

The Guide's Forecast - volume 12 issue number 17

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **April 23rd – April 29th, 2010**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- Although Portland area spring chinook success ended poorly on the Columbia, anglers downstream reported some early limits working plugs on the outgoing tide. Although passage numbers at Bonneville are still likely 2 weeks away from peaking, numbers look good. A re-opener is unlikely until the peak passage date has been realized.

Bank anglers are scoring the lion's share of sturgeon near Rooster Rock, where hordes of people are in pursuit. Action will likely slow as river flows increase and keepers continue to get culled from the concentrated population.

With Willamette flows moderating and water temperature hitting the magic mid-50s, springers are on the move. Monday's fishing at Oregon City was nothing short of white hot with numerous boats taking limits of springers. By Tuesday, action had slowed but should remain consistent into early May or later.

Steelhead and reddsides are being caught upriver near Eugene.

Fish the opener on the McKenzie River between Greenwood Drive boat ramp and Hendricks Wayside for best results.

A few summer steelhead are in the mix on the Clackamas but broodstock steelhead has made for very good action over recent weeks. A couple of springers have been caught at the mouth but fish should begin to distribute by late April.

There appear to be greater numbers of summers than springers in the Sandy River as this system is not forecast to receive a large adult return this season. This will likely focus effort in the Willamette and Clackamas Rivers.

Fishing events for youngsters will be held at Hebo Lake and Trojan Pond on Saturday, April 24th.

Northwest – What would have likely been a productive fishery, all select area fisheries (Young's Bay, Blind Slough and Deep River) near Astoria will close after tomorrow due to the high interception of upriver bound spring chinook.

Good sturgeon fishing in the estuary is still over a month away.

With much the focus on Portland area springers, effort on the north coast has dwindled for steelhead. A few fresh fish remain available but the bulk of the catch will likely be dark winter run fish. Summer steelhead will be available in small numbers on the Wilson, Nestucca and Three Rivers.

Although it's not too early for spring chinook in Tillamook County, the peak has occurred after mid-May in recent years. The predicted rise in river levels this week doesn't appear to be materializing which is likely to keep chinook concentrated in the estuary. The lower reaches of the Wilson and Nestucca may fish fair for steelhead this weekend.

Offshore forecasts for the north coast will likely keep anxious bottomfishing vessels from targeting bass and lingcod. When the boats can get out, fishing should be excellent.

Crabbing remains slow in most north coast estuaries.

Southwest – Early incoming tides won't be of much help to boaters as offshore conditions are forecast to be rough this coming weekend.

South coast beaches are yielding good catches of surf perch when the ocean lies down.

Mainstem Umpqua anglers continue to enjoy decent spring chinook results while the river remains too cool to trigger a smallmouth bite.

When boats have been able to launch out of Charleston, fishing for rockfish and lingcod has been predictably excellent. Ocean crabbing is fair.

While action has slowed on the lower Rogue, daily spring chinook catches remain good. Anchovies, with or without a spinner, remain the bait of choice. Steelheading is fair to good on the upper Rogue with decent numbers over the dam.

Ocean Chinook fishing will begin May 29th and run through Sept 6th (Memorial Day through Labor Day) with a two 24 inch or better fish per day bag limit.

Eastern – Oregon's high lakes open Saturday, April 24th, with many anglers springing for the two-rod permit for an extra \$17, hoping for additional hookups. Many lakes remain ice-bound, but may fish by the weekend.

John Day bass anglers should begin to realize catches of some of the larger fish of the season. Numbers come later when temperatures warm.

Fly fishing is fair on the middle Deschutes with reddsides rising to take offerings on the surface.

SW Washington – Anglers anticipating good fishing in the Drano Lake and Wind River fisheries should begin to realize their wishes right now. Dam passage at Bonneville more than justifies the effort but check regulations carefully as changes have occurred.

The Cowlitz River is booting out good numbers of spring chinook with a few steelhead in the mix. This fishery will be peaking until the first week of May. A large number is forecast to return. Summer steelhead will be on the heels of the salmon run.

The Lewis is also a good choice for springer fishermen and although the Cowlitz will have bigger numbers, effort will be lighter here. The Kalama has both salmon and steelhead but action will be spotty, especially for salmon, for the next few weeks.

Columbia River Fishing Report – As the Willamette cleared, more options opened up for anglers, not just in the Willamette itself, but downstream of the influential tributary as well. By Friday, it was becoming evident that downstream success was having an impact on upstream misery.

The Portland area had been producing good catches of spring chinook to herring trollers. The problem was, we were all shoved into a small area but that's where all the unmolested fish were. In other words, as upstream migrating fish were entering their first "clean" water in the Columbia River, we had all the willing biters to ourselves. But when the Willamette finally cleared enough to allow for downstream success, all the biters were getting culled from the river before they ever

made it up to the Portland area. While we struggled for bites on Davis Bar and the I-5 Bridge, anchor anglers downstream near Westport and Astoria were taking early and easy limits of springers. It was great fishing.

That's all in the past now and anglers will be keeping a sharp eye on dam counts, quite excited about what they are seeing now. On 4/21, the highest passage day of the season was realized with over 9,000 fish passing Bonneville and a cumulative count of over 56,000 fish adults. It's a good start and expected to continue, peaking in early May.

Another indicator that there are a lot more fish to come is the high interception of Columbia bound fish in the Select Area's or SAFE fisheries. Usually the interception rate is low enough to afford both sport and commercial fishers to participate in their respective fisheries throughout the season. Not the case this year as an emergency closure may have this bonus fishery shut down well into June. Here's the official press release:

States close lower Columbia chinook salmon seasons

CLACKAMAS, Ore. – On the heels of one of the most successful seasons in recent history, fishery managers from Oregon and Washington closed commercial and recreational chinook salmon seasons in Select Area Fisheries, effective Saturday, April 24.

Select Area Fisheries are bays and sloughs near the mouth of the Columbia River. Funded primarily by the Bonneville Power Administration, the primary purpose of these sites is to reduce fishing impacts on wild and weak upriver salmon stocks by increasing the availability of hatchery fish in off-channel areas of the lower Columbia.

