

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **November 23rd – November 29, 2012**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- With the Portland area rivers swollen and dirty, few anglers will make the effort this week. Sturgeon can still be caught (and released) in the Willamette and Columbia Rivers despite the less than desirable conditions. Look to shallower water than normal and stay out of the heaviest current and present your offering in lanes that are out of the path of floating debris. Remember to offer a bait that has a lot of scent to it, so it may easily be found by the nearly blind sturgeon. Whole squid is the ideal bait as it is durable and has a very strong odor that many sturgeon will not pass up. Try squid, garlic, sardine, anchovy or earthworm oil. Other baits such as smelt, sand shrimp or roll-mop herring will work as well, either alone or in tandem.

Early this week, the McKenzie water level shot nearly off the chart - literally. It was 11,000 cfs and rising on November 20th, which means it's unlikely to fish by the weekend.

The Santiams are predictably blown out this week and will be slow to recover. Chase steelhead elsewhere over the holiday weekend.

The Sandy and Clackamas Rivers should begin to drop by the weekend and might be worth the effort for anglers looking to catch the season's first steelhead. Plunking the lower stretches with spin-n-gloves and sand shrimp or coon shrimp will be the ticket. On the Clack, Riverside Park just below the boat ramp is a great plunking spot. On the Sandy try Lewis and Clark or Dabney for good plunking access. Until the water clears, keep your presentation close to shore as the steelhead will travel in two to five feet of water. They also will travel along the path of least resistance, so inside corners, current breaks and seams will be the preferred water to fish.

Northwest – Prior to the deluge, chinook fishing was fair at best on the lower Wilson River. With the river flooding early in the week, conditions may be ideal again by the weekend. The Kilchis should fish first, maybe as early as Friday, but chinook numbers on this system have been sub-par this season. Driftboats will likely be out in force over the weekend however with the Wilson, Kilchis, Trask and Nestucca most likely to produce in that order.

Tillamook Bay itself may present the earliest option with early morning incoming tides producing the best opportunity for trollers working the Ghost Hole and Bay City for late run chinook. Tillamook Bay should also have some sturgeon available although tides don't improve until the weekend for this species.

The season's first steelhead have been caught with the Kilchis and North Fork Nehalem producing the first confirmed catches. Given the absence of wild coho to the region, it's surprising to see productive fishing this early in the season for winter steelhead. Thirty-five steelhead have already been collected at the North Fork hatchery. It should fish well by Thanksgiving Day.

Crabbing will be a poor option for most north coast systems except for the lower Columbia, where it's white hot and Netarts Bay which is mildly productive. The early morning high tide will produce the best results.

Southwest- On Tuesday this week, southwest Oregon was still getting hammered by rain storms. Fortunately, the weather is forecast to moderate on Wednesday with a dry day forecast for Thanksgiving.

On November 20, the ODFW is reporting all wild coho fisheries except the Alsea, which closed in October, remain open. The Siuslaw has been near quota fulfillment for weeks, however.

Ocean crabbing remains closed until Saturday, December 1st. Crabbing in bays had been good but has been negatively affected by freshets this week, particularly in smaller estuaries.

While offshore bottom fishing is usually excellent, it won't be on the holiday menu as ocean conditions are predicted to remain rough through the coming weekend.

Chinook and coho catches were slow prior to the storms on the Coos and Coquille, drawing little interest from anglers. Rain this week is likely to wrap up chinook fishing for the season.

The lower and middle stretches of the Rogue are running high this week but may fish by the coming weekend. Prior to the deluge, a 57-pound chinook was caught on the lower Rogue by a bait angler. Steelheading on the upper Rogue would be a logical option over the long holiday weekend. The water level will be dropping and the freshet this week will have enticed fresh summers upstream.

The Chetco River was low and clear until storms hit over the past weekend. It is well above fishing levels this week but is forecast to drop to decent levels by the coming weekend when it should fish well with fresh chinook available. It may be possible to plunk effectively on Thanksgiving Day but almost certainly by Friday this week.

High and muddy on Tuesday this week, the Elk and Sixes respond rapidly to changes in weather and are expected to fish later this week with fresh chinook in the systems.

