

The Guide's Forecast - volume 13 issue number 45

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **November 18th – November 24th, 2011**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Not a full length subscriber yet?

Paid subscribers will get a river-by-river breakdown for north coast systems on where to fish and how good they should be this week. If you don't like the level of detail we're providing in the full length version, we'll refund your \$17.95. It's our no lose guarantee. <http://www.theguidesforecast.com/signup.shtml>

Willamette Valley/Metro- Sturgeon remains the only viable option for gorge anglers but the Bonneville Pool often produces good catches this time of year as well. It remains catch and release fishing in this reservoir. Anglers working the Portland to Longview stretch, particularly around Trojan, are still catching some keepers and a fair number of shakers.

Water temperatures at Willamette Falls have dropped to 50 degrees. While fish passage is at a near-standstill, a few steelhead are being taken upriver on the Town Run. Sturgeon fishing remains good in the Portland Harbor but catch and release regulations are still in effect. Catch and keep seasons for 2012 have yet to be set.

While the McKenzie had been dropping into shape this week, rain will cause the river to rise. A dry weekend may allow some fishing opportunities.

North Santiam fishing has been best around Packsaddle but the river is on the rise this week. Anglers may keep up to two coho per day.

Fishing on the Clackamas and Sandy has been slow. It remains to be seen what results from rain this week. Anglers may have a long wait for winter steelhead in these systems.

Northwest – Chinook are still available in the Tillamook area with driftboaters still anxiously awaiting the first good rain freshet of the season. Meanwhile, herring trollers working the Ghost Hole and Bay City continue to take fresh chinook but action is sporadic at best.

Tidewater of the Wilson, Kilchis and Trask Rivers has been putting out good numbers of chinook and a slight increase in river levels over the weekend boosted catches in the lower reaches of these rivers. Another, more significant rain event is forecast before the weekend which could put rivers in ideal shape by the weekend. Fresh chinook will be most available on the Wilson and Kilchis Rivers but all north coast streams should produce good catches.

Targeted chum salmon fishing is now closed but a large return is coming in on the Kilchis, Miami and Wilson Rivers. Fish are spawning in the lower reaches. Wading anglers should be cognizant of eggs incubating in fresh redds.

Sturgeon typically make a stronger showing in Tillamook and Nehalem Bays this month. Tides will improve later in the month but fish should be available.

The Nehalem system continues to slow but hatchery workers on the North Fork were surprised not to find the season's first winter run steelhead in their trap after the last rain. Early returning steelhead are often an indication for how the season will shape up. No winter-run steelhead have

been reported on the north coast yet.

The Nestucca should also be a fair fall chinook option after the next rain but anglers need to be mindful of the salmon closure upstream of First Bridge near Beaver.

Weak tides should make for productive crabbing in most estuaries, barring a large amount of rain inundating the watershed. The lower Columbia should provide the best opportunity if winds remain subdued. Netarts Bay should also be a strong option.

Southwest – Neither commercial nor recreational crabbing will be allowed to crab in the ocean as scheduled because Dungeness have not sufficiently recovered from the summer molt according to a November 10th announcement from the ODFW. Commercial efforts will not be allowed in bays and estuaries as of December 1st although recreational crabbers may continue to reap the bounty. Ocean crabbing will be delayed until December 15th or possibly later.

Offshore all-depth bottom fishing is excellent at this time of year although days which allow crossing the bar are few and this week is predicted to be rough. Halibut is closed for the year.

Chinook and coho catches are on the wane at Winchester Bay although crabbing has been very good.

Crabbing has been excellent for numbers in Coos Bay but the situation that delayed ocean crabbing this year is evident in catches - Dungeness are not yet filled out with meat. Chinook fishing is slow.

Chinook catches are slow on the lower Rogue with a few being taken near Indian Creek. Half-pounder catches are spotty at Agness. Steelheading is fair to good on the middle river although the majority are wild, requiring release. The upper Rogue has been fishing fairly well for steelhead with no one technique producing better than another. Bait is allowed above Shady Cove, artificials elsewhere.

As rain fell and the Chetco rose, then dropped following the opening above tidewater on November 2nd, anglers experienced excellent fishing at times. Bobber and bait was most successful followed by spoons and spinners. The Chetco is forecast to rise again over the coming week and is expected to fish very well.

Most effort on the Elk and Sixes Rivers has been near the mouths. Despite crowded conditions, it has been slow to fair at best. Rain will improve results.

Eastern – With the Crooked River at excellent level and flow and plenty of trout available, fishing has been good although fish are running on the smallish side.

The John Day Pool and John Day River itself is now peaking for late-season steelhead. Trollers take a good number of fish this time of year, fishing just upstream of the John Day Dam but bobber and jig anglers can witness good action in the lower 8 or 10 miles of the John Day River too.

The Grande Ronde, Umatilla and Imnaha Rivers should begin to provide more opportunity until winter temperatures begin to freeze the river banks. Fish are not large but can provide some of the best opportunity for the year.

SW Washington – Although chinook and coho are present in good numbers on many district streams, most fish are dark, making for poor table fare. Anglers are anxious for the upcoming winter steelhead season.

Winter steelhead will be most prevalent on the Cowlitz River, where Thanksgiving is a predictable indicator on how the season will progress. Good numbers of larger-than-average fish should be available to both bank and boat anglers.

