

The Guide's Forecast - volume 14 issue number 47

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **November 16th – November 22nd, 2012**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- The Columbia River from Longview to Bonneville is offering some very good catch and release sturgeon fishing. All the popular spots are kicking out good numbers of fish and it's likely that the less known locations are faring just as well. The beautiful thing about fall/winter sturgeon fishing is that the fish are rarely picky about the bait you offer up. Smelt or sand shrimp are the mainstays but squid, frozen anchovies, herring (pickled or not) , worms and even crawdad tails will get you fish. With the looming winter, the fish sense leaner times are coming and start foraging with reckless abandon.

Willamette River catch and release sturgeon fishing is rivaling the Columbia fishing if not producing better. From Kelly Point up to Oregon City the favorite slots are producing good numbers and loads of action for anglers who offer up fresh baits to the denizens of the freshwater deep. St Johns, Milwaukie and Oregon City have loads of good water and very good numbers of fish. Pick your favorite bait and enjoy the action.

Trout fishing has held up well on the McKenzie with best results during the Blue-Winged-Olive hatch at the warmest part of the day.

North Santiam levels and flow, extremely high early this week, has started dropping and may fish by Friday. Late summer steelhead and a few coho are in the system.

Both the Clackamas and Sandy Rivers have little if nothing to report other than the occasional old summer steelhead reportedly getting caught. It will be many weeks before catchable numbers of steelhead present opportunities.

Northwest – North coast anglers enjoyed another weak rain freshet early in the week, producing fair results on the Wilson and Kilchis Rivers. Kilchis River chinook remain largely absent with chum salmon making up the bulk of the catching on this system. Although anglers are still likely to intercept a chum salmon in pursuit of chinook, targeting chum after November 15th is illegal.

The Wilson is forecast to be on the drop all week, laying the way for good river conditions by the weekend. Fresh fish should be available but the best fishing is likely to occur prior to the weekend. The Trask and to a lesser extent the Nestucca are also options but the runs are waning on these systems.

Tillamook Bay is still a fair option for late season trollers with the Ghost Hole and Bay City likely to yield the best results. Strong incoming tides over the weekend may bring in a fresh batch of chinook. In recent years, interest and success have been good into mid-December.

Sturgeon should be present in Tillamook Bay and tides this week are favorable although low slack will happen after sunset. While not beneficial to sturgeon anglers, clam diggers will have some good opportunity prior to the weekend if the surf forecast remains accurate.

Crabbing in the lower Columbia remains excellent but strong tides will require anglers to keep a watchful eye on gear as buoys will easily be swept under-water.

Southwest- With friendly offshore conditions this week, bottom fishing excursions have yielded

mostly limits of rockfish. Lingcod catches have been fair to good.

Of those waters open to wild coho retention, only the Alsea is closed at this writing although the Siuslaw is close to quota fulfillment. Be sure to check the ODFW web site to be certain your preferred location remains legal to fish.

The wild coho fishery remains open on the Umpqua mainstem although catches of both coho and chinook have slowed. On the North Umpqua, where chinook may not be targeted, summer steelheading is slow to fair.

Precipitation and the resultant freshet has moved most chinook and coho out of the estuary and upriver on the Rogue. Adult steelhead and half-pounders are being taken around Agness. Middle Rogue steelheading has been fair to good for drift boaters although most are wild, requiring release. Summer steelhead catches on the upper Rogue, good following the lifting of the flies-only restriction, has slowed.

Few chinook remain in Coos Bay although wild coho are being caught on pink spinners or anchovies. Coho have moved upriver with fish allowed to the Dellwood Trap.

Chetco River water flows were on the rise earlier this week, destined for the productive range. The river level will fluctuate as storm fronts pass through. Keep an eye on water conditions to get out whenever it's dropping as chinook fishing should be at its best over the next ten days or so, then start to wind down.

