

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **April 9th – April 16, 2010**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro - Spring chinook fishing on the lower Columbia will be entering peak season in the next 2 weeks. Catches are expected to be good and one of the most consistent bites of the year took place on Tuesday from the I-5 Bridge to Davis Bar, across from the mouth of the Willamette. A brown Willamette kept most of the boat effort above Portland but improving water conditions may better distribute effort in the coming week. Catches will likely be good.

Sturgeon catch and effort is on the rise in the gorge. There should be some decent fishing here if water temperatures continue to rise in the coming weeks. This section of river will only be open for retention for a bit longer but will reopen in October, considered the peak month.

The lower Willamette is clearing which will improve spring chinook prospects this coming weekend. Springer counts stalled at the Falls the first week of April while steelhead numbers are picking up again. Sturgeon may not be kept in the lower Willamette until the re-opener in October.

McKenzie water levels have returned to seasonal normal and the river is in good shape.

The Clackamas level is coming down and the river had decent green color mid-week. Steelheading has been worthwhile and springers will be taken here soon.

Sandy water levels have dropped over four feet in the first few days of April. It will be worth a try this weekend with most of the winter steelhead in the higher reaches.

Canby Pond, Henry Hagg Lake, Sheridan Pond, St. Louis Ponds, Roaring River Park Pond, Timber Linn Lake, Walling Pond and Waverly Lake are scheduled for trout planting.

Anglers 17 and younger are invited to take part in two youth events on Saturday, April 10th. Volunteers will be on hand to assist at St. Louis Ponds from 9 AM to 2 PM and at Cottage Grove Pond from 9:30 AM until 1 PM. Both events are free.

Northwest – Steelheaders remained challenged on north coast streams as river levels have been too high to produce good results on some of the larger streams like the Wilson or lower Nestucca. Improving conditions should have steelheading back to normal by the weekend.

Some smaller systems like the Kilchis remained open and productive in these higher flows but many streams closed to fishing for steelhead unless there is some form of hatchery fish available to anglers.

Spring Chinook fishing opened in Tillamook County on April 1st but even early fish aren't likely to be caught until at least the following week. Coastal spring Chinook average larger in size than their Columbia and Willamette cousins but adult returns are a fraction of what we see for the Willamette and Columbia drainages.

Good numbers of left-over trout still reside in area lakes and bass should begin to stir in the warming waters of coastal lakes and ponds.

Long range ocean forecasts indicate the possibility of an offshore opportunity late in the weekend and bottomfishing should be great. Crabbing however is likely to remain mediocre for a while.

Scheduled for trout stocking are Cape Mears Lake, Carter Lake, Cleawox Lake, Hebo Lake, Lorens Pond, Lytle Lake, Nedonna Pond, Smith Lake, South Lake, Tahoe Lake and Town Lake.

Southwest – Boaters will be greeted with a mild incoming tide but long-range swell and wind forecasts are marginal.

Ocean crabbing has been slow, even for commercial efforts and market prices are reflecting that in stores

Bottom fishing may take place only within the 40 fathom line as of April 1st. That's 240 feet for novice mariners. The decision regarding ocean salmon fishing openings and bag limits is scheduled to take place this week.

Jetty fishers are making good catches of rockfish and perch at Winchester Bay when wind and wave action has allowed. Anglers on the mainstem Umpqua have been doing well for spring chinook over the past week. Rains warmed the water and improved catch-and-release fishing for the mostly wild steelhead in the river now.

Long rodders throwing baits from area beaches are making decent catches of surf perch when the ocean cooperates.

Spring chinook fishing was fair to good on the lower Rogue until storm fronts dropped rain on the area and blew out the river. Water levels will be dropping through the coming weekend and springer prospects are good.

The Chetco closed for fishing at the end of March but will re-open when trout season begins on May 22nd.

Cooper Cr. Reservoir, Galesville Reservoir Loon Lake are scheduled to be planted with hatchery trout.

There will be an estimated 200,000 trout available to anglers when Diamond Lake opens April 24th and some of those are sure to be big ones.

Eastern – Fly anglers did well for reddsides on the Deschutes over Easter weekend. Fishing pressure has been light. The Warm Springs stretch opener is April 24th.

