



October 2020

*The Association of NW Steelheaders Anglers dedicated to enhancing and protecting fisheries and their habitats for today and the future.*

### **Cancelled - Sandy River Chapter October, November, and December 2020 meetings.**

With Oregon Covid-19 numbers where they are, lack of broad availability of a vaccine, State and Local restrictions on social activities, and other unknowns it is not practical for us to hold a highly social activity like one of our meetings, in the near future.

We hope to be able to recommence in January 2021. We will keep you informed here and on our Facebook page.

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### **Chinook retention reopens on mainstem Columbia River starting Saturday, Sept. 19**

[https://www.dfw.state.or.us/news/2020/09\\_Sep/091720.asp](https://www.dfw.state.or.us/news/2020/09_Sep/091720.asp)

September 17, 2020

**CLACKAMAS, Ore.**— Fishery managers were able to reopen the 2020 Chinook retention season starting this Saturday, Sept. 19, four days earlier than scheduled based on preseason planning and run forecasts.

Effective Sept. 19-Dec. 31, 2020, the mainstem Columbia River from Buoy 10 to the Highway 395 Bridge near Pasco, WA reopens for Chinook and coho salmon. Anglers may retain up to two adult salmon, only one of which may be a Chinook. Only hatchery Coho may be retained downstream of the Hood River Bridge. Previously adopted steelhead retention closures and bag limit restrictions remain in effect. All other permanent regulations apply including those pertaining to jack salmon and the use of barbless hooks only.

Previously, adult Chinook retention was scheduled to be closed until Sept. 23 from Buoy 10 upstream to the Hwy 395 Bridge. Moving the reopening date to Sept. 19 follows the addition of two Chinook

retention days at Buoy 10 in early September and three days river-wide Sept. 11-13. The enhanced Chinook retention opportunity is in response to a fall Chinook return that continues to exceed pre-season expectations.

“I’m really pleased that we were able to get fisheries open again river-wide starting this Saturday,” said Tucker Jones, Ocean Salmon and Columbia River Program Manager for ODFW. “This opportunity is the result of hard work by staff, careful and considerate in-season management, and an actively engaged recreational angling community and industry.”

For the latest on Columbia River fishing regulations, see <https://myodfw.com/recreation-report/fishing-report/columbia-zone>.

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## Repairs underway at Willamette Falls Fishway to ensure passage for endangered fish

[https://www.dfw.state.or.us/news/2020/09\\_Sep/091820b.asp](https://www.dfw.state.or.us/news/2020/09_Sep/091820b.asp)

September 18, 2020

**CLACKAMAS, Ore.**—Work is underway to repair the fishway system at Willamette Falls. Anglers and other users of the river may be seeing barge traffic as construction materials are transported from down river to the channel leading up to the cul-de-sac and notice fish counts are not being updated.

The fishway has several areas that need attention due to ongoing issues with stability. One of the concrete aprons at fishway leg 2 has become dislodged, a structural joint on the transport channel needs to be reworked to allow for movement, and a tensioning system needs to be added at fishway leg 1. These need to be repaired to protect the structure from future scour at fishway leg 2 and to stop separation of the structure at leg 1, which could lead to failure of the fishway in the near future if left unfixed. This work is being funded through a grant from the Fish Restoration and Enhancement Program, which is funded by recreational and commercial fishing license fees.

Work on the project requires the shutdown of all the fish ladders in the fishway system. Any fish using the system will be delayed in their migration until after work on the fishway is completed, which is expected to be mid-October at the latest.

There is an in-water work period for this section of the Willamette River from July 1-Oct. 31. (In-water work periods are times outlined by fish biologists, when work in waterbodies is allowed because impacts to fish, wildlife and habitat will be minimized.) Based on this, river conditions, and other factors, ODFW chose this time period to do the work to have a minimal impact on sensitive populations of anadromous fish—particularly species considered Threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act (upper Willamette winter steelhead and spring Chinook).

Coho salmon, which are not listed as threatened are the primary fish species using the ladder in the fall. The coho that normally start to pass through the ladder around this time of year will stay downstream of the falls until the ladder reopens. Based on the 10-year average run timing, about half of the coho salmon run does not migrate over the falls until after Oct. 1. Peak spawning of coho in upper Willamette tributaries typically occurs from mid-November through mid-December, meaning coho will still have time to reach their spawning grounds when the fish ladder reopens by mid-October. The impact of the closed fishway on coho populations is expected to be minimal.

