

The Guide's Forecast - volume 14 issue number 16

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **April 13<sup>th</sup> – April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2012**

**Oregon Fisheries Update:**

**Willamette Valley/Metro-** Action on the Columbia remains disappointing although catches are starting to pick up slightly. A larger number of 4-year olds are starting to show, indicating the run is getting closer to peak as these fish make up the bulk of the returning adults. Managers will meet by phone again tomorrow, to consider another sport extension. An extension is likely as sport angler impacts remain low. Catches should ramp up significantly in the next opener, if it happens.

This will be the week that fishing takes off on the Willamette. The water is finally cleaning up nicely with a turbidity level of 14 as of Monday, April 9<sup>th</sup>. A few fish were caught at the Head of Multnomah Channel on Monday, with 4 making the chalk board at Fred's Marina. Sellwood reported a few fish as well. As the week presses on, catches will increase and Oregon City will begin to produce. Flashers and green label herring are the go to, either rigged whole or plug cut. Prawns will start to see more action as the water warms and clears up a bit.

The McKenzie remains a little high but is dropping in to shape this week. Pack March Brown and Stonefly nymphs, attractors for cutthroat and include to March Brown dies for fair weather hatches.

Flows are around 4,200 at Mehama on the North Santiam making the river floatable below that point. There are decent numbers of wild winter steelhead in the system.

The Clackamas River has been fishing very well for steelhead. Traditionally, late March and all of April see the best catches of steelhead with winter broodstock, wild winter and early summers all hitting the boat decks and beaches. As of late, reports have a strong showing of early summers in the mix. Bobber and jigs work great this time of year and roe side drifted from a boat will get you fish.

One avid angler reported fishing the Sandy River last Friday and had pretty decent success boating seven steelhead while drifting from Oxbow Park downstream. Since then however, it has slowed a bit but it's still worth going. As with the Clackamas, bobber and jig and side drifted roe will produce but plugs and spoons are likely producers as well.

Trout fishing is now in full swing in the valley lakes and ponds with most popular spots being well stocked. Worms and Power Bait often produce the most consistent results.

**Northwest –** Steelheaders working the north coast streams are still scoring fish although a higher percentage of the catch are beginning to color. The wild component of the run seems to be making a bigger showing but action will continue to taper into the coming weeks. A few summer steelhead should begin to show on the Wilson and Nestucca Rivers however and spring chinook are just around the corner.

The Trask will remain a fair target for late returning wild fish and is likely to produce the earliest spring chinook of any Tillamook County stream.

Spring chinook fishing opened on April 1<sup>st</sup> on the north coast but don't expect to see the best action until mid-May.

Although effort was largely by the commercial troll fleet, there were some chinook caught offshore out of Garibaldi last weekend. These stocks are largely from the Sacramento and Klamath River Basins but will feed all summer off the coast of Oregon, making them easy targets for the sport and commercial fleet in calmer seas.

Tides were favorable for sturgeon over the weekend and a few keepers were caught in Tillamook Bay. Most anglers were more motivated for bottomfish however as Garibaldi and Depoe Bay produced outstanding catches of sea bass and lingcod. Crabbing was fair too. Doug Firstbrook of Nehalem produced his 2 lingcod limit on one cast west of Three Arch Rocks off of Oceanside on red and yellow feather jigs. The best action took place between 100 and 145 foot of water.

**Southwest** – Ocean conditions allowed charter boats to make trips early this week. Anglers have been taking mostly limits of rockfish and lingcod despite the depth restriction of 30 fathoms or less. Ocean crabbing is still slow, however.

Crabbing has remained slow on Winchester Bay as it has not yet recovered from the recent freshet. The Umpqua River is dropping this week but has been plagued by muddy conditions. The spring chinook fishery was just getting underway when the last storm hit but when conditions allow, there will be some in the river.

Coos Bay crabbing slowed after the last round of storms left the bay muddy but it should clear up this week with milder weather.

The Coquille, Chetco, Elk and Sixes rivers are closed to fishing.

High water has made some changes to the Rogue River so boaters are urged use caution on the water. The water dropped and cleared sufficiently for a few springers to be taken late last week and through the past weekend. Fishing was good with many springers landed on Monday this week. Spring chinook fishing will only improve along with the weather as the water temperature rises. Springers are upriver now and there's a chance to hook one as high as Grants Pass. Winter steelhead may still be targeted and caught on the upper Rogue. The Applegate is now closed to fishing.

Diamond Lake opens April 28th but with three feet of ice and snow covering the lake currently, it may be another ice-fishing opener this year.

**Eastern** – The Crooked River water level has returned to normal and is fishing well. Take a variety of seasonal nymphs and dries.

Metolius fishers are once again seeing Blue-Winged Olives hatching afternoons now that the water has dropped back into shape.

Green Peter trollers have been taking very few kokanee this early in the year.

**SW Washington** – Although most district anglers will remain focused on spring chinook on the mainstem Columbia, steelhead and early spring chinook are in fair numbers on the Cowlitz, Kalama and Lewis Rivers.

The Cowlitz and Lewis Rivers will likely receive the higher returns of spring chinook in the coming weeks but all three systems should produce a mixed bag of late winter and early summer run steelhead. As flows drop, so should the size of your offerings.

Drano Lake and Wind River fishers will be watching Bonneville Dam counts as they are likely to jump in the coming weeks. Until they do, effort and catch will be low in these popular fisheries. Early season anglers can have some pleasant and productive days however.

**Soapbox Update:** Please join us Thursday, April 19th as our friends at KEEN Footwear <<http://www.keenfootwear.com/us/en/contact.aspx>> help us celebrate 20 years uniting people for salmon, rivers and jobs.

What: SOS - Turning 20 in 2012

When: Thursday, April 19th from 6-9pm

Where: KEEN Headquarters - 926 NW 13th Ave, #210 (upstairs), Portland

Cost: FREE Admission

**VIP guests!** - including State Senator Jackie Dingfelder and State Representative Jules Bailey, author Steve Hawley, filmmaker Andy Maser, and more.