Select Area Fisheries include Young's Bay, Blind Slough, Knappa Slough, and Tongue Point/South Channel in Oregon and Deep River in Washington. These areas are normally open to recreational fishing year round under permanent rules and open to commercial fishing for spring chinook through early June.

The commercial fishery was closed because the commercial harvest guideline of upriver stock spring chinook has been met. The recreational fishery was closed because the recreational guideline for the lower Columbia River downstream of Bonneville Dam, which includes the Select Areas, has also been met.

Fishery managers left open the possibility of reopening both fisheries later this year, depending on the number of upriver chinook that cross over Bonneville dam. In a joint state hearing of the Oregon and Washington departments of fish and wildlife, biologists estimated that more than 300,000 chinook would be needed to cross into the upper Columbia at Bonneville dam in order to increase the harvest guidelines enough to allow for additional fishing below Bonneville.

As of April 20, 56,735 adult chinook salmon had cleared the dam, which is the sixth highest cumulative count to date since at least 1977.

During the recreational chinook salmon season on the Columbia from Bonneville to the mouth, which ended April 18, sport fishermen logged 166,027 angler trips, which is the highest since 2002. During that period they harvested a record 29,125 chinook, compared to the previous high of 25,700 in 2001. Commercial fisheries in the mainstem and Select Areas have harvested a total of 18,000 spring chinook.

"We've had some impressive catches and I'm buoyed that in the past few days we've also had some counts of more than 8,000 fish over the dam," said Steve Williams, deputy administrator of

ODFW's fish division. "It appears that we have a potentially very substantial upriver run, but at this time we have to manage with the information we have."

The two states will revisit potential salmon seasons again after a Technical Advisory Committee of state, federal and tribal biologists issues a new official run forecast, which is likely to occur in early May.

This fishery could be a real boom for sportanglers if we get proper dam passage, enabling us some opportunity prior to the first gillnet opener. Let's pray for passage!

Until we see hope for additional days on the mainstem, we'll likely reduce the news on the mainstem Columbia until the next popular fishery comes online.

On that note, let's go to sturgeon. The only real game in town is the shallow water sturgeon fishery that has developed for bank anglers near Rooster Rock State Park. It has led to some inexcusable practices but apparently is being policed more closely these days. The action has been good and the place is quite obvious as scores of vehicles are parked along Highway 84 to show you where to get your bait wet. Success rates are dropping as keepers are getting culled. Some theorize sturgeon are staging there to avoid sea lion predation. Only a rare keeper is being taken downstream but with the salmon closure, more effort may arise.

The Guide's Forecast – The big excitement here will be watching the salmon pass Bonneville Dam. Drano Lake and Wind River anglers should be in 7th heaven about now. Plenty of willing biters crossing into your territory right now!



You can join the masses at Drano or Wind River but success rates will likely begin to drop off. Use smelt for bait but sand shrimp can be effective as well in the shallow water that fish are being harvested in.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – With the numbers of fish crossing Willamette Falls increasing exponentially and often (in the case of spring Chinook) daily counts doubling or tripling from one day to the next, updates are falling behind. As good as this news is for anglers (after all, if they're on the move over the Falls, they're active in the lower river), it becomes a challenge for fish counters. As of April 18th, the latest data available online, 2,600 springers had crossed, 2,850 summer steelhead and just over 6,000 winters had been counted.

McKenzie levels crested on Wednesday this week and, while still a little high, will continue dropping through the coming weekend with fishing prospects very good here. Look for large, green caddis hatching around Eugene with trout eagerly eating them

The drift from Greens Bridge to Jefferson on the North Santiam is free of hazards. Recycling of summer steelhead from the hatchery downriver to give anglers another shot at them has started on the South Santiam. Bobber and jig rigs are hooking fish.

Despite the fact that the majority of lakes and ponds on the trout stocking schedule this week see **Fisheries Update**, (above) are open year 'round, effort is extensive this week due to the trout opener which effects not the listed waters, but the anglers who know no better. Bless them; it's all fishing and all fishing is a goodness in our estimation.

The Guide's Forecast – Pressure is expected to increase for spring Chinook on the lower Willamette (no surprise there) with the Columbia closure Wednesday this week. Fish are being caught but my, oh, my there are a lot of boats. OK ... there are a lot of boats because the Big River is closed AND the fishing is very good. Trolled herring is responsible for the high mortality rate of hatchery springers here. With summers steelhead numbers exceeding 2,800 at Willamette Falls, fishing has been worthwhile for hardware and fly anglers on the Town Run for upstream as large redsides will hit offers intended for summers. Who'd complain about that?

Stocking practices have Changed on the McKenzie, an effort intended to reduce impact on native trout populations. As a result the stretch from Greenwood Drive boat ramp and Hendricks Wayside, which usually is less than productive, will fish well for anglers targeting hatchery trout this weekend. With as many steelhead as there have been over the Falls, it's a wonder that no steelhead reports have come in. We know of some anglers will target them this weekend.

Target summer steelhead on the South Santiam as the water level starts dropping. Numbers are decent and will continue to improve as good conditions and fair water temperatures temperature have them on the move now.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Catches of winter steelhead which are getting long in the tooth and bright summer steelhead are fair on the Clackamas. There has been little interest, effort or pressure and the spring Chinook fishery in the lower Willamette is at its peak now. Concentrate efforts for springers between Barton and Carver but lower your expectations to avoid disappointment. It has been spotty and quite slow this early.

Steelhead are scattered on the Sandy and while a few springers have been spotted in the lower river, hookups are near-non-existent.

The Guide's Forecast - Target steelhead rather than steelhead with a reasonable expectation of success for steelhead which are scattered throughout the system Spring Chinook fishing will become a reality in the next couple of weeks with springers on the move as water temperatures improve.

Give the Sandy a little time before launching a spring Chinook assault. Numbers are too low now bur will be improving along with water temperature, the key factor for springer movement.

