

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **March 16th – March 22nd, 2007**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- Lower Willamette flows were up a little but the water temperature held at 48 degrees as the winter steelhead count edged closer to the 4,000 mark for the year. A total of 51 summers have also been counted at the Falls. Although sturgeon fishing has slowed, keeper sturgeon are still being caught with smelt and sand shrimp being the top baits.

Spring Chinook fishing is fair but spotty; a few are being taken in the Multnomah Channel reports **pro guide Joe Salvey of Fish Hawk Adventures (503-349-1411)**. The mainstem Columbia above the influence of the Willamette produced good catches of salmon last week prior to the weekend states **pro guide Brandon McGavran (360-607-1327)**. Herring trollers did the best in 18 to 24 foot of water.

The Clackamas took quite a hit from the last rainfall, rising nearly two feet late Monday and early Tuesday this week, but with dry weather in the forecast, it should fish by the weekend.

Sandy River steelheading was slow to fair for anglers over the weekend. Billowing sand remains a detriment. The majority of the steelhead are wild but summers are showing up in the mix said **pro guide Brandon Glass (503-260-8285)**.

The North Santiam remains high although a few steelhead are being taken.

In preparation for spring break, several lakes are scheduled to be planted with hatchery trout this week. They are Benson Lake, Bethany Pond, Blue Lake, Commonwealth Lake, Dorman Pond, Huddleston Pond, Mt Hood Pond, Roslyn Lake, Sheridan Pond, Alton Baker Canal, Cottage Grove Pond, Cottage Grove Reservoir, Creswell Pond, Dorena Reservoir, E.E. Wilson Pond, Freeway Lake East, Junction City Pond, Roaring River Park Pond, Walling Pond, Walter Wirth Lake and Waverly Lake.

Northwest – Another rise in river levels kept most north coast rivers from fishing into the early part of this week. Smaller streams like the Necanicum and North Fork Nehalem fished Tuesday but results were poor.

A moderating weather pattern should allow for extended opportunity on all area streams with the Wilson and Nestucca being top bets for anglers seeking hatchery fish. The Trask and Kilchis Rivers are also good bets but an extended period of higher flows has sent a lot of fish into the upper reaches where bank anglers will have good access to them. Larger baits and drift lures will work better in the higher flows but downsize offerings as rivers begin to clear.

Late afternoon tides and prolonged daylight hours with the time change make sturgeon fishing a fair option for Tillamook Bay anglers over the weekend. The ocean still doesn't look friendly for the weekend and area crabbing remains mediocre.

Perkins Lake, Siltcoos Lagoon, Siltcoos Lake, Smith Lake, Spring Lake, Sunset Lake, Thissel Pond, Vernonia Pond and Woahink Lake will be planted with trout this week.

Southwest – Rock and jetty fishing has been productive for mostly rockfish although a few ling cod have been taken as well. Offshore bottom fishing will be good when the ocean lies down.

According to **pro guide Bill Kremers (541-754-6411)** the Alsea River is in great shape and is producing broodstock steelhead.

The Pacific Fishery Management Council will choose one from a trio of potential plans for the summer Chinook season. With a record number of Klamath salmon this year, two of the three options would allow uninterrupted angling from May into September.

Anglers have started catching striped bass at Horsfall Beach near Coos Bay. This is just the start of the season as better numbers are expected into spring.

Middle and upper Rogue stretches are most likely to be productive as rain has encouraged winter steelhead to go the distance and has them well distributed.

The Chetco has been quite rewarding this season for winter steelheaders. At 4200 cfs and dropping on Tuesday this week, both plunkers and side-drifters were taking fish.

Surf perch are being taken in good number off South coast beaches.

Marie Lake, Bradley Lake, Upper and Lower Empire Lake, Johnson Mill Pond, Johnson Mill Pond, Millicoma Pond, Powers Pond and Saunders Lake are scheduled to be stocked with trout this week.

Eastern – Bull trout fishing is good on the Metolius but the river is closed above Allingham Bridge to protect spawning fish. Sunny weather will have the caddis hatch in full swing and trout looking up.

Fly fishers are experiencing good and improving angling for trout on the lower Deschutes as warmer days trigger caddis hatches here.

Lake Billy Chinook is producing fair to good bull trout catches for trollers.

SW Washington – The Lewis River is putting out some quality late run steelhead and the Cowlitz at Blue Creek and Olequa is also producing. A handful of spring chinook have been taken.

Wind River anglers will have to take note of new regulations beginning March 16th. For starters, the daily bag limit will be reduced to just one hatchery salmon. Drano Lake remains open for 2 salmon or steelhead or one of each.

