

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **March 14th – March 20th, 2014**

Willamette Valley/Metro – With all the wild weather last week, catch and effort for Columbia River spring chinook was low. Now that a high pressure system is building over the region, anglers will be anxious to get after salmon as we near peak season. With the large return predicted this year, if they are going to show, action should start to get more consistent. Willamette fish will be hard to access with this river still running colored; likely to last another week. Mainstem Columbia fish should start to show despite a later run timing. Columbia springers most often exhibit a dark chin versus the Willamette "snow bellies" that have a bright white chin and belly. Willamette springers also tend to cut more pale in color than mainstem Columbia springers. Target fish upstream of the mouth of the Willamette at Kelly Point Park where the river will run more clear. Small, green label herring with a flasher will be an anglers best bet, at least until the water warms and continues to clear.

The Willamette will remain a challenge although Meldrum Bar plunkers may take an occasional salmon or steelhead until flows subside.

McKenzie River levels were high but dropping on Tuesday this week. It will need to improve dramatically to fish by the weekend although dry weather is in the angler's favor.

The Santiams are high this week but will be dropping rapidly over the coming weekend. Fishing will be slow although summer steelhead and the first spring chinook are due at the end of April and into May.

Clackamas and Sandy River steelheaders have been sidelined for much of the week but these rivers could come in by the weekend. The first strong batch of broodstock steelhead should be present for anglers working the softer water as the flow drops. Small clusters of eggs or sand shrimp should produce the best results until the water clears by the middle of next week barring another major rain event.

A free spey fishing class will take place at the Oxbow Boat Ramp on March 22 from 1 PM to 3 PM. Extra rods will be available to fly fishers without spey gear.

Northwest – Steelheaders have been met with a mix of conditions but twice in the last week, the larger systems reached near-flood stage. Smaller streams such as the Kilchis fished well on Saturday and Monday, producing quality sized fish on baits and beads. Russ Hughes of Tierra Del Mar near Pacific City landed three fish topping 10-pounds on Monday, drifting small beads under a bobber. Even though the river was still running high, the river was producing good catches for wild steelhead for most boats floating the small system.

The Necanicum fished well on Saturday as well although this system seemed more laden with spawned-out hatchery fish than fresh wild ones. These small streams went back out by Saturday afternoon but will fish well for just the next few days.

Larger systems such as the Wilson, Nestucca and Trask should fish very well by the weekend. Late-run broodstock steelhead should be readily available on the Wilson and Nestucca and the Trask should produce good results for wild fish. Baits will be best on these systems until flows drop and by late in the weekend, bobbers and plastic worms or jigs and plugs should start to produce.

The Nehalem will likely remain out of reach through the weekend but if the drying trend continues, it should fish well by the middle of next week. It should be peak season on this system if the weather cooperates.

Offshore opportunity still looks to be limited with the upcoming ocean forecast. Ample numbers of lingcod and sea bass await in calmer seas. Crabbing will likely be poor in both the ocean and estuaries.

Southwest- Dry weather this week will make for pleasant outings on the coast. If offshore conditions defy the forecast and mellow out sufficiently for boats to launch, bottom fishing will be excellent and ocean crabbing is picking up according to recent reports.

March 22 to March 29 is Spring Whale Watch Week on the Oregon Coast.

Winchester Bay has been poor for crabbing. Steelheaders on the Umpqua will be rewarded with improving water conditions this week. The mainstem will provide catch-and-release action for natives while South Umpqua anglers will find good flows and color as well as hatchery keepers.

Crabbing remains slow in Coos Bay which has yet to recover from the last passing storm. When the salinity level returns to normal, Dungeness will follow.

Flows on the lower Rogue are moderating as fishing improves. Winter steelhead have been taking plunked Spin 'n' Glos but drift gear will be effective by the coming weekend. Springers are being caught, about half of which are hatchery keepers. Chinook results will improve in coming weeks. Steelheading on the middle Rogue has been slow to fair but is expected to improve as numbers build and water conditions improve. Catches of winter steelhead picked up early this week on the upper Rogue. Bait has been most effective.

