

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **April 28th, – May 4th, 2006**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- Although not much attention is being directed to the Columbia River, sturgeon has drawn the attention of many anglers and people are finding results. Anglers fishing in the gorge drew a keeper per boat over the weekend and the stretch from Portland to Longview is averaging about a keeper for every 6 boats. Effort was also higher in the estuary near Astoria but will likely drop after May 1st when a short term retention closure takes place through the 12th of May. Smelt remains the bait of choice in the gorge but shrimp rules the shallower mudflats in the estuary this time of year.

Spring Chinook have yet to pour over Bonneville Dam but biologists remain hopeful that they are coming. This week will have to show significant improvement in order to salvage the prediction. The highest count of the year, a meager 246 Chinook was counted on April 24th. The year to date total should finally top 1,000 fish by the weekend. Sportanglers netted over 5,000 Chinook on the Columbia this spring- a sign that there are ample numbers of fish present in the system. No additional sport seasons are currently being discussed.

Flows are dropping and temperatures rising on the Willamette River where anglers should expect better results this week. Fishing improved dramatically in the Oregon City area on Sunday and action remained steady into the early part of the week. Prawns was a big producer but backbounced eggs took fish too. When the water warms however, chubs often steal eggs before a salmon can get a hold of them.

Historically, this week is the peak of the spring fishery in the lower Willamette. The temperature and visibility are also ideal for sport catches at 53 degrees and 4.2 feet respectively. With a friendly weather forecast, this week should be the seasons most productive to date.

Summer steelhead counts are approaching the 500 mark with winters topping 5000. Conditions are also ideal on the Santiam although wild fish make up the bulk of the catch. Shrimp drifted behind bright colored drift bobbers produce the best results this time of year.

Effort and catches of keeper sturgeon are slowing in the lower Willamette

While the Clackamas is showing fine color, it's still running high, cool and has been slow for steelheaders and springer hopefuls. There's a hogline at the mouth during daylight hours.

The Sandy River is slow to fair for steelhead for a mix of mostly native and a few hatchery winters and the occasional fresh summer fish. Flow is swift but the water is clear. There are springers available from Marmot Dam to the mouth and a few are being taken but the greatest share seems to be feeding the sea lion working the stretch around the Troutdale Bridge.

Haldeman Pond, Henry Hagg Lake, Huddleston Pond, Salmonberry Lake, Silver Creek Reservoir, Trojan Pond, Detroit Reservoir, East Freeway Lake, E. E. Wilson Pond, Foster Reservoir, Junction City Pond, Leaburg Lake, Lower McKenzie River, Smith Reservoir, Walling Pond and Walter Wirth Lake are scheduled to be stocked with trout.

Northwest – Flows have once again dropped on North Coast streams. The healthy tide exchange now underway could bring in fair numbers of Chinook and a few steelhead into the lower stretches

of the Wilson, Trask and Nestucca Rivers. Anglers will have to employ subtle tactics to find success.

Tillamook Bay itself should produce a fair spring Chinook bite in the upper bay for spinner trollers. Lower bay herring anglers will have their best opportunity closer to low slack but the extreme minus tides pose a threat for jetty anglers and bar crossings. Sturgeon are once again a good opportunity in mid-bay channels.

Offshore, halibut season opens on May 1st from Leadbetter Point in Washington to Cape Falcon near Manzanita. The near shore season (within the 40 fathom line) also opens on the 1st. Be sure to check the regulations regarding the retention of other bottomfish with halibut onboard.

Clamming should be excellent Thursday through Saturday along Clatsop area beaches. Clam shows usually slow after the peak minus tide which will happen on Saturday- a minus 1.7 foot.

Trout are scheduled to be planted this week at Cullaby Lake, Hebo Lake, Lost Lake (in Clatsop County) and in Sunset Lake.

Southwest - Winter steelhead season wraps up on the South coast as of May 1st.

Surf perch fishing remains a worthwhile pursuit although the strong tidal exchange over the weekend may challenge beach fishers.

Winter steelheading is holding up well on the Umpqua. Fish downstream for the best shot at a late-winter fish. Spring Chinook fishing is improving, marginally.

The water temperature at the Rogue River is in the lower 50s which has spring Chinook on the move. Fishing in the lower river has been fair to good and is improving. Steelheading is winding down here as most of the fish are spawning or returning to the ocean in a post-spawn state.

Hyatt Lake and Willow Lake will be planted with hatchery trout this week.

Pro Guide Ken Streater (800-797-4293) says things are in transition on southern Oregon rivers this week as the winter steelheading has slowed down and the spring salmon season is gearing up. Water temperatures in the lower river near the mouth are now suitable for a great run, and signs are good for this. Boats here are landing good sized fish but not a lot per boat.

Upper river results are for the winter steelhead and the fishing there has slowed down considerably. With a stretch of warmer days predicted ahead we are looking for the springers to move upriver and for that fishing to get strong by the end of the month and first part of May!

Pro Guide Bill Kremers (541 754 6411) fished out of Depoe Bay on Monday. There were no bar restriction but the ocean was like a washing machine and there is a fast current coming up from the south. It was very difficult to keep our lines down, but three of us still managed four nice ling cod and a mixed bag of assorted bottom bottom before deciding we had enough and headed back to Depoe Bay. We also dropped some crab pots north of Depoe and we only got two keepers and had one pot missing.

He also fished Green Peter late last week for kokanee. The lake is close to full pool and there are logs and debris floating everywhere. We fished several locations, by the dam, the island, up a couple of arms with limited success. Most of the fish we caught were the planted chinook salmon, but nothing over eleven inches. A note to South Santiam anglers, there is tree blocking the rapid down from the Ladder Hole and huge root wad in the Morse Brothers hole. This section is the river between Foster and Sweet Home. Now for my picks of the coming week: for trout the McKenzie River is your best bet. Also on Monday, May 1st the inshore halibut fishery opens up inside the 40

fathom line. A popular place for halibut is off the lighthouse at Yaquina Head. Be sure and watch your depth and keep trying different location.