It appears that the smelt run is over for the year. Overall results were poor, as expected.

Razor clam diggers will have opportunity to harvest during the next minus tide series. The following beaches will be open for razor clam digging between noon and midnight on these days:

Friday, March 16 – Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks

Saturday, March 17 – All beaches: Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis, Mocrocks, Kalaloch

Sunday, March 18 – Long Beach, Twin Harbors and Kalaloch

Diggers should be aware of the recent time change. Some tide books don't reflect the change.

Columbia River Fishing Report – A flurry of springer activity took place last week in the short stretch from the I-5 deadline downstream to Davis Bar for anglers trolling herring. Although consistent results were not seen fleet-wide, some boats did quite well for what we might expect to see for this

time of year. **Pro guide Brandon McGavran (360-607-1327)** reports, "Fishing has slowed a bit since I talked with you Friday last week. There are some anglers getting a few springers on the Columbia around Vancouver, but fishing has slowed quite a bit as of last Friday. Last week we had some fantastic fishing. On Thursday 3/8/07, I put 5 in the boat and had 9 chances. I have been trolling Herring and flashers. Prawn spinners have been catching also. Water temperatures are warming and there are big tides coming. We should see some good fishing in the next week."

With the turbid waters of the Willamette, anglers couldn't expect great results in the downstream fisheries. Guides fishing in the Westport area reported slow fishing with only a rare opportunity happening. In the Multnomah Channel, **pro guide Joe Salvey of Fish Hawk Adventures (503-349-1411)** reports, "We fished on the Lewis River on Sunday and landed 3 nice hatchery steelhead, and heard of a handful of springers that were caught on the Lewis. Spring chinook are showing up in good numbers early this year, there has been a good bite at the tide change in the Multnomah Channel for the last few days with moderate pressure. For those anglers willing to spin a herring for a little while, the results have been good so far."

Sturgeon fishing remains poor in all areas of the Columbia River. Water temperatures are still quite cold to activate a good sturgeon bite.

Walleye effort increased last week but catch rates declined slightly. The best activity is in The Dalles Pool but anglers are still getting fair numbers in the Bonneville Pool as well. With the warming trend, the fish may slip into the spawning phase which could further slow the bite.

The Guide's Forecast – Good tides in the coming week should provide some good opportunity for spring chinook on the mainstem Columbia. Couple this with the fact that the gillnets haven't fished recently and it's something to get excited about. Although the best fishing has recently taken place upstream of the mouth of the Willamette River, action should begin to improve downstream as well. Anglers are anxiously awaiting the Clifton Channel/ Westport fishery to take off; this may be the week.

The swift flows should keep bank anglers in the running. Minus tides certainly favor bank casters but boaters should have good options too. Whether fishing from the boat or bank, don't discount the value of shallower water for these calorie counting delights! Bank anglers can utilize Jones Beach near Westport and Rainier area beaches as well. Spin-n-glos are the go to lure in green, orange and purple works well too. Don't forget to use heavy scent as this is the only technique where the fish HAVE to come to you!

Don't bother with the sturgeon fishing yet. Warmer water temperatures and a larger food source is needed to motivate fish to bite.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Beautiful weather is predicted this week. While spring doesn't start officially until Wednesday, March 21st, I've been mentioning it here because I've been looking forward to it with great anticipation this year. Flowers and trees are blooming. Robins are in the yard. Springers are in the river and this week, the weather makes it feel as if spring has sprung.

Willamette flows have started to moderate as the water temperature has increased to 49 degrees. This is very good news for anglers. Water clarity has been a problem, but at 3.2 feet on the 15th, it is rapidly improving. The number of boats are increasing near Sellwood Bridge which area has provided periodic spring Chinook action. There are steelhead and springers in the Oregon City area; just ask the half-dozen sea lions in that area. If you're one of the lucky ones to hook up with one or the other, be sure to check for a fin clip. Steelhead counts have topped the 4,100 mark although no additional spring Chinook have been spotted to accompany the lone fish which crossed the Falls in mid February.

The Guide's Forecast – Numbers of spring Chinook available are low, with catch rates the same. It has slowed over the fair start last week. Most anglers trolling the lower Willamette are of the opinion they can't catch any sitting at home or doing yard work. Good philosophy. Plug-cut herring will be most effective until the water temperature climbs into the 50s although a few anglers have reported success with prawn spinners. Trolling around Sellwood or at Coon Island in Multnomah Channel is the best bet to intercept an early Springer. We're just a few degrees away from a temperature in which counts will begin to build. Sturgeon fishing should hold up even though it seems the number of keepers available were thinned by the recent tournament. The St. Johns stretch has been most productive. Smelt and sand shrimp remain the baits of choice but with many of the springer hopefuls dragging plug-cut herring, sometimes sturgeon will key on this bait. It's not a bad idea to have some on board as an alternate. Yours might become the hot rod by trying it.