Eastern – Steelheading has been fair on the lower Deschutes. Runs are cyclical but this year, observers believe numbers are the lowest since the mid-80s. It's still quite possible to take a fish or two in a day. Fly fishing for reddsides has remained worthwhile.

Steelheading has been fair to good on the Grande Ronde near Troy. While the run numbers are off this year, summers taken this week have been big ones.

Soapbox Update: Save the date! One more commission meeting to go until Columbia River management reform is on the books! Mark your calendars NOW for the December 7th ODF&W commission meeting in Salem. It'll be a good one and sport anglers should show up!

SW Washington- With the exception of the Lewis River, most tributary systems are done for salmon for the year. Several regulation changes occur at the end of November/December 1st so study them before departure.

The Lewis should remain a fair to good option for chinook for another few weeks. Fresh fish will continue to arrive.

Winter steelhead have already been taken in several district tributaries this week. The Washougal, Cowlitz and Lewis are top options for motivated anglers.

Columbia River Fishing Report – With inclement weather this week, anglers weren't very motivated to pursue sturgeon on the mainstem using catch and release tactics. ODF&W reports are non-existent and it's likely that the effort was too. None-the-less, sturgeon remain an option but with dropping water temperatures and windy conditions, it hasn't really been all that fun pursuing them. On the mainstem Columbia, the best stretch will remain the Portland to Longview

stretch but those versed in the Bonneville area will also produce some catches. As is often the case in recent years, the larger effort will continue to take place on the Willamette River. With an average water temperature 2 to 5 degrees warmer, it's the obvious go-to place this time of year.

Steelhead anglers in the John Day Pool are still doing very well for late-run summer steelhead. Catches remain impressive with this data from the weekend effort:

John Day Pool (Columbia River above John Day Dam and John Day Arm):

Weekly checking showed no catch for four bank anglers; and 37 adipose fin-clipped steelhead kept, plus 54 unclipped steelhead released for 61 boats.

That's well over a fish per boat but noticeable is the ratio of wild fish to hatchery fish. This is typical for this fishery, this time of year. Bank anglers didn't score good results but trollers working plugs in the pool will often produce the best catches and if you have a top over your boat and the propane heaters running, you'll be in good shape. As a general rule, dark plugs on dark days and metallic colors on what few sunny days exist this time of year.

Crabbing in the estuary is very good, as is to be expected. We crabbed it over the weekend and took 108 keepers for 9 crabbers. Lower Desdemona Sands and the edges of the shipping channel near Buoy's 21 and 20 as well as 22 produced good catches. Effort is on the increase.

The Guide's Forecast – Steelhead will remain the best option for mainstem anglers. Trollers should target the John Day Pool, trolling 5 to 12 feet below the surface. This fishery should have a couple more weeks of productive fishing but it's likely to go downhill from here if history is any gauge to go by. The John Day Arm itself will remain productive too but there are better numbers in the mainstem.

Sturgeon anglers will continue to practice catch and release and the way it's going, maybe exclusively in 2013 too. You'd have to have a comfortable boat to target these fish on the mainstem Columbia but most serious anglers will be sticking to the Willamette River.

Tides for this Thanksgiving weekend are pretty extreme, only allowing for short periods of productive crabbing. Last weekend, we had a string of 13 pots and from the time we picked the first pot on lower Desdemona Sands on the strong incoming tide to the last pot upriver about 1 mile, it was already running out pretty hard and almost sucked our buoys under. It happens that quick and you have to be prepared to deal with it. This is really how most people lose their gear, not timing the retrieval right, especially on the extreme tide series. Crabbing just a single buoy will almost certainly spell disaster. Rick at Sturgeon Paul's is often open for cooking.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos

(503-349-1377) reports, "With the Portland area rivers swollen and dirty, few anglers will make the effort this week. But sturgeon still have to eat and can be caught in the Willamette and Columbia rivers despite the less than desirable conditions. Look to shallower water than normal and stay out of the heaviest current and present your offering in lanes that are out of the path of floating debris. Remember to offer bait that has a lot of "stink" to it, so it may easily be found by the nearly blind sturgeon. Whole squid is the ideal bait as it is durable and has a very strong odor that any self-respecting sturgeon will not pass up. Don't hesitate to inject Mr. Calamari with some extra bait oil for additional sex appeal. Try squid, garlic, sardine, anchovy or my personal favorite earthworm oil. All these scents are available at most well stocked tackle shops under the Pro-Cure or Mike's name. Other baits such as smelt, sand shrimp or roll-mop herring will work as well, either alone or in tandem."

