

[Opening day of lake-fishing season expected to draw 300,000 anglers](#)

Local News

Posted by: David Haviland

Posted on : April 15, 2010 at 5:18 am

The state's most popular fishing season opens April 24, when hundreds of thousands of anglers will head to lakes and ponds stocked with millions of trout by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

Although many lakes are open year round, the last Saturday in April marks the traditional start of the lowland-lakes fishing season, which extends through October.

"This is our biggest fishing season opener and it traditionally draws more than 300,000 anglers of all ages," said WDFW Director Phil Anderson. "It's a good time to gather family and friends at local waterways to cast off winter and celebrate spring."

With lakes in every county of the state well stocked, anglers can keep travel costs down by enjoying good fishing close to home, said WDFW Inland Fish Program Manager Jim Uehara. He reports that more than 20.5 million trout will be stocked in lakes and streams for this year's fishery, including those planted in waters that opened earlier this spring or are open year-round.

[Page 1 : Opening day of lake-fishing season expected to draw 300,000 anglers](#)

[Page 2 : WDFW Weekender Report](#)

[Page 3 : North Puget Sound](#)

[Page 4 : South Sound/Olympic Peninsula](#)

[Page 5 : Southwest Washington](#)

[Page 6 : Eastern Washington](#)

[Page 7 : Northcentral Washington](#)

[Page 8 : Southcentral Washington](#)

[pagebreak:WDFW Weekender Report]

A Washington freshwater fishing license, valid April 1, 2010 through March 31, 2011, costs \$26.00 for resident adults (16-69 years old). Fifteen-year-olds and persons with disabilities can buy a license for \$11, and seniors (70 years and older) can buy an annual fishing license for \$8.00. Children 14 years and younger do not need a fishing license.

A new two-pole endorsement - which allows anglers to fish with two rods in most lakes - costs an additional \$24.50 for adults; \$6.50 for seniors.

All licenses can be purchased on the Internet (<http://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov>), by telephone (1-866-246-9453), or at hundreds of license dealers across the state (listed on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/vendors>).

Tips on fishing areas, listed by county and water, can be found in "Washington Fishing Prospects: Where To Catch Fish In the Evergreen State," available on WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/prospects> . Fish stocking details, by county and lake, are available in the 2010 Hatchery Trout Stocking Plan on WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants> .

Copies of WDFW's annual "Fishing In Washington" sport fishing rules pamphlet are also available from license dealers, WDFW offices and on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm> . The current rules are in effect through April 30, 2010; the rules for May 1, 2010 through April 30, 2011 will be posted and available in printed form by May 1.

Rather catch spring chinook? The fishery in the lower Columbia River is set to close at the end of the day April 18, but anglers will still be able to retain hatchery-raised spring chinook above Bonneville Dam and in tributaries to the big river. In addition, four areas of the Snake River will open for springers later this month. (See the regional report for Eastern Washington below for details on that opening.)

Other new fishing seasons coming up in the days ahead include openings May 1 for shrimp and halibut. A three-day razor-razor clam dig also gets under way April 16 on the coast. See the South Puget Sound/Olympic Peninsula report below for more information on all three of those fisheries.

[pagebreak:North Puget Sound]

Fishing: The blackmouth salmon season is winding down in the region, but halibut fisheries in Puget Sound are coming up soon. For freshwater anglers, one of the most anticipated fishing opportunities occurs later this April, when the lowland lakes trout season kicks off.

Beginning April 24, anglers can cast a line in many of the region's lakes, where thousands of legal-sized trout have been planted. Information on stocking schedules for rainbow, cutthroat and triploid trout is available on WDFW's website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants>).

"This is our biggest fishing season opener and it traditionally draws more than 300,000 anglers of all ages," said WDFW Director Phil Anderson. "It's a good time to gather family and friends at local waterways to cast off winter and celebrate spring."

Because the lowland lake trout opener traditionally draws the biggest crowds, it's especially important for everyone to be patient and safe at boat launches and docks, Anderson noted. "Everyone in boats, and all children on shore, should use personal flotation devices," he added.

This year's opener offers a new opportunity for lake fishers. Anglers may purchase a 2-pole endorsement which allows them to fish with two rods in most of Washington's lakes. Gear rules and daily limits still apply. Many anglers will see the use of two poles as a way to double their fun by using two different types of tackle, or fishing at two different depths. Go to <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/twopole/lakes.php> for a list of lakes where two poles are not allowed.

On the saltwater, selective fisheries for hatchery blackmouth - resident chinook - continue through April 15 in Marine Area 9 (Admiralty Inlet), and through April 30 in marine areas 7 (San Juan Islands), 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) and 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner). Anglers fishing in any of those areas have a two-salmon daily limit, but must release wild chinook.

The halibut season is just around the corner. The season is scheduled to run from May 1 through May 30 in marine areas 6-10, where fishing will be open three days a week - Thursday, Friday and Saturday - and closed Sunday through Wednesday except for Memorial Day weekend when those marine areas will be open Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

Current regulations for all freshwater and saltwater fisheries are available in WDFW's Fishing in Washington pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

Hunting: The spring wild turkey season runs April 15 through May 31 around the state. Hunters have a three-gobbler limit - two birds in eastern Washington and one bird in western Washington. For more information, a Wild Turkey Spring Season brochure is available at WDFW regional offices and on the department's website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/game/water/turkey>).

There's still time to comment on a draft plan to guide management of the state's white-tailed deer populations. Developed by WDFW over the past year, the five-year plan outlines strategies for sustainably managing the game animals throughout their range in eastern Washington. Other key goals include maintaining stable deer-hunting opportunities for state citizens and reducing deer-related damage to crops and other personal property.

The draft plan, along with an electronic comment form, is posted on WDFW's website at http://wdfw.wa.gov/wildlife/management/white-tailed_deer . Public comments will be accepted through April 23 before a final plan is reviewed by the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission and forwarded to the WDFW director for approval.

