

Northwest Oregon's most complete and accurate fishing forecast

Forecasting for the fishing week of **February 18th – February 24th, 2005**

Fisheries Update: Spring Chinook are on their way so make sure that you have the tools you need to put more fish in the creel! Our technical report #1- Willamette River Spring Chinook Tactics and Locations for the Boat Angler is a real hit and a real help! These reports and several more are available at: <http://www.theguidesforecast.com/techrpt.shtml>.

Columbia River sturgeon fishing remains less than favorable. Catch success will likely remain poor and unchanged until more warm water conditions come about. We are in desperate need of rain which will bring a warmer front and stimulate the smelt run.

Spring Chinook fishing on the mainstem Columbia is non-existent. Most anglers are focusing their efforts closer to the Portland harbor due to warmer water temperatures and more easily targeted areas.

The north coast remains a poor place to fish. Steelheaders putting in time on the major tributaries are coming up with some results. The only saving grace to these anglers success is the fact that there isn't much competition. More dry weather is likely to keep these fisheries from blossoming.

A slight minus tide series next week may stimulate fair sturgeon fishing on North Coast estuaries and clamming may be good as well on Clatsop County beaches.

Crabbing is no longer a viable option on the lower Columbia out of Hammond with commercial efforts scouring that area. Dungeness are being taken in fair number out of Nehalem and Tillamook Bays. Crabbing is slow at Yaquina Bay, great at Coos and Winchester Bays.

South coast rivers are suffering with the rest of Oregon waterways from what has become a full-blown winter drought. The effects are running downhill as the outflow in upper lakes and headwater reservoirs is being restricted at many locations in anticipation of a long, dry summer. The Alsea, Elk, Sixes, Coos and Coquille are all low, clear and slow. A few winters have been taken on the mainstem Umpqua with small steelhead falling to drift fishermen at few places along the Rogue River.

Sturgeon fishing remains slow on the lower Willamette as late news indicates a slight improvement in the numbers of springers being taken at select locations. Plunking at Meldrum Bar has been an exercise in patience with on a couple falling daily to the 30 or so rods trying.

Clackamas steelheaders are reporting slow fishing in skinny water. It's slightly better on the Sandy River where the first summer steelhead and first spring chinook fell to anglers over the last week.

Trout were planted this week at Mt. Hood Pond, West Salish Pond, Alton Baker Canal, Alder Lake, Buck Lake, Dune Lake, Elbow Lake, Georgia Lake, Lost Lake in Lane County, Munsell Lake, North Georgia Lake, Perkins Lake, Siltcoos Lagoon and Thissell Pond.

Soapbox Update: Thanks to everyone that submitted oral or written testimony on the increase in steelhead take at the commission meeting last Friday. Your efforts paid off as the commission voted 4 to 3 in favor of NOT supporting any increase of any kind! We still have a hurdle to get through as the directors of each agency will fight it out until they come to a compromise on how the fishery will lay out. The fight is not over so stay tuned to what you can do to seal the deal!

Columbia River Fishing Report – Nothing has really changed on the big river. The smelt are still non-existent as reported by a smelt gill-netter at the Sportsmen Show late last week. The water temperature remains too cold to stimulate migration and most professionals believe they will still come. It is becoming more apparent however that the fish may not come in the hoped for numbers which could have consequences on growth rates this year.

Many Northwest Oregon guides took time off for the Sportsmen's Show this week so reports are less than adequate. However, general reports at the show by sport anglers indicated "status-quo" action- in other words, sturgeon fishing remains very poor and likely won't change until the water warms up.

The Guide's Forecast – The best options remain in the Bonneville Pool for keeper fish. Colder water temperatures don't seem to be putting fish down like they do in the lower river. Keep in mind that there are not a lot of keeper sized fish in this section and the action will get better as temperatures rise. There could be a lot of fish present in the ocean in search of ample bait supplies and southern estuaries along the Oregon coast are still producing fair catches of these fish. If the bait isn't present, there is no reason to be in the Columbia and no real sign of things to change this week.

Temperatures will again play a role in salmon success on the river. Although spring chinook are migrating through (mostly bound for the Willamette River), they are much less likely to bite in the cooler temperatures of the Columbia. The mouth of the Multnomah Channel affords the best opportunity but action has been reported fair in the upper end of the channel and the Oregon City area itself. For those preferring the Columbia mainstem itself, herring is the best option available whether you are trolling or sitting on anchor. The earlier fish seem to prefer this over plugs or winged bobbers such as spin-n-glos.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Anglers state-wide lament the winter drought conditions yet are hopeful that early spring will provide desperately-needed rainfall. Oregon streams and rivers would benefit this summer from

a late-season addition to the snow pack as well.