In downtown Portland, the Willamette flow increased from about 25,000 cfs on November 19th to nearly 120,000 cfs as of the morning of November 21st. The level rose about five feet over that period. In the swift, muddy water coming over Willamette Falls, no significant fish passage is taking place.

McKenzie water levels approached but fell short of bank full stage on Tuesday, November 20th. It remains high at this writing on November 21st.

The North Santiam went over bank full at Jefferson in the early morning hours of November 21st. At that time, the river approached bank full at Mehama. The South Santiam rocketed from 4,000 cfs to 15,000 cfs at Waterloo in the same time period.

Walling Pond and Walter Wirth Lake are scheduled to be planted this week with legal (8") and larger (12") hatchery trout.

The Guide's Forecast – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) predicts, "All the metro area rivers are bulging their banks and the forecast reports for them drop very slowly through the weekend. When these all too common wintertime events happen, seasoned fishermen get cabin fever, start chomping at the bit and try their best to get a "fishing fix" of some sort.

"One way to achieve this fix is by the actual wetting of a line. If this is your angle and feeling a tug on your rod is your goal, sturgeon fishing is probably your best bet.....maybe your only bet. Good eyesight is not one of the sturgeon's virtues, but seeking out food by sense of smell and feel is.....so water turbidity/color has little effect on the sturgeon's ability to feed. Fish shallower than normal, fish out of the main current and avoid debris lanes. Use lots of scent and stay warm and dry.

"Another angle at getting the fishing fix is to become the couch potato and drown yourself in cable/satellite network fishing shows. These days there are a multitude of shows airing at any given time and savvy remote operators can flip flop from show to show for hours on end. You don't have shower, you can wear sweats all day and start drinking beer at noon. Reminiscent of the typical "80's" housewife, who had a mild cold, a pot of tea and hours of soap operas to catch up on. Consider it a "spa day" for the angler.

"For me though, on a day like today when I had plans to fish but the storms put the damper on that plan, I rent a movie and tinker with fishing tackle. Tying leaders is the job that always needs tending too. I start with one hook size and tie up a dozen, then onto my next favorite hook size and so on. All my leaders are rolled onto foam pipe insulation for easy access and storage. Then onto slinky weights, but now I do them a bit differently. For the last six years I have been using heat shrink tubing instead of parachute cord. I find it easier, quicker and I feel like I end up with a more snag free product that's more durable. A small butane torch for melting the ends closed and to secure the lead shot is all that's needed. Then I poke a hole through one end with a small heated nail. You can make a dozen in fifteen to twenty minutes.

"Once a year I have to sit down and crank out two or three dozen steelhead rags. These are my all-time favorite steelhead lure and they are simple and fun to make. It's just 3/8 inch white, foam window insulation (aka backer rod) with multiple colors of yarn strung through it. These lures float higher than any store bought drift bobber rendering them more snag free. Because they are so buoyant, remember to keep your leaders reasonable short, otherwise your presentation will be floating above the steelhead and often out of its strike zone. 18-24 inches works best for me. They are also soft and fish tend to hold onto them longer, plus the yarn gets caught in their teeth like velcro, giving you an extra second or two to detect the bite. But the

buggy, crazy profile of the rag is what makes it shine, often drawing aggressive strikes leaving no doubt whatsoever that it's a fish, not a rock trying to steal your rod right out of your hand.

"If the rains persist and the swollen rivers continue to keep me from plying the waters, I might even get the wild hair to service my reels. I first take the side plate off, exposing the gears. Clean away any moisture or dried salt with a rag and WD-40. Then I'll give the gears a light coat of quality reel grease and on bait casting reels don't forget to give the worm gear a light greasing as well. A light dousing of the WD and a quick wipe-down with a clean rag and you're ready for another season.