Eastern - Anglers hitting the Deschutes for the trout opener on April 22nd on the stretch bordering Warm Springs were greeted with the highest water level in years. As a consequence, fishing was only fair but a few nice fish were taken on nymphs. March Browns are hatching on the middle Deschutes.

Wickiup Reservoir is within inches of full bowl and is free of ice. Odell and Lake Billy Chinook are fishing well for kokanee.

Trout will be stocked in Burns Pond, Clear Lake and Krumbo Reservoir.

Jeff from J.B.s Guide Service 509- 366-4052 reports that right now fishing the Columbia Basin is all about bass. The best bet for them seems to be from the Paterson sloughs to the Crow Bute causeway. Brown spidergrubs and peach Shad rap Rapalas worked very well for us last week when we saw weather over 70 degrees.

The lower Snake is running mud and may not be fishable for some time. The Yakima is also high but is fishable but the bite there has been tough.

Southwest Washington- Salmon returns remain low on the Cowlitz and Kalama Rivers. Catches are slow and the Wind River/Drano Lake Fishery is non-existent.

Clamming along Washington Beaches will open this Friday. Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks and Copalis will all open for digging on morning tides April 28-30, as previously scheduled. Two of those beaches – Twin Harbors and Mocrocks – will also open for a fourth day of digging May 1.

Columbia River Fishing Report – Although fish passage at Bonneville is beginning to show hope, a re-opener for spring Chinook is highly unlikely. The number finally topped 1,500 fish on April 26th.

If the trend continues, fishing may get underway in the Drano Lake and Wind River fisheries on the Washington side. Keep your eye on those counts available at: <http://www.fpc.org/>. And when you view the data available on this site, keep in mind that it is organizations like the Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association (<http://www.nsiafishing.org/>) that is fighting to keep the Fish Passage Center in "business" so adequate science can be collected to assess our efforts on wild Columbia River Salmon.

So what are people doing on the Columbia anyway? Well, they are sturgeon fishing! And the fishing is pretty good too! On par with last year, sturgeon fishing in the gorge is picking up for both bank and boat anglers. Weekend checking showed 23 legal sturgeon kept, plus one legal and 269 sub-legal sturgeon released for 23 boats. Bank anglers in the gorge landed one keeper for every 7 rods. Smelt is the top bait for this area and new regulations (sanctuary) go into effect beginning May 1st in this area. Check regulations closely.

The Portland to Longview stretch has also picked up in success rates. Shaker action was up but about one in every 6 boats landed keeper fish in this section. Smelt also remains a favorite in this stretch but baits tipped with fresh sand shrimp will give you the edge.

The estuary is prepping for a closure on May 1st as well. Retention season will close from May 1st – May 12th and pressure is likely to drop. For those that want to hone their skills in preparation for the May 13th opener, sand shrimp in the shallows will offer the best opportunity.

The Dalles Pool is closed to the retention of sturgeon but walleye action remains steady where weekend checks showed better than 2 fish/boat. The bite should be wearing off as fish move past the spawning phase.

The Columbia will open from Tongue Point to the I-5 Bridge to angling for fin-clipped steelhead, hatchery jack salmon (which must measure less than 24 inches) and shad on May 16th. Above I-5 to the Bonneville Dam, only shad retention will be allowed.

The 2006 season for the Northern Pikeminnow bounty fishery from The John Day Dam to the mouth of the Columbia River will start May 1st. The fishery from The John Day Dam upstream starts on May 15. This year, anglers may earn from \$4 to \$8 per fish turned in at stations where they have registered for this activity. Tagged fish are worth \$500 each. For those who think there aren't many of these high-dollar day-makers, 170 tagged pikeminnows were caught in last year. That's an extra \$85,000.

The Guide's Forecast – Sturgeon will be on the menu for most Columbia River anglers this weekend. Bonneville will likely only get better this week as temperatures moderate and food supplies seem ample. Gorge fishing will get more challenging starting this weekend with the increase in sanctuary size. Smelt will remain the most effective bait and the closer you can get to the deadline, the more effective you will be.

Estuary fishers only have a few more days to take advantage of the retention options downstream of the Wauna Powerlines. Sand shrimp will prove the best bait in the lower river- especially in the shallows. Keepers should also be present in the deeper water but smelt will prove the most effective in these waters. The best action will take place in the upper estuary out of the John Day Boat Ramp.

Good clam tides will greet diggers along Clatsop Beaches into the weekend. The best digs will take place prior to the peak minus tide which happens on Saturday. Surf conditions should allow for a great harvest.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Kapt'n Ken Johnson and I (Michael) were on the river Sunday, April 23rd. Eyes on, hands on, fish on!

Well, two out of three ain't bad.

We launched at Meldrum Bar at 5:30 A.M. and gave it up around 4 P.M. In that time, we marked very few fish and didn't get a bump. The fish checker had seen five come in and we saw perhaps that many more hooked by boats which had not yet come in. It was slow but by day's end, catch rates actually showed some improvement.

The Falls is spectacular at high water level but for those inclined to make an upriver run for a peek, be advised to keep to the Southeast half of the Willamette (that's to the left as you head upriver for the compass-impaired). There are jagged rocks pointing upward toward the opposite shore which pose a hazard even when the river is up. Be safe and enjoy the view.

One set of bobber fishermen were observed anchored against the bank in the last of what might be considered safe water below Willamette Falls on Sunday. Safety concerns and the roar of the water prevented approaching their craft for an inquiry as to their success but they seemed to be enjoying the beautiful weather regardless.

Water temperature that day was 52.3 on our equipment but temps have improved this week. The

Army Corps of Engineers and ODFW are releasing water upstream which is keeping the level high and the temps low.

The year-to-date spring Chinook count as of the latest data on April 20th was 192. On a brighter note, the water temp at the Falls hit 53 for the first time this year on April 24th. As of that date, flows dropped from a high of 30,100 on the 17th to 19,100. Summer steelhead counts are over the 500 mark with winters topping 5000.