Applegate steelheaders are taking fish this week with hardware most effective. No boat angling is allowed here.

Fishing for lingcod and rockfish has been excellent on jigs when boats have been able to slip just outside the entrance to Brookings Harbor. Chetco levels are rapidly dropping with dry weather and the river will produce winter steelhead this week.

Elk River steelheaders have scored when water conditions have been good although this system goes from just right to too low rapidly. Jigs and drift rigs are taking fish.

The surface of Diamond Lake remains slushy and is unsafe for fishing. It remains to be seen if ice fishing will be possible again before the spring thaw.

Eastern – The lower Deschutes is dropping and clearing but fishing is slow. Trout are rising to a hatch of small black stoneflies on the middle Deschutes.

Waters of the Grande Ronde River were still running muddy early this week. It will take some time to clear.

Crooked River levels are coming up slightly with trout rising to midge and caddis patterns in crowded conditions.

SW Washington- Steelhead fishing was pretty good on the Cowlitz last week and the season's first spring chinook was checked on this system. Fishing should only improve as water conditions do.

Several district rivers and streams close to steelhead fishing on March 15th. Check regulations carefully before heading out.

Lake Sacajawea in Longview, Battle Ground Lake and Lacamas Lake in Camas were all stocked with quality trout last week.

Smelt dipping was excellent for Cowlitz River fishers on Saturday. No further sport dipping seasons are likely.

Columbia River Fishing Report – With the inclement weather last week, not many anglers ventured out in pursuit of spring chinook. As a matter-of-fact, you'll see consistent results throughout the creel check from Bonneville and downstream:

Gorge Bank:

Weekend checking showed no catch for three bank anglers.

Gorge Boats:

No report.

Troutdale Boats:

Weekend checking showed no catch for two boats (five anglers).

Portland to Westport Bank:

Weekend checking showed no catch for 109 bank anglers.

Portland to Westport Boats:

Weekend checking showed no catch for 42 boats (87 anglers).

Estuary Bank (Clatsop Spit to Wauna Powerlines):

No report.

Estuary Boats (Tongue Point to Wauna Powerlines):

Weekend checking showed no catch for six boats (eight anglers).

Anglers anxious to get out in pursuit of chinook will likely be putting their effort in upstream of Davis Bar, across from the mouth of the Willamette. The soiled Willamette will likely continue to effect water quality for the next several days, and that's barring any major rain events.

It's about time for a good batch of springers to start showing in the mainstem Columbia although it's beginning to show the spring characteristics of this system; high, cooler water. The Columbia Basin is showing all the signs of a good snow-pack year, which may make springer success challenging. So far however, the season has been a disappointment, but not a surprise.

The Guide's Forecast – With flows subsiding and water temperatures likely to slowly rise and the fact spring chinook are likely to start showing as we near mid-March, action should pick up late in the weekend and into next week. Anglers should start their focus on the river upstream of the influence of the Willamette River where water clarity will not be nearly the issue. Fortunately, the river is open clear to Beacon Rock for boaters and to Bonneville Dam for bank anglers to take advantage of this reach of river.

Catches of spring chinook should improve but won't be explosive until we get closer to the closure, currently slated to happen on April 7th. Explosive may be too strong of a description but if the run prediction comes to fruition, there should be a lot of happy anglers into early April.

Cold flows call for:

1. Smaller bait; use green or red label herring this time of year. If you have fresh or fresh/frozen smelt, you may give that a try too, rigged whole.
2. Slow trolling; keep your baits close to the bottom, not matter how deep of water you're fishing. Slow that troll down just enough to keep your baits turning but it's not a bad idea to actually drag your lead while trolling this way.
3. Use flashers; as painful as it might be to untwist lines if they become entangled, the use of flashers, something I rarely advocate for, would indeed be a good idea. Green seems to be one of the most consistent producers for spring chinook anglers.