Detroit Reservoir is filling more quickly than anticipated so additional release in order to hold the level back for the target date in early May for completion. This could mean higher than normal flows in the North Santiam through spring. Amidst the few wild winter steelhead caught and released over the last week, summers have been taken although there are too few this early in the year to create a target fishery. A total of 20 winter steelhead have entered the trap at Foster Dam on the South Santiam.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Anglers on the Clackamas launching at McIver have picked up a few steelhead. Jigs are catching some as are cured salmon eggs. One angler scored fish throwing spinners. The Clackamas is in good shape with decent color. Eagle Creek has been productive at times for steelheaders drifting eggs.

Sandy steelheaders report water a little above normal with a little color. It should improve and will put out fish by the weekend. The upper river is fairly clear so lures have been effective here. The majority of the fish landed recently have been wild, providing great catch-and-release action. With the broodstock program in place for a while, there are a few fin-clipped fish available.

Pro guide Brandon Glass (503-260-8285) reports, "Well the report for the Sandy river is that there are a lot of wild steelhead around now. The brood stock are far and few between, but the summer's are coming in the lower river now. The river is out, but should be back in by Thursday."

North Coast District Fishing Report – Despite optimum conditions for north coast steelheaders, success rates have not been what most had hoped for. It seems, most of the fish that were destined for the local rivers may have squirted upstream on one of the many earlier rain freshets that we had earlier in the month.

I began my work week fishing on the Necanicum River on Tuesday. I had to cancel on Monday due to yet another high water event. Fishing with Craig R. and his fishing buddy Brad, we put in with ideal conditions but only got one wild fish for our days effort. The fish took a plug a little past half-way into the float. The next day (3/14) was spent on the upper Trask in pursuit of some brutes that this section is known for. We did manage to land 4 steelhead but most were in a near spawning state which seems kind of early for late run steelhead. This is another indication that we may have missed some good opportunity because of all the high water this winter. To finish up the day, we headed out in the upper bay in pursuit of sturgeon on Tillamook Bay. We had a good tide to work with but only managed one shaker sturgeon from the middle of the bay.

Reports from around the region indicate sub-par fishing for this time of the season. **Pro guide Kent Anderson (503-550-6303)** reported sporadic action over the last few days on the Nestucca River. Kent went 1 for 3 on the 14th in the upper river but did manage a good day on the 13th with 7 opportunities. Kent stated the reports that he had been paying attention to have not been all that

impressive. He did report that anglers are indeed using the ramp at 5½ bridge however but the rumor is a landowner up that road is pretty fed up with the parking situation there. Use common sense and park safely.

The Wilson stayed high and colored into Wednesday this week but results will likely be similar on this system when it drops into fishable shape before the weekend. The upper drifts have been the first to clear enough to fish.

We'll get a nice break in the weather on the 15th and I'll be throwing my customers a curve ball trying to get them into some rockfish just offshore in the calming seas. It doesn't look like the pleasure boating will last very long however.

Tillamook Bay salmon anglers should take note of a new boundary off the mouth. Because of a relocation of the navigational buoy, the former 'Triangle' is now a rectangle extending from Pyramid Rock on the South side and Twin Rocks on the North out to the 15 fathom line. The new title is the Tillamook Spring Chinook Terminal Area. Ocean Salmon fishing opens March 15th off the central Oregon coast and will continue through July 31.

The Guide's Forecast – Bigger tides may bring in better numbers of steelhead over the weekend. Most steelheaders have been fairly disappointed recently with great river conditions and not much to show for it. Granted, the continual high water have not bolstered catch rates and coming off another rain freshet won't help this matter much more.

All area rivers with the exception of the mainstem Nehalem should be good options for the weekend. The Nestucca and Wilson will remain top options for those looking to score a hatchery fish. Anglers shouldn't have high expectations however but good effort should pay some dividends. The Necanicum River and smaller systems like it could prove hazardous in the dropping flows. There were several spots that I had to drag the boat on Tuesday- and the flows were still high that day.

I have been taking the majority of my steelhead on plugs this season. The new K-11 Xtreme plugs have been working well in chrome and chrome/pink colors. Plugs have been a good option with the bulk of the anglers going back to side drifting. As flows drop, fish will concentrate however and smaller, less intrusive baits and lures will become more effective.

