

The Guide's Forecast - volume 12 issue number 46

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **November 19th – November 25th, 2010**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- With the Willamette now closed to catch and keep sturgeon fishing, anglers have little choice for good action unless catch and release on the lower Willamette appeals to anglers. Success in the gorge continues to drop and with falling freezing levels, success will continue to plummet.

As of November 16th, water visibility at Willamette Falls was 3.4 feet. About 150 winter steelhead have been counted. Trout fishing is good on the Middle Fork Willamette and will remain so as long as water levels remain fishable. The coho run is over for the year.

Trout fishing has been fair on the McKenzie. Steelheading efforts continue below Leaburg Dam.

Coho are being hooked on the Santiam with results fair to good at times.

The Clackamas was on the rise earlier this week. Eagle Creek produced a few steelhead over the past weekend.

Thanksgiving traditionalists are expected to hit the Sandy next week despite later-running broodstock steelhead. Catches will likely be spotty.

Northwest – Salmon fishing in the Tillamook district continues to disappoint anglers and the effort defines success rates in recent days. Rivers are producing sub-par results despite excellent conditions. Tillamook Bay is effectively over although persistent anglers still have a fair chance at a late run fall chinook.

The Wilson River should be peaking right now but driftboaters are coming up with poor returns on their investment of time. Dark fish are beginning to show in the catches but it appears that the late run that typically graces the Wilson and Kilchis Rivers will fall short of preseason predictions. Another rain freshet is due today but it is clear by now that chinook destined for these systems are somewhat depressed this season.

The Trask has been a staple for much of the fall but success rates are falling on this system as well. Fish are beginning to turn dark here. A winter steelhead was recently caught however, indicating a decent return may be on the way. Steelhead returns often mimic coho returns and it's likely the wild coho return to the Tillamook basin was under-predicted this season.

The Nestucca has been a late season surprise this year as the pre-season forecast was for a poor return. A limited season is in place with driftboaters allowed from Farmer Creek to the tidewater stretch. Another freshet may put this system out of shape until the weekend but the Nestucca may be a fair option for late weekend boaters. This will likely be the last weekend for bright fish but winter steelhead are soon to follow.

Although still several weeks from peak, bright steelhead should be available on the North Fork Nehalem, Necanicum, Wilson, Kilchis, Nestucca and Three Rivers. The season's first hatchery steelhead has been taken on the North Fork Nehalem where anglers witnessed some of the best catches in years last season. Late run wild coho will also be present so be prepared to properly identify species as all wild coho must be released.

Tillamook Bay has few anglers targeting salmon but some effort still exists in the Ghost Hole and Bay City. Bay anglers may find sturgeon fishing more rewarding as the freshwater influx has pushed crab to the sea. The west channel should be bountiful for sturgeon anglers, especially with the upcoming tide series.

Crabbing remains best in the lower Columbia where limits were the rule over the weekend. Success rates should remain favorable until the commercial season opens in early December. All the other estuaries, with the exception of Netarts Bay will likely produce poorly in the coming weeks.

Southwest – Crabbing has been fair to good in bays and estuaries despite recent rain. Ocean crabbing resumes on December 1st.

Chinook have moved out of Winchester Bay upstream into the Umpqua. South Jetty fishers are catching rockfish and surf perch when ocean conditions allow safe access. Chinook fishing has been fair to good on the Umpqua mainstem.

Chinook catches have slowed on the Coos and Coquille. Crabbing has been good in Coos Bay with some taking limits.

Although boat traffic has been moderate, Chinook catches on the Elk and Sixes Rivers have been very slow. A few were taken on plugs late last week but recent rough seas prevented fishing at the mouth.

Rogue Bay is wrapped up for chinook and lower river fishing is slow while the middle river is producing fair steelhead and coho catches. The upper Rogue continues to offer the better action for late-season summer steelhead. Use caution running a driftboat through the old Gold Ray Dam site where a hazardous rapid has formed.

When ocean conditions have allowed offshore access out of Brookings, most anglers are catching rockfish limits although few lingcod have been taken recently with the 120-foot restriction. Chinook fishing has been good in the Chetco River when water conditions have cooperated.

