

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **December 1st, – December 7th, 2006**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- Although action is still fair for sturgeon anglers in the Columbia River Gorge, the bite is beginning to taper as temperatures drop. The cooling trend will further degrade opportunity river-wide for keepers and shakers. Downstream of the gorge, the best area is near the mouth of the Willamette. Boats downstream of the Willamette are reporting poor fishing.

The temperature of the Willamette is currently hovering in the mid-40s. An increase in water temps in the mainstem Columbia will improve the sturgeon fishing in the Portland Harbor. Water is high, swift and full of leaves from the last round of rain although it may fish by the weekend if flows moderate.

Clackamas anglers may find the occasional summer steelhead this weekend if the water clears but pickings are slim. The few coho remaining in Eagle Creek are dark.

The Sandy remains quite muddy. It would be wise to wait for winter steelhead which will arrive early next year.

There's hope for the North Santiam by this weekend, as Detroit is near winter-level low so drainage for flood control purposes is near completion. The river was off color at mid-week, however. If the water doesn't drop to a fishable level, a few decent summer steelhead are still being taken in the tributaries even when the river is high.

No trout planting took place this week in any Oregon waters.

Northwest – The Kilchis River continues to get the most pressure as it remains the only river in fishable condition **reports pro guide Jim Nicol (503-550-3166)**. That should change however as dropping flows on other north coast rivers should enable them to clear by the weekend.

The Wilson hasn't fished all month but chinook should be plentiful from Mills bridge downstream. Flows will be low enough to cause fish to hold in traditional water versus tailouts and shallow runs. Anglers will likely come across a mix of both bright and dark chinook and a rare coho or steelhead.

The Trask remains debris dammed but authorities predict the log jam may break up in dropping flows. Know before you go. The Nestucca should produce a rare quality chinook and early winter steelhead **reports pro guide Jesse Zalonis (503-392-5808)**. Lower floats are likely to produce the best results. Three Rivers may get a push of steelhead if early indicators are accurate.

The Ghost Hole has finally tapered off although a fair number of boats are still trying. With rivers clearing, they should be the better option.

Tillamook Bay sturgeon action should begin to improve but effort has been non-existent and cold weather may deter anglers.

Crabbing will remain best on Netarts Bay but the ocean opens on December 1st. Seas will likely be too rough for recreational crabbers however.

A good clam tide begins for north coast diggers beginning on Friday and lasting past the weekend. The surf is predicted to subside by Sunday.

Southwest – It's time for sturgeon on the Umpqua below Reedsport and anglers are starting to target them. Steelheading is slow on the mainstem, fair to good on the North Fork.

Trollers targeting wild coho in Siltcoos and Tahkenitch Lakes are still taking fair numbers of fish. Blue and Green Pirate colors have been working best and bank anglers can access the Siltcoos River through Tye Campground **reports pro guide Jeff Jackson (541-268-6944)**.

The Siuslaw remains high and turbid but plunkers are taking a few winter steelhead in the lower reaches.

Chinook fishing has been productive on the Elk and Sixes whenever they are in fishable shape. The fish are averaging about 25 pounds each.

Rogue steelheaders have been finding success on the upper river for summer fish while the Grants Pass stretch remains non-productive. Conditions on the high, roiled lower river were unfishable earlier this week.

Chinook anglers on the Chetco have been scoring large, chrome fish between blowouts. Backtrollers have had success with sardine-wrapped Kwikfish. When flows drop, back bounced eggs have been effective. The first winter steelhead of the season was taken here last week.

Eastern - Pro guide Mac Huff (800-940-3688) reports, "Action on the Grande Ronde River has improved dramatically. Although weather conditions may deter anglers, catch rates of 1 fish every 3 to 5 hours are being recorded.

Fair numbers of steelhead continue to enter the Deschutes, but slides upstream have kept the water flowing muddy.

Southwest Washington - Cowlitz River fishery managers are already recycling winter steelhead to the I-5 access point. Visibility is slow to improve. The Kalama hatchery is also seeing winter steelhead arrive.

Dark coho are dominating the catch on the Cowlitz, Kalama and Lewis Rivers. Some quality coho were taken on the Klickitat River over the Thanksgiving weekend however.

Fishery managers approved razor clam digs at Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks, and Kalaloch beaches from December 2 – 3 on evening tides. Diggers may harvest between the hours of noon and midnight each day. Twin Harbors will also be open for a third day of digging from noon to midnight Dec. 4.

But here's the best thing going in SW Washington! Lamiglas will hold its first ever factory clearance sale on Saturday December, 9th here at Lamiglas. We will have over 3000 rods which include closeouts, obsolete models and blens. Lots to choose from. We will also have rod blanks and components for the custom rod builder. I wanted to personally invite all Ifisher's to come on by our factory at 1400 Atlantic Ave. in Woodland, Washington for this huge event. We will also have Jack Glass, Dave Vedder and Carmen McDonald on hand to talk about different fishing techniques. Hours are 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Saturday, December 9th 2006. See you there!

Soapbox Update:

This is a special reminder to our supporters in northwest Oregon. The Save Our Wild Salmon Coalition (SOS) is a featured organization in the [Willamette Week Give Guide](#).

