

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **November 30<sup>th</sup> – December 6<sup>th</sup> 2007**

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**Willamette Valley/Metro-** Dropping water temperatures and a relentless east wind sank catch rates and effort for the gorge fishery last week. The fish seem to be present but reluctant to bite. Sportanglers caught up on their unused quota late in the season and managers are considering a year-round, 4-day per week season in 2008.

Water temperature is down to a chilly 46 degrees at Willamette Falls. This doesn't bode well for sturgeon fishing in the lower Willamette, which relies on water warmer than the Columbia to attract sturgeon and provide good winter fishing. Sturgeon catches have been poor recently.

Summer steelhead fishing is holding up well on the Clackamas with hardware drawing strikes recently. There are still some bright fish available. It's too early to seriously consider winter fish here.

A few winter steelhead are being caught at the Sandy River but these early fish are natives and must be released. Look for hatchery steelhead to start entering around Christmas.

Rains in mid-November, snowmelt and the need to lower the water level of Detroit Reservoir have combined to push the North Santiam high and swift. In addition, trees have fallen into the river recently. Only experienced boaters with familiarity with the river should try it.

Snow is causing closures of several roads including Old McKenzie Pass and Cascade Lakes Highway. Be certain to check with ODOT before heading out this winter season.

**Northwest –** Trollers were out in force over the Thanksgiving holiday last weekend but results varied. Most of the effort took place in the Ghost Hole and some fair catches were reported on some days. The west channel was still producing some fish but effort is likely to drop significantly with incoming weather changes and the tapering of the run.

River levels are forecasted to remain stable making for good water conditions for late run chinook on the Wilson River but mountain passes will become treacherous so be cautious when traveling. Other area streams like the Nestucca, Kilchis and Nehalem Rivers witnessed poor returns so anglers will be looking to these systems for early arriving winter steelhead.

The Necanicum, North Fork Nehalem, Wilson, Kilchis and Nestucca Rivers all get returns of winter steelhead this time of year and catches should begin to build. The period from Christmas to New Years is the peak week however.

**Pro guide Jesse Zalonis (503-392-5808)** reports slow fishing on a low return of Chinook this

year on the Nestucca but is optimistic about the winter steelhead run to come.

Crabbers continue to do poor in Tillamook Bay but the lower Columbia is still producing great results. Commercial crabbers have begun to place their pots in the lower Columbia so keepers may become increasingly hard to find although sport-crabbers have a larger retention slot to work from.

Crabbing has been slow to fair out of Newport and Waldport. Ling cod fishing has been good offshore out of Yaquina Bay.

**Southwest** – Commercial crabbing will commence on schedule in the ocean on December 1st. The crabs are of high quality but rough seas will keep most sport crabbers inside of estuaries.

The next good deluge should bring winter steelhead into southern Oregon coastal streams.

Tides are moderating this week and will be soft for the weekend, which should make for decent Dungeness catches.

Another rough offshore forecast for the coming weekend will probably prevent recreational boaters from venturing out into the ocean.

It's been a disappointing chinook run this season, with most data indicating low numbers. While most rivers experience declining numbers at this time of year, the Elk and Sixes will provide good chinook fishing for another three to four weeks. Providing, that is, that sufficient precipitation keeps the water at fishable levels. It will take a decent amount of rain to fire up the action on the Elk and Sixes as they are low and clear at this time although numbers of chinook have been caught as recently as Monday this week.

The Rogue has been running cold, but steelheading on the upper river has been fair to good.

The Chetco flow was 1,470 cfs as of Tuesday this week and is forecast to increase slightly in the coming days. It's low but fishable, yielding fair results. Best water conditions are between 2,000 and 4,000 cfs. Extreme high tides late last week brought in fresh chinook which will be in deeper holes now. Try pulling plugs or backbouncing cured salmon eggs. Into December, the major shift from chinook to winter steelhead will take place. A few have already been taken.

