

The Guide's Forecast - volume 6 issue number 45

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **May 13th – May 19th, 2005**

Fisheries Update: It's estuary sturgeon time on the Columbia River. Prepare yourself and maximize your efforts with tech report #3- Columbia River Estuary Sturgeon Fishing. These reports and several more are available at:

<http://www.theguidesforecast.com/techrpt.shtml>.

And now it's shad they're picking on! That's right! While a directed spring Chinook gillnet fishery is taking place on Young's Bay and Blind Slough just off the mainstem of the Columbia, the sport shad fishery is CLOSED to anglers! What's wrong with this picture? See more details in the full report but plan on a better explanation in next weeks report!

Meanwhile, one of the few remaining fisheries on the Columbia is the sturgeon fishing. And it is great in the gorge and good in the Portland to Longview stretches. Keepers-a-plenty are coming from the gorge and an odd absence of oversize fish. Fresh shad are being used for bait but with little success for the catch and release, big fish fishery.

Estuary sturgeon fishing opens on 5/14 (Saturday) and scouting guides aren't all that confident. The fish are likely spread out so plan on putting in some time to find results. Fresh shrimp will be key to your success along with a young man on board to keep pulling your anchor in search of biters.

Halibut fishing out of Astoria has been great with some fish going to 60 pounds. Bottomfishing remains great as well and the seas are forecasted to be a bit unfriendly into the early weekend.

Bass fishing in the Celilo Falls area is picking up. Arlington is reaching peak time as well. Plastic worms on the bottom or crankbaits are taking some fish.

And speaking of bass, a new state record smallmouth bass was taken on Hagg Lake on 5/10. More details will be revealed as we get them. A local youth was responsible for the catch!

Tillamook springer action was less than impressive except for a fair bite over the weekend in the upper bay. Tides are switching to a lower bay focus so hopefully the weather will cooperate.

Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) reports the action wasn't what most would expect for ideal river conditions on the Trask and Wilson. It likely won't improve

by the weekend either.

The Nestucca is putting out a few opportunities for those willing to work for them. **Pro guide Jesse Zalonis (503-392-5808)** reported. The lower stretches will likely produce the best results as flows drop.

The halibut fishing will likely be great over the weekend out of Garibaldi. Bottomfishing has been great too but watch those seas!

Sturgeon fishing on Tillamook Bay will likely drop off as many-a-keeper have been culled from the fishery. Most of the sturgeon focus will be on the lower Columbia from now on. Crabbing in the bay has been good but even better in the ocean!

Surf perch are still a viable option when the waves are down. Sand shrimp takes these fish rather easily.

Full length subscribers will note a significant section on Washington fishing this week. The Guide's Forecast- Washington edition is coming to fruition as requested by our numerous readers and **pro guide Kevin Newell (360-430-2521)** is doing a bang-up job of making it happen. Enjoy the fruits of his labor and for our free version subscribers, here is a re-cap of the Washington report:

Pro Guide Jeff Knotts (509) 366-4052 reports that Mid Columbia anglers are taking a few fish in the Umatilla area. With recent poor passage at Bonneville Dam, action should drop off unless the fish make a remarkable come-back.

Pro Guide Bob Barthlow (509) 952-9694 reports slow fishing at the mouth of the Wind River. Also hampered by low counts, this fishery will likely not materialize this late in the season. It has been a disappointment.

Merwin Lake is still producing limits of kokanee for those willing to work for them. As water temps rise, it may become more challenging.

The Kalama has been a hard sell. Boaters are doing considerably better than bank anglers but it is still a challenging go. The Cowlitz is much the same way with fishing success low despite high numbers of fish returning to the salmon hatchery.

Snake River fishing is "out" as the flows have made for challenging conditions. There are a few springers present but it is not worth a great deal of time according to **Pro Guide Pat Long (509) 751-0410**.

Pro Guide David Child (509) 962-5523 reports that the Yakima River continues to hold its own. Flows will dictate what is hatching but overall, the precipitation will not

cause adverse conditions on this river.

Soapbox Update: We've sold out at our Bounty on the Bay event! Thanks to all participants and we look forward to a wonderful event!

