

The Guide's Forecast - volume 15 issue number 17

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **April 19th – April 25th, 2013**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- Although not hot, the spring salmon fishing has picked up on the Willamette River since the Columbia has closed. The best action is coming from the Multnomah Channel and at the head of the channel, with catches coming in at Willamette Park and Sellwood as well. A handful have even been reported from Oregon City from both boaters and bank anglers. Plug cut, green label herring and cured prawns are the most popular baits with the boaters. Spin n glow with or without bait works best for the bank plunkers. Expect the fishing to improve through the end of the month.

Following a spike in levels on the 8th, only light showers are in the forecast for this week which means anglers may expect to find the McKenzie River in excellent condition. Until the brief afternoon March Brown hatch occurs or Caddis start popping, nymphs will be effective.

The Santiam system will be gradually dropping over the week although fishing has been fairly slow. With only 1,700 summers and 500 spring Chinook reported at Willamette Falls, that's not a lot of fish to populate the upstream tributaries. Only winter steelhead have been crossing Foster Dam since April 4th.

The Clackamas River has dropped into prime shape and is giving up a few late winter and early summer steelhead. The section from Rivermill Dam downstream to Carver will provide the best action. Rumors of spring Chinook should start surfacing soon. Sand shrimp and cured roe are the preferred baits, while plugs, jigs and hardware are the recommended artificials.

On the Sandy River, fishermen are still plying the waters for late winter steelhead and early summers. The winter component is on the way out and care should be taken to release spawners carefully. Early summers have been showing up in the catch and numbers should increase through June. The same baits and lures will apply here, as on the Clackamas River.

The ODFW will host a fishing event for two to 12-year-olds at McNary Ponds on Saturday, April 20th from 10 a.m. to noon. Another event on Sunday, April 21st at St. Louis Ponds from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. is family-oriented. Both events are free and kids will be provided with tackle. For information, call 541-276-2344.

Northwest – Although several north coast streams remain open to steelhead fishing, action is slow, after an already mediocre season. Spring chinook is next on tap but action won't heat up for another month. The district doesn't predict the number of returning adults but the size of the Willamette run is often an accurate predictor. Two spring chinook are rumored to have been taken on the Trask River recently.

A few summer steelhead and a rare fresh winter run fish remain available on the Wilson and Nestucca Rivers. The catch will largely be made up of wild and hatchery steelhead either close to spawning or already spawned out.

Coastal anglers will anxiously be awaiting ocean opportunity until springers arrive. Action for California bound chinook should be good out of Garibaldi when seas calm. The weekend looks to hold promise but early morning launches are recommended as it's likely the late morning/early afternoon trade winds will blow. The softer tide series will benefit bar crossers and bottomfishers.

Southwest- Fishery managers recently announced the continuation of the offshore chinook season; south of Cape Falcon, the ocean chinook salmon fishery will remain open through October 31, 2013. Results have been good thus far for offshore trollers from Newport to Bandon which bodes well for the remainder of the season.

Offshore launches should be possible this coming weekend as swell and wind conditions moderate. Sunday looks most promising in the long-range forecast.

Spring chinook entered the mainstem Umpqua early this year. With the water dropping and clearing this week, anglers should take some around Elkton. With winter steelhead in the system, North and South Umpqua flows will be moderating as well.

Lingcod limits came early to boats launching out of Charleston over the past weekend while rockfish numbers were a little harder to come by. Coos Bay offers the best chance of any bay for success with Dungeness crab.

Bottom fish limits took a little longer over the past week but were filled for most boats launching out of Gold Beach. Area beaches have produced good catches of redbait surf perch whenever wave action has been moderate. Boat fishers on the lower Rogue are taking spring chinook to the tune of about a dozen a day on anchovy/spinner combos while bank anglers are scoring a few on Spin 'N' Glo's. Steelheaders on the middle Rogue will encounter late-running winters with best results below the Applegate River. Above the old Gold Ray Dam site, upper river anglers will also have an opportunity to tangle with winter steelhead as the Army Corps of Engineers will allow the upper river to drop over the coming week. Springers are yet to appear at Cole Rivers hatchery.

Even when the ocean has been lumpy, boats launching early mornings out of the Port of Brookings have been scoring good numbers of rockfish and lingcod just outside the bar.

Eastern – Anglers are advised with the upcoming April 27th opening on the Deschutes that use of the popular railroad track crossing at South Junction Campground is considered trespassing by Burlington Northern/Santa Fe Railroad according to the Bureau of Land Management.

Crooked River flows have dropped below 300 cfs over the past week which will be welcome news to fly anglers who were dismayed when flows increased.

The smallmouth bass bite is picking up in upriver reservoirs in the Columbia. The John Day Pool will likely provide some of the best opportunity.

SW Washington- The Cowlitz remains a top prospect for salmon and steelhead and spring chinook catches are beginning to peak despite a low return predicted. Summer steelhead should begin entering in better numbers too.

The Wind River and Drano Lake fisheries are underway but passage at Bonneville remains modest. Once passage reaches 1,000 fish per day, the action should drastically improve, especially with the absence of lower river sport effort.

District lakes are receiving a good plant of trout. Check the WDF&W web site for best opportunities.

Soapbox Update:

Only one day remaining for submitting comments to the Oregon Department of Forestry in support of viable conservation areas on PUBLIC state forest lands! Go to www.forestlegacy.org and check out the talking points along with the correct address to send your comments to the department on this important conservation measure for NW salmon and steelhead!

