

The Guide's Forecast - volume 15 issue number 47

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **November 15<sup>th</sup> – November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2013**

**Full length subscribers:** Thanks for your understanding in my passion for pursuing the wily Rocky Mountain elk in Eastern Oregon last week; unfortunately, I'll be eating hot dogs all winter.....Anyway, we're back with another full length version of our newsletter although you didn't miss much last week and you don't have a whole lot to look forward to this week. None-the-less, we appreciate your patronage and we'll continue to deliver you the best product we can! Bob Rees, The Guide's Forecast

**Willamette Valley/Metro** - Salmon fishing below Bonneville Dam is done. Catch and release sturgeon fishing should provide some action.

Very little is happening on the Willamette River. Catch and release Sturgeon fishing is about the only game in town and few anglers are showing any interest. Expect the first winter steelhead to be caught around Thanksgiving at Meldrum Bar.

The rising waters of the McKenzie through November 8th have turned around and are gradually moderating. While the river is still a little high, nymphs will fool redsides here.

Fishing is slow on the North Santiam but coho have continued to cross the Willamette Falls at a rate of 30 or 40 a day. There should be some available to target. It was a slow season for summer steelhead.

Little is available on the Clackamas other than a handful of late summer steelhead and the odd wild coho salmon. Winter steelhead typically show up here the first week of December.

After a poor return of fall coho, Sandy River anglers await the first winter steelhead. Expect a few to show up in the lower river just after Thanksgiving.

**Northwest** – The North Coast Rendezvous ended up producing around 40 chinook for about 120 "angler days" indicating that chinook fishing remains challenging for even some of the region's best. Catches were most productive for driftboat anglers working the lower Wilson and Kilchis Rivers with fewer coming from Tillamook Bay itself. Since the rivers have dropped, focus again turns to Tillamook Bay with the Ghost Hole and Bay City again producing an occasional chinook. Interest has certainly dropped off even though fresh chinook can still be caught into mid-December.

Anglers will keep a keen eye on river levels, where driftboaters can access fair numbers of returning chinook, particularly to the Kilchis and Wilson Rivers. Females, often still bright and laden with sea-lice, can often still cut pale in color, making for poor table fare. Bucks however can be a great holiday bonus as long as they are still sliver-skinned. Sporadic precipitation should keep the lower reaches of north coast systems fishable through the weekend.

The upcoming minus tide series may yield some sturgeon in Tillamook Bay. This fishery may be the last-ditch option for anglers seeking consumptive opportunity for sturgeon in Oregon. November typically marks a winter migration into coastal estuaries where sturgeon forage on clams, shrimp and juvenile Dungeness crab. The west and middle channels of Tillamook Bay often produce fair catches well into the New Year. Sand shrimp will make the best bait.

The minus tide series will also bode well for clam diggers on the north coast. Razors should be available along Clatsop Beaches if the surf forecast remains accurate. Bay crabbing will likely be challenging on the extreme tide series.

The offshore forecast may be conducive to offshore bottomfishing. Deep-reef action should persist for large lingcod but sea bass should also be plentiful along nearshore reefs.

**Southwest-** Certain stretches of the Oregon coast produce particular species of fish on diverse schedules. chinook fishing in starts to shine on the south coast at this time of year. The Elk and Sixes Rivers should provide some of the best late fall opportunities.

Fishing for wild coho has been poor for Tahkenitch and Siltcoos Lake trollers.

While crabbing in bays has been spotty, results should improve as winter approaches. Heavy rains will stall catches but large, deep bays such as Winchester and Coos are most likely to remain productive.

Anglers trolling spinners on the lower Coquille have been landing some large chinook over the past week.

Chinook fishing is slow at Rogue Bay with only the occasional Indian Creek fish hooked. Slow fishing in the lower Rogue should improve with rain. Steelhead catches dropped off to just a few on the middle river. Summers are being taken on the upper river with bait allowed only above Shady Cove boat ramp. A few coho are in the upper Rogue but rarely bite in this stretch.

Anglers stood shoulder-to-shoulder, fishing "guerilla style" following the opening of the Chetco River on November 2nd. Scores of salmon are stacked in holes awaiting the next freshet which would allow upstream progress. Bobbers and bait flung, lines snarled and epithets were spoken. Regardless, fishing has been good.

Elk River anglers fishing the mouth are taking a few chinook.

Trout fishing is expected to improve at Diamond Lake as fish feed heavily in preparation for the winter months ahead. The weather is getting colder and snow has been falling occasionally.

