

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **February 2<sup>nd</sup> – February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

**Oregon Fisheries Update:**

**Willamette Valley/Metro** - Although certainly early for spring chinook on the mainstem Columbia, the river saw its first one cross Bonneville on January 19<sup>th</sup>. The first commercially caught salmon was landed last week weighing 23 pounds. Water conditions are good but still a bit cold for sport anglers. Early returning salmon seem to bite herring best in the colder water. The Multnomah Channel is a good early season bet.

**Pro guide Jeff Knotts (509-3566-4052)** reports fair fishing for steelhead above McNary Dam.

At 15,000 cfs, flows at Willamette Falls haven't been at this level since early November last year. Winter steelhead counts have gradually declined in these lower flows with the total as of Monday at nearly 1,400. Sturgeon fishing has been slow but will improve as water temperatures rise. Steelheading has been slow but a few are being landed at Meldrum Bar. Spring hopefuls are trolling the Sellwood Bridge area where herring is the favored bait.

**Pro guide Bill Kremers (541-754-6411)** reports slow fishing for sturgeon with the better catches coming from above the St. Johns Bridge.

The Clackamas is running very clear and producing few steelhead. The stretch from Carver to Clackamette is most likely to produce according to **Pro guide Brandon Glass (503-666-5370)**.

Pressure is very light on the low, clear waters of the Sandy River and steelhead catches are fair. Anglers are reporting the wild catch making up 70% of the landings according to **Pro guide Jack Glass (503-666-5370)**. Lowering flows are exposing new sandbars making for challenging navigation. East winds are challenging anglers.

Detroit is at proper level for flood control so no additional releases will add to the waters of the North Santiam where levels are good. Anglers are enjoying an improving catch-and-release fishery for native winter steelhead despite the water remaining cold.

E. E. Wilson Pond is scheduled to be planted with hatchery trout. Huddleston Pond, Walter Wirth Lake, Junction City Pond and Walling Pond were stocked last week and again this week.

**Northwest** – Steelheaders continue to find challenging conditions on most north coast streams reports **pro guide Jim Stevenson (503-881-5289)**. Low, clear water has rendered smaller systems nearly unfishable. Larger rivers like the mainstem Nehalem are producing a few fish but numbers will increase as we progress into the month.

The North Fork Nehalem and Three Rivers on the Nestucca are very slow but could rebound on the next weather system.

Tillamook Bay sturgeon anglers are not producing high catches despite good effort. Crabbing has also slowed in the bay along with the Netarts estuary.

Razor clam digging was good along Clatsop Beaches at mid-week but will likely slow as the last half of the tide series closes out the weekend.

The Siletz has been tough as well but anglers working the lower portions of the river are coming up with some quality broodstock and wild fish.

Crabbing is once again worthwhile at Yaquina Bay.

The North Fork Alsea is too low to fish. A few steelhead are coming from the lower Alsea mainstem.

Scheduled for trout stocking are Alder Lake Big Creek Reservoir 1 and 2, Cleawox Lake, Dune Lake, Munsel Lake and Olalla Creek Reservoir.

**Southwest** – Surf casters are doing well on South coast surf perch when wind and wave conditions allow fishing.

**Pro Guide Jeff Jackson (541-268-6944)** reports making some decent catches recently on the Siuslaw.

Despite water that remains a little high and quite chilly, winter steelhead catches have been fair in the mainstem Umpqua.

Boaters on the Rogue are side-drifting or pulling plugs to pick up adult steelhead and half-pounders. Use caution in low flows.

Good quality cured salmon eggs, small corkies, puff balls and plugs combined with long, light leaders are accounting for steelhead in the low, crystal clear waters of the Chetco. This river has been remarkably productive in all conditions this season.

Ocean crabbers have scored limits of Dungeness late last week during calmer days. Rock fishing has been very good offshore.

When conditions haven't been conducive on the Chetco, steelheaders have been successful by traveling a little further South to the Smith, which has been red hot at times.

Trout stocking will resume in February in the Southwest Zone.

**Eastern** – McNary area trollers are taking a few steelhead on deep diving plugs. The bite improves as afternoon air and water temperatures moderate.

