

The Guide's Forecast - volume 16 issue number 17

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **April 25th – May 1st, 2014**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro – The Northern Pikeminnow Sport-Reward Program on the Columbia River starts May 1st. Go to www.pikeminnow.org for information and a \$10 bonus coupon.

Columbia River anglers posted good catches on the 1-day extension. Fishery managers are reviewing catch stats but another opener is unlikely, at least until late May or June. Steelhead season opens in mid-May.

Trollers using herring, either whole or plug-cut, but generally behind a flasher, have been hooking up with springers on the lower Willamette from the Sellwood Bridge to Portland Harbor. Some are opting for prawn spinners in the mid-50-degree water. Boaters in Oregon City have also seen their share of action. Bank anglers at Meldrum Bar had to content themselves with being spectators earlier this week as the only springers landed were by those fishing from boats although a couple were landed from the bank at Dahl Park. The Willamette is forecast to receive about 58,700 spring Chinook this year. Many of those will make it past the falls while about 4,000 should enter the Clackamas.

Fly anglers on the lower McKenzie are enjoying great water conditions and good results with native reddsides and cutthroat. March Brown dries and nymphs are taking fish now.

If the rising waters of the Santiam system had sufficient numbers of fish to tempt an angler, rising water conditions this week would be enough to ward them off.

Springers are being taken at the mouth of the Clackamas and are scattered upriver. A few are being hooked on hardware. Try locations where natural obstacles cause salmon to hold. Fishing for winter steelhead is fair with the best chance of a hookup high on the river. The first decent push of summer steelhead should occur in a couple of weeks. Expect to find the water level rising this week although it should start to drop by the weekend.

The Sandy is rising this week but should be starting to moderate by Saturday this week. Sandy River spring chinook anglers have been taking a few fish but the better part of the season still lies in the future. Bobber fishers using bait or jigs have taken some from parks along the river. The Sandy is forecast to receive 5,500 spring chinook this season with the peak coming in late April and early May.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife will host a free family fishing event at Trojan Pond southeast of Rainier from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, April 26.

For many Oregon anglers, the 2014 trout season officially kicks off on Saturday, April 26 with the opening of many lakes around the state. Check your angling synopsis or online at www.dfw.or.us to determine which water bodies are effected.

Northwest – Effort remains low for steelhead on the north coast but those that participated in the Nestucca and Wilson fisheries recently have reported big numbers of spawned out fish. Only a rare fresh fish exists and summer run steelhead remain elusive.

Spring chinook have been reported in Tillamook Bay but anglers won't expect much until mid-May. This run often mimics the Willamette return, which is likely to come in mediocre this season.

Offshore anglers remain anxious to fish bottomfish out of Garibaldi; they'll still have to wait for better ocean conditions not seen in the foreseeable future.

Southwest- While offshore winds moderated early this week, ocean swells remained too big for boats to launch. Bottom fishing is excellent when anglers can get to the fish. Boats launching out of Newport over the past weekend limited on large lingcod.

All-depth halibut opens May 8-10 with additional opportunities every other week or until the quota of 113,229 pounds is met or the summer season starts August 1. The nearshore halibut fishery will open on July 1, seven days a week. A new sub-area has been set up south of Humbug Mountain to the OR/CA border with a quota of 3,712 pounds.

Spring Chinook have continued to enter the mainstem Umpqua which has provided early-season action for plug pullers on the lower river. While it is getting late in the season for winter steelhead, anglers have continued to catch decent numbers of hatchery fish on the South Umpqua. The run is above average this year.

Ocean chinook remain scattered which has made it difficult for offshore boaters to locate fish. Results improved when boats could launch out of Charleston recently, however, with best results in water depths of 50 to 150 feet.

