

The Guide's Forecast - volume 15 issue number 16

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **April 12th – April 18th, 2013**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- Spring Chinook fishing on the Willamette River remains sporadic. Small flurries of fish are occasionally caught in all the usual places, but many anglers are still singing the blues. Every third or fourth day, a good report of 25 nets spotted will come from the head of Multnomah Channel. The Columbia River at Davis Bar continues to produce sporadic results but should be consistent through the closure.

The lower McKenzie has been fishing very well. March Browns love rainy weather and redsides love March Browns. When the hatch is on, fishing has been great for fly anglers.

Counts of summer steelhead are gradually ramping up although fewer than 1,400 have crossed, a stronger showing than the last couple of seasons. Santiam fishing is dependent on these Willamette fish. Hatchery fish are being recycled from the hatchery down to Waterloo on the South Santiam to allow anglers another chance at them.

Steelhead fishing on the Clackamas River is tapering off, but local die-hard's continue to squeak out a fish or two. With warmer temps and spring run-off in full swing, the river remains on the high side. The upper river will fish better in this case so anglers would be wise to focus their efforts upstream.

The Sandy River still offers mediocre opportunity for late winter and early summer steelhead. Here, spring run-off has yet to take hold and the river remains very fishable. The water between Oxbow Park and Dabney Park has the most to offer for boaters while the upper river fares better for bank bound anglers.

Northwest – Spring chinook are the primary focus in the district with a noticeable up-tick in catches in the lower Columbia River. Clifton Channel at Tenasillahe Island has been especially productive but catches may slow with the recent river rise. Managers will meet today to discuss the recreational catch to date and determine if more time is warranted. The gillnet fleet fished on Tuesday and did well but the surprise was the presence of shad in the catch. One boat brought in 20 shad for the 9 hour opening; shad typically don't begin to show for another month.

Steelheaders were forced to take a hiatus for part of the week as rain-swollen rivers put most viable systems out of reach. The Wilson, Trask and Nestucca Rivers are just now coming into shape and should fish fair into the weekend. Winter steelhead, both fresh and spent, along with an occasional summer steelhead should be available. Still a month away from peak, the district's first spring chinook should show in the coming days.

After a week of rough ocean conditions, a window of opportunity may come about as early as Friday. Ocean fishing for sea bass and lingcod should be good. Rumors of productive chinook fishing relatively near-shore were reported last week out of Garibaldi.

Crabbing remains best in the ocean when conditions allow but only fair in north coast estuaries.

Southwest- Springtime weather in Oregon can be tumultuous, as has been the case recently. Between storm fronts, central coast offshore anglers have enjoyed good results for lingcod and rockfish. Ocean Chinook is open through April 15th although an extension or additional dates will be announced shortly.

Offshore conditions are marginal this week but there should be opportunities for a quick morning jaunt for bottomfish at nearshore reefs and kelp beds.

Fishing for red-tail surf perch will be good but only on days when wave action and tidal stages cooperate with beach anglers.

Most south coast steelheaders are hanging up their gear this late in the season and targeting spring chinook which are just getting underway.

Umpqua mainstem flows hit 16,000 cfs overnight on April 8th but will be dropping this week. Early spring chinook fishing should be fair to good as the water clears. Low water woes on the South Umpqua were alleviated with rainfall over the past weekend but it will be dropping rapidly.

While the lower Rogue was on the rise and turning muddy into the early hours of Tuesday, April 9th, it has been dropping since. This freshet will ensure decent numbers of chinook will await weekend springer hopefuls. Spring chinook have been running large this season. The middle river was also subject to high, roiled water as storms passed through but will be recovering this week. Upper river steelheaders are taking the occasional bright steelhead amidst the dark and spawned-out specimens. A few springers will be their way into the Cole Rivers Hatchery facility. Beware that access from the Hatchery Hole to McGregor Falls will be closing at 7 PM.

Offshore anglers have taken limits of lingcod and good catches of rockfish whenever ocean conditions have allowed launches. The Chetco River is now closed to fishing.

Eastern – Hatches on the lower Deschutes are light and variable so nymphing remains the most effective tactic. Pelton Dam to the Northern Reservation Boundary opens April 27. Although March Browns are just getting underway, fly anglers are already anticipating the Salmonfly hatch.

Fall River has been rewarding fly anglers with fair to good catches although it's been on one day, off the next.

Mann Lake has been fishing well for fly anglers using wet patterns.

SW Washington- Spring chinook are starting to show on the Cowlitz River. Although the run isn't predicted to be an exceptional one, fishable numbers will grow in the coming weeks.

The Kalama and Lewis are fair at best and spring chinook numbers are expected to be low.

With just over 900 chinook over Bonneville Dam, excitement is building for the Drano Lake fishery. Catches have been tallied and should increase daily although the peak is still 2 weeks away.

Columbia River Fishing Report – Action on the lower Columbia is certainly heating up. Spring Chinook catches early in the week were fantastic with some boats touting double digit opportunities. Plug fishermen were doing the best on the early morning outgoing tides with anchor fishermen reporting good success from Westport downstream. One boat fishing at the head of Tenasillahe Island reporting getting 18 takedowns.

