

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **April 1st – April 7th, 2011**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro - Since the lower Columbia cleared due to the dropping flows of the Willamette River, the better action has taken place from Kalama to Westport Oregon. Anglers both trolling and anchor fishing with plugs have been faring well. Anglers still working the water around I-5 and the airport are still catching an occasional fish but some are reporting seeing no fish caught after a full day's effort.

April 4th will be the last day to fish the lower Columbia River from Buoy 10 to Bonneville Dam. With the high percentage of upper Columbia bound fish in the catch this year, anglers couldn't expect additional time after the closure. The stretch above Bonneville will remain open until April 24th or until the catch guideline of 1050 fish are retained.

Sturgeon anglers working the gorge for sturgeon was an upsurge in success. Effort remained low but success for keepers was good. The Portland to Longview stretch was productive as well.

Winter and summer steelhead are crossing Willamette Falls in fair numbers with a few springers accompanying. Spring chinook results have been on one day, off the next on the lower Willamette. Oregon City anglers are beginning to see catches improve but additional rainfall may put the river out again. With the upswing in earlier returning 5-year old fish, the peak may come a bit earlier this year. Look for the Willamette to be the go to spot for spring chinook when the water is running clear.

Lower McKenzie water levels rose slightly over the past weekend but the river will fall into good shape this week. Water temperature remains in the lower 40s.

Water conditions should be worthwhile this week on the Santiam systems. Fair numbers of wild winters are available along with a very few summer steelhead.

Sandy steelheaders took fish over the past weekend with jigs and drifted roe drawing strikes.

The Clackamas has been getting a good deal of pressure although catches have only been fair. Bobber and jig has been effective at times but side-drifters are taking the lion's share.

Northwest – Steelheaders remain frustrated at water conditions on the north coast. Smaller streams are fishing best but anglers wanting a hatchery option will be out of luck until late in the weekend at the earliest. Flows are forecast to be high for the rest of the week so fish should be well distributed throughout most river systems.

The Wilson and Nestucca Rivers will remain fair hatchery steelhead options through mid-April. Summer steelhead may also be making their way into the Wilson and Nestucca Rivers. Spring chinook retention is allowed in the Tillamook Basin beginning April 1st. Fishing isn't likely to pick up until mid-May however.

Smolt releases began this week so anglers fishing bait targeting steelhead may find it challenging to keep the hungry juveniles off. Trout season doesn't open until late May due to mis-identification of smolts by novice anglers.

Sturgeon anglers caught some keepers on Tillamook Bay over the last tide series. Good tides

won't return for a while however so anglers may turn their focus to crabbing in Netarts Bay. Other estuaries will likely produce poor results due to the influx of fresh water from the last rain freshet.

Bass may begin to stir as temperatures warm this week. Many north coast lakes now harbor largemouth bass and trout imitations may take some of the larger ones.

Southwest – Offshore trips were not a possibility due to rough ocean conditions over the past week and the forecast for the coming week does provide reason for optimism. Ocean salmon fishing is open, bottom fishing outside the 40-fathom line closes on March 31st. Only one cabezon per day is allowed as part of the seven-rockfish per day limit starting April 1st.

South coast surf fishing is heating up, yielding limits of striped perch recently. Pinkfin surf perch, preferred for their table quality, will be showing in greater number shortly.

Avoid a \$200 fine - get those studded tires off your fishing rig before April 5th.

Steelheading has been fair to good on the North and South Umpqua when water levels are falling.

Slow crabbing in Winchester Bay will improve as the Umpqua drops and salinity levels improve in the estuary.

Boat launching facilities are up and running following tsunami damage in the Port of Brookings. Waters of the Chetco River closed to salmon and steelhead retention on the last day of March to reopen in June. Trout fishing is closed until May 28th.

Elk River steelheaders did well when water conditions were good recently although about half the fish hooked were spawned out and heading back to sea.

Lower Rogue fishers did well over the past week for a mix of mostly-hatchery spring chinook and mostly-bright winter steelhead. When a storm front hit over the past weekend, the river blew out but is expected to settle down and fish well this week with catches further improving as the water temperature climbs into the lower 50s. Muddy water has hampered steelheading efforts in the middle Rogue at what is potentially the peak of the season here. Upper Rogue steelheaders stand a good chance at a hookup as conditions improve this week.

Eastern – Pro guide Mac Huff (800-940-3688) reports that while steelheading is winding down with two weeks remaining, fishing has been very good on the Grande Ronde.

The middle Deschutes is expected to remain somewhat high until irrigation begins around mid-April. A few brown trout have been taken with nymphing most effective.

High water has prevented any effort on the Crooked River but good results are expected when the flow drops.

Fall River fly anglers have experienced good results using nymphs.

SW Washington – Steelheading in the district has slowed somewhat as flows are on the rise from recent rains. Water releases on the Cowlitz this week will dampen steelhead catches but there are a few spring chinook in the system when flows come back down.

The Kalama and Lewis will remain options for steelhead and spring chinook should begin to show on these systems as well. Action should improve when flows subside.

Although salmon counts at Bonneville are improving, action at Drano Lake and Wind River likely won't pick up until late April. Predicted numbers of returning chinook however point to a more challenging season.

Columbia River Fishing Report – As expected, sport anglers posted their best week of the season this week with consistent catches coming from the Portland to Longview stretch of the lower Columbia. **Pro guide Brandon McGavran (360-607-1327)** reported a boat limit on Tuesday trolling herring on the incoming tide near Kalama. Brandon did try anchor fishing with plugs for a good part of the outgoing tide but didn't get a grab. **Russ Hughes** reported good action on Wednesday (yes, just after the gillnets fished) going 3 for 4 for 3 rods fishing. Most of the fish were hooked in about 19 feet of water using the chrome/chartreuse head K-15 Kwikfish around Prescott Beach across from the Kalama River on the Oregon side.