Waters of the lower Rogue have continued to drop and clear this week, creating challenging conditions for spring chinook hopefuls. Best chance to hook a springer is below Quosatana Creek. Steelheaders are getting a few winters but most are of poor quality now. Level and flow are supposed to rise through the coming weekend which should trigger the bite as the river recovers. Anglers on the middle Rogue have it a little tougher with rising water, few steelhead and fewer springers passing through. It has been slow on this stretch. There are still a few winters amidst the incoming spring chinook on the upper Rogue where fishing remains fair.

Charter and sport boats are taking limits or near limits of rockfish and lingcod whenever they have been able to launch out of the Port of Brookings.

Diamond Lake has been producing limits for some boaters fishing bait in 35-foot depths over 45 feet of water.

Eastern – The lower Deschutes water level dropped through April 19th but has been stable since that date. Fly anglers are using March Brown and Blue Winged Olive patterns to take resides at a fair to good clip.

Anglers are starting to fish the Crooked River despite water flows much greater than a month ago.

Smallmouth bass fishing is heating up on the John Day River. The largest smallies of the year are historically landed here in April.

Kokanee fishing has been slow at Green Peter with none of the trollers fishing this week approaching the 25-fish limit.

SW Washington- The Wind River and Drano Lake fisheries will top the list of options as fish passage at Bonneville starts to really ramp up. Over 2,000 springers per day are crossing Bonneville with the peak still weeks away. This fishery will really start to produce results this week.

The Lewis and Kalama Rivers remain closed to spring chinook, making the Cowlitz the best option for both salmon and steelhead. Catches of both should ramp up through the end of the month.

Columbia River Fishing Report – Despite good opportunity on the mainstem Columbia on Saturday, sport anglers still did not eat up the entire quota of spring chinook. Rumor has it, nearly 900 remain on the table although an extension is unlikely at this time. The more likely scenario is those additional fish will be added onto the summer chinook season to open in mid-June. It's too early to tell, but we could get a late May or early June start to the summer chinook season depending on how the run size update goes. That run size update won't happen until the first week of May so we're a ways off yet.

The run is progressing well and I'll stick my neck out (even this early in the run) to say that this run will likely come in *under-predicted*, where we'll see more than the pre-season prediction come through this system. That would only provide more opportunity for anglers in early June, possibly late May. This year's return is tracking nearly 5X higher than last year at this time and just over the 10-year average. Jack counts are already higher than last year too.

Boaters from Longview to Portland did report some good fishing, nothing spectacular however. Bill Monroe Jr. had an early day fishing just below Rooster Rock State Park, trolling herring just down from the deadline. There were rumors of some boats fishing upstream of the deadline. I imagine they did quite well too. Anchor anglers working the Puget Island/Tenasillahe Island reach averaged between 5 and 10 chances using plugs, those damn barbless treble hooks.....

With salmon, steelhead and sturgeon season closed right now on the Columbia, you won't find a great deal of info available or necessary for this engine for the next several weeks. Hopefully, the ocean weather calms down soon and we can get after some jetty bottomfish. That doesn't look too promising for the foreseeable future however.

The Guide's Forecast – As you sometimes hear me say, put a fork in it, this river is done, for a while anyway. Steelhead season kicks up around mid-May. Until then, it's pretty cool to watch the future of the springer run pass by Bonneville Dam.

As mentioned in the Fisheries Forecast, above, the 2014 Northern Pikeminnow Sport-Reward Program starts on May 1st. Earn up to \$5 per fish (if you catch enough of 'em) and \$500 if you bag a tagged pikeminnow. See **Random Links**, below, for details.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Traffic and pressure increased almost immediately with the closure of the Columbia to salmon fishing. Unfortunately, results for spring Chinook slowed just as demand increased. This week, bank-fishers at Meldrum Bar had a little action and picked up a few springers. The shore-bound anglers at Dahl Park got their bells rung a couple of times but, as they say, there was nobody home.

McKenzie River levels started to rise late on Wednesday, April 23rd. This trend is likely to continue into the weekend but as water drops and starts to clear, long-rodders should be able to have their way with the trout.

