

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **February 16<sup>th</sup> – February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2007**

**Oregon Fisheries Update:**

**Willamette Valley/Metro-** Following a slight increase in daily numbers of winter steelhead crossing at Willamette Falls, the YTD counts reached 1,639 on February 8th. Water temperatures remain in the low 40s with flows remaining low. Sturgeon fishing has improved with many keepers hitting the dock over the last retention period. Trollers took a few spring Chinook over the weekend around Sellwood. A rising Willamette will put off any action anglers witnessed in the lower, clear water.

Showers haven't improved prospects on the Clackamas River where steelheading remains sporadic. A mix of wild and hatchery fish are available and some broodstock fish have entered the system. A rise in metro river levels should stimulate the first good batch of broodstock hatchery fish on both the Clackamas and Sandy Rivers.

Anglers on the Sandy report slow to fair fishing for steelhead but it does seem to be picking up with rain this week. Reports indicate fish are not holding long in the lower stretches due to the large amount of sediment that has accumulated there. These fish are destined for the upper reaches of the Sandy anyway and in the low flows, bobber and jig fisherman will likely produce the best results.

With Detroit Reservoir filling on the upper end, rain has not affected water level at the North Santiam where catch-and-release fishing for native steelhead is slow to fair.

Scheduled to be stocked with hatchery trout this week are Mt Hood Pond, West Salish Pond and Alton Baker Canal.

**Northwest –** Steelhead anglers are anxiously awaiting the scheduled rain this week which should put most streams back on track after such a long dry period. The rain freshet comes at a time when tides are favorable for drawing in ocean returning fish. Another good slug of broodstock steelhead will likely hit the Wilson and Nestucca Rivers but the Kilchis, North Fork Nehalem and Necanicum Rivers will be the first to clear and may fish by Saturday. Wild fish dominate these smaller streams along with the Trask making them primarily catch and release fisheries.

Sturgeon effort on Tillamook Bay has dropped off significantly but favorable tides should stimulate action over the weekend.

Bay crabbing is better in the lower reaches of Tillamook Bay versus Netarts. Morning incoming tides should offer up opportunity for weekend crabbers. The ocean is forecasted to be rough.

The Siletz rose over six inches with rain this week but catches have remained poor. Fresh fish will be available after the drop forecasted this weekend.

The Alsea River has also been slow but should improve by this weekend. When **pro guide Bill Kremers (541 754 6411)** fished the Alsea River on Monday this week it was still low.

Recreational boats have done very well for bottomfish out of Newport when the ocean cooperates. Crabbing remains slow in Yaquina and Alsea bays.

In the first round of planting this year, Alder Lake, Buck Lake, Cleawox Lake, Dune Lake, Elbow Lake, Georgia Lake, Lost Lake in Lane County, Munsel Lake, North Georgia Lake, Perkins Lake, Siltcoos

Lagoon and Thissel Pond will receive hatchery rainbows.

**Southwest** – Steelheading on the Umpqua slowed a little due to precipitation. It remains fair but should turn on this weekend as levels drop.

Coos and Coquille steelheaders experienced an improvement in action earlier this week with rain increasing water levels and improving color. The majority of fish in the system are wild.

The Rogue River got a significant shot of precipitation and with it, a boost in fresh steelhead and an improvement in the number of hookups. Count on decent weekend fishing from the lower Rogue and upriver through Grants Pass.

Steelhead are on the move on the Chetco with water levels improving as precipitation passes through. It should be an excellent choice for the weekend.

Bottom fishing out of Brookings has been outstanding with large rockfish, cabezon and lings into the high teens in the mix.

Selmac Lake is scheduled to be planted with legal-sized trout.

**Eastern** – Steelheaders working the Grande Ronde River are still realizing great catches. The highest success rates are coming from bait anglers and weather conditions will continue to favor good afternoon catches.

Fly rodders are seeing an increase in Blue-Winged Olive hatches on the Fall River as air temperatures moderate and dries become more effective.

Bull trout have been cooperative on the Metolius when presented with larger offerings.

**SW Washington** – Steelheading on the Cowlitz and North Fork Lewis remains slow but should improve after levels moderate following the weekend's deluge. A spring chinook was caught last Wednesday on the North Fork Lewis.

Smelt remain non-existent on the Cowlitz River and commercial catches are nil.

