

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **March 29th – April 4th, 2013**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- After a slight lull in the spring chinook fishing, the pace has picked up again and reports of decent fishing are coming in from St. Helens all the way up to Milwaukie. After a jump from last week's rain, the turbidity is clearing and the catching is only going to improve. Oregon City is getting a few fish, but the peak of action there is still three weeks away. Multnomah Channel salmon fishermen are picking up fish at Coon Island and Santosh. As usual, green label plug cut herring or cured pawns are the favorite baits for March spring chinook.

Sturgeon are thick in the lower Willamette River. Long shoremen and early morning anglers are reporting schools of sturgeon jumping and rolling in the vicinity of Swan Island. Also spotted are the California and Stellar sea lions working the sturgeon school, tearing up and tossing them around like rag dolls. Few anglers are interested in catch and release sturgeon fishing when spring chinook are present, but those that take interest will likely do well.

On the McKenzie, March Browns are taking to the wing between 1 PM and 4 PM daily with dries and emerges effective during hatch periods. Water levels have been dropping over the past week and water conditions are expected to be good for the coming weekend.

Fishing is slow on the Santiams with numbers low and the water too cold to entice steelhead upstream.

The Clackamas is at premium fishing level and late winter steelhead are present in good numbers. Also present are a few early summer steelhead and successful anglers are occasionally rewarded with the hottest, brightest steelhead available. The water has been running on the clearer side all season long and fishermen are adjusting their tactics accordingly. Bank fishermen are doing best between Rivermill Dam and Barton, at all the popular access points, while boat fishermen are scoring best between Barton and Riverside parks. Expect the run to hold up through mid-April.

Sandy River regulars are still scoring with late winter and early summer steelhead. Drift boaters and bank anglers are doing best between Oxbow Park and Dabney Park. The water is on a slow drop and running clear so lighter leaders and subdued presentations are called for. Drift boats pulling plugs have been scoring well as do float fishers, fishing jigs. Smelt are thick in the lower river and have been spotted up to Dabney Park. River smelt are now federally protected and harvesting them is restricted.

The ODFW will host a family fishing Event at Canby Pond on Saturday, March 30th from 9 AM to 2 PM. Volunteers will be on hand to provide equipment and tips to youngsters.

Northwest – Steelheaders on the north coast are readying for a mediocre season to complete. Action should remain consistently challenging on the Wilson, Nestucca, Trask and Nehalem Rivers with the smaller streams a poor option in the dropping flows. Some summer steelhead may begin to show on the Wilson and Nestucca and the district's spring chinook season opens on April 1st. No sign of spring chinook yet and we're still 6 weeks away from consistent fishing.

With spring break upon us, area lakes have been amply stocked with trout for catch and keep fisheries. Conditions are good and so are the catches.

Calm seas produced excellent catches of bottomfish, both lingcod and sea bass out of all northern ports. Depoe Bay and the south jetty out of the Columbia River have been very consistent with fair catches of ocean crab available too.

It's still a bit early for good catches of ocean chinook south of Cape Falcon but the season is open. Catches are likely to improve in the coming weeks. A large chinook forecast should make for a productive ocean fishery.

Razor clam digging should be excellent over the weekend on many Clatsop area beaches.

Southwest- Boats launching out of central Oregon ports have been taking limits of lingcod but the clock is running out for deep water opportunities. The ocean closes beyond the 30-fathom line on April 1st. Nearshore reefs will continue to produce good catches of rockfish.

Offshore conditions are forecast to be favorable for ocean launches this week.

Winchester Bay crabbing is slow although fishing from the South Jetty has been productive. A few anglers are trying for sturgeon but results have been poor. Starting April 1, two legal sturgeon may be kept for the year. The Umpqua mainstem has dropped to normal seasonal flows following the freshet late last week. Spring chinook fishing is slow although steelheaders have taken a few large fish. All natives must be released river-wide. steelheading has been worthwhile on the South Umpqua although the water is getting a little low.