**Food and beverages** provided by Mother's Bistro <<http://mothersbistro.com/>> and Lagunitas Brewing <<http://www.lagunitas.com/>>

**FREE admission** - \$5 donation gets you an awesome steel mug from Klean Kanteen <<http://www.kleankanteen.com/>>, \$5 per ticket for an awesome raffle. Great prizes thanks to generous donations from Patagonia

<<http://www.patagonia.com/us/patagonia.go?assetid=1865>>, Osprey Packs

<<http://www.ospreypacks.com/>>, Bishop's Barbershop <<http://www.bishopsbs.com/>>, Bob's

Red Mill <<http://www.bobsredmill.com/>>, and Circa 33 <<http://circa33bar.com/>>. Music

provided by DJ Jimbo. <<http://www.ilovejimbo.com/>>

**Interested in volunteering for an hour?** Please contact [bobby@wildsalmon.org](mailto:bobby@wildsalmon.org) or 503.781.3383

**Join the event on Facebook** <<http://www.facebook.com/events/314647871936983/>> and invite your friends and family.

Hope to see you there! Let me know if you can make it.

**Columbia River Fishing Report** – Fishing is not what one would expect for mid-April. Fishery managers met today to discuss a sport extension and again, given the catch rates continue to be poor and water conditions surprisingly bad, managers again voted to extend the season. Surprisingly, managers agreed to extend the fishery though April 22<sup>nd</sup> (Sunday) with another extension a possibility based on catch rates and Bonneville Dam passage. Here is the official action notice:

# Columbia River Fishery Notice

## Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife April 12, 2012

### Joint State Action

<http://www.dfw.state.or.us/fish/OSCRP/CRM/CAN/12/120412notice.pdf>

In joint Oregon and Washington state action the states discussed the following recreational fishery and took the following actions:

#### ***Mainstem Columbia River Spring Chinook Recreational Fishery***

Extended the following recreational fishery downstream of Bonneville Dam:

<b>Area:</b>	<p>Buoy 10 upstream to Beacon Rock (boat and bank) plus bank angling only from Beacon Rock upstream to Bonneville Dam deadline.</p> <p>Legal upstream boundary defined as: "A deadline marker on the Oregon bank (approximately four miles downstream from Bonneville Dam Powerhouse 1) in a straight line through the western tip of Pierce Island to a deadline marker on the Washington bank at Beacon Rock."</p>
<b>Season:</b>	Saturday April 14 through Sunday, April 22, 2012, except closed to salmon and steelhead angling on Tuesday April 17, 2012 (8 days).
<b>Catch Limits:</b>	Two adult adipose fin-clipped salmonids per day, only <b>one</b> of which may be a Chinook.
<b>Additional Regulations:</b>	Effective through June 15, 2012 for the mainstem Columbia River salmon and steelhead fishery from the Rocky Point/Tongue Point line upstream to OR/WA border, it is unlawful when fishing from vessels which are less than 30 feet in length (substantiated by Coast Guard documentation or Marine Board registration) to totally remove from the water any salmon or steelhead required to be released.
Effective through May 15, 2012, the mainstem Columbia River will be open for retention of adipose fin-clipped steelhead and shad <b>only</b> during days and seasons open for retention of adipose fin-clipped spring Chinook.	
Effective through June 15, 2012, on days when the mainstem Columbia River recreational fishery below Bonneville Dam is open to retention of Chinook, the salmonid daily bag limit in Oregon and Washington Select Areas will be the same as mainstem Columbia River bag limits. On days when the mainstem Columbia River fishery is <b>closed</b> to Chinook retention, permanent salmonid bag limit regulations apply.	

Action remains frustrating for most Columbia River anglers. Anglers reporting from the Portland area on Wednesday stated the Columbia was much more turbid than even the Willamette. Rumor has it that the John Day River blew out, muddying the waters downstream although my research doesn't indicate that. Normally, this may not be an issue but given the high, fast flows, the silt hasn't had a chance to settle out before hitting the river downstream of Bonneville. This season clearly has sport anglers perplexed.

A lot of hours are going into kept chinook lately. It doesn't seem to matter if you're on anchor or trolling, you had better count on spending a lot of time in the river before taking one home. With the big push of steelhead apparently upstream, bank anglers are also having a hard time finding biters despite the high flows. It is noteworthy however that the number of steelhead caught by anglers over the weekend, outnumbered chinook.

Downriver, guides fishing out of Astoria reported mediocre fishing at best. One boat reported 3 fish for an all-day effort which sounds pretty good right now but given we're supposed to be in full swing, it's less than impressive. One would surmise that it isn't going to get any better either if the mud flow comes down from the Portland area in a day or less.

Fish passage at Bonneville remains stagnant. Only 129 adults have passed the dam as of April 10<sup>th</sup>. It may be a record low for this time of year. This low fish count will place undue pressure on the fish and wildlife agencies by the upriver tribes and the state of Idaho to curtail the sport season downstream of Bonneville. It seems unlikely that fishery managers will fold anytime soon, especially since the commercial fleet was rumored to do quite well in the Tuesday (4/10) 6-hour opener.

Sorry we can't report more in this section of TGF, especially given the fact we're entering peak season. I know we don't have to tell anyone that fishing is slow; I think almost every springer fisher has already put in some time on the river in hopes that this will be the day.....not yet but it should be coming, of course, based on water conditions. Here are the latest stats from the weekend ODF&W creel survey:

**Gorge Bank:**

Weekend checking showed no catch for six bank anglers.

**Gorge Boats:**

No report.

**Troutdale Boats:**

Weekend checking showed four adipose fin-clipped spring chinook kept for 65 boats (143 anglers).

**Portland to Longview Bank:**

Weekend checking showed 24 adipose fin-clipped spring chinook and 34 adipose fin-clipped steelhead kept, plus three unclipped spring chinook and nine unclipped steelhead released for 385 bank anglers.

**Portland to Longview boats:**

Weekend checking showed 32 adipose fin-clipped spring chinook kept, plus three unclipped spring chinook released for 234 boats (540 anglers).

**Estuary Bank (Clatsop Spit to Wauna Powerlines):**

Weekend checking showed no catch for three bank anglers.

**Estuary Boats (Tongue Point to Wauna Powerlines):**

Weekend checking showed nine adipose fin-clipped spring chinook kept for 27 boats (52 anglers).

**The Dalles Pool:**

Weekly checking showed one adipose fin-clipped spring chinook kept for 23 bank anglers.

**John Day Pool:**

Weekly checking showed no catch for two bank anglers.

**The Guide's Forecast** – More spikes in river levels will continue to lead to volatile fishing conditions. It seems we may be in for another season like last year where May was really the go-to month for action in the area. The only saving grace is this level of flow and spill will ensure the future generations of salmon and steelhead traveling to the ocean will get a safer passage which will bump survival rates.