Upstream of Bonneville Dam, walleye are starting to stir with boats averaging 5 fish per boat in the Bonneville Pool. Mike Hepper, a veteran angler from Richland, has set a new state record for the largest walleye caught in state waters. The fish weighed in at 19.3 pounds taken from the McNary Pool on a spinner and worm combination.

**Soapbox Update** - Stop the decimation of steelhead, salmon and sturgeon by voracious pinnipeds. Now is the time to speak up regarding the control of seal and sea lion predation by lethal means: <http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/Marine-Mammals/Seals-and-Sea-Lions/States-MMPA-Request.cfm>

**Columbia River Fishing Report** – The Columbia River remains a dismal prospect for salmon and sturgeon. Water temperatures have yet to moderate and although spring salmon are moving into the river, the sport fleet is taking only a rare fish. Commercial netters have taken a few chinook in the target sturgeon fishery and they are of quality size. Herring seem to be the better bait in the colder flows.

Good steelhead reports continue to come from the Dalles Pool with low effort and fair catches. Only 3 boats were checked over the weekend but those 3 boats tallied 13 steelhead of which about half were

hatchery fish. I have a call into The Dalles ODF&W to ask where these fish are destined for and what can we expect from this blossoming fishery.

The river remains too cold for smelt to enter in catchable numbers. Commercial netters are still pursuing these baitfish but coming up disappointed. Smelt will be a rare commodity this year.

**The Guide's Forecast** – A much needed shot of rain is due to the Willamette Valley prior to the weekend. This freshet should put salmon on the move and motivated to bite. Keep in mind however, a mediocre run is in the forecast so don't have high expectations this early in the season. Even in the best years, springers are still challenging to catch. Although the precipitation is forecasted to be significant, it likely won't impact the mainstem Columbia all that much. The river is forecasted to rise and likely warm which should improve the bite but if it colors too much, it shouldn't stay that way for long.

With the big tides this weekend, bank anglers should stand a chance at some fresh steelhead or salmon on the lower river. Plunkers working the lower Columbia River Beaches with bright colored spin-n-glos with lots of scent may find some action for a few of the beach rods. These early run springers are mostly Willamette bound fish and should be averaging near 20 pounds this time of year. The gillnets will begin fishing later this week so this may be the week to put in some time.

Sturgeon anglers shouldn't spend too much time pursuing their favorite species this weekend. The gillnet catch of sturgeon has culled several in the keeper size and water temperatures will keep the bite subdued.

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report** – Water temperatures are fluctuating at Willamette Falls as they work their way towards the mid 40s. Angers are anxious to see the magic 50-degree-mark, after which fishing prospects should shine. At 50 degrees or better, steelhead will become very active. Look for daily counts to skyrocket as wild fish high-tail it upstream and hatchery fish in the lower Willamette start grabbing baits and lures more readily. The total at the Falls was near 1,900 as of February 11th. Of great importance to lower Willamette anglers, spring Chinook will move and bite when the water warms, even though the catching doesn't really get underway in earnest until March and April. An early run of larger Chinook is expected this season, however, so anglers are getting wound up - and geared up - to take advantage. The shift will go from herring to prawns and ultimately to hardware later in the season. It is estimated that 52,000 springers will cross Willamette Falls. Sturgeon anglers experienced good fishing for shakers and produced a decent number of keepers over the last Thursday through Sunday retention period.

The North Santiam rose over six inches according to readings the afternoon of February 15th. South Santiam levels were up a foot and rising. The mainstem has risen only a couple of inches.

**The Guide's Forecast** – A few springers have fallen to plunkers fishing the bank below the mouth of the Clackamas River. Winter steelhead catches are slow to fair with fish being taken daily as they travel along the East bank of the Willamette heading for the hatchery at Eagle Creek. Look for the numbers of springers to increase as the season progresses. This is a good option for boatless anglers with this area fishing well when the water is a little high or off-color. Trollers hoping to intercept an early spring Chinook should concentrate on the Sellwood Bridge which has been moderately productive for this early in the season and Multnomah Channel at Coon Island where a couple of chromers were taken mid-week. Columbia water temps are barely over 40 degrees while the Willamette is at least slightly warmer. Anytime lower Willamette temperatures are above those of the Columbia, sturgeon are drawn to the balmier water and in such conditions, are conducive to feeding. Catch rates are good now and should improve for anglers using smelt or herring in the St. Johns area.