Anglers that are reporting consistent results are doing so from the stretch downstream of the mouth of the Willamette. What's becoming pretty evident is that when the Willamette is running clear enough, the better action is downstream of the confluence of the Willamette system. The boats fishing the estuary reported good fishing over the weekend. ODF&W creel checks were as follows:

Gorge Bank:

Weekend checking showed no catch for five bank anglers.

Gorge Boats:

No report.

Troutdale Boats:

Weekend checking showed six adipose fin-clipped spring chinook kept, plus one unclipped spring chinook released for 102 boats (257 anglers).

Portland to Longview Bank:

Weekend checking showed 11 adipose fin-clipped spring chinook and 14 adipose fin-clipped steelhead kept, plus four unclipped spring chinook and two unclipped steelhead released for 245 bank anglers.

Portland to Longview Boats:

Weekend checking showed 80 adipose fin-clipped spring chinook and one adipose fin-clipped steelhead kept, plus 21 unclipped spring chinook released for 256 boats (726 anglers).

Estuary Bank: (Clatsop Spit to Wauna Powerlines):

Weekend checking showed one adipose fin-clipped spring chinook and two adipose fin-clipped steelhead kept, plus one unclipped steelhead released for eight bank anglers.

Estuary Boats (Tongue Point to Wauna Powerlines):

Weekend checking showed 21 adipose fin-clipped spring chinook and one adipose fin-clipped steelhead kept, plus four unclipped spring chinook released for 42 boats (115 anglers).

Bonneville Pool:

No report.

The Dalles Pool:

Weekly checking showed two adipose fin-clipped spring chinook kept, plus one unclipped spring chinook and one unclipped steelhead released for 35 bank anglers.

John Day Pool:

Weekly checking showed one adipose fin-clipped steelhead kept for 14 bank anglers.

You can see by the check, the best fishing clearly occurred in the estuary but guides reported good catches up to Rainier. Despite what most would deem a fair-at-best fishery this season, the lower Columbia below Bonneville is slated to close after April 4th. This means that the last day TO fish is Monday, April 4th.

Although most anglers have been using herring for the early season fish, high water and repeated success has brought anglers fishing in shallower water and using plugs to lure fish to bite. This strategy has paid dividends lately as many anglers are reporting success. Although success hasn't typically come when most would expect. Strong outgoing tides usually produce the best results but anglers waiting out the incoming tide have proven it's a good strategy. This may be due to the fact we have higher than average river flows for this time of year. When the flow slows on the incoming tide, fish may be more likely to move and thus, come across your wiggling plug. There may also be something to a slower wiggling plug versus a fast one.

At any rate, the fishing is good but that will soon come to an end after the weekend. Some guides have also reported a noticeable difference in the grade of the fish. The 4-year olds have begun to show so it's become more challenging to get fish over 20 pounds. But they're springers! How much more do you want? One guide recently reported landing more fish over 30 pounds than he ever has before. It's pretty clear by now that the 5-year old component of the run is good on the Columbia as well as it's forecasted on the Willamette. The start of the 4-year old returns marks the mid-way point (at least this year) for the bulk of the run to come through. It's true however that the 4-year old component is much more prevalent on the Columbia versus the Willamette. The Columbia run typically averages about 80/20 in favor of the smaller fish while this year on the Willamette, better than 50% of the fish returning are forecasted to be 5-year old fish. Those are quality numbers.

Upriver of Portland, anglers continue to struggle to find success as biters get culled from downriver fisheries. It likely won't get any better this week either so if this is your favorite area to fish, patience will be required.

Sturgeon anglers saw a pretty serious up-tick in success this week for reasons I can't explain. Although most of the effort remained focused on salmon, you can't overlook the numbers of keepers anglers targeting sturgeon posted over the weekend. Not your typical results for this time of year but who's good at predicting fishing anyway? Here's the ODF&W weekend sturgeon creel check. These numbers are real:

Gorge Bank:

Weekend checking showed no catch for four bank anglers.

Gorge Boats:

Weekend checking showed six legal white sturgeon kept, plus one legal, seven oversize and 20 sublegal sturgeon released for one boat (six anglers).

Troutdale Boats:

Weekend checking showed no catch for one boat (four anglers).

Portland to Longview Bank:

No report.

Portland to Longview Boats:

Weekend checking showed three legal white sturgeon kept, plus four oversize and 41 sublegal sturgeon released for two boats (seven anglers).

Bonneville Pool:

Closed for retention. No report.

The Dalles Pool:

Weekly checking showed one legal white sturgeon kept, plus three sublegal sturgeon released for 24 bank anglers; and 26 sublegal sturgeon released for eight boats (18 anglers).

John Day Pool:

Weekly checking showed three legal white sturgeon kept, plus six sublegal sturgeon released for 86 bank anglers; and 18 legal white sturgeon kept, one legal, one oversize and 29 sublegal sturgeon released for 34 boats (81 anglers).

Who was lucky enough to fish in that boat that was in the gorge? Limits for all and another keeper throw back? Who'd a thunk it? Shakers a plenty remain near the mouth of the Willamette River but keepers remain hard to come by near Kelly Point Park.

Crabbing is beginning to slow in the estuary but softer tides this week should improve opportunities.

The Guide's Forecast – It will be "all in" this weekend on the lower Columbia. Anglers are likely to keep fishing where they have good history but those that exercise their lower river options are likely to score the best results.

Westport Oregon is a great place to fish from and it will likely be the mid-point for good fishing opportunities this weekend. Puget Island as well as Tenasillahe Island (Clifton Channel) should produce fair to good results for anglers working plugs in the shallows and trolling herring on the flood. Outgoing tides this week aren't as strong as they were last week so plug plunkers should feel confident fishing them in shallower water. Anglers used to fishing hardware for chinook in the mainstem (especially in the fall) typically target deep water. With the high and cool flows we're experiencing in the river this year, don't be afraid to target chinook in the shallower water this week. The strongest part of the tide usually sends fish to the rivers edges, where fish don't have to burn precious calories to make their journey upstream.

Kalama and Caterpillar Island will also be good bets this weekend but keep in mind, the further upstream you go, the more biters will be culled out of the fishery. Use plugs or bait to draw fish in, the river remains too cold for hardware this early in the season. Don't plan on fishing the river by yourself. With catches ramping up and the season winding down, you'll have company out there.