Columbia River Fishing Report – And what the heck is going on with the management of our beloved Columbia River? As most of our readers know, I am not one to take pop shots at our Department of Fish and Wildlife (I am biased since I used to work for the agency) but how do you close the shad fishery citing a possibility of incidental take of upper Columbia River bound springers while conducting gillnet fisheries in Young's Bay and Blind Slough? Granted these gillnet fisheries are taking place outside of the mainstem of the river but if you take such drastic measures to restrict this popular fishery, why would you risk these fragile stocks in a targeted gillnet fishery? Boy, do I know some upset anglers!

Once I get over this, I can write a bit more levelheaded about how critical our spring Chinook run looks this year. Passage at Bonneville Dam is downright frightful! We went from record passage on the 5th of May to record low on the 10th! Flows may be to blame and hopefully the counts pick up again and we can salvage this years run. If these fish don't materialize to the tune of 80 to 100K, we will be looking at some dismal times ahead. Jack counts are encouraging either! Well, let's get off this subject and talk about something fun!

Sturgeon fishing is great! **Pro guide Dan Ponciano (360-607-8511)** reports excellent action for keepers and shakers most days in the gorge fishery. "The last 2 weeks have been very solid." Dan is a bit surprised that more oversized fish aren't falling to his fresh shad (from the Willamette, in case you fish cops are watching). Dan fished fresh shad on 5/11 and didn't get a take on it. He did however land 3 oversized along with 4 keepers and 2 shakers. Most of his fish have been coming on squid with a combo of shrimp or smelt pieces. Dan stated anglers using smelt have a real advantage. A typical day for Dan has been between 35 and 50 fish with 6 to 10 keepers/day. When I asked about sea-lions, Dan stated they are still present although it doesn't appear that they are in the numbers that they used to be when a few more Chinook were present. He also said it has become a frequent occurrence to witness oversized sturgeon being taken by sea lions in the sanctuary where the fish seem to keep stacking up.

Only a few folks trying out the catch and release fishing in the lower Columbia near Astoria and the results aren't that impressive. **Pro guide Todd Dielman (503-338-7467)** fished earlier in the week and came up with about 15 fish in about 4 hours out of the East End Basin. Of those fish, Todd had 1 keeper at 45". Lower river reports are similar- the fish seem hard to find and the fishing may not be wide open for the May 14th start date for catch and keep fishing. Fresh sand shrimp and maybe anchovies

when they can be purchased will be the top baits. Smelt and squid may have some application in deeper water but fish this time of year usually end up in the shallows seeking spawning baitfish or freshwater clams.

Halibut fishing out of Astoria has been great! Most boats are taking limits of fish averaging about 25 pounds but going as high as 60 pounds. The productive halibut grounds remain well guarded secrets by most captains.

Bottomfishing also remains productive although not quite as much as just a few weeks ago. The lingcod are at the end of their spawning cycle and many of the quality fish have been culled by interested anglers. Overall, the bottomfishing off of the North Oregon Coast has been fantastic!

Razor clamming remains closed on all northern beaches. Check the shellfish hotline for further info.

The Guide's Forecast – The big news will be the catch and keep sturgeon opener on Saturday. Reports indicate that the fishing will not be red hot but pockets of keeper fish are likely available. This time of year, the fish could be well spread throughout the lower reaches from Hammond to Aldrich Point and in any depth of water. Use fresh sand shrimp where you can get away with it- the shallows or upriver of Tongue Point for best results. Plan on moving a bunch if you are serious about getting keepers as you shouldn't invest more than a half hour in a location if you are not getting consistent bites. Peak fishing periods will be when the flow is at the first or last part of its peak. Slack tides will be the least productive in most cases unless you are fishing the deep, deep water.

A better bet may be the upper Columbia in the gorge. Fishing remains excellent in this section for those that bring a good selection of bait. With eel being outlawed, smelt is a top bait and squid a strong second. Fresh shad are available in the Willamette but aren't paying big dividends for those targeting oversized fish. As the run starts to strengthen on the mainstem, this will change. Hopefully, our departments wise up and open the shad fishery back up since it may be the only run that actually materializes this year. Stay tuned on that fiasco!

Halibut will likely remain good out of Astoria as well as the bottomfishing. Less than Comfortable seas are forecasted over the weekend so that means you need to practice extreme caution. A minus tide series will still be present over the weekend making bar passage a bit hazardous for those headed west.

