

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **April 27th – May 3rd, 2007**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- With water temperatures still hovering in the 50-degree range at Willamette Falls, spring Chinook have not yet started moving en masse despite the fact that historically we're nearing the peak of the run. A total of 632 springers had crossed as of April 21st, accompanied by 4,636 winter steelhead and 683 summers. A few springers have been taken in the evenings in Oregon City and the Cedar Oaks stretch has produced some fair catches for anglers using prawns. Overall, success appears to be low but creel checks indicate improved catches over last year. **Pro guide Bill Kremers (541 754 6411)** reports the salmon fishing is finally pickup a little on the Willamette by Cedar Island. **Pro guide David Johnson (503-201-4292)** reports the prawns have been most effective recently and warns anglers to watch our for sea lions. **Pro Guide Joe Salvey (503-349-1411)** reports steady production from the Multnomah Channel.

Sturgeon anglers are focusing most of the effort in the Columbia River where catches in the Portland to Longview stretch continue to be good. The gorge has also improved but sanctuary regulations from Bonneville to Marker 85 take effect on May 1st. Oversized sturgeon should begin to stage in this area in preparation for the spring shad run and spawning.

The Clackamas has been slow for steelhead with another week of no spring Chinook catch reports.

Steelheading on the Sandy improved over the past week. Sand shrimp, eggs and spinners are catching fish but the majority of the steelhead present are natives. The river is still too cold for decent spring Chinook fishing although a few are being hooked daily.

About 120 summer steelhead and 155 winters have been counted at Foster Dam on the South Santiam. No springers have been seen yet.

Scheduled for trout planting this week is Haldeman Pond, Henry Hagg Lake, Huddleston Pond, Sheridan Pond, Silver Creek Reservoir, Timothy Meadows, Trojan Ponds, Blue River above Reservoir, Carmen Reservoir, Clear Lake, Detroit Reservoir, E. E. Wilson Pond, Fall Creek, Foster Reservoir, Freeway Lake East, Green Peter Reservoir, Junction City Pond, Leaburg Lake, McKenzie River above Leaburg Lake, Salmon Creek, Smith Reservoir, Walling Pond, Walter Wirth Lake, Willamette River Coast Fork and Willamette River Middle Fork above Hills Creek Reservoir.

Northwest – With winter steelhead counts finally tapering off, the north coast is in hiatus until better numbers of spring chinook enter the Tillamook and Nestucca systems in a few weeks. There has been rumors of a few spring chinook taken in the upper bay and Trask tidewater.

Sturgeon success remains poor in Tillamook Bay despite last weeks good tides. Marty Codino of Portland however took a healthy 52-incher from the middle bay over the weekend. The fish took sand shrimp fishing in 5 feet of water.

Strong NW trade winds are doing their job for the proper upwelling effect for our juvenile salmon but will once again challenge offshore anglers seeking rockfish. There is no relief in sight for a big swell coming from the NW.

Hebo Lake will be planted with trout this week.

Southwest – The few trying for ocean Chinook have had nothing to show for their efforts as fish are far offshore in deep water.

Spring Chinook fishing is improving on the lower Umpqua as the season ramps up. Smallmouth bass fishing slowed with a drop in water temperature. Sturgeon fishing is fair to good below Reedsport.

Most of the winter steelhead which have entered the Rogue are now upstream spawning although fishing for the remaining numbers is fair to good. The water was quite high earlier this week but on the drop with no rain in the forecast. Springer fishing was slow over the weekend but is expected to improve this week.

Wind and rain kept boats in port last week but resourceful anglers still caught fish from ocean beaches as the surf perch fishing continued to reward anglers with plenty of fresh fish.

Since planting of trout at Diamond Lake for the opener Saturday, April 26th is weather- and water quality-dependent, it wasn't until this week that anglers got confirmation. Trout will be planted for fishers to once again enjoy this resource. No other trout stocking is scheduled this week for the Southwest Zone.

Eastern – Pro guide Rick Arnold ((541- 480-1570)) reports the Bull trout action is slowing at Lake Billy Chinook but that they're taking bigger fish.

Lower and middle Deschutes anglers are finding March Browns hatching now with blue winged olives in the mix on the lower river. Trout are now solidly keyed on dries, however, so fly anglers should carry Hare's Ear and stonefly nymphs in their arsenal.

Oregon Cascade lakes open April 28th and fishing is expected to be good. With a limit of 25 kokanee and a naturally-reproducing population, Odell is expected to draw a crowd for the opener. Crane Prairie, also opening this Saturday, is another popular destination.

Lake Billy Chinook is slowing for bull trout action but kokanee should be a strong option in the coming weeks. The boat ramp at the Cove is closed until May 15th for repairs but the Deschutes Arm ramp is still an option.

Burns Pond, Century Gravel Pit, Clear Lake, Fall River, Haystack Reservoir, Haystack Reservoir, Krumbo Reservoir, Shevlin Pond, Simtustus Lake and Sprague Gravel Pit are scheduled for planting of hatchery trout.

SW Washington – Conditions are favorable for good salmon catches on SW Washington rivers. The Lewis and Kalama are producing the best salmon catches while steelhead continue to entertain anglers on the Cowlitz.

Consistent salmon counts at Bonneville make the Wind River and Drano Lake fisheries viable. Catches have improved for anglers in both fisheries and should be peaking this week.

Salmon fishing on the mainstem Columbia above Bonneville was scheduled to close on April 30th but managers met on Wednesday extending the season an additional 3 days due to low impact rates to listed Snake River fish. The fishery is now scheduled to close on May 3rd but managers will once again meet on May 2nd to seal the fate of this fishery.