None-the-less, anglers are disappointed that the fish have yet to show. Although we've seen this before, fishery managers will begin to get a bit on edge if bigger numbers of fish don't start passing Bonneville Dam. We can't really blame it on the sea-lions as much anymore, a few more have been removed from the population. The recent commercial catch indicates that the fish are ever-more present in the system.

Anglers will have to remain diligent and persistent in the coming weeks although assuming the fish will actually show, spring chinook should start hitting the decks and beaches with a little more regularity that we've seen in recent weeks. It would be wise to stick to the shallow water and fish are certainly likely to continue to utilize the softer flows under these conditions.

Plugs should continue to produce as good or better than herring at this point but be sure to wrap those plugs with bait and scent them up for the best results in these high turbid flows. And speaking of turbid flows, we currently don't have an explanation as to why the Columbia has such poor visibility at this time. Although it may clear up, if flow predictions are accurate, the water level should rise once again, before it falls. This won't do much to improve the water clarity on the mainstem.

Bank anglers should use bright colored spin-n-glos, again, with heavy scent. Anglers shouldn't rule out using bait along with their offerings. Don't be bothered with fishing far offshore, these fish, especially steelhead, will travel within a few feet of the shoreline under these conditions.

Sturgeon fishing remains challenging for most. Although it's not likely to improve anytime soon, better action is on the horizon. The Portland to Longview stretch will likely remain the best stretch to intercept keepers but don't plan on great fishing.

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report** – Willamette flows are dropping with the clarity improving daily. Visibility is on track to be three to four feet by the weekend to come and the water temperature is trending to top 50 degrees. Oregon City produced summer steelhead and spring Chinook on Tuesday this week although sea lions showed up on Wednesday and action slowed. Fish passage over the Falls is on the increase with well over 1,000 summer steelhead and more than 5,500 winters upstream.

**Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** has this to add to this week's Willamette report:

"This will be the week that fishing takes off on the Willamette. The water is finally cleaning up nicely with a turbidity level of 14 as of Monday April 9. I will start fishing the Willamette when the level drops to 14, but 12 is getting pretty good and 10 is "Game On". A few fish were caught at the Head of Multnomah Channel today(4-9) with 4 making the chalk board at Fred's Marina. Two different boats I talked to said there was probably ten or so caught with most later in the day.

Sellwood reported a few fish as well with a couple taken from The point and a few more from the West Bank. As the week presses on, catches will increase and Oregon City will begin to produce. Flashers and green label herring are the go to, either rigged whole or plug cut. Prawn will start to see more action as the water warms and clears up a bit."

The McKenzie is still a little high although the color is excellent this week and it has been fishing well.

The water level and flow are showing some improvement on the Santiam system.

Most lakes and ponds are open year-around and many are planted with Oregon-grown hatchery trout. This means the "trout season" which opens April 28th in Willamette Valley has little effect. There are a few exceptions, however. One is the McKenzie, which changes on that date from a catch-and-release trout fishery to one which allows retention of fin-clipped trout. The Middle Fork Willamette above Hills Creek Reservoir will open. One other is the heavy planting (which started this week) of those year-'round lakes and ponds due to an increase in pressure just because "trout season" will be open.

Haldeman Pond, Salmonberry Lake, Trojan Ponds, Alton Baker Canal, Blue River Reservoir, Cottage Grove Pond, Dexter Reservoir, E. E. Wilson Pond, Foster Reservoir, Green Peter Reservoir, Junction City Pond, Timber Linn Lake and Waverly Lake are scheduled to be planted this week.

**The Guide's Forecast** – If conditions on the lower Willamette continue to improve (and they should) and the water temp tops 50 degrees (and it will), trollers will see a dramatic improvement in spring Chinook catches. This should be the week when all of the elements combine. It's time for this fishery to deliver as it should be at this time of year. Catches of spring Chinook are fair to good around the popular Sellwood Bridge. According to the fish checker on Wednesday this week, about half of those trying actually landed a springer. Continue to fish plug-cut green-label herring behind a flasher until the water warms. A look at the river today, April 12th, below Willamette Falls revealed at least a dozen pinnipeds feasting on our anadromous fishes. Regardless, springers are still being landed today by trollers downriver from the Falls.

Clouds of caddis' have been more of a nuisance than a blessing for fly fishers on the McKenzie. Fishing will be worthwhile in any event although nymphs have been most productive this week.

Boaters are still urged to use caution on the hazardous stretch of the North Santiam from Shelburne and Green's Bridge. With numbers of steelhead improving at Wilmette Falls, the South Santiam should be boasting some summers. The North Santiam should continue to provide catch-and-release steelheading action until the remainder of the fish in the system spawn.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports** – Although there was a slight increase in water level and flows on the Clackamas this week, the water will be dropping through the coming weekend and water conditions will be excellent for steelheading.

Chris Vertopoulos adds: "The Clackamas River has been fishing very well for steelhead and it's no surprise. Traditionally late march and all of April see the best catches of steelies with winter broodstock, wild winter and early summers all hitting the boat deck's and beach. As of lately reports have a strong showing of early summers in the mix. Bobber and jigs work great this time of year and roe side drifted from a boat will get you fish."

Snowmelt has been contributing to Sandy River level and flow even in the absence of rainfall. Water color is good, however, and the flow is fine for fishing although results over the past week have ranged only from slow to fair.

Chris Vertopoulos adds, "Jason Hambly of Lamiglas Rods fished the Sandy river last Fri and had pretty decent success boating seven steelies while drifting from Oxbow down. Since then my sources tell me it has slowed a bit but it's still worth going. As with the Clack, bobber and jig and side drifted roe will get your fish but plug's and my favorite "the spoon" will sore mouth a few fish."

**The Guide's Forecast** – With summer steelhead on the move now as the water in the Willamette and Clackamas start to warm with spring temperatures, fresh summers are entering now providing a mix for steelheaders here. Catches are expected to be fair to good through the coming weekend.

Expect to find late winters on the Sandy, many of which will be wild at this time of year. Various baits and lures have been effective with spinners effective this week and fly anglers swinging for a few hookups as well. There should be an improvement in catches as conditions on the Sandy River start to settle down. With a broodstock program in place for several years, steelhead fishing is expected to hold up well at least through the month of April.

**North Coast Fishing Report** – Steelheaders are still working the fabulous spring fishery on the north coast with fair to good results still coming in. Most anglers that participate in this fishery are witnessing less traffic on the water and anglers begin a greater focus on the Willamette Valley's spring chinook. It will only get more sparse in the coming weeks.