**Pro guide Rick Arnold (541-480-1570)** reports fair to good catches of brown, bull and rainbow trout at Lake Billy Chinook.

Grande Ronde steelheaders are still posting fair catches although some icing is occurring along river banks.

Planting of hatchery trout in Central Oregon will resume in March.

**SW Washington** – The Cowlitz and Kalama Rivers remain the best bets for winter steelhead in the region. Bank anglers on the Cowlitz netted better than 1 steelhead for every 2 rods in the last creel check with Blue Creek producing the best catches.

The Kalama River steelhead return was greater than the previous year but peaked earlier than normal. Anglers are catching a fair number of wild and downstream running steelhead with a later broodstock fish likely to improve catches later this month.

Smelt dipping remains poor on the Cowlitz with water temperatures still less than ideal. Mainstem smelt netters are also reporting no catch.

**Columbia River Fishing Report** – There still isn't a lot to report for Columbia River fishing. The best news is the extension of the retention week beginning February 1<sup>st</sup>. Anglers will now be allowed to retain sturgeon from Thursdays through Sundays of each week. Previously, it was Thursday through Saturday. It's just too bad that the fishing really isn't any good riverwide. Sturgeon fishing is poor downstream of Bonneville Dam unless you are a stellar sea-lion. Rumor has it, they are again harvesting oversized sturgeon at an alarming rate. Upriver, sport anglers are doing poorer than usual in the Bonneville Pool with very few keepers coming from the light effort. There were a few keeper sturgeon coming from the Dalles Pool however as this can be a good time to target fish in this area.

**Pro guide Jeff Knotts (509-3566-4052)** "Fished McNary for a pair of nice steelies on Sunday and saw a few others caught as well. We pulled orange and black K-13 Kwikfish for our takes."

Walleye anglers are also taking a few fish in The Dalles Pool. The catch is slightly better than 1 fish per boat although some anglers are throwing back the smaller ones.

The river remains too cold for ample numbers of smelt to enter the river. Commercial gillnetters are not recording any smelt landings but the first spring chinook at 23 pounds was landed last week. The water conditions are good for clarity but just too cold to expect much to happen on the mainstem.

**The Guide's Forecast** – With not much to look forward to, anglers will want to focus their efforts on other bodies of water. One exception however may be the lower Multnomah Channel near St. Helens where water temperatures are certainly cold but clarity and timing may justify a few hours spent trolling herring for a prized early season spring Chinook. A slow troll when air temperatures warm up (afternoon or late morning) will offer the best chance in NW Oregon for salmon.

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report** – As predicted in this space last week, sturgeon anglers will be allowed to keep fish on Sundays starting February 1st. The new four-day retention period will effect the lower Willamette including Multnomah Channel. Sturgeon must measure between 42 and 60 inches to keep.

Water temperature in the lower Willamette was at 39 degrees on the last day of January, a situation which has sturgeon biting very lightly. Steelhead counts have been dwindling at Willamette Falls as the water flow rapidly declines. As of January 30th as one lone steely crossed as water was passing at 14,400 cfs. This is the lowest flow in nearly two months. January year-to-date totals will fall short of the 1,400 mark.

**Pro guide Bill Kremers (541-754-6411)** writes, " ... low and clear and as you know, we need some rain. Did go sturgeon fishing last Friday around the St. John's Bridge. We had better fishing above the bridge than below. Caught one 42 inch keeper size sturgeon which we released and a few shakers. Tried several different baits, shrimp, smelt and squid. Had our best fishing with squid. One factor for anglers to consider when fishing this area is the tides. With strong winds forecast for this weekend there will be a lot of boats blowing around on the incoming tides. I prefer fishing the out going tides, but they are pretty weak for this coming weekend."

Steelhead and the coming spring Chinook run are on the minds of plunkers along the bank of the lower Willamette. While Chinook have been absent from catches over the last week, a few steelhead are being taken daily. With the first springer hitting the beach last week, boats are trolling around St. Johns and the I-205 bridges in hopes of encountering yet another early fish.

