

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **November 28th – December 4th, 2014**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro – Bonneville numbers remain depressed as we enter the winter blues. If you're into wildlife watching, go to the Bonneville area and watch the Stellar Sea Lions chow down on your broodstock sturgeon; it's epic this time of year. Sorry, is my frustration playing out? Warmer temperatures may produce some coho catches in the gorge but other than that, action is slow.

With the Willamette River water level rising and turning muddy, Sturgeon fishing on the lower river has only improved. With many anglers awaiting the arrival of winter steelhead, the catch-and-release action has been a fun interim alternative.

McKenzie River and the Santiams will blow out this weekend and remain unfishable into the coming week.

Once the Clackamas River recovers from storms due to arrive Saturday and Sunday, there may still be a few summer steelhead and coho available but most anglers are hoping for early winter steelhead.

No catches of winters have been confirmed from the Sandy although there are still summers and a few coho, most of which are dark. Expect the river to recover sufficiently to fish by mid-week.

Northwest – A flurry of great action took place last Sunday when air and water temperatures warmed and staging estuary chinook made a run upriver on the Trask and Wilson Rivers. Action has slowed since and only an occasional pod of chinook will roll through the Tillamook district into mid-December. The Kilchis is an option too.

Early winter steelhead should be available on some north coast systems. The North Fork Nehalem is producing a few winter steelhead but only from the handicap ramp, much to hatchery worker's surprise. There hasn't been much interest however. It's still early. Other early winter steelhead options are the Wilson, Kilchis, Three Rivers and Necanicum systems.

Weaker tides this weekend could produce some fair bay crabbing. The lower Columbia is the best option but sport crabbers will have to put up with commercial gear that will start soaking on November 28th.

It's transition time in this district; limited opportunity exists.

Southwest- Winter fishing for rockfish and lingcod is excellent when boats can get out. Launches should be possible early next week. In addition, ocean crabbing becomes legal once again starting December 1.

In last week's newsletter, the closure of Tenmile, Tahkenitch and Siltcoos was stated incorrectly. All of the above lakes will open for wild coho fishing through December 31st, 2014. Thanks and a tip o' the fishing hat to subscriber Bill S. for catching the gaff.

The first winter steelhead of the season may be caught on the Alsea as conditions improve in the coming week.

Native steelhead will be available on the mainstem Umpqua when it drops and clears sufficiently following the storm front due to hit this coming weekend.

The Rogue is forecast to blow out this coming Saturday and Sunday. Even the upper river will experience a significant rise. Once it recovers, fishing will continue for the tail-end of the Chinook run and summer steelhead.

The Chetco should clear sufficiently to plunk early next week with backbouncers and plug-pullers getting in on the action around mid-week. Fishing has been decent as Chinook commonly run big at this time of year as the run is winding down.

The late Chinook run on the Elk and Sixes has rewarded anglers with nice fish following every recent freshet as the rivers rapidly drop and clear.

SW Washington- Coho catches continue to taper in the district but the Cowlitz remains the strong option for late season anglers. Early winter steelhead are likely to show soon too. The early run however, is not what it used to be.

The Lewis remains a fair option for late season (fresh) chinook for those in the know on how to pursue these fish. Their numbers can be quite impressive this time of year but you have to know how to pursue them.

Klickitat anglers still have access to fair numbers of coho but action has tapered from previous weeks. Fishable numbers are still available however.

Eastern – The lower Deschutes has been fair to good for trout and summer steelhead although the water has been roiled from muddy outflow below White River.

Enthusiasts of cold-weather trolling are getting their fix (as well as some dandy lake trout) at Crescent Lake.

Soapbox Update: Fisheries Management Changes in Oregon: Challenges and Opportunities Ahead
December 3, 7:00-9:00 p.m. Sam Cox Building in Glen Otto Park, Troutdale, Oregon
Hosted by the Sandy River Chapter, Association of Northwest Steelheaders
Find out more here: <http://www.theguidesforecast.com/FisheriesMgmtFlyerDec14.pdf>

Columbia River Fishing Report – With the exception of crabbing, this fishery is over. Extreme tides challenged crabbers last weekend as the window of opportunity was small. The high tide exchange, especially the strong minus (evening) outgoing, buries crab pots and made it unproductive to catch crab. Action was still fair to good for those diligent in their pursuit but even my favorite bait, salmon carcasses, came with a price as sea lions ripped up crab pots to get after them. As if we didn't like them in the first place.....

The Guide's Forecast – A softer tide series should prove favorable for weekend crabbers. Weather might be an issue however as a strong N and/or west wind is in the forecast but how often have they blown the weather forecast in recent weeks.....make that in recent years..... Be safe and know that the commercial gear goes in as early as 11/28. After that, action will slow dramatically.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Flow of the Willamette River at the Falls has tripled over that of just a couple of weeks back. With that additional flow, leaves and debris will wash downstream so caution is advised for those intending to launch a boat. Keep an eye upriver and a knife handy in the worst case scenario; a log or tree on the anchor rope can quickly take down any watercraft.