Wildlife viewing : Gray whale sightings continue to draw whalewatchers to the region. The large marine mammals have been milling about the Whidbey and Camano islands area the last several weeks during their annual journey north. Most of the whales are headed to the Arctic Ocean, where they spend the summer feeding, before heading back south to the coast of Mexico. Some gray whales stop short of migrating all the way to the Arctic and instead linger in the waters of the Pacific Northwest during the summer months. For information on whale sightings, visit the Orca Network website at <http://www.orcanetwork.org/sightings/map.html> .

Meanwhile, birdwatchers have an opportunity to take part in the "Wings Over Water" Northwest Birding Festival April 17 in Blaine. The festival features wildlife viewing field trips, arts and crafts, speakers, raptor presentations, and activities and games for children. For more information visit Blaine's Chamber of Commerce website at <http://www.blainechamber.com/wow> .

[pagebreak:South Sound/Olympic Peninsula]

Fishing: Anglers have so many options this time of year that they should consider taking time off from whatever less important activity keeps them off the water. Freshly stocked lowland lakes will open Saturday, April 24, to an estimated 300,000 anglers, and youth fishing events are in full swing. The halibut and shrimp seasons open beginning May 1, and a morning razor-clam dig begins Friday, April 16, at three Washington beaches.

Regional lakes stocked with thousands of trout await South Sound anglers. Devereaux Lake in Mason County is being stocked with 5,000 rainbows - 500 of them 14 inches or larger. In Clallam County, Sutherland Lake is being stocked with 10,000 rainbows, and Bogachiel Pond will be getting

4,100 rainbows in advance of a Kid's Day event. Clear, Kapowsin, Spanaway, Tanwax and Ohop lakes in Pierce County also will be getting upwards of 10,000 fish each. Silver Lake will be stocked with over 31,000 fish, 1,300 of them 14 inches or longer. Find WDFW's stocking schedule by county and lakes here <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants> . For tips on fishing options by water and county take a look at Washington Fishing Prospects (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/prospects/>).

In Thurston County over 600 kids are expected to show up Saturday, April 17, for the Kids' Klassic Family Fish-in at Woodland Creek Community Park. Registration for the event is closed. The next South Sound Kids' Fish-In event will be held Saturday, May 15, at American Lake in Lakewood. Advanced registration is required. To register go to Go Play Outside Washington's web site (http://www.gopaw.org/kids_fish-in_program) and download a registration form.

Meanwhile, people looking forward to digging razor clams can do so at the following times and beaches:

Friday, April 16, (8:32 A.M., -0.7) Long Beach and Twin Harbors only

Saturday, April 17, (9:12 A.M., -0.7) Long Beach, Twin Harbors and Kalaloch only

Sunday, April 18, (9:56 A.M., -0.6) Long Beach, Twin Harbors and Kalaloch only

All of the digs start in the morning and end at noon. WDFW also has announced a tentative razor-clam dig for late April and early May. A final decision on the dig will be based on tests for marine toxins to determine if the clams are safe to eat.

Prospective clammers who live north of Lacey should be forewarned that overnight and weekend repairs to Interstate 5 will make it considerably more difficult to get to and from Washington's coast. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) announced that repairs to the highway between Lacey and Tacoma will close north and soundbound lanes between now and September, resulting in traffic backups that could stretch for miles. For a schedule of closures go to WSDOT's website (<http://bit.ly/dgnuQy>).

Two other fisheries scheduled to open soon are halibut and shrimp .

The 2010 recreational halibut season - which starts May 1 off Ilwaco and May 2 off Westport - will be cut a little short this year. The largest single factor affecting this year's fishery is a 15 percent reduction in the Pacific coast halibut quota set by the International Pacific Halibut Commission, said

Michele Culver, a WDFW regional director. In Washington, sport anglers will be allowed to catch 192,699 pounds of halibut, compared to 214,110 pounds last year.

Constraints on fishing opportunities will be most apparent in Puget Sound, due to the combination of this year's reduced quota and an excessive catch last year. WDFW estimates that Puget Sound anglers caught more than 114,000 pounds of halibut in 2009 - well over the 57,393-pound quota.

Opening for Washington's marine areas are:

Columbia River (Ilwaco): Marine Area 1 will open May 1, three days a week, Thursday through Saturday until 70 percent of the quota is reached, or through July 18. The fishery will then reopen on Aug. 6 and continue three days a week (Friday through Sunday) until the remaining quota is reached, or the end of the day on Sept. 26, whichever occurs first. The 2010 catch quota is 13,436 pounds.

South Coast (Westport/Ocean Shores): Marine Area 2 will open on May 2, two days a week, Sundays and Tuesdays. During the fourth week in May the fishery will be open Sunday only (May 23). Beginning the following week the fishery will resume the Sunday, Tuesday structure until the quota is reached. The northern nearshore area will be open seven days per week, until the quota is reached. The 2010 catch quota is 35,887 pounds.

North Coast (La Push/Neah Bay): Marine areas 3 and 4 will open on May 13, two days per week, Thursdays and Saturdays, through May 22. If sufficient quota remains, the fishery will reopen June 3 and 5. If sufficient quota remains after that opener, the fishery will reopen starting June 17. The 2010 catch quota is 101,179 pounds.

Strait of Juan de Fuca/Puget Sound: Marine Area 5 (Sekiu) will be open May 28 through June 19. Marine areas 6 through 10 (Strait, Port Angeles Admiralty Inlet and Everett) will be open May 1 through May 30. These fisheries will be open three days a week, Thursday, Friday and Saturday closed Sunday through Wednesday except for Memorial Day weekend when they will be open Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The 2010 combined catch quota for these areas is 50,542 pounds.