The seals we saw downriver as well as the trio of sea lions just below the Falls are reliable indicators that there are certainly some fish present.

Numbers of summer steelhead are improving on the Santiam system. The trap at Foster Dam reported nearly 100 summer steelhead in the traps from April 19th to April 24th for a total of 316 so far this season. As of Monday this week, about 170 of these fish have been recycled downstream to provide anglers another opportunity to hook up.

The Guide's Forecast – Daily Chinook counts at Willamette Falls rise and fall with the water temperatures, leading one to believe that it'll break loose when it reaches and holds in the mid-fifties. One can only hope as the Chinook are now long overdue. Better fishing in the lower Willamette seems to be in the Milwaukee-to-St. Johns stretch. The upper end of Multnomah Channel is expected to be more productive than the lower end.

Spring Chinook fishing has improved this week with the warmer weather. Herring, prawns, Kwikfish and cured eggs behind a jet diver are all accounting for occasional hookups. May will bring with it the bounty that is the spring Chinook run. At least we'll know for sure because the bulk of the run **will** come in May, whatever that bulk may be.

Crazy last-minute temperature update (1 P.M. on Thursday, April 27th). The latest reading at the Falls is 57 degrees. Nearly 400 chinook were counted on the 23rd bringing the total on that date to 784. Flows continue to moderate with the latest reading 17,500.

It's shaping up to be a decent weekend with improved numbers of fish available and more reports of hookups.

The lower Willamette should reliably produce plenty of shakers but keeper-sized sturgeon are expected to be limited in number. Effort will remain light in the lower Willamette with attention on the Chinook run. Sand shrimp and Columbia-caught smelt will elicit the best response.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – The Clackamas is showing fine color and flows which were running high last week have started to moderate. Water temperatures have yet to break out of the high 40-degree-range, however, but this has alleviated the algae growth as much of the green goo washed away with the last freshet. It's been slow for steelheaders although fishing picked up a bit over the weekend with a fair number of summers in the mix.

Expect to find plenty of water and current on the Sandy where the water has become very clear.

The Guide's Forecast – Spring Chinook are entering the Clackamas in modest number and while reported as high as Rivermill, efforts are likely to be most productive in the lower river.

Summer steelhead numbers are improving on the Sandy and the fishery should be worthwhile through May. While springers are being taken daily from deeper holes, catches remain low. Expect an improvement this weekend with more fish on the move in the Columbia.

North Coast District Fishing Report – North Coast Rivers have dropped to low levels once again making steelheading challenging in the clear waters. Effort has been low and some anglers are targeting the few early run spring Chinook that may be present. The winter steelhead run is complete and spawners are more likely to make up the catches than fresh run fish. There are however a few summer fish around but with little hazing effort on cormorants when these fish went to sea, don't expect a large return this year.

The tides were right for a take in the upper bay on the morning of the 26th. We fished the screaming outgoing with plugs early in the a.m. but got no love. Later in the tide, we trolled spinners (along with 4 other boats) and never saw a fish hooked. Although this type of success is common this time of year, I thought we really stood a chance at getting a keeper today. The weather was nice however- so nice in fact, that the high seas is calling our name for tomorrow. We're going to try several miles offshore to find out if there really are any Chinook out there. Stay tuned.....

Although my sturgeon slot has dried up in upper Tillamook Bay, there still seems to be some keepers around. West Channel anglers are bringing in a few but sometimes you have to hunt to find them.

Crabbing remains very poor in Tillamook and Netarts Bays.

The Guide's Forecast – Although we don't have the run timing on our side, tides are ripe for taking spring Chinook in upper Tillamook Bay over the weekend. Late morning extreme low tides will offer anglers a fair (at best) chance at a quality Tillamook Bay springer. Use red/white blades in the early morning on the lower Trask River or in front of the Oyster House and switch to greens as the morning progresses. If the weather is as nice as forecasted, a NW wind will likely kick up just after tide change.

Lower bay anglers will also have some opportunity but should be aware of the strong ebb tides that are currently underway. The best time to get your herring on the bottom of the bay will be the last hour of outgoing tide along the north jetty, inside the bay.

Offshore fishing for salmon or bottomfish should be an option late in the week but offshore forecasts are calling for a larger swell by the weekend. Crabbing should also be better in the ocean.

Area rivers will continue to drop but the extreme tides may bring in steelhead to the lower stretches of the Wilson and Nestucca Rivers. Stealth tactics are your only choice for success. Bobber and jigs may produce some results.

Central & South Coast Reports – Most coastal rivers are low, clear and slow for steelhead with winters winding down and summers yet to come. Mid and South coast rivers close to steelhead on May 1st in many locations to allow these fish to spawn unmolested, then re-open on May 27th for the summer season.

Bay and ocean crabbing is slow with only a handful of legals coming even to those running multiple pots, traps or rings.

Halibut season opens inside the 40 fathom line on Monday, May 1st. The first all depth halibut openings are May 11th, 12th and, 13th with many more dates to follow in what is expected to be a great year for flatties.

This is the last weekend that unclipped steelhead may be retained in rivers which allow this practice.

Winter steelheading fair on the Umpqua and some dandies have crossed at Winchester Dam. Fish downstream of that point for the best shot at a late-winter chromer. Steelhead fishing closes on the South Umpqua on April 30th. Spring Chinook fishing is improving, if marginally. Two springers in a single boat is considered an exceptional catch. Sturgeon continue to reward anglers fishing below Reedsport. The minus tides this weekend should only serve to improve this fishery. Striped bass have started to show in tidewater.

Water temperature has been the factor which has stalled Chinook runs State-wide. So it is on the Rogue River, where late-day water temps are pushing into the mid-50s. Fish which have been languishing in the estuary or just outside the bay are now moving upriver. Chinook which have been holding show slight coloration or are dropping sea lice, as is the case with those taken here recently. Anglers report fair or better fishing now with several boats landing springers averaging 27 pounds. That's about the weight of most Fall Chinook on the North coast. Rogue River Rigs which consist of an anchovy with a spinner on its nose are accounting for the majority of catches. Fishing in the Grants Pass stretch remains poor. Counts of winter steelhead at Gold Ray Dam have topped the 9,000 mark though only a couple of dozen chinook have been counted. Most are dark, darkening or down-runners. The wild steelhead fishery closes here on April 30th. One unclipped chinook per angler may be kept as part of the salmon/steelhead limit up to three a year.

