

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **November 30th – December 6th, 2012**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- Just as the weather turns for the better and the rivers begin to drop into shape, another storm front enters the region sending them back into the willows. The Willamette is high and off color and will remain so for at least another week to ten days, depending on the next set of storms. This should not deter the angler wanting to catch and release sturgeon. Fishing has been good despite the high water and a growing handful of eager fishermen are taking part. Smelt, squid, herring and sand shrimp fished in 20-80 feet of water remains the main-stay. From the mouth at Kelly Point Park up to Oregon City is the place but don't ignore the Multnomah Channel. The Columbia River will offer also similar opportunity, using the same baits in the favorite hang-outs. Pressure should be light. Nothing confirmed yet, but a few steelhead should be ringing bells at Meldrum Bar on the Willamette, expect an improvement when the water begins to clear.

McKenzie levels reached bank full briefly on November 21st, remaining high since that date.

Following the last rain storm, the entire Santiam system is too high to fish and will remain so through the coming weekend.

The Clackamas is green, but on the high side as of this writing, but another rise is likely by the weekend. Little opportunity is available here until the river recedes again. About the only possibility would be plunking large spin n glo's at Riverside Park. Target fish close to shore as fish are most likely to take the path of least resistance.

The Sandy River has already given up a couple of winter steelhead from the lower river. High water conditions will make fishing difficult to futile this week. Like on the Clack, plunking the lower river with big winged bobbers could produce a fish or two for the eager angler.

Northwest – The Tillamook district remains the best place to intercept fresh-run chinook and the Wilson tops the short list of prospects. Anglers working the Wilson from the Highway 101 Bridge downstream are taking fish first thing in the morning as well as around high tide. Back-bounced bait and plugs are taking most of the fish.

Although the Kilchis, Trask and Tillamook Rivers all remain options, the area is expected to receive more precipitation and high winds which could put systems out of reach again by the weekend.

Tillamook Bay itself is only producing a rare troll-caught chinook and may continue to do so through mid-December. Coho fishing closes on most coastal systems beginning December 1st. The run was likely over-predicted.

Sturgeon fishing in Tillamook Bay should be underway with late afternoon tides producing a few keepers in the west and center channels. Crabbing will be poor except for the lower Columbia, where it's excellent near high slack.

Most anglers will begin focusing on winter steelhead with the North Fork Nehalem, Necanicum, Three Rivers, Wilson, Nestucca and Kilchis most likely to produce in that order. Steelhead are taken daily now near the North Fork Nehalem hatchery and should continue through early January.

Southwest- Boats launching out of central Oregon ports found deep water ling cod on the bite Monday this week with rockfishing somewhat slower.

Wild coho may be taken from Tenmile, Siltcoos and Tahkenitch Lakes through the end of December although river systems will close on November 30th. Check your preferred river system to be certain quota remains available before fishing.

Ocean crabbing opens on Saturday, December 1st but will be delayed until at least December 15th for commercial efforts. Bay crabbing has been a washout - literally - with fresh water entering coastal estuaries.

High water will prevent effective fishing efforts on south coast streams and rivers through the coming weekend.

The Rogue will get slammed by another round of storms this week but will be a decent prospect for winter steelhead when it recovers. Fishing for late summer steelhead has been decent on the middle Rogue when conditions have allowed. Upper Rogue waters came into shape on Black Friday, producing good catches of summer steelhead two feet or better in length. Fishing will remain good until the next storm hits.

Just as the Chetco has started recovering from the last round of rainfall, another storm front is forecast to hit the southwest on Thursday, and with it, another blowout of the river. The National Weather Service issued a hazardous weather outlook over this period for Curry County. When it drops and clears, target winter steelhead here.

Anglers on the Elk River caught decent numbers of chinook over the past weekend. Further dropping and clearing this week will be followed by another rise and roiling late this week.

Eastern – Several nice summer steelhead were taken in the high but dropping waters of the Deschutes over the past weekend. Local reddsides were also cooperative.

The John Day Pool will remain a strong option for steelhead trollers although success rates should begin to drop in the coming week. Wild fish still make up the bulk of the catch.

