

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **September 22nd – September 28th, 2005**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Columbia River - The Columbia River from Bonneville to Rocky Point/Tongue Point is now closed to the retention of **Chinook**. Unfortunately, this fishery never had a chance to materialize and next to no chance for a re-opener. The downward trend in fish counts at Bonneville indicate we have indeed, passed the peak and may I be so bold as to predict yet another "run-size update"? The remaining portions of the lower Columbia (Buoy 10 and the river upstream of Bonneville Dam) are not producing good numbers of Chinook but it is still a possibility. Buoy 10 fishing continues to slow and coho are making up almost all of the catch.

The ocean fishery remains hit or miss but I know of at least one charter boat that limited on hatchery coho on Saturday out of Warrenton. Saturday conditions were "chamber of commerce" as calm seas and plentiful fish yielded good catches of **tuna** and fair catches of halibut. Our boat load of 5 anglers landed 36 albacore with most of the fish topping 20 pounds. Live anchovies free-swimming were the preferred method. The Chinook fishery is not yielding high results.

Crabbing is finally picking up on the lower Columbia but it sure helps to have quality bait.

Mid Columbia/Deschutes River - Dam passage at John Day indicates the mouth of the Deschutes should be well underway. Both **Chinook** and **steelhead** are present but warm weather conditions have this fishery only producing sporadically.

North Coast - The Tillamook bite has been consistent but a big ocean claimed one boat earlier in the week. The angler cheated death but rough conditions have the ocean closed and the coast guard wary. **Herring** took several fish over the weekend but the bite has switched to an upper estuary bite on spinners. The standard red/whites and chartreuse colors are working best. Coho are still present in the bay but only make up a fraction of the catch.

Nehalem and Nestucca bays remain only fair but **crabbing** in Nehalem Bay is excellent.

Mid-Coast - Fall **chinook** fishing has fallen off even with the good tidal exchange recently. Expect plenty of company despite the slow fishing. Rain is needed to entice fresh fish into the system. **Crabbing** is fair in Siletz Bay.

Offshore out of Depoe Bay and Newport **tuna** are being caught to 30 pounds offshore. A tuna trip of 20 or 30 miles takes experience, the right equipment and plenty of fuel. Boats out of Newport are also finding tuna. The summer all-depth **halibut** season is open Friday through Sunday every week until the quota is met or October 31st. Fishing has been fine.

A few **chinook** are being landed on the Alsea but the pressure and boat traffic is extreme. Those who wind their way through the aluminum hatch are finding bobber 'n' salmon eggs effective. Fishing will improve here through September.

The wild **coho** season will open once again this year On October 1st at Siltcoos and Tahkenitch Lakes.

South Coast - Trolled herring is taking **chinook** to 30 pounds out of Winchester Bay and in the bay below Reedsport for those who can get the fish to a net before the seals grab it.

Chinook fishing is fair to good on the Coos and Coquille Rivers. Both systems offer decent sea-run **cutthroat** fishing as well. **Steelhead** fishing is only getting better on the North Umpqua. **Smallmouth bass** fishing is holding up very well.

Trollers in Rogue Bay saw a slight improvement in catches with the minus tides over the weekend. It was not red-hot fishing by any means and is likely to slow again with the lack of rain. **Steelhead** are being caught in the Grants Pass area.

Willamette Valley/Metro- The low, clear, 60-degree waters of the Clackamas River offer little to anglers. Occasionally a summer **steelhead** has been banked. **Coho** will be the next target of interest, starting low on the river near the bridge.

Cooler weather has improved the visibility of the Sandy River, but the flow is only 250 cfs. The few **chinook** present are well past their prime and **steelhead** are hunkered down. The next motivating factor for anglers will be the coho run, but it hasn't happened yet. Good numbers of silvers are swimming around the mouth but there's insufficient incentive for them to make the trip upstream. They don't seem interested in biting anything.

Willamette flows are up slightly but the water remains very low. With sturgeon fishing closed until October 1st, it's a warmwater fishery only at this time. **Sturgeon** fishing will again get coverage when the Columbia re-opens on October 1st. Unless, that is, the ODFW/WDFW change their minds.

With the salmon spawning on the North Santiam, **steelheaders** now have an opportunity to catch a few as they feed on chinook eggs below the redds.

Steelheading is slow on the McKenzie and the river will not be stocked with trout again in 2005. Chinook will be spawning soon so anglers should be cautious when wading so as to avoid disturbing the beds.

Trout fishing- **Trout** were planted this week in the Willamette Valley at Mount Hood Pond, North Fork Reservoir and at Foster Reservoir. Last week, Cape Mears Lake, Coffenbury Lake, Lost Lake in Clatsop County, Sunset Lake and Town Lake, all located in the Northwest Zone, received hundreds of 16-inch trout. Many of these should still be available to anglers.

Washington Fishing Update

North Puget Sound While the bulk of the run has moved into the rivers, a few **pink** salmon are still being caught in marine waters off Mukilteo and Everett. Those anglers who want to target "humpies" should try fishing with the traditional gear of a small pink imitation squid fished about 20 inches behind a white flasher.