I invite you to go to the [Give Guide](#) site, take a look at the SOS announcement, and make a donation.

Every year, the Willamette Week publishes a Give Guide - highlighting some of Portland's most effective non-profit organizations, and encouraging their readers to make a contribution.

[Click Here To Make A Contribution](http://giveguide.wweek.com/) - <http://giveguide.wweek.com/>

And the giving is both rewarded AND competitive!

What's in it for Contributors?

1. Anyone who gives the minimum of \$10 gets:

a coupon for a Bishops Barbershop haircut (\$20 value)
a SmartPark card charged with 3 hours of downtown parking (\$3.75 value)
a coupon for a free e cup of French Press Coffee at the Stumptown Coffee Roasters in Portland (\$1 value)
a coupon good for a free copy of the 2006 MusicFestNW CD (\$12 value)
TriMet tickets (\$3.50 value)
Coupons from Kiehl's and American Apparel (priceless)
[And much more for just a minimum of \\$10!!!](#)

2. In addition, four contributors will be randomly selected to get cash awards of \$500 each.

3. Portland area donors of

\$250 or more get personal delivery (i.e. from a Willamette Week manager) of coffee, beer, and wine.
\$500 or more, Willamette Week editor Mark Zusman or Richard Meeker will make the delivery.
At \$1,000, a bottle of champagne and some Clear Creek eau de vie gets added to the mix!

4. Lost River - A New Poster: As an additional gift of appreciation from those of us at SOS, anyone who contributes \$30 or more as part of this fundraiser will also receive an amazing poster: a beautiful and provocative image that is a joint project of author/conservationist David James Duncan, Patagonia, and Save Our Wild Salmon.

What's in it for Save Our Wild Salmon and the other featured non-profits?

1. All funds given to SOS will assist our work to restore wild salmon and steelhead in the Columbia & Snake Rivers.

2. BONUS \$\$ #1: The organization that receives the greatest number of gifts from people 35 and under gets \$1,000! Second Place is \$500, and Third Place is \$250!

3. BONUS \$\$ #2: The organization that gets the greatest total contributions receives an additional \$1,000 for first, \$500 for second, and \$250 for third place.

So - thank you for your wonderful support this year! We invite you to make a contribution online as part of the Willamette Week's Give Guide. You'll receive some valuable gifts, SOS will raise important funds needed to protect and restore wild salmon and steelhead in the Columbia Basin so that we can build upon our growing campaign to remove the four costly and out-dated dams on the lower Snake River.

How can I help restore our wild salmon and steelhead?

1. Make a contribution to SOS online at: <http://giveguide.wweek.com/>
2. Forward along this email to all your friends and family and colleagues - encourage them to contribute!
3. Or send us an email and find out about our volunteer opportunities.

Thanks again!
Bobby Hayden
Campaign Organizer

Save Our Wild Salmon
bobby@wildsalmon.org
<http://www.wildsalmon.org>

Columbia River Fishing Report – Colder water and a population of fish that has been worked over hard in the fall are clear indicators that the gorge sturgeon fishery is on its way out. The biggest factor, a drop in water temperatures causes fish to migrate downstream or just plain shut down but remain in the gorge. Creel checks indicated a drop in success with just 14 legal sturgeon kept, plus one legal, two oversize and six sub-legal sturgeon released for 106 bank rods. Boat anglers did only slightly better with just 13 legal sturgeon kept, plus three oversize and 469 shakers released for 22 boats.

Anglers fishing further downstream near the mouth of the Willamette are doing the best downstream of the gorge but limits are not common. Smelt and sand shrimp combinations are taking the bulk of the fish and this area should continue to improve with the differentiation of temperatures between the Willamette and Columbia that will soon ensue.

Effort downstream of Portland is slowing and action is poor for keepers and only fair for shakers. Many anglers remember some consistent fishing for sturgeon once the smelt begin to show but that has not been the case in the last several seasons.

Steelhead fishing in the John Day area experienced a downturn last week- likely due to the change in air and water temperatures associated with the recent cold snap. In a time when we should be witnessing peak fishing, success was mediocre last week with weekly checking showing six hatchery steelhead kept plus one wild steelhead released for 23 bank rods; and nine hatchery steelhead kept plus three wild steelhead released for 28 boats. Treacherous weather kept many anglers from participating as the holiday weekend is traditionally a busy one for this fishery.

Crabbers continued to work the lower Columbia with best success coming closer to the Clatsop Spit. Fresh water has influenced localized populations but limits are still possible even given the turbid waters. Seals continue to be a nuisance for crabbers using fish for bait.

The Guide's Forecast – Severe winter weather was forecasted to hit the gorge late in the week but daytime temperatures are forecasted to rise slightly. Not only will this make a trip to the best sturgeon grounds unsafe, the bite will likely continue to trend downward. Anglers may want to wait until temperatures rise to above freezing before traveling and fishing in the Columbia River Gorge. Sturgeon will respond better to effective baits during the warming part of the day. Smelt will continue to be the bait of choice and anglers willing to tip their baits with shrimp or squid as competition is still high and these fish have been worked over hard in recent weeks. The most productive water will likely be the faster flows closer to the deadline. Anglers fishing near the mouth of Kelly Point Park won't exactly escape all the cold weather that the gorge produces but wind shouldn't be as intense. Willamette influenced waters will produce some of the best results in the area and like upstream, going the extra mile by tipping your smelt with other offerings or scents will produce better results.