Trollers working Clifton Channel and the Aldrich Point area were also taking some fish but anchor fishermen using plugs seem to clearly out-produce the trollers. It does however seem to be

inconsistent and a large part of an anchor anglers success is if you happen to anchor in the right migration path. There were some fair catches of springers falling to trollers at the top of Tenasillahe Island on Thursday.

Action was limited around Prescott Beach on Thursday but both boaters and bank anglers were producing some spring Chinook catches. Anglers were noting a distinct difference in the water color by Thursday. A good deluge hit the Willamette Valley on Wednesday, which could further compromise what has been ideal water conditions to fish in.

The Guide's Forecast – With only one day left to fish the lower Columbia, there won't be much to forecast following Friday's closure. You should get out and fish on Friday however! The lower river will continue to see turbid water conditions but given the fact that river flows and color has remained quite stable throughout the season and catchable numbers of fish are present, your chance at a fish or more is quite realistic.

It will be an outgoing tide for much of the morning so anglers will be inclined to drop anchor and plug fish. Although it's not a bad strategy, anglers should be prepared to troll herring as well as this not only seems to be an effective strategy on incoming tide, but on the outgoing tide as well.

The usual wing-dams and along channel edges is most likely to produce results. It is a big river, especially when the run size is less than ideal. It's fortunate however that we have relatively low-water conditions and we're entering peak migration period.

Scent will be a more necessary tool in the cloudy water conditions.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) reports, "Spring Chinook fishing on the Willamette river remains sporadic. Small flurries of fish are occasionally caught in all the usual places, but many anglers are still singing the blues. Every third or fourth day, a good report of 25 nets spotted will come from the head of Multnomah Channel. Best advice is to go fishing and hope you land on a good day. The lower Columbia River continues to dole out the same scenario's. Expect fishing to improve on both rivers. The Columbia River will remain open through April 12th."

McKenzie water levels spiked on Monday this week but have been dropping since then. The river is shaping up to provide excellent spring fishing conditions by the coming weekend.

Rising since the 1st of April, the South Santiam is forecast to be dropping rapidly as the weekend approaches. Water conditions on the North Santiam will also be moderating over the coming week. We always look at Willamette Falls fish counts to determine the potential at the Santiams. True, not all steelhead make the turn on their way upriver but a significant percentage call (or think) this river home.

ODFW sez, "A free family fishing event will occur at Cottage Grove Pond east of Cottage Grove off Row River Road on Sat. April 13 from 9:30-1:30pm. All equipment and instruction provided. No pre-registration required. Fishing licenses are required for anglers over 13 years of age. Contact the Springfield ODFW office at 541-726-3515 for additional information."

An online fishing report mentioned "500 foot long trout this week." We don't know of any fish that large, bur here is a list of Willamette Valley plantings.

Canby Pond, Sheridan Pond, Alton Baker Canal, Blue River Reservoir, Cottage Grove Pond, Dexter Reservoir, E. E. Wilson Pond, Green Peter Reservoir, Junction City Pond, Timber Linn Lake and Waverly Lake are scheduled to be stocked with hatchery trout.

The Guide's Forecast – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) predicts, "The water is up on the Columbia river, but in comparison to previous years, it's at a very fishable level. That being said, it will be closed after Friday the 12th and all points are moot. Fishing has been on the slow side overall, with a few isolated flurries of activity making the news. The lower river has been more consistent while the river above St Helens has been downright poor, other than a few reported meager bites. It's only speculation, but as the days trudge on, anglers are becoming less and less optimistic that the run will materialize at all. Just as easy, and it's happened in the past, the bulk of the run could show up a day or two after Fridays closure. Nonetheless, we have the Willamette to fall back on and the catch rate here is more depressing than the Columbia's. Flow and turbidity have taken a jump, but not so bad that it halts all effort and fishability. I can't forget that the Columbia's smelt run was a month and a half late, so the optimistic side of me is hoping the same falls true for the springers. Best reports are coming from the Multnomah Channel and the head of the Channel. From there upstream, the reports of salmon caught are far less frequent. Both Sellwood and Oregon City are ghost towns with one to three fish reported every couple of days. Oregon City has very low effort from boaters and the bank line-up at Meldrum bar has holes in it, when its normally elbow to elbow in mid-April. For the optimistic troller, plug cut herring in the green label size will be your best bet, fished 40 inches behind an in-line flasher. Fish it 10-20 pulls with 6 or 8 ounces of lead and troll as slow as you can while maintaining a spinning bait. Further upriver where there is substantially more current, prawns, sandshrimp and cured roe come into play as the favored baits, either forward trolled, back-trolled or back-bounced. With Wednesdays rainstorms, it's likely that the Willamette river will become murkier yet by the weekend. If the turbidity reading is less than 12 and on the drop, you still have opportunity. Skyward of 12 and your best bet is to stay home and get the honey-do's out of the way."

The March Brown hatch has been epic this year and fly fishers may expect to continue to see some on overcast or drizzly days. Blue-winged Olives and Caddis will also be on the wing. In the absence of hatches, rely on standard nymphs such as hare's ear and Prince Nymphs.