McKenzie levels will once again be rising over the coming weekend.

While the Santiam system took a hit from last weekend's storms, from which it hadn't completely recovered, the storm front due in a couple of days will result in a blowout.

The Guide's Forecast – With that additional flow, the lower Willamette will also be getting muddy. This isn't necessarily bad news for anglers looking for sturgeon action as coho and summer steelheading are about done and winter steelhead are yet to arrive. **Robert Campbell at Fisherman's Marine in Oregon City (503-557-5600)** reports an uptick in interest, participation and bait sales, which have included anchovies, smelt, sand shrimp and squid. Sturgeon fishers "should take at least two if not three of those baits," according to Campbell, as the fish's preference can and often does change daily. Angler reports indicate excellent catch-and-release action for both boat and bank fishers. Sturgeon are being landed from shaker-sized to nine feet or better. It goes without saying that with fish this size, sometimes they are hooked and never seen.

There will be nothing of interest to anglers happening on the Mackenzie, North or South Santiam Rivers for the coming week.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Following last weekend's freshet, the Clackamas settled into a fairly stable if not considerably higher flow this week. Winter's coming on though, so expect more of the same in the next couple of days as the next storm front passes through.

Sandy levels rocketed from nine to over 12 feet in a few hours early on November 22nd. In this case, however, the level and flow not only remained high, but has actually increased since that date.

The Guide's Forecast – Steelheaders at McIver have had some good days recently by baiting summers with sand shrimp. It goes without saying they're all hoping for an early winter. According to **Robert Campbell at Fisherman's Marine in Oregon City (503-557-5600)**, he has heard only the rumor of such a fish on the Clack and without being there to actually see it, it's just a fish story. Expect the river to be on the rise this weekend but computer models indicate that it will come back into shape during the week. As Campbell says "It's about time for winter steelhead." Perhaps the report next week will include a few.

There are some steelhead of the summer variety remaining in the Sandy and a few of those will be bright enough for consideration. This will be well into the coming week of course, as the river will be unfishable over the weekend. Finding a coho bright enough to keep will be more of a challenge. As for winter steelhead, it's a real long shot since broodstock programs moved the date beyond the traditional T-Day kickoff.

North Coast Fishing Report – Action for Tillamook chinook was fair to good in the estuary prior to the most recent rain freshet. Predictably, following a prolonged period of dry weather, action was impressive for river anglers on Sunday. The drop in river levels after rains had finally swollen north coast systems produced impressive results for those lucky enough to be on the Trask, Wilson and to a lesser extent, the Kilchis Rivers. The bay has dropped off dramatically since the rain freshet.

Trask and Wilson anglers had the most to brag about but given the fact that Trask River chinook was likely making up the bulk of the south channel bite prior to the rain freshet, it only made sense that this system would produce good catches. Impressive results were reported by the Sunday angler but also predictably, action dropped off dramatically since then.

Most recently, **pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503) 349-1377** reported fair action prior to the river rise on the Trask on Tuesday, bouncing up a nice bright chinook in the Beeler Hole and losing another brute just downstream before the river blew out, floating trees and all. Leafy debris and branches severely impede action and opportunity when the river is on the rise like it was on Tuesday. High winds don't help matters. The Wilson also produced good chinook catches on Sunday but given the finite number of salmon around this time of year, action doesn't last long on these spury systems. The Kilchis also produced some action but not what we're typically used to seeing on a good return year. As a matter of fact, it's been several years since we've been able to call the Kilchis run "impressive".

With higher flows forecast for the near future on most north coast systems, don't look for the bay to produce good results anytime soon. Fish should be shooting right through the bay and into the Trask, Wilson and Kilchis systems as long as flows remain high. Trollers will undoubtedly intercept some but catches will likely remain sparse.

Crab catches over the high exchange weekend were not great.

The Guide's Forecast – With rivers expected to remain high over the weekend, rivers will remain the best option for chinook interception. The Trask and Wilson will remain the best options. Backbounced eggs seems to be producing better than backtrolled plugs at this point. As flows drop, that may change but don't leave home without eggs and shrimp. Bay trollers will struggle for action until we again go through a prolonged period of low river level conditions.

The Kilchis and Necanicum Rivers are also an option when other larger systems are too high to ply. The Kilchis in particular has a late season reputation but on good years, the Necanicum can produce well too. This however, doesn't look to be the exceptional chinook year that most had anticipated. None-the-less, savvy anglers should bring along winter steelhead gear as these systems also get early returning steelhead that could provide some sport. They're not known for their aggressive biting behavior however. You'll have to work for them.

Crabbers may have a fair shot at estuary crab over the weekend. Assuming the commercial fleet deploys their gear farther offshore, nearshore crabbers, particularly estuary crabbers, might find some quality keepers in the lower ends of the estuaries. Tillamook, Netarts, Nestucca and to a lesser extent, the Nehalem should produce fair at best results over the weekend. Watch bar conditions carefully as the ocean isn't expected to lay down all that much over the weekend.

