

The Guide's Forecast - volume 13 issue number 15

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **April 15th – April 21st, 2011**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro - After last week's performance, anglers aren't too excited about prospects on the mainstem Columbia. Effort has been waning, especially with the Willamette River coming into shape. The Columbia is scheduled to close tomorrow but fishery managers will access sport catches today and determine if more time should be allowed for sport anglers. Passage at Bonneville is picking up with peak passage likely in early May. If flows drop, fishing should improve.

The water level in the lower Willamette has been stable for several days with flow decreasing. Pressure has been lighter than normal on the lower Willamette and Multnomah Channel with springer fishing only fair. The water temperature is in the high 40s and broke 50 degrees on Tuesday. Chinook results are improving as it warms a few degrees. Fish passage is picking up following a lull during the recent high water.

With the McKenzie on steady drop over the past several days, March Browns and Blue-Winged-Olives are hatching.

Flow on the Santiam system has dropped and is fishable. Summer steelhead have been taken recently at the mouth.

The water level on the Clackamas has dropped and is fairly stable. There are broodstock in the river and soon, springers.

Sandy fishers have seen little action recently but spring chinook will be in the river soon. The Sandy run doesn't compare in numbers to the Clackamas but fishing can still be good.

Boaters should keep an eye out for floating debris at Detroit Reservoir as it fills.

Northwest – Steelheaders finally saw quality conditions grace north coast streams early in the week. Good catches were reported on the Wilson and fair on the Nestucca and district streams remain busy as Willamette Valley fishing is slow. Despite high flows, some of the best fishing took place downstream of Sollie Smith Bridge on the Wilson. Side-drifters did best in the higher flows.

The Kilchis produced some fish over the weekend but flows are dropping and clearing making fishing challenging. The Trask is an option too with April being one of the better months on this mostly native river.

Rivers are forecast to rise slightly on the weekend but then begin a steady drop next week. The Nestucca and Wilson will remain the best bets but action should wind down after next week. Anglers may begin seeing a few dark fish in the mix as we near spawning time.

Spring chinook should begin entering Tillamook Bay but the peak period is still a month away. Tillamook springers average larger than their inland cousins but aren't as plentiful. The Trask and Wilson Rivers are primary destinations for hatchery bound fish.

Another minus tide will greet sturgeon anglers on Tillamook Bay over the weekend but low slack is just after daylight. It's best to wait to have at least 4 hours of fishing near the bottom of the

outgoing tide. Bar crossings will be sketchy in these conditions. Persistent wind across the ocean is in the forecast.

Southwest – A family fun day with activities for young and old will take place in honor of Earth Day on Saturday, April 16th from 8 AM to 3 PM at Olalla Reservoir. Although the reservoir will be planted, activities will be available for those who don't fish as well. Parking will be limited.

Boats launching out of central Oregon ports have been taking limits of lingcod averaging 10 pounds which are perfect for the table. Ocean Chinook fishing will remain open through the end of the month.

Pressure is building and hog lines are forming on the Umpqua mainstem as spring chinook season gets underway here. The water level is forecast to rise into the coming weekend, however.

The April 23rd Diamond Lake opener is just over a week away although if current conditions persist, it may be necessary to access by snowmobile to fish through the ice. On a brighter note, there are half a million trout awaiting anxious anglers.

Trollers and bank fishers on the lower Rogue have been doing well for springers to 20 pounds and occasionally larger. Some anglers have taken limits although there are wild fish around which must be released. Fishing has been fair on the middle Rogue and good for winter steelhead on the upper river.

When ocean conditions have allowed offshore launches out of Brookings recently, bottom fishers have boated limits of rockfish just outside the harbor. Catches of lingcod have been slow to fair but are expected to improve. If offshore forecasts hold true, there will be opportunities to fish the ocean this coming weekend and into next week. Area beaches are producing surf perch as is the mouth of the Winchuck River.

Eastern – Trollers at Green Peter are spotting good numbers of fish on depth finders but are catching very few kokanee.

Lake Billy Chinook is producing bull trout to herring trollers.

SW Washington – The Kalama, Cowlitz and Lewis are all forecast to receive adult returns of spring chinook in the coming weeks. Successful reports have been scarce lately but some fish are being taken in the dropping flows. The Cowlitz and Lewis are the best options.

Counts at Bonneville aren't exciting enough to stimulate the Drano Lake fishery but a few anglers are trying. Catches have been sparse. Once Bonneville begins passing closer to 1,000 fish per day, fishing should pick up.