I-5 and airport anglers will continue to have a tough time producing consistent catches. Fish will surely be present but motivated fish will have passed by hundreds of lures and baits before they get to yours in this reach of the Columbia. Plug fisherman may do good along the islands in this area of river however. Target your fishing time around low slack and incoming tide.

If we haven't said it enough, the season is closing after the day's fishing ends on Monday, April 4th.

If you fish the I-5, Davis Bar reach of the Columbia, you may want to bring your sturgeon gear as biters are likely to be present. Anglers motivated by keeper options may want to explore the gorge this weekend however as the recent ODF&W report indicates that there are fish present and willing. If you don't get a boat load of keepers, shakers are still commonplace right now. Remember, the Willamette is not an option right now for anglers seeking keepers.

Above Bonneville fishers may start to see a slight increase in dam passage. Eighty-one adults have been tallied at Bonneville through early this week. A far cry from what's to come but anglers upstream are already catching a few fish (see The Dalles Pool report). Drano Lake and the Wind River fishery are several weeks away from consistent results.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Level and flow started increasing Tuesday this week with rainfall and snow melt. Of greatest impact on springer fishing, visibility deteriorated as volume increased. Spring Chinook results were decent early in the week while the water was fairly clear and the lower river somewhat stable, but that concurrence of events lasted only a few days. About 600 summer steelhead have been counted at Willamette Falls along with 18 spring Chinook. Winter steelhead crossing is ongoing with the total for the year over 5,400 which is a darned good number.

Flow at the McKenzie River increased from around 5,000 cfs to nearly 7,000 cfs overnight on March 28th. This is due primarily to warming temperatures which triggered snowmelt.

The Santiam system is high this week as with all the valley rivers but has started dropping and will continue to improve over the week to come.

Scheduled for trout planting this week are Alton Baker Canal, Cottage Grove Reservoir, Creswell Pond, Dexter Reservoir, East Freeway Lake, Foster Reservoir, Walling Pond, Walter Wirth Lake and St Louis Pond. Hagg Lake will receive 200 one-pounders from Desert Springs Fish Hatchery this week according the ODFW.

ODFW sez, "The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife will host free Family Fishing Event this Saturday at Canby Pond. The department will be stocking the pond with 800 legal-sized rainbow trout and 200 larger trout. Staff and volunteers will be on hand from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. to provide equipment and instruction to participating youths."

Lamiglas will be hosting a **FREE** rod building seminar Friday, April 8th 6 P.M. to 9 P.M. and Saturday April 9th 8 A.M. to 6 P.M. All levels of builders and first-timers are welcome to come. Email kendra@lamiglas.com or call 1-800-325-9436 ext 212 for information or to make a reservation. Lamiglas is located at 1400 Atlantic Avenue in Woodland, WA.

The Guide's Forecast – With the lousy visibility on the lower Willamette, it will be a while before it fishes well although plunkers at Meldrum Bar took a couple today (!). On the other hand, there's little effort. It will remain a herring drag for trollers until the water warms and hardware becomes effective. The Columbia closure is looming April 4th so the lower Willamette will be crowded from April 5th until the Columbia re-opens once the numbers are sorted. Then again, with the commercial nets taking fewer than half the expected numbers on Tuesday this week (1,264 taken, 2700 predicted), Willy springer hopefuls may have to get used to some extra company for a while. Or worse, and extended closure. Look for details in Monroe's column this Sunday.

The McKenzie River will be out of shape this week but will fish well once it drops and clears. Steelheaders will start to find a few summers in the river as conditions improve. Use caution boating the McKenzie as trees have fallen into the river with storms recently. A life was lost when a boat went down over the past weekend. Wear those PFDs and watch for wood in the river.

With the number of summer steelhead crossing the Falls now and sure to pick up in weeks to come, the South Santiam will be a good bet to intercept a few. Bobber and jig is historically effective here.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – The water level at the Clackamas has been rising this week and is murky.

The Sandy River has been on the rise the past couple of days and with the increasing flow, visibility has suffered.

The Guide's Forecast – Clackamas levels are forecast to be dropping through the coming week. Fishing will improve along with water conditions and with a decent mix of broodstock and wild steelhead in the river, there's reason for optimism. There's little of interest on Eagle Creek at this stage in the season.

Effort was up prior to the rise in level on the Sandy. Expect slow to fair results as the water recovers from the current high, murky condition.

North Coast Fishing Report – It's high water again for north coast steelheaders. Constant precipitation has kept even the most motivated anglers from participating in north coast stream steelheading. Even small streams have been swollen enough to command little effort.

Prior to the most recent rain, fishing was predictably fair. The water has been at higher levels for so long that fish are making good time traveling through the lower reaches while the rivers give them good access to higher tributaries. This type of weather pattern doesn't allow for white hot fishing but consistency is nice once in a while too.

We'll spend most of our time in this section talking about what lies ahead for next week as rivers are likely to remain too high for good expectations through Saturday or Sunday.

Poor tides and inclement weather has turned off any potential sturgeon fishers but there was light effort at Bay City earlier this week. Catches were fair last week in the favorable tides.

The annual fin-clipping party sponsored by Tillamook Anglers will be combined with a giant fishing tackle garage sale on Saturday, April 9th at the Whisky Creek all volunteer hatchery on Netarts Bay, 2 miles north of Cape Lookout State Park. About 100,000 spring Chinook smolts will be clipped during this fun, family event. Coffee and doughnuts are served at 8 AM, clipping starts at 9 AM. A break will occur at Noon for a free BBQ lunch with the clipping expected to be finished around 2:30 PM. For more information, contact Jerry Dove at 503-812-1572.

Devil's Lake was stocked with hatchery trout this week.

The Guide's Forecast – With rivers remaining high and many smaller streams closing to steelheading after March 31st, options for north coast steelheaders will be limited this weekend. The Kilchis remains open after April 1st due to a recent regulation change (citizen driven) but hatchery fish will be rare on this float.