While the Elk and Sixes are too low to fish on this week, chinook move in with the tides, producing best when water conditions have been decent. Fly anglers do well for chinook on the lower Elk.

Diamond Lake is closed but will reopen on January 1, 2013, for year-around fishing.

Eastern – Redsides are willing when the elements align on the Deschutes. Hatches start mid-day and when it's not raining or windy, fishing has been excellent on the lower river.

Crooked River flows remained unchanged over the past week which is good news for fall fly fishers.

Steelheaders are taking a few fish on the Wallowa River around Minam. Trout fishing has been fair.

With moderate temperatures, the troll fishery in the John Day Pool has produced good catches of summer steelhead lately. Action should hold through much of this month.

SW Washington- The Lewis River remains the best bet for late season chinook. Dark chinook are still being caught on the Cowlitz.

Late season returns of coho continue to disappoint anglers and managers. Hopefully, this won't translate into a poor steelhead return. Steelhead should begin to show on the Cowlitz pretty soon.

Klickitat casters are still taking an occasional coho. Effort and success will likely wind down in the coming week.

Soapbox Update: With the lid closed on recommendations to their respective fish and wildlife commissions, the Columbia River stakeholder group met today in Seaside to determine the fate of Oregon and Washington sport anglers for the future. We'll keep you informed on the next steps in this huge decision. In the meantime, let's take a look at another critical resource, the forage fish of our great pacific.

Small fish, big opportunity

By PETER BAKER AND PAUL SHIVELY

Sometimes the environmental challenges facing our oceans seem so large that it's hard to know where to start solving them. Changes in climate, degradation of habitat and rising demand to feed an ever-growing world population are just a few of the daunting ocean-related problems our nation faces.

Over the past several months, however, a collection of conservationists, anglers and others have come together to urge federal policymakers to safeguard the array of species that serve as the foundation for a healthy marine ecosystem. And, to their credit, regional fishery managers on both coasts heeded the message these advocates delivered: If we want to protect the oceans, it makes sense to start small.

Species such as menhaden, sardines and herring - commonly known as forage fish - are the lifeblood of a healthy ocean. Swimming together in dense schools, these oil-rich fish feed on microscopic plants and animals and then become nourishment for larger wildlife as a crucial link in the marine food web. These fish account for more than one-third of all ocean species caught around the world. But unlike catches of cod or tuna, most of the forage fish that is caught is not consumed by people.

Take menhaden, for example. Giant schools once ranged along the Atlantic coast, feeding whales and seabirds and commercially important fish. But menhaden populations have plummeted 90 percent in just the past 25 years and remain at a record low. Despite their declining numbers, hundreds of millions of menhaden are still hauled in and ground up to be used in fertilizer, pet and livestock feed, and dietary supplements for people.

This removal of forage fish can have significant impacts on coastal ecosystems. Studies have found that the amount of menhaden in the diets of striped bass, ospreys and bluefish has declined. And on the Pacific coast, the decrease of forage fish has been linked to diminished salmon runs, losses in seabird populations, and the unnecessary death of marine mammals. In fact, in 2009 scientists documented 80 percent mortality among pups in a population of sea lions off the coast of California when females left them for a week at a time in search of food.

According to a report issued this year by a panel of 13 eminent ocean scientists, forage fish are twice as valuable left in the water as they are caught in a net because of the vital role they play as food for commercially valuable predators such as tuna and cod. In other words, it's important for federal fishery managers to ensure that there are enough of them to feed everything else in the sea.

That's why conservation and fishing organizations - including the Pew Environment Group - have urged the federal government to step up protection of forage species in the Atlantic and the Pacific. In the Atlantic, we are calling on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to follow the expressed will of regional fishery councils and implement new protections for menhaden and river herring. And on the West Coast, we are asking NOAA officials to fulfill the

Pacific Fishery Management Council's June commitment to forestall fishing for certain forage species until there is proof that catching such forage fish will not harm the overall ecosystem.

