The Guide's Forecast - volume 16 issue number 15

Northwest Oregon and Washington's most complete and accurate fishing forecast Forecasting for the fishing week of April 11th – April 17th, 2014

Oregon Fisheries Update:

<u>Willamette Valley/Metro</u> — With fishery managers extending the season another 6 days starting this morning, anglers will be excited and rewarded while pursuing spring chinook on the mainstem Columbia this week. Catch rates are likely to improve as temperatures increase and interest grows. Most fish are averaging around 12 to 13-pounds but Colby Howe of Portland boated a 14-pounder at Davis Bar on Monday. He was fishing in 24 foot of water, trolling a herring right on the bottom. Catches in the Cathlamet area jumped recently, indicating better numbers of fish are on their way. Action is also picking up in the gorge as well, and it's a much more beautiful place to fish! I just got my first "personal" springer with **pro guide Dan Ponciano (360-607-8511)**. He trolled me into a nice 10 pound fish using a herring and red flasher and was surprised to learn he had a cancellation for Saturday. If you want a great chance at fresh spring chinook, call him IMMEDIATELY to get your Saturday reservation NOW!

Registration remains open for the Salmon Quest, Sandy River Spring Fishing Classic and Bounty on the Bay, allowing anglers to take advantage of a good return of the region's favorite salmon. Google these events for more details.

Water clarity, one of the most important factors in salmon success on the lower Willamette, has improved over the past week as water level and flows have dropped. Mid-week, the water in Multnomah Channel was changing from a gray hue to green. Tides this week favor anglers fishing afternoons. Whole or cutplug herring trolled in the popular Sellwood Bride area or at the mouth of the channel is resulting in hookups as is sitting on anchor with wrapped plugs or prawn spinners. Overall, it has been slow to fair. Catch-and-release sturgeon fishing has been excellent on anchovies and smelt around Swan Island although most of the fish being hooked have been less than 40 inches. Fewer but larger sturgeon have been hooked at Oregon City.

Water levels on the McKenzie will be gradually dropping this week which is a positive condition for fishing. Fly anglers will need March Brown and Caddis patterns in their dry fly arsenal but should also carry a selection of nymphs which will be most productive the majority of the time on the water.

Winter steelhead fishing is on the wane for the Santiams and summer steelheading doesn't really get underway until May. For those who fish it, jigs are most popular here but spinners, spoons and pink plastic worms are also effective at times. This time of year, anglers won't have to deal with crowds.

Clackamas water level and flow is forecast to be stable through the coming week. Bank fishers have been taking the occasional winter steelhead by casting spinners at McIver Park. Overall, boat and bank steelhead fishing has been slow this week.

The Sandy was still somewhat high on Tuesday this week but it will be dropping with dry weather this week. A few springers are around but catches are quite scarce. Steelheading has been fair for winters although most hooked recently have been natives and some have been wild, requiring release. As catches of winter steelhead start to wind down, anglers are strategizing for summer fish which will be arriving in fishable number in the next few weeks.

<u>Northwest</u> — Steelhead season is winding down on the north coast but savvy anglers can have district rivers to themselves although few fresh fish will be available. Low, clear water will further challenge anglers so use small, subtle baits if you pursue these skittish fish. The Wilson and Nestucca will be the best bets for the last of these fish and may provide an early summer steelhead or spring chinook to boot. The Trask is an April favorite for those willing to practice catch and release fishing for steelhead.

Consistent spring chinook action is still a month away.

Saltwater anglers are anxious to see friendlier seas but wind waves will continue to make offshore options a poor choice. Sea bass and lingcod catches should be excellent when the weather allows.

More trout are destined for district lakes and ponds, fishing should be productive in the warming waters.

Southwest- Boats launching out of Depoe Bay early this week made good catches of rockfish along with several lingcod. Boats must stay within the 30-fathom line when angling for bottomfish as of April 1st.

Results have been good for perch anglers casting baits from south coast beaches. Catches will be best on days when the ocean lays down.

Winter steelhead fishing is on the way out while salmon fishing ramps up. Catches of spring chinook are improving on the Umpqua mainstem as the season gets underway here. The river should remain stable this week, which will keep springers on the bite. On the South Umpqua, steelheaders are doing well for hatchery winters.