"Whether you choose to try your hand at sturgeon fishing or start a slinky production line, remember to make it enjoyable. Because if you were fishing, like you originally intended, that's exactly what you would be doing. Tight Lines."

Once a pod of good-sized bites is located, catch-and-release sturgeon fishing has been excellent in the roiled waters of the lower Willamette this week. Decent numbers of shakers, keeper-sized and the occasional oversized are being landed.

Despite dry weather in the forecast for Thanksgiving Day, the McKenzie will be too high to fish through the coming weekend. After that, it's at the whim of Mother Nature.

The Santiams will be too high and treacherous to fish this weekend. While Friday following Thanksgiving is the (old) traditional kickoff, only a few more than 100 winter steelhead have been counted at Willamette Falls, this number will be increasing through December with many of these fish finding their way to the North Santiam.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) reports, "After a bout of high water, anglers will be sidelined for a bit until flows drop. With coho off the table and winter steelhead yet to arrive in fishable numbers, it may be a while before there is any significant interest in the Sandy and Clackamas Rivers."

There remains some summer steelhead available above Barton Park but they will be turning dark and near spawning stage in the coming weeks. Anglers will anxiously be awaiting the fresh fish of late winter, which should start trickling in later in January.

The Guide's Forecast – The Sandy and Clackamas rivers should begin to drop by the weekend and might be worth the effort for anglers looking to catch the season's first steelhead. Plunking the lower rivers with spin n glows and sand shrimp or coon shrimp will be the ticket. On the Clack, Riverside Park just below the boat ramp is a great plunking spot. On the Sandy try Lewis and Clark or Dabney for good plunking access. Until the water clears, keep your presentation close to shore as the steelhead will travel in two to five feet of water. They also will travel along the path of least resistance, so inside corners, current breaks and seams will be the preferred water to fish.

North Coast Fishing Report – With the first major flood of the season, there isn't much to report on. On Wednesday, the Kilchis looked like it was going to clear enough to fish on Thursday (Thanksgiving). Prior to the flood, the Kilchis has not been a top producer for salmon, other than chum. It should still be peak season for this system but don't bank on chinook fishing busting loose this week. Prior to the big water, the Wilson produced only fair results. Bobber tossers working the water below Sollie Smith Bridge did catch a few fish but it wasn't what most had

anticipated for as good of quality as the stretch presented itself. The best fishing (if you could call it "best") was downstream of the Railroad Bridge.

We'll detail other systems in the forecast section given the recent water conditions of all north coast streams.

Bay fishing didn't inspire anyone. On Wednesday, turbidity on Tillamook Bay was high and effort was literally non-existent. There were no boats in the Ghost Hole or at Bay City. Some chinook and some sturgeon should be available however.

The season's first winter steelhead have been reported on the Kilchis and North Fork Nehalem Rivers. It's a good sign of the season ahead but the odd thing is, with the wild coho making a poor showing, (yes, the season remains open until the end of the month) it typically follows suit that the steelhead returns would be low too.

Crabbing was sub-par for this time of year on Netarts, really the only option. One report from a consistent producer only claimed 15 sea-spider lives for a good tide-long effort. Not what you'd expect for an ocean that has a closed commercial fishery.

The Guide's Forecast – Starting with the bay, water clarity should improve in the days ahead and with a strong incoming tide in the afternoon, trollers working the Ghost Hole and Bay City stand a reasonable chance at a fresh chinook. Trolled herring with ample amounts of scent applied, should produce some fish destined for the Wilson, Kilchis or to a lesser extent, the Trask and Tillamook Rivers. Target the incoming tide which will be late morning through the weekend. Keep in mind however that you don't need gin-clear water to catch fish. We've had success in water with less than 10 inches of visibility. Did I mention that you should scent your baits heavily?

Anglers interested in one of the few catch and keep sturgeon options in the state will want to look at Tillamook with the tide series the way it is. A soft but productive afternoon outgoing tide could produce fair catches under these circumstances. With all the fresh water flowing through the estuary, the crabs will largely be kept "at-bay" and away from those targeting keepers in the middle to upper reaches of Tillamook Bay. Sand shrimp will be the top bait choice. The west (or south channel as some call it) will be the most popular not only for anglers, but it's likely to house the highest concentrations of keepers as well.