North Coast Fishing Report – For the most part, steelhead season is over on the north coast. There are still summer steelhead and a rare bright late winter fish to work over but the bulk of the catch at this time will be more mature winter fish positioning themselves in the river for the spawning ritual in the coming weeks.

The Wilson and Nestucca offer the best opportunities for keepers and quality fish with summer and winter steelhead still available along with the possibility of an early spring chinook. If the coastal run is going to materialize like the inland one has, and even down on the Umpqua, we should see some decent early season fishing. Don't look for consistent results in the rivers until mid-May however. We'll detail more options into June.

There will be a fishing opportunity starting on Sunday, April 25th and continuing through May 2nd, open to all ages. There will be no length or bag limits so expect a mega zoo. The ODFW would like anglers to have every opportunity to catch as many trout as possible, after which the lake will be seined and the trout stocked elsewhere.

The Guide's Forecast – Tillamook Bay itself has been quiet as sturgeon and salmon anglers are focusing their efforts elsewhere. A nice set of minus tides may offer up some opportunity for spring chinook in the upper bay early next week however for those sticking it out through low slack. Plugs or trolled herring or spinners may take a quality fish. A few sturgeon are still likely present. Use sand shrimp for those and fish the upper bay where crab are less likely to steal your offering.

Rivers are forecasted to continue to drop, making the lower stretches of coastal systems the likely place to intercept steelhead. Fish should be well hunkered up as waters clear and fish await the next opportunity to stake out their claim for the spawning phase of their lifecycle.

Don't count on recreating west of the points of demarcation anytime soon. The offshore forecast does not look favorable for ocean fishing or crabbing in the immediate future.

Central & South Coast Reports – Temperate coastal lakes warm up early. Many are already hitting 60 degrees and producing decent catches of bass and panfish.

While it's still early, summer steelhead have been taken at Moonshine Park and above on the Siletz but before you pack your gear and head up, it has been slow.

Fishing around the jetties from a boat or from the jetties for land-based anglers has been good at Yaquina Bay with some dandy ling cod showing in catches.

Rock fishers have been doing well off the south jetty at Winchester Bay. While spring Chinook fishing has been considered good on the mainstem Umpqua, it is at the same time spotty with more experienced anglers who are familiar with the river having the greatest degree of success. The North and South Umpqua rivers crested mid-week and will be dropping through the weekend with prospects good for mostly-wild winter steelhead in an array of color and condition.

Crabbing is fair in Coos Bay having recently slowed. Surf perch fishing from area beaches has been decent but only when

wind and waves subside. Steelheading on the Coos River will be open through the end of April although fishing has been slow.

About half the boats trying caught springers at Elephant Rock over the past weekend while some boats took limits on Tuesday this week. Following a rise in the level, water in the lower Rogue started dropping Thursday this week and will continue through the weekend which is very good news for anglers. While there have been some large springers landed here, the hatchery keepers are running in the 20s, decent fish by any measure. One 'trick' that local anglers follow is to downsize the size of both baits and blades as water conditions drop and clear, going to rigs with no hardware in clearest conditions. This tactic has been quite effective recently. Boats have followed Chinook moving upstream until they enters the canyon, This means that springer hopefuls in the middle Rogue will find a mix of summer steelhead and spring Chinook available now. With good numbers crossing at Gold Ray Dam, the upper Rogue is fair to good for a mix of hatchery, wild and spawned -out steelhead. Side-drifters and plug-pullers are catching fish.

Early morning nearshore rockfish and ling cod catches are expected to be excellent for boaters who hightail it back in to the Port of Brookings as conditions deteriorate. Ocean crabbing isn't worth hauling the gear. Stick to coastal bays and estuaries where results have been somewhat better.

The Elk, Sixes, Applegate and Chetco rivers open May 22nd.

At last report, Diamond Lake will not have much exposed water for the April 24th opener and the ice is unsafe to walk on. This is a disappointment to many for whom opening day here is a tradition. Diamond Lake is one of the most productive of the Cascade lakes with the ODFW estimating an average catch rate of over 10 fish per day. The bag limit is five.

Ah, spring! Thoughts lightly turn to thoughts of ... blue-green algae warnings? So it begins. People and pets are advised to avoid contact of any type with the water at Willow Lake near Medford. More to follow in the near future 'Tis the season.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Expect fair to good results on the lower Deschutes for redsides using small nymphs with caddis and mayflies in the air.

Stoneflies are yet to start hatching. Although the weather has been cool with even a little snow falling mid-week, hopes are high for clear skies and a pleasant weekend to come. Great ready for the madhouse at Sherars Falls to begin in May with the kind of numbers we're seeing at Bonneville this week.

Use only barbless hooks for the chance at a four-fish daily bag limit on the upper Snake River spring Chinook opener on Saturday, April 24th. All retained Chinook must be fin-clipped and only two may be over 24 inches with fishing allowed from Dug Bar Boat Ramp to the deadline below Hells Canyon Dam. Fishing is expected to be excellent right up to closure, the date of which will be decided and announced later in the season. They're coming, too; 11.697 on April 21st alone as the YTD total approaches 70,000!

Sunset Cove and Trapper Creek campgrounds will be closed on the opener at Odell due to a safety concern regarding trees which may pose a hazard to campers.

Jigging has been very effective for kokanee lately at Lake Billy Chinook.

Davis Lake is easily accessible and launching has not been a problem. More of a challenge is hooking the fish as cold water here has bass laying low and trout shy and light-biting. When the water warms, results will improve dramatically and it's good too see a decent resurgence of the healthy trout population here.

Crappie dishing is heating up at Brownlee Reservoir as the water warms. Historically, best results com in May, not coincidentally the very time crowds are at seasonal peak. Fortunately, this Snake River impoundment is large.

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report for April 14th - April 28, 2010

North Puget Sound

The blackmouth salmon season is winding down in the region, but halibut fisheries in Puget Sound are coming up soon. For freshwater anglers, one of the most anticipated fishing opportunities occurs later this April, when the lowland lakes trout season kicks off.

