

The Guide's Forecast - volume 15 issue number 48

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **November 22nd – November 28th, 2013**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro - Catch and release sturgeon fishing will produce for anglers willing to give it a try below Bonneville Dam. The Bonneville Pool fishery will be discussed on Tuesday of next week; managers will confer with stakeholders on 2014 season structure beginning at 6:30 p.m. at The Dalles Screens Shop, located at 3561 Klindt Drive in The Dalles.

Catch and release sturgeon is about all that's available on the Willamette River. Anglers are already starting to line the bank at Meldrum Bar and soon the first winter steelhead of the season will be taken.

The McKenzie River could be a stretch this week. Dry weather is forecast but levels were rising recently. Take an assortment of nymphs and dries if you try it.

North Santiam levels rose dramatically mid-week although anglers will find it dropping by the weekend. Coho are available but few are being caught.

A few local anglers continue to fish for late summer steelhead and mostly wild coho salmon on the Clackamas River. Anglers must cover a lot of water to find a willing biter, as there are very few fish per mile of river.

Sandy River anglers are waiting for winter steelhead to arrive. The first of which could be taken any day now, but the run won't show in earnest until sometime after Thanksgiving.

Northwest – North coast anglers are hoping for one last strong crack at Tillamook district chinook. The recent high water will give driftboaters ideal conditions by the weekend. Chinook and some chum, possibly an early steelhead should be available on the Wilson and Kilchis Rivers. The Trask may also get a few late, fresh chinook. Bank anglers and boaters alike should score some results. Anglers are no longer allowed to target chum salmon as they are spawning in good numbers on the Kilchis and Miami Rivers right now.

Tillamook Bay trollers may also find a few fresh fish late this week, working the Ghost Hole and Bay City areas. The lower bay will likely produce the best catches as most chinook are destined for the Wilson, Kilchis and Miami rivers. Recent rains may clear out juvenile crab enough to produce some sturgeon catches in the upper bay. Sand shrimp will produce best. Crabbing will likely be challenging despite good tides coming up.

The Nestucca is likely over for the season, winter steelhead will show below Three Rivers and in Three Rivers itself by month's end.

Netarts crabbing will likely be fair at best but the lower Columbia will draw a lot of interested crabbers this weekend. Recent reports state success rates aren't what most are used to but this weekend will likely be good. An attempt for a late coho will be futile however.

Southwest- Offshore forecasts were off the mark earlier this week but long-range predictions indicate a friendly ocean for the weekend. It's best to check at the last minute. Rockfish and lingcod will reward those able to launch.

Fishing for wild coho has been slow on Siltcoos Lake and will remain so until a decent rainfall. The fishery overall has been disappointing.

Crabbing has picked up at Winchester Bay and is reported to have produced a few limits recently.

Coquille trollers are using spinners to connect with chinook but many are showing signs of age. A freshet will bring in brighter, late-season fish.

Little is happening on Rogue Bay although a few chinook are being taken near Indian Creek. Lower river fishing is slow with the exception of half-pounder catches near Agness. Steelheading on the middle Rogue is spotty but has been best at tributary mouths. Steelheaders have continued to fare well on the upper Rogue with summers on the move and coho in the mix thanks to a little rain over the past week.

Boats launching out of Brookings have been able to slip out to the ocean occasionally to jig up rockfish and a few lingcod. Chetco water flows got a little help from Mother Nature earlier this week but as the weekend approaches, levels will once again be dropping. Steelheaders report taking a few winters recently.

Rain is needed to get the chinook fishery underway on the Elk and Sixes rivers, early December is often peak.

Eastern – Steelhead are scattered on the lower Deschutes but catches remain poor to fair. Chinook and summer steelhead counts have dwindled to single digits at Sherars Falls, another sign of the change in seasons.

Nymphing is generally most effective in the Metolius at this time of year although there are occasional hatches. Fly anglers throwing streamers are taking a few large bull trout. Pressure on the river is light in November.

