

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **April 18th – April 24th, 2008**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- Fishery managers met on Wednesday to discuss the inevitable Columbia River mainstem sportfishing closure. Original fishery models predicted a season to the last day of April but catch rates were consistently good from the opener in late March. Even with a 1 fish bag limit and a 6-day per week fishery, the Columbia will close on April 21st, making Sunday the last day to fish the section from Hayden Island Powerlines to Bonneville Dam.

Effort and catch is likely to ramp up prior to the closure with all areas from the I-5 area to Bonneville producing great catches. In the Bonneville area, back-bouncers working eggs are out-producing all other methods and dam passage is ramping up to over 1,000 fish per day. These numbers will climb steadily through the first few weeks of May but a run size update likely won't be available for another few weeks. If the run is larger than first anticipated, sport anglers may receive additional time but it will be after the peak of the season.

Despite a Columbia closure, the Willamette River remains open for spring chinook. The water temperature is warming and summer steelhead counts at the falls are improving. The best action is taking place in the Oregon City area and steelhead catches are impressive for this section of river. Springer catches in the lower river remain light, but sturgeon action has been good in the lower Willamette and the Multnomah Channel, especially for those who find the larger fish.

Clackamas River levels took a jump at Estacada on April 14th, but it's on the drop this week. Summer steelhead continue to enter and spring chinook are just around the corner.

Warm weather this week is likely to put snowmelt into the Sandy, raising the level significantly. Catches have been a mix of fresh summer fish and spawned-out winter steelhead. The first confirmed springer of the year, a 19-pounder, was weighed at Jack's Snack and Tackle in Troutdale on April 12th.

The McKenzie crested on Tuesday this week but is dropping and should be quite fishable by the weekend.

On the trout planting schedule for this week are Benson Lake, Bethany Pond, Blue Lake, Commonwealth Lake, Dorman Pond, Haldeman Pond, Harriet Lake, Hartman Pond, Henry Hagg Lake, Mt Hood College Pond, Timber Lake, Trojan Pond, Alton Baker Canal, Cottage Grove Reservoir, E. E. Wilson Pond, Junction City Pond and Waverly Lake.

Northwest – Steelhead fishing is slowing down on north coast rivers although fish are still available. A mix of dark fish and a rare bright one is coming from the Wilson, Trask and Nestucca River. Summer steelhead are beginning to enter and rivers have been at ideal stages.

Sturgeon fishing did pick up on Tillamook Bay last weekend but tides won't be as favorable this weekend. Crabbing remains poor in most coastal estuaries.

Bass have yet to stir on most coastal lakes but warmer temperatures should begin to stimulate the bite.

Battle Lake, Carter Lake, Cleawox Lake, Coffenbury Lake, Lost Lake (Clatsop County), Spring Lake,

Vernonia Pond, Woahink Lake are scheduled to be stocked with trout.

Southwest – Rock and jetty fishing has been outstanding recently, especially after dark. Use caution, take a good lantern or other light source and stay away when the wind and wave action is high. Mild afternoon and evening tides favor the activity this week, but the swell and wind wave predictions may compromise safety.

Long-range offshore forecasts indicate the coastal bars will not be safe to cross for recreational craft this weekend.

While the ocean will be closed to commercial salmon harvest and recreational chinook fishing from Cape Falcon south to the California border this year, coho sportfishing will be allowed on a limited basis. The seven-day-per-week season will be open from June 22nd through August 31st or a quota of 9,000 coho. Two fin-clipped fish per day may be kept.

With the Rogue low and clear, spring chinook action has stalled in the lower river. Snowpack will melt with the next round of rainfall but there's no precipitation in the long-range forecast for southwest Oregon. The run is expected to be modest this season on the Rogue, and numbers bear out the prediction. The first springer has yet to be counted at Gold Ray.

Bottom fishers venturing out of Brookings harbors on days when ocean conditions have allowed safe crossing are experiencing outstanding results and are doing so just outside and south of the entrance. Large rockfish have been thick on the first rocky structure anglers encounter.

Scheduled for planting with hatchery trout are Bradley Lake, Upper and Lower Empire Lake, Powers Pond, North and South Tenmile Lake, Medco Pond, Willow Lake, Spaulding Pond, Fish Lake, Burma Pond, Dutch Herman, Expo Ponds 1, Reinhart Park Pond, Ben Irving Reservoir 1, Clearwater #2, 1 Cooper Creek Reservoir, Galesville Reservoir, Hemlock Lake, Lake of the Woods, Lemolo Reservoir, Loon Lake and Plat I Reservoir.

Eastern – Deschutes anglers have found Blue-Winged-Olives the major pattern with a few March Browns showing. Sunny weather is not conducive to hatches, however. Trout fishing has been good and is only expected to improve through April. Count on nymphs to produce on bright days.

Exceptional smallmouth bass were falling on the John Day River recently but snowmelt will likely keep the river too high for productive fishing this week.

Davis Lake has opened, offering plenty of jumbo largemouth bass and a few large rainbows to fly anglers.

SW Washington – With Bonneville Dam counts spiking, the Drano Lake fishery is currently underway. This fishery along with the remaining mainstem Columbia will continue to draw anglers away from other SW Washington opportunities.

The Cowlitz and Lewis Rivers have salmon and steelhead present but record catch rates will keep anglers focused on the metro fishery until it closes.

Columbia River Fishing Report – We all knew it was coming.....fishing can't be that good without consequences. Anglers fishing from Bonneville Dam to Hayden Island were witnessing record catch rates last week as single chinook limits were not tough to come by. Trollers working the water below I-205 were scoring great results though the weekend by working their herring near the bottom

of the river. I witnessed some of the best action closer to the I-5 Bridge. Chamber of Commerce weather brought out the people as high effort counts contributed to the high harvest rates.

Anglers working the Bonneville area backbouncing eggs have also been producing good catches with backrolled plugs a close second.