Steelhead anglers in the John Day area should remain optimistic although we may have seen the peak of this fishery by now. Trollers should still fish darker colored plugs that will dive to 14 feet and cover as much water as possible. Like sturgeon, steelhead will respond better when air and water temperatures are on the rise versus falling. The John Day River itself should continue to be a viable option if mainstem fishing is spotty. Bobbers and pink/white jigs are producing consistent results but don't hesitate to use a shrimp tail in conjunction with your jig or as a stand along offering.

Crabbing in the Columbia River Estuary should remain fair but commercial pots may become a factor if the crabbers price gets accepted. When I last crabbed up there, not too many commercial legals were available which may keep sport crabbers in business. Be sure to bring turkey legs for bait or cage up your fish carcasses as seals are making a habit out of raiding pots and traps.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – The flow of water over Willamette Falls is rapidly moderating although visibility as of Thursday, November 30 is still less than a foot. Leaves in the water which have been an aggravation to anglers are washing out and are providing less of a problem. Even in the high water, a few keeper sturgeon were taken over the last Thursday through Saturday retention period. Unfortunately, the water temperature is down to a chilly 43 degrees.

While both the North and South Santiams were flowing high, swift and off-color at mid-week, with the upcoming dry weather, they should be fishable in a few days.

The Guide's Forecast – Sturgeon anglers will have a reasonably good chance of hooking up this week in the Oregon City-Gladstone stretch and in the St. Johns-Portland Harbor area. It'll probably be spotty with the water temperature low, but action will improve in the coming weeks as the water warms. Smelt, squid and sandshrimp are effective baits made even better in combination. Plunkers along Meldrum Bar are lining up on the bank have takes a few winter steelhead winter steelhead as water conditions improve. Catches here are a combination of unclipped fish headed upriver which must be released and hatchery fish which may be retained and are headed for the Clackamas hatchery. Short casts are called for in heavy flows.

The North Santiam shows some promise of delivering late-season summer steelhead for anglers fishing the upper river. It may be fishable by the weekend since no additional water is being released from Detroit Reservoir. There's a respectable catch and release fishery here for native steelhead, but with around 100 over Willamette Falls, numbers are too low to target them.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Winter steelhead will start entering these rivers in fishable numbers starting in January with the most favorable prospects in February. 'Til then, fish elsewhere. The few remaining coho in Eagle Creek are too long in the tooth to be of interest.

North Coast District Fishing Report – Salmon fishing in the Tillamook is the same as it has been all November. It's a Kilchis show and fishing remains consistent for anglers in the know. **Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** has been reporting between 4 and 7 opportunities all week, landing about half of his opportunities and keeping some quality fish. There are a mix of fresh and dark fish in the system and about half of what anglers are catching now are of a high enough standard to retain. Some anglers are legally taking mature hens for their eggs with no intention of utilizing the meat for consumption. It's an ethics choice but hopefully, people will realize some of these fish are better left to spawn. In the dropping flows, boats working the lower stretches are finding the freshest fish available as there are still some "tide-riders" coming in on every incoming. The flows are low enough that the holes are well defined and salmon are holding in their traditional haunts. Some chum are still being incidentally taken but steelhead still seem to be a rare catch on the Kilchis as most are still in pursuit of salmon.

The Wilson is beginning to show signs of production but guides are reporting many of the fish to be dark. Although flows have been dropping and clarity questionable, salmon have been utilizing the river system for some time now. Fish on the Wilson will be holding in more traditional water as well and hopefully clarity will improve by the weekend. Slides are the major contributor to the turbid flows of the Wilson and Trask. The Trask remains blocked by a log jam at the Railroad Bridge and is impassable at this time.

Pro guide Jim Nicol (503-550-3166) reported from last week, "Monday the 20th I fished the Kilchis in the morning with little success. I took out at noon and went to the Nestucca. I put in at the 4th bridge and drifted to the 1st. (FYI: new put in at the 4th bridge requires you to drag your boat across a silty sand bar 30ft. **Don't try to back into the water you will be stuck**") We hooked 3 fish on Kwikfish sardine wrapped and **lost all 3**. Two of the fish were fresh fish. I know it's late but I wouldn't overlook the Nestucca if it ever starts to clear and gets below 6.5 ft. I think there will be a couple of decent days of

catching some quality fish.”

Pro guide Jesse Zalonis (503-392-5805) reported much the same. Jesse states, “The Nestucca is still a little high. We now have snow and colder weather. So, barring any quick warm up, we will see it come into shape soon. We are going to hit it on Tuesday, and work it until there aren’t any fish left. There should be fish all over the place, but we will start to sort through some dark ones, but there is plenty of chrome to be had. So, off into the snow we go for now. Dress warm, and have a good week. Have NOT heard of any winter Steelhead as of yet...”