North Coast District Fishing Report – Rather disappointing here in Tillamook. Although I anticipated only mediocre fishing for this early tide series in Tillamook, I had hoped for something better. On a good day, we have been averaging between 1 and 2 opportunities for springers here on Tillamook Bay. We have put in some long hours for this action. The upper bay was supposed to be the place to fish and to some degree, it

has worked out for some folks. We lost one fish to the pilings for a half day effort (the weather was too rugged for this fishing guide) on 5/9. Most guides struggled for no return on their investment of time on 5/11 as guides plied both the upper and lower bay for action. A few fish were caught for a few boats just outside of the bay entrance on 5/11. Overall, springer fishing in the bay has been slow.

With the recent rainfall, the Trask and Wilson Rivers were in ideal shape for drifting on 5/11. **Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** took advantage of the conditions and did a drift on the Trask River. Chris came up with one opportunity on the Trask and left rather disappointed for an all morning assault. He noted there were numerous boats on the drift and action was quite slow for most anglers. One boat reportedly had 3 fish however. Chris took out and headed to the Wilson in hopes of better news and finally got his hooks into a nice 22 pounder just downstream of the Donaldson's put in. Please note that there has been some break-ins at the Donaldson put in so be aware of what you have in your car if you park there. Chris didn't have much opportunity to talk to other boats on the Wilson but reports prior to the high water indicated fish were present. The fish may be even more spread out as this rain freshet allowed for good migrating conditions to upper river holding areas on both the Wilson and Trask Rivers.

Further south, **pro guide Jesse Zalonis (503-392-5808)** reports, "The Nestucca is slow, but should pick up well after this rain we are having. Look for the Springers to be on the lower end, and even into tide water. They are available, but it has been hit or miss, with one or two chances a day is all."

The Nestucca River clean up is this Saturday. If you would like to participate, please contact me soon, so I can arrange a spot for you.

Although the tides are right, sturgeon fishing in the bay seems less productive than it has been in recent weeks. Granted, most of the effort is taking place for salmon so this fishery is likely under-tapped.

Crabbing in the ocean has been hit or miss. One day (5/6) we pulled the pots a couple of times to get 35 keepers while the next day, the same string only was good for 8 keepers. I have been placing my pots north of the north jetty out of Tillamook and some guides are doing equally or better to the south of the south jetty. Most of my pots are set in water between 33 and 38 feet.

The all depth halibut opener is Thursday, May 12th south of Cape Falcon. I will be underway myself and hope to report good fishing if I make it back to port. I am anticipating calm seas and a safe return so hopefully, I'll be having halibut for dinner as you are reading this report! Bottomfishing out of Garibaldi remains excellent with quality lings in the catch as well. The ocean seems to be the saving grace of Oregon fisheries right now. Let's not forget how we used to have it.....hopefully, those days

are NOT gone!

The Guide's Forecast – A mediocre tide series is set to happen on Tillamook Bay this week. This will make salmon fishing a focus in the lower bay and if the seas permit, fishing in the ocean may be ok. A high slack and all day outgoing tide will make for decent opportunity along the jetty and in the bubble fishery just outside of the mouth of the bay. The tides will still be close to a 6 foot exchange so heavy leads will be necessary to keep those baits near the bottom where calorie saving springers will migrate into the bay. Blue label herring either cut-plug or rigged whole will do the trick and don't hesitate to try a small spinner blade ahead of the cut plug herring to further attract potential biters. Spinner fishing in the upper bay should not be productive.

Driftboaters thinking they will score springers on the Wilson or Trask will likely be sorely disappointed. There may be a few boats that do well if they are able to work virgin holding water. By the weekend, the springers will be in the deeper, slow holes and will fall to bobber and eggs as well as slowly backtrolled plugs. A few fish will be holding at the heads of the holes but most fish will begin to collect in their classic holding water for lower flows. Don't be too disappointed if you don't have great results. It may take a late May rain freshet for real good results.

Halibut fishing will likely be excellent out of Garibaldi over the Thursday/Friday/Saturday opener. If the fleet scores on the opener (5/12) the fishing will likely be good for the rest of the weekend. Bottomfishing will also be excellent but be aware of the new rules restricting halibut harvesters to have any bottomfish on board at the same time. Sucks, don't it? There aren't many more fisheries that they can close on us!

Go crabbing on the ocean or Tillamook Bay. It has been good and makes for a nice combo option! Plus, they may close it any day! (JUST KIDDING!!!!)

