

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **April 4<sup>th</sup> – April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014**

**Oregon Fisheries Update:**

**Willamette Valley/Metro** – Columbia fishers have been witnessing increasing catches but far from expectations by anglers and the Fish and Wildlife Departments. With the Willamette blowing out this week, effort has been concentrated from Davis Bar near Vancouver and upstream. Spring chinook catches have been improving in the airport reach. Managers are expected to meet by phone on Thursday to consider a sport extension, based on how the fishery is currently performing.

Trollers on the lower Willamette have been hooking up with a fair number of spring Chinook and results are expected to improve through the week. Brined herring trolled at 14 to 20 feet with a flasher has been most effective. Fishing was good last week and with the water dropping and clearing more rapidly than predicted, this weekend should provide decent catches on the lower river. As water conditions improve, so will results for springers. It's still early in the season and April should be a great month.

McKenzie levels are dropping this week with the river expected to be in good shape for fishing by the coming weekend. Fly fishers may expect to find March Browns hatching. A few salmon flies were spotted early this week.

The Santiam systems are coming into excellent level and color for fishing over the coming weekend. Mostly native winters are available on the North Santiam while the number of summers is increasing on the South Santiam.

Following a crest of over 16 feet and flows of 10,000 cfs at Estacada on March 30th, the Clackamas is dropping and clearing. Fishing for winter steelhead is fair but steady. A few summers have been landed and while no springers have been taken, it could happen any day.

The Sandy has recovered from recent rainstorms and was exhibiting good color early this week. The best results have come early in the morning and late in the evening with dark-colored jigs productive recently. Mostly winters are being hooked although the Sandy got a good shot of summers last week.

**Northwest** – North coast steelheaders are still finding fair pockets of fish on the Wilson and Nestucca systems. Both hatchery and wild fish should remain available through the weekend but action should quickly taper after that, at least for fresh, sea-running steelhead. Many smaller systems closed on April 1<sup>st</sup> so check regulations carefully before venturing out. Rivers are expected to continue to drop, making for ideal conditions by the weekend.

Spring chinook anglers in the Tillamook area shouldn't get too excited for several more weeks. Pilot chinook can often be caught by mid-April but the bulk of the return happens from mid-May through mid-June. Run size often mimics the Willamette run.

There is no sign of calming seas so bottomfishers will likely be side-lined for yet another weekend. Sea bass and lingcod are often available during weak tide exchanges along estuary jetties, which won't happen again until the middle of next week.

**Southwest**- Boats that were able to launch out of Depoe Bay and Newport over the past weekend found bottomfish cooperative. Conditions started to get rough on Monday this week as wind and waves chased vessels back to port. As of April 1st, offshore bottomfishers are restricted to waters no deeper than 180 feet.

Results for ocean chinook have been slow to spotty. The few boats which have landed salmon report them as running small.

Spring chinook catches have been hit or miss on the Umpqua mainstem but should improve this week as the river drops into shape. Steelheaders are catching and releasing a few natives on the North Umpqua while fishing for hatchery winters has remained good on the South Umpqua.

Surf perch fishing has been good in the Gold Beach area. Waters of the lower Rogue crested over the past weekend and are forecast to be dropping and clearing into the week to come. Fresh steelhead are in the river and are being caught in the Agness stretch while spring chinook numbers are improving with the best results below Quosatana Creek. Steelheaders on the middle Rogue report fair to good catches although many of the fish that are being hooked have already spawned and are of poor quality. The upper Rogue has been a fairly reliable fishery with numbers of winter steelhead continuing to increase. This is shaping up to be one of the better runs of those over the past decade.

When offshore conditions have allowed boats to cross the bar out of Brookings, catches of lingcod and rockfish have been good. The Chetco River closed to steelhead fishing at sundown on the last day of March. Local reports indicate the best bet is currently for surf perch from area beaches.

The spring thaw is underway at Diamond Lake with much of the water open now. Caution is advised as ice flows can be a hazard and will occasionally block boat ramps.

