

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **April 10th – April 16th, 2009**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro - Boaters did well on Saturday in the lower Columbia estuary signaling a flush of fish destined for upriver fisheries. Anglers on Wednesday fared poorly in the Portland area with a commercial season partly to blame on Tuesday night. Joe Ness of Lake Oswego landed a 15 pounder on a herring at the tip of Hayden Island on Wednesday. To date, this should be the best week of the spring chinook season and the Bonneville area should begin to take off by the weekend with steady catches coming from both boat and bank anglers. We should know by weeks end if the nearly 300,000 fish prediction is accurate.

Water temperature at Willamette Falls is in the high 40s. Daily summer steelhead counts are improving. Spring chinook effort on the Willamette is a fraction of the Columbia fishery but anglers are producing fair to good catches at the head of the Multnomah Channel and in the St. Johns area. These fish average larger than the Columbia salmon. The Oregon City area should produce fair to good results this week. Sturgeon fishing has been fair in the Portland Harbor.

Trout are rising to March Brown imitations on the McKenzie River mid- to late-day. The water has dropped and cleared since last week.

Improvements in water conditions and color on the Sandy has resulted in some steelhead being caught.

While the Clackamas has been slow to fair for winter steelhead, a few summer steelhead have been taken.

Winter steelhead are being caught and released on the North Santiam while a few summers have been taken around Mehema.

Scheduled for trout planting are Canby Pond, Henry Hagg Lake, Cottage Grove Pond, Detroit Reservoir, Roaring River Park Pond, Salmonberry Lake, Sheridan Pond and St Louis Ponds.

A youth fishing event will be held on Saturday, April 11 at St. Louis Ponds from 9 AM to 2 PM. Tackle will be provided and volunteers will assist. For information, call 971-673-6034.

Northwest – Steelhead rivers on the north coast were fishing good early in the week. With the recent precipitation along with a mild snowpack feeding river flows, the rivers are slow to drop enabling boaters to work the quality drifts for many days in a row.

The Kilchis is one of the first to fish after a high water event and yielded an estimated 24-pound steelhead to Ross Ellis and his crew on Saturday. The brute fell to a chrome/flame stripe K-9 Kwikfish.

The Wilson and Nestucca Rivers were in perfect shape by Monday with a mix of late wild and hatchery winter steelhead available along with a rare summer fish. This will likely be the last viable week for quality fish to be harvested before the spring spawn begins.

Although it's a bit early, a few spring chinook were rumored to have been taken in lower Tillamook Bay over the weekend with a possibility of a hatchery salmon in the Wilson or Trask Rivers. The

season opened on April 1st. There was light sturgeon effort on Tillamook Bay this weekend but a few keepers were taken. Another nice tide series begins today making sturgeon fishing an option through the weekend. Spinner trollers may get lucky in the upper bay.

Razor clam digging should be excellent late in the week and into the weekend. A relatively small swell should contribute to a good dig.

Cape Mears Lake, Carter Lake, Cleawox Lake, Hebo Lake, Lake Lytle, Loren's Pond, Nedonna Pond, North Lake, Smith Lake, South Lake, Tahoe Lake and Town Lake are scheduled to be stocked with trout.

Southwest – Winter steelheading is fair to good on the North Umpqua with spring chinook being landed as high as Bunch Bar. A 47-pound springer was landed recently just above Elkton.

Spring chinook are being taken daily on the lower Rogue with greater numbers of early fish showing than in years past. Several springers over 30 pounds have been landed and the vast majority have been of hatchery origin. Late April and early May are historically the peak of the season here.

Forecasts indicate this coming Saturday will be best for a launch out of the Port of Brookings to take advantage of the excellent fishing for rockfish and lingcod. In addition, with Dungeness catches winding down elsewhere, ocean crabbers are taking limits here. Surf perch fishing off area beaches has been good and will continue to improve over the next several weeks.

Scheduled for trout planting this week are Cooper Creek Reservoir, Galesville Reservoir and Loon Lake.

Eastern – Pro guide Steve Fleming (888-624-9424) reports and improvement in smallmouth bass actions recently, with 25 fish caught on April 6th.

The water level is up a little on the lower Deschutes and it's running cold, but nymphs are taking redsides below Maupin.

Lake Billy Chinook has been fair for kokanee and a few bull trout have been landed.

With the recent warming trend, smallmouth bass fishing on the John Day River is producing multiple opportunities for large fish into the low 20-inch range. Jack Hanselman Jr. of Portland landed one of the biggest in recent years measuring 23" X 15.5".

SW Washington – Steelhead fishing is best on the Cowlitz and Kalama Rivers with catches better than a fish every other boat. Some spring chinook are beginning to show in the catches and numbers should be peaking closer to the end of the month.

The North Fork and mainstem Lewis has been producing poor results.

Salmon passage at Bonneville Dam is beginning to climb. This should stimulate the Drano Lake and Wind River fisheries where spring chinook catches have already been reported. These fisheries should peak in the next 2 weeks.