Boats launching out of Bandon and Coos bay are reporting spotty results for ocean chinook as fish are scattered, making it difficult to find the fish.

Charters launching out of Gold Beach are looking forward to settling ocean conditions after a week of wet, unstable weather. As waters of the lower Rogue dropped and cleared over the past week, spring chinook catches ramped up. April and May are the best times to score a Rogue springer with most hooked by boat anglers fishing anchovies on anchor. Due to improving action for chinook downriver, there is little pressure on the river in the Grants Pass stretch although there are still winter steelhead to be caught. Springers will be in this stretch in a week or two. Winter steelheading is good on the upper Rogue where the peak of the season is approaching.

The Chetco, Elk and Sixes Rivers remain closed to fishing.

There's plenty of open water free of ice now at Diamond Lake where fishing is expected to be worthwhile in sunny weather over the weekend to come. Best results will be near the shoreline which is good news to bank fishers.

<u>Eastern</u> – Mann Lake has been producing good numbers of nice-sized trout to fly fishers using nymphs and leech patterns and to gear anglers throwing spinners.

Fishing has been very slow at Harriet Lake for the few who have tried it.

Trollers at Green Peter are taking a few kokanee. Fish are averaging 10 inches. While catches have been far short of limits, a few are taking enough for family dinner. Over the past weekend, a bass fisherman caught several smallmouth bass weighing two to three pounds and a largemouth which tipped the scale at seven pounds.

SW Washington- The Cowlitz remains the top prospect for late-run steelhead and spring chinook. Steelhead fishing remains most productive but that's likely to change in the coming weeks. Spring chinook fishing on other district rivers remains closed so check your favorite body of water before pursuing salmon or steelhead.

With over 1,500 spring chinook over Bonneville Dam, interest is growing for the Wind River and Drano Lake fisheries. Action should dramatically improve in the coming weeks with the peak likely the third and

4th weeks of April. Drano Lake will close to all fishing, every Wednesday through June.

Columbia River Fishing Report – It's underway! Spring chinook catches on the mainstem Columbia is kicking into high gear. Anglers from Cathlamet to the gorge are scoring more consistent results of spring chinook as water temperatures rise and flows subside, not to mention that run timing is coming into full swing. Improved catches are coming river-wide and should peak by the proposed closure date, next Tuesday, April 15th. The fishery is slated to close after the day's effort on Monday, April 14th. Fishery managers are likely to meet early next week to review where the sport-fishery stands on our impacts to Snake River Wild salmon. The commercial fishery swept up most of their impacts in their single day on the mainstem a week and a half ago.

Anglers in Cathlamet have been reporting still sporadic but much more consistent results in recent days. Many guides and avid anglers working the area noted much improved catches beginning last Friday, using both trolled herring and anchor fishing using plugs. Guides have also been complaining about the number of smolts attacking trolled herring in this area. Some guides have commented that they have gone through several dozen baits per day. For this reason, several anglers and guides have been forced to anchor up using plugs to catch springers. Those that are anchoring in the right areas; Puget Island, Tenasillahe Island and Brookfield as some examples, are seeing 4 to 8 opportunities for a tide, landing about half of those opportunities. It was tough enough to catch fish on these plugs with barbed hooks, it's next to impossible on barbless hooks; frustrating for sure.

Anglers fishing the Portland area, Davis Bar, I-5, Airport area, are still finding sporadic results. For whatever reason, this section often produces the least productive catch rates but anglers found good results on Wednesday, when anchor anglers and trollers did see a jump in success. Likely a result of a closure on both gillnets and the lower river sport-fleet. By Thursday, action had slowed in the I-5 area and although good spurts of fish should continue to roll through into the closure, it will likely remain one of the poorer options for action and aesthetic value as jets break the solitude in this reach.

Further upriver, anglers working the Troutdale area and the gorge around Multnomah Falls are also seeing an increase in success. With better numbers of fish moving through the system, this could be a worthwhile area to explore. The sparse crowds and the scenery alone is with the effort of getting yourself up there. Beacon Rock on the Washington side or Dalton Point on the Oregon side is two options for accessing this area. A high of 346 springers passed Bonneville Dam on April 9th.

