

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **March 28th – April 3rd, 2008**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

With the re-opener of the Columbia and the beginning of a very productive anchor fishery using plugs with sardine wraps, be sure you are stocked up on [Bob's Bait Wraps](#) by visiting your local Fisherman's Marine and Outdoor store or go to our on-line tackle store and order yours today:

<http://www.theguidesforecast.com/store/cart.php?cat=Fishing+Gear>

Willamette Valley/Metro- Although catches have slowed slightly from the opener, spring chinook anglers continue to produce fair catches of mostly hatchery fish from the I-5 Bridge to the Portland Airport on the mainstem Columbia River reports **pro guide Brandon McGavran (360-607-1327)**. Brandon McGavran has been going without flashers while **pro guide Brandon Glass (503-260-8285)** has been scoring good results with flashers near Troutdale. Both are fishing their baits close to the bottom. Boat anglers enjoyed a salmon for every 7 rods while bank anglers landed one for every 16.6 rods. Bank catches are likely to improve as snowmelt influences river flows. Returning adults are drawn to slower flows along the edges of the river.

The river downstream of I-5 to Buoy 10 opened on Monday with poor catches reported. Test fishing for the commercial fleet yielded poor results, foregoing the proposed opener on the 25th. This section of river remains open 7-days per week through April 4th. Catches are likely to improve with the section downstream of Longview most likely to produce.

Water flow at Willamette Falls has moderated this week with the temperature and visibility improving. Better clarity and higher water temps are what springer fishers have been looking for, but with weather this week, it's likely to get muddy again. Sturgeon anglers should anticipate fair to good results this week.

Fishing on the Clackamas has slowed to nearly a standstill. Winter steelhead in the river are reportedly dark.

Steelheading is slow for wild winter steelhead on the Sandy River. These fish are starting to color up although there have been reports recently of the occasional hookup with hatchery summers.

Expect fluctuations in the water flow on the North Santiam with precipitation and periodic snowmelt this week. The passage of summer steelhead has been fair despite low water temperatures, with the lower river from Mehema downstream offering the best chance for hookups. **Pro guide Jesse Zalonis (503-392-5808)** reports a few hatchery summers are around in addition to native winter steelhead.

Scheduled for trout planting this week are Blue River Reservoir, Dorena Reservoir, E. E. Wilson Pond, Foster Reservoir, Freeway Lake East, Junction City Pond, Roaring River Park Pond, Timber Linn Lake, Walling Pond, Walter Wirth Lake and Waverly Lake.

Northwest – Steelheaders working the Wilson River last Thursday experienced unprecedented success for this time of year. A mix of hatchery broodstock steelhead and wild fish made up the catch. Success slowed on most district streams early this week however despite ideal water

conditions.

The Nestucca fished fairly good over the weekend with hatchery broodstock available on this river as well reports **pro guide Jesse Zalonis (503-392-5808)** and **pro guide Jim Stevenson (503-881-5289)**. The upper drifts have been fishing better in the higher flows but become more technical above 5th bridge.

The Trask has had some quality wild fish available while the mainstem Nehalem remains too high for quality catches. The Salmonberry River is very hard to access with the road wash-outs from winter storms.

Cooler temperatures have snow in the forecast for the coast range. Traveling will be hazardous and the cold fronts will put steelhead off the bite until the early afternoon.

Several coastal streams close to steelhead fishing on March 31st so check regulations before heading out.

Devils Lake is scheduled to be stocked with hatchery trout.

Southwest – Fishing for surf perch from ocean beaches is as good as it gets, yielding mostly limits to anglers tossing sand shrimp into the surf when wind and wave conditions allow.

Bottom fishing has been outstanding whenever boats have been able to safely access the ocean. Rock and jetty fishers are reporting good catches of a mixed bag of species.

Flyfishers have had some success recently with steelhead in the 'flies only' section of the North Umpqua with larger patterns on sink-tip lines most effective.

Springers are being targeted on the lower Rogue, even though only a handful have been landed by anglers so far this season.

Steelheading is spotty on the Chetco with a few fresh fish entering as aggressive down-runners return to the sea while many are spawning. Both salmon steelhead fishing will close here on March 31st. Without a summer steelhead season, the next run to look forward to will be fall chinook. In the interim, trout fishers will have the river to themselves.

Bradley Lake, Empire Lake Upper and Lower, Johnson Mill Pond, Lost Creek Reservoir and Willow Lake are scheduled to be planted with trout.

Eastern – The lower Deschutes water flow is a little less than average for this time of year which can be a positive for fishing. Water temperatures remain in the low 40s. Trout have not yet keyed on the March Brown hatch, making nymphs the best choice. Redside fishing is fair.

Pro guide Rick Arnold (541-480-1570) reports tough fishing lately for buck trout on Lake Billy Chinook but expects good results starting in April.

Smallmouth fishing is spotty but improving on the John Day where results will only get better as the water warms into springtime. **Pro guide Steve Fleming (1-888-624-9424)** reports April can be one of the best months of the year to score large bass.

SW Washington – Lewis River anglers are reporting catches of spring chinook in the mainstem. Cold fronts hitting the area this week may taper the bite however.

Although salmon passage at Bonneville remains low, rumors of two chinook landed came from Drano Lake over the weekend. This watershed is forecasted to receive a large return this season.

