

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **September 28th – October 4th, 2007**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- Fish passage at Bonneville is still well underway and fishery managers decided to reopen the season for the retention of fall chinook above the Hood River Bridge. Catches are likely to be light but this is peak season for this section of the river. Jack counts continue to skyrocket boding well for future returns.

Sturgeon anglers in the gorge continued to catch keepers at a fair rate. Department heads met on Wednesday to discuss keeping a liberalized sturgeon season above Bonneville Dam. (The fishery will remain open 7 days per week through the end of the year.)

Cooler nights have had a dramatic effect on water temperatures at Willamette Falls as it dropped 10 degrees in 10 days to 62 as of September 24th. The temperature change has yet to effect fishing or fish movement over the Falls. A few coho have been hooked below the mouth of the Clackamas to Meldrum Bar. Sturgeon fishing is slow.

Steelheaders have experienced another week of fair to good fishing on the North Santiam. Summer steelhead have continued to enter the trap at Foster Dam on the South Santiam in good numbers over the past week. In addition, water levels and temperatures have improved, resulting in more steelhead landed over the past week.

The Clackamas has continued to produce good-quality summer steelhead over the past week while coho remain typically tight-lipped. Driftboats below Carver report seeing many steelhead and coho but hooking very few. Use caution, as the water remains low.

Coho are entering the Sandy and have been seen rolling as high as Cedar Creek.

Foster Reservoir, Henry Hagg Lake and West Salish Pond are scheduled to be planted with hatchery trout.

Northwest – Tillamook Bay catches are still good with higher numbers of chinook coming from the spinner trollers in the upper bay. Anglers are grumbling about the excessive silt that washed in from last year's floods. It's limiting the number of productive fishing areas in the upper bay putting large numbers of boats at the Oyster House Hole.

Catches in the lower bay and ocean strongly favored wild coho on Tuesday although weekend fishing was good. Tom Bonk of Kaiser landed his personal best at 43 pounds on Saturday using a herring at the mouth of Tillamook Bay. Crabbing is only fair on Tillamook Bay.

Nehalem Bay remains slow but action should be picking up on the Nestucca and Salmon Rivers in south Tillamook County. Better tides are coming this weekend.

The first fall rains are forecasted for this weekend. Although not substantial, the precipitation should stimulate hatchery coho on the North Fork of the Nehalem as well as the Trask River. Chinook should also start upriver on these streams.

Siletz tidewater has been very slow for chinook over the past week.

Trollers dragging plug-cut herring behind a flasher have been taking a few chinook in Yaquina Bay. A tournament will be taking place on October 14th for which anglers must register at one of several local businesses by October 6th. Crabbing is worthwhile in the bay.

Plug cut herring or large spinners have been productive recently in Siuslaw tidewater. Boaters are reporting better numbers of chinook this week. Word is out and the boat pressure has been heavy.

Southwest – If accurate, the wind and wave forecast for the weekend will prevent boaters from crossing southwest Oregon bars into the ocean. The good news is that the first significant fall rain is predicted to start on Sunday.

ODFW biologists remind anglers again this week that hatchery fall chinook holding below Calapooya Creek should be harvested before rains start. With precipitation, these chinook will enter the creek to spawn. Recent reports from the Umpqua tidewater indicate very slow reports and little angler effort.

Siltcoos and Tahkenitch Lakes open for wild coho retention on October 1st. Trolled spinners and plugs are most commonly used to take these fish.

It's been a morning bite in the lower Coos River recently with trollers taking chinook on herring. Coos Bay has been producing good numbers of large, mostly hard Dungeness.

Chinook trollers on the Rogue River estuary have to endure spotty action again over the past week, a situation not expected to improve until the first decent fall rain.

Chetco anglers have started taking a few salmon but precipitation would be welcomed here as well. The bulk of the chinook run is holding offshore, awaiting fresh water that will trigger their migration. Chinook jacks are being taken in upper tidewater. The Chetco River ocean terminal area fall chinook opening October 1st will once again allow offshore salmon angling.

Eastern – Fishing on rivers in northeast Oregon is improving with cooler weather having a positive effect on water temperatures. The Grande Ronde, Willowa and Minam Rivers should start showing improvements although peak season for these rivers occurs later in the fall.

Trout fishing has been good on the lower Deschutes while the steelhead bite has been decent one day, slow the next.

