

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **March 22nd – March 28th, 2013**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- On the Willamette, your die hard, spring chinook fisherman might have noticed a lull in the catch rate this last week. It could be chalked up to the huge wad of ESA protected smelt that have entered the lower Columbia.

On the Columbia, salmon are being caught from Jim Crow Island up to Washougal and from St Helens to Oregon City on the Willamette, but the action is far from hot. Some anglers are reporting 2-4 partially digested smelt in the bellies of their catch. Expect the action to improve as we near the peak of the run in April. Anglers are reminded that the mainstem Columbia below Bonneville will be closed to salmon and steelhead fishing on March 26th and April 2nd.

Catch and release sturgeon fishing is available and likely quite good, if only anglers would put in the effort. Few NW fishermen can muster up any enthusiasm for this fishery when the tastiest of all salmon are swimming in the same river.

Fly anglers fortunate enough to be on the McKenzie when the March Brown hatch is on should do well. It has been occurring this week between 1 PM and 3 PM with redsides responding accordingly. During those periods without hatch activity, medium to dark-toned nymphs such as Prince or Possie Buggers are effective.

The Santiams are on the rise mid-week but will start to drop and clear by Friday and continue improving through the weekend. Steelhead numbers remain low but a few have been hooked.

Trout fishing has been good at Hagg Lake for trollers using small plugs. Bass fishing has yet to get underway with water temperatures 50 degrees or less.

The Clackamas River is surprising steelhead fishermen with some decent fishing. Respectable numbers of both wild and hatchery broodstock steelhead are showing up in the catch and nobody is complaining about the average size of the fish. The river has been running on the high side, dictating that fishermen should focus their attention to the upper stretches between Rivermill Dam and Barton Park.

Sandy River anglers are also experiencing a boost in the steelhead catch. Warmer temps have contributed to snowmelt in the upper drainage keeping the river at a happy fishable level. Water conditions were near perfect over the weekend with slight rise expected later in the week. Boaters and bank fishermen alike are getting a mix of both wild and hatchery broodstock steelhead, with a few summer steelhead also showing in the catch.

Northwest – Steelhead fishing on the north coast remains consistently mediocre. The Wilson and Nestucca still offer up the best opportunities and a mid-week river rise could stimulate weekend opportunities. If the river systems rise high enough, small stream boating for primarily wild fish could produce good catches. Large fish continue to be taken.

Greg Finley of Vancouver and Bill Glenwright from Hong Kong both got credit for a side-drifted 7-pounder from the Wilson on Sunday. Both angler's offerings were down the throat of the fresh winter-run fish but Greg graciously offered his "half" to the home-bound Bill to feed his overseas family.

Opportunities abound for offshore anglers once seas lay down. Another possibility exists over the weekend but forecasts are always changing. Chinook salmon, lingcod, sea bass and crab are all options if the weather cooperates.

Area lakes have been amply stocked in anticipation for spring break anglers.

Crabbing is best in Nehalem Bay.

Southwest- From Newport to Brookings, offshore boats are taking advantage of access to deep water where limits or near-limits of lingcod are being taken daily. About ten days remain for this opportunity as no bottom fishing will be allowed beyond 30 fathoms as of April 1. Rockfish limits are coming from shallow-water reefs.

Surf perch fishing has been good for anglers casting from south coast beaches. Baits of shrimp, clams, mussels and squid are yielding numbers of good-sized redbreasts.

Rain this week has rivers on the rise but with little or no precipitation over the weekend, expect to find dropping and clearing conditions which should equate to decent fishing. Springer fishing is just starting in some rivers as winter steelhead season winds down. Pink plastic worms have accounted for a number of steelhead fatalities.

The closure of mussel harvest that had been effect from Cape Arago to the California border has been lifted with the abatement of naturally-occurring toxins.

Fishing is fair to good from the South Jetty at Winchester Bay. Crabbing has been slow to fair. The Umpqua system will be dropping in the coming weekend which will mean opportunities for long-rodders in the flies-only stretch of the North Umpqua and keepers on the south. Mainstem fishers are hoping for spring chinook to enter, a possibility following the rise in water levels mid-week.

Low water woes which stalled steelheading on the Rogue will be alleviated with rain this week. While half-pounders are being caught on the lower river, it should receive a late-season surge of adults along with some spring chinook. The March-reliable middle Rogue will re-fire with the freshet. Winters will again resume entering the upper stretch as well.

Although steelhead season is winding down on the Chetco, anglers should see some action as the water levels drop into the coming weekend. Fishing has been good here when water conditions are right and fresh fish are in the system.

Elk River may have another shot at winter steelhead following rainfall this week. This may be a last shot this late in the season and with the river closing at the end of March.

Eastern – March Browns are popping on the lower Deschutes although Blue-Winged-Olives and midges remain important patterns to have on hand. Fishing for reddsides is fair but steady.

The Crooked River has been rising over the past week but no report has come in about how this has affected this remarkably productive little stream.

Despite schools of fish appearing on depth finders at Lake Billy Chinook, only a handful of kokanee are being caught. A few browns and bull trout have been taken.

SW Washington- Cowlitz River anglers are finally seeing an up-tick in steelhead numbers. Boat anglers are doing best and Washougal anglers are finding better success recently too. Most of

the district's anglers remain focused on the mainstem Columbia in pursuit of spring chinook. Catches are slow however but should ramp up this week.

The Cowlitz is plugged with smelt that observers haven't seen in many years. It remains closed to all sport and commercial harvest.

Columbia River Fishing Report – Despite a downturn in success for spring chinook on the mainstem Columbia, effort remains high. For whatever reason (maybe smelt related?) spring chinook success region-wide has tapered this week. Most recent reports indicate things aren't getting any better any time soon. On Thursday, one guide reported being the only boat launching out of Aldrich Point. He soon found out why, they went bite-less for a 7 hour effort, fishing both Clifton Channel and the Brookfield wing jetty using mostly plugs in the outgoing tide. They did make a pass trolling herring along Tenasillahe Island; bite-less.

This same guide (**pro guide Andy Betnar (503) 791-4094**) fished on a crappy Saturday fishing all day for 2 bites, landing one fish, about a 19-pounder. Both bites took place back to back on the Brookfield wing-jetty using Kwikfish to entice. Yes, there are large numbers of sea lions and seals working the area, especially with the large numbers of smelt running up the system.

Spring chinook catches up and down the mainstem slowed, as we've previously mentioned but anglers were anticipating better catches, not a slow-down in the bite. 99 spring chinook have crossed Bonneville Dam now, it seems things are happening earlier this year, likely due to warmer, lower, water conditions.