Detroit is at proper level for flood control so no additional releases will add to the waters of the North Santiam where levels are good. South Santiam numbers are online for the first time this year because the first three winter steelhead to show at Foster Dam didn't do so until January 24th. There are no North Santiam counts as there's no money in the coffers to fund it.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Sturgeon anglers who hold their rods rather than using a rod holder will detect a greater number of bites and hook more fish. When it's windy it's very difficult to feel a bite. Keep a variety of baits on board. Fishing was once again better above the St. Johns Bridge than below this week. Spring Chinook trollers are in evidence, but numbers, if any, are too low to target. Steelhead are being taken daily by plunkers in the Gladstone stretch.

Anglers are enjoying an improving catch-and-release fishery for native winter steelhead on the North Santiam despite the cold water.

The good: Area anglers will flock to the Portland Expo Center February 7 through 11, 2007 to enjoy the Pacific Northwest Sportsmen's show. The bad: In addition to the \$9 admission, it'll cost \$8 to park this year.

Long-rodders may also want to attend the Fly Fishing Show at the Oregon Convention Center February 17th & 18th.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports** – You know for sure it's springer season when sea lions appear in the mouth of the Clackamas. They seem to be doing pretty well, too, although most of the slaughter seems to be of steelhead. With the water temperature dipping into the 30s this week, catches are low. Cold water generally means mid-day fishing will be most productive, but the clear water combined with bright sunny days will have lethargic steelhead spooky as well. These are tough conditions but steelheaders may catch a break this weekend with cloudy weather. If the long-range forecasts hold true, we can expect air temperatures to moderate next week. Eagle Creek was gin-clear and 37 degrees on Monday with fish holding in deeper areas. About 140 winter steelhead have entered the Eagle Creek hatchery.

**Pro guide Brandon Glass (503-666-5370)** reports on the Clack, "Most of the fish have been found from Barton park down. The brunt of the fish are sitting from Carver to Clackamet park. I have pulled some fish out just below Riverside in the last few days due to the east winds on the Sandy river. I have been side drifting, but have also heard of fish being taken on plugs and bobber and jigs. The Clackamas has been very busy during the weekends, but the week days are open."

Pressure is light on the low, clear waters of the Sandy River although steelheading is fair. Steelhead have been taken recently just below Riverside. No fish are moving into the Cedar Creek facility but 71 have been counted at Marmot Dam.

**Pro guide Jack Glass (503-666-5370)** reports, "The Sandy is low and clear the run has been quite good with 70% wilds and that's a good thing! Most fish are from Dodge park down river, lots of sand in the river many holes have filled in. Best fishing has been on gravel bars where there's very little sand with low water conditions drifting small presentations like corkies, small pink worms, bobber and jigs and drifting spoons have produced many fish the wind is tough on lower river."

**Pro guides Jack and Brandon Glass**, also known as Team Hookup, will present a free winter steelhead seminar at the Hillsboro GI Joes on February 15th from 7 to 8 PM.

**North Coast District Fishing Report** – Most north coast streams continue to suffer from low and extremely clear conditions. In these water conditions, traditional floats produce fair at best for the “early bird” that works the water before anyone else does. Fish are concentrated so only a few holes will produce. Deep, slow water and shallower water with a broken surface will hold fish. **Pro guide Jim Stevenson (503-881-5289)** reports from the Nestucca. Jim states, “did a drift on Nestucca, last week, one spawner hatchery released and one nice wild 12-13lbs released, one drift fishing and one on a jig. Not much happening overall need rain and fish, mostly fish.”

The mainstem Nehalem is in perfect condition and only a few boats are fishing it. It’s a little early to expect great results on this stream but it’s the best thing going for right now. Avid angler **John Weed** recently drifted with **Andy Betnar** hooking a couple of fish but not landing any. John had a nice one on but it made a lightning fast run into Andy’s line after Andy stated his line would not be in the way. Well, when Andy felt John’s fish hit the line, he wasn’t watching why he felt the sensation, setting the hook and breaking off John’s fish instantly. I think if John didn’t have such a big heart, he would have left Andy on the bank in that drift.

Sturgeon anglers were out in force last weekend with the later, favorable tides and nice weather. Action was less than impressive. Avid angler and Justice of the Peace for Rockaway, **Rich Riley** reported this, “I went to the west side today with 2 friends (I think that’s called the south channel but I have no idea why it would be called “south”) anyway by the Oyster beds. There were 12 boats... we saw 2 undersize sturgeon caught (1 in our boat) 1 oversize sturgeon (72”) and 1 nice size flounder (caught by yours truly).”

