

**Northwest Oregon and Washington's most complete and accurate fishing forecast**

Forecasting for the fishing week of **January 20<sup>th</sup>, – January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2006**

**Oregon Fisheries Update:**

**Willamette Valley/Metro-** With the lower Willamette River rising and falling, visibility remains near zero. Sturgeon fishers are hopeful that the river will produce but plunkers on the banks would like to see some stability and clarity. Winter steelhead counts for the year are near the 300 mark.

Sturgeon effort remained light this week mostly due to inclement weather. The most productive section was the Portland to Longview stretch although no keepers were tallied in the catch. Boats averaged over 10 shakers per boat however.

Fresh smelt are still being harvested by commercial netters. Over 400 pounds were taken on the last opener. Commercial success although insignificant, is a good indication that there may be a measurable run for dippers to harvest. There is still no indication that fish are present in the Cowlitz River.

The Clackamas has been slow even when water conditions have momentarily improved. The largest problem remains poor water conditions. Anglers are having a hard time gauging the health of the run.

A few fish have been caught on Eagle Creek, however. Despite this being a modest run, the limited bank space is frequently crowded. Fresh fish were reported in the lower stretches early in the week.

A few steelhead have been picked up on the Sandy River but most anglers return empty-handed. Water conditions are expected to improve along with the fishing as the weekend approaches and the freezing level drops.

While there's no trout stocking scheduled this week, extensive planting will the week of January 23rd. At that time Alder Lake, Big Creek Reservoir, Big Creek Reservoir, Clewox Lake, Dune Lake, Munsel Lake, Olalla Creek Reservoir, Huddleston Pond, Junction City Pond, Walling Pond and Walter Wirth Lake will all receive trout.

**Mid Columbia -** The Dalles pool produced 2 legal fish for the 5 boats checked while bank anglers tallied one keeper and 5 shakers for 29 rods. There is some walleye effort as well but we are far from the peak season. One boat reported releasing 2 walleye.

**Northwest -** Rivers on the north coast were bankfull for most of the week. Smaller streams like the North Fork Nehalem and Three Rivers did offer some opportunity. The advantage on these river systems is that they have distinct deadlines where anglers can fish over concentrated numbers. With the bulk of the precipitation behind us, anglers can look for opportunity once again later in the week on these smaller systems.

Larger systems like the Wilson, Trask and Nestucca will fish later into the weekend barring further significant rainfall. Most disappointing however is the fact that many hatchery steelhead will have spawned in the smaller tributaries. Downriver bound steelhead do bite well and multiple fish days are possible for rivers that received a good return.

Soft, tides will favor crabbers but the fresh water influx in most coastal estuaries will likely deter success. Netarts Bay may be the exception but crabbers need to still use caution as high surf conditions will likely continue to exist.

Although tides are not ideal for sturgeon, low afternoon tides will happen after the weekend making Tillamook a prime location. Effort has been very light this winter and fish should be present.

**Southwest -** Smaller streams on the South coast should fish later this week if the weather moderates as expected. Larger Rivers, approaching bankfull or higher at mid-week, don't look as promising.

Alsea steelheaders have seen some action this week, but the river blew out again on Tuesday.

The Umpqua is a raging, muddy mess. Try elsewhere this weekend.

The Coos River cleared sufficiently to allow steelheaders a chance to land a few fish early this week. Anglers may expect to find a mix of wild and hatchery fish.

Anglers have been frustrated by high, off-color water on the Rogue may get a shot at a steelhead by next week if the rains hold off.

**Southwest Washington-** All SW Washington streams were too high for productive fishing last week. Water levels should drop down to favorable conditions as soon as the weekend. Rivers are forecasted to stabilize allowing steelheaders the first good opportunity in a long time. Like many Oregon streams, most hatchery steelhead will be spawned out and won't offer the best tablefare.

**Eastern -** Last week the catch rate on the Grande Ronde was about 3 hours per fish. This week, the river rose a bit and the catch rate went to more than 20 hours per fish in Oregon, but stayed excellent in Washington at 6 hours per fish.

