

The Guide's Forecast - volume 12 issue number 14

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **April 2nd – April 8th, 2010**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

*** * * SPRING CHINOOK SPECIAL * * ***

Red hot spring chinook fishing is right around the corner and with a record return predicted this year, the action is sure to be great! Here is a list of spring chinook options for the 2010 season!

Portland area spring chinook only, ½ day trip (minimum 4 hour "sunrise surprise")

4 to 6 people for \$75.00 per person,

1 to 3 people for \$85.00 per person

Portland area spring chinook full day trip (minimum 8 hours of fishing)

4 to 6 people for \$150.00 per person,

1 to 3 people for \$175.00 per person

Also booking Tillamook Bay spring chinook, Astoria sturgeon and Buoy 10 salmon. Full details on our 2010 calendar available here: http://www.tgfusa.com/fishing_season.asp



Book your trip NOW by calling (503) 812-9036 or emailing Bob Rees at brees@pacifier.com.

Willamette Valley/Metro - With the majority of the mainstem Columbia too colored to produce good catches, effort will be high in the above I-5 fishery this week. This is the final 3-day opener scheduled for sportfishing above I-5, set to close on Saturday. Catches were sparse in comparison to the previous week but success downriver indicates improving success rates are likely this week. The gillnet fleet fished its first opener on Tuesday with good success.

Sturgeon fishing remained fair from Troutdale to the deadline near Bonneville with bank anglers

continuing to catch fair numbers of keepers. The cooler weather pattern may slow catches this week but fair numbers of sturgeon are in the area.

The level and flow are up while the water visibility is nil on the lower Willamette. Spring chinook, summer and winter steelhead counts have increased at the falls over the past week. The lower Willamette is closed to sturgeon fishing above the I-205 Bridge from May 1st through the month of August and from The Wall at Oregon City forever. It should be good elsewhere in the lower river but use caution when boating.

The McKenzie River will be too high to fish this week.

North Santiam level and flow should remain stable at Packsaddle with fluctuations occurring only downstream.

Expect to find high, muddy water at the Sandy, Clackamas and Eagle Creek this week. They'll fish a few days after the weather breaks. On the Clackamas River, there were some good reports of steelhead prior to the current high water.

Canby Pond, Trojan Ponds, Alton Baker Canal, Cottage Grove Reservoir, Creswell Pond, Dexter Reservoir, Foster Reservoir, East Freeway Lake, Walling Pond and Walter Wirth Lake are scheduled for trout planting.

Northwest – North coast rivers have been on the rise for several days, taking most steelheaders out of the game until flows subside. Prior to the high water, the Nestucca and Wilson Rivers were fishing fair although most would call the season just average overall.

Steelheaders can still count on fair numbers of wild and broodstock steelhead into mid-April with the Nestucca and Wilson producing the best results. The Trask will also produce fairly into April with some of the upper stretches a good bet for the experienced boater.

Several north coast systems close to fishing in March 31st to protect spawning steelhead and outgoing salmon and steelhead smolts. Trout fishing will open in late May in coastal systems but area lakes remain well stocked from spring break plants.

Summer steelhead are often intercepted by this time on some of these systems but very few if any have been reported. A rare spring chinook may also show in the catches but none have been incidentally caught; the season opens on the north coast today. Adults must have a healed over adipose fin-clip.

The Trask River receives the greatest spring chinook plants but the Wilson will also realize a fair return. Tillamook Bay anglers hope for low water conditions to keep adults in the lower portion of tidewater and the estuary for as long as possible. Adults will fall to trolled herring and spinners well into June. A fair return is likely with peak season hitting around mid-May.

Crabbing remains poor in most estuaries with boats averaging about 10 keepers for a lot of effort on the lower Columbia. The ocean will remain the best bet this time of year but even this fishery is yielding mostly females.

A calm ocean is nowhere in the forecast keeping recreational craft at bay for at least another week. When the ocean calms, lingcod and seabass will be easy targets.

Devil's Lake is scheduled to be stocked with trout.

Southwest – Mid-morning low tides would hamper offshore launches if ocean conditions allowed which won't happen this weekend as swells to 26 feet will be accompanied by high winds according to coastal forecasts.

Bottom fishers out of Winchester Bay have been catching good numbers of legal-sized kelp greenling along with some large ling cod. Crabbing has been poor. Spring chinook have been taken from the Umpqua with one over 40 pounds and another over 50 in the past week in the Scottsburg area.