For those who have cracked the tricky Metolius code, this river has fished well on nymphs.

SW Washington – Although river levels are likely to remain a bit unstable, better opportunities are just ahead for salmon and steelhead anglers.

The Kalama has been fishing well recently and broodstock fish should be available through April. Although the spring chinook numbers are forecasted to be down, the Cowlitz and Lewis Rivers should offer up ample opportunity for SW Washington salmon in the coming weeks.

Dam passage at Bonneville remains light but should improve dramatically when boat and bank anglers will get re-inspired to target the Wind River and Drano Lake fisheries. Effort is currently light with just over 1,200 adults upstream of Bonneville Dam.

Columbia River Fishing Report – It's "game on" on the Columbia River right now. For the last several days, the blown out Willamette River has anglers congregated in high numbers from the

only fishable stretch in the NW corner of Oregon; the I-5 Bridge to Davis and Frenchmen's Bar. Upstream of I-5 closed after last Saturday and downstream of Frenchmen's, the water was too dirty to expect good action. Fortunately, anglers were quite cordial to one another and some good action was had by many.

The best action has taken place at Davis and Frenchmen's Bars but there was a good bite for a large part of the day and late afternoon from the I-5 Bridge to the Railroad crossing on Tuesday. By Wednesday, the word was out and so were the boats. Although a few fish were falling to anchor anglers, trolled herring was the clear bait of choice for the thousands of rods participating in the fishery. Many skilled anglers were trolling green dyed herring with green flashers with notable success. With so much competition put in such tight quarters, an edge is a necessary evil when fish have so many choices.

Although most guides are reporting their best success is coming from trolling very near to the bottom, some guides are reporting taking fish with their baits suspended off the bottom. One guide reported hearing that fish were being taken at 12 pulls in 30 foot of water. We can certainly see fish on our finders that are suspended off the bottom but my general belief is that the willing biters seem to be close to the bottom of the river. Most guides agree this the area most likely to draw strikes.

Wednesday marked the day when success was starting to come from some of the downriver stretches of the mainstem. The Willamette was still spewing colored water but visibility was clearly on the mend. Anglers fishing Caterpillar Island were seeing more consistent results but even more drastic was good catches were once again coming from the Astoria area where anchor anglers were posting good results using plugs with heavily scented fillets of sardines on the undersides. Also noteworthy was the fact that a lot of our Wednesday fish still had sea-lice intact, indicating they were less than 48 hours out of the ocean.

To further bolster confidence that the run may actually materialize, data from the most recent test net fishery indicated a whopping 11 fish per drift on average, which some have indicated is the best fishing ever recorded for the test net fishery on spring Chinook.

Sport data collected through April 4th indicated a kept catch of 9,600 fish of which 6,900 are going against our quota of 17,200 fish. Simply put, we're at about 40% of our allowable catch through April 4th. The jury is out on whether or not we'll make it to the proposed April 18th closure date but record effort, as witnessed this year, may jeopardize that target date. A relaxing of mainstem regulations are always being talked about but until we start to see significant passage over Bonneville Dam, it won't be discussed in any great detail. Another recreational update will be compiled for next week. As of April 6th, just over 1,500 fish have passed Bonneville Dam.

With salmon hot on the minds of many, effort for sturgeon this week was somewhat subdued. There is still some bank effort in the gorge where 26 bank rods tallied 6 keeper sturgeon, 3 oversize and 15 shakers. Other popular areas didn't receive the attention they normally do this year so reports are scarce.

The Guide's Forecast – It will be "all in" for all salmon this weekend. You won't see much effort switch to other species during these next several days of peak spring Chinook season. Thankfully, the lower stretches should jump start back into action with the water clearing and good reports coming from the lower river as early as Wednesday (4/7).

The lower river will be a strong option for folks that want to get away from planes, trains and automobiles, not to mention water skis, jet fighters and other recreational boaters and anglers.

Most anglers have a good choice for a downriver option and this weekend may be a good time to exercise that option. Barring any mis-prediction in river levels, the Willamette should continue to clear and drop, allowing for good opportunity from I-5 to Buoy 10.