Columbia River Fishing Report – Early Columbia River reports have anglers excited about the spring chinook opportunities this year. The fishing started off great and although action has dropped off a little bit, it remains good enough to keep people motivated. The fishing above I-5 has been most productive although most anglers are not finding consistent results. It's certainly much easier for a guide that is able to fish multiple rods and pounding the pavement on a daily basis. **Pro guide Brandon McGavran (360-607-1327)** reports, "The bite has been pretty consistent on the Columbia in the Vancouver/Portland area. Fished today 3-26-08, we started fishing at 7 am and got our limit of fish by 9:30 before the crummy weather hit. We were 4 for 4 all caught on green label cut plug Herring trolled slowly (no flashers) 1 crank off the bottom. I have my clients work their gear while trolling, dropping it down when it gets deeper and reeling up a crank or two when it shallows up. I want my baits to be fishing right off the bottom. I fish a 4/0 and 3/0 size Mustad hooks. I keep my hooks really sharp so the fish hook themselves. Spring chinook are often light takers on herring so patience is the key when you are getting bit. Concentrate your fishing effort around the tide changes." Brandon has been spending much of his time close to the I-5 Bridge.

Further upstream near Troutdale, **pro guide Brandon Glass (503-260-8285)** has been putting in some hours and coming up with good results. Brandon writes, "Well I have moved my operation in to the Columbia River for those jewels of the Northwest, spring chinook. I have been around the Chinook Landing down to 42nd street, Port-co Ramp area. I have been trolling herring downstream on the bottom, with flashers and a few rods with out. I have been successful every time this week, but yesterday I managed to get 4 hatcheries for my people in about 3hours. Some people have been doing great then a few have been having problems getting bit. I have told everybody the same thing- after a pass if your herring doesn't have sand on it then you are not down on the bottom enough. Fish the water 30' all the up to about 16' and use about 6-8 ounces of lead with a 10" dropper." These are great reports from two very good guides. Thanks guys!

Downstream, the much anticipated opener on 3/24 did not produce the type of results that we had anticipated. In fact, action was quite slow making most think the run was going to be absent this year. Ironic given the fact the fishing has been so good upstream. State trooper **Trygve Klepp** had this to report from this area, "I worked the Westport boat ramp today and checked 12 boats with 21 anglers. I only saw three fish. The checkers only saw six fish total." Not what one would hope for during spring break. It's pretty clear that the fish were plain absent in this section. It's not that uncommon as schools still come through in spurts until more consistent numbers show up later in April.

The weather isn't helping the results in either fishery either. The recent set of cold fronts that is currently hitting our region has dropped water and air temperatures where fish are becoming more lethargic. They hit baits softer and are less likely to move longer distances to attack a bait. The good news is it will change but it doesn't look like this will happen in the near future before all our future anglers have to go back to school.

The Bonneville fishery is not impressive. With all the biters being culled out of the fishery before they get up there, it's a hard place to accomplish good results until more fish filter into the system. Dam passage is minimal with 67 adults passing the dam as of the 25th of March.

Sturgeon anglers remain perplexed as catch rates remain low. Cold water temperatures have a lot to do with mainstem success this time of year and its not favoring sturgeon anglers. The best report came from the Portland to Longview stretch where a keeper sturgeon was retained for about every 10 boats.

The walleye check was also down from previous weeks.

The Guide's Forecast – The current cold snap could put salmon off the bite through the weekend. However, as fish acclimate to the change, the first hint of warmer weather, even if it's just an afternoon warming, the action could change. Starting with the lower river since its days are numbered, the action has been surprisingly slow which usually means that action is very likely to pick up! Although we don't have a great set of tides to work with, the outgoing tides are improving for anglers that like to sit on anchor and work plugs in the ebbing flows. This will be of particular interest for anglers downstream of Longview as that is the favored method of fishing down there.

Some of the early success of the upriver fishery is due to a larger than anticipated (at least by me) return of 5-year old fish. Some smaller 4-year olds are starting to show in the mix. It's an indication the bulk of the run is just beginning as 4-year olds often make up better than 80% of the Columbia run.

Anglers are starting to catch on that trolling herring is an effective method whether the tide is coming in or going out. As some of the TGF guides have pointed out, slowing down the downstream troll is an effective way to getting the job done. It's also critically important that you keep your baits down where the fish are.

It's highly likely that with the slow fishing the downstream opener realized in the lower river that anglers working the above I-5 water and adjacent downriver sandbars that action is likely to slow this week. Biters will be culled from the downstream fishery and a slight lull is always experienced between the 5-year old and 4-year old fish. We're likely to enter that lull this week.

Sturgeon anglers won't make any headway this week in any areas of the Columbia River. The best action will remain in the Willamette River from the Portland Harbor to Lake Oswego. Most metro anglers have their sights set on springers however.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Water flow at Willamette Falls has moderated this week with the temperature and visibility improving. Better clarity and higher water temps are what springer fishers have been looking for and several anchor fishers and trollers got lucky this week. Rainfall is likely to muddy the lower river again, however. Sturgeon anglers should anticipate fair to good results this week.

The McKenzie fished well for fly anglers earlier this week.

Pro guide Jesse Zalonis (503-392-5808) reports, "The North Santiam reports a few summer steelhead around, with an occasional winter run and some hold overs as well."

The Guide's Forecast – Trolling herring until mid-afternoon will be productive with tides conducive to anchor fishing mid afternoons into the evening. Water flow should create enough current during the day, however, with the level up from rainfall. The downside is that this freshet may cause water visibility to deteriorate which will make springer and steelhead fishing difficult. Springer fishing prospects are contingent upon the effect of precipitation on the visibility in the lower Willamette. If it stays at 2.5 feet or better, anglers should connect. Sturgeon fishing should

be worthwhile with St. Johns the most reliable area although anglers willing to remain mobile in order to locate the larger biters will find keepers in Multnomah Channel as well. Smelt remains reliable if you can find and afford it. Smelt is a very good back-up. Try no scent and if ineffective, start juicing them up.

