

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **April 14<sup>th</sup>, – April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2006**

**Oregon Fisheries Update:**

**Willamette Valley/Metro** - Columbia River anglers will see their fishery close at midnight Thursday, April 13<sup>th</sup>. Although the recreational handle of spring Chinook may indicate the pre-season prediction was correct, Bonneville Dam passage needs to improve dramatically before further opportunities can be explored.

Success had dropped off for mainstem fishers and water releases that flush smolts downstream are partly to blame. Prior to the increase in flow, the river from Altoona to Westport had posted the best results.

Spring Chinook passage at Willamette Falls remains low with only 35 over as of April 7th. Summer steelhead counts are doing somewhat better with year-to-date totals nearing the 350 mark. While the lower Willamette level rose on Monday this week, the flow didn't increase significantly. The water temperature has yet to top 51 degrees at the Falls.

These conditions are reflected in the fishing. It's very slow. Multnomah Channel has produced modest catches recently. It is the route frequently taken by spring Chinook and the water is often a couple of degrees warmer than at the Falls. There have been recent signs of improvement at Oregon City but consistency is not the rule. Sellwood Bridge has also slowed.

Most of the summer steelhead heading up the Willamette are bound for the Santiam system and while there are too few this early to provide prime fishing, anglers are taking some along with a few late wild winter fish. **Pro guide Bill Kremers (541-754- 6411)** reports, "The McKenzie River is providing some great trout catches with size 14 dark caddis producing the best opportunities."

Low on the Clackamas offers the best chance of a spring Chinook or summer steelhead encounter. Success remains low however.

Recent rainfall may improve prospects on the Sandy for springers, but reports lately haven't been encouraging.

Haldeman Pond, Dorena Reservoir, East Freeway Lake, E. E. Wilson Pond, Foster Reservoir, Junction City Pond, Timber Linn Lake, Walling Pond and Walter Wirth Lake are scheduled to be stocked with trout this week.

**Northwest** – North Coast steelhead success remain dormant with water desperately needed for a fresh influx of fish reports **pro guide Jesse Zalonis (503-392-5808)**. Area anglers are in hot pursuit of the first confirmed salmon harvested from the bay but rumors have circulated about a wild fish released early in the week.

Sturgeon effort has dropped off and so has the catch. Better tides begin this week however and a combination salmon/sturgeon trip is a viable option for Tillamook Bay anglers. Spinners in the upper bay for salmon and sand shrimp in the middle section could prove productive.

The ocean remains closed due to high swells and will likely remain that way into the weekend. Crabbing is slow on most north coast estuaries.

Waters planted this with hatchery trout include Battle Lake, Bay City Reservoir, Cape Meares Lake, Carter Lake, Cleawox Lake, Coffenbury Lake, Cullaby Lake, Devil's Lake, Lake Lytle, Smith Lake, South Lake, Tahoe Lake, Town Lake and Woahink Lake.

**Southwest** - With a calm ocean on Monday, April 10th, South coast bottom fishers had easy passage. Results were good with numerous ling cod taken up to 30 pounds along with good rockfish catches.

With the exception of the closure South of Florence, recreational ocean salmon fishing is open but no catches have been reported.

Surf perch fishing off the ocean beaches remains a productive pastime. Any rig capable of throwing sufficient weight to hold bottom will work. Clams, shrimp or mussels are effective baits.

Offshore halibut season opens seven days a week on May 1st but is restricted to waters inside the 40-fathom line from Cape Falcon to Humbug Mountain. The first all-depth fishery of the 2006 spring season will open May 11 through 13th with more days to follow. Halibut quotas, up 4% from last year, have doubled over the last decade.

It's been scratch fishing for springers on the mainstem Umpqua River over the last week. Any anglers landing a salmon considers himself very lucky. Sturgeon catches out of Reedsport are mostly oversized.

Rogue steelheaders are scoring fish in the upper river. It is hoped that warmer temperatures this week will take the chill off the water in the lower Rogue and improve the spring Chinook fishery.

Eel Lake, Upper and Lower Empire Lake, Emigrant Lake, Cole River, Howard Prairie, Hyatt Lake, Lost Creek Lake, Applegate Lake, Selmac Lake and Willow Lake will be planted with trout rainbow trout this week.

**Eastern** - Steelhead fishing is open from the northern boundary of the Warm Springs Reservation to the Columbia with the exception of Shears Falls downstream to Buckhollow Creek. Until 4/22, trout and steelhead fishing is closed from the northern boundary of the reservation upstream to the Pelton re-regulation dam. Trout fishing is holding up well on the lower Deschutes. The middle Deschutes (Sunriver Zone) and upper river are closed.

Many central Oregon lakes and rivers are currently closed or lack access until roads are opened. Some waters are scheduled to open April 22nd, others on May 26th. As always, call 511 for road conditions and check the regulations before making a cast.

Hatchery trout will be planted in the South Fork Crooked River, Pinehollow Reservoir, Rock Creek Reservoir and Taylor Lake this week.

Further east, steelheading has also dropped off significantly on the Grande Ronde and Umatilla. Most fish are in the process of spawning states **pro guide Mac Huff (800-940-3688)**.

**Southwest Washington** - The Cowlitz River is putting out some hatchery spring Chinook to bank anglers in the Castle Rock area. A few late winter fish are being taken at Blue Creek.

Kalama and Lewis River anglers are taking a few fish but success is light.

Beginning April 12<sup>th</sup>, Drano Lake will be closed to fishing each Wednesday through May. Success is

slow here and at the Wind River and will remain that way until a significant jump in passage happens at Bonneville.