Come to the Delta Park Dick's Sporting Goods store on **Thursday night** where I'll be hosting a seminar on spring chinook for Tillamook Bay. The seminar starts at 6:30 p.m. All are welcome!

Details can be found here:

<http://www.theguidesforecast.com/BobRees15percentoffcoupon.pdf>

Columbia River Fishing Report – The mainstem is closed although about 1,400 chinook remain on the sport quota. Managers have no intention on re-opening the season until higher numbers of fish cross Bonneville Dam. Stay tuned....

Sturgeon success remains limited but some keepers are coming from the Portland to Longview stretch. It's still hard to compete with all the dead smelt in the system.

The Guide's Forecast – More info as options develop.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) reports, "Although not hot, the spring salmon fishing has picked up on the Willamette River since the Columbia has closed. The best action is coming from Multnomah Channel and at the head of the channel, with catches coming in at Willamette Park and Sellwood. A handful have even been reported from Oregon City from both boaters and bank anglers. Plug cut, green label herring and cured prawns are the most popular baits with the boaters. Spin n glow with or without bait works best for the plunkers. Expect the fishing to improve through the end of the month."

Smallmouth bass fishing is picking up on the upper and lower Willamette and should improve with warm weather over the coming week. This is a good time of year to hook large, pre-spawn females. Boaters are advised that training exercises by the Oregon State Marine Board's Law Enforcement Academy will be taking place on the lower Willamette in the area below the Falls and the mouth of the Clackamas River. This activity, involving the students from around the world will continue periodically through May 11th. While participants will try to provide recreational craft room to enjoy the river, boaters are asked to keep clear of activities on the water as well as those on the riverbanks.

With the McKenzie River dropping steadily since the last round of rain storms, fishing is expected to be productive in the coming week.

It's a pretty good idea for steelheaders monitor counts at Willamette Falls to determine fish numbers bound for the Santiams. The YTD winter steelhead totals of 4,332 as of April 17th is about half of the 10-year average. Summers totaled 1,57 on that same date. As of April 11th, about 80 summer steelhead had been counted at Foster Dam on the South Santiam.

John Montana Orvis store in Bridgeport village on April 27 at 1100. I will be giving a presentation and showing some pictures, answering questions

Family fishing events are listed in the Fisheries Forecast section, above.

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

The Guide's Forecast – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) predicts, "Spurts of action have become more frequent from the Willamette River. Spring Chinook anglers are having some success, but it's still far from a barn burner. It appears the Willamette's run is a bit late, but in past years late April has been the peak. Decent reports are coming in from the Multnomah channel at St. Helens and the Gilbert River area. The head of the channel is also kicking out Chinook regularly and there was quite a crowd over the weekend. Last week, there were a few better days reported from Willamette Park, Sellwood and Milwaukie. Downstream of Cedar Oak near Lake Oswego, trolling herring is the #1 approach by a long shot. Secondly, trolling cured prawns is popular with some of the more seasoned anglers, especially as the water begins to warm. I have covered the details of trolling herring in past editions, so let's talk about rigging and fishing cured prawns. Cured prawns are readily available at bait shops in three primary colors, red, pink and orange. Sometimes you will also find purple, green, chartreuse and natural, but the first three colors are the most popular. Pink is my favorite but I have taken fish on red, orange and chartreuse. There are a multitude of ways to rig prawns so that they either spin or hang straight. But for simplicities sake, I will say that 95% of the time, I like my prawn to roll. But in the hard, fast water that you often encounter up at Oregon City or in the Clackamas proper, a straight, inanimate prawn might be more advantageous. With a rolling prawn, I will often fish it alone or sometimes with a Thin Fin, spinner blade or spin-n-glow. When a straight prawn is in order, I always have a spin-n-glow or a very small spinner blade rigged in tandem to give the offering some action. Some anglers will use a single hook rig and others will use two. Some prefer a single treble with the prawn threaded on the leader while a few will still use a safety pin type of device to hold their prawn straight. Rather than cover all the bases, I will just tell you how I do it and you can decide whether you like my style or not. First, with 25 lb. test, I tie a two hook rig with the hooks two inches apart from eye to eye. The top hook is a size 1 red Gamakatsu and the bottom hook is a 3/0 of the same brand and color. Before hooking up the prawn, I will carefully pick a prawn that does not have a rotten, black head. Carefully unbend or straighten the prawn with clean, gloved hands until some of the bend has relaxed. You still want some natural curl to it, as this is what helps your prawn to roll. Very carefully impale the top(smaller hook) into the base of the tail, curving it outward to the side of the second or third segment. Then gently secure the tail under the egg-loop without cinching it down too tight. Now, push the bottom (larger)hook into the underside at the legs, exiting near the mouth, on the opposite side of the top hook . Finish by placing a Bob's Bait Wrap latex band around the cheeks(gills) of the prawn. This insures that the gills don't flare after trolling it around for a while, which would hinder your roll and make your bait fall apart. Drop your bait in the water at trolling speed and it should roll nicely, not too fast though. It's critical that you use a bead chain or ball bearing swivel as the constantly spinning bait will twist a leader to hell and back. The addition of an attractor is a matter of preference, some do and some don't. A few beads, a plastic clevis and a small spinner blade above the prawn is a favorite of many and has been the demise of many spring Chinook. One other fantastic option mentioned earlier, is the locally made Martin Thin Twin. It is a light mylar propeller that spins effortlessly in the slightest of currents. There are five or six different sizes and I lean towards the middle and smaller sizes. There are a few color combinations as well, just pick your favorite of the day. To rig the Thin Fin, just add three to four 5mm beads above your bait and thread on the Thin Fin, it's that simple. This rig will work in the faster water below Willamette Falls and just as well in the slower water down in the Portland

Harbor. Expect fish to be caught through May and even into June in the majority of the river. The fishing at Oregon City usually drops off when the shad arrive in mid-May, but that's not because salmon aren't present, but more so because of the lack of current AND the river is clogged with shad hog liners, leaving no open lanes for back trolling."