Washington razor clam digs are scheduled as follows: Friday, April 10 (7:45 a.m., -0.7 ft.) Twin Harbors, Saturday, April 11 (8:25 a.m., -0.7 ft.) Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Sunday, April 12 (9:05 a.m., -0.5 ft.) Long Beach, Twin Harbors.

Columbia River Fishing Report – Anglers approached the Wednesday (4/8) opener with a lot of anticipation but quickly had their hopes dashed when effort way out-weighted success. With the commercial gillnet opener just a few hours before sport fishing re-opened, anglers overlooked this setback with the thought there is a steady stream of springers due back to the metro fishery; especially given the recent success in the lower river last Saturday. The netters took just over 2,800 fish.

We started the morning at sunrise having virgin water downstream of the I-5 Bridge on Wednesday coming up very short of our first bite of the day. As a matter of fact, we went a long time without even seeing a fish caught. Far from what I expected given the circumstances. We headed upriver to fish near the tip of Hayden Island on a call indicating that a few fish were being taken in the area. We dropped our green dyed herring and landed a nice 15-pound hatchery fish on our first pass in the area. We didn't see or hook any other fish before we took out at 10:30 a.m.

As is usual, most of the action took place before 10:00 a.m. Although there will be periods of activity throughout the day, the morning seems to be the most consistent for the I-5 area. On Thursdays, the strategy shifts as the water downstream of the powerlines is "virgin water" since the Wednesday opener only encompasses the stretch upstream from this deadline.

Reports from the Bonneville area on Wednesday were favorable with anchor anglers taking fair numbers of fish on the hook using Kwikfish. Catches were also reported from the bank but that action will likely only improve as the month wears on. To date, fish passage at Bonneville has yet to reach over 100 fish so it's clear that the bulk of the run is still a few weeks away. It should be a fun couple of weeks however.

It's clear that the action isn't what it was like last year at this time but managers in the know are pointing to water temperatures as a primary cause for a slow start. Since the last opener, the water temperature has warmed 2 degrees and that trend is likely to continue. Fishery managers have not spoke recently about modifying the season even though rumors are already flying around about it. This type of scenario played out more than once recently with late returns much more common in recent years. It's still too early to call this run a bust. Catch rates in some of the lower river fisheries are starting to show promise.

In regards to the lower river fisheries, the bites have been quite localized. Clifton Channel downstream of Westport is not producing consistent results but hogliners working the Brookfield jetty in the lower river saw great action on Wednesday. Most veteran anglers believe that since the bulk of this run is destined for the upper river, the fish will be using the Washington side of the river and not susceptible to falling to anglers on the Oregon side fisheries (like Clifton Channel). We'll wait until the bulk of the run does arrive before we make that assumption.

All other fisheries are second class this time of year although it's notable that the retention season for sturgeon in The Dalles and Bonneville Pools have achieved their quotas. Sturgeon fishing downstream of Bonneville Dam is still open during the latter half of the week but any sturgeon effort is only really taking place in the Willamette River.

The Guide's Forecast – In theory, this should be a good week for anglers on the lower Columbia River. Although it was off to a poor start, fishing should pick up significantly this week. Trollers from Troutdale to Westport should see action become more consistent if indeed these fish are going to show up in the force that they are predicted to. With the majority of anglers now trolling, the anchor fishery often gets overlooked these days. There are plenty of good spots to anchor but without

numbers that can produce results, anglers are more confident going to the fish versus waiting for them to come to us.

Bonneville is an exception however as a good percentage of anglers have confidence that if they get in the right lane, they can consistently intercept fish in the traveling lane using plugs as an effective offering. Anglers working this stretch should also have some good opportunities backrolling plugs and backbounced eggs should begin to pick up fish as well. If the run is going to materialize, numbers at the passage facility should begin to climb dramatically in the coming days.

With building tides this weekend, anglers should find improving opportunities in the lower river. Although not a screaming set of minus tides, the outgoing flow coupled with a likely dump from the upstream reservoirs, should put Chinook close to the bank where anglers can access them from sloping beaches. Spin-n-Glos are typically the most effective but anglers often run another free sliding line down their main-line with a shallow diving plug attached.

It's still important to keep your trolled herring on the bottom but don't rule out the shallower water when the flow velocity picks up. There are really only 2 places calorie counting migrating fish can avoid fast water; on the bottom of the river and along the rivers edges. Both will produce the best this week. Green label herring remain the bait size of choice although some anglers are finding it hard to come by.

Why exactly would you sturgeon fish the mainstem Columbia this week? If you're hot on sturgeon, you had better stick to the Willamette but let's be realistic, it's springer season now!

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Willamette Falls water temperature hit 50 degrees on April 8th with the visibility nearly 4 1/2 feet. The ODFW reports that over the last Thursday through Friday retention period, 388 boats took 127 Chinook.

With the McKenzie flow at 5,500 cfs and the water temperature in the mid-40s, lower McKenzie anglers are doing well for redbreast trout and have found some large specimens in the mix.

The North Santiam flow is steady and is expected to remain so over the next week or so.