North Fork Nehalem anglers may soon get a good look at early winter run steelhead. The action should begin to build and fish will be in their best condition in the coming weeks prior to New Years. Anglers are asked to aid in catch statistics for biological purposes. Here is the press release:

ODFW needs volunteers for steelhead survey

TILLAMOOK, Ore – Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife needs assistance from local steelhead anglers this winter to evaluate the hatchery steelhead program at the Nehalem Hatchery.

Kiosks have been placed at key locations along the river, and anglers are asked to stop and fill out a short survey at the end of their fishing day. The goal of the project is to estimate the contribution of each hatchery stock to the sport catch, and to collect information about the effectiveness of the hatchery recycling program. The survey is from December 2006 to March 2007.

“Nehalem Hatchery raises two stocks of winter steelhead,” said Keith Braun, ODFW district fish biologist in Tillamook. “The voluntary survey will allow us to assess the portion of the catch that is from each stock, to see if one is providing a better return to the fishery than the other.”

Along with information about the number of fish caught, the survey sheet will have space to record data about released fish, number of anglers and time fished. Anglers will also be able to record any comments they might have, such as any tagged fish caught.

“We ask that people take the time to stop and provide some information about their fishing trip,” Braun said. “The survey will only take a minute or two to complete, and the information will be very useful in evaluating this program.”

Crabbing in the area remains best in Netarts where district fish biologist Rick Klumph reported 29 keepers for 6 pots with an overnight soak. Effort is high as it is the best crabbing option on the north coast besides the lower Columbia River.

The Guide’s Forecast – Area rivers are finally getting to the lowest levels we’ve witnessed since the beginning of the flooding events on the 2nd of November. It only took 30 days, but it looks like we’ll finally get to go fishing somewhere else other than the Kilchis River. The Wilson and Nestucca will be the next best options with the Trask still blocked by a large wood jam at the Railroad Bridge about 2 miles upstream of Highway 101. Depending on how the jam behaves as the flows drop, the jam may be removed with human intervention but hopefully, on its own in dropping flows.

Although the Kilchis will remain a good option for late season chinook, the Wilson will be an even better option as there is more water to fish and a larger population of fish to work on. It began to fish on Wednesday and should improve as clarity does. The earlier you fish it, the better the results should be. The dropping flows will put fish in their traditional haunts like deep eddies and slow slots. You will have to match your plugs for the depth of water you are targeting these fish in. The K16 (regular) and K16 extreme plugs should prove most effective in water deeper than 8 feet as long as there is flow. You may see fish rolling in slow eddies but these fish will be hard to tempt. Fresher fish are also more likely to be

found in the faster flows. Be aware that many fish will be utilizing the shallower tailouts of holes and slots and will not be in any shape for tablefare OR egg-taking. These hens will be actively spawning and have singled out eggs. These fish are our future!

The Wilson will remain a better option than the Nestucca as fresh fish will continue to enter the Wilson well into December. The Nestucca should have a few fresh fish but most will be or will have spawned by now. Steelhead may also be an early option for motivated anglers. The best drifts to target these fish will be from Mills Bridge downstream on the Wilson and below Three Rivers on the Nestucca. You can target steelhead between salmon holes on these rivers and tadpolly plugs are a good choice for either chinook or steelhead this time of year. Be sure to know your fish as wild coho and chum salmon are still present in these systems as well. Fresh chinook should be a good option on the Trask as well if the log jam breaks loose ensuring safe navigation.

Smaller streams like the Necanicum and North Fork Nehalem should begin to realize some winter run steelhead. Late chinook will also be present as well as coho and both should be left alone. Chinook will be well past their prime in almost every case. Downed trees may still be an obstacle on these smaller, more dynamic streams.

Good sturgeon tides will occur beginning on the 1st of December and anglers will have some good opportunities to pursue them. With low slack occurring on Friday, Saturday and somewhat on Sunday before sunset, anglers will have peak opportunity during daylight hours. With all the fresh water in the estuaries, crab will not be a nuisance. Sand shrimp or mud shrimp where available will provide the best chance at a keeper. Sturgeon should be infiltrating these estuaries in search of salmon carcasses, clams and shrimp this time of year and numbers should build into late winter. The south and middle channels will be good places to target but the Bay City piling may also be a good option.

Crabbing should still be poor on Tillamook Bay and tides too extreme for productive effort. Netarts Bay will remain the best bet but again, extreme tides will limit peak crabbing times to just high slack and the last part of incoming tide.

Razor clam digging along Clatsop Beaches should be productive if the surf doesn't pound the clams down in the sand. Watch that surf and bring a headlamp if you clam after daylight hours.

Central & South Coast Reports – Pro guide Jim Stevenson (503-581-5347) reports, " ... [despite] high water, managed to get a drift trip on Siletz when still high and rising landed five one good one kept, the time on Siletz has past for salmon."

Dry weather will bring the Alsea back into shape in the next week. The freshet has Chinook scattered and anglers may expect to find a mix of bright and dark fish.