Most anglers will wait until larger systems subside and provide good opportunities for hatchery broodstock steelhead well into mid-April. These notable systems include the Wilson, Nestucca, Alsea and Siletz Rivers. When the Wilson and Nestucca begin to clear and drop, fishing should be fair to good but not dynamite as one would hope. There's been too much high water for too long of a period of time. The Alsea and Siletz should be petering out for broodstock fish.

Anglers note: the large fir tree that slid into the Wilson River near milepost 6 was still intact earlier this week. Plan for hazardous drifting conditions on this river or any river you float this time of year.

Upper reaches of these rivers may fish by Saturday but realize fish will be well spread out so you'll have to cover a lot of water to expect good results. But good action should not be out of reach given the depth of this years returning adults. Not many would argue that it's been a productive year for steelhead.

As we always mention, bigger baits and brighter colors should dominate your offerings in higher flows although black can contrast the dirty water color before it becomes "steelhead green". Target water that is slower flowing, even water less than 3 feet, as fish will gravitate to the edges to stay out of heavy flow.

Spring chinook are on the horizon but don't look for a good chance at one of those for several more weeks. Sturgeon tides aren't happening this week so stick to the Willamette Valley if your quarry is salmon or sturgeon.

Don't even think about bottomfishing offshore, or crabbing for that matter. Crabbers should stick to Netarts Bay but don't go with high expectations.

Central & South Coast Reports – The new date for the river clean up is Saturday April 9th at Hee Hee Ilahee park:

Siletz River Clean up Day!

Re-scheduled due to high water!

Saturday, April 9 2011 @ 9am

Hee Hee Ilahee Park

The Siletz Watershed Council invites you join us for our annual River Clean up Day!

There will be free food, prizes, & good times as we do our part to keep the beautiful Siletz River clean.



What to bring: Your neighbors, gloves, dress in layers, wear clothes appropriate for the Oregon coast; waterproof boots, raincoat, etc.

Trash bags will be provided

For more information or you would like to use your boat in the clean up. Please contact Aaron Duzik at : siletzwatershedcouncil@gmail.com Free doughnuts and coffee in the morning, then chili, hotdogs, and soda in the afternoon for all volunteers. The day starts at 9am (please come early to fill out waiver) and ends about 2pm with a prize raffle for all participating volunteers.

Thank you to our sponsors:



Siletz Watershed Council



Dahl Disposal	MidCoast Watersheds Council
Noels Market	Larry's Old Place
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Roadhouse Café	Randy's Bait and Tackle
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As of Friday, April 1st, offshore bottom fishers will be required to stay within the 40-fathom line (240 feet or shallower). Ocean Chinook fishing will remain open through the month of April with the coho fishery tentatively scheduled to open on July 2nd.

Although the ocean is forecast to be rough this weekend, surf perch fishing has been improving on south coast beaches. Try it when the waves are laying down for safety.

Subscribing to an online service in order to get accurate, timely information can improve the chances of success for tuna fishers. To see if it's worth it to you, take a 'webinar' with one such provider online April 4th or 6th at 7:30 PM. Register here to be Emailed login details the day of the webinar: <http://www.ripcharts.com/WebConference.aspx>

This is the time of year that striped bass move into coastal rivers such as the Coos, Coquille and Smith, creating a mostly secret fishery. Hint) there's a reason that sculpin are rarely hooked where there is a striper population present. Try them at night for best chance of a hookup.

Crabbing is poor to slow out of Newport in the bay. Boaters at Yaquina Bay are advised that the South Beach Marina fuel dock will be closed from April 4th through April 22nd for maintenance. and upgrades.

Crabbing has been fair to good in Winchester Bay while sturgeon fishing is slow. Spring Chinook are yet to enter the Umpqua system in any significant (as in fishable) number although a few have been taken at Scottsburg. Steelheading is slow to fair in the flies-only section of the North Umpqua. The best chance of a hatchery steelhead hookup will be had on the South Umpqua.

There are a few steelhead in the Coos and Coquille river systems but most are spawned out 'snakes' that aren't fit as table fare.

At this writing on Thursday, March 31st, the Elk River is dropping and clearing. It should provide prospects for late season winter steelhead.

Water levels on the lower Rogue has started dropping and are forecast to continue to drop (for the most part) through the coming week. This bode well for spring Chinook fishing as fresh fish are entering on every tide. Steelheaders are taking fish on the middle Rogue in fair to good water conditions. Plug-pullers have been doing well this week in the Grants Pass stretch. Winter steelhead are entering the upper Rogue and providing decent catches here. With steelheading improving on the middle and upper river, expect to see some drift boat traffic, even on weekdays. One wild steelhead may be kept per day as part of the limit up to five per year through the end of April.

As of Friday, April 1st, the Chetco River will be closed to salmon and steelhead fishing and will not open for trout fishing until May 28th, so the lack of reports in the coming weeks won't be due to the absence of fish; there just won't be any fishing allowed here.

Diamond Lake, the jewel of the south coast, will open got the 2011 season on April23rd. With thick ice covering the lake and several feet of snow on the ground, it remains to be seen whether or not the opener will be an ice fishery. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife estimates around 500,000 trout weighing up to 10 pounds await anglers on opening day and those fish will be there regardless of the weather conditions. Call 800-733-7593 x 222 for weather and Diamond Lake water conditions.

Bluebill Lake and Eel Lake are scheduled for trout planting.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Steelheading has been good on the Grande Ronde with some anglers reporting multiple hookups. Pressure can be high at times, however, particularly on weekends.

Pro guide Mac Huff (800-940-3688) reports, "The season is winding down in Northeast Oregon and Southeast Washington. Just over two weeks remain, but great fishing is traditionally available during these last two weeks and with the Grande Ronde at just over 4,000 cfs, conditions are excellent. The water is green, there are lots of fish, and the catch rate is in the single digits.

"Call me if you are looking for a guide to help you finish the season in style."

Smallmouth bass fishing has been slow in the cold waters of the John Day. Recent storms have further hampered efforts but good weather this week will improve results. A few steelhead have been taken recently on plugs.