**SW Washington-** The Cowlitz remains a top option for steelheaders with the late season winter fish making a strong showing this season. Bank and boaters are doing well and fishing should improve as flows continue to drop and clarity improves. Spring chinook action will start to pick up here as well with the peak likely in the middle 2 weeks of April.

The Kalama is producing poor results lately and the Lewis also has been less than impressive. Action isn't likely to improve in the coming weeks.

Bank plunkers working lower Columbia beaches should see an increase in success rates when the water starts to clear. That could be as early as Sunday where high water will keep salmon migrating close to shore, giving bank anglers fair opportunity, especially if fishery managers extend the season.

**Eastern** – Deschutes flows are fairly stable and the color is good although fishing for reddsides is reported as only fair. Expect to see Blue-Winged-Olives and March Browns occasionally. Nymphs have been effective in the absence of hatches.

Lake Billy Chinook is producing fair to good catches of kokanee and some good-sized bull trout to those who are targeting them.

Green Peter has been producing some kokanee but fishing has been slow. Roadside camping has been permanently closed due to littering.

### **Soapbox Update:**

**Columbia River Fishing Report** – It's getting to be peak time for spring chinook and the effort is beginning to show that. Following the recent high and turbid water event, anglers are anxious to get back on the water, despite whatever the water looks like. Effort was on the increase by Thursday with hog lines forming again in the Kalama area. Catch is on the increase.

Prior to the high water, effort was concentrated above Davis Bar, across from the mouth of the Willamette River. Catches were improving with some of the luckiest anglers having 2 to 3 opportunities per day on the lower end of Government Island to the I-5 Bridge. Green label herring is still responsible for the bulk of the catch. Savvy anglers simply anchored up during the high water event as salmon migrate quickly in the higher flows so allowing fish come to you instead of chasing them down is an effective technique. With flows starting to moderate and clarity starting to improve, trolling will be the primary technique for most effective fishers.

For anglers downstream of the Willamette, success rates have been less than impressive with the water conditions that anglers in that reach have had to deal with. Clifton Channel anglers as well as those anchored at Brookfield have found a few fish but it's far from barn-burner fishing in these reaches. That could change this week.

Numbers are starting to build at Bonneville, already ahead of last year and over double the 10-year average. If temperatures continue to climb, so will catch rates.

Fishery managers met today at the Joint State hearing and adopted the staff recommendation. The spring chinook fishery will continue through April 14<sup>th</sup> with the expectation of another Tuesday (April 8<sup>th</sup>) closure, not necessarily to accommodate another commercial fishery opener as they caught nearly all of their share on the one day that they fished last week (1,700 fish), but to take a break to see how the weekend sport fishery performed. Here is the official press release:

#### **NEWS RELEASE**

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April 3, 2014

#### **Chinook anglers get six more days on Columbia**

CLACKAMAS, Ore. – Spring Chinook anglers on the lower Columbia River will get six more days of salmon fishing under a season extension adopted today by Oregon and Washington fishery managers.

The spring Chinook season that was originally scheduled to close after April 7 will now go through April 14, except for Tuesday, April 8, when the recreational fishery will be closed to allow for a potential commercial fishing period.

High and turbid water conditions meant a slow beginning to the spring Chinook season. Through March 31, anglers have harvested only 5 percent of their available upriver spring Chinook allocation. Managers predict that by April 7 anglers will have kept fewer than 3,000 of the 12,400 fish pre-season expectation.

Water conditions and fish abundance are expected to improve over the next week and a half. According to Jeff Whisler, ODFW's assistant Columbia River fisheries manager, staff is predicting that by the end of the season extension 89 percent of the fishery's allocation of upriver spring Chinook will be used.

However, Whisler cautions that predicting the number of fish that will be caught during the six day extension is difficult and anglers should be alert for further modifications to the fishery. Over the next

week, the states will continue to closely monitor the salmon returns and recreational catch to determine whether further modifications to the spring Chinook season are appropriate. In-season regulation changes are posted on the [ODFW Web site](#).

