

The Guide's Forecast - volume 14 issue number 40

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **September 28th – October 4th, 2012**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) reports the fall salmon run up the lower Columbia River is tapering off but good opportunity still exists. The best action will be from the mouth of the Sandy River up to Bonneville Dam. Anchor fishermen and bank anglers have been doing best, while backtrollers take up the slack. Smaller sized bait-wrapped Kwikfish in size K13, K14 and K15 have been getting it done. Recent reports indicate that the faster, 20-30 ft. water has produced best. Further downstream, anglers are still catching fish on wobblers and Kwikfish alike, but the lower river has most likely already seen the bulk of the run pass by.

With October Caddis ever more abundant, water conditions perfect and pleasant fall weather ongoing, fly fishers are enjoying good results on the McKenzie River.

Coho and summer steelhead entering the North Santiam should be available to anglers around the mouth of the little North Fork and Stout Greek.

On the Clackamas, no reports of silvers in the river yet, but a modest showing could appear any day now.

The Sandy has seen a few silvers taken on the river with most of the action reported from Oxbow Park downstream. Expect the Cedar Creek area to turn on soon as these fish will arrive and make a showing upriver, with or without rain. A handful are also being taken at the mouth by anglers casting weighted spinners.

Northwest – Recent reports from the lower Columbia indicate there are still a surprising number of coho around with some boats reporting more hatchery fish than wild for a change. The soft tide series recently booted out keepers near the Desdemona Light Marker while anglers indulged in easy Dungeness crab limits in the same area.

With the recent calm water, offshore anglers found on-again, off again success for albacore about 40 miles west of the river mouth. Live bait continues to produce the best results. Reports of a hooked marlin are likely accurate although still uncommon off of Oregon. Anglers are hopeful of one final series of opportunities before fish move out of range until next summer.

Tillamook Bay anglers are enjoying a productive season although rough seas kept anglers inside for the first time in a while on Monday slowing angler momentum. Seaweed and eelgrass is hampering success but fish are available throughout the bay. A large percentage of the catch are 3-year old fish, averaging around 12 pounds but fish to 40 pounds have been taken lately.

The Trask tidewater also has fair numbers of fish present but the soft tide series has them off the bite. With no measureable rain in sight, action should remain fair in the tidewaters of most north coast streams.

The Nehalem is producing fair catches of chinook and an occasional coho. Coho seem largely absent from most systems however but the wild run should start showing by early October.

The Nestucca, Salmon, Siletz and Alsea should all have catchable numbers of fish available to both bank and boat anglers. Catches should start to peak this week.

Crabbing remains phenomenal in the ocean and good in most estuaries. The fresher the crab bait, the better the results.

Southwest- Tuna fishing was good out of Depoe Bay late last week, rewarding sports and charter boats with good catches of large albacore. The end of this fishery is looming, but it's not over yet.

Rockfish and Dungeness limits along with good catches of ling cod were the rule out of central Oregon ports over the past weekend.

The wild coho fishery started on September 15th on several southwestern systems. A few have been caught but the season has just started.

Nearshore halibut re-opened of the central coast on Monday, September 24th. It is scheduled to run through October 31st but is more likely to deplete the 4,700-pound quota prior to that date.

Crabbing in Winchester Bay is quite good while trollers targeting chinook in the bay have seen an improvement over the past week with herring behind a flasher.

Bottom fishing out of Bandon has been excellent with rockfish on the surface some days, allowing fast action casting with light gear or fly rods. Salmon fishing has been slow to fair.

Fishing out of Gold Beach lit up over the past week with scores of fall chinook landed in the Rogue estuary, three of which were over 50 pounds. Offshore boats are scoring rockfish, ling cod and plenty of crabs. Lower Rogue fishers are taking a mix of adult chinook and jacks. Half-pounders are gobbling spinners around Agness. Back-trolled plugs are taking chinook on the middle Rogue while the flies-only upper Rogue has slowed for summer steelhead in low water conditions.

There is no chinook fishing out of Brookings until the "Bubble" fishery opens October 1st to high expectations.

Eastern – Fishing for reddsides has been decent on the lower Deschutes during the morning and evening caddis hatches.

Hosmer Lake has been slow for most, worthwhile for experienced fly fishers who are taking decent numbers of Atlantic salmon and brook trout.

Green Peter continues to produce good numbers of kokanee, about two-thirds of which are of table quality but it is evident that the spawn is nearing.

SW Washington- The Cowlitz and Lewis Rivers remain top options for district anglers with chinook making the strongest showing although coho are not far behind.

Fair numbers of sturgeon are below Bonneville Dam but consumptive opportunity doesn't open up again for another few weeks.

Columbia River Gorge anglers are enjoying a productive period, targeting chinook at the tributary mouths hovering with small clusters of eggs. Jigs can also be effective fished here but are more likely to take coho when they start showing in the coming weeks.

Columbia River Fishing Report – Although just a skeleton crew exists in the lower Columbia River but if you're dropping down bait or spinners in pursuit of hatchery coho, it's pretty easy right now. Easy limits have been the rule lately with guide taking good numbers, limits actually, of hatchery coho with much fewer wild fish in the mix. The reality is, and this year's coded wire tag recoveries will indicate this, many of those early "wild" coho are actually destined for tribal hatcheries. They just aren't clipped. With the bulk of those fish through the system, ample numbers of authentic hatchery fish are available for angler harvest.

The bite has been consistently good both above and below the bridge. Late last week, guides were getting their fish on lower Desdemona Sands, even late on the outgoing tide. Fresh jigged anchovies were working well. As early as Wednesday, guides were taking easy limits of hatchery coho on the incoming tide, particularly above the bridge. And more good news, it seems that there aren't nearly as many sea lions around as fish interception hasn't been a big problem. It's hard to believe that this action will last much longer but it's even harder to believe that it has lasted as long as it has.

Those willing to stay close to lower Desdemona Sands, and dropping crab pots to boot, have been richly rewarded with easy limits of crab. You can even afford to be extra selective of the keepers you take. The crab are hard, plentiful and of a good grade around the lower Desdemona Light Marker and Buoys 20 and 22.