Summer steelhead are crossing at Willamette Falls in steady although modest number. While these counts exceed those as of the same date in 2011 and 2012, the total as of April 10th was just 1,500. That's not a great many summer steelhead to disperse significant number to the Santiams. A few fish are being caught here and there but a few fish sums up the population this early in the season.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports –Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) reports, "Steelhead fishing on the Clackamas river is tapering off, but local die-hard's continue to squeak out a fish or two. With warmer temps and spring run-off in full swing, the river remains on the high side. The upper river will fish better in this case so anglers will be wise to focus their efforts upstream. The Sandy river still offers mediocre opportunity for late winter and early summer steelhead. Here, spring run-off has yet to take hold and the river remains very fishable. The water between Oxbow Park and Dabney Park have the most to offer for boaters while the upper river fares better for bank bound anglers."

The Guide's Forecast – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) predicts, "The Clackamas River has been running high and on a very slow drop. Although there is little angler effort with the prevailing conditions, a few relentless steelhead fishermen are picking up the

occasional late straggler. The upper river above Barton will offer the best opportunity with the higher flows.

Over on the Sandy River, spring run-off is in effect and high water is the name of the game. The upper river will offer up some opportunity for the adventurous angler and plunking on the lower river might also produce. The river is scheduled to drop slowly through the weekend and hit favorable fishing levels by the weekend. By this time, a few late winter broodstock steelhead will be available as will increasing numbers of fresh hatchery summer steelhead. Hardware produces well for bank anglers this time of year and would be well advised to carry an assortment of spoons and spinners in the vest. Boaters do well back trolling plugs and casting bobber and jig set-ups. However, never launch the boat with a carton or two of fresh sandshrimp. Take note: SUMMER STEELHEAD LOVE SANDSHRIMP!"

North Coast Fishing Report – Steelheaders got one last opportunity with the weekend deluge. River systems starting with the smallest ones, such as the Kilchis began producing on Tuesday. By Wednesday, the larger systems such as the Wilson and Nestucca were beginning to produce good numbers of fish. One reliable report from the Wilson on Wednesday tallied a 10 for 12 run between the Siskeyville put-in and the river gauge hole. The guide reported all 10 of the fish they landed were fresh, bright steelhead. Still under ideal conditions, the river is still fishing well late this week. Although anglers can still expect a fair chance at fish over the weekend, it certainly won't be as epic as it was mid-week. The strong late-season showing on these systems seemed inevitable but given the poor early season production and the fact many anglers are pursuing spring chinook during the remaining few days of the Columbia fishery, it was a wide-open river system for much of this week. Side-drifters continued to rule the roost but with the higher flows, bait was out-producing smaller offerings such as beads.

The Nestucca system also produced fair on Wednesday with the upper reaches most viable in the higher flows. Like the Wilson, traffic on the Nestucca has been light with little anticipation following a mediocre at best season this year. With fewer boats on the water, fewer reports are coming in but it appears on this system as well, some of the finest opportunity of the season came following the weekend rain freshet.

The Trask River, one of the more viable north coast systems in April, is a prime producer. Higher flows at mid-week, and given the fact the Trask has a good dispersal rate of natives throughout the system, the Stone's Camp to upper Peninsula drift would have been a prime target at mid-week. Again, with such low traffic, reports are sparse but the action should have been quite good. It is a wild fish show on this system.

The Nehalem remains too high to produce. Some reaches and tributaries of this system are now closed.

With rough conditions offshore, boaters had not opportunity to pursue saltwater species. That could change in the near future although forecasts remain highly variable right now.

Crabbers were also not impressed with the weather as little effort existed this week.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife invites young anglers to take part in its family fishing event Saturday, April 20 at Hebo Lake from 9 AM. to 2 PM The event is free and ODFW staff and volunteers will be on hand to assist youngsters who want to learn how to fish. The lake will be stocked with 3,000 rainbow trout just prior to the event (*that's 1,500 fish per acre - Ed.*). The ODFW will provide equipment including rods, reels and bait. Angling education instructors and volunteers will be present to answer questions and offer assistance

Cape Meares Lake, Carter Lake, Cleawox Lake, Coffenbury Lake, Devil's Lake, Hebo Lake, Lake Lytle, Loren's Pond, Lost Lake (Clatsop County), Nedonna Pond, North Lake, South Lake, Smith Lake, Tahoe Lake, Town Lake and Vernonia Pond are scheduled to be planted with trout this week.

The Guide's Forecast – Steelheaders have officially seen the last of the good fishing this week but that doesn't mean viable options are gone. Flows and color for the "Big 3" on the north coast will remain good through the weekend. Starting with the Wilson, effort will likely remain low as folks remain focused on Willamette Valley springers. The Columbia closure on Friday could re-invigorate some interest in steelhead fishing by the weekend however. None-the-less, steelheaders on the Wilson should find a mix of bright winter-run, a few spawned out fish too. A rare summer steelhead is also likely to show in the catch as well. Spring chinook are now officially an option as well but anglers trying to target an early returning fish will largely be wasting their time. By the weekend, flows are likely to drop to where anglers may want to focus their efforts in the lower reaches of these systems. The Wilson downstream of Mills Bridge will likely become one of the stronger candidates for success.

The Nestucca will largely mimic the Wilson in the sense that a mix of fresh and spent steelhead will be available. Anglers working the water hard should expect results but weekend warriors will have missed the epic opportunity that anglers witnessed mid-week.