SW Washington – The Cowlitz, Lewis, North Fork Lewis, Elochoman, Toutle, North Fork Toutle, Green, Kalama and Washougal rivers, including Camas Slough are all closed to the retention of chinook due to low returns.

Coho are being caught by mostly bank anglers on the Cowlitz at the mouth of the Toutle, Lewis and Kalama Rivers.

Columbia River Fishing Report – With sportfisheries winding down on the lower Columbia, coupled with the closure of most of its opportunities, there isn't a whole lot to write about on the mainstem. Fishery managers decided last week to re-open the river section from the Hood River Bridge to Pasco after a late surge of Chinook began crossing Bonneville Dam. Although it is likely that the bulk of the chinook in this extended section will be incidentally intercepted by trollers working the mouth of the Deschutes for mainly steelhead, there is an ongoing fishery upriver, in

the Hanford Reach which has been growing interest in recent years. Managers were still concerned about hatchery returns to the Spring Creek hatchery where the Tule strain of Chinook are not meeting the needs of the egg take for this season. Still, a decision was made this week to open the lower Columbia from Buoy 10 to Bonneville Dam starting Saturday, September 29th. In addition, the adult salmon bag limit has been increased to four per day only one of which may be a Chinook.

Noteworthy is the number of jacks returning to the Columbia where this years passage (thus far) has only been surpassed one other year in recent history. Only a few short years ago, over 70,000 jacks passed Bonneville during the peak of the big returns in the early 2000's. Although we may not reach that mark, we may get close which could equate into some great returns in the next couple of years. Science is winning over and maybe, just maybe dam operations on the Columbia and Snake are finally paying dividends.

Sturgeon opportunity received a boost on Wednesday this week as managers maintained a 7-day per week fishery for the Wauna to Bonneville stretch through the end of the year. Catches in this area typically peak this time of year for bank anglers and boat angling is equally as productive. Keepers seem to move in good numbers into the gorge fishery and although this fishery has been open for several weeks now and several keepers have been already culled from here, action should remain consistent.

Downriver, a small number of salmon anglers may still be interested in the Buoy 10 fishery. Effort and catch has waned as the bulk of the run has moved upriver. There may be a few straggler adults still available and crabbing is picking up in the area so be sure to plan on "double-dipping" if you are planning a fishing trip to the Astoria area.

The Guide's Forecast – Sturgeon fishing may be the best option going for metro anglers on the mainstem of the Columbia this week. With cooling temperatures and concentrated numbers of keepers coming to the gorge, smelt will rule as a bait in this area. The bank fishery in this area begins to peak in October and offers some of the best opportunities for a bank angler to take home a keeper over any other time of the year. There can be some intimidating anglers in this area however so don't hesitate to report any harassment or poaching to the Oregon State Police if you experience it.

Trollers working their secret areas from Troutdale through the gorge will begin to take more consistent numbers of coho on plugs this time of year. Although I am not sure where these fish are destined for, success can be worth the trip if you have some experience in these "micro-fisheries". This fishery will last into the early weeks of November.

Summer steelhead are still available at the mouth of the Deschutes and an occasional Chinook and coho are also being taken on plugs in this area. Passage is still going strong but ever since the mainstem started showing signs of cooling, migrating adults have been making tracks over The Dalles Dam and headed for their eastern destinations.

Quality upriver brights should begin showing in decent numbers in the Hanford reach but be sure to check regulations before participating in this fishery.

For crabbers, Buoys 20 and 22 are the likely targets but be sure to cage your baits as seals will be wanting in on your bait if you are using fish carcasses. You can deter them by using turkey legs for bait or caging your offerings to deny them access. You may have to move around to get out of them if they just don't leave you alone. Lower Desdemona Sands may offer you some reprieve.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Willamette water temperature has been holding steady at 62 degrees. Fish passage remains low with the most recent totals 113 fall Chinook and 353 coho. The sturgeon decision on the Columbia regarding allowing retention seven days a week through the remainder of 2007 effects the lower Willamette and Multnomah Channel as well.

Barring the effect of heavy rainfall, the level and flow of the North Santiam should remain stable through October 3rd.

The Guide's Forecast – While sturgeon fishing has been spotty over the past week with the lower Willamette producing mostly shakers, the opportunity is there every day of the week and keeper action should improve into the fall and winter months.