**Eastern** – As predicted, steelheading on the Deschutes has shown some improvement now that chinook spawning is over. With summers scattered throughout the lower river, there are plenty of opportunities. Redsides have been cooperative during daytime Blue-Winged Olive hatches and again late in the day with Caddis patterns.

Low waters of the Crooked River have continued to produce fish. Trout catches are decent in the stretch below Bowman Dam while the river below is producing whitefish.

**SW Washington-** Fishing for both chinook and coho salmon is starting to wind down on most district rivers. Fish are getting dark and anglers are hoping for an improved run of winter steelhead, due to show any week now, starting with the Cowlitz. With coho returns often mimicking winter steelhead returns, anglers shouldn't get too excited.

The department will likely announce late Tuesday, additional razor clam digs tentatively scheduled beginning November 15<sup>th</sup> along several district beaches. Check the WDF&W web site for openings.

**Columbia River Fishing Report** – It's all crabbing, unfortunately, not all the time, on the lower Columbia. The action is good but it's best on the smaller tide series, which we're not on right now. It should remain good until the commercial fleet dumps their pots in at the end of this month. This won't necessarily be a great weekend for crabbing in the lower river but you can likely get a limit if you work your string of pots quickly during the high tide or low tide exchanges. Leave them too long and you'll lose your buoy's underwater to the stronger tides during peak ebb or flood tide. Slack tides do not occur for

very long periods of time during these intense tide exchanges. Next weekend (weekend of the 23<sup>rd</sup>) will offer a much better opportunity.

Fishing is over on the lower Columbia (as if you didn't know that already.....)

**Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** reports, "Salmon fishing below Bonneville Dam is for all purposes done. Numbers of dark, spawning chinook are present on the submerged gravel bars below the dam but anglers are strongly urged to leave them alone. Catch and release sturgeon fishing should provide some action for anglers willing to put in the time. Fishing for salmon from a floating device is not allowed above Beacon Rock."

**The Guide's Forecast** – Not much to do on the lower Columbia this weekend. You may want to look at the razor clam tides along Clatsop Beaches however but be prepared to bring your lanterns as it will be dark out during some of the best tides.

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** reports, "Very little is happening on the Willamette River. Catch and release Sturgeon fishing is about the only game in town, but few anglers are showing any interest. Plunkers are already starting to frequent Meldrum Bar and we can expect the first winter steelhead to be caught sometime around Thanksgiving."

McKenzie water levels which spiked overnight in the first week of November, have been falling back to pre-freshet levels this week. Caddis and Blue-Winged Olives will be patterns of interest but be sure to have a variety of nymphs in brown/orange hues.

Over 18,500 coho have crossed the Falls so statistically, the North Santiam should have over 4,500 within its banks. It's a better bet than the comparatively paltry summer steelhead population. Speaking of which, on November 1st, the ODFW started counting all steelhead at the Falls as winters.

Hagg Lake is producing limits of trout averaging 10 inches or a little better to bait fishers and trollers (tipping their offerings with bait). Spoons, spinners and plugs have been less effective. The last day to access the lake will be Sunday, November 24th. It will be open year around starting in March, 2014.

Alton Baker Canal and Waverly Lake have been planted with hatchery trout.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Another round of heavy precipitation, perhaps over an inch over this coming Friday and early Saturday, is likely to put the McKenzie out of shape for a while. We'll update when things settle down but then it is the rainy season in Oregon; it's just finally living up to its' reputation.

North Santiam coho (or steelhead) numbers will become moot as the water level is forecast to spike on Saturday, November 16th and roller coaster for a while. Trout fishing has been good but is also dependent on water conditions.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** reports, "Despite excellent water conditions, little is available on the Clackamas river other than a small handful of late summer steelhead and the odd wild coho salmon. A few early winter steelhead typically show up here the first week of December, but the late January through April is usual timing for Clack winter steelhead.

"After a poor return of fall coho, Sandy River anglers await the first winter steelhead. Expect a few early fish to show up in the lower river just after Thanksgiving, but anglers can expect "solid" fishing by mid-December."

**The Guide's Forecast – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** predicts, "Hmmm, be patient till a few winter steelhead show up sometime around Turkey Day. Until then, anglers can make slinkies, tie leaders and fill their reels with fresh line."