Klickitat River anglers are still finding some coho but like other areas, fish are beginning to turn dark. Some late run summer steelhead should also be available.

Columbia River Fishing Report – Sturgeon fishing is clearly on the way out as hard-core anglers are still seeking keepers in the gorge and in the Portland to Longview stretch. Keepers are hard to come by in both of those reaches but shaker action is keeping many anglers exercised. The real action continues in the Portland Harbor where catch and release fishing is pretty good right now and has been for several weeks.

Catch numbers on the mainstem Columbia, as evidenced in recent mainstem creel checks are:

Gorge Bank:

Weekly checking showed four legal white sturgeon kept, plus 32 sublegal sturgeon released for 50 bank anglers.

Gorge Boats:

Weekly checking showed one sublegal sturgeon released for two boats (four anglers).

Portland to Longview Boats:

Weekend checking showed three legal white sturgeon kept, plus one legal, two oversize and 85 sublegal sturgeon released for 53 boats (129 anglers).

Catch rates continue to slide, which isn't unusual for this time of year. When the cold spell grips our area later this week, action will only further fall off. As a matter of fact, it will likely come to a complete stand-still for a good part of the winter months.

As we've said in previous weeks, salmon season is effectively over although there may still be a chance for a late-season coho near tributary mouths, both on the Washington and Oregon sides. Casting spinners or plunking eggs may take a few fish.

The Guide's Forecast – Don't get too excited about this weekend's prospects. With winter weather clearly on its way, it will be a good weekend to stay home and reminisce about the good times we all had this year. Temperatures are forecast to be in the 30's (yes, that includes the "high" for the day too) which should further put down fish as we enter the cooler weather of winter.

Sturgeon fishing will continue to deteriorate with action a likely toss-up between the Portland to Longview stretch and the gorge. Anglers may want target the mainstem close to the mouth of the Willamette, where it seems the bulk of the activity is going on. Smelt, squid and shrimp or a combination thereof, are likely the best baits to use. The deeper water tends to produce the better results this time of year.

Weather depending, the lower Columbia should be phenomenal for crabbing this weekend. Morning high tides and a soft outgoing tide should produce easy catches of Dungeness around Buoy's 20 and 22 as well as lower Desdemona Sands. It should be easy limits for those putting in a little bit of time and effort. Watch the weather however as winds are forecast to be strong on Sunday, moderate on Saturday. Crabbers can often get away with productive crabbing when a south wind blows as wind waves don't have a chance to build with the Oregon shore protecting nearshore waters. Don't take any risks however, they're really just crab...

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Water temperatures at Willamette Falls have been dropping Along with the water level and flow since the 1st of November. With the water temperature now in the high 40s, fish passage is at a near standstill. As of November 15th, the water flow ticked upward and will surely increase with precipitation in the forecast through the foreseeable future but it remains to be seen if there are any coho which will be moving upstream. With fewer than 30 winter steelhead counted. those numbers will be climbing for certain in weeks to come. About 1,850 fall Chinook are upstream which creates a rather specialized fishery for plunkers at times.

Water conditions were fairly steady on the McKenzie until the last round of rainfall started. This is the beginning of the fall rainy season and in Oregon we can expect it to remain wet for months to come.

The North Santiam is high and rapidly rising this week. While conditions on the South Santiam are somewhat better, as the fall rains come on, it will be coming up as well.

While most rivers and streams are closed to trout fishing at this time of year, the majority of lakes and ponds remain open year 'round (Henry Hagg is an exception as it closes for the year at sundown on Sunday, November 20th) and are stocked well into late fall and winter in many cases. Trout planting information isn't always readily available at this time of year; we'll do our best to ferret out the information and post it in this space weekly. While there is no trout stocking planned for this week, Hagg will fish well right up to closure.

The Guide's Forecast – Now that the fall rains have arrived, the steelhead and trout opportunities on the upper Willamette and in the Eugene-Springfield stretch in particular, are just about washed out. So to speak. The Middle Fork is closed above Hills Creek Reservoir until April, 2012, although steelhead were caught below the reservoir as recently as Tuesday this week. The Coast Fork is open to catch-and-release trout fishing.

As one might expect, the McKenzie is on a sharp rise with rain this week. In fact, from Noon Wednesday this week through noon today, November 17th, the flow at Vida increased from 2,750 cfs to 4,500 cfs - and there's lots more rain in the forecast. Pour an extra cup of coffee and fire up the fly-tying vise.

The Santiam systems will be too high and swift to fish for at least a week. There are other options in the valley.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Water levels at the Clackamas have come up over a foot in the last few days and while it is forecast to be on the drop in the week to come, that prediction contradicts meteorological prognostications. In other words, we'll believe it when we see it. Yeah, it will recover eventually but if the weather guy is to be believed, the skies are gonna open in the coming week. Coho swam into Eagle Creek with rain this week and a few appeared to be in decent condition. Anytime there are a few catchable fish in the creek,

however, they are far outnumbered by those hoping to catch them (by hook or crook at this location). Report aberrant behavior.

While the Sandy River actually dropped through Wednesday this week, it has started rising and will be subject to the whims of the weather with the exception of the freezing level which, as it drops, will improve conditions due to the Sandy's glacial origins.