Crabbing has been less than impressive too. Knowledgeable crabbers like Gary and Sharon Kish of Sauvies Island reported poor returns for the time the spent in the lower bay but the few crab they did catch were of quality size and condition. Netarts Bay has also slowed.

Clam digging along Clatsop County Beaches was quite good for those finding productive sand bars. One digger reported bagging his limit in just 15 minutes. We are now on the backside of this minus tide series so digging won’t be nearly as productive and the low slack period now enters after-sunset times.

**The Guide’s Forecast** – With no precipitation in sight, north coast steelheaders are likely to continue to find challenging conditions. This will keep many anglers home so if you are versed in low water tactics or are innovative enough to hunt down biting fish, they should be present in good numbers in the lower reaches of most north coast streams. The larger streams will be the best options with the Nehalem my first choice, followed by the Nestucca, Wilson and Trask Rivers. Plug fishing can become effective in these types of water conditions but dark colors work best in most cases. Be sure to match your plug capabilities to the depth of the water. These fish will be close to the bottom in deep, slow holes or shallower slots that have a broken surface. Bobbers and jigs will also work well if they can be presented without spooking the timid fish. Smaller streams are best left to the bank angler- they’ll have their own set of challenges to meet.

Sturgeon anglers may be discouraged by recent success rates but the fish are likely still present. The minus tide series is waning and with the prolonged dry period, the influx of crab may also challenge soaking baits. If crabbing was better, I would suggest some soak time for Tillamook and Netarts estuaries but if you go, don’t carry high expectations with you.

Ocean anglers may witness their best bar and ocean conditions in quite some time this weekend. The swell is forecasted to subside to around 7 foot every 14 seconds with wind waves near 1 foot. This may create some good opportunity for ocean crabbers and bottomfishers along the entire coast line. Columbia River anglers may still need to pay attention to the east wind that often follows this type of weather pattern. Be aware however, calm seas don’t necessarily mean safe seas. Always wear your

lifejacket and make sure your marine radios are in working order.

**Central & South Coast Reports** – The Siletz is getting a surprising amount of traffic and pressure considering the clear water is producing very few steelhead.

Crabbing has been poor for some, good for others in Yaquina Bay. Check the crabs for firmness by squeezing the uppermost segment (nearest the body) of the crab's leg just aft of the claw. A surprising number of softshells are in the mix which is most unusual in winter. Winchester Bay has been fair for crab.

**Pro Guide Jeff Jackson (541-268-6944)** reports "The Siuslaw is in great shape and fishing well. Anglers are hooking good numbers of steelhead in the Whitaker to Wildcat section of the river. Fish are also being caught from the Forks to Tide drift. The run will be building this month and should fish well all the way through March. Some of the smaller rivers I fish when everything is blown out are way too low."

The mainstem Umpqua has been a shining star on the South coast. While fishing has deteriorated with water conditions, this one continues to deliver winter steelhead although boat anglers are doing far better than bank fishers on the. One wild fish per day up to five per year may be kept here in the mainstem only. Steelhead are moving on the North Umpqua despite low, frigid water. Over 1,000 have crossed Winchester Dam. The steelhead derby this weekend will have the Umpqua jammed with guide boats, however.

Anglers are as weary of the phrase "low, clear and cold" as we are of writing it, but that's the way it is on most rivers and certainly applies to the Rogue. Steelhead movements has slowed or in some cases, stalled in these conditions and the slow fishing reflects it. Steelheaders best chance of hooking one is with bait in the stretch below Grants Pass where a few are being taken. Try creek mouths where warmer water may be found. There's not much metalhead action on the upper or lower river and this situation won't change until the next round of precipitation. As of February 1st, one wild steelhead per day of at least 24 inches may be kept up to five per year from the Hog Creek boat landing to Coles River Hatchery.

High-quality, cured salmon eggs, small corkies, puff balls and plugs combined with long, light leaders are accounting for steelhead in the low, crystal clear waters of the Chetco. This river has been remarkably productive in all conditions this season.