The snow pack, reported as 20% of normal, will not effect the electricity supply according to the BPA in a recent television news story. The agency went on to indicate that by having Oregonians pay higher electric bills this winter, it will somehow make up for the deficiency. Go figure.

Just when you thought sturgeon fishing couldn't get any worse, it seems to have come to a virtual standstill in the mid-40-degree waters of the Columbia and lower Willamette. And there's still no sign of smelt.

Plunkers on the bank below the mouth of the Clackamas River are taking low single digits of a mix of wild and hatchery steelhead daily. The rare spring chinook has fallen as well, although trollers this week have not found many fish.

Conditions may not be improving, but with time, greater numbers of chinook will be available as indicated by this report from **avid angler Tom F.** who wrote this week regarding a trip on Sunday, February 13th, "Well, I thought it would only be a scout trip, but I actually got a springer in the channel yesterday. About 17 lbs, nice and fat, on a herring. Saw two others caught and heard of a fourth. A few more boats than usual for February - I could see 10-12 others from where I was most of the day. The state cop said mine was the first fish he'd checked there this year. I'll be out there again next Sunday. Thought you'd like to know.... "

Since Detroit at the headwaters of the North Santiam remains below full and conservation measures have been started to ensure water later in the year, it follows that the river is at Summertime levels. It is possible that Detroit will simply not fill this year. Despite the fact that a few summer steelhead have been taken, certain evidence that there are a few in the system, the normally strong winter run has been negatively effected by these conditions. The number which have crossed that falls indicates a wild winter run one-tenth of normal.

The Guide's Forecast – Trollers will see a few additional springers this week, but many are waiting 'til March when the available numbers will provide genuine reason for optimism. The 2005 spring chinook forecast is for good numbers and the run has just barely started.

With the Multnomah Channel in the lower 40s and Willamette Falls at 44, there's no positive temperature differential to entice sturgeon unto that tributary to feed as has been the case in years past.

With anglers facing the potential of little change in these challenging water conditions, it is certainly worthwhile to brush up on the most effective techniques. Steelheaders in the Salem area may do just that at the next meeting of the Salem Chapter of the

Northwest Steelheaders where a special presentation featuring Larry Sydow from Sy's Jigs who will discuss in detail the best methods for presenting this most-effective low-water lure. The meeting starts at 7 PM at the Salem Library and the public is welcome to attend.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – The low, clear Clackamas River is producing the occasional winter steelhead daily for the few fishing it. Bank fishermen seem to have a light edge over boaters with the mostly wild metalheads population.

Dabney on the Sandy River got some attention earlier this week, perhaps by anglers anxious for the company of others with a similar interest. It certainly wasn't due to the anything like good fishing. Most anglers on the Sandy are coming home empty-handed.

There are exceptions, of course, as **pro guide Trevor Storlie (503-695-6515)** reports, "The Sandy has been hit or miss for most people. On Sunday [02/13, Ed.] the first confirmed Spring Chinook was caught in the lower end. Looks like we might be off to a real early start. Bobber and jigs are still the hot ticket. Guys are also doing better on bait. The little push of rain really help the bite pick up on Sunday. The river should continue to get better a pressure decreases do to people in pursuit of Spring Chinook and our wild broodstocks start to show."

Pro guide Jack Glass (503-666-5370), reporting from his home river, shares the anglers pain and some good news as he writes this week, " ... low low water will it ever change! There are a few fish in the sandy, and the first summer steelhead was caught last Friday [02/11, Ed.] during the commission meeting I was in, and the first spring Chinook was caught Sunday during the sportsman show I was in all week Trying to be a good Representative for the industry sure cuts into fishing opportunity's, maybe we can get a first next year."

The Guide's Forecast – Outdoor writers are seeking fresh, creative methods to express "low and clear." With no break in the weather there will be no change in the conditions, hence, little reason to expect a dramatic improvement next week over the marginal results recently. As always, time remains on the side of the angler. The longer that biological clock ticks within anadromous fishes, the greater the drive to run the river. Fishing may be slow, but it will get better; it always does. Eventually. It's great to hear about summer steelhead and spring chinook being taken recently. They're coming!

