

The Guide's Forecast - volume 10 issue number 7

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **November 20th – November 26th, 2009**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- Sturgeon effort continues to decrease in the Columbia River gorge despite a slight up tick in success rates with the increased flow. Bank anglers are faring best. Fair shaker action remains but anglers are reluctant to use up quality bait in a catch and release fishery.

Water level on the lower Willamette has been fluctuating with the visibility 2.5 to 3 feet and temperature in the high 40's. Sturgeon fishing has been improving.

The McKenzie water level has been dropping over the past week along with the water temperature. Fishing has slowed with temps in the low 40's.

Detroit Reservoir is predicted to be at winter level November 20th, after which the North Santiam level should moderate. Steelheading is slow to fair.

Clackamas anglers have been banking a few summer steelhead around McIver.

Coho is about wrapped up on the Sandy although a few bright fish remain in the Oxbow to Cedar Creek stretch. **Pro guide Trevor Storlie (503-307-5601)** reports the Sandy is high but in good shape with a few bright fish here but the majority are spawners There are a few summers around but most are anticipating the winter steelhead run but Thanksgiving is way too early since steelhead production has switched to a later returning broodstock.

Northwest – The first significant rain event hit the coast on Monday, blowing out every river in the district at least until mid-week. Another system may keep larger rivers out of play through the weekend.

Prior to the high water, action for chinook remained fair at best with a few fish coming from the Wilson late last week. Despite good water conditions, most anglers came up empty handed. A small handful of steelhead were reported downstream of Mills Bridge.

Chum salmon made a fair showing on the Kilchis River but the target fishery is now closed. The Kilchis will remain one of the better bets this week as its smaller watershed clears more rapidly than the other larger basins.

The Trask produced fair late last week and a few winter chinook will be available through the month.

Tillamook Bay is still capable of producing chinook into December with the Ghost Hole being a primary target location for herring trollers. Sturgeon have been present in the west channel for some time but the rain freshet may stimulate them to bite more consistently. Fresh sand shrimp will be a likely producer.

The Nestucca had small pockets of fresh chinook last week but like other larger rivers in the area, will be out of shape through the weekend if predicted rainfalls hit reports **pro guide Jesse Zalonis (503-392-5808)**.

Crabbing will turn off in most coastal estuaries with the rain freshet. The exception will be the lower

Columbia River where the softer tide series next week should produce easy limits for persistent crabbers. Netarts Bay is also a fair option.

Ocean crabbing will reopen on December 1st although offshore weather conditions are likely to be too treacherous for recreational craft. Combined seas are forecasted to be 17 feet on Saturday.

Southwest – Southwest rivers have been dropping over the past week but this situation can change with storm fronts. Rain will have a greater effect on rivers once the ground is thoroughly saturated. Rain was falling on Tuesday this week and is expected to increase as the weekend approaches.

The summer all-depth halibut season off the central Oregon coast will be on Fridays and Saturdays only in 2010. The good news is that fishers may keep ling cod outside the 30-fathom line prior to limiting on halibut.

The wild coho fishery at Tahkenitch has been slow but Siltcoos is producing fair to good catches. Trolling small, brightly-colored plugs has been most effective.

Plugs are taking good numbers of coho on the Umpqua. This is a catch-and-release fishery with virtually no hatchery keepers available.

Chinook fishing has further slowed on the lower Rogue while steelheading on the middle and upper river is worthwhile.

While the Chetco came up enough for chinook to migrate upstream, there is insufficient flow for these fish to enter spawning tributaries. It remains closed above the Highway 101 Bridge. If the offshore forecast holds true, launching for bottom fish won't be a possibility this coming weekend.

A few chinook are being taken from the Elk and Sixes rivers. The Elk is clearer and has been productive on corky and egg rigs.

Eastern – Cold weather and snow has had no adverse effect on steelheading at the Grande Ronde where catches remain very good around Troy.

Crescent Lake is producing large mackinaws to trollers willing to negotiate a few inches of snow and endure frigid temperatures.

