

The Guide's Forecast - volume 15 issue number 49

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **November 29<sup>th</sup> – December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2013**

**Happy Thanksgiving! We are grateful to have you as subscribers!**

**Willamette Valley/Metro** - Few, if any anglers are venturing out to fish the lower Columbia since the cold weather hit. Catch and released sturgeon fishing should produce for anglers willing to brave the frigid weather.

A few bank anglers are lining up along Meldrum Bar waiting for the first winter steelhead ring their bell. Catch and release sturgeon fishing should be good in the harbor above and below the St. John's bridge as well as in the Milwaukie section.

McKenzie water levels are at seasonal average following the freshet over the past week. While there are no winter steelhead here, reddsides will cooperate with long-rodders throwing Caddis imitations.

Fish passage at Willamette Falls is nil. While there are coho in the North Santiam, they have been challenging to hook and are starting to show their age. At least water conditions will be decent for the three-day weekend.

Lack of effort on the Clackamas River leaves little to report. The first winter steelhead could be caught within the week, though the bulk of the run isn't due to show until sometime in January.

The mid-week holiday will likely bring out a few anglers to try the Sandy River in hopes of catching a Thanksgiving steelhead. Cold, windy weather will make the fishing tough to bear but a steelhead or two will likely hit the bank.

The 2014 Oregon Sport Fishing regulations are now available online, at ODFW offices and at most places that sell hunting and fishing licenses.

**Northwest** – The only thing left on the lower Columbia is sport crabbing. Although crabbers fishing close to the Oregon side struggled for good catches over the weekend, those crabbing lower Desdemona Sands fared well. The commercial crabbing delay will afford the sport fleet additional opportunity if the weather cooperates. East winds hampered effort last weekend.

Thanksgiving is the traditional winter steelhead kick-off and rumors of early season steelhead are starting to trickle in. The Kilchis, Wilson, Necanicum, North Fork Nehalem, Three Rivers and Nestucca systems should all produce rare, early season opportunities. The North Fork Nehalem and Three Rivers are likely to be prime targets for bank anglers, there have been confirmed catches on the North Fork. Match your bait size to water conditions using small baits in clear water and larger offerings when rivers run colored.

Late season chinook fishing on the Wilson and Kilchis systems has been disappointing. Despite historic hot fishing on a few of these north coast systems, these late November fish have been largely absent. There should remain a rare opportunity for a December chinook but anglers should not count on any consistency.

Ghost Hole trollers haven't been deterred but catches remain poor. Crabbing in Tillamook Bay was fair at best over the weekend along with most north coast estuaries. Tides will get challenging by the weekend.

An unprecedented period of calm ocean conditions last week produced great catches of bottomfish, especially large lingcod for deep-reef fishermen. Seas are expected to sour by the weekend with limited

opportunity throughout the winter months. The delay for the commercial crab fleet may also yield fair ocean catches after December 1<sup>st</sup> however most keeper males migrate to deeper water this time of year.

**Southwest-** Large lingcod were taken over the past weekend out of central Oregon ports and rockfishing has yielded good catches as well. Limits or near limits of bottom fish are common at this time of year. Getting out is the trick.

Offshore conditions look mixed over the coming weekend with a friendly ocean predicted for Saturday, November 30, deteriorating into Sunday. Check conditions late this week to launch safely.

Recreational ocean crabbing will open on December 1 but commercial efforts scheduled for that same date will be delayed until December 15 or later as samples indicate Dungeness are not up to strict standards.

It remains to be seen if fresh winters show this week on the Alsea although coho are being caught on pink spinners and plugs. Steelheading is likely to heat up following the next round of rainfall.

While crabbing slowed in Coquille tidewater and Coos Bay following rainfall early last week, it will be improving with dry weather this week. Chinook are coloring up.

Chinook fishing in Rogue Bay is all but wrapped up for the year. Lower Rogue flows are back to pre-freshet levels with adult steelhead and half-pounders being caught near Agness. Results have been sporadic on the middle river for anglers using either bait or lures. Steelheading should be good on the upper river on Black Friday though it'll be for summers, not winters, and most are showing colorful signs of their lengthy freshwater residence. There is considerable pressure above Shady Cove where bait is allowed but drifting cured eggs has been effective.