Frenchman's Bar and the adjacent areas aren't putting out fish like they were either. The onset of the cold snap certainly took its toll on the bite as well but there isn't really that much more season left assuming the models are correct.

Sturgeon fishing remains slow and the abundant smelt run certainly has something to do with it. The soft tide series that we're currently coming into is likely to curtail success for the rest of this week.

The Guide's Forecast – Yes, the tide, a large smelt run and cold water conditions are wreaking a bit of havoc on catch rates this week. That may not change all that much going into the weekend. Dam numbers are encouraging but catch rates should be on the rise given the current conditions and run timing.

Not overlooking the fact that peak passage at Bonneville has shifted a few weeks later in recent years, we're still coming up on peak migration for Columbia River springers. Catches should be picking up but don't expect action to all of a sudden just light up this week. It should pick up from the current week but with the depressed return anticipated this year, catch rates will not be all that impressive this season.

You can see from the below graph that there are many more steelhead (relatively speaking) than salmon, in the river:

2013 Spring Chinook Observation Summary_ All data preliminary																
Chinook Adult Data																
							Lower R.		Up River						Steelhead	
Fishery	Month	Date	(inches) Mesh	# of Drifts	Zones	Ad- Clip	No Clip	Ad- Clip	No Clip	Ttl Chin	Chin/ Drift	Chin/ Sthd	Sthd/ Drift	Total Sthd	Ad- Clip	
Test	Mar	3	4 1/4	16	2-3	1	1	0	0	2	0.1	0.5	0.3	4	2	
Test	Mar	10	4 1/4	16	2-3	1				1	0.1	0.3	0.3	4	3	
Test	Mar	17	4 1/4	16	2-3	1	1	1		3	0.2	0.4	0.5	8	5	

Also, you can see that the bulk of the catch remains "white-faced" Willamette bound springers. Not until we start to see more black-chinned salmon will the run actually be "in".

The weak tides this week will not be all that conducive to bank fishing for salmon or steelhead but that doesn't mean you can't catch fish off the bank. It's unfortunate however that this tide series falls on spring break.

The weak tide series however will be conducive to bottomfishing, particularly out of the mouth of the Columbia. South jetty bottomfishing should be pretty good over the weekend if the offshore forecast remains consistent. Target your effort around the tide changes.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) reports, "On the Willamette, your die hard, "everyday" spring Chinook fisherman might have noticed a lull in the catch rate this last week. It could be chalked up to the huge wad of ESA protected smelt that has entered the lower Columbia. Smelt are no stranger to spring Chinook and they will dine with reckless abandon when any forage fish is so readily available, even in the early stages of their spawning run. It's likely that the surges of springer's entering the lower Columbia are getting sidetracked by the free buffet and lingering there till their biological clock tells them to put some river miles behind them. Salmon are being caught from Jim Crow Island up to Washougal on the Columbia and from St Helens to Oregon City on the Willamette, but the action is far from hot. Some anglers are reporting 2-4 partially digested smelt in the bellies of their catch. Expect the action to improve as we near the peak of the run in April. Catch and release sturgeon fishing is available and likely quite good, if only anglers would put in the effort. Few NW fishermen can muster up any enthusiasm for this fishery when the tastiest of all salmon are swimming in the same river."

McKenzie River levels rose sharply overnight on Wednesday, March 21st, but will be dropping and clearing as weather conditions turn to clear and mostly dry this week. Conditions should be good for the coming weekend.

Water in the Santiam system rose with rainfall mid-week but was dropping the morning of Thursday, March 20th and flows will continue to moderate through the weekend.

The film "McKenzie Memories" will be shown as part of a fundraiser for the McKenzie River Trust on Friday, April 5th from 6-8:30 PM at Cozmic Pizza located at 199 West 8th Avenue in Eugene.

Food and drinks will be available and a \$5 donation is suggested. Dave Helfrich will share a century of family history living along the McKenzie, including stories about his father Prince Helfrich, and Veltie Pruitt. These local legends played a part in the Hollywood film "How the West Was Won" (1962) which was filmed on the McKenzie River. Randy Dersham will speak on the history of the iconic McKenzie Drift Boat and Whitewater Boat Parade during the 1940s through 1960s and will show a rare screening of the short feature film "Shooting the Deschutes" shown at the 1939 World's Fair. This classic film starring Prince Helfrich and Veltie Pruitt offers viewers a chance to see parts of the Deschutes River that no longer exist today.

Alton Baker Canal, Cottage Grove Pond, E. E. Wilson Pond, Junction City Pond, Walling Pond and Walter Wirth Lake are scheduled to be stocked with hatchery trout.

The Guide's Forecast – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) predicts, "Spring Chinook continue to be the center of attraction on the Willamette and Columbia river's. A late run of smelt have also entered the Lower Columbia and are surging into the Cowlitz. Last week's Chinook catch has been sporadic at best and many anglers are already grumbling about a low return, the supposed lack of fish and the sad news only festers. But after all, its Late March and we are 3 weeks to a month from the peak of the run and I suspect the fishing will remain sporadic until the HUGE wad of smelt that are infesting the lower river dissipates. Also take this into consideration....when spring Chinook enter the lower Columbia, only to find an abundant "buffet" of oily baitfish, what do you think happens ??? The gorge themselves and loiter in the buffet line. Spring Chinook are many months away from spawning and if any fish still has a latent desire to feed, it's the spring salmon. Many successful anglers have been reporting two to four fresh smelt in the bellies of their catch. I hardly consider this year's larger run of smelt an anomaly, but more of a good sign of things to come. Up until the late 80's, huge smelt runs were always the norm on the lower Columbia, with the runs commonly reaching the into the Lewis, Washougal and Sandy rivers. I even recall smelt running up to Bonneville Dam on year. The smelt run has drastically dropped off in just the last twelve years and now we have been unable to harvest them both commercially or for sport for the last two seasons. Funny things happen when you take gillnets out of the picture. Yes, gillnetters have had liberal seasons on the Columbia river smelt for as long as I can remember. Another factor to consider is that the Columbia is running lower and clearer than normal and the smelt run could be more concentrated and definitely more visible to spectators and the predators that feed on them. In a nutshell, its way to early in the springer season to get worried. The fish have run into and are feeding on an abundant food source in the lower river, inadvertently slowing their migration up river. The water is lower than most years and the winter steelhead run AND the smelt run are running later than usual. To me, this equates to: Get ready, they are on their way. So keep on tying leaders, taping your flashers and brining your bait because the bulk of the run is just around the corner. I could be wrong but my hunch is that things will break loose with the next strong tide series. Anchor fishermen who like to fish Kwikfish and Flatfish type lures, might consider purchasing frozen smelt (that comes from BC and Alaska), either brining it, or salting it the night before and using it for bait wraps on your plugs. The Atlas/Mike's and Pautskes brand liquid bait brines are excellent for this and the choice of colors available is fun to experiment with.