Spring Chinook anglers on the Rogue will have limited access to areas in which it will be legal to target these fish in an effort to boost the return numbers over Gold Ray Dam to the 15,00 range. Annual counts have been about half that number in recent years. New deadlines and restrictions have not yet been set, although an area of the upper Rogue where Chinook cannot be retained seems a certainty. At a meeting held in White City last week, sports anglers urged an increase in the stocking of hatchery springers.

As related previously in TGF, the lines from commercial crab pots lost December 9th at the mouth of the Chetco River created a hazard to boats crossing the bar. The Army Corps of Engineers plans on using underwater cameras and side-scanning sonar in an effort to retrieve them. The costs of clearing the pots may be billed to the owners of the commercial vessel Charvelle which lost them when it came close to capsizing on the South side of the Chetco mouth.

The Chetco may be too low to bother with. A few are being taken high on the system, but drifting the river may not be possible by the weekend as boaters have had to drag their craft in several spots earlier this week.

Ocean crabbers have scored limits of Dungeness late last week during calmer days. Charter and sports boats are scoring limits of rockfish and lings offshore out of Brookings.

**Central and Eastern Oregon** – Fishing for bull trout is slow to fair at Lake Billy Chinook. The Metolius Arm will re-open on March 1st.

**Pro guide Rick Arnold (541-480-1570)** adds this, "Got a trip in to Lake Billy Chinook on Sat. Took a friend who wanted something to eat. We caught (5) browns up the crooked River Arm to 2.5 Lb. We also caught and released (2) small rainbows. Later we targeted bull trout out in the main lake and finally stuck a 25 in. 5.5 Lb. bull trout to finish the day."

**Northwest Trout** – The late website update of the ODFW trout stocking schedule resulted in the omission here of waters planted last week. In the Willamette Valley, E. E. Wilson Pond is scheduled to be planted with hatchery trout this week for the first time. It opened February 1st, but angling at this location requires a free permit, available at the parking area. Huddleston Pond, Walter Wirth Lake, Junction City Pond, Walling Pond and Walter Wirth Lake were stocked last week and again this week. Scheduled for trout stocking in the Northwest Zone are Alder Lake Big Creek Reservoir 1 and 2, Cleawox Lake, Dune Lake, Munsel Lake and Olalla Creek Reservoir. Salish Pond received 400 broodstock brook trout last week and many of these fish are likely still available as the information was only released this week.

### **Washington fishing reports:**

**From the WDF&W Weekender Report January 24<sup>th</sup> – February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

#### **North Puget Sound**

After several weeks of rough weather, conditions have improved and so has fishing. Anglers on the saltwater have had some success recently with **blackmouth** and catch numbers could continue to rise as two more marine areas open for salmon Feb. 1. Meanwhile, the region's rivers have come back into shape and steelheaders are finding hatchery fish in some streams.

On Puget Sound, anglers in Marine Area 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) continue to do well for blackmouth. "Recent reports from our test boat in 8-1 indicate that there's pretty good fishing in the area," said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fisheries biologist. "Folks who know how to fish that area in the winter are doing very well."

Anglers in marine areas 8-1 and 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) 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.

Meanwhile, anglers have only a few more days to catch blackmouth in Marine Area 10 (Seattle/Bremerton), which closes at the end of the month. However, angling opportunities in the region will increase Feb. 1, when marine areas 7 (San Juan Islands) and 9 (Admiralty Inlet) open for salmon. Anglers in those two marine areas will have a daily limit of one salmon, and chinook must measure at least 22 inches in length.

The traditional fishing spots in those two marine areas should be a good bet for anglers during the first two weeks of February, Thiesfeld said. "Over the past few years, marine areas 7 and 9 have been two of the top areas for blackmouth fishing in Puget Sound," he said. "We're expecting anglers to have

similar success this year."

In November, a large number of shakers were caught and released in marine areas 7 and 9, and some of those fish are probably still out there, Thiesfeld said. "Anglers should use larger spoons and plugs in order to minimize their catch of those juvenile chinook," he said. "Treat those fish with extreme care when releasing them because they are next year's crop of blackmouth."