Most recently, the river has been on a significant rise and the heavier flows has clearly affected angler success. The increase in flow is due to spilling at Bonneville to send our future returning adults downstream but it wrecks havoc on our mainstem fishery (a small price to pay for a future for our fish). The spill acts a lot like a rain freshet when fish feel they'll have good access to tributaries and stay focused on their migration instead of my herring. It's something we've come to expect this time of year but according to the river forecast, the river should begin falling Thursday for good fishing over the weekend.

We've certainly seen some great fishing over the last 10 days with no real consistency in what section of the river is producing best. I've been targeting the 20 to 30 foot of water making sure my baits are as close to the bottom as possible. I've been using upwards of 10 ounces on my rods to ensure the baits stay down where they belong. Fishing 6 rods on Sunday, I rigged half of the rods with green label herring and the other half with cut-plug blue label herring. Although it took a while, the larger blue label herring clearly outproduced the whole green labels that I was trolling but not all guides would agree. The bulk of the guides are using green label herring and having success with them. I only tried plug-cutting a green label once and thought it was just too small. I prefer to run the greens whole. Not many of us are using additional attractors like fish-flashes and I don't feel that the additional hardware is worth the hassle of a potential line twist.

With the fishery due to close, anglers will be looking for other alternatives since spring chinook ranks so high on our "to-do" list. Most anglers would rather view springers crossing at Bonneville Dam over fishing the Willamette (well, maybe just me). Tributary fisheries in Oregon won't be in high gear for a while (if at all this season) so anglers have the opportunity to get creative to take advantage of a white-hot opportunity in the Drano Lake/Wind River fishery.

Other mainstem fisheries are less than impressive with sturgeon on the minds of many. Traditionally, sturgeon action is well underway for gorge fishers but that fishery has been oddly absent in recent years. With the upcoming sanctuary closure later in May, a poor catch is again in the works for the upper gorge fishers. None-the-less, the Willamette fishery produced enough keepers to certainly get the upper river quota jump-started. The Portland to Longview stretch did put out some numbers however with an impressive check of 8 keepers and 67 shakers for 6 boats fishing in this stretch.

The Guide's Forecast – It's the last weekend of the season, that has any meaning anyway. A season re-opener is a possibility but not until a run update is available and that likely won't be until early May. With flows dropping from the recent spill, action should be back on track with good catches throughout the open stretch from Bonneville to Hayden Island. Trollers should have a good time working the water downstream of the 42nd street boat ramp keeping their herring near the bottom where the biters are. Anchor fishers will likely utilize the stretch from I-205 upstream to Troutdale and backbouncers and backtrollers will utilize the water just downstream of Bonneville Dam. No matter where you fish, it will likely be a busy place.

Although it was a drastic difference in the I-5 stretch on 4/16, with peak passage still numerous days away, the action is far from over. It looks like we'll be weather challenged with a cold front coming in which won't do great things for weekend fishers. I'm sure that won't stop most anglers however- at least the ones that have had a taste of what this season has offered.

If you are wanting to sturgeon fish on the waning days of a banner spring chinook season, the Portland to Longview stretch should offer up the best chance for a keeper. Smelt will be a top bait and effort will likely increase when the salmon season closes.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – The temperature at Willamette Falls has dropped a degree to 50, the spring Chinook total has yet to reach 100 Salmon continue to cross in modest number. It remains to be seen if the daily numbers reach the 1,000 per day has been the norm in late April of seasons past. Spring Chinook catches on the lower Willamette have actually been good at times with the stretch from the mouth to Sellwood providing the best action. A few have also been taken in Multnomah Channel where sturgeon fishers are finding mostly shakers.

Plunkers at Meldrum Bar have seen very little in the way of action over the past week.

Even with the Columbia producing springers so well, the lower Willamette is still getting moderate attention from salmon fishers (at least through the coming weekend). Trollers dragging herring and anchor fishers soaking wrapped Kwikfish getting hookups occasionally. Here's a tip - try wrapping those Kwiks with herring or prawns instead of sardines.

There won't be many options for spring Chinook after this coming Sunday so expect to see traffic get much worse on the lower Willamette.

Good News: The Oregon State Marine Board will implement wake control rules on the Willamette River near Wilsonville. boats pulling wakeboarders, waterskiers and inner tubes will be prohibited from making power-on turns and must stay at least 100 feet from all docks, and be no closer than 200 feet from other boats pulling towed devices.

The Guide's Forecast – With the springer hopefuls chumming the lower river with discarded and lost baits, herring has been the top bait for sturgeon. It still requires some searching to locate the large biters, but it's worth it.

Smallmouth bass fishing has only been fair in the lower Willamette but the fish are good-sized. They've been responding to a variety of lures from soft plastics to crankbaits. The upper Willamette has been putting out good numbers of smallies but they're not running as large. Cold weather and rain (snow? hail?) this weekend will shut down this fishery until the next round of more spring-like conditions. Daily steelhead counts, both summer and winter, remain promising. Summer steelhead numbers have topped 1,000 while over 4,100 winter steelhead have crossed.

The summer steelhead run has started on the McKenzie River. There aren't a lot of fish available yet and the water is still in the mid-40s but it's great to see the summers showing. Unfortunately, precipitation this week will blow out river this week. When it settles down, anglers may expect to find the March Brown hatch in full swing although the trout aren't keying on them consistently. Stay versatile and pack nymphs.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – The Clackamas has been running a little high with good color but the water has remained to cold to encourage fish movement or a reliable bite. The storm front predicted to hit over the coming weekend won't help this situation as we get hammered with another round of precipitation coupled with unseasonably low temperatures.

When the latest front passes and warmer weather helps to raise the water temperatures, the rush for spring Chinook is sure to start on the Sandy River with the Columbia closed.