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula Anglers still have time to go ocean **salmon** fishing, but it's quickly slipping away. Only Marine Area 1 (Ilwaco) remains open, and just until Sept. 30. All of the other coastal waters closed on Sept. 18. Ilwaco anglers averaged about one fish per rod during the Sept. 17-18 weekend, nearly three-quarters of them **cohoM**. They can keep two, and both can be **chinook**.

Southwest Washington: Pro Guide Bob Barthlow (509.697.7125) finished up at Drano lake in the gorge on Sunday, was a pretty slow day, but they managed two in the early afternoon on spinners off downriggers, the first fish was a nice 36# URB. Started at the mouth of the Klickitat on Monday, Coho action is slow, but they did well on URB's on spinners. The mouth of

the Klick, should peak on Chinook the next couple weeks, and Coho fishing will remain good all of October.

In a recent newspaper column, the outdoors editor for the *Vancouver Columbian* suggested that area anglers take a break from fishing now that **chinook salmon** retention has ended for the season on the lower Columbia River. "It's true that the action has slowed down, but anglers do still have some options," said Manuel Fariñas, WDFW regional fish manager. For one thing, fishing remains open for **hatchery coho, steelhead** and **cutthroat trout** on the lower river between the Rocky Point/Tongue Point line and Bonneville Dam.

Eastern Washington: Jeff Knotts of **JB'S Guide Service (509 366 4052)** tells TGF that Hanford reach is steadily improving. Two to four fish a day from Ringold to Coyote Rapids. Saturday Sept. 17th showed an excellent egg bite fished behind divers as the ferry landing.

North Central Washington: September 30 marks the end of **chinook salmon** fishing in the Okanogan River and the lower Similkameen River in Okanogan County. The stretches open are the Okanogan from the Highway 97 bridge near the mouth to the railroad trestle downstream of the Lake Osoyoos Control Dam in Oroville, and the Similkameen from the mouth upstream to the county road bridge in Oroville.

South Central Washington: The Yakima River opened for **salmon** fishing on Sept. 1 from the confluence with the Columbia River upstream to Sunnyside (Parker) Dam, and will remain open through Oct. 22. WDFW Fish Biologist Paul Hoffarth says the peak fishing typically occurs during the last two weeks of the season.

Columbia River Fishing Report – There is not much to write about for such a big body of water and it's even choked with fish! Closures have the clamps down on anglers for much of the river system! As far as the Chinook season, the way the fish passage is going at Bonneville, don't count on any additional opportunity here. Numbers continue to drop and if I had to guess, I feel another "run size update" is on the way. Anglers however are taking advantage of a few productive spots above Bonneville Dam and scoring fish. For the novice to this area, it may be challenging to expect great results as this water is hard to read.

Sturgeon fishing closed.....still....

Coho action in the Buoy 10 reach remains less than impressive. A weaker tide series will only make things more difficult for anglers targeting fish in this section. There were however still fish being caught in the ocean last weekend so results are still a possibility.

The ocean has turned upside down as making for a not-so-fun experience in pursuit of tuna or halibut. The fishing was phenomenal over the weekend as myself and 4 other anglers jumped aboard the F/V *Scorpion* with Captain Ron (not actually a licensed captain but a friend with a great amount of knowledge on tuna and halibut). We left port about 5:30 a.m. and headed about 30 miles west until we started seeing other boats (including commercial vessels) and jumping tuna. Once we got close to the tuna, we dropped our live anchovies down with a small size 2 or 3 hook in their backs and let them swim off alive. In some cases, the tuna sounded and spooked from the boat but in many cases, soon after approaching the school, we were into them and what a hoot that was. Once a tuna takes a live bait, they tear off about 30 yards of line (you have your reel in freespool) and then you lock up the bail and set the hook. Hold on because then they go on a run of about 80 to 120 yards and never give up after that! It is by far, the strongest fish (pound for pound) that I have ever encountered. The action was great as one time, we had 5 rods fishing and 4 of them with tuna on them! To top off the banner day of fishing, the seas were flat as I have ever seen them and we had 2 complete full breaches of a

humpback whale about 500 yards from the boat. A day that will go down in my personal archives as one of the best EVER! Halibut anglers fishing that day did bring some fish in but most boats that fished the ocean that day spent their time in pursuit of tuna.

The Guide's Forecast – A simple forecast following a simple report. The best bet on the Columbia will likely remain the water just upstream of Bonneville for upriver bright Chinook. Wobblers worked in key migrating locations may produce some results. The mouth of the Deschutes should also produce some consistent results as steelhead passage and salmon passage at the Dalles is in full bloom. Troll spinners or larger plugs for salmon and smaller, dark colored hot shots for steelhead.

In the Buoy 10 fishery, effort has really dropped off and success has too. There should still be some quality hatchery coho available and above the bridge on the Washington side is your best bet. If you have access to fresh bait, bring your crab pots as this fishery is finally starting to pick up. Drop your pots between Buoys 20 and 22 in about 25 to 30 foot of water for best results.

Sturgeon fishing will remain closed until October 1st.

Ocean fishing will be an option but prepare yourselves for rougher seas. Tuna should remain an option but a long, bumpy ride will take away from the experience. Halibut anglers don't have as far to run but one might ask if a 25 to 35 pound halibut is worth the hemorrhoid. The coho target fishery is about done on big blue and the Chinook fishery isn't consistent enough to warrant a trip in these seas.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Willamette flows are up slightly but the water remains very low. With sturgeon fishing closed until October 1st, it's a warmwater fishery only at this time. Sturgeon fishing will again get coverage when the Columbia re-opens on October 1st. Unless, that is, the ODFW/WDFW change their minds.