Boats had a brief window of opportunity for an offshore launch out of Charleston over the past weekend, taking limits of rockfish and ling cod. Crabbing has been fair in Coos Bay but the freshet this week may shut it down.

Spring chinook fishing has been spotty on the lower Rogue with water conditions deteriorating this week. The latest storm had put enough water into the Rogue to draw winters upstream and will hopefully give upper river fishers a shot where water has been too skinny to fish well. Winter steelhead are crossing Gold Ray Dam in significant numbers.

The Chetco, Elk and Sixes rivers closed to steelheading on March 31st.

Scheduled for trout planting are Middle and lower Empire Lake and Sru Lake.

Eastern – Steelhead remain present in good number on the Wallowa River although action slowed this past Sunday as a weather front moved through. Fresh water should get these fish on the move.

The population of Bull trout appears to be better this year than in seasons past at Lake Billy Chinook.

Kokanee fever should soon hit as the state record, and maybe national record, has once again been broken on Wallowa Lake last week. Wan Teece of Enterprise caught a kokanee weighing 8.23 pounds trolling hardware in the middle of the lake.

SW Washington – Rising rivers put most district streams out of reach for boaters and bank anglers despite increasing numbers of salmon and continued fair catches of steelhead.

The Cowlitz will remain a strong option when flows subside with the Lewis and Kalama also good options. Steelhead will remain the main focus for just another week until springers begin to return in fishable numbers.

The Cowlitz spring salmon return is predicted to be over double of last year's actual return while the Lewis is likely to double. Predictions are 12,500 for the Cowlitz and 6,000 for the Lewis. The Kalama River forecast is coming in at only 900 fish.

Columbia River Fishing Report – As we near peak season, anglers continue to remain persistent in their attempts to catch a Columbia River spring Chinook. Catch rates continue to improve in all stretches of the river and bank anglers in the gorge are starting to show signs of life.

Catch rates around the area improved for boats in the estuary especially with better than a fish for every other boat (47 kept for 85 boats) although bank anglers only took 2 fish for 45 rods. With the poor run-off to date, bank anglers won't be looking at a very prosperous season this

year. Stronger flows focus returning adults near the shore where they don't have to burn as many calories to head upstream. Plunkers work spin-n-glos in the outgoing tide and oftentimes slide a smaller flatfish down the line as anglers are allowed up to 3 hooks when pursuing salmon on the Columbia. The best beaches to look for Chinook are Prescott Beach near Westport and beaches near Rainier although public access is not what it used to be. Keep in mind the stronger the outgoing tide and flow, the closer to the beach the fish will travel.

Boaters working the Portland to Longview stretch had good conditions to find their quarry last week and herring trollers and anchor anglers did score good results. Since then however, heavy rain and a cold front will leave the mainstem downstream of the Willamette too turbid for high hopes as we enter the best part of the season.

Upstream, the last I-5 to I-205 stretch did not produce outstanding results. The Thursday opener traditionally fished well but the catch was rather sparse for the effort that was out after them. Hopefully, the last opener performs much differently.

Although the commercial fishery produced over 3,100 fish for their first opener of the season, most had anticipated more fish would have been caught. It's still a sign that there are good numbers of fish in the system but there will be other openers in the near future. Ironically, the usually safe select area fisheries are likely to close down temporarily as the incidental take of upriver Chinook were reaching jeopardizing numbers. Those select areas will fill up much better later in the season and no one wants to jeopardize our chance to harvest those quality fish, even sport anglers.

Bank anglers working the Bonneville area are seeing fair results for this early in the season. Although still a ways away from peak season, about every 6th rod checked had a keeper Chinook for the grill. This fishery, like the boat fishery above I-5 will close after Saturday, April 3rd.

Sturgeon fishing slowed this week despite fair catches by bank anglers the week before. A weather change can have that effect and it's likely there are still fair numbers of fish in the area.

Focusing back in the estuary, crabbers are reporting less than a limit for a day's effort. They are also reporting bug numbers of females with keepers just barely over legal size. Nearshore bottomfishers won't be targeting lings or seabass off of the south jetty anytime soon. The ocean will remain too rough.

The Guide's Forecast – The Willamette is forecasted to remain high and turbid for at least another week putting the lower Columbia in a compromised state for anglers that wish to fish in the downstream stretches. Although anglers can catch salmon in waters that are muddied, confidence levels drop dramatically when visibility is less than 1 foot. And certainly when waters are on the rise, fish can be particularly difficult to catch.