Fishing for steelhead is reported as fair on the Grande Ronde River.

SW Washington- The Cowlitz has tallied some early winter steelhead already with a late November/early December fishery commonly productive on this body of water in years past. Coho and sea-run cutthroat trout are still making up the bulk of the catch however.

A surprising number of winter steelhead, primarily wild fish, have already shown on the Kalama River. Some coho are still available.

Coho are making a late showing in the Lewis and some winter chinook should start to show.

A single smelt was caught during a sturgeon study near Kalama last week. Although still closed to sport and commercial harvest, hopefully this species is making a rebound. It was a great run last year.

Columbia River Fishing Report – Good crabbing reports continue to come in from the lower Columbia. Tides are only getting more ripe for great crabbing on the lower river with expectations that the weekend will be quite busy down there as fishing on the north coast is in a clear decline. Maybe not so surprising however is that some folks are reporting that limits are hard to come by. Of course, that came last week when tides were more extreme but overall, I rate the ocean crab fishery this fall as sub-par compared to previous years. Most folks continue to work the water to the south side of the shipping channel (red line) in 25 to 35 feet of water between Buoys 20 and 22. Those areas should produce fine on the upcoming soft tide series.

A few folks remain persistent dunking eggs along SW Washington tributary mouths. A rare coho is being taken here but most serious anglers are focusing their efforts upstream.

Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) reports, "Catch and release sturgeon fishing will produce for anglers willing to give it a try below Bonneville Dam. In the late fall, sturgeon feast heavily on spawned out salmon carcasses to fatten up for the winter, but they are in a feeding mode and won't pass up any morsel that equates to calories. Smelt is always a favorite, but squid, sand shrimp and roll mop herring will all get it done."

The Guide's Forecast – It should be a crabby weekend for estuary crabbers. Target the entire reach (out of the shipping channel) from Hammond downstream to Buoy 20. Look for depths of 25 to 45 feet and the fresher the bait, the better the results. You still need to be cognizant of the peak ebb and flood however. Keep close track of your pots as there will be lots of competition out there.

Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) predicts, "The cold snap should trigger a good sturgeon bite in the gorge but without an effort, it will be tough to gauge. Getting anglers used to "catch and release" on sturgeon will take some time, but catching and letting go is more fun than raking leaves."

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) reports, "Catch and release sturgeon is about all that's available on the Willamette River. This fishery is gaining in popularity as anglers have discovered that the lower Willamette can be chock full of sturgeon in the winter months. Now that retention has been curtailed until further notice, it stands to reason that the fishing should only improve as time goes on. The Portland Harbor is probably the most popular stretch, with the Toyota Hole and East bank where Shenanigans used to reside, being favorite spots for both the sturgeon and the fishers. Anglers are already starting to line the bank at Meldrum Bar and soon the first winter steelhead of the season will be taken. Plunkers here use spin n glows with or without a prawn tail, coon shrimp or sand shrimp. Backrollers like the K-11X Kwikfish, 3.5 Maglips or Wiggle Warts. A diver and a sand shrimp will also get fish."

Water flow at the McKenzie River topped 8,000 cfs as rain fell overnight on November 19th but the water has been dropping and clearing with drier weather since then.

Water levels spiked early this week but have been dropping dramatically. Expect to find weekend level and flow to be much lower than normal for this time of year if forecasts remain accurate.

Walling Pond and Walter Wirth Lake have been stocked with trout.

The last day this year to fish Hagg Lake will be November 24th. It will open in March, 2014 to year-around fishing.

The Guide's Forecast – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) predicts, "Here too, catch and release sturgeon fishing is a viable option if you're looking for a fishing opportunity. The Milwaukie section and the harbor will be good bets this week. Work the deeper holes that are 30-100 feet deep for the best success. If enough fishermen brave the crisp weather and make a go of it, it's likely that a winter steelhead or two will be taken from Meldrum Bar this week. Our ears are burning here at The Guides Forecast.

