

The Guide's Forecast - volume 14 issue number 46

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **November 9<sup>th</sup> – November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012**

**Oregon Fisheries Update:**

**Willamette Valley/Metro-** The Columbia River below Bonneville dam has been a ghost town, but a small core of anglers has been trying their hand at catch and release sturgeon fishing. The bite should only improve as more fish show up, always arriving when the salmon begin spawning below the dam and in the local creeks.

It's been reported that the better fishing for catch and release sturgeon is in the lower Willamette River Portland harbor. Good catches of predominantly undersize sturgeon are the norm and double digit days are common. Occasionally, keeper size and over-size sturgeon are hooked and since they all have to be released, your gear should be able to handle the larger fish so as not to over-stress them in an extended fight with lighter gear. Anglers are already lining up along Meldrum bar in anticipation of the first winter steelhead. No reports of any caught.

As the smaller local rivers recede, there remains a chance for a few silvers in the upper Sandy and Clackamas Rivers. This late in the season, expect most fish to be wild so catch and release will be in order. Rumors of a few early arriving winter steelhead have already surfaced on the Sandy River; not surprising after the recent high water.

McKenzie levels have been dropping since the freshet last week. Fishing for reddsides and native cutthroats has been decent on nymphs.

The Santiam system is high and unfishable at this time. While water level and flow moderated somewhat since the last rain storm, it's forecast to be out of shape for the remainder of the week.

**Northwest –** Following the most significant rain on the north coast to date, salmon anglers were sorely disappointed that action wasn't nearly as good as the anticipation was. Smaller river systems were fishing effectively by Sunday but results on the Kilchis were poor despite high effort and ideal conditions. Early in the week, most north coast rivers were in prime shape but only producing an occasional fresh chinook. Anglers are in a quandary.

The Trask and Nestucca systems are producing an occasional fish as well but not what most anglers were hoping for. The Nehalem remains colored and most upriver areas remain closed to the taking of chinook as they begin to turn color in the upper reaches, making for poor table fare.

Tillamook Bay itself produced better prior to the weekend but overall, trollers remain perplexed that more chinook are not available despite good fishing conditions. Historically, early November has produced excellent catches. Reports of sturgeon in the estuary are likely credible.

Fishing on the north coast may still improve in the next several weeks but angler interest is waning due to slowing catch rates and the upcoming hunting seasons. Tillamook Bay and the Wilson and Kilchis Rivers will remain top bets. Wild coho remain largely absent and that should concern winter steelhead enthusiasts as survival rates are often similar on the north coast.

Crabbing remains excellent on the lower Columbia but only fair on most other systems after last week's rain. Commercial pots will inundate the lower Columbia the last few days of November so the recreational fleet still has a few weeks of productive opportunity.

**Southwest-** With salmon upriver on many south coast rivers now, anglers will focus on fresh fish still coming in on the tides in the lower reaches of most watersheds. River levels are expected to remain low through the weekend.

According to the latest data available online as of Tuesday, November 6th, the Alsea is the only wild coho fishery which has closed with the quota filled. Check the ODF&W web site for the most updated information.

Catches of chinook and coho have slowed on the Umpqua mainstem and smallmouth bass fishing is winding down around Elkton as water temperatures drop. Summer steelheading remains fair on the North Umpqua.

Chinook catches have slowed on the Coos and Coquille although the wild coho fisheries remain open.

While rainfall pulled most of the salmon out of the Rogue estuary, sending them upstream, trollers have continued to make fair, steady catches of chinook and coho in the bay. Catches of adult and half-pounder steelhead have been good around Agness with a few chinook and coho also falling to anglers. Steelheading is good on the middle Rogue, particularly for side-drifters using bait. Waters of the upper Rogue continued to produce decent catches of summer steelhead. While most have been natives, there have been large, hard-fighting hatchery fish in the mix.

The Chetco opened the last day of October as skies opened and dumped rainfall on the area bringing impressive numbers of fresh chinook upriver. This scenario will repeat with upcoming weather fronts. Fishing was good upriver on the opener, slowed over the weekend and has been slow this week. It may be mid-November before the next freshet rejuvenates chinook fishing.

Elk and Sixes anglers experienced some action following precipitation over the past week but conditions change rapidly on the small, volatile ocean tributaries. Currently low and clear, fishing will be worthwhile with successive weather fronts.