Although tides are right for some good sturgeon action over the weekend, the weather forecast isn't looking too promising. Wind and a possible chance of rain may damper effort. Crabs don't seem to be a factor in the upper bay and neither do sturgeon for that matter.

Bay crabbing remains poor in Tillamook, Nehalem and Netarts estuaries.

Central & South Coast Reports – Crabbing has picked up at Yaquina Bay with some reports of limits. Dungeness are in excellent condition now.

Ling cod and rockfish angling will close offshore beyond the 40-fathom line on April 1st. The closure, which protects endangered vermillion, yelloweye and canary rockfish, puts all bottom-dwelling species except halibut off limits. Offshore bottom fishing has been excellent whenever conditions have allowed safe crossing of the bars. Predictions for offshore conditions into the weekend don't look very user-friendly, however.

Siletz steelheaders should find excellent water color this weekend with the level right at five feet.

It's worth repeating. Bait fished with a diver in the rivers often results in the steelhead taking the hook

deeply and is frequently lethal. When natives are present, resist using this combination, Fishing will be good this week and other methods which allow for the safe release of wild fish will be equally effective. Thanks in advance for being responsible.

Pro guide Bill Kremers (541-754-6411) shares his experiences this week, " ... fished the Alsea River yesterday. River was in great shape. Most of the people are fishing the North Fork as there were only a couple of other boats on the entire main river. On our way we picked up a couple of broodstock tubes hoping to catch a couple of native steelhead for the broodstock program. We put in at River Edge and floated down to Blackberry. Most of our action was right at the start as we lost nice steelhead just below River Edge on K-11 Kwikfish. A little later we landed a native hen which went into the tube. As we were working our way to Stoney Point to tie the tube off, the clip broke and the steelhead swam free. We tried. We also landed one more steelhead just below Five Rivers on a pink worm and float. It too was a native hen, but it had just spawned, but it sure put up a great fight. Also a lot of cutthroat around."

Umpqua anglers have been taking winter steelhead this week on both the North and South forks. Bait has been out fishing lures on the North Umpqua where steelheading has been very productive recently. It'll be a good bet for the weekend.

The striped bass season has begun in the Coos Bay area with five landed so far at Horsfall Beach. All of these were 20+ pounders. Often hooked inadvertently by those targeting surf perch, these large, hard-fighting brawlers are seldom landed on light gear. Stripers enter ocean coves along the beach to feed primarily on perch and will continue to do so on their way to the Umpqua, Coos and Coquille where they spawn.

This is just the start of the season as better numbers are expected into spring.

Coquille steelheaders are finding fish here mostly past their prime although an occasional bright fish is being caught.

Anglers were taking winter steelhead by pulling plugs on the Elk and Sixes earlier this week but these volatile rivers will likely be too low to fish well by the weekend.

Rogue River level is still a bit high but dropping with the water color spot-on steelhead green. The best steelheading has been in the middle river new Grants Pass. Steelhead are being taken with bait in the upper river as well with 4,000 over Gold Ray Dam. It turns out that Gold Beach resident Ron Dyles, reported as having recently taken the first 2007 Rogue spring Chinook caught the first springer about this time last year as well. A few additional spring Chinook catches have been confirmed. Now that Chinook are entering, the lower river is the place to intercept them. The Rogue River Rig, which puts a spinner blade on the nose of an anchovy, is the most common method here. Flows at Agness were 10,200 cfs and moderating on the morning of Thursday, March 15th with good color.

Chetco flows, at 2,650 on the afternoon of March 15th, are dropping rapidly. One wild steelhead may be retained up to five per year on the Chetco and Rogue rivers.

Surf perch continue to good on the South coast with many surf casters reporting 15-fish limits.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Deschutes anglers are experiencing fair trout fishing in sunny weather. Warmer temperatures will encourage an improvement which will continue into April. Expect to see Blue-Winged Olives and tiny caddisflies hatching mid-day.

Northwest Trout – In The Willamette Valley they are Benson Lake, Bethany Pond, Blue Lake,

Commonwealth Lake, Dorman Pond, Huddleston Pond, Mt Hood Pond, Roslyn Lake, Sheridan Pond, Alton Baker Canal, Cottage Grove Pond, Cottage Grove Reservoir, Creswell Pond, Dorena Reservoir, E.E. Wilson Pond, Freeway Lake East, Junction City Pond, Roaring River Park Pond, Walling Pond, Walter Wirth Lake and Waverly Lake. In the Northwest Zone, Perkins Lake, Siltcoos Lagoon, Siltcoos Lake, Smith Lake, Spring Lake, Sunset Lake, Thissel Pond, Vernonia Pond and Woahink Lake will be planted with trout this week.