Soapbox Update: NSIA's 13th Annual Banquet is this Saturday, December 1st. We'll get to revel in huge successes this year as NSIA's participation in discussion have helped bring a significant change about how the states of Oregon and Washington manage the Columbia River. Join us in this fun-filled event by checking out details here: www.nsiafishing.org.

SW Washington- Winter steelhead are starting to show on some district streams with the Cowlitz likely to produce the best early run catches of the big 3. The Kalama, Lewis and Washougal are all winter steelhead options too but don't receive the same hatchery returns as the Cowlitz.

The Lewis remains the best bet for late run chinook when the flows become fishable. Although many of the fish are dark, some fresh run fish should still be available through mid-month.

Check the WDF&W web site for razor clam openings; they are scheduled through December 1st.

Columbia River Fishing Report – With catch and release sturgeon fishing the only option on the entire Columbia River, effort remains low. Salmon and steelhead fishing for the year is winding down with the exception of the John Day Pool and Arm. The creel program for that area is also winding down, a sure sign that effort is dropping.

The John Day fishery really remains the only viable fishery into December but it will taper dramatically in the weeks ahead. Fish are beginning to color as the summer run fades to the winter run.

Crabbing will be the most popular activity in the estuary and remains excellent for those after an easy limit. We'll look at the tides and what options they provide in the forecast section.

The Guide's Forecast – Trollers will still take steelhead in the John Day Pool but both the pool and the John Day Arm should begin to fade fast as fish begin to think about the spawning phase of their lifecycle. The weather remains tolerable for favorable results.

Crabbers should pay attention to early morning low tides this weekend on the lower Columbia. They are soft tides and that typically produces good catches. Weather however may be a factor as high winds are forecast prior to the weekend only somewhat diminishing through the weekend. Exercise extreme caution when venturing out from Hammond. A sport boat went down there the week before Thanksgiving. Lower Desdemona Sands and Buoys 20, 21 and 22 should be equally productive. Just keep in mind that you're on the big river now and the tides are not very forgiving. The incoming following the morning low isn't that strong but strong enough to take your buoys under if you're not properly rigged or your gear isn't placed in the right place.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) reports, "Just as the weather turns for the better and the rivers begin to drop into shape, another storm front enters the region sending them back into the willows. The Willamette is high and off color and will remain so for at least another week to ten days, depending on the next set of storms. This should not deter the angler wanting to catch and release sturgeon. Fishing has been good despite the high water and a growing handful of eager fishermen are taking part. Smelt, squid, herring and sand shrimp fished in 20-80 feet of water remains the main-stay. From the mouth at Kelly Point Park up to Oregon City is the place but don't ignore the Multnomah Channel. The Columbia River will offer also similar opportunity, using the same baits in the favorite hang-outs. Pressure should be light. Nothing confirmed yet, but a few steelhead should be ringing bells at Meldrum Bar on the Willamette, expect an improvement when the water begins to clear."

Fish passage is at a standstill at Willamette Falls in the muddy, high and rising water.

McKenzie flows at Vida, while moderating, were still over 9,000 cfs at Vida and greater than 6,400 cfs below Leaburg Dam as of Thursday, November 29th.

The Santiam system remains too high to fish well of even safely.

According to the ODFW, brood trout are scheduled for release this week at Waverly and Mt. Hood ponds. Additional brood trout plants will take place at Sheridan, Huddleston, Canby, Mt. Hood, Timber Linn, and Junction City ponds over the coming week. Most of these trout weigh seven to 10 pounds. Anglers are reminded that only one trout over 20 inches is allowed per day.

The Guide's Forecast – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) predicts, "Here we go, winter time is upon us here in the NW, and we can look forward to getting hammered by

rainstorms for the next four months. What can a fisherperson do to satisfy the urge, when the rivers are all blown into to the willows ? Go fishing !

It is quickly becoming winter steelhead season and there are a few fish in most of the local river systems. When the main rivers are high and dirty, steelhead will often seek shelter in the smaller tributaries to get out of the heavier flow and debris. Many of these trib's clear very quick and run clearer when winter storms leave the larger rivers swollen and brown. Often times all one needs to do is fish just inside the mouths of these streams to find fish avoiding the bombardment of water, silt and debris.

Keep in mind that many of the fish you might encounter are bound for these tribs and will be wild and have to be released. But catching and releasing a steelhead is WAY better than raking leaves on your day off.