The Guide's Forecast — Columbia River sport anglers only have a few more days to take advantage of an awesome opportunity. Spring chinook salmon fishing is slated to remain open through Monday, although managers may look at additional opportunity based on fishery performance. All sections of the lower Columbia below Bonneville should continue to improve for catching but here's the section by section breakdown for you:

Lower river downstream of Longview – anglers both troll and anchor fish in this section. Action should be good for both techniques but anchor fishing is a nice relaxing and productive way to fish. You will have to target the maximum ebb tide, but flows should be significant enough to keep plugs working for most of the day. The standard chrome with chartreuse butt &/or head will be a staple but the chrome with pink or red dots is always a Columbia River favorite. With the tide series on the increase, flows will intensify, allowing bank anglers a fair chance at fish in the lower river. Chinook and steelhead tend to gravitate towards the river bank in the faster flows.

"Middle" river - The I-5/Airport/Davis Bar area will remain popular but success rates will likely remain fair at best in this section. Although Davis Bar likely will produce the best results, numbers of fish will have to start to really ramp up before the closure on Monday for catches to become impressive. . None-the-less, it will remain popular with all the regular haunts producing fair catches. The airport to I-5 Bridge, down

to the railroad bridge and Davis Bar in 22 to 35 feet of water with trolled herring will be where the biggest effort takes place. Anchor anglers will continue to work the top of Hayden Island and the Washington shoreline just upstream of the I-5 Bridge. Davis Bar will likely bear its own high pressure, especially if the Willamette is not producing desired results for Willamette die-hards.

The Gorge – Although gaining in popularity, the gorge remains an under-fished area below Bonneville Dam. Action can be good in this area as we witnessed what appeared to be a fish per boat average. I fished up there on Wednesday with **pro guide Dan Ponciano (360-607-8511)** getting 1 bite for the 2 rods we fished and thankfully, landing that fish, a hatchery one of about 10 pounds. It's a nice fishery with a fairly consistent bottom, nearly snag free. Boaters can also fish close to the deadline, anchored with plugs as they become fairly productive this time of year. Bank anglers have even more access in the Bonneville area and results should become more consistent in the coming days. Bank anglers will use spin-n-glos, often tipped with a little bait or scent.

Action is picking up above Bonneville Dam, particularly at the Wind River and Drano Lake fisheries. With over 300 fish per day crossing and ramping up, that fishery will really start to take off in the coming weeks.

With an extension unknown, this will be the weekend to get out after springers on the mainstem Columbia. Water conditions, including temperatures and run timing will offer the best of the season opportunity for our regions highest quality fish.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report — It's April and the dogwood is blooming. Who needs a better spring Chinook fishing report than that? OK, then, it's mid-April and the Willamette was blown out a week ago. Water conditions on the lower Willamette have continued to improve this week. ODFW measurements indicate an increase in turbidity this week but the USGS graphs indicate that water clarity is improving every day. Those are all positive indicators. Trollers and anchor fishers are connecting daily. Catches have been a little sparse but have been showing a little improvement every day. About 250 summer steelhead have been counted at Willamette Falls and daily numbers are picking up. In addition, 20 spring Chinook have been tallied at the Falls.

Water level and flow at the McKenzie have stabilized this week with no sign of the roil kicked up by the last storm. Prospects for fly anglers look very good for the coming weekend and beyond. While it's not yet time for summer steelhead, McKenzie redsides will entertain anglers.

While the level and flow of the Santiams has not yet moderated to the relatively placid realm of prestorm levels, they are eminently fishable and of interest to many, boatable. High water on the Santiams will inevitable shift things around and there are a few new trees in the river but none of them are in "surprise" areas and may be see in plenty of time to steer around them.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Outdoor Education will sponsor a **free fishing event** at Shorty's Pond on Saturday, April 12 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. More than 1,300 rainbow trout will be released into the pond and anglers of all ages will have the opportunity to catch up to five fish ranging from 10 inches to over two pounds. The Molalla Chapter of the Association of Northwest Steelheaders will join ODFW staff and volunteers to provide rods, reels, tackle, bait, and assistance to anyone who wants to come join in the fun. Participants can bring their own gear or borrow gear that will be available on site at no charge

Trout fishing has been good at Hagg Lake this week. One angler reported finding a concentration of Hagg trout in one of the coves and landing and estimated 40 fish (but not keeping; the limit is five trout). He did this casting spinners in the middle of the afternoon.