As is always the case, freshly-planted trout, having been raised in a shallow environment, will remain in water no deeper than six or eight feet for about two weeks. They'll school up and travel the shoreline during that period, creating flurries of activity as they travel. Trolling is generally ineffective for newly-stocked trout but Power Bait will take 'em.

Town Lake, which received 2000 trout the week of March 5th, received an additional stocking meant for another location that could not be reached. These Trout planting occurs at various times during the week. While it's likely that the bodies of water listed above have been stocked by the time you read this, there's a sure way to find out and to discover if any plantings have been detoured to a different location. Call 971-673-6000 after 2 PM for a list of water bodies stocked each day.

The information regarding the above 'trout hotline' was in a March 13 release from the ODFW which went on to reveal, "In the South Willamette Watershed, more than 4,000 trophy-sized trout will be released throughout the year with concentrations in Big Creek Reservoir, Cleawox Lake and Olalla Creek Reservoir. More than 2,500 trophy-sized trout will be released into the North Willamette Watershed with a major release in August of 800 fish each at both Harriet and Trillium Lakes and 400 fish into West Salish Pond." Stay tuned.

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report March 7th – March 20th, 2007

North Puget Sound

Anglers could have an opportunity over the next couple weeks to take advantage of warming temperatures and spring-like conditions on Puget Sound, where blackmouth salmon fishing remains hot. Freshwater fishers also could benefit from the changing seasons, as the Skagit River appears to be dropping into shape, improving anglers' chances of hooking a steelhead.

The best bet, though, continues to be the **blackmouth** fishery. "There's no shortage of blackmouth out there," said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. "Fishing has been good for several weeks, and some people have said that this is the best blackmouth fishing they've seen in a long time."

Most marine areas in the region - with the exception of Marine Area 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) - are open for blackmouth, and all have been good for salmon anglers, Thiesfeld said.

The most productive region seems to be the southern portion of Marine Area 9 (Admiralty Inlet), Thiesfeld said. According to WDFW creel checks at the Everett boat ramp, 262 anglers brought home 56 salmon during the first weekend in March. At the Kingston public ramp, 34 anglers were checked with nine chinook that same weekend.

Anglers in Marine Area 9, as well as Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands), have a daily limit of one salmon, and chinook must measure at least 22 inches in length. "Marine Area 7 also is kicking out some nice size fish," Thiesfeld said. "I've heard some salmon have been as large as 18 pounds."

Blackmouth fishing in marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) and the northern portion of 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) also remains a good bet, Thiesfeld said. Anglers in those two marine areas 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.

"There might be some really hot spots here and there, but it's hard to go wrong just about anywhere in the region this year when it comes to blackmouth," Thiesfeld said.

Hot fishing could make for some heated competition during the inaugural Anacortes Salmon Derby, which 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 or 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>.

In the freshwater, anglers in the region still have a shot at **steelhead**. A number of rivers closed to steelhead fishing Feb. 28, although most areas of the Skagit River remain open for the harvest of hatchery steelhead through March 15. Beginning March 16, a catch-and-release fishery for all steelhead opens on the Skagit from the Dalles Bridge to the Cascade River. Wild steelhead are distinguished from hatchery fish by their intact adipose and ventral fins.

Brett Barkdull, another WDFW fish biologist, said fishing has been decent on the Skagit, especially in the lower river. "The river had been running a little high recently," he said. "But it should be back in shape, and anglers should find some nice fish."

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>).

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

Fishing for blackmouth is still going strong in Puget Sound, but steelheading may give that fishery a run for its money now that the rivers have dropped into shape. Add the prospect of a razor clam dig in mid-March and the outdoor forecast is looking good for the days ahead.

Fishing for **blackmouth** continues to reward anglers from Port Angeles to Hood Canal, said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. "This season is continuing to produce," he said. "The fishing is the best I've seen in the past six to eight years."

Good numbers of fish, combined with nice weather, helped make the 25th annual Geoduck Restaurant Salmon Derby in northern Hood Canal a success, said Sue Perley, who sponsored the event. Shane Roaf of Brinnon won the \$600 first prize after hooking an 18-pound, 2-ounce blackmouth. A total of 149 fish were weighed in during the two-day derby, which takes place "anywhere south of the Hood Canal Bridge," Perley said. Most of the fish were caught in the Brinnon-Seabeck area.

