogue over the past week. When the ocean has laid down and the water has been dropping, spring Chinook catches have been good. Flows are predicted to drop to plunking levels by the coming weekend. Results on the middle Rogue have been fair with a few Chinook taken around Grants Pass. Upper Rogue anglers have been taking a few springers along with late-season winter steelhead.

Boats launching out of Brookings Harbor have been doing well for ling cod, fair for rockfish.

Diamond Lake opens April 28th but with the water reported as 99% covered in snow and ice, augers and snowshoes should be included in opening day fishing gear.

Howard Prairie and Hyatt Lake also open this Saturday.

Eastern – Salmonflies are appearing on the Deschutes but they're not yet hatching in significant numbers. March Browns and BWOs remain the primary hatches. Lower river color has been murky at times with White River spewing silt this week. Warm Springs opens this coming weekend. Middle Deschutes levels are low with irrigation starting.

Crooked River water levels rose again late last week. It should drop this week to allow fishing by the weekend.

Brightly-colored blades trailing Spin 'N' Glos or hoochies are taking decent sized kokanee for trollers at Green Peter.

The John Day River level rose over the past weekend, shutting down smallmouth bass action.

Soapbox Update: VOTE! This is a summary of the CCA initiative that will be on the fall ballot in Oregon!

**Immediate Release:
April 3, 2012**

Contact: Lydia Plukchi
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The Office of the Secretary of State received a judgment from the Supreme Court on April 3, 2012, for initiative petition #21, proposing a statutory amendment, for the General Election of November 6, 2012. The judgment from the Supreme Court included a copy of the modified ballot title submitted to the court by the Attorney General's office. The modified ballot title is as follows:

Prohibits commercial non-tribal fishing with gillnets in Oregon "inland waters," allows use of seine nets

Result of "Yes" Vote: "Yes" vote changes commercial non-tribal fishing in Oregon "inland waters" (defined) by banning gillnets, adopting other regulatory changes; recreational salmon fishers ensured their recent share.

Result of "No" Vote: "No" vote continues current commercial fishing practices, retains laws allowing gillnets, leaves other current regulations in place; continues annual adjustment of recreational salmon harvest share.

Summary: Current law allows commercial salmon fishing in Columbia River only with gillnets; requires recreational salmon fishers' percentage share of overall salmon catch to be readjusted annually; allows issuing of gillnet permits within limit of 200; recognizes gillnet licenses as valid in Columbia River in both Oregon and Washington waters. Measure bans commercial gillnet fishing by non-tribal fishers in Oregon "inland waters" (defined); requires Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission to permit use of "seine nets" (defined) instead; ensures that recreational salmon fishers' percentage of overall salmon catch remains at 2007-2011 levels; prohibits purchase of salmon caught by gillnet by non-tribal fishers in Oregon inland waters; prohibits issuing of additional gillnet permits; repeals statute recognizing validity of gillnet licenses in Oregon and Washington waters.

Chief Petitioner(s):
Fred Girod, 1006 W 11th St, Vancouver, WA 98660,
Rod Monroe, 1006 W 11th St, Vancouver, WA 98660
David Schamp, 1006 W 11th St, Vancouver, WA 98660

SW Washington – Steelhead are still dominating the catches on the Cowlitz, especially near the trout hatchery. Spring chinook are starting to show however and catches should ramp up in the next two weeks.

The Kalama and Lewis are also showing signs of improvement for salmon anglers with some summer steelhead starting to show as well.

Drano Lake and Wind River trollers should soon start to score good results for upriver bound spring chinook. Adult numbers are climbing rapidly at Bonneville, which in turn signals the first good opportunities for keepers in this popular district fishery.

Columbia River Fishing Report – Well, this section of TGF will get easy for the next several weeks. As anglers face a final closure on the mainstem Columbia, counts over Bonneville are starting to come to fruition. It would only be obvious that the best catch rates of the year finally happened last week with estuary fishers taking the lead bragging rights with good catches reported from Puget Island to Rice Island just prior to the high water event now taking place on the lower river.