The Guide's Forecast – More water flow in the Clackamas will get coho on the move and potentially on the bite (it could happen) but this is really too little, too late as the vast majority of these fish are dark this late in the season. There are a few late summers around. On a brighter note, winter steelhead are somewhere around the corner. Early winters will likely enter with rain in the coming week.

Increased flow on the Sandy will draw coho into the system, perhaps the last of them as late as it is in the season. Dark fish will be moving upstream and out of the river so anglers may hope to see some bright ones. There are coho in Cedar Creek but, as always, there are more people trying than there are fish in the creek. Try the parks or just below the mouth of Cedar Creek. Drifted roe should tempt a few as will plugs and spinners when water conditions allow. There are a few turning their attention to the lower river, hoping to find winter steelhead but it's a little early yet for best results.

North Coast Fishing Report – This is the rain driftboaters have been waiting for, and have anticipated much earlier in the season than mid-November. It's not uncommon however to have to wait until this time of year before the first good boost of rain comes through. Regardless, this should be a productive weekend for driftboaters and maybe even bay anglers.

Traditionally, mid to late November is a good time to pursue chinook in the Tillamook district but in recent years, the return of adults to the Kilchis and Wilson watersheds has not been substantial. That doesn't appear to be the case this year as productive fishing was witnessed by many in what I term as the second half of the season (mid-October –mid-November). Further verifying a productive return to these late-run systems, the Ghost Hole and Bay City had some of the most consistent fishing that I have seen in the last 3 or 4 years. This is likely due to the route Wilson and Kilchis fish take, swimming in from the ocean and along the east side of the estuary, headed across Kilchis Flats to the SE corner of the bay where the respective mouths of the Kilchis and Wilson Rivers enter. It's a theory that has proven itself for many years when there are fishable numbers around.

The bay itself has been less than impressive most recently. Storms blew off any effort on Wednesday but action for the last several days has been sporadic at best. Since last Friday, it has been very slow with only a short bite at first light in the Ghost Hole. More recently, with the exception of Wednesday, action was slightly better in the Ghost Hole and Bay City on the early morning incoming tide. Torrid winds pushed people off of the bay on Wednesday.

The lower reaches of the Wilson, Kilchis and even the Trask (traditionally an early season favorite) has been laden with chinook and chum in the case of the Wilson and Kilchis. Bobber tossers have been catching fair numbers of fish consistently throughout the week although not every fish is bright.

Some driftboat activity has been taking place, especially on the Wilson where lower river drifters have been taking some bright fish along with a few dark ones. Backbounced eggs has been most effective as flows remained too low for effective plug pulling for most of the post-freshet we experienced last weekend. The Trask and even bay anglers are still coming across hatchery

chinook destined for the Trask Hatchery. There have even been some recent (reliable) reports of late returning hatchery coho as well.

Nehalem anglers haven't had much to sing about lately but that may change soon. The north fork should soon see their first returns of hatchery winter steelhead although no one is waiting with baited breath as steelhead returns often mirror coho returns and the hatchery coho returns to the North Fork were less than impressive this year. For that matter, so were the wild coho returns based on angler observation. This may not spell good news for anxious anglers waiting to get the winter steelhead season off to a good start this year. Hatchery workers at the North Fork facility were somewhat surprised not to have the season's first returning fish on last weekend's rain event. The wild coho season remains open with few anglers participating.

The Nestucca fishery should still be a late season option although when November catches used to be pretty good in this system, there were many more fall chinook around. That is not necessarily the case these days. None-the-less, there should be some further opportunity in this basin when the river clears. Anglers have noted a fair number of fish coming from hatchery stock.

Not knowing how the current rain event will effect crabbing in most north coast bays, action was really good prior to the rain freshet. Tillamook Bay was great in the early part of the week if you found a good concentration of crawlers. Tides are only improving for crabbers through this weekend and hopefully the rain event we're currently on won't adversely affect the action but it could very well have an impact.

The Guide's Forecast – Get ready, get set, it's go time on many north coast streams as at the time of this writing, rivers are on the rise and set to crest early Thursday morning. This will be the most significant rain event of the fall season and fishing results should reflect that.

As is standard procedure, some watersheds will have fresher fish than others. If you're looking for the best chance at a fresh fish then the Wilson or Kilchis will offer up those opportunities. These two systems should also have a fair number of chum salmon which will likely incidentally take chinook gear and must be released unharmed. Effective November 15th, anglers cannot even target chum salmon for catch and release purposes. As for the fishability of north coast streams, smaller streams will come in sooner than larger ones. We've outlined the best bets here based on the current weather and river level models specified on early Thursday morning. From north to south on the north coast:

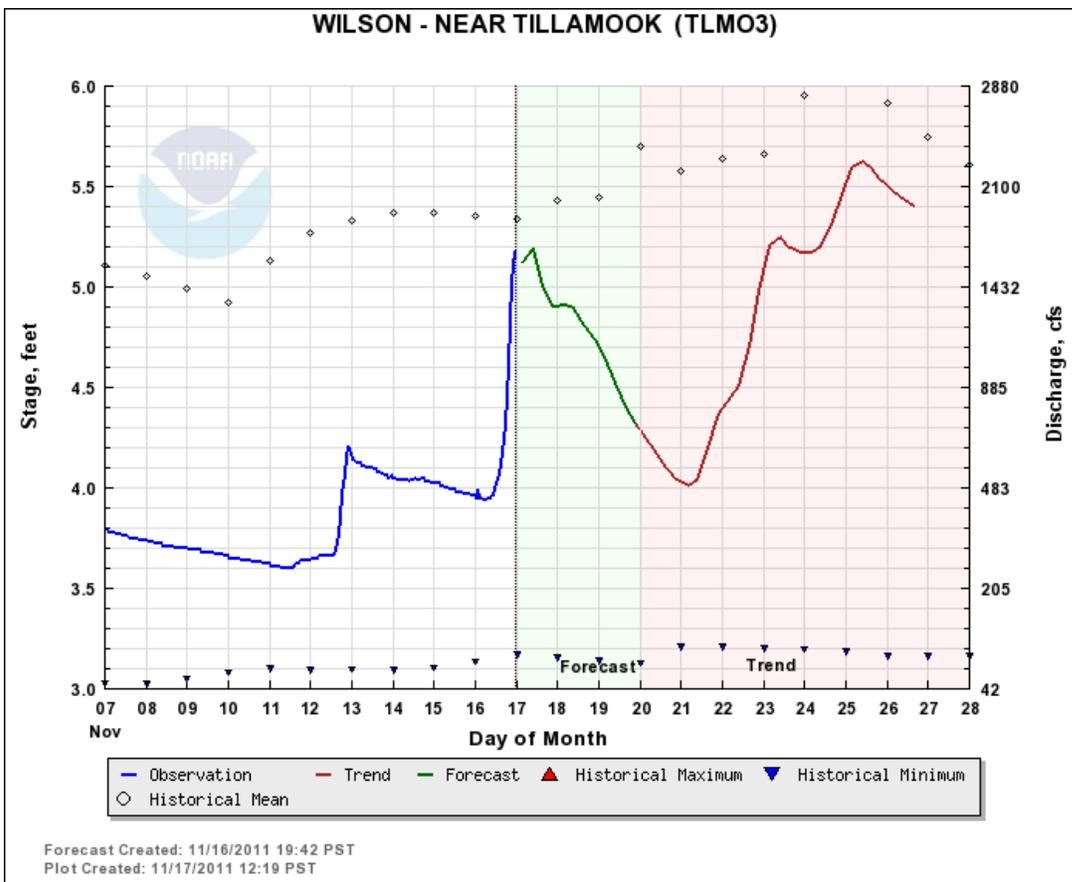
Necanicum River- Should have a few fresh chinook available, a rare coho and chum salmon and even rarer early winter steelhead. There should be good numbers of dark chinook and coho spawning. The lower reach from Klotchy Creek to the Relief Pitcher take-out should produce the best results. You'll need a permit from the gravel company on Highway 101 to take out there (used to be called Johnson's Gravel). Fish this before the weekend for best results. By the weekend, it may be too low to drift and be wary of downed trees. High wind from the last system may be blocking navigation. It's always a risk on any north coast stream but especially this one.

Nehalem River- Likely won't fish until Sunday at the earliest. Be mindful of upriver closures and fish are very likely to be dark. Wild coho may still be retained but again, check regulations for open areas. For your convenience, seasons are listed here:
http://www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/fishing/docs/2011_Coastal_Fall_Chinook_Seasons_table.pdf.

Miami River – Should be full of chum but closed to the targeting of them. There should also be fresh chinook available with best access by bank anglers. You'll need permission to fish much of the more productive spots and pay to play requirements for some.

Kilchis River- A top prospect, this system should have a fair number of fresh chinook available but will likely fish best Thursday and Friday this week. Fresh chinook should be well distributed throughout the system (a rare find this time of year). Chinook will concentrate more in classic deep water when flows drop. They'll become more susceptible to Backbounced eggs and plugs in these deeper lairs. In higher flows, plugs will be effective in shallower areas, especially in tail-outs and shallower runs.

Wilson River- Another top north coast prospect, this system has significantly more adults returning than the Wilson but it doesn't come in as quickly. This system should fish best by Friday or Saturday but plan on plenty of leafy debris to foul your gear. It can be frustrating at times but good numbers of fish will be present. In higher flows, the upper reaches will fish the best but fresh fish will be harder to come by although they should be present. Mills Bridge to Sollie Smith will be the most popular but larger numbers of anglers are learning the water downstream of Sollie Smith to the mouth. This will be a great fishery once the water level reaches the high 4 foot stage but it will still be laden with leafy material. Here's the modeled hydrograph as of early Thursday morning. Check the updated readings from our homepage:



Trask River – A lot of fish present but most of which are dark. There should be some fresh fish available but fish downstream of the hatchery. Driftboaters should do well in the well defined holes throughout the system. Bank access doesn't get good until you get into the upper reaches.

Trask fish seem to respond well to eggs and shrimp combinations and are typically larger than fish from any other system in the district.