The Trask River should be in full swing for steelheaders working the upper reaches. The upper reaches however are best suited for bank anglers in the dropping flows. April 1st closures on this system exist as well so check regulations here as well. Anglers fishing the lower reaches should also find an occasional steelhead but you would have to be pretty motivated to target a spring chinook this early in the season. Mid-April spring chinook catches however are frequently documented.

With an unstable offshore forecast, it looks as if bottomfishers and saltwater salmon anglers are out of luck. Unsettled weather will make for less than ideal conditions for estuary crabbers as well.

Central & South Coast Reports – Offshore bottom fishing was good during the rare day this week when boats could get out of the ports of Depoe Bay and Newport. While rockfish were cooperative, ling cod fishing was slow. On recent trips, anglers had taking prodigious catches of lings despite the depth limitation of 30 fathoms or less which started at the beginning of April. This week they were scarce.

Ocean Chinook fishing has been fair to good for those who have been able to get out and target these fish. Trolling at 60 to 80 feet over 100 to 120 feet of water has produced salmon recently. The season is scheduled to remain open through April 30th (this date was reported to TGF as April 15th but the ODFW states the 30th as the correct closure date). The Pacific Fishery Management Council will announce dates from May 1 through April 30, 2014 later today, April 11th, following a public meeting. If this information becomes available prior to our deadline, we will report it here..

UPDATE: *At 1:57 today, April 11th, this came in:* **"4/11/13 ACTION NOTICE:** The Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) has adopted a set of final ocean salmon fishery seasons. These seasons must still be approved by the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Secretary of the Department of Commerce, as well as, the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission before becoming law. The final PFMC proposed commercial and sport regulations are available at the

PFMC website at <http://www.pcouncil.org/2013/04/25020/council-adopted-draft-salmon-mgmt-measures-april13/>

"A graphic summary of the commercial seasons proposed off Oregon is available here: http://www.dfw.state.or.us/MRP/salmon/Regulations/docs/2013_Troll_Salmon_Map.pdf. Troll fishers are also advised to make sure to print and review the full regulation package from the PFMC prior to fishing.

A graphic summary of the recreational seasons is available here: http://www.dfw.state.or.us/MRP/salmon/Regulations/docs/2013_Sport_Ocean_Salmon_Map.pdf and a synopsis of the regulations is available in the Sport Season Regulation Summary here: http://www.dfw.state.or.us/MRP/salmon/Regulations/docs/2013_Sport_Ocean_Salmon_Regs.pdf"

Forecasts for offshore conditions no longer indicate early day windows for brief, nearshore forays in the coming weekend. This is a change from indications to the contrary earlier this week. Opportunities recur in the coming week, but that may change with the unsettled weather of an Oregon springtime.

When the ocean does lay down and winds moderate, beach casters may expect to find action with redbait surf perch in many location. Just find a steep beach and fish it on the last two hours of an incoming tide. Not all location will produce, but that's true of any kind of fishing, isn't it? Results will continue to improve through April and May.

The annual Siletz River clean-up, sponsored by the ODFW, will take place Saturday, April 13 from 9 AM to 2 PM. Meet at Hee Hee Illahee Park in Siletz where volunteers will be dispersed to either walk the banks of the river or float in order to do clean-up. Pre-register at siletzwatershedcouncil@gmail.com or show up the day of the event. To volunteer a drift boat, call 503-621-2433 before April 13th. This is an opportunity to give back to the river!

Ocean salmon trollers launching out of Reedsport are staying within a couple of miles of Winchester Bay jaws with fair to good success. Spring Chinook seem to be making an early appearance on the lower Umpqua this season. Several reports have been seen of fish hooked by rock fishers inside Winchester Bay along the jetty. The Umpqua mainstem has produced a number of early fish but the large fish for which this system is so well known have yet to appear. Shad will be in the picture when warmer weather raises water temperatures. With a better-than-average return of winter steelhead this season, catch-and-release fishing should be worthwhile on the North Umpqua with the river predicted to remain in decent shape over the coming week. Affected only slightly by rainfall earlier this week, the South Umpqua is low for best results but has fair numbers of hatchery steelhead throughout.

Rock and jetty fishers have been taking fair to good numbers of greenling, rockfish and a few ling cod inside Coos Bay. Crabbing has been slow. Although the Coos River will remain open for steelheading through April, most of the fish available are of poor quality, either dark or spawned-out.

Lower Rogue water levels, dropping since the last storm front passed through on April 8th, will continue to drop and clear through the weekend. The spring Chinook run has started here and this latest freshet is sure to have fresh fish entering the river. The past weekend produced a few, even in muddy water so prospects are decant in better water conditions this week. Expect to see catches improve in May and June as the season gets into full swing. water flow in the middle Rogue have been moderating since mid-day Monday this week. A few springers should be around

but this stretch has been primarily a steelhead fishery. The upper river was muddy early this week but should be clearing with drier weather this week. Winter steelhead have been entering the hatchery in fair to good number but no springers have been seen as of the latest report. The Rogue is closed to trout fishing until May 25th.

Ice fishing is done at Diamond Lake for 2013 with the surface reduced to thin ice covered with slushy snow. Since there's no open water at this transitional period, fishing is limited to the north side where bank fishers are able to cast to a limited area of open water. Lake conditions will improve daily as air temperatures warm, soon allowing boats to launch.