The McKenzie can be volatile. On the plus side is the low snow level; on the minus side is the rain which remains in the forecast through Saturday. If it doesn't blow out, fish nymphs and wets. Look for dry fly opportunities during afternoon hatches.

Water temperatures on the North Santiam will be best below Mehama, but still in the low 40s. On the positive side, numbers of summer steelhead are improving daily and catches have been fair at times. The first couple of South Santiam summers entered traps at Foster Dam on March 24th. Both were recycled. Go get 'em.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Clackamas steelheaders saw an improvement this week with fresh fish entering following recent precipitation, and while still slow, a few steelhead are being landed. Dog Creek delivered a number of hookups, but steelhead remain sluggish despite good level and clarity.

Sandy River anglers have experienced decent water level, good water clarity and slow fishing over the past week.

The Guide's Forecast – Water temperature in the Sandy and Clackamas are stalling what could be a decent steelhead bite. As air temperatures rise, water temperature will follow (With the exception of cold snowmelt) but when the water warms, steelheading will improve. Add to that equation the entrance of hatchery summer steelhead and a good time will be had by all.

North Coast Fishing Report – Many north coast lakes have been stocked with trout for the spring break weekend. Unfortunately, with coast mountain passes laden with snow, travel to these lakes will not be such a great idea. Cold weather may also put many of these fish off the bite.

Steelheaders experienced awesome fishing late last week as Wilson River anglers put the way-lay on quality broodstock and wild fish. Thursday was termed nothing short of phenomenal as limits were common on many boats with some reporting double digit results. It didn't seem to matter whether you were side-drifting or plug pulling, it all paid off. Friday and Saturday were also decent but Thursday was the day.

The Nestucca also experienced some of the best fishing of the season on the same day, Thursday as many boats had multiple opportunities for quality fish. **Pro guide Jim Stevenson (503-881-5289)** reported, "The upper Nestucca had some good steelhead fishing right after the rise last week, still holding a good height, for any of the drifts. We had a mix of brood stock and wild fish." Like many streams, it tapered a few days later as indicated by **pro guide Jesse Zalonis' report (503-392-5808)**. "The Nestucca is on the High side, with odd color. We have just had some freak storms over the last week, and looks like this week is more of the same. Fishing is fair at best, with some fresh fish around. Most are spread all over with a different pattern each day."

The Trask has also reported some good results with the bulk of the fish landed being wild. There are rare cases of broodstock straying so be sure to check for fins on all your catches. Some of the upper drifts fished well on the last river rise but fish should be well distributed throughout the

entire river.

I fished the Kilchis River on 3/25 for a half day trip. We purposely started later in the day when the temperatures warmed up and our competition was well down the river (or fishing another river altogether). We ended up hooking just 2 fish with the one landed, a nice 9 or 10 pound wild hen that we promptly released. She took a K-11X chrome/red dot Kwikfish at midway between the Sam Downs Creek and Logger Bridge in a broken surfaced hole of about 4 feet. We never saw another boat on our drift although another group of anglers fishing downstream of us reported no catch at all.

The mainstem Nehalem remains too high and off-color to fish and Salmonberry anglers are having a hard time accessing the river with winter road wash-outs. It may be too late in the season for steelhead by the time this stream comes into fishable state.

Not much effort from the sturgeon fleet. Success rates continue to fall and inclement weather has most hovered around our wood stoves. It looks like a short lived sturgeon season this year.

The Guide's Forecast – The hydrograph models are even more unpredictable when we have snow pack in the coast range. With all the precipitation that has fallen in recent hours and the way the Wilson looked this afternoon, it looks like the rivers will be on the high side for a while in Tillamook County. This may give smaller streams a last ditch effort before they close on the 31st of March. This will be the last weekend for many coastal streams that don't have hatchery fish available (salmon or steelhead) on them. Check regulations before heading out after the end of the month.

The late steelhead season is fast winding down with the Wilson a top producer this year. With the results we've seen thus far, it's pretty clear this will continue to offer up the best chances for steelhead (both keepers and wild fish) for anglers into the first 10 days of April.

The Nestucca has come on nicely and in good years, can produce good catches of late winter (both wild and summers) well into April. Although this doesn't look like one of those banner years, it's likely to continue to produce for the next couple of weeks. Fish the higher drifts in higher water and the lower stretches in lower flows which may not happen until mid week.

The Trask should also produce fish into mid-April with this stream the most likely to produce the larger fish for the region.

Tides aren't all that good for sturgeon opportunity and it hasn't shaped up to be a great year for them anyway. Many anglers have switched their focus to Nehalem Bay although no recent reports are available.

Seas are forecasted to be too rough for safe bar passage. That's ok, there are too many whales out there to watch for anyway. When seas do calm down, the bottomfishing action should be great!

Central & South Coast Reports – In the long-range look at the offshore wind and weather conditions for this coming weekend, Friday had been looking good, but conditions change quickly in Oregon, Friday is out, Sunday is a maybe; Monday looks better. Check last-minute conditions and call the local Coast Guard to be sure. And safe.

A rare 'sure thing' in fishing would describe offshore party boat results for bottom fish off the Oregon coast, and it seems to just get better as one looks at results heading down the coast to

the south. Some skippers have not failed to deliver limits of bottomfish in over a dozen trips of trips.