It's not unusual for the Willamette to be blown this time of year but most thought (including myself) that given our mild winter, we'd have ideal conditions to work over our predicted ample numbers of springers returning this year. These conditions may give anglers working the upriver sections some pretty good opportunity as effort and success will drop downstream of Portland giving willing biters a chance to get harvested upriver.

Learn the I-5 to Davis Bar stretch of the river with a good focus on the last 3-day opener above I-5 ending Saturday. The fishing should be good but the cold weather front may keep anglers from realizing the catches they'd be hoping for this time of year and under these circumstances.

Herring trolled near the bottom will likely produce the most consistent results but anchor anglers seem to be having higher rates of success than we've seen in recent years. This is often the case when fish are on the move and that may be the case under these water conditions.

Expect high effort this weekend but hopefully the catches will be worth tolerating the crowds. Get to the boat ramps early if you plan on being the early bird that has a chance at the worm.

Keep your herring on the bottom and some guides are reporting fish in the deeper 30 to 40 foot of water. **Pro guide Brandon McGavran (360-607-1327)** also reported identifying numerous salmon between 12 and 18 feet under the surface although most are still catching their fish on the bottom. The mark rate (fin-clipped fish) has been very good this season.

Bottom line, you may not want to focus much of your effort downstream of the Portland area. The water will remain too colored to expect big returns.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – With double digit numbers of spring Chinook, summer and (still) winter steelhead crossing Willamette Falls, upriver numbers are improving. Spring Chinook fishing has been slow to spotty in the lower river.

ODFW Sez: "Angling for sturgeon, including catch-and-release, is prohibited seven days per week during May 1 through August 31 from Willamette Falls downstream to the I-205 Bridge."

The McKenzie saw a rise in level from less than four feet to eight and from about 1,300 cfs to over 8,500 near Leaburg Dam early on March 30th.

North Santiam water levels are forecast to be fluctuating. This is not a good time to be on the river.

The Guide's Forecast – The lower Willamette is a dirty debris field and anglers won't be able to find all those fish crossing the Falls this

coming weekend because the Willamette will be a muddy maelstrom. If you're sensing a theme this week, yeah, and unfortunately, it's no foolin'.

While the level has been dropping since Tuesday this week, the McKenzie won't be a possibility by this coming weekend. When the river recovers, a few fresh summer steelhead should be around. Carry Blue-Winged Olive and March Brown patterns for trout.

When the Santiam settles down in a week or two, there should be some fresh summers lurking about although that fishery isn't expected to be worthwhile for a few weeks.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – The Sandy and Clackamas both peaked mid-week, the latter near Bankfull at Estacada.

The Guide's Forecast - Sandy and Clackamas levels will be high and fluctuation through the weekend. Sandy conditions weren't too bad mid-week with about 12 inches visibility. There are fresh winters in the river for those who can find them. The Clack is blown.

North Coast Fishing Report – Although most NW anglers have spring Chinook on the mind, avid steelheaders should still have some good opportunities ahead. It really wasn't to be this week as high winds and heavy rain brought rivers up to unfishable levels. Prior to the high water, fishing in the lower flows was sub-par anyway.

April 1st brings about a flurry of closures on the north coast with mostly the smaller streams effected. These closures will aid spawning steelhead in lower flows and protect outmigrating smolts in the coming weeks.

The best rivers will remain open with the Wilson, Trask and Nestucca still top bets when flows subside. Bank anglers had some opportunity in the higher flows in the upper reaches of the Wilson and Nestucca on Thursday morning but action was likely only fair.

Not much in the way of other opportunity on the north coast. Sturgeon remains slow and spring Chinook opens up on April 1st but won't get going good for several more weeks. Offshore fishing and crabbing is not an option in the big seas we're currently experiencing.

The Guide's Forecast – With only a rare opportunity between rain events, bank anglers will have the best opportunity in the higher reaches and boaters will likely be shut out again for about another week. Since most smaller streams are not an option, it may behoove anglers to keep their focus on metro area spring Chinook.

Crabbing, naaah, bottomfishing, no way, sturgeon fishing, don't waste your time.

Clamming would be an option but the surf is going to be high and likely put the clams out of range.

It should be a good fishing for steelhead when flows subside, especially on the Wilson and Nestucca Rivers. Who'd a thunk we'd be facing these kinds of weather conditions this time of year.

Central & South Coast Reports – High water plagues southwest anglers this week along with the fishing reports. We'll make up the truncated information when the weather steeles down.

Got your eye on the Siletz as a winter steelhead possibility for the weekend? Fuhgeddaboutit. It'll be on the rise. Alsea? Same deal. While the Siletz is predicted to drop on Sunday, it is likely to be roiled.