Columbia River Fishing Report – With salmon season closed, anglers on the Columbia are either focusing their efforts on Willamette River/Multnomah Channel springers or mainstem Columbia

sturgeon. The best fishing remains in the Portland to Longview stretch but catch rates have dropped from the previous weeks impressive results. Seven keepers were tallied for 51 boats.

The Oregon and Washington Fish and Wildlife departments announce an extension on April 25th of the 2007 spring Chinook recreational fishery until midnight May 3 on the mainstem Columbia River from Bonneville Dam to McNary Dam.

Guides working both ends of the river are reporting an odd absence of sturgeon. Although temperatures may still be a bit cold for sturgeon activity to improve, it does seem odd that this late in the season both Bonneville and the estuary sturgeon show is not underway. A single keeper was taken in a 3 boat check over the weekend but pro guides from that area reported terrible results. Furthermore, **pro guide Dan Ponciano (360-607-8511)** reported an absence of all sizes of sturgeon in the gorge a week ago. There doesn't seem to be many stirring but maybe it will take a fresh shad to really find out what the story is. Too early to be concerned but some folks are wondering if the fish have just had enough of the sea-lion predation taking place in this area. These fish didn't last for 200 million years being stupid, ya know.

Walleye effort has tapered off but bass fishing should start to show signs of improvement in the warming weeks ahead.

It seems the hazing program at Bonneville Dam has been less than effective in deterring California and Stellar sea loins which have consumed well over 400 salmon and steelhead this year.

The bounty program to reduce numbers of voracious pike minnows which dine on steelhead and salmon smolt will begin on the Columbia and Snake rivers on May 14th this year, paying from \$4 to \$8 per fish. Anglers must pre-register to collect the funds. More information on this worthwhile program is available online at www.pikeminnow.org.

The Guide's Forecast – Don't look to the mighty Columbia for anything spectacular. I guess we have an additional 3 days of springer fishing upstream of Bonneville Dam to be thankful for. Dam passage for spring chinook jumped on the 24th with over 2,500 adults passing the facility. This brings the total number of adults to nearly 15,000 fish which should bolster sportfisheries upstream of Bonneville. The Wind River, Drano Lake and even the Klickitat River should begin to improve- especially with aggressive biters NOT being culled out of downstream fisheries.

The bulk of the angling effort will take place at the above mentioned interception points. There are a few anglers however that know the ins and outs of mainstem fishing in the Bonneville Pool. Although there isn't much time left to figure it out, it may be worth learning for future opportunity.

Warmwater anglers may want to increase their effort for mainstem bucket-mouths in the coming weeks. Bass should be feeding more aggressively in the shallows with crank baits and rubber worms responsible for the bulk of the catch. Walleye effort is waning with the ensuing spawn.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – With the water temperature improving, numbers of spring Chinook crossing Willamette Falls is also looking better. While 101 springers on April 24th might not me a lot, but with the water temp up to 52, this is only the second time since the run began that the daily count was greater than 100. A total of 862 spring Chinook have been counted so far this season along with about 800 summers and 4,700 winter steelhead.

Pro guide Bill Kremers (541 754 6411) reports, " ... the salmon fishing is finally pickup a little on the Willamette by Cedar Island. Pink prawns, a few reds beads and a rainbow spinner is what is working best for me. Also caught a few fish using a K-15 Kwikfish wrapped with the red oily tuna meat.

The best fishing times are at the tide changes. Anglers can fish the prawn rig trolling with a jumbo diver, back bouncing or anchored up. If you anchor up, use about a 40 inch lead line."

Kremers' client j. Perkins of Albany took this 14-pound springer on a K=15 Kwikfish near Cedar Island.



Pro guide David Johnson (503-201-4292) reports, "I've been fishing the Willamette in O.C. and down town. We've been averaging two per day, mostly on prawns. I haven't been seeing very many fish caught, a lot of the days we've only seen four to six fish caught for the day.

"The water has been cool and as we near the peak time of the run it looks like the river will be also hitting optimum temps so I'm expecting it to take off. If you check with ODFW we are ahead of last year in catch as well as dam passage.

"Anglers should be alert of plenty of fish steeling sea lions. Keep the net down, stay seated and get the fish to the boat ASAP to avoid fish loss."

Pro Guide Joe Salvey (503-349-1411) reports "steady production from the Multnomah Channel, we have been getting 2 to 5 fish a day working cut plug herring on the shelf's with other missed opportunities. I have been finding that the Pro Cures Brine and Bite is really performing and giving me the edge to keep consistent. "

A recreational angler who requested anonymity reported April 23rd, "We caught 7 chinook today. Biggest one was 32 lbs. Smallest was 12 lbs the others were about 20 lbs. 2 were natives. We ended the day with 5 keepers. We missed 3 by grabbing the rod to quick. We started at Crescent Oak ramp (West Linn) about 6:30 and quit at 3:30. The fish and game checker there had 2 fish by noon and 5 by 4. We doubled his total count for the ramp so it was not like it was a hot bite...I think [the captain] was doing everything right. We caught 6 fish between 8 am and noon and then the last one about 2:30.

"We are going again tomorrow."

Roughly 25 boats were fishing below Sellwood Bridge the morning of April 26th as sea lions snoozed on

a nearby dock. The pinnipeds looked very well fed. Smelt, squid and sand shrimp are getting bit by sturgeon but hookups were rare over the last retention period.