The bag limits and areas open to fishing remain the same during the extension: From Buoy 10 upstream to Beacon Rock (boat and bank) plus bank fishing only from Beacon Rock upstream to the Bonneville Dam deadline. Anglers may keep two adult salmonids a day, of which only one may be a Chinook. Only adipose fin-clipped fish may be kept.

The 2014 Northern Pikeminnow Sport-Reward Program fishery will start May 1, 2014 for all stations. The season will end September. The bounty starts at \$4 for each fish and increases depending on the number turned in for the season. See **Random Links**, below, for details.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Well, this section ought to be more juicy than it has been in recent weeks. Most of us dream of the ability to fish on the mainstem Columbia for spring chinook around mid-April; now we have our chance!

Fishing should dramatically improve this week. Flows however are expected to rise slightly, which could keep catch rates from exploding. With an already high river and the possibility of it going even higher, anglers may be looking at employing high water tactics. That would mean fishing close to shore and anchor fishing. Most anchor anglers only consider plugs when anchor fishing but savvy anglers would utilize a herring over the side as springers are quite willing to take a wounded baitfish from an anchored boat versus chasing one down on the run, especially in cold water.

Most anglers will likely remain herring trollers and catches should be good but anglers should consider anchor fishing; albeit a bit boring, it should produce some measureable results under these conditions. Smaller plugs (Mag-Lips, K-11's or K-13 Kwikfish) should be considered, given the smaller size of these fish. Yes, small fish take small baits, large fish take large baits.

Clifton Channel anglers and those in the below Longview fishery should also see an increase in success. Rumors from the latest test fishery indicate there are a LOT of fish in the system right now. One state biologist told me that in 2 drifts on Wednesday, the gillnet landed 40 chinook. That's way above the season average.

So, look for the best action (through the weekend) to happen upstream of the mouth of the Willamette. Anchor fishers and trollers should both take fair numbers of fish through the weekend. Herring will work for both fisheries but anchor anglers will also be using plugs wrapped with sardines or tuna bellies and scoring occasional action. Portco, the airport area, the lower end of Government Island and the I-5 area and of course Davis Bar in this "middle river" reach will all be primary targets for sport anglers this week. Although this won't be a wide-open week, it will improve dramatically and after the weekend, we'll likely see great catches through the next proposed closure (April 14<sup>th</sup>). It seems unlikely we'll get more time after the 14<sup>th</sup>, even though Department models indicate there will still be sport allocated fish available after the 14<sup>th</sup>. But why would I be so stupid as to predict how a fishery will perform?

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand this will be a good week but the following week, barring any major water dumps from Bonneville, should be pretty impressive if the run predictions are accurate. We'll have an idea as to just how accurate that prediction is based on this week's fishery performance. It will certainly help that the downstream running smelt are finally starting to filter out of the system.

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report** – Spring Chinook fishing was pretty darned good in the lower Willamette prior to the latest rise in water level and turbidity. All the regular

haunts put out fish as well as Multnomah Channel near Gilbert River. High flows on the lower Willamette coupled with off-color water slowed springer hookups this week but the latest data shows indicators heading in a positive direction for the weekend. **Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** is of the opinion that the Willamette is recovering too slowly to fish over the coming weekend and it will be Monday next week at the earliest until it's fishable. **Robert Campbell at Fisherman's Marine in Oregon City (503-557-5600)** was more optimistic, stating that the lower river should fish by Saturday, April 5th. Chinook numbers are on the increase with catches to follow if the water color will allow for these fish to actually see the offering. For those familiar with turbidity readings, it was 14 and dropping at mid-afternoon on April 3rd. Fish can be caught at 10 to 12 but a mid-single-digit reading or lower is definitely fishin' time.

Water levels on the McKenzie River started dropping over the past weekend. The river has come into decent shape and cleared up from earlier storm fronts. It's only approached fishable levels in the past couple of days but anglers this weekend should be greeted with nice water conditions.

Santiam River water levels and flows have dropped to fishable levels this week with steelhead becoming more active as water temperatures increase. About 3,000 winter steelhead and 350 summers have been counted at Willamette Falls along with a handful of springers. Many of these fish are bound for the Santiam system.