The Santiam system will be a prospect only when steelhead start crossing Willamette Falls en masse.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports** – Steelhead are well-distributed on the Clackamas from Gladstone upriver past McIver, but action is unlikely to improve until the water temperature increases.

Sandy levels and flows were on the increase Thursday this week. If the precipitation stops as forecast, steelheaders may find some willing fish this weekend. Drifting bait will be the best bet following the freshet. Update: According to reports late today (Thursday), the Sandy really got hammered and is unlikely to fish until Sunday or early next week. Eagle Creek would be a logical alternative but will probably be crowded.

**North Coast District Fishing Report** – Significant amounts of precipitation have finally hit the north coast- it's the rain freshet we've been awaiting for around a month now. This rain should put most north coast streams out- including the smaller systems that are exceptionally low and clear right now. For this reason, they will be the first to return to fishable shape and action should be great!

Although steelhead fishing on most north coast streams have been restricted to bank anglers working the upper stretches of these systems and boat anglers the very low reaches, that should all change following this latest weather event. Guides and anglers have been working the larger mainstem Nehalem River with favorable results. Bobbers and jigs, plastic worms or bait have been scoring the best results and the system seems to have good numbers of fish present. Boaters have also been working the long, slow stretches with plugs and taking some quality fish in the teens. The Nehalem however will not be the best option for at least a week when waters may once again clear assuming another halt to heavy precipitation.

Sturgeon anglers did not have favorable tides to work the north coast estuaries but that changes this week. Effort has been low and recent previous good tides did not produce great results.

Anglers anxious to target crab and bottomfish in the ocean have not had great weather conditions to pursue their quarry. There is no let-up in sight. Oftentimes in February, there is a window of calm water associated with east winds that frequent this month. We've had some limited east wind events but it really hasn't benefited the ocean condition. Stay tuned- there is still a lot of the month left.

Recent reports for crabbing in the area indicate Tillamook Bay is producing much better than Netarts estuary. Although Tillamook is not producing easy limits, good numbers of quality keepers are coming from the lower estuary. The softer tide series we are not coming off of was fair.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Be prepared for departure as this weekend will offer some of the best opportunity in several weeks for anxious steelheaders. Specifically, the Necanicum, North Fork Nehalem and Kilchis Rivers should produce great catches of both spent hatchery fish and fresh wild ones. With the larger plants taking place on the North Fork and Necanicum Rivers, these systems are notorious for aggressive, but spent, adult ocean returning steelhead. They will bite almost anything but in the dropping flows, bait will rule the roost. As more fish enter these smaller systems and the water begins to drop, plugs will be an effective method. In the higher flows, look for steelhead in the tail-outs of deeper holes. Keep in mind that fish will take advantage of the path of least resistance so the slower flows to the side of the main runs will also produce the bulk of the bites. When driftfishing, be sure to let your bait ride out the drift and enter into the slower water before retrieving for another cast. You may even go so far as to let it soak on the bottom of the drift for several seconds before reeling in. Just be sure your bait is on the bottom when you're waiting for a bite.

The larger systems like the Trask, Wilson and Nestucca Rivers should also produce nicely but if we get

the rainfall predicted, they may not fish until Sunday or Monday. Higher flows are ok to target these fish in as long as the flows are on the drop and you have at least 10 inches of visibility. The more turbid the water, the closer to the bank these fish will be and the bigger (and more scented) your baits should be. Look to the previous paragraph for additional high water techniques. The Wilson and Nestucca should get a nice shot of broodstock, fin-clipped steelhead into the high teens following this rain freshet. The higher drifts on these larger systems should produce the best results as the flows drop. On the Wilson, this will be from Vanderzanden's to Siskeyville, the Nestucca from 6<sup>th</sup> bridge to 1<sup>st</sup> bridge. The Trask from Cedar Creek down will produce the best results early but experienced boatsmen can try from Stone's Camp to the upper peninsula drift. No matter what drift you do, boat anglers need to be aware of the large quantity of wood debris in these watersheds and the fact it will be shifting again on this high water. All these floats have the high potential to navigational hazards which have recently taken the lives of anglers.