The Guide's Forecast – St. Johns remains to go-to stretch for sturgeon. Try fresh smelt, squid or sand shrimp and with all the herring in the river from salmon trollers that, so would be a good bait to try. Spring Chinook fishing is slow to fair with the flurry of activity but the crowded Sellwood area seems to be producing as well as anyplace. A last minute report indicated an early morning bite in that area put an estimated 30 springers in about 20 boats on April 9th. Stick with herring or wrapped Kwikfish. Wait until the water temperature hits the mid-50s to try hardware.

Trout on the McKenzie are responding best to sub-surface offerings such as nymphs and soft-hackles.

There are sufficient wild winter steelhead in the Santiam system to provide a fair to good catch and release fishery. For those who enjoy taking a fish or two home for the barbie, wait until numbers of summer steelhead improve.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Steelheaders report a slowing of winter fish action on the Clackamas but they are hooking a few summers.

With the winter steelhead running drawing to a close on the Sandy River, the focus will change to spring Chinook although only a few have been hooked this early in the season.

North Coast Fishing Report – Rivers were in ideal shape this week as last weeks rain freshet and gradual warming trend continues to feed good flows into north coast streams. With the bulk of the anglers focused on Willamette Valley spring Chinook, north coast rivers were fairly light with effort.

Streams that remained open produced good results this week. For the first time in a long time, the Kilchis River remains open past March 31st and a huge buck was caught and released on the lower river on Saturday. The Wilson and Nestucca also produced fair results when the flows began to subside. Hatchery fish remain on the Wilson and Nestucca and a few strays can be found on the Trask River.

Rumors of spring Chinook came from Lyster's Corner over the weekend and enough people were buzzing about it to make me think it may actually be true. It's not uncommon for a spring Chinook to be caught in late March on one of these coastal streams and depending on the size of the return to the Trask and Wilson Rivers, action can begin to kick in as early as mid-April. It's not a fishery you can count on for consistent results however. In the last few years, success is much more consistent around late May.

Sturgeon effort remains low but there are a few keepers coming from the West Channel. Shrimp dunkers were taking an occasional keeper but results won't be consistent in this fishery either. Adults may make their way back into Tillamook Bay temporarily as numbers of keeper sized fish begin to migrate back north into the lower Columbia for their summer feeding schedule.

Once again anglers have an opportunity to give something back to the river and the fishing community at the 22nd annual fin clipping party made possible by Tillamook Anglers. Saturday, April 11th, 108,000 spring Chinook smolt will be fin-clipped at the Whiskey Creek hatchery/ As always, coffee, hot chocolate and doughnuts will be served at * AM with clipping starting at 9 AM. At noon a fabulous barbecue will be served at no cost with work wrapping up by 2:30. No registration is required, just show up to volunteer. For information, call 503-812-1572.

The Guide's Forecast – Action for steelhead will begin to wane as winter steelhead begin to prepare for the spawning phase of their lifecycle. A few late, fresh hatchery and wild fish will still be available on the open streams in the Tillamook district but anglers are encouraged to consider only taking bright males at this point. Many of the females are beginning to transfer their fats and energy into egg production and won't make the best tablefare. A slight rise in river levels over the weekend may put the larger systems out for steelheaders. Levels are expected to stabilize after the weekend.

You'd have to be pretty motivated to avoid the crowds to target Tillamook Bay spring Chinook this week. Tides are ripe however for a chance at a springer in the upper bay on a herring, spinner or plug this weekend. The minus tides always seem to draw fish into the upper bay.

You could combo this pipe dream with a sturgeon trip although the best action for both species often takes place about the same time, the last 2 hours of outgoing tide.

Be sure to check regulations for the body of water you plan on recreating in. New regulations this year may put a crimp in your old habits or you may be surprised with a more liberal season!

Crabbing should pick up with a drop in local pressure and clamming should be good as well for both bay clams and razor clams along Clatsop County Beaches near Seaside.

Predicted wind waves would make weekend recreation on the ocean less than ideal but calmer seas are sure to come.

Central & South Coast Reports – Offshore anglers must once again stay inside the 40-fathom lime when targeting bottom fish. Cabezon may be retained as part of the six-fish rockfish bag limit. Newport and Depoe Bay should offer geed prospects for bottom-dwellers but caught on returning to port early - before winds come up.

The Siletz is in good condition and is supposed to be dropping through the weekend. While reports indicate only fair fishing for steelhead, persistent anglers should be able to land a fish or two here.

The Alsea is predicted to continue dropping through the weekend despite rain in the forecast. As of the 1st of April, the hatchery reports 1,216 steelhead have returned to their trap.

Steelheading at the Coquille River is winding down with the majority of fish present those which have spawned out and are returning to the ocean.

Spring Chinook catches have slowed in the mainstem Umpqua as the level has dropped and water has cleared. While most of the springers are below Elkton, a few have crossed at Winchester Dam. The North and South Umpqua, while also low, have remained

fair for winter steelheading. Striped bass fishing is improving in the estuary.

Diamond Lake opens to trout fishing on April 25th and is expected to fish very well.