The Siltcoos and Tahkenith wild coho fishery, which benefits from the ODFW Salmon-Trout Enhancement Program (STEP), has been rewarding anglers with some nice fish recently.

Pro guide Jeff 'Action' Jackson (541-268-6944) joins the TGF team this week with a report from the central Oregon coast: "Right now, the Siuslaw and Umpqua below Elkton are pretty well blown out. Success (and effort) this week was low. The Siuslaw takes a long time to clear. While the Siuslaw is dirty, reports of winter steelhead being taken by plunkers have been rolling in. Believe me, it is never too early to try.

"What IS going on this week will be Siltcoos and Tahkenitch Lakes (just south of Florence). We have the only wild coho fishery in Oregon and it has been really good for the past couple of weeks. On Siltcoos, Maple Arm is the place to be. On Tahkenitch, try Five Mile Arm. Anglers are having good success trolling

Wiggle Warts and HotShots. The hot colors have been blue pirate, green pirate, and orange. Don't have a boat? Great bank access is available to the Siltcoos River through the Tye Campground (U.S. Forest Service). Park at the gate and walk in."

Steelheading picked up a little on the mainstem Umpqua over the weekend, but the best results are still coming from the North Fork where anglers are finding a few coho in the mix. The South Umpqua opens for steelhead on Friday, December 1st. While sturgeon fishing has been slow, anglers are hopeful that minus tides over the weekend will turn on the bite. It's due.

Steelheading on the Coos and Coquille rivers is good and improving. The East Fork Coquille opens December 1st.

Chinook anglers on the Elk and Sixes did well earlier this week as the river dropped into shape and the action moved above tidewater. Eggs are taking the most fish but catch rates tapered off mid-week.

The upper Rogue remains the most productive fishery again this week. Steelheaders are catching fair to good numbers of summers on cured salmon eggs and egg flies. With the majority of steelhead in the Grants Pass stretch of non-hatchery origin, effort and catch rates are low. While winter steelhead have been caught of and on for the past couple of weeks, numbers and catch rates remain low. Steelheading will improve as the run gets underway in December. Gravel bars are the best place to try for them.

The Chetco fishes best at 4,000 cfs or less. As of mid-day Thursday, November 30th, it was at 3,710 cfs and just over five feet at Brookings with both level and flow dropping. Sardine-wrapped Kwikfish are taking a few but anglers backbouncing cured salmon eggs are doing best. Winter steelhead are trickling in and with the bulk of the run yet to come, anglers took a few again this week.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Waters of the Deschutes have been clearing this week at a surprisingly rapid rate with visibility Wednesday about three feet. Steelhead fishing is slow to fair in the lower river with pressure very light.

Pro guide Mac Huff (800-940-3688) writes, "The early season on the Grande Ronde River in eastern Oregon and Washington was underwhelming. Better than 2005, but like other Columbia River fish returns our summer steelhead were likewise late. That changed during November and last week the creel survey reports about 100 steelhead landed during three days of survey, averaging 3 to 5 hours per fish for Oregon and Washington respectively. If the weather doesn't deter you the fishing is excellent."

Northwest Trout – Pro guide Rick Arnold (541-480-1570) reports, "Got word from a buddy that he caught some nice browns up the Crooked River Arm of Billy Chinook to 4 LB. Kokanee and bull trout can be had as well after the lake clears from the blown out conditions from recent rains."

Anglers are reminded the Metolius Arm of Lake Billy Chinook is closed to angling.

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report:

From the WDFW Website:

SEASON UPDATE

November 28, 2006

Contact: Dan Ayres, WDFW, (360) 249-4628

Barbara Maynes, ONP, (360) 565-3005
Razor clam dig cleared to begin Saturday
at four ocean beaches

OLYMPIA - Clam diggers today got the green light to proceed with a razor clam dig at four ocean beaches starting Saturday, Dec. 2 on evening tides.

Fishery managers gave final approval for the dig at Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks, and Kalaloch beaches after marine toxin tests found that clams on those beaches are safe to eat.

All four beaches will be open for clam digging Dec. 2-3 between the hours of noon and midnight each day. The National Park Service scheduled the dig at Kalaloch to coincide with those at the other beaches. Twin Harbors will also be open for a third day of digging from noon to midnight Dec. 4.

Dates and evening low tides for the upcoming dig are as follows:

Saturday, Dec. 2 (4:16 p.m. -0.4) Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks, Kalaloch

Sunday, Dec. 3 (5:07 p.m. -1.0) Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks, Kalaloch

Monday, Dec. 4 (5:56 p.m. -1.3) Twin Harbors only

Ayres noted that fishery managers have tentatively scheduled another dig over the New Year's holiday. If upcoming marine toxin tests are favorable, an evening dig will be held Dec. 31 at all five ocean beaches - including Copalis - followed by another Jan. 1 at Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks and Kalaloch. One beach, Twin Harbors, would also remain open for an evening dig Jan. 2.

"We'll announce final word on a New Year's dig once we see the test results," Ayres said.

Under state rules, harvesters are allowed to take no more than 15 razor clams and must keep the first 15 they dig, regardless of size or condition. Each digger's clams must be kept in a separate container.