Wednesday produced well for anglers on the lower Wilson. We floated from Siskeyville to Sollie Smith Bridge and started out with a bang. We had 4 hatchery fish to the boat by 10:00 a.m. but fell out of good graces after that. All our fish came on plugs in the dropping flows and no biters below Mills Bridge near the old Guide Shop. Plugs of the K11x variety in metallic blue, metallic red (brown back) and chrome with the red stripe all produced results on Wednesday but side-drifters did equally well in the same stretch. Bobber and bait anglers also picked up fish throughout the lower reaches. There are clearly a lot of fish remaining in the system. We harvested 3 hatchery hens and were somewhat disappointed with the quality of their meat. Although 2 of the 3 that we kept were bright and had all of their eggs intact within the skeins, the meat was starting to pale out. Yes, of smoker quality but as one friend puts it, "put a boot in the smoker and out comes a smoked boot....". It seems the bucks are the ones to target now. Hens often indicate the end of the run.

The Nestucca is much the same. With a great season almost behind us, action remains fair to good with a few more wild fish showing in the catches. The lower reaches are beginning to produce some of the better results. Most anglers are focused on sidedrifting but plugs should almost be equally effective. Rumors of an early spring chinook are unconfirmed and a bit unlikely; certainly possible.

Other district rivers are low and clear. These larger systems have held their color. Most folks are looking to gear up for spring chinook in the estuary but that is still a few weeks away from peak production.

Anxious offshore anglers had all their dreams come true over the weekend when bottomfishing out of most northern ports was excellent. We fished Three Arch Rocks on Saturday, along with numerous other vessels, taking an easy 28 fish bottomfish limit along with 6 (of 8 possible) lingcod. We topped off our day with 19 crabs for 7 pots, soaking them along with several other folks north of the entrance to Tillamook Bay. It was a great day and I would have a hard time understanding how most persistent anglers couldn't find their limit. Dinner reef, closer to the bay entrance posted poor results (much to my dismay). There were some large black rockfish in our catches.

Although I can't confirm that any sport boats participated in the offshore chinook fishery, there were some commercial catches of chinook coming into port. It's likely that the commercial fleet was targeting these fish 7 to 10 miles offshore using mostly spoons for bait. It is supposed to be an excellent season offshore, targeting California stocks of chinook.

There remains some sturgeon effort in Tillamook Bay and results varied during the quality weekend minus tide series. Anglers fishing at Bay City and in the middle channels did find a few keepers on sand shrimp. Catches can go either way this time of year. Some years, it seems the bay population actually increases this time of year.

Cape Meares Lake, Carter Lake, Cleawox Lake, Coffenbury Lake, Devil's Lake, Hebo Lake, Lake Lytle, Loren's Pond, Lost Lake (Clatsop County), Nedonna Pond, North Lake, Smith Lake, South Lake, Tahoe Lake, Town Lake, Vernonia Pond and Woahink Lake are scheduled to be stocked with trout.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Although steelheaders will still have access to fair numbers of fish, the bulk of them will be on the downside of quality table fare. In the dropping flows, fish will be easier to find as they'll seek the deepest, darker water but a small bump in the hydrograph is forecasted any time now. This won't hurt efforts but on a declining run, it may not have much impact either.

There should still be some fresh fish entering the system but count on having to cull through some dark and spawned out fish if you need to take home a good one. There should be some around, maybe even a summer steelhead. Spring chinook may even show in very limited numbers if the freshet materializes.

Of course this will come as no surprise, the Wilson and Nestucca will be the best bets, whether you're targeting wild or hatchery fish. Sidedrift in higher flows and pull plugs as the flows drop and clear. And you've heard this one before, fish low in the system when flows are low and higher up when flows are higher. Fish couldn't be better distributed throughout these north coast river systems. The Kilchis may even fish again before the weekend.

Tides weaken by the weekend. This could make access to the ocean a pretty safe ride. Of course, this all depends on how the ocean is. Here is the ocean forecast:

**FRI**

NE WIND TO 5 KT...BECOMING NW IN THE AFTERNOON. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 11 FT...BUILDING TO 13 FT IN THE AFTERNOON. CHANCE OF SHOWERS.

**FRI NIGHT**

NW WIND 10 TO 15 KT WITH GUSTS TO 20 KT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 12 FT.

**SAT**

NW WIND 10 TO 15 KT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 9 FT.

**SAT NIGHT**

NW WIND 5 TO 10 KT...BECOMING W AFTER MIDNIGHT. WIND WAVES 1 FT. W SWELL 9 FT.

**SUN**

S WIND 5 TO 10 KT. WIND WAVES 1 FT. W SWELL 7 FT.

**MON**

SW WIND 15 TO 20 KT. WIND WAVES 4 FT. W SWELL 10 FT.

Sunday looks the most promising for an offshore excursion but that forecast is an eternity away from an accurate weather perspective. Even if the ocean is too rough, bay crabbing in Tillamook is rumored to be pretty good and these upcoming tides should allow for safe and productive crabbing into the weekend.

Not a great tide series for sturgeon fishing or clamming for razors.

Although there certainly are chinook available offshore, the commercials haven't necessarily zeroed in on them. That will likely happen soon and we'll report back what we hear. It's likely we'd have to go 7 to 10 miles offshore to effectively target them however. Herring will likely produce the best but the commercial fleet often deploys hardware.

**Central & South Coast Reports** – Ocean conditions continued favorable for bottom fishing through Wednesday this week with mostly limits of rockfish and lingcod taken. While boats got out today, April 12th, offshore swells are forecast to increase Friday and Saturday this week although launches may once again be possible on Sunday, April 15th if predictions remain accurate.

With ocean Chinook open and legal to catch from Cape Falcon to Humbug Mountain (Port Orford), offshore boaters and charters are enjoying fair results and the run forecast is excellent. Some feeder Chinook were taken out of Newport this week and one boat took a total of six. The limit is two adults per day per angler and the season may carry on through October. The prediction for an excellent ocean coho season has offshore fishers excited even though it doesn't open until July and will likely last just through the month for an 8,000-fish quota. See **Random Links**, below for complete information on ocean salmon seasons.

With the ocean laying down much of the time this week, beach casters have made fair to good catches of pinkfin surf perch.

Siletz River steelheaders have scored winters this week. Try upriver for best results. It won't be long until summer steelhead become the target of interest here.