Lower Rogue anglers are taking spring Chinook daily although action has slowed as the river has dropped and cleared. Several springers over 30 pounds have been landed. Precipitation is needed to improve water conditions but only showers are forecast for the next several days. Steelheading is slow in the Grants pass stretch and while a few springers have been spotted, there have been no catches reported. Steelheading is spotty on the upper Rogue with the water low and clear.

While Saturday remains the better opportunity to slip out of the Port of Brookings for nearshore rockfish and ling cod, with low swells at long intervals, but plan on an early-day foray as winds are now forecast to come up during the day. Take crab traps to drop in 40 or so feet of water. Ocean crabbing has held up well here, yielding limits on overnight sets.

Surf and bay perch angling has remained good on the southwest coast.

The Elk, Sixes and Chetco river remains closed until late May.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Pro guide Steve Fleming (888-624-9424) reports from the John Day, "Here's the Formula: surface water 43 degrees + early morning sunshine with no frontal activity = Good Day of smallmouth fishing. April 6 we had three anglers who boated 25 smallies with one 21 1/2" and two 18"+ in the catch. Most were caught on soft plastics fished slow and low, spinnerbait, and crankbait. It's nice to see things return to normal after a tough March and early April. The river is hanging around 3300 CFS with medium clarity, and should have "good fishing" (5-8 quality smallmouth per angler per day)."

"We struggled last week for a two fish per day average per person, but on a couple of those days we landed nice smallmouth bass. One fish was 23" X 15 1/2" caught by Jack Hanselman Jr of Portland. this is the second largest smallmouth any of our clients have caught years."

Washington fishing reports:

From the **WDF&W Weekender Report** April 1-14, 2009

North Puget Sound

Anglers are starting to gear up for some upcoming fishing openers, such as halibut and trout, but they shouldn't set their salmon rods aside just yet. There's still time to get out on the water and catch some blackmouth, which could continue to provide decent fishing for anglers in the region.

"The hatchery **blackmouth** season is in the home stretch," said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. "Now is the time for anglers looking to hook a blackmouth to get out on the saltwater and take advantage of the remaining weeks in the season."

Several anglers fishing the **Anacortes Salmon Derby** recently did just that. A total of 114 fish were weighed during the derby, which took place March 28-29. Brian Darling took home the \$12,000 grand prize with his 18-pound, 62-ounce fish. Jamie Morrow's 17.86-pound salmon was good enough for a second-place finish and \$4,000, and Bill Lavalley was awarded \$2,000 for his third-place fish, which weighed in at 17.70 pounds.

Selective fisheries for hatchery blackmouth - resident chinook - continue through April 15 in marine areas 7 (San Juan Islands) and 9 (Admiralty Inlet), while fisheries in marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) and 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) run through April 30. Anglers fishing in any of those 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.

Saltwater anglers itching for the opportunity to hook a big flatfish don't have to wait much longer. The **halibut** season gets under way April 23 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 can still cast for **steelhead** in the region. Catch-and-release fishing is open on the Skagit River from the Dalles Bridge at Concrete to the Cascade River through April 30. The Sauk River also is open from the mouth of the river to the Darrington Bridge. Anglers fishing the Sauk can still keep two hatchery steelhead through April 30, but all wild steelhead must be released.

Freshwater anglers looking to cast for **trout** will soon have numerous lakes to choose from. The lowland lakes trout season gets under way April 25, when many lakes - stocked with thousands of legal-sized trout - will open for fishing. Information on stocking schedules for rainbow, cutthroat and triploid trout is available on WDFW's website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/index.htm>).

Before heading out, anglers should check the rules and regulations for all freshwater and saltwater fisheries on WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>.

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

This month, anglers can look forward to halibut fishing on Puget Sound, the expansion of lingcod fishing on the north coast and two proposed razor clam digs on ocean beaches. Also coming up - the April 25 opening of the statewide lowland lakes trout-fishing season.

The recreational halibut season opens April 23 in marine areas 6-11 and 13 (Port Angeles and Puget Sound). These fisheries 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. Additional openings will follow in May on the coast and the western Strait of Juan de Fuca. For more information, check the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/halibut/>.

Anglers should note that the Hood Canal Bridge will close for six weeks starting May 1. The Washington State Department of Transportation is offering a number of transportation options to help drivers during this time. Information is available at <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/SR104HoodCanalBridgeEast/2009closure.htm>

On the coast, anglers fishing for **lingcod** have been pulling in some decent-sized fish - as long they can get out, said Erica Crust, WDFW ocean port sampler. "With March so stormy, boats have had a tough time crossing the bar at Westport. But on good days, most people are catching their two-fish daily limit," Crust said.

Other anglers, though, are waiting until April 16, when Marine Area 4 opens. "Neah Bay is historically a good fishery for lings," said Crust. "If the weather cooperates, we should see some excellent fishing there again this year."

Crust reminds anglers that recreational fishing for bottomfish or lingcod is not allowed in waters deeper than 30 fathoms in Marine Area 2 (Westport/Ocean Shores) from March 14 through June 15. However, anglers may retain sablefish and Pacific cod in these waters from May 1 through June 15. Retention of canary and yelloweye rockfish is prohibited in all areas.