North Coast District Fishing Report – How many more weeks are we going to get away with this? Fishing remains poor on the North Coast and if the weather forecast materializes, it will be much the same with low, clear water conditions with an east wind at your back as you float downriver. An occasional steelhead is being taken on the north coast but most guides are canceling their trips due to poor water conditions and

lack of fish. Most are saying it is one of the poorest years in recent history. The larger river systems continue to offer the most hope with an occasional broodstock fish coming from the Wilson River and some wild fish coming from the Trask, Wilson, Nestucca and the mainstem Nehalem Rivers. **Pro guide Jesse Zalonis (503-551-2716)** reports, "I will start fishing again on this Wednesday. I have been away as you know. Thank you to all who came by to visit at the show. I have heard a rumor of some good fresh fish on the lower Nestucca. The river looks very low and clear, so summer tactics it is. I will let you know what happens. I will fish every day through March, so I should get the scene dialed in here in a day or two."

TGF staff writer Michael Teague shares his recent experiences on the North coast:

"Been fishing?" asked the fellow at a Tillamook tackle shop earlier this week when I strolled in wearing steelheading gear.

"Nope," I replied, "but I do enjoy dressing up like a fisherman. I've got a sailor suit I wear sometimes, too."

"It was amusing to see the stranger's expression change from stunned surprise to realization of the joke. Following an introduction, we had a good chuckle and complained, as fishermen have been doing lately, about the lack of rain. This exchange reflects the light-hearted mood during this getaway on the Wilson River February 13th, 14th and 15th.

"As the disappointing winter steelhead hatchery run winds down and the wild fish have yet to enter in significant number combines with midsummer water levels and clarity, conditions remain difficult. Despite three days of spinner flinging and jig tossing, no fish were harmed in this writer's attempt to hook up.

"Further, Sunday through Tuesday this week, no steelhead were reported taken on the lower Wilson. A mix of wild and native fish, though few in number, has been encountered on the upper river over the last few days. Since this was a Valentines getaway with my wife, we stayed low.

"The NOAA Wilson gauge showed a spike in level on Tuesday, February 15th, which seemed odd as I was there and hadn't noticed it. A closer look at the figures revealed that the level rose from 3.849 to 3.897. The few hundredths of an inch was imperceptible from the bank."

The smaller tributaries offer little hope for driftfishing but there may be a rare angler that has mastered the art of bobber and jig fishing in the very lower stretches of these rivers. No matter what river you plan to fish, bobber and jig fishing will likely be a top producing method.

The Guide's Forecast – As fishermen, of course we hold out optimism and if history repeats itself, we could still be in for some quality wild winter steelhead fishing. Data suggests that the wild winter run of fish often mirrors the return of wild coho from the previous fall. Well, wild fall run coho came back on strong numbers and we could see that in the March steelhead fishery. Of course only time will tell and many anglers will be focusing their efforts on the ample supply of spring chinook destined for the Willamette and upper Columbia River.

Still way too early to speculate just what kind of wild run of steelhead we will have on the North Coast this year but one thing everyone agrees on, much will be told after the next rain freshet. When will that be, by the way? No rain in sight makes the bigger systems the best bet with the mainstem Nehalem a best bet for desperate anglers. Low flows make this a great option and the fact that low water will not deter wild fish from migrating into the lower stretches is good news. The Beaver slide to Mohler Sand and Gravel or Roy Creek may provide one of the better options this week. The afternoon weather is most conducive to results as air temperature begins to match water temperature. Besides that simple fact, it is much more fun to fish in warmer weather! The roads are less treacherous too! Can anyone say, "fair-weather" guide? The lower stretches of the Wilson (Donaldson's to the bay), Trask (plan on dragging some of Loren's Drift to Hwy. 101) and the Nestucca (Three Rivers to Cloverdale) offer the best opportunity for those willing to brave the cold east wind predicted to meet the winter steelheader.

Some fair afternoon minus tides for sturgeon will also play out starting on Thursday the 17th. The west channel as well as the middle channel in Tillamook Bay will offer up some possible keeper action next week. Mud shrimp has been hard to find so plan ahead if you are making a trip to the coast. Check archived reports for pertinent phone numbers to reserve your bait.

Anglers considering other options might try for surf perch, according to Marie Will of Tillamook Bait (800-317-6885), who indicated some nice ones are being taken at Cape Meares Beach and Cape LookOut State Park. Anglers considering this fishery should check ocean conditions; it's supposed to be rough this weekend.

Crabbing remains fair in the Tillamook and Netarts Bays. The closer you crab to the ocean, the more productive the crabbing seems. The ocean is not forecasted to be friendly this week- despite a predicted east wind, so keep your distance.