While the spring Chinook run has been late to get underway, water conditions have improved on the mainstem Umpqua and catches are picking up in the Scottsburg stretch. With only a small percentage of steelhead in the North Umpqua of hatchery origin, the recent freshet brought

increased numbers of fish into the system and has provided decent catch-and-release action. Spring Chinook have yet to enter but it won't be long and once it starts, fishing should be worthwhile well into June. Rain also brought steelhead into the South Umpqua where catches of hatchery fish has been fair to good as the river dropped and cleared.

Conditions are starting to improve in Coos Bay following the last storm which means crabbing and bay fishing will start to pick up. Steelheading remains open through April above tidewater on the Coos River although anglers will encounter an ever-greater number of spawned-out fish. While often aggressive, steelhead which have spawned are not worth keeping.

Spring Chinook fishing is once again underway on the lower Rogue with fair to good catches made by both boat and bank-bound fishers mid-week in the stretch downstream from Agness. Springers have made their way upstream as well with the hatchery reporting a few entering the trap on Wednesday this week. The problem on the Rogue, as with many rivers following a long, wet March, is water temperature and for action and fish movement to truly get underway, the water must warm to just over the 50-degree mark. With good numbers of winter steelhead available on the middle Rogue, that has been the target for most anglers although they are occasionally surprised by spring Chinook. Steelhead catches have been ongoing on the upper Rogue. No springers have been hooked on the upper river despite the report of fish in the trap.

The Chetco River will remain closed until the southwest trout opener on May 26th.

Emigrant Reservoir, Lost Creek Reservoir, Lake Selmac, Willow Lake, Expo Pond, Butterfield Lake, Eel Lake, Upper and Middle Empire Lake and Lake Marie are scheduled to receive hatchery trout.

**Central and Eastern Oregon** – The lower Deschutes has a little additional water and flow but the clarity is excellent. Redsides are cruising and looking for bugs to bite. Nymphs are taking them early in the day with dries effective as Blue-Winged Olives hatch in the afternoon.

Metolius fly fishers are scoring the occasional broad-shouldered bull trout.

A few hearty souls ventured to Wallowa Lake over the past weekend and early this week, encountering several inches of snow in places including the boat ramp. Kokanee were cooperative, however, with fair to good catches of large kokanee on jigs.

Fishing for kokanee has been slow for trollers at Green Peter but show some sign of improvement.

The Metolius Arm of Lake Billy Chinook has been providing fair results for kokanee. Fly fishers are also taking bull trout from the lake.

### **Washington fishing reports:**

***From the WDF&W Weekender Report for April 2012***

### **North Puget Sound**

One of the state's most popular fishing openers is scheduled for later in the month, when the lowland lakes trout season gets under way.

The lowland lakes **trout** season begins April 28, 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 the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) [website](#).

But, until then, fishing for blackmouth in Puget Sound takes top billing in the region.

Overall, fishing in March was slow for salmon anglers in the region, said Steve Thiesfeld, Puget Sound salmon manager for the WDFW. "It's been very spotty," he said. "We'll get reports of decent fishing one day, and then it cools off for several days. So they're out there, but people definitely need to put some time in on the water to have any success."

Anglers fishing marine areas 7 (San Juan Islands), 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay), 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) and 9 (Admiralty Inlet) have a two-**salmon** daily limit, but must release wild chinook salmon. Marine Area 9 is open only through April 15, while Marine Area 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) is already closed to salmon fishing.

Thiesfeld said anglers might want to consider fishing the Strait of Juan de Fuca – Marine Areas 5 (Sekiu) and 6 (eastern Strait) – where salmon fishing has been much better. However, time is running out to hook a salmon in those waters. The two areas, which have a daily limit of one salmon, are open only through April 10.

Meanwhile, it's not too early to start planning for halibut fishing, which opens in May. The 2012 recreational halibut seasons approved for Puget Sound are:

- **Marine Area 5:** From May 24-28, the fishery will be open Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday for Memorial Day weekend. From May 31 through June 23, the fishery will be open Thursday, Friday and Saturday. WDFW has also set Thursday, May 23 as the opening day of the 2013 season.
- **Marine Areas 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10:** From May 3-19, the fishery will be open Thursday, Friday and Saturday. From May 24-28, the fishery will be open each day (Thursday through Monday) for Memorial Day weekend. From May 31-June 2, the fishery will be open Thursday, Friday and Saturday. WDFW has also set Thursday, May 2 as the opening day of the 2013 season.
- **Marine Areas 11, 12, 13:** These areas will remain closed to halibut fishing this year to protect threatened and endangered rockfish species.

In all marine areas open to fishing, there is a one-fish daily catch limit and no minimum size restriction. Anglers may possess a maximum of two fish in any form, and must record their catch on a WDFW catch record card.

For more information on the halibut fishery, including seasons in Washington's ocean areas, click [here](#).

Prefer shellfish? Sport fishing for **spot shrimp** in Puget Sound opens May 5. Shrimp fishing opportunities in various areas of Puget Sound will be similar to last year, although there is one change this season that was made to avoid an extreme minus tide, said Mark O'Toole, a shellfish biologist for WDFW.

Unlike previous years, the shrimp fishery will not reopen on the following Wednesday after the May 5 opener. Instead, the fishery will reopen in most areas on Friday, May 11. "With such an extreme low tide on that Wednesday (May 9) it only made sense to shift the second day of fishing to Friday," O'Toole said. "We don't want to leave shrimpers stranded 100 feet from the boat ramp on a low afternoon tide."

In all areas of Puget Sound, fishers are limited to 80 spot shrimp per day. Spot shrimp seasons for various areas of Puget Sound are:

- Hood Canal Shrimp District (Marine Area 12): Open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on May 5, 11, 12 and 16.
- Discovery Bay Shrimp District (Marine Area 6): Open from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. on May 5, 11, 12 and 16.
- Marine areas 4 (east of the Bonilla-Tatoosh line), 5, 6 and 13 (excluding shrimp districts): Open daily beginning May 5 at 7 a.m. The spot shrimp season closes when the quota is attained or Sept 15, whichever comes first. The exception is Marine Area 13, which closes for spot shrimp May 31.
- Marine Area 7: Opens May 5 at 7 a.m. and will be open May 11, 12, 17, 18 and 19.
- Marine areas 8, 9, 10 and 11: Open May 5 and May 11 from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Additional dates and times will be announced for these areas if sufficient quota remains.

For a description of the marine areas and fishing rules, including regulations for coonstripe and pink shrimp fishing seasons, see WDFW's [Recreational Shrimp Fishing website](#).