In addition, catches of large ling cod, one of the most desirable of bottom dwellers both for their fighting ability and table quality, are common.

Anglers fishing off rocky shorelines and jetties are also reaping the bottomfish bounty at this time of year. Those fishing river mouths, bay entrances and ocean beaches are scoring limits of pinkfin and striped perch.

Steelheading has been fair to good on the North Umpqua with fish on the move. The river is expected to continue fishing into the weekend despite rain due to the lowering freezing level. Flyfishers have had some success recently with steelhead in the 'flies only' section of the North Umpqua with larger patterns on sink-tip lines most effective. The number of hatchery fish is improving on the South Umpqua but it remains to be seen if it will fish with rain storms in the forecast.

Boaters were able to cross the bar out of Coos Bay on Monday this week, and the bottom fishing was good as usual, Ling cod and rock fish were cooperative under sunny skies. River traffic has been light on the Coos and Coquille with the winter steelhead run winding down.

Rain last week provided a flurry of decent steelheading on the Elk and Sixes last week. The Elk River closes to salmon and steelhead while Sixes will close to trout and steelhead fishing on March 31st.

The Rogue is forecast to be on the rise into Saturday, but is supposed to start dropping by Sunday. If so, that'd be the day to target for a possible chance at an early springer but it's far too early for optimism. Rogue Plunkers have an advantage when water is high, but springers bite much better when the water is dropping and not well when it's on the rise. Rogue River spring Chinook fishing will improve in April. Winter steelhead angling has been good in the middle Rogue with the majority of fish falling to plug-pullers. Steelheading is fair to slow on the upper river but will improve as the run moves upstream.

Chetco Recent rainfall did cause a flurry of late-season steelheading activity on the Chetco, but this might be considered a last hurrah on one of the great producers of winters on Oregon as it closes for salmon and steelhead at sundown on Monday, March 31st.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Pro guide Steve Fleming (1-888-624-9424) reports, "It's been a good week for big fish, 17" + smallmouth bass. We are averaging over 2 per person per day. No steelhead in the last week, they are probable in the upper river above Kimberly. The water is off color and crankbaits with rattles, or 1/8 oz. jigheads with 3-4" grubs covered with Smelly Jelly Craw/Anise are working the best.

"The river was blown out for a couple of days this last week with high dirty water, and will probably have some more high dirty water starting Thursday?!"

Pro guide Rick Arnold (541-480-1570) reports, "After a little flurry of some bigger bulls the first week of the Metolius opening on LBC, it has been tough lately. With colder water temps and some off color water up the arm, the bigger bulls haven't been cooperating. I expect things to improve near the end of the month, at least I hope so. This spring is reminiscent of 2006 when things didn't get going until April. Time will tell! I will be out this Fri. so look for a report next week. I also have a couple of trips next week before leaving to film a DVD on Lake Michigan for

big browns. Check the website for details and a video teaser clip when we get back. Should be fun!"

Northwest Trout – Reports from Hagg Lake continue to indicate murky water, floating debris and slow fishing. This one may need a few more weeks of recovery to offer decent prospects although it was planted with a few thousand hatchery trout on February 25th and will be stocked again at the end of March and again in mid-April.

Over the past weekend, Detroit Reservoir was reported to have had snow plowed in the parking lots. Fishing is very slow in the cold water here and with the weather forecast this week, more snow is likely to fall. This is another destination best postponed for a few weeks.

Devils Lake in Lincoln City will receive 6,500 hatchery trout this week, a fair number for this 750-acre lake. Combined with holdovers, however, this is a decent prospect for the weekend. Trout must be fin-clipped to be retained here. Temperate coastal lakes remain fishable much of the year.

Members of local fly fishing clubs and local fly shops have organized a free Fly Fishing Festival from 9 AM to 4 PM at Amazon Community Center, located at 2700 Hilyard Street in Eugene. This is a youth-oriented event although children under 12 should be accompanied by an adult. Kids can learn to fly cast, study basic entomology, watch pro fly-tiers work, learn to tie a fly and what knots to use when fishing.

From the ODFW: "Garden Lake (Creswell Pond) will be stocked with 2,925 legal-sized trout this week. A youth angling event is scheduled to take place rain or shine at Garden Lake Park Saturday, March 22, when an additional 500 one pound trout will be stocked. This event from 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. is specifically for kids and ODFW will provide rods, reels, bait and volunteer angler instructors at no charge. Contact the Springfield ODFW office at 541-726-3515 with questions."

Scheduled for trout planting this week in the Willamette Zone are Blue River Reservoir, Dorena Reservoir, E. E. Wilson Pond, Foster Reservoir, Freeway Lake East, Junction City Pond, Roaring River Park Pond, Timber Linn Lake, Walling Pond, Walter Wirth Lake and Waverly Lake.

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report March 19th – April 2nd, 2008

North Puget Sound

With **steelhead** fisheries winding down in the rivers, the best bet for most anglers in the region is **blackmouth** fishing in the marine areas of Puget Sound.

The waters around Camano and Whidbey islands continue to provide decent fishing for blackmouth, said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. "The best fishing in those areas, especially on weekdays, seems to be at a few of the usual spots - the Racetrack, Elger Bay and Langley," he said. "Nearby Admiralty Inlet, however, continues to be surprisingly slow."

Selective fisheries for hatchery blackmouth - resident chinook - continue through April in marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) and 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner). The selective fishery in Marine Area 9 (Admiralty Inlet), however, only runs through April 15.