Central and Eastern Oregon – The cool waters of the John Day are producing only a handful of smallmouth bass daily but those hooked are dandies.

The Deschutes is still running over 7,000 cfs at Moody at this writing (mid-day April 27th). Nymphs are the only choice for long-rodders who may expect to find fair fishing available. The Crooked River remains high and completely blow out.

Kokanee fishing should be good at Billy Chinook and Odell but it'll be very slow at Green Peter this weekend.

Northwest Trout - Trout were stocked this week in the Willamette Zone at Haldeman Pond, Henry Hagg Lake, Huddleston Pond, Salmonberry Lake, Silver Creek Reservoir, Trojan Pond, Detroit Reservoir, East Freeway Lake, E. E. Wilson Pond, Foster Reservoir, Junction City Pond, Leaburg Lake, Lower McKenzie River, Smith Reservoir, Walling Pond and Walter Wirth Lake. Cullaby Lake, Hebo Lake, Lost Lake (in Clatsop County) and in Sunset Lake were planted in the Northwest Zone.

Odell and Lake Billy Chinook will be good this weekend for kokanee but give Green Peter a few more weeks; it's very slow.

As mentioned previously, Diamond Lake will be treated with rotenone in September to eliminate the illegally-introduced tui chub (<http://www.diamondlake.net/tuichub.html>) which populations have exploded, competing with and threatening the trout populations. Prior to September poisoning, extensive netting will take place starting in mid-July. Here's the good news for fisherfolk: Starting May 13th the trout limit will be increased to 20 per day. Two daily limits may be in possession and there are no size restrictions. That's about the same time officials figure the lake will be ice free and will add 20,000 trout to the existing trout population estimated at about that same number. Get 'em while you can ... and while they're still alive. Diamond Lake will close September 15th and re-open November 1st.

SW Washington - With fishing for **spring chinook salmon** closed for conservation purposes on the lower Columbia mainstem, more anglers are beginning to shift their attention to the tributaries. And their timing could be good, said Joe Hymer, WDFW fish biologist. During the second week of April, 109 adult springers returned to the Cowlitz Salmon Hatchery as catch rates continued to improve on portions of the Cowlitz, Lewis, and Kalama rivers. "We've had a good early showing at the hatchery and the numbers should keep ramping up in the weeks ahead," Hymer said.

Some of the best spring chinook fishing was reported in the lower Cowlitz below the mouth of the Toutle River. Heavy rain during the second weekend in April muddied those waters, but fishing should pick up once the rivers clear, Hymer said. Summer and late winter **steelhead** are also returning to the Cowlitz and Kalama rivers, providing the opportunity for a mixed bag.

Fishing for hatchery steelhead reopened April 16 in the East Fork of the Lewis River from the mouth to the upper boat ramp at Lewisville Park and in the Washougal River from the mouth to the Mount Norway Bridge at Vernon Road. Selective gear rules - no bait, single barbless hooks - are in effect through May 31.

Besides recovering spring chinook, Tacoma Power employees at the Cowlitz Salmon Hatchery also corralled 247 adult steelhead during the second week of April. They released 63 spring chinook and 112 steelhead into the upper Cowlitz River at the Day Use Park on Lake Scanewa. Seven steelhead were released into the Tilton River at Gust Backstrom Park in Morton.

Will the mainstem Columbia River reopen to spring chinook fishing below Bonneville this season? "It's possible, but it all depends on the dam counts," Hymer said. As of April 16, only 205 adult springers had been counted above the dam, compared to 851 last year - the previous record low for that date. "Everyone's just hoping that this is also the latest run on record and that the fish will start moving above the dam."

Hymer noted that fishing for hatchery chinook jacks and hatchery steelhead is still scheduled to reopen May 16 from the Rocky Point/Tongue Point line upstream to the Interstate 5 Bridge. **Shad** fishing from Bonneville Dam downstream will also reopen May 16.

Given the low counts at Bonneville Dam, spring chinook fishing farther upriver has been understandably slow but should improve, depending on fish moving upstream of the dam. The upper end of Bonneville Pool to McNary Dam is scheduled to remain open for hatchery spring chinook and hatchery steelhead through the end of April.

Sturgeon fishing below Bonneville, however, has started to pick up - particularly in the Columbia Gorge - as river flows and temperature continues to increase, Hymer said. On the lower Columbia from the mouth to the Wauna powerlines, sturgeon anglers are reminded the fishery switches to catch-and-release only May 1-12 and then reopens May 13 with a minimum 45-inch size limit. Sturgeon fishing in The Dalles Pool switched to catch-and-release April 8 when anglers reached their 100-fish quota for that area, but there are still fish left to be caught in the Bonneville and John Day pools, Hymer said.

Anglers should be aware that sturgeon fishing will close May 1 in three spawning sanctuaries on the Columbia River designed to protect female sturgeon during the spawning period. The three sanctuaries, which will be off-limits to all bank and boat sturgeon fishing through July 31, are located:

Below Bonneville Dam, downriver approximately 5 miles to Navigation Marker 85 on the Washington side of the river.

Below John Day Dam, downriver 2.4 miles to the west end of the grain silo at Rufus, Ore.

Below McNary Dam, downriver 1.5 miles to the Highway 82 Bridge.

Bass also like the warmer water, and boat anglers have been catching three per rod - and one **walleye** for every two rods - in the John Day Pool. Boat anglers have also been catching some walleye in the Bonneville Pool.