North Coast Fishing Report – With so much focus on the Columbia River, the few steelheaders that have been drifting north coast streams are still pleased with their results. **Pro guide Paul Welle (503-842-6234)** gives us these reports from the Tillamook area: "The Tillamook area rivers are still producing some fresh steelhead . A decent plug bite has been productive to get some bent rods with side drifting a close second, bobber and jigs / worm also getting good results. Sturgeon fishing on Tillamook Bay did pick up some on the last series of low tides. Let's hope it continues throughout the spring. Bass fishing along the coast is still slow with water temperatures low to mid 50's, but fish should be moving up, especially in late morning and afternoon. Concentrate on wood and rock and protected pockets on the north shores. Try sinko's, suspending jerkbaits, jig-n-pig and other slow moving baits. Remember to be patient, the best is yet to come." Paul recently took a trip to our southern cousin. Paul reports, "in a recent trip to Clear lake, California bass fishing was a kick. The water was still cold, with 57 degrees the warmest we could find. Caught 28 bass in two days, all Carolina rigging brushhogs and drop shotting robo worms. Couldn't catch a fish on swimbaits yet, but live shad with a 1/64 shot was a guaranteed fish especially in the Keys. Saw a guy catch a 7.25 on a sinko there. Can't wait to get back there again. Soon it will be off to Togiak River Lodge for the Alaska season. Tight lines everybody. Now Booking trips for Tillamook Fall runs Sept through Dec."

Most guides have folded up their season and are anxiously awaiting the return of spring chinook to the area. That run is still several weeks away from getting underway but after the run we experienced on the Columbia, hopes are running high for a good return.

Calm seas greeted ocean goers over the weekend and those out in search of rockfish did quite well for lingcod and seabass. It may be a while until we see those kind conditions again.

The Guide's Forecast – Dark steelhead will make up a larger portion of the catch for the few driftboaters working the Wilson and Nestucca Rivers. A few folks may focus their efforts on the wild stocks of the Trask River but overall, action will likely only remain mediocre given the lower return of native fish this season. Look forward to mid-May when salmon begin to return to the rivers and estuaries.

Sturgeon fishing won't be all that inspirational given the poor tide exchange and the cold weather in the forecast. Are we really ready for more snow in the coast range again?

Central & South Coast Reports – Bottom fishing out of Depoe Bay was worthwhile over the past weekend, yielding a mix of rockfish and ling cod. Ocean crabbing has been fair.

Crabbing has been improving out of Newport inside Yaquina Bay. While no limits have been reported, enough keeper Dungeness and large rock crab are being taken to finally make the trip worthwhile. Tides are good for crabbing this week but the weather forecast is poor.

Pro guide Bill Kremers (541-754-6411) reports "Had a bottom fishing trip out of Newport on Saturday, flat ocean, good fishing and lots of boats. We did have to search for the fish has a spot will be good on the first drift and then turn off or the wind would switch directions and we would just miss the reef or the ledge. Here a couple of hints if you are fishing the reefs south of Newport in the Johnson/Seal Rock area. Start on top of the reef then drift off. The fish are hanging along the edges and it must easier to lower your jig when you float over the edge of the reef. This will also result in less hang ups, just keep one eye on the fish finder so you are aware of the depths. One more hint, especially if you are targeting ling cog. Several of the cod had octopus in their stomachs, especially around Seal Rock. One angler simply went to a three oz jig with an octopus and limited out in a couple of passes. The ocean forecast is not looking good for this coming weekend, but hopefully it

will improve next week. In mean time I will be fishing springers on the Columbia until they shut it down."

The Umpqua has kicked out a few springers with the run just starting here. The fish have consistently run 20 pounds and have been of hatchery origin. While too early to target spring Chinook optimistically in the Umpqua, now that a few have been taken, anglers will surely be pursuing them, With the ocean off limits until for Chinook, the rivers should get better runs this season. Winters are being taken on the North Umpqua although they're a mix of pre- and post-spawners. The first springer of the season has crossed Winchester Dam. South Umpqua steelheaders are taking a mix of wild and hatchery fish. The pressure is very light.

Spring Chinook fishing has stalled in the low, clear, cold water of the lower Rogue. Anglers here are hoping for warm spring rains which will jump-start the action. The Grants Pass stretch has been providing worthwhile winter steelheading but catches are only fair on the upper river.

One never knows for certain what specie will be on the end of the line when bringing up a fish from the depths. Recently, catches have included the brilliantly colored vermilion rockfish with some of these specimens in the 10-pound range.

Cabezon are fabulous at the table, but many anglers hesitate to take them to the fillet table as they are challenging to clean and yield far less flesh than the other rockfish of a similar weight. A large one is worthwhile, however, and will be a welcomed guest at dinnertime.

For those not fortunate enough to have access to a sea-worthy boat, surf fishing for striped and pinkfin perch continues to deliver 15-fish limits to those willing to clean that many. Sand shrimp is a great bait but fragile. Other options include clams, mussels, bloodworms and even shrimp from your grocer's seafood counter.

Recreationalists can deter spread of invasive species

Mud snails have spread from their first discovery in the mid 90s in the lower Columbia. Now this invasive, non-native species can be found in many south coast river including the Umpqua and Rogue. Fish eat 'em, no problem, but they're intact and healthy after exiting the digestive tract.

Mud snails gorge on algae, an important food source for tiny critters and the devastation moves up the food chain as larger animals which no longer have the little ones upon which they normally feed, begin to die out. Incredibly prolific, a single snail will become millions in a year. In their native New Zealand, parasites keep them in check but no such natural deterrent exists in the U.S.

While crawfish and freshwater sculpins can actually kill and eat mud snails, they are one of the first to suffer from the effects of the depletion of food sources. As is stands, there's no solution to infestations, but boaters and fishers can help to stop the spread. Thoroughly clean boat hulls and every item of gear that comes in contact with any lake or river.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Pro guide Steve Fleming (1-888-624-9424) "We were out most everyday this last week and the fishing was very good for the big ones. We caught Master Angler smallmouth (20" +) most every day and some Trophy 18" fish. The techniques were different every day from spinnerbaits, Carolina rigs, to 1/8 jigheads with Outlaw worms and Smelly Jelly scent. The water went up a lot today and we blanked out (yuk), and looks like it will remain up and unfishable for a week. Sorry!"