A sunny weekend should have Caddis popping on the McKenzie River. Carry a supply of like patterns as well as nymphs in the absence of hatches.

Despite fair to good numbers of coho having entered the North Santiam this season, fishing remains poor to slow. Low water this weekend will not improve results.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) reports, "A few local anglers continue to fish for late summer steelhead and straggler wild coho salmon on the Clackamas River. Anglers must cover a lot of water to find a willing biter, as there are very few fish per mile of river. Although, the bulk of the run is more than a month away, a few early winter steelhead are about due to be caught. The hole at the mouth of Eagle Creek would be a good starting point if this is your goal.

"Sandy River anglers are waiting for winter steelhead to arrive. The first of which could be taken any day now, but the run in earnest will start to show sometime after Thanksgiving. Plunkers near the I-84 Bridge are usually the first to score but a few early steelhead make a bee line for Oxbow County Park before they slow down."

The Guide's Forecast – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) predicts, "Thanksgiving is normally the time we hear of the first winter steelhead being taken and the Clackamas River shouldn't be left out of the mix. Although, the bulk of the run is weeks away, an early fish or two could easily pop up here. Water conditions will be ideal by the weekend.

"Great water conditions are in store for the first winter steelhead to be taken from the Sandy River. The lower river will fish good for plunkers as will Oxbow and Dabney Parks."

North Coast Fishing Report – In what typically is a banner time of year to pursue chinook in Tillamook, it appears that the late run, typically destined for the Kilchis and Wilson Rivers, is a bust. Although there certainly will be more chinook taken, both in Tillamook Bay as well as on the Wilson, Kilchis and to a lesser extent, the Trask River, it will be far from the glory November days we used to have (only about 6 to 10 years ago) this time of year. It's still too early to call this rain freshet a bust but anglers working the lower Kilchis should have slayed them on Wednesday, only to come up largely empty. It was in ideal shape. Tillamook Bay itself was in good shape on Wednesday although not covered with boats. Certainly however, enough boats were there to answer the question as to whether or not there is a viable fishery there; doesn't seem like it.

I was most excited to fish the lower Kilchis on the first part of the drop this week; Wednesday would have been the first fishable day after the river was in the trees for the early part of the week. Well, preliminary reports from the lower Kilchis from Wednesday indicate that fishing was grossly pathetic. One guide reported just one chum and one dark chinook for an all-day effort down there. It should be thick with chinook under these conditions and given the timing of this current rain freshet.

It's still too early to tell how the Wilson will fish after this rain but we'll know more by the weekend. It should be better, albeit not all that much better, than the Kilchis on Wednesday. It is a much more extensive system, ya know.

Volunteers working up chinook at the Trask hatchery reported gobs of chinook over there on Tuesday. The Tuesday tally was 918 chinook worked up at the hatchery alone that day! We knew the run was a strong one this year on the Trask, we just didn't know it was that strong. Maybe this would be a good late season option although this kind of action can't last too much longer over there. This is supposed to be an earlier run on this system. None-the-less, this river is inundated with salmon right now and may be the best surprise in the Tillamook system by the weekend.

North Coast systems may see the first few winter steelhead trickle in this weekend. Although smaller systems like the North Fork Nehalem had yet to clear at this writing, they should be well fishable by the weekend. Early steelhead are often a sign of run strength and although I'm not optimistic that we're in

for a great run this winter, I hope I'm wrong. Other north coast systems that we could see some early arriving steelhead include: Big and Gnat Creek (Highway 30), the Necanicum, North Fork Nehalem, Kilchis, Wilson, Nestucca and Three Rivers systems. It's a good time of year to run Tadpolly's in the tail-outs, targeting both chinook and steelhead which may lay here in higher flows.

There are still a few chum and coho in the system, they need to be released unharmed.

Crabbing remains challenging, even in the estuary that has little fresh water influence; Netarts Bay. Recent reports indicate a lot of crab present, just not many keepers. This would only be more challenging in other estuaries where the recent fresh water levels have increased from the most recent rainfall event.