Even though the regional fishery councils endorsed these common-sense objectives and earned broad public support, those commitments mean nothing until NOAA implements the policies. Unfortunately, agency officials have been slow to embrace the councils' direction.

America's oceans offer a tremendous economic asset and cultural legacy. Whether you enjoy fishing on the water, eating a sumptuous seafood meal, or watching whales and seabirds, all of these activities depend upon a thriving and healthy marine ecosystem.

Forage fish nourish other wildlife and sustain important commercial and recreational fisheries. If we're going to protect our oceans as a whole, we must make sure that healthy populations of these smaller prey species remain in the water to support the entire food web.

ABOUT THE WRITERS

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Columbia River Fishing Report – With the exception of upriver steelhead fishing and some sturgeon opportunity, the lower Columbia is a ghost town. We'll start with some info from **pro guide Chris Vertopoulos** reprinted from the fisheries update section of this newsletter:

"The Columbia river from Longview to Bonneville is offering some very good catch and release sturgeon fishing. All the popular spots are kicking out good numbers of fish and it's likely that the "secret honey holes" are faring just as well. The beautiful thing about fall/winter sturgeon fishing is that the fish are rarely picky about the bait you offer up. Smelt or sand shrimp are the mainstays but squid, frozen anchovies, herring (pickled or not), worms and even crawdad tails will get you fish. With the looming winter, the fish sense leaner times are coming and start foraging with reckless abandon."

Steelhead fishing in the John Day Pool and Arm remains productive with better than a fish per boat average on the last check. Here is the latest data from ODF&W creel checkers from this area:

Weekly checking showed two adipose fin-clipped steelhead kept for four bank anglers; and 17 adipose fin-clipped steelhead kept, plus 38 unclipped steelhead released for 43 boats.

The lower Columbia will be the focus of a more intense crab effort than fishing in the near future. Although tides may not be the ideal scenario coming up, if you pay attention to how they lay out, you should expect some pretty easy limits to fall on the early morning low and for a short period on the afternoon high tide. Wait too long after the p.m. high slack and you're likely to lose your pots as the subsequent outgoing tide is a minus one and if your pots don't migrate their way downstream, the buoys will certainly go under until the tide begins to slack out again, which will be after dark. Use good judgment here or you'll lose some gear in pursuit of your quarry.

The Guide's Forecast – Catch and release sturgeon fishing should continue to provide some good sport for mainstem Columbia anglers from Bonneville to Longview. Bonneville will likely remain a top bet as historically, October and November can be fantastic months for action and

with no effort recently as the catch and keep fishery was cancelled this fall. As Chris mentioned, you don't have to be too selective as to what bait you use but smelt, shrimp and squid will likely remain top bets. Even though action should remain good until water temperatures further plummet, the Willamette will likely continue to provide the best action through the winter months.

Upriver, trollers working the John Day Pool and Arm should also continue to benefit from the moderate weather. Fairly warm weather conditions should keep fish on the bite and as long as there isn't a drastic temperature change, the bite should track well all week long. Plugs trolled in The Dalles Pool is the staple for late summer run fish while bobber and bait or jigs works best in the John Day Arm itself.

Crabbing will be the focus of most effort on the lower Columbia and although this weekend isn't the ideal tide series, crabbers should find good success working gear from sun-up through low slack. As previously mentioned, keep track of your gear and get it off the water before the tide starts screaming in. If you don't get ahold of all your pots before the strong incoming, you're likely to find them upstream of where you dropped them. The subsequent minus tide that follows the afternoon high slack is nearly a 12-foot run-off; you're sure to lose gear on that screamer! Crab just north or south of the shipping channel near Buoys 20 and 21. Don't hesitate to target 20 to 24 foot of water as the bottom should be seething with crustaceans.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) reports, "Willamette river catch and release sturgeon fishing is rivaling the Columbia fishing if not producing better. From Kelly Point up to Oregon City the favorite slots are producing good numbers and loads of action for anglers who offer up fresh baits to the denizens of the freshwater deep. St Johns, Milwaukie and Oregon City have loads of good water and very good numbers of fish. Pick your favorite bait and enjoy the action."