Officials with the Oregon State Marine Board have changed their minds about moving the deadline below Willamette falls so it will remain at the Green Bridge. Boaters should keep their heads up for turbulence when the fish bypass system is in operation at the cul-de-sac.

Most of the fish crossing at the Falls enter the Santiam system. The North Santiam, still high and fairly cold, is putting out winter natives along with a few summers with sand shrimp the top bait.

The Guide's Forecast – Time is on our side at this point in the spring Chinook run. To predict that catches will improve is a no-brainer. Water temperature has been the key and with the temps rising, so will catch rates. Most boats trolling herring around Portland Harbor were getting at least one takedown earlier this week. Wrapped Kwikfish and prawn spinners will also generate strikes. The majority of springers will take Multnomah Channel to the Willamette, so Coon Island will be a good bet.

Pressure on the North Santiam is very light and it's a beautiful place to fish, even though numbers of summers will be low for a while.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Fishing remains very slow on the Clackamas. Winter steelhead are still being hooked at Dog Creek but most are dark and very few spring Chinook hookups are occurring.

While a few spring Chinook have entered the chilly water of the Sandy River and can be seen rolling in the lower river, low water temperatures have kept these fish off the bite. Summer steelhead are entering and high-tailing it upriver where they're being intercepted by anglers plying the water in the Oxbow to Cedar Creek stretch with baits of sand shrimp or bobber 'n' jig rigs. Winter steelhead are also being hooked but most are natives or slanky specimens which have spawned and are headed back to the ocean.

North Coast Fishing Report – Like the Columbia, it's hiatus time for most of the north coast fisheries. The rivers are low and not many steelhead are in the biting mood anyway this week. There is likely some summer steelhead available and should be through the summer months. I have heard of one spring chinook hooked on the Wilson River but it was lost. There have been reports of a few other springers taken in the upper bay and Trask tidewater.

We targeted spring chinook and sturgeon over the weekend with poor results for both species. We did manage a keeper per day on Sunday and Monday with the Sunday keeper taken by Marty Codino of Portland being 52 inches. The Monday keeper was a mere 42 inch fish. Sand shrimp took both fish in the upper bay.

Sea-bass fishing along the jetty is fair for jetty casters. The bass are falling to jigs. The ocean has been too rough for ocean going vessels.

The Guide's Forecast – A weaker tide series should favor herring trollers in the lower bay during the upcoming week. Stick to the north jetty inside the bay for the best chance at an early salmon. Blue label herring are most available and plug cut along with a whole rigged herring does stand a reasonable chance at taking a quality fish. Target the last hour of outgoing tide for best results.

Tides are also more favorable for crabbing in the lower bay. The ocean will likely not be an option this week either but with the low tide exchange, crabbers may be able to place their pots closer to the jaws

for a productive catch. Rockfishing should remain fair along the jetties.

Stealthy bank anglers will have the advantage this week on the Wilson and Nestucca Rivers. The Wilson is likely the best bet for access. Don't target spawning steelhead in the tail-outs. These fish are out future and don't deserve to be jeopardized! Fresher fish and summer steelhead should be hanging out in the faster flows and broken-surfaced water that is 3 to 5 feet deep.

Sturgeon fishing is poor and likely to remain that way into the summer months.

Central & South Coast Reports – Umpqua steelheaders have experienced a slowing of steelhead action in the North and South forks. Spring Chinook fishing in the lower mainstem is also slow. The river has been running high and off color - bad for salmon and steelhead fishers but promising for those targeting sturgeon in the estuary.

A few spring Chinook are being taken on the middle Rogue on plugs and a handful have crossed Gold Ray Dam. Numbers are so low, however, that a fishery hasn't really developed anywhere on the river. Daily catches in the lower river have remained in single digits and have local anglers wondering when the run will get underway this year. Winter steelhead are plentiful and cooperative on the upper Rogue but they're mostly dark or down-runners making this primarily a catch-and-release show.

Surf perch fishing remains very good of the Southern coast with both striped and pinkfin showing up in catches.

Diamond Lake, rotenoned late last Fall, will receive an initial stocking of 6,000 trout this week and a total of 80,000 will be planted this year in an effort to return this Oregon resource to the jewel-like status it earned prior to a tui chub infestation. The chubs, inadvertently stocked by illegal bait fishermen, multiplied and consumed resources to the detriment of trout populations. The waters of Diamond Lake are so rich that rainbows grow so rapidly that their bodies look disproportionately large compared to their heads. It opens this Saturday, April 28th

Central and Eastern Oregon – Pro guide Rick Arnold ((541- 480-1570)) reports, "Bull trout action is slowing at Lake Billy Chinook on bigger fish. Water temps rising and smaller bulls showing. We did have a one great trip this past week with (2) anglers scoring on (10) bulls with (3) legals going 4.5, 6.5, and 15.25 Lb. Check out the full report and photos on our website."

Rick mentioned that he won't be reporting for the next couple of weeks as he's filming his next DVD at Lake Tahoe.

Long-time **TGF contributor and avid angler 'Dobe'** reports, "Winston and I fished the Metolious arm of Lake Billy Chinook on last Thursday and managed to only pick up one sub legal Bull trout. Didn't try for any Kokanee but heard some were being caught around Perry South inlet. The boat ramp at The Cove is closed until May 15th for repairs, so the only place to launch is the last ramp up the Deschutes arm. On Friday, we fished Ochoco Res and picked up a couple of nice Rainbows trolling spinners and worms. The Res is brim full."