The John Day has been kicking out some steelhead to trollers and bobber & egg fishers. Fish are well distributed throughout the system and move an average of 7 miles per day when water levels rise. Steelhead are in the system, and with each rising of the river flow another pod comes in. So, watch the river gauge and when it goes up sharply figure it will send in another pod. All steelhead techniques seem to be working, with none working a lot better than another reports **Mah-hah Outfitters, pro-guide, Steve Fleming, (toll free) 1-888-624-9424**. Last week, hatchery fish made up a large percentage of the catch in the mainstem Columbia, just above the John Day Dam.

Steelheading on the Deschutes has been spotty.

SW Washington – The majority of coho present in district rivers are being released due to their poor quality. Fresh steelhead are available on the Cowlitz and Kalama Rivers with the Kalama producing more steelhead than salmon last week.

The Klickitat River remains an option for coho anglers although action slowed from previous weeks.

Columbia River Fishing Report – The mainstem continues to slow for most species as salmon season is over and the John Day Pool fishery has not yielded the results most would have expected for such a huge run as we experienced this year.

The John Day steelhead fishery is about the only program going right now. Although the fishery is certainly underway, we've seen much better catch rates in previous years than we're witnessing this season. The one significant improvement this week is the presence of more hatchery fish than in previous weeks. Boat anglers in particular showed markedly improved catch rates from the previous weeks. Catch rates remained close to 1 fish per rod for boat anglers and about 1 fish for every 3 rods from bank anglers.

Sturgeon fishers were still taking an occasional keeper sturgeon in the gorge but the bite has been reduced to mostly shakers. An increase in flows did stimulate a better bite than we've seen in recent weeks however, but it's still challenging to find a keeper in the mix. Smelt remains a top bait but tipped with shrimp adds a killer combo, likely to get more bites.

Counts have ceased on many Columbia River dams with Bonneville still passing a few coho and steelhead, even this late.

What is red hot and going is the estuary crab fishery that is commonly awesome this time of year. Strong tides still produced good catches this week but better tides lie ahead.

The Guide's Forecast – With sturgeon and salmon fishing slowing, steelhead fishing is about the only option on the Columbia River and you'll have to travel a bit upstream to make that trip come to fruition. The John Day Pool should continue to get better in the coming weeks but like any fishery, it will be as volatile as the weather will be. Trollers take the bulk of the fish here and that won't change anytime soon.

Bank anglers working the bank from the John Day Dam to the mouth of the John Day River should also begin to see a slight improvement in steelhead action. There can be some banner days in this area and although it hasn't peaked yet, it may not be as good as it has been in years past. None-the-less, it will be one of the only games in town for anglers wanting to target bright, shiny fish.

The other best program involved crustaceans. As in crabs! The lower Columbia River estuary is loaded with them and they're biting like piranhas! Just soak your pots downstream of Buoy 22 starting this weekend and into Thanksgiving week. The weak tides should be quite friendly to you and your crabbing buddies. The commercial season will open on December 1st but crabbers can put out their pots 3 days before the opener so it won't last much longer.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Flows at Willamette Falls are over 20,000 cfs with water temperatures in the high 40s. As visibility has dropped, sturgeon fishing has continued to improve, a typical trend for this time of year as the level (and mud) increase, just the way those bottom feeders like it.

McKenzie levels have been dropping but the water temperature is still low for the river to fish its best. Expect the volume to increase with the next round of rain.

Detroit Reservoir at the head of the North Santiam River, is scheduled to be at its lowest level (at which it functions as flood control) on Friday, November 20th. That's about the same time the next storm front will move in with precipitation increasing throughout the system. This means that despite the reduction of flow from Detroit, the Santiam will run high and swift.

The Guide's Forecast – Boats moving to find larger biters are doing fairly well for sturgeon on the lower Willamette. Bank anglers are also catching a few with smelt both effective and durable.

There may be some steelhead around on the McKenzie for the Thanksgiving kickoff, but they'll be late summers, not early winters. Summer steelhead are being recycled and more are arriving at Leaburg Dam daily.

Fishing is slow on the North Santiam and will only be more challenging as anglers are faced with even higher water conditions. Despite an off-the-chart record run of coho, most of them went elsewhere. Winter steelhead are starting to cross at Willamette Falls and a few are showing in the Santiam system but these fish are wild, providing a catch-and-release fishery that is appealing to some but worthwhile action is weeks away.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – The Clackamas water level is up with recent rains. While summer steelhead fishing is fair, only a few dark coho remain in the system.