Catches of steelhead should be reliable in the North Santiam for persistent anglers. Small spinners, spoons or baits will take fish as will bobber and jig rigs.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – While scores of anglers are jamming the so called 'Bowling Alley Hole' which is the lower hole on the Clackamas and a location coho will stop to rest after they enter the river, catches are few. This is about to change as fish will be on the move (and more inclined to bite) when the rain begins this coming weekend. Steelheading has remained a far better option than chasing coho on the Clack this week and these fish are still in great shape.

Trollers at the mouth of the Sandy have seen an improvement in hookups. These anglers have also hooked the occasional Chinook; the re-opening of the lower Columbia which will allow for a Chinook to be part of the four-salmon limit may yield some bonuses here. Once the rain begins, coho will be entering the Sandy River en masse and Cedar Creek will predictably become a zoo.

North Coast Fishing Report – Tillamook anglers are enjoying a good start to their season with fair to good catches of Chinook in both the upper and lower ends of Tillamook Bay. Over the weekend, the lower tide exchanges produced some good catches at the jaws and in the ocean itself. Although the bay itself produced the best catches on the soft afternoon outgoing tide, the ocean provided some small and brief flurries of activity if you were in the right place at the right time. I ran my last trip on Saturday (I spent the week in Washington DC lobbying for fish and wildlife funding and global warming legislation) produced my poorest day of the week with only one opportunity for Tom Bonk of Kaiser, Oregon. Tom landed the biggest salmon of his life at 43.5 pounds weighed in at Garibaldi Marina that afternoon. It seems there are more large fish this season than I have seen in a while. Maybe a return to the good ol' days?



Since the weekend when ALL of the angling fleet was fishing the lower end of the bay and ocean, the spinner bite has picked up with some days yielding good catches of Chinook and a few coho in the upper bay. Most anglers are concerned with all the silt build-up coming from the upper watershed as many of the traditional productive slots have filled in concentrating the bulk of the effort in just a few locations. You thought the upper bay felt crowded before.....And then there is the seaweed. Yes, it's back and impeding angler opportunity as one can't keep your bait fishing for long without getting weeded out. Depending on what time of the tide you are fishing and where you are fishing, it can all be pretty frustrating. By Wednesday, the bite in the upper bay and ocean had slowed and the seaweed was so bad for anglers fishing in the jaws that it wasn't really fishable at all. The most consistent bite of the morning has been at the Oyster House Hole through low slack. Be prepared to join the crowd.

Some coho are beginning to show in the catches with the bulk of the catch being of wild origin. Although most anglers will be targeting the Chinook, coho can make great sport but don't count on being able to take any home. All wild fish must be released unharmed and anglers are often fooled by larger coho that often exhibit the characteristics of Chinook so be sure before you bonk!

The Nehalem River is starting to show signs of improvement although most veteran guides are finding themselves more motivated to fish on the more productive Tillamook. **Pro guide Russ Morrow (503-310-9733)** reported slow action although he had a 20 pounder on the bar by noon time on Wednesday. Russ "pulled the plug" on Tillamook with all the seaweed he experienced at the start of his day and the coast guard put a 22-foot and under restriction on the Tillamook Bay bar. The upriver fishery at Nehalem and Wheeler is even more challenging.

Further south, anglers working the Nestucca River are picking up some fish in the Nestucca tidewater. Bobber tossers above Woods Bridge are taking some fish on shrimp and egg combinations and spinner tossers downstream are taking an occasional fish at the Boat Ramp and Guard Rail Holes. A more intense tide series this weekend should stimulate the bite here and on neighboring Salmon River where good numbers of hatchery Chinook are due back to the hatchery. Crowds are at their peak at the Highway 101 Bridge on the Salmon River.

The Guide's Forecast – Although most consider October peak month for Tillamook Bay Chinook, it has clearly been the last half of the month that has produced the best catches in recent years. Given the start we have witnessed on the bay thus far however, I think we can expect a good push of fish into the bay on the coming tide series. Besides the good tides, we have some rain in the forecast which although will be a welcome change and likely will stimulate some migration for Chinook, won't be the "gullywasher" that will get the driftboat season underway. Levels were forecasted to rise just under a foot. That will certainly bring fish into the rivers but the rise likely won't last long so you'll want to pay attention to what the rivers are doing very closely. Hopefully, it will be significant enough to wash some of the problem seaweed out of the bay. The higher tide series will certainly bring the seaweed in frustrating anglers during the peak part of the tides. It's the October battle we all hope to avoid.