Conditions are excellent for the Cascade Lakes opener this Saturday, April 28th. Following several years of less-than-optimal water levels and ice-out, anglers are anxious to get out and catch some fish this weekend.

Paulina and Odell, both top kokanee producers, are also well-known for kicking out jumbo trout. Crane Prairie is a legendary location for large.

Good news on the Deschutes is the opening of the most productive stretch of water on the river, that adjacent to the Warm Springs Reservation down to the deadline. It's been almost six months since redds in this stretch have seen a fly and March Browns are on the hatch. Large stonefly nymphs should also be effective. Also opening is the tribal permit area between Dry Creek and Trout Creek. Water is at summer level low and is warming up.

Other good bets for the weekend include Fall River where action has been decent but not on dry flies. Bull trout have been reliable. Fall River has a March Brown hatch in progress which has the trout looking up.

Keep an eye out for spawning steelhead and give them wide berth to protect future generations for all of us.

Northwest Trout – Hagg Lake has been producing trout on the troll. Take a variety of lures and keep changing to find out what they prefer on any particular day.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is hosting a youth angling event Saturday, April 28 from 9:30 AM to 1:00 PM at Garden Lake, also known as Creswell Pond, in Creswell, Oregon. Fishing equipment will be available along with ODFW staff and volunteers.

Another youth angling event will take place this coming Saturday from 9:30 AM to 2 PM at Trojan Pond near Rainier in the North Willamette watershed. Kids will fish for 16 inchers here. Tackle and helpers will be on hand.

Scheduled for trout planting this week in the Willamette Valley is Haldeman Pond, Henry Hagg Lake, Huddleston Pond, Sheridan Pond, Silver Creek Reservoir, Timothy Meadows, Trojan Ponds, Blue River above Reservoir, Carmen Reservoir, Clear Lake, Detroit Reservoir, E. E. Wilson Pond, Fall Creek, Foster Reservoir, Freeway Lake East, Green Peter Reservoir, Junction City Pond, Leaburg Lake, McKenzie River above Leaburg Lake, Salmon Creek, Smith Reservoir, Walling Pond, Walter Wirth Lake, Willamette River Coast Fork and Willamette River Middle Fork above Hills Creek Reservoir. Hebo Lake will be stocked in the Northwest Zone.

Northwest Bass & Panfish - Soft plastics are taking smallmouth bass on the Columbia now that the water temperature has reached 50 degrees. The upper and lower Willamette has been productive for the last few weeks.

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report April 18th – May 1st, 2007

North Puget Sound

As the region's blackmouth and steelhead fisheries come to a close, more anglers are starting to shift their attention to other fishing opportunities. The halibut season is under way in Puget Sound, and openings for other bottom fish are not far off. And one of the most anticipated fisheries occurs later this April, when the lowland lakes trout season kicks off.

Beginning April 28, anglers can cast a line in many of the region's lakes, where thousands of legal-sized **trout** have been planted. Information on stocking schedules for rainbow, cutthroat and triploid trout is available on WDFW's website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/index.htm>).

During the first few weeks of the season, anglers should focus on fishing higher in the water column, where the stocked trout tend to remain after being placed in a lake, said Jon Anderson, WDFW resident trout manager. "After they're planted, the trout usually can be found in the top 3 to 5 feet of water," he said. "After a few weeks, drop the hook deeper."

Meanwhile, freshwater anglers have only a few more days to cast for **steelhead**. The catch-and-release steelhead fishery on the Skagit and Sauk rivers closes at the end of the month. Anglers on the Skagit can fish for steelhead from The Dalles Bridge to the Cascade River, while those on the Sauk can fish from the mouth of the river to the Darrington Bridge.

Out on the saltwater, the region's **blackmouth** fishery also is coming to an end. Only the selective chinook 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.

But anglers are still finding some blackmouth as the season enters its final days. According to creel checks at the Everett boat ramp, 310 anglers hauled in 48 chinook during the second weekend in April. At the Edmonds ramp 22 anglers brought home six chinook that same weekend, while 21 anglers checked five blackmouth at the Mukilteo ramp.

Anglers in marine areas 8-1 and 8-2 can keep up to two hatchery chinook per day, so long as the fish measure at least 22 inches in length. Wild chinook salmon, which have an intact adipose fin, cannot be brought aboard the boat.

Halibut fishing opened April 9 throughout the region. Mutiny and Admiralty bays, as well as Eastern and Partridge banks usually 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 bottom fish, 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 anglers 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.

Anglers out on Puget Sound will soon have an opportunity to drop a **shrimp** pot. The shrimp season opens throughout the region May 5. Details are available on WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/crabreg/>.

Before heading out, anglers should check the rules and regulations for freshwater and saltwater fisheries in WDFW's 2006/2007 *Fishing in Washington* pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

Anglers face a variety of choices as spring fishing seasons continue to unfold throughout the region. Go saltwater fishing for **halibut** or **lingcod**? Go river fishing for **steelhead** or **spring chinook** on the north coast? Dig **razor clams** during a mornings-only dig scheduled April 19-22 at various ocean beaches?

For many anglers, "fishing season" begins April 28 on opening day of the lowland lakes **trout** season. On Washington's single biggest fishing day, anglers can choose from among 110 lakes in the region stocked with rainbow, cutthroat, brown trout and triploids.