Anglers are reminded that all 2011-2012 Washington state fishing licenses expire at midnight March 31. To keep fishing, anglers 15 years of age and older must purchase a 2012-13 license. Licenses and permits are available [online](#), by phone (1-866-246-9453) and from sporting goods stores and other retail license dealers around the state.

### **South Sound/Olympic Peninsula**

The popular lowland lakes fishing season gets under way later in the month. Many lakes – stocked with thousands of legal-sized trout – open for fishing April 28. Information on stocking schedules for rainbow, cutthroat and triploid trout is available on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) [website](#).

Until then, anglers have plenty of other fishing opportunities in the region.

One option is to dig some razor clams during an opening approved at several ocean beaches April 7-9. Opening dates and morning low tides are:

- April 7, Saturday (7:36 a.m., -1.2 ft.): Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks, Kalaloch
- April 8, Sunday (8:23 a.m., -1.5 ft.): Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks, Kalaloch
- April 9, Monday (9:11 a.m., -1.5 ft.): Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Kalaloch

No digging will be allowed after 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 harvester's clams must be kept in a separate container, said Dan Ayres, coastal shellfish manager for WDFW.

Noting that 2011-12 state fishing licenses expire March 31, Ayres reminds diggers age 15 or older that they must purchase a 2012-13 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 lingcod fishing regulations, check the [Fishing in Washington pamphlet](#). For

information on the deepwater portions of marine areas 1 and 2 that are closed, check the [fishing rule change](#) on WDFW's website.

Meanwhile, fishing for **salmon** is still an option. Marine areas 5 (Sekiu) and 6 (eastern Strait) are open through April 10. "Salmon fishing in the Strait has been good over the last couple weeks," said Steve Thiesfeld, Puget Sound salmon manager for WDFW. "I'd recommend fishing those two areas before they close."

Marine areas 11 (Tacoma-Vashon), 12 (Hood Canal) and 13 (South Puget Sound) are also open for salmon fishing in April.

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 15 on the Clearwater, Hoh and Quinault rivers, and April 30 on the other rivers. 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](#).

Anglers should note that the **halibut** season gets under way in May. The 2012 recreational halibut seasons approved for Washington's marine areas are:

- **Marine Area 1 (Columbia River):** Opens May 3, three days per week (Thursday-Saturday) until 80 percent of the quota is achieved, or until July 14, whichever is earlier. The fishery will reopen Aug. 3 and continue three days per week (Friday-Sunday), until the remaining quota is taken, or until Sept. 30, whichever occurs first. The early quota is 9,516 pounds; the late quota is 2,379 pounds.
- **Marine Area 2 (Westport):** Opens May 6, two days per week (Sunday and Tuesday) for three consecutive weeks. The area-wide fishery will be closed May 27 and 29. If sufficient quota remains, the fishery will open the following Sunday and/or Tuesday and continue until the quota is reached, or until Sept. 30, whichever occurs first. The northern nearshore area will open May 6 and continue seven days per week until the nearshore quota is reached, or until Sept. 30, whichever occurs first. The quota for the area-wide fishery is 40,739 pounds; the quota for the northern nearshore fishery is 2,000 pounds.
- **Marine areas 3 and 4 (La Push and Neah Bay):** Opens May 10, two days per week (Thursdays and Saturdays) through May 19. If enough harvestable fish remain to be caught, the fishery will re-open May 31 and/or June 2 and possibly on additional days (Thursdays and Saturdays) until the quota is reached or Sept. 28, whichever occurs first. The combined quota for both areas is 108,030 pounds.
- **Marine Area 5:** From May 24-28, the fishery will be open Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday for Memorial Day weekend. From May 31 through June 23, the fishery will be open Thursday, Friday and Saturday. WDFW has also set Thursday, May 23 as the opening day of the 2013 season.
- **Marine areas 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10:** From May 3-19, the fishery will be open Thursday, Friday and Saturday. From May 24-28, the fishery will be open each day (Thursday through Monday) for Memorial Day weekend. From May 31-June 2, the fishery will be open Thursday, Friday and Saturday. WDFW has also set Thursday, May 2 as the opening day of the 2013 season.

- **Marine areas 11, 12, 13:** These areas will remain closed to halibut fishing this year to protect threatened and endangered rockfish species.

In all marine areas open to fishing, there is a one-fish daily catch limit and no minimum size restriction. Anglers may possess a maximum of two fish in any form, and must record their catch on a WDFW catch record card.

Prefer shellfish? Sport fishing for **spot shrimp** in Puget Sound opens May 5. Shrimp fishing opportunities in various areas of Puget Sound will be similar to last year, although there is one change this season that was made to avoid an extreme minus tide, said Mark O'Toole, a shellfish biologist for WDFW.

Unlike previous years, the shrimp fishery will not reopen on the following Wednesday after the May 5 opener. Instead, the fishery will reopen in most areas on Friday, May 11. "With such an extreme low tide on that Wednesday (May 9) it only made sense to shift the second day of fishing to Friday," O'Toole said. "We don't want to leave shrimpers stranded 100 feet from the boat ramp on a low afternoon tide."

In all areas of Puget Sound, fishers are limited to 80 spot shrimp per day. Spot shrimp seasons for various areas of Puget Sound are:

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- Discovery Bay Shrimp District (Marine Area 6): Open from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. on May 5, 11, 12 and 16.
- Marine areas 4 (east of the Bonilla-Tatoosh line), 5, 6 and 13 (excluding shrimp districts): Open daily beginning May 5 at 7 a.m. The spot shrimp season closes when the quota is attained or Sept 15, whichever comes first. The exception is Marine Area 13, which closes for spot shrimp May 31.
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Additional dates and times will be announced for these areas if sufficient quota remains.

For a description of the marine areas and fishing rules, including regulations for coonstripe and pink shrimp fishing seasons, see WDFW's [Recreational Shrimp Fishing website](#).

Anglers are reminded that all 2011-2012 Washington state fishing licenses expire at midnight March 31. To keep fishing, anglers 15 years of age and older must purchase a 2012-13 license. Licenses and permits are available [online](#), by phone (1-866-246-9453) and from sporting goods stores and other retail license dealers around the state.

### **Southwest Washington**

After a couple of months of slow fishing for **spring chinook salmon**, fishery managers from Washington and Oregon are set to decide whether to extend the initial season on the lower Columbia River beyond April 6.

Their decision, scheduled April 5, will be reported on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) [website](#) and on the department's Fishing Hotline (360-902-2500).

"Like last year, the spring chinook run has been late to arrive – and for many of the same reasons," said Joe Hymer, a WDFW fish biologist. "Not only has the Columbia been running high

and cold, but all that rain in recent weeks has muddied up the water below the Willamette and Cowlitz rivers.”