Upriver, anchor anglers working wobblers are seeing a slow-down in their fishery. Bonneville has had its challenging days too. Here's what **pro guide Chris Vertopoulos** has to say about it:

"The fall salmon run up the lower Columbia River is tapering off but good opportunity still exists. The best action will be from the mouth of the Sandy River up to Bonneville dam. Anchor fishermen and bank anglers have been doing best, while backtrollers take up the slack. Smaller sized bait-wrapped Kwikfish in size K13, K14 and K15 have been getting it done. Recent reports indicate that the faster, 20-30 ft water has produced best. Further downstream anglers are still catching fish on wobblers and Kwikfish alike, but the lower river has most likely already seen the bulk of the run pass on by."

Here is the ODF&W creel check from the weekend:

Gorge Bank:

Weekend checking showed nine adult fall chinook, and two jack chinook kept for 62 bank anglers.

Gorge Boats:

Weekend checking showed 30 adult fall chinook, and 11 jack chinook kept, plus one jack chinook and one unclipped steelhead released for 46 boats (152 anglers).

Troutdale Boats:

Weekend checking showed 21 adult fall chinook, and three jack chinook kept, plus one adult fall chinook released for 76 boats (180 anglers).

Warrior Rock to Portland Bank:

Weekend checking showed no catch for 11 bank anglers.

Warrior Rock to Portland Boats:

Weekend checking showed one adult fall chinook, three jack chinook, and one adipose fin-clipped adult coho kept for 21 boats (40 anglers).

Wauna to Warrior Rock Bank:

Weekend checking showed no catch for two bank anglers.

Wauna to Warrior Rock Boats:

Weekend checking showed two adipose fin-clipped adult coho kept, plus three adult chinook, two jack chinook and five unclipped coho released for 13 boats (21 anglers).

The Guide's Forecast – For estuary salmon fishers, the bite is likely to taper although "B" run coho should still be running well into mid-October. Stronger tides this weekend will likely push fish well above the bridge and anglers will have to wait until we get closer to high tide before fishing becomes most effective. Spinners will remain a top option but fresh jigged anchovies are a sure bet. This isn't the best weekend to target these fish as strong tides will keep crab buried for the peak push, not making for a productive double-effort bonus. None-the-less, crabbing will be excellent near the tide changes but be wary of your pot placement and the length of your soak as buoys will get pushed under during the extreme exchange.

Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos has this to add to the "Forecast" section:

"The next two weeks will see the last of the steady chinook action from Washougal to Bonneville Dam. It appears that the bulk of the run has seen its day on the lower river and best opportunity remains from the mouth of the Sandy River up to Bonneville Dam. The smaller sized bait-wrapped Kwikfish in the K13, K14 and K15 sizes have been producing the best results. Changing out the hooks to one size larger on the smallest sizes is important to increasing your hook-up to the net ratio, as the smaller hooks don't seem to grab as well with the larger chinook. Up near the dam, the anchor fisherman have been out fishing the backrollers 3-1 and many backrollers have taken note and switched their tactics. Many "dialed-in" anglers are also reporting the best action happening in the 20-30 ft depths rather than the deeper 30'-50' water of most fall seasons. This can possibly be attributed to 1-3 degree cooler water temps or even a barely noticeable increased sediment load than normal for the calendar date. Now that Condit Dam on the White Salmon river has been removed (just upstream from Bonneville dam), it's entirely possible that cooler water than usual is making its way downstream and the sediment that had built up from a century of the dams existence is still filtering its way downstream, adding a tinge more color to the Columbia River. Salmon are extremely sensitive to their environment and one or two degree's is a big deal to them and can drastically change their usual habits. Yet one can only speculate."

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) reports, "Warmwater fish are available in the Willamette River with mediocre opportunity."

Water temperature at Willamette Falls is in the mid-50-degree range as the flow once again moderates. Fish counts haven't been updated since September 20th when over 200 coho passed, raising the YTD as of that date to 736.

The McKenzie was last stocked with hatchery trout in mid-September and while only fin-clipped fish may be kept, the best fishing here is catch-and release for beautiful, resident wild trout.

Camera monitoring at Bennett Dam has shown there are about 3,800 steelhead in the upper North Santiam. Chinook passage at Foster Dam on the South Santiam is all but done for the year. Summer steelhead are being seen in modest number although over 6,500 are upriver. Another 8,400 summer steelhead which were captured at Foster have been recycled to Waterloo boat ramp as of September 24th.

Henry Hagg Lake, Detroit Reservoir, Dexter Reservoir and Foster Reservoir are scheduled to be planted with hatchery trout this week.

The Guide's Forecast – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) predicts, "Little is happening on the Willamette River, no reports of silvers off the mouth of the Clackamas yet but anglers shouldn't expect much more than a smattering of fish when they do show up. Smallmouth bass fishing is an option if you are looking for solitude and little competition."

Catch-and-release sturgeon fishing has been very good in the lower Willamette. Results were particularly good over the past weekend when early morning fishing coincided with an outgoing tide. Anchovies have seemed to be the most effective bait recently. Expect to wrestle some larger fish as there have been oversized sturgeon in the mix. Smallmouth bass running to nearly three pounds are actively feeding now so use reaction baits such as crankbaits or spinner baits. Upriver, trout fishing has been very good for fly fishers on the Middle Fork Willamette. As numbers build over Willamette Falls, the best results for coho generally comes to spinner fishers at the mouths of upper Willamette tributaries.

McKenzie River level and flow are steady, creating excellent conditions for fall fly fishing. Expect to find October Caddis and Green drakes hatching and imitations effective.

A well know outdoor writer who should remain nameless (but won't; it's Bill Monroe) took exception to the mention of coho on the North Santiam in the Fisheries Forecast as it appeared in the Oregonian. Admittedly numbers at Willamette Falls have been modest thus far this season, but if Bill Sanderson, long-time pro guide on that river, says there's a possibility, we've just gotta believe. Oh, yeah, ODFW reports this week, "Coho are starting to show up in the Santiam River and other tributaries above Willamette Falls." Both the North and South Santiam are forecast to increase in level and flow at the end of September.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) reports, "No reports of silvers in the Clackamas river yet, but a modest showing could appear any day now.