Anglers fishing in those areas can keep two hatchery blackmouth as part of their two-salmon daily limit and they must release wild chinook, which have an intact adipose fin.

Thiesfeld reminds anglers that regulations are different for Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands), where anglers have a daily limit of one chinook salmon. That area is open for salmon through April 15.

Saltwater anglers looking for a change of pace will soon have an opportunity to hook a **halibut**. The halibut season gets under way April 10 in marine waters throughout the region. The fishery will be open five days a week, Thursday through Monday, with a daily limit of one halibut. There is no minimum size limit for halibut caught in any area.

Meanwhile, anglers still have an opportunity to cast for **steelhead**. Portions of the Skagit and Sauk rivers remain open for steelheaders through March, but anglers should be aware that regulations for those two rivers changed last month, said Brett Barkdull, another WDFW biologist. The changes were made to protect wild steelhead because low returns are expected back this year to the Skagit River basin, he said.

Anglers fishing the Sauk and Skagit rivers, as well as Fisher Slough, must now follow selective gear rules for all fish species. The rules require anglers to use unscented artificial flies or lures with single-point barbless hooks and knotless nets. Those and other selective gear rules are listed on page 26 of WDFW's *Fishing in Washington* regulation pamphlet, which is available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>. There are some exceptions, however, for the use of motorized vessels on the Skagit River.

On the two rivers and the slough, anglers have a daily limit of two hatchery steelhead.

Barkdull reminds anglers that while most of the Skagit River closes April 1, a stretch from the mouth upstream to the Memorial Highway Bridge will remain open. Before heading out to the rivers, anglers should check the department's website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) for details on the Skagit River basin rule changes.

Looking forward to the **summer salmon fishing** season? There's still time to provide input on proposals for this year's fisheries. Three public meetings have been scheduled for the last week of March and early April as fishery managers continue to develop the 2008 salmon seasons. Those meetings are scheduled for:

- March 28 - The final opportunity for anglers and others to provide input on Willapa Bay and Grays Harbor salmon seasons. The meeting is scheduled to begin at 9 a.m. at the Lacey Community Center, 6729 Pacific Avenue, Lacey.
- March 31 - An opportunity for the public to comment on proposed ocean salmon fishing options adopted by the Pacific Fishery Management Council. The meeting is scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. at the Chateau Westport, 710 Hancock Street, Westport.
- April 1 - The public will have an opportunity to discuss salmon fisheries that take place in coastal areas (except Willapa Bay and Grays Harbor), Puget Sound and the Columbia River.

That meeting is scheduled to begin at 9 a.m. at the Lynnwood Embassy Suites Hotel, 20610 44th Ave. W., Lynnwood.

The final fishing package for Washington's waters will be finalized in early April. More information about the salmon season-setting process can be found on WDFW's North of Falcon website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/northfalcon/>).

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

With lingcod fishing under way, halibut and spring chinook on the horizon, and a proposed April razor clam dig, anglers are reminded to buy their 2008-09 fishing licenses before current licenses expire March 31.

On the ocean, recreational **lingcod** fishing got under way March 15 in marine areas 1-3 and will be open through Oct. 18. In Marine Area 4 (Neah Bay), the lingcod season will be open April 16 through Oct. 15.

All four marine areas will be open seven days a week with the following restrictions:

- In Marine Area 2 (Westport Ocean Shores), recreational fishing for bottomfish or lingcod is not allowed in waters deeper than 30 fathoms from March 15 through June 15.
- In Marine Areas 3 and 4 (La Push and Neah Bay), recreational fishing for bottomfish or lingcod is not allowed in waters deeper than 20 fathoms from May 21 through Sept. 30, except on days the halibut fishery is open.
- In Marine Area 1 (Ilwaco), no bottomfish, with the exception of sablefish and Pacific cod, are allowed on any vessel with halibut on board from May 1 through Sept. 30.

Retention of canary and yelloweye rockfish is prohibited in all waters. The minimum size for lingcod in marine areas 1-3 is 22 inches. The minimum size for lingcod in Marine Area 4 is 24 inches.

Additional information about the lingcod fishery and other bottom fish is available on the WDFW Fishing Hotline (360) 902-2500 and the department's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>.

Anglers looking for other opportunities will soon be able to try for **halibut** when marine areas 6-11 and 13 open for recreational halibut fishing April 10-June 13. The fishery will be open five days a week, Thursdays through Mondays (Marine Area 12 remains closed). The daily limit is one halibut per angler. Additional openings on the coast and the western Strait of Juan de Fuca will take place in May. This year, fishing out of Westport (Marine Area 2) will be limited to two days a week (Sundays and Tuesdays) after the initial opening day on Thursday, May 1. More information is available on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/halibut/>.

In river fishing, catch rates for **wild steelhead** remain mixed on the Olympic Peninsula, with the Sol Duc providing the most consistent returns. Recent WDFW creel checks showed that 80 anglers caught 69 wild steelhead (59 released) and two hatchery fish on the river. On the upper Hoh, 58 anglers caught 42 wild fish (all released). However, on other rivers in the Quillayute system such as the Calawah, Bogachiel and lower Hoh, the fishing's been slow, said David Low, WDFW fish biologist.

"River conditions have been pretty good, despite some rain," Low said. "But anglers' favorite fishing holes are coming up empty. This is especially true in the lower Hoh, where strong effort hasn't produced many fish." On the March 14 weekend, a creel check on the lower Hoh showed 145 anglers caught 19 wild steelhead and five hatchery fish. On the other hand, a few **spring chinook salmon** have made their way to the Sol Duc, where fishery managers estimate 1,745 hatchery salmon will return this year, which is a little above average, Low said.