Eastern – Steelheading is slow on the Deschutes but the occasional fish is being landed. Maupin to Warm Springs has been most productive.

The Grande Ronde is producing fair to good catches of steelhead ranging from chrome to colorful.

Although John Day Pool anglers should be coming into their peak season, catches were mediocre this week. Action may remain fair this week with the ensuing weather pattern in the forecast. Bobber and jig will work in the John Day itself but trollers work the pool above the dam.

SW Washington – Dark coho dominate the catches on most SW Washington streams but early arriving steelhead should begin to make a showing in the coming week with the Cowlitz a top option later this month. The Cowlitz is known for its large, early run fish and it likely won't disappoint this season.

Hatchery winter steelhead have returned to the Kalama and Lewis River facilities with the peak just a few weeks away.

The mouth of the Klickitat is still booting out good numbers of quality coho and that should continue through the end of this month. Males are the better choice for quality tablefare.

Columbia River Fishing Report – Sturgeon catch and effort continue to wane near Bonneville where cooler water and air temperatures are clearly having the fall effect on the bite. Keepers, shakers and oversize remain in the area but will become much more lethargic in the coming weeks. Bank anglers are still getting a few keepers near the deadline and boaters are having to work hard to find keepers as many have been culled from the fishery already.

Besides crabbing, steelhead fishing is the only other game in town on the Columbia, and this is taking place in the John Day Pool. Action is picking up and should continue into early December. Drastic weather changes however will slow the momentum with afternoons a bit more likely to produce fair catches than the frigid morning. Trolled plugs dominate the catch here. Anglers also have the option to target steelhead in the lower reaches of the John Day River itself. Bobber and jigs, pink worms or bait is the main technique here.

Meanwhile, crabbing in the estuary was outstanding last weekend. With favorable tides and big numbers of keeper males present, limits were easily had, especially by those with quality bait. The standard Buoy 20 and 22 produced nicely and some crabbers utilized lower Desdemona Sands as well, reporting excellent results.

The Guide's Forecast – Sturgeon effort and catch will continue to decline, especially with the onset of the series of cold fronts due to hit our area early next week. Most anglers like to focus on keepers in the Portland Harbor in the lower Willamette but catch and keep fishing is closed in that area right now, effectively curbing the best keeper option in the area right now. Don't expect good catches anywhere you fish and it will be many months before it improves again.

Fishing for steelhead in the John Day Pool should be fair through the weekend but once the cooler front moves onshore, dropping temperatures and a barometer may curb the bite. Solid colored plugs will likely be most effective this week, especially with the overcast skies. For anglers not familiar with this fishery, there will be other boaters around. Like any fishery there are finer points but overall, it's a pretty simple fishery.

For crabbers in the Astoria area, tides will be on the increase, decreasing the opportune time for participants to harvest their catch. None-the-less, catches should remain outstanding near high and low slack. The fresher the bait, the better. Tuna and salmon carcasses will produce the best but should be caged to keep seals from taking your baits out of your cages. Chicken will work nicely too but likely not as effective as fish.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – With the coho run all but over for the year, there have been 20,000 counted at Willamette Falls. Winter steelhead have only recently started migrating so the count is fewer than 200. Only catch-and-release sturgeon fishing will be allowed in the lower Willamette and Multnomah Channel through the remainder of 2010.

Rain this week is taking its toll on the McKenzie River with water rapidly rising at this writing on November 18th. Winter flows limit options on the Santiams although coho and steelhead are in the system. The river is up even further this week with precipitation.

Limits of hatchery trout as well as the occasional broodstock are being caught at Hagg Lake which will remain open through Sunday, November 21st, on which date it closes until spring.

The Guide's Forecast – Middle Fork Willamette anglers will find trout available. The stretch

from Hills Creek to Lookout Point reservoir has remained in decent shape and the water temperature has been holding in the 50-degree range. Fly fishers should score with nymphs.

Steelhead remain available and are being caught below Leaburg

Spinners have been most effective in hooking coho on the North Santiam while steelhead have been duped by jigs. Pressure has been very light.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – While there are coho in the Clackamas which are bound for Eagle Creek, they are dark this late in the season. Targeting late summers on the Feldheimers to Barton Park stretch would make more sense.