Central & South Coast Reports – Driving past one of the coastal estuaries a few days ago when wind and rain was ferocious and waves were crashing on the east shore rip-rap, it was surprising, amusing and a little scary to see a kayak on the water. Particularly as this tiny boat's skipper was balancing a full-sized, commercial-style crab pot. Perhaps foolish, but one had to admire his adventurous spirit. For more crazy kayak hi-jinx on video, see **Random Links**, below.

When those rare windows have opened to allow boats to safely cross to the ocean where they may fish any depth of water without restriction, few are bothering to do so. Nearshore catches of lingcod and rockfish are too good to bother exploring greater depths.

There's not much hope for offshore launches this weekend, but the prediction from the NOAA for Monday through Wednesday of the coming week look downright friendly with three-foot swells at 11 seconds or better, and light winds. Go get 'em.

Closed since the end of August (yeah, all those Dungeness you've been buying from Mega-Mart seafood cases had been frozen since then), commercial and sport crabbers may once again drop pots in the ocean starting Friday, November 28th. Bay crabbing has been good enough the past several weeks that recreational crabbers haven't missed ocean crabbing.

Correction: In last week's newsletter, the closure of Tenmile, Tahkenitch and Siltcoos was stated incorrectly. All of the above lakes will open for wild coho fishing through December 31st, 2014. Thanks and a tip o' the fishing hat to subscriber Bill S. for catching the gaff.

Conditions are predicted to be good on the Alsea in the first week of December following the freshet this weekend. Its a bit of a long shot for an early fish but winter steelhead will be entering the Alsea sometime in December for sure. It opens above River Edge landing on December 1st.

The graph record of the changes in Umpqua mainstem water flow looks like a roller coaster too wild to ride. Hang on, 'cause it's headed uphill this weekend toward a major blowout. All is not lost however. As it drops, it'll offer some decent catch-and-release action for wild steelhead.

The jetty has been producing good catches of rockfish at Coos Bay while the bay continues to produce limits or near limits to crabbers. Effort will be low during stormy periods but Dungeness results are expected to remain good when the weather improves. The wild coho season ends on the Coos River Sunday, November 30th.

With the exception of the last of the Indian Creek fish, Rogue Bay is done for Chinook fishing. The Rogue took a hit from rainfall over the past weekend, rising a couple of feet from Grants Pass to Agness and flow on the upper Rogue increased significantly for the first time this season. The scenario looks remarkably similar for the weekend to come. A few Chinook have been caught on the lower Rogue with catches fair to good around Grants Pass for anglers using bait. The larger changes in depth and flow coming this weekend on the middle and lower river will stall fishing efforts. Despite lots of leaves in the water, the upper Rogue has been producing steelhead on plugs and egg imitations below Shady Cove boat ramp where bait is disallowed. Above that point, roe has been effective. While the upper Rogue is likely to double in volume Saturday and Sunday, it will be dropping rapidly in the first of next week.

While the Chetco River will dropping through Friday this week, it is forecast to rise over the coming weekend and stay in the 4,800 range for a few days. While that's a level at which anglers switch to plunking, the prediction of a rapid rise means it'll be muddy for a while as well. It should clear sufficiently to plunk early next week with backbouncers and plug-pullers getting in on the action around mid-week. Fishing has been decent as Chinook commonly run big at this time of year as the run is winding down. Bear in mind, however that only one wild Chinook per day can be kept and no more than five for the year.

Incidentally, the Chinook salmon run on the Chetco has been so good this year that the ODFW easily exceeded the required number of fish spawned for broodstock which means one more reason for optimism in runs to come.

Smaller rivers such as the Elk and Sixes are volatile, blowing out one day and if the rain stops, dropping and clearing the next. As these two have been on the drop, they have also been producing good numbers of large Chinook. For the latest river conditions, call the hatchery hotline: 541-332-7025. It's updated daily in season at 8 AM.

A number of anglers have reported that fishing is good for large trout at Garrison Lake near Port Orford.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Water levels on the lower Deschutes are still a little high but fishable, as least above White River where Blue-Winged-Olives are hatching on occasion but nymphing is more effective. The latest report was that snow on the riverbanks has melted. Trout fishing is fair and summer steelhead are still getting caught on occasion.

Enthusiasts of cold-weather trolling are getting their fix (as well as some dandy lake trout) at Crescent Lake.

Crooked River fly anglers are being rewarded with good numbers of mostly small trout. To improve your experience fishing this remarkable little stream, get up into the canyon.

Write to the TGF staff:

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Michael Teague: TGFMichael@gmail.com

Doug Rees: doug@TheGuidesForecast.com

Random Links

Kayak Fishing for Monster Halibut: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5PAyn9svACo#t=255>

Ice Cold Coho by Kayak: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XSaP_m3UPpU#t=113

Oregon Shellfish Areas: <http://www.dfw.state.or.us/mrp/shellfish/maps/Yaquina.asp>

GOOD LUCK!