Rockfish and lingcod are available in the ocean just outside Brookings Harbor and results for anglers using jigs has been good. Last week's storm raised Chetco levels rapidly but levels fell almost as fast with dry ground soaking up the water. Plunkers scored initially and then driftboaters as water levels dropped although overall it was just fair fishing. Expect low, dropping levels over the coming weekend with more rain in the forecast early next week.

If rain falls in the coming week as predicted for the southwest corner of Oregon, there should be some decent chinook fishing on the Elk River. Sixes River has been getting driftboat traffic but producing few fish in low water.

Trout fishing has yet to heat up as expected as the weather cools at Diamond Lake. Bait anglers are catching a few fish however.

**Eastern** – Water temperatures are good on the lower Deschutes although air temps will have guides icing up. Trout fishing is fair to good with Caddis hatching afternoons. Steelhead are scattered in the river but slow to bite or strike in frigid weather. Try mid-afternoons.

Results have been mixed for trollers at Crescent Lake with some boats landing several large lake trout while others have blanked.

Lake Billy Chinook is producing fair to good kokanee catches and the occasional bull trout to trollers. Avoid the Metolius Arm as it's closed at this time of year.

Off-season trollers at Green Peter are catching some kokanee.

**SW Washington-** Although few in number, winter steelhead are starting to show in most district rivers.

The Cowlitz, Lewis and Kalama are all winter steelhead options but salmon still dominate the catches.

Fresh chinook and some coho remain available on the North Fork Lewis with last week's average a salmon per rod.

The Klickitat River is still producing good catches of coho with anglers also averaging a fish per rod. This fishery should taper after this weekend however.

Several regulation changes happen beginning December 1<sup>st</sup>. Check regulations carefully.

**Columbia River Fishing Report** – It's all crab, all the time but the not so great news is, it's been better. Although limits are still quite possible, there has been a clear jump in effort in recent years and some larger charter operators are funning a lot of pots and people out there in search of holiday bounty. Traditional grounds that sport crabbers have successfully hit in years past are not producing all that well. The Oregon side, inside of Buoy's 20 and 22 is not crabbing all that well but those working the Washington side of Desdemona Sands is still crabbing well but you have to be prepared to crab it right. I just got off of the lower Columbia on Wednesday, co-captaining a 7-person crew that yielded about 76 keepers for an overnight soak. We used frozen salmon carcasses and fresh rockfish carcasses and although both produced fair catches, it seems like the fresh rockfish carcasses out-fished the frozen bait. Overall, it was a bit disappointing for what the lower Columbia can produce this time of year but we've known for a while that we were in for a more challenging season than in years past. We placed our 15 pots between wing jetty 7 off of Chinook and (green) Buoy 21 in water between 35 and 50 foot deep. You have to look at your tides to make sure your pots won't move on you and you also have to time it between tide changes when that exchange is bigger (>6 foot run off or flood tide). Wait too long and your buoys will bury until the next tide exchange, which can easily happen after sunset in these short days.

We're coming into more intense tides right now so the window of opportunity is rather short right now. More on that in the forecast section.

**Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** reports, "Few, if any anglers are venturing out to fish the lower Columbia since the cool weather hit, even fewer will consider fishing once the rain and or snow arrives this weekend . Catch and released sturgeon fishing should produce for anglers willing to brave the adversity, but the lower Willamette would be a better option."

**The Guide's Forecast** – With an upcoming minus tide series and strong flood tides coinciding, it is an unfortunately circumstance that crabbing will be a poor option this weekend. The lower Columbia remains the best location to possibly take a limit of Dungeness and the delay in the commercial opener certainly brightens that prospect but tides will take precedence and if you do go crabbing, you had better be prepared for a quick pull of the pots and keep in mind, you 'll likely only get one pull of the pots before the tides suck your buoys under. You need to load up those pots with quality bait if you plan on scoring a limit! The next quality upcoming tide series will be taking place at night. How challenging would that be?

**Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** predicts, "Good luck if you try."

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report** – **Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** reports, "A few bank anglers are lining up along Meldrum Bar waiting for the first winter steelhead ring their bell. No reports or rumors of any being taken as of yet. A spin n glow and a 3/0 hook is all that's needed to get a winter steelhead at Meldrum Bar, but some anglers prefer to add a prawn or coon shrimp to the mix. Catch and release sturgeon fishing should be good in the Portland Harbor and the Milwaukie section. With the good #s that were racked up on the last catch and keep opener( Oct

19th ), it our bet that the river is loaded with hungry sturgeon. But its hard to know anything with so few anglers giving it a try. Its obvious the the catch and release fishery is going to take some getting used to."