**Columbia River Fishing Report –** Despite less than ideal conditions, a few boat and bank anglers did make it out to fish the mainstem Columbia in pursuit of sturgeon. Boat in the gorge (3 of them total) scored only shaker sturgeon while 15 bank rods recorded 1 keeper, 1 oversize and 8 shakers. The Portland to Longview stretch fared only slightly better with 4 boats catching 51 shakers. No legals were tallied. The Bonneville Pool wasn't as good as it should be as 16 sub-legal sturgeon released for six boats and 12 sub-legal sturgeon released for 32 bank rods. Smelt continues to be the bait of choice and for the few lucky fishermen that are in the right place at the right time, fresh smelt can be purchased from area gillnetters.

Gillnetters landed about 200 pounds for each side of the river on the last opener. The consistent catch is a good indicator that the smelt may show in decent numbers this season. Netters are motivated however as the price/pound remains high. These landings, although relatively small, may not have happened if the demand wasn't there.

The Columbia River Recreational Advisory Group met this week in an attempt to design a Columbia River spring Chinook season that will appease as many anglers as possible. Although the group doesn't have a definite percentage of impacts to work with, sport anglers may very well receive 60% of the allocation quota. This decision will take place closer to the end of the month. Washington commission members decided in a 5-4 vote to favor sport anglers in a 60/40 split with commercials while Oregon commissioners voted 4-3 to support a 55/45 split that will

also favor sport anglers. The caveat is that the Oregon commission gave 5% flexibility in either direction so the two directors will negotiate the final terms. The season crafted by the advisory group will favor anglers downstream of the mouth of the Willamette as the fishery there has much less an impact on endangered Snake River springers which will allow for more opportunity on the water. Anytime a fishery is conducted upstream of the Willamette, ESA impacts are eaten up quicker as all salmon upstream are governed by the management strategy. There should however be some opportunity upstream of the Willamette- most likely a modest season during the month of March while heavier restrictions will be in place during the month of April. This may result in 1 to 3 days/week of opportunity for anglers that like to fish in the gorge area.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Effort for sturgeon in the mainstem Columbia River should increase this week as favorable weather has many anglers anxious to get out fishing. The most popular area will likely be from the mouth of the Willamette to Longview. Shaker action will be the main menu but a few more keepers should begin showing in this section. Anglers will try and play the smelt card in this section of river as the popular baitfish are likely to stage below the Cowlitz before making a run. To date, there have been no reports of smelt entering the Cowlitz. Dipping remains open on Saturdays. Check the regulations for dipping times. I don't anticipate that there will be many, if any smelt in the Cowlitz on this weekends opener. The gorge will likely remain a poor option for keepers this weekend.

The Bonneville Pool and the Dalles Pool will likely remain one of the better options for catching a keeper sturgeon this week. Not many metro anglers are versed in this fishery however.

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report** – The lower Willamette River is rising and falling with near-zero visibility. Sturgeon fishers are hopeful but plunkers on the banks would like to see some stability and clarity. Winter steelhead counts for the year are near the 300 mark with water temps hovering around the mid-40-degree mark.

Those steelhead which have crossed the Falls are, for the most part, destined for the Santiam River. These wild steelies create a catch-and-release fishery of interest to a limited number of anglers who enjoy the sport and relative solitude on this lovely watercourse.

**The Guide's Forecast** – The high, muddy conditions on the lower Willamette combined with the fact that it's still a debris field should take it off the list for weekend boaters. Sturgeon fishing may be an option during the next three-day retention period starting Thursday, January 26th. At that time. Multnomah Channel and St. Johns should produce.

Unfortunately for the North Santiam River conditions, Detroit Reservoir at the headwaters, a recreational resource in its own right, does double duty as flood control for the rivers below it. At its current 200-foot level, water must be released from the reservoir in anticipation of further precipitation. This will keep the North and mainstem Santiam high for weeks to come. It should be back in shape when the numbers of hatchery summer steelhead create a more popular fishery ... sometime in March, perhaps.