As a general rule for anglers fishing that area, anchoring with plugs on the outgoing tide can be very productive while trolling on the incoming tide. With the gillnet fleet taking out a swath of fish in the middle river, the lower stretches could be the place to be by the weekend.

But all stretches downstream should be good but as competition increases in the lower stretches, those biters are going to get culled out of this fishery the farther up that you fish. It looks like any immediate re-opener of the fishery above I-5 is likely just a pipe dream.

Keep the herring spinning in the I-5 to Willamette River stretch as effort will certainly be strong in this stretch of river over the weekend. Anglers are gaining confidence in fishing here and therefore, are likely to continue to fish in this area up until the proposed closure.

Sturgeon anglers may want to give it a rest this weekend although bank anglers are loving this opportunity with a much reduced crowd to deal with. The best bank angling is taking place near the deadline at Bonneville Dam.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – The flow is moderating and water visibility is up to about 18 inches on the lower Willamette as of Thursday, April 8th. Spring Chinook and summer steelhead movement is starting to improve after tanking during the last storm caused high, muddy water.

Anglers will enjoy good weather and fine water conditions on the McKenzie this weekend.

A reminder from the ODFW regarding sturgeon fishing on the lower Willamette:

The retention of white sturgeon is prohibited April 1 through October 31.

Bank angling is prohibited from the east shore of the Willamette River the entire year at the "Oregon City Wall" defined as the area beginning west of Highway 99E, at the northern-most extent of the parking area near the intersection of 8th Street and Highway 99E in Oregon City, approximately 290 feet downstream of the Oregon City/West Linn bridge (Hwy 43) and extending upstream approximately 1715 feet to the retaining wall extending into the Willamette River at the NW corner of the Blue Heron Paper Mill.

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.

McKenzie anglers will find the weather and the river both in fine shape for the weekend. Redsides have been cooperative with fly fishers this week.

Originally scheduled for April 3rd, the Stayton to Green's Bridge Lear the River trip will take place on May 1st. This is for boaters who are confident on the oars and is not intended a lesson in boating.

The Guide's Forecast – Boats started trolling in fair number Thursday this week on the Willamette but no catches were reported or see, It's likely to be a slow weekend. For those

properly equipped, the Big River is fishing well.

Expect to see plenty of March Browns along with Blue-Winged Olives on the McKenzie. Results are good for anglers properly equipped with the appropriate patterns. The exception is during warmer days when caddis start hatching. Tens of thousands of these bugs have filled the air and water during these occasions and the competition is too fierce to make for effective fly fishing. Between hatches, however, nymphing has been quite effective. Try March brown and Golden Stone imitations.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – As the Clackamas has dropped and cleared, steelheading has steadily improved. A couple of springers have been taken in the lower river.

While the water remained murky mid-week, some anglers did find bright, willing winter steelhead on the Sandy. With the water clearing, the coming weekend looks promising. Steelheaders will find the number of wild fish to be increasing as the hatchery fish numbers diminish at this time of year.

The Guide's Forecast - It's too early to target springers in the Clackamas but winter steelhead fishing should be worthwhile. With a few summers in the mix, results only improve as runs overlap.

Given the time of year, most Sandy fishers are switching over to target spring Chinook rather than steelhead. The recent high water brought some in and more will be coming in the next few weeks.

North Coast Fishing Report – North coast steelheaders haven't had much of a choice to practice their art all week. High water persists, forcing most serious steelheaders onto smaller streams on the north side of the state, that consistently have brief periods of glory. Most of these smaller streams are now closed and haven't had significant hatchery plants in recent years. Check local listings before heading out. We'll go into greater detail in The Guide's Forecast section since so little information exists from the current high water status.

Offshore waters remained too rough for salt water recreation and it looks like more unstable weather on the horizon. Crabbing inside and outside of most north coast estuaries is less than ideal right now.

Another opportunity to give a little back to the Tillamook area fishery occurs Saturday, April 10th at Whiskey Creek Fish Hatchery. That's where the annual fish-clipping party will take place, starting at 8 AM with coffee (or tea or hot chocolate) and doughnuts.. Around 9 AM, following a few minutes of instruction, join a couple of hundred new friends to fin-clip Chinook smolts destined for the Trask River. Enjoy a barbecue lunch at mid-day and expect to be wrapped up by 2 PM. Find the hatchery to the right off Highway 101 out of Tillamook towards Cape Lookout State Park. Just show up and join in the fun.