Lakes stocked with more than 3,000 trout include Wentworth Lake in Clallam County; Sandy Shores in Jefferson County; Mission and Wildcat lakes in Kitsap County; Devereaux Lake in Mason County; Ohop and Spanaway lakes in Pierce County; and Clear, Deep, Hicks and Long lakes in Thurston County. Updated information on WDFW fish plants is available online at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/weekly/>. For tips on fishing options, by water and county, see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/prospects/index.htm>.

Thurston County offers youngsters ages 5-14 a head start with a one-day fishing event at Long Lake Park on April 21. The area open to fishing includes the waters within the swimming buoy line between the fences at the north and south boundaries of the swimming beach. Children must be pre-registered in order to participate. Information on registering and the event is available by calling Lacey Parks and Recreation, (360) 491-0857.

Meanwhile, recreational **halibut** anglers have been out in force near Port Angeles (Marine Area 6), pulling in more than 40 of the big flatfish since the season began April 9. Marine areas 6-11 and 13 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca and Puget Sound) are open five days a week, Thursday through Monday, through June 16.

This month and next are the best months to catch halibut, said Greg Bargmann, WDFW marine fish manager. "The earlier in the year, the better," he said. Bargmann advises anglers to check the tides and go out when there's minimal change. "Fish bite best when the tide is moving slowly, with no significant highs or lows," he said.

Anglers should note the following additional halibut openers occurring throughout May:

Marine Area 1 (Ilwaco) will open May 1, seven days a week until 70 percent of the quota is reached, or until July 15, whichever comes first. The fishery will reopen on Aug. 3 and continue three days a week, Friday through Sunday, until the remaining quota is reached, or Sept. 30, whichever comes first. It is unlawful to fish for, retain, or possess any bottom fish, except Pacific cod and sable fish with halibut on board.

Marine Area 2 (Westport/Ocean Shores) will open May 1, five days a week, Sunday through Thursday, until 95 percent of the quota is reached. During this time, fishing will be open seven days a week in the northern near shore area south of the Queets River. Once the catch reaches 95 percent of the quota, fishing in the near shore area will be limited to Fridays and Saturdays until the remaining quota is taken - or Sept. 30, whichever occurs first.

Marine areas 3 and 4 (Neah Bay and LaPush) will open May 15, three days a week, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, until the May quota is reached. The fishery in that area will then reopen on selected dates in June within certain boundaries.

Marine Area 5 (Seiku) will be open May 24 through Aug. 3, five days a week, Thursday through Monday.

Marine Area 12 (Hood Canal) is closed to fishing for halibut and a number of other species due to low dissolved-oxygen conditions.

All areas open to fishing have a one-fish daily catch limit and two-halibut possession limit, regardless of whether those fish are fresh or frozen. There is no minimum size limit for halibut caught in any area. For additional information, call the Fishing Hotline at (360) 902-2500 or check the WDFW website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/halibut/>).

The **lingcod** fishery in Marine Area 4 (Neah Bay) got under way April 15, giving anglers a chance to land some of the abundant fish in the area. Creel reports from opening day near Sekiu on the Strait of Juan de Fuca showed an average of one fish for every angler.

But weather conditions along the south coast near Westport have been thwarting lingcod anglers, said Wendy Beghley, WDFW fish biologist. "When nature cooperates and people can get out, they're catching fish," she said. "But so far the weather's been pretty challenging."

Anglers should note the minimum size for lingcod in Marine Area 4 is 24 inches, rather than 22 inches in marine areas 1-3 on the south coast below Cape Alava. All four marine areas are open seven days a week through Oct. 13. Details on regulations and additional information about the lingcod fishery is available on the WDFW Fishing Hotline (360-902-2500) and the department's website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

As long as the weather holds, anglers on the Bogachiel and Calawah rivers should be able to catch a few wild **steelhead** before the season closes April 30, said David Low, WDFW fish biologist. "We're hearing there's some good-sized steelhead out there, if people can get out on the rivers," Low said.

Meanwhile, **spring chinook** are showing up in the Sol Duc and Quillayute rivers, where about 1,300 hatchery fish are expected to return this year, said Low. He also reminds anglers that the Hoh River reopens May 17 for spring chinook as well. Before heading out, anglers should check WDFW's Fishing in Washington pamphlet, posted at the website noted above.

Rather dig **razor clams**? A morning dig is scheduled April 19-22. One beach - Twin Harbors - will open for digging Thursday, April 19, joined by Long Beach on Friday, April 20. Those beaches plus Copalis, Mocrocks and Kalaloch will open for digging Saturday, April 21. All beaches except Kalaloch will be open for digging Sunday, April 22. All digging on those beaches must be finished by noon. Details are available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/razorclm/season.htm>.

Southwest Washington:

More than 300,000 anglers across the state - including thousands from southwestern Washington - are expected to turn out April 28 for opening day of the lowland lakes **trout** season. Mineral Lake in Lewis County always draws a crowd, as does Swift Reservoir in Skamania County and the Rowland Lakes in Klickitat County. At these and many other lakes set to open around the region, the daily catch limit is five trout per day, no minimum size.

Then again, many anglers will forgo the "opening day" tradition for a chance to catch a **spring chinook salmon** on one of several tributaries to the Columbia River. The mainstem fishery below the Interstate 5 Bridge closed April 16, but the action on Columbia River tributaries should start heating up soon, said Joe Hymer, WDFW fish biologist.

"With the mainstem now closed below Bonneville Dam, the focus is shifting to the `tribs'," Hymer said. "We should see a lot more spring chinook caught in rivers ranging from the Cowlitz to the Klickitat in the days ahead."