Sturgeon anglers tallied a few keepers in the Portland to Longview area which is surprising given the flows coming from upstream. With warming water temperatures, success rates should climb.

Columbia River Fishing Report – Even as sportanglers near the peak of the lower Columbia River spring Chinook season, effort and success is less than stellar, even for a year when biologists were only expecting a few hundred thousand fish back to the system. High flows continue to hamper boat anglers as most are attuned to fishing on the bottom in deeper water. What many boat anglers don't realize is that these fish can and will travel in the shallower water this time of year to avoid heavy flows. That explains why bank anglers downstream of Portland

are faring well when pursuing salmon right now. Although not off the charts, catch rates for bank anglers are at their season high right now with a strong possibility that they may stay that way as long as the Columbia remains open. It's notable that there were actually more hatchery steelhead taken than spring Chinook in the last creel check. Summer fish are on their way.

Sporadic success is coming from boat anglers but it's closely correlated with the high tides over the course of the day. On Wednesday, we fished the wing jetty along Hayden Island for a few hours, not seeing a single fish taken in a hogline of about 6 boats. The fish did come through later however with a small handful taken on the afternoon high tide for plug plunkers in the area. Few trollers were working the water so there was lots of room for the waning fleet.

Boaters downstream of the mouth of the Willamette reported improving success since the river cleared. Westport anglers fishing from the wing jetties saw slightly improved catches at mid-week. Bank anglers still seemed to be doing better for the amount of effort input. Water levels are expected to continue to drop but not significantly. Flows tend to be on the increase for much of this month anyway due to court ordered flow and spill regimes. It's clear however that there is a lot of water coming down the river for this year in comparisons to years past. It's making for productive trolling and deeper water plug fishing.

Sturgeon effort remains low with the pending salmon closure coming up on the mainstem. There were boats targeting sturgeon in the Portland to Longview stretch and some keepers were caught in that section. The weekend check ended up being exactly 1 keeper and 10 shakers for every other boat fishing. This section of river is getting the most attention right now.

Downriver, crabbers continue to find success despite historic odds for this time of year. Some days, action starts out slow but builds dramatically as the winter season fades. One hour before and one hour after seem to be the best options so plan on sticking it out if you're serious about your crabbing.

A few bottomfishers took advantage of short windows of opportunity over the weekend but you have to really know what you're doing this time of year or bad consequences are very possible. Limits or near limits of rockfish came from several boats and are highly likely if you can effectively fish the last part of incoming tide as well as the first part of incoming.

The Guide's Forecast – Fishery managers decided Thursday afternoon to once again extend the recreational sportfishing opportunity below Bonneville Dam. Washington and Oregon agreed that we can conservatively allow another 4 days of sport effort extending the fishery from Saturday, April 16th through Tuesday, April 19th without compromising catch balancing with the tribes. Managers stated that until we get a significant spurt of fish past Bonneville, it will be hard to justify any additional time to make sure adequate passage happens at Bonneville Dam. This may not happen until early May or later this year.

Here is the official press release:

NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release April 14, 2011

Spring chinook season on lower Columbia extended

CLACKAMAS, Ore. – Last week's high flows and poor water conditions continued to hamper spring chinook fishing success on the lower Columbia River, prompting fishery managers to extend the current season four more days.

The spring chinook season was scheduled to close tomorrow, but Oregon and Washington fishery managers meeting today decided to keep the fishery open through Tuesday, April 19 to give anglers a chance to harvest more of the 3,100 upriver spring chinook remaining on the harvest quota. The two states also indicated that further extensions in the lower river would be unlikely prior to a formal run update sometime in May.

"It's been a difficult year so far for both fishers and managers," said Chris Kern, ODFW assistant Columbia River fisheries manager. "Poor water conditions are keeping catch rates low, while fish passage at Bonneville Dam is well behind expectations, meaning we need to be cautious going forward."

As of April 13, 864 adult spring chinook have been counted at Bonneville Dam. The fish count at Bonneville Dam is one of the pieces of information used by managers to monitor and estimate the final run size.

The river will remain open through Tuesday, April 19 from Buoy 10 to Rooster Rock State park for both bank and boat anglers and from Roster Rock to Bonneville Dam for bank fishing only. The daily bag limit continues to be 2 adult salmon/steelhead in combination, of which **only 1 may be an adult chinook.**

Passage numbers are ramping up and so is test netting success. "Catch per unit of effort" jumped significantly last week for the test netter where an average of 12.7 Chinook per drift were detected versus previous numbers nearly 1/3 of that. Most anglers agree that there are a lot of spring Chinook in the system right now, they are just not willing to bite.