Estuary sturgeon fishing will likely drop off this week with the weaker tide series. Mud shrimp will be the bait of choice if you choose to pursue.

Brought to you by The Guides Forecast- Washington Editor and Pro Guide Kevin Newell (360-430-2521)

Mid Columbia River Fishing Report – Pro Guide Jeff Knotts (509) 366-4052 reports, "The Umatilla is the only game in this part of the Columbia Basin for springers. I must report even though the river is in great shape there just doesn't seem to be very many fish returning there either. The morning bite is over by 7am and the fish ratio is

about 2-4 fish caught for around twenty guys fishing. And all these dudes are the local crew, that know these waters very well."

The Guides Forecast- SO, slow I'm not sure if it will remain open much longer. I'll back in search for walleye and will start sturgeon fishing next week."

Wind River Fishing Report – Pro Guide Bob Barthlow (509) 952-9694 reports slow fishing at the mouth of the Wind River, "I Fished the Wind Saturday, went 0-1 on a shrimp spinner and hit two early Sunday on a morning trip on M-2 SP Flatfish in Double Trouble."

The Guides Forecast- Well the fish count at Bonneville Dam jumped up to over 6000 fish for one day but it has quickly dropped off to just a few hundred fish a day. With these low fish counts the spring Chinook fish at the mouth of the Wind River and at Drano Lake will be pretty poor.

Lewis River Reservoirs Fishing Report- Merwin is still producing Kokanee for those willing to work for them. Limits are being had by some anglers but not all. The fish are still scattered throughout the lake which makes them hard to find in decent numbers.

The Guides Forecast- Fishing should continue to improve as the water warms.

Kalama River Fishing Report - According to WDFW, "Boat anglers averaged a spring Chinook per every 2.5 rods while bank anglers averaged one per every 12 rods when including fish released. Through May 4, a total of 260 adult hatchery and 43 adult unmarked spring chinook had returned to Kalama Falls Hatchery."

The Guides Forecast- Fishing should hopefully continue to be good on the Kalama. This little river has been a bright spot in an otherwise uneventful spring Chinook season amongst SW Washington tributaries.

Cowlitz River Fishing Report- According to WDFW, "Fishing success is low despite high numbers of fish returning to the salmon hatchery. Through May 4, a total of 1,802 adult and 53 jack hatchery and 28 adult unmarked spring Chinook had returned to the facility."

The Guides Forecast- Higher flows will make the fishing improve but that is unlikely to happen anyway soon. Until something changes the conditions on the Cowlitz, the fishing will continue to be sub standard.

Neah Bay Fishing Report - Charter Captain Mike Jamboretz (206) 595-9526

Nothing to report yet, but hold on because Mike will have some great pictures from the May 10 halibut opener!

Snake River Fishing Report – Pro Guide Pat Long (509) 751-0410 reports, “The Snake, Clearwater, Salmon and the Grande Ronde are all pretty much un-fishable for the time being. Wednesday's storm doubled and tripled the flows and all area waters are out of shape, plus we are under a flood watch until Tuesday morning, which may or may not develop, but we are assured enough rain to keep the rivers at their current state for a few days. A few hardy souls are dodging old growth and beaver cuttings on the Clearwater in hopes of hooking up one of the few springers that are moving through but success is very low.”

The good news is that the increased flows are moving the salmon and steelhead smolt downriver and with any luck they will make it to the salt with a low mortality!!!

The Guides Forecast- Best chance in our area for awhile will be fishing the reservoirs for cats and sturgeon-the increased flows and stained water will actually improve fishing below Lower Granite and Little Goose Dams-fish the current lines and flow patterns that develop with the increased water velocity.

Yakima River Fishing Report – Pro Guide David Child (509) 962-5523 “We've been out on trips lately, and can report that the YAK fish are still looking up for the Caddis, PMD's, Baetis on the cloudy days, limited salmon fly fun, and the start of some golden stones. The nymphing for us has been better than the dry fly activity, but that's mostly dependent on where you are and when. Shake off the out-migrating Chinook, and look for larger risers. Work the large risers and move on if they get to picky.

The Guides Forecast- It's raining currently, so let's keep posted to the river's flows, we'll be OK if we get a slight rising limb on the hydrograph. The rainy weather will be great for our mayfly hatches. I'm not expecting flows to be a big issue.

GOOD LUCK!