Shrimp seasons open May 1 in all marine areas and for most species. The length of the season varies by area. The rules and dates for shrimping will be published in the state's annual Sport Fishing Rules pamphlet, which comes out later this month. Information is available now at WDFW's recreational shrimp page (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/shrimpreg/shrimpindex.shtml>).

One change from previous years is that Discovery Bay will be open to shrimping for the first time since 2005, when it was closed due to low abundance. The Bay will be open at least two days, May 1 and May 5.

Out on the coast, fishing for lingcod , rockfish and other species is beginning to pick up. After a few weeks of terrible ocean conditions, boats were finally able to get out of Westport late last week.

"After having to cancel about 10 days in a row the ocean has finally laid down," said Erica Crust, WDFW's ocean port sampler. "Charter boats are back to targeting rockfish and lingcod. A few charters got their limits of lingcod over the weekend, with some in the mid to upper 20 pound range."

The lingcod season opens on Friday, April 17 in Marine Area 4 (Neah Bay).

Crust reminds anglers that recreational fishing for bottomfish or lingcod is not allowed in waters deeper than 30 fathoms in Marine Area 2 (Westport/Ocean Shores) from March 15 through June 15. However, anglers may retain sablefish and Pacific cod in these waters from May 1 through June 15. Retention of canary and yelloweye rockfish is prohibited in all areas.

The minimum size for lingcod in marine areas 1-3 is 22 inches, while the minimum size in Marine Area 4 is 24 inches. All areas are open seven days a week. Additional information about the lingcod fishery and other bottomfish is available on the WDFW Fishing Hotline (360) 902-2500 or online at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm> .

It's a good thing these other fisheries are picking up because steelhead and salmon fisheries have been slow. A creel check counted conducted at boat ramps in Port Angeles and Port Townsend counted 11 chinook April 10. Elsewhere, there were few anglers and even fewer fish taken.

Creelers checked only about a dozen wild steelhead on the Lower and Upper Hoh River during the second weekend in April, and creel counts ended April 1 on the Quillayute system. Retention fishing closes at the end of the day April 15 on the Hoh River, but will remain open through April 30 on the Quillayute River system.

To take advantage of all these opportunities, anyone 15 years and older must have an applicable 2010-11 fishing license. Licenses can be purchased on-line at <https://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov> , by phone (866) 246-9453, or in person at more than 600 license vendors throughout the state. A list of vendors is at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/vendors> . Updates on the razor clam season are at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/razorclm/season.htm>

Hunting: The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission adopted new hunting rules at its meeting last weekend. New hunting rules reflect changes in game populations since the current three-year plan was adopted last year. They include:

Reducing antlerless elk hunting in the Yakima area.

Reducing antlerless deer hunting in northeast Washington and the Olympic Peninsula.

Providing additional permits for spring black bear hunting and delaying start dates for fall black bear hunting in some areas.

Increasing permit hunting for cougar in southeast Washington.

Changing the fall turkey hunt in southeast Washington from a limited permit-only hunt to a general hunt.

Along with the new hunting rules, the commission also approved a new application system for special-hunt permits that will give hunters more options by allowing them to apply for deer and elk permits in several different categories. The system applies "points" accrued by unsuccessful permit applicants from previous years to each of the new permit categories.

The amended hunting rules, which take effect May 1, will be included in WDFW's new Big Game Hunting pamphlet, which will be available by late April at license dealers, WDFW offices, and online at http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regs_seasons.html .

The spring wild turkey season runs April 15 through May 31 around the state. For more information, a Wild Turkey Spring Season brochure is available at WDFW regional offices and on the department's website: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/game/water/turkey> .

Wildlife viewing: For those interested in spring bird watching, the 15th annual Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival will be held April 30 through May 2. This event takes place during the annual migration of hundreds of thousands of shorebirds as they stop at the Grays Harbor estuary to feed and rest before departing for their nesting grounds in the Arctic. For more information, visit <http://www.shorebirdfestival.com/> or call (800) 303-8498.

[pagebreak:Southwest Washington]

Fishing: Columbia River anglers have been reeling in over 1,400 spring chinook salmon per day during the first full week of April, raising questions about how long the lower river would remain open to fishing. After some deliberation, fishery managers from Washington and Oregon agreed that the fishery below the I-5 Bridge will remain open as planned through Sunday, April 18.

But that doesn't necessarily mean that will be the last day to catch spring chinook on the lower river this year. In establishing this year's season, fishery managers set aside a "buffer" until this year's near-record run forecast of 470,000 upriver fish can be verified by dam counts. If the count looks good, WDFW will announce additional fishing time in early to mid-May, said Cindy LeFleur, WDFW Columbia River policy coordinator.

"At this point, the upriver run is definitely looking strong, but we'll have to see how the count at Bonneville Dam shakes out over the next few weeks," LeFleur said. "After our experience during the past two years, we need to make sure that the forecast is on track before we reopen the fishery."

So what's an angler to do between now and then? Joe Hymer, a WDFW fish biologist, has some ideas:

Fish a tributary: Anglers are picking up spring chinook in the Cowlitz, Kalama and Lewis rivers, although winter-run steelhead are still providing most of the action on the Cowlitz. Thirty-one boat anglers reported catching 23 hatchery steelhead (plus one released) and one adult spring chinook in a recent creel check focused around the trout hatchery and Blue Creek. The 47 bank anglers surveyed had two hatchery steelhead and three springers.

Meanwhile, summer steelhead also are moving into several tributaries to the lower Columbia - including the lower Washougal and East Fork Lewis rivers. Both of those rivers open for fishing April 16 under selective gear rules (no bait). Check the Fishing in Washington rules pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) for catch limits and other regulations applicable to these rivers.

Head upriver: Time may be running short for spring chinook fishing on the lower Columbia River, but the fishery from Bonneville Dam to McNary Dam is scheduled to remain open seven days a week through May. With upwards of 1,000 fish per day now moving up the fish ladders, anglers fishing the mainstem above Bonneville are starting to catch some spring chinook. Bank fishing only is permitted from Bonneville Dam to Tower Island powerlines, located about six miles below The Dalles Dam.