**Eastern –** Following runoff over the past week that roiled the Deschutes, the river has dropped and cleared. Steelheading has been good around Maupin and Sherars Falls. As conditions improve, brightly-colored lures and flies will be most effective.

Lake Billy Chinook provides a decent bull trout fishery over the winter months. One fish at least 24 inches or better in length may be kept although most choose to catch-and-release these fish.

The Grande Ronde, Umatilla and Imnaha systems should start to produce good catches of steelhead. Following last week's rain, flows have improved, drawing fish upriver from the Snake.

The John Day River is also producing fair catches of steelhead although most are wild and must be released.

**SW Washington-** Following the high flows of last week, boaters did see a slight spike in success for both chinook and coho. Overall however, coho numbers remain fair at best.

Chinook will remain the best option on the Lewis River with a dwindling opportunity on the Cowlitz.

The Klickitat River adjacent to the Columbia will remain a fair option for late-run coho for another

few weeks but given this year's lower return, anglers are often going away empty handed.

**Columbia River Fishing Report** – With little to pursue, this section of the report will slowly dwindle to little information over the course of the rest of the year. This info, contributed by **pro guide Chris Vertopoulos** talks about what few fishing options remain around Bonneville Dam. Chris writes:

“The Columbia River below Bonneville dam has been a ghost town, but a small core of anglers has been trying their hand at catch and release sturgeon fishing. The bite should only improve as more fish show up, always arriving when the salmon begin spawning below the dam and in the local creeks. Anglers wanting to try their hand at gorge sturgeon should consider using smelt, squid and sand shrimp for bait. Combinations of smelt and sand shrimp or squid and sand shrimp work extremely well and will draw more bites than single baits. The fish are hungry this time of year and seem to know that the coming wintertime offers slim pickens.”

Sometimes, action can be good in the deep water below the I-5 and railroad bridge and upstream of the mouth of the Willamette. This area may come into play if you are targeting sturgeon (for catch and release) in the Portland Harbor (Willamette). The fact is, there won't be many anglers participating in these fisheries as catch and release for sturgeon really hasn't taken hold for many anglers just yet. The result; You'll have a lot of territory to target your quarry if you choose.

Further upriver however, steelhead anglers are just entering into a productive phase of their fishery in the John Day Pool and the John Day Arm itself. Adverse weather likely kept effort low last week but catch rates were still good for those that participated in the fishery. Here is ODF&W's catch rate statistics for last week:

Weekly checking showed one unclipped steelhead released for eight bank rods; and 10 adipose fin-clipped steelhead kept, plus 11 unclipped steelhead released for 26 boats.

It's no secret that this is a productive fishery and should remain that way well into November. This troll fishery offers up some of the best boat steelhead fishing for any Oregon fishery for the entire year. Plugs are responsible for most of the take, making this a gentleman's fishery so no one should be intimidated by participating in this fishery.

If you still have sturgeon on the mind, the Bonneville Pool can often produce great catch and release opportunities this time of year.

This time of the year on the Columbia River, the lower reaches out of Hammond become quite popular for crabbers, where a bounty of crustaceans are readily available for those with boats or are willing to do some casting with crab snares from Social Security Beach in Fort Stevens State Park. Either way, if you target the right time of the tide (low slack through the entire incoming tide), you should be able to count on a bountiful harvest.

**The Guide's Forecast** – With little effort in catch and release fishing, it's a wide-open option for those that know where the pockets of fish exist this time of year. Although most of the effort will remain in the Willamette River itself, there will be some fair options on the mainstem Columbia if you can handle the weather this time of year.

Upriver, steelheaders will continue to take good numbers of steelhead well into this month. Trollers will take the lion's share but boaters working the lower John Day should also have good opportunities using bobber and bait or jigs in 3 to 5 foot runs and side pools. This is peak season

for these two areas right now. Rainfall and snow levels will certainly effect the John Day Arm fishery but less so in the John Day Pool itself.

As we mentioned earlier, crabbing will draw the most attention for the outdoor enthusiast this week and the next several weeks. Although high tides over the weekend are forecast to be fairly high (8'8" at 9:59 a.m. on the lower Columbia) crabbers that pay attention to the ebb and flow of the river should witness good results throughout the weekend. You WILL have to pay attention to the tide however, or you are likely to lose your gear or your buoys to a strong incoming or outgoing tide. The better tides are actually the following weekend.