Counts are at a near standstill at Willamette Falls with the exception of daily, single digit winter steelhead passage although the total thus far is well short of the century mark.

McKenzie water levels are high but dropping and will continue to be on this trend until rain starts up again sometime on Saturday this week. Until then, it should be a productive location.

North Santiam water flow is roughly 10,000 cfs at Jefferson at this writing mid-day November 15th. It's predicted to drop to the mid-8,000 cfs range on Saturday, then rise rapidly along with all other valley rivers.

Boaters: If you haven't done so already, this is your reminder to winterize your watercraft! See **Random Links**, below, for additional information.

Trout fishing has slowed at Hagg Lake as the season draws to a close. The popular lake is closed for 2012 at sundown on Sunday, November 18th. It will reopen on the first Saturday in March, 2013.

Waverly Lake is scheduled for trout planting this week.

The Guide's Forecast – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) predicts, "Thanksgiving has been the traditional "kick-off" for the winter steelhead run here in the Pacific North West and the Willamette Valley is no exception. Within the valley and the immediate outlying rivers, most often the earliest arrival is usually taken from Meldrum Bar on the Willamette river. Plunkers are already loitering at the bar and blacktop waiting for the first bell

ringer, but none have been reported as of yet. If good numbers start to show after Turkey Day, that would indicate a strong return for the 2012/13 winter season. Plunking with spin n glows, with or without a coon shrimp is the standard but there are other lure/bait combo's that will take fish. The locally made Martin Tackle, Thin Twin is a mylar propeller blade that accounts for lots of steelhead and salmon throughout the NW and Alaska. It comes in various sizes and colors and can be stacked on top of a couple of corkies or similar buoyant bobbers. It spins effortlessly in the slightest current and should be an addition to any savvy salmonid anglers tackle foray. Another similar lure is the Smile Blade available from Mack's Lures in Wenatchee WA, also a propeller lure/blade that shouldn't be ignored. When plunking for steelhead and spring salmon too, remember to cast and set your gear close to shore. Often times anglers assume the fish are running out in the deeper, heavy water but is isn't so at Meldrum. These fish run very close to the shoreline with three to twelve feet of depth being all that the fish needs for its safe travels upstream. Boaters can get in on the action too, but they usually wait for the bank fishermen to let them know there are fishable numbers in the area before they risk burning any fuel. Most successful backtrollers flatline small plugs like Kwikfish, flatfish and wiggle warts. The K-11 Kwikfish is a mainstay and the new Yakima Bait 3.5 Mag Lip should be a killer here with its deep diving skip-beat action. The metallic red finish is killer no matter which brand or model you choose. Again, stay in the shallower lanes as anything over 12-14 ft will likely be void of the target fish."

Catch-and-release sturgeon is a good bet for those not targeting early winters on the lower Willamette. Fishing is quite good now with multiple reports of many fish taken during a day's fishing. While outgoing tides are a favorite (and productive) period to fish, the current in some areas is strong. Baits must hold stationary on the bottom for sturgeon so be prepared with weights to 12 ounces. Sturgeon seem to be snubbing nothing this week with sand shrimp, herring, squid and nightcrawlers drawing bites. Fish are running from medium shaker size to those which would be considered large keepers if it wasn't a catch-and-release only fishery. The water level of the Middle Fork Willamette has been inviting fly fishers to wade this week. While there are few venturing out at this time of year, those who have done so have found water temperatures pleasant with air temps cool. Trout on the Middle Fork will be responding to dries this week. Expect the next round of precipitation to raise and cool the water. If weather prognosticators are correct, this means Friday this week and the first half (or so) of Saturday. After that, all bets are off as rain is forecast to resume in earnest.