"There have been a few silvers taken on the Sandy river with most of the action reported from Oxbow Park downstream. Expect the Cedar Creek area to turn on soon as these fish will arrive and make a showing upriver, with or without rain. A handful are also being taken at the mouth by anglers casting weighted spinners."

Trollers at the mouth of the Sandy have picked up a few coho on plugs or spinners. A few anglers who have hiked down to mouth this week report seeing scores of coho moving in and upriver, mostly with the tide but not a single one of them reported hooking a fish. At least it appears some are indeed entering and heading upstream, whether or not.

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Only a single report has come in this week which indicated one lone coho hooked (and lost) at the mouth of the Clackamas and nothing else. Fishing for summer steelhead is still an option on the Clackamas as the hatchery will continue recycling hatchery fish downstream to Riverside Park this week in order to give anglers another shot at them. Spinners have been taking fish this recently.

Rain will certainly improve prospect for coho on the Sandy although these fish will head upstream regardless. Flies have been effective this week in hooking a couple at Cedar Creek this week, making it evident there are coho in the Sandy from the mouth to the creek.

North Coast Fishing Report – With the ocean and bar too rough to recreate in/on, anglers have had to focus their efforts in the estuary, battling seaweed and eelgrass for large parts of the tide. But, we've seen it worse too.

Chinook remain abundant as this is one of the more consistent seasons that I have witnessed. Ocean or bay, there are good numbers of fish present. Also notable is the number of smaller 3-year olds in the catch. It's an indicator of good numbers of larger adults in next year's catch. Maybe the ocean conditions and that newly negotiated US/Canada treaty is going to pay dividends.

Most recently, the Ghost Hole and Bay City have been producing chinook on the flood tide. The Ghost Hole is the first to go off although the action certainly isn't lights out. About 2 hours into the incoming tide, we'll start to see some fair action for chinook for herring trollers. The weed has been particularly bad at this time of the tide so you'll have to do your best to avoid it. There will be sporadic action for the middle 3 hours of incoming tide but anglers may want to consider fishing Bay City as the tide rolls in. Again, there hasn't been many chinook at either of these locations but there are catchable numbers and it's been the only game in play.

The upper bay has produced poor results but that could change with the upcoming stronger tide series. Anglers have had to deal with low tides up there recently and the first part of incoming tide; not the most productive time to fish.

The west channel does have some fish in it. We have taken a chinook each of the last 2 days (Tuesday and Wednesday) over there. On herring fished near the bottom on the first part of outgoing tide.

When the ocean is an option, many have gone out there in hopes of escaping the sea weed and eel grass in the estuary. You can often do that but recent ocean weather has kept most anglers from fishing the area that they want to, in particular, the south side of the south jetty. The swell has been too big there recently and the bar too rough to cross on Monday and Tuesday. The north side of the bay has also been producing some catches, including some sand dabs. Many folks hovered in the outgoing tide in the jaws the last few days, producing just a few fish. Although we haven't seen any white hot bites the last several days, we're clearly in peak season as several fish have been coming to the boat ramps.

The size has varied with some days, smaller 3-year old fish dominating the catch and some days, a nice 30+ pounder has come to the net. A few fish over 40 pounds have been taken recently. What seems to go against tradition, smaller baits don't necessarily mean smaller fish. We've been catching plenty of smaller adults (and one jack) on the large Blue Label herring as of late.

The incoming tide has certainly produced the better fishing, as in 2 to 4 hours after low-slack. The first part of outgoing tide has also produced fair results even though many anglers have been exiting before this begins.

Nehalem Bay has been productive with mostly chinook in the catch. A few coho are beginning to show but anglers thus far have been largely in pursuit of chinook and the action has been good with fewer anglers in pursuit of them. The jaws have been producing some of the better catches but that should change on this upcoming stronger tide series.

Anglers on the Nestucca have been largely quiet but there are some fish around. It's clear that this isn't going to be a banner run again but there are fishable numbers present. Most anglers have been focusing on the estuary and the river below Woods Bridge. Action should spread out more in upriver tidal areas on the upcoming tide series.

The Salmon River has been busy with anglers with fair fishing at times. Like the Nestucca, effort will shift more with the upcoming tide series.

The Alsea and Siletz Rivers are gaining in momentum. Both rivers should start to peak in the lower reaches over the next two weeks. The Alsea in particular is expected to realize a large return this season. Trollers working the mouth had their tides this week but the stronger series should produce better results in the upper tidewater areas.

Coho have yet to make a strong showing in any of the northern estuaries. That should change in the very near future. That is, if the wild run actually materializes like most think it will. More frequent jumpers were witnessed in Tillamook on Wednesday and momentum should build. Each estuary has its own set of regulations so check them accordingly.

Crabbing is over-the-top in the ocean, when one can get out. Estuary crabbing is productive too and limits can be had if you work at it. Like the ocean, there is a fair number of soft-shelled crab but that should soon change.

The Guide's Forecast – After years of observation, one thing seems to hold true, if the fishing has been slow for any length of time, it's going to pick up pretty good in the near future. That seems to be the case on Tillamook pretty soon. I don't know if it will be this weekend or not but even though we've posted some regular results all week, overall, it hasn't been on fire around these parts. We're due for some pretty good action in the coming days.

Stronger tides will open up some opportunities in other areas of the estuary. These tides should push fish into the upper bay where spinner and herring trollers should take fair numbers of fish by the weekend. The full moon hits over the weekend and that alone should produce some fair action.

With the ocean forecast looking grim for getting outside, anglers will be stuck in the bay for their only option and we'll be fighting sea weed too. Although the sea weed is always challenging, it's better some days over others. Anglers should be able to avoid heavy concentrations during certain times of the tide but you may have to hunt for open areas on occasion.

Follow the tide up-bay, starting at the Ghost Hole, Bay City, Corral and upper bay near the Oyster House as the tide comes in. The West Channel should fish best during the last hour of incoming tide as well as the first 2 hours of outgoing.

Although herring is king, especially in the lower bay, spinners may have strong application if the

weed is an issue. Plugs may even be a viable option on the strong tide, both incoming and outgoing.

Tidewater fishing should be fair with more motivated fish coming in with the stronger tide series. The Trask and Tillamook Rivers should produce the best results. It's a bit early for Wilson and Kilchis River fish.