Boaters are advised to use caution on the Sandy while crossing under the I-84 Bridge where higher water levels have submerged pilings. Watch for buoys indicating the location of these hazards. Coho are being taken occasionally on spinners or fly gear with some bright enough to keep and others in poor condition at this time of year.

The Guide's Forecast – The Clackamas is likely to have a few winter steelhead as the numbers at Willamette Falls indicate their presence in the lower Willamette. Winters will soon make an appearance in Eagle Creek as well.

Broodstock steelhead have been the planting stock at the Sandy for several years. These are hatchery progeny of wild steelhead and, as such, will return in a similar fashion as their non-hatchery heritage. Consequently, catching a Thanksgiving steelhead here is a long shot while fishing is likely to be good here in late December into January.

North Coast Fishing Report – Although there have been brief periods of brilliance recently, overall, the late component of Tillamook Bay fall Chinook has been a bit of a bust for most. Most guides are focusing their efforts in the lower Wilson River with sleds or driftboating the upper river or the Trask or Nestucca. No system is stand-out but anglers are having to work hard for their quarry.

Most recently, all river systems that are still viable right now only put out an opportunity or two for most guides last week; and they were in great shape for boating. The brief flurries of activity I mentioned earlier took place in tidewater of the lower Wilson with one guide reporting 5 landed Chinook on Tuesday and another going 3 for 4 on Wednesday in the same location. It's pretty clear however, that when you look at the effort in the lower Wilson, it's a down year, when it should be peak season in tidewater of the Wilson.

The Trask, a staple this season, is going downhill. Guides working the water last week were pleased to get 1 or 2 opportunities for a days effort recently. Fish are beginning to turn dark here. There are still some wild coho present and a winter steelhead was caught here recently.

Tillamook Bay itself is less than impressive with effort waning and a fish rumored about every other day. Most effort is still taking place in the Ghost Hole and a little at Bay City but anglers are putting in long hours for little reward. Although fish are still likely utilizing the west channel, these fish are thought to be destined for the Trask River and that run is certainly winding down.

I have yet to hear any rumors of sturgeon in the west channel of Tillamook Bay but one of the last trips I did over there, I marked numerous fish that were not biting trolled herring. I think

there are good numbers of sturgeon in the bay right now but haven't confirmed that with rod and reel.....yet.

Winter steelhead are here! The North Fork Nehalem is the local gauge for when the run has arrived. ODF&W has already recycled (4) steelhead to the Aldervale Ramp. It's likely the Necanicum, Three Rivers, the Kilchis and Wilson Rivers also have fish with the peak for early season steelhead later in December.

Of course, all this fresh water doesn't do much for the crabbing. It's poor on Tillamook and fair to good on Netarts although the weather has been less than conducive.

The Guide's Forecast – At this writing, our rivers are under siege. Heavy precipitation has inundated river systems but that should inspire some late run Chinook to make appearances in the Wilson, Kilchis, Nestucca and to a lesser degree, the Trask River. As rivers drop, target smaller streams like the Necanicum and Kilchis first, then look to the upper reaches of the larger systems to produce bright fish.

Here's another river-by-river breakdown that we received so much positive feedback from last week:

Fish these in chronological order (assuming the precipitation models come in accurate):

Kilchis, North Fork Nehalem or Necanicum Rivers- All were big at mid-week but should be fishable by Friday. Chinook and early running hatchery steelhead should be available on these systems but dark Chinook, and fewer of them will likely be present on the NF Nehalem. Larger baits of eggs or plugs should be effective. Smaller clusters of eggs should be effective for what few steelhead should be present. We'll get a good idea how good the steelhead run is going to be this season, based on steelhead catches on these smaller streams.

The upper Trask and Wilson Rivers (the upper Nestucca remains closed)- Some bright Chinook and a rare steelhead should be present. Eggs and plugs should be effective with bait producing the best results on the early part of the drop. The Wilson has the highest likelihood of having the brightest fish. Fish lower in the system by the weekend with Sunday likely producing the best results. Plan on picking off lots of leafy debris, especially if you fish these systems on Friday or Saturday.

The lower Nestucca may fish again by late in the weekend but most fish will have shot upstream by then. Steelhead will be hard to catch on the mainstem but should be making their way into Three Rivers in limited numbers this weekend.