While fishing is off the activity list this week, Winchester Bay jetties have been very productive for rockfish when the ocean has laid down between storm fronts and the Umpqua is getting an exceptional springer return this year. The only disappointing fishery so far this season has been for sturgeon but that may turn around with the latest freshet.

While one of the guide services reported over 100 fish caught over the past week, the Rogue is currently unfishable. It will recover and, with a good return expected this season, will fish well for spring Chinook when the weather breaks. In the meantime, there is a widely mixed bag of steelhead available in the middle Rogue where wild and hatchery, dark, bright and spawned fish are being hooked. Techniques taking them varies just as much. Anglers on the upper Rogue may catch a break if the downpours stand a chance against restrictions in water flows. There are certainly plenty of steelhead that have crossed Gold Ray Dam recently so they're there for the taking when skinny water conditions improve.

Fishing on the Applegate, Chetco, Elk and Sixes rivers closed March 31st but will resume on May 22nd.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Wallowa Lake puts out large kokanee but this year has been nuts. With a new State record of 7 1/2 pounds taken in February and another giant nearly 8 1/4 pounds landed Saturday, March 27th, this location is the undisputed landlocked sockeye champ. The latest fish, if the 8.23 pound weight is verified, would be the largest ever taken in the United States. See Random Links, below, for details.

Fishing for reddsides has been spotty on the lower Deschutes. Steelhead are on the spawn and should be left to do their business.

Fishing closed March 31st on the Grande Ronde and other rivers. Check those regulations.

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report for March 31st – April 13th, 2010

North Puget Sound

Thousands of anglers are gearing up for the lowland lakes trout opener in late April but many remain focused on the marine areas of Puget Sound, where blackmouth salmon fisheries are still under way.

“Overall, fishing for **blackmouth** continues to be very slow in northern Puget Sound,” said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. “But a number of anglers that made it out on the water for the recent Anacortes Salmon Derby had a bit of success and landed some large fish.”

A total of 132 fish were weighed during the **Anacortes Salmon Derby**, which took place March 27-28. Ralph Thomas of Tacoma took home the \$15,000 grand prize with his 27.48-pound fish. John Belarde of Woodinville hooked a 25.72-pound salmon that was good enough for second place and \$5,000, and Seth Baumgarten of Kirkland was awarded \$2,500 for his third-place fish, which weighed in at 24.38 pounds.

“Those are some outstanding blackmouth,” Thiesfeld said. “Anglers definitely have to put in some time on the water, but it can be worth it for an opportunity to haul in a 20-plus pound blackmouth.”

Anglers fishing in Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands) – as well 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) and 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) – have a two-salmon daily limit, but must release wild chinook. Those three marine areas are open through April 30.

Thiesfeld reminds anglers that Marine Area 9 (Admiralty Inlet) is open only through April 15. Anglers fishing Marine Area 9 also have a two-salmon daily limit, but must release wild chinook.

Halibut anglers should be aware that the fishing opener for the big flatfish in most marine areas of Puget Sound has been delayed this year. The later starting date is necessary because of the combination of a reduced quota and excessive catch last year in the Sound.

To ensure that the halibut fishery in Puget Sound stays within the quota, the fishing season in marine areas 6-10 will run from May 1 through May 30. Marine Area 5 (Sekiu) will retain its

traditional opening date just before the Memorial Day weekend but will close earlier than it has in the past. Marine Area 5 will be open from May 28 through July 19.

The Puget Sound halibut fisheries will be open three days a week – Thursday, Friday and Saturday – and closed Sunday through Wednesday except for Memorial Day weekend when they will be open Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Marine areas 11 (Tacoma-Vashon Island) and 13 (South Puget Sound) will be closed this year to protect rockfish, which may be caught incidentally by anglers fishing for halibut. As in previous years, Marine Area 12 (Hood Canal) will remain closed due to low dissolved-oxygen conditions. For more information on 2010 halibut fisheries, see the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/halibut>.

Freshwater anglers looking to cast for **trout** will soon have numerous lakes to choose from. The lowland lakes trout season gets under way April 24, 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>).

Current regulations for all freshwater and saltwater fisheries are available in WDFW's Fishing in Washington pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

April will see the traditional opening of the statewide lowland lakes trout fishing season, the expansion of lingcod fishing on the north coast and at least one proposed razor-clam dig on ocean beaches, pending the outcome of tests for toxins. The tentative dates for clamming are April 16, 17 and 18.