In the freshwater, hatchery **steelhead** fishing has been great in the upper Skagit River, said Brett Barkdull, WDFW fish biologist. "Anglers on the Skagit have been doing really well above the Sauk River," he said. "The river has come back into shape and the effort has definitely increased." Angler effort on the Cascade River, however, has slowed recently, and steelheading has been spotty, depending on river conditions.

Barkdull reminds anglers that wild steelhead start entering the region's rivers in late January. As most anglers know, wild steelhead can be distinguished from hatchery fish by their intact adipose and ventral fins. Retention rules for wild steelhead, as well as rules and regulations for other freshwater and saltwater fisheries, can be found in WDFW's 2006/2007 Fishing in Washington pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

Looking to fish a derby? Anglers will have an opportunity in March to participate in the inaugural Anacortes Salmon Derby. The derby is scheduled for March 10-11 out of the Cap Sante Marina, and tickets for the event are \$50 per person. Proceeds from the derby will go toward scholarships to benefit young adults interested in pursuing an education in fisheries and a related natural science. Top prize for the derby, which is hosted by the Fidalgo Chapter of Puget Sound Anglers, is \$5,000. For more information visit <http://www.anacortessalmonderby.com>.

### **South Sound/Olympic Peninsula**

After weeks of heavy rain and high water, rivers have finally dropped into shape on the Olympic Peninsula, where **steelhead** anglers have been out in force since mid-January. Scott Barbour, a WDFW fish biologist, said he counted nearly 70 boat trailers along the Wynoochee River on the third Saturday of the month.

"A lot of anglers are hitting the river, and many are catching fish," Barbour said. "People have been catching steelhead from Shaeffer Creek on downstream." Good fishing conditions are also drawing anglers to the Satsop and Chehalis rivers, although the latter usually doesn't hit its peak until February, Barbour said. Then again, some anglers have been catching steelhead on area rivers since November. "I know one plunker who claims he's hooked at least one steelhead every day since Thanksgiving on the Wynoochee," Barbour said.

Anglers may retain up to two hatchery steelhead per day on those rivers, provided the fish measure at least 20 inches. All wild steelhead, identifiable by an intact adipose fin, must be released. Meanwhile, catch rates have begun to slow on several north coast rivers, where the transition from hatchery steelhead to wild steelhead is now under way. On the Bogachiel/Quillayute river system, creel checkers interviewed 76 anglers but tallied only 21 fish - kept or released - during the three-day survey period ending Jan. 21. Catch rates were nearly twice that high just a week earlier.

"We're in that 'in-between' phase, when the hatchery fish start to drop off and the wild fish haven't yet started to arrive in large numbers," said Randy Cooper, another WDFW fish biologist. "Once we get some more rain, we should start seeing more wild fish moving up the rivers."

Cooper said the Hoh River has been discolored in recent weeks, discouraging boat angling. But the Sol Duc has been fishing well, producing 32 steelhead for the 39 anglers checked during the three-day period ending Jan. 18. Of that total, anglers released 15 of the 16 wild steelhead they caught and two

of the 17 hatchery fish.

Rules for retaining wild steelhead on the north coast rivers are outlined on page 29 of the **Fishing in Washington** rule pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/reqs/fishregs.htm>).

Saltwater anglers eager to catch **salmon** will soon have more options. Blackmouth fishing opens Feb. 1 in Marine Area 9 (Admiralty Inlet) and on Feb. 16 in marine areas 5 (Sekiu), 6 (East Juan de Fuca Strait), 11 (Tacoma/Vashon) and 12 (Hood Canal). See the Fishing in Washington pamphlet for details. Clam diggers can also look forward to another **razor clam** opening in February, provided that upcoming marine toxin tests show the clams are safe to eat.

Four beaches - Twin Harbors, North Coast Beach (Long Beach), Mocrocks and Kalaloch - are tentatively scheduled to open for digging Feb. 16 and 17 between noon and midnight. Twin Harbors will also remain open an additional day, Feb. 18, during the same hours if test results allow the dig to proceed as planned. Copalis Beach will remain closed in February because of the relatively low number of clams available for harvest there.