An alert reader advised TGF over the past weekend that A dozen boat trailers were parked at Wheatland Ferry on the upper Willamette which would indicate angler effort for steelhead or, more likely, spring Chinook in that stretch. There was no report regarding their success. When the waters of the upper Willamette below Hills Creek Dam has been moderating, results with native reddsides have been quite good at times. When fish are rising, March Brown dries have been received well while nymph patterns such as Mega Prince and Golden Stone have been getting takes as well.

Expect to see a few Caddis and March Browne on the McKenzie but standard nymph patterns such as hare's ear and Prince will take fish all day long.

Steelheading has showed some improvement this week on the North Santiam. There are still winters in the system with anglers reporting catches of a few summers as well in the past few days. Jigs are most popular although spinners, spoons and drifted bait will also take fish here.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) reports, "The Clackamas River has dropped into prime shape and is giving up a few late winter and early summer steelhead. The section from Rivermill Dam downstream to Carver will provide the best action. Rumors of spring Chinook should start surfacing soon. Sand shrimp and cured roe are the preferred baits, while plugs, jigs and hardware are the recommended artificials.

"On the Sandy River, fishermen are still plying the waters for late winter steelhead and early summers. The winter component is on the way out and care should be taken to release spawners carefully. Early summers have been showing up in the catch and numbers should increase through June. The same baits and lures will apply here, as on the Clackamas River"

The Guide's Forecast – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) predicts, "Both the Clackamas and Sandy River continue to give up a few late winter steelhead but many are spawners or nearing spawning. Please take care to carefully release these precious fish and let them do their thing. The respectful release of a spawning or spent fish is the mark of a true sportsman. A few summers are also available and there is no finer fighting fish available, pound for pound. Summer steelhead like bait and hardware equally well and can be caught with your favorite method. Bobber and jig has become a favorite tactic of both beginner and expert anglers and accounts for a huge number of "first ever" steelhead in recent years. Being that the strike is visual rather than feel oriented, it makes it simple for the novice angler to detect the elusive bite. As the summer nears and water clears, gravitate towards the more subdued jig colors like the nightmare and shrimp color patterns. In the clearest, lowest of flows a plain black jig with a small segment of cooked cocktail shrimp or coon shrimp on the hook is deadly. On the Sandy river, these water conditions are rare as the heat of the summer keeps the Sandy glacier bleeding, adding a silty color to the water. Over on the Clack though, low clear summertime flows are the norm and low water, stealthy tactics are a must for any success. Expect a few spring chinook to start showing in the catch in the coming weeks on both rivers and the summer steelhead numbers to increase through June."

North Coast Fishing Report – Steelhead fishing on the north coast is over. As we have

mentioned several times before, with return sizes under-performing, it's highly unlikely that the fringe weeks, both early and late, are likely to produce viable catches of salmon or steelhead. That is clearly the rule this year as driftboat traffic and my own success on Monday would attest to.

Under ideal conditions, I floated the Wilson River from Vanderzanden's all the way down to Sollie Smith Bridge. I never saw another boat or even witnessed a boat trailer in any of the launch areas. Although flows were still a bit high, clarity was excellent but fish were nowhere to be found. A full days drift, both side-drifting with decent casters and pulling plugs, yielded a poor return of one small, dark, wild fish; that fish took a plug just above Mills Bridge; the chrome with red strip down the back, K-11 Extreme. Three rods effectively pounded the water side-drifting and in my expert opinion, accounted for zero opportunities. Plenty of virgin water, ideal water conditions, and no competition yielding no quality fish says it all.

With spring chinook interest peaking in the valley, there is really no reason to be at the coast.

Reports from the Nestucca are much the same. High effort, low yield, no traffic. Most guides welcome the fact this season is over.

It would be inappropriate to call the mythical steelhead extinct as there were some days of brilliance. Better yet, with the coho forecast predicted to boom this fall, expectations for a much better return next winter should already be building.

The Trask River may be the last Tillamook stream to yield winter steelhead but anglers should be more excited about the 2 spring chinook rumored to have been taken there recently. Far from peak opportunity, the dedicated few bank anglers targeting chinook near the hatchery have already tallied springers.

There has been some spring chinook effort in the bay but no reported catches yet. The earliest I have ever caught springers in the bay has been the 14th of April. The catch really started ramping up last year, right around mid-May.

Offshore anglers had no opportunity this week but the ocean forecast may soon make for a positive change. See the forecast section.

Crabbing effort was also light this week as cool, inclement weather kept interest low.

Hebo Lake, Olalla Creek Reservoir, Thissel Pond and Woahink Lake are scheduled for trout planting this week.

The Guide's Forecast – Steelhead season is over; that's all I have to say about that. Spring chinook have arrived but anglers would be foolish to expect consistent results this early in the season. Drift areas, a decent early season bet, would be the Trask River as a recent surge of flows could have sent a pilot batch upriver.