The Deschutes is expected to remain higher than normal through springtime due to heavy snowpack this year.

Anglers should use care to avoid steelhead redds. The upper Deschutes is closed to all fishing.

Kokanee catches at Lake Billy Chinook have been good, but the 25-fish limit is coming to an end. April

31st will be the last day that anglers will be allowed this "bonus bag."

Northwest Trout – On the trout planting schedule for this week in the Willamette Valley are Benson Lake, Bethany Pond, Blue Lake, Commonwealth Lake, Dorman Pond, Haldeman Pond, Harriet Lake, Hartman Pond, Henry Hagg Lake, Mt Hood College Pond, Timber Lake, Trojan Pond, Alton Baker Canal, Cottage Grove Reservoir, E. E. Wilson Pond, Junction City Pond and Waverly Lake. In the Northwest Zone, Battle Lake, Carter Lake, Cleawox Lake, Coffenbury Lake, Lost Lake (Clatsop County), Spring Lake, Vernonia Pond, Woahink Lake are scheduled to be stocked with trout.

Diamond Lake is supposed to be stocked with trout prior to the scheduled opening on April 26th. That's not gonna happen. The lake will remain covered with ice well beyond the official opening date. While ice fishing is allowed here as long as the hole is smaller than 12 inches in diameter, no one is supposed to walk on the ice. Catch 22. Boaters won't have to be concerned about the 10 mph speed limit for many weeks.

For those who check the online schedule for trout stocking, the date of planting on the schedule is always a Monday and the actual stocking may occur any day that week. The new trout planting confirmation number is 971-673-6000 at which information regarding what waters were planted on any given day will be available after 2 PM.

A free fishing event for youngsters will be held this Saturday, April 19th at Cottage Grove Pond. Roaring Springs Trout Hatchery and Fishing Club stocked over 1,600 rainbow trout for the event, with over 400 of those fish larger than 12-inches. ODFW staff and volunteers will be on duty from 9:30 AM to 1 PM to provide fishing equipment, advice and to clean fish. For information, call 541-726-3515.

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report April 16th – April 29th, 2008

North Puget Sound

Blackmouth salmon are no longer the only game in town for the region's saltwater anglers. The **halibut** season is under way in Puget Sound and openings for other bottomfish are not far off. For freshwater anglers, one of the most anticipated fisheries occurs later this April, when the lowland lakes **trout** season kicks off.

Beginning April 26, anglers can cast a line in many of the region's lakes, where thousands of legal-sized trout have been planted. Information on stocking schedules for rainbow, cutthroat and triploid trout is available on WDFW's website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/index.htm>).

During the first few weeks of the season, anglers should fish higher in the water column, where the stocked trout tend to remain after being placed in a lake, said Jon Anderson, WDFW resident trout manager. "After the trout are planted, they usually stay in about the top 3 to 5 feet of water," he said. "So anglers will want to keep the hook shallow early on. After a few weeks, anglers likely will have better success fishing lower in the water column."

Out on the saltwater, selective fisheries for hatchery **blackmouth** - resident chinook - continue through April 30 in marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) and 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner). Anglers fishing in those two areas can keep two hatchery blackmouth as part of their two-salmon daily limit and must release wild chinook, which have an intact adipose fin.

Halibut fishing opened April 10 throughout the region. Mutiny and Admiralty bays, as well as Eastern and Partridge banks usually are the best bets for flatfish early in the season. Halibut fishing is open five days a week, Thursday through Monday, with a daily limit of one halibut and no minimum size limit.

Beginning May 1, anglers in the region also will have an opportunity to drop a line for other **bottomfish**, such as **lingcod**, **rockfish** and **cabezon**.

Anglers out on Puget Sound will soon have an opportunity to catch shrimp as well. The shrimp season opens throughout the region May 3. Details are available on WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/shrimpreg/shrimpindex.shtml>.

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

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

While hundreds of Washington lakes are being planted with **trout** in time for the lowland lakes opener, anglers have been reeling in **halibut** and **lingcod** from coastal waters. **Razor clam** diggers, meanwhile, can head out for morning digs April 19-23.

For many anglers, "fishing season" begins April 26 on opening day of the lowland lakes trout season. On the state's single biggest fishing day, anglers can choose from among 99 lakes in the region stocked with thousands of legal-sized trout.

Lakes stocked with more than 5,000 trout include Sutherland Lake in Clallam County; Aberdeen Lake in Grays Harbor County; Leland Lake in Jefferson County; Island and Wildcat lakes in Kitsap County; Benson and Devereaux lakes in Mason County; Clear, Kapowsin and Ohop lakes in Pierce County; and Clear, Hicks, Long and Pattison lakes in Thurston County. Information on WDFW stocking schedules is available online at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/weekly/>. For tips on fishing options, by water and county, see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/prospects/index.htm>.

In Thurston County, youngsters ages 5-14 can attend a one-day fishing event at the Kids' Klassic Family Fish-in, held at the Woodland Creek Community Park on April 19 - a week before the season opener. Children must be pre-registered to participate. For information, call Lacey Parks and Recreation, (360) 491-0857.

Meanwhile, recreational **halibut** anglers have been out in force near Port Angeles (Marine Area 6), pulling in more than 40 of the flatfish since the season began April 10. Marine areas 6-11 and 13 (Port Angeles and Puget Sound) are open five days a week, Thursday through Monday, through June 13.