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** reports, "The Columbia river below Bonneville dam has been a ghost town, but a small core of anglers have been trying their hand at catch and release sturgeon fishing. The bite should only improve as more fish show up, always arriving when the salmon begin spawning below the dam and in the local creeks.

"It's been reported that the better fishing for catch and release sturgeon is in the lower Willamette rivers Portland harbor. Good catches of predominantly undersize sturgeon are the norm and double digit days are common. Occasionally, keeper size and over-size sturgeon are hooked and since they all have to be released, your gear should be able to handle the larger fish so as not to over stress them in an extended fight with lighter gear. Anglers are already lining up along Meldrum bar in anticipation of the first winter steelhead. No reports as of yet of any caught."

McKenzie water levels have been dropping steadily over the past week but so has the water temperature, from the 50-dgrees range until the mid-40s as of November 8th.

While the Santiams have dropped following the recent deluge, they are still too high to fish well. Coho fishing opened November 1st on the North Santiam from Stayton up to Big Cliff Dam and will remain open through the end of the year.

**The Guide's Forecast – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** predicts, "Anglers wanting to try their hand at gorge sturgeon should consider using smelt , squid and sand shrimp for bait. Combinations of smelt and sandshrimp or squid and sandshrimp work extremely well and will draw more bites than single baits. The fish are hungry this time of year and seem to know that the coming wintertime offers slim pickens.

"The same baits mentioned above will be used but many Willamette sturgeon gurus like to tip their shrimp or smelt with fat earthworm. I have also had good success in the past with worm oil injected into either bait. Anglers are already lining up along Meldrum bar in anticipation of the first winter steelhead. Use small spin n glows with or without a coon shrimp, fished close to shore. Boat anglers will have success back trolling K-11 Kwikfish wiggle warts and the new small sized Yakima Bait Maglip. No reports of any caught as of yet."

Fishing is likely to be slow on the McKenzie's chilly water. The stretch above Leaburg Dam closed on the last day of October.

While the North Santiam will fish best at flows of 3,000 or less at Mehama, it was 5,500 at mid-day on Thursday this week and is not predicted to improve over the coming week. Detroit Reservoir must lower the water level over 40 feet by the 1st of December. South Santiam flows were about 4,600 at Waterloo. Conditions would need to improve for this system to fish well.

Unfortunately, the forecast is just the opposite. There are steelhead and coho in the system. however.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** reports, "As the smaller local rivers recede, there remains a chance for a few silvers in the upper Sandy and the Clackamas rivers. This late in the season, expect most fish to be wild so catch and release will be in order. Rumors of a few early arriving winter steelhead have already surfaced on the Sandy River and that's not surprising after the recent high water."

**The Guide's Forecast – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** predicts, "Side drifting yarn and roe in the lower river will produce for the boat anglers. Upstream run small plugs, side drift and bobber and jig will get fish. expect the next high water to bring better numbers of steelhead to the valley rivers."

**North Coast Fishing Report** – Tillamook anglers were largely disappointed this week as river levels have been in ideal condition since last weekend. Following the last rain freshet the smaller systems such as the Kilchis, Necanicum and North Fork Nehalem offered the early options with the Kilchis the most likely to produce the best results. That anticipation was quickly quelled however as catch rates were disappointing for the folks that were effectively working the water.

Specifically, driftboaters working the Kilchis reported poor results with some boats catching (and releasing) chum salmon. It's apparent by now however, that this year's run of chum isn't as strong as last years. Necanicum River anglers, the few boaters that may have braved the treacherous river, likely found some decent fishing as many anglers reported numerous fish present, just not willing to bite prior to the rain freshet. North Fork Nehalem anglers were few, mostly inspired to target coho (which are returning in low numbers this year too), but often only catch dark fish this time of year. Folks get more excited about winter steelhead on this system, although it's early, than they do for fall chinook.

The Wilson and Trask as well as the Nestucca are primary targets when flows drop but anglers on these systems were largely disappointed as well. Immediately following the rains and wind, leaves inundated the rivers, hampering anglers from effectively working their gear. When flows and leafy debris finally did subside, there were some fish available, specifically chinook, but not nearly what most had anticipated given the time of year and the conditions that presented themselves over the past week. That didn't seem to slow effort however. Now with flows dropping, anglers will once again focus on the lower reaches of these larger streams and Tillamook Bay itself. So let's report on the goings on of Tillamook Bay next.....