The bay may fish in its lower reaches as a weak tide exchange greets saltwater anglers. The weak tides will keep fish low in the system, where herring trollers working the jetty and adjacent outside waters stand a realistically low chance of scoring. Check regulations closely as ocean regulations differ from year to year. This spring season, sport anglers still have to consider the Tillamook Bay Bubble where fin-clipped only chinook may be retained. Sorry, it's unclear as to whether anglers need to fish barbless hooks or not. Wild chinook must be released unharmed as they are likely destined for the Tillamook Basin where wild spring chinook are depressed. Outside of the bubble, it's a wide open 2-chinook bag limit for salmon anglers. The Pacific Fisheries

Management Council adopted concurrent seasons, following the March 15th opener, which has already yielded fair results for commercial trollers working out of Garibaldi.

It will be worth watching the weather over the weekend. The forecast currently shows a favorable option but it stands to reason, the late morning or early afternoon wind will create some issues. If an angler can get offshore, you may look for decent chinook fishing anywhere from 125 feet to 300 feet. It's always a crap shoot finding these chinook in the big pond but predicted numbers returning this fall point to an ample supply.

Bottomfishing opportunity should also exist but reports from down south indicate limits were harder to come by but still quite feasible. Lingcod seem to still be snapping but sea bass were a bit more challenging.

Central & South Coast Reports – As reported in this space past week, the ocean Chinook season which was scheduled to close on the 15th of March off the southwest coast to Humbug Mountain (south of Port Orford), was extended through October 31st. In addition, the stretch south of Humbug Mountain to the California border will be May 1st through September 8th. That's over 130 days of fishing opportunities for those plying offshore waters for Chinook.

With a strong return predicted for the Klamath and Sacramento kings, offshore catches are expected to be good. In addition, this will be one of the best returns in years for four-year-old Chinook which means trollers can look forward to landing larger than average fish. Be sure to have a good supply of mooching leaders as well as divers, dodgers and flashers.

The entire southwest coast opens offshore for coho fishing for the month of July for silvers of hatchery origin (only fin-clipped fish may be kept). The non-selective (wild) ocean coho season will be open from Cape Falcon to Humbug Mountain September 1st and 2nd, then every Thursday through Saturday or until a quota of 16,000 has been taken.

Friday, April 19th looks promising for an offshore launch with only small swells and light winds in the forecast. While this coming Saturday is predicted to be a little rougher, Sunday still looks promising for ocean fishing.

Fishing for redbtail surfperch is good on most southwest beaches with best results coming from areas near the mouths of rivers and bays on the last two hours of an incoming tide.

Siletz steelheaders are taking summer steelhead although it has been a hit-or-miss affair. Those who stick with it and cover a lot of water are doing best.

Some bay crabbers out of Newport have reported taking limits of Dungeness from Yaquina Bay although there are a percentage that are softshells.

Offshore boaters who have been mostly ignoring the offshore Chinook troll fishery so far this year might take a nod from Commercial efforts which have been doing well off the mouth of the Umpqua River. Crabbing is slow to fair in Winchester Bay and surf perch are starting to be caught more regularly. Lower Umpqua trollers are hooking far better for spring Chinook this year than in seasons past. Catch rates on the Umpqua mainstem ramped up dramatically this week from Scottsburg to Elkton with pressure on the river reflecting anglers success. There have been multiple reports of Chinook weighing 30 pounds or better recently. Warm weather this week could jump-start the productive smallmouth fishery on the Umpqua River which has been slow due to low water temperatures. South Umpqua steelheaders are reporting fair to good results for hatchery steelhead following the last freshet.

Rock and jetty fishers are doing well for rockfish and greenling at Coos Bay although crabbing has been slow. While steelheading remains open on the Coos as well as the Coquille river, this fishery is all but done here.

Following several somewhat lackluster days on the lower Rogue River, the spring Chinook bite turned on over the past weekend as recreational anglers hooked up in several locations while guide boats reported landing as many as eight fish. Anglers may expect to fished water level and flows moderating through the weekend to come. The level is forecast to get below that which is optimum for best results by the third week of April. Middle Rogue water has cleared and will continue to drop through the coming weekend. Steelhead are available as well as spring Chinook which will be migrating in greater number in the coming weeks. Water in the upper Rogue will also be dropping although springers are yet to arrive at Cole Rivers Hatchery. Steelheading has been spotty but most anglers are getting a chance or two at fish.

The ODFW advised anglers in an April 17th bulletin, "With spring chinook salmon about to arrive in the upper Rogue River, anglers should be aware of a change in fishing regulations effective this year.

"From April 1 to July 31, the Rogue River from the ODFW markers downstream from the fish ladder entrance at Cole Rivers Hatchery to the Highway 62 bridge at McGregor Park is closed to all angling from 8 p.m. to one-half hour before sunrise. This new regulation affects several popular spring chinook fishing holes including the "Hatchery Hole."

"Previously, this section of river was closed to angling from 7 p.m. to one hour before sunrise. The new regulation is meant to address a problem with people snagging and keeping illegally hooked fish in the morning when it was too dark for Oregon State Police to clearly observe the illegal activity. Also, extending the legal angling hour to 8 p.m. gives people more time to fish in the evening.