The Guide's Forecast – With many streams now closed, anglers have to look to the hatchery planted streams for consumptive opportunity. On the north coast, that's the Wilson, Nestucca and Trask Rivers which should have great steelheading this week and into mid-April for the persistent steelheader.

Starting Saturday, the upper stretches of the Wilson, Trask and Nestucca Rivers should all fish well. With crowds down, there could be some very serene and productive days on an anglers favorite stretch or his north coast favorite. Use bait in the stronger flows and don't be afraid to use larger baits either. These fish will have to find your bait as well so make it easy on them.

It's still early for spring Chinook but there could be a rare one around, most likely to be caught on spinning gear in pursuit of steelhead. Keep in mind that your best choices for hatchery fish are the Trask River for salmon followed by the Wilson. For steelhead, the Wilson and Nestucca will fish best with the Trask a wonderful wild steelhead option.

Crabbing and clamming will be poor options with the tide series we're coming up on and the recent performance of these fisheries.

Central & South Coast Reports – Although the 40-fathom restriction for offshore bottomfishing kicked in again at the first of April, results are good at this time of year in shallower water so there is little impact on catches. Large rockfish are plentiful at ocean depths less than 240 feet and ling cod remain nearshore having recently spawned.

Offshore ocean forecasts call for lumpy seas during the days this coming weekend but early launches should make quick ocean forays possible for bottom fishers. Take the crab traps if you wish but ocean crabbing has not been very productive over the past 10 days. Bay crabbing has actually been better.

With the weather settling down this weekend, rockfish anglers will resume tossing offerings off the south jetty at Winchester Bay. This has been a productive fishery when wind and wave has allowed the activity, producing worthwhile catches not only of rockfish but also various perch species and kelp greenling. On the Umpqua,, spring Chinook fishing is improving and with the river back in shape following rains this week, anglers from Scottsburg up to Winchester Dam are sure to find a few. Side drifters working the confluence at the North and South Umpqua are doing well for late-season steelhead although the majority are wild which must be released or spawned out which should be released.

Speaking of the Umpqua, the USCG is gathering information regarding navigational aids in the area. Express your opinions here:

<http://www.uscg.mil/d13/dpw/docs/UmpquaRiverLightQuestionnaire.pdf>

Steelheading has been slow on the Coos and Coquille. There are certainly better opportunities on the south coast than either of these rivers. Coos Bay has been producing a few sturgeon to anglers soaking sand shrimp on outgoing g tides.

When seas were high, spring Chinook didn't cross the shallow bar into the Rogue River. Storm front dumped rain which muddied the water, stalled springer fishing and had Chinook charging upriver in the freshet. A break in the weather this weekend, accompanied by more mellow ocean conditions will have fresh springers entering the lower Rogue and should make for decent fishing this weekend at this most productive ocean tributary. The lower Rogue has dropped and is fishable now although action will improve when the water temperature rises a few degrees. Anglers in the Grants Pass stretch will find a mix of winter steelhead and spring Chinook. With upper Rogue water levels finally flowing enough to allow proper fishing and good numbers of steelhead over Gold Ray Dam, steelheading should be decent this weekend.

Although Diamond Lake is scheduled to open on April 24th, recent cold weather and snow has stalled nature's seasonal progression. For those hoping to fish the opener (which, historically, is piscatorial gangbusters), hold the good thought. There's still ice on the lake at this time.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Lake Billy Chinook has been producing a few large bull trout to trollers recently.

Kokanee fishing has been slow to fair on the troll at Green Peter.

Washington fishing reports:

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

North Puget Sound

Fishing: 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

Fishing: 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

Fishing: 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

Fishing: 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

Fishing: 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

Write to the TGF staff:

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Random Links

US 20 Highway closed on upcoming halibut weekend:

<http://www.us20pme.com/news.html>

Free admission to Truck Fest and fishing seminars this weekend in Puyallup:

<http://www.saltpatrol.com/truck--jeep-fest--puyallup-fairgrounds>

GOOD LUCK!