Anglers fishing the North Fork of the Lewis River caught some spring chinook during the week ending April 15, although none were checked on the Cowlitz River. Boat anglers fishing near Blue Creek did, however, average nearly one late-run **hatchery steelhead** for every two poles. Bank anglers also caught some fish. Tacoma Power personnel recovered 53 adult spring chinook along with 275 winter-run steelhead at the Cowlitz Salmon Hatchery.

The first spring chinook of the season was checked at Drano Lake during the same week, and more are clearly headed that direction. On April 16, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers counted 804 spring chinook passing Bonneville Dam - nearly as many as the cumulative total this year through April 12.

"As those numbers continue to rise, it won't be long before fishing improves upriver," said Hymer, who advises anglers to keep an eye on online "dam count" totals to assess fishing prospects above Bonneville Dam. See <http://www.cbr.washington.edu/dart/adult.html>.

Hymer reminds anglers gearing up to fish for hatchery spring chinook salmon in the Wind River that new regulations are in effect this season. In a year when chinook salmon returns to the Wind River are predicted to be down significantly, anglers fishing that river may retain only one - rather than two - hatchery spring chinook per day.

Night closure and non-buoyant lure restriction also will be in effect on the Wind River this year. In addition, the river will remain closed to all fishing upstream from a point 400 feet below Shipherd Falls until the catch-and-release steelhead season begins in September.

As in previous years, anglers will be required to release any wild, unmarked spring chinook they catch any time during the season.

Anglers should be aware that the mainstem Columbia from Tower Island powerlines, located about 6 miles below The Dalles Dam, to McNary Dam is scheduled to remain open to fishing for hatchery salmon and hatchery steelhead through April. Some spring chinook have been sampled just below John Day Dam in recent days.

Upriver anglers waiting for the chinook catch to pick up might want to try fishing for **walleye** in the John Day Pool. Thirty-seven anglers checked during the week ending April 15 averaged nearly one keeper per pole. For downriver anglers, Hymer suggests fishing for **sturgeon** on the Columbia River from Vancouver downstream. "It's a sleeper fishery," he said. "While most people were out fishing for chinook, a handful of anglers were getting some nice sturgeon."

But if history is any guide, the lowland lakes trout opener April 28 will have the greatest draw. Tips on fishing areas, listed by county and water, can be found in *Washington Fishing Prospects*, available on WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/prospects/index.htm>. Fish stocking details, by county and lake, are available in the Hatchery Trout Stocking Plan on WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/index.htm>.

Eastern Washington:

Many excellent **trout** fishing waters open April 28 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's rainbows and cutthroats are averaging 10 to 12 inches, with some up to 20 inches," Donley said. That catch will mostly come from the near 60,000 cutthroat fry and near 80,000 rainbow fry that have been stocked and growing in Badger the past couple of years. This spring, Badger also received 5,000 eight- to 12-inch rainbows, 200 two- to five-pound surplus hatchery rainbow broodstock, and 2,016 triploid rainbows weighing three-quarters to 1.5 pounds.

Donley also likes the prospects at Williams Lake, where he expects anglers to catch limits of 11- to 20-inch trout. Spring fry plants over the past couple years at Williams total almost 182,000 rainbows and over 45,000 cutthroats, Donley said. This spring Williams also received 10,000 eight- to 12-inch rainbows, 400 two to five-pound surplus hatchery rainbow broodstock, and almost 3,000 triploids running three-quarters to 1.5-pounds apiece.

"West Medical opening day catches will be even better than last year, mostly from the 200,000-plus rainbow fry stocked there," Donley said. West Medical was also stocked with 10,000 eight to 12-inch rainbows, 400 two to five-pound surplus hatchery rainbow broodstock, and 2,016 triploids.

Donley predicts "another peak production year for Fishtrap Lake," which has plenty of 11- to 16-inch rainbows along with fry plants now running 10 to 12 inches. Fishtrap received over 98,000 rainbow fry over the last couple years, plus 15,000 eight to 12-inch rainbows, 400 two to five-pound surplus hatchery rainbow broodstock, and 2,417 triploid rainbows this spring.

Medical Lake is going to be good this year, too, Donley said. Rainbows and browns are running to 20 inches and tiger trout up to 18 inches. Fishing at Medical Lake is under selective gear rules, with a 14-inch minimum size and two-fish daily catch limit. "Fish Lake will also be good for eastern brook trout and tiger trout, a brook-brown hybrid," Donley said. "Brook trout should average 8 to 16 inches and tiger trout will be seven to 20 inches." Fish Lake received nearly 12,000 tiger trout fry, almost 6,000 brook trout fry, and 400 two-plus-pound surplus hatchery brook trout broodstock.

"Clear Lake should also be pretty decent with all the stocking we've done there," Donley said. Clear has received 85,000 rainbow fry, 55,000 brown fry, and 20,000 tiger fry over the last couple years, plus 30,000 eight to 12-inch rainbows, 10,500 eight to 12-inch browns, 50 two- to five-pound surplus hatchery rainbow broodstock, and 2,261 triploids running two-thirds to 1.5 pounds this spring.

Donley says two mixed-species lakes in Spokane County that open April 28 could also be fairly productive. Downs Lake gets 5,000 catchable-size rainbows every year, but it also has lots of **yellow perch** and a fair population of **bass** and **crappie**, he said. Chapman Lake gets 7,500 rainbow catchables, added to more than 100,000 kokanee fry that have been growing since last spring. "Chapman's kokanee fishing won't be great on this opener, but it will pick up later in the season," Donley said.