Looking forward to the lowland lakes opener April 29? Those eager to start fishing for **trout** should know that hatchery crews have recently planted several year-round waters that are open right now. Mayfield Lake received 5,975 catchable-size rainbows April 7 and Swofford Pond got 4,025. Lacamas Lake in Camas was planted with 4,500 rainbows and 14,162 brown trout, averaging over half a pound apiece.

North Central Washington – The April 29 fishing season opener should provide good **trout** catches at several northcentral region waters, particularly in Okanogan County. Bob Jateff, WDFW district fish biologist of Omak, picks seven lakes to provide top fishing opportunities. Blue Lake on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area, a selective gear rule water with a one-fish daily catch limit, has rainbows to 18 inches and browns to 16 inches. Fish Lake, also on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area, has rainbows 11-12 inches with carryovers up to 15 inches. Leader Lake in the Omak/Okanogan area has rainbows up to 13 inches. Big Twin Lake in the Winthrop area, a selective gear rule water with a one-fish daily catch limit, has rainbows up to 18 inches. Conconully Lakes in the Omak/Okanogan area have rainbows 11-12 inches, with carryovers up to 15 inches, and some one-and-a-half-pound triploid rainbows. Pearrygin Lake in the Winthrop area has rainbows up to 11 inches. Aeneas Lake in the Tonasket area, a fly-fishing-only water with a one-fish daily limit, has both rainbows and browns up to 18 inches. Also expected to produce well is Douglas County's Jameson Lake near Mansfield. Jateff reports that Jameson has 11- to 12-inch rainbows and with carryovers up to 15 inches.

WDFW Fish Biologist Jeff Korth of Moses Lake says the major trout waters in the Columbia Basin that open on April 29 and traditionally provide good opportunities, "are all in the late stages of being over-run with spiny-rayed fishes like perch, sunfish, bass, bullheads, and sculpins." Blue, Park, and Warden lakes have all had poor survival of fingerling trout, he noted. "However, the growth of those fingerlings that do survive will be very good and the resulting yearling trout should range from 12 to 15 inches on opening day," he said. Korth said all three are also receiving additional stockings of hatchery-reared yearling trout measuring 9-10 inches this spring. Most of the smaller lakes that open April 29 are in fairly good shape and should have good fisheries this spring, he added. "Many of the March 1 and April 1 opening waters are still fishing well, especially the Hampton Lakes and the selective gear rule waters with one-fish daily catch limits, like Dusty, Lenore, Lenice, Nunnally, and Dry Falls," he said. Korth reminds anglers that starting May 1, selective gear rule waters will include a requirement to use knotless nets; see the new fishing rules pamphlet for all the details.

South Central Washington - Almost all southcentral region **trout** lakes are open year-round, but additional catchable-size rainbows and triploids are stocked in them now, along with the April 29-opening waters, so it's a good time to fish them. Anglers can check WDFW's catchable trout weekly updates for the most recent plants at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/weekly/>. WDFW Fish Biologist Jim Cummins notes that higher elevation lakes, such as Dog, Clear, and Leech in Yakima County, and Lost Lake in Kittitas County, are not expected to be accessible for fishing and planting until May due to heavy mountain snowpack, unless the weather turns unseasonably warm. Those lakes will be planted with triploids when the roads are free of snow. Dog and Clear Lakes will also be planted with catchable rainbow trout.

Cummins also notes that Lower Yakima River **smallmouth bass** fishing will peak in May. "Tagging studies several years ago confirmed that adult smallmouth bass enter the Yakima River in early spring and stay in the Yakima until late June or early July when they migrate back into the Columbia

River," he explained. "Fishing for them is generally excellent in April and May. Quarter-ounce tube jigs or 'gitzits' in a smoke with red flake color, bounced on the bottom of the river in rocky areas with deep slow water that is close to fast water like an eddy, should catch good-sized, hard-fighting smallmouths. The fish run about one-and-a-half to four pounds each. When the bass are most active and in highest concentrations, surface lures like a jointed Rapala will also catch them." Cummins noted that smallmouth bass regulations on the Yakima will change on May 1. Currently, from the mouth of the Yakima at Highway 240 Bridge to Granger Highway 223 Bridge, there is no daily limit, no minimum size, and only bass less than 12 inches or greater than 17 inches may be retained, with no more than one over 17 inches. Beginning May 1 the rule changes to no daily limit, no minimum size, and only three bass over 15 inches may be retained. This change standardizes the rule for bass over 15 inches with the Columbia River rules. But more importantly, the new rule should increase harvest on the extremely dense smallmouth bass population by allowing more smaller fish to be kept. "We want more bass harvested," explained Cummins, "because predation by bass on rearing and out-migrating juvenile fall chinook salmon is a major contributor to the decline of fall chinook."

As water temperatures increase, Columbia River bass fishing is heating up, too, Cummins notes. The Yakima River Delta, Finley Area, Patterson and Plymouth are good areas to fish for both **largemouth** and smallmouth bass, although smallmouth are most often caught, he said. Good bass catches have already been reported for both the Yakima and Columbia Rivers. **Channel catfish** fishing also peaks in the Yakima in May and June. Most rivers and streams remain closed until June 1 to protect spawning steelhead and downstream migrating salmon and steelhead smolts.

Paul Hoffarth, WDFW fish biologist, reports **sturgeon** fishing in the John Day Pool of the Columbia River (from John Day Dam to McNary Dam), is improving, with several legal-size sturgeon caught in April. Hoffarth reminds sturgeon anglers that Washington and Oregon fishery managers approved new spawning sanctuaries below McNary and John Day dams to protect large, breeding sturgeon. Sturgeon fishing will be prohibited from May 1 through July 31 from McNary Dam downstream to the Highway 82 Bridge and from John Day Dam to the west end of the grain silo at Rufus, Ore.

Triploid rainbow trout are being planted in Columbia Park Pond, a juvenile and disability-licensed only lake in Benton County, and in Railroad Pond, a selective gear fishery, in Franklin County. The Tri-Cities "Fishing Kids" event, scheduled for Saturday, May 6, at Columbia Park Pond in Kennewick, provides beginning fishing instruction for children ages 5 through 14 years of age. For \$5 each, kids receive a t-shirt, Zebco rod and reel, and other fishing goodies. Registration forms are available from the Kennewick Recreation Department online at <http://www.ci.kennewick.wa.us>.