With the salmon spawning on the North Santiam, steelheaders now have an opportunity to catch a few as they feed on chinook eggs below the redds.

Steelheading is slow on the McKenzie, which is about right given the time of year and water conditions. Trout were stocked in the upper and lower river last week and there will be no more planted in 2005. Chinook will be spawning soon so anglers should be cautious when wading so as to avoid disturbing the beds, although an opportunity to catch steelhead may result as described regarding the Santiam, below.

The Guide's Forecast – Coho are in the Willamette River with counts at the Falls increasing daily. It broke 100 on Wednesday the 14th, followed by counts of 117 the 133 on Thursday and Friday, respectively, the latest data available. With the next rain a coho fishery will actually develop.

The better, albeit somewhat lackluster opportunity to catch a steelhead between these three rivers is the North Santiam. For a third year, this one just never turned on. Prior to the last three consecutive crummy seasons, this was a summer steelhead favorite. Where chinook are spawning now, drift high-quality cured salmon eggs just below. Alternately, floating the bait down to feeding steelhead with a bobber should get their attention. They're feeding on eggs anyway, so this will likely be the best opportunity of the year to land one or two.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Nobody's talking specifics, but a few coho have been landed in the last few days. Seriously, it's going to take a day or two of precipitation to jump-start the run in the Sandy and Clackamas Rivers. But for those who want to get one of the

first, these are the places. A friend of mine who swore me to secrecy regarding the location caught one in the 'teens.

The low, clear, 60-degree waters of the Clackamas River offer little to anglers. Occasionally a summer steelhead has been banked. Coho will be the next target of interest, starting low on the river near the bridge. Spinner flingers are already starting to line the banks as surely as time and tide. A few coho may be seen rolling in the stretch along Barton Park but no one has reported being able to tempt any of those fish to strike. It won't be long, though. A few have been taken at the mouth on plugs.

Cooler weather has improved the visibility of the Sandy River, but the flow is only 250 cfs. The few chinook present are well past their prime and steelhead are hunkered down. The next motivating factor for anglers will be the coho run which will get underway with the next decent rainfall. Good numbers of silvers are swimming around the mouth but there's insufficient incentive for them to make the trip upstream. The only people catching them seem to be snaggers as they don't seem interested in biting anything. Once it starts, this is expected to be a most worthwhile fishery.

North Coast District Fishing Report – Tillamook slowed slightly on the back end of this tide series. A rough ocean has limited possibilities for herring trollers as the jaws remain restricted and choked with seaweed. Spinner trollers in the upper bay are beginning to find consistent results with the red/white a good standby. We took one Chinook of about 20 pounds on 9/21 near the mouth of the Wilson River on a slack line bite. We didn't see many other fish caught but most guide boats had at least one fish/boat in the upper bay. The seaweed is also running thick in the upper bay but up-bay from the corral, it doesn't seem to be as bad. The most productive time of the tide is the last half of outgoing and recently, the NW wind has had an adverse effect on our fishing efforts lately. The middle bay has not produced well- likely due to seaweed and the fact there are not a large number of fish present. The water between the mouths of the Trask/Tillamook and to the end of the picket fence produced the best results on 9/21. Herring trollers on this date did not fare well as most worked the jaws with a restricted bar. Seaweed is also to blame here but there definitely seemed to be a lack of fish.

I also fished the tidewater section of the Tillamook River but saw no activity for the few anglers that were fishing there. There is an incredible amount of bait in the upper bay and some in the Tillamook tidewater right now. They appear to be anchovies.

Further south, **pro guide Jesse Zalonis (503.392.5808)** reports, "The Nestucca tidewater is picking up. There are a bunch of fish around but the bites have been sporadic. Lately it has been a first light and low tide affair when bobber fishing. Spinners have also been producing well in all area's, during the same tide series.

At the beginning of the outgoing, PC has been the place to be, both at the bridge, and at the ramp."

Jesse continues, "We are also finding a good bite in areas that permit on bounced plugs. I usually wrap mine quite large, and have them really close to the bottom in about 8 feet of water. Basically, we are moving around a bunch in search of, and switching tactics all day. Right now we are getting about 3 per day, and getting a few extra chances. I have been hearing a bunch about the lack of eggs and larger sardines for fillets. I have both on hand and ready to go. I also have cured sardine fillets, that are tougher than raw, and they work great. If you need some, call us, and we will make arrangements for you to get them."

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The Salmon River fishery should be well underway and although fishing is fair, it seems it is not as good as it has been in years past. The action should pick up however as the month progresses.

The Nehalem River remains sporadic from the 101 bridge downstream but reports of more consistent bobber fishing are coming from the bridge at Mohler to the mouth of the town of Nehalem.

Crabbing in Nehalem Bay is reported as great!