**North Coast Fishing Report** – Still not much to write home about for north coast salmon fishing. Admittedly, early indicators had me thinking that the late November run would be a good one on Tillamook Bay. Although action has been fair at best, effort is still running fairly high for the Ghost Hole fishery on the incoming tide. I fished the bay on Wednesday, but avoided the crowd in the Ghost Hole in the morning, only to hear I missed a less-than-stellar bite for much of the morning. I heard there was only about 6 to 8 fish taken for just under 20 boats. We flew right to Bay City where a trolled herring in about 12 feet of water, yielded about a 16-pound hen for Robert McLean of Sisters, Oregon. The fish was taken just after high tide during the outgoing flow. Shortly after we caught that fish, about another 6 or 7 boats showed up but we saw no other fish taken. Although in the "Fisheries Update" section I mention my hesitance in taking hens this late in the season, this fish was a hen, was mint bright and cut very orange, taking me for a bit of a surprise. I hope all the November hens cut like this! We blew over to the west channel for a pass, only to come up empty handed like the other 2 boats over there. Our primary target was sturgeon but I'll save that for the next paragraph. Overall, action on Tillamook Bay remains subdued. After a brief flurry on the lower Wilson and Kilchis Rivers following last week's rain, action in these systems has also slowed. Not that it was all that hot but it certainly was the place to be late last week, after a prolonged period of next to no precipitation. Tidewater remains the preferred option for fresh fish and the upcoming tide series should produce some of these for tidewater bobber tossers.

Other north coast systems produced poorly last weekend as well. The Nestucca does have some history as a November river but action over there was under-impressive. Checkers working that body of water do report seeing a rare fresh fish coming in but not very good for the number of boats still plying its waters.

The Nehalem is largely over as well. Workers at the hatchery are reporting a smattering of salmon still in the river but catches are extremely rare, especially for fresh fish. No sign of an early winter steelhead yet but the first one should show pretty soon although no one is expecting great guns fishing; hopefully, we'll be surprised.

So, how good was the sturgeon fishing? Well, I'm a bit burned out on trolling herring for salmon on Tillamook Bay and given the number of sturgeon (really, not all that overwhelming) I saw jump during the salmon season, I thought we'd still be justified to try for sturgeon on what is the last few months of consumptive opportunity in Oregon. Well, there's still plenty of juvenile crab in the estuary as we couldn't seem to escape them. We targeted them in the upper bay, not far from Ray's Place Piling, the west channel, the ditch across from the Highway 101 culvert not far from the Ghost Hole and at Bay City. We had a few suspicious bites in the west channel but never hooked a sturgeon and had trouble keeping bait on the hooks in many of the spots that we were fishing. If the sturgeon are present, they're not in such great number as to deter the juvenile crab from getting your bait before they do. It may take a prolonged period of fresh water to blow those juveniles out to sea, or at least from the upper reaches of the estuary.

With all the focus on inland fisheries, the offshore has largely been ignored despite a productive deep-reef fishery that has produced good catches of large lingcod and some sea bass for offshore anglers. Lately however, especially with the saltwater salmon season folded up, interest has been low. Although tolerable but still somewhat big ocean conditions this week could have allowed for some folks to sneak

out, no reports have come in from nearshore or deep-reef anglers. The upcoming storm system due to hit the coast this weekend, certainly won't draw any interest.

Bay crabbing remains challenging unless you want a bunch of small ones (then go sturgeon fishing). The strong tide series this weekend won't help anything.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Although it's too early to call a weekend forecast accurate but a strong low pressure is scheduled to hit the coast by Friday, which is expected to bring strong gusting winds to the coastal headlands into Saturday afternoon. Here is the weather forecast as of early morning on Thursday:

**FRI**

W WIND 20 TO 25 KT...BECOMING SW 25 TO 30 KT IN THE AFTERNOON. GUSTS TO 40 KT. COMBINED SEAS 10 FT DOMINANT PERIOD 10 SECONDS. RAIN.

**FRI NIGHT**

NW WIND 25 TO 30 KT WITH GUSTS TO 40 KT. COMBINED SEAS 19 FT DOMINANT PERIOD 11 SECONDS. SHOWERS.

**SAT**

N WIND 20 TO 25 KT WITH GUSTS TO 35 KT. COMBINED SEAS 21 FT DOMINANT PERIOD 11 SECONDS...SUBSIDING TO 18 FT DOMINANT PERIOD 11 SECONDS IN THE AFTERNOON. CHANCE OF SHOWERS.

**SAT NIGHT**

N WIND 20 TO 25 KT...EASING TO 10 TO 15 KT AFTER MIDNIGHT. WIND WAVES 8 FT...SUBSIDING TO 5 FT AFTER MIDNIGHT. NW SWELL 14 FT.