**Eastern** – Anglers who bundled up and traveled to Crescent Lake to chase lake trout and browns did fairly well over the long holiday weekend. It will fish well until snow prevents access.

Steelheading has been fair on the Grande Ronde for a mix of hatchery and wild fish.

**SW Washington** – The Cowlitz, Lewis and Klickitat Rivers are the last remaining options for late run coho. Winter steelhead are beginning to show on the Cowlitz River and numbers should build as Christmas nears.

**Columbia River Fishing Report** – With a stiff east wind and dropping temperatures, the sturgeon fishery in the gorge is coming to a slow stop. Most anglers would agree, when temperatures begin to drop to the mid to low 40 degree range, the sturgeon bite goes downhill, quickly. We are nearing that temperature benchmark and fish still seem to be present, just not so willing to bite. Effort has dropped off as well but a few hard-core anglers are still participating. Keepers are still being taken from the fishery but it's clearly not as popular as it was a month ago. Conditions aren't likely to get any friendlier either. Cold, snowy weather is in the forecast

and that will serve only to punctuate the end of a productive season. Some of the better fishing is actually taking place downstream of the gorge where Troutdale anglers are taking a few more fish and downstream of the Willamette, there are still some fish for motivated anglers. Sand shrimp has gained in popularity but smelt remains a consistent stand-by. Most believe the sturgeon will still be anticipating a smelt return and stage near the mouth of the Cowlitz in hopes of a staple winter food supply. They have been sorely disappointed in recent years. Although a 2008 smelt forecast has not made its way into this writer's hand, the species was recently petitioned for listing on the Endangered Species List. That's never a good sign.

As for the mainstem fishery, it's really all about sturgeon below Bonneville now. River forecasts and season setting will be big news and we should know more by mid-month. Stand by as we'll keep you apprised when we get more information.

Upriver, people are still in hot pursuit of mainstem and John Day steelhead. It's another fishery for the hard-core as cold, winter weather will likely deter even the most die-hard angler. You had better have a good top and a propane heater if you plan on having any fun in this fishery. The weather is supposed to get even nastier as the week goes on. Be prepared for it or don't waste your time as you won't find it all that fun. As for success rates, they are still fair but not what this fishery is capable of. The final creel check for the season took place this week ending with three adipose fin-clipped steelhead kept and six unclipped steelhead released for 29 bank rods; and eight adipose fin-clipped steelhead plus eight unclipped steelhead released for 40 boats.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Don't you dare drag your children out to participate in this fishery- it would be a great way to never get them back out there. The shaker fishing is still good but even that has tapered from previous weeks. It may just be a good time to get your Christmas shopping done! If you do find yourself headed out for sturgeon, you may want to try downstream of Troutdale if you are searching for keepers. The ratio of shakers to keepers is better downstream as you get closer to the mouth of the Willamette but no matter where you fish this time of year, you shouldn't have high expectations for taking home a keeper. The weather will be NO fun this week!

Steelheaders have a little (and I do mean a little) more reason to stay motivated. The John Day Pool may be a fair choice to look for a hatchery fish this time of year. If your boat is properly equipped with a heater and a top, it can still be a pleasure to drag a plug around in search of a keeper. The fishery is clearly winding down however as most fish are making their way upstream to over-winter before the spawning season. The John Day Arm may satisfy your need to break the monotony of trolling in the same body of water. Be sure you know where you are going however as this is not the time of year to get stranded on a gravel bar!

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report** – Baby, it's cold outside.

You might have noticed. The temperatures recently require bundling up day and night and that situation is reflected in the temperature of the water at Willamette Falls.

A phenomenon that occurs each winter in Oregon is the migration of sturgeon as winter approaches from the normally-cooler water of the Columbia to the historically-warmer water of the Willamette seeking comfort and feed. Unfortunately, water temperature this season is down to 42 degrees as of December 28th, and the fishing is reflecting it. Catches of shakers are low and a keeper is a rare commodity, indeed.