When chasing tributary steelhead, small stream tactics are in order. Bobber fishing and casting spinners will get some fish, but "old school" drift fishing a corky with some bait or yarn is a great approach in small water. Use slightly lighter sinkers/slinkies and shorter leaders than you would normally use on the bigger systems. In small water your fishable drift is substantially shorter and the steelhead will most often lie in the head of the run, right in the broken water.

Getting your offering down to his cone of vision in a hurry is paramount. Keep your leaders between 12 and 16 inches, otherwise your presentation will have passed above and past the fish before your sinker even made contact with the bottom . A size 10 pearl pink corkier with cerise or blue yarn doused with some shrimp flavored smelly jelly is my go to. Add to that a small piece of prawn or crawfish tail and you are in the money.

Don't spend a lot of time in one spot, keep moving and cover lots of holding water for the most success. If fish are present, you will hook-up within the first few casts, if nothing happens move on to the next hole. Some great small streams and tributaries that come to mind are Gnat creek, Big creek and the Clatskanie on the lower Columbia river.

Also, the Lewis and Clark, and the Clatskanie that flow into Young's Bay have early winter steelhead runs. Close to Tillamook, The NF Nehalem and Necanicum are two very productive small streams, both with strong plants of early returning hatchery runs of steelhead.

On the Clackamas, Clear creek and Eagle creek have good opportunity, even Johnson creek flowing through the greater Milwaukie area puts out a few steelhead each year. Make sure and check the regulation book for closure dates and any other restriction as well as obeying the no trespassing signs. So if you need to get out and catch a steelhead despite the perpetual high water, small stream steelheading might be your avenue to success."

Expect sturgeon retention to be disallowed completely in the entire Willamette as well as much of the Columbia in 2013. Anglers may expect other restrictions to effect terminal tackle intended for salmon and steelhead as well.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) reports, "The Clackamas is green, but on the high side as of this writing, but another rise is likely by the weekend. Little opportunity is available here until the river recedes again. About the only possibility would be plunking large spin n glo's at Riverside Park. Target fish close to shore as fish are most likely to take the path of least resistance.

"The Sandy River has already given up a couple of winter steelhead from the lower river. High water conditions will make fishing difficult to futile this week. Like on the Clack, plunking the lower river with big winged bobbers could produce a fish or two for the eager angler."

Clackamas and Sandy river levels were fishable mid-week but the few who tried it this week have struck out, failing to find anything willing to bite. The rivers are dropping at this writing on Thursday but it's all forecast to go to hell as the next storm fronts move in.

The Guide's Forecast – While the Sandy River dropped to fishable level this week, results have been poor. A number of anglers expressed they would not return again to try the Sandy or Clackamas rivers until January at the earliest as a few winter steelhead should be in the river by then. It's a solid suggestion.

North Coast Fishing Report – Most sport effort is now switching to tributary fisheries, particularly the Wilson River. Despite near perfect conditions, guides were only averaging 2 to 3 fish per boat for a full day effort early in the week. Backbounced eggs or backrolled plugs were responsible for the bulk of the catch. Guides spent more of their time fishing just above or below the Highway 101 Bridge in order to take advantage of chinook arriving on the new tide. That strategy often did pay dividends, no matter what time of the day it was. Early morning has been producing the most consistent results however.

The Kilchis has been a season disappointment. Most anglers familiar with the Kilchis know that this system should be peaking but in recent years, the run has clearly been down. Although persistent anglers can still take an occasional fish here, you'll have to work for them and you can't count on big numbers. In lower flows, it's best to position yourself downstream where you stand a chance at fish you know are "holed up" or are making their way upstream on the incoming tide. Unless you're intimately familiar with this system, you may want to explore the Wilson where your chances are better.

The Trask is also a late season option and may even be better than the Kilchis for chinook. Like the other systems, in lower flows, the lower reaches will produce the best results. This system should be slowing however.