Twenty-five blackmouth were reported caught over the March 3-4 weekend at Ediz Hook (Marine Area 6), the three-and-a-half mile spit that curves north of Port Angeles. Farther south, anglers fishing in Marine Area 11 near Point Defiance boat ramp hauled in nine blackmouth March 4. South Sound anglers should also be aware that Marine Area 13 opened March 1 for blackmouth.

Meanwhile, word is out that rivers and streams throughout the area have dropped into shape for some prime **steelhead** fishing. Sixty-three anglers were contacted on the Bogachiel River during a creel

survey conducted March 2-4, up from just 17 anglers during the previous three-day period. Those 63 anglers connected with 51 fish (all but four of them wild), releasing 16 of them.

"The rivers are dropping into shape and fishing should start to pick up," said David Low, a WDFW fish biologist who monitors the fishery on north coast rivers. "Conditions haven't been great this season but, when they are, anglers are generally finding fish."

More anglers were surveyed on the Hoh River during the March 2-4 creel check than anywhere else. On the lower river, 141 anglers reported catching 45 steelhead, 41 of them wild. On the upper river, 94 anglers caught 50 fish, releasing all 46 of the wild ones. The 21 anglers surveyed on the Sol Duc had caught 11 steelhead, nine of them wild.

No survey results were available for the Queets River during that period, but Low said he had heard reports of several 18-to-20 pounders caught in recent days.

Under state rules, anglers may retain one wild steelhead per year, provided that it is caught in one of 10 designated rivers in western Washington. Rules for wild-steelhead retention are outlined on page 29 of the Fishing in Washington rule pamphlet <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>.

Favorable weather and river conditions have also made for good fishing in the Grays Harbor area, said Scott Barbour, WDFW fish biologist. "Now that the rivers are back in shape, there are fish to be had," he said. "Although some rain is expected in coming days, the rivers should remain quite good." The Wynoochee and Satsop rivers were especially popular for steelhead fishing in early March, Barbour said.

Those fishing the Chehalis River might also want to consider trying for sturgeon, which are now present in the river. "The technique for catching the big fish is somewhat different," said Barbour. "People seem to have the best luck using smelt for bait on an incoming or outgoing tide, and keeping their lead low to reach the fish."

Ready to dig some **razor clams**? Fishery managers have tentatively scheduled a three-day razor clam dig March 16-18 at various ocean beaches on evening tides. Final word on the dig will be announced about a week ahead of time, once marine toxin tests determine whether clams on those beaches remain safe to eat.

As currently scheduled, the following beaches will be open for razor clam digging between noon and midnight on the following days:

March 16, Friday - Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks (low evening tide: 5:31 p.m., +0.1 ft.)

March 17, Saturday - All beaches: Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis, Mocrocks, Kalaloch (low evening tide: 6:16 p.m., -0.1 ft.)

March 18, Sunday - Long Beach, Twin Harbors and Kalaloch (low evening tide: 6:58 p.m. -0.1 ft.)

No digging will be allowed before noon any of those days.

Southwest Washington:

Smelt are thinning out and steelhead fishing is set to close on a number of lower Columbia tributaries, but spring chinook salmon are about to take the main stage.

With springers now showing up in creel surveys on the lower river, anglers have established a growing "fish camp" in Cathlamet.

"**Spring chinook** fishing should improve daily," said Joe Hymer, WDFW fish biologist. "The fish are beginning to arrive, water conditions are improving and we're getting some warmer weather. This

season is about to begin in earnest."

The spring chinook fishery has been open since Jan. 1 between the Interstate 5 bridge downstream to Buoy 10, but it doesn't usually start heating up until mid-March, Hymer said. Creel surveys and other reports show anglers are now catching hatchery spring chinook between the I-5 Bridge and the Lewis River.

Anglers fishing below the I-5 bridge can keep a total of six hatchery salmon per day - including two adults - but must release any wild, unmarked fish they encounter. Hatchery steelhead and shad may also be retained within the limits described in WDFW's *Fishing in Washington* rules pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

Based on pre-season estimates, a total of 164,000 spring chinook are expected to return to the Columbia River this year, considerably fewer than the 225,000 that returned last year. However, some individual runs - particularly the one to the Willamette River - should provide some good fishing this year, Hymer said.

"A large portion of the return to the Willamette is comprised of five-year-old fish, which can run to 30 pounds or more," he said. "Those fish tend to come in early, so they should start showing up in the catch pretty soon." He added that the Cowlitz, Kalama, and Lewis rivers should also start producing spring chinook soon.

The mainstem recreational fishery for spring chinook salmon below the I-5 Bridge is scheduled to run through April 15, unless allowed targets for wild fish are reached first. Run forecasts for Columbia River tributaries are posted on the WDFW website at http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/salmon_columbia07.htm.