A kokanee jigging seminar will be held at Cabela's in Springfield on Saturday from 1 PM to 2 PM. This is a free event with a Q&A session following.

Hagg Lake has been fishing well for hatchery trout with the majority being caught 10 inches or smaller. Anglers are taking a few in the 15-inch range. Bass fishing remains slow with the water still a little cool. Smallmouth are more active than largemouth at this time.

Cottage Grove Pond, Cottage Grove Reservoir, Creswell Pond, Dorena Reservoir, Foster Reservoir, Roaring River Park Pond, Sunnyside Park, Canby Pond, Henry Hagg Lake, Huddleston Pond and Trojan Pond are scheduled to have been planted with hatchery trout.

**The Guide's Forecast** – As of today, April 3rd, discharge on the Willamette measured 55,000 cfs whereas it was around 30,000 prior to the deluge. It is moderating rapidly with turbidity levels dropping as rapidly as flows. Cautious optimism is advised for the coming weekend along with large herring and bright flashers. Location matters but the popular spots (Sellwood Bridge, Portland Harbor, et al) will be jammed when the bite turns on. Better results will come to those who find a productive area away from the main crowd. Oregon City will allow a little space between the gunwales but some exploration and discovery elsewhere on the river can be most rewarding. The lower Willamette is pretty opaque today but should start fishing on Friday this week and springers will be landed over the weekend. On anchor, prawn spinners are most likely to be effective, generally on a 30 to 36-inch leader and a 28 to 32-inch dropper. Plugs are fished on a similar dropper with leaders 54 to 60 inches in length and should be wrapped with a herring fillet. Longer droppers are used in deeper water but it's imperative to keep your offering near the bottom. Trolling a herring behind a flasher is a best bet to get a hookup. Try to be on the water as the tide turns.

Small Caddis have been hatching on the McKenzie River this week with redsides responding to imitations. And just maybe a few early salmon flies as a few were spotted streamside on Tuesday this week. It's best to be prepared for anything and that means some Hare's Ear and Prince Nymphs in case the bugs *don't* come out to play.

Significant numbers of winter steelhead have been counted at Bennett Dam on the North Santiam and with summer steelhead showing at Foster Dam on the South Santiam, perhaps there's hope for a decent

fishery a little later in the year. For now, try the lower stretches of the North Santiam for the best chance of a hook-up with a native winter. Drifting jigs or bait will be most effective.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports** – When TGF spoke to **Robert Campbell** by telephone at Fisherman's Marine this week, he stated the Clack was "OK for steelhead" and had "good numbers" of winters in the system. He went on to say that "springers will be caught anytime now," that as the river drops and clears over the next couple of days fishing should improve and that both the Clack and Sandy Rivers should be good for another two or three weeks. Clackamas water levels are a bit high but fishable but will be dropping through Friday this week with the color becoming a solid steelhead green. The weekend forecast indicates rising water levels, however. Boat and bank anglers have been scoring this week with a variety of lures.

Steelheaders will find the Sandy water level dropping, with the color good and improving through this week. There are a few summer steelhead in the river although the majority will be winters at this time of year. **Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** said that the Clackamas as well as the Sandy have been just OK but that he thinks it's just not that great a year for steelhead.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Bank fishers on the Clackamas could do worse than to fish Bonnie Lure or McIver Park, the latter particularly near the mouth of Dog Creek. Try nightmare-pattern jigs under a float or throw spoons and spinners. We're still waiting for the first confirmed report of a Clackamas spring Chinook catch as the fishery is due to get underway. A few winter steelhead will be available in Eagle Creek although the run will be winding down through April.

For hookups from the bank on the Sandy, corky and yarn, spinners, spoons and cured eggs should get some steelhead attention. Fly anglers have taken a few large, bright fish by swinging flies. Side-drifting and bobber-dogging baits or lures will be effective in hooking up with wily Sandy steelhead as well. Steelheaders may expect to hook the occasional summer fish as there are a few around. Whatever you target and wherever you choose to fish, early morning has been a key to success here with another flurry of activity in the evening.