Par for the course, Tillamook Bay itself has been a poor producer for much of the week. The exception was last Friday when several fish were taken throughout the bay, including the west channel for a change. The bite in the west channel did last a few days be dropped off steadily from the one-day that produced some great results (last Friday). The west channel has been slow for much of the season, it finally kicked in for a short period. Most recently, some of the more consistent anglers I know struggled pretty hard in pursuit of chinook. Bay City remains a go-to spot but even though this has been consistent for a large part of this season, it's a dead spot right now. I managed 2 bites for one 23 pound buck on Sunday, it was one of 2 fish that we saw caught although we heard of a few more.

Although no confirmed catches have been made to my knowledge, some boaters are reporting marking fish that look an awful lot like sturgeon. They're sticking to the bottom and not rolling. They are also in the lower extremities of the estuary in the middle channel. November is typically

when the first strong batch of sturgeon enter Tillamook Bay. It's highly likely that there could be good numbers of fish present.

With water levels up, and weather patterns unpredictable, interest in crabbing most north coast estuaries has been low. Although there should be some opportunity as flows are predicted to stay moderate, if you're serious about your crabbing, you should look to the north for the best success.

**The Guide's Forecast** – With water levels expected to remain stable, don't expect much to change for Tillamook area anglers. The moderating flows however should keep options open for most anglers, with the lower Wilson and the lower Kilchis strong options throughout the week if flows do what they are forecasted to do. Keep in mind however that the bay fishing has to pick up before the river fishing does.

Plugs and backbounced eggs in the lower reaches of the Wilson and Kilchis should offer up some opportunity for late season chinook but the early returns to these systems indicate that the chinook runs may not materialize this season. If they do, they won't be much to write home about. It's odd, given the fact that the early season was so productive.

Anglers may want to wait until the bite picks up in the bay before venturing up into the lower reaches of Tillamook area streams. Although the Trask will remain a late season option, it's largely over for the season with only a few late season stragglers expected through mid-November.

The tides for the weekend look pretty strong. With this, fish may move right past Bay City and the Ghost Hole and if flows remain high, may go right into the lower reaches of the Wilson and Kilchis Rivers. Don't expect good results however as we've should have seen some good fishing on the last go-around. None-the-less, there should still be some fair numbers of fish coming in and herring held in the strong incoming tide or trolling with it in the Ghost Hole or the west channel but Bay City continues to be a consistent spot too. With a lot of the weed gone, anglers have the option to hold with plugs too.

Anglers wishing to target chum may see an influx of fish on this tide series. With flows still forecasted to be high on the Miami and Kilchis, this could provide some fair opportunity if the run materializes. It seems however that the run won't be as strong as it was last year. Trollers witnessed frequent chum hook-ups in the Ghost Hole and at Bay City this time of year and earlier.

Unless there is a mad run of fish that come in this week, don't count on any white hot action to take place in the bay or the rivers.

Although the ocean forecast is what I might call "confused" opportunistic anglers likely won't have a shot at offshore species this week. Bay crabbing remains fair with better action likely in Netarts Bay.

By early next week, there will be some large evening minus clam tides if the ocean swell cooperates. Clamming should be good if that is the case, it just likely won't be the case.

**Central & South Coast Reports** – According to long-range forecasts, offshore boaters may get an opportunity to fish in the next couple of days. Saturday, November

10th, the ocean is predicted to be friendly and deep water fishes are likely to be cooperative. Every angler can keep up to seven rockfish (but not cabezon) and two ling cod 22 inches or better. Opportunities to get out aren't common in wintertime, but the fishing is usually great.

While there are scattered reports of early winter steelhead, and there are a few around, it's really early to anticipate much action. The few photos this writer has seen appeared to be fairly bright, late-season summer fish. Fresh winters will be the color of lead and mercury and blush-free with natives sporting translucent fins. Later in November, numbers of winters will build and it will be on.

While Chinook can be seen rolling on occasion, fishing has been slow on the Siletz with only a few dark salmon hooked. Boat traffic has been fairly heavy this week.

Siuslaw trollers have been challenged to find biters recently despite the apparently decent numbers of fish in the river. While the wild coho fishery is near maxing out the quota of 1,700 fish, it remained open as of the latest update. During the last week of data which covered October 29th through November 4th, few coho were caught at any of the wild fisheries, likely due to crummy weather.