Puget Sound – Anglers can take advantage of **trout**-stocked lakes beginning April 29, when the lowland lake fishing season kicks off. Thousands of legal-sized trout have been stocked in many of the region's lakes. Complete information on stocking schedules for rainbow, cutthroat and triploid trout is available on the WDFW website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/index.htm>).

Anglers should focus on fishing higher in the water column for the first few weeks of the season because the stocked trout tend to remain in the top 3 to 5 feet of water after being placed in a lake, said Jon Anderson, WDFW resident trout manager. "After a few weeks, drop the hook deeper where the fish are feeding," he said.

Out on the saltwater, the **blackmouth** catch has slowed and the season is wrapping up. Only the selective fishery in marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) and 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) remains open, and those two areas close April 30. By most accounts, the pilot selective fishery, which opened last October, was a success, said Steve Thiesfeld, Puget Sound recreational salmon manager for WDFW. Preliminary numbers through March 31 indicate that anglers made more than 10,000 trips, and kept about 950 hatchery chinook, which can be identified by their missing adipose fin. The mark rate for hatchery chinook was about 59 percent.

"Creel surveys indicate the fishery had a low impact on wild fish," Thiesfeld said. "Angler compliance with the rules was very good and our sampling crew did an excellent job monitoring the fishery. These elements are absolutely essential for a successful selective fishery."

As the fishery's closure nears, catch counts have tapered off. Only four chinook were checked in by 55 anglers over a five-day period at the boat ramp in Everett. No other blackmouth were counted at ramps throughout the region during recent catch counts.

During the selective fishery, anglers have a daily limit of two salmon, but wild chinook must be released. Unlike hatchery fish, wild chinook have an intact adipose fin. The 8-1 and 8-2 selective fishery is scheduled to begin again in October and run through April 2007, said Thiesfeld.

Halibut fishing opened April 9 throughout the region. Mutiny and Admiralty bays, as well as Eastern and Partridge banks are the best bets for flatfish early in the season. Halibut fishing is open five days a week, Thursday through Monday, with a daily limit of one halibut and no minimum size limit.

Anglers also can drop a line for other bottomfish, such as **lingcod**, **rockfish** and **cabezon**, beginning May 1. During the hook-and-line season (May 1-June 15), there's a one-fish daily limit for lings, which must be a minimum size of 26 inches and a maximum size of 40 inches. For rockfish, there is no minimum size and fishers must keep the first legal rockfish caught. Anglers fishing for cabezon have a daily limit of two fish, and there is no minimum size limit. Before heading out to try and hook these fish, anglers should check the *2005/2006 Fishing in Washington* pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

Or, instead of dropping a line, drop a pot. **Shrimp** season opens throughout the region May 6. Details are available on WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/crabreg/>.

In the rivers, catch-and-release fishing for **steelhead** is winding down. Anglers are still hooking some fish in both the Skagit and Sauk rivers, which close to steelhead fishing April 30. Anglers planning to get out on the river for the final days for steelhead fishing 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.

Olympic Peninsula – While hatchery workers were racing to plant millions of trout in time for the lowland lakes opener, anglers have been reeling in halibut, lingcod and spring chinook salmon from waters throughout the region. Razor clam diggers, meanwhile, have been waiting for final word on the season's last razor clam dig, tentatively scheduled to begin April 28.

Eager to catch some rainbow **trout**? Anglers can choose from among hundreds of lakes throughout the state opening to trout fishing April 29. Most are stocked with 8-to12-inch rainbows, but many also are planted with cutthroat, brown trout and triploid trout weighing up to 1.5 pounds apiece.

"Past experience is the best guide to choosing a lake to fish," said Ron Warren, regional WDFW fish manager. "Conditions usually don't change that much and we try to keep our stocking plans fairly consistent from year to year."

For those new to lake fishing - or just want to refresh their memory - Warren recommends consulting two reports, both available on the WDFW website. The first, *Washington Fishing Prospects* (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/prospects/index.htm>), describes lakes throughout the state and the kind of fish that can be caught there. The second, *2006 Catchable Trout Plants* (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/regions/reg6/index.htm>), outlines when and where WDFW is planting more than 21 million trout this year.

Young people, age 14 and younger, have an opportunity to get their lines in the water before the general opener at the **Lacey Family Fish-In**, scheduled April 23 at Long's Pond. The event is free, but kids who pay \$5 get to keep a new rod and reel and a T-shirt. Registration is required; call 360-491-0857. The pond, open only to juvenile anglers, will be closed to all fishing until the day of the event.

Meanwhile, **halibut anglers** have been pulling in dozens of big flatfish since the season began April 9 in all areas of Puget Sound except Hood Canal. Most of the fishing effort has focused around the waters off Port Angeles, where creel checks indicate a catch rate of about one fish for every 5.5 rods. How does that compare to 2005, when the fishery got under way five days later?

"So far, the catch rates are about the same as last year," said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW Puget Sound fisheries manager. "Anglers fishing in Marine Area 6 on opening day had a bit better catch rate and it appears more people turned out than last year, so it's likely that more halibut have been caught."

Marine areas 6-11 and 13 in Puget Sound are open to halibut fishing five days per week, Thursday through Monday, through June 18. On May 1, two coastal areas - Marine Area 1 (Ilwaco) and Marine Area 2 (Westport) - will also open for halibut on different fishing schedules. The Ilwaco area will be open seven days per week until the quota is reached, while the Westport fishery will be on a Sunday-through-Thursday schedule. Marine areas 3 (La Push) and 4 (Neah Bay) will open May 9, with halibut fishing restricted to Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

The coastal **lingcod** fishery is already in full swing. Two-fish limits have been common for anglers fishing aboard charters south of Cape Alava, and Marine Area 4 (Neah Bay) opened for lingcod fishing April 16. Rough weather kept most boats off the water that day, but the action has picked up considerably since then, said Scott Barbour, WDFW fish biologist. "We're seeing a lot of nice fish, generally running 6 to 15 pounds," he said.