Coos Bay crabbing is good and improving. Late-season steelheading is spotty on the Coos system although the West and East Fork Millicoma and South Coos are producing a few fish.

When boats have been able to cross the bar out of Gold Beach, bottom fishing has produced limits of rockfish, lingcod and a few crab. Spring chinook fishing turned on in the lower Rogue following the rise in water levels Thursday last week. The first two hours of the incoming tide and an hour after it turns have been most productive. Steelheaders on the middle Rogue are doing fair. Winter fish are being taken on the upper river as well and while the first springer of the year was taken on March 7th at the Hatchery Hole, none have entered the hatchery facility yet.

Only the occasional bright winter steelhead is being caught on the Chetco as most are spawned out or dark this late in the season.

Elk River anglers took a few late-winter steelhead as the river dropped following rainfall last week but the level is getting too low to fish well.

SW Washington- With steelhead catches still low in the district's rivers, anglers are maintaining their focus on spring chinook. Mainstem sportfishers saw a bump in upper Columbia bound fish indicating the run is starting to peak, although still weeks away.

Passage at Bonneville continues to improve but still hasn't topped 150 fish. When several hundred salmon a day begin to move, the Drano Lake fishery should kick in. That's still likely a few weeks away.

Eastern – March Browns are hatching on the lower Deschutes but not in impressive number. Take Blue-winged-Olive, stonefly, caddis and midge patterns for success with the reddsides.

Fly casters on the Metolius are taking fish on nymphs with only occasional light hatches occurring.

Green Peter is producing fair catches of kokanee but far short of the 25-per-day limit.

Steelhead fishing this week in the Grande Ronde in southeast Washington has been stellar. The state creel from last week tallied less than 3 hours per fish.

Soapbox Update:

Do you care about wild salmon and steelhead on the North Oregon Coast?

The Oregon Department of Forestry is taking public comment on "High Value Conservation Areas" until mid-April and if you're an angler, you should be a part of the conversation. Go to the home page of the North Coast State Forest Coalition for talking points and where to submit your comments. They DO count and you'll be an important part of this vital conversation.

www.forestlegacy.org

Columbia River Fishing Report –Maybe that run is going to come in at a paltry 140,000 spring chinook....Anglers working the Columbia from the Portland area to Astoria are struggling hard to find biters. In a year when we finally had favorable water conditions, we got dealt a small run of salmon and a BIG run of smelt. What are the chances?

Yes, anglers will always find something or someone to blame for bad fishing. Although the water temperatures have dropped down a bit more than one would hope, conditions largely remain ideal for spring chinook trollers working the lower Columbia. The fish just don't seem to be there in any great numbers or if they are, they're not very motivated to bite.

Guides from the Astoria area to I-5 are singing the blues with many reporting going days without a fish. Astoria area guides at least have the chance to target bottomfish and some metro area guides are chasing sturgeon. Reports from one of the lowest areas that anglers target salmon, Brookfield and Clifton Channel are poor. "Biological desert" is a phrase often used right now and appropriately so. Trollers, nuthin', anchor anglers using Kwikfish, nuthin', bankies, nuthin'. It's pretty hard to get excited about the prospects right now and with a huge school of smelt reported from the Sandy River to the mouth, why would one take your herring? It's not a great time to be a spring chinook guide.

Here's a creel check one wouldn't expect for the last week in March:

Gorge Bank:

Weekend checking showed no catch for 10 bank anglers.

Gorge Boats:

No report

Troutdale Boats:

Weekend checking showed two adipose fin-clipped spring Chinook kept, plus one unclipped spring Chinook released for 90 boats (220 anglers).

Portland to Westport Bank:

Weekend checking showed one adipose fin-clipped spring Chinook and five adipose fin-clipped steelhead kept, plus one unclipped spring Chinook and one unclipped steelhead released for 183 bank anglers.