Nehalem Bay should also produce another batch of chinook and the first strong showing of wild coho this weekend. Strong tides should motivate fish to bite and the upper reaches should be a good option such as Wheeler and the town of Nehalem. The coho were rumored to concentrate in better numbers above the confluence of the North Fork and may do so again this season.

The Alsea and Siletz should see a nice bump of fish on this tide series. The Alsea has been going for some time but the Siletz should begin to take on its own over the weekend. Bobber tossers will do best during the tide changes but plug fishermen should produce on the strong incoming and outgoing tides.

Although the Nestucca should improve over the weekend, returns are expected to be low so your expectations should match that. The water upstream of Woods should see more fish and better action.

Crabbing in the estuary will likely taper a bit on this extreme tide series. Ocean crabbing will remain phenomenal but one may not get into the ocean this weekend, or at least live to tell about it.

Razor clam digging on the north Oregon Coast re-opens on October 1st with evening tides likely to produce some results if the surf is calm enough to bring clams to the surface.

Central & South Coast Reports – While bottom fishing was excellent out of central Oregon ports over the past weekend, rough seas kept boats at bay early this week. Be sure to take crab gear as ocean crabbing remains great.

Recreational ocean crabbing will close on October 15th to re-open on December 1st. While estuary and river crabbing remains open year-around, it is historically better certain months. **TGF** will keep you abreast of the best times to go.

A few halibut have been taken since the nearshore fishery re-opened Monday this week, primarily by salmon trollers fishing deep for Chinook. The depth limit for nearshore halibut is 240 feet for a quota of 4,700 pounds.

It remains to be seen if any more tuna fishing will be possible this late in the season. Ocean conditions become ever more volatile with every passing day. When boats have made it out over the past week, there have been some albacore taken in the 35 to 40-pound range.

Crabbing has been good for boaters at Winchester Bay and even those tossing traps and rings from docks are doing pretty well.

Tagged Dungeness turned in at Sportsman Cannery will win a cap and a chance at a \$1000 prize but the deadline is the last day of September. No registration or entry fee is required. Chinook catches have been a hot or cold affair with best results coming at the Umpqua River bar. Coho are also coming in. Only one wild coho may be kept but there is a two-salmon limit on hatchery fish, Chinook or coho. Bank fishers are also hooking a few salmon with off the South Jetty. Osprey Point and Half Moon Bay are historically the most productive.

Chinook numbers are good in Coos Bay although the bite has been spotty. A little precipitation would improve fishing but more than a little will send them upriver. Crabbing has been good.

Yaquina Bay crabbers have been doing pretty well for Dungeness. While no limits have been reported, they're taking decent numbers of good-quality crab. Trollers are taking the occasional coho up the Yaquina River.

Alsea Correction: Sometimes a season gets painted with too broad a brush. So it was last week that I (Michael) stated the wild coho season and starting September 15th on those south coast rivers open for coho. The exception is the Alsea which is open from October 1st from the mouth to Five Rivers at River Mile 31. Thank you to alert readers at ifish.net for catching this bone-headed error. On a related topic, trollers are catching Chinook in Alsea Bay.

Coastal rivers that opened for wild coho September 15th are the Siletz, Yaquina, Siuslaw, Umpqua, Coos and Coquille. The length of the season, bag limits and quotas vary so be certain to check regulations specific to the system you intend to fish. For what it's worth, early season catches of wild coho on the Siuslaw have been best by far. See **Random Links**, below, for detailed information.

Tenmile Lakes open on October 1st for both the North and South Lakes but is closed downstream of Hilltop Bridge, the canal between lakes and all the tributaries above the lakes. This season runs from October 1st through December 31st.

Boaters launching out of Charleston have been taking good numbers of a colorful mass of rockfish as well as a few ling cod. Boats trolling Coos Bay from Marshfield Channel up to SOMAR are doing pretty well for Chinook. Bank fishers have been taking a few salmon as well.

The lower Coquille has been producing limits of good-quality Dungeness crab but results for fall Chinook trollers has only been fair over the past week.

When ocean conditions have allowed offshore launches, boats out of Gold Beach are taking excellent numbers of rockfish and ling cod. While many lament that the Rogue estuary isn't fishing as well as it could, it's still the best producer on the south coast right now. Trollers are picking up decent numbers of fall Chinook in the bay, including three last week that scaled over 50 pounds, while the middle river is hosting fish bound for Indian Creek. Hatchery coho are also showing up in catches from the bay, but only fin-clipped fish may be kept. Trollers should keep offerings (generally plug-cut, green label herring) close to the bottom so set up rigs with a one-foot dropper and as much lead as necessary to do the job. A range of cannonballs from two to five ounces should cover any situation. Half-pounders are being taken river-wide with best results coming from around Agness. All steelhead measuring 16 inches or less are considered half-pounders. Plug-pullers have been most successful on the middle Rogue where fall Chinook catches have been steady. Chinook may be kept whether fin-clipped or not on the middle and lower Rogue but targeting them above the old Gold Ray Dam site is not allowed. Be area the Chinook fishing will close on the middle river as of October 1st. Anglers throwing flies on the upper Rogue continue to be challenged by low water. Flies may be thrown with any tackle. No additional weight is allowed although spinning bubbles are legal. Nymphs have been most effective in the skinny water.

An excellent return is forecast for the Chetco and the "Bubble" fishery running from October 1st through the 14th is a knock for not only good catches but will produce some large fish. Thereafter, trolling in Brookings Harbor will be worthwhile. Jacks have been entering the Chetco system for a while now with bobber and bait fishers reaping the rewards.

For those fishing the south coast who are willing to meet the California requirement for salmon fishing, the Klamath River has been producing excellent numbers of fall Chinook and, as a bonus, the bag limit is four per day. This system has rebounded following a crisis only a few years back. Boon dogging cured eggs has been the most productive technique here.