When Blue-Winged-Olives are hatching on the McKenzie, matching that hatch will produce results with native trout. Otherwise, nymphing should be productive until the next rise in water levels. There are summer steelhead in the river but expect to find mostly darkening fish at this time of year.

Even in high water, there are areas which are fishable on the Santiam. Nonetheless, the river is hazardous in high flow so use caution if you try it.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) predicts, "The Sandy and Clackamas rivers should also give up a few forerunners between the holiday and Dec 1st, if the water condition allow for any fishing at all. On the Sandy, anglers can plunk or even drift fish a few spots below the Troutdale bridge with great access at Lewis and Clark state park. Similar setups work here as well and backtrollers and sidedrifters will soon begin to work the water above Troutdale. On the Clack at Gladstone, there is some great drift fishing water from the tail-out at High Rocks on down to the Highway 99 bridge. Anglers venturing out for early winters should focus on the lower sections of the river, as the earliest fish are in no hurry to get up river. Drifting corkies, spin n glows or cheaters in pink, orange or flame will get them but you might consider the addition of some yarn, eggs or a sandshrimp tail. This

same water is also popular with spinner and spoon fishermen and even the occasional fly guy has been spotted swinging some feathers."

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North Coast Fishing Report – Interest in Tillamook chinook took a hit this week with hunting season and some poor weather conditions over the weekend. That didn't stop everyone however as there was a report of a 20 fish bite in the Ghost Hole over the weekend. One boat reported going 2 for 3 opportunities at Bay City on Friday. As is per usual, most fish were taken on the incoming tide, early in the morning and the first part of outgoing tide. The Ghost Hole and Bay City is really where all the effort is being focused.

Most recently, guides working the Ghost Hole on Wednesday reported slow results. There was a 6 or 7 fish day for those that worked the Ghost Hole all day but throughout the estuary, the nice weather was all the talk. Catches were really slow. The lower Wilson was also rumored to put out just a few fish for back bouncers.

River fishing took another hit with plummeting water temperatures and clearing conditions. Anglers that braved the leaf-ridden streams earlier last week had to sift through large amounts of "distraction" to get their fish on. Those that did brave these conditions did find success but they had to work for it. By the weekend, debris was minimized but so was the catch. Fresh fish were most available on the lower reaches of the Wilson but disappointingly, the Kilchis seemed somewhat sterile of chinook. Chum were plentiful however. The Trask was sub-par but that was to be expected as this system typically receives an earlier run of fish.

The Nestucca below First Bridge also had some biters available with much less traffic than the Wilson. Expectations were lower for Nestucca River chinook as the run wasn't forecast to be a barn-burner here but anglers that did work the water found some success here.

Like the Tillamook systems, more southerly watersheds such as the Alsea and Siletz have fish well distributed throughout the basin. Fresher fish can still be found in tidewater but when flows are up, they don't spend much time looking at offerings in this reach. Anglers should be taking advantage of the dropping water conditions these systems are experiencing now.

Headed back north, sturgeon continue to be legendary on Tillamook Bay but are likely present in fair number. November can notoriously productive for the few anglers that target these fish this time of year. The middle and south channels likely have fishable numbers present. With crabbing still reported as good, it may remain challenging to keep a bait fishing in the lower reaches of Tillamook Bay until more fresh water inundates the system.

And yes, crabbing remains surprisingly good. Reports of quality keepers is still coming from the Tillamook and Netarts estuaries. The current high tide series may slow success however.

The Guide's Forecast – Strong tides on dropping rivers make Tillamook Bay and the tidewaters of the Wilson and Kilchis most attractive for weekend anglers. Anglers will know early in the morning if there are good numbers of fish present, which would justify some time in tidewater. High tides are scheduled to occur well before sunrise but chinook should collect on the east side of the bay at Bay City and the Ghost Hole if they come in over the weekend. I expect fishing to be fair until the next forecasted system moves in early next week or as early as Sunday. Of course, trolled herring first thing in the morning should produce the best results and the subsequent incoming tide, particularly the latter half of it, should put out some fish as well. The west (or as some call it, the south channel) channel may also be an option as it produced some catches earlier this month. It's a wild-card but may be an option none-the-less.