Boat anglers at Wind and Drano Lake have also been taking a few springers, while bank anglers fishing the Klickitat River downstream from Fisher Hill Bridge have been catching newly arriving summer steelhead. Drano Lake is closed to all fishing on Wednesdays through May. Also, effective

April 16, bank fishing only will be allowed west of a line projected from the eastern-most pillar of the Highway 14 Bridge to a posted marker on the north shore of the lake. Check the Fishing in Washington rules pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) for catch limits and other regulations applicable to these waters.

Dig some razor clams: Diggers recently got a green light to proceed with a morning razor-clam dig running Friday, April 16, through Sunday April 18, at Long Beach and Twin Harbors. Kalaloch Beach, further north will also open for digging April 17-18. Low morning tides will be at 8:32 a.m. (-0.7) April 16, at 9:12 a.m. (-0.7) April 17, and at 9:56 a.m. (-0.6) April 18. No digging will be allowed after noon any of those days.

Diggers are reminded that they must have a valid 2010-11 license to participate in the dig. Fishing and hunting licenses may be purchased by phone (1-866-246-9453), over the Internet (<https://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov/>), or from license vendors throughout the state (see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/vendors> for a list).

Catch some trout: Hundreds of lowland lakes open for trout fishing April 24 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 (Lewis County), Swift Reservoir (Skamania County) and Rowland Lakes (Klickitat County).

Meanwhile, WDFW recently stocked several year-round lakes with catchable-size rainbows, some weighing up to a half-pound apiece: South Lewis County Park Pond near Toledo (3,042 fish), Lake Sacajawea in Longview (3,016 fish), Kress Lake in Kalama (2,067 fish) and Lacamas Lake in Camas (3,500 fish). A complete trout-stocking schedule for all lakes in Washington is posted on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants> .

Hunting: The spring wild turkey season runs April 15 through May 31 around the state. For more information, a Wild Turkey Spring Season pamphlet is available on the department's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/game/water/turkey> .

Meanwhile, hunters have an opportunity to comment on a draft plan to guide management of the state's white-tailed deer populations. Developed by WDFW over the past year, the five-year plan outlines strategies for sustainably managing the game animals throughout their range in eastern Washington. Other key goals include maintaining stable deer-hunting opportunities for state citizens and reducing deer-related damage to crops and other personal property.

The draft plan, along with an electronic comment form, is posted on WDFW's website at http://wdfw.wa.gov/wildlife/management/white-tailed_deer . Public comments will be accepted through April 23 before a final plan is reviewed by the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission and

forwarded to the WDFW director for approval.

Wildlife viewing: With the arrival of spring, the Vancouver Lowlands have come to resemble Grand Central Station, enlivened by great movements of birds in and out of key nesting and resting areas. Several thousand Canada geese are now on display at the Shillapoo Wildlife Area, although thousands more have already flown west down the Columbia River, leaving their wintering grounds for points north.

"The birds seem to follow the Columbia to the ocean, then turn north to Canada and Alaska," said Sandra Jonker, WDFW wildlife manager for southwest Washington. Meanwhile, osprey have returned to the region, inspecting their nests and preparing for the breeding season. In recent weeks, birders and anglers have reported sighting osprey from marshlands near Vancouver to the Cowlitz River.

Birds aren't the only species in transit these days. More than 3,500 spring chinook salmon passed by the fish-viewing window at Bonneville Dam in a single day, and thousands more are right behind them.

To monitor daily fish counts from home, check the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers website at <https://www.nwp.usace.army.mil/op/fishdata/home.asp> . Or stop by the Washington Shore Visitor Complex and see the annual parade of fish for yourself. To get there, take Washington State Highway 14 east to Milepost 40 (about 5 miles from Stevenson) and turn into the Bonneville Dam visitor center. The visitor center is the glass building at the end of the powerhouse.

[pagebreak:Eastern Washington]

Fishing: April 24 marks the start of the most popular fishing season in Washington, including dozens of trout-stocked lakes in this region. It is also the opening day of spring chinook season on three sections of the Snake River, where fishing will be expanded this year. Daily catch limits will also be raised, thanks to the abundance of hatchery chinook expected to return.

In all, four sections of the Snake will open to spring chinook fishing this year - starting April 20 with the stretch starting just below Ice Harbor Dam on the Walla Walla/Franklin county line, just east of

the Tri-Cities. That section of the Snake River runs from the southbound Highway 12 Bridge upstream about seven miles to the fishing-restriction boundary, about 400 feet below Ice Harbor Dam.

The three sections of the Snake that open April 24 are:

From Railroad Bridge, about half-mile downstream of the Tucannon River mouth, up about nine miles to the Corps of Engineers boat launch (about a mile upstream of Little Goose Dam along the south shore). This zone includes the area between the juvenile bypass return pipe and Little Goose Dam along the south shoreline of the facility (includes the walkway area locally known as "the Wall" in front of the juvenile collection facility);

From Casey Creek upstream about six miles to the fishery restriction area below Lower Granite Dam; and

From Blyton Landing Boat Launch along the Snake River Road in Whitman County (about 12 miles upstream of Lower Granite Dam) upstream about 19 miles to the boat dock behind the Quality Inn in Clarkston (boundary line is from the white sign for Hells Canyon Tours (about 100 ft upstream of the boat dock that has the small green roofed shed on the south shore) across to the culvert with tanks and trailers on the north shore).

Only adipose fin-clipped spring chinook adults or jacks can be retained in these fisheries. Chinook harvest or retention is limited to two adults and four jacks per day. One exception is the area between the juvenile bypass return pipe and Little Goose Dam along the south shoreline of the facility - including the walkway area locally known as "the Wall" in front of the juvenile collection facility - where the daily catch limit is one jack and one adult.