In addition, the bulk of this year’s return is expected to be four year-olds, which arrive a bit later, Hymer said.

Those conditions are clearly reflected in the catch. Through March 25, an estimated 42,600 anglers had caught only 1,176 of the spring chinook available for harvest through April 6. Of that number, about 800 were upriver salmon that count toward the 12,700-fish harvest guideline for the first leg of the fishery.

At the same time, only a few dozen fish have been counted crossing Bonneville Dam.

As anglers may recall, the pre-season forecast anticipated a return of 314,200 upriver spring chinook, which would be the fourth-largest run on record. Hatchery-reared spring chinook returning to the Cowlitz, Lewis Willamette and other tributaries below Bonneville Dam will also contribute to the number of fish available for harvest.

To guard against overestimating this year’s run, the states are managing spring chinook fisheries with a 30 percent buffer until the forecast is updated in late April or early May. Whatever they decide about extending the sport fishery in early April, they will also consider reopening the fishery after the run update.

Hymer reminds anglers that all 2011-2012 Washington state fishing licenses expire at midnight March 31. To keep fishing, anglers age 15 and older must purchase a 2012-13 license and a Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement. Licenses and permits are available [online](#), by phone (1-866-246-9453) and from sporting goods stores and other retail license dealers around the state.

Through April 6, anglers fishing downriver from Bonneville Dam may retain one marked, hatchery-reared adult spring chinook as part of their daily catch limit. Anglers should note that the sport fishery will be closed April 3 to accommodate a possible commercial fishery.

Above Bonneville Dam, the fishery is open to boat and bank anglers on a daily basis through May 2 between the Tower Island powerlines six miles below The Dalles Dam and the Washington/Oregon state line, 17 miles upriver from McNary Dam. Bank anglers can also fish from Bonneville Dam upriver to the powerlines during that time.

Anglers fishing above Bonneville Dam can keep two marked adult spring chinook per day.

The mainstem Columbia River is also open for retention of shad through May 15 on days and in areas open for retention of adipose fin-clipped spring chinook.

Fishing for chinook salmon and **hatchery steelhead** is also open on a number of tributaries to the Columbia River under rules outlined in the 2011-12 [Fishing in Washington](#) pamphlet. Hymer said fishing for winter hatchery steelhead is still going strong, particularly on the Cowlitz and Kalama rivers, noting that summer-run steelhead are moving in right behind them.

Anglers are limited to one adult hatchery-reared chinook a day on the Kalama and Lewis rivers, but can keep two hatchery fish a day on the Wind River and Drano Lake. Starting April 1, the lower Klickitat River is open for spring chinook fishing Mondays, Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays only. The daily limit is two hatchery chinook, two steelhead, or one of each.

Sometime in early April, WDFW plans to expand the popular fishing area at the mouth of the Wind River by pushing the outside boundary 100 yards out into the Columbia River. John Weinheimer, a WDFW fish biologist, said the expansion is designed to help relieve crowding at the mouth of the Wind River, where up to 200 boats a day often compete for space during the peak of the spring chinook season.

Approximately 8,400 hatchery-reared adult spring chinook salmon are expected to return to the Wind River this year, compared to 7,800 last year.

“The public has asked us for years to move the fishing boundary out into the Columbia,” Weinheimer said. “We’re trying it this year on an experimental basis to see if we can do that without a significant impact on federally protected spring chinook and summer steelhead bound for the upper Columbia River.”

Once the buoy line has been moved, WDFW will open the expanded area for fishing and announce the regulation change on its [website](#).

The expansion is being funded by fees paid by anglers for a Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement, which is required to fish the Columbia or its tributaries. The Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement Advisory Board, which allocates that funding, approved spending \$33,300 to hire a biologist and a technician to monitor the catch and analyze the data over a three-month period.

Hymer noted that a similar expansion is in the works at Drano Lake. Building on the bank-only fishing opportunity near the outlet that opens April 16, fishery managers plan to keep a bank-fishing area outside Drano Lake open after the mainstem Columbia closes in early May.

He added, however, that anglers should also expect to see more Yakama Nation tribal fishing in the lake. Starting in mid-April, subsistence fisheries from fishing platforms will be allowed from noon Monday through 6 p.m. Thursday each week through mid-June. As in recent years, a set net fishery also will take place Tuesday night into Wednesday during the same period.

“We ask that both tribal and non-tribal fishers respect each others’ space,” Hymer said.

As with spring chinook, fishing for **white sturgeon** has been slow, with low participation in recent weeks. Fisheries below Bonneville Dam are open on the following schedule:

- **Buoy 10 to the Wauna powerlines:** Retention of white sturgeon is allowed daily through April 30 and from May 12 through July 8. Through April 30, sturgeon must measure between 38 inches and 54 inches (fork length) to be retained. From May 12 through the end of the season they must measure 41 inches to 54 inches (fork length) to be retained. Catch-and-release fishing is allowed on days when retention is prohibited.
- **Wauna powerlines to Bonneville Dam:** Retention of white sturgeon is allowed three days per week (Thursday through Saturday) through July 31 and from Oct. 20 through Dec. 31. Sturgeon must measure between 38 inches and 54 inches (fork length) to be retained. Catch-and-release fishing is allowed on days when retention is prohibited.

Sand Island Slough near Rooster Rock is closed to fishing at least through April 30.

Rather catch some **trout**? Several popular lakes – including Mineral Lake (Lewis County), Swift Reservoir (Skamania County) and Rowland Lake (Klickitat County) – open for business April 28. In addition, many year-round lakes throughout the region will be stocked with thousands of rainbow trout over the next few weeks – some weighing up to a pound a piece. See how many, and where, on WDFW’s [regional stocking report](#).

Now is also a good time to start plying the waters for **walleye** and **bass** from Bonneville Dam up to McNary Dam. "Catch rates for both species should pick up right through spring," Hymer said.

### **Eastern Washington**

Some of the region's best fishing will begin with the lowland lakes season opener on April 28. Hundreds of thousands of trout will be waiting in lakes throughout the region when anglers hit the water for opening day.

Best bets in the central district include Badger, Williams, West Medical, Fishtrap and Clear lakes, which will be well-stocked and grow fish well, said John Whalen, regional fish program manager for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

In Stevens County, Whalen recommends Waitts, Loon, Deep, Cedar, Potter's Pond, Bayley, Rocky, Starvation and the Little Pend Oreille chain of lakes. In Ferry County, he likes Ellen, Davis, Swan and Trout lakes, and favors Diamond, Frater, Big Meadow, North and South Skookum, Marshall and Sacheen lakes favors in Pend Oreille County.