Farther upriver, fishing for hatchery chinook and hatchery **steelhead** will open March 16 from the Tower Islands (six miles below The Dalles Dam) to McNary Dam. Chinook fishing will also open March 16 on the Wind River and Drano Lake, although returns to those waters - plus the Klickitat River, which opens in April - are expected to be down this year. WDFW will announce new fishing regulations for the Wind River and post them on its website within the week.

Since only one chinook had been counted at Bonneville Dam through February, anglers should check the fish counts at <http://www.cbr.washington.edu/dart/adult.html> or <http://www.nwp.usace.army.mil/op/fishdata/home.asp> before they head to these areas.

Meanwhile, March 15 is the last day to fish several lower Columbia tributaries, which are being closed to protect spawning steelhead. Rivers and creeks closing the next day include Abernathy, Cedar, Germany, Mill (Cowlitz County), Rock (Skamania County), Salmon (Clark County), Skamokawa, Coweeman, Elochoman, Grays, East Fork Lewis, Washougal and Wind.

Anglers are still catching some steelhead on the Cowlitz and Kalama rivers, which will remain open for late stocks of hatchery fish. Wild fish must be released. Angler effort on the Lewis River has been light.

Smelt dippers on the Cowlitz and lower Columbia rivers have probably seen the peak of the season - such as it was, Hymer said. Both recreational and commercial harvest did fairly well on the last Saturday in February, but the catch has declined ever since, Hymer said. "Dippers may still be able to pick up some smelt, but abundance is declining," Hymer said. The Cowlitz River will be open to smelt dipping from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. each Saturday through March 31.

Sturgeon fishing in all areas of the Columbia open for that species should improve with warming weather, although most anglers below the I-5 bridge are now focusing on spring chinook, Hymer said. Boat anglers fishing for **walleye** have been averaging one fish per rod in The Dalles Pool, and almost that good in the Bonneville and John Day pools. **Trout** anglers should be aware that WDFW released 2,000 browns into Kline Pond and 7,000 more into Lacamas Lake on Feb. 22.

Eastern Washington:

The Spokane River arm of Lake Roosevelt is the place to catch **walleye** now. WDFW district fish biologist Chris Donley of Spokane explains that walleye are staging in that part of the waterway now in preparation to go upstream into the reservoir to spawn. Walleye fishing in the Spokane arm remains open until April 1, then closes for two months to allow the fish to spawn.

Many **trout** waters in the central district of the region have been a little tough to access. Iced-up shorelines have made bank fishing virtually impossible, and launching boats to reach open water has been challenging. "We need a good rainstorm, wind, and continued mild temperatures to open things up," Donley said. Undaunted anglers in float tubes and other small craft have been working Coffeepot Lake in Lincoln County and Amber Lake in Spokane County, both which opened March 1 and have healthy populations of rainbows.

Donley also noted that the district's two winter-only rainbow trout-stocked lakes - Fourth of July on the Lincoln-Adams county line and Hog Canyon in southwest Spokane County - are still producing catches. Both close March 31.

The Tucannon River impoundments in Columbia County that opened March 1 have been providing good catches. WDFW Tucannon Fish Hatchery manager Doug Maxey reported all seven man-made fishing lakes -- Beaver, Big Four, Blue, Deer, Rainbow, Spring and Watson lakes - are full of catchable-size (8-10-inch) rainbows and "in good shape," completely ice-free and accessible. Maxey said the lakes will be re-stocked starting the week of March 19.

Anglers who want to get the latest information on fish stocking and rules can visit the WDFW booth at the Inland Northwest Wildlife Council's annual Big Horn Outdoor Adventure Show, March 15-18, at the Spokane County Fair and Expo Center. For more information see <http://www.wildlifecouncil.com/bighornsubsite/default.htm>.

North Central Washington:

WDFW district fish biologist Jeff Korth of Moses Lakes says there's plenty of good **rainbow trout** fishing ahead in the Columbia Basin because cold weather and ice cover on the March 1 opener kept anglers and catches to a minimum. "Participation and catch rates will pick up at all these lakes when our weather stabilizes and spring advances," he said.

The largest lakes - Burke and Quincy - were iced up and slow on the opener. Creel checks that day measured just 2.5 fish per angler average at Quincy, where most of the catch was made up of 13.5-inch yearling rainbows and about 27 percent in 17.5-inch carryovers. Anglers at Burke averaged 1.7 fish apiece, mostly in 11.2-inch rainbows with about eight percent in 14.5-inch carryovers. "These two lakes have some of the best fish in the Basin," Korth said, "so as they open up and warm weather entices more anglers, they'll provide some very good fishing."