Trout fishing has been only fair for most at Diamond Lake, but results have shown some improvement as the weather cools. There are still a couple of tagged fish out there somewhere, worth 100 each for the lucky angler taking one, but only through the last day of September. Starting on 2013, Diamond Lake will offer year-around fishing. In the winter months, that would be strictly an ice-fishing operation.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Summer steelhead fishing is slow to fair on the lower Deschutes with spinners or jigs taking fish recently. For fly fishers targeting trout, prospects are good as there's less competition since the majority of anglers have turned their attention to summer steelhead. Although results at Sherars Falls have been reported as slow, counts are trending upward. There were 32 Chinook counted over the most recent 10 day period (two days of which the trap was not operated) and well over 200 hatchery steelhead, 69 of which were counted on September 25th alone.

The Owyhee River is fishing very well now with a myriad variety of insects hatching. Watch for activity as it can change depending on the time of day and adjust accordingly. Prospects are good through October.

With salmon spawning imminent, kokanee fishing is over at most locations although East Lake is still producing fish, about half of which are bright enough to keep.

Green Peter has been producing fair to good numbers of kokanee, some of which are bright with just many starting to show color.

Trollers are using downriggers to ply depths of 50 to 75 feet to take fish on dodgers and hoochies.

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report for September 2012

North Puget Sound

Anglers are hooking some bright **ocean coho** in portions of Puget Sound, where more ocean salmon are expected to arrive in September.

Point No Point, Jefferson Head, Possession Bar and Shipwreck should be good spots to catch ocean coho, said Steve Thiesfeld, Puget Sound salmon manager for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

Anglers fishing those areas – or other waters of marine areas 9 (Admiralty Inlet) and 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) – have a daily limit of two salmon, but must release chinook. In Marine Area 10, anglers also must release chum salmon through Sept. 15, while those fishing in Marine Area 9 must release chum through Sept. 30.

"We've seen tremendous coho fishing the last two weeks of August in central Puget Sound," Thiesfeld said. "Fishing should continue to be good as more of those ocean coho make their way into the area."

Marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) and 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) are also open for salmon. Anglers fishing those two marine areas have a two-salmon daily limit, but must release chinook salmon.

Another option is Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands), where anglers have a daily limit of two salmon, but can keep only one chinook. Anglers in Marine Area 7 must release chum and wild coho.

Thiesfeld said the best bet for **freshwater anglers fishing for coho** salmon in the region might be the Nooksack, Snohomish and Green rivers. Other options for coho include the Skagit and Stillaguamish rivers.

Meanwhile, most areas of Puget Sound close to **recreational crab fishing** at sunset on Labor Day (Sept. 3). However, Marine Area 7-North (Gulf of Georgia) and 7-South (San Juan Islands/Bellingham) will remain open through Sept. 30.

Sport fishers who crab in marine areas 7-North and 7-South after Labor Day must record their catch on winter catch record cards. Winter cards are now available at sporting goods stores and other license vendors across the state.

The daily catch limit in Puget Sound is five Dungeness crab, males only, in hard-shell condition with a minimum carapace width of 6¼ inches. Fishers may catch six red rock crab of either sex per day, provided those crab measure at least 5 inches across. See WDFW's [sport-crabbing website](#) for more information.

Crabbers are reminded that their summer catch record cards are due to WDFW by Oct. 1 and must be returned whether or not the cardholder caught or fished for crab during the season. Crabbers who fail to file catch reports for 2011 will face a \$10 fine, which will be imposed when they apply for a 2012 Puget Sound crab endorsement. Completed cards can be mailed in or recorded online. Additional information is available on [WDFW's website](#).

WDFW will announce winter crab seasons for Puget Sound in early October, after completing its assessment of the summer fishery.

Elsewhere, **Lake Sammamish** is open for salmon fishing, with a daily limit of four salmon, of which two may be chinook. All sockeye must be released, and fishing is closed within 100 yards of the mouth of Issaquah Creek. Nearby **Lake Washington** opens Sept. 16 to coho fishing. Anglers will be allowed four coho per day (minimum size 12 inches) but may only fish in waters north of the Highway 520 Bridge and east of the Montlake Bridge.

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

The ocean salmon fishing season is in its final stretch, but anglers should continue to hook bright fish into late September.

"As we move into the final weeks of the season, fishing should continue to be good," said Doug Milward, ocean salmon manager for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). "That's especially true for coho, which tend to be larger later in the fishery."

Anglers have a two-salmon daily limit in all four marine areas off the Washington coast. Up to two chinook may be retained in all areas.

Milward reminds anglers that regulations for coho change in early September in Marine Area 1 (Ilwaco) and Marine Area 2 (Westport). Anglers will be allowed to retain both hatchery and wild coho salmon beginning Saturday, Sept. 1, in ocean waters off Westport and Monday, Sept. 3, off Ilwaco.

In addition, anglers fishing off Westport will be allowed to retain only one coho as part of their two-salmon daily limit beginning Sept. 1, while the coho catch limit in Ilwaco will remain two fish. Those changes do not affect ocean salmon fisheries off LaPush (Marine Area 3) and Neah Bay (Marine Area 4), where anglers can continue to retain hatchery coho but must release wild coho.

All ocean areas (marine areas 1-4) are open to salmon fishing seven days a week.

Ocean salmon fisheries are currently scheduled to continue through Sept. 23 in marine areas 2, 3 and 4, and through Sept. 30 in Marine Area 1. However, salmon fisheries in those areas could close early if catch quotas are reached. Milward reminds anglers to check for any rule changes at [WDFW's website](#).

In the Strait of Juan de Fuca, anglers fishing marine areas 5 (Sekiu) and 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca) have a two-salmon daily limit, but must release chum, chinook and wild coho. Regulations change in Marine Area 5 on Sept. 15, when anglers will be allowed to retain wild coho.

Steve Thiesfeld, Puget Sound salmon manager for WDFW, said fishing for hatchery coho has been good in the Strait and expects that to continue in early September. "Effort typically drops off after Labor Day and then picks up again the middle of September, when anglers fishing off Sekiu can retain any coho," he said. "But anglers might not want to wait until then because fishing for hatchery coho has been pretty darn good."

Farther south, salmon fishing opens Sept. 1 north of Ayock Point in Hood Canal (Marine Area 12), where the daily limit is four coho. All other salmon species must be released. The same rules apply to the Quilcene/Dabob bay fishery, which opened for salmon fishing Aug. 16.