Further east, **pro guide Jeff Knotts (1-509-547-7450)** reports, "This last week I did get some good reports from the mouth of the Yakima. Smallmouth bass are staging at the tip of Baitman Island and are being caught on a variety of plastics and cranks. This fishery will remain good for big hens until the Yakima goes into spring flood. Walleye fishing in Irrigon has slowed due to post spawn and high flows but bass fishing will be picking up as the water warms in the sloughs."

**Columbia River Fishing Report** – Sportfishing on the mainstem Columbia closes at midnight on Thursday, April 13<sup>th</sup>. The press release reads as follows:

SALEM - With spring chinook runs on the Columbia River looking very similar to last year's, Oregon and Washington fishery managers Tuesday decided to close all sport angling for spring chinook in the Columbia River below the I-5 Bridge, effective 11:59 p.m. Thursday night.

The decision closes the recreational fishing season for salmon, steelhead and shad in the mainstem Columbia River between the mouth at Buoy 10 upstream to I-5. Salmon, steelhead, and shad angling is already closed in the Columbia River from the I-5 Bridge upstream to Bonneville Dam. Recreational fishing for salmon, steelhead, and shad in the Columbia River from Bonneville to McNary Dam (excluding salmon angling from a boat and from the Washington shore between Bonneville Dam and Tower Island power lines) remains open. All tributaries below Bonneville Dam also remain open as per permanent regulations. If the counts for spring chinook at Bonneville Dam improve during the coming weeks, fishery managers will consider re-opening the fishing seasons.

The upriver spring chinook count through April 10 at Bonneville Dam totaled 121 fish. Passage for this date is comparable to 2005 - one of the lowest spring chinook counts on record for this date. The 10-year average for this date is 19,400 adult chinook. For years with late runs, the average is approximately 1,100 fish. Upriver spring chinook run sizes cannot be updated until late April when significant passage has occurred.

Spring chinook counts at Willamette Falls totaled 35 fish as of April 7, compared to 404 fish for the same time last year. Willamette spring Chinook run sizes cannot be updated until early May.

Fish managers set the Columbia River spring chinook fishery based on the number of fish expected to return from the ocean and the allowable impact to wild salmon and steelhead stocks listed under the federal Endangered Species Act.

"Impacts" are the unintended mortalities associated with handling and releasing wild fish. The allowed non-Indian impacts are 2 percent of the total runs of ESA -listed Snake River spring/summer chinook and Upper Columbia River spring chinook.

Additional information about the Columbia River spring chinook season also may be found on ODFW's Web page at [http://www.dfw.state.or.us/OSCRP/CRM/action\\_notes.html](http://www.dfw.state.or.us/OSCRP/CRM/action_notes.html)

Most recently, anglers reported difficult conditions on the lower Columbia with increased flows and large amounts of debris. Mixed results however are coming from the river below Longview. One report talked about good fishing in Clifton Channel on the day before the closure while other reports stated slow fishing most likely associated with increased flows from dam releases. Regardless of how productive the fishing really is, it will have little benefit to anglers as the river closes to fishing after

dark on Thursday.

Most are asking what are the chances of a re-opener. Having been on the phone at the last compact meeting, I am not optimistic. The Departments are looking at using recreational catch statistics as an indicator to run sizes but the information is so new, we can't quite justify using it to manage the season this year. Many are optimistic according to recent catch rates in the lower Columbia that the run will indeed show up as predicted if not in greater numbers this season. Many are also theorizing that the sealions are stalling fish passage at Bonneville and therefore causing the run to look smaller than it really is. It is this fear that is actually driving the closure of the fishery. Many of the user groups once again harped on the Departments about the sealion issue and we are continually being told "that the process is slow but we are doing something about it." In reality, it is likely that nothing is going to get done about it (in earnest) this year but aggressive hazing tactics are being employed. The states are seeking an exemption from the Federal Government to lethally remove problem sealions but it will take some doing- hopefully we won't have to list the Columbia River White Sturgeon before we get this "exception".

Sturgeon fishing remains somewhat poor downstream of Bonneville Dam but slight improvements have been noted in the gorge, near the mouth of the Willamette and a few fish are being pursued in the estuary as well. Catches have been light but positive changes are on the horizon.

The walleye fishery is still holding on but success has dropped from previous weeks. Productive reservoirs remain The Dalles and Bonneville Pools. Fish are nearing their spawning phase and are becoming less responsive to bait.

**The Guide's Forecast** – With the Columbia closure, there isn't a whole lot to get excited about. Sturgeon fishing will likely be the next fishery to tap into and the best action- if you gauge this fishery on last year, will likely take place in the gorge. With the warming waters, action should pick up and fish should be present at Skamania Flats, Horsetail Falls and upstream. Smelt will be the bait of choice but anglers will want to stand out when the crowds start to participate so use smelt tipped with shrimp or employ your favorite scent when pursuing these fish.

The estuary will begin to gain momentum but effort will stall during the May 1<sup>st</sup> – May 12<sup>th</sup> retention closure. Fish should be most present in the John Day area and sand shrimp or smelt should produce the best results.

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report** – Spring Chinook passage at Willamette Falls had been by ones or twos until last Saturday until a dozen crossed on Saturday and counts have been in the low double digits since. As of April 10th, the latest data available, 79 springers have crossed. Summer steelhead counts are pushing 400 year-to-date. While the lower Willamette level rose on Monday this week, the flow increase only marginally but the freshet brought with it the usual assortment of wood on Tuesday this week, so keep a watchful eye upstream when boating. Multnomah Channel is just as hazardous. The water temperature is really the culprit in stalling the salmon run as it has yet to top 51 degrees at the Falls.