Portland to Westport Boats:

Weekend checking showed five adipose fin-clipped spring Chinook kept, plus three unclipped spring Chinook released for 83 boats (199 anglers).

Estuary Bank (Clatsop Spit to Wauna Powerlines):

Weekend checking showed no catch for three bank anglers.

Estuary Boats (Tongue Point to Wauna Powerlines):

Weekend checking showed no catch for 28 boats (62 anglers).

The Dalles Pool:

Weekly checking showed no catch for 17 bank anglers.

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

Weekly checking showed no catch for seven bank anglers.

But how about those bottomfish? It's pretty easy pickings along the south jetty out of the lower Columbia right now. I've fished 2 days in the last 4 and although we struggled to find lingcod on the first day (Saturday the 23rd), we took our 8 person sea bass limit in about an hour; yes, that's 56 fish! The next round (3/25), we had no trouble finding those lings and harvested our 8 lingcod and 28 bass in a few hours' time. I even caught a nice lingcod (although not as nice as it should have been using a 3 pound bait) on a shad along the sunken jetty. The weather has been nice except for an early morning east wind. These last few days have been glass calm however. I know, pretty bad salmon fishing when you're bragging about the bottomfishing, huh? Ocean crabbing has been fair too.

The Guide's Forecast – I'm not sure I'd be too optimistic for this week's outlook for salmon fishing. Despite good water conditions and the nearing of peak season, catches may very well remain light through the weekend with an exceptionally large smelt run surely to blame. We certainly have to be grateful for the return of this depressed stock of forage fish but it's cutting into our harvest of spring chinook.

Run timing alone should be enough to justify a fair bite river-wide but don't count on it. Although the smelt run should literally be dying off, your measly herring will be hard to find amongst all the smelt bodies in the mainstem. None-the-less, you can't catch if you don't try and trolled herring will still produce some catches, no matter how many smelt are in the river. Anchor anglers may have a better chance with Kwikfish, just because these plugs look drastically different than a smelt.

We're not sure where we're at on the spring chinook guideline but it is still slated to close after April 5th. Because of the possibility of a sudden jump in catch rates, the Departments will likely not consider an extension until they have a good grip on how catch rates have been as we near the proposed closure date. In other words, stay tuned.....

Sturgeon fishing is even worse than salmon fishing, by a long ways too. With this much smelt in the river, it's not going to improve anytime soon.

So, you want to focus your efforts on bottomfish? You may be out of luck as tides become more extreme and the weather goes out for a while. There might be some opportunity by Sunday but as the tides get more extreme, it's hard to get to fishing effectively on the sunken jetty, where all the quality lingcod are. Here is the offshore forecast:

FRI

N WIND TO 5 KT...RISING TO 5 TO 10 KT WITH GUSTS TO 15 KT IN THE AFTERNOON. WIND WAVES 1 FT. NW SWELL 3 FT AT 11 SECONDS.

FRI NIGHT

N WIND 10 TO 15 KT WITH GUSTS TO 20 KT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 3 FT AT 14 SECONDS.

SAT

N WIND 10 TO 15 KT WITH GUSTS TO 20 KT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 4 FT AT 13 SECONDS.

SAT NIGHT

N WIND 10 TO 15 KT WITH GUSTS TO 20 KT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 4 FT AT 19 SECONDS.

SUN

NW WIND 5 TO 10 KT. WIND WAVES 1 FT. W SWELL 6 FT.