Salmon fishing is currently open south of Ayock Point, where anglers can retain two hatchery chinook as part of their four salmon daily limit. However, they must release wild chinook and chum salmon.

In the **southern portion of Puget Sound**, anglers fishing Marine Area 11 (Tacoma/Vashon) have a two-salmon daily limit, but must release wild chinook. Anglers fishing Marine Area 13 (South Puget Sound) have a two-salmon daily limit, but must release wild chinook and wild coho.

Because salmon fishing rules vary depending on the marine area, anglers should check the [Sportfishing Rules Pamphlet](#) before heading out on the water.

Meanwhile, most areas of Puget Sound will close to **recreational crab fishing** at sunset on Labor Day. The only two areas of the Sound that will remain open to crab fishing after Labor Day are marine areas 7-North (Gulf of Georgia) and 7-South (San Juan Islands/Bellingham). Crabbing in those two areas is open through Sept. 30.

Sport fishers who crab in marine areas 7-North and 7-South after Labor Day must record their catch on winter catch record cards. Winter cards are now available at sporting goods stores and other license vendors across the state.

The daily catch limit in Puget Sound is five Dungeness crab, males only, in hard-shell condition with a minimum carapace width of 6¼ inches. Fishers may catch six red rock crab of either sex per day, provided those crab measure at least 5 inches across. See WDFW's [sport-crabbing website](#) for more information.

Crabbers are reminded that their summer catch record cards are due to WDFW by Oct. 1 and must be returned whether or not the cardholder caught or fished for crab during the season. Crabbers who fail to file catch reports for 2012 will face a \$10 fine, which will be imposed when they apply for a 2013 Puget Sound crab endorsement. Completed cards can be mailed in or recorded online. Additional information is available on the [WDFW website](#).

WDFW will announce winter crab seasons for Puget Sound in early October, after completing its assessment of the summer fishery.

In freshwater, the popular salmon fishery on the **Puyallup River** is in full swing. Anglers are reminded that the Puyallup River is closed to fishing Sept. 2, 3, 9, 10 and 11 from the 11th Street Bridge to the City of Puyallup outfall structure across the river from the junction of Freeman Road and North Levee Road.

Thiesfeld reminds anglers that the salmon fishery on the Skokomish River, from the Highway 106 Bridge to the Highway 101 Bridge, closes at the end of the day Sept. 3. Although, the salmon fishery for the lower Skokomish River, from the mouth to the Highway 106 Bridge, runs through Sept. 5 and then reopens Sept. 16. Check the [Sportfishing Rules Pamphlet](#) for details.

Elsewhere, **several rivers** around the region open to salmon fishing Sept. 1, including the Carbon River in Pierce County; Copalis River, Van Winkle Creek and Joe Creek in Grays Harbor County; and the Bear and Niawiakum rivers in Pacific County. Salmon fishing on the Nisqually River is already under way.

Recreationists should be aware that WDFW's access site at Ward Lake in Thurston County will be closed beginning Sept. 1 due to poor water quality at the lake. Recent tests conducted by the City of Olympia and Thurston County show fecal coliform bacteria levels that are unsafe for swimming and water recreation. Once water quality improves, WDFW will reopen the access site. For more information, check Thurston County's [website](#).

Southwest Washington

September is prime time for salmon fishing in the Columbia River Basin, as large numbers of fish move upriver and into tributaries on both sides of Bonneville Dam. At the Buoy 10 fishery near the mouth of the river, the catch of **chinook salmon** is expected to be the highest in more than two decades. Although that chinook fishery ends there Sept. 3 at the end of the day, anglers still have a lot of options to catch both chinook and **coho salmon** upriver from the Rocky Point/Tongue Point line.

"Prospects are good for salmon fishing this month, but it's important to remember these fish are on the move," said Joe Hymer, a fish biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). "As the month goes on, successful anglers will follow the fish upriver and into the tributaries."

Of the 655,000 fall chinook included in the pre-season forecast, about 350,000 are projected to be upriver brights – the fourth largest return since record keeping began in 1964. This year's coho salmon run is fairly modest, but will help to round out the catch, Hymer said.

Through Sept. 9, the daily limit is six fish per day – including two adult salmon, two adult steelhead or one of each – from the Rocky Point/Tongue Point line to the deadline below Bonneville Dam. Only one of the adult salmon may be a chinook. Anglers may keep any chinook, but must release any coho salmon or steelhead that is not marked with a clipped adipose fin.

Starting Sept. 10, rules for adult chinook retention in those waters will change in at least two ways.

- Anglers can retain two adult chinook as part of their daily limit from a line from the Warrior Rock lighthouse through Red Buoy #4 to the orange marker atop the dolphin on the Washington shore at Bachelor Island upstream to Bonneville Dam.
- Below this line, permanent rules require anglers to release chinook salmon through Sept. 30 – although there may be an exception to this rule. Fishery managers have agreed to allow a pilot mark-selective fishery for chinook Sept. 10-16 from Rocky Point/Tongue Point line to the Warrior Rock line – *if all other sport fisheries can meet their management objectives*. That question has not yet been answered because those sport fisheries are still under way. In any case, anglers will be allowed to retain two adult chinook in that area beginning Oct. 1.

WDFW will update this report and issue a news release about the proposed selective fishery once that decision is final.

“Our hope is that we can move forward with the weeklong mark-selective fishery below the Warrior Rock line, but first we have to make sure enough chinook are available for harvest in the regular fisheries on the lower Columbia River,” said Cindy LeFleur, WDFW Columbia River policy manager. “We’re still waiting to see how that turns out.”

In the meantime, Hymer has a couple of tips for anglers fishing for chinook salmon in the Columbia River.

“Anglers targeting chinook do best in fairly deep water – 40 to 50 feet down,” he said. “Some of the best fishing for both salmon and steelhead will be at the mouth of tributaries, where the fish hold up before heading upstream. When anchoring in deeper water, anglers should be alert for ship traffic.”