McKenzie water levels have returned to seasonal normal levels following the last round of rainfall. It will fish over the holiday weekend.

North Santiam flows will be about 2,000 cfs at Mehama and stabile through the long weekend. Despite fairly "fishy" conditions and over 4,500 coho estimated to be in the system, not many anglers have been successful in hooking up let alone landing any of these fish. There are a few winter steelhead around but it's all catch-and-release for wild fish on the Santiam.

Boaters are warned to be aware of a hazard on the Willamette River at Harrisburg. See **Random Links**, below for expanded story.

**The Guide's Forecast – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** predicts, "It's my bet that a steelhead or two will be taken at Meldrum Bar by the end of the weekend. Also, if some ambitious anglers would hit the harbor with some smelt and sand shrimp, a field day could be had catching and releasing sturgeon till your arms ached. Sounds like a great holiday plan for the first half of the day."

Late fall/early winter trout fishers will find some entertainment on the McKenzie along with a degree of solitude. It'll be a Caddis show, for sure, although rainfall wil produce some Blue-Winged Olives.

While coho have been elusive and there wasn't much of a summer steelhead run this year, North Santiam trout fishing has been a reliable trout fishery. This time of year, fish Stayton to Shelburne with Caddis and Stonefly imitations.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** reports, "Lack of effort on the Clackamas River leaves little to report. The first winter steelhead could be caught within the week, though the bulk of the run isn't due to show until sometime in January. On the lower river, Riverside Park is a favorite of early season plunkers. Higher up, the mouth of Eagle Creek would be a good bet for fishers wanting to get a leg up on their winter steelhead catch of the 2013-14 season.

"The mid-week holiday will likely bring out a few anglers to try the Sandy River in hopes of catching a Thanksgiving steelhead. Cold, windy weather will make the fishing tough to bare but a steelhead or two will likely hit the bank before the weekend is over. Plunkers have been spotted on the lower river and hopefully we'll hear some good news in the coming days."

**The Guide's Forecast – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** predicts, "A handful of winter steelhead have been confirmed from coastal streams, so its only a short matter of time before the first is taken from the Clack or Sandy. Water conditions are still within the "good" category but some form of precipitation is predicted for the weekend.

"A rainstorm would help the Sandy River, but conditions are far from terrible. Winter steelhead are due here and I would bet on the Sandy to kick one out before the Clack."

**North Coast Fishing Report –** There are still some motivated anglers out there but I'm not sure why. It sure was an exciting fall but the late season showing of chinook is less than stellar. Poor results remain common but there have been a few bright spots lately. One guide reported just a single chum salmon after an all-day effort on Monday fishing the lower Wilson River. On Tuesday however, he turned things

around and hooked 4 chinook, landing 2 of them, fishing in the same area, same technique. That same guide, **pro guide Brandon McGavran (360-607-1327)**, reported seeing 2 different boats take chinook on bobber and bait on Monday. With few fish coming into the system, they do seem to be schooling and bobber fishing can often take advantage of that situation. There are certainly folks still taking quality chinook in the Tillamook area streams and estuary but you have to be prepared to work pretty hard for not much return on your investment of time. None-the-less, there aren't many places where you can count on a bright chinook in late November; at least not on the north coast. The Tillamook area remains your best bet for such a prize.

The Kilchis, now too low for any expectations, also produced poorly coming off of the last rain freshet. Most north coast systems remain too low for fresh fish but anglers may find fresh chinook in the lower reaches of the Wilson, Trask and Tillamook Bay itself if you're persistent.

Effort in Tillamook Bay is waning as catches have been slow. Still, there are plenty of folks that still have the bright idea that early December can be a great time to pursue fresh chinook in the Ghost Hole and at Bay City, and it often is. It just seems unlikely that this is going to be one of those years.

Steelheaders are taking notice of the current conditions and timing. It's often Thanksgiving when the first good push of steelhead make a showing on the north coast. Right now, conditions are not ideal with low flows and cold water temperatures. The fish just don't seem to move very often under these conditions and the ones that are present, aren't very interested in striking.

Steelhead have been reported in the Kilchis and North Fork Nehalem systems and have likely been available in the Wilson and Three Rivers as well. Of course if they're "available" in Three Rivers, they're in the Nestucca River as well. Also, the Highway 30 streams (and they are nothing more than streams right now) also have fish present. Several fish have already been taken at the hatchery. It's only the low water hampering success at this point. Although few employ the technique, fishing in tidewater, using bobbers and bait or pink worms, can often produce good results for savvy anglers. The forecast looks like this will be the norm for much of the week anyway.