We fished the mainstem Columbia on Wednesday, sitting in a hogline of about 7 boats for nearly 2.5 hours. We never saw a fish caught. We headed to the Willamette from there with not much better results. High, cold water continues to be a factor and that situation won't remedy itself significantly in the upcoming 4-day extension.

So, look for continued challenging fishing conditions on the mainstem Columbia but we can be grateful for the additional time. Keep on anchor as fast flows are keeping fish close to the bank where they can negotiate their upstream migration much easier. Shallow diving plugs and spin-n-glos will remain a top option with herring trolling a distant second. These fish are clearly avoiding heavier flows so they are not in the deep water where we've found them in recent years.

As a matter of fact, bank fishing may be a great option as flows are forecast to remain high. Fish gentle sloping beaches but try and cast to a small shelf to stick your offering in a traveling lane. This can be accomplished using a cannon ball lead versus a pyramid lead but the rolling action is likely to roll into your downstream neighbor to leave plenty of space downstream if you're fishing in crowded conditions. Use ample scent to attract your quarry as it will make a difference in this big water.

This will likely be the last opportunity before early May (at the earliest) to catch a Columbia River spring Chinook. Most people think this run will come in, we just need warmer water and a little bit more time.

Sturgeon anglers on the mainstem have seen a slight dip in action near the mouth of the Willamette. Some of the better keeper fishing is taking place between Portland and Longview however and that will likely continue to be the case. There can be some good fishing in the gorge this time of year but there isn't much effort taking place up there. That may change when salmon season closes.

Crabbing in the lower river should begin to taper but we've been saying that for some time now. It's held up well for much longer than we had anticipated but strong tides will play a negative role for weekend crab seekers.

Those same minus tides will impact ocean goers as bar conditions will be rough in the morning when most offshore recreationalists want to access the ocean. A window of kind ocean conditions are forecast for the weekend where bottomfishers may finally get a chance to intercept willing lingcod and seabass. Limits should fall pretty easily if ocean conditions allow. The south jetty out of the mouth of the Columbia should be primed with good populations of rockfish; it's too bad the tides aren't as favorable as they could be.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Flows at Willamette Falls have continues to moderate this week and while water temperatures show a positive trend and the 50-degree mark should occur with warm spring rain followed by sunny weather in the forecast over the next several days. Visibility has improved daily over the past week and while it may take a hit from showers this week, it will clear with dry days to follow.

Despite showers this week, the McKenzie gauge at Vida shows improving water levels with the water temperature at 43 degrees and warming as of Thursday this week.

Expect to find the Santiam system a little high this week as rain has combined with snowmelt to add water to the river. Winter numbers are good and a few summers are in the system but the water remains too cold for best results.

Saturday, April 16th marks the McKenzie River Boat Rodeo and Cook Off, which benefits the free life-jacket program for boaters on the McKenzie River. The event will take place at Hendricks Bridge Park near Waltherville. Boat inspections will be available after noon. Call 541-579-3474 for more information.

The Eugene Spring Fly Fishing Festival will take place from 9 AM to 4 PM Saturday at Campbell Community Center located at 155 High St. The event is free and hosted by the McKenzie Flyfishers, Cascade Family Fly Fishers and the city of Eugene.

Scheduled for trout planting this week are Alton Baker Canal, Blue River Reservoir, Cottage Grove Reservoir, Detroit Reservoir, Dexter Reservoir, E. E. Wilson Pond, East Freeway Lake, Foster Reservoir, Green Peter Reservoir, Junction City Pond, Timber Linn Lake, Waverly Lake, Haldeman Pond, Salmonberry Lake and Trojan Ponds

The Guide's Forecast – Water temperatures in the lower Willamette near the mouth are hitting 50 degrees. This warmer water coupled with improved air temperatures bodes well for spring Chinook catches in the coming week. Fish at Sellwood, Oregon City, Portland Harbor or Coon Island in Multnomah Channel. The week to come is looking worthwhile. Keep an eye out for sea lions as they have been taking hooked springers lately.

Fly anglers have been doing well for reddsides and cutthroat on the McKenzie in the past few days. Watch for trout actively feeding with the reward of multiple hookups. The log jam at Milepost 44 on the McKenzie River has been removed thanks in no small part to participation by the McKenzie River Guides Association.