MON

W WIND 10 TO 15 KT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 6 FT.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) reports, "After a slight lull in the spring Chinook fishing, the pace has picked up again and reports of decent fishing are coming in from St. Helens all the way up to Milwaukie. After a jump from last week's rain, the turbidity is clearing and the catching is only going to improve. Oregon City is getting a few fish, but the peak of action there is still three weeks away. Multnomah Channel salmon fishermen are picking up fish at Coon Island and Santosh. Rocky point has kicked out a few and Fred's Marina at the head of the channel is posting fish daily. The power lines and the red buoy at the top of Sauvie Island are go-to spots in the lower Willamette. Sellwood started giving up fish again on Sunday and the bite improved on Monday. As usual, green label plug cut herring or cured pawns are the favorite baits for March spring Chinook. Sturgeon are thick in the lower Willamette River. Long shoremen and early to get on the water anglers are reporting schools of sturgeon jumping and rolling in the vicinity of Swan Island. Also spotted are the California and Stellar sea lions working the sturgeon school, tearing up and tossing them around like rag dolls. Few anglers are interested in catch and release sturgeon fishing when spring Chinook are present, but those that take interest will likely do well."

McKenzie River levels dropped through Monday, March 25th, then level out with the river stable since that date. These are excellent conditions for spring fly anglers. March Browns have been hatching afternoons but the activity has been sparse.

Summer steelhead numbers have been chugging along at Willamette Falls with the latest cumulative total as of March 26th about 750. That just might mean worthwhile steelheading is in the offing for the North Santiam later in the season. While there aren't a lot of fish in the river currently, the level is down and will continue to gradually moderate over the coming week. There are good fishing conditions which are similarly mirrored on the South Santiam.

Canby Pond, St Louis Pond, Alton Baker Canal, Cottage Grove Pond, Dexter Reservoir, Foster Reservoir, Freeway Lake East, Timber Linn Lake, Walling Pond, Walter Wirth Lake and Waverly Lake are scheduled for trout planting.

The Guide's Forecast – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) predicts, "Spring Chinook fishing on the Willamette River is trudging along but as of yet, it's nothing to write home about. Sporadic reports of a fish or two per boat continue to filter in but nobody is "lighting it up". It's likely that the abundant smelt run of 2013 has slowed the upriver migration of spring Chinook to both the Columbia and Willamette Rivers. Springer's will feed on their spawning run and the Columbia River smelt, or Eulachon is no exception. The smelt are spawning and dying and will be out of the picture within a few days of this writing and that's when the salmon fishing is likely to improve. Nonetheless, a few fish are getting caught and anglers are encouraged to stay off the couch and get after it. Monday. Decent catches were reported from the lower Multnomah Channel on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday leading us to believe a push is making its way upriver. The Columbia River continues to dish out less than impressive reports, but we also expect that to change in the next few days. A couple of important factors should be calculated into your fishing plan of attack. First, the water on both rivers is substantially lower than most years and the spots or lanes that worked in past seasons are either two feet deep or dry sand. Think outside the box and anticipate the lane of travel with the lower water, which brings us to the second factor. Turbidity. Both rivers have been running clearer than average (especially the Columbia) and there is far more penetrating light. Knowing what I know about Chinook salmon, they prefer low light or darkness to hide their presence, very typical of the ambush predator that they are. All this equates to fishing deeper water where its dimly lit and the salmon have more cover. Reliable Intel is coming in from "dialed" fishermen that are having better success at 25-40 feet on the Columbia River, not your typical 12-25 feet of most years. We at The Guides Forecast suggest you fish more lead and fish deeper when hitting the usual hangouts like Davis Bar and the airport to RR bridge (AKA the I-5 troll). Don't forget to troll as slow as possible and sometimes an added drift sock or sea anchor is necessary on the downhill troll.

"The Willamette River is chock full of sturgeon and the sea lions have that figured out. However very few anglers have been interested in what can be a "lights out" catch and release fishery. Spring Salmon will always win the popularity contest, especially when anglers cannot retain sturgeon. If you are looking for an opportunity to show a kid or new angler a good time on the water, catch and release sturgeon fishing is your ticket. The Portland harbor has the most space available away from the salmon trolling lanes. Water 40-80 feet deep is what you're looking for and fish the outgoing tides. Keep a smelt (purchased from a store), herring, squid or sand shrimp on the bottom and let the fun begin."