Crabbing in the district was fair at best despite ideal conditions and tides last week and weekend. I placed 6 well baited pots for 4 hours right at the mouth of Tillamook Bay on Sunday, only yielding 10 keepers for the effort. Other estuaries didn't do much better.

Not many anglers took advantage of the flat calm seas last week when lingcod and sea bass were readily available for those going offshore or fishing the nearshore. Those that did, found ample numbers of large lingcod in the deep-reef areas and sea bass in the nearshore. It's hard to not want to place crab pots in what we know would be fertile waters this time of year.

**The Guide's Forecast** – It will be a bit of a blasé week for river anglers as no sign of significant rainfall will keep fish in the lower reaches of river where tidewater bobber fishers stand the best chance at getting into fish. Although chinook will still be on the minds of many and a feasible option, anglers should look at modifying techniques to target steelhead as well. With the low, clear water conditions and the fact water temperatures remain frigid, small baits will be key and realistically, you'll have to lower your expectations. The action will only get more challenging as we move into the late weekend when a low front is expected, followed by a prolonged period of cold weather. To top off a challenging weekend, the amount of precipitation isn't expected to be all that much and may actually fall as snow, making for dangerous travelling conditions if you're traveling the coast range or cascades for that matter.

Most anglers will likely stick to the troll fishery in Tillamook Bay itself. Although the tide series is improving into the weekend, the poor late season showing of chinook don't make things look all that appealing this weekend. None-the-less, dragging a herring through the Ghost Hole and at Bay City may

offer up the best chance at holiday chrome this weekend. Winds are expected to pick up on Sunday and Monday.

Don't expend too much time working crab gear this weekend. A strong tide series won't keep crab on the feed for very long. You'll also have to remain diligent on when and where you pick and place your pots. You won't have much time to retrieve them before the strong outgoing tide sucks the buoys under.

Razor and bay clamming may be decent going into the weekend. Expect cold digging however; not so fun when you're getting your sleeves wet. You'll need a lantern after Saturday to catch the peak minus tide and by then the ocean surf may beat razor clams down where they won't be feeding all that actively.

At early glance, the ocean may be most friendly for bottomfish on Friday or Saturday but it will likely be a good long while before we see seas as calm as they were for much of the last several days.

**Central & South Coast Reports** – Boats launching out of Depoe Bay and Newport will do well. Bottom fishing this time of year is historically productive if offshore conditions allow safe passage. Recreational ocean crabbing will re-open on Sunday, December 1st with commercial efforts delayed until mid-December or later.

Chinook fishing is winding down on the Siletz River with most salmon upriver above the deadline now. While summer steelheading is slow, a few winters have been taken with this fishery expected to improve in December.

Crabbing has been poor to slow in Yaquina Bay. While Chinook fishing is about done for the year, rockfish and ling cod are being caught along the jetties and just outside when ocean conditions allow.

A few winters are showing up on the lower Alsea according to the ODFW. Try drifting bait or tossing spinners to intercept one.

The Siuslaw has produced at least a single winter steelhead but it's still early for this river to produce well. There are still a number of Chinook around although most are dark.

Siltcoos Lake trollers have been taking coho on spinners and plugs. It has been slow most of the season but it appears this is finally worth a try.

Crabbing is improving in Winchester Bay. Fishing for wild coho has been slow on the Umpqua mainstem. This fishery remains open through the end of November with just over half the quota taken. A few winter steelhead are usually caught over the Thanksgiving weekend. Summer steelheading has been slow to fair on the flies-only stretch of the North Umpqua. The South Umpqua will re-open on Sunday, December 1st.

Crabbing has continued to pick up at Cos Bay from boats as well as the docks. While some winter steelhead entered the Coos system with the last round of rainfall and some are taken around Thanksgiving, better catches will occur in coming weeks. Wild coho may be kept here through November 20th although catches have been spotty.

A few steelhead should be available on the Coquille but as with most southwest rivers, fishing won't pick up until later in the winter months.

