

The Guide's Forecast - volume 13 issue number 14

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **April 8th – April 14th, 2011**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- The Columbia River below Bonneville Dam closed after Monday. The season ended with most anglers disappointed and the lack of effort showed that sentiment for most of the season. Kim Reller of Portland was one of the lucky anglers on Sunday, boating a 15-pound spring chinook just below the I-5 Bridge on a sardine wrapped plug in 17 feet of water. High water plagued the sport fleet for most of the season, leaving nearly half of the sport quota unutilized.

Fishery managers decided Wednesday to extend the sportfishery on the mainstem Columbia, adding an additional 7 days for sportanglers between Buoy 10 and Rooster Rock. If water conditions remain challenging as expected, more time may be allotted but that won't be decided until another meeting occurs on April 13th.

Sturgeon fishing continues slow in most areas of the Columbia but keeper action did improve in the Portland to Longview stretch slightly. Effort and catch will likely remain subdued until flows subside and temperatures warm.

Water levels are expected to rise once again on the Willamette where muddy water has already hampered success rates in what should be approaching peak season. Flows did not stop fish passage as over 800 summer steelhead have been counted in addition to the nearly 5,900 winters.

The water level and flow on the McKenzie was on the increase earlier this week. Snowmelt will likely continue to keep the level up and water temperatures down. This will make fishing challenging for anglers.

The Clackamas has settled into normal level and flow for this time of year. It should provide fishing for a mix of wild and broodstock steelhead. Sidedrifting bait often produces the best in these higher flows as fish are likely to utilize shallower, slower flows, especially in colored water.

Sandy River water levels rose again earlier this week and it looks like a long shot for the coming weekend. Broodstock steelhead await anglers when conditions improve.

Northwest – Steelheaders remains justifiably frustrated as high water limited the river systems most have been able to access recently. Traffic however was busy over the weekend with the Wilson and Nestucca Rivers bearing the brunt of the effort.

River levels are expected to come into good shape again by the weekend but with such a prolonged period of high water, fishing is likely to be only fair. Both wild and hatchery broodstock fish should be available however with a rare summer steelhead available on the Wilson and Nestucca Rivers.

This Kilchis remains a viable option in higher flows and should continue to produce almost exclusively wild fish at least through mid-April. Most other small streams closed to fishing on March 31st.

Sturgeon fishers continue to catch some keepers in Tillamook Bay. Fair tides will allow some opportunity through the weekend but keepers typically begin exiting the estuary about this time

of year.

Wind wave and swell height will likely keep offshore anglers from accessing hungry lingcod and seabass schools. When ocean weather does settle, the fishing should be excellent.

Crabbing remains the best in the lower Columbia where crabbers with fresh bait are still taking limits of crab. Tides will remain favorable in the afternoon but the freshwater influx on the lower Columbia should slow catches.

Southwest – With rainfall moderating, lingcod catches will improve inside the 40-fathom line. As of April 1st, offshore bottom fishers may keep only one cabezon per day. Poor ocean conditions have hampered efforts.

Historically, boats launching out of Coos Bay and Winchester Bay have caught the most ocean salmon but weather conditions have prevented launches since the opener. Long-range forecasts indicate a glimmer of hope for the coming weekend.

Crabbing has been slow to fair due to fresh water influx from coastal river runoff. Surf perch fishing has been good on area beaches when wave action has moderated.

Steelheaders have done well on the North and South Umpqua when water levels have been dropping. The ODFW predicts a good hatchery return on the South.

Fishing on the Elk River was good right up to the end of March. The Elk and Sixes are closed as of April 1st.

On the Rogue spring chinook catches have been on one day, off the next, but even slow days have produced several bright fish. Overall, anglers are pleased with results for this early in the run. Lower Rogue level and flow is forecast to be good and dropping over the coming weekend. Fishing for winter steelhead has been slow on the middle river due to high water but good on the upper river.

The last day for steelheaders on the Chetco River was March 31st. It will re-open on May 28th when sea-run cutthroat will be the species of interest with salmon and steelhead runs over at that time.

Eastern – It's the time of year when spring runoff will hamper effort on the lower Deschutes. High water may potentially continue for weeks although fishing will be good when the water drops.

The John Day crested at flood level on April 3rd but has been dropping since. It is forecast to drop through the coming weekend but will remain high for fishing.

Sturgeon retention season will close in the John Day Pool beginning April 10th. The 500 fish quota is expected to have been met by then.

Walleye anglers are catching fair numbers of fish despite high water flows. The action should remain good for another few weeks.

SW Washington – High water has hampered steelhead success on the Cowlitz, Lewis and Kalama Rivers. Steelhead remain available and the Cowlitz is one of the better options when flows drop.

Spring chinook should begin to show in fair numbers on the Cowlitz and Lewis Rivers. Forecasts aren't great however but peak season is fast approaching.

Bonneville Dam passage of spring chinook isn't favorable enough to excite Drano Lake and Wind River salmon anglers. Late April is the better time and biologists expect significantly better passage to happen in the next few weeks.

Columbia River Fishing Report – With high flows and subdued catches, effort was waning in the last few days of the mainstem Columbia fishery. Anglers were keeping a close eye on water conditions the last few days of the season and the hydrograph proved accurate as flow increased on the last few days of the season. This kept the bulk of the sportfleet off of impacted fish that would attain their fishery quota.

By the closure of the fishery, anglers had not even met half of their 7,750 fish quota, causing fishery managers to meet to consider additional time for the sportfleet to take advantage of impacts "left on the table". Those managers met Wednesday by phone to discuss a myriad of options before converging on an additional 8 days of opportunity beginning April 8th and lasting through the following Friday, April 15th. Managers will again meet on Thursday, April 14th to decide if there will be additional time after that allotted to the sportfleet.