Davis Bar also fished well late last week but slowed slightly by the weekend. A rising river was to blame but action shifted upriver by the weekend with good catches reported near the airport. We fished on Sunday, the last day the mainstem was open, only to lose one at the head of the channel (near Fred's Marina) and landing 2 hatchery fish alongside Hayden Island. It was one of the more consistent spots for action from what I witnessed although only a few fish were caught over the course of the few hours that we spent there.

It's all moot at this point and final numbers haven't come out yet but it appears that we still have not attained our full sport quota as of yet so the departments will once again go to the modeling table and weigh options for the sport fleet. You know we'll keep you apprised as the details emerge. Bonneville counts are for the last 2 days numbered over 4,000 adults per day passing the facility. That should continue to ramp up in the coming 10 days with hopefully some days seeing over 10,000 fish cross at Bonneville.

Just for fun, here are the catch rates (according to ODF&W) for the last week of the fishery:

Gorge Bank:

CLOSED. Weekend checking showed 19 adipose fin-clipped spring chinook kept, plus one unclipped spring chinook released for 43 bank anglers.

Gorge Boats:

CLOSED. Weekend checking showed 36 adipose fin-clipped spring chinook kept, plus eight unclipped spring chinook released for 32 boats (104 anglers).

Troutdale Boats:

CLOSED. Weekend checking showed 56 adipose fin-clipped spring chinook kept, plus 13 unclipped spring chinook released for 189 boats (436 anglers).

Portland to Longview Bank:

CLOSED. Weekend checking showed 36 adipose fin-clipped spring chinook, and 13 adipose fin-clipped steelhead kept, plus six unclipped spring chinook and four unclipped steelhead released for 483 bank anglers.

Portland to Longview Boats:

CLOSED. Weekend checking showed 235 adipose fin-clipped spring chinook adults, three adipose fin-clipped spring chinook jacks, and one adipose fin-clipped steelhead kept, plus 48 unclipped spring chinook adults and one unclipped spring chinook jack released for 503 boats (1,342 anglers).

Estuary Bank (Clatsop Spit to Wauna Powerlines):

CLOSED. Weekend checking showed six adipose fin-clipped spring chinook kept for 19 bank anglers.

Estuary Boats (Tongue Point to Wauna Powerlines):

CLOSED. Weekend checking showed 56 adipose fin-clipped spring chinook adults, and one adipose fin-clipped spring chinook jack kept, plus 13 unclipped spring chinook adults and one unclipped spring chinook jack released for 70 boats (179 anglers).

Sturgeon fishing remains predictably slow with just one keeper recorded in the Portland to Longview stretch. We're still many weeks away from good fishing in the mainstem Columbia.

The Guide's Forecast – Anglers will be on stand-by for a possible re-opener of the mainstem Columbia in the coming weeks. One thing is for sure, fishery managers will have to get a grip on the number of fish actually returning to the system this coming year. Some crystal ball enthusiasts are predicting that 10% of the run will be passed Bonneville by April 30th but we'll certainly have a good idea by then what the run size will be. The big question is, will we have seen the peak counts by then or not? The next joint-state meeting will happen on April 30th and just before the meeting, we'll get our hands on the state "fact-sheet", which give the juicy details on what the sport fleet's possibilities are. We'll certainly let you know but the good news is, with a rapidly rising river, anglers won't miss much as catch rates would be low anyway under this high-flow scenario. This river will be raging, it might be a good time to NOT be on the water.

And that goes for sturgeon fisherman too.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Daily fish counts at Willamette Falls have been up and down in reverse relationship with the water level. Early this week there was some improvement. Current data shows about 350 spring Chinook upstream along with about 2,800 summer steelhead. The roughly 6,500 winters that have been counted are probably past their prime and not of interest to anglers. As muddy water washed into the lower Willamette over the past weekend, catch rates for spring Chinook declined. There are plenty of fish in the river and the water temperatures is showing some improvement but if the visibility is low, catches will be negatively impacted. The Middle Fork Willamette above Hills Creek Reservoir opens Saturday, April 28th.