Meanwhile, **blackmouth** fishing continues to disappoint anglers throughout the region. On the March 14 weekend, 13 anglers surveyed near Seabeck in Hood Canal had caught two chinook, while 45 anglers in the Point Defiance area had caught eight. Farther north at Ediz Hook near

Port Angeles, creel checks showed about one fish for every two rods. The blackmouth season ends April 10 in marine areas 5,6,11 and 12. Marine Area 13 is open until April 30.

Anglers may want to put their rods aside and grab a shovel for a **razor clam** dig tentatively scheduled April 6-9 and April 19-23. If approved, Twin Harbors will be open on all days while Long Beach will be open April 6-8 and April 19-20. Copalis and Mocrocks will be open April 19-20. All digs will be held on morning tides.

April 1 marks the beginning of a new license year, so diggers must purchase an applicable 2008-09 fishing license. Anyone age 15 or older must have a license to dig razor clams. Licenses can be purchased at <http://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov>, by telephone (1-866-246-9453), or in person at more than 600 license vendors throughout the state. A list of vendors is available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/lic/vendors/vendors.htm>.

Updates on the razor clam season are available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/razorclm/season.htm>

For those interested in the upcoming **summer salmon fishing** season, there's still time to provide input on proposals for this year's fisheries. Three public meetings have been scheduled for the last week of March and early April as fishery managers continue to develop the 2008 salmon season. Those meetings are scheduled for:

- March 28 - The final opportunity to provide input on the Willapa Bay and Grays Harbor salmon seasons. The meeting is scheduled from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Lacey Community Center, 6729 Pacific Avenue, Lacey.
- March 31 - A hearing on proposed ocean salmon fishing options adopted by the Pacific Fishery Management Council. The meeting is scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. at Chateau Westport, 710 Hancock Street, Westport.
- April 1 - An opportunity to discuss salmon fisheries that take place in coastal areas (except Willapa Bay and Grays Harbor), Puget Sound and the Columbia River. The meeting is scheduled from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Lynnwood Embassy Suites Hotel, 20610 44th Ave. W., Lynnwood.

The final fishing package for Washington's waters will be finalized in early April. More information about the salmon season-setting process is available on WDFW's North of Falcon website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/northfalcon/>.

Southwest Washington:

The **spring chinook** fishery got off to a fast start March 16, with boat anglers averaging a fish for every 5.5 rods on the lower Columbia River between the Hayden Island west power lines and Bonneville Dam. The turnout was good, too. In all, 368 boats and 170 bank anglers were counted on both sides of the river during an aerial survey opening day.

The highest concentration of boats - 110 - was near the Portland Airport, although 35 boats were counted between the Interstate 5 Bridge and the power lines. Most bank anglers were fishing immediately downstream from the dam, though the fishing there was slow.

"We're getting a strong early showing, the best in several years," said Joe Hymer, WDFW fish biologist. "The best news is this run's just getting started, and we're expecting to see a lot of fish move upriver before it's all over."

According to pre-season forecasts, 269,300 spring chinook will return to the Columbia River and its tributaries above Bonneville Dam, the third-largest run since 1977. That compares to just 86,230 fish last year.

The chinook fishery from the Hayden Island power lines upstream to the dam runs seven days a week through March 23, then switches to six days a week - closing from one hour after official sunset Mondays to one hour before official sunrise Wednesdays - through April 30. The limit is one adult hatchery chinook per day.

Below the Hayden Island power lines, chinook fishing opens daily downstream to Buoy 10 from March 24 through April 4. Fishing in that area, normally the focus of the lower river season, was held to just 12 days this year to protect weak Willamette River stocks. There, too, the limit is one hatchery adult chinook per day.

As most anglers know, hatchery chinook can be identified by a clipped adipose fin. All wild chinook with an intact adipose fin must be released unharmed.

While some chinook have begun to show in tributaries to the lower river, late-run **hatchery steelhead** have been providing most of the action in the Cowlitz and Kalama rivers. On the Cowlitz, the best bet has been from the Barrier Dam downstream to Olequa.

Hatchery steelhead have also been the name of the game above Bonneville Dam, where anglers have been doing well in The Dalles and John Day Pools. As of March 15, only 46 "springers" had cleared Bonneville Dam, so it's not surprising that none had shown up in WDFW creel checks.

But that's likely to change in a big way over next few weeks, Hymer said. Mid-Columbia tributaries - notably Drano Lake and the Wind River - are expected to be major destination points for this year's run of upriver chinook salmon. Hymer noted that Drano Lake, at the mouth of the Little White Salmon River, is expected to see a return of 36,800 spring chinook, which would top the record of 20,600 fish in 2002.

The spring chinook fishery also opened March 16 from Bonneville Dam upstream to McNary Dam, Drano Lake and the Wind River, where anglers can keep two hatchery salmon per day - once they arrive. The White Salmon River, which also has a two-salmon daily limit, opens April 1. The Klickitat River will be open Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays only beginning April 2. The daily limit will be one hatchery salmon or one hatchery steelhead on the Klickitat from the Fisher Hill Bridge downstream.

Hymer reminds anglers that the shoreline outside the mouth of Drano Lake will be open for bank fishing for the first time in 30 years. In all, this year's fishing regulations will open up 40 additional miles of bank fishing on the mainstem Columbia River from Bonneville Dam to the Tower Island power lines six miles below The Dalles Dam.