Patience and persistence will be necessary for mainstem trollers to score any results for springers. If the current trend continues however and the run size comes in as predicted, by the time we're ready to write next week's report, we should have something to say about this fishery. Until then, don't expect much and focus your efforts above Davis Bar, across from Kelly Point Park on upstream to the airport stretch. We still have about 3 weeks left in this fishery and the last 2 will produce much better results.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – The Willamette remains a muddy mess and will continue to produce less than ideal conditions through the weekend. It is on the drop and will be improving if the weather pattern holds. There has been next to no effort for spring chinook and sturgeon anglers even took a break during all the rough weather.

Sturgeon fishing remains a very viable option however and if you got your hands on some fresh smelt, you'll have a great time in the Portland Harbor catch and release fishery.

Still flowing at roughly 10,000 cfs mid-day on Thursday this week, the McKenzie has been too high to fish this week.

Following a major high water event due to winter storms, the Santiam system is forecast to be dropping rapidly through the coming weekend.

Benson Lake, Bethany Pond, Blue Lake, Canby Pond, Commonwealth Lake, Dorman Pond, Huddleston Pond, Mt. Hood Pond, Progress Lake, Sheridan Pond, St. Louis Pond, Cottage Grove Pond, Cottage Grove Reservoir, Creswell Pond, Dexter Reservoir, Dorena Reservoir, E. E. Wilson Pond, Freeway Lake, East, Junction City Pond, Roaring River Park Pond, Walling Pond, Walter Wirth Lake and Waverly Lake are scheduled for trout planting this week.

The Guide's Forecast – The Willamette will continue to be a poor option at least until early next week. With flows dropping and the river clearing, it should become an option in the near future however. The peak of the spring chinook run is still a month away however but the larger 5-year olds can make a fair showing by mid-March on this system. Sellwood will remain a primary interception point but the Multnomah Channel and Fred's Marina area can also produce results.

Sturgeon fishers should continue to focus their efforts in the Portland Harbor although some fish should start to move farther up into the Willamette towards Oregon City. Fresh smelt will likely dictate catch results but sand shrimp can also produce good results this time of year.

The McKenzie will be too high and swift to fish this coming weekend but at least conditions are headed in the right direction.

While the Santiams will be dropping and clearing over the weekend to come, there are still too few fish in the river for us to be optimistic about the odds of an actual encounter with a fish. On a brighter note, counts at Willamette Falls are starting to reflect summer steelhead - 29 at the latest data available - so there's always hope this once-productive summer steelhead destination will again become worthwhile.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – The Clackamas and Sandy systems are just now coming back into shape after a wicked couple of weeks following a battering of rain storms. We'll spend most of our time focusing on the future (in the Forecast section) instead of telling you how these systems neared flood stage twice last week. There has been no effort during the high water event.

The Guide's Forecast – Just now coming into fishable range, the Clackamas River should offer up some pretty decent steelheading this week. Plunkers should see the earliest benefits from Cross Park all the way downstream to Meldrum Bar in the Willamette River. Medium sized spin-n-glos tipped with bait (either eggs or sand shrimp) should produce some results for anglers fishing out of the main current and close to shore. By the weekend, side-drifters working the tail-outs and shallow flats should begin to see measureable results using small clusters of eggs. Plugs should become more effective as flows drop. Boaters working the Barton to Carver stretches will likely see the best results but don't overlook traditional water downstream of Carver either. As flows drop, the lower reaches will hold more fish.

The Sandy River should start to see some better returns by the weekend. Like the Clackamas, the later returning broodstock fish will likely produce better results than we've seen so far this season. Like the Clack, the best results will likely begin for plunkers in the lower reaches, likely before the weekend, and then the upper reaches, from Revenue Bridge to Oxbow Park will produce for bank drifters and side-drifters using small baits and even hardware. The Marmot area should also begin to produce catches in the slow moving holes that bobber and jig fishers, along with driftfishers utilize.

It should be the season's most productive week for these two river systems. Some quality sized broodstock fish should be available in both so bump up your gear as long as the water retains some color.

North Coast Fishing Report – Like the inland streams, most coastal river systems gave us a bye last week. The larger systems are just now coming into fishable stage at this writing but the Kilchis and Necanicum Rivers fished well early this week.

Monday produced good results for side-drifters of small baits and beads on the Kilchis. From Kilchis Park downstream, most boats were able to boat 2 to 6 wild fish each, some topping 14 pounds. There were several fish reported over 10-pounds early in the week.