Locations of the razor-clam digging beaches are:

Long Beach, from the Columbia River north jetty to Leadbetter Point on the Long Beach Peninsula.

Twin Harbors, from the south jetty at the mouth of Grays Harbor south to the mouth of Willapa Bay.

Copalis Beach, which extends from the Grays Harbor north jetty to the Copalis River and includes the Ocean Shores, Oyhut, Ocean City and Copalis areas.

Mocrocks Beach, from the Copalis River to the Moclips River.

Kalaloch Beach, from South Beach Campground to Brown's Point (just south of Beach Trail 3) in Olympic National Park. Visitors to the park are advised to consult area bulletin boards for park safety and other information.

A license is required for anyone age 15 or older. Any 2006 annual shellfish/seaweed or combination fishing license is still valid. Another option is a razor-clam-only license available in annual or three-day only versions.

Descriptions of the various licensing options are available on the WDFW website at <https://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov/>.

[North Puget Sound](#)

Fishing: Saltwater anglers who braved recent heavy rains and frigid temperatures did fairly well fishing for **chinook salmon**. "A number of anglers that did get out on Puget Sound found some fish," said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fisheries biologist. "That could be a good sign as we move into December."

Catch counts were already showing some improvements by the last week of November. At the Everett Ramp, 27 anglers were checked with four chinook Nov. 24, and 48 anglers brought home 20 chinook the following day. At the Camano Island ramp, six anglers checked two chinook Nov. 24, while 28 anglers hauled in four chinook the next day.

Thiesfeld reminds anglers that salmon fishing in marine areas 7 (San Juan Islands) and 9 (Admiralty Inlet) closes Nov. 30, and a one-salmon daily limit begins Dec. 1 in Marine Area 10 (Seattle/Bremerton).

The selective fishery continues in marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) and 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner), where anglers can keep up to two hatchery chinook per day, so long as the fish measure at least 22 inches in length. Wild chinook salmon, which have an intact adipose fin, cannot be brought aboard the boat.

In the rivers, anglers should still find some **chum salmon**, said Thiesfeld. "But this is really the time of year when most people are gearing up to fish for **steelhead**."

Elsewhere, about 3,000 hatchery **rainbow trout** - averaging approximately three pounds each - were released into Beaver Lake near Issaquah in mid-November, said Chad Jackson, WDFW fish biologist. Beaver Lake, one of several westside lowland lakes open to fishing year-round, is best fished by small boat, although anglers can also be successful fishing from shore, said Jackson. The daily bag limit is five fish, and bait anglers must keep the first five trout they catch.

Back on the saltwater, **crabbing** is still an option in seven marine areas of Puget Sound. Marine areas 4 (Neah Bay), 5 (Sekiu), 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca), 9, 10, 12 (Hood Canal) and 13 (south Puget Sound) are open seven days a week through Jan. 2 unless catch quotas for those areas are reached before then. Marine areas 7S (San Juan Islands), 7E (Anacortes to Bellingham), 7N (Bellingham to Pt. Roberts), 8-1, 8-2 and 11 (Tacoma-Vashon Island) will remain closed to sport crabbing for the season.

Anglers should check WDFW's *2006/2007 Fishing in Washington* pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) for more information on those and other fisheries in the region.

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

Weather permitting, anglers will have some good opportunities to catch winter **steelhead**, **coho** and **chum** salmon in the days ahead. Then again, clam diggers can look forward to another productive **razor clam** opening in early December, regardless which way the weather turns.

"Despite rough weather, most diggers got their 15-clam limits during the last opening," said Dan Ayres, WDFW coastal shellfish manager. "We expect that will hold true during the upcoming dig, too." Four beaches - Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocoorks, and Kalaloch - will open for **razor clam** digging Dec. 2 and Dec. 3 between the hours of noon and midnight each day. Twin Harbors will also be open for a third day of digging from noon to midnight Dec. 4. Copalis Beach will remain closed to digging due to the low number of clams in the total allowable catch.

The best time to start digging is an hour or two before low tide, said Ayres, who recommends taking a lantern for evening digs. Evening low tides for the upcoming dig are as follows:

Saturday, Dec. 2 (4:16 p.m. -0.4) Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocoorks, Kalaloch

Sunday, Dec. 3 (5:07 p.m. -1.0) Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocoorks, Kalaloch

Monday, Dec. 4 (5:56 p.m. -1.3) Twin Harbors only

Ayres noted that fishery managers have tentatively scheduled another dig over the New Year's holiday. If marine-toxin tests are favorable, an evening dig will be held Dec. 31 at all five ocean beaches - including Copalis - followed by another Jan. 1 at Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks and Kalaloch. One beach, Twin Harbors, would also remain open for an evening dig Jan. 2.

Meanwhile, rivers throughout the region have been dropping into shape for fishing since the recent freeze-up, said Bill Freymond, WDFW regional fish manager. "If it stays cold, the Satsop, Wynoochee and a lot of other rivers should be in prime condition," he said. "Right now, the focus is still on late-run **coho**, but **steelhead** are right behind them." David Low, a WDFW fish biologist, is already hearing reports of anglers catching steelhead in area rivers, noting that a friend caught "three hatchery steelhead and a 'Christmas king'," during the last weekend in November.