That can also be said of several Olympic Peninsula rivers, where **winter steelhead** and **spring chinook salmon** have been competing for anglers' attention. The steelhead season ends April 30 on the Sol Duc, Bogachiel, Quillayute and Calawah rivers but the spring chinook run should keep building on the Soc Duc and the Quillayute through mid-June, said Mike Gross, another WDFW fish biologist. Anglers are required to release all unmarked chinook and coho, but can keep two fin-clipped adult chinook and up to six fish, counting jacks. "We're looking at a good run this year, with good numbers of hatchery spring chinook," Gross said.

Hoping to dig **razor clams** one last time this spring? Final word on the dig tentatively scheduled to begin April 28 will be announced by April 25 after marine toxin tests have determined whether the clams are safe to eat. If results are favorable, more than 20,000 people are expected to descend on coastal beaches for the opening - the last scheduled during the spring season.

Four beaches - Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks and Copalis - are tentatively scheduled to open for digging April 28-30 on morning tides. A fourth day of digging is also scheduled May 1 at Twin Harbors and Mocrocks. Each day's dig on those beaches must be completed by noon.

Kalaloch Beach will not reopen to razor clam digging this season, due to concerns about the low abundance of clams on the beach in recent months, said Dan Ayres, WDFW coastal shellfish manager. WDFW and Olympic National Park are investigating the apparent low abundance of razor clams on that beach.

Ayres reminds prospective diggers that they will need a valid 2006-07 license to participate in the planned dig, since previous annual licenses expired March 31. And he strongly advises diggers to have that license in hand before they leave home.

"Those who wait could face long lines at licensing outlets on the coast, he said. "Nobody wants to be

standing in line to buy a license at low tide."

Coming up soon: Shrimp fishing opens May 6 in most areas of Puget Sound. See the WDFW website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/do/newreal/release.php?id=apr0406a>) for information about fishing schedules for specific marine areas.

Eastern Washington - Many excellent **trout** fishing waters open April 29 in this region and fish biologists believe it will be a great opener if the weather cooperates. Chris Donley, WDFW central district fish biologist, expects the top producing waters to include Badger, Williams, and West Medical lakes in southwest Spokane County and Fishtrap Lake on the Lincoln-Spokane county line. "Badger was rehabilitated in fall 2002 and fishing this season for rainbows and cutthroats averaging 10 to 12 inches with some up to 20 inches should be good," Donley said. "There have been some illegal introductions of black crappie and largemouth bass in Badger and I'd like to know if anglers see any other species."

Badger received 40,000 rainbow spring fry, 30,000 cutthroat spring fry, 5,000 rainbow catchables, 1,214 triploids and 200 rainbow broodstock. Williams Lake was rehabbed in fall 2003, so this will be its peak year of production, according to Donley. "It should be a great fishery with 11- to 20-inch trout. If anglers see other kinds of fish, let me know," he said. Williams received 75,000 rainbow spring fry, 45,000 cutthroat spring fry, 10,000 rainbow catchables, 2,167 triploids, 400 rainbow broodstock. "This is the sixth season for West Medical since our last rehab and the trout fry plants have been missing in the catch the last couple years," Donley said. "I think that cormorants may be starting to have an impact, although I'd like to hear if anyone sees anything other than trout there. The fishing won't hold up through the full season, but this will still be an excellent opening day for West Medical." West Medical received 145,000 rainbow spring fry, 11,000 rainbow catchables, and 2,100 triploids. "This will be the peak production year for Fishtrap, which we rehabbed fall 2003," Donley said. "There are bullheads back in the lake, but fishing should be great for 11- to 16-inch rainbows and fry plants now 10 to 12 inches." Fishtrap received 95,000 rainbow spring fry, 10,000 rainbow catchables, 1,615 triploids, 400 rainbow broodstock.

"Fish Lake in Spokane County will also be good for brook and brown trout and a unique opportunity to harvest tiger trout, a brook-brown hybrid," Donley said. "Brook trout should average 8 to 16 inches, a limited number of browns will be 15 to 20 inches, and tiger trout will be 7 to 20 inches." Fish Lake received 10,000 tiger trout fall fry, 20,000 brook spring fry, and 575 brook broodstock. Medical Lake, which is under selective gear rules, has "too many trout competitors and too little suitable forage" to produce as well as other lakes, but it does have some 20-inch rainbows, Donley says. Clear Lake is a mixed species fishery that should provide fair to good fishing on the opener for rainbows up to 18 inches, 10- to 25-inch brown trout, and some rainbow broodstock.

Other central district waters that opened earlier this spring, but continue to provide good catches, include Spokane County's Amber Lake, where rainbows are averaging 12 to 20 inches and selective gear rules are in effect, and Lincoln County's Coffeepot Lake, where rainbows are averaging 12 inches and selective gear rules are also in effect. Donley reminds anglers that on May 1 these and other selective gear rule fisheries will require knotless nets; see the new fishing rules pamphlet for more details.

In the north end of the region, WDFW Fish Biologist Curt Vail of Colville expects two lakes in particular to be stand-outs on the April 29 opener. Rocky Lake in Stevens County and Ellen Lake in Ferry County were both rehabilitated in 2004 so Vail says this should be their first best season. Rocky received 4,500 rainbow fry in spring 2005 and Ellen received 20,000 rainbow fry in spring 2005. Although no sampling had been made at this time, Vail expected those fish to be at least 12 inches and numerous, with good survival. Waitts Lake in Stevens County should also be very good; it received 24,000 net-pen rainbow fry last fall. Vail expects Starvation Lake, also in Stevens County,

to be better than last year. His recent sampling there showed last spring's fry plants (17,900) were 11.4 inches. Marshall Lake in Pend Oreille County, which received 35,000 cutthroat fry last fall, should be good. Cedar Lake in Stevens County, which received 18,000 rainbow fry last spring, always produces big rainbows.