The Necanicum produced similar results early in the week although anglers continue to report a high incidence of downstream runners on this system. Some wild fish are certainly available but they tend to show in greater numbers a bit later in the month. So far, not a lot of fresh, beefy wild fish but there should certainly be some present by now.

The Wilson and Nestucca are now primary targets and started to produce good catches by Wednesday. Its peak season on these systems now and this week should produce some of the best catches of the season. Anglers working the higher reaches produced well on Wednesday with Vanderzanden's to Mills Bridge on the Wilson and 6th Bridge to 1st on the Nestucca the best drifts on Wednesday.

The Trask started to also shine on Wednesday for boaters and bank anglers working the upper reaches above the Dam Hole. Stones Camp to the upper Peninsula drift fared well at mid-week but flows for this stretch will be too low by the weekend.

The Nehalem remains a muddy mess but that should change after the weekend.

We'll report in more detail in the forecast section since we have much to look forward to.

Offshore options were nil. Most north coast bay exits were closed and remain that way right now. Willing lingcod and sea bass await us in calmer conditions.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) is hosting a Family Fishing Event Saturday, March 15 at Devils Lake in Lincoln City. This **free event** will run from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Regatta Park. The ODFW will stock the lake with 6,500 rainbow trout, including 2,000 fish that will be released in a large net pen reserved for youths. Staff and volunteers will be present to hand out equipment, and be available to teach youngsters how to bait, cast, and "reel in" their catch. Adults can get tips on basic rigging, fish identification and casting.

Coffenbury Lake, Cullaby Lake, Devil's Lake, Lost Lake (Clatsop County) and Vernonia Pond were stocked with hatchery trout this week.

The Guide's Forecast – This should be an excellent week for steelheaders. Smaller systems such as the Kilchis, Necanicum, North Fork Nehalem and Three Rivers will be dropping too low for boaters to work and the last series of wind and rain made for some new navigational hazards, especially on the Necanicum. Bank anglers should have good access to these systems beginning right now and should find steelhead pocketed up in deeper holes and slots. This is when bobber and jig fishing can prove productive but a stealthy approach is certainly warranted.

Anglers will be "all in" on the larger systems such as the Wilson, Kilchis and Trask Rivers. These rivers are producing prime results right now (Thursday) and should fish well into the weekend. Admittedly however, the best action has taken place on Wednesday and Thursday and as effort increases over the weekend and flows drop, action won't be as fast, even by Friday. None-the-less, it should be a productive weekend for steelheaders working the Wilson, Nestucca and Trask River systems.

Side-drifters will be out in force and justifiably so. Side-drifting small baits or beads should prove very effective into the weekend. As the flows drop and effort increases, savvy anglers will have to low-hole their fellow anglers or become more creative to find success. Changing up your offering by the weekend should prove productive. Drift jigs or rubber worms, maybe even real worms just to show the fish something different. They seem to be more receptive to jigs this year than in the past. Plugs should also have a place in the dropping flows as these later returning brute broodstock fish and their wild cousins can get quite aggressive on plugs and we have a variety of colors to choose from here. Don't expect great results if you're side-drifting eggs like everyone else this weekend.

The mainstem Nehalem is still a few days out from clearing but weekend anglers should find some action if they choose to fish the clearing tributaries. By early next week, the Nehalem mainstem should have ample numbers of willing biters available to side-drifters and plug pullers. It's primarily a wild fish system.

Big swells and wind waves continue to dominate the offshore forecast so no bottomfishing (again) this weekend. Most bar crossings will remain dangerous if not deadly. It might not even be a good choice to fish off the jetties this weekend even though there should be good fishing this time of year.

There are still some crabbers working the lower Columbia River and they are catching a few Dungeness. The tides intensify by the weekend however so opportunities will wane. If the surf wasn't so rough, razor clamming would be an option but that's clearly not going to be the case.

Central & South Coast Reports – Nice weather combined with high swells this week has charter and sport craft skippers watching the ocean as well as offshore forecasts day-to-day, hoping for a break. Predictions will give boaters reason to exercise caution over the coming weekend.