With water temperatures hovering in the mid-40s and the water level low, kokanee fishing is slow at Green Peter.

Lake Billy Chinook is producing fair to good numbers of bull trout to deep trollers.

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report for March 2011

North Puget Sound

With the region's rivers closed to steelhead fishing, anglers' attention has turned to blackmouth salmon in the marine areas of Puget Sound.

Anglers fishing marine areas 7 (San Juan Islands), 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay), 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) and 9 (Admiralty Inlet) have a two-**salmon** daily limit, but must release wild chinook salmon. Marine Area 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) is closed to salmon fishing.

While there have been a few reports of anglers hauling in some nice blackmouth, salmon fishing in Puget Sound has been slow the last couple of weeks of February. "Anglers that have put in their time on the water have been most successful," said Steve Thiesfeld, fish biologist with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). "It looks like that will continue to be the case as we head into March. But hopefully fishing will improve as spring approaches."

Anglers looking for some competition might want to participate in the **Everett Blackmouth Derby** on March 19. Prizes include \$3,000 for the largest fish, \$1,500 for second place and \$500 for third place. For details, visit the [derby's website](#).

Meanwhile, numerous rivers are closed to fishing for **steelhead** and other game fish, including the Skagit, Sauk and Samish. The three rivers, usually open in March, closed early to protect wild steelhead that are returning in low numbers this year.

Freshwater anglers, however, can wet a line at some local lakes. Lake Washington and Lake Sammamish are good spots to fish for **perch**, **cutthroat** and **smallmouth bass**, said WDFW fisheries biologist Danny Garrett. "Lake Washington and Lake Sammamish continue to produce 14-18 inch cutthroat trout with the occasional lunker over 20 inches," he said. "Fishing for bass, perch, and **crappie** in all lakes should improve in March as water temperatures increase and fish move shallower."

Looking forward to the **summer salmon fishing** season? There's still time to provide input on proposals for this year's fisheries. Several public meetings have been scheduled throughout March as fishery managers continue to develop the 2011 salmon seasons, which will be finalized in mid-April. For more information on the meetings, visit WDFW's [North of Falcon website](#).

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

More wild steelhead are moving into rivers on the Olympic Peninsula, blackmouth salmon fisheries are under way in Puget Sound and the lingcod season opens March 12 in ocean areas south of Cape Alava.

In addition, WDFW plans to open several ocean beaches for a razor clam dig in March if marine toxin tests show the clams are safe to eat. The results of those tests will be announced about a week before the dig is scheduled to start.

The dig is tentatively scheduled to get under way after noon Saturday, March 19, then switch to morning hours March 20-22. Under that plan, digging will be allowed at four beaches – Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis and Mocrocks – March 19-20, then continue at two beaches – Long Beach and Twin Harbors – March 21-22.

No digging will be allowed before noon March 19 or after noon March 20-22.

"We're planning this opening at the time of year when the best tides for digging razor clams switch from the evening to the morning," said Dan Ayres, WDFW coastal shellfish manager. "It's a little tricky from a scheduling standpoint, but it does provide an opportunity for back-to-back digs the evening of Saturday, March 19, and the morning of Sunday, March 20."

The fifth annual Ocean Shores Razor Clam Festival, which includes a chowder cook-off, is also scheduled March 19. Information on the festival is available at <http://www.2011clams.com/>.

Wild Steelhead fishing on the northern peninsula is a good bet right now, said Kirt Hughes, regional fishery manager for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). "This is peak season for wild steelhead," he said. "Anglers need to keep an eye on river conditions, but fishing is good right now."

As in years past, anglers may retain only one wild steelhead per license year on the Bogachiel, Calawah, Clearwater, Dickey, Hoh, Quillayute, Quinault and Sol Duc rivers. On all other rivers, anglers may retain only hatchery-reared steelhead marked with a clipped adipose fin and healed scar.

Anglers looking to hook a **hatchery steelhead** should try fishing rivers in the Chehalis River Basin. "During the last weeks of February, fishing slowed in the basin," Hughes said. "But the Satsop, Skookumchuck and Wynoochee rivers still offer the best opportunities for hatchery steelhead in March."

For more information on steelhead fishing regulations, check the [Fishing in Washington pamphlet](#).

As water temperatures begin to warm, freshwater anglers also might want to try fishing at one of the region's lakes. Popular lakes open year-round include Thurston County's Saint Clair Lake for **rainbow** and **brown trout**, American Lake in Pierce County for **kokanee** and Kitsap Lake in Kitsap County for rainbow trout.

Rather catch a **blackmouth salmon**? Several areas of Puget Sound are open to fishing for resident chinook. Anglers fishing marine areas 11 (Tacoma-Vashon) and 12 (Hood Canal) have a two-salmon daily limit, but must release wild chinook.

Those fishing the Strait of Juan de Fuca – marine areas 5 (Sekiu) and 6 (eastern Strait) – have a daily limit of one salmon. “During the last weekend of February, anglers fishing for blackmouth at Coyote and Partridge banks in the eastern Strait had success,” said Steve Thiesfeld, Puget Sound salmon manager for WDFW.

Anglers fishing for salmon in Marine Area 13 (South Puget Sound) continue to have success hooking resident **coho**, said Larry Phillips, regional fish biologist for WDFW. Best bets include the Tacoma Narrows, the Squaxin Island area and in Eld Inlet off Evergreen Beach. Anglers fishing Marine Area 13 have daily limit of one salmon.

Another option is **lingcod** fishing, which gets under way March 12 in marine areas 1-3, south of Cape Alava. The minimum size for lingcod in these areas is 22 inches, with a daily limit of two fish per angler. For lingcod fishing regulations, check the [Fishing in Washington pamphlet](#). Looking forward to the **summer salmon fishing** season? There's still time to provide input on proposals for this year's fisheries. Several public meetings have been scheduled throughout March as fishery managers continue to develop the 2011 salmon seasons, which will be finalized in mid-April. For more information on the meetings, visit WDFW's [North of Falcon website](#).