Sturgeon anglers will have some good late afternoon opportunity this week with the minus tide over the weekend. Keepers are certainly pocketed in the upper and middle bay but the west channel should produce fair results as well. Memaloose Boat Ramp may be the best access point for weekend recreation if pursuing sturgeon.

Crabbers will have some good options for early morning tides this weekend as soft incoming tides should produce fair results on Tillamook Bay. Netarts will likely remain poor and the Nehalem Bay will not be overly productive as well with all the fresh water draining that basin. Fresher bait will yield the best results.

A razor clam dig should not be out of the question for diggers working the Clatsop Beaches. Check any clam closures prior to departure however as there seems to be some issues developing on the Central and Southern Oregon Coasts.

**Central and South Coast District Fishing Report** - With the latest round of rainfall, the Siletz is forecast to crest at 12.5 on Friday, February 16th, then steadily drop. If it's clear enough it may fish by Sunday. There will definitely be a mix of broodstock and wild fish available.

On Monday this week, **pro guide Bill Kremers (541 754 6411)** wrote the he "fished the lower Alsea today. It was dead. Only saw other two boat trailers on the entire river. The Alsea is still very low. Hoping for some more rain." Well, Bill got his wish. As of the afternoon of February 15th, the Alsea has risen and is too muddy to fish. It'll recover but will take a couple of days.

Mainstem Umpqua anglers enjoyed decent fishing prior to the rain storms as other Southwest tributaries suffered from low, clear water. The precipitation served only to roil the waters and it's unlikely to clear sufficiently to fish well for a week or so.

SOLV (Stop Oregon Litter and Vandalism) is teaming up with the Oregon State Police to conduct a cleanup of the lower Umpqua River. Boaters who'd like to help can meet and launch at the West Coast Basin before the project starts at 8 AM. Cleanup of the river beach is expected to conclude at noon.

Elk and Sixes steelheaders have enjoyed good fishing this week but these flashy streams will drop and clear very quickly in the absence of precipitation. Plug-pullers have been doing well here.

Rogue river levels have receded from 6.5 to less than five feet at Agness over the last three days. Precipitation is due again on Sunday, but Saturday should be prime for fresh winter steelies. Anglers drifting bait have been doing well downstream of the Applegate River for steelhead bound for the hatchery facility located there. Cured salmon eggs and egg imitations are taking fish in stretch below Grants Pass. There majority of the Rogue River winter steelhead run is yet to come. It'll be productive here for many weeks.

Bait fishers are doing best on the Chetco which hit 6,900 CFS earlier this week with flows moderating. Today, February 15th another freshet has flows over 4,000 but with the predicted break in the weather coming to pass, plunkers will have a very good weekend.

Offshore bottom fishing has been spectacular out of South coast ports. Ling cod to 20 pounds and 10-pound cabezon are not uncommon with rockfish also running large. While the weather looks unsettled, fishing will be rewarding whenever bar crossing is safe. Bait will continue to out-fish lures until the ocean temperature rises.

**Central and Eastern Oregon** – Trout anglers on the lower Deschutes will find a slight improvement in redbside fishing this weekend with mid-day hatches of Caddis and Blue-Winged Olives during which periods dries will be effective. Steelheading for aging summers is slow. Spawning has commenced so use caution to avoid wading on redds.

**Northwest Bass & Panfish** - Having dominated local competitions, 14-year-old Becky Nelson of Salem will be winging her way to the Bassmaster Junior World Championship at Lake Logan Martin near Birmingham, Alabama. It is her first time competing on a national level.

**Northwest Trout** – Stocked with hatchery trout in the Willamette Valley this week were Mt Hood Pond, West Salish Pond and Alton Baker Canal. In the first round of planting in the Northwest (coastal) Zone this year, Alder Lake, Buck Lake, Cleawox Lake, Dune Lake, Elbow Lake, Georgia Lake, Lost Lake in Lane County, Munsel Lake, North Georgia Lake, Perkins Lake, Siltcoos Lagoon and Thissel Pond received hatchery rainbows.

### **Washington fishing reports:**

**From the WDF&W Weekender Report February 7<sup>th</sup> – February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

#### **North Puget Sound**

With the arrival of calmer weather and the opening of two popular marine areas, anglers have a choice: head out onto Puget Sound in search of blackmouth or turn to the rivers and cast for steelhead. Either way, anglers should find plenty of fishing opportunities throughout the region over the next few weeks.