Trout are taking caddis imitations and nymphs for long-rodders on the McKenzie. With the March Brown hatch starting, the preference is soon likely to change.

The trap at Foster Dam on the South Fork Santiam has had 179 summer steelhead return as of April 12th. Recycling of about half the returning summers downstream commenced a couple of weeks back.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Fishing will remain slow but steady in the lower river with the best bets

Multnomah Channel and Sellwood Bridge. Low numbers make it a challenge to single out any one technique over another, but trolling wrapped Kwikfish, plug-cut herring or prawn spinners with the current has been responsible for some of the hookups. Recent data indicates about 20% of the boats trying are putting a springer over the gunwale.

Numbers at the Falls along with catch rates will improve when the temperature of the water rises. Looking back at data from years past confirms this consistently.

The South Santiam actually shows some possibility in the upcoming week. Over 50 of the fish in the year-to-date totals returned in a five-day period, indicating decent numbers entering. Combined with the re-runs, it's enough to give summers steelheaders reason for optimism. The North Santiam will be mostly a catch-and-release show for native steelhead with very few summers in reported catches recently.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports** – The Barton to Carver stretch was the most productive on the Clackamas River this week, but fishing for a mix of wild and hatchery steelhead is fair at best.

Of the steelhead hooked on the Sandy River, the vast majority are natives requiring release. Oxbow to Dabney has been slow to fair.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Blown out from the last storm front, the Clack settled down this week but is likely to swell and roil again with rain expected this weekend. Recycling of steelhead downriver will start soon to allow anglers a second shot at them.

Recent catches of summer steelhead on the Sandy are encouraging and the next freshet should draw a few more springers into the system. Depending on how much rain falls, the river may be out of shape until next week.

**North Coast District Fishing Report** – Steelhead effort continues to wane on the North Oregon Coast but the folks that are sticking to it are still finding success. Results are certainly sporadic but the Nestucca and Wilson as well as the Trask are still putting out fair numbers of fish occasionally. **Pro guide Kent Anderson (503-550-6303)** put **NSIA's president Dan Parnell** onto 4 nice steelhead on the Nestucca on 4/11. The group landed a combination of fresh and spent wild fish sidedrifting eggs on the lower river.

The Wilson has been sparse for effort but some fish are being caught from Mills Bridge downstream. Some summer fish are beginning to show in the catches. Rumors of spring Chinook are coming from the river systems but dedicated anglers will have to fish hard to find success.

The Trask is also very low and clear so stealth tactics must be employed when pursuing salmon or steelhead. Early morning is the best and with the transition in runs, persistence is key.

Sturgeon anglers are still finding keepers in the estuary and the upper bay along with the south channel are producing the best results. The tides haven't been that conducive to great opportunity but as you will read in the forecast section, that is about to change.

Crabbing remains fair at best in Tillamook Bay and Netarts is the same.

Although the ocean has been too big to allow bar passage, bottomfishers are finding success on ling cod and Seabass along the jetties jigging feather jigs, small herring or rubber worms. Many of the

ling cod are too small to keep but larger ones will be making their way into the jetties to spawn. I question the management decision to allow harvest this time of year but how much further can we actually curb bank angling access?

**The Guide's Forecast** – A rise in river levels is forecasted just prior to the weekend. Although the rise isn't forecasted to be all that significant, for this time of year, any rise is welcome and will add significant numbers of chrome to coastal river.

Although good numbers of spring Chinook are not likely, a few salmon coupled with the possibility of fresh late winter run a summer run fish is a likelihood. The best fishing will take place when the river crests so watch your hydrographs. Fair numbers of fish will have been staging in the tidewater sections or estuaries of these coastal systems. The Trask, Wilson and Nestucca will provide the best opportunity and be sure to check regulation changes that went into effect on April 1<sup>st</sup> on many coastal rivers.

To boot, a nice tide series begins on Friday that should help entice salmon and steelhead into freshwater systems. Early morning salmon fishing in upper Tillamook Bay should produce some results for those trolling spinners or working plugs. The Oyster House Hole will likely put out a few nice fish.

Sturgeon anglers should find favor with the tide series as well using shrimp to pursue keepers in the middle bay and south channel. Even though crabbing is somewhat poor in the estuary, sculpin and crab will compete for your bait so bring lots so you don't run out!

The ocean is forecasted to stay big so offshore salmon and bottomfishing will not be an option and crabbing will not be likely as well. The ocean, when open will provide the best chance for keeper crab.

**Central & South Coast Reports** – Crabbing in coastal bays and in the ocean has produced females, undersized and few legal males over the past week. Wind and wave prediction forecast for this weekend will prevent boats from crossing into the Big Pond, but when the weather moderates, fine bottom fishing and offshore salmon prospects await anglers.

While the winter steelhead are cooperating in the mainstem Umpqua River, spring chinook action has fallen off. The North and South Fork have fair to good numbers of winter chinook present but chilly water has them off the bite. Shad numbers are improving but the better fishing will come later in the year. Sturgeon fishing below Reedsport is holding up well but in this fishery, it's catch-and-release for oversized fish in the search for one short enough to keep. Charter boats out of Winchester Bay took advantage of mild conditions earlier this week, rewarding clients with limits of ling cod and rockfish.

Coos River steelheaders may fish through April 30th but the action is winding down here. While the Coquille River offers slightly better prospects, cold water has slowed steelheading here as well.