Donley also noted that several year-round lakes in Spokane could be good bets for warmwater fish on April 28 - especially for anglers who want to avoid the crowds at the usual trout hot spots. Eloika and Bonnie lakes offer good perch fishing and Silver Lake has bass, crappie and **bluegill**.

Other central district waters that opened earlier this spring under selective gear rules continue to provide good catches. These include Spokane County's Amber Lake, where rainbows are averaging 12 to 20 inches, and Lincoln County's Coffeepot Lake, where rainbows are averaging 12 inches.

The Tucannon River impoundments in Columbia County opened for trout fishing last month, but hatchery crews continue to stock them and other area waters with catchable-size rainbows. Curl Lake opens April 28 and is being stocked with eight to 12-inch and some 14-inch-plus rainbows.

In the north end of the region, Rocky Lake in Stevens County to be one of the best bets on the April 28 season opener, said WDFW district fish biologist Curt Vail of Colville. Limits of nine to 12-inch rainbows should come from the 5,000 rainbow fry stocked there last spring. Waitts Lake in Stevens County should also be very good with abundant stocking, including more than 30,000 brown trout fry from last year, 17,000 eight to 12-inch rainbows and 250 two to five-pound surplus hatchery rainbow broodstock, and 24,000 recently-released net-pen-reared rainbows.

Marshall Lake in Pend Oreille County should also produce good catches from the 35,000 cutthroat fry stocked last fall. Cedar Lake in Stevens County, which received over 18,000 rainbow fry last spring, historically produces big rainbows on the opener. Mudgett Lake in Stevens County, which received over 10,000 rainbow fry last year, should also be good. Southern Stevens County's Deer and Loon lakes are receiving lots of triploid rainbows ranging from three-quarters to 1.5 pounds to add to opening day action. Deer Lake is slated for 3,350 triploids, along with 15,000 rainbow fry, 31,400 rainbow

catchables, 500 rainbow broodstock and 900 eastern brook broodstock. Loon Lake is getting 1,063 triploids, in addition to more than 16,000 rainbow fry and nearly 110,000 kokanee fry.

April 27 is the registration deadline for the "Fishing Kids" event on May 5 at Spokane County's Clear Lake. This annual event for kids 5-14 years of age provides beginning fishing instruction, a 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 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 477-2638 for more details.

North Central Washington:

The April 28 fishing season opener at several Columbia Basin **trout**-stocked waters should be very productive, says WDFW district fish biologist Jeff Korth of Moses Lake. Best bets may be Grant County's Blue and Park lakes, which were just rehabilitated last fall and stocked with 10-12-inch rainbows, plus triploid rainbows running three-quarters to 1.5 pounds each.

Blue Lake received 105,000 catchables and 5,901 triploids, while Park received 70,000 catchables and 3,752 triploids. "The catchables at Blue and Park should provide an average catch rate of at least three fish per angler on the opener," Korth said. "Fingerlings for the 2008 fishery will be stocked later this spring, and the Park and Blue lakes fisheries will return to their former glory."

Vic Meyers Lake, which connects to Park Lake, was also rehabilitated last fall, and is being stocked with 3,000 catchable-sized rainbows and 280 big triploids in time for the opener.

The rainbow catch at Deep Lake is usually very good on the opener, yielding four to five fish per angler, Korth said. Besides the usual 5,000 rainbow and 40,000 kokanee fingerlings, Deep Lake also received 5,000 catchable-sized (10-12 inches) rainbow trout this year. "The late-spring, early-summer kokanee fishery at Deep Lake has been good to those who know how to target them," Korth said, "But the better kokanee fishing comes later in the summer, in July and August."

Perch Lake is among the most consistent waters in the Basin, with limits of 11-12-inch rainbows generally the rule, Korth said. "Perch Lake receives only 10,000 fingerlings annually, and the lake is fished out in a few weeks most years, so only an occasional 15-inch carryover will be seen," he said. Korth noted that Perch Lake is mostly a shore fishery, although hand-carried boats or float tubes can be used.

Warden Lake, once a favorite for the late April trout opener, is now plagued by spiny-rayed fishes like sunfish and bullheads, reducing survival rates for fingerling trout. "Warden Lake was stocked with 57,000 rainbow fingerlings last spring, but our sampling indicates that only about 10 percent survived," Korth said. "Another 20,000 rainbow fingerlings were stocked last fall and survival of these fish was good. Yearling rainbow from the spring stocking were 12-14-inches, but those from the fall stocking will only be eight to 10 inches." Warden's last rehabilitation was nine years ago. A few carryover rainbows at 15 inches and better should make up about five percent of opening day catches, he said, along with some large brown trout.

Many of the Basin's March 1 and April 1 opening lakes are still fishing very well, especially Burke Lake and Upper Hampton Lake, and the selective gear fisheries at Dusty, Lenore, and Dry Falls lakes.

WDFW district fish biologist Bob Jateff of Omak says several trout waters in the Okanogan should provide good fishing on the April 28 opener. Good bets for lots of 10- to 12-inch rainbows, and some carryover rainbows to 14 inches, are Conconully Reservoir, Conconully Lake, Wannacut, Fish, and Alta lakes.

Pearrygin Lake, near Winthrop, was rehabilitated last fall to remove undesirable fish species, but will be re-stocked prior to the opener with both catchable-size (12 inch) and triploid rainbow trout (one to two pounds).