Sufficient numbers of summer steelhead are above Willamette Falls now to create optimism regarding the Santiam, system. Keep in mind that the South Santiam gets the vast majority of hatchery fish returns.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Fishing has been worthwhile on the Clackamas with broodstock steelhead in the system and summers starting to enter and show in catches. Rain on Friday this week is predicted to cause a rise in water levels but it will be falling from Saturday forward.

Results at the Sandy River have been poor to slow since the high water event earlier this year. When the rain stops and daytime temperatures rise, runoff from Mt. Hood is likely to cause off-color water conditions.

The Guide's Forecast – Once the Clackamas starts to drop and clear, it'll be a good bet for steelhead. Broodstock are scattered now but the best chance of hooking up with a fresh summer steelhead will be low on the river at this time of year. For those without a boat, try any one of the many parks for decent bank access.

Persistent steelheaders have managed to take the occasional steelhead on the Sandy with spinners or jigs but it is a challenging fishery and has been very slow. A glimmer of hope has manifested recently with a couple of summer steelhead landed.

North Coast Fishing Report – Although north coast steelheaders have enjoyed fair water conditions throughout the season, it has its drawbacks. High water gives steelhead ample opportunity to access their spawning grounds or even spawning grounds that haven't been accessed in some years. Therefore, fish continue to move quickly through the lower river systems, not pausing too long to look over anglers offerings.

Small streams such as the Kilchis continue to produce fair at best results but without a hatchery option, little effort is being applied. Most anglers continue to pursue hatchery broodstock fish and quality wild steelhead on the Wilson and Nestucca Rivers. Success rates have slowed somewhat as we near the tail end of the season.

Summer steelhead should begin showing in the catches and a mix of dark and bright late run winters will continue to fall in these two primary steelhead systems. The upper reaches have been fishing best but as flows drop, so should your effort in the watershed. Bait remains the best option in the higher flows but plugs could be an option if the water gets lower. Fish that have been in the system longer tend to be more territorial and in turn, will strike out of aggression more than a feeding instinct.

Spring Chinook are now most likely in the systems and hatchery (fin-clipped) fish can be retained. It may still be too early to target them however but every now and then, one is caught employing steelhead gear, especially in high water.

Good sturgeon tides are coming around again with good lows at mid-morning on the north coast. Since razor clam digging remains challenging, sturgeon fishing may be a good option for north coast enthusiasts.

Be cautious of the strong outgoing tide if you plan on negotiating the bar out of any coastal estuary but especially the lower Columbia or Tillamook Bay. Although calmer seas are in the forecast, it won't take much of an ocean swell to make these crossings hazardous.

Scheduled for trout planting are Carter Lake, Cleawox Lake, Coffenbury Lake, Devil's Lake. Lost Lake (Clatsop County), Olalla Creek Reservoir, Thissel Pond, Vernonia Pond and Woahink Lake.

The Guide's Forecast – Steelheaders will likely go through another high water period prior to the weekend. River forecasts show a jump in water levels that will make the larger systems (Wilson and Nestucca) out of reach for the weekend. Even the upper reaches will be out of line if we get the precipitation that is forecast for the north coast.

The Kilchis may remain the best option over the weekend but do plan on high flows to compete with success rates. Very few hatchery steelhead will be on this system this time of year and it is the waning part of the run so don't come to this system with high expectations.

The Wilson and Nestucca Rivers may fish again by as early as Monday or Tuesday of next week. Some winter fish will still be available, especially given the magnitude of this year's return but don't expect too much with all the water we've had this winter/spring. The higher reaches will remain the best bets and this gives bank anglers some pretty good options as the system should be loaded with both fresh and near-spawning adults.

If the weather settles, sturgeon fishing may be fair on Tillamook Bay. You may want to run some rods with sturgeon baits and some with plugs targeting spring Chinook. There should be some of both in Tillamook Bay.

Bay crabbing is tough on all north coast systems but you may be able to get out into the ocean this weekend. Here is the offshore forecast:

.FRI...SE WIND 10 TO 15 KT WITH GUSTS TO 20 KT. WIND WAVES 3 FT. W SWELL 7 FT AT 11 SECONDS. RAIN LIKELY.

.FRI NIGHT...NE WIND 15 TO 20 KT...BECOMING W 10 TO 15 KT AFTER MIDNIGHT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 6 FT AT 11 SECONDS. CHANCE OF RAIN.

.SAT...NW WIND 10 TO 15 KT WITH GUSTS TO 20 KT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 5 FT. SLIGHT CHANCE OF SHOWERS.

.SAT NIGHT...NW WIND 10 TO 15 KT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 5 FT. SLIGHT CHANCE OF SHOWERS.