The ocean has not been an option but that may change in the coming days.

The Guide's Forecast – It's the conditions driftboaters have been waiting for, I'm just not sure anglers should go into the weekend with as high of expectations as one would hope. It's clear by now that the late-season chinook numbers are not going to be impressive and although we typically switch our focus from the Trask Basin to the Wilson and Kilchis, which may not be such a grand idea. I do have a high degree of confidence however that the Wilson will produce some chinook by and over the weekend but the Kilchis looks to be a poor option for hopeful driftboaters, especially by the weekend. The Wilson however should be in prime shape and producing even before the weekend gets here. Here's a breakdown on the rivers that matter this week, from north to south:

Necanicum River – This Seaside system should get one last push of chinook. Although there should still be some bright ones around, it won't be overflowing with quality chinook. It should fish best by Thursday and getting too low by Friday. Watch for blow down trees, this can be a hazardous reach. This can be an early winter steelhead stream.

North Fork Nehalem – Getting too late for bright coho although there may be a straggler here. Anglers might be more anxious for a bright winter steelhead, which would also be a rare catch. Three Rivers on the Nestucca system is much the same, without the possibility of a coho.

Kilchis River – This system should be a great option but it doesn't look like it will be. There should be some fresh chinook available but don't count on great numbers. You may find an early winter steelhead here but don't be optimistic about this system either as it only receives nominal plants.

Wilson River – This system will be a primary target for valley and coastal anglers alike. It should have ample numbers of chinook available but since I've been downplaying the late returns in recent years, it doesn't look like it will be like the days of old. Still, it will be one of the best bets on the north coast this weekend and should be fishing good by Friday. Sure, there's a chance for early season steelhead but it would still be a fluke.

Trask River – Not typically a late season strong option but it appears as if it might be this weekend. The hatchery was inundated with chinook on Tuesday, indicating an unusual late push of fish in this system. I guess we shouldn't be too surprised since this fueled such a strong early season much through mid-October. Be mindful of large, wild coho that exhibit very similar markings to chinook on this system. I came really close to bonking an 18-pounder here earlier this year.

Nestucca River – It would be odd to catch a bright late-season chinook here but it's possible. You might stand as good a chance getting an early season steelhead downstream of Three Rivers. Either way, you'll need some luck.

Tillamook Bay – We'll see optimistic anglers working the bay well into mid-December but the action was

far from impressive at mid-week. The soft tide series won't play much of a role in success this weekend but there should be some biters available to trollers working from Bay City to the jaws. You'll have to be pretty lucky to score results and it'll be cold so be prepared for that.

It's possible that many of the juvenile crab got washed out to sea, enabling sturgeon fishers to seek the last possible keepers before the extended closure. The west channel and upper bay hold the most promise. Use sand shrimp for bait.

Crabbers may find some success crabbing near the mouth. The soft tide exchange won't hurt and if you've got good bait, you could score some nice keepers. You might even get to scoot out over the bar if the east wind knocks down the swell over the weekend. The rockfish should be hungry. Netarts Bay may only produce fair results despite favorable tides.

Not many Oregonians took advantage of razor clam tides this week. It didn't help that conditions were terrible with high surf and rain. This will not be a week for clamming.

Central & South Coast Reports – Forecasts for offshore conditions over the coming weekend should appeal to those launching to reap the bottom fish bounty out of Newport or Depoe Bay. Swells are predicted to remain at two feet or lower at intervals of eight to 12 seconds while winds are forecast for less than 10 mph.

Late fall/early winter bottom fishing is usually quite good with colorful rockfish (including cabezon until further notice) anxious to fill out seven-fish daily bag limits. All depths are open which allows offshore boaters access to deep water lingcod haunts where larger fish hang out. Two lings over 22 inches may be kept.