The minimum size for lingcod in marine areas 1-3 is 22 inches, while the minimum size in Marine Area 4 is 24 inches. All areas are open seven days a week. Additional information about the lingcod fishery and other bottomfish is available on the WDFW Fishing Hotline (360) 902-2500 or online at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>.

Anglers still looking for **blackmouth** are running out of time. Several areas still open to fishing will close April 10, although Marine Area 13 will remain open through April 30. Recent creel checks near Sekiu and Port Angeles showed an average of one fish for every three anglers.

Time is also running out for **steelhead** fishing on the north coast of the Olympic Peninsula. The retention fishery closes at the end of the day April 15 on the Hoh River, but will remain open through April 30 on the Quillayute River system. Anglers checked on the Calawah and Sol Duc rivers were averaging about one fish per rod over the March 28 weekend while 78 anglers on the lower Hoh caught 59 steelhead (38 wild fish released).

Meanwhile, WDFW hatchery crews are stocking 115 lakes throughout the region with nearly 700,000 legal-size trout to prepare for the April 25 lake-fishing opener. Twenty-nine area lakes and ponds are also stocking up on 1.5-pound triploids. More information and schedules are available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/>. Long's Pond, a juvenile fishing lake in Thurston County, will be planted with 1,750 catchable trout, along with 150 one-pounders in preparation for "spring break," which begins Friday, April 3 for most area schools.

Rather dig **razor clams** ? WDFW is tentatively planning two morning digs in April, provided marine toxin tests show the clams are safe to eat. Tentative dates and tides:

- Friday, April 10 (7:45 a.m., -0.7 ft.) Twin Harbors

- Saturday, April 11 (8:25 a.m., -0.7 ft.) Long Beach, Twin Harbors
- Sunday, April 12 (9:05 a.m., -0.5 ft.) Long Beach, Twin Harbors
- Saturday, April 25 (7:27 a.m., -1.3 ft.) Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis, Mocrocks
- Sunday, April 26 (8:10 a.m., -1.6 ft.) Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis, Mocrocks
- Monday, April 27 (8:55 a.m., -1.7 ft.) Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis, Mocrocks

April 1 marks the beginning of a new license year, so diggers must purchase an applicable 2009-10 fishing license. Anyone age 15 or older must have a license to dig razor clams. Licenses can be purchased at <https://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov> , by telephone (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/razorclam/season.htm>

Southwest Washington

The **spring chinook** catch is continuing to pick up on the lower Columbia River, but not nearly as fast as the number of anglers on the water. An aerial survey conducted on a weekday in late March tallied 1,600 boats and 600 bank anglers on the river - up from just 600 boats and 300 bank anglers at the same time last year. So while creel census estimates showed that anglers kept 2,224 chinook salmon that week, only about one in 10 anglers took home a springer.

"The number of boats and anglers has really ramped up in the past couple of weeks," said Joe Hymer, a WDFW fish biologist. "But fishing has been like the weather - it will heat up one day, and then cool off the next. There's a lot of pent-up demand out there, and everybody's just waiting for that warm spring day of good fishing."

Hymer said he is still fairly optimistic that day will arrive soon. Nearly 300,000 upriver spring chinook are expected to return to the Columbia River this year, which would make the annual run the largest since 2001. An additional 37,000 springers also are expected to return to the Willamette River, up from 27,000 last year.

"As in recent years, spring chinook seem to be running a little late," he said. "If the run is as forecasted, we'll see catch rates improve considerably in the days ahead."

Meanwhile, anglers fishing the Cowlitz River have been reeling in lots of late-run hatchery **winter steelhead** - along with an occasional springer - from the mouth of the Toutle River upstream. At Blue Creek, WDFW surveyed eight boat anglers with 13 steelhead, while 24 bank anglers at the barrier dam had five and had released three. The Kalama River has also been producing decent catches of hatchery steelhead.

Walleye fishing is also starting to pick up in The Dalles Pool, where boat anglers have been averaging a fish per rod. In the John Day Pool, the average has been a fish for every three rods.

But the spring chinook fishery on the lower Columbia River will continue to draw the most attention from anglers in the weeks ahead, Hymer said. For that fishery, he recommends sinking a flatfish or cut plug herring fairly deep - 20 to 30 feet - and resisting the urge to set the hook too quickly. "The fish are fairly lethargic in the current cold-water conditions," he said. "My advice is fish deep, and give the fish time to grab your lure or bait."

Hymer reminds Columbia River anglers that **shad** and fin-clipped **steelhead** may be retained only on days open to fishing for adipose fin-clipped chinook.

Through April 18, salmon fishing is open three days a week - Thursday through Saturday - downstream from the west power lines on Hayden Island to Buoy 10. From the power lines upstream to Bonneville Dam, the fishery is open Wednesdays through Saturdays through April 22.

Below Bonneville Dam the daily salmonid bag limit is six fin-clipped fish, no more than two adult salmon or steelhead or one of each. No more than one may be an adult chinook. Wild chinook and wild steelhead must be released.