The minimum size of any retained chinook is 12 inches. Jacks are less than 24 inches long. The adipose fin-clipped fish must have a healed scar at the location of the missing fin. Fishing must cease as soon as the adult chinook daily limit is retained. All chinook with the adipose fin intact, and all steelhead, must be immediately released unharmed.

All of these chinook fisheries will run through June 30, unless catch rates warrant an earlier closure. See all details at <https://fortress.wa.gov/dfw/erules/efishrules/> .

Meanwhile, the April 24 lake opener should provide lots of catch limits at most of the traditionally popular trout-fishing waters throughout the region. Some of the best are in Spokane, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Stevens and Ferry counties where WDFW fish hatchery crews have been especially busy stocking rainbow , cutthroat , brown , eastern brook , and tiger trout . (All details of fish stocking by

water by county are available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants> and complete information about all lakes is available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/prospects/> .)

WDFW central district fish biologist Chris Donley of Spokane expects that Badger and Williams lakes in southwest Spokane County will again be among the top producers. Both rainbow and cutthroat trout to 18 inches will be available. Although both should be excellent on the opener, the Mayfly hatch in mid-May is usually the peak fishing time for these waters.

Donley also predicts West Medical Lake, just west of the town of Medical Lake in southwest Spokane County, will be one of the best opening-day trout lakes in the state. West Medical has been stocked with fry, catchable-size, broodstock and triploid rainbow trout, so catches will run the gamut size-wise.

Fish Lake, northeast of Cheney, should provide excellent fishing on stocked brook and tiger trout on the opener and throughout the season. Two years ago the state record tiger trout, over 14 pounds, was harvested from this lake.

Clear Lake, south of the town of Medical Lake, is also expected to see good action on stocked yearling rainbow, broodstock rainbows, and brown trout. Donley notes that Clear also has good largemouth bass and black crappie fisheries.

Chapman Lake, south of Cheney, usually provides good catches of rainbow trout and kokanee on the opener, but it's best known for late-season action on largemouth and smallmouth bass and other warm water species.

Amber Lake, southwest of Cheney, which opened March 1 as a catch-and-release fishery, shifts to a harvest fishery on April 24. Amber is under selective gear rules and a two fish over 14 inches limit, designed to maintain a quality rainbow and cutthroat trout fishery. Anglers must release all trout with missing adipose fin - only unmarked trout may be retained as part of the legal limit.

Donley expects Fishtrap Lake, on the Spokane-Lincoln county line, to be among the best opening-day trout lakes in the state. Fishtrap has fry planted rainbow trout, with larger carryover, broodstock and triploid rainbows available.

Deer or Deer Springs Lake, northeast of Odessa in Lincoln County, has annual fry and catchable-size rainbow trout plants, along with some brown trout. The access area can be muddy early in the season, but it could provide decent catches on the opener. Fishing for yellow perch and black crappie can be good, too.

WDFW northeast district fish biologist Bill Baker of Colville expects good performance starting April 24 from a number of Pend Oreille and Stevens county fisheries, many which lie on national forestlands, some with campgrounds.

In Pend Oreille County, Davis Lake, south of Usk, has good early and late season fishing for rainbow and eastern brook trout, kokanee, largemouth bass, and sunfish. Diamond Lake, southwest of Newport, has a cooperative net pen project that releases 12,500 rainbow trout, in addition to WDFW hatchery-stocked catchable-size rainbows and browns. This year, 950 larger triploid and a few broodstock rainbows have been added to Diamond, which also offers action on largemouth bass, yellow perch, and bullheads. Frater Lake, southwest of Lone, should be good for planted cutthroat trout since it was rehabilitated in the fall of 2008 to eliminate illegally introduced tench and pumpkinseed sunfish. Big Meadow Lake, west of Lone, should provide 10-15-inch rainbows from annual spring fry plants.

Other Pend Oreille County lakes that open April 24 and are well stocked with rainbows and/or cutthroat trout include the North and South Skookum lakes, northwest of Usk; Browns Lake northeast of Cusick (fly-fishing only, all motors are prohibited); Carl's Lake, southwest of Tiger; Crescent Lake, north of Metaline Falls, Fan Lake, northeast of Deer Park; Halfmoon Lake, northeast of Usk; Horseshoe Lake, northwest of Elk; Ledbetter Lake, north of Metaline Falls; Leo Lake, southwest of Lone; Marshall Lake, northwest of Newport; Mystic Lake, east of Usk; Nile Lake, southwest of Lone; and Sacheen Lake, southwest of Newport along Highway SR-21.

Yocum Lake, another popular Pend Oreille County lake that opens April 24, has some access limitations early in the season. Lying north of Ruby, across the Pend Oreille River and up LeClerc Creek Road, Yocum has road access on both its north and south ends. But the south road is not available until after May 30 due to road protection efforts by Simpson Lumber Company. A Forest Service road to the north end of the lake provides an alternative route, but it is not suitable for trailers.

In Stevens County, three popular lakes open April 24 for a short catch-and-keep season (through May 31) under selective gear rules - Bayley Lake northeast of Chewelah, Rocky Lake south of Colville, and Starvation Lake southeast of Colville. Both receive annual rainbow trout fry plants that should provide excellent catches before they shift to catch-and-release fishing June 1.

Potter's Pond, north of Colville on the Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge, usually grows large trout from rainbow plants. Baker notes, however, it nearly went dry last fall, so there are no larger carryover fish this year and anglers can only expect fair numbers of 8-10 inch trout.

Waitts Lake, west of Valley along Highway US-395 with a newly improved access area, has seen an increase of rainbow and brown trout plants from a net-pen project, so there's good carryover potential. Largemouth bass, yellow perch, and numerous pumpkinseed sunfish are available as well.

McDowell Lake, southeast of Colville on the Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge, opens April 24 for fly-fishing only and catch-and-release and should provide good angling on large rainbows. McDowell was rehabilitated in the fall of 2006 to eliminate tench and restocked with various rainbow age classes in the spring of 2007.