Fishing is about done for the year on the Sandy. A few coho remain available but most are far too dark to be keepers and brighter fish are becoming more scarce. Winter steelhead are next on the schedule but don't expect to find fishable numbers until early next year.

Pro guide Trevor Storlie (503-307-5601) reports the Sandy "is high but in good shape right now. There are bright fish here but the majority are spawners. The top end of Oxbow Park on up to Cedar Creek from what I am seeing is the top producing section of the river. Spinners and eggs are the taking fish."

North Coast Fishing Report – Needless to say, the north coast has been a wash this week with heavy rains inundating the watersheds and putting even the smallest rivers out of shape for several days. It's not as if we're missing all that much however as just prior to the heavy rains, fishing wasn't very good to begin with. In case you have been missing the news, it hasn't been all that good all season!

There was an occasional Chinook being taken from the Kilchis River and a fair number of chum salmon. The Wilson was also kicking out an occasional fish upstream of tidewater. There was a bunch of Chinook around the railroad bridge downstream of Sollie Smith Bridge last Saturday but they moved up in the ideal conditions and anglers were able to take advantage of them in the Mills Bridge to Sollie Smith Bridge stretch. But don't read this wrong, it was still a challenging float for most anglers.

The Trask fished fair late last week but it too tapered with the high water. Chinook were well distributed on the Nestucca River reports **pro guide Jesse Zalonis (503-392-5808)**. Jesse stated fish were schooled up in pods however so if you found fish, you needed to stay on top of them to score results.

There were a few fish in the Ghost Hole as well but like the rivers, action tapered with the stormy weather hit.

Crabbing, well, you know. It went out with the fresh water. The exceptions are Netarts and the lower Columbia.

Overall, the north coast hasn't fished for several days and it likely won't fish over the weekend but we have to save something for the next section.....

The Guide's Forecast – It doesn't look good for the weekend! Another storm front is currently pounding the coast again, putting north coast streams on hold for another weekend. There is a small possibility that smaller streams like the Kilchis and North Fork Nehalem may fish by late in the weekend. If that is the case, flows will still be high and the anchor and wait method will work the best. Now let me be clear, I'm not an advocate of anchoring up a hole but when flows are high, it is clearly the best way to intercept moving fish. That's the conditions anglers will be facing on the smaller streams over the weekend. Most anglers won't waste their time on cloudy waters and it may be a wise choice this weekend given the poor returns we're experiencing this weekend but fish should be available on some north coast streams this weekend.

Starting Monday of next week, rivers are forecasted to come back down and should be fishable in this order:

North Fork Nehalem and Necanicum Rivers: steelhead. Note, both rivers may have blow-down so be very cautious if you are boating!

Kilchis River: Chinook, chum, a rare early steelhead. The Kilchis is closed to the targeting of chum salmon.

The Trask: Some Chinook, a rare hatchery steelhead stray from the Wilson.

Wilson and Nestucca Rivers: Chinook, an early hatchery steelhead (Alsea stock) and an occasional broodstock steelhead. A rare chum on the Wilson.

Tillamook Bay can also be an option, even with dirty water! More than once, my competition has been out there fishing with muddy water in the bay only to score impressive results on an incoming tide. The salt water wedge underneath the turbid fresh water on top will hold fish. The question is, are there enough fish there to make it worth your while? Only you can answer that...

These conditions often bring in sturgeon from a mass exodus that occurs on the lower Columbia River this time of year. Although sturgeon have been present for much of the fall, better numbers should be present with this rain freshet. Sand shrimp takes fish all year on Tillamook but anglers can also get creative here if you have old salmon bellies available to you. The fish that we saw earlier this year in the south channel were large!

Forget crabbing, it'll be a waste of time unless you're in Netarts Bay and that action has dried up somewhat from previous weeks. It remains the best choice on the north coast besides the lower Columbia however.

Central & South Coast Reports – Wind, rain and high surf will keep recreational boats off the ocean this coming weekend. Crabbing remains good to great in bays and estuaries but is sensitive to salinity levels which may be affected by the heavy rain forecast for this week. Ocean crabbing remains closed until December 1st.