Hatchery steelhead are also showing up in tribal catches, said Low, adding that he'll have a better sense of the sport catch once WDFW resumes creel surveys during the first week in December. Survey results for the Quillayute River system and the Hoh River will be posted on the WDFW Fishing/Shellfishing website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishcorn.htm>) under the heading "Fishing Reports." Low strongly recommends that anglers review steelhead-fishing rules discussed in WDFW's *Fishing in Washington* pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/reggs/fishregs.htm>) before attempting to hook up.

Chum anyone? Many popular chum salmon waters such as Kennedy Creek and McLane Creek will be closing to salmon fishing at the end of the day Nov. 30. But that's just when the late-run chum fishery on the Nisqually River gets rolling, said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. "Anglers should get some nice, chrome-bright chum salmon right through the month of December," he said. "That what makes that fishery so popular."

Southwest Washington:

Icy roads, rather than fishing conditions, could be the biggest concern for anglers hoping to spend some time on area rivers in the days ahead. With many parts of southwest Washington still in the grip of late-November storms, anglers might want to consider putting fishing plans on hold until driving conditions are less dicey, said Wolf Dammers, a WDFW fish biologist.

"There are still a lot of late-running **coho** around, but the **winter steelhead** fishery is just getting started," Dammers said. "Anglers aren't going to miss much if they wait for driving conditions to improve."

For those fishing during the week ending Nov. 26, the Cowlitz River remained a hotspot for coho. In creel surveys conducted on the Cowlitz that week, 77 anglers kept 22 adult coho and released 22 others. Fifteen anglers contacted on the Klickitat River also did well that week, landing 19 coho and releasing 13 others.

An increasing number of coho caught in those, and other, Columbia River tributaries are dark, a sure sign that those fisheries are winding down, Dammers said. As of Nov. 22, the daily limit for marked, hatchery coho was increased to three fish (minimum size, 12 inches) on the Washougal, Kalama and Lewis rivers. The daily limit was also increased to three coho, marked or unmarked, on the Klickitat River.

Meanwhile, bright hatchery **steelhead** are just starting to show up in the catch - and at area hatcheries. As of Nov. 22, a total of 30 winter run steelhead had returned to the Grays River Hatchery. Also that week, two winter steelhead were recorded in a creel check on the Cowlitz River and 47 others were recovered at the Cowlitz Salmon Hatchery. Blue Creek and Mill Creek, both tributaries to the Cowlitz River, will both open to hatchery steelhead fishing Dec. 1. Blue Creek also opens for hatchery **sea-run cutthroat** fishing that day.

The 47 winter-run steelhead recovered at the hatchery were released back at the Interstate 5 boat launch along with 39 summer-run steelhead. Tacoma Power employees also released 1,979 coho adults at the

Day Use Park on Lake Scanewa, 525 coho adults on the Cispus River and 520 coho adults at the Franklin Bridge near Packwood.

At Kline Pond, bank anglers fishing in the swimming area are catching 12- to 18-inch **brown trout** on biscuit dough. On Nov. 21, Kline Pond was also planted with 1,000 catchable-size rainbows and Lacamas Lake was planted with 5,000 catchable-size rainbows.

On the Columbia River, the **sturgeon** fishery has cooled off along with the weather. In a recent survey, 66 bank anglers fishing from the Wauna powerlines upstream to Bonneville Dam had caught just three legal-size fish. The water temperature at the dam has dropped to 51 degrees.

Eastern Washington:

Four winter-only **rainbow trout** lakes open Dec. 1 for a four-month season. At least three of them should provide good action if anglers can reach them through current icy and snowy conditions.

Chris Donley, WDFW central district fish biologist, said recent sampling indicates prospects at Fourth of July Lake on the Lincoln-Adams county line and Hog Canyon Lake in southwest Spokane County are better than expected. Donley said both lakes are under a five trout daily catch limit, with no more than two over 14 inches. About half the fish in Fourth of July are 14 inches or better, he said. "If your first two fish at Fourth of July are at least 14 inches, you're done for the day," he said. Hog Canyon has more of the 9- to 11-inch fish, although enough 14- to 18-inchers to make fishing interesting. Donley recommends Hog Canyon for anglers who want to take home limits. "Fourth of July anglers might see some **tiger trout** in their catch for the first time this season," he said. "Those fish were put in there to try to help control the fathead minnow population."

The other two winter-only trout lakes are Williams and Hatch in Stevens County. Williams Lake has 9- to 10-inch rainbows from this year's fry plants, and some 14-inch or better carryovers from last year. But illegally-introduced yellow perch are starting to compete with the trout, so this may be the last year of decent trout fishing at Williams. Hatch Lake fishing will again be poor since it has had a growing infestation of yellow perch and received only minimal hatchery trout.