Big Twin Lake, near Winthrop, suffered some winterkill but will be planted with triploid rainbows up to 1.5 pounds and catchable rainbows to 12 inches. Other good bets for selective gear lakes are Blue Lake on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area (for rainbows and browns up to 18 inches) and Ell Lake, southeast of Tonasket (for rainbows 14 to 16 inches). Ell continues to have low water level issues but should still provide fair fishing.

Both fly-fishing-only lakes in the Okanogan - Aeneas and Chopaka - should have slower than normal fishing for rainbow trout, Jateff said, but in both cases the opportunity exists for some exceptionally large fish. Meanwhile, Leader Lake near Okanogan should provide fair fishing for rainbow trout, as well as **black crappie** and **bluegill**.

Jameson Lake in Douglas County should have good fishing for rainbow trout 11 to 12 inches, and some carryovers to 14 inches, said Jateff, noting that Jameson has a well developed launch site with campsites at the southern end of the lake.

Two lakes that opened April 1 continue to provide good catches: Rat Lake near Brewster offers rainbows and browns in the 11 to 13-inch range, and Spectacle Lake northwest of Tonasket has rainbows up to 12 inches.

WDFW warmwater fish biologist Matt Polacek reports **walleye** are starting to bite on year-round Banks Lake. "Last year's spring/summer fishery reports showed the highest catch rates on Barker Flats, the southwest side of Steamboat Rock, and in the Devil's Punchbowl in about 18 to 25 feet of water," he said. "Anglers were successful using a perch pattern crankbait or a perch pattern worm harness behind a bottom walker. Troll along the weed beds and if you start catching perch then you are in the right spot. Harvest was excellent last year and we hope that this year is the same."

South Central Washington:

Trout-stocked waters in the southcentral region are open year-round, with hatchery stocking continuing through the spring. Anglers can check stocking schedules at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/regions/reg3/index.htm> and updates on weekly plants at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/weekly/>.

Jim Cummins, a WDFW fish biologist in Yakima, said there is still good snowpack in the mountains, so a number of higher elevation lakes are not accessible to plant. "Catchable-size rainbows were planted in Clear Lake in Yakima County, but Lost Lake near Rimrock Reservoir and Dog Lake are not accessible," he said. "In fact, Dog Lake was completely frozen on April 12. When the snow melts these lakes will be planted."

Cummins reminds anglers that most rivers and streams are closed until June 1 to protect salmon and steelhead smolts that are migrating downstream, and to protect spawning steelhead, rainbow and cutthroat trout. "The catch-and-release area on the Yakima River is an exception," he said. "The reach of the Yakima is open year-round, but anglers should check the Sport Fishing Rules pamphlet before fishing."

Smallmouth bass fishing is expected to pick up and stay good through at least the end of May in the lower Yakima River. "When spring flows are high, fishing can be difficult," Cummins said. "But when water flow is low, there is some great smallmouth fishing from Benton City down. The recent cool

weather in the mountains has resulted in a steady decline in river flows, so now is the time to get the bass gear out and fish the river." Cummins said that although the majority of fish are in the one- to two-pound class, a number of fish five pounds and larger are caught every spring. **Channel catfish** are another good bet in the Yakima as water temperatures increase. Anglers can check Yakima River flows at <http://www.usbr.gov/pn/hydromet/yakima/>, where "Daily Data" is the best tab to check. The Yakima River at Kiona is the best flow to check, and water temperatures are also posted.

Paul Hoffarth, a WDFW fish biologist in Pasco, agrees that smallmouth bass and channel catfish in the lower Yakima is improving. He notes that WDFW helped create two new primitive boat launches at Snively Road and Hyde to provide anglers access to waters below Horn Rapids Dam. Additional launches upstream of Horn Rapids Dam are located in Benton City and at Horn Rapids Park.

Hoffarth also said the season for **white sturgeon** remains open at this time in the John Day Pool (John Day Dam to McNary Dam) and will continue until the quota is reached. A sturgeon sanctuary will be in effect from May 1 through July 31 from the Interstate 82 bridge at Umatilla upstream to McNary Dam. No fishing for sturgeon is allowed in this area during this time period.

The Ringold bank fishery will re-open May 1 for **spring chinook** through May 31. Fishing is restricted to bank angling only on the hatchery side of the river from the WDFW markers a quarter mile downstream of the Ringold irrigation wasteway outlet to the markers a half mile upstream of Ringold Springs Creek (hatchery outlet). Daily limit is two hatchery salmon, 12-inch minimum size. Only chinook with a clipped adipose fin and a healed scar at the location of the fin may be retained. Night closure and non-buoyant lure restrictions are in effect. All wild chinook (with an intact adipose fin) must be released immediately and may not be removed from the water.

Hoffarth said the annual stocking of triploid rainbow trout in the Tri-Cities area is complete. In addition to Railroad Pond in Franklin County and juvenile-only Columbia Park Pond in Benton County, two new lakes were planted - Dalton Lake and Powerline Lake, both in Franklin County. Powerline Lake is a walk-in lake with a healthy population of **yellow perch** and **largemouth bass** in addition to the recent triploid plants.

Reader Email

Got a question, story to tell or information to share? Shoot us an Email!

Write to the TGF staff:

Bob Rees: brees@pacifier.com

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Michael Teague: Michael@TheGuidesForecast.com

Random Links

It won't be long - Salmon trolling in Tillamook Bay

<http://www.steelheaduniversity.com/tillamook.htm>

Weekly Quote – "For me, becoming a fly fisherman has been a matter of adding layers, not passing through stages. I began with bluegills and largemouth bass, and I pursue them still." - William Tapply

GOOD LUCK!