Lake Marie, Butterfield Lake, Eel Lake, Emigrant Reservoir, Lost Creek Reservoir, Lake Selmac, Willow Lake and Expo Pond are scheduled for trout planting.

Central and Eastern Oregon – While the Deschutes is always open below the reservation to the mouth of the river with the Maupin area fishing well recently, the stretch from the northern boundary to Pelton Dam will open on April 23rd, providing anglers with fresh water to fish. Fly fishers are anxious to fish Mecca Flats. Hatches can be variable and spotty in the springtime but fishing can be quite productive at times. Nymphs will be most effective. Fishing is fair on the middle Deschutes now that the water level has dropped dramatically although levels have been fluctuating.

Metolius fly fishers have been doing well using nymphs with only light hatches appearing recently.

Crooked River flows have moderated somewhat with the latest reading less than 500 cfs. It may require a little added weight to get nymphs down to the trout this week but the river has the potential to drop further in which case, fishing will improve.

Fishing is fair for trollers at Green Peter with the kokanee bite best in the late afternoon. The bite seemed to pick up mid-week but catches are still short of the generous 25-fish limit.

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report for April 2013

Last updated April 4, 2013

North Puget Sound

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

One of the state's most popular fishing openers is scheduled for later in the month, when the **lowland lakes trout season** gets under way. The season begins April 27, when many lakes – stocked with thousands of legal-sized trout – will open for fishing.

But, until then, several year-round fishing lakes have already been stocked with trout and should provide good fishing opportunities early in the month. Waters stocked with trout averaging 10 to 12 inches in length include Alice, Angle, Beaver, Green, Meridian and Sawyer lakes in King County; and Ballinger, Blackmans, Cassidy, Chain, Flowing, Gissberg Ponds (Twin Lakes), Ketchum, Loma, Lost (Devil's), Martha, Panther, Shoecraft, Silver and Tye lakes in Snohomish County.

Information on stocking schedules for rainbow, cutthroat and triploid trout is available on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) [website](#). Anglers should also check the [Fish Washington rule pamphlet](#) before heading out.

Freshwater anglers also can cast for trout on the lower Skagit River. The Skagit, from the mouth to Highway 536 at Mount Vernon, is open from March 28 through April 30 for gamefish. Anglers fishing the lower Skagit River have a daily limit of two trout. Check the [emergency fishing rule change](#) for details.

Salmon fishing also is an option. Several marine areas of Puget Sound are still open for salmon. 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 9 is open only through April 15, while Marine Area 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) is already closed to salmon fishing.

“Anglers really need to put some time in on the water in early spring, when fishing for blackmouth salmon is often pretty spotty,” said Ryan Lothrop, Puget Sound recreational salmon fishing manager.

Lothrop said anglers might want to turn their attention to the Strait of Juan de Fuca where fishing for blackmouth has recently improved, especially off Sekiu. However, time is running out to hook a salmon in Marine Area 5 (Sekiu), as well as Marine Area 6 (eastern Strait). The two areas are open only through April 10.

Meanwhile, saltwater anglers can start planning for **halibut** fishing, which opens in May. Details on the upcoming halibut season are available on [WDFW's website](#).

Prefer shellfish? Puget Sound's **spot shrimp** season is also set to begin in May, and the season is expected to run from one day to several weeks longer in various areas of the Sound, due to policy changes recently adopted by the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission.

“Recreational shrimp fishers will see a real difference in the length of this year's seasons, particularly in the San Juan Islands and the Strait of Juan de Fuca,” said Rich Childers, WDFW shellfish manager. “Sport fisheries in other areas are also likely to pick up some extra fishing days under the updated policy.”

Details on the upcoming shrimp season are available [here](#).

Anglers are reminded that all 2012-2013 Washington state fishing licenses expire at midnight March 31. To keep fishing, anglers 15 years of age and older must purchase a 2013-14 license. Licenses and permits are available [online](#), by phone (1-866-246-9453) and from sporting goods stores and other retail license dealers around the state.

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

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

Anglers can look forward to a number of new fishing opportunities in the weeks ahead, including the opening of the lowland lakes trout-fishing season, shrimping and halibut fishing.

To prepare for the popular **statewide trout opener**, hatchery crews from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) have been working since last year to stock more than 17 million fish in over 600 lakes throughout the state. The statewide [trout-stocking plan](#) shows where those fish are going, county by county.

WDFW has also tentatively scheduled two morning **razor clam** digs this month, one running April 9-14 and the other April 24-30. As usual, final approval of those digs will depend on the results of marine toxin tests, which will be announced about a week ahead of time.

For more information on those digs, see WDFW's [Razor Clam website](#). Also, sport clam and oyster seasons are opening early at **Oak Bay** and **South Indian Island**. For those interested in these areas, please check the [fishing rule change](#).

Whether planning to dig clams or catch trout, everyone age 15 and older will need to purchase a 2013-14 license to participate in the April openings, since current fishing licenses expire at midnight March 31. Licenses are available online (<https://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov/>), by phone (1-866-320-9933) and from license dealers around the state.

Meanwhile, fishing for **salmon** remains an option. Marine areas 5 (Sekiu) and 6 (eastern Strait) are open for chinook through April 10. According to Ryan Lothrop, Puget Sound recreational salmon fishery manager, Sekiu has been a very good choice for anglers seeking salmon.