Nestucca River – Hard hit the last few years, this system has clearly rebounded this season. Hatchery fish have contributed significantly this year and that may continue to be the case into the late season. Like the Trask, Nestucca fish are typically earlier returning but fair numbers of fresh fish should be available. The river above First Bridge is closed to chinook fishing and that's a good thing as fresher fish will be found downstream. There has been some good catches of fresh fish in recent weeks. Plugs are good on this system but so are eggs and shrimp.

Flows should dictate your technique on this unprecedented opportunity over the weekend. In higher flows, fish will be on the move and although I don't typically advocate for people to sit on anchor on these smaller north coast streams, it can be an effective way to harvest fish. In most cases, anchor fishing always produces the best results when fish are moving AND they'll be moving the most in higher, more colored water. In other words, anchor fishing won't do you much good when most anglers like to fish; in that steelhead green water we all favor so much. It's this off-colored but improving visibility water that really produces the best catches. It's also when most of the leafy debris is around.

When flows decrease, chinook begin to hold in the deeper haunts when backrolled plugs and backbounced baits produce the best results. It's really ineffective and inappropriate to anchor over these fish under this type of water condition.

This will be the weekend to get the cobwebs off of your driftboat!

Bay angling may also prove to be good as fresh fish should be making their way through the estuary following this system. What many folks don't realize is you don't need clear water to catch fish in Tillamook Bay. Some of the best catching stories I've ever heard about has come under poor visibility for the pioneers willing to give it a try. Bay City and the Ghost Hole will remain fan favorites. Herring, and large ones will prove to be the best. Use heavy scent!

This rain event should push crab out to sea or at least to the lower reaches of the estuary. The best news around that is it should also bring sturgeon into the bay where November can often times be a good time to catch sturgeon in Tillamook or Nehalem Bays. Sand shrimp in the west channel will be a telling tale when tides improve next week.

Crabbing on the other hand may take a nose-dive with the current rain freshet. The lower bay may remain productive on Tillamook, Nehalem or Nestucca estuaries but Netarts should be great on this tide series. The crab in the ocean are reportedly in poor condition, thus the delay in the commercial and sport crab opener but the estuaries themselves should have high quality keepers available.

Central & South Coast Reports – Although opportunities for bottomfish and ling cod are excellent at this time of year and the ocean will remain open without depth restrictions, ocean conditions will keep boats at bay this week. It's never a good sign when swell predictions are in the 'teens. Offshore swells are forecast to moderate to single digits by this coming Sunday through Monday but will ramp up again into the coming week. 'Tis the season. Halibut fishing is not an option for the remainder of 2011.

While ocean crabbing was scheduled to open December 1st, it seems the sea spiders have been slow to recover from the summer molt and are not in prime condition. As a consequence, the ODFW has postponed the opener to December 15th but even that date is tentative. More

samples will be taken and when ocean crab are full of meat and ready for harvest, it'll be on. Subject to seasonal offshore conditions, of course.

Wild coho catches have been fair in Siltcoos Lake and in the river where fish may be taken above the Highway 101 Bridge. The first verifiable coho catches occurred at Tahkenitch lake over the past week. Rain will improve fish movement and numbers available to anglers and, with precipitation in the forecast, the Tenmile coho fishery should get started in the coming week.

Crabbing is fair in Yaquina Bay with many of the Dungeness requiring culling as they are still softshells.

Chinook fishing has stalled at Winchester Bay. Crabbing is good from boats and docks but Dungeness require sorting for hardshells and for decent meat content. While catches of rockfish are very good off the south jetty, very few are trying it. Ocean bottom fishing out of Winchester Bay has been off the hook (so to speak) whenever offshore conditions have allowed crossing the bar. North Umpqua steelheading remains slow. The South Umpqua which has been closed to protect spawning salmon, will re-open December 1st.

Chinook catches have slowed dramatically on the Coos and Coquille although the occasional fish landed recently were nice and bright. Winter steelheading historically gets underway on these systems toward the end of the month.

Fishing has been slow on the lower Rogue although local steelheaders are hoping to intercept some winters with rain this week. Summer steelhead continued to be taken on the middle river this week with various baits and lures effective and results fair to good. Flow out of Lost Dreek Reservoir on the upper Rogue has improved but in the lower 40-degree range, is chilly. This doesn't seem to have slowed summer steelhead action, however, as catches have been good over the past week. Fishing low and slow in the cool water has been most productive. Coho are also passing through the upper river and are being hooked periodically.

The Chetco has fished well at times over the past week, particularly as it was dropping following some welcome precipitation. The coming week will see more rainfall which will move the Chinook currently in the system but of greatest interest to us fisher-types, more large, bright, fresh fall Chinook will be entering the system. In addition, a few winter steelhead have already been taken and more of those fish will enter with the freshet. It's shaping up to be a very good season on the Chetco.

The Elk and Sixes river should increase in flow sufficiently this week to pull Chinook which have been languishing in

tidewater upstream as well as draw fresh fish into the system. In addition to improving fishing conditions and prospects, the freshet will help to break up the zoo that invariably occurs near the mouth when Chinook are kegged in tidewater due to low water conditions (even though some of the bobber aficionados prefer it).

Central and Eastern Oregon – The Deschutes redsides fishing has been fair to good around Maupin with the river giving up the occasional brightly-colored steelhead. Dress for warmth at this time of year and be prepared for wind.