"Last year, more than 10,000 hatchery spring chinook returned to Cole Rivers Hatchery, the best return in eight years. A similar run is expected this year. "The hatchery run provides the fishery for upper river anglers." said David Haight, Assistant District Fish Biologist. "We just want to remind anglers of the importance of angling ethically, following the regulations, and being considerate of others. The upper Rogue is a beautiful place to fish and we are all responsible for keeping it that way."

"Anglers should check the Oregon Sport Fishing Regulations for more information."

ODFW sez, "A Family Fishing Event is set for Saturday, April 27 at Middle Empire Lake near the campus of Southwestern Oregon Community college [in Charleston, Ed.]. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is partnering with the Child Advocacy Center to host the event which is part of the annual "Family Fun Day."

"The event features a fishing clinic where families can learn about fishing. Once completing the clinic, kids can fish in an enclosure in the lake that will be stocked with 6,000 rainbow trout. Fishing in the enclosure begins at 9 a.m. and ends at 3 p.m.

"This is one of the best community events of the year," said Tom Rumreich, ODFW STEP biologist. "There's fishing, fun and many giveaways."

Ben Irving Reservoir, Clearwater Forebay #2, Cooper Creek Reservoir, Galesville Reservoir, Hemlock Reservoir, Lake of the Woods, Lemolo Reservoir, Loon Lake, Plat 1 Reservoir, Upper and

Lower Tenmile Lake, Bradley Lake, Lower and Middle Empire Lake and Powers Pond are scheduled for trout planting.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Fishing for reddsides has been fair to good on the lower Deschutes. With hatches light, nymphs have been most effective.

With water conditions continuing to improve, try nymphs at Crooked River. The coming weekend should be good.

Brown trout and a few kokanee are being taken by Suttle Lake anglers.

Fishing has been slow to fair for trollers at Green Peter. As of Wednesday this week, the dock was still not in the water although the level was high enough to make for easy launches.

Trolling has been producing fish at Ochoco Reservoir. Action is reported as slow to fair.

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report for April 2013

Last updated April 4, 2013

North Puget Sound

(Island, King, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish and Whatcom counties)

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 season begins April 27, when many lakes – stocked with thousands of legal-sized trout – will open for fishing.

But, until then, several year-round fishing lakes have already been stocked with trout and should provide good fishing opportunities early in the month. Waters stocked with trout averaging 10 to 12 inches in length include Alice, Angle, Beaver, Green, Meridian and Sawyer lakes in King County; and Ballinger, Blackmans, Cassidy, Chain, Flowing, Gissberg Ponds (Twin Lakes), Ketchum, Loma, Lost (Devil's), Martha, Panther, Shoecraft, Silver and Tye lakes in Snohomish County.

Information on stocking schedules for rainbow, cutthroat and triploid trout is available on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) [website](#). Anglers should also check the [Fish Washington rule pamphlet](#) before heading out.

Freshwater anglers also can cast for trout on the lower Skagit River. The Skagit, from the mouth to Highway 536 at Mount Vernon, is open from March 28 through April 30 for gamefish. Anglers fishing the lower Skagit River have a daily limit of two trout. Check the [emergency fishing rule change](#) for details.

Salmon fishing also is an option. Several marine areas of Puget Sound are still open for salmon. 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.

"Anglers really need to put some time in on the water in early spring, when fishing for blackmouth salmon is often pretty spotty," said Ryan Lothrop, Puget Sound recreational salmon fishing manager.

Lothrop said anglers might want to turn their attention to the Strait of Juan de Fuca where fishing for blackmouth has recently improved, especially off Sekiu. However, time is running out to hook a salmon in Marine Area 5 (Sekiu), as well as Marine Area 6 (eastern Strait). The two areas are open only through April 10.

Meanwhile, saltwater anglers can start planning for **halibut** fishing, which opens in May. Details on the upcoming halibut season are available on [WDFW's website](#).

Prefer shellfish? Puget Sound's **spot shrimp** season is also set to begin in May, and the season is expected to run from one day to several weeks longer in various areas of the Sound, due to policy changes recently adopted by the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission.

"Recreational shrimp fishers will see a real difference in the length of this year's seasons, particularly in the San Juan Islands and the Strait of Juan de Fuca," said Rich Childers, WDFW shellfish manager. "Sport fisheries in other areas are also likely to pick up some extra fishing days under the updated policy."

Details on the upcoming shrimp season are available [here](#).

Anglers are reminded that all 2012-2013 Washington state fishing licenses expire at midnight March 31. To keep fishing, anglers 15 years of age and older must purchase a 2013-14 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

(Clallam, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Kitsap, Mason, Pierce, Thurston and Pacific counties)

Anglers can look forward to a number of new fishing opportunities in the weeks ahead, including the opening of the lowland lakes trout-fishing season, shrimping and halibut fishing.

To prepare for the popular **statewide trout opener**, hatchery crews from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) have been working since last year to stock more than 17 million fish in over 600 lakes throughout the state. The statewide [trout-stocking plan](#) shows where those fish are going, county by county.

WDFW has also tentatively scheduled two morning **razor clam** digs this month, one running April 9-14 and the other April 24-30. As usual, final approval of those digs will depend on the results of marine toxin tests, which will be announced about a week ahead of time.

For more information on those digs, see WDFW's [Razor Clam website](#). Also, sport clam and oyster seasons are opening early at **Oak Bay** and **South Indian Island**. For those interested in these areas, please check the [fishing rule change](#).

Whether planning to dig clams or catch trout, everyone age 15 and older will need to purchase a 2013-14 license to participate in the April openings, since current fishing licenses expire at midnight March 31. Licenses are available online (<https://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov/>), by phone (1-866-320-9933) and from license dealers around the state.