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

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

- **Columbia River (Ilwaco):** Marine Area 1 will be open May 1, seven days a week until 70 percent of the quota is reached, or until July 20, whichever occurs first. The fishery will then reopen on Aug. 1 and continue three days a week (Friday-Sunday) until the remaining quota is reached, or Sept. 30, whichever occurs first.
- **South Coast (Westport/Ocean Shores):** Marine Area 2 will open on May 1, and then continue two days a week, Sundays and Tuesdays until the quota is reached, or Sept. 30, whichever occurs first. The northern nearshore area will open May 1 and will be open four days a week, Friday through Sunday and Tuesdays, until the quota is reached.
- **North Coast (La Push/Neah Bay):** Marine areas 3 and 4 will be open starting May 13 on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays until the quota is reached. If sufficient quota remains, the fishery will reopen on June 17 and 19 (Tuesday and Thursday) in Area 4B and shoreward of a line approximating 30 fm from the Bonilla-Tatoosh line south to the Queets River. All recreational fishing in Marine Areas 3 and 4 outside of these areas will be closed on those dates. If sufficient quota remains, the fishery will reopen in all areas of marine areas 3 and 4 on Saturday, June 21.
- **Strait of Juan de Fuca/Puget Sound:** Marine Area 5 (Sekiu) will be open May 22 through July 21, five days a week, Thursday through Monday.

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

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

The **lingcod** fishery in Marine Area 4 (Neah Bay) gets under way April 16, giving anglers a chance to land some of the abundant fish in the area.

Meanwhile, many boats out of Westport in Marine Area 2 are catching their limits on lingcod since the March 15 opener, said Scott Barbour, WDFW fish biologist. "People are doing really well when the weather cooperates and they can stay out on the water," he said.

Marine areas 1-4 are open seven days a week with the following restrictions:

- 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.
- 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.

Retention of canary and yelloweye rockfish is prohibited in all waters. Anglers should note the minimum size for lingcod in Marine Area 4 is 24 inches, rather than 22 inches in marine areas 1-3.

Lingcod fishing in marine areas 5-13 gets under way May 1 and will be open seven days a week through June 15.

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 (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

Anglers still have time to travel to the Olympic Peninsula for some **steelhead** fishing. With the exception of the Hoh River, area rivers will remain open for steelhead fishing through April 30.

Rather dig **razor clams**? A morning dig is scheduled April 19-23. Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Long Beach, Copalis and Mocrocks will all be open for digging April 19-20. Twin Harbors will be open for three additional days, April 21-23, All digging on those beaches must be finished by noon. Kalaloch Beach remains closed to harvest. Details are available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/razorclm/season.htm>.

Dates and low tides are:

- Saturday, April 19, 6:40 a.m., -0.1 ft: Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis and Mocrocks
- Sunday, April 20, 7:18 a.m., -0.4 ft: Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis and Mocrocks
- Monday, April 21, 7:55 a.m., -0.6 ft: Twin Harbors only
- Tuesday, April 22, 8:30 a.m., -0.6 ft: Twin Harbors only
- Wednesday, April 23, 9:06 a.m., -0.5 ft: Twin Harbors only

Southwest Washington:

After weeks of good fishing, fishery managers for Washington and Oregon met today (April 16) to consider closing the **spring chinook** fishery on the lower Columbia River for a catch assessment.

The meeting follows a week in which boat anglers fishing from the west Hayden powerlines upriver to Bonneville Dam averaged an adult chinook for every 2.5 rods - the best catch rate for that period since 2000.

"Catch rates, especially for boat anglers, have been spectacular over the past couple of weeks," said Joe Hymer, WDFW fish biologist.

If a closure takes effect, both states will review pre-season run-size estimates late this month or in early May to determine if the fishery can be reopened within federal guidelines. Anglers should keep an eye on the WDFW website for updates on the fishery, Hymer said.

In the meantime, he suggests checking out tributaries to the big river above and below Bonneville Dam, where anglers are hooking up with spring chinook in increasing numbers. Springers are now

moving into Wind River and Drano Lake above Bonneville and on the Lewis, Cowlitz and Kalama rivers below the dam.

"Fishing on the tribs is only going to get better in the weeks ahead," Hymer said. "If the fishery on the mainstem is any indication, they should definitely be worth some time on the water."

Adult chinook passage past Bonneville Dam has increased dramatically since April 10, when spills were increased to help move juvenile salmon downriver, Hymer said. Within days, adult passage increased from just over a hundred fish per day to nearly 1,300.

"Fishing should start getting good above Bonneville pretty soon," Hymer said.

Chinook fishing is currently open seven days per week on the Columbia River from Bonneville Dam upstream to McNary Dam, as well as on the Wind and White rivers, plus Drano Lake. Anglers should note that Drano Lake is scheduled to be closed to fishing Wednesdays beginning April 9.

Another possibility is the Klickitat River, which is open for salmon and steelhead fishing Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays only. The daily limit is one hatchery salmon or one hatchery steelhead on the Klickitat from the Fisher Hill Bridge downstream. The fishery will likely be slow until more fish cross Bonneville Dam, Hymer said.

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 open 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.

Parking and access to the bank fishery at the mouth of Drano Lake will likely be best Wednesdays, when the rest of the lake is closed to recreational fishing, Hymer said.

Meanwhile, anglers are reminded that April 26 is opening day for many **trout lakes** throughout the state. While many lakes in southwest Washington are open year-round, the April 26 opener does mark the start of trout fishing in such perennial favorites as Mineral Lake in Lewis County and Rowland Lakes in Klickitat County.

Anglers should, however, be aware that the trout opening on Swift Reservoir in Skamania County has been delayed a month because of unusually low water levels due to a slow snow melt. That has made access to the lake difficult, and potentially dangerous. Planned stocking of catchable rainbows has been delayed until just before the Memorial Day weekend.

But trout plants at year-round lakes has continued on schedule, including:

- Mayfield Lake - 6,070 catchable-size rainbows.
- South Lewis County Pond - 618 triploids weighing 1.3 pounds each and 4,025 catchable-size browns.
- Sacajawea Lake in Longview - 10,325 catchable browns.
- Kress Lake in Kalaman - 2,040 catchable size rainbows and 6,510 browns.
- Horseshoe Lake in Woodland - 4,080 catchable rainbows and 6,510 browns.
- Battleground Lake - 3,000 half-pound rainbows.