**North Coast Fishing Report** – Steelheaders are starting to wind down their fishery on the north coast but with a stronger than anticipated late season return, the action under these ideal conditions could last a bit longer. Precipitation is keeping water levels ideal but with consistent flows and effort, small pods of fresh fish will fuel catches into the weekend.

Action remains best on the Wilson and Nestucca systems with both wild and hatchery fish options available. The lower reaches have been the primary target for most avid anglers with savvy anglers doing a short float in the lower reaches to get "first water," followed up by a longer float later in the morning through the afternoon to settle for flogged water. The good news is with flows up and stable, fish have more places to hide so not everyone will be pitching baits to the same waters. When river levels are as high as they are, leave no water unmolested. Also, it remains a good strategy to employ alternative techniques such as bobber and jig fishing or plug pulling as most anglers remain married to side-drifting baits and beads under these conditions.

Many smaller systems are closed for the year but the Kilchis recently opened to an all-year steelhead fishery and in high water, will still perform well for wild fish this time of year. Also, fewer folks will be on the river due to its catch and release status and many don't realize it's still open.

With steelhead phasing out, and Willamette Valley spring chinook heating up, rivers will become more barren by the day. Spring chinook in the district remains a ways out but the first springer of the year is likely to get reported in the next few weeks.

Bottomfishing opportunities will become more interesting in this district. Some larger charter boats have been getting out and scoring good results. The all-depth fishery for bottomfish is now closed but there will remain some great nearshore options for the months to come. The ocean is upside down right now, but that could change, soon.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Conditions for steelhead will remain ideal through the weekend. This should be the last good hurrah for steelhead and although the action won't be peak-season pretty, with a reduction in pressure and perfect conditions, folks could possibly post some impressive results. Again, we recommend that you get creative in your presentation, especially if you're following a fleet of boats. In these dropping flows, plugs can become especially productive for these late season returners. Use subtle colors as the water drops and clears.

Spring chinook in the Tillamook district are still weeks away from peaking but fishy, motivated individuals will likely start pursuing them. I'll wait until mid-May before I get too excited.

Offshore anglers may only have to wait a few more days before the weather begins to look promising. Sea bass and lingcod will be quite anxious to meet you at the dinner table, hopefully you'll be able to accommodate. Here is the offshore forecast (at least as of Thursday night):

**FRI**

SW WIND 10 TO 15 KT. WIND WAVES 3 FT. W SWELL 7 FT AT 10 SECONDS. SECONDARY SWELL W 5 FT AT 15 SECONDS. SHOWERS LIKELY.

**FRI NIGHT**

S WIND 10 TO 15 KT. WIND WAVES 3 FT. W SWELL 7 FT AT 14 SECONDS. CHANCE OF SHOWERS.

**SAT**

S WIND 10 TO 15 KT...RISING TO 15 TO 20 KT IN THE AFTERNOON. WIND WAVES 3 FT. W SWELL 6 FT AT 13 SECONDS. SHOWERS.

**SAT NIGHT**

SW WIND 10 TO 15 KT. WIND WAVES 3 FT. W SWELL 6 FT AT 12 SECONDS. RAIN LIKELY.

**SUN**

SW WIND 10 TO 15 KT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 6 FT AT 11 SECONDS.

**MON**

N WIND 10 KT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 7 FT.

**TUE**

SW WIND 10 KT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 7 FT.

**Central & South Coast Reports** – As offshore conditions mellowed on Wednesday this week, charter and sport craft launched from Newport and Depoe Bay to try their luck for bottom dwellers. Despite the restriction to 30 fathoms or less as of April 1st, lingcod and rockfish cooperated and catches were good. One charter boat out of Depoe Bay reported that crabbing "seems to be picking up."

All-depth halibut fishing will open for the spring season on May 8th through 10th with additional opportunities on May 22-24, June 5-7 and June 19-21. More dates will be added if the quota does not fill.

Ocean Chinook fishing opened March 15th and is scheduled to run through the last day of April. Results for recreational offshore trollers have been slow to spotty for the most part. Many boats have reported only burning fuel in a fruitless effort.