Beginning April 24, anglers can cast a line in many of the region's lakes, where thousands of legal-sized **trout** have been planted. Information on stocking schedules for rainbow, cutthroat and triploid trout is available on WDFW's website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants>).

"This is our biggest fishing season opener and it traditionally draws more than 300,000 anglers of all ages," said WDFW Director Phil Anderson. "It's a good time to gather family and friends at local waterways to cast off winter and celebrate spring."

Because the lowland lake trout opener traditionally draws the biggest crowds, it's especially important for everyone to be patient and safe at boat launches and docks, Anderson noted. "Everyone in boats, and all children on shore, should use personal flotation devices," he added.

This year's opener offers a new opportunity for lake fishers. Anglers may purchase a 2-pole endorsement which allows them to fish with two rods in most of Washington's lakes. Gear rules and daily limits still apply. Many anglers will see the use of two poles as a way to double their fun by using two different types of tackle, or fishing at two different depths. Go to <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/twopole/lakes.php> for a list of lakes where two poles are not allowed.

On the saltwater, selective fisheries for hatchery **blackmouth** - resident chinook - continue through April 15 in Marine Area 9 (Admiralty Inlet), and through April 30 in marine areas 7 (San Juan Islands), 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) and 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner). Anglers fishing in any of those areas have a two-salmon daily limit, but must release wild chinook.

The **halibut** season is just around the corner. The season is scheduled to run from May 1 through May 30 in marine areas 6-10, where fishing will be open three days a week - Thursday, Friday and Saturday - and closed Sunday through Wednesday except for Memorial Day weekend when those marine areas will be open Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

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

Anglers have so many options this time of year that they should consider taking time off from whatever less important activity keeps them off the water. Freshly stocked lowland lakes will open Saturday, April 24, to an estimated 300,000 anglers, and youth fishing events are in full swing. The **halibut** and **shrimp** seasons open beginning May 1, and a morning **razor-clam** dig begins Friday, April 16, at three Washington beaches.

Regional lakes stocked with thousands of **trout** await South Sound anglers. Devereaux Lake in Mason County is being stocked with 5,000 **rainbows** - 500 of them 14 inches or larger. In Clallam County, Sutherland Lake is being stocked with 10,000 rainbows, and Bogachiel Pond will be getting 4,100 rainbows in advance of a Kid's Day event. Clear, Kapowsin, Spanaway, Tanwax and Ohop lakes in Pierce County also will be getting upwards of 10,000 fish each. Silver Lake will be stocked with over 31,000 fish, 1,300 of them 14 inches or longer. Find WDFW's stocking schedule by county and lakes here <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants> . For tips on fishing options by water and county take a look at Washington Fishing Prospects (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/prospects/>).

In Thurston County over 600 kids are expected to show up Saturday, April 17, for the Kids' Klassic Family Fish-in at Woodland Creek Community Park. Registration for the event is closed. The next South Sound Kids' Fish-In event will be held Saturday, May 15, at American Lake in Lakewood. Advanced registration is required. To register go to Go Play Outside Washington's web site (http://www.gopaw.org/kids_fish-in_program) and download a registration form.

Meanwhile, people looking forward to digging **razor clams** can do so at the following times 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

All of the digs start in the morning and end at noon. WDFW also has announced a tentative razor-clam dig for late April and early May. A final decision on the dig will be based on tests for marine toxins to determine if the clams are safe to eat.

Prospective clammers who live north of Lacey should be forewarned that overnight and weekend repairs to Interstate 5 will make it considerably more difficult to get to and from Washington's coast. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) announced that repairs to the highway between Lacey and Tacoma will close north and soundbound lanes between now and September, resulting in traffic backups that could stretch for miles. For a schedule of closures go to WSDOT's website (<http://bit.ly/dgnuQy>).

Two other fisheries scheduled to open soon are **halibut** and **shrimp** .

The 2010 recreational halibut season - which starts May 1 off Ilwaco and May 2 off Westport - will be cut a little short this year. The largest single factor affecting this year's fishery is a 15 percent reduction in the Pacific coast halibut quota set by the International Pacific Halibut Commission, said Michele Culver, a WDFW regional director. In Washington, sport anglers will be allowed to catch 192,699 pounds of halibut, compared to 214,110 pounds last year.

Constraints on fishing opportunities will be most apparent in Puget Sound, due to the combination of this year's reduced quota and an excessive catch last year. WDFW estimates that Puget Sound anglers caught more than 114,000 pounds of halibut in 2009 - well over the 57,393-pound quota.

Opening for Washington's marine areas are:

- **Columbia River (Ilwaco):** Marine Area 1 will open May 1, three days a week, Thursday through Saturday until 70 percent of the quota is reached, or through July 18.

The fishery will then reopen on Aug. 6 and continue three days a week (Friday through Sunday) until the remaining quota is reached, or the end of the day on Sept. 26, whichever occurs first. The 2010 catch quota is 13,436 pounds.

- **South Coast (Westport/Ocean Shores):** Marine Area 2 will open on May 2, two days a week, Sundays and Tuesdays. During the fourth week in May the fishery will be open Sunday only (May 23). Beginning the following week the fishery will resume the Sunday, Tuesday structure until the quota is reached. The northern nearshore area will be open seven days per week, until the quota is reached. The 2010 catch quota is 35,887 pounds.
- **North Coast (La Push/Neah Bay):** Marine areas 3 and 4 will open on May 13, two days per week, Thursdays and Saturdays, through May 22. If sufficient quota remains, the fishery will reopen June 3 and 5. If sufficient quota remains after that opener, the fishery will reopen starting June 17. The 2010 catch quota is 101,179 pounds.
- **Strait of Juan de Fuca/Puget Sound:** Marine Area 5 (Sekiu) will be open May 28 through June 19. Marine areas 6 through 10 (Strait, Port Angeles Admiralty Inlet and Everett) will be open May 1 through May 30. These fisheries will be open three days a week, Thursday, Friday and Saturday closed Sunday through Wednesday except for Memorial Day weekend when they will be open Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The 2010 combined catch quota for these areas is 50,542 pounds.