While beaches and bays are open for clams coast-wide, mussels are still unsafe for harvesting due to high levels of toxic domoic acid.

A few Chinook are being taken at the Alsea but it has been slow with numbers low.

Coho are moving into Siltcoos and Tahkenitch Lake where the wild coho fisheries are about at peak for the year. The better fishing has been at Siltcoos Lake and while spinners are the go-to lures, trolled plugs have been more effective this season.

Bait is accounting for Chinook hookups on the mainstem Umpqua while spinners are effective for coho although most of the latter are wild and must be turned back to spawn. These fish are charging upstream now with additional river flow.

Cold water continues to have a negative effect on the summer steelhead bite on the North Umpqua where results have been fair at best.

The Coos kicked out a variety of fish over the past weekend including coho, steelhead and sea-run cutthroat trout.

The Rogue Chinook run of 2009 was better than previous seasons even though the salmon ran smaller than average. We say 'was' not only due to the time of year but because the next rise in the river which started this week is predicted to quadruple the flow to 8,000 cfs or so and effectively drop the curtain on Chinook fishing in the lower river. Always productive and promising, the next big thing on the Rogue will be the winter steelhead run which will begin in December although half-pounder fishing remains worthwhile around Agness. With the Chinook spawn wrapped on the upper Rogue and single egg imitations less effective, the best fishing will be for summers on the middle Rogue although most will be wild requiring release. For the best shot at a hatchery fish, try the lower Rogue Canyon. Steelhead are not particularly selective in these areas taking all manner of bait, flies and lures.

Earlier this week, ODFW biologists determined the level of the Chetco and its tributaries was sufficient to allow Chinook to access spawning areas. As of today, November 19th, the Chetco has re-opened above the Highway 101 Bridge to river mile 10.5 at Icebox. The bag limit for wild Chinook is one per day and two per season. Since the primary concern in low water conditions has been snaggers, anglers are asked to keep an eye out for unethical persons (we don't think of them as anglers) and illegal behavior. Turn 'em in. Expect the Chetco to blow out by the weekend with prospects improving if forecasts for a drop in the level hold true early next week.

Chinook fishing has been decent in the Elk River while the Sixes is recovering from a high water event at this writing. Rain starting Friday and continuing through the weekend will put these rivers out of shape. Fortunately, these small ocean tributaries recover rapidly. Plugs will be most effective when the water level begins to drop.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Steelheading has slowed on the Deschutes as the water temperature is dropping with cold weather overnight.

Crescent Lake produced big browns and lake trout over the past weekend. There's snow on the ground but access is scheduled to be allowed until the end of the month but that could change with a heavy snow storm.

Trollers using plugs have been doing pretty well for steelhead on the John Day but be aware there are tournaments scheduled for this coming weekend.

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report November 11th – November 24th, 2009

North Puget Sound

There have been a few reports of some late-season coho in the region's rivers, but freshwater anglers are mostly reeling in chum salmon. Out on Puget Sound, salmon fisheries are under way in several marine areas, where anglers have hooked some nice blackmouth.

"While it's not as hot as the first few days of November, **blackmouth** fishing is still pretty good in Puget Sound," said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. "My advice to anglers is get out on the water while the fishing is good."

Four marine areas in the region are open for blackmouth - resident chinook. Anglers fishing marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay), 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner), 9 (Admiralty Inlet) and 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) have a two-salmon daily limit, but must release wild chinook.

Thiesfeld reminds anglers fishing for blackmouth that **crabbing** also is a possibility. Marine Area 10 and most of Marine Area 9 are open for crabbing seven days a week through Jan. 2, 2010. The portion of Marine Area 9 south of a line from Foulweather Bluff to Olele Point is closed for the season. Crab fishing also is open seven days a week through Jan. 2 in marine areas 4 (Neah Bay), 5 (Sekiu) and 13 (south Puget Sound).

The daily catch limit in Puget Sound is five Dungeness crab, males only, in hard-shell condition with a minimum carapace width of 6¼ inches. Fishers may catch six red rock crab of either sex per day, provided those crab measure at least 5 inches across. For more information about recreational crabbing in Puget Sound, see WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/crab>.

