

Fall storms sink any fishing success

About every condition that works against angling is at the top of this week's fishing report. No way to flower this up, folks, but a series of fall storms that began to reach the Lane County coast early last week flat-out shut down most of the fishing opportunities from west to east. The wind and rain at the coast and in the valley, plus snow in the Cascades, made fishing and travel difficult at best. But the bad weather has passed and a forecasted dry spell is on the way.

Last week, a 20-foot sea and waves to 25 feet crashed onto central Oregon beaches and jetties, making beach fishing and bar crossings impossible for several days. This weekend could see the trend change and this time of year the ocean is rich with possibilities. If by chance that prediction holds, the south of Cape Falcon zone is open to the most species of bottom fish, including halibut. Dependably, the bottom fishery has been consistently productive whenever accessible this season.

Also, any break in the seas could present the last opportunity to fish for tuna this year. Ocean water in the 60-degree range still persists offshore, but the warm-water bubble that brings the tuna close enough to the Oregon coast to fish for them has begun to drift southward.

Winchester is still a good bet for captains who can boat far offshore (30 to 40 miles), or seek a charter operator for a guided trip.

More than eight inches of rain fell in the Siuslaw drainage in September and the Siuslaw River has been running higher and at levels more like November since then. The average rainfall for September is 2.5 inches.

The wet trend continued into October and the lower river above tidewater has been navigable on many days since mid-September, too.

For folks still trolling the bay, the Chinook salmon fishing pressure has shifted far up the estuary this week, much earlier than in past seasons. The trollers are still working around Tiernan Landing, but a lot of anglers are focusing their attention on the lower river from Mapleton upstream to the deadline at Lake Creek.

The good news here is that the heavy rains that fell last week pushed fresh fish up the river



FRANK ARMENDARIZ
ANGLER'S LOG

and most of those fish are still very bright. The river downstream from Rain Rock is easily run in a pontoon or drift boat, and they have hit the lower Siuslaw in fair numbers. For bank anglers, there are several points to access the river on foot; with a couple of landings and a short hike, plenty of other salmon holes are reachable.

The chinook are in the river and should be around into November, though the quality of the meat will decline much sooner as the fish begin to spawn. Bobber and salmon eggs or sand shrimp account for the most number of hookups on fresh fall chinook in the river.

For anglers with limited mobility, reaching the water is always a challenge, and I like sharing if it gets more folks a chance at overcoming obstacles and catching a good fish. There are modest exceptions: Junction City ponds and the Alton Baker canal are reasonably accessible for trout fishers, but they are highly urbanized fisheries and offer little of the aesthetics that anglers love.

Bender Landing and County Park, on the North Fork Siuslaw, is another one of those diamonds. About five miles up the North Fork Siuslaw River Road from Highway 126.

Bender has a boat landing and an accessible fishing dock for folks with mobility issues. Restrooms, a large parking lot that accommodates both single vehicles and trailers, and picnic benches add to the convenience in a beautiful setting.

Chinook salmon return to the North Fork in late October and November and the fishing dock is the perfect place to cast a line. In January and February, it's also an idea location to plunk for winter steelhead.

Now go fishing. Take your kids or a friend. Those will become some of the best memories of your life.

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PHOTOS BY FRANK ARMENDARIZ/
THE CHRONICLE

From top: Fifteen-foot waves were breaking across the Siuslaw River bar last week, forcing a mandatory closure of boats crossing the Siuslaw and most other river bars in the state. Bar closures will be more common as we move toward winter.

Jacob King of Eugene enjoys surf fishing, a year-round opportunity in Oregon. Here, a 2.5-foot surf was good enough to turn out a few surf anglers; the next day, the surf grew to near seven feet.

The quality of bait can make all the difference for fall chinook. These salmon eggs were cured by Matt Danz, of Danz Outdoors in Springfield. I trust Matt to always have fresh baits.

NOTEBOOK

Bobcat released into wild

Chronicle news services
Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife officials safely released a male juvenile bobcat into the wild last week. Based on its teeth, the bobcat was at least six months old; it was released on BLM land in Lane County.

ODFW's evaluation of the bobcat showed it to be healthy. It had no signs of active infection or injury.

It is not known if two bobcats found earlier in the week at Oak Hill School were orphaned, abandoned by their mother, or naturally dispersing. Young bobcats may start to disperse away from their mother as early as six months old, so a bobcat born early in the spring could naturally disperse in the fall.

Changes for Columbia fishing: Oregon and Washington fisheries managers have reopened the mainstem Columbia to retention of coho salmon through Oct. 31, from the Tongue Point/Rocky Point line upstream to The Dalles Dam. The daily adult bag limit is two coho.

Only hatchery coho may be retained downstream of the Hood River Bridge. All steelhead and all salmon except coho must be released. All other permanent regulations remain in effect, including retention rules for coho jacks.

Also
Hunting seasons are in full swing and the recent cold, wet weather should improve many hunts. General season coast buck and Cascade buck are open; the cool, wet weather should have bucks moving around more. Cold and wet are preferred conditions for duck hunting, which is open statewide. Goose hunters also can plan to spend a day in the field this weekend. Upland bird seasons – pheasant, quail, forest grouse, chukar and partridge – are open across the state. The number of grouse tails and wings being deposited in west-side collection barrels suggest a strong season is underway.

The number of fishermen trolling the bays dropped off considerably this last weekend. A few fish were caught but early rains pushed most salmon upriver.





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