Expect to see a few March Browns hatching from 1 PM to 3 PM on the McKenzie but there haven't been great numbers taking to wing for the most part. Occasionally, however, major hatches have occurred and while these are short-lived, it's amazing to see. At these times, watch for rising fish and try an emerger. Nymphs will more effective whenever there is an absence of hatches witch will be most of the time.

Despite decent water conditions on the Santiam system, without many fish in the river, a nice day on the Santiams is just that. As the weeks go by and if summer steelhead numbers continue to build, there may be worthwhile fishing.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) reports, "The Clackamas is at premium fishing level and late winter steelhead are present in good numbers. Also present are a few early summer steelhead and successful anglers are occasionally rewarded with the hottest, brightest steelhead available. The water has been running on the clearer side all season long and fishermen are adjusting their tactics accordingly. The bobber and jig method is producing best for both boaters and shore bound anglers. Dime

size clusters of roe with a touch of yarn are also a favorite bait for Clackamas steelhead. Bank fishermen are doing best between Rivermill Dam and Barton, at all the popular access points, while boat fishermen are scoring best between Barton and Riverside parks. Expect the run to hold up through mid-April.

Sandy River regulars are still scoring with late winter and early summer steelhead. Drift boaters and bank anglers are doing best between Oxbow park and Dabney Park. The water is on a slow drop and running clear so lighter leaders and subdued presentations are called for. Drift boats pulling plugs have been scoring well as do float fishers, fishing jigs. Smelt are thick in the lower river and have been spotted up to Dabney Park. River smelt are now federally protected and harvesting them is restricted."

The Guide's Forecast – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) predicts, "Both the Clackamas and Sandy Rivers are still putting out decent numbers of both winter and summer steelhead. Many of the winter fish are wild and almost all of the summers are of hatchery origin and perfect for the grill. Fresh, early summer steelhead are prime table fare, full of fat with firm pink meat. The best tasting big trout you will ever eat. Both bank and boat anglers are doing well and the action should hold up through the middle of April. Water level and clarity become key to late season success and as long as we have mild temps to keep the snow melting, which in turn keeps the levels up. AND we get the sporadic rain that puts a little color into the tributaries which keeps the mainstem from running too clear, we will have water condition that lengthen the window of good opportunity. Bobber and jig set-ups are by far the most popular method to catch late season steelhead. Boaters are doing well pulling plugs as well and the new 3.5 Magip by Yakima Bait Company has been the shining star this season, with metallic red combinations getting most of the attention."

North Coast Fishing Report – As the weeks wane for good opportunity for winter steelhead, most anglers are relieved to see it go. Mediocre results are still coming from all north coast streams with guides reporting some days are good while most are a struggle. I fished the Wilson with NW icon Jim Martin on Friday, March 22nd, yielding 3 opportunities for 2 hatchery fish. We drifted from Vanderzanden's to Sollie Smith pulling plugs, driftfishing and side-drifting our way downstream. That's a lot of water for 3 bites. We saw other fish caught too however and following along the theme of this year, some quality sized fish too. Traffic has been rather light even with the fact this is spring break.

Of course the Nestucca is also getting some pressure with hit and miss fishing on this system as well. Veteran guides are having to grind it out but typically finding some success for a full day's effort. Side-drifters continue to rule the roost over here but flows are starting to drop enough now to make plug pulling a strong option. Only the lower reaches are viable now with the dropping flows.

The Trask is not drawing much attention but a fair run of wild fish are showing and late March into early April is really peak time over here. Again, lower reaches are the target area as upper reaches become treacherous in the dropping flows.

The mainstem Nehalem should be coming on-line after our last rain freshet last week. I plan on fishing it on Friday but it should be in ideal condition right now. Reports from the Salmonberry are encouraging but it's a tough river to produce on. Anglers are spotting more fish than they are catching.