Shrimp seasons open May 1 in all marine areas and for most species. The length of the season varies by area. The rules and dates for shrimping will be published in the state's annual *Sport Fishing Rules* pamphlet, which comes out later this month. Information is available now at WDFW's recreational shrimp page

(<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/shrimpreg/shrimpindex.shtml>).

One change from previous years is that Discovery Bay will be open to shrimping for the first time since 2005, when it was closed due to low abundance. The Bay will be open at least two days, May 1 and May 5.

Out on the coast, fishing for **lingcod**, **rockfish** and other species is beginning to pick up. After a few weeks of terrible ocean conditions, boats were finally able to get out of Westport late last week.

"After having to cancel about 10 days in a row the ocean has finally laid down," said Erica Crust, WDFW's ocean port sampler. "Charter boats are back to targeting rockfish and lingcod. A few charters got their limits of lingcod over the weekend, with some in the mid to upper 20 pound range."

The lingcod season opens on Friday, April 17 in Marine Area 4 (Neah Bay).

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 15 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>.

It's a good thing these other fisheries are picking up because **steelhead** and **salmon** fisheries have been slow. A creel check counted conducted at boat ramps in Port Angeles and Port Townsend counted 11 **chinook** April 10. Elsewhere, there were few anglers and even fewer fish taken.

Creelers checked only about a dozen **wild steelhead** on the Lower and Upper Hoh River during the second weekend in April, and creel counts ended April 1 on the Quillayute system. Retention

fishing 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.

To take advantage of all these opportunities, anyone 15 years and older must have an applicable 2010-11 fishing license. Licenses can be purchased on-line at <https://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov>, by phone (866) 246-9453, or in person at more than 600 license vendors throughout the state. A list of vendors is at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/vendors>. Updates on the razor clam season are at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/razorclm/season.htm>

Southwest Washington

Columbia River anglers have been reeling in over 1,400 **spring chinook salmon** per day during the first full week of April, raising questions about how long the lower river would remain open to fishing. After some deliberation, fishery managers from Washington and Oregon agreed that the fishery below the I-5 Bridge will remain open as planned through Sunday, April 18.

But that doesn't necessarily mean that will be the last day to catch spring chinook on the lower river this year. In establishing this year's season, fishery managers set aside a "buffer" until this year's near-record run forecast of 470,000 upriver fish can be verified by dam counts. If the count looks good, WDFW will announce additional fishing time in early to mid-May, said Cindy LeFleur, WDFW Columbia River policy coordinator.

"At this point, the upriver run is definitely looking strong, but we'll have to see how the count at Bonneville Dam shakes out over the next few weeks," LeFleur said. "After our experience during the past two years, we need to make sure that the forecast is on track before we reopen the fishery."

So what's an angler to do between now and then? Joe Hymer, a WDFW fish biologist, has some ideas:

- **Fish a tributary:** Anglers are picking up spring chinook in the Cowlitz, Kalama and Lewis rivers, although winter-run steelhead are still providing most of the action on the Cowlitz. Thirty-one boat anglers reported catching 23 hatchery steelhead (plus one released) and one adult spring chinook in a recent creel check focused around the trout hatchery and Blue Creek. The 47 bank anglers surveyed had two hatchery steelhead and three springers.
Meanwhile, summer steelhead also are moving into several tributaries to the lower Columbia - including the lower Washougal and East Fork Lewis rivers. Both of those rivers open for fishing April 16 under selective gear rules (no bait). Check the *Fishing in Washington* rules pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) for catch limits and other regulations applicable to these rivers.
- **Head upriver:** Time may be running short for spring chinook fishing on the lower Columbia River, but the fishery from Bonneville Dam to McNary Dam is scheduled to remain open seven days a week through May. With upwards of 1,000 fish per day now moving up the fish ladders, anglers fishing the mainstem above Bonneville are starting to catch some spring chinook. Bank fishing only is permitted from Bonneville Dam to Tower Island powerlines, located about six miles below The Dalles Dam.
Boat anglers at Wind and Drano Lake have also been taking a few springers, while bank anglers fishing the Klickitat River downstream from Fisher Hill Bridge have been catching newly arriving summer steelhead. Drano Lake is closed to all fishing on Wednesdays through May. Also, effective April 16, bank fishing only will be allowed west of a line projected from the eastern-most pillar of the Highway 14 Bridge to a posted marker on the north shore of the lake. Check the *Fishing in Washington* rules pamphlet

(<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) for catch limits and other regulations applicable to these waters.

- Dig some razor clams: Diggers recently got a green light to proceed with a morning razor-clam dig running Friday, April 16, through Sunday April 18, at Long Beach and Twin Harbors. Kalaloch Beach, further north will also open for digging April 17-18. Low morning tides will be at 8:32 a.m. (-0.7) April 16, at 9:12 a.m. (-0.7) April 17, and at 9:56 a.m. (-0.6) April 18. No digging will be allowed after noon any of those days. Diggers are reminded that they must have a valid 2010-11 license to participate in the dig. Fishing and hunting licenses may be purchased by phone (1-866-246-9453), over the Internet (<https://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov/>), or from license vendors throughout the state (see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/vendors> for a list).
- **Catch some trout:** Hundreds of lowland lakes open for trout fishing April 24 throughout the state, drawing tens of thousands of anglers out for their first cast of the year. While most lakes in southwest Washington are open year-round, "opening day" does mark the start of trout fishing in such perennial favorites as Mineral Lake (Lewis County), Swift Reservoir (Skamania County) and Rowland Lakes (Klickitat County). Meanwhile, WDFW recently stocked several year-round lakes with catchable-size rainbows, some weighing up to a half-pound apiece: South Lewis County Park Pond near Toledo (3,042 fish), Lake Sacajawea in Longview (3,016 fish), Kress Lake in Kalama (2,067 fish) and Lacamas Lake in Camas (3,500 fish). A complete trout-stocking schedule for all lakes in Washington is posted on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants>.