Southwest Washington

Spring chinook fever is beginning to take hold on the Columbia River. More than 50 boats were counted on the lower river one day in mid February when only a few fish had been counted at Bonneville Dam. By late March – when the bulk of the run is expected to arrive – that number is expected to grow to nearly 2,000 per day.

“At first, the fish usually arrive in fits and starts, then eventually start moving upriver in a steady flow,” said Joe Hymer, a fish biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). “Through March, we expect to see the number of boat and bank anglers on the river to increase week by week.”

According to the pre-season forecast, 198,400 upriver spring chinook will return to the Columbia River this year, close to the 10-year average. While that prediction is well below last year's banner run of 315,345 fish, the number of large five-year-old chinook is expected to be up significantly over last year.

The forecast anticipates the return of more than 100,000 five-year-old fish to the upper Columbia and Willamette River this year, Hymer said. By comparison, only about 26,000 of the fish that returned last year were in that age class.

“We're already seeing a high number of large fish in the early catch,” Hymer said. “Those five-year-olds generally run 18 to 30 pounds apiece.”

Through Feb. 28, spring chinook fishing is open to boat and bank anglers on a daily basis from Buoy 10 near the mouth of the Columbia River upstream to the Interstate 5 Bridge under rules described in the 2010-11 *Fishing in Washington* pamphlet.

From March 1 through April 4, the fishery will be expanded 22 miles upriver to Rooster Rock, under new rules approved by fishery managers in Washington and Oregon. Bank anglers will also be allowed to fish from Rooster Rock up to the fishing boundary below Bonneville Dam during that time.

Above Bonneville Dam, the fishery will be open to boat and bank anglers on a daily basis from March 16 through April 24 between the Tower Island powerlines six miles below The Dalles Dam and the Washington/Oregon state line, 17 miles upriver from McNary Dam. Bank anglers can also fish from Bonneville Dam upriver to the powerlines during that time.

As in years past, anglers may retain only hatchery-reared fish, marked with a clipped adipose fin. All unmarked wild spring chinook must be released unharmed.

Anglers fishing downriver from Bonneville Dam may retain one hatchery-reared adult chinook per day as part of their catch limit. Above the dam, anglers can keep two marked hatchery chinook per day.

To guard against overestimating the run, the states will manage the fishery with a 30 percent buffer until the forecast is updated in late April or early May, said Cindy LeFleur, Columbia River policy coordinator for WDFW. "If the fish return at or above expectations, we will look toward providing additional days of fishing on the river later in spring," she said.

Initial seasons announced today allocate 7,750 upper river spring chinook to the sport fishery below Bonneville Dam, 1,650 to anglers fishing above Bonneville and 2,100 to the commercial fleet. Those guidelines do not include the catch of spring chinook returning to tributaries flowing into the Columbia River below Bonneville Dam or into the Bonneville Pool.

The Cowlitz River is currently open to fishing for spring chinook, with a daily limit of two adult chinook salmon. On the Kalama and Lewis rivers, the limit is one adult chinook salmon per day. Above Bonneville, the Wind River and Drano Lake are scheduled to open for spring chinook March 16 with a limit of two chinook per day.

All of those rivers are also open to fishing for **hatchery steelhead** under rules outlined in the 2010-11 [Fishing in Washington](#) pamphlet. Hymer said fishing for late-run hatchery steelhead is still going strong, particularly on the Cowlitz and Kalama rivers, noting that summer-run steelhead will start coming in right behind them later in the month. Although spring chinook start arriving on the Cowlitz in early March, hatchery steelhead usually make up the bulk of the catch until later in the month, he said.

In other waters, anglers should be aware that March 15 is the last day to fish for steelhead on Abernathy, Cedar (Clark Co.), Germany, Mill (Cowlitz Co.), Rock (Skamania Co.), Salmon (Clark Co.) creeks and on the Coweeman, Elochoman, Grays, East Fork Lewis and Washougal rivers. **Sturgeon** anglers should also be aware of new joint fishing seasons and catch guidelines established for 2011. Concerned about the decline of legal-size sturgeon in the lower Columbia River, fishery managers from Washington and Oregon agreed to reduce this year's total catch by 30 percent. As in years past, 80 percent of the allowable catch will be allocated to the sport fishery and 20 percent to the commercial fishery.

"In practical terms, this year's action is expected to reduce the amount of time sturgeon fisheries in the lower Columbia River will be open at the end of the season," said Brad James, another WDFW fish biologist.

Fishing seasons approved for 2011 in the lower Columbia River are as follows:

- **Buoy 10 to the Wauna powerlines:** Retention of white sturgeon is allowed daily from Jan. 1 to April 30; May 14 through June 26; and July 1-4. From Jan. 1 to April 30, sturgeon must measure between 38 inches and 54 inches (fork length) to be retained. From May 14 through the end of the season they must measure 41 inches to 54 inches

- (fork length) to be retained. Catch-and-release fishing is allowed on days when retention is prohibited.
- **Wauna powerlines to Bonneville Dam:** Retention of white sturgeon is allowed three days per week (Thursday through Saturday) from Jan. 1 through July 31 and from Oct. 8 until Dec. 31. Sturgeon must measure between 38 inches and 54 inches (fork length) to be retained. Catch-and-release fishing is allowed on days when retention is prohibited. All fishing for sturgeon will be closed from May 1 through Aug. 31 in the sturgeon sanctuary downriver from Bonneville Dam described in the *Fishing in Washington* rules pamphlet.

At a previous joint state hearing, the two states took action to close the Sand Island Slough near Rooster Rock to fishing at least through April 30.

Bucking the trend in the lower river, monitoring and fishery data show that sturgeon populations are growing above Bonneville Dam, James said. In response, catch guidelines were increased from 1,400 fish to 2,000 fish in the Bonneville Pool and from 165 fish to 500 fish in the John Day Pool. The 300-fish guideline in The Dalles Pool remains unchanged.