Anglers also continued to catch **steelhead** in relatively large numbers. Last weekend, 37 anglers fishing the Bogachiel/Quillayute River caught 54 steelhead; all but two were wild. Fishing was also good on the Lower Hoh River, where 65 anglers caught 39 steelhead fish over the last weekend in March. The good fortune didn't extend to the Upper Hoh, where 38 anglers fished for more than 220 hours, reeling in only six wild steelhead, all of which were released. 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.

As was the case last year, the weather on Washington's coast so far hasn't been very conducive to ocean fishing for **lingcod**. Anglers have brought in a few 20 to 22 pounders in marine areas 1-3, but the weather has afforded few opportunities to fish, said Erica Crust, WDFW's ocean port sampler in Westport.

Crust said that a few privately owned boats that did venture out caught their limits of lingcod and **rockfish** right off the jetty. Charters have had more success. According to Crust, the majority have come in with their limit of rockfish and an average of one lingcod per person. Typically, many anglers wait until Marine Area 4 opens on April 16 to head out. "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. Marine Areas 5 and 6 will close April 10, although Marine Areas 11, 12 and 13 will remain open through April 30. On the Peninsula, blackmouth anglers are catching a few **chinook**, but the action has fallen off in recent weeks. At the Pt. Defiance dock in Tacoma only five chinook were checked in the week ending March 28.

Rather dig **razor clams**? WDFW is tentatively planning at least one opening in April, provided marine toxin tests show the clams are safe to eat. All are scheduled on morning tides and digging ends at noon. Tentative dates and tides:

- Friday, April 16 (8:32 a.m., -0.7 ft.) Long Beach and Twin Harbors only
- Saturday, April 17 (9:12 a.m., -0.7 ft) Long Beach, Twin Harbors and Kalaloch only
- Sunday, April 18 (9:56 a.m., -0.6 ft) Long Beach, Twin Harbors and Kalaloch only

Meanwhile, hatchery crews are stocking lakes throughout the region with tens of thousands of **rainbow trout** to prepare for the April 24 lake-fishing opener. More information and schedules are available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/>.

Halibut anglers should be aware that the fishing opener for the big flatfish in most marine areas of Puget Sound has been delayed this year. The later starting date is necessary because of the combination of a reduced quota and excessive catch last year in the Sound.

To ensure that the halibut fishery in Puget Sound stays within the quota, the fishing season in marine areas 6-10 will run from May 1 through May 30. Marine Area 5 (Sekiu) will retain its traditional opening date just before the Memorial Day weekend but will close earlier than it has in the past. Marine Area 5 will be open from May 28 through July 19. For more information on 2010 halibut fisheries, see the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/halibut>

Southwest Washington

The **spring chinook** fishery on the lower Columbia River has sprung into action. After a slow start, the recreational catch for March shot up to 7,693 fish caught or released – the third highest count for that month since the creel-check program was started in 1968. More than 2,000 boats and 750 bank anglers were counted during an aerial survey on a recent Saturday, a clear sign that this year's spring chinook fishery had finally shifted into high gear.

"The run is really starting to ramp up now," said Joe Hymer, a WDFW fish biologist. "Anglers have been catching some nice fish throughout the lower river. If you've been planning to go, now is a good time to do it."

According to the pre-season forecast, 559,900 spring chinook salmon - 470,000 of which are upriver bound - will return to the Columbia River and its tributaries this year, the largest run since at least 1938.

Hymer noted, however, that anglers planning to join the spring chinook fishery in the days ahead should be aware of changes in fishing rules and in river conditions.

- **Fishing seasons:** April 3 is the last day to catch spring chinook from the I-5 Bridge upriver to Bonneville Dam – at least until fishery managers complete an in-season assessment of the run in early May. However, the spring chinook fishery will remain open from Buoy 10 to the I-5 Bridge seven days a week through April 18.

- **River conditions:** Heavy rain during the last week in March has increased turbidity in some tributaries to the Columbia River. "That makes fishing conditions – especially at the mouths of the tributaries – a little tougher," Hymer said. "In general, I'd suggest fishing in shallower water away from river mouths, and trolling with a flasher/dodger to increase visibility."

Anglers fishing below Bonneville Dam may retain one adult spring chinook salmon a day, while those fishing above the dam can keep two per day. As in previous years, only hatchery-reared fish marked with a clipped adipose fin and a healed scar may be retained. All wild spring chinook, identifiable by an intact adipose fin, must be released unharmed.