Central & South Coast Reports – From the Siletz to the Umpqua, steelheading is slow. Stay with the light gear, long leaders and concentrate on the upper stretches of coastal rivers for the best chance of scoring a winter steelhead until the rains provide some relief. Larger systems will offer some opportunities down low, but the middle sections of most rivers will remain relatively fish-free. Bobber and jig combos shine in

these conditions with dark colors the better choice in clear water.

Deeper holes and slots are producing a few winter steelhead on the mainstem Umpqua but flows are so low that winters aren't moving up into the North or South Forks. Deep-drifted, cured salmon eggs is the most productive technique. This is the method which worked for Rob Ginno who is profiled today in the Medford Mail-Tribune. The steelhead he caught scaled at 28 pounds:

*<http://www.mailtribune.com/archive/2005/0217/sport/stories/03sport.htm>

The earlier suggestion to fish high or low in skinny conditions doesn't apply to the Rogue River, where both upper and lower stretches are non-productive. The only place providing any action is the Agness area where steelheaders are taking smallish adult steelhead and half-pounders. Bait is working best. In preparation for a long, dry season, flows are being cut back upriver which exacerbates the already marginal conditions.

Crabbing is slow in Yaquina Bay but reported as very good in Coos and Winchester Bays.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Fly fishing has been rewarding on the Deschutes river from Maupin through Macks Canyon for long-rodders using Blue-Winged Olive patterns and Golden Stone nymphs.

Northwest Trout - Perhaps this week is a good time to take the kids trout fishing at one of the many lakes and ponds which have been stocked. Mt. Hood Pond, West Salish Pond and Alton Baker Canal were planted in the Willamette Valley. Alder Lake, Buck Lake, Dune Lake, Elbow Lake, Georgia Lake, Lost Lake (Lane County), Munsel Lake, North Georgia Lake, Perkins Lake, Siltcoos Lagoon and Thissell Pond received trout in the Northwest Zone.

Reader Email

Once again this week, Kap'n Ken Johnson brings us the 'Black Top Report' from the lower Willamette, "It's been rumored that there are a bunch of Gladstonians and Oregon Citians cleaning out the "Fall" leaves and winter wrath from inside their parked boats at home. Is something up only the "locals" know about? Or are they just "loco?" Steelhead fishing at Meldrum Bar is still being done, but then, some of these guys have nothing better to do. That's why *I'm* down there from time to time. A few more Chinook Sized poles are hitting the edge of the beach hoping for that early Springer. Still, one or two Steelies are being caught a day, out of 15-30 poles on any given day. About one Chinook every other day, maybe, is starting to grab that Spin-n-Glo and Prawn combo. Not the best odds, most would say. However, a couple of Chinook Salmon have come to the boat ramp (I haven't seen'em?) and that might be why there's a whole lot of

boat cleanin' goin' on around town! If I didn't have about 253 bungee cords wrapped tight around mine, I would be out there too. I'm waiting for another 3-4 weeks, to tell you the truth...It's time, however, because there is a lot of "Spring Fever" going on already, even without the rain that is needed so badly. Pray for Rain...Pray for Snow in the mountains!"

Thanks, as always, Ken!

Subscriber Tony T. wrote this week regarding one of the many resources available at the TGF website, "I read an email in this weeks report that was regarding salmon spinners. Your staff referred him to the archives. I can't seem to locate this area. How do I get to the archives."

In his reply Tony, Michael Teague wrote "Thanks for writing ... it's always great to hear from subscribers. You can access the archive on this page at the TGF website here: *<http://www.theguidesforecast.com/subscriber/archive.shtml>. Please let us know if you have any problems. We're here to help you catch more fish."

Write to the TGF staff:

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Random Links

Is it too early to think about Hawgs-n-Dogs? We don't think so! Entries have to be in before March 31st:

<http://www.theguidesforecast.com/hawgs.shtml>

Here's an enjoyable way to tour Oregon or check the weather anywhere in the state (and elsewhere) from your easy chair via Webcam: http://mchristi.wso.net/new_cams-wus.html#OR

Just for fun, the Fish-On Song (Rated PG-13 for language):

<http://mypeoplepc.com/members/johnandmichellekruse/pacificnorthwestoutdoors/id9.html>

Weekly Quote - "Handling a big trout in swift water is akin to flying a kite on a blustery day. The more line you let out, the more trouble you're going to have getting it back." - Jimmy D. Moore

GOOD LUCK