It's a driftboaters dream scenario this weekend. After a prolonged period of high water, the weekend should offer several options for freshwater fishers. Here's a breakdown of the best options for driftboating when the flows subside.

Necanicum River – A navigational hazard with all the recent high winds and saturated river banks, this system does harbor a fair run of hatchery chinook as well as a wild run. There has been some nice fish taken here but if you put your boat in, prepare to forge a way through a fair amount of windfall and worst case scenario, you may end up leaving your boat somewhere that you don't want to. Of course you'll also have to be ready to deal with sweeper trees in swift water that most likely pose a threat. If that info doesn't scare you off, there should be some chinook available without much competition and the season's first winter steelhead should be available too. These early run steelhead are notorious for not biting however so be prepared to see more in the tailouts than catch them on your line. Run plugs or backbouce bait in every spot possible with fish holding anywhere in higher flows and the very distinct chinook holes in lower flows. Salmon eggs will be most effective for steelheaders this early in the season. Sometimes, this system fishes best in higher flows as gravel bars have a way of popping up everywhere in this system drops in flow.

North Fork Nehalem River- A good option for early run steelhead with over 35 already recorded in the fish trap. These fish enter the system early in the year so good fishing should occur on this river drop. The chinook and coho run on this system is over. There is a private ramp at the county line that the public can pay to have access to and the upper drift from the hatchery is inadvisable unless you know the river well and have a raft versus a hard-boat.

Mainstem Nehalem River – Not an option. The upper reaches are closed anyway to chinook angling. This river will be out of shape for some time yet.

Kilchis River – Fresh chinook should be available high into the system on this high water event and the fact this run should be going for a few more weeks if the fish actually do show up. Driftboaters should have good action here as early as Thanksgiving but it will quickly wane by Sunday. As flows drop, target fish lower into the system. Aggressive anglers may even try to skip the higher holes early to target some of the lower holes to have it to yourself. This run should stay viable into December. There should be a rare hatchery winter steelhead available here too. There has already been some confirmed catches of steelhead here.

Wilson River- A November/early December mainstay, this system may begin to produce fish by Saturday in the lower reaches. Fish will move fast once the system begins to drop but anglers will be hampered by leafy debris throughout the weekend. If you keep your gear clean and the water is on the mend, you should find some fair success here as this run too should be peaking on this drop. The Wilson will produce bright fish in the upper reaches when the flows are still up. Plugs and bait will produce best and the tidewater section should stay productive through the early part of next week. It's not uncommon to catch fresh hens this time of year, even loaded with sea-lice yet these hens will often cut pale. Bucks are surely high quality but keep in mind the hen dilemma that we often encounter this time of year.

Trask River- Although typically an early season producer, there should still be some fresh fish entering this system. It's clear that the Trask has had a steady push of fish throughout the early part of the run and this should continue on into early December. The entire system should hold fish but like most systems, it should produce the best when flows are a bit high. Fish will also be well distributed throughout the system, in all types of water in the higher flows. Don't overlook shallow water when flows are up, you'll be passing over willing fish. There are some good bank fishing opportunities here. These late run fish seem to respond well to plugs.

Nestucca River- Typically a great option for fall chinook, this system has gone downhill in recent years. You'll want to check regulations as it's only open below First Bridge but biters should be had when flows and leafy debris subside. Driftboaters have had a fair season for chinook here but anglers may actually have a better shot at early run winter steelhead destined for Three Rivers. The best hold-up spot for these fish will obviously be at the mouth of Three Rivers.

Three Rivers- Really just a bank angling opportunity, fish will head quickly to the hatchery hole. Bank anglers should be able to intercept some fish along the road in certain reaches and as we've mentioned throughout this section, don't overlook any water, especially in higher flows. They'll hold in about any type of slower, broken surfaced water in these conditions. Bait will produce the best results, particularly small clusters of eggs.

Crabbing is really only an option on Netarts Bay and given the stronger tides this weekend, don't count on great results. Other estuaries besides the lower Columbia are a poor option.