Most offshore anglers use braided line in the 50 to 60 pound range, usually with monofilament leaders of 30 pounds or so. While rockfish will readily take baits of herring, sardine, anchovy or squid, jig heads tipped with curly-tailed grubs or the saltwater-sized Berkley Gulp! baits work great. Lings will gobble bait (kelp greenling is their favorite) but this is a technique used mostly by jetty fishers. Offshore, location is more important than the lure with the majority of lingcod falling for pipe jigs.

All bottom fish except cabezon may be taken without depth restrictions through March of 2014. The cabbie season closes December 31st. Ocean crabbing will re-open on December 1st.

The wild coho fishery at Siltcoos remains very slow. This week, fly anglers joined trollers in getting skunked.

Following rainfall earlier this week, the Siuslaw produced Chinook although it was spotty; some took limits, others took home nothing. No reports have come in of early winter steelhead yet.

Crabbing has been fair to good and continues to improve at Winchester Bay. With just over 50% of the wild coho quota filled so far this year, it is unlikely to fill this late in the season. Fishing has been slow on the mainstem. Steelheading has been fair but spotty on the North Umpqua. The South Umpqua is scheduled to open on December 1st.

Fishing has been slow for either Chinook or coho in Coos Bay. Crabbing is still slow but has been showing signs of improvement. Winter steelhead will be moving into the system in the next week or two.

While most Chinook have made their way upstream to spawn on the Coquille system, a few fish are still being hooked in tidewater. Wild coho may be kept here through November 30th.

The lower Rogue experienced quite a freshet on Monday this week but anglers this weekend will see no evidence of it, except perhaps the absence of Chinook in the bay as there will be only a few Indian Creek fish left to target. Fishing for adult summers is slow on the lower Rogue although the Agness area is producing fair to good catches of half-pounders. Chinook spawning has wound down on the middle river and with it, results for summer steelhead which are only fair at best. Fresh water in the river invigorated summer steelheading on the upper Rogue where anglers have been catching fish in stretches where bait is allowed as well as the areas restricted to flies and lures.

Chetco flows got a much-needed boost with rain early this week, pushing the level over eight feet at Brookings and flows to 8,700 cfs. The respite was short lived, however and the water dropped almost as fast as it rose. Expect to see some improvement this weekend but waters will still be fairly low for the Chetco. Chinook fishing has been fair to good since the river opened upstream at the first of the month. Bobber and bait is most popular and has been effective although plugs have been effective for some of the guide boats. Only one Chinook per day may be kept under temporary rules enforced due to low water which had fish confined to deeper holes.

Over three inches of rain fell at Port Orford on Wednesday this week, raising the level of the Elk River and coloring it up. The hatchery reported over four inches of rainfall. Boats on the river have been taking fish and there will be a couple of productive days until waters drop and clear again.

Anglers are still hoping for trout at Diamond Lake to go on a feeding binge prior to the lake icing over. The inlets and outlet of the lake have been most productive for those using Power Bait.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Bright kokanee averaging 11 to 12 inches have been taken this week at Lake Billy Chinook with trolling and jigging both effective. Yeah, we think it's a crazy time of year to fish kokos, too. This time of year, most are gearing up for bull trout on the troll. They're catching a few as well.

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Random Links

2013 Winter Steelhead Guide:

http://www.dfw.state.or.us/rr/steelhead_guide/docs/2013_Winter_Steelhead_Guide.pdf

You May Be Killing Steelhead And Not Even Know It:

<http://www.ginkandgasoline.com/steelhead/you-may-be-killing-steelhead-and-not-even-know-it/>

Fisherman Catches World Record Albino Catfish:

<http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/headlines/2013/11/fisherman-catches-world-record-206-pound-albino-catfish/>

With Rogue River dams gone, chinook salmon make a splash:

http://seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2022293731_rogueriverxml.html

Anglers invited to comment on 2014 Bonneville Pool sturgeon season:

<http://www.dfw.state.or.us/news/2013/november/111413.asp>

ODFW Announces Prestigious Art Contest Winners:

<http://www.dfw.state.or.us/news/2013/november/111813b.asp>

GOOD LUCK!