Eastern Washington

April 24 marks the start of the most popular fishing season in Washington, including dozens of trout-stocked lakes in this region. It is also the opening day of **spring chinook** season on three sections of the Snake River, where fishing will be expanded this year. Daily catch limits will also be raised, thanks to the abundance of hatchery chinook expected to return.

In all, four sections of the Snake will open to spring chinook fishing this year - starting April 20 with the stretch starting just below Ice Harbor Dam on the Walla Walla/Franklin county line, just east of the Tri-Cities. That section of the Snake River runs from the southbound Highway 12 Bridge upstream about seven miles to the fishing-restriction boundary, about 400 feet below Ice Harbor Dam.

The three sections of the Snake that open April 24 are:

- From Railroad Bridge, about half-mile downstream of the Tucannon River mouth, up about nine miles to the Corps of Engineers boat launch (about a mile upstream of Little Goose Dam along the south shore). This zone includes the area between the juvenile bypass return pipe and Little Goose Dam along the south shoreline of the facility (includes the walkway area locally known as "the Wall" in front of the juvenile collection facility);
- From Casey Creek upstream about six miles to the fishery restriction area below Lower Granite Dam; and
- From Blyton Landing Boat Launch along the Snake River Road in Whitman County (about 12 miles upstream of Lower Granite Dam) upstream about 19 miles to the boat dock behind the Quality Inn in Clarkston (boundary line is from the white sign for Hells Canyon Tours (about 100 ft upstream of the boat dock that has the small green roofed shed on the south shore) across to the culvert with tanks and trailers on the north shore).

Only adipose fin-clipped spring chinook adults or jacks can be retained in these fisheries. Chinook harvest or retention is limited to two adults and four jacks per day. One exception is the area between the juvenile bypass return pipe and Little Goose Dam along the south shoreline of the facility - including the walkway area locally known as "the Wall" in front of the juvenile collection facility - where the daily catch limit is one jack and one adult.

The minimum size of any retained chinook is 12 inches. Jacks are less than 24 inches long. The adipose fin-clipped fish must have a healed scar at the location of the missing fin. Fishing must cease as soon as the adult chinook daily limit is retained. All chinook with the adipose fin intact, and all steelhead, must be immediately released unharmed.

All of these chinook fisheries will run through June 30, unless catch rates warrant an earlier closure. See all details at <https://fortress.wa.gov/dfw/erules/efishrules/>.

Meanwhile, the April 24 lake opener should provide lots of catch limits at most of the traditionally popular trout-fishing waters throughout the region. Some of the best are in Spokane, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Stevens and Ferry counties where WDFW fish hatchery crews have been especially busy stocking **rainbow**, **cutthroat**, **brown**, **eastern brook**, and **tiger trout**. (All details of fish stocking by water by county are available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants> and complete information about all lakes is available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/prospects/>.)

WDFW central district fish biologist Chris Donley of Spokane expects that Badger and Williams lakes in southwest Spokane County will again be among the top producers. Both rainbow and cutthroat trout to 18 inches will be available. Although both should be excellent on the opener, the Mayfly hatch in mid-May is usually the peak fishing time for these waters.

Donley also predicts West Medical Lake, just west of the town of Medical Lake in southwest Spokane County, will be one of the best opening-day trout lakes in the state. West Medical has been stocked with fry, catchable-size, broodstock and triploid rainbow trout, so catches will run the gamut size-wise.

Fish Lake, northeast of Cheney, should provide excellent fishing on stocked brook and tiger trout on the opener and throughout the season. Two years ago the state record tiger trout, over 14 pounds, was harvested from this lake.

Clear Lake, south of the town of Medical Lake, is also expected to see good action on stocked yearling rainbow, broodstock rainbows, and brown trout. Donley notes that Clear also has good **largemouth bass** and black **crappie** fisheries.

Chapman Lake, south of Cheney, usually provides good catches of rainbow trout and **kokanee** on the opener, but it's best known for late-season action on largemouth and **smallmouth bass** and other warm water species.

Amber Lake, southwest of Cheney, which opened March 1 as a catch-and-release fishery, shifts to a harvest fishery on April 24. Amber is under selective gear rules and a two fish over 14 inches limit, designed to maintain a quality rainbow and cutthroat trout fishery. Anglers must release all trout with missing adipose fin - only unmarked trout may be retained as part of the legal limit.

Donley expects Fishtrap Lake, on the Spokane-Lincoln county line, to be among the best opening-day trout lakes in the state. Fishtrap has fry planted rainbow trout, with larger carryover, **broodstock** and **triploid rainbows** available.

Deer or Deer Springs Lake, northeast of Odessa in Lincoln County, has annual fry and catchable-size rainbow trout plants, along with some brown trout. The access area can be muddy early in the season, but it could provide decent catches on the opener. Fishing for **yellow perch** and **black crappie** can be good, too.

WDFW northeast district fish biologist Bill Baker of Colville expects good performance starting April 24 from a number of Pend Oreille and Stevens county fisheries, many which lie on national forestlands, some with campgrounds.

In Pend Oreille County, Davis Lake, south of Usk, has good early and late season fishing for rainbow and eastern brook trout, kokanee, largemouth bass, and sunfish. Diamond Lake, southwest of Newport, has a cooperative net pen project that releases 12,500 rainbow trout, in addition to WDFW hatchery-stocked catchable-size rainbows and browns. This year, 950 larger triploid and a few broodstock rainbows have been added to Diamond, which also offers action on largemouth bass, yellow perch, and bullheads. Frater Lake, southwest of Ione, should be good for planted cutthroat trout since it was rehabilitated in the fall of 2008 to eliminate illegally introduced tench and pumpkinseed sunfish. Big Meadow Lake, west of Ione, should provide 10-15-inch rainbows from annual spring fry plants.