All in all, only a little over 4,000 adult Chinook have been taken in this fishery. Some anglers may argue that this can't be true as few a fish as they witnessed getting caught. Catches were noticeably slower the last few days of the fishery and will likely continue to be so with the odd spring rain freshet now being witnessed on the mainstem. You were a very lucky angler to get a fish in the last few days of the fishery.

Catches were even more scarce downstream of the mouth of the Willamette where turbid waters hampered success rates. Most of the effort took place above I-5. We had 2 opportunities on the second to last day (Sunday), fishing plugs exclusively. We spent the bulk of the morning just below I-5 on the Oregon side and the late morning just above Portco on the Washington side. We only saw one other fish taken all day in those two areas. Our fish hit the "double-trouble" k14 Kwikfish with a sardine wrap. Trollers were also not catching any fish.

Sturgeon fishing also slowed for anglers working the mainstem. The best fishing was from Portland to Longview where 4 keepers and 61 shorts were tallied for 13 boats. Like salmon fishing, high water hampered effort and success. Following a great check of one boat in the gorge last week, only 1 boat was sampled in the gorge this week with no catch.

Downriver, crabbing has held the interest of some in the estuary. Catches remained good but that has got to change with the high influx of water headed downstream right now. It's surprising that it's held up for this long.

The Guide's Forecast – It's odd to admit, but the Columbia re-opener really isn't exciting all that many people. It's obvious that until water flows come down that catch rates will not go up. Flows reached nearly 400,000 CFS this week and are expected to remain in the high 200,000's through mid-month. While good for upstream migration of adults and downstream migration of juveniles, this does not bode well for anglers.

Expect catches to remain subdued although good opportunity exists for anglers that can find the right migration path. Fish in shallow water for the best results and don't overlook even 4 foot of water for fish to swim in. In these flows, salmon and steelhead will really be hugging the shoreline to keep from expending high amounts of energy to make their upstream destinations.

Bright colored spin-n-glos heavily scented will work for bank anglers that have a distinct advantage in these high flows. Bank anglers can also effectively fish plugs but don't use too large a plug as fast flows and shallow water will keep the plug fishing too close to the bottom where you will diminish your strike to hook success. I suggest a K11 through K13 size and use green in any color combination here. Boaters should stick to sardine wrapped plugs, also heavily scented in water between 4 and 17 feet. Don't pick fast flows, seek out slower water as even the slower water has high velocity right now.

Water clarity on the mainstem Columbia took a nose-dive this week too, dropping to just 2 to 2.5 feet in most areas. That should improve in the slightly dropping flows. None-the-less, bright colors are advised.

Sturgeon fishing will remain mediocre in most areas but anglers have the best chance in the Portland to Longview stretch. Smelt or shrimp will remain a top bait but anglers will have to put in some time to expect a reasonable chance at a keeper sturgeon.

Crabbing should continue to go downhill on the lower Columbia. With the huge freshwater influx, crabs are going to seek more saline waters to the west. The ocean off of the mouth is likely to remain rough although when the big pond does settle down, bottomfishing is likely to be lights out!

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – The surge of springer-hungry Columbia fishers many anglers anticipated (and dreaded) was pretty much a non-event with the lower Willamette in marginal condition at best since the closure. The attitude of most Big River fishers since April 4th seemed to be "it's over" as they traded stories, some of successes and others of failures. Even if the Willamette comes in to shape and turns on, Columbia fishers will return to their open water when it re-opens on April 15th. After that, those who do the salmon dance on the Willy need only agonize over their quarry. And have a damned good time doing so. As of the morning of April 7th, the flow which had been moderating earlier this week is increasing slightly as the water temperature drops. Turbidity remains higher than optimum for best fishing. Yeah, it's high and off-color but plunkers at Meldrum Bar (when available) and Social Security Beach have taken springers this week and for those who are blessed with patience and favor the tactic, there are more to be had. There are 30 springers upstream from Willamette Falls, over 1,000 summer steelhead have been counted and more than 6,100 winters have crossed.

Following a slight spike in water level on the lower McKenzie mid-week, the level is falling today, April 7th. Weather forecasts indicate a warming trend, few showers and some dry days over the coming week. Water levels should continue to drift toward normal for this time of year.

The North Santiam is dropping and should be fishable all weekend long. Boaters should remain vigilant regarding hazards between Shelburn and Green's Bridge.

Scheduled for trout planting this week are Canby Pond, Henry Hagg Lake, Huddelston Pond, Sheridan Pond, Shorty's Pond, Trojan Ponds, Detroit Reservoir, Dorena Reservoir, Foster Reservoir, Roaring River Park Pond, Timber Linn Lake and Walling Pond.

ODFW sez, "The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife will host free Family Fishing Events this Saturday at Cottage Grove and St. Louis Ponds. The department will be stocking these systems with trout ranging from 8 inches to upward of two pounds. Staff and volunteers will be on hand from to provide equipment and instruction to participating youths."

These events will take place from 9 AM to 2 PM.

The Guide's Forecast – Trollers targeting springers are hooking up with herring while anchor fishers are experiencing some success with prawns. It's still early so fishing is slow to fair but it's safe to say results will be improving along with water conditions. As the middle Willamette recovers in the Eugene-Springfield area, fly anglers will enjoy good results for trout.

While there haven't been many opportunities on the lower McKenzie with rainfall on all but two days over the past month, don't discount it as showers moderate and dry, warmer weather occurs more frequently as springtime progresses. Although fishing in rising water is invariably non-productive, any time the water is dropping there are fish to be caught, and even though levels may be higher than normal following a wet spring and snowmelt events, the visibility usually remains good. On calm days, March Browns will be hatching at this time of year but resident cutthroat and reddsides will respond to nymphs otherwise. There are still some winter steelhead in the river and summers will soon be available in sufficient number to make targeting them worthwhile. A few have been landed already.