Meanwhile, fishing for **salmon** remains an option. Marine areas 5 (Sekiu) and 6 (eastern Strait) are open for chinook through April 10. According to Ryan Lothrop, Puget Sound recreational salmon fishery manager, Sekiu has been a very good choice for anglers seeking salmon.

Marine areas 7 (San Juan Islands), 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island, Skagit Bay), 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner), 11 (Tacoma-Vashon), 12 (Hood Canal) and 13 (South Puget Sound) are also open for salmon fishing in April.

Anglers fishing marine areas 6, 7, 8-1, 8-2, 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 13) have a daily limit of one salmon.

Lingcod fishing is also open in marine areas 1-4 under rules described in the Sport Fishing Rules pamphlet. The fishery expands to areas of Puget Sound and the Strait of Juan de Fuca on May 1.

In freshwater, anglers still have an opportunity to hook **wild steelhead** on some rivers 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 through April 30 on the other rivers. For more information on steelhead fishing regulations, check the [Fishing in Washington pamphlet](#).

In addition to the fisheries opening this month, anglers can look forward to seasons opening in May for halibut and shrimp. For information on the upcoming [halibut season](#), see the news release on the WDFW website. A news release outlining the 2013 [shrimp season](#) is also available on the website.

Southwest Washington

(Clark, Cowlitz, Klickitat, Lewis, Skamania and Wahkiakum counties)

The sport fishery for spring chinook salmon on the lower Columbia River has been extended through April 12 under an agreement reached by fishery managers from Washington and Oregon. During that period, the recreational fishery will be closed April 9 to accommodate a possible commercial fishery.

With harvest levels running well below expectations, the two states added six days to the recreational fishing season previously set to continue through April 5.

Through March, anglers had caught just 1,500 adult spring chinook salmon, about 25 percent of the 6,100-fish harvest expected by this point in fishery, said Ron Roler, Columbia River Policy coordinator for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

“The season definitely got off to a slow start, but the bulk of the run is starting to move in,” Roler said. “River conditions are excellent – low and warm – so we will be monitoring the fishery closely to make sure the catch doesn’t exceed the established guideline.”

Guy Norman, WDFW southwest regional director, said fishery managers from both states will watch the catch throughout the extension period and close the fishery earlier if necessary. “We want to keep the fishery open through April 12 – and perhaps even longer – but we have to hold the catch within the guideline,” Norman said. “The situation can change very quickly in April when the fish start moving upriver in large numbers.”

Norman noted that fishery managers will also meet in May to consider whether potential changes in the runsize will allow a late-season opening.

After three years of strong spring chinook returns, this year’s fishery is based on a projected run of 141,400 upriver fish, about 25 percent below the 10-year average. By comparison, approximately 203,000 fish destined for areas above Bonneville Dam returned to the Columbia River last year.

Upriver fish make up the bulk of the catch, although spring chinook returning to the Willamette, Cowlitz and other rivers below Bonneville Dam also contribute to the fishery.

Sport fishing for salmon and steelhead is scheduled through April 12 on the lower Columbia River from the mouth upriver to Beacon Rock, and to bank anglers up to the fishing boundary below Bonneville Dam. The daily limit below Bonneville Dam is two adult hatchery-raised fish and no more than one adult chinook.

Anglers fishing the mainstem Columbia River are required to use barbless hooks and release any wild, unmarked salmon, steelhead or cutthroat trout they intercept.

Above Bonneville Dam, the fishery is open to boat and bank anglers on a daily basis through May 5 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 Tower Island powerlines during that time. The daily limit above the dam is two adult chinook salmon.

Barbless hooks are not currently required on Columbia River tributaries, although that issue will likely be considered during this year’s North of Falcon season-setting process.

Fishing for salmon and steelhead remains open on the Cowlitz River and at Drano Lake, consistent with standing rules described in the [Fish Washington](#) rules pamphlet. The Klickitat River will open April 1 under the same rules and limits as last year.

However, fishing on several other tributaries to the Columbia River will be closed or curtailed in several of those rivers this year to meet spawning goals at area hatcheries. Rivers affected by emergency rules are:

- **Lewis River:** All chinook must be released from the mouth upstream to the mouth of the East Fork until further notice. The mainstem Lewis remains open for hatchery steelhead.
- **North Fork Lewis River:** All chinook must be released from the mouth of the East Fork upstream to Merwin Dam until further notice. Through May 31, fishing is closed for all species from Johnson Creek (located downstream from the Lewis River Salmon Hatchery) upstream to Merwin Dam. The North Fork Lewis from Johnson Creek downstream remains open to fishing for hatchery steelhead.
- **Kalama River:** All chinook must be released from the boundary markers at the mouth upstream to the upper salmon hatchery (Kalama Falls Hatchery). The Kalama River remains open to fishing for hatchery steelhead.
- **Wind River:** From April 1 through July 31, anglers will be limited to one hatchery chinook or one hatchery steelhead per day from the mouth (boundary line/markers) upstream to 400 feet below

Shipherd Falls. Wild chinook and wild steelhead must be released. All fishing is closed until further notice from 400 feet below Shipherd Falls upstream, including all tributaries.

For additional information, see the [rule change notices](#) on the WDFW website.