As the month progresses, salmon fishing will heat up farther upstream in the tributaries, Hymer said. He reminds anglers of several new rules that will be in effect on various rivers this season:

- **Release wild chinook** – Anglers must release all wild chinook on the Tilton River from mouth to West Fork; the Cispus River from mouth to North Fork; the Cowlitz River from posted signs on Peters Road to mouth of Ohanepecosh and Muddy Fork; plus Mayfield Lake and Lake Scanewa (Cowlitz Falls Reservoir). However, anglers may keep up to 10 hatchery rainbows at Lake Scanewa starting Sept. 1.
- **North Fork Lewis River from mouth of East Fork to the overhead powerlines below Merwin Dam** – Wild chinook may be kept beginning Sept. 15.

- **Drano Lake** – Any chinook or coho salmon, with or without a clipped adipose fin, may be retained. Effective Sept. 15, anglers with a two-pole endorsement can put it to use.
- **Klickitat River from mouth to Fisher Hill Bridge** (located about 3 miles upstream from the mouth) – Night closure and anti-snagging rules are in effect. Only fish hooked inside the mouth may be retained.
- **Washougal River** – Fishing is closed from 200 feet (or posted markers) below to 200 feet above the temporary weir (when in place).

Like last year, anglers may retain up to six hatchery adult coho on all tributaries to the lower Columbia River with hatchery programs. Those rivers include the Cowlitz, Deep, Elochoman, Grays (including West Fork), Kalama, Klickitat, Lewis (including North Fork), Toutle (including Green and North Fork) and Washougal. Regulations for these and other fisheries are described in WDFW's [Fishing in Washington rules pamphlet](#).

Apart from salmon, anglers are still catching **walleye** above and below Bonneville Dam. **Trout** fishing is also still an option at a number of lowland lakes, including Swift and Merwin reservoirs where anglers can take advantage of increased catch limits for rainbow and kokanee approved in early August. At Swift Reservoir, anglers must release all salmon larger than 15 inches in length. For anglers who don't mind a hike, September is also a great time to head for the **high wilderness lakes** around Mount Adams and Mount St. Helens. Hymer recommends three such lakes – Goose, Council and Takhlakh – that all offer drive-in access.

"The mosquitoes should die down around the high mountain lakes after the first frost arrives," Hymer said. "Sure, the fish are usually small, but the leaves are beginning to turn, the air is crisp and you can really experience the change of season."

Eastern Washington

Sept. 1 is the traditional opening of the catch-and-keep season for hatchery-marked Snake River **steelhead**. For a second consecutive year, hatchery-marked **fall chinook salmon** are also fair game then.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) district fish biologist Glen Mendel says the steelhead run appears to be coming in weak this year. As of late August, the A-run of upriver summer steelhead was about 61 percent of the preseason forecast. The B-run steelhead passage was also tracking less than expected so far.

However, a large run of upriver bright hatchery fall chinook is expected to return to the Snake River, so anglers should have good opportunities, said Mendel.

Up to three hatchery-marked steelhead (those with clipped adipose or ventral fins and a healed scar at the clipped fin location) can be retained daily. The salmon daily harvest limit in the Washington portion of the Snake River is three adipose fin-clipped fall chinook adults (24 inches in length and larger), and three adipose fin-clipped jack fall chinook (less than 24 inches). Minimum size for chinook is 12 inches.

Barbless hooks are required when fishing for steelhead or salmon. All wild steelhead and chinook, which are protected under the Endangered Species Act, must be released immediately without removing them from the water. Once anglers have retained three hatchery steelhead, they must cease fishing for salmon and steelhead for the day, regardless of whether the salmon daily limit has been retained.

Mendel reminds salmon and steelhead anglers of the change in the Snake River boundaries for catch record card codes for zones 648 and 650 near Clarkston. The upper end of code 648, and the lower end of 650, was the interstate bridge. But that was moved to the state line, from the Greenbelt boat launch to the state line sign on the north shore, as relayed in the current fishing rules pamphlet. Mendel said this change allows separation of harvest data for the boundary waters with Idaho.

The steelhead season runs through March 31, but the chinook season closes Oct. 31, or earlier, depending on monitored harvest rates and run size.

This month is the last chance to fish several of the region's best **rainbow** and/or **cutthroat trout** fishing lakes. Closing Sept. 30 is Badger, West Medical, and Williams lakes in southwest Spokane County, and Fishtrap Lake in Lincoln County. Two other southwest Spokane County lakes change seasons soon -- Amber Lake shifts to catch-and-release-only on Oct. 1 and North Silver Lake switches to catch-and-release-only on Nov. 1.

Randy Osborne, WDFW central district fish biologist, said that if conditions are right, September fishing at these lakes can almost rival the first weeks of the season in the spring. "Air and water temperature changes during this month can trigger late summer/early fall insect hatches, which can equate to some pretty productive fishing conditions all month long," he said.

Spokane County's Downs Lake and Lincoln County's Coffeepot Lake also close at the end of the month but can yield good catches of **yellow perch**, **black crappie**, and **rainbow trout** during September.

Plenty of other lakes throughout the region remain open through October or year-round. Clear Lake, near the town of Medical Lake in Spokane County, typically produces good catches of **brown trout**, **crappie**, and **largemouth bass** as fall advances. Lake Roosevelt and Sprague Lake both offer good-size rainbows. Stevens County's Deer and Loon lakes continue to provide a variety of fish, from bass to kokanee.

Anglers heading for a weekend of camping near the Tucannon River, or its trout-stocked impoundments on WDFW's Wooten Wildlife Area in Columbia County, need to keep fire restrictions in mind. Wooten manager Kari Dingman said that with hot, dry conditions, the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has a campfire ban in effect until further notice.

The 63,000-plus-acre, lightning-caused Cache Creek wildfire, adjacent to the Snake River on the Washington-Oregon stateline, was still burning in late August, with expected containment sometime in early September. Most of the fire is in Oregon, but anyone recreating in Washington's southeast corner may want to check out possible road closures [online](#).

Northcentral Washington

A **chinook salmon** fishery opens Sept. 1 in the Lake Chelan Project Tailrace area near Chelan Falls and runs through Oct. 15. Up to three chinook may be kept daily (only one of which can be a wild adult fish), and fishing is allowed from the railroad bridge to the Chelan Public Utilities District (PUD) safety barrier below the powerhouse.

WDFW Chelan District Fish Biologist Travis Maitland said up to 3,000 adult chinook salmon—released as juveniles from net pens just below the Chelan PUD powerhouse—are expected to return to the waterway.