In the rivers, reports indicate anglers are mostly hooking **chum salmon**, although a few **coho** continue to be caught in some streams. One hot spot for salmon fishing in the region is the Skykomish River, where anglers have a daily limit of two salmon, plus two additional pink salmon, but must release chinook.

For **trout** anglers, Beaver Lake near Issaquah could be the best place to cast for rainbows over the next couple of weeks. About 2,000 hatchery rainbows - averaging about 3 pounds each - have been released in the lake. Beaver Lake, which is one of several westside lowland lakes open to fishing year-round, is best fished by small boat, although anglers also can be successful fishing from shore, said Chad Jackson, fishery biologist for WDFW. The daily bag limit is five fish, and bait anglers must keep the first five trout they catch.

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

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

As the chum salmon season nears its peak, anglers fishing the shores of Hood Canal and Puget Sound streams are finding success landing the big fish. On the coast, early winter-run steelhead are moving into area rivers while a razor-clam dig is planned for mid-November.

An evening **razor-clam** dig has been approved Nov. 14-17 at Twin Harbors, while Long Beach, Copalis and Mocrocks are scheduled for evening digs Nov. 14-16. Kalaloch Beach will be open Nov. 16 for one day of digging. No digging will be allowed at any beach before noon.

Evening low tides during the dig are at 4:34 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 14 (-0.3 ft.), 5:21 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 15 (-0.7 ft.), 6:05 p.m. Monday, Nov. 16 (-0.9 ft.), 6:47 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 17 (-0.8 ft.).

The best time to start digging is an hour or two before low tide. Clam diggers should also take lights or lanterns and check weather and surf conditions before heading out.

Harvesters are allowed to take no more than 15 razor clams and must keep the first 15 they dig, regardless of size or condition. Each digger's clams must be kept in a separate container.

A license is required for anyone age 15 or older. Any 2009 annual shellfish/seaweed license or combination fishing license is still valid. Another option is a razor-clam only license available in annual or three-day only versions. Descriptions of the various options are available on the WDFW website at <https://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov>.

More digs are tentatively scheduled Dec. 2-5 and Dec. 31 - Jan. 3, subject to the results of marine toxin tests.

Meanwhile, as the season nears its peak, **chum** salmon can be found in virtually every small stream in the area. Popular fishing spots include the mouth of Kennedy Creek on Totten Inlet (where a recent creel check showed 66 anglers with 70 fish) and the Hoodspout Hatchery (where 81 shore anglers recently landed 67 chum). Anglers are reminded that the daily limit in the Hoodspout "hatchery zone" is four salmon, with a maximum of two chinook. Other areas now open to chum salmon fishing include the Dosewallips and Duckabush rivers in Jefferson County and Minter Creek in Pierce/Kitsap Counties.

Salmon fishing on coastal rivers has been hampered by recent rains, but catch rates should improve once the weather gets better, said David Low, WDFW fish biologist. "Virtually every river is out of shape right now, but the rain is also bringing in more fish," he said.

By the time conditions improve, anglers can start thinking about the winter steelhead season, Low said. "December is the big month for hatchery steelhead on the north Olympic Peninsula - including rivers in the Quillayute system and Hoh River," Low said. "We're already seeing some early winter-run fish, so hopefully that's a good sign."

Starting Dec. 1, wild steelhead retention rules go into effect on rivers in the Quillayute system. Low advises anglers to review retention rules in WDFW's 2009-2010 *Fishing in Washington* rules pamphlet at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm> before heading out.

Recreational crab fishing is under way in five marine areas of Puget Sound, including marine areas 4 (Neah Bay), 5 (Sekiu), 10 (Seattle/Bremerton), 13 (south Puget Sound), and a portion of Marine Area 9 (Admiralty Inlet). Crab fishing in those areas is open seven days a week through Jan. 2, 2010. The portion of Marine Area 9 south of a line from Foulweather Bluff to Olele Point is closed for the season.

The daily catch limit in Puget Sound is five Dungeness crab, males only, in hard-shell condition with a minimum carapace width of 6¼ inches. Fishers may catch six red rock crab of either sex per day, provided those crab measure at least 5 inches across.