Speaking of March (and thinking of springtime, which can't get here soon enough for many of us), the North Santiam Chapter of Northwest Steelheaders starts their "Learn the River" series of driftboat trips on March 4th. This will be from Green's Bridge to Jefferson, I-5, and Buena Vista. Experienced boaters as well as those who are new to the sticks are welcome to join, Call 503-585-4569 for information.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports** – The news for other rivers is no better this week as another deluge on Tuesday, January 17th filled many to the banks and roiled water

everywhere.

A glimmer of hope for Sandy steelheaders is the combination of a lowering freezing level and moderation in rainfall 'long about Saturday if the forecast is to be trusted.

The Clackamas is predictably high, and is likely to remain in that condition through the weekend. This river has been so reliably out of shape that the ODFW said it's difficult to determine whether or not there are steelhead in the river, although 143 winter fish have entered the trap at the hatchery on Eagle Creek the first week it was open (through Tuesday this week).

**The Guide's Forecast** – Everything is blown and brown but gradually recovering at this writing (mid-day Thursday, January 19th). The smallest streams, as always, will fish by the time this is read. Think Eagle Creek. Think crowds, too.

Fish as high as possible on the Sandy as it clears, applying high-water techniques. Clackamas anglers are advised the same, keeping offerings bear the banks which will generally be the path steelies will take as the current is lighter at the edges, allowing for passage with less effort on the fishes part..

The bottom line is, following 33 straight days of precipitation, we're going to catch a break. How much of a break and how long it'll last is yet to be determined, but there will be marginal improvement. Go fishing - weather or not.

**North Coast District Fishing Report** – Very little sportfishing took place on the North Oregon Coast this week. Smaller streams such as the Kilchis, Three Rivers, Necanicum and North Fork Nehalem are fishing as of the 19<sup>th</sup>. North Fork Nehalem personnel have recycled 178 steelhead to Vernonia Lake and collected an additional 441 fish at the hatchery for recycling back into the lower river on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Effort was light on the 19<sup>th</sup> and very few fish were caught. These area rivers were still a bit high on the 19<sup>th</sup> but should fish good by the weekend.

**The Guide's Forecast** – I know you aren't going to believe this, but another front is expected to hit the north coast on Friday, causing yet another rise in river levels over the weekend! If this weather system comes to fruition, larger streams like the Wilson, Trask and Nestucca will not be options again until after the weekend. This keeps the smaller streams like the Necanicum, Kilchis, North Fork Nehalem and Three Rivers the best option for steelheaders. The bank fishing on these smaller streams may almost be a better option as high waters will have fish well distributed and the higher reaches will be the places where fish are more likely to hold. The Necanicum, Three Rivers and North Fork Nehalem offer the best bank fishing opportunities and the last 2 have distinct hatchery deadlines where fish are most likely to concentrate in high numbers.

Wherever you fish, don't expect gangbuster results. Most of the hatchery fish are either spawned or ready to spawn and won't offer the best in tablefare. With the bulk of the wild steelhead still several weeks away, we are simply between runs of fish. There should be a mix of spawned out hatchery fish, very few chrome hatchery fish and a few wild fish available. Eggs and sandshrimp will offer the best chances for success as bait often times fishes best in higher water conditions.

Tides will once again work in the sturgeon anglers favor but it won't be until the middle of next week. Although the tides are soft, an afternoon low will provide some opportunity for anglers in Tillamook and Nehalem Bays. Sand shrimp will be the bait of choice and success should be decent as the fresh water influx is keeping the competition (crab) at sea.

Initial crab landings for the north coast are down significantly from previous years. Crabbers are

currently on strike hoping for a better price since demand will likely outweigh supply. Crabbing in most coastal estuaries is not a good option but Netarts may be the exception- especially with the soft tide series due in next week.