Small streams such as the Necanicum, North Fork and Kilchis River do have fish in them but they'll be pretty spooky under the current conditions. Bank anglers will have the best access to

them but anglers need to pay close attention to closures on many of these systems. DO check regulations before venturing out as many of these streams close after March 31st.

Further south, the Siletz River has produced on-again, off-again results for steelheaders. This fishery is also clearly winding down but side-drifters continue to take fish if you remain persistent in your effort.

Sturgeon anglers are non-existent although reports from the few that are trying are not encouraging. Maybe the population has already realized that there is a banner run of smelt in the mainstem Columbia right now?

There is lots of trout opportunities during this spring break time. The lakes on the north coast have been amply stocked.

Bottomfishing has been excellent and charter boats have been taking advantage of both deep reef and nearshore opportunities. From Depoe Bay to Garibaldi, it's nice to be on big blue again and bottomfish are hungry out there. This is often the peak time for good lingcod and sea bass opportunity.

Saturday, April 13th, will mark the 24th year for the annual fin clipping at Whiskey Creek Volunteer Salmon hatchery. About 100,000 Spring Chinook smolts need to be clipped which will require 300 to 400 volunteers. No experience is necessary and on the job training will be provided. Coffee and doughnuts will be served at 8 AM with work starting at 9 AM. A BBQ lunch will be available at noon with work wrapping up around 2 PM. From Tillamook follow the signs to Cape Look Out State Park. The hatchery is two miles north of the Park. Turn right toward Netarts Bay from downtown Tillamook and watch for a sign at each intersection that says fish with an arrow. It's fun and is a way for each of us to give back to the fishery we all enjoy.

Cape Meares Lake, Coffenbury Lake, Cullaby Lake, Devil's Lake, Hebo Lake, Lake Lytle, Loren's Pond, Lost Lake (Clatsop County), Nedonna Pond, Smith Lake, South Lake, Spring Lake, Sunset Lake, Tahoe Lake, Town Lake and Vernonia Pond are scheduled to be stocked with trout for spring breakers.

The Guide's Forecast – Steelheaders are about to wind up their season. After what has been a challenging year, steelheading should return to better times next year as a much better coho forecast is in the mix for fall. Although there is still at least one week of better opportunity, when adult returns are compromised so was the expended success in the early and later parts of the season.

Rivers remain low however which will further challenge steelheaders this week. With no significant weather forecast in site, north coast systems both large and small will experience challenging conditions. Anglers should stick to the lower reaches of larger streams such as the Wilson, Trask, Nestucca and Nehalem Rivers. These larger systems will most likely produce the better numbers, especially in a waning run. Small baits or single beads will be called for in these low water conditions as fish will be spooking and lying in the deeper broken surface slots of these lower reaches.

Many smaller streams close on March 31st, so check the regulations for the body of water you plan to fish. Systems that don't have hatchery salmon or steelhead in the spring and summer months are the ones most likely to close at the end of the month.

Spring chinook are next on tap with the north coast season opening April 1st. Summer steelhead are also available although both species are still four to six weeks away from viable catches. Both chinook and steelhead may be retained as long as they are missing their adipose fins.

Salmon seekers have another option however, as the ocean south of Cape Falcon opened in mid-march. Effort has been lite but in years past fairly good success can be found in March and early April.

Most saltwater sportsman have been pursuing bottom fish under ideal ocean conditions. Flat calm seas late in the week yielded excellent catches of bottom fish both seabass and lingcod coast wide. It did not really seem to matter what you used to pursue your target, but lingcod seemed to be more apt to bite bait.

Ocean crabbing has been just fair but crab are in good shape this time of year. These Dungeness make for a nice bonus especially when you can harvest them on flat seas. Only a few hiccups in ocean weather this weekend but overall it looks as if the ocean will continue to offer up a strong bottom fishing option for a while. Don't overlook the minus tide series this weekend as razor clams become an option. A calm surf should yield easy limits but you won't be alone out there as spring break is still upon us.