Despite the higher quota, the Bonneville Pool was closed to sturgeon retention at the end of the day Feb. 18. Anglers are advised to watch the [WDFW website](#) for updates on The Dalles Pool and the John Day Pool.

While sturgeon fishing has been slow in the lower river, the **walleye** fishery has been picking up above Bonneville Dam. By mid February, boat anglers fishing The Dalles Pool were averaging a walleye per rod.

Rather catch **trout**? WDFW plans to plant a total of 10,000 half-pound rainbows in Kline Pond, Battle Ground Lake and Lacamas Lake – all in Clark County – in March. In addition, Lacamas Lake is expected to receive 5,000 browns of similar size. Anglers fishing Kline Pond averaged nearly two fish apiece in mid February after a previous trout plant. See the [trout-stocking schedule](#) on the WDFW website for more information on winter trout stocking.

Eastern Washington

March may start off a bit slow for fishing in the region with the recent return of wintery weather and iced-over waters that will keep anglers home, limit their access, or slow fish stocking.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Lyons Ferry and Tucannon fish hatchery crews have been working to get "catchable" size (about one-third pound) and "jumbo" size (one-plus pound) **rainbow trout** stocked in several lakes and ponds in the southeast end of the region that open to fishing March 1 or are open year-round.

Six of the seven March 1-opening impoundments off the Tucannon River on WDFW's Wooten Wildlife Area in Columbia County are getting some of their annual allotment of hatchery rainbows, with others stocked later in the season. Big Four Lake is scheduled to receive a total of 2,000 catchables and 300 jumbos; Blue Lake will receive 23,000 catchables and 400 jumbos; Deer Lake gets 3,400 catchables and 50 jumbos; Rainbow Lake gets 15,000 catchables and 325 jumbos; Spring Lake gets 11,000 catchables and 325 jumbos; and Watson Lake gets 21,300 catchables and 325 jumbos. Beaver Lake has water depth and quality issues that preclude it from viable fish stocking this year.

Also opening March 1 for stocked rainbow fishing is Fishhook Pond in Walla Walla County, which is scheduled to receive a total of 5,000 catchables and 150 jumbos this season, and Pampa Pond in Whitman County, which will receive a total of 6,000 catchables and 200 jumbos.

Two year-round-open small impoundments off the Snake River near the bottom of Alpowa Grade west of Clarkston in Asotin County are also being stocked at this time. Golf Course Pond will get a total of 22,000 catchables and 475 jumbos, and West Evans Ponds will get a total of 22,000 catchables and 475 jumbos.

Orchard Pond, a year-round impoundment off the Snake River in Columbia County, will receive a total of 2,000 catchables and 50 jumbos.

In Walla Walla County, two year-round fisheries are scheduled to receive some of their annual allotment of trout – Quarry Pond will get a total of 25,000 catchables and 400 jumbos, and Bennington Lake will get a total of 20,500 catchables and 625 jumbos.

Anglers can check [Catchable Trout Plant Reports](#) to see when WDFW hatchery crews will complete trout stocking.

Other waters opening March 1 in the region will likely provide action on a variety of fish later in the month when ice melts and access is easier. Most of these waters are not dependent on catchable fish stocking, but have fish populations that carry over through the winter.

Chris Donley, WDFW central district fish biologist, said that Liberty Lake, in eastern Spokane County, will be “fantastic” for carryover **brown trout** that run 16 to 25 inches. Liberty will also yield some of the earliest **yellow perch** and **crappie**, he says, “but not on the first of March this year.”

When warmer weather returns, Downs Lake in southwest Spokane County might be the best place in the region for the first **smallmouth bass**. Downs also has yellow perch, crappie, and carryover rainbow trout. Medical Lake, near the town of the same name in southwest Spokane County, has brown and rainbow trout.

Amber Lake in southwest Spokane County opens for catch-and-release of rainbow and **cutthroat trout** on March 1. Coffeepot Lake in Lincoln County opens on the first, under selective gear rules, for rainbows, perch and crappie. When conditions improve, both of these special rule fisheries should provide excellent fly-fishing opportunities.

Bill Baker, WDFW northeast district fish biologist, reports Deer Lake in southern Stevens County is still iced over. “If anglers attempt to fish it on the March 1 opener they need to be very cautious about safe ice depth,” he said. Deer Lake has bass, crappie, perch, rainbow and **lake trout**, and **kokanee**.

Baker also notes that northern Stevens County’s two winter-season rainbow trout lakes – Williams and Hatch – are still producing catches of fish measuring 13 to 14 inches. “The bite seems to be best in the early morning,” he said. Both lakes remain open through the month of March, but Baker warns anglers to be cautious about quickly changing ice conditions this late in the season.

WDFW police Sgt. Dan Rahn said fishing action has slowed at the central district’s two winter-season (December through March) lakes – Hog Canyon in Spokane County and Fourth of July in Lincoln County. In February, many anglers checked were taking limits of rainbows, he notes, but changing conditions may be keeping anglers at home. “There’s still plenty of nice fish to be caught at these lakes,” he said. “But anglers do need to be careful about marginally safe ice.”

Baker also said Lake Roosevelt kokanee and rainbow trout fishing has been good and should continue through March. In the Spring Canyon area of the big Columbia River reservoir, both species are being caught near the surface.

Other year-round fisheries in the region that continue to provide good fishing include Sprague Lake for rainbows, and Rock Lake for rainbow and brown trout.

Another kind of fishing is available at the Inland Northwest Wildlife Council's 51st annual [Big Horn Outdoor Adventure Show](#), March 17-20, at the Spokane County Fair and Expo Center. Some 5,000 trout are stocked in three huge indoor lakes for kids to catch at "Fishing World," and there's a "Virtual Reality Fishing Simulator," fishing demonstration tank, lots of fishing seminars by experts, and hundreds of fishing equipment and charter service vendors. The show also offers a rifle range, archery range, laser shot shooting simulators, and of course the origins of the event – "Trophy Territory," where hundreds of hunter-harvested antlered and horned animals are displayed and judged by Boone and Crocket scorers.