Meanwhile, anglers can catch and keep **white sturgeon** from Buoy 10 upstream to Bonneville Dam, and in The Dalles and John Day pools. Fishing has been slow, but anglers have been landing a few legal-size fish, particularly in the Dalles and John Day pools.

Effective April, the annual statewide retention limit for sturgeon is two legal-size fish under a measure recently approved by the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission. The daily limit remains at one legal-sized fish. The change in the annual limit, also adopted by Oregon, is designed to help address the decline of legal-size sturgeon in the lower Columbia River in recent years.

Fishing seasons approved for 2013 in the lower Columbia River are as follows:

- **Buoy 10 to the Wauna powerlines:** Retention of white sturgeon is allowed daily through April 30 and from May 11 through June 30. Through April 30, sturgeon must measure between 38 inches and 54 inches (fork length) to be retained. From May 11 through the end of the season they must measure between 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 June 15 and from Oct. 19 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. Effective through April 30, angling is prohibited from a line between the upstream end of Sand Island, located east of Rooster Rock State Park, to a marker on the Oregon shore downstream to a line between the lower end of Sand Island and a marker on the Oregon shore.
- **Pools above Bonneville Dam:** Retention fishing closed Feb. 10 in Bonneville Pool, but additional days are possible in June. Retention fisheries in the two reservoirs between The Dalles and McNary dams will remain open until their respective 300-fish and 500-fish guidelines are met.

Rather catch some **trout**? Hundreds of lowland lakes open for trout fishing April 30 throughout the state, drawing tens of thousands of anglers out for their first cast of the year. While most lakes in southwest Washington are open year-round, "opening day" does mark the start of trout fishing in such perennial favorites as Mineral Lake, Fort Borst Park Pond, Carlisle Lake, Davis Lake, and Plummer lake (Lewis County), Swift Reservoir, Swift Power Canal, and Kidney Lake (Skamania County) and the Rowland Lakes, Spearfish and Horsethief Lake (Klickitat County).

For news on razor clam openings, see WDFW's [razor clam website](#).

Eastern Washington

(Asotin, Columbia, Ferry, Garfield, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, Walla Walla and Whitman counties)

Some of the region's best **trout** fishing will begin at the end of the month with the lowland lakes season opener on April 27.

"Some of those waters that open April 27 around Spokane that are well-stocked and where fish grow well include Williams, West Medical, Fishtrap, and Clear," said Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) central district fish biologist Randy Osborne in Spokane. "One that we rehabilitated last year that should be very good this season is Fish Lake near Cheney."

Bill Baker, WDFW northeast district fish biologist, said many trout lakes in Ferry, Stevens, and Pend Oreille counties that open on April 27 are traditionally good bets. Those include Stevens County's Waitts, Cedar, Rocky and Starvation lakes; Ferry County's Ellen and Davis lakes; and Pend Oreille County's Diamond, Marshall and Sacheen lakes.

But there's plenty of good fishing to be had until then, too.

The daily bag limit for **walleye** doubles to 16 fish beginning April 1 on Lake Roosevelt, the lower San Poil River, and the lower Spokane River from the mouth at Hwy. 25 bridge upstream to 400 feet below Little Falls Dam. For details check the [emergency fishing rule change](#).

Meanwhile, catch-and-release fishing for 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 27 when the daily limit will be two trout of at least 14 inches. Rainbows with clipped adipose fins caught at Amber must be released even after April 27.

Coffeepot Lake in Lincoln County is producing rainbow trout, 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, is a good bet for brown trout and, as the water warms, **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.

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, perch catches not far behind.

Rock Lake, open year-round in Whitman County, is consistently a good spot for brown and rainbow trout. Another year-round trout fishery that provides a secluded and productive experience for anglers willing to walk a mile, is Z-Lake on the Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area in Lincoln County.

In the south end of the region, anglers fishing the Tucannon River impoundments on WDFW’s Wooten Wildlife Area have been catching nice rainbow trout. Area manager Kari Dingman said Big Four, Blue, Deer, Rainbow, Spring and Watson lakes are all well-stocked with hatchery trout and warming up.

Anglers are reminded that all fishing rules in the [2012-2013 regulations pamphlet](#) apply throughout the month of April. New rules take effect May 1, 2013, and will be available in pamphlets online and at license dealers later this month.

Anglers are also reminded that all 2012-2013 Washington state fishing licenses expire at midnight March 31. To keep fishing, anglers over 15 years of age must purchase a 2013-14 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 19 is the deadline for registration for the May 4 Kids’ Fishing Event at Clear Lake in Spokane County. For details on the registration form, see the [Youth Fishing 2013 Event Calendar](#).

Northcentral Washington

(Adams, Chelan, Douglas, Grant and Okanogan counties)

Dozens of lakes in the region open to fishing April 1, most in Adams and Grant counties of the Columbia Basin. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) district fish biologist Chad Jackson of Moses Lake says weather changes can always play and “April Fools” trick on anglers on this opener, so be prepared for fickle spring conditions.

Jackson also reminds anglers age 15 and older they’ll need to have a new fishing license, valid April 1, 2013-March 31, 2014, in hand before participating in this opener. All 2012-2013 Washington state fishing licenses expire at midnight March 31. 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.

Many of the waters opening April 1 are within the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge, including the Pillar-Widgeon chain of lakes, which should provide fair to good **rainbow trout** fishing. One refuge fishery – Para-Juvenile Lake, seven miles northwest of Othello on the Adams-Grant county line – opens April 1 only to anglers under 15 years of age. It’s a good spot to take kids to catch **bass** and **sunfish**.