It's Historic! <http://www.mckenziechamber.com/events?eventId=436046&EventViewMode=EventDetails>

McKenzie River Community at the 9th annual McKenzie River Wooden Boat Festival. The festival is a one-day event on the lawns of Eagle Rock Lodge at 49198 McKenzie Hwy, Vida, OR. It is open to the public from 10:00am to 5:00pm admission is free. If you are a wooden boat river runner you might want to join some of the boaters as they gather at the Finn Rock boat landing to take the short float down the river to Eagle Rock Lodge. The flotilla plans to launch as close to 9:00am as possible, and arrive at the show grounds just after 10:00.

Santiam levels which have been rising over the last couple of days are forecast to start dropping later today. Expect high but fishable conditions by the weekend. Caution is advised on the North Santiam stretch from Shelburn and Green's Bridge due to downed trees and multiple side channels. It's safer to float from Green's Bridge or Stayton.

Trout stocking is in full gear at locations throughout the Willamette Valley. This week's releases includes Haldeman Pond, Henry Hagg Lake, Huddleston Pond, Salmonberry Lake, Silver Creek Reservoir, St. Louis Ponds, Trojan Pond, Blue River, Carmen Reservoir, Clear Lake, Detroit Reservoir, Dorena Reservoir, EE Wilson Pond, Fall Creek, Foster Reservoir, Freeway Lake, Junction City Pond, Leaburg Lake, the McKenzie River below Leaburg Dam, Salmon Creek, Smith Reservoir, and Coast Fork of the Willamette River.

The Guide's Forecast – The lower Willamette River is rising and getting muddy as of the afternoon of April 24th. Once the rain stops and this river starts to recover, this freshet is expected to have a positive effect on results for springer anglers on the lower river. Trollers should try plug-cut herring behind a flasher in the stretch from Oregon City to the head of Multnomah Channel which has been most productive this week. There's always a chance of intercepting a Columbia fish in Multnomah Channel as well. St. Johns Bridge into Portland Harbor may start to improve following the increase in flows. Don't hesitate to backbounce eggs or shrimp or anchor fish sardine-wrapped Kwikfish as an alternative approach. They've been getting a few on plugs below Buoy 19.

McKenzie flows are a bit high at this writing on April 24th but conditions will be improving as the water drops and clears this coming weekend. Trout fishing should be fair and improve further with dry weather in the coming week. There will be March Browns on the wing but in the absence of hatches or if it's showery, throw Prince Nymphs and March Brown Emergers.

Slowing flows and moderate water temperatures have springers charging over the Falls and heading upriver. As we've mentioned, the majority of fish at this time of year (an estimated 60% are headed for the Santiams. A total of 2,500 spring Chinook and nearly 1,100 summer steelhead have been counted as of April 23rd. With numbers of springers and steelhead building at the Falls, it is time to be cautiously optimistic about the Santiams providing a worthwhile fishery this year. Once a haven for summer steelheaders, the North Santiam has endured too many 'off' seasons and ho-hum results. It will be several weeks before the jury is in on this one. Spring Chinook fishing should start up on the South Santiam prior to that.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Clackamas water levels are rising sharply at this writing mid-day on Thursday the 24th. A few summer steelhead were taken on bobber and jig mid-week but no springer catches were reported.

Low water woes on the Sandy are in the process of being alleviated as this report is released. Water will be rising with precipitation but will start to moderate over the coming weekend. A mix of summer and winter steelhead have been landed over the past week along with a few spring Chinook.

The Guide's Forecast – The upper Clack will be the most productive stretch for the coming week. Some steelhead hopefuls are hitting their regular haunts on the Clackamas in hopes of mining some summer silver, only to find spring Chinook occupying the water. Not to be deterred, they're catching some by throwing spoons. If you think there wouldn't be any summer steelhead high on the river, you'd be thinking incorrectly.