Improving conditions on the lower Rogue River this week have had a positive impact on the spring chinook fishing. A few winter steelhead are entering as well, but springers are the focus of anglers. Since the water temperature reached 50 degrees, about half the boats trying in the lower river are landing a salmon by dragging anchovies with or without a Rogue River Spinner setup. With a half-dozen springers already over Gold Ray Dam and steelheading slow in the Grants Pass stretch, fishers are trying for concentrating on springers here as well. Steelheading in the upper Rogue remains a good option with steelhead counts nearing 7,500 at Gold Ray. All manner of bait and hardware

have been effective at times. One wild steelhead per day up to five a year and one wild chinook up to three per year may be kept anywhere in the Rogue system.

The Elk, Sixes and Chetco rivers closed to steelhead and salmon fishing at the March.

**Central and Eastern Oregon** – While the John Day River is historically picking up for smallmouth bass at this time of year, high, muddy conditions has fishing shut down here.

**Northwest Bass & Panfish** - The smallmouth are stirring and striking at Hagg Lake. This amazing impoundment has produced several consecutive State-record smallies, some by accident, some by deliberate effort. It is generally conceded, however, that the big ones are tough to find and tempt to the hook.

**Northwest Trout** - In the Willamette Valley, Haldeman Pond, Dorena Reservoir, East Freeway Lake, E. E. Wilson Pond, Foster Reservoir, Junction City Pond, Timber Linn Lake, Walling Pond and Walter Wirth Lake are scheduled to be stocked with trout this week. Waters planted this with hatchery trout in the Northwest Zone include Battle Lake, Bay City Reservoir, Cape Meares Lake, Carter Lake, Cleawox Lake, Coffenbury Lake, Cullaby Lake, Devil's Lake, Lake Lytle, Smith Lake, South Lake, Tahoe Lake, Town Lake and Woahink Lake.

Faraday Lake has been receiving winter steelhead from the trap at North Fork Reservoir thanks to an effort of the folks at PGE.

According to a recent ODFW release, young people interested in learning to fish can do so April 15 at Nedonna Pond, just north of Rockaway Beach as part of the Youth Angling Enhancement Program. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife will stock approximately 600 legal-size rainbow trout and 50 trophy trout well as supplying rods, reels and tackle for use by young anglers who do not have their own fishing equipment. The fishing event is scheduled from 9 A.M. to 2 P.P. The child who catches the largest trout will win a rod and reel.

**SW Washington** - After a promising start, the **spring chinook** fishery on the lower Columbia River slowed during the third week of March even as the number of anglers multiplied. Creel checks of 961 salmonid anglers fishing below the Interstate 5 bridge turned up 33 chinook and nine **steelhead** - or about one chinook for every 30 rods. By comparison, surveys in the same area a week earlier revealed a catch rate for every 16.8 rods.

"The action has been fairly decent in an area one day and then slow the next," said Joe Hymer, a WDFW fish biologist. "It's too early to draw any meaningful conclusions about the run from two weeks of sampling, but catch rates should get more consistent as the fishery progresses."

On the Cowlitz River, 69 bank anglers interviewed from barrier dam to the mouth caught one spring chinook and seven winter steelhead during the week of March 13. Most of the fish were caught from Olequa downstream. Thirty-seven boat anglers interviewed on the Cowlitz that week had caught 13 winter steelhead, most taken around Blue Creek. Meanwhile, 34 bank anglers checked on the Lewis River accounted for just one steelhead and no chinook salmon. Nineteen boat anglers caught just one chinook.

As of March 17, only two spring chinook had been counted at Bonneville Dam, so the upriver fishery has not yet gotten under way, Hymer said. Bank anglers fishing in The Dalles Pool did, however, hook up with 13 steelhead that week, 10 of them hatchery fish. Boat anglers focused on **walleye**,

averaging about a fish per rod in the Bonneville Pool and a fish for every two rods in The Dalles Pool. Bass are also beginning become active above Bonneville Dam.

Undersized fish continued to provide most of the action in the **sturgeon** fishery above and below Bonneville Dam, although anglers are pulling some "keepers" from Bonneville, The Dalles, and John Day pools.

For upriver salmon anglers waiting for the spring chinook run to arrive, Hymer recommends keeping an eye on fish counts at Bonneville Dam posted on the Army Corps of Engineers website at <http://www.nwp.usace.army.mil/op/fishdata/home.asp>. The fishery in the mainstem Columbia River will be open through April 30 from the Tower Island power lines, approximately six miles below The Dalles Dam, to McNary Dam. The limit for chinook salmon is six marked (fin-clipped) fish, only two of which can be adults. All chum and sockeye must be released.

Under new rules approved this year, anglers will also be required to release any wild, unclipped chinook salmon they catch on Drano Lake, lower Wind River, White Salmon River and Klickitat River. Wind River and Drano Lake opened for hatchery chinook retention March 16, while the Klickitat will open April 1. Once it opens, the spring chinook fishery in the Klickitat River will be open Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays from the mouth to the Fisher Hill Bridge. The other areas will be open seven days per week except Drano Lake, which will be closed Wednesday beginning in mid April.

Anglers looking for some action in the Vancouver area might want to try Klineline Pond, which was planted with 1,000 catchable-size **brown trout**. In the week that followed, 39 bank anglers pulled 62 browns and 52 **rainbows** out of the pond in Salmon Creek Park.

**North Central Washington** – April 1 marks the opening of more Columbia Basin **rainbow trout** fisheries and WDFW District Fish Biologist Jeff Korth predicts a good season at many of them. Among the best and largest of these waters are Upper and Lower Hampton lakes on the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge, eight miles north of Othello. Both were rehabilitated in the fall of 2004, re-stocked with fingerling rainbow trout last spring (21,000 in Upper, 8,000 in Lower), and have had no fishing since. Korth says this year's opener should be very good. Lower Hampton has a primitive boat launch. Upper Hampton is a walk-in lake, however Korth says it's not too far to carry a float tube. Just below the Hampton lakes is Hen Lake, stocked with 750 rainbow fingerlings last year, which should produce similar results.