Northcentral Washington

At least 18 **rainbow trout**-stocked waters in the northcentral region open to fishing on March 1, but only a few will likely be fishable early in the season. Only two lakes in Grant County – Martha Lake just east of the town of George and Upper Caliche Lake just west of George – were at least half-open from ice, reports Chad Jackson, a district fishing biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

"Fishing at Martha Lake should be good for 11 to 13-inch trout that were stocked late last fall," Jackson said. "There is also a good number of catchables at least 14 inches to be caught in Martha."

"Upper Caliche Lake will fish well, too, but the trout will be smaller, running eight to ten inches," he said. "We were unable to plant fish late last fall when the lake was iced over with that early winter weather in November."

Two other popular March 1-opening waters – Quincy and Burke lakes on WDFW's Quincy Wildlife Area southwest of the town of Quincy – were mostly iced over and unfishable at last check.

"When they do open up, I expect them to fish well since they received pretty hefty catchable plants last spring and fall," Jackson said. Burke Lake was stocked with 18,000 rainbows weigh a third of a pound and Quincy received 16,000.

Other Columbia Basin lakes opening March 1 on the Quincy Wildlife Area include Upper, Lower and West Caliche lakes, southwest of George; Dusty Lake, a selective gear rule fishery south of Quincy; and several small "walk-in" lakes, including Cascade, Cliff, Crystal, Cup, Dot, George and Spring.

Three other lakes – Lenice, Nunnally and Merry on WDFW's Crab Creek Wildlife Area in southwest Grant County just east of Beverly – open under selective gear rules March 1. Lake Lenore, north of the town of Soap Lake in Grant County, opens for catch-and-release trout fishing March 1. The fishery there for two to four-pound **Lahontan cutthroat trout** usually catches fire there by April.

In Okanogan County, lake fishing is an option on several stocked year-round waters, including Patterson Lake near Winthrop and Sidley Lake near Oroville. **Yellow perch** are usually caught at Patterson and rainbow trout are the predominant species at Sidley.

WDFW Okanogan district fish biologist Bob Jateff reminds **steelhead** anglers fishing the upper Columbia River and its tributaries that they are required to retain any hatchery-origin adipose-fin-clipped steelhead they catch up to the limit of four fish per day. The Wenatchee and Icicle rivers remain open to steelhead fishing until further notice. Anglers may retain hatchery steelhead with a clipped adipose fin and a circular (hole) punch in their caudal (tail) fin on the Wenatchee and Icicle rivers, along with other waterways in the upper Columbia.

Southcentral Washington

Spring chinook salmon are moving up the Columbia River and steelhead fishing should pick up soon, but **trout** fishing in area lakes is probably best bet for catching fish over the next few weeks.

"We start stocking year-round lakes in late February and continue right through June," said Eric Anderson, a fish biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). "This fishery is really our bread and butter, and anglers look forward to it all year."

By mid-March, about a dozen lakes and ponds in Yakima, Kittitas, Franklin and Benton counties are scheduled to receive thousands of "catchable size" rainbow trout, along with hundreds of jumbos and triploids. For a complete list, see the [stocking schedule](#) for southcentral Washington on the WDFW website.

But anglers should also be aware that **steelhead** fishing usually picks up in March on the Columbia River and its tributaries. Paul Hoffarth, another WDFW fish biologist, notes that some of the highest catches of the season occur in March near the Ringold Springs Hatchery.

"A lot of steelhead that have been hanging out all winter will make their final spawning runs," Hoffarth said. "That's when catch rates start rising again."

The daily limit is four hatchery steelhead per day from the Columbia River from Priest Rapids to Chief Joseph Dam and all tributaries in between. Under rules now in effect, anglers are required to retain the first four adipose-fin-clipped steelhead they catch. See the WDFW [fishing rule](#) issued Feb. 9 for details on that rule and other new regulations.

Meanwhile, the **spring chinook** fishery opens March 1 above Bonneville Dam with a two-chinook daily limit. The area open for spring chinook fishing has been extended upstream of McNary Dam to the Washington-Oregon border, 17 miles upstream from the dam.

Spring chinook probably won't start showing up in the catch that far upriver until mid April, while walleye are already starting to make a good showing, Hoffarth said. "We're are starting to see a few walleye in the creel, including some good-size fish running over 10 pounds. Walleye fishing should continue to improve for the next few weeks as these fish get ready for their early spring spawn."

White sturgeon are also still an option. The sturgeon fishery above McNary Dam (Lake Wallula) is scheduled to run through July 31, and the catch guideline for the John Day Pool (Lake Umatilla) was recently increased from 165 to 500 fish. "That increase should allow us to keep the fishery open for retention on into March," Hoffarth said.

TGF Inbox - Reader E-mail

Subscriber Robert S. wrote to share this: "we just got back from fishing the Catlamet stretch of

the Columbia on the 24th-25th and 26th. On Thursday we picked up 1 wild springer about 15 lbs and 1 keeper about 17lbs. On Friday we limited our boat 4 for 4, an 18+, 2- 14s and a 12 pounder. On Saturday we picked up our biggest fish at 19+ pounds. We hit it pretty hard though and didn't see our usual results, the turbidity was high and we lost a lot of gear on new snags in our normal trolling lanes. All in all though we feel we did well compared to the other reports we heard including a fellow boat who we always fish with who is skunked for 7 days on the water using exactly the same gear, bait and brine and scents."



Write to the TGF staff:

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Random Links

Favorite Flies for Spring on the McKenzie and Willamette (commercial site): Part one

<http://oregonflyfishingblog.com/2011/03/29/favorite-flies-for-spring-on-the-mckenzie-and-willamette-part-2-wets-and-dries/>

Part two - <http://oregonflyfishingblog.com/2011/03/22/favorite-flies-for-spring-on-the-mckenzie-and-willamette-part-one-nymphs-and-wets/>

Angler catches 'monster' catfish in Willamette:

<http://www.statesmanjournal.com/article/20110310/OUTDOORS/103100349/1034/outdoors/Angler-catches-monster-catfish-Willamette>



GOOD LUCK!