**SUN**

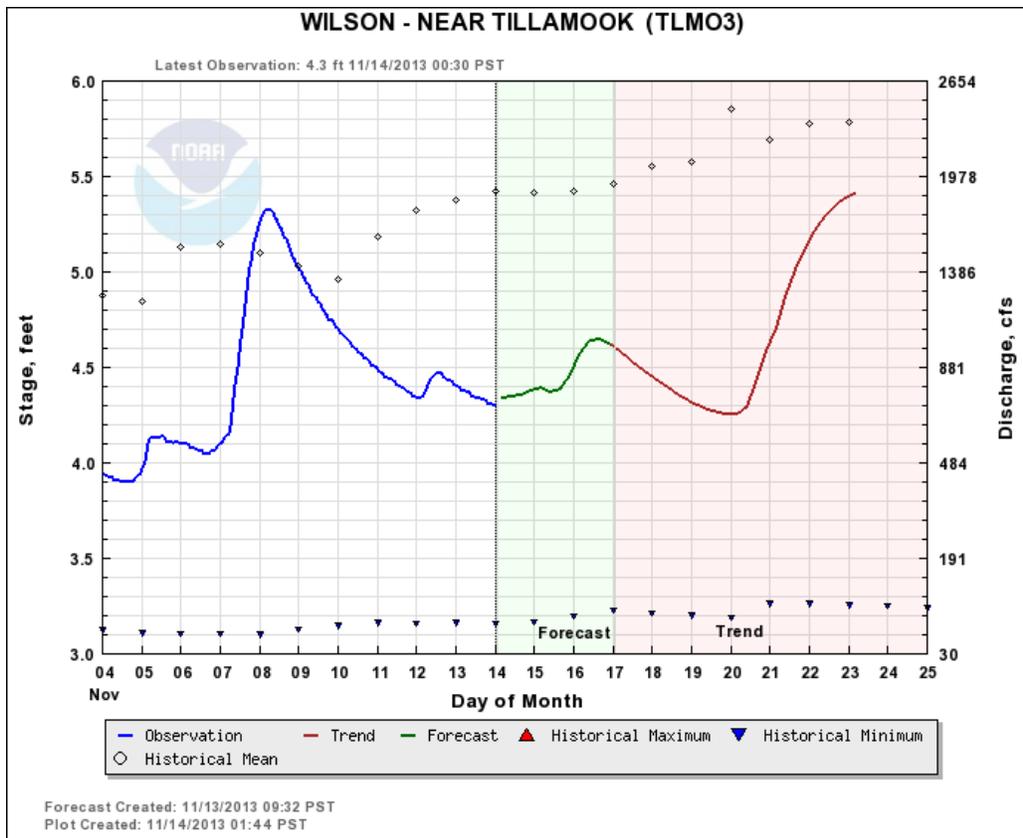
E WIND 5 TO 10 KT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. NW SWELL 10 FT.

**MON**

SE WIND 5 TO 10 KT. WIND WAVES 1 FT. NW SWELL 4 FT.

If the weather forecast comes to fruition, the fair-at-best fishing is certainly not worth that pain on Friday or Saturday. If the weather doesn't materialize (and forecasters are frequently wrong, even when the weather isn't as volatile at it is this time of year), it would be wise to stick to the season-long strategy of targeting late-running, Wilson and Kilchis River bound chinook on the east side of the bay, also known as The Ghost Hole and Bay City. Herring will remain key in these colder waters and you'll still want to target these fish on the early part of incoming tide, chasing them up the bay as the tide continues inward. Although some chinook have recently been reported in the upper bay, not many people are fishing then up there and the bulk of these late-returning fish are typically destined for the Wilson and Kilchis Rivers. Recent reports from Wednesday however indicate that there was some fair action for the few boats working the Memaloose area with one boat reporting 8 opportunities in the last 2 days, even though he was unsuccessful in connecting with any of those 8 bites (he is a reliable source). The west channel likely holds little promise for late season chinook but remains an option for a desperate angler.

The tidewater stretches of the Wilson and Trask and to a lesser extent, the Kilchis Rivers also remain options for bobber tossers and maybe when the river swells again, action will pick back up again for one last hurrah. Rivers are scheduled for another moderate rise as indicated here:



Couple this rise in river levels with some strong incoming tide pushes (over 8 foot high tides over the weekend) and some fresh fish should be inspired to make a run into the bay this weekend. Again, don't count on gangbuster fishing but late-season opportunities should exist. Strategic anchor anglers may find some good opportunities using plugs on the outgoing tides.

Leave the crab gear at home but maybe early next week, we'll see some additional offshore opportunity for bottomfish, anxious to put on a few pounds before the winter woes set in.

What was once looking like a promising weekend for clam diggers is out the door if the low pressure system moves inland. Look for small surf conditions (a small swell) for good digging conditions. That doesn't look like a strong possibility for the weekend.