"Last year when we were able to open this area for the first time, fishing pressure was very light, due to the fishery being new and confusion over fishing access," said Maitland. "Chelan County ordinance prohibits the use of internal combustion engines, so last year we did not allow fishing from a floating device of any kind. This year floating will be allowed, so this could be a great little fishery for the angler with a kayak or a small pontoon boat."

This year there's also some bank fishing on the north shore, although anglers must stay downstream of Chelan PUD boundary signs on that shoreline. Fishing along the southwest shoreline is limited to wading only with no fishing from the bank.

Anglers planning to participate in this fishery must have WDFW's Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement and should check other [specific rules](#) for the fishery.

The Lake Wenatchee **sockeye salmon** fishery that has provided great opportunities since early August closes on Labor Day (Sept. 3). The daily limit was increased from three to five fish in mid-August and since then limits have been taken by many happy anglers.

The Wenatchee River hatchery summer **chinook salmon** fishery—open from the river mouth to below Dryden Dam—continues through Oct. 15. Angling pressure has been relatively light, Maitland said, but there have been a few nice hatchery chinook harvested. As of Sept. 1 the fishery extends upriver to the Icicle River road bridge that crosses the Wenatchee River. Check [fishery rules](#) on the WDFW website.

Chinook fishing in the Columbia River from Priest Rapids to Wells Dam is still producing, although anglers need to work a lot harder now to get the fish to bite, Maitland said. Chinook also are still being caught off the mouth of the Okanogan River, WDFW Okanogan District Fish Biologist Bob Jateff reports.

"Catch rates are lower than anglers experienced earlier this summer, but the fish are continuing to average 12 to 15 pounds," Jateff said. "As water temperatures cool in the tributaries, fish will start to move upstream and out of the mainstem Columbia River. During September, reduced numbers of chinook will continue to be caught in upstream areas just below Chief Joseph Dam." Anglers are reminded that the salmon fishing section of the mainstem Columbia River—from Wells Dam to the Highway 173 Bridge in Brewster—closed Aug. 31 to protect steelhead.

Meanwhile, **trout** fishing on the Methow River can be at its best in September, when other river users start to thin out and only anglers are left, Jateff said.

"At this time anglers can do well with surface flies, lures and nymph patterns," he said.

Trout anglers are reminded that the section from Lower Burma Road Bridge to the Highway 153 Bridge at McFarland Creek closes at midnight on Sept. 15. The rest of the river upstream to Foghorn Dam closes at midnight on Sept. 30.

The Methow River trout fishery is conducted under a permit with NOAA Fisheries and can close at any time if limits on incidental encounters with steelhead are reached.

Okanogan County's Davis, Campbell, and Cougar lakes in the Winthrop area open Sept. 1 for catch-and-keep fishing for rainbow trout.

"These lakes provide a nice fall fishery to mix things up between fishing the Methow River for trout and fishing the mainstem Columbia for salmon," Jateff said.

Southcentral Washington

September is prime time to fish for **trout** on one of the many high-elevation lakes or rivers in the region, said Eric Anderson, a fish biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) based in Yakima. As temperatures begin to drop, waters ranging from the Yakima River to Taneum Creek come alive with fish eager to feed.

"After months of high water, the conditions are perfect for fishing many area lakes and streams," Anderson said. "Most of the mosquitoes burned off in the summer heat, and it's just a great time to be out catching fish."

Anderson noted that most rivers and creeks have statewide trout catch limits of two trout with an 8-inch minimum size. Most also have special regulations, including selective gear rules that prohibit bait. Rules for specific waters are described in the Fishing in Washington rules pamphlet, available [online](#) and from license vendors throughout the state.

Meanwhile, counts of **chinook salmon** and **steelhead** passing McNary Dam have been climbing day by day, setting the stage for popular fisheries throughout the region. While those fisheries often start out slow, they can ramp up quickly by mid-September as more fish move past the dam, said Paul Hoffarth, a fish biologist based in Pasco.

"There's a lot of anticipation out there right now," Hoffarth said. "Anglers are catching fish here and there, but they know a lot more are headed our way. By the middle of the month, we could have several thousand upriver brights in the Hanford Reach."

According to the preseason forecast, 650,000 fall chinook salmon will enter the Columbia River this year, and about two-thirds of them will keep moving past Bonneville Dam. Most areas of the Columbia River have been open for salmon fishing since Aug. 1, and two major tributaries will open in September.

The Yakima River opens for salmon fishing Sept. 1 from the Columbia River upstream to Prosser Dam, although the area around the Chandler Powerhouse will remain closed, as in previous years. "The best fishing on the Yakima is in October, but some fish will start moving in this month," Hoffarth said.

Anglers have also been catching some **hatchery steelhead** both above and below McNary Dam, and the harvest should pick up throughout the month, he said. Anglers can retain two **hatchery** steelhead per day, identifiable by a missing adipose fin with the healed scar, measuring at least 20 inches. Steelhead fishing above the Highway 395 Bridge at Kennewick is not scheduled to open until Oct. 1, but could open earlier if the numbers pick up, Hoffarth said.

Farther east, the Snake River also opens Sept. 1 for hatchery fall chinook and steelhead above the Highway 12 Bridge. Anglers must use barbless hooks when fishing for salmon and steelhead in the Snake River. Anglers are advised to check the *Fishing in Washington* pamphlet and [emergency rules](#) for all waters before heading out.

"As with salmon, look for steelhead fishing to improve as the water cools and more fish move upriver," Hoffarth said. "Steelhead move fast. They don't stay in one spot very long, so anglers have to be there when they are passing through."

Walleye fisheries are already in full swing, producing nice catches in the Columbia River below McNary Dam as well as in the Snake River. **Sturgeon** fishing is restricted to catch and release in most of the Columbia River, including Lake Wallula and the Hanford Reach.

TGF Inbox - Reader E-mail

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Random Links

Wild Coho Harvests & Season information:

http://www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/fishing/coastal_salmon_seasons.asp

Catch results in special mark selective chinook fishery on the Lower Columbia River:

http://seattletimes.com/html/reeltimenorthwest/2019231530_catch_results_in_special_mark.html

GOOD LUCK!