Tillamook Bay will likely be a poor option for salmon fishers, especially with the rivers being in good shape. Some fish will likely still be moving through but based on late season success, don't come with high expectations. The Ghost Hole, Bay City and to a lesser degree, the West Channel should all be in play and you may have to put some miles on the boat to find success.

If you're really motivated, dunk some sand shrimp in the west channel on the outgoing tide to see what you hook. There should be some keepers there and if they are present this year like they have been in the past, it likely won't take long to figure it out. You shouldn't have much competition from the crab in the bay; because there shouldn't be many.

If you do want crab in your fish box, hit the lower Columbia but with the stronger tides over the weekend, the frame of opportunity will be somewhat reduced as tides push the buoys under and

crab are less likely to be out and feeding in the stronger flows. Time it right however and limits should be easy near Buoys 20 and 22. Cage your bait!

Central & South Coast Reports – Late-day minus tides over the coming weekend should provide some bay clamming opportunities if the weather isn't too harsh.

While wind and wave action this coming weekend will prevent offshore launches, long-range forecasts indicate moderating conditions and the possibility of ocean access late next week.

Crabbing has been slow to fair in Yaquina Bay.

Alsea steelheaders are scoring chrome near the Five Rivers deadline. Chinook are also being landed with the majority still fairly bright. This popular fishery often becomes crowded.

Tahkenitch coho fishers have been taking a few this week with the Five Mile Arm productive at times. plugs, spoons and spinners will hook fish here but check the weather before making a trip at this time of year.

Siltcoos has been producing coho with several anglers experiencing good catches for the season although the individual days have been hot or cold depending on whether or not the fish are on the move.

Crabbing has been good in Winchester Bay but the freshet occurring this week may hamper results. Chinook are scattered on the mainstem Umpqua and catches have been fair to good at times. There are coho in the system but they're mostly wild, making it primarily a catch-and-release fishery. Fishing on the North Umpqua has been slow this week.

Coos Bay Chinook fishing has slowed to a crawl with fish upriver now. Crabbing has been very good but may take a hit from a front moving in late this week. While no winter steelhead catches have been reported, this is one of the locations which is expected to deliver for Thanksgiving.

Coquille Chinook fishing has been slow.

The Elk and Sixes remained low and clear as of Wednesday this week although sufficient rain fell overnight and into Thursday this week to raise the levels and add some color. Chinook fishing should be good. High winds have continued to buffet the area. For daily Elk River levels, call 541-332-0405.

With the Chinook run occurring early in the Rogue system, it's over for the 2010 season now. The lower river at Agness is slow. Anglers on the middle Rogue are taking mostly-native coho on plugs and spinners and steelheading has been fair. Steelheading is fair to good on the upper Rogue although pressure has been light.

Chetco Chinook anglers have taken fish to 40 pounds this week. Bobber and bait has been a gig fish killer at Social Security Bar. The water level and flow have been low, but a front moving in on Thursday this week has the level spiking so there should be a fresh flush of Chinook coming in. In the coming week, Chinook should be entering the tributaries and will be spawning in December. Winter steelhead will become of interest around the middle of December with the Chetco producing winters into February and March.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Pressure is very light as steelheading has remained slow on the

Deschutes with better results near the mouth. As of mid-week, the river was muddy as the White has been spewing mud.

Mackinaw continue to be taken at Crescent by patient downrigger trollers.

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report for November 2010

North Puget Sound

Anglers will continue to find some coho in the region's rivers and streams, while out on Puget Sound more areas are scheduled to open for chinook fishing, as well as late-season crab opportunities.

At 8 a.m. on Nov. 15, marine areas 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca), 9 (Admiralty Inlet), 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) and 12 (Hood Canal) will reopen for sport crabbing seven days a week through Jan. 2, 2011.

Crab fishing will also remain open seven days a week through Jan. 2 in marine areas 4 (Neah Bay), 5 (Sekiu), and 13 (south Puget Sound), where the fishery has continued uninterrupted since June 18.

Sport crabbing will not reopen this year in marine areas 7 (San Juan Islands), 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay), 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) and 11 (Tacoma/Vashon Island), where the summer catch reached the annual quota, said Rich Childers, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) shellfish policy coordinator.