Plug pullers are catching steelhead in the John Day with fishing reported as fair to good. Interestingly, smallmouth bass catches are fair to good but the channel cats for which the John Day is so well known seem to be absent. Rain may hamper efforts for all species here, however.

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report for November, 2011

Put a turkey on your table – or razor clams

For anglers, Thanksgiving traditionally marks the start of winter steelhead fishing in western Washington, where anglers can also reel in coho and chum salmon moving in from the ocean. On the eastside, fly fishers are flocking to a hot catch-and-release steelhead fishery on the Grand Ronde River, where anglers can retain up to three marked hatchery fish per day on the lower river starting Nov. 1.

Rather serve shellfish? Seven areas of Puget Sound are currently open for crab fishing, and two more – marine areas 11 (Tacoma) and 13 (South Puget Sound) – are scheduled to reopen Nov. 21.

In addition, four ocean beaches – Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis and Mocrocks – will open Oct. 28-29 after noon each day for the first razor clam dig of the season. Pending the results of marine toxin tests, additional digs are tentatively scheduled Nov. 11-12 and Nov. 25-26, providing plenty of opportunities to put clams on the table for the holiday.

North Puget Sound

Anglers are still finding coho in the region's rivers, but most of the action will shift to steelhead in the coming weeks. On Puget Sound, the late-season crab fishery is under way, and more marine areas are scheduled to open for chinook.

Beginning Nov. 1, marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island, and Skagit Bay), 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) and 9 (Admiralty Inlet) open for **chinook** salmon fishing. Anglers fishing those marine areas, as well as Marine Area 10 (Seattle/Bremerton Area), have a two-salmon daily limit, but must release wild chinook salmon.

Anglers are reminded that Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands) closes to salmon retention Nov. 1.

Saltwater anglers have been reeling in **chum salmon** as October comes to a close. Salmon anglers may want to try fishing waters around Point No Point (north end of the Kitsap Peninsula) and Possession Bar (southern portion of Whidbey Island) – two areas of Marine Area 9 that are often hotspots for chum salmon in early November.

Before heading out, anglers can check [creel reports](#) for information on catch and effort in Puget Sound. Recreational fishery samplers with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) collect the information each week at fishing access sites throughout Puget Sound.

While on the Sound, why not drop a crab pot? **Sport crabbing** reopened in marine areas 4 (Neah Bay), 5 (Sekiu), 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca), 7, 8-1, 8-2, and a portion of Marine Area 9 north of a line that extends from Olele Point to Foulweather Bluff.

Marine areas 11 (Tacoma-Vashon Island) and 13 (South Puget Sound) will reopen for sport crabbing at 8 a.m. on Nov. 21.

In each area, crabbing is allowed seven days a week through Dec. 31.

Sport crabbing will not reopen this year in marine areas 10, 12 (Hood Canal) and the portion of marine area 9 south of line that extends from Olele Point to Foulweather Bluff. The annual quotas in those areas were reached during the summer fishery, said Rich Childers, shellfish policy coordinator for WDFW.

The daily catch limit in Puget Sound is five Dungeness crab, males only, in hard-shell condition with a minimum carapace width of 6¼ inches. In addition, fishers may catch six red rock crab of either sex per day, provided those crab measure at least 5 inches across. Additional information is available on the [WDFW website](#).

All crab caught in the late-season fishery should be recorded on winter catch cards, which are valid until Dec. 31. Winter cards are available at license vendors across the state. Those catch reports are due to WDFW by Feb. 1, 2012. For more information on catch record cards, visit WDFW's [catch record card webpage](#).

Meanwhile, several rivers are open in November for salmon fishing, including the Nooksack, Skagit, Cascade, Stillaguamish, Snohomish, Skykomish, Wallace, Snoqualmie and Green.

Some of those rivers – the Skagit, Snohomish and Green – are also good spots for winter steelhead fishing, said Bob Leland, WDFW's steelhead program manager. "Anglers can certainly find some steelhead early in the month, but around Thanksgiving is when fishing usually starts to improve," he said.

Because regulations vary for each river, anglers should check [WDFW's sportfishing regulations pamphlet](#) before heading out.

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

Anglers fishing for salmon often turn their attention to blackmouth and chum in November. But shellfish really take center stage as more areas of Puget Sound re-open for sport crabbing and the razor clam season gets under way on coastal beaches.

October wraps up with a **razor clam** dig at Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis and Mocrocks. More on that opening, scheduled Oct. 28-29, is available at [WDFW's razor clam website](#).

Early in November, WDFW will proceed with another evening razor clam dig if tests are favorable at Long Beach, Twin Harbors and Mocrocks. Tentative opening dates and evening low tides are:

- Nov. 11, Fri. – 6:48 p.m., (-0.4 ft.); Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks
- Nov. 12, Sat. – 7:23 p.m. (-0.4 ft.); Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks

Later in the month, razor clammers will have another opportunity. Tentative opening dates and evening low tides for that dig are:

- Nov. 25, Fri. – 6:27 p.m. (-1.9 ft.); Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis, Mocrocks
- Nov. 26, Sat. – 7:14 p.m. (-1.8 ft.); Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks

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

All diggers age 15 or older must have an applicable 2011-12 fishing license to harvest razor clams on any beach. Licenses, ranging from a three-day razor clam license to an annual combination fishing license, are available on [WDFW's website](#) and from license vendors around the state. More razor clam digs are tentatively scheduled Dec. 10 and Dec. 22-23.