The Guide's Forecast – Anglers are coming upon a weaker tide series making spinner trolling a second option. The weaker tides create better opportunities for herring trollers on the lower bay. Seaweed may however cause a real headache for anglers this week on Tillamook Bay. Trask and Tillamook fish are still on the menu making the upper bay more appetizing on the other hand. Of course these fish have to pass by lower estuary anglers and biters will get culled out before they reach this upper bay spinner haven. The ocean may open back up as seas are supposed to subside somewhat but be prepared to fight seaweed and dense crowds as the Columbia season is now closed. This will shift effort.

The tidewater stretches of the Trask are home to some bobber anglers. Fish are being caught but again, the weaker tide series will slow that bite as well. Hatchery coho are present in the bay but in such low numbers, it is hard to inspire many to bite.

The Nestucca should also be an option for herring trollers near the mouth as a softer tide series may bring fish over the bar assuming the conditions aren't too rough. Bobber anglers will look on in confusion as jumpers don't necessarily mean biters. The same holds true for Salmon River anglers.

The Nehalem system will also likely slow with this onslaught of weak tides. An anglers best bet is to combo up with herring trolled near the mouth and drop crab pots in the area (but out of the trolling lane) to make your trip worth your time.

Central & South Coast Reports – Fall chinook fishing on the lower Siletz has fallen off even with the good tidal exchange recently. Expect plenty of company despite the slow fishing. Rain is needed to entice fresh fish into the system. While many different methods will take fish here, trolling through the anchor fishermen is not really a good plan. Either join 'em or bobber fish. Crabbing is fair in Siletz Bay.

Offshore out of Depoe Bay, those prepared to make the long trip are taking tuna. The numbers are sometimes few but many of the fish are in the 30-pound class and few boats are hitting schools to catch them by the score on live bait. Weekend halibut fishers are limiting early enough to do some salmon fishing on the way back to port. Boats out of Newport are also finding tuna. Check terrfin.com for 60-degree water. The closer to shore, the shorter the boat ride for albacore.

The all-depth halibut fishery on this stretch of the coast is a Friday through Sunday opportunity or until the quota fills. At last check, there was plenty of poundage remaining to allow for the halibut fishing to continue for a few weeks. Try this if you're able. The regulations require

keeping the first fish caught, but a couple of five-footers have hit the docks In Newport. Yours could be next.

A few chinook are being landed on the Alsea but the pressure and boat traffic is extreme. Those who wend their way through the aluminum hatch are finding bobber 'n' salmon eggs effective with Drift Creek as reliable a spot as any. Fishing will continue to improve here through September.

The wild coho season will open once again this year at Siltcoos and Tahkenitch. Conservation efforts have allowed a strong recovery and sufficient numbers to allow harvest. The season runs from October 1st through December 15th. Siltcoos will be the first to start producing with the best chance for one of these beautiful, native silver salmon where streams feed into the lake. Trolling spinners is effective, particularly at the creeks which allow coho access to the lakes. Siltcoos starts earlier than Tahkenitch so plan your trip accordingly. Once underway, we'll report weekly on efforts, success and techniques for this unique opportunity.

Although the taking of wild coho has been illegal since 1993, the NOAA allowed ODFW to open these lakes for the first season with a tiny quota in December of 2003. The only parallel fishery involving the opening of a retention season for a specie on the threatened list is that for bull trout at Lake Billy Chinook. Studies by ODFW biologists determined that the protected coho populations have rebounded dramatically. In the future, an opener for native coho will likely occur in the Coos and Coquille Rivers.

Plug-cut herring trolled in the tidewater stretch of the Siuslaw is yielding Fall chinook to 30 pounds or better, but the size of chinook everywhere this year varies widely. When a fish hits, you won't know until you set the hook whether you've got a sub-teen or a 40 pounder.

Steelhead fishing has been good and is only getting better on the North Umpqua. Smallmouth bass fishing is holding up very well. Surface lures are effective and soft plastics fish with just enough weight to get the lure to the bottom will take the larger smallies.

Trolled herring is taking chinook to 30 pounds below Reedsport for those who can get the fish to a net before the seals grab it. Both coho and chinook are being landed offshore with the area about 10 miles South being productive recently at 20 to 40-foot depths over 100 to 150 feet of water.

Be very careful out there. Another boat went down and lives were lost on the Umpqua River jetty Monday, September 20th. In this incident, an experienced captain of a Tuna charter boat had his vessel capsize. The investigation of this incident is still pending.

Chinook fishing is fair to good on the Coos and Coquille Rivers for boaters dragging herring. Both systems offer decent sea-run cutthroat fishing as well.

Speaking of cutthroat, it's been a while since this terrific Oregon native specie was discussed here. Also called blueback, these critters are occasionally hooked when steelhead fishing, but to target them, think slow water. For instance, this little honey holes where a smaller river a tributary stream enters is often a honey hole for steelhead. Where the seam is prime metalhead water, cutthroat prefer the dark, boil **above** such a spot. They also like to hang along the edges of the river underneath overhanging branches waiting for something tempting (such as your lure) to pass by. Generally willing biters, they'll readily take a size 2 or 3 spinner such as Blue Fox. Flu anglers will draw strikes with brightly-colored wet flies, particularly any patter with yellow on it. Bluebacks are catch and release only North of the Salmon River in the Northwest Zone but two per day may be retained to the south of that river.