Winter steelhead will soon dominate the minds of north coast anglers. They've already made a fair showing with the North Fork Nehalem working nearly 100 steelhead earlier this week from their trap. It's likely that at least some of these fish will be recycled downstream although they aren't known for sacrificing themselves any better on the second run. Three Rivers is another strong small stream option with the Necanicum, Wilson, Kilchis and Nestucca also on the list but less likely to produce. These over-bred early run hatchery fish tend to skip right to where they were liberated, keeping mind that they were bred from fish that originally didn't bite. The later returning broodstock fish have much more redeemable qualities but they won't show in any great number until later in February. The Nestucca and Wilson are primary destinations for this breed of winter steelhead.

Tillamook Bay itself has not been an overly productive system in the late season. There remains persistent trollers working the Ghost Hole and Bay City but they have to put in some hours to expect any return on their investment of time. There have been reports of a few fish in the extreme lower reaches of the Tillamook River tidewater, indicating that the upper bay may produce a few biters when conditions are good. Anglers may want to consider switching targets, looking to sturgeon as a viable alternative, especially since it's really the last option for those wanting a consumptive opportunity for white sturgeon. Consumptive opportunities for sturgeon are likely to disappear in the very near future.

Ocean fishing has not been a consistent option recently and that's not likely to change with the upcoming storm system moving in. When boats have been able to get out, rockfish action has been good, not great but anglers are targeting the larger lingcod in the offshore reefs. Strong winds and high surf won't allow for much recreation, fishing, crabbing or clamming in the nearshore or on the beaches in the coming week.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture closed mussel harvesting from the Columbia River to the California border because of elevated levels of paralytic shellfish poisoning.

The Guide's Forecast – With the onset of December, choices will further wane on Tillamook area streams for late run chinook. The Wilson will remain the best option with the Kilchis a distant second if catch rates don't improve significantly on that system. With the incoming weather system, it seems to have more bark than bite meaning that although rain is certainly in the forecast, there doesn't seem to be large amounts in the forecast to turn river systems south again. If that is the case, the lower reaches will remain the best options for taking fresh run chinook and steelhead. The Trask and Nestucca are likely to continue to wane into a steelhead show.

As for steelhead, bank anglers hold an advantage here as the smaller tributary systems are the most likely to continue to produce the best catches. When early run steelhead hit the North Fork Nehalem and Three Rivers, they'll best concentrate near the hatcheries where they were liberated from. The mouth of Three Rivers may also be a fair to good spot for both bank and boat anglers. Boaters working the mainstems of the Nestucca, Wilson and Kilchis Rivers may intercept pods of biters but the action will be short-lived as these schools often make a "b-line" for their final destinations.

Tillamook Bay itself should only be a fair prospect for chinook as early morning tides favor more sturgeon action than salmon. Although the last half of the morning outgoing can certainly produce chinook results if there are fair numbers present, the best salmon action typically happens in the incoming tide, about half way through and into high slack. Bay City and the Ghost Hole will remain top bets but if you have the time, you may want to explore the west channel too. While you're over there, consider dropping in a sand shrimp and you may be surprised at the action you'll find for sturgeon this time of year.

With all the fresh water in the estuaries this time of year, crabbing has been challenging but still an option if you hit the right part of the tide and find a productive pocket of crab. There should be some sizeable keepers in the catch for a few more weeks as the commercial fleet will be put on hold for a while longer. The crab population has certainly been good this fall. Netarts Bay and certainly the lower Columbia will continue to provide the more bountiful catches.

There is another good clam tide series now upon us but combined seas will likely keep razor clams down and success rates low. Mussel harvest coast wide is also closed now due to the PSP toxin. Keep your eye on the internet warnings before you go out.

Don't count on going offshore anytime soon.

Central & South Coast Reports – Bottom fish anglers are generally well rewarded in the wintertime during those rare days when the ocean is friendly enough to allow access to its bounty. Tuesday this week was one of those days, during which charters out of central Oregon ports quickly limited on rockfish and ling cod. The rest of the week doesn't look promising,

however, with wind and wave action preventing offshore launches if forecasts remain accurate. Gale warnings are in effect for today, November 29th, for the entire southern coastline.

Friday, November 30th, will be the last day for wild coho in rivers where fishing is allowed and which have fish remaining in the quota. Troll fisheries for wild coho in Tenmile, Siltcoos and Tahkenitch lakes will remain open through December 31st.