But anglers don't have to wait until the end of April to catch some nice trout, Whalen said. Lots of lakes that opened for business March 1 are still producing well, he said.

For example, Coffeepot Lake in Lincoln County is producing **rainbow trout** up to 22 inches, mostly on flies. Coffeepot is under 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 offers good catches of **brown trout** that run up to 25 inches. 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 receives hatchery "catchable-size" rainbow trout, but it should also fish well this month 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 on both rainbow and **cutthroat trout** at Amber Lake in southwest Spokane County has been good. Amber is under selective gear rules and shifts to a catch-and-keep season on April 28 when the daily limit is two trout of at least 14 inches. Rainbows with clipped adipose fins caught at Amber must be released even after April 28.

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

Year-round Lake Roosevelt keeps producing big rainbows most days, with some **kokanee** and **walleye**. Anglers should keep in mind that the portion of the reservoir from the Kettle arm upstream to Barstow Bridge closes April 1 through the Friday before Memorial Day (May 25).

Deer Lake in southern Stevens County, which opened March 1, is finally warming up and likely producing some catches of rainbow and **lake trout**, with **bass**, **crappie** and **perch** catches not far behind.

In the south end of the region, the Tucannon River impoundments, on WDFW's Wooten Wildlife Area, have been producing nice rainbow catches since opening March 1. 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.

Anglers are reminded that all fishing rules in the [2011-2012 regulations pamphlet](#) apply throughout the month of April. New rules take effect May 1, 2012, and will be available in pamphlets online and at license dealers later this month.

Anglers are also reminded that all 2011-2012 Washington state fishing licenses expire at midnight March 31. To keep fishing, anglers 15 years of age and older must purchase a 2012-13 license. Licenses and permits are available [online](#), by phone (1-866-246-9453) and from sporting goods stores and other retail license dealers around the state.

April 20 is the deadline for registration for the May 5 **Kids' Fishing Event** at Clear Lake in Spokane County. For details on the registration form, see the [Youth Fishing 2012 Event Calendar](#) on WDFW's website.

### **Northcentral Washington**

Dozens of the region's lakes opened to fishing April 1, most in Adams and Grant counties of the Columbia Basin.

With cold, wet, windy weather on the opener, fishing effort was down, reported Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) district fish biologist Chad Jackson of Moses Lake.

"Dry Falls Lake had the best fishing on the opener for those willing to brave the high winds and cold temperatures," he said. "Successful anglers were primarily using small black chironomids at depths of 15 to 25 feet. Anglers who fished three to five hours on the opener caught-and-released five trout on average. Trout size was fair to good, ranging from 10 to over 20 inches. It appears that last year's cold spring shortened the growing season for trout in Dry Falls Lake, as yearlings should easily be 12-14 inches by the opener, instead of 10-12 inches. Smaller yearling trout size has been observed in other lakes in the Basin this year. Over the next couple months these trout should grow to a nicer size."

Dry Falls Lake, which is in the north end of Grant County near Coulee City, should continue to provide good fishing through the spring. It's a Selective Gear Rule fishery with an internal combustion motor prohibition and a one fish daily catch limit. In addition to **rainbow trout**, Dry Falls gets stocked with **brown** and **tiger trout**.

Jackson said the Hampton and Teal lakes fished poor on the opener averaging from one to two trout per angler. However, trout caught from these lakes were very nice sized, ranging mostly from 14 to 18 inches.

North and South Teal lakes, among the "Seep Lakes" south of Potholes Reservoir and north of Othello, were rehabilitated in 2010 and restocked with rainbow trout fry in 2011. Upper and Lower Hampton lakes, north of Othello on the wildlife refuge, are usually good producers in this early season, but Jackson predicted they only be fair at best. "The Hamptons are in need of rehabilitation to remove nuisance fish species that impact trout fry survival," he said. "There are still some good size trout in the two lakes for the patient angler."

Many of the other waters that opened April 1 are within the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge, including the Pillar-Widgeon chain of lakes. "These small lakes should be fair to good through the spring," Jackson said. "We encourage anglers to fish three to five of these lakes in an outing in order to catch a decent number of **rainbow trout**."

One refuge fishery – Para-Juvenile Lake, seven miles northwest of Othello on the Adams-Grant county line – opened April 1 only to anglers up to 14 years of age. It's a good spot to take kids to catch **bass** and **sunfish**.

Beyond preparation for the vagaries of spring weather, Jackson reminds anglers to have a new fishing license, valid April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013, in hand before participating in this opener.

All 2011-2012 Washington state fishing licenses expired at midnight March 31. To keep fishing, anglers 15 years of age and older must purchase a 2012-13 license. Licenses and permits are available online, by phone (1-866-246-9453) and from sporting goods stores and other retail license dealers around the state.

### **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, Matoon Lake, FioRito Lake, Powerline Lake, Marmes Lake, and other lakes in April. Several lakes are also being stocked with jumbo trout, weighing over a pound apiece.

"Rotary Lake in Yakima has been particularly good with some trout up to two pounds apiece," said Eric Anderson, a WDFW fish biologist based in Yakima. "As the weather continues to warm and the March winds subside, fishing should pick up in lakes throughout the region."

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

Anderson reminds anglers that all 2011-2012 Washington state fishing licenses expire at midnight March 31. To keep fishing, anglers age 15 and older must purchase a 2012-13 license. Licenses and permits 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. Bank anglers may retain two hatchery steelhead per day along the Franklin County shoreline between the WDFW marker a quarter-mile downstream from the Ringold irrigation wasteway outlet and 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 May 2 (or until the quota is reached) 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.

"The run appears to be late this year, but 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. Anglers planning to fish the lake should keep an eye on the WDFW website for possible updates.

Farther upriver, the sport fishery for white sturgeon above McNary Dam (Lake Wallula) is scheduled to run through July 31.

In both areas, anglers may retain only those white sturgeon that measure between 43 inches and 54 inches when measured from the tip of the snout to the fork of the tail.

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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#### **Random Links**

2012 Salmon Seasons from Pacific Fishery Management Council:

<http://www.pcouncil.org/2012/04/20323/council-adopts-generous-salmon-seasons-coastwide/>

Guide to Clackamas River parks: <http://www.clackamas.us/parks/>

**GOOD LUCK!**