Evening low tides during digs tentatively scheduled in February are:

- Feb. 16, Friday, 5:47 p.m., -0.3 ft., Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks, Kalaloch
- Feb. 17, Saturday, 6:28 p.m., -0.5 ft., Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks, Kalaloch
- Feb. 18, Sunday, 7:08 p.m., -0.3 ft., Twin Harbors only

Under WDFW rules, harvesters may take no more than 15 razor clams and must keep the first 15 taken, regardless of size or condition. Each digger's limit must be kept in a separate container.

A license is required for anyone age 15 or older. Any 2006 annual shellfish/seaweed, razor clam or combination license is still valid. Licenses can be purchased via the Internet at <https://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov>, by telephone (1-866-246-9453) or in person at more than 600 license vendors throughout the state. A list of vendors can be found at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/lic/vendors/vendors.htm>.

### **Southwest Washington:**

Although the peak has passed for early-run hatchery **steelhead**, anglers haven't been wasting time waiting for late-run fish to arrive at lower Columbia tributaries. Good fishing conditions bolstered catch rates on the Kalama River and Blue Creek during the third week of January, while dozens of anglers hooked up with excess hatchery steelhead recently planted in a number of area lakes and ponds.

"We're in a transition period between early-run hatchery steelhead and late-run stocks, which will build through spring in the Cowlitz and Kalama rivers," said Joe Hymer, WDFW fish biologist. "Meanwhile, we're starting to get a few reports of **spring chinook** returning to the Willamette River, so we should start seeing some springers in the Cowlitz, Kalama, and Lewis rivers before long."

Anglers fishing the Kalama River during the third week in January averaged one-to-two steelhead hook-ups per boat, said Chris Wagemann, a WDFW fish research biologist at the Kalama Falls Hatchery. Fishing conditions, after a week of cold weather, were "the best of the year," he said. No creel counts were available for that week on the Cowlitz River, but 28 anglers were checked with 18 hatchery steelhead on Blue Creek.

Hymer reminds anglers that Blue Creek closes to all fishing Feb. 1, when the catch limit also reverts to two hatchery steelhead per day on the Cowlitz River downstream from Mayfield Dam.

Catching that many fish hasn't been a problem for most anglers fishing Kress Lake, one of several lakes and ponds planted with excess hatchery steelhead in recent weeks. Wagemann said he's heard of some

anglers making as many as a dozen hook-ups in one day at the popular fishing lake near Kalama in Cowlitz County. "All the people I've heard from said they had a great time," Wagemann said.

Since mid-December, WDFW and Tacoma Power have planted slightly over 1,400 excess adult hatchery steelhead in Kress Lake, 553 in South Lewis County Park in Toledo and 63 into Horseshoe Lake in Woodland. In addition, 115 coho adults and 11 winter-run steelhead were released into the upper Cowlitz River at the Day Use Park on Lake Scanewa during the third week of January.

While the recent cold snap has energized the steelhead fishery by improving river conditions, it has had the opposite effect on fisheries for **smelt** and **sturgeon**, Hymer said. Smelt dipping, already slow, came to a virtual halt on the Cowlitz River on the third Saturday in January, and few legal-size sturgeon were reported caught in the mainstem Columbia that week.

"Smelt like a water temperature of 42 degrees or above," Hymer said. "In recent days, water temperatures have been ranging from 38 degrees to 40 degrees. That's pretty cold for sturgeon, too. Fishing for both species should improve once the weather warms up a bit."

The Cowlitz is open to smelt fishing only on Saturdays from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., with a daily limit of 10 pounds. No other Washington Columbia River tributary is open to fishing for smelt. Weekly smelt updates can be found at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/smelt/index.htm>.

Sturgeon anglers should be aware that fishery managers will sponsor a public meeting Jan. 25 in Vancouver to consider adopting season modifications for the sturgeon fishery from the Wauna powerlines to Bonneville Dam. At that meeting, fishery managers will consider options for providing additional retention opportunity to access up to 4,000 sturgeon left over from last year's harvest guideline. A report on the outcome of that meeting will be posted on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/>.

**Walleye**, on the other hand, don't seem to mind the cold, even though they're classified as a "warm-water" fish. During a recent creel survey in The Dalles Pool, boat anglers averaged nearly a walleye apiece. "Right now, they're fattening up before spawning," Hymer said. "That takes precedence over the cold."