The North Santiam is high, fast and with fresh wood having fallen from the banks is a dangerous place for drift boater above Fishermen's Bend and requires familiarity and experience below.

Precipitation and snowmelt will combine to keep the water level up although Detroit is expected to be down to flood-control level by December 1st.

In a meeting of the Columbia River Recreational Fishing Advisory Group on Tuesday, December 27th the 2008 sturgeon season was discussed. The majority of recommendations favored allowing retention on Thursdays through Sundays through September and seven days a week for the remainder of the year if catch rates allow it. The lower Willamette and Multnomah Channel retention periods mirror those of the Columbia.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Only warming water will improve the sturgeon outlook. Accompanying rain would help further as sturgeon like high, muddy water. Additional current would further assist in turning on the bite. Nothing in the weather forecast indicates that this will occur in the coming week.

There are late-season summer steelhead and a few native winters bound for the Little North Fork in the North Santiam, but between the high water and strong current there are better options for anglers. Those who try it might opt for larger baits and lures and fish them in softer water.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports** – Clackamas anglers seeking bright winter steelhead are likely to be disappointed as it will be a few weeks 'til the winter run commences. On a brighter note, summer steelhead have been taken in the McIver stretch and there are still some keepers in the mix.

Additional winter steelhead have been caught (and released as early fish are natives) at the Sandy. This fishery will be worthwhile when fin-clipped broodstock steelhead arrive in January.

**North Coast Fishing Report** – Anglers are still holding onto hope for a fair late-run fall chinook season. Although effort is certainly down from last year, anglers are still catching fair numbers of fish. Most recently the Ghost Hole produced some fair numbers last weekend and it may very well hold up into the first week of December. The size of the fish becomes quite uniform this time of year with only a rare fish taken over 30 pounds. Fish have also been taken in the west channel recently although effort is light over there as well. Anglers are using herring almost exclusively.

The lower Wilson is also kicking out some fair numbers of fish and with lower flows, action is almost better in this stretch than the driftboat section above Sollie Smith Bridge. The water has been clearing and the fish are becoming situated in the well defined holes of this lower stretch where jet boats are having the best access. Backbounced bait or plugs are taking the most fish and recent rains may improve conditions for anglers in this stretch.

Driftboaters upstream on the Wilson are finding an occasional bright fish but they are hard to come by with the pressure downstream and the fact the water levels have receded. Other north coast streams are in the same condition but the runs on other streams are clearly winding down for the season and most would say that they didn't make a strong showing in the first place. The Kilchis River is another December stronghold but most experienced anglers agree that the fish (including chum salmon) have made a very poor showing this season. The Nestucca, Trask and of course the Nehalem River are poor.

Many anglers are already looking forward to the winter steelhead show that typically starts off around the Thanksgiving holiday. Winter steelhead have been reported from the North Fork Nehalem River and there are likely fish present in the Necanicum River as well. On the north

coast, the Kilchis, Wilson and Nestucca Rivers also receive hatchery plants of steelhead but being bigger river systems, they may be harder to target and therefore, verify their existence.

**Pro guide Jesse Zalonis (503-392-5808)** reports, "The Nestucca is pathetic! The majority of the fish that were in the fishable areas are gone. There is just a small handful of holes where some remain, and everyone is fighting over them. Seems the return is down more than ever this year, with most boats coming up empty. This is the poorest we have ever seen in the system.

"There is also an incredible amount of pressure on the creek, so fishing opportunity is quite limited...Personally, the fall king fishery is near the end for the season.

"Look for some of the first of the winter steelhead run to show on the lower river, with most of them being hatchery fish from Three Rivers. There are a few at the trap now, with one reported caught and one, in the trap itself. We will have to wait and see what happens here in the next week. There should be some coming, lets just hope this will be a banner season for them. We sure need it!

"Have no reports on the crabbing scene, but we plan to check it here in a couple of days."