The big tides should draw anglers into the upper bay where spinner trolling will rule the estuary. With spinners, anglers can whip their rod tips in hopes of shaking seaweed free and allowing the spinner to function so it can do its job. If you are spinner fishing, you'll want to focus your efforts close to low slack but be wary of the changes the upper bay has made. It'll put the squeeze on the crowds so please be patient with other boaters and courteous for others with fish on. Favorite colors for these fall fish are red/white in the morning and depending on whether we have clear sunny skies or not, metallic colors in the afternoon. The chartreuse green dot spinner is also a favorite on sunny days but if you have a chance, it's best to try both brass/green and solid green colors at the same time (you'll need more than one angler on board for this.) Trollers working the Tillamook River should score some fish- especially if rains stimulate the migration this weekend.

Some anglers will be keeping a watchful eye on the ocean conditions where we can effectively escape the seaweed when fishing away from the mouth of the bay. The ocean forecast becomes hit or miss this time of year so monitor the forecast closely before you decide which side of the bay you will be fishing. It'll be an excellent option if ocean and bar conditions are favorable. The stronger tides however will not make for productive fishing along the jetties on the inside of the bay and the seaweed will be a nightmare!

Bank anglers may want to monitor river levels closely as well. Although it's likely that the bulk of the coho are already in the river and staging at the hatcheries on the Trask and North Fork Nehalem Rivers, there should be enough still yet to come to offer up some good opportunity. Chinook will also be on tap with the Trask and Tillamook Rivers offering up the best chances to score chrome. The Hospital Hole, the 101 take-out on the Trask and Loren's Drift will be a bank anglers best bet. Access on the Tillamook is much more challenging and the higher you go, the poorer the quality of the fish you'll be targeting. Tidewater will offer up the best quality fish and given the fact the forecast isn't for a large rise in river levels, may make for the best fishing as well.

Don't rule out the Nestucca with the upcoming tide series and possible precipitation. Tidewater, including the famed Boat Ramp Hole may see some great fishing this weekend. Bobber and spinner fish near low slack but some of the lower holes just above tidewater may put out some good fish as well. The level of precipitation will dictate the success rates for most anglers this weekend.

The Salmon River follows close suit with the Nestucca. Access is challenging here as well but you can bet the hole at the Highway 101 Bridge will be busy with anglers.

Central & South Coast Reports – While the Siletz remains slow for Chinook anglers, fish are being taken daily. Trollers drew the most strikes over the weekend with about a dozen fish reported.

Offshore coho fishing along the central Oregon coast closed September 16th while ocean Chinook angling remains open through Halloween. Chinook catches have been low again over the past week. Bottom fishing has been good but the weather forecast for the upcoming weekend looks too stormy to cross into the ocean. All depth halibut is closed for the year.

While salmon fishing has been slow for trollers in Yaquina Bay so far this year, optimism is high for the 2007 U da Man Tournament to be held Sunday, October 14th. Registration at local area merchants costs only \$30 and benefits Chinook salmon enhancement in the Yaquina Bay and river systems. There will be no launch fees for registered anglers on Sunday. First place pays \$500 with cash awards to second a third place plus every entrant weighing in will be part of a drawing for additional prizes. Participants will meet at 5:45 AM at South Beach Marina with fishing beginning at 7 AM. Weigh-in at the same location will take place at 3 PM. Register by October 6th to be sure to get a T-shirt although late registration will be allowed. Dinner and a live auction on Saturday, October 13th is an option for the first 150 participants paying \$25 to attend.

Crabbing has been fair to good in Yaquina Bay, fair at Alsea Bay, but crabbing everywhere is improving and will continue to get better into the fall and winter months as crab harden and get larger.

Despite fewer than normal numbers of steelhead returning this season to the North Umpqua, anglers are hooking up with some regularity. Long rodders have experienced fair to good results in the flies-only section. Coho and Chinook catches improved in Winchester Bay over the past week. Crabbing has also picked up with numbers and quality of Dungeness improving. Smallmouth bass fishing will remain good around Elkton on the mainstem until the water temperature drops. The South Umpqua is closed to all fishing until the first of December.

Chinook catches in Coos Bay are few and far between. It's slow to fair at best with several jacks showing in catches. Coquille trollers are taking the occasional Chinook with some large fish have showing in recent catches.

Fishing is slow to fair in the Rogue River estuary with trollers taking a combination of coho and Chinook. While fall Chinook are scattered from the lower river to Grants Pass, coho won't start upstream until the first week of October as rain jump-starts their migration. Half-pounders are also being caught in the lower Rogue. Summer steelheading is fair in the middle Rogue and slow on the upper river.