Huddleston Pond, Sheridan Pond, Alton Baker Canal, Blue River Reservoir, Detroit Reservoir, Dexter Reservoir, E. E. Wilson Pond, East Freeway Lake, Green Peter Reservoir, Junction City Pond, Timber Linn Lake and Waverly Lake are scheduled to be planted with hatchery trout.

The Guide's Forecast – **Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos: (503) 349-1377** reports taking a couple of springers on Tuesday and Two more on Wednesday this week by trolling herring from below the Sellwood Bridge to Portland Harbor. Half of these fish were natives and had to be released although the ODFW estimate 60 to 70 percent of the spring Chinook in the lower Willamette are hatchery keepers.

Robert Campbell at Fisherman's Marine in Oregon City (503-557-5600) stated the river is "getting green" from the area of Meldrum Bar to the mouth and should be excellent color and fishing well by the coming weekend. He has several "bigger than average" fish come into Fisherman's to be weighed, some of which were well over 20 pounds. Campbell stated that this year's run has a "significant component of five-year-old fish." He said that trolled herring has been best but that prawn spinners will start to really shine as conditions continue to improve. From all indications, it sounds as if this is *the* weekend to be fishing springers on the lower Willamette. Unfortunately, the boat ramp at Clackamette Park will remain closed so boats will have to launch elsewhere.

Fishing has been very good on the McKenzie River lately, with consistent nymphing throughout the day and intermittent dry fly activity. For a selection of flies recommended as effective on the McKenzie and upper Willamette courtesy of The Caddis Fly Shop, see **Random Links**, below.

While the majority of those fish counted at Willamette Falls are destined for the Santiam system, it's still early to expect any real action. Prospects will improve in May and even further into the month of June. By then we should be able to tell whether or not we'll have a decent summer steelhead on the North Santiam and if spring Chinook fishing will be worthwhile on the South Santiam.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – NOAA forecast show the water level and flow at the Clackamas continuing to gradually drop over the next 10 days or so, then blow out again. Currently there is little action for anglers here although a sport fisher reported landing a couple of steelhead this week fishing spoons.

Sandy River flows have returned to pre-storm levels and it is exhibiting good color. In addition to decent winter steelhead numbers, summers are entering and a few steelheaders have actually caught a couple. **Robert Campbell at Fisherman's Marine in Oregon City (503-557-5600)** reported the Amatos took several fishing over the past weekend and remarked that there is very little pressure on the river.

The Guide's Forecast — The Clackamas is attracting few anglers as steelhead fishing is slow. The fish that are available are a mix of natives, broodstock and spawned-out fish with the majority unclipped. **Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos: (503) 349-1377** indicated that while the river is in good shape, there are not many fish around and that "it's an unimpressive winter run this year" on the Clackamas but that there are a few summers around and that there should be a "couple springers" in the river but that the water temperature in the Clackamas would need to hit the "magic temperature of 2 degrees" to being decent numbers of Chinook into the river.

Robert Campbell at Fisherman's Marine in Oregon City (503-557-5600) told TGF by telephone that he was "hearing good things" about the Sandy River and that a friend of his had a phenomenal 12-fish day recently. He went on to say that most of the steelhead in the river are bright although the majority are wild fish which must be released. He believes spring Chinook have been caught but that "No one is talking about it." It's really pretty early for springers although a few have likely been landed. May will be more productive with an even better chance of a hookup in June.

North Coast Fishing Report – Steelheaders are winding down their north coast season with a larger portion of spent, downstream running steelhead in the catches lately. Fresh fish are still available on some systems but given the mediocre return we witnessed this late winter, we can't expect a good late season program this year.

Effort remains concentrated on the Wilson and Nestucca Rivers with dedicated guides and anglers still working the lower portions of these rivers. In these dropping conditions, it's the early angler that gets the reward and fish are concentrating in the deeper areas so you don't have to look in every nook and cranny to find them.