I headed out in pursuit of sturgeon over the weekend only to find the clamming beds. Although I should have known better, the setting sun was in my eyes and I was too close to the eastern edge of the west channel and ended up having a sand-bar party for 4 hours. I normally wouldn't brag about this but since anyone who has spent any amount of time navigating Tillamook Bay (especially on a minus tide) has spent time on the sandbars of the estuary. None-the-less, we didn't get to fish and the heaters were running most of the time. Oh yeah, the sunset was glorious! Thankfully, I had family on board! Sorry guys! Stay tuned for more sturgeon reports.....later, after I get all the sand out of my jet!

Crabbing remains poor on Tillamook Bay but maybe with the softer tides this week, it will pick up?

**The Guide's Forecast** – It'll be a volatile week for Tillamook area anglers. Bay fishers will still have a crack at Tillamook chinook, most likely bound for the Wilson River this time of year. Most of this weeks tides will be an outgoing influence which doesn't necessarily bode well for bay trollers. Regardless, the Ghost Hole and Bay City will be likely areas of interception and the west channel may also continue to offer up some opportunity.

The best scenario for north coast anglers may be the lower Wilson River where anglers can take advantage of an early morning high tide that will theoretically move fish into tidewater and upstream in preparation for spawning season. Anglers will want to keep in mind that hens are frequently not a good take home product this late in the season. Even if they are silver bright, they often cut pale and their flesh is not of high quality. Bright bucks on the other hand can still be of great quality. It'll be a mix of backrolled plugs or backbounced eggs that will take fish this time of year. Plugs seem to work better in higher flows as fish tend to spook easier as flows drop. The river forecast is for up and down conditions which make for better opportunities for river fishers.

Although it's getting to be time for sturgeon, the tides aren't necessarily right for anglers this week. You don't need a minus tide to effectively catch sturgeon but the late morning and early afternoon tides this week are not the best choice to corner sturgeon. Besides that, the weather won't be all that much fun either.

Crabbers will likely continue to be challenged in the pursuit of holiday crustaceans this week.

Although the tides will be favorable, keepers have been hard to come by and I don't know why that would change. The ocean would have been a great option but rough seas are in the forecast so it likely won't be a great option. The lower Columbia will remain the best place and is becoming quite popular with Oregon and Washington crabbers.

**Central & South Coast Reports** – It is interesting to note, in addition to the ocean opening for recreational Dungeness crabbing on December 1st, that rockfishing will be open through December. The last time this occurred was in 2003. It is speculated that record catches of halibut and albacore took sufficient pressure off rockfish and ling cod to allow for catchable numbers through the end of the year.

Commercial boats launched out of Oregon ports on Wednesday morning loaded with crab pots in order to get a jump on the Dungeness season which opens December 1st. This advanced soaking of gear is allowed but harvest cannot commence until Saturday.

While everyone acknowledges that Chinook catches are down this year, both Fall and spring Chinook jack counts have been very good on coastal rivers, so next season should show a dramatic improvement in adult catches.

Water level and temperature dropped this week on the Umpqua mainstem where angling will improve when the water begins to warm. Coho are being caught on the North Umpqua with number fair to good. Over 2700 silvers have crossed Winchester Dam. The South Umpqua opens December 1st to hatchery steelhead fishing.

Winter steelhead started trickling into the Coos and Coquille systems with recent rainfall. It will only improve into December.

On Monday, November 26th, the Elk River was showing signs of the need for rain - again. Water levels were low, getting quite clear and running cold. Chinook were caught despite these conditions but they were biting lightly.

Half pounder anglers should see an improvement in catches this week with the Rogue just over 4,000 cfs and the levels dropping. Coho fishing has been fair in the Grants Pass stretch with plugs, spinners and spoons effective. Steelheading on the upper river has been fair to good for bait fishers despite cold water temperatures.