"Catch and release sturgeon fishing on the lower Willamette is likely good, but very few anglers are participating with the spring salmon available"

Now that the Spring Equinox has come and gone which means that spring, rain or shine, has officially arrived in Oregon. March Browns are in evidence on the McKenzie River. The March Brown Event will occur afternoons but is frequently short-lived, sometimes lasting less than an hour. When hatches aren't apparent, nymphs will be effective here.

With Willamette Falls winter steelhead counts nearing the 3,000 mark, they remains well below the 10-year average and summer steelhead are just beginning to make up any significant component with just over 500 counted as of March 21st which is the latest data available. This means the story of low fish numbers in the Santiams remains the same. Numbers in the Willamette reflect what sort of results may be expected on the Santiams.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) reports, "The Clackamas River is surprising steelhead fishermen with some decent fishing. The earlier part of the run could be described as disappointing, but as of late that has been all but forgotten. Respectable numbers of both wild and hatchery broodstock steelhead are showing up in the catch and nobody is complaining about the average size of the fish. Many successful anglers are reporting steelhead in the 12-20 lb. range, both wild and of hatchery origin. The river has been running on the high side, dictating that fishermen should focus their attention to the upper stretches between Rivermill Dam and Barton Park. Forecasts are anticipating another rise in water level by Wednesday, possible pushing the river beyond fishable level.

"Sandy River anglers are also experiencing a boost in the steelhead catch. Warmer temps have contributed to snowmelt in the upper drainage keeping the river at a happy fishable level. Water conditions were near perfect over the weekend with slight rise expected later in the week. Boaters and bank fishermen alike are getting a mix of both wild and hatchery broodstock steelhead, with a few summer steelhead also showing in the catch. Fish are spread throughout the entire system. Expect the fishing to hold up through the first week of April."

The Guide's Forecast – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) predicts, "With the rain and high freezing level, the Clackamas has surged well above comfortable fishing level, making for challenging fishing conditions at best. However, it is dropping and should rebound to good fishable levels by Sunday or Monday. Prior to the bump in level, fishing was rather good for native and hatchery broodstock steelhead and when the river returns to good shape, it's likely there will be good fishable numbers through mid-April.

"The Sandy River also jumped up in level but to a lesser degree, putting it a near prime fishable height. Steelhead anglers will be working the lower, middle and upper sections and fish should be spread throughout the system. Drifters from Dodge to Oxbow Park are getting both native and hatchery broodstock steelhead on bait, hardware and jigs. A few summers have also been showing up in the catch for a couple weeks. Boaters from Oxbow down are getting fish as well, but add plugs into the mix and success will follow. The Yakima Bait Company's, Maglip 3.5 is stirring up steelhead for pluggers and Sandy River anglers should take note of it. Metallic red, pink and blue finishes are popular with both the steelhead fishermen and the steelhead. Power boat anglers are also in the game from Dabney Park downstream and free drifting bait/yarn is the method du jour. Expect steelhead fishing to hold up on the Sandy through the first week of April."

North Coast Fishing Report – Steelheaders continue a ho-hum season on the north coast but persistent anglers are still being rewarded. The big two (the Wilson and Nestucca Rivers) continue to take on the most pressure and producing the best catches. It remains rare however for anglers to get their hands on high numbers of 2-salt steelhead, which typically make up the bulk of the catch on all coastal systems.

Weekend anglers enjoyed a minimal 3-inch rise in river levels after Saturday's deluge, which did stimulate catches on Sunday although a far cry from what most of us experienced last year. One

positive aspect of a depressed return this year is the fact that there are far fewer steelheaders fishing this season. Of course that has its own set of negative circumstances as coastal tourism is also down this year.

Drawing from experience, I fished Friday, Saturday and Sunday on the Wilson and Trask systems. On Friday, we did a late start from Mills Bridge to Sollie Smith, yielding only one bite. Bill Glenwright of Hong Kong took home his largest steelhead hitting 34" X 17", coming in at over 13 pounds. The hatchery buck took a size 30 black pirate hot shot just downstream of Mills Bridge in about 3 feet of water. We saw few other fish taken. Saturday, we did the "low-hole" thing, putting in at Donaldson's gravel bar and getting some virgin water downstream of the double-wing dam. Our early morning effort yielded only a single opportunity on a K-11x Kwikfish (chrome with red dot) although we lost that fish on a snag in the Chrome Patch Hole. We headed over to the Trask River, floating from Cedar Creek to the Highway 101 Bridge with just one other opportunity, landing about an 8-pound spawned out wild hen on side-drifted eggs a little upstream of the Car-body Hole. Finally, on Sunday, we did another late start, targeting hatchery fish on the Wilson again. We put in at Mills Bridge working both plugs and side-drifted baits downstream to Sollie Smith Bridge. We were seeing a higher number of steelhead caught for the skeleton crew on the water and finally boated our first (and only) steelhead; a bright hatchery hen of about 7 pounds that took both anglers egg clusters at the same time! Averaging one to two chances per day has been about standard procedure this season for anglers that aren't taking their sport too seriously.

The Nestucca is much the same with avid anglers or experienced guides are dredging up two to 4 opportunities per day, hopefully yielding about half of the fish you hook. Most anglers continue to employ the side-drifting technique.

It's been a while since anglers have had access to smaller streams that should hold fair numbers of wild fish this time of year. The Kilchis, Necanicum or North Fork Nehalem are all good late-season options yet only bank anglers have had access to these systems during this extended period of low water. Unfortunately, by the weekend, river levels will be back down again and anglers should be fishing right now, instead of reading your beloved TGF.

As we pass through the peak of steelhead season and anglers begin to focus their efforts on spring chinook, these rivers will only get more sparse for anglers in pursuit of steelhead. Quality fish should however be available through the first week of April.

Offshore remained just a dream but that should change by the weekend. See The Guide's Forecast section for more info.

Tillamook Bay sturgeon anglers have been non-existent; there must be a reason for that. Maybe a lot of that has to do with the 1 fish annual bag limit?

Crabbing is best on Nehalem Bay, poor on Tillamook Bay and only fair on Netarts Bay.

Alder Lake, Big Creek Reservoir-1 & 2, Buck Lake, Carter Lake, Cleawox Lake, Devil's Lake, Dune Lake, Eckman Lake, Elbow Lake, Erhart Lake, Georgia Lake, Lost Lake (Lane County), Mercer Lake, Munsel Lake, North Gerogia Lake, Olalla Creek Reservoir, Perkins Lake, Siltcoos Lagoon, Siltcoos Lake, Thissel Pond and Woahink Lake are scheduled to be planted with trout.