- Kline Pond - 4,000 catchable size rainbows and 2,000 half-pound browns.

Looking for a bigger tug on the line? **Sturgeon** fishing is heating up below Bonneville Dam and should improve in the days ahead, Hymer said.

Eastern Washington:

April 26 marks the start of some of the best **trout** fishing in the region, although this year's opening weekend catches may be smaller in size than anglers traditionally expect.

"The trout fry we stocked in these lakes last spring and fall just haven't grown as much by now because of our record long, cold and snowy winter," said WDFW District Fish Biologist Chris Donley in Spokane. "A lot of these waters remained iced-up and snow-covered for a lot longer this winter, so there just wasn't the feed for fish. We'll still have some very good fishing at the usual waters, but the average size of the fish will be smaller."

Those "usual" waters that provide good fishing include Badger, Williams and West Medical lakes in southwest Spokane County and Fishtrap Lake on the Lincoln-Spokane county line.

Donley said Badger's rainbows and cutthroats average 10 to 12 inches, with some larger. Last year over 30,000 cutthroat fry and about 50,000 rainbow fry were stocked in Badger. This spring 10,000 eight- to 12-inch rainbows, 400 14-inch-plus rainbows, and 1,000 triploid rainbows up to 1.5 pounds each were added to Badger. Williams Lake should be good for limits of 10- to 18-inch trout, mostly from last year's plants of 40,000 cutthroat fry and 108,000 rainbow fry. Williams also received 10,000 eight- to 12-inch rainbows, 400 14-inch-plus rainbows, and 1,500 triploids. West Medical also should be good with over 180,000 rainbow fry stocked last year and the same number of "catchables" as Badger received this spring.

Popular Fishtrap Lake will be good as well, but not like the peak production seasons of past years, Donley said. "Fishtrap anglers will still catch lots of 10- to 16-inch trout, including carryovers from 2006 stocking," he said. "But last year's fry plants may look significantly smaller than usual." Fishtrap received over 88,000 rainbow fry last year, and this spring the lake received 15,000 eight- to 12-inch rainbows, 400 14-inch-plus rainbows, and 750 big triploids.

Other trout lakes in the central district that open April 26 and will provide decent fishing include Fish and Clear lakes in southwest Spokane County. Both have tiger trout - a brook-brown trout hybrid - from fry plants last year (Clear received 20,000, Fish received 12,000). Clear also received 75,000 brown trout fry and over 60,000 rainbow fry last year, plus "catchables" this spring - 10,500 eight- to 12-inch browns, 30,000 same-size rainbows, 400 14-inch-plus rainbows, and 1,000 big triploids. Fish Lake also received about 1,700 14-inch-plus eastern brook trout this spring.

Amber Lake in southwest Spokane County, which has been open since March 1 for catch-and-release fishing, shifts to a harvest season April 26. Selective gear rules are still in effect at Amber and only two rainbow or cutthroat trout of at least 14 inches can be retained. Amber rainbows with clipped adipose fins must be released.

Two other selective-gear-rule lakes in the central district that have been open since the first of March and remain good bets through the spring are Coffeepot Lake in Lincoln County for rainbows, yellow perch and black crappie, and North Silver Lake in southwest Spokane County for rainbows. The requirement to release adipose-fin-clipped fish is also in place at North Silver.

Three mixed-species lakes that usually open on the last Saturday of April were changed to the March 1 opening season this year, although anglers will find them listed in the current pamphlet as opening

April 26. Those lakes are Liberty, Downs and Medical lakes. Donley said that because of the record-long winter, the earlier opener didn't solicit angling crowds and none of them are anywhere near "fished out." Liberty Lake, east of Spokane near the Idaho border, continues to provide good catches of brown and rainbow trout, and as the weather warms it will produce more **largemouth** and **smallmouth bass, yellow perch, and crappie**. Downs Lake in the southwest corner of Spokane County has also been providing opportunity for yellow perch, largemouth bass, crappie, and rainbow trout. And Medical Lake, near the town of the same name in southwest Spokane County, is good for large brown, rainbow, and tiger trout under selective gear rules.

Year-round Sprague Lake has been receiving fish along with many of the lakes that open this month. Sprague had been without fish since last October's rotenone treatment to rehabilitate the declining fishery. Now Sprague has about 160,000 catchable-size rainbows, including over 3,200 triploid rainbows up to 1.5 pounds. Cow Lake, which was also treated last fall as part of the Sprague Lake watershed, received about 6,000 one-third-pound rainbows. Later this spring, broodstock largemouth bass, bluegill and crappie captured from other Washington waters will be stocked. About 4,000 black crappie and at least 60 channel catfish that were collected from Sprague Lake before last fall's treatment also will be returned this spring. Juvenile warmwater fish species from the Meseberg Hatchery - about 100,000 **bluegill**, 14,000 largemouth bass and 2,000 crappie - will also be stocked.

Other year-round, mixed-species fisheries in Spokane County might be just the ticket on April 26 for anglers who want to avoid crowds at the usual trout hot spots. Eloika and Bonnie lakes can be good for perch fishing, and Silver Lake has bass, crappie and bluegill.

Many more lakes open April 26 further north in the region, although some have been too icy to receive catchable-size trout plants. Many of the northern fisheries are based on fry plants from last year and the year before, so when they are accessible they should provide good fishing, Donley said.

As of April 16, several popular waters, including Diamond, Davis, Fan, Marshall and Sacheen lakes in Pend Oreille County, remained iced up and even some access sites snowed in.

"Many of our northern lakes may be June producers this year," Donley said. "By then those fry plants will hopefully get a little growth."

Whenever the fishery gets under way up north, Donley said some of the best bets will be Stevens County's Starvation Lake, which got 18,000 rainbow fry last year; Rocky Lake with over 5,000 rainbow fry; Deep Lake with over 75,000 cutthroat fry and over 10,000 rainbow fry; and Cedar Lake with over 20,000 rainbow fry.