There was sporadic activity in the upper reaches of the lower Willamette (below Willamette Falls). On Monday, Sellwood produced a few fish on the point about 1,000 yards above the bridge and the west bank produced a few biters as well. Some fish were caught at Fred's Marina on Wednesday, despite a rising Columbia and Willamette River. There were also rumors of a good afternoon bite in the Garbage Hole on Wednesday although it's not likely to hold up due to an increasing river for the next several days. The Multnomah Channel has been predictably quiet and will likely continue that way until Columbia flows moderate.

McKenzie levels have continued rise gradually over the past week with the latest flow measured right around 10,000 cfs at Vida. That's about double the flow measured just 10 days ago and is attributable primarily to snowmelt with moderating air temperatures and a rising freezing level. The river above Leaburg Lake will open this coming Saturday.

With snowmelt impacting valley streams and rivers, extra water is being released from Detroit Reservoir into the North Santiam and from Green Peter Reservoir into the South Santiam. This means another weekend of higher-than-normal water flows as room is made in these impoundments to contain the influx of water. Summer steelhead are entering the Foster Dam trap on the South Santiam.

Of interest, relief and a testament to common sense, starting in 2013, soft plastic lures will no longer be considered live bait according to Oregon regulations. How it was ever any other way escapes us.

Haldeman Pond, Henry Hagg Lake, Salmonberry Lake, Silver Creek Reservoir, Timothy Meadows, Trojan Ponds, Blue River above Reservoir, Carmen Reservoir, Clear Lake, Detroit Reservoir, Dorena Reservoir, E. E. Wilson Pond, Fall Creek above Fall Creek Reservoir, Foster Reservoir, Freeway Lake East, Junction City Pond, Leaburg Lake, McKenzie River above and below Leaburg Lake, Salmon Creek, Salt Creek, Smith Reservoir, Coast Fork Willamette River and the Willamette River Middle Fork above Hills Creek Reservoir are scheduled to be planted with hatchery trout.

The Guide's Forecast – The water level is forecast to remain fairly steady (although high) on the lower Willamette through the weekend, then moderate slightly in the week to come. The good news is that the turbidity level isn't too bad and should hold or even improve as the water drops. Stick with trolling the lower Willamette for springers. Recently, fruitless mornings have turned into productive afternoons and in a few cases have resulted in limits as the bite turned on later in the day. Stick with plug-cut green-label herring either with or without a flasher and spend at least a portion of the day trolling downhill as that technique has been most productive recently. If anchor fishing, relax and enjoy what is predicted to be decent weather over the coming weekend. Wrap those K-14s with a sardine fillet and freshen it up periodically but don't bother with prawns or cured roe which have been effective occasionally but are attracting primarily trash fish this week. Plunking from Meldrum Bar has been producing summer steelhead but spring Chinook is rarely seen here. Trout fishing will be good on the Middle Fork when the water drops and clears.

Summer steelhead numbers are increasing in the McKenzie system and once the water starts dropping, they'll be a worthwhile target. Hatchery trout may be retained on the McKenzie starting April 28th.

The Santiams are high and worse yet, rising. Write these off your fishing list for the coming weekend. On a similar topic, the Spey clinic scheduled at Kimmel Park on the North Santiam has been cancelled due to - you guessed it - high water. The level is forecast to start dropping again next week.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Clackamas water levels are rising at this writing but are forecast to be starting to drop rapidly over the coming weekend. The level at Estacada is predicted to return to 13 feet or so by the 1st of May.

Sandy River water levels remain high at this time, measuring 11.6 feet at the town of Sandy. As a result, effort and catches have been low.