Most of those steelhead which are/have crossed at Willamette Falls are destined for the Santiam system and as soon as the water temperature hits 50 degrees, it should fish well. Although not listed in the 2011 regulations, bait will be legal all year on the South Santiam.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Clackamas river levels went well over 16 feet on Tuesday this week. As of Thursday, April 7th, it is rapidly dropping and is showing decent color.

The Sandy River took a pretty good hit earlier this week but, as with other Willamette Valley Rivers, is dropping and will continue to do so through the coming weekend barring snowmelt from Mt. Hood.

The Guide's Forecast – The water level on the Clackamas will be falling through the coming weekend. Exhibiting a nice, green color, steelheading will be worthwhile from McIver downstream. Recent catch reports indicate a few summers are available in addition to winter steelhead.

Very little effort on the Sandy over the past week may be a contributor to low catch reports but we imagine both low numbers and few fishers are due to slow fishing. Conditions will be decent this coming weekend and there are broodstock steelhead in the river. It should be worth a trip.

North Coast Fishing Report – Anglers seeking steelhead on north coast streams have also been plagued by unusually high waters for this time of year. This has limited access to what should be the best bets for hatchery reared broodstock fish; the Wilson and Nestucca Rivers.

Action was good for anglers last weekend, taking advantage of good water conditions that have been a rarity for much of the season. The Wilson was jam packed with boats last weekend with numerous fish being taken, the bulk of them of wild origin. Effort has been high with the poor options for spring Chinook in the valley. When conditions have allowed, anglers have been pleased with their success on these coastal systems.

The Kilchis has really been the only north coast option for any prolonged period of time but it seems most anglers are unaware of the relatively new regulation change that allows fishing into

April. A local angler got the regulation change only a few years ago but it's provided anglers with a good option when other systems are too high to fish, i.e. this year. Fishing on the Kilchis has been fair at best however. With such prolonged periods of high water, fish have consistent access to upstream areas of interest so big shots of fish are not common under these conditions. This has held true recently on most north coast systems.

Sturgeon anglers continue to number few but there remains a few keepers to persistent anglers. Bay City Piling and the west channel remain favorite haunts for sturgeon anglers and tides will remain favorable, although not minus tides, through this weekend.

Area crabbing remains slow with all the fresh water we've had recently.

Cape Mears Lake, Carter Lake, Cleawox Lake, Hebo Lake, Lake Lytle, Loren's Pond, Nedonna Pond, North Lake, Smith Lake, South Lake, Tahoe Lake, Town Lake are scheduled to be planted with hatchery trout.

The Guide's Forecast – Anglers will have another crack at steelhead over the weekend with the Wilson and Nestucca expected to come into shape by Saturday. Although anglers shouldn't expect wide open fishing despite the steelhead green conditions, action should be fair for the seasons last slug of wild and broodstock steelhead making their way to the spawning grounds. Summer steelhead should also begin to show in low numbers on the Wilson and Nestucca systems.

Stick to the upper reaches if boating for the weekend. Those sections will clear first and fish will be well distributed to these areas this time of year. Anglers will begin to see some colored up fish in the system that should be released unharmed. Summer run fish will be so bright, they'll almost look more blue than silver or green. Bank anglers working the upper reaches of the Wilson or Nestucca have a reasonable chance at catching a quality steelhead this weekend.

Stick with big baits and bright colors in these higher flows. You'll have to motivate fish under these conditions. Unusually cool temperatures for this time of the year won't help steelheaders but won't necessarily hamper success either. Fish the edges of the current as fish will remain in the slower flows to keep from expending valuable energy this time of year. Slower, walking speed flows that are 2 to 4 foot deep will be ideal under these conditions.

Don't overlook the Kilchis River either as it will remain a good bet under these conditions. You likely won't find any hatchery fish over there this time of year but if you do, they'll likely be spent.

Sturgeon anglers will have some good tides to work with for much of the morning over the weekend. Sand shrimp on the bottom should draw some interest but be prepared to move as fish are scattered in Tillamook Bay.

Bay crabbing will remain poor but Netarts is an option. Afternoon tides will be soft enough to score some keepers but after the weekend, high tide occurs after sunset. Plan for cold weather too.

Don't even think about going offshore.

Central & South Coast Reports – Offshore and inshore bottom fishers are reminded of a couple of changes in regulations effective April 1st. Initially, ocean fishers are restricted to the 40-fathom (240-foot) line. Fortunately, ling cod may be found in shallow water and are even

accessible to rock and jetty anglers as they have moved in to spawn. In addition, while the seven fish limit of rockfish and kelp greenling has not changed, only one of those fish may be a cabezon. The latter decision was made in an effort to keep retention open through the summer season as allowing unlimited retention would likely fill the harvest cap which would disallow taking any cabbies for the remainder of the year.

The spring Ocean Chinook salmon fishing is scheduled to remain open through the end of April with no determination at this writing with regard to a summer fishing season.

Offshore winds have prevented launches this week and there's no relief in sight other than a brief respite predicted for Saturday afternoon. It will break eventually, though, with opportunities for salmon trollers, recreational crabbers and bottom fishers alike.

Crabbing is slow in bays and estuaries as coastal rivers flush fresh water downstream.

South coast beaches are producing limits or near-limits of striped surf perch whenever ocean conditions allow safe fishing. Catches have included a few redbills as well.

Crabbing is slow to fair out of Newport in Yaquina Bay but it is possible to catch a few perch at this time of year while the traps or rings soak.