.SUN...N WIND 10 KT WITH GUSTS TO 15 KT. WIND WAVES 1 FOOT. W SWELL 5 FT. SLIGHT CHANCE OF SHOWERS.

.SUN NIGHT...N WIND 10 TO 15 KT WITH GUSTS TO 20 KT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. SW SWELL 4 FT. SLIGHT CHANCE OF SHOWERS.

.MON...N WIND 10 TO 15 KT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. SW SWELL 4 FT.

.TUE...N WIND 15 KT. WIND WAVES 4 FT. NW SWELL 6 FT.

Offshore bottomfishing should be great but be very cautious of bar conditions. It may be best to wait until low slack and it shouldn't matter much to the fish. The lingcod are yummy this time of year.

Central & South Coast Reports – Offshore Chinook salmon season will remain open through the end of April. Beyond that we remain uninformed as there still been no update regarding the summer season beyond a potential July opener for coho. In the absence of reports and without updates from the ODFW regarding catch and effort estimates, ocean salmon results are unknown although it has been a rough spring season for offshore boaters.

Following week after week of high winds and pounding waves, there is hope on the horizon. Offshore forecasts are, comparatively, remarkable. If predictions remain accurate, in the week to come, one to three foot swells at nine to 16 seconds coupled with relatively mild wind will greet boaters heading offshore. We can only hope that it comes to pass.

Despite dozens of boats drifting the Siletz River, recent results have been slow for steelhead.

Crabbing has been fair in Yaquina Bay with the majority of the quarry red rock crab although sufficient numbers of Dungeness are being taken to make a meal.

Winchester Bay crabbers created a great deal of pressure with boat traffic over the past weekend but experienced only poor to slow results for their efforts. On the other hand, South Jetty fishers have been doing well with several taking limits of mostly greenling although some experienced anglers have limited on ling cod. After steadily dropping over the past week, the Umpqua is forecast to rise again on April 15th and 16th but the water is expected to moderate in flow and clear thereafter. Spring Chinook are in the system in modest number with catches reported at Scottsburg and higher. There has been a great deal of boat traffic lately so expect some company here. An alternate fishery would be the South Umpqua where steelheading has been decent.

Boats launching out of Coos Bay at Charleston have been doing very well for bottom fish. Anglers are reminded that only one cabezon may be retained as part of the seven-fish limit. Winter steelheading is winding down on the Coos River and closes April 30th.

Steelheading is slow on the Coquille with the season ending on the last day of the month.

Education Card is required for all motorboat operators for boats over 10 horsepower. The cost of the course is \$15. Pre-registration is required. To register, call 541-267-6152."

The lower Rogue is forecast to rise on Friday this week, then continue to drop and clear through Saturday and Sunday and into the coming week. Fresh, bright spring Chinook have been caught this week and should continue to provide a worthwhile fishery on the lower river. Steelheaders are taking winters on the middle Rogue as spring Chinook began to nose into this stretch. Steelheaders are doing well on the upper Rogue with some anglers making multiple catches. Side-drifting with scented yarn has been most effective.

Pro guide Andy Martin (206-388-8988) wrote to us with this Rogue report on April 10th, "There was a good afternoon bite on Saturday near Elephant Rock. The hot bait has been an anchovy fished with a size 4 gold Hilderbandt blade that has been working better than the green blades. There were at least 20 fish caught around Elephant Rock on Saturday. There were also a few taken at John's Hole and the Willows."

Marie Lake, Emigrant Reservoir, Lost Creek Reservoir, Lake Selmac, Willow Lake, Hyatt Lake, Butterfield Lake, Middle and Lower Empire Lake, Mingus Park Pond, North and South Tenmile Lakes are scheduled for trout stocking.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Deschutes River flows remain high, even for the spring season with the gauge at Moody showing just over 8,000 cfs and flows at Madras about 6,200 cfs as the morning of April 14th. It mostly a nymphing game in the big water but March Browns and Blue-Winged-Olives hatches are occurring late mornings to early afternoons. With the river level dropping, the weekend is looking quite promising. Hatches are improving and as of mid-week, trout are looking up and responding to dries.

There's still a lot of water in the John Day River but hardcore smallmouth bass fisher have been scoring some large fish according to Steve Fleming at Mah-Hah Outfitters.

Jig fishers at Wallowa Lake have been taking decent numbers of kokanee and a couple of large fish have been landed this season.

Crescent Lake is producing fair catches of brown and lake trout on the troll.

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 **kokanees** 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:

- Pearygin 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

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GOOD LUCK!