Central & South Coast Reports – Offshore bottom fishing, as good as it is this time of year, will not be an option off the central Oregon coast over Thanksgiving and wind and wave action will probably not allow trips on Friday, either. There's some hope for the coming weekend but be certain to check conditions at the last minute before planning a launch.

Commercial crabbing, which was scheduled to open offshore on December 1st, has been delayed "at least through Dec. 15" according to an ODFW bulletin. A change of this nature is not unusual following test of maturity and quality of ocean Dungeness. A later opener will endure better quality product for consumers. Another round of tests will take place in late November or early December. Commercial harvest is slated to close in bays at 12:01 AM on December 1st but may reopen with the delay in ocean crabbing.

The opener for recreational ocean crabbing remains December 1st as scheduled.

Alsea anglers, anxious to get out over the long holiday weekend, will contend with high water conditions and the aftermath of a river which went over flood stage on the morning of November 20th. This situation will probably shut down bay crabbing for a while.

While the mainstem Umpqua is running over 45,000 cfs at Elkton on Wednesday this week, it should drop to fishable levels for plunkers by Friday this week. Winter steelhead will be moving into the river with results improving as weeks go by. Chinook are likely to be far upstream but there should be a few coho remaining in the system. Fishing for summers is slowing on the North Umpqua.

Once the Coos and Coquille Rivers recover from the high water event this week, there should still be some coho in the systems. Neither of these is near filling the quota for the wild coho fisheries at these locations.

The Rogue River is a raging torrent as of Wednesday. When the water level drops, winter steelhead will be available on the lower Rogue. Steelheading was decent on the middle Rogue prior to the storm this week and when the river settles down, should continue to produce summers for a while. Waters of the upper Rogue will fish first as waters drop and clear and should boast a good number of summers as the return has been good this season.

Residents in the Brookings area were the object of rescue efforts on Tuesday this week as the Chetco pushed over its banks, flooding lower elevations. The crest occurred late afternoon, coinciding with high tide. Local Sherriff John Bishop remarked the water was higher than he had ever seen it. Boats rescued residents of At Rivers Edge RV Park. With the river dropping and everyone at risk now safe and dry, we can once again consider the possibility of catching a fish. According to NOAA, the Chetco should fish sometime on Friday. Plunkers using Spin 'n' Glos will be the first to take advantage of any fresh fish in the system. Levels and flow are predicted to continue to moderate until near the end of November. There are two schools of thought with regard to Chinook fishing this late in November. These are shared about equally between south coast guides and recreational anglers experienced with fishing the Chetco. On one hand, the run may be winding down, offering a fish here or there for a couple of weeks. The other opinion is that it's a late run this year which will be evident once the water drops and clears. It remains to be seen but there's always appeal to an optimistic opinion. The next day or two will tell for sure but if the late run faction is correct, this will be a bang-up week to be fishing the Chetco. Check out the river online - see **Random Links**, below.

Elk River levels increased from five to 15 feet overnight on the 19th. This is one that recovers quickly, however, and boasts a late run of Chinook. It should fish on Thanksgiving Day without

much of a problem and results are expected to be good. The Sixes is also expected to produce Chinook as it rapidly recovers from the mid-week freshet.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Flows of the Deschutes at Madras increased from 4,800 cfs to over 5,500 cfs From November 19th to mid-day November 21st.

In the midst of flood and chaos in much of the state, the Crooked River remains in decent shape although results slowed this week for fly fishers.

Grande Ronde steelheaders have been hooking a good number of a mix of wild and hatchery steelhead.

Lake Billy Chinook is producing bull trout on the troll. Have a plan in place should the wind come up here.

Winter lake trout fishing has started with downrigger trollers taking fish at Crescent Lake this week.

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](http://www.WDFW.com).

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 Hoodsport 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 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

Write to the TGF staff:

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Random Links

Winter Steelhead 101 - A compilation of great threads at ifish.net
<http://www.ifish.net/board/showthread.php?p=4344470#post4344470>

Check out the Chetco River Bar via webcam
<http://www.port-brookings-harbor.com/webcams/port-of-brookings-harbor>

GOOD LUCK!