Also opening Dec. 1 is a four-month **whitefish** season on the Little Spokane River from the state highway 291 bridge near Nine Mile Falls to the west branch tributary north of Chattaroy. Up to 15 whitefish of any size can be taken daily, but fishing gear is restricted to one single point hook no bigger than size 14 (no more than 3/16-inch from point to shank). The gear rule is designed to minimize the chances of catching other gamefish, which are not legal to harvest at this time.

Snake River **steelhead trout** fishing continues to be best in the tributaries, although effort recently increased in the mainstem section from Lower Monumental to Little Goose dams following the release of about 1,000 surplus adult steelhead from WDFW's Lyons Ferry Hatchery. The recent cold snap may have steelhead holing up in deep, slow-moving water, which can make for hot fishing. The latest creel checks on the Tucannon River indicate anglers have been averaging about nine hours of fishing for every steelhead caught. Anglers in the mid-Snake River section above the stateline bridge were averaging about 9.5 hours per fish caught. Those in the stretches of the mainstem from Lower Granite to Lower Monumental dams were averaging a little less than 10 hours per steelhead. For details on the latest creel see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/snake/index.htm>.

North Central Washington:

Bob Jateff, WDFW district fish biologist, said catch rates for **steelhead trout** have recently slowed a bit on the mainstem Columbia River above Wells Dam. "Anglers are averaging one fish per 10 hours of fishing effort," he said. "The area around Pateros has been the most popular location."

The four-month season for **whitefish** opens Dec. 1 on portions of the Chewuch, Entiat, Methow, Similkameen, and Wenatchee rivers and Sinlahekin Creek. The daily catch limit is 15 fish using the standard whitefish gear - one single point hook size 14 or smaller (no more than 3/16-inch from point to shank). The gear rule is designed to minimize the chances of catching other gamefish, which are not legal to harvest at this time. Jateff recommends that anglers on the Methow regularly check the WDFW website's emergency fishing season changes (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) for special closures during the whitefish season. At this time, the Methow, Okanogan, and Similkameen rivers are closed to fishing for steelhead.

Dec. 1 also marks the shift to a catch-and-keep season with standard fishing gear on four Okanogan County lakes - Little Twin near Winthrop, Big and Little Green near Omak, and Rat near Brewster. Jateff said all four lakes should provide good fishing for **rainbow trout**, although recent deep-freeze conditions could delay or complicate access until a major thaw or safe ice depth develops. The daily catch limit is five fish and bait is allowed.

South Central Washington:

North Elton Pond, the region's only designated winter season rainbow trout fishing lake, is open for fishing from Dec. 1 through March 31. The 15-acre lake near Selah, in Yakima County, has been stocked with 2,000 rainbows that average about three-quarters of a pound and 10 to 13 inches. But WDFW Fish Biologist Jim Cummins said the recent deep freeze has iced-up the water and there may be no safe opportunity to fish on the opener. If wintry conditions persist, there may eventually be fishing through the ice. The daily catch limit is two trout.

Eric Anderson, WDFW district fish biologist, said two year-round lakes in Kittitas County were recently planted with surplus hatchery rainbow trout broodstock. North FioRito and Mattoon lakes near Ellensburg each received 125 fish that range from five to 10 pounds each.

More similar-sized rainbow broodstock from WDFW's Goldendale Hatchery were slated for some Yakima County year-round waters on Nov. 29, barring any access problems from snow or ice. Rotary Lake and I-82 Pond #4 were each to receive 125 fish and Myron Lake was to get 84.

Whitefish season opens on the Bumping, Naches and Tieton rivers Dec. 1. Cummins said the Columbia River between Vantage and Priest Rapids Dam and the Yakima River are also good bets for whitefish. The daily catch limit is 15 fish using the standard whitefish gear - one single point hook size 14 or smaller (no more than 3/16-inch from point to shank). The gear rule is designed to minimize the chances of catching other gamefish, which are not legal to harvest at this time. Check the fishing rules pamphlet for all details.

Reader Email

Got a question, story to tell or information to share? Shoot us an Email!

Write to the TGF staff:

Bob Rees: brees@pacifier.com

Doug Rees: doug@TheGuidesForecast.com

Michael Teague: Michael@TheGuidesForecast.com

Random Links

Fishing regulations for 2007 complete:

http://www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/fishing/regulations_2007.pdf

From the ODFW: "Gray whales are migrating south from the Bering Sea to the Sea of Cortez. At the height of the migration 18,000 whales will pass by the Oregon coast in four weeks from mid-December to mid-January. Winter migration has the highest number of whales per hour (about 30) but the whales are usually a mile or more off shore because of stormy weather. For more about gray whales go to

<http://www.whalespoken.org>."

Training available for volunteer whale watchers:

<http://www.statesmanjournal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20061128/OUTDOORS/611280303/1034>

Weekly Quote – "Not only has a larger portion of this terraqueous ball been bequeathed to fish-kind than to mankind, but "its first families" were also more richly endowed by Providence in beauty of form and of coloring. There was a period when all the inhabitants of this planet were fishes, previously to the sublime moment when "God said 'Let the dry land appear.'" The ancients thought that the illimitable beauties of the waters were reflected in the heavens; hence they gave the constellations the names of fishes." - Genio Scott

GOOD LUCK!