Trollers in Rogue Bay saw a slight improvement in catches with the minus tides over the weekend. It was not red-hot fishing by any means and is likely to slow again with the lack of rain as we move into a period of moderate tides. There won't be another big exchange of water until October when the next minus tidal series is forecast. Steelhead are being caught in the Grants Pass area as they congregate below chinook redds. This situation would make cured salmon eggs the best bait for them. Chinook are scattered throughout this area but fishing is very slow for them. Targeting chinook anywhere above Gold Ray Dam is illegal now.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Fall River and Crooked River offer great fishing at this time of year with prospects improving as we move into the Fall season. Caddis imitations and Pale Morning Duns are staples with nymphs a go-to if the hatch is not apparent. Trout fishing has slowed on the upper Deschutes with many dinks snatching flies. Nymphs will tempt the larger redsides. Big Laval Lake is a best bet for a high Cascade destination with good-sized Rainbows eating large offerings like wooly buggers and leech patterns. Trout here average 18 inches and the big fish taken this year was a new record for Big Lava at 33 inches and over 11 pounds.

Northwest Bass & Panfish - The Willamette River continues to produce steady catches of bass. Fish rocky current breaks for smallie, backwaters and sloughs for largemouth. As Fall is signaled with cooler temperatures and shorter days, both species will go on periodic feeding sprees. This time of year is second only to pre-spawn fishing in the springtime. A variety of lures will take either Smallmouth or bigmouth; a variety of soft plastics, crankbaits and spinnerbaits will ensure some action.

Use the same arsenal at Hagg Lake to catch bass now as they stage off points and around large boulders.

Northwest Trout - Trout fishing is improving at Diamond Lake. With the cooler nights and moderating daytime temperatures, an improvement should be seen in most lakes stocked with trout. This is a fine time to plan a Fall trip to the High Cascades.

Trout were planted this week in the Willamette Valley at Mount Hood Pond, North Fork Reservoir and at Foster Reservoir. Last week, Cape Mears Lake, Coffenbury Lake, Lost Lake in Clatsop County, Sunset Lake and Town Lake, all located in the Northwest Zone, received hundreds of 16-inch trout. Many of these should still be available to anglers.

Washington

North Puget Sound While the bulk of the run has moved into the rivers, a few **pink** salmon are still being caught in marine waters off Mukilteo and Everett. Those anglers who want to target "humpies" should try fishing with the traditional gear of a small pink imitation squid fished about 20 inches behind a white flasher.

Drop the gear down about 25 feet in the water column and troll slowly. Anglers throughout the region have had to work a bit harder than usual to entice bites from **coho** salmon. Steve Foley, a WDFW fisheries biologist from Mill Creek, recently burned a lot of gas in his boat while searching for coho in central Puget Sound. "We covered a lot of water and had very few hook-ups to show for our effort," said Foley, adding that he and another veteran salmon angler tossed just about every piece of gear they could find in the tackle box at the fish.

Anglers have had some luck using a green artificial squid behind a green flasher and trolled fast, while flies, plug-cut herring and spoons can also catch coho. Try fishing in the top 40 feet of water early in the morning, and go deeper as the day progresses. Sue Kraemer, a veteran WDFW sport fish sampler, said the fishing in recent days has generally been better in waters adjacent to

Seattle than in the Everett area. "I wouldn't say it was great fishing off Seattle, but the overall trend seemed to indicate that fishing was better south than north," Kraemer said.

One angler bucked the trend by catching a giant coho off Everett. The fish tipped Kraemer's scales at 20 pounds. That's a nice fish, but it's five pounds short of the saltwater record, which was set back in 2001 by an angler fishing off Sekiu. Anglers in the San Juan Islands (Marine Area 7) have been taking only a smattering of **chinook**, coho and pink salmon. Saltwater salmon-fishing rules change in many areas beginning Oct. 1, including the end of the special "pink bonus" of two additional pink salmon in marine areas 7-10.

Beginning Oct. 1 anglers in marine areas 8-1 and 8-2 can retain up to two hatchery chinook per day of at least 22 inches in length. The loss of this summer's "pink bonus" is the only change in the daily bag limits for marine areas 9 and 10 (Admiralty Inlet and the Seattle-Bremerton areas, respectively) beginning Oct. 1. Salmon fishing has also been spotty on area rivers, including the Skagit, where WDFW District Fish Biologist Brett Barkdull said anglers have been working hard to land pink salmon. "Fishing conditions haven't been the best this year, with low flows and poor visibility really making it tough," Barkdull said. Plunking gear seems to be working best on the lower river.

The Skagit is open to salmon fishing from the mouth upstream to the confluence with the Cascade River. Anglers can keep two salmon measuring at least 12 inches in length per day. Release all chinook. The pinks are thick on the Snohomish River in the Monroe area, and anglers have been landing fish with a pink jig. There is a four-fish daily limit on the Snohomish; no more than a total of two may be coho and chum salmon. Release all chinook.

The Skykomish, one of the Snohomish's main tributaries, is also producing a lot of good fishing for pink salmon. The Sky is open under the same daily bag limits as the Snohomish. Anglers on the Snoqualmie River can retain two salmon per day, but all chinook and pink salmon must be released. Elsewhere in the region, fishing remains slow on the lower Nooksack River, which is open to salmon retention from the Lummi Nation reservation boundary upstream to the yellow marker at the FFA high school barn in Deming.