"I think the best bet will be at the mouth of Drano Lake," Hymer said. "Casting a plug or lure from shore is sure to produce fish." Anglers fishing the newly opened bank are asked to follow three rules: Don't cross the highway, don't trespass over the railroad tracks and don't interfere with tribal fisheries.

With water temperatures rising, **sturgeon** fishing has again sprung to life in Bonneville and John Day pools, where anglers have been catching some legal-size fish. Those fishing John Day should keep an eye out for rule changes, because the catch is quickly approaching the annual quota, Hymer said. The Dalles Pool has already reached its annual quota and is catch-and-release through the end of the year.

Meanwhile, boat anglers fishing the John Day Pool have been averaging three **bass** per rod and a **walleye** for every three rods. In the Bonneville Pool, they've been averaging a walleye or bass per rod, and some walleye are also being caught in The Dalles Pool.

Here's the report for trout anglers:

- Kline Pond - Including fish released, bank anglers averaged 6 trout per rod. The largest was a six-pound brooder. Best fishing is in the swimming area by anglers using flies, lures, or shrimp.
- Burns Pond in Wahkiakum County - Planted with 2,000 catchable-size rainbows March 12.
- Lake Sacajawea in Longview - Planted with 4,300 catchable size rainbows March 10.
- Battleground Lake - Planted with 2,000 over half-pound rainbows March 10.

Eastern Washington:

Fishing waters in the central district that opened March 1 are finally starting to thaw and produce catches. Liberty Lake in eastern Spokane County, which just shifted to the March 1 opener this year, may be the best now, said Chris Donley, WDFW district fish biologist from Spokane.

"Liberty is completely ice-free and big **brown** and **rainbow trout** are being caught, including browns reportedly up to eight pounds," he said. "**Bass** fishing remains slow, but should pick up as spring advances."

Farther south and west in Spokane County, Downs Lake is also ice-free and should be producing catches of **rainbow trout**, along with **yellow perch**, **largemouth bass**, and **crappie**.

Two other lakes that opened on March 1 - Amber in Spokane County and Coffeepot in Lincoln County - still have some ice but are becoming more fishable. Donley reminded anglers that both lakes have selective gear rule restrictions. Amber is catch-and-release only for its **cutthroat** and **rainbow trout** and Coffeepot has a minimum size of 18 inches and daily catch limit of one trout.

Medical Lake, near the town of the same name in Spokane County, is still iced up, but is expected to provide open water fishing soon. Anglers following Medical's selective gear rules should catch large **brown**, **rainbow**, and **tiger trout**. Donley reminded anglers that only Medical Lake is open at this time. West Medical Lake remains closed until April 26.

Two winter-only trout fisheries - Fourth of July Lake in Lincoln County and Hog Canyon Lake near the Spokane-Lincoln county line - close March 31. Lenny Hahn, WDFW enforcement officer, reported shore fishermen are catching limits at Hog Canyon.

In the south end of the region, the seven Tucannon River impoundments that opened March 1 continue to provide limits of **rainbow trout**. WDFW Tucannon Fish Hatchery crews plan to stock Big Four Lake with trout this week, now that it's thawed out and river levels are down enough to allow hatchery truck access. The other six lakes - Beaver, Blue, Deer, Rainbow, Spring and Watson - have been well-stocked for the past month with one-third to one-half pound rainbows from the hatchery.

Anglers who want to spend rainy spring days indoors can find their fill of fishing enticements at the Inland Northwest Wildlife Council's 48th annual **Bighorn Outdoor Adventure Show**, March 20-23, at the Spokane County Fair and Expo Center, 404 N. Havana St. in Spokane. The show features fishing, hunting and other outdoor recreation seminars and children's activities, along with hundreds of equipment and supply vendors, sportsmen's clubs, and agency information booths, including WDFW. Proceeds from the show go into the council's many cooperative fish

and wildlife habitat and enhancement projects. For more information, see <http://www.wildlifecouncil.com/bighornsubsite/default.htm>.

North Central Washington:

April 1 marks the opening of many more Columbia Basin fishing waters. Jeff Korth, WDFW district fish biologist from Moses Lake, reports fair to good prospects for anglers.

Upper and Lower Hampton lakes, on the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge eight miles north of Othello, are among the largest waters opening April 1.

"Both lakes were rehabilitated in the fall of 2004, but now Lower Hampton has an expanding population of sunfish," Korth noted. Lower Hampton should have two sizes of yearling rainbows, 12-inch fish from last spring's 9,500 fingerling plant, and eight-to-10-inch fish from last fall's 3,300 fingerling plant. "The smaller fish will grow quickly this spring and should make for good late spring angling," Korth said.

Upper Hampton, which was stocked with 21,000 rainbow fingerlings last spring has larger fish, probably 13-to-14-inch yearlings and some larger carryovers, but catch rates will be lower. "Upper Hampton has fish-eating birds that play a role in the food chain," Korth said. Lower Hampton has a primitive boat launch. Upper Hampton is a walk-in lake, but Korth said it's not too far to carry a float tube.

The Pillar-Widgeon chain of lakes in the same area include ten small, walk-in lakes spread over about a square mile of beautiful canyon land, with access just southeast of Soda Lake below Potholes Reservoir. Korth noted these lakes were also rehabilitated in 2004 and should provide good fishing for the "persistent angler" from the bank or, better yet, from a float tube.