On Puget Sound, the **blackmouth** fishery has picked up recently, especially in marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) and 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner). "The fishery got off to a slow start, but since the weather improved more anglers have been getting out on the water and they seem to be having pretty good success," said John Long, WDFW fish biologist.

Anglers in marine areas 8-1 and 8-2 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.

Elsewhere, marine areas 7 (San Juan Islands) and 9 (Admiralty Inlet) recently opened for salmon. Traditional spots, such as Point Lawrence and Obstruction Pass in Marine Area 7 and Possession Bar and Useless Bay in Marine Area 9, are usually good areas for anglers, Long said. In those two marine

areas, anglers have a daily limit of one salmon, and chinook must measure at least 22 inches in length.

Meanwhile, **steelhead** fishing has been decent in the Skagit and Sauk rivers, said Brett Barkdull, WDFW fish biologist. "The rivers are in good shape and are very fishable," he said. "It's not red hot, but I think one more good shot of rain might bring a number of those steelhead in."

The majority of steelhead showing up in the Skagit and Sauk rivers are wild fish, but some hatchery steelhead remain, said Barkdull. Wild steelhead, distinguished from hatchery fish by their intact adipose and ventral fins, must be released. Anglers, however, have a daily bag limit of two hatchery steelhead through Feb. 28 on the Sauk and through March 15 on the Skagit. Both rivers turn to catch-and-release fisheries for all steelhead in March - the Sauk beginning March 1 and the Skagit starting March 16. Barkdull reminds steelheaders on the Skagit fishing from boats, sleds or any other floating device equipped with a gas or electric motor that it's illegal to fish while under power during the catch-and-release season. Rules and regulations for the Skagit River fishery, as well as 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>).

Anglers looking to take part in a salmon derby will have an opportunity in March. The inaugural Anacortes Salmon Derby is scheduled for March 10-11 out of the Cap Sante Marina. Tickets for the event are \$50 per person, with proceeds going 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**

Area anglers will have to make some choices in the days ahead. Salt water or fresh? Blackmouth or steelhead? And what about that razor clam dig tentatively scheduled for mid-month?

Those opting for **blackmouth salmon** will have four more marine areas to fish starting Feb. 16, with seasons scheduled to run through April 10. They include areas 5 (Sekiu), 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca), 11 (Tacoma-Vashon) and 12 (Hood Canal), joining area 9 (Admiralty Inlet) which is already open.

"People really look forward to these openings," said John Long, WDFW fish biologist. "So far, catches in the north sound have been good and we expect these new areas to be producers as well." For all salmon the daily limit is one. Chinook must measure at least 22 inches. There is no size limit for other species of salmon.

Anglers who want to kick off the season in competitive style, can enter the Discovery Bay Salmon Derby, which runs Feb. 17-19 near Sequim. The derby, which is the oldest in the state, features \$10,000 in prizes and starts at daylight Feb. 17. The award ceremony will begin at 2 p.m. Monday, at the Gardiner Boat Ramp. For more details, call 360-797-7711 or visit <http://www.discobaysalmonderby.com/>.

Meanwhile, **steelhead** fishing has been running hot and cold from the Grays Harbor area to the northern Olympic Peninsula.

"Steelhead fishing has definitely been hot on the Wynoochee River," said Scott Barbour, WDFW fish biologist. "Fishing conditions have been almost perfect, and people are catching a lot of fish." The action has been slower on other area rivers - including the Wishkah, Satsop and Humptulips - which have been running low and clear, he said. "A little rain sure wouldn't hurt," he said.

Barbour noted that wild steelhead will likely outnumber hatchery fish in those rivers by the end of the

month. Anglers can keep up to two hatchery steelhead per day from catches on rivers in the Grays Harbor area, provided the fish measure at least 20 inches. All wild steelhead, identifiable by an intact adipose fin, must be released.

Farther north, anglers are also experiencing variable success, river by river, as more wild steelhead move in. "The fishing is pretty typical for this time of year," said David Low, another WDFW fish biologist. "It's good one day and tough the next. With some rainfall, conditions should improve." Sol Duc River had the best catch rates among the north coast rivers, based on creel checks conducted Feb. 1-4. That survey found that 29 anglers caught 30 wild steelhead and released seven of them.