It is unfortunate that harsh offshore conditions have kept boats bay-bound since the ocean opened for Chinook fishing. With springers entering the Umpqua and earlier reports of bottom-fishers hooking springers, ocean trollers could surely have hooked Chinook out of Reedsport. Crabbing is slow this week in Winchester Bay due in part to this week's freshet adding to an overall wet spring. It will improve following a break in the storm fronts. A few sturgeon have been landed but as is typical for the fishery here, most are oversized and must be released. The Umpqua system is very high and swift at this writing on mid-day April 7th but is forecast to be dropping rapidly into the coming weekend. Try the mainstem around Scottsburg for long-shot springers (it's still early) or the South Umpqua for a fair to good chance of a hatchery steelhead hookup. Expect to encounter an ever-greater number of slanky steelhead which have spawned and are returning to the ocean. It may seem like an odd time of year to mention smallmouth bass and plug-pitchers shouldn't expect large numbers but historically the largest smallies come from the Umpqua at this time of year.

Winter steelhead action has slowed on the Coos and Coquille as the end of the season approaches. Both rivers will close to steelheading at the end of April.

Spring Chinook fishing was very good on the lower Rogue Monday this week as water conditions improved. Most boats got a couple of fish that day. While it slowed on Tuesday this week, the Rogue blew out mid-week as another storm front came through. Still high on Thursday morning, the water level is forecast to be falling and with a little clearing, it will fish this weekend although snow is falling in Medford today. If it does fish, it will fish well. Get in on this round if you can as the long-range weather forecast is predicting another rain storm starting the middle of next week. While there are winter steelhead in the middle Rogue, results have only been fair and once again this stretch is high and muddy. Anglers with their sights set on steelhead should seriously consider the upper river where winter hookups have been good and should remain so for a while. Try drifting scented yarn.

Scheduled for trout stocking are Bradley Lake, Upper and Middle Empire Lake, Johnson Mill Pond, Powers Pond, Saunders Lake, Ben Irving Reservoir, Cooper Cr. Reservoir, Galesville Reservoir, Loon Lake and Plat I Reservoir.

Central and Eastern Oregon – As if the Deschutes running extremely high wasn't bad enough, snow is in the forecast for late this week. Plan a trip elsewhere and tie some flies while looking forward to genuine spring weather. It's gotta happen eventually.

Recent trips to Crescent Lake have yielded good catches of large brown trout but it has been cold over there and is snowing periodically.

Fishing is fair for kokanee at Green Peter with downriggers not required to troll for them at this time of year.

While it's possible for patient, persistent anglers to take a limit, the fish are not yet in the best condition for the table.

Trollers using hoochies are taking limits of kokanee at Lake Billy Chinook. Limits are coming in fairly short order recently and the occasional bull trout is showing up in catches.

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report for April 2011

North Puget Sound

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

As March comes to a close, fishing continues to be slow for most anglers targeting **blackmouth**, said Steve Thiesfeld, Puget Sound salmon manager for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). "For the most part it has been a real grind for anglers fishing Puget Sound," he said. "But there have been a few bright spots. One angler recently caught a 27-pound hatchery chinook in the San Juan Islands and several participants in the recent Anacortes Salmon Derby did pretty good as well."

A total of 101 fish were weighed during the **Anacortes Salmon Derby**, which took place March 26-27. Mike Champion of Bellingham took home the \$15,000 grand prize with his 18.96-pound fish. Patrick Barton of Bellingham hooked a 18.74-pound salmon that was good enough for second place and \$5,000, and Brett Enholm of Bellingham was awarded \$2,500 for his third-place fish, which weighed in at 18.44 pounds.

"While anglers definitely have to put in some time on the water, it can be worth it for an opportunity to catch a large blackmouth," Thiesfeld said.

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. Thiesfeld reminds anglers that Marine Area 9 is open only through April 15, while Marine Area 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) is already closed to salmon fishing. Freshwater anglers looking to cast for **trout** will soon have numerous lakes to choose from. The lowland lakes trout season gets under way April 30, when many lakes – stocked with thousands of legal-sized trout – will open for fishing. Information on stocking schedules for rainbow, cutthroat and triploid trout is available on [WDFW's website](#).

Anglers should note that the **halibut** season gets under way in May. The 2011 recreational halibut seasons approved for Washington's marine areas are:

- **Columbia River (Ilwaco):** Marine Area 1 will open May 5, three days a week, Thursday through Saturday until 70 percent of the quota is reached, or until July 17. The fishery will then reopen on Aug. 5 and continue three days a week (Friday through Sunday) until the remaining quota is reached, or Sept.30, whichever occurs first. The 2011 catch quota is 15,418 pounds.
- **South Coast (Westport/Ocean Shores):** Marine Area 2 will open on May 1, two days a week, Sundays and Tuesdays. During the fourth week in May the fishery will be open Sunday only (May 22). Beginning the following week the fishery will resume the Sunday, Tuesday structure until the quota is reached. The northern nearshore area will be open seven days per week, until the quota is reached. The 2011 catch quota is 43,500 pounds.
- **North Coast (La Push/Neah Bay):** Marine areas 3 and 4 will open on May 12, two days per week, Thursdays and Saturdays, through May 21. If sufficient quota remains, the fishery will reopen the week of June 2. If sufficient quota remains after that opener, the fishery will reopen starting June 16. The 2011 catch quota is 108,792 pounds.
- **Strait of Juan de Fuca/Puget Sound:** Marine areas 6 through 10 (Strait, Port Angeles, Admiralty Inlet and Everett) will be open May 5 through May 29. Marine Area 5 (Sekiu) will be open May 26 through June 18. These fisheries will be open three days a week, Thursday, Friday and Saturday closed Sunday through Wednesday except for Memorial Day weekend when they will be open Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The 2011 combined catch quota for these areas is 58,155 pounds.

All areas that will be open to halibut fishing have a one-fish daily catch limit, with no minimum size, a possession limit of one fish while on the vessel, and a possession limit of two fish in any form once the angler is on the shore.