Other Pend Oreille County lakes that open April 24 and are well stocked with rainbows and/or cutthroat trout include the North and South Skookum lakes, northwest of Usk; Browns Lake northeast of Cusick (fly-fishing only, all motors are prohibited); Carl's Lake, southwest of Tiger; Crescent Lake, north of Metaline Falls, Fan Lake, northeast of Deer Park; Halfmoon Lake, northeast of Usk; Horseshoe Lake, northwest of Elk; Ledbetter Lake, north of Metaline Falls; Leo Lake, southwest of Ione; Marshall Lake, northwest of Newport; Mystic Lake, east of Usk; Nile Lake, southwest of Ione; and Sacheen Lake, southwest of Newport along Highway SR-21.

Yocum Lake, another popular Pend Oreille County lake that opens April 24, has some access limitations early in the season. Lying north of Ruby, across the Pend Oreille River and up LeClerc Creek Road, Yocum has road access on both its north and south ends. But the south road is not available until after May 30 due to road protection efforts by Simpson Lumber Company. A Forest Service road to the north end of the lake provides an alternative route, but it is not suitable for trailers.

In Stevens County, three popular lakes open April 24 for a short catch-and-keep season (through May 31) under selective gear rules - Bayley Lake northeast of Chewelah, Rocky Lake south of Colville, and Starvation Lake southeast of Colville. Both receive annual rainbow trout fry plants that should provide excellent catches before they shift to catch-and-release fishing June 1.

Potter's Pond, north of Colville on the Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge, usually grows large trout from rainbow plants. Baker notes, however, it nearly went dry last fall, so there are no larger carryover fish this year and anglers can only expect fair numbers of 8-10 inch trout.

Waitts Lake, west of Valley along Highway US-395 with a newly improved access area, has seen an increase of rainbow and brown trout plants from a net-pen project, so there's good carryover potential. Largemouth bass, yellow perch, and numerous pumpkinseed sunfish are available as well.

McDowell Lake, southeast of Colville on the Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge, opens April 24 for fly-fishing only and catch-and-release and should provide good angling on large rainbows. McDowell was rehabilitated in the fall of 2006 to eliminate tench and restocked with various rainbow age classes in the spring of 2007.

The Little Pend Oreille chain of lakes northeast of Colville near the Pend Oreille county line - including Gillette, Heritage, Sherry and Thomas - usually produce decent catches of rainbow and tiger trout throughout the season.

Other Stevens County waters that open April 24 that could be good destinations are Cedar Lake, north of Leadpoint; Mudget Lake, south of Fruitland; Black Lake, east of Colville; Deep Lake, southeast of Northport; Elbow Lake, west of Northport; Jump-Off-Joe Lake, south of Chewelah; Little Twin Lake, east of Colville; Loon Lake, northwest of Deer Park; and Summit Lake, northeast of Orient.

A traditional favorite for the opener in Ferry County is Ellen Lake, north of Inchelium, on the Colville National Forest, and it should produce especially well this year. Baker explained that Ellen was rehabilitated in fall 2008 and re-stocked with rainbow trout catchables and fry, so anglers can expect good numbers of fair-sized fish and an occasional larger carryover on the opener.

Long Lake, southwest of Republic, in the Scatter Creek drainage on the Colville National Forest, opens April 24 for fly-fishing only on fry-planted cutthroat trout.

Other good bets in Ferry County for the opener, depending on road access conditions, are Davis Lake, northwest of Boyds; Swan Lake, southwest of Republic; Trout Lake, west of Kettle Falls; Empire and Ward lakes, north of Republic; and Renner Lake, west of Barstow.

In the southeast end of the region, Hood Park Pond in Walla Walla County closes to fishing April 16 - at least for anglers 15 years of age and older. A youth fishing event, coordinated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, takes place at Hood Park Pond on April 17. WDFW hatchery crews will stock trout for the event on April 16, so the closure is to prevent premature harvest of trout dedicated to the kids. Hood Park Pond will re-open to all fishing at 1 p.m. April 17.

Youngsters can still be registered for the "Kids Fish-In" event scheduled for May 1 on Clear Lake in southwest Spokane County. For \$5, kids 5 to 14 years of age can fish and catch up to three trout, and receive a t-shirt and rod and reel. Registration forms are available at WDFW's Spokane Valley office, 2315 N. Discovery Place, or on-line at www.gopaw.org. The event is co-sponsored by the Go Play Outside Alliance of Washington, Fairchild Air Force Base Outdoor Recreation program, Inland Northwest Wildlife Council, Inland Empire Fly Fishing Club, Spokane Fly Fishers, Spokane Walleye Club, White Elephant Stores, Zebco and Eagle Claw.

Northcentral Washington

WDFW Columbia Basin district fish biologist Chad Jackson of Moses Lake says some of the best and most popular lakes in the state that open April 24 are in Grant County.

"The best of the bunch are the large lakes," Jackson said, "like Park, Blue, Warden, and Deep lakes. But don't overlook the smaller waters like South Warden, Perch, and Vic Meyers lakes. They offer some excellent fishing, too. "

Jackson says all lakes have been stocked heavily with **rainbow trout** in preparation for the big opener. Overall, anglers should expect good to excellent fishing for yearling and carryover trout. Catch rates should be around three to four fish per angler at most or all of the opening day lakes.

"Anglers fishing opening day at Warden Lake the last two years have averaged 3.5 fish each," Jackson said. "Warden Lake should fish well again on the opener for fry origin and catchable rainbow trout, now ranging from 11 to 13 inches in length. Carryovers averaged 11.5 percent of the total trout checked in the creel during the last two years and ranged from 15 to 18 inches in length. Hopefully, this trend will occur again for the upcoming opener. Tiger trout are also planted in Warden Lake and should run 12-20 inches by the opener."

South Warden Lake is a much smaller water body at just 24 acres, Jackson says, and those interested in fishing it must make a short hike to the lake from the access site at the south end of Warden Lake. Rainbow trout fry stocked in the spring should average around 12 inches in length. South Warden Lake is best fished from a small hand-carried boat or float tube, but shore fishing can be effective as well.