The Guide's Forecast – While high water on the Clackamas has been challenging, as the situation improves, steelheading will pick up. There are a few winters but fresh summers are of greatest angler interest. While it's still early to expect stellar results for spring Chinook, a few have been hooked on the lower river over the past week. Prospects for springers will improve into May. Eagle Creek is open but offers nothing of legitimate interest at this time. Recently, anglers have reported catching 'trout' but these are actually smolts which should be left alone to make their way downriver and return in a few years as adults. Catch them then.

There are still winter steelhead in the Sandy with the majority wild or spawned out at this time. Spring Chinook are becoming the target of greater interest along with the fresh summer steelhead which have been entering over the past few weeks. Spinners will take either or both.

North Coast Fishing Report – North coast anglers remain in neutral as winter steelhead

numbers continue to dwindle and spring chinook have yet to make a good showing. River levels are looking good right now but the majority of fish will be of poor quality in the coming weeks.

There are rumors, albeit somewhat reliable, that there has been spring chinook caught in the Tillamook watershed, particularly the Trask and Tillamook Bay. It's to be expected although most anglers won't go out in force for another few weeks. More on the weekend prospects in the forecast section of this report.

Offshore seekers found some opportunity on Monday and Tuesday of this week. Although a rough wind chop made for a bumpy ride, some anglers fared well for sea bass and lingcod fishing at Three Arch Rocks off of Oceanside. Crabbing was fair too with one boat reporting 15 keepers for 3 pots fishing south of the south jetty. Although the "dinner-plate" sized crabs are not plentiful, the sport legal size crabs are in great shape and taking fresh bait. The lingcod were taking heavy jigs and feather jigs as well.

Bay crabbing is fair at best with Tillamook producing a few keeper crabs over the weekend. Netarts isn't much better.

The Guide's Forecast – Don't bother the steelhead although river conditions might be fair by the weekend. There may be a very rare bright winter steelhead around with a slight chance for a summer steelhead in the coming weeks. Only the Nestucca and Wilson get summer run plants but they won't number too high even though survival was clearly good for steelhead for this year's adult returns.

There will even be spring chinook in the Trask, Wilson and Nestucca Rivers with the Trask the most likely to offer up an early hatchery treat. Don't count on bagging a bunch however, luck will still play a major role in your success. As flows drop, chinook will likely be most receptive to plugs although back-bounced baits, both eggs and shrimp or a combination of both, should offer the angler the best chance at early season chrome. If water models are accurate, chinook should be in their traditional water by the weekend. That is, deep slots and slow holes.

For those not paying attention to river levels, weak weekend tides may produce an occasional spring chinook at the jaws. Soft tides offer up a fair opportunity for herring trollers working the jaws on the outgoing tide. It's still early season but only a few weeks away from peak season. Motivated anglers may reap a reward. The outgoing tides are all morning long with an early morning high tide which isn't a bad option either. Be sure to hit the bar early in the morning as it'll be a daybreak bite if you're targeting high tide. The entire outgoing however, through low slack in the early afternoon will also present an occasional opportunity too. These tides are also conducive to crabbing in the lower bay and it may be fair.

The offshore forecast could be interpreted as "hit or miss". Although it's always a roll of the dice on how the forecast actually turns out, the forecasted swell seems tolerable but the wind waves may make it a bit over the top for most sport craft. If boats do make it out, the bottomfishing will likely remain excellent and nearshore halibut (inside of 40 fathoms) opens up on May 1st. Here is the offshore forecast through the weekend but always check an updated version before your trip:

FRI

W WIND 10 TO 15 KT...BACKING TO SW IN THE AFTERNOON.
WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 11 FT. CHANCE OF SHOWERS.

FRI NIGHT

S WIND 10 TO 15 KT WITH GUSTS TO 20 KT. WIND WAVES
2 FT. W SWELL 10 FT...SUBSIDING TO 8 FT AFTER MIDNIGHT. CHANCE

OF SHOWERS.