Marine areas 7 (San Juan Islands), 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island, Skagit Bay), 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner), (11 (Tacoma-Vashon), 12 (Hood Canal) and 13 (South Puget Sound) are also open for salmon fishing in April.

Anglers fishing marine areas 6, 7, 8-1, 8-2, 11 and 12 have a two-salmon daily limit, but must release wild chinook. Those fishing the Strait of Juan de Fuca (marine areas 5 and 13) have a daily limit of one salmon.

Lingcod fishing is also open in marine areas 1-4 under rules described in the Sport Fishing Rules pamphlet. The fishery expands to areas of Puget Sound and the Strait of Juan de Fuca on May 1.

In freshwater, anglers still have an opportunity to hook **wild steelhead** on some rivers on the Olympic Peninsula. 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. Wild steelhead retention continues through April 15 on the Clearwater, Hoh and Quinault rivers, and through April 30 on the other rivers. For more information on steelhead fishing regulations, check the [Fishing in Washington pamphlet](#).

In addition to the fisheries opening this month, anglers can look forward to season's opening in May for halibut and shrimp. For information on the upcoming [halibut season](#), see the news release on the WDFW website. A news release outlining the 2013 [shrimp season](#) is also available on the website.

Southwest Washington

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

The sport fishery for spring chinook salmon on the lower Columbia River has been extended through April 12 under an agreement reached by fishery managers from Washington and Oregon. During that period, the recreational fishery will be closed April 9 to accommodate a possible commercial fishery.

With harvest levels running well below expectations, the two states added six days to the recreational fishing season previously set to continue through April 5.

Through March, anglers had caught just 1,500 adult spring chinook salmon, about 25 percent of the 6,100-fish harvest expected by this point in fishery, said Ron Roler, Columbia River Policy coordinator for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

"The season definitely got off to a slow start, but the bulk of the run is starting to move in," Roler said. "River conditions are excellent – low and warm – so we will be monitoring the fishery closely to make sure the catch doesn't exceed the established guideline."

Guy Norman, WDFW southwest regional director, said fishery managers from both states will watch the catch throughout the extension period and close the fishery earlier if necessary. "We want to keep the fishery open through April 12 – and perhaps even longer – but we have to hold the catch within the guideline," Norman said. "The situation can change very quickly in April when the fish start moving upriver in large numbers."

Norman noted that fishery managers will also meet in May to consider whether potential changes in the run size will allow a late-season opening.

After three years of strong spring chinook returns, this year's fishery is based on a projected run of 141,400 upriver fish, about 25 percent below the 10-year average. By comparison, approximately 203,000 fish destined for areas above Bonneville Dam returned to the Columbia River last year.

Upriver fish make up the bulk of the catch, although spring chinook returning to the Willamette, Cowlitz and other rivers below Bonneville Dam also contribute to the fishery.

Sport fishing for salmon and steelhead is scheduled through April 12 on the lower Columbia River from the mouth upriver to Beacon Rock, and to bank anglers up to the fishing boundary below Bonneville Dam. The daily limit below Bonneville Dam is two adult hatchery-raised fish and no more than one adult chinook.

Anglers fishing the mainstem Columbia River are required to use barbless hooks and release any wild, unmarked salmon, steelhead or cutthroat trout they intercept.

Above Bonneville Dam, the fishery is open to boat and bank anglers on a daily basis 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. The daily limit above the dam is two adult chinook salmon.

Barbless hooks are not currently required on Columbia River tributaries, although that issue will likely be considered during this year's North of Falcon season-setting process.

Fishing for salmon and steelhead remains open on the Cowlitz River and at Drano Lake, consistent with standing rules described in the [Fish Washington](#) rules pamphlet. The Klickitat River will open April 1 under the same rules and limits as last year.

However, fishing on several other tributaries to the Columbia River 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:** 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.

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 Dalles and John Day pools.

Effective April, the annual statewide retention limit for sturgeon is two legal-size fish under a measure recently approved by the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission. The daily limit remains at one legal-sized fish. The change in the annual limit, also adopted by Oregon, is designed to help address the decline of legal-size sturgeon in the lower Columbia River in recent years.

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 through April 30 and from May 11 through June 30. 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) 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:** Retention fishing closed Feb. 10 in Bonneville Pool, but additional days are possible in June. Retention fisheries in the two reservoirs between The Dalles and McNary dams will remain open until their respective 300-fish and 500-fish guidelines are met.

Rather catch some **trout**? Hundreds of lowland lakes open for trout fishing April 30 throughout the state, drawing tens of thousands of anglers out for their first cast of the year. While most lakes in southwest Washington are open year-round, "opening day" does mark the start of trout fishing in such perennial favorites as Mineral Lake, Fort Borst Park Pond, Carlisle Lake, Davis Lake, and Plummer lake (Lewis County), Swift Reservoir, Swift Power Canal, and Kidney Lake (Skamania County) and the Rowland Lakes, Spearfish and Horsethief Lake (Klickitat County).

For news on razor clam openings, see WDFW's [razor clam website](#).

Eastern Washington

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

Some of the region's best **trout** fishing will begin at the end of the month with the lowland lakes season opener on April 27.