The Little Pend Oreille chain of lakes northeast of Colville near the Pend Oreille county line - including Gillette, Heritage, Sherry and Thomas - usually produce decent catches of rainbow and tiger trout throughout the season.

Other Stevens County waters that open April 24 that could be good destinations are Cedar Lake, north of Leadpoint; Mudget Lake, south of Fruitland; Black Lake, east of Colville; Deep Lake, southeast of Northport; Elbow Lake, west of Northport; Jump-Off-Joe Lake, south of Chewelah; Little Twin Lake, east of Colville; Loon Lake, northwest of Deer Park; and Summit Lake, northeast of Orient.

A traditional favorite for the opener in Ferry County is Ellen Lake, north of Inchelium, on the Colville National Forest, and it should produce especially well this year. Baker explained that Ellen was rehabilitated in fall 2008 and re-stocked with rainbow trout catchables and fry, so anglers can expect good numbers of fair-sized fish and an occasional larger carryover on the opener.

Long Lake, southwest of Republic, in the Scatter Creek drainage on the Colville National Forest, opens April 24 for fly-fishing only on fry-planted cutthroat trout.

Other good bets in Ferry County for the opener, depending on road access conditions, are Davis Lake, northwest of Boyds; Swan Lake, southwest of Republic; Trout Lake, west of Kettle Falls; Empire and Ward lakes, north of Republic; and Renner Lake, west of Barstow.

In the southeast end of the region, Hood Park Pond in Walla Walla County closes to fishing April 16 - at least for anglers 15 years of age and older. A youth fishing event, coordinated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, takes place at Hood Park Pond on April 17. WDFW hatchery crews will stock trout for the event on April 16, so the closure is to prevent premature harvest of trout dedicated to the kids. Hood Park Pond will re-open to all fishing at 1 p.m. April 17.

Youngsters can still be registered for the "Kids Fish-In" event scheduled for May 1 on Clear Lake in southwest Spokane County. For \$5, kids 5 to 14 years of age can fish and catch up to three trout, and receive a t-shirt and rod and reel. Registration forms are available at WDFW's Spokane Valley office, 2315 N. Discovery Place, or on-line at www.gopaw.org. The event is co-sponsored by the Go Play Outside Alliance of Washington, Fairchild Air Force Base Outdoor Recreation program, Inland Northwest Wildlife Council, Inland Empire Fly Fishing Club, Spokane Fly Fishers, Spokane Walleye Club, White Elephant Stores, Zebco and Eagle Claw.

Hunting: With about 80 percent of Washington's wild turkey harvest in this region, the spring wild turkey hunting season opener April 15 is huge here. Hundreds of turkey hunters, donning camouflage and using calls, will be afield through May 31.

WDFW officials remind turkey hunters to be safe and ethical. Avoid using gobbler calls, never presume what you hear is a turkey, be sure of targets, select calling sites with vision in all directions, don't wear red, white or blue clothing (the colors of gobblers' heads at this time of year), don't attempt to stalk turkeys, and always ask permission to hunt private land.

The northeast GMUs 101-136 in Ferry, Stevens, Pend Oreille, Spokane and Lincoln counties should be particularly productive with an abundance of the big birds. The southeast GMUs 139-186 in Whitman, Walla Walla, Columbia, Garfield and Asotin counties, traditionally produce the second-highest harvest.

Remember that turkey hunting tag-holders must report hunting activity after the seasons and harvest should be reported within 10 days of taking a turkey. For all the rules, see http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/game_species/turkey.

Over one-third of Washington's spring black bear hunting permits are in this region. Permit-holders will be afield after black bears during the April 15 - May 31 season. For all the rules, see http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/game_species/bear_cougar.

Another kind of popular "hunting" in the spring is for the shed antlers of deer and elk. WDFW biologists say deer, elk and other wildlife are still "winter-weary" and should not be unduly disturbed during the increasingly popular quest for "sheds."

WDFW ungulate research biologist Woody Myers says these native ungulates are foraging day-long on newly-sprouted grasses and forbs in grasslands, pastures, low or mid elevation forest meadows, and other open areas of southern exposure.

"They're just now finding the opportunity to reverse the energy deficit they've been in all winter," Myers said. "Plus, the does and cows are entering their third trimester of pregnancy, a time of increased energy demands. Any disturbance now might mean the difference between life and death for both adults and youngsters yet to be born. Adults can still be lost as a result of starvation this spring and weight at birth has been correlated to fawn and calf survival."

WDFW wildlife biologist Paul Wik says the Blue Mountains area, for example, sees far too much accidental and intentional bumping and chasing of animals at this time, along with trespassing, traveling in winter closures, and traveling behind locked gates. To protect wildlife, there is currently a closure to motorized traffic in the Lick Creek Game Management Unit (GMU 175) in Garfield and Asotin counties and closures to all human entry in the Cummings Creek area of WDFW's Wooten Wildlife Area that continue through April.

Wildlife viewing: WDFW wildlife biologist David Woodall of Clarkston reports osprey are back in the southeast Washington area now. The fish-eating raptors, which winter in more southern climes, set up housekeeping near the Snake River or its tributaries - good sources of food for parent birds rearing young. "A pair of ospreys have claimed the nesting platform across from the ballfield in Asotin," Woodall said.

Woodall also reports mountain bluebirds and tree swallows are back in the area working on nests. The bluebirds use open, high meadow areas where old tree cavities or man-made nest boxes are available. The swallows are also cavity nesters and will use nest boxes in wooded areas near water.

For details on building and locating cavity-nesting species nestboxes, see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/backyard/nestboxes.htm> .

[pagebreak:Northcentral Washington]

Fishing: WDFW Columbia Basin district fish biologist Chad Jackson of Moses Lake says some of the best and most popular lakes in the state that open April 24 are in Grant County.