The Chetco provided good Chinook catches following the last rain and during the recent extreme tidal series. The tides have turned soft, however, and the water level has dropped to 2.6 at Brookings as of Thursday, November 29th. The next possibility of rain sufficient to make a positive difference here is late this week into early next week. The Chetco Chinook season historically concludes in late November and early December, but a few late fish may enter with precipitation. And hey, winter steelheading has only just begun. A few have already been taken.

Bottom fishing for rockfish has been excellent out of Bandon and Brookings when the ocean has cooperated. Ling cod have been more difficult to locate recently.

**Central and Eastern Oregon** – The public boat ramp at Crescent Lake closes Saturday, December 1st.

Reports from the east side are getting thin and this is a situation not likely to improve as the temperature drops and weather conditions grow more harsh. Readers are encouraged to share

their experiences if they brave the elements to chase a fish in central or eastern Oregon.

**Northwest Trout** – No trout stocking took place in Oregon this week and no reports have been submitted.

### **Washington fishing reports:**

#### **From the WDF&W Weekender Report November 28<sup>th</sup> – December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

##### **North Puget Sound**

Fishing for **chum salmon** at many of the region's rivers and streams has been slow, but some **steelhead** are starting to show up in the catch. On Puget Sound, **crabbing** is still an option and **blackmouth** fishing has been good in some areas.

"The **blackmouth** fishery slowed a bit in early November, but anglers have done pretty well recently," said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. "That could be a good sign as we move into December." Creel checks in the region show decent fishing for blackmouth – resident chinook – in Marine Area 10 (Seattle/Bremerton). At Shilshole Ramp, 30 anglers were checked with seven chinook Nov. 24, while 37 anglers brought home 12 chinook the following day.

Those fishing Marine Area 10 are currently allowed to keep one chinook as part of a two-salmon daily limit. Daily bag limits for that area change beginning Dec. 1, when anglers will be allowed to keep two hatchery chinook as part of their two-salmon daily limit. They must, however, release wild chinook, which have an intact adipose fin, and are required to use single-point barbless hooks beginning Dec. 1.

Thiesfeld said anglers have been averaging about one blackmouth for every five rods in marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) and 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner), where selective fisheries for hatchery chinook run through April. Anglers in those two marine areas have a two-salmon daily limit, and can keep up to two hatchery chinook per day.

Time is running out for anglers to hook blackmouth in Marine Area 9 (Admiralty Inlet), said Thiesfeld. The salmon fishery in that area closes Dec. 1. Until then, anglers can keep one chinook as part of a two-salmon daily limit.

While out on the Sound, why not drop a pot? Marine areas 4 (Neah Bay), 5 (Sekiu), 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca), 9, 10, 11 (Tacoma/Vashon), 12 (Hood Canal) and 13 (south Puget Sound) are open to sport **crabbing** seven days a week through Jan. 2. However, crabbing is closed in marine areas 7 (San Juan Islands), 8-1 and 8-2.

The daily catch limit in Puget Sound is five Dungeness crab, males only, in hard-shell condition with a minimum carapace width of 6¼ inches. In addition, fishers may catch six red rock crab of either sex per day, provided those crab measure at least 5 inches across. Additional information is available on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/crab/index.htm>.

In the rivers, **chum** fishing has been slow throughout the region, but anglers are beginning to reel in some hatchery **steelhead**. "They've caught a few on the Cascade River and a few on the Skagit River," said Brett Barkdull, another WDFW biologist. "I expect fishing will pick up once we get some more rain." Anglers on the Skykomish and Snoqualmie rivers have also hooked some nice steelhead, according to recent reports.

**Rainbow trout** are also an option for anglers. About 3,000 hatchery rainbow trout – averaging approximately 3 to 5 pounds each – were released into Beaver Lake near Issaquah in mid-November. Beaver Lake, one of several westside lowland lakes open to fishing year-round, is best fished by small boat, although anglers can also be successful fishing from shore. The daily bag limit is five fish, and bait anglers must keep the first five trout they catch.