Halibut fishing will remain closed in marine areas 11 (Tacoma) and 13 (southern Puget Sound) to protect three species of rockfish listed for protection under the federal Endangered Species Act. Marine Area 12 (Hood Canal) will remain closed due to low dissolved-oxygen conditions.

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

April will see the traditional opening of the statewide lowland lakes trout fishing season, the expansion of lingcod fishing on the north coast and up to two rounds of razor-clam digging on ocean beaches.

One morning razor clam dig has been approved at two beaches -- Long Beach and Twin Harbors -- April 7-9. Digging dates and morning low tides are:

- April 7 (Thursday), 9:37 a.m. (0.1 feet); Long Beach, Twin Harbors
- April 8 (Friday), 10:19 a.m., (0.2 feet); Long Beach, Twin Harbors
- April 9 (Saturday), 11:07 a.m. (0.4 feet); Long Beach, Twin Harbors

Later in April, razor clammers could have another opportunity if marine toxin tests show the clams are safe to eat. Tentative opening dates and low tides for that dig are:

- April 19 (Tuesday), 8:07 a.m. (-1.8 feet); Long Beach, Twin Harbors
- April 20 (Wednesday), 8:54 a.m. (-1.7 feet); Long Beach, Twin Harbors
- April 21 (Thursday), 9:42 a.m. (-1.4 feet); Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis and Mocrocks
- April 22 (Friday), 10:33 a.m. (-0.8 feet); Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis and Mocrocks
- April 23 (Saturday), 11:27 a.m. (-0.2 feet); Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis and Mocrocks (Digging allowed until 1 p.m.)

No digging will be allowed after noon on any of the razor-clam beaches, except on April 23 when digging is allowed until 1 p.m. on the four beaches. Fishery managers agreed to an extra hour of digging April 23 because low tide won't occur until 11:27 a.m. that morning, said Dan Ayres, coastal shellfish manager for Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). 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 harvester's clams must be kept in a separate container. Noting that 2010-11 state fishing licenses expire March 31, Ayres reminds diggers age 15 or older that they must purchase a 2011-12 license to participate in the April openings. Various licenses, ranging from a three-day razor-clam license to a multi-species combination license, are available [online](#), by phone (1-866-246-9453) and from sporting goods stores and other retail license dealers around the state.

Also on the coast, the **lingcod** fishery is under way in marine areas 1 (Ilwaco), 2 (Westport-Ocean Shores) and 3 (LaPush). Beginning April 16, Marine Area 4 (Neah Bay) also will open for lingcod. For more information on lingcod fishing regulations, check the [Fishing in Washington pamphlet](#).

Meanwhile, fishing for **blackmouth** is still an option. Marine Areas 5 (Sekiu) and 6 (eastern Strait) are open through April 10, although Marine Areas 11 (Tacoma-Vashon), 12 (Hood Canal) and 13 (South Puget Sound) will remain open through April 30.

Anglers fishing marine areas 11 and 12 have a two-salmon daily limit, but must release wild chinook. Those fishing the Strait of Juan de Fuca – marine areas 5 and 6 – and Marine Area 13 have a daily limit of one salmon.

In freshwater, anglers still have an opportunity to hook **wild steelhead** on the Olympic Peninsula. 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. Wild steelhead retention continues through April 30 on most of those rivers. The exceptions are the Clearwater, Hoh and Quinault rivers, where wild steelhead retention runs through April 15. Anglers should be aware that portions of the Dickey River closed in mid-March. For more information on steelhead fishing regulations, check the [Fishing in Washington pamphlet](#).

Lake fishing opportunities expand at the end of the month, when the **lowland lakes trout season** gets under way. Many lakes – stocked with thousands of legal-sized trout – open for fishing April 30. Information on stocking schedules for rainbow, cutthroat and triploid trout is available on [WDFW's website](#).

Anglers should note that the **halibut** season gets under way in May. The 2011 recreational halibut seasons approved for Washington's marine areas are:

- **Columbia River (Ilwaco):** Marine Area 1 will open May 5, three days a week, Thursday through Saturday until 70 percent of the quota is reached, or until July 17. The fishery will then reopen on Aug. 5 and continue three days a week (Friday through Sunday) until the remaining quota is reached, or Sept.30, whichever occurs first. The 2011 catch quota is 15,418 pounds.
- **South Coast (Westport/Ocean Shores):** Marine Area 2 will open on May 1, two days a week, Sundays and Tuesdays. During the fourth week in May the fishery will be open Sunday only (May 22). Beginning the following week the fishery will resume the Sunday, Tuesday structure until the quota is reached. The northern nearshore area will be open seven days per week, until the quota is reached. The 2011 catch quota is 43,500 pounds.
- **North Coast (La Push/Neah Bay):** Marine areas 3 and 4 will open on May 12, two days per week, Thursdays and Saturdays, through May 21. If sufficient quota remains,

- the fishery will reopen the week of June 2. If sufficient quota remains after that opener, the fishery will reopen starting June 16. The 2011 catch quota is 108,792 pounds.
- **Strait of Juan de Fuca/Puget Sound:** Marine areas 6 through 10 (Strait, Port Angeles, Admiralty Inlet and Everett) will be open May 5 through May 29. Marine Area 5 (Sekiu) will be open May 26 through June 18. These fisheries will be open three days a week, Thursday, Friday and Saturday closed Sunday through Wednesday except for Memorial Day weekend when they will be open Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The 2011 combined catch quota for these areas is 58,155 pounds.

All areas that will be open to halibut fishing have a one-fish daily catch limit, with no minimum size, a possession limit of one fish while on the vessel, and a possession limit of two fish in any form once the angler is on the shore.

Halibut fishing will remain closed in marine areas 11 and 13 to protect three species of rockfish listed for protection under the federal Endangered Species Act. Marine Area 12 will remain closed due to low dissolved-oxygen conditions.