Pro guide Kent Anderson (503-550-6303) has stated that action has dropped off dramatically. He's been working the Nestucca River and focusing most of his efforts in the lower reaches. Low water dictates that the most effort take place here as an anglers best chance at a fresh fish comes from an incoming tide. Regardless, as Willamette Valley spring chinook season ramps up, steelhead effort on the coast wanes, especially this year. (I just landed a 12 pound wild Columbia springer while writing this just now...Thursday, 4/10. The fish took a chartreuse green butt M3 Flatfish in 31 foot of water on anchor, just upstream of the I-5 Bridge on the Washington side. That's our 2nd afternoon opportunity for about 2.5 hours of effort so far. The other bite came on a K-14 plug (chartreuse also) at the same location.

Action on the Wilson largely mirrors the Nestucca where savvy anglers are working the extreme lower reaches of the river in hopes of finding fresh, tidal fish. Those with a motor are wise to work the water downstream of Sollie Smith Bridge but bobbers and jigs or worms often produce best under these low, clear water conditions.

Offshore anglers remain tied to the dock with few exceptions. Bar crossings have not been too favorable but **pro guide Andy Betnar (503) 791-4094** got out for bottomfish on Thursday morning, coming back to the dock with his limit of bottomfish, targeting the south side of the south jetty out of the Columbia. We're losing the soft tide series so this won't be a great option this week.

Saturday, April 12th, marks the 25th year that volunteers have gathered to fin-clip spring Chinook fingerlings which will become exciting catches and gourmet dinners in years to come. To join this party, just show up at the Whisky Creek Hatchery just south of Netarts at 8 AM. Have coffee and doughnuts, lend a hand, share some laughs and have some fun. Enjoy a free lunch at noon with the clipping party wrapping up around 1:30 PM. There will also be a gigantic garage sale at the site. Who knows? the springer you clip could be the one you catch in the future.

Cape Meares Lake, Carter Lake, Cleawox Lake, Devil's Lake, Loren's Pond, Lytle Lake, Nedonna Pond, Smith Lake and Tahoe Lake are scheduled to be stocked with trout.

The Guide's Forecast — Put a fork in it, steelhead season is over on the north coast. Anglers will be hard-pressed to find quality steelhead this late in the season. Of course it's still possible and you won't have much competition to find them. Some summer steelhead will begin to show in the catch but summer steelhead returns are a fraction of winter steelhead returns and they typically peak later in spring. Those that do decide to go for it should seek their silvery treasure on the extreme lower reaches of the river systems. A stronger tide series this week could be a game changer as no change in water levels is likely. It looks as if spring is here and with it, comes less precipitation.

Spring chinook action is still weeks away but there should be some "pilot" fish in the system. It won't be long before the first springer is caught and we're not all that likely to hear about it. Some of the bigger fish often are caught early in the season. We may see some of that action in the upper bay on the weekend tide series and early into next week. Spinners and plugs and even trolled herring may take an early fish in the Memaloose area of the estuary.

There may be some windows of opportunity for bottomfish throughout the weekend and early next week. If boaters can get out, action should be good. Lingcod and black sea bass are quite willing this time of year. Jetty anglers won't be so fortunate; strong tide exchanges will limit success over the weekend even though there should be some fish available.

Good tides for razor clamming start early next week.

Central & South Coast Reports – While the ocean north of Humbug Mountain opened for Chinook fishing on March 15th, catches have been few and far between due to the fish being scattered and difficult for boats to locate. Around mid-April, ocean salmon fishing should show some improvement with the last two weeks of the scheduled season producing much better catches for offshore trollers.

Update - 04/09/2014 at 2:37 PM – Ocean salmon seasons are determined by the Pacific Fishery Management Council in April each year for ocean salmon from May a of the current year through April 30th of the following year. The latest season update came via Email from the ODFW today, extending (as expected) ocean Chinook fishing through October among other things. See **Random Links**, below, for details.

Sport and Charter boats launching out of central Oregon ports have been doing well this week as offshore conditions moderated which allowed for safe crossings. Rockfish limits have been happening more often than not and ling cod catches have been decent. The next few days looks promising for boats to access bottom fishing grounds which are 180 feet or shallower as of April 1.