The ocean is forecasted to be rough again into the early part of the weekend but the swell and wind waves are also supposed to subside. This may give bottomfishers their first opportunity of the season by the early part of next week. Always drop crab pots on an ocean excursion. Just don't expect great results this year!

**Central & South Coast Reports** – .Smaller streams on the South coast should fish later this week if the weather moderates as expected. Larger Rivers, approaching bankfull or higher at mid-week, don't look promising so soon. Reports this week are sparse.

The Siletz may be fishable by the weekend and prospects of an encounter with finclipped steelhead is pretty good. This river crested near bankfull overnight on the 17th, Rose again with rain on Friday, but is on the drop. Early next week for sure ... if it doesn't rain, of course.

Alsea steelheaders saw some action early this week, but the river blew out again on Tuesday.

The Umpqua is a raging, muddy mess. Expect to find the river at the 14 foot level near Elkton this weekend.

The Coos River cleared sufficiently to allow steelheaders a chance to land a few fish early this week. Anglers may expect to find a mix of wild and hatchery fish when conditions once again allow the pursuit.

At flood level overnight on January 18th, it's unlikely the Coquille River will be fishable this weekend.

The Coos and Coquille are entering the peak of the season and deserve steelheaders attention through February anytime conditions allow.

Anglers have been frustrated by high, off-color water on the Rogue may get a shot at a steelhead by next week if the rains hold off. Steelhead should be available in fair number having been scattered by the freshet. With the run strong now, plunking the gravel bars on the lower river will be the best bet for intercepting a fresh metalhead and conditions will allow it this weekend.

A recent article in the Curry County Pilot mentioned common local wisdom holds that the Chetco River won't fish 'til the flow drops to 4,000 cfs but the author scored at 6,000. At noon on Wednesday, January 18th it was closer to 18,000. It's been a long, wet winter on the South coast.

Fortunately for plunkers, the Chetco is dropping and clearing rapidly. It should be fishable and productive by Friday.

**Central and Eastern Oregon** – No reports.

**Northwest Trout** - Once again, cold weather and muddy water at the rearing facility has prevented the "catchable-sized" trout from reaching the necessary eight-to-ten-inch length for use in trout stocking. Consequently, Walling Pond and Walter Wirth Lake received a few more broodstock trout this week. The week of January 23rd, Alder Lake, Big Creek Reservoir, Cleawox Lake, Dune Lake, Munsel Lake, Olalla Creek Reservoir, Huddleston Pond and Junction City Pond

will all receive trout.

**SW Washington** - High, dirty water has brought steelhead fishing to a virtual standstill in rivers throughout the region, but **sturgeon** are a different story. "Sturgeon actually seem to like these conditions," said Joe Hymer, WDFW fish biologist. "Warm, turbid water with lots of debris seems to invigorate them." The best place to find those conditions right now is around the mouth of the Willamette River, which is where Hymer suggests anglers go if they're looking to hook a sturgeon in the lower Columbia River.

Other options include the pools farther upstream. At the Bonneville Pool, boat anglers have been averaging one legal-sized sturgeon for every six rods, although fishing has been slow for bank anglers. The Dalles Pool and John Day Pool have also been giving up some legal-sized fish. All three pools are open to sturgeon fishing under the same rules as last year. (See WDFW's 2005-06 Fishing in Washington rules pamphlet.) Below Bonneville Dam, the fishery is open Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays downstream to the Wauna powerlines near Cathlamet and seven days per week below the Wauna powerlines to Buoy 10.

**Smelt** make great sturgeon bait, but they don't come cheap. Hymer said fresh/frozen smelt were retailing for nearly a dollar per fish after commercial boats landed 399 pounds in the lower Columbia on Jan. 5. (Another 445 pounds were landed Jan. 9). No recreational landings had been reported on the Cowlitz River as of Jan. 10, but Hymer said that should change once river conditions improve. The popular fishery on the Cowlitz runs from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. each Saturday through March 31, with a daily catch limit of 10 pounds per person. All other tributaries to the Columbia River are closed to smelt dipping until further notice.