On the rise today and into the weekend, spring Chinook prospects will be good on the Sandy as the water drops and clears. It may be Sunday before this occurs but being at the right place at the right time could be quite rewarding. Don't be too dismayed in landing a springer that would be considered colored up by fall Chinook standards; chances are they will cut just fine as these fish spawn later in the year.

Incidentally, this guideline applies even more to bucks than hens, the latter of which can appear fairly dark yet produce bright red fillets. Summer steelhead numbers are improving although with springers in the river, few are targeting them.

North Coast Fishing Report – River systems are all but empty as anglers opt to let spawning fish lie. The winter steelhead spawning season is in full bloom and will last into mid-May, maybe longer. There are very few fresh steelhead around and fewer in pursuit. Summer steelhead will be available in the Wilson and Nestucca systems, a stray or two in the Trask but most are awaiting the quality spring chinook that make themselves available more in May and June than April. It's hard to wait for such a quality product and although you don't have to if you have nothing else better to do, don't go with high expectations. Plan to expend most of your time in mid to late May through the first 10 days of June.

Offshore anglers haven't had much to get excited about either. The ocean has been too rough for good action lately; that doesn't look to be changing anytime soon.

Furthermore, there aren't even any great trout plants going on this week.

The Guide's Forecast – We're coming up on a minus tide series which will make upper Tillamook Bay an attractive option for motivated spring chinook anglers. There won't be many people but for good reason; there won't be many fish. Regardless, it'll be the best chance for an early season spring chinook thus far. Needless to say, your odds will improve dramatically in a couple of weeks.

Steelheaders should hang it up unless you like wrestling with spent steelhead. That's maybe a good idea in January when they're all hatchery brats but there will be a fair mix of wild fish that are spawning or spent in this week's catch if you put your boat on the water or fish from the bank.

Here's the ocean forecast, maybe by mid-week of next week.....:

FRI

W WIND 10 TO 15 KT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 9 TO 10 FT AT 15 SECONDS. SHOWERS. ISOLATED TSTMS.

FRI NIGHT

NW WIND 10 KT...BECOMING W 10 KT OVERNIGHT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 9 FT AT 14 SECONDS. SHOWERS DECREASING.

SAT

SW WIND 10 TO 15 KT...BECOMING S 20 TO 25 KT. WIND WAVES 4 FT. W SWELL 8 FT AT 14 SECONDS. RAIN IN THE AFTERNOON.

SAT NIGHT

S WIND 25 TO 30 KT. GUSTS TO 35 KT. COMBINED SEAS 11 TO 13 FT. RAIN.

SUN

W WIND 10 TO 20 KT. WIND WAVES 3 FT. W SWELL 9 FT AT 13 SECONDS. SHOWERS LIKELY.

MON

S WIND 10 TO 15 KT. WIND WAVES 3 FT. W SWELL 11 FT.

TUE

S WIND 10 KT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 8 FT.

Alder Lake, Big Creek Reservoir 1 & 2, Buck Lake, Cleawox Lake, Dune Lake, Elbow Lake, Erhart Lake, Georgia Lake, Lost Lake, Mercer Lake, Munsel Lake, North Georgia Lake, Olalla Creek Reservoir, Perkins Lake, Siltcoos Lagoon, Siltcoos Lake and Sutton Lake are scheduled for trout planting.

Central & South Coast Reports – The weather forecast was right on the mark today, the wind has dropped to almost nothing but the swell is huge and promises to be for the next couple of days.

Herring are being taken on jigs at Yaquina Bay and reports indicate they're getting them in decent number although the ODFW has stated that these baitfish have spawned and most have left the bay.

Several weather computer models capable of long-range prediction are forecasting an *El Niño* (a band of anomalously warm ocean water temperatures) occurring this year off the Pacific coast. While not universally good news, it does bode well for tuna fishing.

Commercial salmon boats have continued to make fair to good catches of ocean Chinook but they are doing so at offshore distances unreachable by sport boats.