Large jacks are entering the Chetco system now, a harbinger of the adults to follow. Upcoming rains to do the trick with the best fishing during an hiatus in precipitation with the water level falling. The lower Chetco produced a pink salmon and two chum salmon recently. Interesting and unusual, yes. Legal to keep, no.

Trout anglers at Diamond Lake are making fair to good catches of the 8,000 rainbows planted last week. Some of the fingerlings planted at three to four inches earlier this year are showing up

in catches having grown to about an eight inch length, a positive indication of the health of the waters here. Occasionally, anglers are picking up a few of the larger trout planted here last spring. These fish have been in the five to six pound range with one of these big fish allowed per day. It's all good with the memory still fresh of the downward spiral Diamond Lake took for years prior to the eradication of the prolific and harmful tui chub. And it'll only get better as this jewel of a lake returns to it's former sparkle.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Steelheading has been fair to good on the Deschutes from Shearers Falls to the mouth and should only get better into October as steelhead move up the Columbia.

Northwest Trout – Youth angling event

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is hosting a youth angling event Saturday, September 29 from 9:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at West Salish Pond in Fairview, Oregon. The department will stock approx 3,000 trophy-sized rainbow trout and 150 four-pound rainbow trout the morning of the event. The department is also supplying rods and reels for the day in addition to bait, tackle and fish bags for use by young anglers without fishing equipment. ODFW staff and volunteers will be on hand to answer questions and offer assistance to less experienced youth anglers. Packets of information including ODFW's Easy Angling booklets will be available to participants.

Foster Reservoir was planted with 5,000 rainbows this week, West Salish Pond received 3,000 and in the last stocking of the year, Henry Hagg Lake was planted with 8,000 hatchery trout. Hagg Lake closes in November.

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report September 19th – October 2nd, 2007

North Puget Sound

Saltwater anglers are finding an increasing number of coho salmon throughout the region, likely signaling the arrival of a big push of ocean silvers into Puget Sound. Meanwhile, freshwater anglers on Lake Sammamish have had some success fishing for chinook, and the Stillaguamish River remains one of the top spots to cast for pinks.

But the best bet for salmon anglers waiting for that flood of ocean coho is the marine areas of Puget Sound. "We're just starting to see a rise in the number of coho caught in central Puget Sound," said Doug Milward, a fish biologist for WDFW. "During a recent creel check, anglers in the Shilshole area averaged almost a fish per person. That's good fishing, and hopefully it will continue over the next few weeks."

Point No Point, Jefferson Head and Possession Bar should be good spots to hook ocean coho, said Milward. Anglers fishing those areas, or other waters of marine areas 9 (Admiralty Inlet) and 10 (Seattle/Bremerton), through Sept. 30 have a daily limit of two salmon, plus two additional pink salmon, and must release chinook. Chum salmon also must be released in Marine Area 9 through Sept. 30.

Milward reminds anglers that regulations in marine areas 9 and 10 change beginning Oct. 1, when anglers will have a daily limit of two salmon and must release chinook.

Meanwhile, crabbing in the region is still an option, but only one marine area remains open and for a limited time. The eastern and northern portions of Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands) are open for crab Wednesday through Saturday each week through Sept. 29. See WDFW's sport-crabbing website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/crab/> for more details on the fishery.

In the freshwater, pink salmon fishing has been "red hot" recently for anglers on the Stillaguamish River, said Kirt Hughes, another fish biologist for WDFW. "Anglers have been landing pinks left and right," he said. "Even if it has slowed down a bit, the Stillaguamish should continue to provide a great fishing opportunity."

Anglers fishing the Stillaguamish River have a daily limit of two salmon, plus two additional pink salmon, but must release all chinook.

Elsewhere, anglers fishing on Lake Sammamish are finding some chinook salmon. An abundant return of chinook to the Issaquah Hatchery this year has made for pretty good fishing in the lake, where anglers have a daily limit of two salmon measuring at least 12 inches. All sockeye must be released, and salmon fishing is closed within 100 yards of the mouth of Issaquah Creek.

Lake Washington also is open for salmon. Anglers have a daily limit of two coho per day (minimum size 12 inches) from waters north of the Highway 520 Bridge and east of the Montlake Bridge. Chinook salmon must be released.