With waters already running high throughout the region, 22 anglers interviewed Jan. 2-6 on the Cowlitz River had caught just two **steelhead** - one at Mission Bar, the other at Olequa. Although the peak of the early hatchery run has passed on most area rivers, Hymer noted that the Cowlitz and Kalama rivers have late runs that should provide good fishing into March. Anglers have been catching some steelhead in the Dalles Pool, but fishing effort has been down in most areas as the rain continues to fall.

Meanwhile, Tacoma Power employees recovered more than 1,000 salmon during the first week of 2006 at the Cowlitz Salmon Hatchery - including the **first adult spring chinook** of the new year. More than 750 adult coho and 13 winter-run steelhead were released into the upper Cowlitz River at the Lake Scanewa Day Use site above Cowlitz Falls Dam. Crews also released 132 adult coho at Franklin Bridge in Packwood, 85 winter-run steelhead at the Massy Bar boat launch and 150 adult coho into the Tilton River at Gust Backstrom Park in Morton.

Still, looking for a way to shake the high-water blues? Lake fishing may be the answer. During the first week of January, WDFW stocked Sacajawea Lake in Longview with 123 five-pound rainbow trout and 36 ten-pounders. Horseshoe Lake in Woodland got 16 five-pound fish and four ten-pounders; Rowland Lake near Lyle got 100 five-pounders and 75 ten-pounders; and Spearfish Lake near Dallesport got 90 five-pounders and 25 ten-pounders. The department plans to continue planting approximately 1,000 catchable-size rainbows in Klinline Pond every other week through the winter.

**North Central Washington** - Fishing for **hatchery steelhead** has improved considerably in the upper Columbia River system with recent warmer weather melting most of the ice in both the Methow and Okanogan rivers. WDFW district fish biologist Bob Jateff of Omak says steelhead that have been relatively undisturbed for more than a month are now biting, although WDFW enforcement officers report that participation has been low. Most fish are being caught with small

jigs used with a foam-type bobber as a strike indicator.

By law, anglers must release any steelhead with an intact adipose fin or a disc tag they intercept in the fishery. Officers estimated that only one out of six steelhead recently caught were hatchery-reared "keepers." The daily catch limit is two fish with a minimum size of 20 inches. Statewide gear rules and night closures are in effect. Anglers can check the WDFW access areas for signs about gear rules and closed areas.

Jateff also reminds **whitefish** anglers that standard whitefish gear rules do not apply in areas where there is an ongoing steelhead fishery. In the open steelhead sections of the Similkameen and Methow Rivers, selective gear rules will apply, with no bait allowed, during the Dec. 1 to March 31 whitefish seasons.

Winter fishing is currently very slow for **rainbow trout** in such Okanogan County lakes as Little Twin, Davis, Sidley and Bonaparte, where warm temperatures have made the ice unsafe to walk on and shore and boat fishing risky. **Walleye** fishing has been productive recently at Potholes Reservoir, even from the MarDon Resort dock.

**South Central Washington** - Fishing participation has been low throughout the region with rain and snow melt leaving rivers and streams high and muddy. WDFW enforcement officers recently checked a few die-hard **whitefish** anglers on the Yakima River near Cle Elum but catches were light. Other recent river and stream patrols have turned up few or no anglers. Just one steelhead was checked from the Columbia River near Plymouth in Benton County. As water levels and conditions settle out, catch rates should improve.

WDFW fish biologist Jim Cummins of Yakima reports the warmer weather has melted most of the ice on the region's year-round lowland **rainbow trout** lakes, so they may be more accessible. Anglers can bone up and gear up for future opportunities at the 13th annual **Tri-Cities Sportsmen Show**, Jan. 20-22, at the TRAC in Pasco. Among the many fishing guide and gear vendor displays and demonstrations, there's a kids' fishing pond and free seminars, including fly-fishing expert Jim Teeny and an outdoor cooking camp hosted by TV personality Butch "C.W." Welch. Show hours are 1-8 p.m. Jan. 20, 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Jan. 21 and 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Jan. 22. Admission prices are \$7 for adults, \$3.50 for kids six to 12, and free for kids five and under.