The Pillar-Widgeon chain of lakes on the refuge should also be productive. Those lakes were also rehabilitated in 2004, re-stocked last year, and have remained un-fished until this season. "These 10 small, walk-in lakes are spread over about a square mile of beautiful canyon land," Korth said. "They will provide some good fishing for the persistent angler, with bank fishing on most, but float-tube fishing is a definite advantage. The best of the lot will probably be Widgeon, Sago, and Pillar, but never count any of the other waters out." Fingerling rainbow stocking rates were: Pillar - 2,500, Gadwall - 750, Shoveler - 750, Lemna - 450, Poacher - 150, Snipe - 600, Cattail - 1,500, Sago - 300, Hourglass - 300, Widgeon - 1,600.

Korth reported that Para-Juvenile, McManaman, Halfmoon, and Morgan lakes, all in the lower portion of the drainage below the Hampton lakes, were well stocked last year with both rainbow and **cutthroat trout**. However, they won't provide as much fishing action. "Sunfish, perch, and bass currently impact trout survival," he said. "So, expect a few large fish, especially the cutthroat." Korth also noted that Morgan and much of Halfmoon are on private land, so access is from the west end of Halfmoon Lake. Para-Juvenile is only for anglers up to 14 years of age. Fingerling stocking rates (rainbow, cutthroat) were: Para-Juvenile - 2,400, 1,500; McManaman - 1,400, 1,000; Halfmoon - 3,000, 1,000; Morgan - 4,000. North and South Teal, Herman, and Lyle lakes have all been "infiltrated with spiny-rayed fish," Korth said, so rainbow trout survival has been poor. "Fishing

pressure has been relatively light at these lakes so there's a good chance some bigger carry-overs will be caught," he said. Fingerling rainbow stocking rates were: North Teal - 6,300, South Teal - 9,000, Herman - 10,600, Lyle - 3,000.

Dry Falls Lake in Sun Lakes State Park, about three miles west of Coulee City in northern Grant County opens April 1. This lake is under selective gear rules and a one trout catch limit. Well stocked with rainbows, Dry Falls catch rates have recently been "on a slide for as yet unknown reasons," Korth said. Sterile, triploid rainbow fingerlings were stocked in the lake from 1999 through 2004. "So the possibility for some true four- to seven-year old monsters is very real," he said. From 2000-2004, half the rainbow fingerlings stocked have been triploids, with an annual total of 10,000 rainbows. Except for the 2003 yearlings, the normal, diploid rainbow are adipose-clipped, and the triploids are not clipped. There are also 2,000 **brown** and **tiger trout** (a cross between a brown and brook trout) stocked annually.

In Okanogan County, several rainbow trout-stocked lakes open to catch-and-release fishing on April 1 - Davis, Little Twin, and Campbell lakes in the Winthrop area, Little Green Lake in the Omak area, and Rat Lake in the Brewster area. WDFW District Fish Biologist Bob Jateff reminds anglers that all of these lakes are under selective gear rules and anglers should check with locals before traveling to them since some will likely still be partially frozen on April 1. Big Green, near Omak, is another lake that opens April 1 for catch-and-release, but due to a fall 2005 rehabilitation treatment, it will not be re-stocked with trout until May of this year. Spectacle Lake northwest of Tonasket, which opened March 1, will be receiving 35,000 catchable-size rainbows by the first week of April. Spectacle will also receive 1,000 one-to-two-pound triploid rainbows in April. Jateff said Spectacle, which normally closes July 31, will have a new closing date of Sept. 30 starting this year.

Jateff also reminds anglers that the **steelhead** season on the Upper Columbia, Methow, Okanogan, and Similkameen rivers is scheduled to close March 31. "Steelheading should start to pick up before then in all areas as the water temperature warms up and fish become active," he said. "The jig and bobber fishermen seem to be doing the best, but fly anglers using flies with a strike indicator are also effective. Anglers who can cover a lot of ground are generally more successful, because they access areas where fish have not been disturbed as much."

**Bass, bluegill** and **crappie** are the attraction at Adams County's Hutchinson and Shiner lakes and Coyote, Bobcat, and Hayes creeks and ponds - all opening April 1. These small warm-water fisheries usually warm up early to provide excellent fishing. Only non-motorized boats are allowed on Hutchinson and Shiner, and Coyote and Bobcat creeks and ponds are walk-in access only. Access for both areas is off McMannaman Road. Mike Schmuck, WDFW warm-water fish biologist, said other year-round warm-water species fisheries also are producing now. "With warmer weather, the bite should be picking up," Schmuck said. "Anglers have been using black Rooster Tails to catch bass at Stan Coffin Lake on our Quincy Wildlife Area in Grant County." Schmuck reminds anglers that Stan Coffin is a catch-and-release bass lake. All warm-water fishing in the northcentral region is now described on WDFW's website at [http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regions/reg2/reg2\\_prospects.htm](http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regions/reg2/reg2_prospects.htm).