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

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

Now that salmon fishing has closed in most ocean areas, anglers can focus on the coho fishery heating up along the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Salmon anglers can also look forward to the opening of several area rivers in the coming weeks.

While most coastal salmon fisheries north of Leadbetter Point closed in mid-September, a portion of Marine Area 3 (LaPush) will be open daily Sept. 22 through Oct. 7 for a late-season fishery targeting coho and chinook salmon returning to the Quillayute River system.

"The La Push fishery is very popular," said Wendy Beeghley, WDFW fish biologist. "There's still fish out there and judging from this year's overall results, anglers should be successful."

The La Push Last Chance Salmon Derby will take place on Sept. 29 and 30 and features \$4,300 in prizes, including \$1,000 each for the top coho and chinook. For more information, call 360-374-2531 or send an email to info@forkswa.com.

Anglers are reminded to review WDFW's 2007/2008 Fishing in Washington pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) for details on boundaries and regulations. On the south coast, Marine Area 1 (Ilwaco) is open for salmon fishing until Sept. 30. In Marine Area 2, Grays Harbor will be open Oct. 1 through Oct. 31. Anglers can keep one chinook and one wild adult coho as part of their two-fish daily limit. Willapa Bay will remain open for salmon fishing through Jan. 31.

Meanwhile, the non-selective coho fishery currently under way in Marine Area 5 (Sekiu) is proving productive for area anglers. "This is a classic hook-nose coho fishery and anglers should be catching some bigger fish," said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. Over the Sept. 15-16 weekend, more than 800 anglers fishing near Sekiu averaged nearly one fish per rod.

While the salmon fishery off Sekiu closes Sept. 30, a non-selective fishery for coho and chinook will open Oct. 1 in Marine Area 6 (Port Angeles). The fishery is open through Oct. 31 with a daily limit of two fish (combined). Only one chinook can be retained.

Also in October, anglers in Marine Area 11 (Vashon Island to the Tacoma Narrows Bridge) will be allowed to retain wild chinook. Anglers in Marine Area 13 may also retain wild chinook, but must release all wild coho.

Additional opportunities for fall fishing will become available in October when several area rivers open for salmon fishing, said Hal Michael, WDFW fish biologist. "Now's the time when river fishing picks up as coho leave the saltwater and begin to enter the streams," he said.

Rivers open for salmon fishing Oct. 1 include the Chehalis, Elk, Hoquiam, Johns, Satsop, Wishkah and Wynoochee in Grays Harbor County; Kennedy Creek (upriver to the Highway 101 bridge) in Thurston County; the Nemah River in Pacific County; and the Skokomish River in Mason County.

Many of these rivers are open to coho fishing only and anglers are advised to check WDFW's 2007/2008 Fishing in Washington pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) for rules applicable to specific rivers.

Southwest Washington:

After today (Sept. 19), anglers will be required to release any chinook salmon they encounter from the mouth of the Columbia River upstream to the Highway 395 Bridge in Pasco. Fishery managers from Washington and Oregon approved the new non-retention rule - which took effect Sept. 18 below Bonneville Dam - in response to low numbers of upriver bright chinook counted at the dam through mid-September.

The new rule will be in effect for the remainder of the season to help conserve upriver brights moving up the mainstem Columbia River, said Cindy LeFleur, WDFW Columbia River policy advisor.

"In-season data indicates the upriver bright return will be even lower than expected this year," said LeFleur, noting that the official run forecast has now been reduced to 105,000 fish from the 185,200 estimated pre-season. "Given what we know, we couldn't allow the retention fishery to continue any longer this season."

But anglers still have options for salmon and steelhead fishing in the Columbia River and its tributaries, LeFleur. The new regulations do not affect coho fisheries in the Columbia River and - at least for now - anglers can still retain chinook salmon they catch in the tributaries, she said.

"Biologists are still assessing chinook returns to the lower Columbia tributaries," LeFleur said. She recommended that anglers keep an eye on the department's website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/>) or check the Fishing Hotline (360-902-2500) if they're planning a trip to area tributaries feeding into the Columbia River below Bonneville Dam.

On the Cowlitz River, hatchery coho - not chinook - accounted for most of the action during the second week of September, Joe Hymer, WDFW fish biologist. The 89 bank anglers surveyed that

week caught and kept 75 hatchery adults, along with five adult chinook salmon. Hymer reminds anglers that there is a six-fish bag limit for adult hatchery coho on the Cowlitz.