Siltcoos Lake is producing wild coho as the run winds down but Chinook are migrating through the lake as well. A big king can be a handful for anglers geared up for silvers. If the number of trollers is any indication, it would appear that Tahkenitch and Tenmile lakes have started producing some wild coho.

Fishing participation has dropped off along with catches at Winchester Bay. Jetty fishers are taking fair to good numbers of rockfish, perch and greenling. Unlike boat anglers, bank fishers are allowed to keep cabezon as well. Fishing has been slow in the Umpqua mainstem while summer steelheading is fair on the North Umpqua.

Chinook fishing is slow on the lower Coquille although a few coho are being taken and crabbing has been worthwhile. The wild coho season will remain open through November if the quota doesn't fill.

Because Coos Bay is so large, rain did not push crabs to the ocean. The freshet did cause them to move, however, with best results now coming from the lower bay. There is little pressure from trollers as Chinook fishing slowed dramatically. Bank fishers seem undeterred as they have continued to throw spinners and catch the occasional salmon.

Chinook fishing is winding down on the lower Rogue River as salmon make their way upstream to spawn. The river will be dropping through the coming weekend. There are summer steelhead and coho in the river around Agness with catches coming on spinners and flies. A few winters are starting to show as well but catches will improve later in November. In the meantime, summer steelheading is just hitting its stride in the Grants Pass stretch. Flies and spinners have been about equally effective here. Steelheading has continued to be worthwhile on the upper Rogue. While only flies and artificial lures are allowed from the old Gold Ray Dam site to the Shady Cove Boat Ramp, the river above Shady Cove to the Coles River Hatchery opened on November 1st where bait is allowed and has been effective for summers.

The Chetco River, low and clear on Thursday, November 8th, is forecast to roller coast a bit over the next few days. The predicted rises, if accurate, will put it into the range of fishability. Chinook catches were good over the past weekend and, when there's sufficient water in the river, it's expected to be productive here. If the river spiked mid-month, it could put out a few early winter steelhead.

Sixes Chinook fishers are taking a few fish but rain would improve conditions here. The Elk River is low and clear. Upper and Middle Empire Lake, Powers Pond and Saunders Lake are scheduled to be stocked with trout.

**Central and Eastern Oregon** – Boaters brave cold weather and often fish through snow storms at Crescent Lake as wintertime fishing here is historically good for large Mackinaw and the occasional jumbo brown trout. There are a few bull trout in the lake as well but these must be released immediately.

While Crooked River is running off-color, fishing has remained steady.

### **Washington fishing reports:**

#### ***From the WDF&W Weekender Report for November 2012***

### **North Puget Sound**

(Island, King, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish and Whatcom counties)

The rainy season is setting in and the days are getting shorter, but anglers still have a variety of fishing opportunities to choose from in November. Three more areas open for chinook salmon fishing in Puget Sound, where the winter Dungeness crab fishery is also under way. Steelhead fishing should catch fire by the end of the month, and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is stocking a popular fishing lake near Issaquah with 2,000 hefty rainbow trout.

Starting 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 have a two-salmon daily limit, but must release wild chinook salmon. Chinook salmon fishing also continues under the same rules in Marine Area 10 (Seattle/Bremerton).

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

Meanwhile, **sport crabbing** is open seven days a week through Dec. 31 in marine areas 4 (Neah Bay), 5 (Sekiu), 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca), 7 (San Juan Islands), 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island, and Skagit Bay), 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner), 9 (Admiralty Inlet), 12 (Hood Canal) and 13 (South Puget Sound).

Two areas – marine areas 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) and 11 (Tacoma-Vashon Island) – will not reopen this year, because the annual quotas for those waters were reached during the summer fishery.

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, 2013. For more information on catch record cards, visit WDFW's [catch record card webpage](#).

On freshwater, several rivers are open in November for salmon fishing, including the Nooksack, Samish, 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 hatchery steelhead early in the month, but fishing usually starts to pick up around Thanksgiving," he said.

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

Earlier in the month, anglers will have an opportunity to catch large **trout** in Beaver Lake near Issaquah, thanks to the release of about 2,000 hatchery rainbows averaging about 2 to 3 pounds each. The release is scheduled for Nov. 7.