The Guide's Forecast – North coast steelheaders got a nice rain freshet on Wednesday, which should help a struggling sport fishery on all river systems.

Smaller systems should produce best today and Friday with the other north coast biggies (Wilson, Nestucca and Trask) coming on line by the weekend. The upper reaches will offer ample and productive opportunities as these steelhead will be moving quickly under these conditions. Here's a breakdown of which rivers will offer up the best opportunities throughout the weekend.

Necanicum, North Fork and Kilchis Rivers- These systems will fish best before the weekend. Be aware however that the high winds mid-week may have put downed trees into these systems. Drift with caution. These fish will largely produce wild fish this late in the season but you may find a rare hatchery fish available. Be prepared for catch and release fishing.

Trask River – The upper reach (Peninsula drift) should be fishing good prior to the weekend. This isn't a long drift but it can be a productive one. Keep in mind however that this is not a big return year. Also keep in mind that when flows lower, this can be a treacherous reach of river, especially for inexperienced boaters. The lower drift will fish best over the weekend, from Cedar Creek to Highway 101.

Wilson River- Definitely a river many will target for the remainder of the season. This river will fish well from Milepost 10 downstream with the upper reaches fishing best over the weekend. Side-drifters will again rule the roost but when flows drop, plug pullers will have some options after the weekend. Anglers may start to see a rare summer steelhead but there should be good action for winter runs with a few darker fish starting to show in the catches. Here is the Wilson hydrograph model:



Nestucca River- Another main target for steelheaders with 6th Bridge downstream a strong option over the weekend. There has been a strong showing of wild steelhead this season but some hatchery fish are certainly available. Small clusters of eggs or single beads have been responsible for the bulk of the catches this season. Post weekend steelheaders should focus their efforts on the water downstream of First Bridge.

Mainstem Nehalem- Although not the best option following the recent rain freshet, the Nehalem was a good option prior to the rain but the size of this watershed never lends itself to highly productive fishing.

Onto other fisheries, offshore anglers are keeping a keen eye on the ocean weather forecast. It looks as if the weekend may finally offer up some good opportunity for lingcod, bottomfish, crab and even salmon for the motivated troller. Here is the forecast:

FRI

NW WIND 15 TO 20 KT WITH GUSTS TO 25 KT. WIND WAVES 4 FT. NW SWELL 10 FT AT 10 SECONDS. CHANCE OF SHOWERS IN THE AFTERNOON.

FRI NIGHT

NW WIND 10 TO 15 KT WITH GUSTS TO 20 KT...EASING TO 5 TO 10 KT AFTER MIDNIGHT. WIND WAVES 3 FT. NW SWELL 8 FT AT 10 SECONDS.

SAT

NW WIND TO 5 KT...BACKING TO W IN THE AFTERNOON. WIND WAVES 1 FT. NW SWELL 6 FT AT 10 SECONDS. CHANCE OF SHOWERS.

SAT NIGHT

W WIND 5 KT...VEERING TO E AFTER MIDNIGHT. WIND WAVES 1 FT. W SWELL 5 FT AT 10 SECONDS.

SUN

NE WIND 5 TO 10 KT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 5 FT.

MON

E WIND 10 TO 15 KT. WIND WAVES 3 FT. W SWELL 4 FT.

Finally, soft tides over the weekend should make estuary crabbing pretty good. It's just too bad the estuary crabbing isn't too good. If you're going to crab, it seems that Nehalem Bay is the best weekend option but Tillamook and Netarts should produce fair-at-best opportunity too.

Central & South Coast Reports – Most boats caught limits of rockfish and ling cod out of Newport and Depoe Bay early this week. Rough offshore conditions kicked up mid-week. Offshore conditions are forecast to moderate into the coming weekend.

With friendlier ocean conditions over the next few days, fishing for pinkfin surf perch will once again become productive off southwest beaches. With a generous 15-fish limit, take only what you're able to use. Sand shrimp are arguably the best bait but more durable baits such as prawns, clams and squid will stay on the hook longer.

While the Winchester Bar closed most of the weekend at the ocean Chinook opener which prevented launches, boats targeting on bottom fish landed at least three. At least that's an indication the fish are out there. Rock fishers on the South Jetty have been doing well for smallish lings, rockfish and surf perch. The mainstem and North Umpqua took a hit from the storm front which passed through this week while there was a lesser impact on South Umpqua water flows. Interest in steelhead fishing is waning as anglers on the mainstem focus their attention on the nascent spring Chinook run. Mainstem steelheading generally yields native steelhead which must be released here. The primarily catch-and-release steelhead fishery on the North Umpqua has been best below Glide and anglers in the flies-only stretch have been hooking a few.

Crabbing has been fair at Coos Bay where clam diggers will do well as a series of minus tides start toward the end of March. While many Coos system steelheaders consider the season wrapped up at this time of year, a few continue to take fish on the South Coos as well as West and East Fork Millicoma. Rain this week brought some fresh winters in for anglers to target. Drifted bait or a jig under a bobber have taken fish here as have pink plastic worms.

Steelheaders on the Coquille system will encounter a mix of fresh winters drawn in with rain this week and those which have spawned and are returning to the ocean. Steelheading remains open here through April but quality of catches will deteriorate.

Anglers on the lower Rogue expect to see winter steelhead as the water level drops over the coming weekend but are also hoping for a decent showing of spring Chinook. Water will be high on the middle Rogue on Friday, March 22nd but will be improving over into Saturday and Sunday. Fair but steady results that steelheaders have enjoyed over the past week should improve following this high water event. Winter steelhead will be entering the upper Rogue over the next several days, providing fresh opportunities for anglers in this stretch. One wild steelhead may be kept per day up to five for the year from Cole Rivers Hatchery down to Gold Beach through April.

Limits or near-limits of ling cod are being landed by boats launching out of the Port of Brookings whenever ocean conditions allow. Catches of rockfish have also been very good. Chetco flows rocketed from around 1,200 cfs to over 8,000 cfs on Wednesday this week. Water has been moderating since then and will continue to drop through the weekend. Despite the winding down of steelheading here, fresh winter surely entered with this freshet which will provide action for late-season die-hards.

Bradley Lake, Lower & Middle Empire Lake, Johnson Mill Pond, Powers Pond, Ben Irving Reservoir, Cooper Creek Reservoir, Galesville Reservoir, Lake Marie, Loon Lake and Plat 1 Reservoir are scheduled for trout stocking.