Anglers that witness some good early morning or late flood action may want to consider a trip into the lower reaches of the Wilson tidewater where the bulk of the fish should be destined for. These bay fish will ride the tide into the tidewater reaches where they will fall to plugs or back-bounced baits throughout the incoming tide (depending on flows) and the first part of the outgoing tide. Anglers could find favorable conditions to anchor if flows remain up and a little colored. Again, the Wilson will be the top pick but the Kilchis should get a good rush of fish sometime before the month is out. The Trask would be a distant 3rd.

Although it's starting to get late for Nestucca River chinook, it is a late season option, especially if you're looking to avoid the crowds. Keep in mind that the reach above First Bridge is closed for angling.

Motivated anglers can look to Tillamook Bay in pursuit of keeper sturgeon. It's really the best option for catch and keep opportunity in the state right now. Sand shrimp soaked in the west or middle channel offers the best chance at a keeper. You'll have to keep checking your baits if you're not sure that crab are invading your space. You'll only have the first part of outgoing tide to work with as low slack will occur well after sunset. Of course you can also target the less intense morning outgoing, it should still produce some results if fish are present.

Crabbers will have some limited parts of the high and low slack to work with on Tillamook and Netarts Bay. Both should offer up some quality keeper crab opportunities although the following weekend will be even better when tide exchanges aren't as significant.

Central & South Coast Reports – It's that time of year when extra caution is advised for travelers, particularly on coastal passes or when travelling east. Icy roads have caused several problems recently. Be prepared.

Recreational Dungeness crabbing is closed offshore through November but will open as scheduled on the 1st of December. Ocean commercial harvest was scheduled to open the same date but in a November 14th News Release, the ODFW announced a delay until December 15th to allow crab quality to improve. The deadline for commercial operations in bays remains December 1st but is subject to any extension with the offshore delay.

Offshore launches Should be possible off the central coast for those able to get away on Friday, November 16th, with moderate swells and winds forecast. That changes as wind and wave action increase with the front moving in on Saturday.

Most areas open for wild coho have been slow. The only exception, albeit a modest one, is the Siuslaw which remains open according the ODFW updates as of November 11th. It would be surprising, given the nice weather this week, if the Siuslaw actually doesn't fill this week despite a reports of zero taken through the week prior to the 11th. The Siletz, Yaquina, Umpqua Coos and Coquille will fish for sure as these are nowhere near the quota limit. Also open for wild coho are the troll fisheries at Tenmile, Siltcoos and Tahkenitch lakes. The wild coho troll fisheries at Tenmile, Tahkenitch and Siltcoos lakes remains open and all produced some fish over the past weekend with pink spinners a reliable choice.

It seems to be an "off" year for coho runs in general state-wide. With rare exceptions (such as the Alsea where the quota filled the third week in October), there are just not a lot of fish this season.

Some fall Chinook which have the appearance of being past their pull date but cut (and eat) well. Readers are reminded that this will only happen with dark bucks. Hens will deteriorate much more rapidly as their body stores go to egg production. A good guideline might be to release hens to proliferate; keep bucks for the smoker or, if really good quality, the table.

The Siletz has been slow over the past week although a few coho have been taken.

Yaquina Bay has been fair for crabbing. It's still a good idea to check the Dungeness in order to assure they have thoroughly hardened (hence, full of meat) following the molt earlier in the year.