The daily catch limit in Puget Sound is five Dungeness crab, males only, in hard-shell condition with a minimum carapace width of 6¼ inches. In addition, fishers may catch six red rock crab of either sex per day, provided those crab measure at least 5 inches across. Additional information is available on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/shellfish/crab/> .

While on the Sound, why not fish for blackmouth ? Beginning Nov. 1, opportunities for blackmouth will increase, as marine areas 8-1, 8-2 and 9 open for chinook. Anglers fishing those marine areas, as well as Marine Area 10, have a two-salmon daily limit, but must release wild chinook salmon. Anglers are reminded that Marine Area 7 closes to salmon retention Nov. 1.

Saltwater anglers fishing for chum salmon may want to try waters around Point No Point (north end of the Kitsap Peninsula) and Possession Bar (southern portion of Whidbey Island). Those two areas of Marine Area 9 are often hotspots for chum salmon in early November.

Meanwhile, several rivers are open for salmon fishing, including the Snohomish, Skykomish, Stillaguamish, Snoqualmie and Wallace. Anglers fishing those rivers have a daily limit of two coho. The Skagit, Cascade, Green (Duwamish) and Nooksack also are open for salmon but regulations vary for each river. For details, check WDFW's sportfishing regulations pamphlet at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regulations/>.

For trout anglers, Beaver Lake near Issaquah could be the best place to cast for rainbows in November. About 2,300 hatchery rainbows - averaging 2 to 3 pounds each - are scheduled to be released into the lake Nov. 8. Beaver Lake, which is one of several westside lowland lakes open to fishing year-round, is best fished by small boat, although anglers also can be successful fishing from shore.

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

Nov. 1 Update: Coho retention on the Nisqually River closes Nov. 1.

Anglers fishing for salmon often turn their attention to chum in November, when the run usually peaks around the middle of the month. But shellfish also take center stage with more areas of Puget Sound re-open for sport crabbing and two razor clam openings on the calendar for November.

The first evening razor clam dig has been approved at Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis, Mocrocks and Kalaloch. Opening dates and evening low tides are:

- Nov. 5, Fri. - 6:41 p.m., (-1.4 ft.), Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis, Mocrocks, Kalaloch
- Nov. 6, Sat. - 7:26 p.m., (-1.6 ft.), Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis, Mocrocks, Kalaloch
- Nov. 7, Sun. - 7:11 p.m., (-1.5 ft.), Twin Harbors
- Nov. 8, Mon. - 7:55 p.m., (-1.2 ft.), Twin Harbors

Later in the November, razor clammers will have another opportunity at Long Beach and Twin Harbors. Tentative opening dates and evening low tides for that dig are:

- Nov. 20, Sat. - 5:39 p.m., (-0.4 ft.), Long Beach, Twin Harbors
- Nov. 21, Sun. - 6:17 p.m., (-0.7 ft.), Long Beach, Twin Harbors

Clam diggers are reminded that they should take lights or lanterns for the nighttime digs and to check weather and surf forecasts before heading out. No digging will be allowed before noon on any of the five razor-clam beaches. Harvesters are allowed to take no more than 15 razor clams and must keep the first 15 they dig, regardless of size or condition. Each digger's clams must be kept in a separate container.

All diggers age 15 or older must have an applicable 2010-11 fishing license to harvest razor clams on any beach. Licenses, ranging from a three-day razor clam license to an annual combination fishing license, are available on WDFW's website at <https://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov> and from license vendors around the state. More razor clam digs are tentatively scheduled Dec. 3-6 and Dec. 31-Jan. 2.

Rather catch crab ? At 8 a.m. on Nov. 15, marine areas 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca), 9 (Admiralty Inlet), 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) and 12 (Hood Canal) will reopen for sport crabbing seven days a week through Jan. 2, 2011.

Crab fishing will also remain open seven days a week through Jan. 2 in marine areas 4 (Neah Bay), 5 (Sekiu), and 13 (south Puget Sound), where the fishery has continued uninterrupted since June 18.

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The daily catch limit in Puget Sound is five Dungeness crab, males only, in hard-shell condition with a minimum carapace width of 6¼ inches. In addition, fishers may catch six red rock crab of

either sex per day, provided those crab measure at least 5 inches across. Additional information is available on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/shellfish/crab/> .