**Central & South Coast Reports** – Conditions for ocean launches become challenging at this time of year and are only going to become more so as winter approaches. Windows of opportunity are brief and infrequent but the rewards are worthwhile. If this sort of trip is on your wish list, keep a close eye on offshore conditions.

When boats have been able to get out, catches of ling cod have been excellent and most anglers have limited on rockfish. One cabezon may still be kept as part of a seven rockfish daily bag limit.

Wild coho may be legally taken in many south coast rivers as well as a trio of lakes (check the regs) although fishing has been slow everywhere for the most part this season. As with many fisheries, lack of rain has hampered this one and will turn it around if the skies open.

Chinook catches have slowed on the Siletz River now that most salmon are on the spawn well above the deadline. Steelheading is too slow to be worthwhile.

Trollers targeting coho on Siltcoos and Tahkenitch lakes have endured mostly frustration over the past week. While fish are being spotted occasionally on depth finders, they have not been interested in any offerings. Spinners and Wiggle Warts are traditional lures which have been equally ineffective of late. Here again, rain may save the late portion of these fisheries.

Significant rainfall will jump-start the winter steelhead fishery on coastal rivers. While the traditional Black Friday steelhead kickoff trip has become too early in many locations, expect to find some winters in the Alsea at that time but only if Mom Nature has delivered in the form of precipitation.

Siuslaw bobber anglers are hooking a few chinook at the Siuslaw Rover but may expect many dark fish. The lower river has been most productive. Rainfall should bring a flush of brighter fish.

Crabbing has improved at Winchester Bay with a couple of boaters taking limits this week. heavy rainfall will reverse this trend, however. With just over 50% of the coho quota taken from the Umpqua so far this year, it is unlikely to fill. Catches are slow but will improve with rainfall. A few chinook are falling to the nonne & bait crowd on the Umpqua mainstem. Early morning hours have yielded the best results for steelheaders fishing the North Umpqua in the Swiftwater stretch. Be prepared for road construction delays and encounters with colorful individuals. The South Umpqua is scheduled to open on December 1st.

Crabbing has picked up a little at Coos Bay although it's slower than usual for this time of year. A few trollers are still trying on in the bay but catch rates have slowed dramatically. Upper stretches of tidewater along with the lower South Coos River have been most productive.

A few chinook are being picked up on the Coquille River but with low water conditions and given the time of year, fishing is slow and most salmon are well past their prime. Fishing is taking place primarily above the town of Coquille.

Trollers and spinner flingers are taking very few chinook at Rogue Bay. Most activity is for fish returning to Indian Creek event though the majority are turning dark. There are half-pounders to be taken on the lower Rogue as they hold below spawning chinook. A similar scenario may be found on the middle river although the players involve adult as well as half-pounder summer steelhead. Summer steelhead catches have started to slow on the upper Rogue due to skinny water conditions.

Low, clear water is discouraging for chinook anglers at the mouth of the Elk River, many of whom make long trips at this time of year, expecting a bounty. To add insult, while only a handful are being hooked, the majority of those are turning dark. Rain will solve a number of problems here.

Despite the optimistic online report, anglers tell us that fishing is very slow at Diamond Lake.

**Central and Eastern Oregon** – Summer steelhead remain scattered on the lower Deschutes with catches slow to spotty. Trout fishing is a better bet as long-rodders are experiencing decent results on Caddis and BWO patterns. Trap counts at Sherars Falls indicate a steady number of steelhead and chinook passing through although daily numbers have been declining.

With trout fishing closed on the Wallowa River it has been a whitefish show here although a few steelhead are showing up in catches.

The pros who fish the Grande Ronde River at this time of year are scratching their heads as the historically good fishing here has been disappointing. The 'fair' rating has been downgraded to 'poor.'

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**Random Links**

Siltcoos from Atlas of Oregon Lakes:  
<http://aol.research.pdx.edu/?q=lake/379>

Tahkenitch from Atlas of Oregon Lakes:  
<http://aol.research.pdx.edu/?q=lake/383>

Suggested trolling areas for wild coho on Siltcoos and Tahkenitch lakes:  
<http://www.oregonfishingforum.com/attachment.php?attachmentid=30131&d=1384031268>

NOAA Chart for Yaquina Bay & River: Siltcoos from Atlas of Oregon Lakes:  
<http://aol.research.pdx.edu/?q=lake/379>

Tahkenitch from Atlas of Oregon Lakes:  
<http://aol.research.pdx.edu/?q=lake/383>

*"The finest gift you can give to any fisherman is to put fish back,  
and who knows if the fish that you caught isn't someone else's gift to you?"*  
Lee Wulff

**GOOD LUCK!**