Recreational crabbers are required to send in a winter catch card or report their catch online by Jan. 15. People failing to submit their winter reports will receive a \$10 fine when they apply for a 2010 Puget Sound crab endorsement. For more information about recreational crabbing in Puget Sound, see WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/crab>.

In the South Sound, anglers fishing in marine areas 11 and 13 (Vashon Island to South Puget Sound) may retain **wild chinook** as part of their two-fish daily limit, but only one chinook - hatchery or wild - may be retained.

Anglers are advised to check the 2009-2010 *Fishing in Washington* rules pamphlet at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm> before heading out.

Southwest Washington

The **late coho** run has peaked in the lower Columbia River Basin, but another major fishery is taking shape as the first **winter steelhead** move into the area. Since the winter steelhead season usually doesn't rev up until Thanksgiving, anglers might want to consider a few other options between now and then:

- **Klickitat coho:** Catch rates for coho have been tapering off below Bonneville Dam, but the Klickitat River has remained a hotspot for boat and bank anglers alike. Creel checks through the first week of November showed an average catch of 1.5 fish per rod. "But don't wait too long," said Joe Hymer, a WDFW fish biologist. "It's hard to tell how long those fish will be on the bite."
- **Sturgeon:** Columbia River bank anglers have been averaging one legal-size white sturgeon for every 10 to 15 rods just downstream from Bonneville Dam. "And with blustery weather in the forecast, anglers' odds could improve since sturgeon seem to get energized by increased river flows and turbidity," Hymer said. Anglers fishing from the Wauna powerlines upstream to the dam can keep one white sturgeon measuring between 38 and 54 inches fork length per day on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays only. The statewide annual limit is five fish per license year (April through March).
- **Cowlitz cutthroats:** The fishery for sea-run cutthroat trout is in full swing on the Cowlitz River, where 1,100 cutts had returned to the hatcheries through November 4. "Sea-run cutthroat are aggressive, hard-fighting fish," Hymer said. "They'll take flies, bait, lures - practically anything you throw at them." Fishing should be good from Blue Creek near the trout hatchery on downriver, he said. Up to five cutthroats per day may be retained as part of the daily trout limit on the lower Cowlitz River, where the fish generally range from 12 to 20 inches.
- **Swift Reservoir:** Anglers fishing the reservoir have continued to reel in some nice rainbows averaging 12-13 inches, with some up to 20 inches. Fishing was recently extended through Nov. 30 for game fish and salmon.

Bright, **late-stock coho** are still moving up a number of tributaries to the lower Columbia River, including the Elochoman, Cowlitz, Lewis, Kalama, and Washougal rivers. "There are still a lot of coho throughout the system," Hymer said. "The question is how long they'll keep biting." Through the first week of November over 64,000 fish had returned to the Cowlitz Salmon Hatchery and close to 90,000 had crossed Bonneville Dam since Oct. 1.

Anglers fishing the mainstem Columbia near the mouth of the Lewis River should also be aware that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began blasting and dredging the shipping channel around Warrior Rock on the north end of Sauvie Island on Nov. 1. All watercraft will be prohibited from entering a 1,500-yard safety zone around the site without permission. Boaters who wish to enter the safety zone can contact the Coast Guard at VHF 13 or VHF 16 for specific instructions. For additional information, see <http://ww.crci-project.info>.

Meanwhile, **winter steelhead** will soon start hitting baits and lures in tributaries such as the Kalama, Lewis, Washougal, Elochoman and Grays rivers, along with Salmon Creek in Clark County, he said. As of the first week of November, 18 adipose-clipped steelhead had returned to the Cowlitz Salmon Hatchery and two other facilities, with plenty more to follow.

Weekly escapement reports for winter steelhead are posted on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hat/escape/escape.htm>. In mid-November, WDFW will post a summary of last year's steelhead smolt plants at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/harvest/harvest.htm>, providing anglers an indication of this year's fishing prospects. "We don't produce a pre-season forecast for steelhead, but the run should be decent," Hymer said. "The winter-run fish were planted during the same time as some of the upper Columbia summer-run fish, which came in strong this year."

As in past years, only hatchery steelhead with a clipped adipose fin and a healed scar may be retained. Anglers are advised to check the *Fishing in Washington* rules pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) for daily catch limits and other regulations applicable in specific waters.