**South Central Washington** - WDFW enforcement officers recently reported "excellent" **walleye** catches on the Columbia River below John Day Dam southeast of Goldendale. Some fishing boats checked had landed five to seven walleye. The daily limit is 10 walleye with no more than five over 18 inches and no more than one over 24 inches. One 47.5-inch **sturgeon** was checked below McNary Dam, and fortunately officers were able to release the fish unharmed. The angler was verbally warned for the undersized sturgeon. Minimum size for sturgeon in that stretch of the Columbia River is 48 inches, maximum size is 60 inches and the catch limit is one. Recent Yakima River drift-boat patrols showed only light fishing activity. Some **bass** have recently been harvested on the Snake and Columbia rivers. Warm-water fish species were also the target of anglers recently checked at Worth Lake, northwest of Mesa in Franklin County. A total of 35 **rainbow trout** fishers

recently checked at Mattoon Lake averaged four trout apiece. Trout fishermen at Myron Lake in Yakima County were recently cited by WDFW officers for exceeding the bag limit, violating gear rules, and fishing without licenses. Myron has a one trout catch limit and selective gear rules (no bait, single barbless hook) are in effect.

"All of these selective-gear waters will see a change on May 1 that anglers should be thinking about now as they gear up for spring and summer fishing," said Jim Cummins, WDFW fish biologist. "Those changes will require anglers to use knotless nets to reduce abrasion and scale loss and therefore increase survival of released fish." Cummins said most fly fishers already use knotless nets, but others will need to gear up.

Two Franklin County fisheries recently received more hatchery stock. Dalton Lake was stocked with 2,500 catchable-size (8-12 inch) rainbows and Marmes Pond was stocked with 100 catchable rainbows. Anglers can check the weekly stocking report for the latest information at Catchable Trout Plant Weekly Reports (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/weekly/>).

**Puget Sound** – The region continues to be decent for **blackmouth** anglers. Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands) has been productive with reports of nice-size fish, some pushing 25 pounds, said Steve Thiesfeld, Puget Sound recreational salmon manager for WDFW. "Given the reports we've received lately from the San Juans, anglers should try and take advantage of the few remaining fishing days in that area," Thiesfeld said. Blackmouth fishing closes March 31 in Marine Area 7.

Anglers, however, can continue to chase blackmouth in marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) and 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) through April. Fishing in those two areas has been slow but steady. "It's not as hot as it was in January, but those two areas continue to kick out some nice blackmouth," Thiesfeld said. Anglers fishing marine areas 8-1 and 8-2 have a daily limit of two salmon, but wild chinook must be released. Unlike hatchery fish, wild chinook have an intact adipose fin.

The Everett ramp continued to be one of the busiest locations in the region, with 59 anglers checking in 12 chinook March 18, and 116 fishers hauling in 13 blackmouth March 19. Another busy ramp was Bellingham's, where 31 anglers accounted for five chinook March 18, while 73 fishers checked in 18 blackmouth the following day.

Saltwater anglers looking for a change of pace will soon have an opportunity to hook a **halibut**. The halibut season opens April 9 throughout the region - five days earlier than last season. Fishing is open five days a week, Thursday through Monday, with a daily limit of one halibut and no minimum size limit.

This time of year, **steelhead** anglers in northern Puget Sound are limited to catch-and-release fisheries on the Skagit and Sauk rivers. Reports from both rivers continue to show decent fishing for wild steelhead, particularly in the Sauk. Anglers planning to fish for steelhead in northern Puget Sound should check the *2005/2006 Fishing in Washington* pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) and WDFW's Emergency Rule Changes, which are posted on the same website.

One of the last opportunities for the public to comment on this year's proposed salmon-fishing seasons will be at a meeting in Lynnwood on March 30. The meeting, which is scheduled to begin at 9 a.m. at the Lynnwood Embassy Suites Hotel, 20610 44th Ave. W., is designed to continue developing preliminary proposals for 2006 salmon fisheries. The final fishing package for the ocean, as well as nearshore coastal, Puget Sound and Columbia River waters, will be finalized in early April in Sacramento, Calif. More information about the salmon season-setting process, including salmon forecasts, can be found on the North of Falcon website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/northfalcon/>).

**Olympic Peninsula** – The arrival of spring signals the start of several new fisheries, while others wind down for the season. The result is a veritable gumbo of fishing opportunities, including razor clams, lingcod, steelhead, halibut and the possibility of catching a spring chinook salmon.

For a start, **razor-clam** enthusiasts should be aware that WDFW has approved a dig on all five ocean beaches March 25-28. Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks, Copalis and Kalaloch will all open for digging on evening tides March 25-27. Two of those beaches - Twin Harbors and Mocrocks - will also open for a fourth day of digging March 28.

As during previous digs this season, no digging will be allowed before noon at any of those beaches. Low evening tide will be 3:14 p.m. March 25 (+0.3 ft.), 4:07 p.m. March 26 (0.0 ft.), 4:55 p.m. March 27 (-0.2 ft.) and 5:39 p.m. March 28 (-0.1 ft.).

WDFW is also tentatively planning a dig for late April - the first of the season scheduled on *morning* tides. Provided toxin tests are favorable, Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks and Copalis are all tentatively scheduled to open April 28-30 on morning tides, followed by a one-day dig May 1 at Twin Harbors and Mocrocks. An April opening at Kalaloch is in question, however, because the clam harvest on that beach has been unusually low during recent digs.

Meanwhile, **lingcod** fishing got under way March 18 in ocean areas south of Cape Alava and the initial reports are promising. Anglers aboard charter boats fishing out of Westport are averaging about one ling per rod, most running 7 to 10 pounds apiece, said Wendy Beeghley, a WDFW fish biologist. "Charter fishers are doing really well," said Beeghley, noting that about a dozen boats are working the fishery during weekends. Most private boats are fishing Grays Harbor, she said.