Recreationists on the Sound can also pursue blackmouth - resident chinook. Beginning Nov. 1, anglers fishing marine areas 5 (Sekiu), 11 (Tacoma-Vashon Island) and 13 (South Puget Sound) can keep one chinook as part of a two-salmon daily limit. However, salmon fishing in Marine Area 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca) is only open through Oct. 31.

Elsewhere, anglers fishing Hood Canal (Marine Area 12) have a daily limit of four salmon, but only one of those fish can be a chinook.

November is when the action heats up in the region for chum salmon . Popular fishing spots include the Hoodsport Hatchery area of Hood Canal and the mouth of Kennedy Creek in Totten Inlet. Other areas where anglers can find chum salmon include the Dosewallips and Duckabush rivers in Jefferson County and Minter Creek in Pierce/Kitsap Counties. Those three rivers open for salmon fishing Nov. 1.

Meanwhile, salmon fisheries remain open through Nov. 30 on the Bogachiel, Sol Duc, Calawah, Dickey, Clearwater and Hoh rivers. Also open for salmon fishing through November, are the Elk, Hoquiam and Johns rivers and Joe Creek in Grays Harbor County; and the Bear and Niawiakum rivers in Pacific County. In Mason County, the Skokomish River is open for salmon fishing through Dec. 15.

Anglers should be aware that the Nisqually River, from the mouth to the military tank crossing bridge (located one mile upstream of mouth of Muck Creek), closes to coho retention Nov. 1. For more information, see the rule change at <http://bit.ly/buK23R>.

Winter steelhead fisheries get under way in November on several rivers, including the Bogachiel, Calawah, Sol Duc, Quillayute and Hoh. Beginning Nov. 1, anglers fishing those rivers have a daily limit of three hatchery steelhead. "Traditionally, the winter steelhead fishery doesn't really get going until later in November," said Bob Leland, WDFW's steelhead program manager. "Anglers can certainly find some steelhead early in the month, but around Thanksgiving is when fishing usually starts to improve."

Grays Harbor-area rivers, such as the Satsop, Wynoochee and Humptulips, also are good bets for anglers once steelhead start to arrive, said Leland.

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

Southwest Washington

Thanksgiving Day traditionally marks the start of the popular winter steelhead fishery, although some anglers started working their favorite rivers well ahead of time. A number of area rivers have been open to fishing for hatchery steelhead for months, and catch totals have been rising since mid-October.

That tally will likely increase even faster now that the first big storm of the season has soaked the region with heavy rains, said Joe Hymer, a fish biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

"Steelhead move upriver on pulses of water, and the storm really helped to prime the pump," Hymer said. "Now that the ground is good and wet, we can expect to see more and more fish move upstream every time the sky opens up and the rivers start to swell."

Major destinations for hatchery-reared steelhead moving up the Columbia River are the Cowlitz, Kalama, Lewis (east and north forks), Washougal, Elochoman and Grays rivers, along with Salmon Creek in Clark County, he said. Other waters opening for steelhead fishing Nov. 1 are Abernathy, Coal and Germany creeks, the Coweeman River and Cedar Creek in Clark County and Mill Creek in Cowlitz County.

Only hatchery-reared steelhead, which have a clipped adipose fin, may be retained in regional waters. All wild, unmarked fish must be released unharmed.

But until Thanksgiving - or whenever steelhead begin to arrive en masse - late-run coho salmon may be the best target for anglers who want to catch fish. While the coho run has peaked, those fish should generate some action on the mainstem Columbia and many of its tributaries right through November, Hymer said.

"These are fairly large fish, some weighing up to 20 pounds apiece," he said. "The trick is getting them to bite. The best time is when they are moving upriver, drawn by high water. Otherwise, it can be hard to get their attention."

State regulations allow anglers to catch and keep up to six adult coho salmon per day on the Elochoman, Cowlitz, Klickitat, Kalama, Lewis and Washougal rivers, as well as the lower portion of the Grays River. Several rivers also remain open for chinook salmon, although some close Oct. 31.