SAT

S WIND 10 TO 15 KT...EASING TO 5 TO 10 KT IN THE AFTERNOON. GUSTS TO 20 KT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 8 FT.

SAT NIGHT

W WIND 5 TO 10 KT...VEERING TO N AFTER MIDNIGHT. WIND WAVES 1 FT. W SWELL 6 FT.

SUN

NW WIND 10 TO 15 KT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 7 FT.

MON

NW WIND 10 TO 15 KT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 8 FT.

Central & South Coast Reports – Offshore swell and wind forecasts are becoming more favorable as the weekend approaches. Despite boats having to remain inside the 30-fathom line, lingcod catches have been excellent recently and the seven rockfish per angler limit may include a cabezon.

Ocean Chinook results have run the gamut. Some boats have gotten into them and caught fish while others have blanked. Overall, it's certainly worthwhile giving it a shot while offshore.

Spring all-depth halibut will open for the first round from Cape Falcon to Humbug Mountain on May 10th with fishing continuing every Thursday through Saturday through June 2nd or a quota of 120,821 pounds. The summer fishery will start on August 3rd with fishing days every other Friday and Saturday.

Nearshore halibut will also open on May 1st with catches allowed daily. Boats must fish inside the 40-fathom line for shallow water flatties.

Just to get offshore enthusiasts in the halibut mood, a large halibut was confirmed as caught and released by a charter boat on Sunday, April 22nd. And that was in less than 180 feet of water.

South of Humbug Mountain to the California border, ocean halibut is open seven days a week without depth restrictions but frankly, fishing just ain't as good in this offshore area as it is further north.

With wave action moderating into the weekend, surf perch fishing is expected to be productive. Stick to stretches of beach near river or bay mouths for best results. Those bags of shell-on shrimp from the freezer section of your local mega-mart are effective and will stay on the hook better than sand shrimp (which really are the best but also the most delicate of baits). In a pinch, nightcrawlers will also take pinkfins from the surf.

Crabbing has been poor to slow both inside and outside of Yaquina Bay. Nets, traps and pots are taking very few legal crab but many undersized and females.

Crabbing remains slow with many Dungeness undersized in Winchester Bay which is still suffering effects from fresh water flushing in from the river. South jetty angers have catching fair to good numbers of rockfish and greenling. Sturgeon fishing in the bay and Umpqua tidewater has improved this week. Spring Chinook catches have been fair to good on the mainstem Umpqua

when water flows have been conducive. Boat and bank pressure has consequently been fairly high at times. Water levels are forecast to be on the rise into the weekend, then start to drop again starting Sunday, April 29th. As the water drops, steelheading will pick up although the North Umpqua has been producing mostly lanky, spawned out fish at this time of the year. South Umpqua steelheaders may expect to hook a preponderance of hatchery fish. No wild steelhead may be kept anywhere on the Umpqua but if a proposal currently under consideration by the ODFW is approved, one per day will be allowed on the mainstem and North Umpqua just like the Rogue. Shad fishing will begin soon.

Crabbing has picked up in Coos Bay and is reported as good for those dropping nets and traps from boats although it's still slow for dock crabbers. Steelheading closes on the Coos and Coquille River on the 1st of May.

Lower Rogue water conditions are decent and the level will be dropping through the coming weekend. Catches have been good and should only improve. Springers are running large this season with the average fish over 20 pounds. Plunkers at Huntley Park have been hooking up occasionally this week but are landing very few. With good results coming to both bank and boat fishers, pressure has been high at times and the coming weekend is expected to be a busy one. Flows on the middle Rogue will be dropping through the weekend which may result in an improvement in hookups which have been spotty. Good numbers of winter steelhead and spring Chinook available. While flows on the upper Rogue spiked this week, the water should be dropping over the next few days. Winter steelhead are still being taken along with the occasional springer with prospects for the latter picking up as the season builds.