In a creel survey conducted during the last full week of March, 3,272 boat anglers in 1,396 boats reported catching 658 adult hatchery chinook and six hatchery steelhead. The 395 bank anglers surveyed that week had 35 adult chinook and two steelhead. Approximately 71 percent of the fish sampled were identified as upriver stocks.

Anglers fishing tributaries to the lower Columbia are also catching increasing numbers of spring chinook, along with some late winter-run and early-arriving summer **steelhead**. The Cowlitz and Kalama rivers are providing some action for both species, although fishing on the Lewis River remains slow, Hymer said.

Few spring chinook were caught above Bonneville Dam through March, but that will certainly change as more fish start moving past the dam, Hymer said. The fishery is open seven days per week from Bonneville Dam to McNary Dam, with a daily limit of two hatchery chinook, two hatchery steelhead, or one of each. **Bank fishing only** is permitted from Bonneville Dam to Tower Island powerlines, located about six miles below The Dalles Dam.

Starting April 3, the Klickitat River opens for spring chinook fishing four days per week – Mondays, Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays – from the Fisher Hill Bridge downstream. The daily limit there, and on the lower Wind River and Drano Lake, is two hatchery chinook, hatchery steelhead, or one of each.

Anglers can check fish counts at the dam on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers website at <https://www.nwp.usace.army.mil/op/fishdata/home.asp>.

Fishing for **sturgeon** has been slow in the lower Columbia River and in The Dalles Pool, the only area between Bonneville and McNary dams open to sturgeon retention. Boat anglers have, however, been catching some walleye in The Dalles Pool.

Shell-aficionados should be aware that WDFW is tentatively planning a morning **razor-clam** dig at Long Beach and other ocean beaches in mid-April. If marine toxin tests show the clams area safe to eat, the dig will take place on the following days and beaches:

- Friday, April 16, (8:32 a.m., -0.7) Long Beach and Twin Harbors only
- Saturday, April 17, (9:12 a.m., -0.7) Long Beach, Twin Harbors and Kalaloch only
- Sunday, April 18, (9:56 a.m., -0.6) Long Beach, Twin Harbors and Kalaloch only

Eastern Washington

Fishing: Early spring fishing continues to be good at lakes that are open in the region. The seven Tucannon River impoundments in southeast's Columbia County – Beaver, Big Four, Blue, Deer, Rainbow, Spring, and Watson lakes – are well-stocked with **rainbow trout** from WDFW's Tucannon and Lyons Ferry fish hatcheries.

Amber, Downs, Liberty and Medical lakes in Spokane County are all producing rainbow catches. The access dock was just restored at Liberty Lake, near the town of the same name in the far eastern part of the county. Docks were also just re-installed at year-round Newman Lake, also on the east end of the county, and Eloika Lake, north of Chattaroy in the north end of the county. Fishing has been good for both rainbow and **brown trout** at Rock Lake in Whitman County. Anglers are reeling in some nice-size rainbows at Sprague Lake on the Lincoln-Adams county line. And rainbows and **kokanee** are the catch of the day at Lake Roosevelt.

April 15 is the deadline to register kids five to 14 years of age for the May 1 **Kids' Fish-In** event at Clear Lake in southwest Spokane County. The cost is \$5 each, which includes a T-shirt, rod and reel, and help to catch up to three rainbow trout. The 45-minute fishing sessions take place from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Fairchild Air Force Base access site on Clear Lake. The event is sponsored by WDFW, Go Play Outside Alliance of Washington (GoPAW), Inland Northwest Wildlife Council, Spokane Fly Fishers, Inland Empire Fly Fishing Club, Spokane Walleye Club, Fairchild AFB Outdoor Recreation program, White Elephant, Zebco and Eagle Claw. Registration forms are available at WDFW's Spokane Valley office at 2315 N. Discovery Place, 509-892-1001; or online at http://www.gopaw.org/kids_fish-in_program.

Steelhead retention on the Snake River and most tributaries ends March 31. Grand Ronde River steelheading continues through April 15.

The single, biggest lake fishing opener is coming up April 24, mostly on waters that were stocked last year with hatchery trout fry that have been growing to catchable-size over the winter. But WDFW fish hatchery crews are also busy stocking lakes with catchables and surplus broodstock in some lakes to boost fishing opportunities on the opener. Watch for this year's stocking plan to be posted soon on WDFW's website at http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/reports_plants.html.

Northcentral Washington

The "April Fools" opener on more than 30 waters in the Columbia Basin should provides some fair to good fishing on **rainbow trout** and other species.