Effective that day, the No. 5 fishway on the Klickitat River closes upstream to chinook fishing, the Wind River closes to all salmon fishing, and the stretch of the Columbia River from Beacon Rock to Bonneville Dam closes to all fishing for both salmon and steelhead. For additional information on fishing seasons, see the Fishing in Washington rules pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regulations/>).

Other fishing options in the days before - and possibly after - Thanksgiving include:

- Sturgeon: Anglers reeled in nearly 1,500 legal-size sturgeon from the lower Columbia River above the Wauna powerlines during the first three weeks of October. As of Oct. 17, there were 841 fish available for harvest for the remainder of the year. The fishery is open Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays until the quota is met. Before heading out, anglers are advised to check the WDFW website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regulations/>) to make sure the fishery is still open for retention of white sturgeon.
- Cowlitz cutthroats: October is prime time to catch sea-run cutthroat trout on the Cowlitz River, but the fish usually keep biting through November, Hymer said. The best fishing is from Blue Creek near the trout hatchery on downriver, he said. "Sea-run cutthroat are aggressive, hard-fighting fish," he said. "They'll take flies, bait, lures - practically anything you throw at them." Anglers may retain up to five hatchery-reared cutthroats per day as part of the daily trout limit on the lower Cowlitz River, where the fish generally range from 12 to 20 inches.
- Swift Reservoir: Anglers fishing the reservoir have continued to reel in some nice rainbows averaging 12-13 inches. The fishery is open through Nov. 30.

In addition, WDFW has approved one razor-clam dig set to begin Nov. 5 at all five coastal beaches and has tentatively scheduled another opening later in the month.

See the South Sound/Olympic Peninsula regional report above for tentative beach openings. Check the WDFW website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/>) or the toll-free Shellfish Hotline (866-880-5431) for final word on the scheduled dig.

Eastern Washington

Snake River steelheading was slow in October, but could pick up in the weeks ahead, said Joe Bumgarner, a WDFW fish biologist. Anglers have been averaging 30 to 50 hours per steelhead - a far cry from last year when steelheaders were catching fish in a fraction of that time.

Even the mouth of the Grand Ronde River, which traditionally provides some of the best fishing, has been slow. Catch rates for the fall chinook fishery, which tends to be incidental to steelhead fishing, have also been slow on the Snake River system.

Warmer temperatures through late October may be part of the problem, Bumgarner said.

"The good news is that there are lots of steelhead here and the weather is changing," he said. "At last count there were more than 190,000 steelhead over Lower Granite Dam, with 800 to 1,200 a day still coming up. With the rain and colder temperatures we're just starting to get now, November could be the month of steelheading here."

Although many of the region's top trout-fishing lakes are closed by November, there are a couple of exceptions and several year-round-open waters worth trying. Southwest Spokane County's Amber Lake remains open through the end of November for catch-and-release, selective gear fishing for rainbow and cutthroat trout . Waitts Lake in Stevens County is open through February and provides rainbow and brown trout, largemouth bass , and yellow perch .

Big net-pen-reared rainbow trout and some kokanee are available in Lake Roosevelt, the Columbia River reservoir off Grand Coulee Dam, which is open year-round. Large rainbows continue to provide action at Sprague Lake, the big year-round waterway that sprawls across the Lincoln-Adams county line just south of Interstate 90.

Fly fishers have reported that rainbow trout are biting at year-round-open Z-Lake off Telford Road on the WDFW Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area in Lincoln County.

Rock Lake in Whitman County, open year-round, is still producing catches of rainbow and brown trout , along with some largemouth bass .

Trout, bass, crappie, perch , and other species are available at Spokane County's year-round-open Eloika, Newman and Silver lakes.

Northcentral Washington

The steelhead fishery on the upper Columbia River and its tributaries slowed a bit in late October, but anglers will have another river to try in the weeks ahead. Starting Nov. 1, the Similkameen River will open to fishing for hatchery-reared steelhead from the mouth to 400 feet below Enloe Dam. Selective gear and night closure rules are in effect for the Similkameen River.

Above Wells Dam, anglers have been averaging one steelhead for every ten hours of fishing on the mainstem Columbia River and its tributaries, reports WDFW district fish biologist Bob Jateff of

Twisp. "Remember there's mandatory retention of adipose-fin-clipped hatchery steelhead and a four-fish daily limit," he said. "All fish with adipose fins intact must be released and cannot be completely removed from the water prior to release."