Rather catch **crab**? Sport crabbing reopened in marine areas 4 (Neah Bay), 5 (Sekiu), 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca), 7, 8-1, 8-2, and a portion of Marine Area 9 north of a line that extends from Olele Point to Foulweather Bluff.

Marine areas 11 (Tacoma-Vashon Island) and 13 (South Puget Sound) will reopen for sport crabbing at 8 a.m. on Nov. 21.

In each area, crabbing is allowed seven days a week through Dec. 31.

Sport crabbing will not reopen this year in marine areas 10, 12 (Hood Canal) and the portion of marine area 9 south of line that extends from Olele Point to Foulweather Bluff. The annual quotas in those areas were reached during the summer fishery, said Rich Childers, shellfish policy coordinator for the department.

The daily catch limit in Puget Sound is five Dungeness crab, males only, in hard-shell condition with a minimum carapace width of 6¼ inches. In addition, fishers may catch six red rock crab of either sex per day, provided those crab measure at least 5 inches across. Additional information is available on the [WDFW website](#).

All crab caught in the late-season fishery should be recorded on winter catch cards, which are valid until Dec. 31. Winter cards are available at license vendors across the state. Those catch reports are due to WDFW by Feb. 1, 2012. For more information on catch record cards, visit WDFW's [catch record card webpage](#).

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

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

Before heading out, anglers can check [creel reports](#) for information on catch and effort in Puget Sound. Recreational fishery samplers with WDFW's sampling program collect the information each week at fishing access sites throughout Puget Sound.

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

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

Winter steelhead fisheries get under way in November on several rivers, including the Bogachiel, Calawah, Hoh, Quillayute and Sol Duc. Beginning Nov. 1, anglers fishing those rivers have a daily limit of three hatchery steelhead. "Anglers can certainly find some steelhead early in the month, but around Thanksgiving is when fishing usually starts to improve," said Bob Leland, WDFW's steelhead program manager.

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

Because regulations vary for each river, anglers should check [WDFW's sportfishing regulations pamphlet](#) before heading out.

Southwest Washington

Thanksgiving Day traditionally marks the start of the popular **winter steelhead** fishery, although some anglers will undoubtedly start working their favorite rivers well ahead of time. The first two steelies of the season arrived at the Cowlitz Hatchery during the third week of October and lots more are right on their tails.

Catch totals will take off once the first big storm of the season has soaked the region with heavy rains, said Joe Hymer, a fish biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

"Steelhead move upriver on pulses of water," Hymer said. "Once the sky opens up and the rivers start to swell, we'll see more fish on the move."

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

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

Anglers planning a trip should be aware that the **White Salmon River** is closed to all fishing until further notice. Designed as a safety measure, the closure took effect Oct. 25 – one day before Condit Dam was breached using explosives.

Pat Frazier, WDFW regional fish manager, said the rush of water pouring through the 125-foot dam is expected to destabilize the river banks, and deposit large amounts of sediment and dangerous debris in the river channel. Frazier said the fishing closure will remain in effect until WDFW can assess the conditions and ensure public safety.

Condit Dam, a 98-year-old structure owned by PacifiCorp, is located on the White Salmon River about three miles from its confluence with the Columbia River. Breaching the dam is expected to open up 14 miles of habitat for chinook salmon and 33 miles of habitat for steelhead.

On other rivers, late-run **coho salmon** may be the best target for anglers who want to catch fish. Although the coho run has peaked, those fish should generate some action on the mainstem Columbia and many of its tributaries right through November, Hymer said.

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

State regulations allow anglers to catch and keep up to six adult coho salmon per day on the Cowlitz, Klickitat, Kalama, Lewis and Washougal rivers, as well as the lower portion of the Grays River. Several rivers also remain open for **chinook salmon**, although some close Nov. 1.

Effective that day, the No. 5 fishway on the Klickitat River closes upstream to chinook fishing, the Wind River closes to all salmon fishing as does the stretch of the Columbia River from Beacon Rock to Bonneville Dam.

However, like last year, the lower Grays River and the West Fork – including the area around the hatchery – will be open for salmon through Dec. 31. Steelhead fishing will continue in those waters through mid-March.

For all these waters, anglers should check the [Fishing in Washington](#) pamphlet for specific rules affecting fisheries. In addition, WDFW's [Hatchery Escapement Reports](#) can provide a good indication of the number of fish returning to each river.

Caught your fill of salmon and steelhead for the year? Here are some other options to consider:

- **Razor clams:** The first dig of the season gets under way on evening tides Oct. 28-29 at Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis and Mocrocks. Additional digs are tentatively scheduled Nov. 11-12 and Nov. 25-26, pending the results of marine toxin tests. No digging will be allowed any day before noon. For more information, see WDFW's [Razor Clam Webpage](#).
- **Sturgeon:** Anglers are still reeling in legal-size sturgeon above the Wauna powerlines on the lower Columbia River. Bank angling has been consistent near Longview and below Bonneville Dam, while boat anglers have done best between Camas and Kalama. The fishery is open Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays through the end of the year or until the quota is met.
- **Cowlitz cutthroats:** October is prime time to catch sea-run cutthroat trout on the Cowlitz River, but the fish usually keep biting through November. The best fishing is from Blue Creek near the trout hatchery on downriver. Anglers may retain up to five hatchery-reared cutthroats per day as part of the daily trout limit on the lower Cowlitz River, where the fish generally range from 12 to 20 inches.