Sampling efforts are currently confined to Marine Area 2 (Westport), but WDFW will start sampling the catch in marine areas 1 (Ilwaco) and 3 (LaPush) on May 1. Marine Area 4 (Neah Bay) will open for lingcod fishing April 16. In all four ocean areas, the catch limit is two fish per day, measuring at least 24 inches. Anglers fishing in Marine Area 2 should be aware of a 30-fathom depth restriction approved March 3 to protect yelloweye rockfish. (See <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm> on the WDFW website.)

Hoping to tie into an even bigger fish? This year's **halibut** fishery gets under way April 9 in marine areas 6-11 and 13 of Puget Sound. The fishery will be open five days per week, Thursday through Monday, through June 18. Best bets for catching a big flatfish in April are marine areas 6, 9 and 13, said Michele Culver, a WDFW fish biologist. "The fishing should be good, and we've heard that April is the best time to go," Culver said. Later openings set for the coast and other areas are described on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/do/newreal/release.php?id=mar0306b>.

Catch rates for wild **steelhead** have been strong as the fishery nears the finish line on several area rivers. On the Hoh River, 152 anglers interviewed from March 17-19 had caught 105 steelhead, all but a few of them wild fish. All of those wild fish were released. The Hoh will close to all steelhead fishing the evening of March 31, as will the Wynoochee, Satsop and some other area rivers. Before heading out, steelhead anglers are advised to call the WDFW Fishing Hotline (360-902-2500) or check the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>.

The Quillayute River system, which remains open through April 30, should continue to provide good steelhead fishing in the weeks ahead, said Mike Gross, a WDFW fish biologist. "Fishing has been pretty good recently, but a little rain would help," he said. On the Calawah, one river in the Quillayute system, anglers averaged a fish per rod in creel checks conducted March 17-19. The same was true for the 49 anglers checked on the Sol Duc River during that period, although 78 anglers checked on the Bogachiel had hooked just 32 steelhead.

Gross said anglers have taken a few **spring chinook** salmon in the Quillayute system, where all wild spring chinook must be released. Anglers have also reported catching spring chinook in several marine areas, although those fish may actually be large blackmouth, said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW Puget Sound recreational salmon manager.

"A lot of anglers assume that if they catch a 20- or 30-pound salmon at this time of year, it must be a spring chinook," Thiesfeld said. "They may be right, but chances are good it's a big old blackmouth."

Either way, chinook fishing has been picking up in several areas, notably the eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca (Marine Area 6). At Ediz Hook in Port Angeles, anglers have been averaging about one fish for every four rods. In the waters off Point Defiance (Marine Area 11), catch rates have been even better some days.

Can't make this month's razor clam dig? Here are some additional **clam-digging** opportunities recently announced by WDFW:

Illahee State Park, Kitsap County: Sport clam and oyster fishing seasons will open April 1 through July 31.

West Bewatto (DNR 44-A), Mason County: Sport clam season is extended through May 31.

Dosewallips State Park, Jefferson County: Sport clam season will open May 15 through July 31.

Fort Flagler State Park, Jefferson County: Sport clam season will open April 1 through July 15.

Point Whitney Tidelands, Jefferson County: Sport clam season is extended through July 1.

Point Whitney Lagoon, Jefferson County: Sport clam season will open Aug. 1-31.

**Eastern Washington** - Anglers at early-opening and year-round **rainbow trout** lakes throughout the region are seeing good catches of 8- to 12-inch fish, with occasional larger catches either from "jumbo" hatchery plants or winter carryovers. Among the Tucannon River impoundments in Columbia County, Blue, Rainbow and Spring lakes just received 100 more "jumbo" rainbows from the Tucannon Fish Hatchery. Spring and Watson lakes also received a couple thousand more catchables (8- to 12-inchers) each. Walla Walla County's Bennington Lake, a reservoir that is open to fishing year-round, but is drained and filled annually, is now full of water and trout. WDFW Lyons Ferry and Tucannon hatchery crews stocked Bennington with 7,000 rainbows this week. More will be added next month and through June. Walla Walla County's Quarry Pond just received another 2,500 catchable-size rainbows. Asotin County's year-round waters - Golf Course and West Evans ponds - were each stocked with 150 jumbo rainbows. Lincoln County's Coffeepot Lake is producing nice catches of rainbows, but anglers there need to comply with selective gear rules and a two-trout daily catch limit. Spokane County's Amber Lake is also productive for both rainbow and **cutthroat trout**, but it's catch-and-release only until April 29. After April 29, the lake will still be under selective gear rules.

John Whalen, WDFW regional fish program manager, said that all selective-gear waters will change on May 1. "Those changes require anglers to use knotless nets to reduce abrasion and scale loss and therefore increase survival of released fish," he said. "Most fly fishers already use knotless nets, but others will need to gear up."

Snake River drainage **steelhead** fishing continues to be productive in the last weeks of the season. Best catch rates were reported near the mouth of the Grand Ronde River where steelheaders averaged just a little over an hour of fishing per steelhead caught. The Touchet River was almost

that good, and the Tucannon River measured just under two hours per fish caught. Anglers on the Walla Walla River averaged a little under three hours per steelhead. Check out the full details of the latest creel survey at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/snake/index.htm>. Steelhead fishing closes on the Snake River mainstem March 31, while portions of tributaries like the Grande Ronde, Touchet, and Tucannon rivers remain open through April 15. Check the [fishing regulations pamphlet](#) for all details.