Central and Eastern Oregon – A nice mix of hatches are occurring on the lower Deschutes as spring comes to the east side. Look for March Browns amidst Blue-Winged Olives, early Skwalla Stone Flies as well as midges and small caddis. Plan your arsenal accordingly and include nymphs for those inevitable stretches when bugs aren't popping.

Ice fishing has reportedly been productive at North Twin Lake.

Fishing has been fair for kokanee at Green Peter with fish scattered. Should any troller be lucky enough to hook one of those landlocked Chinook, which are the result of an experimental planting in 2003-2004, those large fish are counted as part of the generous 25-salmon-per-day bag limit.

The ODFW reminds anglers this week that Morgan Lake near La Grande is closed at this time of year. Inadvertently omitted from the 2013 Fishing Regulations, this fishery will open April 27th with a trout planting scheduled the week prior.

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report for March 2013

Last updated March 4, 2013

North Puget Sound

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

With steelhead fishing closed in the region, anglers are now turning to other species, including rainbow trout in many of the region's lakes and blackmouth salmon in Puget Sound.

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

Steve Thiesfeld, Puget Sound salmon manager for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), said anglers fishing for blackmouth have had the most success in the San Juan Islands. "Central Puget Sound has been slow, but anglers fishing the San Juans have done really well this winter," he said.

Before heading out, anglers can check [creel reports](#) for information on catch and effort in Puget Sound. Catch samplers with WDFW collect the information each week at fishing access sites throughout Puget Sound.

Anglers looking for some competition might want to enter the **Everett Blackmouth Derby** on March 16. Prizes include \$3,000 for the largest fish, \$1,500 for second place and \$500 for third place. For details, visit the [derby's website](#).

Looking forward to the **summer salmon fishing** season? Several public meetings have been scheduled throughout March as fishery managers continue to develop the 2013 salmon seasons, which will be finalized in early April. For more information on the meetings, visit WDFW's [North of Falcon website](#).

Rather catch **trout**? The lowland lakes trout season doesn't officially get under way until late-April, but anglers in the region can get an early start on the action. Twenty-three lakes that are open to fishing year-round will be stocked with 97,000 fish in March. Those lakes include:

- **Island County:** Cranberry and Lone.
- **King County:** Alice, Angle, Beaver, Green, Meridian, Rattlesnake (selective gear rules, catch-and-release only), and Sawyer.
- **Snohomish County:** Ballinger, Blackmans, Cassidy, Chain, Flowing, Gissberg Ponds (Twin Lakes), Ketchum, Loma, Lost (Devil's), Martha (Warm Beach), Panther, Shoecraft, Silver, and Tye.

Other good bets include lakes Goodwin and Roesiger in Snohomish County, where several thousand rainbow trout that were stocked in December should be growing to catchable size this spring and summer.

"Whether you're new to the sport or a veteran, there are plenty of fishing opportunities for both boat and shore anglers," said Justin Spinelli, fisheries biologist for WDFW.

Fishing for **kokanee** should pick up this month, particularly at Angle, Stevens, Cavanaugh and Samish lakes. "Because kokanee feed near the surface in low light conditions and then move deeper as the day progresses, successful anglers vary their depth and tackle throughout the day," said Spinelli.

Fishing for **bass, yellow perch, catfish, black crappie, and bluegill** is also an option. In March, these species can still be found around bottom structure (rocky outcroppings, points, and humps) in deep water, said Danny Garrett, fisheries biologist for WDFW.

“Anglers should slowly work their gear and plan to change location regularly because these fish are on the move in spring,” Garrett said. “As water temperatures warm later in the month, yellow perch begin to congregate in schools in shallower depths to spawn, while bass and other warmwater species aggressively feed in preparation for spawning in May and June.”

Before heading out, anglers should check the [Sportfishing Rules Pamphlet](#) for more information on fishing regulations.

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

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

Blackmouth salmon fisheries are in full swing in Puget Sound, the lingcod season gets under way mid-March in ocean areas south of Cape Alava and several ocean beaches are scheduled to open for razor clam digs this month.

State fishery managers have approved an evening razor clam dig that will run March 7-11 at Twin Harbors, March 8-10 at Long Beach and March 9-10 at Copalis and Mocrocks. No digging will be allowed at any beach before noon.

In planning a trip to the beach, all diggers should be aware that Daylight Saving Time starts March 10, said Dan Ayres, coastal shellfish manager for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). “If you forget to set your watch ahead, you could miss an hour of prime digging,” he said, noting that the best digging occurs an hour or two before low tide.

Evening low tides for the upcoming dig are as follows:

- March 7, Thursday, 3:06 p.m., +0.3 ft., Twin Harbors
- March 8, Friday, 4:01 p.m., 0.0 ft., Twin Harbors, Long Beach
- March 9, Saturday, 4:50 p.m., -0.2 ft., Twin Harbors, Long Beach, Copalis and Mocrocks
- March 10, Sunday, 6:33 p.m., -0.2 ft., Twin Harbors, Long Beach, Copalis and Mocrocks
- March 11, Monday, 7:12 p.m., 0.0, Twin Harbors

WDFW also plans to open second dig later in the month, provided that marine toxin tests show the clams are safe to eat. The timing of that time reflects the seasonal switch to morning low tides, Ayres said.

“Every year in late March, the lowest low tides switch from evenings to mornings, so we structure razor clam digs accordingly,” Ayres said. Tentative opening dates and morning low tides for late March are:

- March 28, Thursday, (7:57 am -0.3 ft.): Twin Harbors
- March 29, Friday, (8:40 a.m., -0.6 ft.): Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis, Mocrocks
- March 30, Saturday, (9:26 a.m., -0.7 ft.): Twin Harbors, Long Beach, Copalis, Mocrocks
- March 31, Sunday, (10:16 a.m., -0.6 ft.): Twin Harbors

Under state law, diggers can take 15 razor clams per day, and are required to keep the first 15 they dig. Each digger’s clams must be kept in a separate container.

All diggers age 15 or older must have a valid fishing license to harvest razor clams on any beach. Licensing options range from a three-day razor clam license to an annual combination fishing license, which can be purchased on [WDFW's website](#) and from license vendors around the state.

Meanwhile, fishing for **blackmouth** – resident chinook – is an option in several areas of Puget Sound. Anglers fishing marine areas 6 (eastern Strait), 11 (Tacoma-Vashon) and 12 (Hood Canal) have a two-salmon daily limit, but must release wild chinook. Those fishing marine areas 5 (Sekiu) and 13 (South Puget Sound) have a daily limit of one chinook salmon.

“Fishing has been really good in the straits,” said Steve Thiesfeld, Puget Sound salmon manager. “The straits and Hood Canal are the places to be for blackmouth fishing now.”