A daily limit of one hatchery adult chinook is also in effect on the Kalama and Lewis rivers, where hatchery returns are expected to be relatively low. One hatchery adult chinook will also be the daily limit on Deep River whenever the section of the Columbia River downstream from Hayden Island is open for salmon fishing.

Since March 16, salmon fishing has also been open seven days a week from Bonneville Dam to McNary Dam, where anglers may retain two marked, hatchery-reared adult salmon or steelhead (or one of each) per day. The same daily limit is in effect for the bank-only fishery from Bonneville Dam upstream to the Tower Island power lines and on the Wind River and Drano Lake, which also opened March 16.

Hymer reminds anglers fishing - or planning to fish - for hatchery chinook salmon or steelhead on the Klickitat River that the season has been expanded by an extra day each week, starting April 1. Klickitat River anglers will be able to fish Sunday in addition to the weekly Monday, Wednesday and Saturday schedule previously announced.

A number of new statewide fishing rules go into effect May 1, including a new anti-snagging rule, which replaces the current Non-Buoyant Lure rule. This rule requires anglers to use one single-point hook unless fishing from a floating device, where two single-point hooks are allowed. Hooks must measure $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch or less (point to shank) and must be attached to or below the lure or bait. Weights may not be attached below or less than 12" above the lure or bait. This new rule applies to all gear, whether it floats or sinks, and whether or not bait is used. In most areas, the anti-snagging rule applies to all species with the exception being the mainstem Columbia River, from Bonneville Dam to McNary Dam, where it applies only to anglers fishing for salmon and steelhead.

New *Fishing in Washington* rule pamphlets will be available in printed form and on the WDFW website later this month, but for now anglers can check to see if the new anti-snagging rule applies to a specific water under WAC 232-28-619 at http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/rule_proposals/adopted_wac_revisions_2009-10_sportfish.pdf.

Eastern Washington

Year-round and March-opening **trout** lakes in the region are producing more catches as ice slowly disappears and more open water is available. Many more lakes throughout the region will open April 25, but there is no shortage of waters to fish until then, says WDFW central district fish biologist Chris Donley.

Sprague Lake, on the Lincoln-Adams county line off Interstate 90, is probably the best bet, Donley said. Boat anglers willing to brave early spring rain, wind, snow, sleet and hail are reeling in two-pound **rainbow trout**. The good fishing should continue at Sprague throughout the

year with additional trout stocked periodically. More than 3,000 one-third to one-half pound rainbows from Lyons Ferry Hatchery were planted there in mid-March.

Meanwhile, Liberty Lake near the Washington-Idaho border is providing open water catches of **yellow perch** and one to two big **brown trout** per angler. The lake, which opened March 1, just received about 350 quarter-pound rainbows from the Spokane Hatchery.

Coffeepot Lake in Lincoln County is ice-free and being fished now, Donley said. Rainbows, perch and **black crappie** are the targets at Coffeepot, which is under selective gear rules and a daily catch limit of one trout of at least 18 inches.

Amber Lake in southwest Spokane County is completely open and providing good catch-and-release fishing for both rainbow and **cutthroat trout**. Amber shifts to a catch-and-keep season on the last Saturday of April, with selective gear rules and a daily catch limit of two trout of at least 14 inches.

Downs Lake, in southwest Spokane County, has had open water for some time now and respectable catches of winter-carryover rainbow trout in the 15-to-16-inch range. Downs recently received 2,500 eight to ten-inch **tiger trout** from the Columbia Basin Hatchery.

Year-round Rock Lake in Whitman County continues to provide catches of rainbow and brown trout. It was just stocked with 3,321 quarter-pound brown trout.

The Tucannon River impoundments on WDFW's Wooten Wildlife Area in Columbia County in southeast Washington have been receiving plants of "catchable" rainbows (about one-third pounders) and "jumbos" (about one-half pounders) from the Tucannon and Lyons Ferry hatcheries. Blue Lake just received 30 more jumbos and 3,800 catchables; Rainbow Lake, 3,000 catchables; Spring, 2,100 catchables and 100 jumbos; and Watson, 3,000 catchables.

Year-round West Evans Pond in Asotin County just received 150 more nearly one-pound rainbows from the Tucannon Hatchery and Orchard Pond in Columbia County recently received 30 "jumbos" and a thousand "catchables" from the Lyons Ferry Hatchery. Quarry Pond in Walla Walla County will be stocked with more catchable and jumbo trout in early April.

Anglers can check weekly hatchery trout stocking reports on WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/weekly/>. The entire trout stocking plan can be viewed at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/>.

April 24 is the deadline for registering 5 to 14-year-olds for the "Fishing Kids" event on May 2 at Clear Lake in southwest Spokane County. Cost is \$5 and includes a half-hour of fishing instruction, rod and reel, and t-shirt. Registration forms are available at WDFW's Spokane Valley office at 2315 N. Discovery Place, or printable from the Spokane County 4-H website at <http://www.spokane-county.wsu.edu/4h/index.html>.