Winchester Bay is producing good catches of Dungeness for boaters although crabbers will need to sort through lots of females and undersized crab. Bank anglers are taking decent numbers of a variety of bottom fish in the triangle area. South Jetty anglers are also catching bottom fish. There is nearly no pressure on the lower Umpqua for Chinook although the few trying are catching some fish. The wild coho fishery is open here from the ocean up the mainstem Umpqua to the Scottsburg Bridge but not above that point. The North Umpqua, which received only a fair run of summer steelhead this season, has started to wind down.

There is little interest in Chinook fishing on Coos Bay now that most of the Quarry has migrated upstream. Crabbing in the bay is worthwhile with many limits reported. The wild coho fishery is open through the end of November.

Crabbing is fair to good on the lower Coquille although there is almost no effort being made for Chinook this late in the season.

The Rogue estuary boats an early run of fall Chinook so it follows that bay fishing is about over for the year. Lower Rogue steelheaders are taking a few winter steelhead but this run won't really get underway until late November and into December. The next freshet is likely to put some of these fish into the river. Summer steelhead, bit adults and half-pounders, are still being taken at Agness. The Grants Pass stretch has been productive for summer steelhead as well with even better numbers available. On the upper Rogue, with a strong return of summer steelheading ongoing, fishing remains very good. Particularly productive is the stretch from Shady Cove Boat Ramp to Cole Rivers Hatchery where both boat and bank anglers are making good catches. Some coho have also been spotted but only couple have been caught. Upper Rogue coho are generally hooked inadvertently by steelheaders as there aren't a lot of them and they don't bite well.

Rivers generally fish better when the water level is stable and often best when the water is dropping, The Chetco River, while dropping and forecast to continue doing so into the coming weekend, is too low to fish well regardless. First light anglers using bobber and bait have been

taking fish despite marginal water conditions. The weather in the southwest is predicted to change around mid-day Saturday, however, with rain starting and the Chetco reaching familiar blowout stage. If the river starts to drop in the third week of November as expected, there will be Chinook in the river.

Despite low water conditions on the Elk and Sixes rivers this week, reports indicate that Chinook fishing has been worthwhile.

Bradley Lake will be stocked with trout in mid-to-late November.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Steelheading historically starts to improve on the lower Deschutes around this time of year but with the run numbers lower this year, it has yet to happen. Fly anglers who catch a BWO hatch are pretty much guaranteed a good time with the reddsides, however.

Spring-fed waters of the Metolius keep trout active into the winter months on the Metolius River. This is still a tricky one for anglers and frigid air temperatures add another challenge.

As of mid-day Thursday this week, Crooked River flows remain low which means fishing should be good. While the quarry runs small at this time of year, at least it's a chance to get out for some action.

Trollers using downriggers took decent numbers of kokanee over the past weekend at Green Peter. The fish are smallish but plentiful and bright. There are few locations that will produce kokes in winter.

Lake Billy Chinook is producing bull trout for some while others are blanking. This is a downrigger troll fishery which generally improves as winter comes on. Temperatures have dropped and snow is on the ground but only small bulls have been taken thus far. Results are expected to improve later in the year into early 2013.

The Grande Ronde has been providing fair to good steelheading for drift boaters recently in cold weather conditions.

Expect east side fishing reports tend to become less common in the cold winter months. TGF readers who brave the elements are encouraged to share information.

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 blackmouth 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.

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](#).

While on the Sound, anglers can also fish for **blackmouth** – 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

Larry Moore, respected angler, former guide and founder of Wish Works shares his 'secret' herring brine: <http://fish-works.com/fish-works/comment/101#comment-101>

Oregon Boaters Registration Info:

<http://www.oregon.gov/osmb/boatreg/pages/registration.aspx>

Tips On Boat Winterization:

<http://www.takemefishing.org/boating/boating-basics/storage-and-maintenance/winterizing>

Bizarre fish story in Cabo San Lucas

<http://www.grindtv.com/outdoor/blog/40947/a+rare+fish+taken+off+cabo+san+lucas+ends+up+getting+stolen+in+bizarre+tale/>

GOOD LUCK!