On the Bogachiel River, 28 anglers caught 22 fish in a creel check over the Super Bowl weekend - the highest catch rate for that river so far this season. One angler from Forks told Low that he caught three steelies in two hours of fishing.

The upper Hoh, which receives glacier melt, is in the best shape for water levels, Low said. Forty-five anglers caught and released 26 fish in a three-day period on the upper Hoh, while 129 anglers on the lower Hoh caught and released a total of 69 hatchery and wild steelhead combined.

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 at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs>.

WDFW has tentatively scheduled **razor clam** digs on four ocean beaches on Feb. 16 and 17. If marine toxin tests are favorable, fishery managers will open Twin Harbors, North Beach Peninsula (Long Beach), Mocrocks and Kalaloch to digging between noon and midnight. Twin Harbors will be open an additional day, Feb. 18, during the same hours if the test results allow the digs to proceed.

Final word will be announced approximately one week ahead of time via the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov>, the WDFW Fishing Hotline (1-360-902-2500) and the statewide news media. Copalis Beach will remain closed in February because of the low number of clams available for harvest.

The best time to start digging is an hour or two before low tide. Evening low tides during the two-day digs are 5:47 p.m. and 6:28 p.m. For the Feb. 18 Twin Harbors dig, the low tide is 7:08 p.m.

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.

### **Southwest Washington:**

Winter's grip has cast a chill on virtually every type of fishing on the Columbia River and its tributaries. With water temperatures at Bonneville Dam hovering around 37 degrees, few catches of steelhead or sturgeon - much less smelt - were reported as January turned to February.

"We need some rain and warmer temperatures to shake things loose," said Joe Hymer, a WDFW fish biologist in the Vancouver office. "Fisheries have been in a holding pattern, but that could change fairly quickly if temperatures start rising and we get some rain."

Boat anglers fishing The Dalles Pool were an exception to the slowdown, averaging 1.6 **steelhead** per rod during creel checks conducted Jan. 29-Feb. 4. By contrast, none of the 27 bank anglers or two boat anglers surveyed on the Cowlitz River caught fish last week. Neither did the 13 bank anglers fishing for **sturgeon** below Bonneville Dam, where the sport fishery is now open four days per week - Thursdays through Sundays - downriver to the Wauna power lines.

Fishing has also been slow at Kress Lake, South Lewis County Pond and Horseshoe Lake, where WDFW has planted hundreds of excess hatchery steelhead in recent weeks. "Fish lose their interest in biting - or even moving - when water temperatures get this low," Hymer said. "But once things warm up a bit, fishing should pick up."

For one thing, several thousand late-run hatchery steelhead are expected to return to the Cowlitz and Kalama rivers in the weeks ahead, Hymer said. "The early run to those rivers was fairly strong, and there's no reason to believe the late run won't be too," he said.

Warmer water should also spur the arrival of **spring chinook**, a few of which have been caught in the Willamette River net fishery, Hymer said. While the spring chinook run usually doesn't peak until mid-April, he said anglers could start encountering springers any time - especially if things warm up.

**Smelt**, too, prefer warmer water temperatures - specifically 42 degrees or higher, Hymer said. Gulls have been observed actively working waters near Church Hole at Chinook, indicating that smelt are in the area. But those smelt - if, indeed, that's what they are - are unlikely to move into the Cowlitz River until water temperatures rise, Hymer said.

For now, fishers are likely to have better luck at one of several lakes recently planted with **trout**. They include Battleground Lake (3,015 catchable-size rainbows), Kline Pond (1,000 half-pound and 156 five-pound rainbows), Icehouse Lake near Bridge of the Gods (800 catchable-size rainbows), Little Ash Lake near Stevenson (800 catchable-size rainbows) and Kidney Lake near North Bonneville (1,000 half-pound rainbows). Hymer noted that Kidney Lake remains open to fishing through the end of February.

Area anglers may want to consider heading west for a **razor-clam** dig tentatively scheduled in mid-February, provided marine toxin tests show the clams are safe to eat. Fishery managers plan to open four ocean beaches - Twin Harbors, North Beach Peninsula (Long Beach), Moccross and Kalaloch - for digging Feb. 16 and 17 between noon and midnight if marine toxin tests are favorable. Twin Harbors will also remain open an additional day, Feb. 18, during the same hours if the 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. For more information on the proposed dig, see the Sound Sound/Olympic Peninsula regional summary above.