Rivers blown out? Take a virtual ocean dive in clear water out of Newport. These photos are from mid-November of this year:

<http://www.photoshop.com/users/newportfrierson/albums/9073f9edd30945c0bc51e4067f42caaf/slideshow>

North Fork Alsea opens to steelheading on December 1st but it will be a few weeks before there are sufficient winters present for this to be considered a fishery.

Tenmile Creek will start to receive a few winter steelhead in early December with numbers building later in the month.

Crabbing slowed at Winchester Bay as high, muddy water washed downstream from the mainstem Umpqua. Dungeness are still being taken by those concentrating efforts in the lower bay. There is very little effort for Chinook with the run about over. A few anglers have been trying for winter steelhead, a few of which have started entering the lower river. There's rarely much pressure for the mostly wild fish by steelheaders, however, as this is primarily a catch-and-release fishery. Summer steelheading in the North Umpqua is winding down. There may be some coho available but most are wild and finding a hatchery silver in decent condition will be challenging. Winter steelheading generally doesn't get underway here until February. The South Umpqua will open to steelheading on Saturday, December 1st, although winter steelheading won't be an option until February of next year. With hatchery steelhead entering the South Umpqua, this will be the most likely place to bonk a keeper, however.

Charleston crabbers have continued to make good catches of Dungeness despite the recent freshets as the large, deep water of Coos Bay is capable of maintaining decent salinity levels. Multiple storm fronts are predicted to hammer the south coast over the coming week but once local waters recover, winter steelhead will be available in the South Coos and Millicoma rivers. Depending on water conditions, steelheading will continue to improve through December, peaking in January. As water drops, plunkers will be the first to take advantage of winter steelhead which will be entering the Coquille during high water periods over the coming week.

While there are winter steelhead entering the Rogue River, it will be a while before anglers will be able to fish them. Lower and middle Rogue water levels are on the rise with the river predicted to remain out of shape for much of the week to come. The lower river at Agness is forecast to go over bank full in the next couple of days. Those who fished through the rain on the upper Rogue Wednesday this week were doubly rewarded. In addition to relative solitude, boats drifting the upper river were rewarded with multiple opportunities for summer steelhead and good catches of a mix of wild and hatchery fish to 10 pounds. Bait has been particularly effective in the stretch where it's allowed above the Shady Grove Boat Ramp.

Chetco water levels are once again on the rise at this writing mid-day Thursday, November 29th. If the NOAA forecast is accurate, it will be very thoroughly blown out, cresting at nearly 38,000 cfs on Friday this week, remaining a muddy maelstrom through the coming weekend. That said, once the water drops and clear, perhaps by the weekend of December 8th, there will be some winter steelhead in the system.

The Elk and Sixes rivers will be among the first to recover following repeated deluges over the coming week. When fishable, there should be late Chinook providing action along with a few early winter steelhead. Backbouncing, bobber fishing and pulling wrapped Kwikfish will all take fish here when the river conditions allow fishing.

Diamond Lake will open in just over a month to year-around fishing. It's likely to be an ice fishing scene at the opener on January 1, 2013.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Trout fishing has been reliable on the middle Deschutes below Benham Falls. Steelheading is fair to good this week on the lower river. Fly anglers are scoring summers on Nymphs.

The Metolius has been fishing well. While there's a fairly reliable mid-day hatch of BWOs, be prepared with nymphs as well. Decent numbers of bull trout are in the river and will respond to streamers.

Crooked River sly fishers are enjoying low water and good fishing. A combination of midges and Blue Winged Olives will be among patterns of importance so be prepared to represent all stages and stay versatile.

Fishing has been good on the Fall River.

Steelhead have been caught this week on the Grande Ronde near Troy. Call the Joseph Fly Shop at (541) 432-4343 for the latest reports on river conditions.

Crescent Lake has been producing large Mackinaw to deep trollers although the local brown trout have been elusive. Be prepared for frigid weather and probable snow. See **Random Links**, below, for a webcam view of the latest conditions, including the boat ramp.

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 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."

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Random Links

Crescent Lake web cams: <http://crescentlakeresort.com/live-feed/>

Oregon Pacific Coast Passport available at discount starting December 1:

http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/r6/passes-permits/recreation/?cid=fsbdev7_007224

Tying and fishing the hot Mr. Hanky fly: (commercial site):

<http://www.deneki.com/2010/03/mr-hankey/>

GOOD LUCK!