Steelheading is slow to fair on the Siletz with native winter fish predominant at this time of year. Summer steelhead have started trickling in with this fishery picking up steam over the next several weeks.

Largemouth bass are active in temperate coastal lakes as evidenced recently by very good catches during a tournament held over Easter weekend where all five competing teams turned in five-bass catches totaling greater than 30 pounds. These fish will spawn soon so get 'em while they're hot, so to speak. This is the time to catch them but be certain to release them to complete the spawning process and ensure a good population in the future.

Some decent catches of Dungeness have been made recently by boats crabbing Winchester Bay although it has remained slow for those crabbing from the docks. Spinner flingers fishing the Half-Moon Bay area of Winchester Bay have been hooking and landing spring Chinook with this technique. It's a patient man's game and all but arduous, but the payoff is worth it. Spring Chinook catches slowed dramatically this week on the Umpqua mainstem above Scottsburg. Winter steelheading is slow to fair for natives. Shad are just a few weeks away. South Umpqua steelheading remains fair for hatchery winters on the South Umpqua but this fork will close on April 30th to re-open with the trout season on May 24th.

Coos Bay jetties have continued to produce rockfish and lingcod when the ocean is not too rough but bay crabbing remains slow. The Coos River will be open to steelheading through the end of April but there are few fish available this late in the run.

Striped bass are entering the Coquille River at this time of year. These fish are targeted mostly by locals who are less than anxious to share any information about it. The best shot at a hookup is after dark with plugs or baitfish.

Water levels are on the rise on the lower Rogue but when they start to drop (on this coming Saturday, according to the NOAA) it should be *on* for spring Chinook although there may be some time required for waters to clear if this freshet causes roiling. Spinner-anchovy rigs remain the top choice for Rogue springers. There are still a few straggler winter steelhead in the lower river but most anglers are interested only in salmon at this time of year. Winter steelheading is winding down on the middle Rogue although spring Chinook have started making their way past Grants Pass. Fishing for winter steelhead on the upper Rogue is fair but steady although most of the fish on the upper river are not worth keeping this late in the season.

Catches have picked up for bait fishers at Diamond Lake but results are expected to improve as the water warms with spring weather.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and several of its partners are sponsoring a fun day of fishing and other outdoor activities at Olalla Reservoir near Toledo, Ore. on Saturday, April 26. The event is open to the public, and no pre-registration is required. The Olalla Reservoir Fishing Derby and Earth Day Event will take place from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. and will include both youth and adult fishing derbies, kayak tours, nature hikes and other family-oriented outdoor activities.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Crooked River flows remain high to the standard Midges and Blue Winged Olives should be supplemented with an assortment of Nymphs.

Fishing has been slow and pressure has been light for trout and bass at Davis Lake.

The recent trout planting at Lake of the Woods included 1,000 legal or larger trout and 800 "trophy-sized" trout.

Green Peter has remained hit-or-miss for kokanee trollers with a few boats finding schools and doing fair.

Hosmer Lake is barely accessible via a considerable hike or snowmobile ride in wintry conditions. A report earlier this week indicated that Lava Lake is still covered with ice and is likely a week or two away from ice-out.

Many central Oregon water bodies open on Saturday, April 26th, including Howard Prairie, Hyatt Lake, Crane Prairie and Wickiup Reservoir. Check the angling reservations for waters affected.

A couple of inches of snow covered the ground at Wickiup on the morning of Wednesday this week but it is expected to be clear by the opener. Get there early as parking will become a problem.

Write to the TGF staff:

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Random Links

Trout fishing gets even better when several popular fisheries open April 26:

<http://www.dfw.state.or.us/news/2014/april/041814b.asp>

Bookmark Alert - LAKES/RIVERS/TIDES/WIND LEVELS: http://nwfishquest.com/?page_id=48

For those traveling for the opener - USDA Forest Service Road Conditions:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/mthood/alerts-notice/?cid=stelprdb5191108>

GOOD LUCK!