Southwest Washington

Starting April 8, Columbia River anglers will get at least eight more days to catch hatchery-reared **spring chinook salmon** below Bonneville Dam under a decision announced today by fishery managers from Washington and Oregon.

The popular fishery, which closed for a catch assessment April 4, will reopen to fishing Friday, April 8, through Friday, April 15. Fishery managers will meet again April 14 to determine whether to allow additional fishing time.

The eight-day extension will give anglers another chance to catch hatchery-reared spring chinook still available for harvest, said Cindy LeFleur, Columbia River policy coordinator for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

"Fishing conditions on the Columbia River have been pretty rough in recent weeks, leaving the sport catch well below the harvest guideline," LeFleur said. "These extra fishing days will give anglers some time to make up for the high water and turbid river conditions that have undercut catch rates to date."

Through April 4, anglers had caught and kept a total of 4,500 spring chinook. Approximately 3,800 were upriver fish, compared to a 7,700-fish harvest guideline for upriver chinook set at the beginning of the season.

The area set to reopen for spring chinook fishing April 8 extends from Buoy 10 upriver to Rooster Rock for boat and bank anglers, and to the fishing boundary below Bonneville Dam for bank anglers only. When the fishery is open, anglers can retain one marked, hatchery-reared adult chinook salmon as part of their daily limit.

Anglers may also retain **shad** and hatchery-reared **steelhead** when the spring chinook fishery is open. However, all wild salmon and steelhead not marked as a hatchery fish by a clipped adipose fin must be released unharmed.

Along with the eight additional fishing days, lower-river anglers could get another chance to catch spring chinook in May, once fishery managers update the run forecast. While the preseason forecast projected a return of 198,400 upriver fish, the fishery has been managed with a 30 percent "buffer" to guard against overestimating the run.

"If the fish return at or above expectations, we will look toward providing additional days of fishing on the river later in spring," LeFleur said.

The fishing extension starting April 8 does not affect the spring chinook season above Bonneville Dam, which is open seven days a week through April 24 between the Tower Island powerlines below The Dalles Dam and the Washington/Oregon state line, 17 miles upriver from McNary Dam. Bank fishing is also allowed from Bonneville Dam upriver to the powerlines located about 6 miles below The Dalles Dam through April 24.

Anglers fishing above Bonneville Dam can retain up to two marked, hatchery-reared adult chinook salmon or hatchery steelhead as part of their daily limit.

News of any additional fishing days will be announced on WDFW's website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/>), the Fishing Hotline (360-902-2500), the Region 5 hotline (360-696-6211*1010) and through local news media.

Meanwhile, WDFW Fish Biologist Joe Hymer has some other fishing opportunities to recommend:

- **Fish a tributary:** This is the time of year when anglers start picking up increasing number of **spring chinook** in the Cowlitz, Lewis and Kalama rivers. **Winter steelhead** are still providing lots of action on the Cowlitz – especially near the trout and salmon hatcheries – and **summer steelhead** are moving into several other tributaries to the lower Columbia River. Note that the lower East Fork Lewis River and the Lower Washougal River open to steelhead fishing April 16. Check the [Fishing in Washington](#) rule pamphlet for current rules before you go.
- **Head upriver:** In April, the daily number of **spring chinook** passing Bonneville Dam usually jumps from hundreds to thousands of fish, which move into the Bonneville, The Dalles, and John Day pools and a number of tributaries in between. Wind River, Klickitat River and Drano Lake are all good bets for spring chinook in April. **Walleye** fishing is also picking up in The Dalles Pool and the John Day Pool.
- **Catch some trout:** Hundreds of lowland lakes open for trout fishing April 30 throughout the state, drawing tens of thousands of anglers out for their first cast of the year. While most lakes in southwest Washington are open year-round, "opening day" does mark the start of trout fishing in such perennial favorites as Mineral Lake (Lewis County), Swift Reservoir (Skamania County) and the Rowland Lakes (Klickitat County). Meanwhile, fishing is already good for **kokanee** running 12-15 inches in Merwin Reservoir on the North Fork Lewis River.
- **Fish for sturgeon:** In the last days of March, catch rates for legal-size sturgeon showed a marked improvement in the lower Columbia River below Bonneville Dam. This trend should continue in the weeks ahead as higher flows over Bonneville energize both the fish and the fishery. Note, however, that the Sand Island Slough near Rooster Rock will be closed to fishing at least through April 30. Also be aware that the retention fishery for sturgeon in the John Day Pool closes April 10, when the catch is expected to reach the 500-fish harvest guideline.
- **Dig some razor clams:** One morning razor clam dig has been approved for April 7-9 and a second is tentatively scheduled April 19-23, pending the results of marine toxin tests. The first is scheduled for Long Beach and Twin Harbors only, If test results are favorable, those beaches will reopen for digging April 19-23 and two others – Copalis and Mocrocks will be open April 21-23. For more information, see the WDFW [razor clam](#) webpage.

Anglers and clam diggers over age 14 are reminded that a 2011-12 license is required to participate in any of the April openings, since 2010-11 licenses expire March 31. Licenses ranging from a three-day razor-clam license to a multi-species combination license are available [online](#), by phone (1-866-246-9453) and from sporting goods stores and other retail license dealers around the state.

Eastern Washington

Some of the region's best fishing will begin at the end of the month with the lowland lakes season opener on April 30, but there's plenty of good fishing to be had until then.

"Some waters that open in late-April that are well-stocked, such as Badger, Williams, West Medical, Fishtrap, Fish, and Clear lakes, will likely be excellent again," said Chris Donley, district fish biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). "But until then, try some March 1-opening waters or year-round fisheries."