### **Eastern Washington:**

Ice fishing continues to provide some action on regional lakes, but recent warming trends and rain may soon make ice unsafe. Anglers are still reeling in **rainbow trout** at Fourth of July Lake on the Lincoln-Adams county line and at Hog Canyon Lake in southwest Spokane County. Nice-sized **crappie** are coming through the ice at Sprague Lake off I-90 on the Lincoln-Adams county line. Crappie are also being caught, along with some **yellow perch**, at Eloika Lake in north Spokane County.

WDFW enforcement officers report that a large number of anglers are fishing for **steelhead** and catching many fish on the Grande Ronde River in the Snake River Basin. Steelheaders on the Walla Walla River and sections of the mainstem Snake report that action is slowing down. A few small steelhead were caught in the Ice Harbor Dam pool. For the most recent creel surveys, see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/snake/index.htm>.

### **North Central Washington:**

WDFW enforcement officers recently patrolling the upper Columbia River Wells Pool **steelhead** fishery found little angler effort. The Rufus Woods reservoir, on the other hand, continues to see plenty of action on big **triploid rainbow trout**.

Ice fishing is fair at many Okanogan County lakes, including Rat Lake near Brewster and Green Lake near Omak where 10 to 12-inch **rainbows** are being caught. Recent patrols at Davis Lake near Winthrop in Okanogan County yielded no anglers with catches. But five fishermen checked on Patterson Lake had seven trout and one **yellow perch**. "The perch at Patterson Lake are still difficult to find because trout are taking the bait before the perch can get to it," reported WDFW officer Cal Treser of Twisp. WDFW fish biologist Bob Jateff of Omak says anglers need to fish as many areas of Patterson as possible to find the schools of perch. He recommends using small teardrop-shaped jigs tipped with maggots or worms.

An ice fishing festival is scheduled for Feb. 17 at Sidley Lake near Molson, about a mile from the Canada border. Coordinated by Eden Valley Guest Ranch, the festival includes fishing contests for kids and adults with a first prize of a 14-foot Lund boat. For more information contact the Ranch at (509-485-4002).

### **South Central Washington:**

The Columbia River is open for retention of **hatchery steelhead** upstream to the wooden power line towers at the old Hanford townsite north of the Tri-Cities. WDFW fish biologist Paul Hoffarth reports anglers are picking up a few steelhead below McNary Dam near the Umatilla River and at Irrigon. "Steelhead fishing in the Ringold area is typically spotty in February," Hoffarth said, "but it can produce the occasional great day and really picks up by March."

Retention of **white sturgeon** in the Columbia River below McNary Dam (Lake Umatilla) re-opened Jan. 1. "It's a great time to fish for sturgeon," Hoffarth said, "because few anglers start gearing up for sturgeon until spring."

Hoffarth also notes that **walleye** fishing above and below McNary Dam on the Columbia River has been on the rise. "Several fish reaching up to 10 pounds or more have been caught," he said. "We could have a new state record with a walleye that weighed in at 19.3 pounds."

The 17th annual Central Washington Sportsmen Show is Feb. 16 - 18 at the Yakima SunDome, and will feature daily fishing seminars, a fly casting pool, fly tying demonstrations, trout bobbing contests, an outdoor cooking camp, and vendors of fishing and hunting gear, guides and lodges. For show hours, admission prices and other details, see <http://www.shuylarproductions.com/index.php>.

### **Reader Email**

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

Write to the TGF staff:

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### **Random Links**

Volunteer instructors sought for children's fishing program

<http://www.statesmanjournal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070207/OUTDOORS/702070373/1034>

Not an endorsement, just an opportunity for anglers to express themselves if they're so inclined. "No Seals' decals

**<http://www.salmonthief.com/>**

Just for fun - "A whimsical potty that turns your toilet into a nautical wonderland"

**<http://www.fishnflush.com/#>**

**Weekly Quote** – "And then there is the joy of fishing itself; of throwing a line whether fish take or no. It seems impossible to convey the reality of this as a separate pleasure, to any but honest anglers. 'You fish?' they say. 'What patience you must have.' Not at all; hardly anything is less true. Some of the most impatient souls alive are untiring salmon fishers; men to whom blank days or lost fish are but as whetstones to keener fishing on the morrow." - A.H. Chaytor

**GOOD LUCK!**