WDFW district fish biologist Chad Jackson says most of the waters opening April 1 are either within or adjacent to the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge south of Potholes Reservoir, and over half are planted with spring and/or fall **rainbow trout** fry.

"Although many of these lakes are in need of rehabilitation to rid them of competing fish species, nice sized trout can be found," Jackson said.

The Upper and Lower Hampton lakes historically produce quality fishing on the opener for 12-14-inch yearling trout. Jackson says that while trout size is still fairly good at the Hamptons, total trout abundance is not nearly as good. Last spring Upper was planted with 26,500 trout fry and Lower with 5,000 trout fry. Lower Hampton Lake also received a trout fry plant of 4,500 in the fall.

"Both of the Hampton lakes were rehabilitated roughly six years ago," Jackson said, "but sunfish and other warmwater species appear to have established themselves once again. These species impact trout fry survival by competing for the same food resources. To confound things, cormorants (fish-eating birds) have been known to prey upon trout in some years."

Jackson said anglers looking to maximize catch rates should fish Lower Hampton Lake, where they'll find two different size classes of trout available for harvest -- 8-10 inches and 11-13 inches. Anglers looking to harvest larger fish should hike into Upper Hampton Lake and, if

possible, fish it from a small boat or float tube. Yearling trout in Upper Hampton Lake range in size from 12 to 14 inches.

"Hampton anglers may also want to try Hen Lake," Jackson said, referring to the small lake connected to Lower Hampton Lake. Hen Lake receives 750 rainbow trout fry in the spring, and if fry survival is good, they should be around 12 inches in length."

Jackson said those who traditionally fish North and South Teal Lakes on the April 1 opener should not expect the excellent fishing found there in the past. Both lakes are in need of rehabilitation, but both lakes were also stocked with approximately 5,000 trout fry in the spring. Anglers should expect to catch a few nice 12-14-inch yearlings and 16-inch and greater carryovers.

The Pillar-Widgeon lake chain, also opening April 1, includes (running north to south) Pillar, Gadwall, Snipe, Shoveler, Cattail, Poacher, Lemna, Hourglass, Sago, and Widgeon lakes. Jackson said all are stocked with rainbow trout fry during the spring. Total trout fry stocked in each lake is as follows: Pillar – 2,500, Gadwall - 750, Snipe - 600, Shoveler - 750, Cattail – 1,500, Poacher - 150, Lemna - 450, Hourglass - 300, Sago - 300, and Widgeon – 1,650. Access to this chain of small lakes is located just southeast of Soda Lake.

"Anglers looking to fish the Pillar-Widgeon lakes should visit either the entire chain or at least three or four of the lakes during their outing," Jackson said. "If you're persistent, expect to catch some very nice sized yearling and carryover trout. Shore fishing is available at most of these lakes, but I advise packing a float tube because it will increase your chances for success. Usually the best lakes in the chain tend to be Widgeon, Sago, and Pillar, but don't ignore the other lakes."

Jackson says some of the Columbia Refuge area lakes also offer excellent fishing for warmwater species, particularly Hutchinson and Shiner lakes. Since their rehabilitations in 1997, these two lakes have developed into quality fisheries for **largemouth bass** and **bluegill**. Anglers should note that only non-motorized boats are allowed on these two lakes.

Other warmwater fishing options are the Coyote, Bobcat, and Hayes creek ponds located just south of Morgan and Halfmoon lakes. Jackson says these ponds are relatively small and shallow, so they warm up quickly, and offer good fishing for largemouth bass. Another option might be Deadman Lake located just off McManamon Road next to Halfmoon Lake.

Anglers who plan on fishing the refuge area lakes, especially the hike-in ones, should remember that with the unseasonably warm weather has rattlesnakes out earlier and in greater numbers than normal.

Also opening on April 1 is Dry Falls Lake, located just northeast of Park Lake within the Sun Lakes State Park southwest of Coulee City. The 99-acre lake is under selective gear rules and a one-trout daily bag limit.

"Opening day success at Dry Falls in previous years was a little slow because of cold weather," Jackson said. "But this year abnormally warmer air temperatures are heating up the lake much quicker and it may fish better on this year's opener. I expect anglers to take 13-14-inch yearling rainbows and carryovers up to 24 inches, just like the last two years."

Brown and **tiger trout** are also planted into Dry Falls Lake. Jackson reported that a total of 9,900 rainbow, 1,000 tiger, and 1,000 brown trout fry were stocked into Dry Falls Lake in 2009.