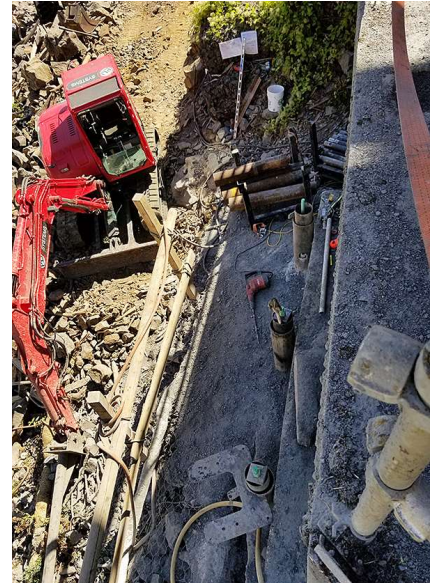
Doing the work during this period avoids the time of year when Threatened species upper Willamette steelhead and spring Chinook use the fishway. Nearly 95 percent of hatchery summer steelhead will have also migrated upstream of the falls by late August. (The fishway was closed on Aug. 27.)

“Our biggest concern is a catastrophic failure of the fish ladder that would keep any fish from using the ladder, particularly threatened upper Willamette winter steelhead and spring Chinook,” said Ryan McCormick, ODFW Chief Engineer. “This would keep fish from migrating upstream for years and would significantly threaten these already fragile populations, so it’s critical we take steps now to fix the fish ladder.”

Anglers and others using the river around the falls are reminded to observe restricted areas and are asked to exercise caution as equipment will be moved to and from the site by barge.

### Photos

- 091820 willamette falls fishway 1 odfw - Several micropiles have been installed and grouted into place. These micropiles will secure this section of fishway which will stabilize movements at this joint.



091820 willamette falls fishway 2 odfw - The spill apron at the base of the fishway is dislodged and the gravel under the slabs has scoured away. Without this protection in place, the fishway is at risk for damage.

- 091820 willamette falls fishway 3 odfw - Willamette Falls Fishway is currently undergoing repairs due to ongoing issues with stability







- 091820 willamette falls fishway 4 odfw - The barge crane lowers a mini excavator to the site to begin demolition of the failed slabs at Leg 2.



- 091820 willamette falls fishway 5 odfw - The failed apron has been demolished and the site is prepped for placing a new concrete slab.

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## **One Last Cast**

Jim Cathcart (aka Navigator)

It is funny how a thought might stick in your memory, but it may be forever before you act on it. One of those thoughts for me had its genesis around 15 years ago. My oldest son and middle child, Peter, was playing on a little league summer team and Karen (mother and wife) and I were in Rainier for a weekend tournament. Between games I ran across a woman that was picking blackberries from a berry patch next to the ballpark and I noticed some fishing rods in the back of their truck and of course the conversation went to fishing. Turns out the berry picker was taking a break from plunking for fall Chinook salmon on the Columbia River at nearby Dibblees Beach.



Stories about catching salmon on a spin 'n glow rig followed and the woman gave me a mini-clinic on how to rig up a three spreader system including how to make do it yourself spreaders with a swivels and surgical tubing.

The reason why the thought stuck with me was not for the useful information I gleaned from the chance conversation but the back drop in which it occurred. It was a beautiful sunny, windless, hot day in Rainier and the idea of finding my own beach and setting the plunking rod in the holder with bell hooked up to signal a bite filled the time between the pitches, outs, hits and runs of the tournament. To this day when mid-August rolls around and the sun is out against blue sky on a



windless hot day my thoughts turn to blackberries, do it yourself spreaders, Dibblees Beach and fall Chinook. And my sense of smell picks up the aroma of summer fading into fall. But to this day, I have yet to go fishing from Dibblees Beach.

We all have our thoughts that trigger our senses letting us know that the seasons are changing and it is time to move from one fishery to the next. Winter steelhead yield to spring Chinook (or kokanee) which in turn yield to summer trout, bass and walleye which in turn yield to crabbing and fall Chinook which yield to tributary Coho and then back to winter steelhead. As one gets more experience the cycle solidifies with habit and tradition; perhaps with the occasional departure for that trip of a lifetime. Well, at least this was so before 2020 rolled around ...