"Some of those waters that open April 27 around Spokane that are well-stocked and where fish grow well include Williams, West Medical, Fishtrap, and Clear," said Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) central district fish biologist Randy Osborne in Spokane. "One that we rehabilitated last year that should be very good this season is Fish Lake near Cheney."

Bill Baker, WDFW northeast district fish biologist, said many trout lakes in Ferry, Stevens, and Pend Oreille counties that open on April 27 are traditionally good bets. Those include Stevens County's Waitts, Cedar, Rocky and Starvation lakes; Ferry County's Ellen and Davis lakes; and Pend Oreille County's Diamond, Marshall and Sacheen lakes.

But there's plenty of good fishing to be had until then, too.

The daily bag limit for **walleye** doubles to 16 fish beginning April 1 on Lake Roosevelt, the lower San Poil River, and the lower Spokane River from the mouth at Hwy. 25 bridge upstream to 400 feet below Little Falls Dam. For details check the [emergency fishing rule change](#).

Meanwhile, catch-and-release fishing for both rainbow and cutthroat trout at Amber Lake in southwest Spokane County has been good. Amber is under selective gear rules and shifts to a catch-and-keep season on April 27 when the daily limit will be two trout of at least 14 inches. Rainbows with clipped adipose fins caught at Amber must be released even after April 27.

Coffeepot Lake in Lincoln County is producing rainbow trout, mostly on flies. Coffeepot is under selective gear rules (no bait, artificial flies and lures only, knotless nets), a minimum size limit of 18 inches and daily catch limit of one trout.

Liberty Lake, in eastern Spokane County, is a good bet for brown trout and, as the water warms, **yellow perch** and **crappie**.

Downs Lake in southwest Spokane County receives hatchery "catchable-size" rainbow trout, but it should also fish well this month for **largemouth bass**. Downs also has yellow perch and crappie.

Medical Lake, near the town of the same name in southwest Spokane County, has brown and rainbow trout.

Deer Lake in southern Stevens County, which opened March 1, is finally warming up and likely producing some catches of rainbow and lake trout, with bass, crappie, perch catches not far behind.

Rock Lake, open year-round in Whitman County, is consistently a good spot for brown and rainbow trout. Another year-round trout fishery that provides a secluded and productive experience for anglers willing to walk a mile, is Z-Lake on the Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area in Lincoln County.

In the south end of the region, anglers fishing the Tucannon River impoundments on WDFW's Wooten Wildlife Area have been catching nice rainbow trout. Area manager Kari Dingman said Big Four, Blue, Deer, Rainbow, Spring and Watson lakes are all well-stocked with hatchery trout and warming up.

Anglers are reminded that all fishing rules in the [2012-2013 regulations pamphlet](#) apply throughout the month of April. New rules take effect May 1, 2013, and will be available in pamphlets online and at license dealers later this month.

Anglers are also reminded that all 2012-2013 Washington state fishing licenses expire at midnight March 31. To keep fishing, anglers over 15 years of age must purchase a 2013-14 license. Licenses and permits are available online, by phone (1-866-246-9453) and from sporting goods stores and other retail license dealers around the state.

April 19 is the deadline for registration for the May 4 Kids' Fishing Event at Clear Lake in Spokane County. For details on the registration form, see the [Youth Fishing 2013 Event Calendar](#).

Northcentral Washington

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

Dozens of lakes in the region open to fishing April 1, most in Adams and Grant counties of the Columbia Basin. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) district fish biologist Chad Jackson of Moses

Lake says weather changes can always play and “April Fools” trick on anglers on this opener, so be prepared for fickle spring conditions.

Jackson also reminds anglers age 15 and older they’ll need to have a new fishing license, valid April 1, 2013-March 31, 2014, in hand before participating in this opener. All 2012-2013 Washington state fishing licenses expire at midnight March 31. Licenses and permits are available online, by phone (1-866-246-9453), and from sporting goods stores and other retail license dealers around the state.

Many of the waters opening April 1 are within the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge, including the Pillar-Widgeon chain of lakes, which should provide fair to good **rainbow trout** fishing. One refuge fishery – Para-Juvenile Lake, seven miles northwest of Othello on the Adams-Grant county line – opens April 1 only to anglers under 15 years of age. It’s a good spot to take kids to catch **bass** and **sunfish**.

North and South Teal lakes, among the “Seep Lakes” south of Potholes Reservoir, were rehabilitated in 2010 and restocked each year since with rainbow fry, which have grown to 12-inch catchables. Fishing at both should be good, Jackson says.

Some of the best fishing on the April 1 opener should be at Dry Falls Lake at the north end of Grant County near Coulee City. “This is a selective-gear-rule fishery with an internal combustion motor prohibition and a one-fish daily catch limit, so there’s a lot of catch-and-release fishing,” Jackson said. Most anglers catch more than 10 fish during an outing. Most of the catch is made up of yearling trout ranging in size from 12 to 14 inches, but several carryovers of up to 20 inches have been reported. In addition to rainbows, Dry Falls gets stocked with brown and tiger trout.”

Upper and Lower Hampton Lakes, north of Othello on the wildlife refuge, are usually good producers in this early season, but Jackson said they are in need of the rehabilitation work tentatively planned for this fall. “We need to remove nuisance fish species that impact trout fry survival,” he explained. “There might still be some decent trout in these lakes for the patient angler who wants to find them.”