Martha Lake fished the best on the opener with an average of almost four trout per angler. Many limits were caught in an hour or less. Most of the catch there was in 10.5-inch rainbows with a few 15.5-inch carryovers. Korth says it will stay that good throughout much of the season.

Upper, Lower, and West Caliche lakes were slow, as expected. Upper Caliche was completely ice-free, but anglers averaged just a little over one fish apiece, mostly 11-inch rainbows with some 12.6-inch carryovers. "The rainbow fishery there is simply overrun by perch and smallmouth bass," Korth said. "We stocked 4,000 rainbows there the day before the opener, but I think those fish just didn't acclimate fast enough. By now they will be very catchable."

Dusty Lake, managed under the selective fishery rules (no bait, single barbless hook, one-fish limit), was ice-free and provided very good fishing on the opener. Anglers were averaging four to five 14-20-

inch rainbows each per hour.

Lenice and Nunnally lakes, also selective fishery waters, were fair on the opener, with anglers averaging about three 14-19-inch rainbows apiece. The catch rate at these lakes was much slower than Dusty, however, with less than one fish per hour of effort. Korth says Lenice and Nunnally should receive some larger hatchery fish by the first of April.

No opening day checks were made at Lake Lenore because it was mostly ice covered then. As it opens up, Korth expects Lenore to be good for many three to five-pounds **Lahontan cutthroat trout**. Lenore is under selective fishery rules, with catch-and-release requirements in effect from March through May.

As water and air temperatures warm, the string of small, walk-in lakes on the west side of the Quincy Wildlife Area should provide good fishing for anglers who want to get away from the crowds. None were checked on the opener, but usually yearling rainbows range from 9-12 inches, with carryovers 14-18 inches.

WDFW district fish biologist Bob Jateff of Omak reports hatchery-marked **steelhead** fishing on the Upper Columbia River above Wells Dam continues to be slow. "The most popular fishing spots are at the docks in Pateros and just upstream and downstream of the dam," he said. The season is scheduled to continue through March, but it could close on short notice, depending on impacts to wild fish. Anglers should watch for WDFW emergency announcements or news releases.

Jateff says there are still opportunities for ice fishing in the Okanogan, with Rat and Davis Lakes still providing catches of **rainbow trout** in the 10-12 inch range. Rufus Woods reservoir continues to provide **triploid rainbow** fishing for both bank and boat anglers. Fish average in the one to three-pound range, with an occasional five-pounder caught. Jateff reminds anglers that whenever bait is used in fishing, fish hooked and landed are part of the daily limit whether retained or released.

Jateff also reminds anglers that the regulations on Spectacle Lake are different this year. The lake opens April 1 and closes September 30 to provide a longer season for anglers on the very popular fishing lake.

South Central Washington:

Fishing: The southcentral region's many year-round fishing lakes continue to be stocked with catchable-size (10-12 inch) rainbow trout through this month. Some jumbo trout, weighing about a pound each, will also be planted in those waters, including Granger Pond, I-82 Ponds 4 & 6, Myron Lake, Rotary Lake and Sarge Hubbard Park Pond. Anglers can check the weekly plants list at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/weekly> on the WDFW website to see which lakes were recently planted.

WDFW district fish biologist Eric Anderson of Yakima says more lakes at higher elevations will be stocked as the weather continues to warm up and the snow and ice melts. Wenas Lake, a popular recreational fishery in the Yakima Valley, is no longer stocked because the landowner has decided to not renew the public access agreement.

Although most of the lakes in the Yakima and Kittitas valleys are open to fishing year round, special regulations are in effect on some waters. For that reason, Anderson strongly advises anglers to check WDFW's Fishing in Washington rule book (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) before casting a line.

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

Jaw-dropping footage of whale attack:

<http://us.video.aol.com/video.index.adp?pmmsid=1866831>

Big Fish Madness Challenge at Versus:

<http://www.versus.com/bigfishmadness>

KATU has lots of big fish pictures online at Fish Tales:

<http://www.katu.com/features/fishtales>



Weekly Quote – "The angling hypnosyche, the fisherman's absorbing consciousness of water – its motions, sounds, and texture; its variety and constancy; the scope and density of the life it sustains – this awareness is a habit of mind and temperament. It is a way of seeing and thinking about things, an orientation born from a mind magnetized by an irrepressible fascination with springs and creeks and rivers." - Ted Leeson

GOOD LUCK!