Also productive that week was the north fork of the Lewis River, where 109 bank anglers caught 30 adult coho (releasing 11 of them), along with two hatchery steelhead. The 27 boat anglers surveyed on the North Fork that week caught and kept nine chinook and six adult coho. Anglers can retain up to four adult hatchery coho per day on the North Fork Lewis, Grays, Deep, Elochoman, Kalama, and Toutle rivers.

"The best fishing usually follows the heels of a good rain," said Hymer, noting that some anglers should trek to the Grays and Elochoman rivers. Anglers looking for chinook might want to try the Washougal River rather than Lacamas Creek, which is now closed to all fishing. Earlier this month, a release of water from Lacamas Lake Dam attracted a large number of fall chinook into the stream along with an influx of anglers, some of whom were found to be fishing illegally. As a result, Lacamas Creek has been closed to all fishing until further notice.

Farther east, boat anglers have been catching some coho on the Wind and White Salmon rivers and Drano Lake, although steelhead catching have been declining rapidly as thousands of fish move past The Dalles Dam. Coho anglers throughout the lower Columbia River Basin should expect a "transition period" as early-run stocks make way for late-run fish in early to late October, said Hymer, noting that most of those late-run fish will be heading to the Cowlitz, Lewis and Klickitat rivers.

"We're not expecting a huge run of late-run coho this year, but anglers will know them when they see them," Hymer said. "These are bright fish, often weighing eight pounds or more."

For bank anglers hoping to take home a sturgeon, the area just below Bonneville Dam is still the place to be. In a recent creel survey, 151 bank anglers caught 17 legal-sized fish in that area. Farther downstream, 37 boat anglers took five legal-sized sturgeon in the Camas-Washougal area, where four others caught 10 walleye including one that weighed a whopping 17 pounds.

Time is running out for anglers thinking about fishing Mineral Lake one more time this season. Mineral is set to close Sept. 30. Swift Reservoir, open through October, can be a good place to catch rainbows in the fall, although low water may complicate launching a boat. Another option is to head to high mountain lakes. Pesky mosquitoes should be tapering off with the cooler, moist weather while trout are fattening up in preparation for winter.

Want to catch some hatchery sea-run cutthroat trout? Hymer says Blue Creek downstream on the Cowlitz is the place to be.

Eastern Washington:

Now is the time to fish several of the region's best trout fishing lakes - not only because changing weather conditions usually mean catching is good, but also because they close Sept. 30. Badger and Williams lakes in southwest Spokane County have been producing good catches of rainbows and cutthroat throughout the five-month season. West Medical Lake in southwest Spokane County and Fishtrap Lake on the Lincoln-Spokane county line have also been excellent for rainbows, including stocked triploids and broodstock. Amber Lake, near Badger in Spokane County, has provided some of the biggest trout, although it shifts to a two-month-long, catch-and-release season after Sept. 30.

Also closing at midnight Sept. 30 are Fan Lake in Pend Oreille County, Liberty Lake in eastern Spokane County, and Downs, Fish and North Silver lakes in southwest Spokane County.

Sprague Lake, on the Lincoln-Adams county line, is normally open year-round, but will close Oct. 1 until further notice so that WDFW crews can apply rotenone to the waters throughout the lake's drainage for fishery rehabilitation. For now, Sprague Lake catch and size limits on all gamefish have been waived to allow removal of as many fish as possible before the treatment. There are crappie, channel catfish, walleye and some rainbow trout available to anglers who can catch them.

Fishing on the Snake River is picking up with cooler temperatures and shorter days. Catches have been steadily increasing near the Clearwater River confluence near Clarkston. Watch soon for creel checks by WDFW fish biologists and their colleagues in Idaho and Oregon, posted on the WDFW eastern region webpage at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/snake/index.htm>.

Walleye fishing has been fair overall in the lower Snake and mid-Columbia rivers. Flows have declined and the spill has ended at McNary Dam resulting in improved fishing for walleye below McNary Dam.

North Central Washington:

Catch-and-release trout fishing on the Methow River continues to be good, with some anglers catching rainbow and cutthroat up to 18 inches, said Bob Jateff, WDFW district fish biologist in Omak. "Surface fly patterns as well as lures have been productive," he said. Jateff reminds anglers the season closes on the Methow Sept. 30.

Chinook salmon fishing on the Columbia River in the Brewster/Bridgeport area has picked up a bit in recent days. Jateff reports the majority of the fish have been caught in the upper section just below the Highway 17 Bridge in Bridgeport. The chinook season is open through Oct. 15.