Before heading out, anglers can check [creel reports](#) for information on catch and effort in Puget Sound. Recreational fishery samplers with WDFW collect the information each week at fishing access sites throughout Puget Sound.

Rather hook a **lingcod**? Fishing for lingcod gets under way March 16 in marine areas 1-3, south of Cape Alava. The minimum size for lingcod in these areas is 22 inches, with a daily limit of two fish per angler. For lingcod fishing regulations, check the [Fishing in Washington pamphlet](#).

In the rivers, wild **steelhead** returns to northern peninsula streams reach their peak in March. As in years past, anglers may retain only one wild steelhead per license year on the Bogachiel, Calawah, Clearwater, Dickey, Hoh, Quillayute, Quinault and Sol Duc rivers. On all other rivers, anglers may retain only hatchery-reared steelhead marked with a clipped adipose fin and healed scar. For more information on steelhead fishing regulations, check the [Fishing in Washington pamphlet](#). Information on weekly steelhead catches in the Quillayute River system and the Hoh River are available on [WDFW's website](#).

Meanwhile, there's still time to provide input on the **summer salmon fishing** seasons. Several public meetings have been scheduled throughout March as fishery managers continue to develop the 2013 salmon seasons, which will be finalized in mid-April. For more information on the meetings, visit WDFW's [North of Falcon website](#).

Southwest Washington

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

Despite modest run-size forecasts, this year's **spring chinook** fishery got off to an early start on the lower Columbia River, where anglers were reeling in ocean-fresh "springers" by mid-February. Fishing will continue to ramp up through March, as the bulk of the run moves in from the ocean, said Joe Hymer, a fish biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

"The fishery got off to a fairly quick start, no doubt due to favorable weather and river conditions through late February," Hymer said. "If those conditions continue, anglers should do well in the weeks ahead."

Sport fishing for salmon and steelhead has been open since Jan. 1 below the Interstate 5 bridge, but expands upriver to Beacon Rock beginning March 1. Bank anglers can fish up to the fishing boundary below Bonneville Dam but boats will be limited to Beacon Rock downstream.

The fishery below Bonneville Dam is scheduled to run through April 5, but will close on two Tuesdays – March 26 and April 2 – to accommodate possible commercial fisheries.

Above Bonneville Dam, the fishery will be open to boat and bank anglers on a daily basis from March 16 through May 5 between the Tower Island powerlines six miles below The Dalles Dam and the Washington/Oregon state line, 17 miles upriver from McNary Dam. Bank anglers can also fish from Bonneville Dam upriver to the Tower Island powerlines during that time.

Effective March 1, the daily limit is six adipose-clipped salmonids, including no more than two adult fish and no more than one adult chinook below Bonneville Dam. The limit is the same above the dam, except that anglers may keep two adult chinook starting March 16.

To facilitate the release of wild, unmarked fish, anglers fishing for salmon, steelhead or cutthroat trout are now required to use **barbless hooks** on the mainstem Columbia River downstream of the Washington/Oregon state line.

Barbless hooks are not currently required on Columbia River tributaries, but that issue will likely be considered during this year's North of Falcon season-setting process. The public will have an opportunity to comment on that and other issues at a meeting scheduled March 12 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Vancouver Water Resources Education Center, 4600 SE Columbia Way, Vancouver, Wash.

Based on this year's preseason forecast, 141,400 upriver spring chinook will return to the Columbia River in 2013 – about 25 percent below the 10-year average. That forecast follows three years of strong returns of fish destined for waters above Bonneville Dam, including last year's run of 203,000 upriver fish.

"The preseason forecast is definitely down this year, but – for perspective – it is still twice as large as those we saw in the 1990s," Hymer said.

Based on that forecast, the initial harvest guideline allows anglers fishing below the dam to catch up to 5,000 hatchery-reared upriver chinook before the run update in late April or early May. Another 670 adult fish will be reserved for anglers fishing between Bonneville Dam and the Washington/Oregon state line, 17 miles upriver from McNary Dam.

Fishery managers expect anglers fishing below Bonneville to reach the 5,000-fish guideline by April 5, but could extend the season if enough fish are still available for harvest, said Ron Roler, WDFW Columbia River policy manager. "Salmon returns are highly variable, and we'll have a better idea what the season holds once the bulk of the run starts moving upriver," he said

While upriver fish make up the bulk of the catch, spring chinook returning to the Willamette, Cowlitz and other area tributaries also contribute to the mainstem fishery. However, due to subpar run projections, in-river fisheries for spring chinook will be closed or curtailed in several of those rivers this year to meet spawning goals at area hatcheries. Rivers affected by emergency rules are:

- **Lewis River:** All chinook must be released from the mouth upstream to the mouth of the East Fork until further notice. The mainstem Lewis remains open for hatchery steelhead.
- **North Fork Lewis River:** All chinook must be released from the mouth of the East Fork upstream to Merwin Dam until further notice. Through May 31, fishing is closed for all species from Johnson Creek (located downstream from the Lewis River Salmon Hatchery) upstream to Merwin Dam. The North Fork Lewis from Johnson Creek downstream remains open to fishing for hatchery steelhead.
- **Kalama River:** All chinook must be released from the boundary markers at the mouth upstream to the upper salmon hatchery (Kalama Falls Hatchery). The Kalama River remains open to fishing for hatchery steelhead.
- **Wind River:** The entire river will be closed to fishing March 16-31. From April 1 through July 31, anglers will be limited to one hatchery chinook or one hatchery steelhead per day from the mouth (boundary line/markers) upstream to 400 feet below Shipherd Falls. Wild chinook and wild steelhead must be released. All fishing is closed until further notice from 400 feet below Shipherd Falls upstream, including all tributaries.

For additional information, see the [rule change notices](#) on the WDFW website.

Hymer said WDFW will monitor returns to all four rivers to determine if the emergency restrictions can be lifted. No emergency restrictions are currently planned for the Cowlitz River, Klickitat River, or Drano Lake, where fishing regulations for spring chinook and steelhead are consistent with those in the [Fish Washington](#) rules pamphlet.

In other waters, anglers should be aware that March 15 is the last day to fish for **steelhead** on Abernathy, Cedar (Clark Co.), Germany, Mill (Cowlitz Co.), Rock (Skamania Co.), and Salmon (Clark Co.) creeks and on the Coweeman, Elochoman, Grays, East Fork Lewis, South Fork Toutle, and Washougal rivers.

Meanwhile, anglers can catch and keep **white sturgeon** from Buoy 10 upstream to Bonneville Dam, and in The Dalles and John Day pools. Fishing has been slow, but anglers have been landing a few legal-size fish, particularly in the John Day Pool.