Eastern Washington

Steelhead fishing has been excellent on the Grande Ronde River, a tributary of the Snake River in the region and state's southeast corner.

"Many people from all over the state and from out of state are on our Chief Joseph Wildlife Area fishing the Ronde," reported WDFW Blue Mountains Wildlife Area Complex Manager Bob Dice. "Fly fishing for steelhead has been extremely popular there."

Dice reminds anglers that the lower portion of the Grande Ronde, about two-and-a-half miles from the mouth to the County Road bridge, is under selective gear rules (artificial flies or lures with single-point barbless hooks) and all steelhead must be released year-round. The upper

portion of the Grande Ronde, from the County Road bridge to the Oregon state line, opens Nov. 1 to daily retention of up to three hatchery-marked steelhead.

Glen Mendel, WDFW southeast district fish biologist, said another productive fishing spot has been the Heller Bar area of the mainstem Snake River, just below the mouth of the Grande Ronde.

Snake River steelhead and **fall chinook salmon** fishing overall remains slow, although the month of November often marks the start of more action with cooler air and water temperatures, Mendel said. He also noted that anglers will see new state boundary signs on the Snake at its confluence with the Clearwater River on the Idaho border, thanks to a cooperative effort with Idaho Department of Fish and Game. The signs on the north shore of the Snake where it bends to the west in Washington should help clarify where either state's fishing license is valid.

WDFW Wooten Wildlife Area Manager Kari Dingman reminds anglers that the Tucannon River impoundments on the Wooten close to fishing Oct. 31.

Many of the region's other top-producing trout fishing lakes are also closed by November. But there are a couple of exceptions and several year-round-open waters worth trying.

Southwest Spokane County's Amber Lake remains open through the end of November for catch-and-release, selective gear fishing for rainbow and **cutthroat trout**.

Waitts Lake in Stevens County is open through February and provides fishing rainbow and **brown trout, largemouth bass, and yellow perch**.

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

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

Trout, bass, perch, **crappie**, and others species are available at Spokane County's year-round-open Eloika, Newman and Silver lakes. Newman Lake's public access site boat ramp should be completely repaired and useable by Nov. 1.

Northcentral Washington

Anglers can catch and keep **hatchery steelhead** on the Similkameen River starting Nov. 1, a day after the special fishery for **coho salmon** closes on the Methow, Wenatchee and Icicle rivers. A Columbia River Salmon/Steelhead Endorsement is required to participate in any of these fisheries.

Meanwhile, WDFW Okanogan district fish biologist Bob Jateff reports that a few lowland **rainbow trout** lakes are still open for catch-and-release trout fishing through the month of November, specifically Big and Little Green lakes near Omak, and Rat Lake near Brewster. Selective gear rules are in effect for these three lakes.

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

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

Southcentral Washington

A [recent photo](#) in the Yakima Herald-Republic showed an angler hip deep in the upper Naches River near Cliffdell against a backdrop of fall color, capturing the spirit of the season.

"It's a great time of the year to be out on the water," said John Easterbrooks, south-central regional fish program manager for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). "The scenery's great and the fishing for **wild rainbow** and **westslope cutthroat trout** can be fantastic."

Easterbrooks has been advising anglers who want that experience to act soon, because most area rivers and streams close to fishing at the end of the day Oct. 31. Examples include the Naches, Little Naches, and Bumping rivers and the section of the Yakima River below Roza Dam in Yakima County. Taneum, Naneum, and Manastash creeks in Kittitas County also close to fishing that day.

Oct. 31 is also the last day of the extended **salmon season** in the Hanford Reach, where anglers have caught a record catch of more than 10,000 adult fall chinook and over 2,500 jacks. Anglers were still averaging 1.7 chinook per boat through the middle of the month.

That leaves **hatchery steelhead**, usually the main attraction in November. The season opened Sept. 16 – two weeks earlier than usual – but anglers have been working hard for their fish ever since, said WDFW fish biologist Paul Hoffarth at WDFW's Dist. 4 office in Pasco.

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

This year's forecast is below the 10-year average, but that does not fully account for the low number of hatchery steelhead in angler's creels in the Reach, Hoffarth said. Like last year, creel surveys and fish counts at the Ringold Springs Rearing Facility indicate a dearth of one-salt fish returning from the ocean for the first time.

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

Anglers can retain two marked hatchery steelhead from the Highway 395 Bridge in Pasco to the wooden powerline towers at the Old Hanford townsite. Hatchery steelhead can be identified by a clipped adipose fin and/or a ventral fin clip. All unmarked steelhead must be released unharmed.

For more information about fishing seasons and regulations in the region, see the [Fishing in Washington](#) rule pamphlet.

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

Cyclops Shark:

<http://news.yahoo.com/cyclops-shark-other-cryptic-creatures-october-creepy-113008213.html>

GOOD LUCK!