**Puget Sound** – Heavy rains and rising rivers have forced anglers to avoid the region's murky streams and instead turn to saltwater for fishing opportunities. **Steelhead** fishing has come to a virtual halt as rain continues to fill North Sound rivers. But stalwart anglers willing to brave the wind and rain in Puget Sound are having some success with **blackmouth**. The best bet for anglers seems to be the waters near Everett, said Steve Foley, WDFW biologist. The weather, however, is keeping most people off the water. "The few people that are out there fishing are catching some fish," Foley said. "But with this weather pattern the way it is, it's tough for people to get out." Blackmouth catch counts at the Everett boat ramp gave some indication of angler success. On Jan. 8, 13 anglers checked in six chinook.

Those heading out on the Sound can take advantage of the region's islands for some protection from harsh weather. If a south wind is blowing, anglers might want to try the east side of Whidbey Island, said Steve Thiesfeld, a WDFW fish biologist. "Areas like Penn Cove, Holmes Harbor and Utsalady Bay give anglers a shot at catching some blackmouth while providing protection from a south wind," Thiesfeld said. This is also a good time for anglers to take their time and learn the blackmouth fishery. "It really pays off," he said. "Those that have learned the fishery are having success."

Marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay), 8-2 (Port Susan and Port

Gardner) and 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) are open for blackmouth fishing, although Area 10 closes Jan. 31. Marine areas 7 (San Juan Islands) and 9 (Admiralty Inlet) remain closed for blackmouth. Anglers should check the 2005/2006 [Fishing in Washington](#) pamphlet for more information. When the rain does let up and rivers in the region start to drop, anglers should first try fishing the upper reaches of rivers, said Foley, who recommended Tokul Creek, a tributary of the Snoqualmie River, and the Cascade River, which is a tributary of the Skagit River. "Upper reaches drop and clear up first, while the lower reaches can remain dirty," he said.

**Olympic Peninsula** – High water and steady rain have put a damper on fishing area rivers, forcing anglers to consider other options. One possibility is a three-day **razor-clam** dig tentatively scheduled Jan. 27-29 at four ocean beaches. WDFW will give the final word on that dig - and another opening tentatively scheduled at all five ocean beaches Feb. 24-26 - once toxin tests determine whether clams remain safe to eat.

Both digs are geared to evening tides, with no digging allowed before noon any day. Low tides during the three-day dig proposed this month are at 5 p.m. Jan. 27, 5:49 p.m. Jan. 28 and 6:34 p.m. Jan. 29.

The four beaches tentatively scheduled to open those days are Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks and Kalaloch. Copalis Beach will remain closed to digging in January to ensure that enough clams are available for harvest in April, when the tides allow for morning digs, said Dan Ayres, WDFW coastal shellfish manager. Copalis is, however, tentatively scheduled to open for digging along with the other four beaches Feb. 24-26, Ayres said. "Since the weather is usually better in February, it made more sense to take a break this month," he said.

Due largely to rough weather, diggers averaged just 6.7 clams per day during the opening held over New Year's weekend, Ayres said. "But a lot of the more experienced, better-prepared diggers did get their 15-clam daily limit," he added. "A lot depended on finding the right location, being able to spot 'shows' and packing a good lantern." "Shows" are small holes in the sand, indicating the presence of a clam below the surface.

Meanwhile, **steelhead** fishing has stalled throughout the Olympic Peninsula, as heavy rains continue to push area rivers out of shape. On the Quillayute River system, where 165 anglers caught 67 steelhead (including four wild fish) over New Year's weekend, catch totals and angler participation steadily declined as flows increased. By Jan. 10, the Quillayute and virtually every other river in the region was unfishable. "All the rivers in the Grays Harbor area - the Satsop, Chehalis and Wynoochee - are completely blown out," said Scott Barbour, a WDFW fish biologist. "Your best bet (for seafood) right now is to drop a crab pot in the harbor."