Coffeepot Lake in Lincoln County is producing 18- to 22-inch **rainbow trout** on chironomids and other flies, Donley said. Regulations at Coffeepot Lake include selective gear rules (no bait, artificial flies and lures only, knotless nets), a minimum size limit of 18 inches and daily catch limit of one trout.

Liberty Lake, in eastern Spokane County, "boomed at ice-out," with catches of **brown trout** that ran 16 to 25 inches, Donley said. Liberty still has lots of good fishing for both those trout and, as the water warms, some of the earliest **yellow perch** and **crappie**.

Downs Lake in southwest Spokane County just received some hatchery "catchable-size" (9 to 12 inches) rainbow trout, and is fishing well for **largemouth bass**. Downs also has yellow perch and crappie.

Medical Lake, near the town of the same name in southwest Spokane County, has brown and rainbow trout.

Catch-and-release fishing for both rainbow and **cutthroat trout** at Amber Lake has been "awesome," Donley said. Amber is under selective gear rules and shifts to a catch-and-keep season on April 30 when the daily limit will be two trout of at least 14 inches. Rainbows with clipped adipose fins caught at Amber must be released even after April 30.

A year-round fishery, Rock Lake in Whitman County, is consistently a good spot for catches of both brown and rainbow trout.

Bill Baker, WDFW northeast district fish biologist, said that year-round Lake Roosevelt keeps producing big rainbows most days, with **kokanee** on some days. Baker also notes Deer Lake in southern Stevens County, which opened March 1, is finally warming and likely producing some catches of rainbow and **lake trout**, with **bass**, **crappie**, **perch** catches not far behind.

"Most fishing lakes in the northeast district won't open until April 30, and even then, some at higher elevation may still have pretty cold water temperatures, if not some ice or snow," Baker said. "But the usual good producers will be the ones to plan on fishing late in the month."

In Stevens County, those include Waitts, Loon, Deep, Cedar, and the Little Pend Oreille chain of lakes, plus Potter's Pond and a few selective gear fisheries such as Bayley, Rocky and Starvation lakes. In Ferry County, traditional favorites opening in late April include Ellen, Davis, Swan and Trout lakes, plus fly-fishing-only Long Lake. Pend Oreille County waters opening April 30 include Diamond, Frater, Big Meadow, North and South Skookum, Marshall and Sacheen lakes.

In the south end of the region, the Tucannon River impoundments, on WDFW's Wooten Wildlife Area, have been producing nice rainbow catches since the March 1 opener. Area Manager Kari Dingman said Big Four, Blue, Deer, Rainbow, Spring and Watson lakes are all well-stocked with hatchery trout and slowly warming up as spring advances. Beaver Lake has water depth and vegetation growth issues that preclude it from viable fish stocking this year.

April 18 is the deadline to register for the May 7 **Kids' Fishing Event** at Clear Lake in Spokane County. For details on the registration form, see the [Youth Fishing 2011 Event Calendar](#) on WDFW's website.

Northcentral Washington

About three dozen lakes throughout the region open to fishing or shift to catch-and-release on April 1.

The bulk of those fisheries are in the Columbia Basin where WDFW District Fish Biologist Chad Jackson predicts a "fair to good" season, depending as always on weather. All but one are within or adjacent to the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge south of Potholes Reservoir, and over half are planted with either spring and/or fall **rainbow trout** fry.

"Those who traditionally fish the April 1 opener should note that North and South Teal lakes will not be fishable this year because we treated those lakes last fall to remove carp and other spiny rays to restore the trout fishery," Jackson said. "We'll be stocking them with fingerling rainbows later this spring so fishing should be good for next year's opener."

There are lots of other fishing spots to try now and the best may be Dry Falls Lake, the only one of the April 1-opening waters not in or near the refuge. It's located in Sun Lakes State Park, northeast of Park Lake and west of Coulee City in the north end of Grant County.

Jackson says anglers should expect to catch 13- to 14-inch yearling rainbows with carryovers 18 inches or greater on opening day at Dry Falls Lake. A total of 10,150 rainbow, 756 **tiger trout**, and 1,026 **brown trout** fry were stocked there in 2010.

"Just remember that Dry Falls has a selective gear regulation and a one trout daily bag limit," Jackson said. As defined in the [Sportfishing Rules Pamphlet](#), selective gear is only unscented artificial flies or lures with one single-point, barbless hook, bait prohibited, and knotless nets. Other April 1 opening waters in the Columbia Basin include:

- Upper and Lower Hampton lakes, in Grant County north of Othello on the refuge, stocked with 28,507 and 5,047 rainbow trout fry in the spring, respectively; Lower Hampton also received a trout fry plant of 4,500 in the fall. Lower Hampton should produce 12- to 14-inch yearling trout catches, probably an average of about three per angler; Upper Hampton may have larger fish, but the catch rates will probably again be slow.
- Pillar-Widgeon chain of lakes in Grant County on the refuge, stocked with trout fry in the spring as follows: Pillar – 2,500; Gadwall – 750; Snipe – 600; Shoveler – 750; Cattail – 1,500; Poacher – 150; Lemna – 450; Hourglass – 300; Sago – 300; and Widgeon – 1,650. Access to this lake chain is just southeast of Soda Lake. Try either the entire chain or at least three or four of the lakes to catch some 12- to 13-inch yearlings and carryover trout in the 18-inch or better range. Shore fishing is available at most, but consider packing in a float tube to increase chances for success. The best tend to be Widgeon, Sago, and Pillar, but all can produce well.
- Hutchinson and Shiner lakes on the refuge in Adams County with excellent **largemouth bass** and **bluegill** fishing. Only non-motorized boats are allowed.