It's not too early to plan your halibut trips with the first all-depth opener May 8th through 10th. Additional dates include May 22-24th, June 5-7 and June 19-21 with more to follow if the quota holds up.

Many central coast rivers wrapped up for the winter steelhead season. It all but over, for instance, on the Alsea and Siuslaw rivers. There are still a few to be caught on the upper Siletz, however, for those who like a challenge.

Every year, Wells Creek Inn at Reedsport sponsors a spring Chinook contest. Over 40 entrants have signed up this year but only one fish had been entered as of Wednesday this week. That's sure to change as catches are ramping up. Several springers well over 20 pounds have been landed recently and conditions (along with numbers of fish in the Umpqua mainstem) are improving. While anglers are in the throes of salmon madness, a productive fishery is being mostly overlooked, that of Umpqua smallmouth. Historically, the largest bass of the year are landed here during the month of April. Cases of adipose fever are being successfully treated on the South Umpqua, however, where catches of hatchery winter steelhead are good although the run has started to wind down.

A few ocean Chinook have been taken by boats launching out of Charleston although bottom fishing has produced limits of black rockfish and ling cod. Coos Bay crabbing remains slow although patient and persistent crabbers have been able to boat a few legals. Rockfish and ling cod are available from the jetties inside the bay. The Coos River will remain open for winter steelhead through the month of May although the season is winding down and most fish in the river are past their prime. The daily bag limit here and on the Coquille is three hatchery fish per day.

The setup on your tackle merchant's shelf labeled "Rogue River Rig" is aptly named as it's the most common rig for springers on the lower Rogue and for the best of all reasons: it works! This setup puts a spinner blade on the nose of a whole anchovy which is then fished on anchor in the waters of the lower Rogue where is has proved most effective this week. Spring Chinook fight harder and eat better than any other Oregon salmon and hooking one fresh from the ocean will guarantee a handful of action. Plug

pullers and side drifters are doing well for winter steelhead on the middle Rogue now that the river has dropped to a decent level for fishing. Upper river steelheaders have continued to enjoy steady catches of a mix of wild and native winters.

Some trout limits have been taken by boaters at Diamond Lake but fishing has been slow for most. This is primarily a Power Bait show with fish coming at 30 to 40 foot depths.

Emigrant Reservoir, Lake Selmac, Willow Lake and Expo Pond are on the trout planting schedule this week.

Central and Eastern Oregon – The water level has continued to drop and the color is excellent on the lower Deschutes. Blue-Winged Olives remain the primary pattern but keep an eye out for the occasional Match Brown hatch with the water warming. Mid-day to mid-afternoon will be when hatches occur most frequently.

Crowded conditions have nee a concern of the regulars on Crooked River but that problem was solve in the third week of March when flows went from 50 cfs to over 500 cfs. The river remains high but will be dropping now that most of the contributory snowmelt is no longer a factor.

Trollers are taking a few kokanee at Green Peter but jig fishers who get into a school of fish are taking good numbers.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and several local partners will host a **free youth fishing event** at the McNary Channel Ponds near Hermiston on Saturday, April 12. To give kids the best opportunity to catch fish, the event is open to only youth 12 years old and younger from 10 a.m. to noon. The ponds will be open for families to fish starting at noon.

Write to the TGF staff:

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Random Links

Sellwood Bridge Cam: http://www.sellwoodbridge.org/?p=construction-camera

Spring Flies for the McKenzie and Willamette: http://oregonflyfishingblog.com/2014/04/08/flies-you-need-in-your-fly-box-for-spring-fishing-on-the-mckenzie-and-willamette/

Recreational Season Graphics and Summary Sheet:

http://www.dfw.state.or.us/MRP/salmon/Regulations/docs/2014 Ocean Sport Time Area Graphic.pdf http://www.dfw.state.or.us/MRP/salmon/Regulations/docs/2014 Ocean Sport Summary Map.pdf

Commercial Troll Season Graphic (make sure to review the full tables on the PFMC website for critical information in the footnotes):

http://www.dfw.state.or.us/MRP/salmon/Regulations/docs/2014 Ocean Troll Time Area Graphic.pdf

GOOD LUCK!