"Since they were rehabilitated in 2006, Park and Blue lakes have been fishing quite well the past couple years," Jackson said. "Anglers fishing these lakes in 2008 and 2009 averaged near limits of trout, and I expect them to be good again this opening day with three to four trout per angler. Boat anglers usually have higher success than shore anglers at both lakes. Yearling rainbow trout should average a very robust 12 inches with carryovers being at least 15 inches. To sweeten the pot, we'll be adding a small number of 15 to 20-inch triploid rainbow trout just prior to opening day."

Jackson says Deep Lake is probably the region's most unpredictable late April opening fishery.

"For some unknown reason," he said, "Deep Lake anglers either average near limits of trout or less than one trout per angler. Hopefully, anglers fishing Deep Lake this year will experience excellent fishing for fry origin and catchable rainbow trout ranging from 11 to 13 inches."

Jackson noted an extra 2,500 catchable rainbow trout and 221 triploids will be planted into Deep Lake just prior to opening day. A total of 5,000 rainbow trout fry and 7,500 catchables were already stocked, plus 40,000 **kokanee** fry.

"Kokanee can be anywhere from 12 to 16-plus inches," Jackson said, "and they'll take many of the same fishing gears used to catch rainbow trout. However, the better kokanee fishing usually occurs later in the spring through summer from June through August."

Perch and Vic Meyers lakes are usually pretty constant producers on opening day, Jackson says, both averaging three to four fish per angler. Both are mostly fished from shore, although small hand-carried boats or floats can be used. Yearling trout caught at both fry-stocked lakes usually average around 12 inches in length. The catch rate for carryover trout of 15 inches or greater is considerably better at Vic Meyers Lake.

WDFW Okanogan district fish biologist Bob Jateff of Twisp reports some of the best production trout waters on the April 24 opener are Pearygin Lake near Winthrop, Conconully Lake and Reservoir and Alta Lake near Brewster, Fish Lake on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area, and Wannacut Lake near Oroville.

Good opening day selective gear waters are Big Twin Lake near Winthrop and Blue Lake on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. Two popular fly-fishing lakes opening April 24 are Chopaka near Loomis and Aeneas near Tonasket. Rainbow trout are the predominant species in all four of these lakes.

Jateff also reports that Spectacle Lake, which opened April 1, continues to provide good fishing for rainbow trout 11-13 inches.

"Most of these Okanogan County lakes have received some larger rainbows in the one to two pound range," Jateff said, "in addition to their normal fish plants. Year-round Patterson Lake in the Winthrop area will get a plant of catchable size rainbows, as will Leader Lake in the Okanogan area. These two lakes are managed as mixed-species fisheries, so both could also provide some good spiny ray fishing early on."

In Douglas County, Jameson Lake's water quality has improved over the last several weeks, Jateff reports. That means WDFW hatchery crews will be able to stock upwards of 20,000 catchable size rainbow trout in Jameson prior to the April 24 opener.

All details of fish stocking by water and by county are available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants> and complete information about all lakes is available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/prospects/>.

Southcentral Washington

Even though the big statewide late April opener is a "non-event" in this region of mostly year-round lake fisheries, anglers should be aware that WDFW fish hatchery crews do ramp up trout stocking at many waters now.

WDFW district fish biologist Paul Hoffarth of Pasco notes large **triploid rainbow trout** are going into three Tri-Cities area lakes - Dalton Lake, off the Pasco-Kahlotus Highway; Columbia Park Pond, a juvenile-only fishery in Columbia Park in Kennewick; and Powerline Lake, a walk-in only lake in north Franklin county near Mesa.

"These big trout weigh in excess of one pound each and are scheduled to be planted by mid-April," Hoffarth said. "In addition, large numbers of catchable-size trout will be planted in Dalton, Quarry, and Columbia Park Pond in mid-April."

All details of fish stocking by water by county are available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants> and complete information about all lakes is available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/prospects/>.

Hoffarth also notes the numbers of **spring chinook salmon** moving into the mid and upper Columbia River are starting to rise. Spring chinook seasons are open up to McNary Dam through April - and will open in the Tri-Cities area in late April and the first of May - including sport fisheries in the Yakima River and at WDFW's Ringold Hatchery. Many of these fisheries are listed in the WDFW Fishing Regulations, but others will open or be modified by emergency rule change; for the latest, see <https://fortress.wa.gov/dfw/erules/efishrules/>.

"A one-mile section of shoreline in the Columbia River adjacent to our Ringold Hatchery will open for spring chinook on May 1," Hoffarth said. "Original estimates for the hatchery return was 700-plus adult spring chinook, but it could exceed 2,000."

Hoffarth notes this is the final year the Ringold area will be open for spring chinook, and that it will open to bank-angling only. Daily limit is two hatchery chinook. For all details see the Fishing Rules of Washington at http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regs_seasons.html.

The latest creel survey on the Columbia River John Day Pool (Lake Umatilla) showed an estimated 24 boat trips and 122 bank anglers fishing. The majority of the boats were fishing for **walleye** or **sturgeon** and the bank anglers were primarily fishing for chinook salmon. No catch was reported for salmon.

Fishing for walleye, **smallmouth bass**, and **channel catfish** is picking up in the Columbia, Walla Walla, and Yakima rivers.

Kids fishing events in the region are scheduled for May 1 at Columbia Park Pond in the Tri-Cities and May 8 in the Yakima area. Cost per kid five to 14 years of age is \$5, which includes fishing for stocked rainbow trout and a rod and reel. Pre-registration is required. For the Tri-Cities event, contact Kennewick Recreation at 509-585-4293 or online at www.ci.kennewick.wa.us. For the Yakima event, contact WDFW Southcentral Regional Office, 1701 S. 24th Ave., 509-575-2740 or Yakima Greenway Foundation, Office 111 South 18th St., 509-453-8280. Information on both events is also available at the Go Play Outside Alliance of Washington (GOPAW) website at http://www.gopaw.org/kids_fish-in_program.

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GOOD LUCK!