"Okanogan County lake fishing should improve considerably as fall progresses and water temperatures cool down," Jateff said. Blue Lake on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area, Ell Lake near Tonasket, and Big Twin near Winthrop are three selective gear trout lakes that should offer good fishing until the end of October, he said. Anglers also should not pass up late season opportunities to catch panfish in both Leader Lake near Omak and Patterson Lake near Winthrop. "Leader is good for both bluegill and crappie, and Patterson is good for yellow perch," Jateff said. "Jigs tipped with a small piece of worm are effective methods for all three of these fish species."

Jateff also said that anglers who want to catch a few brook trout should explore some of the open fishing tributaries of the Methow River system. "Boulder Creek and Falls Creek are both tributaries to the Chewuch and hold good numbers of brook trout," he said. "Anglers may keep up to five brook trout per day, no minimum size, but please check the regulation pamphlet carefully, since there are tributaries that are closed to all fishing."

Jeff Korth, WDFW district fish biologist in Moses Lake, said with nighttime air and water temperatures dropping, trout angling in the Columbia Basin should be picking up. "I've recently seen quite a few anglers at Blue and Park lakes getting in last-of-the-season catches," he said. Both lakes close to fishing Sept. 30.

Sprague Lake, which is on the Adams-Lincoln county line, is normally open year-round. But this year, the lake will close Oct. 1 so that WDFW crews can apply rotenone to the waters throughout the lake's drainage for fishery rehabilitation. Until the closure, Sprague Lake catch and size limits on all gamefish have been waived to allow removal of as many fish as possible before the treatment. There are crappie, channel catfish, walleye and some rainbow trout available to anglers.

The 17th annual Wenatchee River Salmon Festival is Sept. 20-23 at the Leavenworth National Fish Hatchery in Leavenworth. The event features salmon and other wildlife watching at the hatchery and in the stream, nature-related art and craft booths, "recycled" salmon sculpture, an animal costume parade, the amazing salmon maze, a Native American encampment, outdoor recreation exhibits and hands-on educational activities. Call 509-548-6662 for more information, or see <http://www.salmonfest.org/>.

South Central Washington:

From Sept. 20 through the remainder of the season, Columbia River anglers are required to release any chinook salmon they encounter below the Highway 395 Bridge in Pasco. The new regulations, approved by fishery managers from Washington and Oregon, do not affect coho fisheries in the Columbia River or salmon fisheries in any of its tributaries. Paul Hoffarth, WDFW fish biologist, explained that the agreement to end chinook retention on the mainstem Columbia River was due primarily to the low number of upriver bright chinook salmon counted at Bonneville Dam through Sept. 16. "Based on the counts and catch totals to date, the pre-season run forecast of 185,200 upriver chinook has been reduced to 105,000 fish, a reduction of more than 40 percent," he said.

The Hanford Reach of the Columbia River, Highway 395 Bridge to Priest Rapids Dam is open for salmon retention at this time where fishing has just started to pick up. An estimated 292 adult chinook and 39 jacks have been caught so far, which is just slightly behind last year at this time (318 adults and 40 jacks). Staff sampled 23 percent of the boat anglers.

Hoffarth noted that while the Snake River opened for steelhead on Sept. 1, the Ringold-area steelhead fishery would open Oct. 1. "Large numbers of steelhead are moving past McNary Dam and into the Snake and mid-Columbia," he said. "Anglers are required to use barbless hooks while fishing for steelhead in the Snake River and only hatchery steelhead may be retained."

Hoffarth said he's starting to see a few more anglers on the Yakima River fishing for salmon. Creel checkers interviewed more than 20 salmon anglers each day over the past weekend and 58 anglers during the week. A couple of adult salmon and nine jacks were caught.

Walleye fishing has been fair overall in the lower Snake and mid-Columbia rivers. Flows have declined and the spill has ended at McNary Dam resulting in improved success for walleye below McNary Dam.

Reader Email

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

Write to the TGF staff:

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Weekly Quote – "Izaak Walton wrote in 1653: 'He that hopes to be a good angler must not only bring an inquiring, searching, observing wit; but he must also bring a large measure of hope and patience.' In these days of hard-fished waters, ethics and philosophy play an ever increasing role in our enjoyment, and to Father Walton's measure of hope and patience, let us add the spice called charity." - Ernest G. Schwiebert, Jr., 1955

GOOD LUCK!