Northcentral Washington

The April 1 fishing season opener at more than two dozen small lakes in the Columbia Basin and a few in Okanogan County may initially be an April Fools Day event, says WDFW northcentral regional fish program manager Jeff Korth of Moses Lake.

Several of the Basin fisheries are plagued with fish species that compete with **trout**, so fishing will actually become better a little later in the spring on hatchery-stocked rainbows. And some Okanogan district fisheries are still iced up with one of the region's longest winters on record.

"This is still a good warm-up for our late April statewide fishing season," Korth said, "and it spreads the fishing pressure out a bit."

Upper and Lower Hampton lakes, on the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge north of Othello in Grant County, are the largest waters to open April 1. Lower Hampton has a primitive boat launch, and Upper Hampton has walk-in access that's not too far to carry a float tube, Korth says. Both lakes were rehabilitated in the fall of 2004, but Lower Hampton has an expanding population of sunfish. Upper Hampton has fish-eating birds, like cormorants, as part of its food chain. Lower Hampton should have two sizes of yearling rainbow trout - 12-inch fish from last spring's fingerling plant of 5,000, and 8-10-inch fish from last fall's fingerling plant of 4,500. Korth says the smaller fish will grow quickly and should make for good late spring angling. Upper Hampton has the larger fish, probably 13-14-inch yearlings and some larger carryovers, but catch rates will be lower. Upper Hampton was stocked last spring with 26,500 fingerling rainbows.

The Pillar-Widgeon string of 10 small, walk-in lakes on about a square mile of beautiful canyon land on the refuge also open April 1. Access is just southeast of Soda Lake. Also rehabilitated in 2004, these waters should provide good fishing, both from the bank and from float tubes. Korth says the best will probably be Widgeon, Sago, and Pillar. 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.

Also opening April 1 are Para-Juvenile, McManaman, Halfmoon, and Morgan lakes, in the lower portion of the drainage below the Hampton lakes. Korth says that due to a hatchery fish shortage, only McManaman and Para-Juvenile were stocked for this season; McManaman received 1,400 trout, Para-Juvenile 2,400. "Sunfish, perch, and bass currently impact trout survival," he said, "so don't expect many large carryover fish." 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 is open only for anglers up to 14 years of age.

North and South Teal, Herman, and Lyle lakes, also on the refuge south of Potholes Reservoir, open April 1 and despite spiny-ray fish infiltration, some carry-over rainbow trout are caught. Korth says that's probably because fishing pressure is light. Fingerling rainbows were stocked as follows: North Teal - 6,300; South Teal - 9,000; Herman - 10,600; Lyle - 3,000.

Several warmwater species fishing waters in Adams and Grant counties also open April 1 -- Hutchinson and Shiner lakes, and Coyote, Bobcat, and Hayes creeks and ponds. Korth says these waters have very good **bass** and **bluegill** fisheries. Coyote and Bobcat creeks and ponds are small waters, which usually warm up quickly and provide some excellent early fishing. Only non-motorized boats are allowed on Hutchinson and Shiner, and Coyote and Bobcat creeks and ponds are walk-in access only. Access for both areas is off McManaman Road.

Also opening April 1 is Dry Falls Lake in Sun Lakes State Park, just west of Coulee City in the north end of Grant County. Dry Falls is under selective gear rules with a daily catch limit of one trout. Korth says it had a strong 2008 season, and 2009 should be even better. "Expect to catch yearling rainbows at 14 inches and about 20 percent in carryovers from 16 to 24 inches," he said. "Catch rates should average five to 10 fish per trip, and the right place at the right time could produce 20-plus fish days." Last year Dry Falls received 9,900 fingerling rainbows for this year's season. Korth also notes there are **brown** and **tiger trout** stocked most years.

Further north in the region, Spectacle Lake, southwest of Tonasket in Okanogan County, opens April 1 for rainbow trout fishing. But WDFW Okanogan district fish biologist Bob Jateff of Twisp says ice cover on Spectacle has been very thick this year, so anglers should check with local resort owners about conditions before heading out. When it does thaw out, Jateff expects good

fishing at Spectacle for rainbow trout 10-12 inches, with carryover fish to 16 inches, as well as a few brown trout.

Washburn Island Pond, a diked-off oxbow of the Okanogan River near Fort Okanogan State Park, opens April 1 for **bluegill** and **largemouth** bass fishing.

Campbell and Davis lakes are rainbow trout waters in the Winthrop area that shift on April 1 from a catch-and-keep season to a catch-and-release season. Rat Lake, near Brewster, and Big and Little Green lakes near Omak, also shift on April 1 to catch-and-release fishing only. Rat has both rainbow and brown trout; the Green lakes are predominately rainbow.

Jateff reminds anglers that **steelhead** fishing closed March 31 in the Methow, Okanogan, and Similkameen rivers, along with the mainstem Columbia River from Rocky Reach to Chief Joe dams. As of April 1, the Methow River and tributaries are closed to all fishing until June 1. **Whitefish** season also ended March 31 in the Methow and Similkameen rivers.