Trout lake fishing in the south end of the region opened last month, but hatchery crews continue to stock many waters with catchable-size rainbows. Glen Mendel, WDFW fish biologist in Dayton, reminds anglers that as of May 1 no more than two of the daily catch of five trout can be over 13 inches. The rule change is to prevent waste of smaller trout, since some anglers have been "sorting" fish to take home only the bigger ones, and to spread out the harvest of bigger fish among more anglers. Check the new rules pamphlet for details.

April 28 is the registration deadline for the "Fishing Kids" event on May 6 at Spokane County's Clear Lake. This annual event for kids 5-14 years of age provides beginning fishing instruction, t-shirt, Zebco rod and reel, and other fishing goodies for just \$5 per kid. Registrants must sign-up for half-hour fishing instruction timeslots from 8:00 a.m. through 2:30 p.m. Registration forms are available at WDFW's eastern regional office at 2315 N. Discovery Place in Spokane Valley and Spokane County 4-H at WSU Extension, 222 W. Havana St. in Spokane. Call the 4-H office at 509-477-2638 for more details.

Reader Email

Subscriber and regular contributor Kaptn Ken Johnson writes, "Seems to be that there are fish out there. Fish ARE being caught on a more regular basis. That being said, the numbers of fish out there is still smaller than one would expect, especially this time of year. I went "Trolling" last weekend with my good buddy Michael Teague and what a wonderful day it was. One of the best fishing days I had...Michael said the same thing...Unfortunately, we were "skunked" in the "Catching" department. Seems the trollers that we talked to weren't fairing to well. We did see two different boats (trollers) with fish tied to the sides of their boats, so not everyone was doing poorly. With the cooler water temperatures hovering around 51 that day, the salmon seem to be a bit scattered. In that I mean they were swimming at different depths...10' deep, 15' deep and down to about 20' too. Hard to keep your hardware and bait in the zone when they're all over the place.

"The thermocline has not been established in the deeper, calmer water because of the higher water levels and cold runoff coming downstream. That, and the fact we only scoped a few fish all day meaning there just weren't a bunch of fish in the water. Counts at Oregon City Falls verified that. In the Meldrum Bar area, Hog Liners seemed to be fairing pretty well. As Michael and I approached the boat ramp to head home, we passed a hog line where three boats were dropping out, all within about 15-20- seconds of each other with fish on. Upriver, as we became tourists and were heading up to see the falls, we watched as two other boats below the I-205 bridge were dropping out of line with fish on. In the last 4-5 days the temperature has gone up above the magical 52 degrees and the bite seems to be on a lot stronger. Another degree or two and watch out! This weekend should be a bit interesting, if not crowded, to say the least...I know I'll be out there! The best time to get to the boat ramps to put your boat in is about 8-9am, I hear!!! Riiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiight!? (c~ * See you on the water!"

Regular readers know of Ken's sarcastic humor ... putting in a 8-9 AM this weekend (or any weekend from now through the first half of June) will guarantee a very long walk from the tow rig back to the boat.

Regular reader Wilma C. wrote to ask, "Hi Mr. Teague, We recently took our kids fishing at Huddleston Pond in Willamina, and the method we used was one you had recommended several years ago involving using Powerbait on size 16 treble hooks off a leader with slip sinker and small-sized swivel. We didn't even get a nibble this time, though when we used this method several years

ago, we caught quite a few fish. I realize the pond hasn't been stocked since the first of April, so maybe this was the problem; no one else seemed to be getting any bites that day, either. I just wondered if this is still your main method you recommend for trout fishing, or is there something you now like better? Thanks for being available for all our fishing questions!"

Michael replied, "Your description of the Powerbait system sounds perfect. The only thing I might add is the use of light leader. Trout are one of those species which actually are a bit leader shy. For regular stockers I would recommend no more than four pounds. You didn't mention the age of your children but if they are old enough to refrain from "horsing" in the fish, you could even use three-pound-leader to your advantage.

"That said and in answer to your question, there is still no more effective method (that I know of) to catch planted trout.

"Conversely, these fish aren't that bright (insert smile here). The Willamina locals literally follow the ODFW tank truck to the pond and yes, the trout will bite the moment they hit the water ... I've watched it happen. Following this logic, the population of planted trout is rapidly reduced. A week or two after the pond is stocked, the numbers available are reduced to the point that no one is catching any ... as you discovered.

"There is not such a dramatic impact on larger lakes like Henry Hagg (which received 7,000 last week and another 7,000 this week) where there is lots of deep, cool water and trout will remain available weeks after stocking. Some will even hold over winter, growing to 18 inches or better.

"Here's some good news for you: Huddleston Pond will be stocked this week. This may actually have occurred already as the planting dates are vague, indicating only what week it'll happen. Fresh, State-raised rainbows will be available by Friday this week for sure. This week they'll plant 750 legal (eight to 10 inches), 200 "foot-longs" and 25 of what the ODFW calls "Trophy" trout measuring 16 inches or better. As always, daybreak and sunset will be the most effective time to fish for them.

"So, get out there and get 'em. Write again anytime and please let us know how you do out there!"

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

Write to the TGF staff:

Bob Rees: brees@pacifier.com

Doug Rees: drees@TheGuidesForecast.com

Michael Teague: SailCat@SailCat.com

Random Links

For information on razor clam seasons and closures, visit the Oregon Department of Agriculture website:

http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/FSD/shellfish_status.shtml

For information on Oregon 's razor clams including tips on how to dig razor them:

<http://www.dfw.state.or.us/MRP/shellfish/razorclams>.

Weekly Quote –

Fishing, if I a fisher, may protest

Of pleasures is the sweet'st, of sports the best,
Of exercises the most excellent,
Of Receptions the most innocent.
But now the sport is marred, and wot ye why?
Fishes decrease, and fishers multiply. - Reverend Thomas Bastard, 1498

GOOD LUCK!