Anglers on the Nooksack can retain two fish measuring at least 12 inches in length each day. All pink, wild chinook and wild coho salmon must be released. Those are the same rules for the north fork of the Nooksack, which opens to salmon fishing Oct. 1. Coho fishing on the Stillaguamish River remains slow. For an urban salmon-fishing experience, head down to the Duwamish River in Seattle's industrial south end.

There, anglers are targeting the big run of pink salmon that is colonizing the Duwamish-Green watershed. WDFW enforcement officers have cited anglers for a number of infractions on the lower Duwamish, so be sure to follow all of the rules. Downstream of the First Avenue Bridge, anglers are fishing under Marine Area 10 rules that are outlined on pages 116-117 of the Sport Fishing in Washington pamphlet.

Anglers who are fishing the stretch of river from the First Avenue South Bridge upstream to the Southwest 43rd Street-South 180th Street Bridge can retain up to six salmon per day, no more than three adults, and all chinook must be released. The Green River opens to salmon fishing up to the South 277th Bridge in Auburn beginning Oct. 1 under the same regulations as the lower river.

If saltwater and river fisheries aren't generating any interest, try lake fishing for a change. The **yellow perch** are biting at lakes throughout the region. Perch are not only one of the tastiest species available, they're also considered one of the most abundant fish species in Lake

Washington, where anglers are catching full stringers by fishing a plain nightcrawler just off the bottom in about 20 feet of water.

Fishing for **trout** on lowland lakes should continue to improve as water temperatures cool. Try trolling pop gear or a fly during the first and last few hours of daylight, or still-fish with bait near the bottom during the midday.

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula Anglers still have time to go ocean **salmon** fishing, but it's quickly slipping away. Only Marine Area 1 (Ilwaco) remains open, and just until Sept. 30. All of the other coastal waters closed on Sept. 18. Ilwaco anglers averaged about one fish per rod during the Sept. 17-18 weekend, nearly three-quarters of them **cohoM**. They can keep two, and both can be **chinook**.

"It's probably the best show in town now," said Scott Barbour, WDFW fish biologist. Marine Area 3 (LaPush) was one of three ocean areas closed to salmon fishing on Sept. 18, but not for long. A two-week bubble fishery is scheduled from Sept. 24 to Oct. 9 targeting coho and chinook salmon returning to the Quillayute River system. In the past, fishing has been restricted to the area just outside the mouth of the river, but this year's "bubble" is wider and has no western boundary. That will give anglers, including those who take part in the LaPush Last Chance Salmon Derby on Oct. 1-2, more water to fish. A total of \$4,300 is up for grabs at the derby, with \$1,000 for the biggest chinook (which usually tops 40 pounds) and hatchery coho.

Willapa Bay is serving up its best year of fishing since WDFW began tracking it, Barbour said. Fishing for chinook and coho has been good long after Labor Day, when it traditionally tails off. The fishery will stay open through Jan. 31, but anglers are now competing with commercial fishing boats. Anglers might think about heading north to Grays Harbor, which opened east of the Buoy 13 line on Sept. 16. Barbour is expecting some big coho there. (Chinook must be released.) The question is how many, and when.

Some rain should bring them in, Barbour said. The countdown is also on for salmon fishing in the Strait of Juan de Fuca, where anglers have been landing some nice 10- to 16-pound coho. Like Ilwaco, the season there ends Sept. 30. "There are reports of these nice big ones going through the strait, so you'd better get out there quick," said John Long, another WDFW fish biologist. Chinook, wild coho and chum must be released.

The "No Fin You Win" coho derby is Sept. 24 at Sekiu. The winner gets half of the entry fees. Fishing for coho has also been improving around Point Defiance in Tacoma and the silvers should continue to work their way down Puget Sound, Long said. "They should show up in the South Sound in the next week or so, and I expect a fair number of them to return," he said. Record low flows are being recorded in many of the north Olympic streams, said Mike Gross, WDFW biologist. Fish are holding up low in the river systems or hanging outside the mouths waiting for more water to trigger upstream migration. Some coho are in the Sol Duc and Quillayute rivers, but getting them to bite is difficult. Early morning is the best time to try, Gross said. The chinook have been slow to show up, he said. Several other westside rivers - including the Chehalis, Satsop, Wynoochee and Wishkah - open for salmon fishing Oct. 1.

Shellfish alert: The state health department recently issued emergency closures for two North Olympic beaches. Sequim Bay was shut down Sept. 16 to shellfish gathering because of high levels of domoic acid in oysters and clams. Discovery Bay was closed two days later because of Paralytic Shellfish Poison, commonly called red tide. Monitoring will continue and the beaches will reopen when the levels drop. Recreational harvesters can check for biotoxin closures at the health department's Biotoxin Web site (<http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/sf/biotoxin.htm>) or the biotoxin hotline at 1-800-562-5632.

Southwest Washington: Pro Guide Bob Barthlow (509.697.7125) finished up at Drano lake in the gorge on Sunday, was a pretty slow day, but they managed two in the early afternoon on spinners off downriggers, the first fish was a nice 36# URB. Started at the mouth of the Klickitat on Monday, Coho action is slow, but they did well on URB's on spinners. The mouth of the Klick, should peak on Chinook the next couple weeks, and Coho fishing will remain good all of October.