Korth reports that several year-round or March-opening waters in the region are now open and fishing well, including Burke and Quincy lakes. Canal, Windmill, and Heart lakes all received catchable-size rainbows last fall. Corral and Blythe lakes were rehabilitated in 2007 and have excellent fisheries this year.

Southcentral Washington

WDFW District Fish Biologist Paul Hoffarth reminds anglers that starting April 1 the Columbia River Ringold area **steelhead** fishery is restricted to bank fishing only. Hoffarth said the restriction is designed to reduce impacts to spring chinook salmon listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The boundary area for the bank fishery is from the WDFW marker one-quarter mile downstream of the Ringold irrigation wasteway outlet to the marker one-half mile upstream of Spring Creek. The fishery will be open through April 15. Hoffarth said last year during the April season anglers averaged one steelhead per 2.7 hours of fishing, and he expects similar success this year.

Hoffarth said on May 1 the Columbia River shoreline adjacent to the Ringold Hatchery will be open for **hatchery spring chinook salmon** fishing. Similar to the April steelhead fishery, this sport fishery will be restricted to bank fishing only to reduce impacts to ESA-listed upper Columbia River spring chinook. The boundary area for the bank fishery is from the WDFW marker one-quarter mile downstream of the Ringold irrigation wasteway outlet to the marker one-half mile upstream of Spring Creek. A night closure and two chinook daily limit will be in effect. This fishery is subject to emergency closure if ESA impacts are exceeded for the Columbia River.

Hoffarth said year-round Columbia Park Pond in Kennewick was just stocked with catchable-size **rainbow trout**. "This fishery is only for anglers under 15 years of age or persons with a disability license," he said. Hoffarth also notes the ninth annual Fishing Kids Event will take place at Columbia Park Pond on May 2. All participants must register with Kennewick Parks and Recreation at 509-585-4293 or online at <http://www.ci.kennewick.wa.us>.

Dalton Lake in Franklin County will be planted with catchable and jumbo trout in early April. Dalton Lake, Columbia Park Pond, and Powerline Lake (Franklin County) will also be stocked with large **triploid trout** in mid April.

Anglers can check weekly hatchery trout stocking reports on WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/weekly/>. The entire trout stocking plan can be viewed at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/>.

WDFW Fish Biologist Jim Cummins said most rivers and streams in the Yakima River basin are closed to fishing until the first Saturday in June to protect downstream migrating salmon and steelhead smolts. "A notable exception is the catch-and-release section of the Yakima River," he said. "Anglers often do very well this time of year in that reach of the Yakima for rainbow trout if the water flows are low. Conditions are very good right now. Check Yakima River regulations in the pamphlet for specifics."

A number of new statewide fishing rules go into effect May 1, including a new anti-snagging rule, which replaces the current Non-Buoyant Lure rule. This rule requires anglers to use one single-point hook unless fishing from a floating device, where two single-point hooks are allowed. Hooks must measure $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch or less (point to shank) and must be attached to or below the lure or bait. Weights may not be attached below or less than 12" above the lure or bait. This new rule applies to all gear, whether it floats or sinks, and whether or not bait is used. In most areas, the anti-snagging rule applies to all species with the exception being the mainstem Columbia River, from Bonneville Dam to McNary Dam, where it applies only to anglers fishing for salmon and steelhead.

New *Fishing in Washington* rule pamphlets will be available in printed form and on the WDFW website later this month, but for now anglers can check to see if the new anti-snagging rule applies to a specific water under WAC 232-28-619 at http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/rule_proposals/adopted_wac_revisions_2009-10_sportfish.pdf.

TGF Inbox

Reader Sonny T. wrote via the Contact Form at the TGF website, "Where, above Willamette Falls in the Willamette River, is there a place to fish for Salmon. I have heard there are some places around Newberg. I fish from a boat. Can you help?"

TGF co-editor Michael Teague replied, "Springer fishers launch from either Roger's Landing in Newburg or Wheatland Ferry.

"While I couldn't pry any specific locations from those I know, here's what to look for. Find a slot that runs parallel and close to the bank. This is strictly an anchor-fishing show rigged on leaders with the lead on a dropper.

"Here's the rub and one of the challenges of this fishery. Only 50 or so have been counted so far this season, too low a number to target them. Springers won't start crossing Willamette Falls until the water is warmer. This is a good thing in that spinners aren't very effective until the water temps reach the mid-50s or so. Warmer water also increases algae growth which will ultimately become so bad that fishing is no longer possible.

"So, to take advantage of this fishery, you need a promising location (scouting the river early will help), sufficient numbers over the Falls to make it worthwhile and water temperatures high enough for hardware to be effective, BUT, not so warm that algae growth has become a problem.

"Hope this is of some help."

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

Write to the TGF staff:

Bob Rees: bree@pacifier.com
Doug Rees: doug@TheGuidesForecast.com
Michael Teague: Michael@TheGuidesForecast.com

Random Links

Choose the right fishing knot and tie it correctly:

http://www.netknots.com/html/fishing_knots.html

Savage Dam to be removed on Rogue River:

<http://www.mailtribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20090404/NEWS/904040319>

GOOD LUCK!