Central & South Coast Reports – Offshore bottom fishing has been good this week with friendly conditions this week although not everyone has managed to take two ling cod and seven rockfish limits. Anglers will be limited to depths of 30 fathoms or less starting April 1. Crabbing has been fair.

The ocean is scheduled to remain open for open for Chinook fishing until April 15th. Ocean salmon seasons from May 1st through April 20, 2014 are in discussion by the PMFC with an announcement coming by April 11th.

In years past, cabezon retention was allowed starting April 1st but not so this year. These fish may not be retained until July.

Nearshore halibut will open from Cape Falcon to Humbug Mountain on May 2nd with all-depth fishing opening May 9-11. We'll advise of additional dates a little closer to the season.

Boats targeting ocean Chinook out of Newport and Depoe Bay reported success with come returning to the docks with limits. With bottom fish anglers occasionally hooking Chinook and may keep them if they have a tag, the ODFW cautions that to be sure all those on board after the salmon is boated bend the barbs on their hooks or switch to barbless as soon as a salmon is landed.

Ocean conditions are forecast to remain very mild on Friday this week, then increase slightly for the weekend but long periods will continue, allowing all but the smallest craft to cross bars for weekend fishing.

Surf perch fishing has excellent on the south coast this week in mild ocean conditions. Various baits are effective as are appropriately-sized Berkeley Gulp soft plastics, particularly when the bite is really on.

Winter steelhead are still being caught on the Siletz as that season winds dawn but a few summers have also been taken over the past week. Pink plastic worms rigged wacky styly have been accounting for hookups. Please Email us if you're not familiar with this rigging.

Although the ocean Chinook season opened mid-March, targeted effort has been very light with most reports of hookups coming from anglers targeting bottomfish. Over the past weekend, one boat returned with limits of rockfish and ling cod for the boat along with a nice Chinook which couldn't resist a shrimp fly. Crabbing has remained slow this week in Winchester Bay. With mild ocean swells, South Jetty rock fishers have caught greenling, rockfish and striped surf perch. Springer hopefuls on the mainstem near Elkton have been mostly disappointed although Kwikfish have been getting hit with native steelhead sometimes the culprit. A few nice Chinook are being landed on the Scottsburg stretch. Expect fair to good catch-and release steelheading for natives on the North Fork from Glide to the forks. River flows are forecast to remain stable. Fishing in the flies-only stretch has been slow to fair. No spring Chinook have been counted at Winchester Dam as yet. With hatchery steelhead entering the South Umpqua early this year in better than average spring flows, fishing has been worthwhile over the past week.

Boats launching out of Charleston earlier this week have done well for ocean Chinook. Crabbing should be good in Coos Bay over the Easter weekend, although crabbers report a preponderance of females showing up in nets and traps. Winter steelhead have been caught in the usual locations with the South Coos, West Fork Millicoma and East Fork Millicoma producing fish although water conditions are less than ideal. This will be the last weekend for South Coos access above the Dellwood Gate by permit from Weyerhaeuser. The Coos system will remain open through April 30th.

While there are few bright winters amongst the dark and/or spawned out kelts on the Coquille, steelheaders are hooking up occasionally here using drifted eggs or bobber and jig.

A bag limit of three hatchery steelhead per day has been allowed on the Coos, Coquille, and Tenmile basins since January 1 but there have been no reports of anyone pulling off this three of a kind.