Gunning for **razor clams**? See the regional report for the South Sound/Olympic Peninsula for information about a dig tentatively scheduled in mid-February.

#### **Eastern Washington:**

According to WDFW enforcement officer patrol reports and fish biologists' creel surveys, very few people have been fishing the Snake River for **steelhead**, due to recent extremely cold weather. The mainstem river has also been muddy, which usually slows the bite. Steelheading in the Snake River drainage was best on the Tucannon River where creel checks showed about 10 hours of effort per steelhead caught. See the full report on stretches of the Snake River mainstem at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/snake/index.htm>.

WDFW enforcement officers recently patrolling the region's winter-only **rainbow trout** lakes reported sporadic catches through the ice. Officer Lenny Hahn of Spokane found some 20-inch-plus trout caught at Fourth of July Lake on the Lincoln-Adams county line. "Some folks were nearly catching limits while others were only catching one or two," he said. On Jan. 21 Hahn recorded about five to six inches of ice at Fourth of July and eight to nine inches at Hog Canyon Lake in southwest Spokane County. Some Hog Canyon anglers were catching limits of smaller trout. Officer Don Weatherman of Colville reported anglers catching small rainbows through the ice at Williams Lake in Stevens County. Weatherman also checked anglers going after **burbot** or **ling cod** in Sullivan Lake in Pend Oreille County, although he noted the lake wasn't completely iced over and anglers should be cautious.

### **North Central Washington:**

WDFW Fish Biologist Art Viola of Cashmere reports **steelhead** fishing is very slow on the upper Columbia River near Wenatchee. "But ice fishing on Chelan County's Fish Lake is very good for **yellow perch** and **rainbow trout**," he said. "Barring a warm spell, the ice should remain safe."

Ice fishing in Okanogan County is also going strong, according to WDFW Fish Biologist Bob Jateff of Omak. Rat Lake near Brewster, Green Lake near Omak, Davis Lake near Winthrop, and Molson/Sidley lake near Oroville are all producing catches of **rainbow trout** in the 10 to 12-inch range. Jateff said ice fishing at Patterson Lake near Winthrop has been slow for **yellow perch**. "But I encourage anglers to fish as many areas of Patterson as possible," he said. "Once the perch are located, their schooling tendencies will increase catch rates. Small teardrop-shaped jigs tipped with maggots and/or a piece of worm are effective setups for perch."

Jateff also reports **steelhead** fishing on the upper Columbia River near Pateros has slowed considerably in the last few weeks with average catch rates of only one fish for every 12 hours of effort. Fishing for big **triploid rainbows** on Rufus Woods Lake - the Columbia River reservoir east of Bridgeport - continues to be very good. Jateff reports anglers catching 2-to-5-pound triploids, with an occasional 10-pounder. He notes new regulations on Rufus Woods allow anglers to retain two trout and two **kokanee** as part of the daily bag limit. Rufus Woods has good boat launching facilities and bank access for fishermen.

### **South Central Washington:**

WDFW Fish Biologist Paul Hoffarth of Pasco reports anglers harvested 81 Columbia River **steelhead** at Ringold as of Jan. 21. "So far in January we've interviewed 46 anglers with 133 pole hours with 11 steelhead," he said. "The average for the month is 12.1 hours per steelhead. Weather has been cold, effort has been light, and I'm pretty sure there is a connection." Hoffarth said 22 percent of the harvest in January is steelhead that were trapped at Ringold, transported, and released back in the river in the Tri-Cities to give anglers a second chance at the fish.

### **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](mailto:brees@pacifier.com)

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

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

### **Random Links**

How to rig beads for trout, steelhead & salmon

**[http://www.troutbeads.com/How\\_To.html](http://www.troutbeads.com/How_To.html)**

Just for fun - Reporter makes the best news of his life

**<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-No7OG0cFQ&mode=related&search=>**

**Weekly Quote** – "Great sport-fish will make you earn them. But, that just makes them more precious when you connect. Wild Gamefish are more precious than diamonds. And so are good fishing partners." - Mark Bachmann

**GOOD LUCK!**