It has been a tumultuous year this 2020 and our patterns of life have been severely interrupted with the coronavirus pandemic, calls for social justice and the now the most recent upheaval, wildfires. With respect to the latter there is no question many of our go to fishing destinations in the Clackamas, Santiam and McKenzie River basins have been changed for generations to come. But our memories of such have not burned and there are stories to share with the next generation of anglers who will start their own cycle of tradition in this new environment.

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## ODFW hatchery staff take steps to keep fish alive and perform critical functions after evacuation due to wildfires

[https://www.dfw.state.or.us/news/2020/09\\_Sep/091520.asp](https://www.dfw.state.or.us/news/2020/09_Sep/091520.asp)

**Contact:** Michelle Dennehy, (503) 931-2748, [michelle.n.dennehy@state.or.us](mailto:michelle.n.dennehy@state.or.us)  
September 16, 2020

**SALEM, Ore.**—Despite the unprecedented wildfires and evacuation of six ODFW-managed fish hatcheries, millions of fish at these facilities remain alive with hatchery staff returning as they are able to care for fish and even spawn spring Chinook during a critical time in their life cycle.

Most importantly, no lives were lost among ODFW hatchery staff and their families who had to evacuate. Unfortunately, some critical infrastructure and fish were lost, with Rock Creek Hatchery on the North Umpqua River sustaining the most severe damage followed by Klamath, Leaburg, and Minto. <https://youtu.be/jhgrlvpJues>

With the permission of authorities managing fires, some ODFW staff have been returning periodically to even Level 3 evacuation areas on a limited basis to keep fish at the hatchery alive (by assuring that water is flowing, feeding fish, controlling debris, fueling generators, etc.) and to perform other critical tasks such as spawning spring Chinook.



**Rock Creek** sustained the most severe damage of all hatcheries. With the exception of the Rock Ed Education Center, all buildings and employee housing were either destroyed or severely damaged by the Archie Creek Fire. Staff access has been more limited than at other facilities due a number of hazards around the site including downed trees and power lines. Some hazards were eliminated to allow staff to get in today (Sept. 16), remove about 700 remaining adult spring Chinook and summer steelhead and move them to Cole Rivers Hatchery with the intent to spawn and collect enough eggs to meet Rock Creek's production goals. Staff estimates 400,000 juvenile fish were lost and although the extent of fish loss is currently unknown, we expect to know more later this week. The site remains at Evacuation Level 3.

At **Leaburg Hatchery**, staff who were evacuated from the hatchery and their homes at 2 am. on Sept. 8 due to the Holiday Farm fire returned later in the morning to release approximately 1.16 million fish on site into the McKenzie River as the hatchery lost water. Eugene Water & Electric Board (EWEB) was forced to open the Leaburg Dam rollgates as a precaution as debris from the fire could come down the river and clog or overtop the dam, which dewatered Leaburg Lake and the hatchery. "Those fish would not have survived very long without new incoming fresh water," said Erik Withalm, Leaburg hatchery manager. "We pulled tail screens to get fish out as quickly as we could before evacuating again as the fire approached. Fortunately, structures at the facility sustained only minor damage with only the wellhouse and a tractor burning."

Most of the fish released from Leaburg (yearling spring Chinook, summer steelhead and rainbow trout) are expected to survive after spending the next few months in the river. The spring Chinook and summer steelhead that were released will then head downstream to the ocean as part of their natural life cycle with some eventually returning to the hatchery in 2-4 years. The rainbow trout will stay in the river and continue to provide a fishing opportunity for anglers. Some fish on site that were meant for release in another basin (Rock Creek spring and fall Chinook and summer steelhead) were not released and died on site as under fish management plans, ODFW hatcheries do not release "out of basin" stocks. While the vast majority of fish released made it out to the river, an estimated 5-10 percent did not get out of the hatchery before it was dewatered.

As Leaburg Lake levels have come up, hatchery staff are returning to the site as they are able to recollect spring Chinook adults in the trap for eventual spawning and to transfer any eggs to McKenzie Hatchery. Any dead fish at the site are being removed. The hatchery's popular sturgeon also survived the fire, but may eventually be released into the McKenzie River as the hatchery is no longer suited for long-term holding of the sturgeon due to likely water supply issues that will occur in the coming months.