North and South Teal lakes, among the “Seep Lakes” south of Potholes Reservoir, were rehabilitated in 2010 and restocked each year since with rainbow fry, which have grown to 12-inch catchables. Fishing at both should be good, Jackson says.

Some of the best fishing on the April 1 opener should be at Dry Falls Lake at the north end of Grant County near Coulee City. “This is a selective-gear-rule fishery with an internal combustion motor prohibition and a one-fish daily catch limit, so there’s a lot of catch-and-release fishing,” Jackson said. Most anglers catch

more than 10 fish during an outing. Most of the catch is made up of yearling trout ranging in size from 12 to 14 inches, but several carryovers of up to 20 inches have been reported. In addition to rainbows, Dry Falls gets stocked with brown and tiger trout."

Upper and Lower Hampton Lakes, north of Othello on the wildlife refuge, are usually good producers in this early season, but Jackson said they are in need of the rehabilitation work tentatively planned for this fall. "We need to remove nuisance fish species that impact trout fry survival," he explained. "There might still be some decent trout in these lakes for the patient angler who wants to find them."

Two Okanogan County lakes also open April 1 – Spectacle Lake, just south of Loomis, and Washburn Island Pond, a diked oxbow lake off the Columbia River near Fort Okanogan State Park due east of Brewster off Highway 17.

WDFW Okanogan district fish biologist Bob Jateff of Twisp says anglers can expect to catch rainbows in the 10-14 inch range at Spectacle. Washburn Island Pond is a warmwater fishery that provides anglers opportunities for **largemouth bass**, **bluegill**, and the occasional **channel catfish**. Combustible engines may not be used while fishing Washburn.

Several other Okanogan County rainbow trout fisheries shift to catch-and-release only fishing under selective gear rules on April 1. These include Campbell, Cougar, Davis, Green and Lower Green, and Rat lakes.

Jateff notes that Davis Lake, near Winthrop, is still frozen, so anglers should check with local sources before making a trip. When it is ice-free Davis should provide good fishing for rainbows in the 10-14 inch range.

Rat Lake, near Brewster, should provide good fishing for rainbows and browns up to 14 inches. The Green lakes, west of Omak, should provide rainbows in the 11-13 inch range. Many other trout lakes open April 27, when the single biggest fishing season in the state gets under way.

Jateff said the best bets in Okanogan County will likely be Pearrygin Lake, near Winthrop, with 10-13-inch rainbows; Conconully Lake and Reservoir in the town of Conconully, with lots of rainbow trout and kokanee; Alta Lake, just west of Pateros, rehabilitated in 2011 to remove goldfish, now with excellent fishing for rainbow trout to 15 inches; and Wannacut Lake, near Oroville, with 10-13-inch rainbows.

In Chelan County, a good opener may be Wapato Lake, with quality rainbows from last year's fingerling plants, plus yellow perch, **bluegill** and **largemouth bass**, said Travis Maitland, a WDFW district fish biologist. Other Chelan County waters opening April 27 may see catchable-size trout plants delayed, depending on weather, including Wenatchee Heights Lakes, Beehive Reservoir, and Clear, Black, and Lilly lakes. Anglers can check the Catchable Trout Plant Weekly Reports at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/plants/weekly/>.

In Douglas County, Jameson Lake is still a popular fishery and should have some good sized carryovers available. "We also stocked it last fall with about 10,000 catchable-size rainbows that should be very nice size for the opener," Maitland said. "In addition, Jameson will get 600 large "triploid" rainbows just before the opener."

Southcentral Washington

(Benton, Franklin, Kittitas and Yakima counties)

Trout fishing takes center stage in April as the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) continues planting thousands of **rainbows**, **kokanee** and **cutthroat** in regional lakes and ponds for the second straight month. Rotary Lake, Tims Lake, Yakima Sportsman Pond, Fio Rito Lakes, Matton Lake – these are just a few of more than two dozen lakes scheduled to receive fish this month. A complete list is posted on WDFW's [trout-stocking website](#).

Most of those fish run from one-third to a half-pound each, but some weigh in at 1½ pounds, said Eric Anderson, a WDFW fish biologist based in Yakima.

"We're putting some hefty, great-looking fish out there this year," Anderson said. "This is a good time to get outdoors and celebrate spring by catching some."

Anderson notes that all anglers 15 and older must have a 2013-14 fishing license to fish for trout and other species after March 31, when 2012-13 licenses expire. 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.

Meanwhile, the **spring chinook salmon** got off to a slow start in the lower Columbia River this year, but the upriver run should start arriving in area waters in mid-April, said Paul Hoffarth, a WDFW fish biologist based

in the Tri-Cities. "Anglers should keep an eye out for emergency rules that open and close fishing on short notice," he said. 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.

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. The daily limit is two hatchery steelhead along the Franklin County shoreline from the WDFW marker a quarter-mile downstream from the Ringold irrigation wasteway outlet to the marker a half-mile upstream from Spring Creek.

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

TGF Inbox - Reader E-mail

Write to the TGF staff:

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Random Links

Big Browns on the Deschutes: <http://vimeo.com/63748668>

Worth revisiting - Ceremony for Renaming Your Boat:

<http://boatsafe.com/nauticalknowhow/rename.htm>

Pickling Fish and Other Aquatic Foods:

<http://cru.cahe.wsu.edu/CEPublications/pnw0183/pnw0183.pdf>

GOOD LUCK!