In a recent newspaper column, the outdoors editor for the Vancouver *Columbian* suggested that area anglers take a break from fishing now that **chinook salmon** retention has ended for the season on the lower Columbia River. "It's true that the action has slowed down, but anglers do still have some options," said Manuel Fariñas, WDFW regional fish manager. For one thing, fishing remains open for **hatchery coho, steelhead** and **cutthroat trout** on the lower river between the Rocky Point/Tongue Point line and Bonneville Dam.

Although the bite is fairly subdued for coho and steelhead, anglers have had some success fishing for hatchery coho at the mouth of the Cowlitz River and the downstream tip of Lady Island on the Columbia River in Camas at this time of year. In addition, the Buoy 10 fishery at the mouth of the Columbia remains open to retention of chinook and hatchery coho salmon, although the catch rate for chinook has dropped to about one fish for every 12 rods. For hatchery coho, anglers have been averaging about one fish for every 5.5 rods. Some anglers have turned their attention to catching sea-run cutthroat trout, now returning to the Cowlitz Hatchery.

Fishing has been good from Castle Rock to the barrier dam below the hatchery, said Wolf Dammers, another WDFW fish biologist. "These trout make for great eating," said Dammers, noting that the fish generally range from 12 to 15 inches long. "Keepers" must be at least 12 inches and have a clipped adipose fin. Come Oct. 1, anglers will also be able to catch and keep **sturgeon** Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays on the mainstem Columbia from the Wauna powerlines upstream to Bonneville Dam.

See the WDFW [Fishing in Washington rules pamphlet](https://fortress.wa.gov/dfw/erules/efishrules/index.jsp) (<https://fortress.wa.gov/dfw/erules/efishrules/index.jsp>) for size limits and other information. Meanwhile, an increasing number of anglers are following the chinook upstream from Bonneville Dam, where chinook retention is still allowed. Fish checkers are reporting increased angler effort in the Bonneville Pool, including the mouth of the White Salmon River where anglers are catching bright fall chinook and some hatchery coho. The same is true off the mouth of the Klickitat River, where anglers are finding success either jigging or trolling. Salmon fishing in tributaries to the Columbia River is also picking up, both above and below Bonneville Dam.

Boat anglers fishing the lower reaches of the Lewis River are mostly catching fall chinook, while bank anglers are having the best luck with hatchery coho. On the Klickitat River, anglers are catching dusky-colored fall chinook downstream from the Fisher Hill Bridge. "A good, hard rain would really help move some fish upstream," Fariñas said. "Sooner would be better than later." That's because chinook retention will come to an end Oct. 1 on all or part of a number of tributaries, including the Elochoman, Cowlitz, North Fork Toutle, Green, Kalama, Lewis, Washougal and White Salmon. Here, too, anglers are advised to check the [Fishing in Washington rules pamphlet](https://fortress.wa.gov/dfw/erules/efishrules/index.jsp) (<https://fortress.wa.gov/dfw/erules/efishrules/index.jsp>) for specific regulations on those and other rivers.

As announced in mid-September, fisheries managers from Washington and Oregon agreed to end chinook retention in the lower Columbia after reducing their estimate of returning "upriver bright" chinook from 354,600 fish to 280,000 fish - a reduction of 20 percent. The upriver bright run includes salmon bound for the Snake River that are listed as threatened under the federal

Endangered Species Act. Estimates for mid-Columbia brights and the Bonneville Pool Hatchery stock were also reduced. Chinook jack counts at Bonneville Dam have been running below the 10-year average, although the Spring Creek Hatchery and McNary Dam have both achieved this year's goals.

Eastern Washington: Jeff Knotts of JB'S Guide Service (509 366 4052) tells TGF that Hanford reach is steadily improving. Two to four fish a day from Ringold to Coyote Rapids. Saturday Sept. 17th showed an excellent egg bite fished behind divers as the ferry landing.

WDFW Fish Biologist Joe Bumgarner says Snake River **steelhead** creel checks indicate that the fishing remains slow, although a few areas have seen a bit of improvement recently. Ice Harbor and Wallula Junction, below the mouth of the Walla Walla River, have produced fish, while anglers have reported some success at the mouth of the Tucannon River, Bumgarner said.

"Not much is happening on the Grande Ronde River yet," he added, noting that creel checks indicate anglers are averaging about 12 hours of effort per steelhead caught. Clocking in with a seven-hour-per-fish average was the Tucannon, while anglers on the Walla Walla River averaged nine and a half hours per fish. On the mainstem Snake, steelheaders in the stretch between Lower Monumental and Little Goose dams averaged just under 12 hours per steelhead caught.

Ice Harbor to Lower Monumental dams was almost 15 hours per fish, and Little Goose to Lower Granite dams was just over 26 hours per fish. Several **trout** fishing lakes throughout the region close Sept. 30, including eastern Spokane County's Liberty Lake, where the WDFW access site is the only way lakeshore homeowners can remove their docked boats for the season.