"The best of the lot will probably be Widgeon, Sago, and Pillar," Korth said, "but never count any of the other waters out." Fingerling rainbow stocking rates were: Pillar - 2,500, Gadwall - 750, Shoveler - 750, Lemna - 450, Poacher - 150, Snipe - 600, Cattail - 1,500, Sago - 300, Hourglass - 300, Widgeon - 1,650.

Para-Juvenile, McManaman, Halfmoon, and Morgan Lakes, in the lower portion of the drainage below the Hampton lakes, are normally stocked with rainbow and/or cutthroat trout fingerlings, Korth said, but due to a shortage at the hatchery no fish were stocked for 2008.

"Sunfish, perch, and bass currently impact trout survival," he said, "so expect just a few large carryover fish, especially the cutthroat." Morgan Lake and much of Halfmoon Lake are on private land and access is from the west end of Halfmoon Lake. Morgan Lake can only be accessed via the waters of Halfmoon Lake. Para-Juvenile Lake is for 14-year-old and younger anglers only.

North and South Teal, Herman, and Lyle lakes, among the "Seep Lakes" on the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge north of Othello, have all been infiltrated with spiny-rayed fishes, so rainbow trout survival has been poor, Korth said. "But trout angling pressure has been relatively light so there's a good chance some carry-overs will be caught," he said. "Rumor also has it that some nice bluegill can be caught, too." Fingerling rainbow stocking rates were: North Teal - 6,300; South Teal - 9,000; Herman - 10,600; Lyle - 3,000.

Hutchinson and Shiner lakes, and Coyote, Bobcat, and Hayes creeks and ponds off McMannaman Road in Adams County are all good **bass** and **bluegill** fisheries that also open April 1.

"Coyote and Bobcat creeks and ponds are small waters that usually warm up quickly and provide some excellent early fishing," Korth said. He also noted that only non-motorized boats are

allowed on Hutchinson and Shiner, and Coyote and Bobcat creeks and ponds are walk-in access only.

Dry Falls Lake, at Sun Lakes State Park about three miles west of Coulee City in Grant County, opens April 1 under selective gear rules and a daily catch limit of one trout.

"The 2008 opener here should be just like the good old days," Korth said, "with very good fishing for yearling rainbow at 14 inches and about 20 percent of the catch in carryovers from 16 to 24 inches." Dry Falls received 9,900 fingerling rainbows in preparation for this year's season. It also has **brown trout** and **tiger trout** (brown x brook trout).

Bob Jateff, WDFW district fish biologist from Omak, noted a couple of Okanogan County lakes opened for fishing April 1.

"Spectacle Lake near Loomis should provide very good fishing for **rainbow trout**," Jateff said. "The ice is just beginning to melt off, but should be completely gone by the opener." Spectacle Lake has a WDFW access site with a concrete boat launch, as well as three resorts.

"Washburn Island Pond near Brewster should provide fair early season fishing for **largemouth bass**," Jateff said. "Washburn Island Pond will get much better as the water temperatures warm and the bass become more active." Washburn Island Pond has a PUD access site with graveled boat launch, although internal combustion engines are prohibited.

Jateff also reported **steelhead** fishing picked up on the Okanogan and Similkameen Rivers within the last few weeks. He reminds anglers that selective gear rules prohibiting bait are in effect for the steelhead areas on both rivers. The season is scheduled to close March 31.

South Central Washington:

Most lakes in the south central region are open to fishing year-round and stocked periodically with WDFW hatchery **rainbow trout**. Eric Anderson, WDFW district fish biologist from Yakima, reported the most recently stocked lakes are the I-82 Ponds 1,2 and 3 in Yakima County.

"Fishing will be good in these ponds," Anderson said, "but many other stocked lakes and ponds are producing nice catches, too." Anderson acknowledged fishing has been "a bit slow" in some areas, but as the weather continues to warm, fishing will improve for both trout and panfish. Anderson encouraged anglers to regularly check the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/regions/reg3/index.htm> for the latest information on trout stocking in local lakes and ponds.

Anderson also reminded anglers that WDFW is no longer stocking nor maintaining a public access on Wenas Lake, the once popular trout lake about six miles north of Naches in Yakima County.

"We could not reach an agreement with the Wenas Irrigation District on a public access and stocking plan for the lake," he explained. "The old plan expired and we don't have the funds to pay the Irrigation District for access."

North Elton Pond, the region's winter-only rainbow trout fishing water along I-82 near Selah, closes March 31.

Yakima River anglers and guides may want to attend a March 28 program about the river and its fisheries sponsored by the Kittitas Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited and the Yakima Basin Fish and Wildlife Recovery Board, in cooperation with WDFW. The program, which runs 6 to 9 p.m. in the Manastash Room at the Kittitas County Fairgrounds in Ellensburg, includes the history and

condition of the Yakima River, habitat restoration efforts, and the status of trout in the upper river. More information is available at: <http://www.ybfwrb.org/>.

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

Doug Rees: doug@TheGuidesForecast.com

Michael Teague: Michael@TheGuidesForecast.com

Random Links

The backlash - Lawsuit filed to stop sea lion killing:

<http://159.54.226.83/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080325/NEWS/803250344/1001>

Angler lands 19-pound largemouth. The emotion in his voice tells the story, but he doesn't forget his sponsors: **<http://huddlestondeluxe.com/ButchBrown19lb.wmv>**

Weekly Quote – "Scholars have long known that fishing eventually turns men into philosophers. Unfortunately, it is almost impossible to buy decent tackle on a philosopher's salary." - Patrick McManus

GOOD LUCK!