The daily limit is one white sturgeon per day in all waters where retention is allowed. The annual retention limit is currently five fish in Washington, although the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission recently voted to reduce the annual limit to one fish starting May 1. Watch the [WDFW website](#) for more information on the new annual retention limit in the weeks ahead.

Fishery managers from Washington and Oregon reduced this year's harvest rate for white sturgeon by 15 percent on the lower Columbia River, but that reduction is largely offset by a slight increase in the legal-size sturgeon population – the first indication of improvement in five years. As a result, the harvest guideline for the recreational sturgeon fishery below Bonneville Dam will remain virtually unchanged at 7,790 fish.

As in years past, 80 percent of the allowable catch will be allocated to the sport fishery and 20 percent to the commercial fishery. Under the new harvest rate, the portion of the catch available to recreational fisheries will be allocated as follows: 4,040 fish in the estuary, 2,020 above the Wauna powerlines, and 1,730 in the Willamette River.

Fishing seasons approved for 2013 in the lower Columbia River are as follows:

- **Buoy 10 to the Wauna powerlines:** Retention of white sturgeon is allowed daily from Jan. 1 through April 30 and from May 11 through June 30. From Jan. 1 through April 30, sturgeon must measure between 38 inches and 54 inches (fork length) to be retained. From May 11 through the end of the season they must measure between 41 inches to 54 inches (fork length) to be retained. Catch-and-release fishing is allowed on days when retention is prohibited.
- **Wauna powerlines to Bonneville Dam:** Retention of white sturgeon is allowed three days per week (Thursday through Saturday) from Jan. 1 through June 15 and from Oct. 19 through Dec. 31. Sturgeon must measure between 38 inches and 54 inches (fork length) to be retained. Catch-and-

release fishing is allowed on days when retention is prohibited. Effective through April 30, angling is prohibited from a line between the upstream end of Sand Island, located east of Rooster Rock State Park, to a marker on the Oregon shore downstream to a line between the lower end of Sand Island and a marker on the Oregon shore.

- **Pools above Bonneville Dam:** Fishery managers reduced the harvest guideline for the Bonneville Pool from 2,000 fish to 1,100, because monitoring data indicate that the sturgeon population did not increase over the past three years as expected. Sturgeon retention was allowed through Feb. 10, with additional days possible in June. Retention fisheries in the two reservoirs between The Dalles and McNary dams are scheduled to proceed until their respective 300 fish and 500 fish guidelines are met.

Another option is **walleye**, which are now on the bite above Bonneville Dam. The **kokanee** fishery is also picking up in Merwin Reservoir and should improve throughout the month. For other freshwater fishing options, check the [stocking schedule](#) on WDFW's website for **trout** plants throughout the region.

Eastern Washington

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

About a dozen lakes throughout the region open to fishing March 1, and all should be ready for action.

Six Tucannon River impoundments on WDFW's Wooten Wildlife Area in Columbia County – Big Four, Blue, Deer, Rainbow, Spring and Watson lakes -- are looking good, said area manager Kari Dingman. "It already looks like spring on the Wooten," Dingman said. "The lakes are all stocked and the campgrounds are cleaned up and ready for opening day. There is still snow up high on the ridge tops, and it's still a little muddy along the lake shorelines, but the sun has been shining and the pussy willows are starting to bud."

Big Four Lake received its allotted 2,000 "catchable" rainbow trout (10- to 12-inch, one-third pounders) and 300 "jumbo" rainbows (measuring more than 14 inches and weighing one pound each). By the opener the other five lakes will receive the first of several plants of similar sized rainbows, with subsequent stocking periodically through June.

Glen Mendel, WDFW district fish biologist, said because Beaver Lake, a seventh Tucannon River impoundment, is weedy and shallow it will not be stocked for the third consecutive year. Fish Hook Pond in Walla Walla County also will not be stocked this year, he said.

WDFW Tucannon Fish Hatchery Manager Doug Maxey reports that other year-round-open fisheries in southeast Washington will be stocked. Asotin County's Golf Course and West Evans ponds; Columbia County's Dam, Dayton Juvenile and Orchard ponds; and Walla Walla County's Bennington Lake and Hood Park, Jefferson Park, Lions Park and Quarry ponds, are all receiving initial trout plants. Quarry and Dalton lakes, as well as Marmes Pond in Franklin County, will be stocked by March 1, as will Golf Course and West Evans ponds in Asotin County. Pampa Pond, in Whitman County, opens March 1 and will be well-stocked with catchable-size rainbows.

Anglers can find the total trout allotments for these and other fisheries, as well as weekly catchable trout plant reports, on WDFW's [website](#).

Other fisheries in the region that open March 1 rely more on "put, grow and take" trout stocking, says Randy Osborne, WDFW central district fish biologist. "These are about eight-inch trout stocked last fall or spring that have grown and are ready to harvest this season," he said.

Amber Lake, in southwest Spokane County, was stocked with 5,000 rainbows and 1,000 **cutthroat trout** last May. It opens for catch-and-release only fishing March 1, and then shifts to a two-trout-per-day harvest season April 27.

Medical Lake, in southwest Spokane County, was stocked with 2,500 rainbows last May, and will be stocked with another 1,000 rainbows, plus 2,500 **brown trout**, this spring. Medical Lake is under selective gear rules, motors are prohibited, the minimum size limit for trout is 14 inches, and the daily catch limit is two trout.

Downs Lake, east of Sprague on the Lincoln/Spokane county line, should be stocked with 5,000 rainbows by the March 1 opener if weather allows. Downs also has warmwater fish species, and there is a minimum size limit of nine inches for black crappie and a daily catch limit of 10.

Liberty Lake, in eastern Spokane County, received 45,000 brown trout fry last fall and 700 “jumbo size” (at least one-pound) browns this spring. Liberty is also being stocked this spring with 5,000 catchable size (one-third pound or 10-inch) rainbows, and 100 jumbo size rainbows.

Coffeepot Lake in Lincoln County received 5,000 “put, grow and take” rainbows last spring, and will receive another 5,000 this year. Selective gear rules are in effect, plus an 18-inch minimum size and one-fish daily catch limit.

Osborne also notes that March is the last month to fish the winter-only lakes in the region – Hog Canyon Lake in Spokane County, Fourth of July Lake in Lincoln County, and Hatch and Williams lakes in Stevens County. These Dec. 1-March 31 fisheries are mostly ice-fishing opportunities, but Osborne notes recent mild weather has probably left ice conditions dangerous.