### Reader Email

Kaptn Ken Johnson waxes philosophical in his report from the lower Willamette this week. "I went out on the Willamette River today with my buddy Pete. Pete's the guy who married my old girlfriend. I only say that as a point of reference. I love them both! Always will. Can't help it! We went out in my "new" used little ol' boat today. Pete hadn't been in it yet and I've only taken it out once before, so in a way it was our maiden voyage. It's a couple of days after my 56th birthday and I was kind of treating myself to a belated birthday present to myself. I invited Pete to my celebration. We trolled from the Oregon City area to Lake Oswego in the "Deep Water" for hours and hours. It was wonderful. We caught absolutely nothing. Oh, after a couple of hours, we got our adrenalin pumping three different times I think, no four, when we snagged the bottom of the river and our rod tips buried themselves almost to the water line. One would think that as well as I know this river, I would know where all the shallow spots are, and for the most part I do...But, I'm still pretty good at finding them from time to time. Well, I did it again, today. 3 or 4 times. It was wonderful. It rained pretty hard for at least 1/2 the time we were out there. It couldn't have been a nicer day. My back's killing me but that's just me. Let's me know I'm still alive. We saw some seals out there today and got a bit verbal about it. You know how a salmon fisherman feels about those seals. The discussion got pretty heated. For example, we wondered how much grease would fill up the bottom of our BBQ's if we slapped some Seal Steaks on the grills. I said I assumed it would be a lot and it would probably be best to take the BBQ off the deck and cook over the yard somewhere. Wouldn't have a greasy deck that way! I thought it should be cooked one way, and Pete thought it should be cooked another. We came to the same conclusion though and it was that no matter how you fixed it, it would have to be heated! That's about as "heated" as our conversation went. Just something to pass the time as we trolled and trolled and trolled. A Bald Eagle was soaring about 300 feet above the water. I was wondering what he was looking for and if his fishing luck was any better than ours. Drakes were trying to drown their girlfriends again and again all over the place...Glad the grandchildren were in school today. It's definitely that time of year. I swear I saw an Osprey but I thought they usually didn't start showing up until the end of April, or so. I could be wrong. We watched as the Heron's soared above Yuca Island. I don't know what it is, but I love to watch the Heron's soar all together like a big ol' family reunion. They've been back in town for a few weeks now definitely marking the beginning of spring. I really know spring is here, not so much when I see the words on my calendar, but when I see hundreds of Heron's soaring above the Yuca Island. I actually look forward to it each year. It's my thing, I know, but it's pretty neat, for me anyway. They all get together, like 200+ of them, all at once, and soar amongst each other, all over the sky, drifting around, like they're telling each other all about their wintering adventures down South and just saying Hello for the first time in this new Spring. It is quite a sight to see, actually. They're a pretty big bird in the wingspan department, you know. It was a beautiful day when you think of it. There is so much out there. I kept thinking that all day long...How beautiful the day was and the life that is in it. If you just take the time to look, listen smell and see what's hanging around the city and the river. This city of ours is really a beautiful place. For miles and miles around it too. Today was like a gift and I was sharing it with my friend Pete. He and his wife Patti bought me a delicious Birthday Dinner at Red Lobster a couple of nights before and that was great. More than great!!! Today, however, was special. The sights and smells of the river, the sounds of hundreds of grunting Heron's above. An American Bald Eagle checking out the area looking so elegant and royal as he soared above.

"For some reason, immediately after noticing that Eagle, I thought of my son who is in the Army

right now. He is scheduled to get out at the end of August of this year, FOR GOOD! Yep, it was a simple day, you know...But it was really special. Pete and I have an understanding of sorts. It has nothing to do with the fact that he married my old girlfriend either. We joke about that a lot. No, Pete gave me yet another gift today! His gift was that of being with a good friend to me who has been there for me through some wobbly times and still sticks around. He gave me the gift of his time. We're getting older now and I think it's time we really value these "times" we share with our friends and families. No, the understanding that Pete and I have with each other is that we're not out there to actually catch fish...Well, at least not always. We're fishing...Not there to necessarily "Catch." Matter of fact, in the nearly 17 years I've known Pete, I've NEVER been able to CATCH a Salmon when he's on board! Oh, I catch Salmon...Just not with Pete in the boat. Pete has never even caught a Salmon in the Willamette or Columbia, period. I love him dearly but "Catching" really sucks when he's around! No, we don't go out catchin' too often.

"But, we sure have a swell time Fishin'. A fish would only be a bonus to a wonderful day. I just built a real nice fish cleaning station in preparation for my moving out of my home, here in Clackamas County. I was born in Milwaukee and now reside in Gladstone. I haven't gone too far in my life, I guess. I'm going to take my new "FCS" to my new residence on the Central Oregon coast hoping, of course, to use it very often. So, while loading the boat this morning and getting ready for the day, I was really hoping "we" could have broken it in cleaning a Salmon. I mean, I don't want to ruin a "Non-Catching' Streak" of nearly 2 decades but cleaning a 15 or 20 pound Salmon, just to break it in, would have been really nice. What the heck was I thinking? Nope...Just wasn't to be!

"No Salmon.....again. You would think I would be used to it by now. I am...it didn't matter...When all was said and done, it was all just a beautiful, beautiful day!!!"

Going fishing? Got an opinion on something? How 'bout an unusual, amusing or informative fishing story? Shoot us an Email!

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### **Random Links**

Offshore halibut quotas: \*<http://www.iphc.washington.edu/halcom/sport/2asportglance.htm>

It's that time of year - Find a park online for camping:

\*<http://www.oregonstateparks.org/searchpark.php>

**Weekly Quote** – "There is not the slightest doubt, of course, that the fishing is better on some days than it is on others, and that frequently certain parts of the day are better than others. All fishermen know that. My thesis is that I do not believe anyone can predict those times - at least for any appreciable period in advance ." - Robert Traver

**GOOD LUCK!**