- Coyote, Bobcat, and Hayes creek ponds, located just south of Morgan and Halfmoon lakes, on the refuge in Adams County. These ponds are relatively small and shallow, warming up quickly for good largemouth bass fishing
- Deadman Lake located just off McManamon Road next to Halfmoon Lake, on the refuge in Adams County, for bass and other warmwater species fishing.

In the north end of the region, in Okanogan County, a few other fisheries open April 1. Bob Jateff, WDFW Okanogan district fish biologist, said Spectacle Lake – nine miles southwest of Tonasket – should be good for **rainbow trout** in the 10- to 12-inch range. During the month of April, Spectacle will receive up to 800 one- to two-pound triploid rainbows.

Washburn Island Pond, located four miles east of Brewster on the Columbia River, offers largemouth bass and bluegill fishing starting April 1. A Colville tribal license is required if fishing from shore, but not if fishing from a boat. No internal combustion engine boats are allowed, only electric motors.

Jateff notes several Okanogan lakes switch to catch-and-release, selective gear rules, and electric boat motors only on April 1:

- Davis, Cougar, and Campbell lakes, located within the Methow Wildlife Area near Winthrop, with rainbow trout 10 to 12 inches and carryover fish up to 15 inches; small graveled boat launches at all three; could still have some ice during the first part of April.
- Rat Lake, located north of Brewster, with rainbow and brown trout 10 to 12 inches; WDFW access site with concrete boat ramp; should be thawed out by first week in April.
- Big and Little Green lakes, located five miles northwest of Omak, with rainbow trout 10 to 13 inches; WDFW access site on Big Green with concrete boat ramp; should be thawed out by first week or two in April.

Many more Okanogan County lakes will open April 30 to provide good trout fishing, including:

- Pearrygin Lake, near Winthrop, with rainbows 10 to 12 inches and carryover fish up to 15 inches; up to 500 triploid rainbows (one to two pounds each) will be stocked before the opener; boat launching facilities available at State Park, resort and WDFW access site.
- Conconully Reservoir and Lake, near town of Conconully, with rainbow trout 10 to 12 inches and carryover fish up to 15 inches; boat launching available at State Park and resorts at both lakes.
- Blue Lake, located within the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area, with rainbow trout 10 to 16 inches and some **brown trout** also available; selective gear rules, electric motors only; camping and gravel boat launch sites.
- Big Twin Lake, near Winthrop, with rainbow trout 12 to 16 inches; selective gear rules and electric motors only; resort and WDFW access site with gravel boat launching facilities.
- Chopaka Lake, near Loomis, with rainbow trout 12 to 18 inches; fly fishing only and no boat motors allowed; Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) campsites and gravel boat launch.
- Aeneas Lake, near Tonasket, with rainbow trout 12 to 16 inches, brown trout up to 18 inches; fly fishing only and no boat motors allowed; WDFW access site with camping and gravel boat launch.

Southcentral Washington

This is the time of year that area anglers start thinking seriously about **trout**, because the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is planting plenty of fish in local waters right now. Thousands of catchable-size trout are scheduled to be planted in Columbia Park Pond,

Dalton Lake, Powerline Lake, Quarry Pond, Marmes Lake, and other lakes in April. Many lakes are also being stocked with jumbo trout, weighing over a pound apiece.

"This is a good time to get outdoors and celebrate spring by catching some fish," said Paul Hoffarth, a fish biologist for the Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). "Thousands of fish around southcentral Washington are just waiting to be caught."

A complete trout-planting schedule for southcentral lakes and ponds is available on the [WDFW website](#).

Hoffarth reminds anglers over the age of 14 that a 2011-12 fishing license is required to fish for trout and other species after March 31, when 2010-11 licenses expire. Licenses ranging from a three-day razor-clam license to a multi-species combination license are available [online](#), by phone (1-866-246-9453) and from sporting goods stores and other retail license dealers around the state.

Most **steelhead** sport fisheries are now closed in the Columbia and Snake rivers, although a "bank only" fishery adjacent to WDFW's Ringold Springs Hatchery near the Tri-Cities is open April 1 through April 15. The daily limit is two hatchery steelhead along the Franklin County shoreline from the WDFW marker a quarter-mile downstream from the Ringold irrigation wasteway outlet to the marker a half-mile upstream from Spring Creek.

Meanwhile, **spring chinook salmon** will be moving into the area in increasing numbers throughout the month of April. On the Columbia River, anglers can keep two adipose-fin-clipped hatchery chinook per day through April 24 from Bonneville Dam upstream to the Washington/Oregon state line, 17 miles upriver from McNary Dam. The lower Yakima River opens to spring chinook fishing May 1.

"Springers usually start arriving in fishable numbers around the middle of April," Hoffarth said. "Anglers should keep an eye out for emergency rules that open and close fishing on short notice." For updates, he recommends checking the [department's website](#), the Fishing Hotline (360-902-2500) and local news media.

Sturgeon anglers are also advised to stay abreast of new regulations. As of late March, anglers could still catch and keep legal-size sturgeon in Lake Umatilla (John Day Dam to McNary Dam), but that fishery will close as soon as the 500-fish quota for those waters is reached. Rather catch warm-water fish? Catch rates should continue to improve on area rivers for **smallmouth bass**, **channel catfish** and **walleye** in April right through spring.

TGF Inbox - Reader E-mail

Write to the TGF staff:

Bob Rees: brees@pacifier.com

Doug Rees: doug@TheGuidesForecast.com

Michael Teague: Michael@TheGuidesForecast.com

Random Links

New State Park online cabin reservations open April 7:

<http://oregonstateparks.wordpress.com/2011/03/30/mark-april-7-on-your-calendar-new-cabin-reservations-open/>

Trick For Clearing Backlashes:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TDI5kwR5zjc&feature=related>

Saltwater Fly Fishing Info? You'll probably find it here (commercial site):

<http://www.garybulla.com/>

GOOD LUCK!