Open water has allowed catchables to be stocked at Waitts and Jump Off Joe lakes. Waitts has received 15,000 eight- to 12-inch rainbows and 500 hatchery surplus broodstock rainbows. Jump Off Joe received 7,500 eight- to 12-inch brown trout and 4,000 rainbows of similar size.

Loon Lake in southern Stevens County has open water and should be receiving 400 14-inch-plus rainbows and 750 big triploids, to boost last year's 15,000 rainbow fry. Deer Lake, just northeast of Loon, has been open since March 1 when anglers were ice-fishing for its rainbow and **lake trout**, largemouth and smallmouth bass, crappie, yellow perch, and kokanee from last year's fry plant of about 325,000. Deer is slated to receive 30,000 eight- to 12-inch rainbows, 400 14-inch-plus rainbows, and 1,000 triploids.

Donley says Pend Oreille County's Diamond Lake should be good fishing once it's stocked with its allotment - 10,000 eight- to 12-inch brown trout, 23,500 rainbows of the same size, 500 14-inch-plus rainbows, and 1,000 triploids.

All fish stocking details, by county and lake, are available in the 2008 Hatchery Trout Stocking Plan at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/index.htm>.

A spring **chinook salmon** fishing season on portions of the Snake River could be coming soon, said WDFW District Fish Biologist Glen Mendel in Dayton. Anglers should stay tuned for an announcement of that special and limited opportunity.

April 25 is the registration deadline for the "Fishing Kids" event on May 3 at Spokane County's Clear Lake. This annual event for kids 5-14 years of age provides beginning fishing instruction, a T-shirt, a Zebco rod and reel, and other fishing goodies for just \$5 per kid. Registrants must sign up for half-hour fishing instruction timeslots from 8 a.m. through 2:30 p.m. Registration forms are available at WDFW's eastern regional office at 2315 N. Discovery Place in Spokane Valley and Spokane County 4-H at WSU Extension, 222 W. Havana St. in Spokane. Call the 4-H office at 477-2638 for more details.

North Central Washington:

Although good fishing has been under way throughout the region for the past month, the best **trout** fishing opportunities start April 26 with the lowland lakes season opener.

Jeff Korth, WDFW district fish biologist from Moses Lake, said the best bets will be Blue and Park lakes north of the town of Soap Lake in Grant County. "Fishing should be excellent at these two lakes because we rehabilitated them two years ago and this will be the first year for yearling **rainbow trout** grown there," Korth explained. "Most anglers should get limits of fat 12-inch rainbows from our fingerling plants. Many of the catchable-sized rainbows stocked last year have carried over and will be 15-plus inches now. I think we'll see an average catch rate of at least three fish per angler on the opener."

Korth reported Blue Lake has received 196,455 rainbow fingerlings and Park Lake received 125,772. Blue Lake also received almost 5,000 **brown trout** fingerlings and 3,000 **tiger trout** fingerlings, and Park Lake received about 10,000 brown trout fingerlings. Korth noted the brown and tiger trout don't usually enter the fishery until they are more than two years old, so the rainbows will make up this year's catch.

Another good bet April 26 will be Vic Meyers Lake, a relatively small water connected to Park Lake that was also rehabilitated in 2006 to remove bullheads. Vic Meyers is mostly a shore fishery, although hand-carried boats or float tubes can be used. It was stocked with 3,600 fingerling rainbow trout, 200 fingerling brown trout, and 100 fingerling tiger trout. Korth predicts catch rates will be three to four fish per angler, mostly 12-inchers with maybe 10 percent being 15-inchers.

Perch Lake, in Sun Lakes State Park, is one of the most consistent fishing waters in the Columbia Basin, Korth said. Limits of 12-inch rainbow trout are generally the rule at this small but popular lake. The plant is only 10,000 fingerlings, and the lake is usually fished out in a few weeks, so only an occasional 15-inch carryover will be seen. Perch is also mostly a shore fishery, although hand-carried boats or float tubes can be used.

Deep Lake, also in Sun Lakes State Park, usually provides very good fishing on the opener, with an average of four to five rainbows per angler, said Korth. Besides the usual 5,000 rainbow fingerlings, Deep Lake received an additional 5,000 catchable-size (10-12 inch) rainbow trout this year. The fingerlings stocked last year will now be 13-14 inches, Korth noted. Deep Lake is also stocked with 40,000 **kokanee** fingerlings that run eight to 10 inches by late spring and early summer. "The kokanee or 'silver' fishery has been good to those who know how to target them, but the better kokanee fishing comes later in the summer, by July and August," Korth said.

Another popular April 26-opening fishery is Warden Lake east of Potholes Reservoir. But Korth said Warden Lake's trout still suffer from competition with spiny-rayed fishes like sunfish and bullheads, so the survival rate of the 80,768 rainbow fingerlings stocked last spring is as mediocre as the catch rates. Anglers can expect only about two or maybe three fish apiece, but they will be nice trout at 13-plus inches, with carryover rainbows of at least 15 inches making up about five percent of the catch, Korth said. There are also some large brown trout in Warden Lake, and another 10,000 tiger trout fingerlings were stocked last fall.

Many more lakes open April 26 further north in the region. Bob Jateff, WDFW district fish biologist from Omak, said Conconully Reservoir near the town of Conconully in central Okanogan County should be very good for rainbow trout 11-12 inches with carryover fish to 15 inches. Pearrygin Lake near Winthrop will be good fishing for 11-inch rainbows. Alta Lake near Pateros will be good for rainbows up to 15 inches and Fish Lake near Sinlahekin should be good for yearling rainbows up to 11 inches.

Selective-gear-rule lakes that open April 26 that Jateff predicted will provide very good fishing include Blue Lake near Sinlahekin for browns and rainbows 12-18 inches, Ell Lake near Tonasket for rainbows up to 15 inches, and Big Twin Lake near Winthrop for 10-12 inch rainbows with a few carryover fish to 15 inches.