"The best of the bunch are the large lakes," Jackson said, "like Park, Blue, Warden, and Deep lakes. But don't overlook the smaller waters like South Warden, Perch, and Vic Meyers lakes. They offer some excellent fishing, too. "

Jackson says all lakes have been stocked heavily with rainbow trout in preparation for the big opener. Overall, anglers should expect good to excellent fishing for yearling and carryover trout. Catch rates should be around three to four fish per angler at most or all of the opening day lakes.

"Anglers fishing opening day at Warden Lake the last two years have averaged 3.5 fish each," Jackson said. "Warden Lake should fish well again on the opener for fry origin and catchable rainbow trout, now ranging from 11 to 13 inches in length. Carryovers averaged 11.5 percent of the total trout checked in the creel during the last two years and ranged from 15 to 18 inches in length. Hopefully, this trend will occur again for the upcoming opener. Tiger trout are also planted in Warden Lake and should run 12-20 inches by the opener."

South Warden Lake is a much smaller water body at just 24 acres, Jackson says, and those interested in fishing it must make a short hike to the lake from the access site at the south end of Warden Lake. Rainbow trout fry stocked in the spring should average around 12 inches in length. South Warden Lake is best fished from a small hand-carried boat or float tube, but shore fishing can be effective as well.

"Since they were rehabilitated in 2006, Park and Blue lakes have been fishing quite well the past couple years," Jackson said. "Anglers fishing these lakes in 2008 and 2009 averaged near limits of trout, and I expect them to be good again this opening day with three to four trout per angler. Boat anglers usually have higher success than shore anglers at both lakes. Yearling rainbow trout should average a very robust 12 inches with carryovers being at least 15 inches. To sweeten the pot, we'll be adding a small number of 15 to 20-inch triploid rainbow trout just prior to opening day."

Jackson says Deep Lake is probably the region's most unpredictable late April opening

fishery.

"For some unknown reason," he said, "Deep Lake anglers either average near limits of trout or less than one trout per angler. Hopefully, anglers fishing Deep Lake this year will experience excellent fishing for fry origin and catchable rainbow trout ranging from 11 to 13 inches."

Jackson noted an extra 2,500 catchable rainbow trout and 221 triploids will be planted into Deep Lake just prior to opening day. A total of 5,000 rainbow trout fry and 7,500 catchables were already stocked, plus 40,000 kokanee fry.

"Kokanee can be anywhere from 12 to 16-plus inches," Jackson said, "and they'll take many of the same fishing gears used to catch rainbow trout. However, the better kokanee fishing usually occurs later in the spring through summer from June through August."

Perch and Vic Meyers lakes are usually pretty constant producers on opening day, Jackson says, both averaging three to four fish per angler. Both are mostly fished from shore, although small hand-carried boats or floats can be used. Yearling trout caught at both fry-stocked lakes usually average around 12 inches in length. The catch rate for carryover trout of 15 inches or greater is considerably better at Vic Meyers Lake.

WDFW Okanogan district fish biologist Bob Jateff of Twisp reports some of the best production trout waters on the April 24 opener are Pearygin Lake near Winthrop, Conconully Lake and Reservoir and Alta Lake near Brewster, Fish Lake on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area, and Wannacut Lake near Oroville.

Good opening day selective gear waters are Big Twin Lake near Winthrop and Blue Lake on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. Two popular fly-fishing lakes opening April 24 are Chopaka near Loomis and Aeneas near Tonasket. Rainbow trout are the predominant species in all four of these lakes.

Jateff also reports that Spectacle Lake, which opened April 1, continues to provide good fishing for rainbow trout 11-13 inches.

"Most of these Okanogan County lakes have received some larger rainbows in the one to two pound

range," Jateff said, "in addition to their normal fish plants. Year-round Patterson Lake in the Winthrop area will get a plant of catchable size rainbows, as will Leader Lake in the Okanogan area. These two lakes are managed as mixed-species fisheries, so both could also provide some good spiny ray fishing early on."

In Douglas County, Jameson Lake's water quality has improved over the last several weeks, Jateff reports. That means WDFW hatchery crews will be able to stock upwards of 20,000 catchable size rainbow trout in Jameson prior to the April 24 opener.

All details of fish stocking by water and by county are available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants> and complete information about all lakes is available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/prospects/>.

Hunting: WDFW Okanogan district wildlife biologist Scott Fitkin of Winthrop expects improved spring wild turkey hunting, which opened April 15 and runs through May 31.

"The mild winter should have translated into less than average winter mortality for turkeys," Fitkin explained. "It also could mean better than average access for hunters. The birds, however, may be more spread out on the landscape this year with more snow-free ground than usual. Overall I am anticipating a modest improvement in turkey harvest over last year in the Okanogan District."

Fitkin reminds turkey hunters they must report hunting activity after the seasons and harvest should be reported within 10 days of taking a turkey. For all the rules, see http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/game_species/turkey.

Another kind of popular "hunting" in the spring is for the shed antlers of deer. WDFW biologists say deer and other wildlife are still "winter-weary" and should not be unduly disturbed during the increasingly popular quest for "sheds."

WDFW ungulate research biologist Woody Myers says deer are foraging day-long on newly-sprouted grasses and forbs in grasslands, pastures, low or mid elevation forest meadows, and other open areas of southern exposure.

"They're just now finding the opportunity to reverse the energy deficit they've been in

all winter," Myers said. "Plus, the does are entering their third trimester of pregnancy, a time of increased energy demands. Any disturbance now might mean the difference between life and death for both adults and youngsters yet to be born. Adults can still be lost as a result of starvation this spring and weight at birth has been correlated to fawn survival."