WDFW will close the Beaver Lake access site at sunset on Nov. 6 while the fish are being planted and reopen the site at sunrise Nov. 8. The lake, itself, will remain open to fishing those days.

Beaver Lake is best fished by small boat, although anglers also can be successful fishing from shore, said Justin Spinelli, fishery biologist for WDFW. Internal combustion boat engines are prohibited on the lake.

The daily limit is five fish, only two of which can exceed 15 inches in length. Anglers are advised to check the sport fishing rules pamphlet, which is available on [WDFW's website](#).

The lake's access site is most easily reached by way of East Beaver Lake Drive Southeast, off Southeast 24th Street in the city of Sammamish. Parking for vehicles and boat trailers is limited, and a valid WDFW Vehicle Access Pass or Discover Pass must be visible in vehicles parked at the access site. For more information about the Vehicle Access Pass and the Discover Pass, visit [WDFW's website](#).

Beaver Lake is one of several lowland lakes in western Washington open to fishing year-round.

## South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

(Clallam, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Kitsap, Mason, Pierce, Thurston and Pacific counties)

Fall fisheries are under way in the region, where winter steelhead and chum salmon are making their way into the rivers and black mouth salmon can be found on Puget Sound. Shellfish also are on the menu with the late-season crab fishery open in the Sound and two razor clam digs tentatively scheduled at coastal beaches.

In mid-November, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) will proceed with an evening **razor clam** dig if marine toxin tests are favorable. Tentative opening dates and evening low tides are:

- Nov. 13, Tuesday, 5:54 p.m., -1.6 ft., Twin Harbors
- Nov. 14, Wednesday, 6:41 p.m., -1.9 ft., Twin Harbors
- Nov. 15, Thursday, 7:29 p.m., -1.9 ft., Long Beach, Twin Harbors
- Nov. 16, Friday, 8:18 p.m., -1.6 ft., Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis, Mocrocks
- Nov. 17, Saturday, 9:09 p.m., -1.1 ft., Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis, Mocrocks

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

- Nov. 26, Monday, 5:16 p.m., -0.1 ft, Twin Harbors
- Nov. 27, Tuesday, 5:52 p.m., -0.3 ft., Twin Harbors
- Nov. 28, Wednesday, 6:27 p.m., -0.4 ft., Twin Harbors
- Nov. 29, Thursday, 7:01 p.m., -0.4 ft., Long Beach, Twin Harbors
- Nov. 30, Friday, 7:35 p.m., -0.3 ft., Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis, Mocrocks
- Dec. 1, Saturday, 8:10 p.m., -0.1 ft., Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis, Mocrocks

"Clam diggers should plan to take lights or lanterns for the nighttime digs and to check weather and surf forecasts before heading out," said Dan Ayres, WDFW coastal shellfish manager.

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 2012-13 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. 11-16 and Dec. 28-31.

Prefer **crab**? Sport crabbing reopened Oct. 13 in marine areas 4 (Neah Bay), 5 (Sekiu), 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca), 7 (San Juan Islands), 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island, and Skagit Bay), 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner), 9 (Admiralty Inlet), 12 (Hood Canal), and 13 (South Puget Sound).

In each area, crabbing is allowed seven days a week through Dec. 31. Sport crabbing will not reopen this year in marine areas 10 (Seattle/Bremerton Area) and 11 (Tacoma-Vashon Island). The annual quotas in those areas were reached during the summer fishery.

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While on the Sound, anglers can also fish for **black mouth** – resident chinook. Beginning Nov. 1, anglers fishing marine areas 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 areas 5 (Sekiu) and 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca) are only open through Oct. 31.

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

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.

In the rivers, salmon fishing remains 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.

Meanwhile, fishing for **chum salmon** picks up in November. Popular fishing spots include the Hoodspout 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.

**Hatchery steelhead** are also an option on several rivers, including the Bogachiel, Calawah, Hoh, Quillayute and Sol Duc. All wild steelhead, identifiable by an intact adipose fin, must be released. "As the month progresses, hatchery steelhead fishing should steadily improve," said Bob Leland, WDFW's steelhead program manager. "Traditionally, steelhead fishing really starts to heat up around the Thanksgiving holiday."

Other good bets for steelhead include the Satsop, Wynoochee and Humptulips, said Leland. Because regulations vary for each river, anglers should check [WDFW's sportfishing regulations pamphlet](#) before heading out.

