

He still won't back down
Tom Petty reflects on 40 years of songwriting/D4

Outdoors

Inside
Comics **D3**
People **D5**
TV Daily **D6**



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SECTION D

FISHING PREVIEW

Better bite on tap for opener

A drier winter plus warmer water should make for an active start to trout season

By **JIM MUREZ**
For The Register-Guard

A drier-than-normal winter means the trout season will get off to a better-than-average start Saturday with more places where anglers can wet their lines.

"There's a good chance on opening day we'll have lower and warmer water than in previous years," Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife district biologist Jeff Ziller said. "That will usually help the activity."

The ODFW will continue to stock numerous lakes, rivers and streams this week and then will continue to restock them next week. Anglers will have ample opportunity to come home with a creel that shouldn't be empty.



IVAR VONG/For The Register-Guard, 2012

Hatchery fish swim in the display pond near the dam at Leaburg Lake, which will be a popular spot come Saturday.

For one of the most popular and traditional opening-day fisheries, the agency will follow the same pattern it's used the past few years to stock the McKenzie River by first stocking the section below Leaburg Dam to Hendricks Bridge. It had stocked

the upper river first for several years, but surveys in 2009 and 2010 found the catch rate was extremely poor, so it changed its strategy.

"People will want to make sure they target the lower river in early May," Ziller said. Ziller also encourages people

who don't plan to keep their catch to give sections of the McKenzie and Willamette that are catch-and-release or have lower limits. Those include the McKenzie from Hendricks Bridge to its mouth, the Middle Fork of the Willamette River from Dexter Dam to the Coast Fork and the Willamette from the McKenzie River to Harrisburg. These tend to have good insect hatches this time of year and are very productive for wild fish.

Another spot Ziller recommends is Hills Creek Reservoir. The ODFW used to stock the Middle Fork of the Willamette River upstream from the reservoir. But anglers' success had been so poor that the agency decided to shift the fish to the reservoir. In 2012 and 2013, anglers "knocked the socks" off of these fish.

In addition to the 200,000 fingerling trout released, the ODFW will stock the reservoir

Turn to **TROUT**, Page D2

Coho run projects to be one big catch

The hatchery and wild counts are expected to exceed the million mark for first time since 2010

By **JIM MUREZ**
For The Register-Guard

Ocean salmon anglers may see one of their better seasons in years and have the most opportunities to fish for coho they've had since the 2010 season.

This year's coho run is projected to approach 1 million hatchery fish. Counting wild coho, the run is likely to exceed the million-fish mark. Once the sport coho season opens June 21, anglers will be able to fish seven days a week.

"With coho, and all things being equal, we should have a tremendous season," said Eric Schindler, ocean salmon sampling project leader for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife in Newport.

The sport fin-clipped coho season is open June 21 to Aug. 10 with a quota of 80,000 fish from Cape Falcon south to California. That's up from 2013's quota of 10,500.

"I don't think we'll catch 80,000 coho, but you never know," Schindler said. "Last year, the fishing was terrible, and we only caught 6,000 in July. There should be a lot more coho around this summer, and the fishing should be much better."

Any coho remaining from the summer hatchery will be rolled over into the non-selective season — during which anglers can keep any legal-size coho caught — in September.

The outlook is particularly bright for coho from Bandon up to the Columbia River. The sport "non-selective" coho season runs from Aug. 30 to Sept. 30 with a quota of 20,000 fish from Cape Falcon south to Humbug Mountain.

The sport chinook season from Cape Falcon south to Humbug Mountain, near Port Orford, opened March 15 and will remain open through Oct. 31. Fishery managers have been hearing of good ocean chinook catches from Newport to Bandon. The area from Humbug Mountain south to the California border is open May 10 to Sept. 7 for chinook, and will be open for the June 21 through Aug. 10 hatchery coho season as well.

Most of the hatchery coho off the central coast come from the Columbia River system. Part of the reason for the lackluster catch last year is fewer fish made their way this far south than normal. While the forecast for this year's salmon seasons are bright, next year is uncertain with an El Nino projected to develop off shore.

"That's bad news for salmon," Schindler said, "but it shouldn't affect this year."

As for tips, he looks for the water temperature to be between 52 and 56 degrees. He also looks for areas with debris on the surface, as that usually indicates some upwelling or a tidal edge that are likely to attract fish. Schindler's other trick with coho is to keep his gear in close: "Until the flasher drops just out of sight in the prop wash."

While the forecast is for a good year for coho, Schindler doesn't want to get anyone's hopes up too high.

"I've done this long enough to know that fish are going to do what fish are going to do," he said.



IVAR VONG/For The Register-Guard, 2012

Keina Wolf, of Eugene, helps her daughter, Riley, on the opening day of the 2012 fishing season at Leaburg Lake.

A COMPLICATED CODE ON THE MCKENZIE

Trout fishing regulations juggle a multitude of complex issues

By **PAUL HOOPYAR**
For The Register-Guard

In 1916, a simple dictum regulated trout fishing for the entire McKenzie River Basin: "75 trout per day. Bait allowed."

Since then, conditions have changed in the McKenzie watershed: more people live here, more demands are placed on the river from multiple users, and our understanding of native trout as part of a complex ecological system has evolved. Consequently, fishery managers juggle a multitude of legal mandates and angler preferences.

Today, the river's trout fishing regulations provide for both the stocking and consuming of hatchery trout, while simultaneously protecting the McKenzie's prized native-trout population.

To the casual observer, fishing regulations in Oregon are about as simple

to decipher as fractals in Chaos theory: the 108 pages for 2014 are a testament to the contortions the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife assumes in regulating, and providing access to, fishing.

To others, the trout fishing regulations for the McKenzie can look like a Rube Goldberg contraption.

With the trout fishing season approaching, it's a good time to shed light on the maze of regulations, management strategies, basin plans and angler preferences.

The McKenzie is managed by the ODFW in an intricate balancing act. The department's decision space is bordered by the state's Native Fish Conservation Policy and the McKenzie River Sub-Basin Plan, both of which prioritize sustaining native fish populations. The federal Endangered Species Act, which mandates the re-introduction and expansion

of habitat for bull trout in the basin and a host of conflicting angler preferences.

On one hand, the goal is to sustain the McKenzie's native redds trout population. On the other, the department stocks the middle section of the river with approximately 130,000 hatchery fish between April and September with the intent of providing catchable, legal-sized fish for people to consume.

As a result, the agency divides the McKenzie into three trout management zones. The lower river, from its confluence with the Willamette River up to Hendricks Wayside (approximately 11 miles), is managed for native trout, with year-round fishing restricted to artificial lures, flies and catch-and-release only. No hatchery fish are stocked in this section, and no bait fishing is

Turn to **MCKENZIE**, Page D2

"The DDT killed off the bugs and our trout. As a little kid, I remember we'd catch big trout — up to 3 to 4 pounds. (In the early 1950s) you were lucky if you caught five or six trout that were six inches long ..."

— **DAVE HELFRICH**, LONG-TIME MCKENZIE RIVER GUIDE