WDFW district fish biologist Bob Jateff of Twisp said Spectacle Lake opens for fishing April 1, and anglers can expect rainbow trout in the 10-13-inch range, with carryover fish to 15 inches. There

is a five fish daily catch limit and bait is allowed at Spectacle. Jateff reminds anglers that when fishing with bait, the first five fish count as part of the daily limit, whether kept or released. Jateff also reminds anglers that some Okanogan County lakes switch to **catch-and-release trout** fishing on April 1 -- Rat near Brewster, Big and Little Green near Omak, and Davis and Campbell near Winthrop. Selective gear rules are in effect for all of these lakes and the use of boats with internal combustion engines is prohibited. Anglers must also use a knotless net to land fish.

WDFW fish biologist Matt Polacek reports the latest creel survey at Banks Lake shows decent catch rates on **yellow perch** and fair size on **walleye**. Anglers last surveyed at this Columbia River reservoir southwest of Grand Coulee averaged 3.28 perch that averaged 7.75 inches per hour of fishing. Walleye anglers caught fish that averaged almost 18 inches at a rate of about one walleye for every three hours of fishing. Anglers surveyed also averaged 1.2 **black crappie** of about 11 inches each per hour of fishing, and about one rainbow trout of about 16 inches for every two hours of fishing.

WDFW fish hatchery specialist Mike Erickson reports recently fishing Rufus Woods Reservoir and doing "very well" near the rainbow trout net pens and other areas in the waterway on the Douglas-Okanogan county line. "This is an outstanding fishery," Erickson said. "With a group of six people in two boats, we had to work for the fish but came out with limits two days in a row."

Southcentral Washington

WDFW district fish biologist Paul Hoffarth of Pasco reminds anglers that **steelhead** fishing closes March 31 in many areas of eastern Washington. However, a one-mile section of shoreline in the Columbia River adjacent to WDFW's Ringold Hatchery will remain open through April 15.

"This fishery is open to bank angling only," said Hoffarth, noting that the daily catch limit is two hatchery-marked steelhead.

Rainbow trout were recently planted in Dalton Lake, Quarry Pond, Columbia Park Pond (a juvenile-only water), and Marmes Pond in the Tri-Cities area. In addition, Dalton Lake and Powerline Lake will be planted with **triploid trout** by mid-April.

Hoffarth said fishing for **walleye, smallmouth bass, and channel catfish** has been slow in recent days, but should pick up in the Columbia River, Walla Walla River, and Yakima River in the next couple of weeks.

April 19 is the deadline to register for the Tri-Cities Kids Fishing Event scheduled for May 1. For more information and registration forms, contact Kennewick Recreation at 509-585-4293 or online at http://www.ci.kennewick.wa.us/Recreational_Services/home.asp.

WDFW district fish biologist Eric Anderson of Yakima reports that all Yakima and Kittitas county year-round ponds are seeing heavy fishing action from earlier hatchery trout stocking. The I-82 ponds #1, 2, and 3 each recently received nearly 2,500 rainbows weighing nearly a half-pound apiece. See all of the continuing hatchery stocking of local fisheries at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/weekly/>.

As warmer spring conditions advance and more and different fish are biting, it's a good time to take advantage of the new **two-pole** fishing opportunity. Most fisheries in the southcentral region are open to the use of a second pole with the purchase of the two-pole endorsement -- \$24.50 with all surcharges and license dealer fees, \$6.50 for seniors. For a list of excluded fisheries and all the details, see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/twopole>.

TGF Inbox - Reader E-mail

Subscriber Joe E. wrote, "hello, love your cause too help fisherman find calming, peaceful outdoor happiness.

"Could you please include the Wilson river in your fishing reports to me. Also some of the possible bank fishing areas.

"thanks for the info."

Bob Rees responded, "Thanks for being a subscriber! If you receive the full length version of the TGF newsletter, you'll note some detailed information on the Wilson River and bank fishing opportunities on the Trask. We'll certainly add more as the season progresses and appreciate the time you took to write us on your thoughts!

"Good luck this year!"

Write to the TGF staff:

Bob Rees: brees@pacifier.com

Doug Rees: doug@TheGuidesForecast.com

Michael Teague: Michael@TheGuidesForecast.com

Random Links

State record for kokanee falls for second time in a month:

<http://www.statesmanjournal.com/article/20100330/OUTDOORS/100330032/1034>

With thanks and a tip o' the fishing cap to **pro guide Andy Partin (206) 388-8988** -

Ling cod catches big salmon:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RaHZYOKmgmU>

GOOD LUCK!