Grays River anglers should note the fishery for winter-run steelhead on the mainstem from the Hwy. 4 Bridge upstream and the West Fork will open two weeks early this year (Dec. 1 instead of Dec. 15). The mainstem Grays below the Hwy. 4 Bridge will open as usual on Nov. 15.

Eastern Washington

Snake River **steelhead** fishing is hot, particularly in the mid-river stretch above the bridge between Washington and Idaho. Joe Bumgarner, WDFW fish biologist, said the latest creel checks in that river section (650) show anglers are averaging less than four hours of effort per fish caught, and just over five hours per hatchery fish kept. The stretch between Lower Monumental and Little Goose dams was running about 13 hours per fish caught, and the Lower Grand Ronde River from the mouth at Bogans to the Oregon state line was running just under 14 hours per fish caught.

Other Snake River stretches recently checked included Little Goose to Lower Granite Dam with an average of a little less than 16 hours per fish caught, Lower Granite Dam to Clarkston with an average of slightly more than 17 hours per fish caught, and Ice Harbor to Lower Monumental dams with an average of over 26 hours per fish caught.

Bumgarner also notes that on Nov. 19 Lyons Ferry Fish Hatchery staff plan to sort steelhead that have returned to the hatchery and release those not needed for production. He estimates at least 1,000 steelhead could go back into the Snake River that day, and since almost all will be hatchery-marked fish, they will be available for harvest by anglers upstream.

Southwest Spokane County's Amber Lake remains open through the end of November for catch-and-release, selective-gear fishing for **cutthroat** and **rainbow trout**.

Anglers continue to reel in **rainbow trout** at year-round Sprague Lake on the Lincoln-Adams county line and at Lake Roosevelt, the reservoir off Grand Coulee Dam northwest of Spokane.

Anglers should be aware that from Nov. 16-21 crews will be making repairs to the boat launch at Newman Lake, east of Spokane. The launch will remain open during the work, but anglers planning to fish for **tiger muskies, bass, bluegill, crappie, perch** or **rainbow** and **eastern brook trout** at the year-round lake should expect delays.

Northcentral Washington

WDFW District Fish Biologist Bob Jateff said **steelhead** fishing in the mainstem Columbia River and the Methow and Okanogan rivers continues to be good. "Despite increasing numbers of anglers, the average catch rate continues to be about one fish for every eight to 10 hours of fishing," Jateff said.

Jateff reminds steelheaders that new regulations this season require that anglers retain every adipose-fin-clipped steelhead caught up to the maximum limit of four fish per day. Selective gear rules are in effect for all areas, except that bait is allowed on the mainstem Columbia River only.

Southcentral Washington

The **coho salmon** daily catch limit was recently increased on the portion of the Columbia River downstream of the Hwy. 395 bridge at Pasco. Now up to three (instead of two) of the six fish allowed per day may be adult fish (20 inches or more). The change was made because the overall returning run of coho was at or above expectations. All salmon other than chinook and coho must be released.

Columbia River **steelhead** fishing in the Tri-Cities area, below the powerline towers, continues to be productive. Paul Hoffarth, WDFW district fish biologist, reminds steelheaders the daily catch limit is two hatchery-marked steelhead.

Sturgeon anglers may want to attend a public meeting Nov. 12, from 6-8 p.m., at the McNary Dam visitor center conference room to discuss proposed fishing rule changes to protect sturgeon populations in the McNary Reservoir (Lake Wallula) and the John Day Reservoir (Lake Umatilla). The McNary changes include reducing the number of months that sturgeon can be harvested, and establishing new sanctuary zones below Ice Harbor and Priest Rapids dams. The John Day changes include options for lengthening the sturgeon sportfishing season to spread out pressure.

TGF Inbox – Reader Email

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

Write to the TGF staff:

Bob Rees: brees@pacifier.com

Doug Rees: doug@TheGuidesForecast.com

Michael Teague: Michael@TheGuidesForecast.com

Random Links

Fishing Sturgeon in the Columbia River:

http://sturgeonsite.coastangler.com/columbia_angling_1.htm

GOOD LUCK!