## Southwest Washington

(Clark, Cowlitz, Klickitat, Lewis, Skamania and Wahkiakum counties)

Thanksgiving Day traditionally marks the start of the popular **winter steelhead** fishery, although some anglers start working their favorite rivers well ahead of time. Catch totals will ramp up as area rivers swell from the falling rain, 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, we'll see more fish on the move."

The daily catch limit on the mainstem Columbia River is two adult hatchery steelhead, or two adult salmon (chinook and coho only), or one of each. On area tributaries, anglers may retain two adult hatchery steelhead *plus* the salmon limit listed for each river in the [Fishing in Washington](#) pamphlet.

In all waters, only hatchery-reared steelhead with a clipped adipose fin may be retained. All wild, unmarked fish must be released unharmed.

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, Hymer 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.

WDFW's [Hatchery Escapement Reports](#) can provide a good indication of the number of fish returning to each river. Anglers can also check the 2011 [Steelhead Smolt Plant Reports](#) determine how many young fish were stocked last year

But until winter steelhead arrive in large numbers, late-run **coho salmon** may be the best bet for anglers who want to catch fish. Catch rates on the Klickitat River – including both coho and **chinook salmon** – were running around a fish per rod in late October. Salmon fishing was almost as good on the Cowlitz River.

“These are fairly large fish, some weighing up to 20 pounds apiece,” Hymer 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 – and on the lower portion of the Grays River. Except in the Klickitat River, only those fish with a clipped adipose fin may be retained. Several rivers – including the North Fork Lewis below Colvin Creek – 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, 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.

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

- **Cowlitz sea-run cutthroats:** The bite on the Cowlitz River should continue 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.
- **Sturgeon:** Retention fishing will close at the end of the day Nov. 3 in The Dalles Pool, the last remaining area of the mainstem Columbia where a sturgeon may be kept this year. All other areas of the big river and its tributaries already shifted to catch-and-release.
- **Razor clams:** WDFW has tentatively scheduled two multi-day razor clam digs in November, including planned openings at Long Beach on Nov. 15-17 and Nov. 29-Dec. 1. Final word on those digs will be announced after marine toxin tests are conducted about a week prior to each scheduled opening. For updates, see WDFW’s [Razor Clam Webpage](#).
- **Trout:** Anglers may retain up to 10 rainbows per day under bonus limits now in effect at Swift Reservoir and Lake Scanewa (Cowlitz Falls Reservoir). The same daily limit is in effect for kokanee at Merwin Reservoir.

## Eastern Washington

(Asotin, Columbia, Ferry, Garfield, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, Walla Walla and Whitman counties)

Catch rates for **Snake River steelhead** aren’t as good as those in past years, but catch rates in some areas are good and expected to improve later this month.

As of late October, creel survey data shows an average of about 10 hours of fishing effort per steelhead caught in the stretch between Lower Monumental and Little Goose dams, said Joe Bumgarner, a WDFW fish biologist. About the same rate was tallied earlier in October in the stretch upstream of the Washington-Idaho state line in Clarkston, but Bumgarner says the Heller Bar area near the mouth of the Grand Ronde, was probably running closer to six hours per fish caught.

The Grand Ronde tributary of the Snake, which is traditionally a good steelhead fishery in November, is high and out of shape now. Once the river settles down it should provide better steelheading.

“The recent pulse of water here should pull steelhead in from the Snake River,” said WDFW district fish biologist Glen Mendel of Dayton. “Fishing should improve once it drops and clears.”

October creel surveys on other tributaries showed good catch rates among smaller numbers of anglers. The Tucannon averaged about four hours of fishing per steelhead and the Walla Walla averaged near seven hours per fish.

Bumgarner also notes good numbers of fish at “better-than-average catch rates” below Ice Harbor Dam and in the Wallula area on the Columbia River, both near the Tri-Cities.

Bumgarner reminds steelheaders of the three hatchery-marked steelhead daily catch limit and the barbless hook requirement. He also said to watch for the state boundary signs on the Snake at its confluence with the Clearwater River on the Idaho border; the boundary waters 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 closed to fishing Oct. 31.

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

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 rainbow and **brown trout, largemouth bass, and yellow perch**.

Big net-pen-reared **rainbow trout** and some **kokanee** are available at 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 other species are available at Spokane County's year-round-open Eloika, Newman and Silver lakes.