Diamond Lake opening day woes continue for the second year in a row. Or perhaps "woes" is too strong a term as there must be fans of ice fishing who were hoping for this turn of events. We believe those folks to be in the minority, however. In any event, The lake opens this coming Saturday, April 28th. Four to five inches of ice covers the surface of the lake which is in turn covered by a couple of feet of slushy snow. This according to the Diamond Lake Resort which, being located right on the lake, is a reliable source. Prepare for the opener accordingly. Call the resort at 541-793-3333 for timely reports on conditions and, when applicable, fishing. Ask about snowshoe rental rates (yes, really) while you have them on the phone.

Incidentally, if Proposal 55P, currently being considered by the ODFW is approved, Diamond Lake will remain open year-around. Ice fishing may become de rigueur for a portion of the season at Diamond Lake. The motivation for such a proposal is that too many trout reduce the overall growth of the population. The other side of that consideration is the possibility that the generous eight-fish per day limit may be reduced to five as with the majority of trout lakes in Oregon. See **Random Links**, below, for a list of proposals currently being considered.

Trout season doesn't open on the south coast until May 26th. Many rivers are closed until the including the Winchuck, Chetco, Elk and Sixes.

Applegate Reservoir, Medco Pond, Spaulding Pond, Fish Lake, Burma Pond, Dutch Herman Pond, Reinhart Pond, Millicoma Pond, Sru Lake and Floras Lake are scheduled to be stocked with trout.

Central and Eastern Oregon – The Deschutes has been on the rise for a week but has stabilized over the last couple of days. The water is predictably off color but according to recent local reports, the visibility is fishable despite very high water. While a couple of salmonflies were spotted earlier this week around Madras, the hatch isn't really in full force until June.

One of the problems facing east side and high lake anglers at the opening of trout season this coming Saturday is accessibility as late season snow has many access roads closed. Be sure to check ODOT reports before departing.

Crescent Lake has been producing lake trout to trollers but browns have been challenging to coax to the hook recently.

Kokanee are active at Lake Billy Chinook with trollers taking some by shallow trolling. Fishing for bull trout has been slow to fair.

Crane Prairie opens this coming Saturday and has a devoted following. The launch ramp at the resort is clear and will be useable. Check the roads to Rock Creek and Quinn as the status was not available as of Thursday, April 26th.

Little Lava Lake is not accessible due to snowfall. The roads are also blocked to Hosmer Lake.

The Metolius is fishing seasonably well although fishers will be dealing with higher flows due to snowmelt. The stretch from Arlington to Gorge will provide better water conditions. On a brighter note, bull trout catches often improve when the water comes up. Fish streamers for bulls and stonefly nymphs to tempt rainbows.

Crooked River anglers are enjoying fair to good results despite water that is higher than optimal levels. At 1250 cfs at mid-day on Thursday this week, at flows were moderating at that time.

East Lake, Howard Prairie, Hyatt Lake, Krumbo Reservoir, Lava Lake, Lemolo Reservoir, Odell, Paulina, Lake Simtustus, South Twin and Wickiup Reservoir will open on Saturday, April 28th.

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 Ayers, 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:

- 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.

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 other's 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 **cutthroat 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:

Bob Rees: brees@pacifier.com

Doug Rees: doug@TheGuidesForecast.com

Michael Teague: Michael@TheGuidesForecast.com

Random Links

Diamond Lake information: <http://www.diamondlake.net/fishingreport.html>

Howard Prairie Lake information:

<http://www.howardprairieresort.com/html/marina.html>

Hyatt Lake information:

<http://www.mailtribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20120420/LIFE/204200313>

NOAA Proposal to remove Steller sea lion from the list of endangered wildlife - Agency seeks comment: <http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/newsreleases/2012/ssledps041812.htm>

Proposed regulation changes being considered by ODFW/OSP:

http://www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/fishing/public_process/docs/Fish_Division-OSP_2012_PP_review_results.pdf

GOOD LUCK!