Jateff also reported that a few lowland lakes are still open for catch-and-release trout fishing through the month of November - Big and Little Green lakes near Omak, and Rat Lake near Brewster. Selective gear rules are in effect for all three lakes.

Anglers interested in catching yellow perch could try Patterson Lake near Winthrop, said Jateff, noting that the fish average seven to eight inches. "There's no daily limit and no minimum size," he said. "We encouraged anglers to retain all perch caught regardless of size."

Several year-round waters in the region can provide decent fishing opportunity during the month of November. Banks Lake has a little bit of everything - smallmouth and largemouth bass, crappie, yellow perch, walleye, kokanee, even lake whitefish. Moses Lake and Potholes Reservoir have most of the same, plus net-pen-reared rainbow trout.

Southcentral Washington

Fresh from a record catch of fall chinook, anglers fishing the Hanford Reach in late October were having a tough time hooking up with hatchery steelhead. That doesn't bode well for fishing opportunities in November, when steelhead are the main attraction for anglers in that section of the Columbia River, said Paul Hoffarth, a fish biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

"Steelhead fishing has been unusually slow at a time when it should be ramping up," Hoffarth said. "We've been seeing 20 anglers come in with one fish among them."

While the forecast is below the 10-year average, it does not fully account for low number of hatchery steelhead in angler's creels in the Reach, Hoffarth said. Both creel surveys and counts at the Ringold Fish Hatchery indicate a dearth of one-salt fish returning from the ocean for the first time.

Although counts of two-salt fish are generally on track, one-salt fish generally make up about three-quarters of the catch, Hoffarth said. "I hope I'm wrong, but it looks like we could be in for another tough month of steelhead fishing in this area."

Starting Nov. 1, the daily catch limit is two hatchery steelhead, which can be identified by their clipped adipose fins. All unmarked steelhead must be released unharmed.

The slow start for steelhead in the Hanford Reach stands in stark contrast to the record catch of fall chinook from McNary Dam to Priest Rapids Dam this year. Through Oct. 22, when that fishery closed, anglers caught an estimated 10,000 adult chinook, along with 1,360 jacks and four coho, Hoffarth said. He estimates that approximately 90,000 fall chinook returned to the Reach this year.

Anglers fishing the Yakima River also caught an estimated 230 adult chinook, 25 jacks and 23 coho before that fishery closed Oct. 22.

Fisheries remain open for both salmon and hatchery steelhead in most areas of the Columbia River downstream from McNary Dam. For daily limits and other regulations, see WDFW's Fishing in Washington rules pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regulations/>).

Hoffarth said walleye fishing should also be productive through the end of November, before the cold sets in. He recommends trolling upstream at night.

TGF Inbox - Reader E-mail

Dan O had written recently asking for information on coastal Chinook fishing. This week we heard from him again in this update: "I wanted to thank you for the info you shared with me. I have been having considerable success on Siltcoos, pics are attached. All have come on trolling black wiggle warts."

Here's one of the photos Dan sent.



Reader Mike T. wrote to ask, "On the Crooked right now, dry flies? Nymphs? What works this time of year?"

TGF co-editor Michael Teague responded, "The Crooked has been fishing well as it often does through the winter. Whether nymphs or dries will depend upon the prevailing weather and presence (or absence) of hatches.

"This time of year you can expect to see Blue-Winged Olives hatching and when that occurs, definitely try a dry fly in that pattern, being careful to gauge the size according to the bugs you see. You're also likely to see some midges. If there's no surface activity or signs of a hatch then it's time to tie on a nymph.

"Fishing will be good on the Crooked whenever there hasn't been much fluctuation in level for a couple of days.

"Thanks for writing and I hope this has been of some help."

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

Write to the TGF staff:

Bob Rees: brees@pacifier.com

Doug Rees: doug@TheGuidesForecast.com

Michael Teague: Michael@TheGuidesForecast.com

Random Links

River flow & height:

http://stream-flow.allaboutrivers.com/Oregon/river_flow-sOR.html#23

GOOD LUCK!