Wildlife viewing: This is an excellent time to visit the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge south of Moses Lake in Grant County. Hundreds of bird species are now gracing the refuge and surrounding area with spring mating and nesting underway. It's great place to drive around to see green-winged and cinnamon teal, northern pintails, gadwall, American wigeon, redhead, lesser scaup, common goldeneye, bufflehead, ruddy duck, black-crowned night heron, American avocet, least sandpiper, common snipe, Caspian and Forster's terns, bank, cliff and barn swallows, rock and marsh wrens, savannah, grasshopper and white-crowned sparrows, red-winged, yellow-headed and Brewer's blackbirds , and many other species. To learn more and plan a trip, visit the refuge's website at <http://www.fws.gov/columbia/> .

Some recently returning migrant song birds are still looking for nest sites. Secondary cavity nesters - those that will use, but not create for themselves, nests in tree cavities - will readily use man-made nest boxes, including bluebirds, chickadees, nuthatches and swallows . For detailed information about building and placing bird nest boxes, see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/backyard/nestboxes.htm> .

[pagebreak:Southcentral Washington]

Fishing: Even though the big statewide late April opener is a "non-event" in this region of mostly year-round lake fisheries, anglers should be aware that WDFW fish hatchery crews do ramp up trout stocking at many waters now.

WDFW district fish biologist Paul Hoffarth of Pasco notes large triploid rainbow trout are going into three Tri-Cities area lakes - Dalton Lake, off the Pasco-Kahlotus Highway; Columbia Park Pond, a juvenile-only fishery in Columbia Park in Kennewick; and Powerline Lake, a walk-in only lake in north Franklin county near Mesa.

"These big trout weigh in excess of one pound each and are scheduled to be planted by mid-April," Hoffarth said. "In addition, large numbers of catchable-size trout will be planted in Dalton, Quarry, and Columbia Park Pond in mid-April."

All details of fish stocking by water by county are available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants> and complete information about all lakes is available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/prospects/> .

Hoffarth also notes the numbers of spring chinook salmon moving into the mid and upper Columbia River are starting to rise. Spring chinook seasons are open up to McNary Dam through April - and will open in the Tri-Cities area in late April and the first of May - including sport fisheries in the Yakima River and at WDFW's Ringold Hatchery. Many of these fisheries are listed in the WDFW Fishing Regulations, but others will open or be modified by emergency rule change; for the latest, see <https://fortress.wa.gov/dfw/erules/efishrules/> .

"A one-mile section of shoreline in the Columbia River adjacent to our Ringold Hatchery will open for spring chinook on May 1," Hoffarth said. "Original estimates for the hatchery return was 700-plus adult spring chinook, but it could exceed 2,000."

Hoffarth notes this is the final year the Ringold area will be open for spring chinook, and that it will open to bank-angling only. Daily limit is two hatchery chinook. For all details see the Fishing Rules of Washington at http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regs_seasons.html .

The latest creel survey on the Columbia River John Day Pool (Lake Umatilla) showed an estimated 24 boat trips and 122 bank anglers fishing. The majority of the boats were fishing for walleye or sturgeon and the bank anglers were primarily fishing for chinook salmon. No catch was reported for salmon.

Fishing for walleye, smallmouth bass , and channel catfish is picking up in the Columbia, Walla Walla, and Yakima rivers.

Kids fishing events in the region are scheduled for May 1 at Columbia Park Pond in the Tri-Cities and May 8 in the Yakima area. Cost per kid five to 14 years of age is \$5, which includes fishing for stocked rainbow trout and a rod and reel. Pre-registration is required. For the Tri-Cities event, contact Kennewick Recreation at 509-585-4293 or online at www.ci.kennewick.wa.us . For the Yakima event, contact WDFW Southcentral Regional Office, 1701 S. 24th Ave., 509-575-2740 or Yakima Greenway Foundation, Office 111 South 18th St., 509-453-8280. Information on both events is also available at the Go Play Outside Alliance of Washington (GOPAW) website at http://www.gopaw.org/kids_fish-in_program .

Hunting: The general spring wild turkey hunting season runs April 15-May 31 and the region has several good areas of opportunities, including the 91,000-plus-acre WDFW Colockum Wildlife Area, south of Wenatchee in Kittitas and Chelan counties.

Turkey hunters are reminded they must report hunting activity after the seasons and harvest should be reported within 10 days of taking a turkey. For all the rules, see http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/game_species/turkey

Another kind of popular "hunting" in the spring is for the shed antlers of deer and elk. WDFW biologists say deer, elk and other wildlife are still "winter-weary" and should not be disturbed during the increasingly popular quest for "sheds."

WDFW's Oak Creek Wildlife Area, west of Yakima where elk are winter-fed, is one of the most popular areas for shed hunting. Oak Creek's new manager Ross Huffman reminds visitors that area and road closures - including Forest Service Road 1400 (Oak Creek Road), the Bethel Ridge Road which goes through the Oak Creek headquarters, and the Bethel Ridge/ Meloy Canyon Road - remain in effect until 6 a.m. on May 1 to limit disturbance to animals during the critical time of late winter and early spring.

Vehicle gates are closed to all entry on other wildlife areas in the region, too. The Mellotte Road into the Wenas Wildlife Area, the Robinson Canyon and Joe Watt Canyon roads into the L.T. Murray Wildlife Area, and roads on the Whiskey Dick and a portion of the Quilomene wildlife areas in Kittitas County are closed until May 1 to protect elk.

Wildlife viewing: The huge waterfowl and shorebird migrations are now past at McNary National Wildlife Refuge, just southeast of the Tri-Cities. But many bird species are now nesting here, including mallard and redhead ducks, black-crown night herons, great blue herons, pied-billed grebes, long-billed curlews, burrowing owls, long-billed marsh wrens, and yellow-headed, red-winged, and Brewer's blackbirds. Ring-billed gulls, California gulls, Forester's terns and spotted sandpipers also nest in colonies on the river islands in the Hanford Islands Division of the refuge. For more information and updates on the new environmental education center under construction, see <http://nwr.mcny.wa.us/> .