Rogue Bay is seeing very little effort from trollers with the Chinook trolling season all but over. Half-pounder fishing has been good on the lower Rogue. Steelheaders on the middle river are taking fair to good catches of summer steelhead on a variety of flies and lures. There's no reason to get up early to fish summers on the upper Rogue. Fishing has been good but best results are coming right in the middle

of the day. A mix of coho and summer steelhead are available above Shady Cove near the hatchery. For fly anglers, try Carpetbagger or bead-head Hare's Ear patterns. A couple hundred hatchery steelhead were recycled from the hatchery on Wednesday this week to improve the odds but most of these fish were past their prime. Still fun on the end of a line, though.

Weekend anglers on the Chetco will be dealing with low water conditions yet again although Chinook are expected to be taken regardless. The fresh salmon which entered on the last freshet which are hunkered down in deep holes will respond to bobber & bait. The one fish per day bag limit remain in place due to water conditions. A few winter steelhead have been reported over the past week and additional traffic over the holiday weekend is sure to produce a few.

Chinook fishing at the Elk and Sixes rivers has been slow in low water conditions. The few fish that are up in the river are turning dark. Rain is forecast to fall on Friday and Saturday this week and may be enough to cause some improvement. Once the late-season Chinook fishery gets underway on the Elk and Sixes, it can continue producing through December.

While trout often feed heavily at this time of year in anticipation of winter weather, that theory hasn't worked out too well for Diamond Lake anglers. Amidst periodic snow flurries, fishing has remained slow for weeks. Power Bait or nightcrawlers seem to be yielding the best catches.

**Central and Eastern Oregon** – Steelhead are scattered on the Deschutes from Maupin to the mouth although catching them has been a challenge. Fly anglers targeting reddsides should try Warm Springs to North Junction. Caddis are by far the primary pattern. Middle Deschutes fly fishers are taking rainbows and browns with Caddis and Pale Morning Duns hatching on this stretch.

At just over 70 cfs, Crooked River flows are the lowest of the season and many fly anglers think that's just fine. Fishing has been good with nymphs although dries will be productive during hatches. With air temperatures forecast to drop below the zero mark over the coming weekend, the Wallowa River is expected to ice up. Similar conditions are expected on the Grande Ronde and Imnaha rivers.

Green Peter has continued to produce kokanee to trollers this week. Results aren't jolt by any standards but given the time of year, eight or 10 quality fish ain't a bad day. Needless to say, November boat traffic is very light.

**TGF Inbox - Reader E-mail**

Reader Kaptn Ken writes to share this: "For anyone interested...Razor Clamming is coming soon ... 12/01 thru 12/6 ... Evening Tides ("Dark Thirty" ... Bring your L.E.D. Head Lamps or L.E.D. Flashlights!!!)

"Best 12/1 thru 12/6!!!"

12/1	N/A	L 2'5"	4:10AM	6'3"	H 8'8"	10:04AM	9'6"	L -0'10"	5:21PM	7'4"	H 6'5"	11:40PM
12/2	4'0"	L 2'5"	4:58AM	6'6"	H 9'0"	10:47AM	10'3"	L -1'3"	6:06PM	8'1"	-	-
12/3	8'1"	H 6'9"	12:28AM	4'3"	L 2'5"	5:47AM	6'8"	H 9'1"	11:33AM	10'8"	L -1'6"	6:51PM
12/4	8'6"	H 6'11"	1:16AM	4'5"	L 2'5"	6:38AM	6'7"	H 9'1"	12:20PM	10'8"	L -1'6"	7:38PM
12/5	8'7"	H 7'0"	2:04AM	4'7"	L 2'5"	7:31AM	6'3"	H 8'9"	1:10PM	10'1"	L -1'4"	8:25PM
12/6	8'6"	H 7'1"	2:54AM	4'8"	L 2'5"	8:29AM	5'8"	H 8'2"	2:04PM	9'2"	L -0'11"	9:14PM

Thanks. Ken!

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**Random Links**

Molalla River article in Canby Herald:

<http://www.pamplinmedia.com/cby/147-news/201988-the-mighty-moRiver>

Extreme Boating Hazard On Willamette River At Harrisburg:

<http://www.albanytribune.com/22112013-extreme-boating-hazard-willamette-river-harrisburg%E2%80%8F/>

2014 fishing regulation booklet includes incorrect price for senior citizen license:

<http://www.dfw.state.or.us/news/2013/november/112513b.asp>

New Record Wels Catfish is an Albino:

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

"Fish, I love you and respect you very much. But by the end of the day I will kill you."  
- Ernest Hemingway

**GOOD LUCK!**