Clam tides often occur after sundown at this time of year. That will be the case for the next set of minus tides occurring in the third week of March, Those will to equip with lanterns are better yet headlamps will score tasty bivalves with reduced competition as not many are willing to go this extra mile. Most coastal estuaries have clam beds. Mussel harvesting is closed from Cape Arago in Coos County south to the California border but all other shellfish may be taken on the entire Oregon coast.

From the ODFW, March 11, 2014:

RECREATIONAL OCEAN SALMON ACTION NOTICE:

"The National Marine Fisheries Service in consultation with the Pacific Fishery Management Council, the State of Oregon, and fishery interests has reviewed the recreational Chinook salmon seasons adopted under the 2013 regulation setting process, and the season scheduled to be open for Chinook salmon from Cape Falcon to Humbug Mt. will occur as scheduled for the period of March 15 through April 30. All retained Chinook salmon must be 24 inches or larger.

"Anglers fishing in ocean waters adjacent to Tillamook Bay between Twin Rocks and Pyramid Rock and within the 15 fathom depth contour are reminded that only adipose fin clipped Chinook salmon may be retained or on board while fishing."

The Siletz River is reported as having "lots of fish" with side-drifting effective at hooking and landing them this week.

Anglers casting from the jetties along Yaquina Bay are taking rockfish. Don't venture out too far if the ocean is kicking. Crabbing has been slow in the bay with catches reported at only one or two keepers per crabber per day.

Waters of the Umpqua mainstem are dropping although off-color conditions have remained a problem for anglers. It should be clearing through the weekend, giving steelheaders a shot at native winters and salmon hopefuls the possibility of a hookup with spring Chinook. The Scottsburg stretch will be the best area for anglers to target springers. Fishing has been only fair on the North Umpqua but the South Umpqua should be in decent shape with a targetable number of hatchery winter steelhead available. The most productive steelheading will take place in the next several weeks.

While rockfishing around Coos Bay jetties has been fair to good, the crabbing has yet to bounce back from fresh water washed into the bay from the last round of storm fronts. Steelheading in the rivers has been slow with the water still dropping and clearing.

While the lower Rogue water level has been dropping this week, anglers may expect to find flows in the 7,000 cfs to 8,000 cfs range around Agness this coming weekend and that plenty of water from which to tempt a fish. Plunking may continue to be the best approach with the regard fresh winter steelhead and early springers in this stretch although Chinook numbers won't really build until late April into May. Flows in the Grants Pass stretch should have moderated to the 6,000 cfs range by Saturday, March 15th, which should allow steelheaders who know how to fish that kind of water a shot at fresh winters which will be passing through. Steelhead are entering the upper Rogue in decent number now, substantiated by good numbers reported at the hatchery facility. With water conditions are predicted to be good over the next several days, spinners, jigs and flies will catch them. Call 1-800-472-2434 for the latest conditions and hatchery counts.

Chetco River flows are forecast to drop below the 3,000 cfs level near Brookings this weekend with a worthwhile component of winter steelhead available for anglers to target. Drift bait if there's any color remaining in the water. Otherwise, drift gear, hardware, jigs and plugs will be effective.

With good numbers of steelhead entering the Elk River this season, fishing has been good at times. Plenty of steelhead were taken immediately following the recent rain storms but the water level is likely to be too low over the coming weekend for this system to fish well.

Mingus Park Pond will be stocked with trout this week.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Crescent Lake has produced some good-sized brown trout and large mackinaw to downrigger trollers this week.

The Metolius Arm of Lake Billy Chinook has been producing good numbers of kokanee this week. A few bull trout have also been landed but most have been smaller than keeper-sized.

Ochoco Reservoir is only about half full at this time with the potential this season to remain far below its proper level.

Crooked River over 55 cfs which is not exactly a raging torrent but the greatest volume in months.

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Random Links

New world record for lake trout won't stand: <http://www.ksl.com/?sid=28995580&nid=1288>

Rare Albino Blue Marlin: <http://billfishreport.com/billfish-report/rare-albino-blue-marlin/>

GOOD LUCK!