WDFW Lands Manager Brian Trickel said the gates to the access area will be left open until Oct. 11 to give residents time to remove their boats after the fishing season closes. The last days of trout fishing should be excellent at other local lakes, such as Badger and Williams in southwest Spokane County, where rainbow and cutthroat to 14 inches long are still being reeled in. A number of fingerlings that were just stocked this year are also now showing up in the catch and anglers are returning them to the water.

That has prompted WDFW sergeant Dan Rahn to remind anglers who fish with bait that they must stop fishing once they have caught five fish - even if the fish are undersized. "I suggest trout anglers shift from bait to lures to avoid this problem," Rahn said. Many fishing lakes remain open through October and are providing good action. Rahn reports that Chapman Lake is producing limits of **kokanee**.

North Central Washington: September 30 marks the end of **chinook salmon** fishing in the Okanogan River and the lower Similkameen River in Okanogan County. The stretches open are the Okanogan from the Highway 97 bridge near the mouth to the railroad trestle downstream of the Lake Osoyoos Control Dam in Oroville, and the Similkameen from the mouth upstream to the county road bridge in Oroville.

The daily limit is six salmon, no more than two adults. All coho and sockeye must be released. Non-buoyant lure restriction and night closure are in effect. Year-round Potholes Reservoir remains good for **bass, walleye, catfish** and **crappie** fishing, especially with lower water levels and cooler temperatures. Many Columbia Basin trout lakes also close to fishing Sept. 30, and the fishing action should improve with the cooler weather.

Check the sport fishing pamphlet for details on specific lakes. Several of the region's lakes are scheduled for rehabilitation, and that means the daily bag limit has been removed for all game species on those waters. In Okanogan County, the daily bag limit is removed on Green, Lower

Green and Spectacle lakes. In Grant County, daily limits have been removed on Warden, South Warden, Quincy and Burke lakes. Daily bag limits remain in effect for Annex Lakes and Shay Pond, which are also scheduled for rehabilitation.

South Central Washington: The Yakima River opened for **salmon** fishing on Sept. 1 from the confluence with the Columbia River upstream to Sunnyside (Parker) Dam, and will remain open through Oct. 22. WDFW Fish Biologist Paul Hoffarth says the peak fishing typically occurs during the last two weeks of the season.

A Yakama Nation Fishing Permit is required for fishing upstream of the Highway 223 Bridge at Granger. Check the "Special Rules" section for the Yakima River for additional details and restrictions. The Hanford Reach area of the Columbia River is also open for salmon fishing through Oct. 22 for all areas upstream of the old Hanford townsite. Hoffarth noted that the Columbia River below the townsite is open through the end of December, although few salmon are caught after the first week in November.

The Columbia River downstream of the Hanford townsite (Ringold) opens Oct. 1 for the retention of **steelhead** returning to the Ringold Hatchery. Hoffarth said these hatchery steelhead have both adipose and ventral fins clipped, and anglers can only harvest those with both fin clips. This fishery remains open through March 31, 2006.

Reader Email

Subscriber 'Bryan' wrote this week via our online Contact Form at the TGF website, " ... you mention in the "North Coast" section that...

"The Salmon River fishery should also take off for bobber anglers" – where is this located... on the Nestucca River or is it an independent tributary or which bay?"

Co-writer and recreational angler Michael Teague responded, "The Salmon River flows along Highway 18 with the first access point at the rest area in Van Duzer Corridor. Most people fish it much lower, however, above the hatchery and below there in tidewater. Since I live in Lincoln City, I drive by several access points frequently and I can tell you it's getting come pressure right now with the halfway decent tidal series. The tidewater portion in mostly a bobber 'n' bait show although some people have success with spinners. I'm sure there are Fall chinook being caught as the run there is a little earlier than the Nestucca.

"Thanks for writing and be sure to do so again if you have any further questions."
We've discussed the Salmon here in the past, but with the season upon us, it bears mentioning again. Wear your thickest skin and those to whom foul language is offensive might avoid it altogether. When mentioning this combat fishery to some, they say they enjoy it and there are some nice chinook caught there as well as coho a little later in the season. Perhaps if one realizes in advance this is a "good ol' boys" gathering place with limited bank space which creates a genuine guerilla fishing spot. Enjoy!

Write to the TGF staff:

Bob Rees: brees@pacifier.com

Doug Rees: drees@TheGuidesForecast.com

Michael Teague: SailCat@TheGuidesForecast.com

Random Links

Bill Monroe takes an eloquent shot at the bureaucrats' decision to close the Columbia chinook

fishery to sportsmen but not gillnetters:

http://www.oregonlive.com/sports/oregonian/bill_monroe/index.ssf?/base/sports/112695461418421.xml&coll=7

Pro Angler Jay Yelas takes a shot at B.A.S.S.:

http://www.bassfan.com/opinion_article.asp?ID=47

On a positive, note, the WDFW has initiated a new interactive mapping tool called SalmonScape to track salmon: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/mapping/salmonscape/index.html>

Check the status of bottomfish and halibut fisheries along with catch rates and remaining quota:

http://www.dfw.state.or.us/MRP/regulations/sport_fishing/index.asp#halibut

Weekly Quote – "I've willingly confronted what, to others, might seem like intolerable discomfort and even danger for the chance to catch a fish, and I've been skunked more than my share of times. But my time on the water has never been wasted." - William Tapply

GOOD LUCK!