Barbour noted that plunkers had some success catching hatchery coho in high water on the Wynoochee River during the first week of January, but gave up when the skies opened up again. "Give the rivers a couple days to drop back into shape after the rain stops," advises Mike Gross, another WDFW fish biologist. "Once they do, there's usually a bunch of fresh fish waiting to move upriver."

Or, anglers can go **blackmouth** fishing. Most marine areas are closed to salmon fishing, but Marine Area 10 is open for blackmouth through the end of January and Marine Area 13 is open through April 30. Catch rates aren't red hot, "but people are getting some nice fish," said Steve Thiesfeld, Puget Sound recreational fishing coordinator for WDFW. Anglers are reminded that several area rivers - including the Humptulips, Copalis, Minter and lower Chehalis (below Porter Bridge) - will close to salmon fishing Jan. 31. Thiesfeld advises anglers to check the WDFW [Fishing in Washington](#) pamphlet before they head out.

**Eastern Washington** - Snake River **steelheading** has been slow with high, muddy flows from abundant rain and snow melt in the tributaries and full pool in all sections of the mainstem river. Latest creel checks showed anglers averaged five hours per steelhead caught on the Touchet River and more than 29 hours per fish caught on the Snake between Ice Harbor and Lower Monumental dams. (See the full report at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/snake/index.htm>.) When water conditions settle out from current high levels, steelhead action should pick up, especially in and at the mouth of the tributary streams.

The same wet, unseasonably warm weather has left most of the region's winter or year-round fishing lakes unsafe for ice fishing, which drew crowds in December. Boat launching and shore fishing might also be risky at this time on some waters. A forecasted cold snap might ice things up again, but WDFW district fish biologist Chris Donley of Spokane warns that it will have to be a sustained freeze to make ice fishing safe again. "Now's the time to fish Lake Roosevelt for **kokanee** and **rainbow trout**," Donley said. "It's been good for both boat trolling and bank fishing, from the mouth of the Spokane River all the way to Grand Coulee Dam." Donley also noted that Whitman County's year-round Rock Lake continues to produce catches of **brown** and rainbow trout.

WDFW district fish biologist Curt Vail of Colville reported that fishing at winter-only Williams Lake in Stevens County is available only to brave, small boat anglers, since ice conditions have deteriorated. "Getting your boat in and out will require some risk and ingenuity," he said, "but there are some great rainbows in there for those willing to try." He noted that other waters in the northeast district are in similar shape. "Waitts Lake just barely got completely frozen before the current thaw," he said. Winter-only Hatch Lake, which is in need of rehabilitation to restore its once-healthy trout fishery, is yielding skinny **yellow perch** about six inches long. "You could cook fillets with three passes over a 100-watt light bulb," he said.

### **Reader Email**

If no news is good news, we're soaking in it this week. We can only assume that the lack of correspondence in our inbox means no one else is fishing either thanks to the crummy water conditions.

Write to the TGF staff:

Bob Rees: [brees@pacifier.com](mailto:brees@pacifier.com)

Doug Rees: [drees@TheGuidesForecast.com](mailto:drees@TheGuidesForecast.com)

Michael Teague: [SailCat@SailCat.com](mailto:SailCat@SailCat.com)

### **Random Links**

Detailed Siletz fishing map. Well, sorta detailed:

\*<http://www.oregonh2o.com/images/mapsiletz.jpg>

Similar map of the Alsea: \*<http://www.oregonh2o.com/images/mapalsea.jpg>

**Weekly Quote** – "Certainly fishing in traditional ways excuses no one for failing to catch big trout; anyone who fishes long enough should get at least a few." - John McDonald

**GOOD LUCK!**