Minto Fish Facility's Manager Greg Grenbemer described it as a "miracle" that all has gone so smoothly at his facility near Gates, which was evacuated due to the Beachie Creek Fire. The generator and water pumps have been running so no fish have been lost. A few staff and fish pathologists were also able to return this week during a critical time to spawn spring Chinook while their egg quality is optimal and before adults die. (Due to their natural life cycle, not the fire, spring Chinook egg quality will quickly diminish if the adults are not spawned at a certain time and the adults will die soon after, resulting in fewer smolts released from in 2022 and poor adult returns in 2024). So far since evacuation, the crew have been able to spawn an estimated 840,000 eggs from their North Santiam spring Chinook adult broodstock, and intend to spawn another 900,000 eggs in coming days. "We were able to preserve this year's generation," said Grenbemer. "Those eggs will go to Roaring River until we can take them back to our hatcheries on the Santiam River." (See video of fish spawning at link)

Marion Forks was also spared from damage, and staff are returning as they can to clean ponds and screens and feed fish to keep them alive.

At Klamath Hatchery, a hatchery building, shop and office complex were lost in the Two Four Two fire, and power, water and sewer compromised. An estimated 50,000 triploid brown trout were lost—20,000 of those meant for Diamond Lake and the rest for other locations. Staff are cleaning up and developing contingency plans for 2021 production and stocking. The Klamath Hatchery receives brown trout eggs from California Fish and Wildlife each year, and hope Diamond Lake stocking of triploid brown trout will be able to resume as normal in 2022. (Diamond Lake is also stocked from other hatcheries so will still be stocked with rainbow trout in 2021.)

"We are still very much in the emergency response phase. The safety and security of our staff is priority one, and we have dozens of staff who have been impacted by the evacuations from their homes," ODFW Deputy Director Shannon Hurn said. "As the state sees more stability and abatement of active fires, we will determine over the next week or two the extent of the fish loss and damage. Then, it will be time for long-term planning for repairing, replacing and funding the recovery of our infrastructure. We will also need to plan as best we can for expected mudslides or debris flows that will occur with the fall rains on burned areas, and will further complicate hatchery management."

While they assess fish loss, Fish Division staff statewide are also developing contingency plans for production and stocking in 2021 and into the future.



Other hatcheries that were evacuated during Oregon's unprecedented wildfires include the Clackamas Hatchery (Estacada), which is threatened by the Riverside Fire, but the fire has not reached the facility yet and so no structures are damaged. Fortunately, despite waterflow issues over the weekend, water has been restored and no fish have been lost. Staff continue to access these facilities on a limited basis to keep fish alive. Equipment has been relocated to other facilities in less fire danger. Clackamas hatchery staff also assisted in caring for fish at the Eagle Creek National Fish Hatchery over the weekend (Eagle Creek rears Clackamas spring Chinook and winter steelhead for release in the Clackamas Basin). Fortunately, no fish have been lost yet.

The Salmon River Hatchery in Otis was also evacuated due to the Echo Mountain fire and still has no power, but the generator is working and there does not appear to be fish loss. Hatchery staff continue to access the facility during the daytime to ensure fish are kept alive.

Other fish hatcheries have been at Level 1 or 2 Evacuation status in recent days including Cole Rivers, Dexter, Oak Springs, Roaring River, Sandy, South Santiam/Foster and Wizard Falls as well as the Clackamas regional office. Staff are moving equipment offsite and have developed contingency plans for fish holding or release if Evacuation Levels move to Level 3.

"On behalf of the Department I would like to say thank you to all the firefighters and those volunteer on the front lines. We are very aware that the damage at several of our hatcheries would have been much more extensive without them," continued Hurn. "Also, I'd like to say thank you to Oregon's law enforcement, cities, counties and other community services for the relief they are providing. It is heartening to see these small forested communities rally together in the face of such devastation."

Many more photos are viewable at: [https://www.dfw.state.or.us/news/2020/09\\_Sep/091520.asp](https://www.dfw.state.or.us/news/2020/09_Sep/091520.asp)

## ***Sandy Chapter Board Members***

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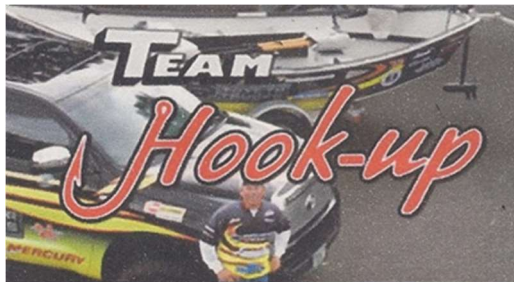
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