Catches of deep-water lings have continued excellent this week out of Gold Beach with most boats taking limits. The opportunity to access any depth of water for bottom-dwellers comes to a close this weekend, however, with Sunday, March 31st the last day for fishing in depths greater than 180 feet. On a brighter note, ling cod catches are good nearshore for anglers using various colors of jigs. Several Chinook have been taken by bottom fishers. These fish have to be released here. Spring Chinook results have been spotty on the lower Rogue although it's still early to expect reliable catches. Springers entered the river on freshet which occurred late last week with most winter steelhead moving upriver. The river has since dropped and will remain stable through the first few days of April. Boats sitting on anchovy/spinner rigs account for the greater number of hookups on this stretch. Storm fronts are forecast to bring another wave of precipitation, consequent rise in water levels and more salmon. Middle Rogue steelheading is reliable, as is usually the cast for this time of year as winters make their way to the Applegate River. Side-drifting good-quality cured eggs or yarn is effective. Bank anglers will hook up by drifting bait, corkies or yarn balls. Flows are currently too low for best results but that situation will turn around in the second week of April if rainfall hits are predicted. The upper Rogue produced winters as rains added water and color to the river but it has dropped and cleared this week. Expect the river to be skinny for weekend fishing.

Bottom fishing has been excellent out of Brookings with mild ocean conditions and light winds. On the Chetco, catches of winter steelhead are a mix of a very few bright fish amidst those which have turned dark and spawned out downrunners. It's late in the season to expect much here. The last day to try is March 31st as the Chetco will be closed starting April 1.

The Elk will produce the occasional bright winter steelhead with the next freshet but this winter fishery is well into the wind-down phase. The last day for fishing on the Elk is Easter Sunday.

The surface of Diamond Lake has about four inches of ice covered with a foot of packed snow with ice fishing ongoing. The catch rate has remained flat this year at one fish for every two hours of effort with most rainbows in the 12 to 16 inch range. Call 1-800-733-7593, ext 236 or 238 for the latest updates on ice fishing conditions. Time is running out for ice fishers as the thaw is likely to start in just a couple of weeks.

Cooper Creek Reservoir and Galesville Reservoir are scheduled to be stocked with hatchery trout.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Pro Guide Mac Huff (800-940-3688) Reports, "Fishing this week in the Grande Ronde in southeast Washington has been stellar. The state creel from last week tallied under 3 hours per fish – AWESOME! Cold weather kept the river steady to down-trending all week, which certainly benefitted angling. Considering the dismal fishing that Snake River steelhead fisheries produced through the fall it is terrific that spring fishing is "normal." This week's weather forecast could jeopardize the current good conditions if the forecast for warmer nights occurs and turns the trend around on water levels, but only time will tell. Until then, there is some excellent steelhead fishing being had."

Despite the appearance of highly-anticipated March Browns on the lower Deschutes, Blue-Winged-Olives are of greatest interest to the redsides as they should be to fly fishers. Expect this to be the case through April. In addition to those patterns, caddis, Skwalla Stone fly and midge patterns will be effective at times.

Crooked River fly fishers have continued to enjoy fair to good results in flows less than 80 cfs although most of the action has been on nymphs. Tagged redsides or whitefish should be released after noting the tag color and number, fish length and location caught, then reported to the ODFW at 541-447-5111 ext. 24 or by Email to timothy.k.porter@state.or.us. While it was still fishing well on Wednesday this week, expect to see the springtime increase in flows any time now.

With the Metolius Arm of Lake Billy Chinook open, catches of bull trout have been good. Be sure to obtain a tribal permit to fish here, however. Comparisons of catch rates this year compared to 2012 show a marked improvement. Kokanee fishing has been slow.

Fishing is fair to good for trollers at Ochoco Reservoir for trout to 18 inches.

Kokanee fishing has remained fair at Green Peter Reservoir. Kokanee are small at this time of year and the meat is not fully colored but they are decent table fare.

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 Moccrocks. 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.

TGF Inbox - Reader E-mail

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Random Links

Rockfish information including a recompression video:

http://www.dfw.state.or.us/MRP/finfish/groundfish_sport/index.asp

Watch out for fake fire extinguishers:

http://marinelog.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3778:coast-guard-warns-on-fake-fire-extinguishers

Crabbing data from the ODFW:

<http://www.dfw.state.or.us/MRP/shellfish/crab/reports.asp>

GOOD LUCK!