## Northcentral Washington

(Adams, Chelan, Douglas, Grant and Okanogan counties)

Anglers have been reeling in **hatchery steelhead** at a rate of about a fish per rod during the special fishery that opened in mid-October on the upper Columbia River and key tributaries, said Jeff Korth, regional fishery manager for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

"We have a lot of extra hatchery steelhead that need to be removed, and anglers are doing a good job of it," Korth said. "The problem is that we don't have a lot of wild fish returning this year, which limits the amount of time we can leave the fishery open. Our immediate goal is to keep it going through November, but anglers should keep an eye on the WDFW website for any updates."

The hatchery-steelhead fishery opened Oct. 16 by special rule on the Upper Columbia River from Rock Island Dam to Chief Joseph Dam, and on the Wenatchee, Icicle, Entiat, Methow, and Okanogan rivers. Similkameen River opens for hatchery steelhead retention under the same rule Nov. 1.

Under that rule, anglers are required to keep any adipose-fin-clipped steelhead they intercept, but must release all wild, unclipped steelhead. Anglers must stop fishing for steelhead after they have caught their daily limit of two hatchery fish.

Additional regulations for the special fishery are listed in the [Fishing Rule Change](#) on the WDFW website, but are not included in the *Fishing in Washington* fishing rule pamphlet. Any updates will be posted on the [Emergency Rule](#) webpage.

Anglers participating in the fishery are required to possess a Columbia River Salmon/Steelhead Endorsement along with a current fishing license.

"We hope to reopen this fishery in February or March, so we can intercept hatchery fish heading for spawning areas," Korth said. "As during the current fishing period, we'll keep anglers posted."

Meanwhile, several lowland lakes are still open for catch-and-release fishing for **rainbow trout** through November, including Big and Little Green lakes near Omak, and Rat Lake near Brewster. Selective gear rules are in effect for these three lakes.

Perch are another option, said Bob Jateff, WDFW Okanogan district fish biologist.

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

Several other year-round waters in the region can also provide decent fishing 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 the same, plus net-pen-reared rainbow trout.

## Southcentral Washington

(Benton, Franklin, Kittitas and Yakima counties)

Hatchery **steelhead** fishing is usually the main attraction in the Tri-City area at this time of the year, but anglers have been working hard for their fish, said WDFW fish biologist Paul Hoffarth at the department's office in Pasco.

“Steelhead fishing has been unusually slow at a time when it should be ramping up,” Hoffarth said during the last week in October. “We’ve been seeing 20 anglers come in with one fish among them.”

Like last year, this year’s forecast is below the 10-year average and well below the record run in 2009, he 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 unclipped steelhead must be released unharmed.

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

Prospects for **walleye** fishing look much better, said Hoffarth, noting that November is a great time to hook some of these toothy gamefish below McNary Dam. “Fall fishing for walleye can be extremely good between Umatilla and Boardman in the late fall,” he said. “Those fish are putting on the feedbag for winter and are eager to strike big lures, night and day.”

Fishing is also picking up for **whitefish** on the Columbia River from Vernita Bridge to Priest Rapids Dam. The catch limit is 15 whitefish per day, but anglers are required to use a single-point hook, measuring no more than 3/16 inch from point to shank (hook size 14). The Yakima River opens to winter whitefish angling Dec. 1, as do the Naches, Bumping, Tieton and Cle Elum rivers. Fishing for steelhead or bull trout in all those waters is prohibited.

While most rivers and streams close to fishing after Oct. 31, the Yakima River remains open year around for catch-and-release fishing – notably for **trout** – above Roza Dam. Eric Anderson, a WDFW fish biologist stationed in Yakima, recommends fishing there or any of the year-round lakes in the region.

“Fishing opportunities aren’t as abundant in fall, but it’s still a good time to get out on the water,” he said. “Trout anglers can find some nice carryovers in year-round lakes and the scenery isn’t bad either with the fall colors on display.”

## **TGF Inbox - Reader E-mail**

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## **Random Links**

600lb Black Marlin Jumps in Boat and Lands on the Crew:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S8PV9AgeFHI&feature=autoplay&list=LP4qRk91tndwq&playnext=1>

Live, streaming Rogue River Cam:

[http://web.thedailycourier.com/web\\_cam/](http://web.thedailycourier.com/web_cam/)

**GOOD LUCK!**