Surfperch fishing has shown signs of improvement and will continue to pick up momentum through the month of April. Choose areas where the waves break close-in, indicating a steep beach. Effective baits include sand shrimp, pile worms, chunks of clam or squid and prawns from the cold case at your grocery store. Artificial soft plastics such as those made by Berkeley under the Gulp! name are also effective.

According to ODFW biologists, the herring spawn at Yaquina Bay was the largest in 15 years. They added that now that the spawn over, the herring are gone from the bay.

April and May can provide some of the better opportunities for trout on Siltcoos Lake. As a bonus, the largest trout of the year are often caught at this time of year.

South Tenmile Lake has continued to produce large numbers of yellow perch from silly small to nice keepers.

Steelheaders fishing the Alsea are at the tail end of the winter season but a few fresh fish have been hooked this week as the water dropped and cleared.

Following the landing of the first spring Chinook of the year from the mainstem Umpqua on March 1<sup>st</sup>, there was very little action for salmon. The freshet which occurred as a result of heavy rains late last week should jump-start the season here. There are native steelhead in the North Umpqua which are providing catch-and-release sport while catches of hatchery winters are good on the South Umpqua. Spinners, spoons, jigs and drifted roe have all been effective at times.

Crabbing has picked up a little with some people taking some legal-sized Dungeness but overall it is still quite slow. Clamming always seems to be productive around Charleston but the next series of minus tides won't occur until mid-month. The Coos and Coquille Rivers will remain open to steelheading through the end of April although the run is just about wrapped up here.

Waters of the Rogue have dropped into excellent shape for fishing and are forecast to remain that way over the coming week. The first real push of spring Chinook is expected on the Rogue River this week following high water from recent storm fronts. Steelheaders will also find winters in the system although the majority of these fish will already have moved further upriver. While the middle Rogue was suffering from blowout conditions at this time last week, it has fully recovered with steelheaders casting spinners or pulling plugs to take winters which are passing through on their way upstream. The Applegate closed to all fishing at the end of March but will re-open for trout fishing on May 24th. Upper Rogue steelheaders are encountering more winters as these fish make their way up the river. Anglers report a mix of wild and hatchery fish in this stretch. Drifting baits of cured roe has been particularly effective this week as the water level and flow returns to normal for this time of year. Many steelheaders have taken limits this week.

Fishing of any kind will not be allowed on the Chetco River until trout season opens on May 24th.

The Elk and Sixes Rivers are closed to all fishing until trout season opens.

As Diamond Lake continues to thaw and more water opens up, boats are launching at the north boat ramp to tempt resident trout with Power Bait. Anglers are reporting mixed success. Keep an eye out for ice floes which are prone to movement from the wind.

Bradley Lake, Johnson Mill Pond, Powers Pond, Saunders Lake, Empire Lake and Butterfield Lake were scheduled to be stocked with trout this week.

**Central and Eastern Oregon** – Limits of kokanee are being taken by trollers using small hoochies behind Sling Blades on Lake Billy Chinook.

Crescent Lake has been producing some dandy Mackinaw to deep water trollers with a few topping the 20-pound mark.

Pinehollow Reservoir, which was recently planted with legal and broodstock trout, has been productive this week. Fish are being caught on spinners and Power Bait.

Various sizes of trout have been stocked at Lake of the Woods and trollers using spinner and bait combos are taking fair to good numbers of them up to 18 inches. It is scheduled to be planted again in mid-April. German Brown trout are also in the lake along with a population of largemouth bass.

Brownlee Reservoir is producing good numbers of smallish crappie along with fair catches of good-sized channel catfish.

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**Random Links**

Northern Pikeminnow Sport-Reward Program: <http://www.pikeminnow.org/>

14th annual Surf Perch Derby in Long Beach, Washington: <http://surfperchderby.com/>

Grant McOmie on Surf Fishing and Clamming: <http://traveloregon.com/trip-ideas/grants-getaways/surf-fishing-and-clamming/>

**GOOD LUCK!**