Two Okanogan County lakes also open April 1 – Spectacle Lake, just south of Loomis, and Washburn Island Pond, a diked oxbow lake off the Columbia River near Fort Okanogan State Park due east of Brewster off Highway 17.

WDFW Okanogan district fish biologist Bob Jateff of Twisp says anglers can expect to catch rainbows in the 10-14 inch range at Spectacle. Washburn Island Pond is a warmwater fishery that provides anglers opportunities for **largemouth bass**, **bluegill**, and the occasional **channel catfish**. Combustible engines may not be used while fishing Washburn.

Several other Okanogan County rainbow trout fisheries shift to catch-and-release only fishing under selective gear rules on April 1. These include Campbell, Cougar, Davis, Green and Lower Green, and Rat lakes.

Jateff notes that Davis Lake, near Winthrop, is still frozen, so anglers should check with local sources before making a trip. When it is ice-free Davis should provide good fishing for rainbows in the 10-14 inch range.

Rat Lake, near Brewster, should provide good fishing for rainbows and browns up to 14 inches. The Green lakes, west of Omak, should provide rainbows in the 11-13 inch range.

Many other trout lakes open April 27, when the single biggest fishing season in the state gets under way.

Jateff said the best bets in Okanogan County will likely be Pearrygin Lake, near Winthrop, with 10-13-inch rainbows; Conconully Lake and Reservoir in the town of Conconully, with lots of rainbow trout and kokanee; Alta Lake, just west of Pateros, rehabilitated in 2011 to remove goldfish, now with excellent fishing for rainbow trout to 15 inches; and Wannacut Lake, near Oroville, with 10-13-inch rainbows.

In Chelan County, a good the opener may be Wapato Lake, with quality rainbows from last year’s fingerling plants, plus yellow perch, **bluegill** and **largemouth bass**, said Travis Maitland, a WDFW district fish biologist. Other Chelan County waters opening April 27 may see catchable-size trout plants delayed, depending on weather, including Wenatchee Heights Lakes, Beehive Reservoir, and Clear, Black, and Lilly lakes. Anglers can check the Catchable Trout Plant Weekly Reports at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/plants/weekly/>.

In Douglas County, Jameson Lake is still a popular fishery and should have some good sized carryovers available. “We also stocked it last fall with about 10,000 catchable-size rainbows that should be very nice size for the opener,” Maitland said. “In addition, Jameson will get 600 large “triploid” rainbows just before the opener.”

Southcentral Washington

(Benton, Franklin, Kittitas and Yakima counties)

Trout fishing takes center stage in April as the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) continues planting thousands of **rainbows**, **kokanee** and **cutthroat** in regional lakes and ponds for the second straight month. Rotary Lake, Tims Lake, Yakima Sportsman Pond, Fio Rito Lakes, Matton Lake – these are just a few of more than two dozen lakes scheduled to receive fish this month. A complete list is posted on WDFW's [trout-stocking website](#).

Most of those fish run from one-third to a half-pound each, but some weigh in at 1½ pounds, said Eric Anderson, a WDFW fish biologist based in Yakima.

"We're putting some hefty, great-looking fish out there this year," Anderson said. "This is a good time to get outdoors and celebrate spring by catching some."

Anderson notes that all anglers 15 and older must have a 2013-14 fishing license to fish for trout and other species after March 31, when 2012-13 licenses expire. Licenses ranging from a three-day razor-clam license to a multi-species combination license are available [online](#), by phone (1-866-246-9453) and from sporting goods stores and other retail license dealers around the state.

Meanwhile, the **spring chinook salmon** got off to a slow start in the lower Columbia River this year, but the upriver run should start arriving in area waters in mid-April, said Paul Hoffarth, a WDFW fish biologist based in the Tri-Cities. "Anglers should keep an eye out for emergency rules that open and close fishing on short notice," he said. For updates, he recommends checking the [department's website](#), the Fishing Hotline (360-902-2500) and local news media.

Sturgeon anglers are also advised to stay abreast of new regulations. As of late March, anglers could still catch and keep legal-size sturgeon in Lake Umatilla (John Day Dam to McNary Dam), but that fishery will close as soon as the 500-fish quota for those waters is reached.

Most **steelhead** sport fisheries are now closed in the Columbia and Snake rivers, although a "bank only" fishery adjacent to WDFW's Ringold Springs Hatchery near the Tri-Cities is open April 1 through April 15. The daily limit is two hatchery steelhead along the Franklin County shoreline from the WDFW marker a quarter-mile downstream from the Ringold irrigation wasteway outlet to the marker a half-mile upstream from Spring Creek.

Rather catch warm-water fish? Catch rates should continue to improve on area rivers for **smallmouth bass**, **channel catfish** and **walleye** in April right through spring.

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Random Links

Petition - Allow Harvest of Sea Lions: <https://petitions.whitehouse.gov/petition/allow-harvest-sea-lions-west-coast-order-save-salmon-and-steelhead-population/XDwwBVR6>

Budget woes - now river gauges:

http://streamstatsags.cr.usgs.gov/ThreatenedGages/gmaps/or_gm_base.html

ODFW says to watch for illegal turtles entering Oregon:

<http://www.dfw.state.or.us/news/2013/march/032713.asp>

GOOD LUCK!!