Year-round-open waters in the region can be very productive during March. Lake Roosevelt is still providing catches of rainbow trout and **kokanee**, mostly in the Grand Coulee Dam area. Rock Lake in Whitman County is still producing decent catches of rainbow and brown trout. Silver Lake in Spokane County has been yielding **yellow perch** up to nine inches through the ice, although ice conditions are likely deteriorating.

Another kind of fishing is available at the Inland Northwest Wildlife Council’s 53rd annual [Big Horn Outdoor Adventure Show](#), March 21-24, at the Spokane County Fair and Expo Center. Some 5,000 trout are stocked in three huge indoor lakes for kids to catch at “Fishing World,” as well as a “Virtual Reality Fishing Simulator,” a fishing demonstration tank, lots of fishing seminars by experts, and hundreds of fishing equipment and charter service vendors. WDFW staff will be on site selling fishing licenses and talking with visitors about all things fish and wildlife.

Northcentral Washington

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

Fishing for **whitefish** and **hatchery steelhead** opens March 1 on the Methow River, from the mouth at the Highway 97 bridge to the confluence with the Chewuch River in Winthrop.

The re-opening of the steelhead fishery will help reduce the proportion of hatchery fish on the spawning grounds and further reduce competition between natural origin and hatchery juvenile production.

Steelheaders have a daily limit of two fish, with a minimum size of 20 inches, and must keep hatchery steelhead – identifiable by a missing adipose fin. Adipose-fin-present steelhead must be released unharmed and cannot be removed from the water prior to release. Night closure and selective gear rules are in effect. Anglers are required to possess a Columbia River Salmon/Steelhead Endorsement as part of their valid fishing license.

Whitefish anglers must follow selective gear rules in areas open to steelhead fishing, and the daily limit is 15 whitefish.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) district fish biologist Bob Jateff said the Methow and other steelhead fisheries may be closed on short notice depending on participation and catch rates of natural origin fish. He advises anglers to regularly check the fishing hotline at 360-902-2500 or the [WDFW webpage](#).

Also opening March 1 are dozens of Columbia Basin lakes stocked with **rainbow trout**, and WDFW District Fish Biologist Chad Jackson reports almost all are ice-free and fishable.

“Anglers should expect to have good catch rates on 12-inch yearling rainbows in Upper Caliche, Martha, Burke, and Quincy lakes,” Jackson said. “Upper Caliche and Quincy lakes will be the best bets for carryovers. Burke Lake was rehabilitated last October and restocked with about 12,000 catchable size rainbows in mid-February, so it should fish well, but there will be no larger carryover fish there.”

Jackson said another March 1-opening fishery -- Lenore Lake, near the town of Soap Lake in Grant County - still had about 20 percent ice coverage in late February.

“But with all the wind and warmer weather, I wouldn’t be surprised if Lenore is ice free on the opener,” he said. “Either way, it’s still fishable.” Lenore is on a catch-and-release only season through May. Big **Lahontan cutthroat trout** are the draw there.

March 17 marks the close of steelheading on two sections of the Okanogan River to protect natural origin steelhead. The sections are from the first powerline crossing downstream of the Highway 155 Bridge in Omak (Coulee Dam Credit Union Building) to the mouth of Omak Creek, and from the Tonasket Lagoons Park boat launch to the Tonasket Bridge (4th Street).

Other northcentral region waters that will continue to be open for steelhead angling until further notice include:

- Mainstem Columbia River from Rock Island Dam to boundary markers below Wells Dam and from Highway 173 Bridge at Brewster to 400 feet below Chief Joseph Dam.
- Wenatchee River from the mouth to 400 feet below Tumwater Dam, including the Icicle River from the mouth to 500 feet downstream of the Leavenworth Fish Hatchery Barrier Dam.
- Okanogan River from the mouth to the Highway 97 Bridge in Oroville, except for the two sections that close March 17.
- Similkameen River from the mouth to 400 feet below Enloe Dam.

March is the last month for the catch-and-keep fishing season at several Okanogan County lakes that shift to catch-and-release April 1. Big and Little Green lakes near Omak, Rat Lake near Brewster, and Davis Lake near Winthrop have been producing **rainbow trout** catches through the ice. Year-round-open Patterson Lake near Winthrop has also been a good trout ice fishing spot. But Jateff warns anglers to use caution as the weather starts to warm this month and ice thickness diminishes.

Southcentral Washington

(Benton, Franklin, Kittitas and Yakima counties)

Spring chinook salmon are moving up the Columbia River, steelhead fishing should pick up soon and trout fishing will definitely improve starting early this month.

"We start stocking **trout** in year-round lakes in early March and continue right through June," said Eric Anderson, a fish biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). "This fishery is really our bread and butter, and anglers look forward to it all year."

In March, WDFW will stock 20 lakes and ponds in Yakima, Kittitas, Franklin and Benton counties with thousands of "catchable size" rainbows, along with hundreds of jumbo trout weighing 1 to 1½ pounds. For more information, see the regional [trout stocking report](#) on the department's website.

Paul Hoffarth, another WDFW fish biologist, said anglers should also be aware fishing for **hatchery steelhead** usually picks up right before the season closes March 31. Some of the highest catch rates of the season are often recorded in March near the Ringold Springs Hatchery, he said.

"A lot of steelhead that have been hanging out all winter will make their final spawning runs," Hoffarth said. "That's when catch rates start rising again."

Fisheries for hatchery steelhead are open through March on the Snake River and on the Columbia River downstream from the wooden powerline towers at the Old Hanford townsite. Steelhead fishing is not permitted anywhere on the Yakima River.

Rather catch **white sturgeon**? The retention fishery for sturgeon is expected to run through July 31 above McNary Dam (Lake Wallula). Lake Umatilla, which extends from John Day Dam to McNary Dam, is also expected to remain open through March for white sturgeon.

Hoffarth notes, however, that the Lake Umatilla fishery is managed on a quota system and could close abruptly when the quota is reached. Anglers planning to fish the lake should keep an eye on the WDFW website for possible updates.

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

Hoffarth also reminds anglers that some of the year's biggest **walleye** are caught in the spring. These fish are now preparing to spawn and are nearing their highest weight of the year, he said. Once commonly caught in Lake Umatilla below McNary Dam, walleye are now routinely caught above McNary Dam in Lake Wallula, including the lower Snake River and the Hanford Reach.

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Random Links

Worth Reading - First Rogue Springer Story:

<http://www.mailtribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20130315/LIFE/303150311/-1/OREGONOUTDOORS>

Photo by The Fishin' Hole in Shady Cove



Spring Fishing Classic March 30 2013:

<http://www.nsiafishing.org/?event=spring-fishing-classic>

Tie a Shrimp Fly (video):

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=wPpn_BgAUp4

GOOD LUCK!