Fly-fishing-only Aeneas Lake near Tonasket should be good for rainbows 11-13 inches on the April 26 opener, Jateff said. Another fly-fishing-only water, Chopaka Lake near Loomis, was recently rehabilitated. But Jateff reported spring plants of 10-12 inch rainbows should provide good early season fishing, along with some larger 14-16 inch fish. "Anglers should check first before venturing to Chopaka," Jateff said. "Slower thawing conditions at the lake could delay fish plants until the first week in May."

Jateff also reminded anglers that some of the Okanogan County lakes that opened April 1 are also a good bet. Spectacle Lake near Loomis is providing good fishing for rainbows 11-12 inches, while Leader Lake near Omak has rainbows 11-12 inches plus **crappie** and **bluegill**. Patterson Lake near Winthrop is good for 10-12 inch rainbows and 8-10 inch yellow perch.

Many of the Columbia Basin fisheries that opened March 1 and April 1 are also still fishing well, especially Quincy, Burke, and the Hampton lakes, Korth noted. "The fisheries under selective gear rules with a one-fish daily catch limit - Dusty, Lenore, and Dry Falls lakes - are good to excellent. Lenore has been a little slow but should pick up soon with the spawning run about over and fish back out in the lake feeding," Korth said. "Dry Falls has been excellent with catches of 13-15-inch yearling rainbows and 16-20-inch carryovers."

Lenice and Nunnally lakes, which opened March 1 on the Crab Creek Wildlife Area just east of Beverly in Grant County, just received big triploid rainbow trout. Lenice received 500 and Nunnally 600 of the one-and-a-half-pound fish. Both lakes are under selective gear rules and a one-fish daily catch limit.

Year-round Beda Lake, south of Winchester Wasteway, also recently received 250 triploid rainbow trout.

All fish stocking details, by county and lake, are available in the 2008 Hatchery Trout Stocking Plan at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/index.htm>.

Korth reported **walleye** fishing at year-round Moses Lake should be picking up after a bit of a slow down. "They're still catching them at the Alder fill, but walleye fishing should really pick up with the spawning run about over and fish back out in lake feeding."

South Central Washington:

Most of the south central region's **trout** fisheries are on year-round seasons, although many waters receive hatchery fish plants along with April 26-opening lakes in other regions. Paul Hoffarth, WDFW district fish biologist from Pasco, noted three Tri-Cities area lakes recently received large triploid trout averaging well over a pound each - Dalton Lake northeast of the Snake River's Ice Harbor Dam in Franklin County, Powerline Lake northwest of Mesa in Franklin County, and juveniles-only (under 15) Columbia Park Pond near Kennewick in Benton County.

Eric Anderson, WDFW district fish biologist from Yakima, noted that large amounts of **triploid** rainbow **trout** have been planted in Mud, Myron, Fio Rito and Mattoon lakes in Yakima County. Clear, Dog, Leech and Lost lakes will likely not be planted with triploids until May due to snow and difficult access conditions. Hatchery surplus broodstock rainbows, that run seven to eight pounds each, recently went into I-82 Ponds 1 and 2, and Tim's Pond.

All details of how many fish have been stocked and where are available on WDFW's South Central Region webpage at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/regions/reg3/index.htm>.

The biggest fishing draw in the region this year may be spring chinook salmon, with run forecasts indicating large numbers returning to the Columbia River, Hoffarth said. Currently, retention of hatchery-marked (adipose-fin-clipped) chinook is allowed on the Columbia River from Bonneville Dam upstream to McNary Rapids Dam, with some area restrictions, through May 10.

"With the return of spring chinook running late again this year, the best fishing in the John Day Pool or Lake Umatilla will likely be during the final ten days of the season," Hoffarth said. "The spring chinook forecast for the Umatilla River is also well above normal and should lead to good catches in the Columbia River near Umatilla, Oregon."

WDFW has proposed opening several sport fisheries for spring chinook in portions of the Columbia, Snake, and Yakima rivers. These fisheries will be opened by emergency rule change and are dependent upon actual returns meeting forecast expectations. They would likely open around May 1 and be restricted to specific areas with special regulations. Hoffarth advises anglers to watch for special openings on WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm> .

Bass anglers are beginning to catch some nice pre-spawn smallmouth in the lower Yakima River, Hoffarth reported. "These fish will migrate farther upstream over the next few weeks," he said. WDFW now maintains multiple primitive boat launch sites in the lower Yakima River.

Hoffarth reminded anglers the Columbia River's John Day Pool is now closed to the retention of **white sturgeon**. Catch-and-release fishing for sturgeon is permitted in the John Day Pool, except for the sturgeon sanctuary located from the I-82 bridge at Umatilla upstream to McNary Dam. "This area is also closed to all angling for sturgeon from May 1 to July 31," Hoffarth said. The Columbia River from McNary Dam to Priest Rapids Dam is currently open for sturgeon, including the Snake River upstream to Ice Harbor.

Columbia River **walleye** catch has slowed, but will likely begin to pick up with warmer weather, Hoffarth reported.

Registration is underway for two "Fishing Kids" events in the region that provide opportunities to introduce children 5 to 14 years of age to fishing. One is on Saturday, May 3, at Columbia Park Pond in Kennewick, co-sponsored by the Kennewick Parks Department. Call 509-585-4293 for details. The other is Saturday, May 10, at Sarge Hubbard Park Pond in Yakima, co-sponsored by Yakima Parks Department. Call 509-575-6020 for details.

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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Doug Rees: doug@TheGuidesForecast.com

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Klamath Lake Trophy Trout Derby won by 9-year old:

http://heraldandnews.com/articles/2008/04/13/featured_story/doc4801ae87e6e83464183977.txt

Weekly Quote – “ ... trapping and killing the animals would harm kayakers and others who have established relationships with individual sea lions.” - The Humane Society of the United States

GOOD LUCK!