Before heading out, anglers should check the rules and regulations for all freshwater and saltwater fisheries in WDFW's *Fishing in Washington* pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

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

Weather permitting, anglers will have some good opportunities to catch winter **steelhead, coho, chum** and **blackmouth** in the days ahead. Meanwhile, a **razor clam** dig is scheduled to open later in December.

Winter **steelhead** are making their return to Olympic Peninsula rivers where anglers are catching early hatchery arrivals in the Humptulips River in western Grays Harbor County and the Bogachiel River in the Quillayute system. "With the recent rains bringing in the fish and the rivers dropping down, people have been catching some nice steelhead," said David Low, WDFW fish biologist. The Bogachiel typically gets early returning hatchery fish the first few weeks in December, followed by the Hoh and Sol Duc, Low said. "Then the wild steelhead start to show up January." Although it's still early, WDFW biologists are foreseeing an average season in terms of returning fish, said Low. "It's looking like a typical return for most rivers and if last year's any indication it should be decent fishing." Then again, success depends on the weather. "This is especially true on the Olympic Peninsula where rivers can easily go out of shape when storms come through," he said.

Low recommends anglers review the steelhead-fishing rules outlined in the *Fishing in Washington* pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

While several area rivers will close to salmon fishing Nov. 30, others will remain open to anglers looking for some late-run **coho**. Anglers may continue to retain wild coho on the Satsop, Wishkah and Wynoochee rivers as well as a portion of the Chehalis River (from the Hwy 101 Bridge in Aberdeen to the Porter Bridge). Before heading out, anglers should check the Errata sheet, which contains corrections to the *Fishing in Washington* pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>). The Elk, Hoquiam, Johns and Skookumchuck rivers will close Nov. 30.

Meanwhile, anglers trolling the waters around Point Defiance in recent days have been catching a fair number of **blackmouth**, said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. "Although the effort's been low, the fish are there," he said. "If folks get out, they should be able to take home a fish." Over the Nov. 24 weekend, anglers were averaging about one fish per rod. The daily limit is two salmon; one chinook may be retained.

Although salmon fishing closes at many popular **chum** sites such as Kennedy Creek and McClane Creek on Nov. 30, the Nisqually River offers a late-run season for wild chum, said Thiesfeld. "For those who want to catch some fish throughout December, it's the only game in town."

The next **razor-clam** dig is tentatively scheduled Dec. 21-22 on evening tides at Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis and Mocrecks. One more evening dig is planned Dec. 23 at Twin Harbors only. Kalaloch Beach will remain closed throughout the 2007-08 season. Evening low tides during the dig are 4:12 p.m. Friday, Dec. 21 (-0.4 ft.), 5:06 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 22 (-0.9 ft.), 5:58 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 23 (-1.2 ft.).

Harvesters are allowed to take no more than 15 razor clams and must keep the first 15 they dig, regardless of size or condition. Each digger's clams must be kept in a separate container. A license is required for anyone age 15 or older. Any 2007 annual shellfish/seaweed license or combination license is still valid.

### **Southwest Washington:**

Anglers fishing several tributaries to the lower Columbia River are still catching good numbers of late-stock hatchery **coho salmon** while waiting for **winter steelhead** to arrive. Some of the best fishing has been on the Cowlitz River near the barrier dam, where 32 bank anglers caught 12 coho during Thanksgiving weekend.

Hatchery steelhead should start showing up in the catch on the Cowlitz and other area rivers shortly, said Joe Hymer, WDFW fish biologist.

"Depending on weather conditions, the winter steelhead fishery should start revving up sometime in mid-December," Hymer said. "Heavy rain could bring them in sooner, but we should definitely start seeing some action by the middle of the month."

All or part of several Columbia River tributaries – including the Cowlitz, Lewis, Kalama, Elochoman, Grays, Coweeman, and Washougal rivers and Salmon Creek (Clark Co.) – are currently open to retention of two hatchery steelhead per day. Blue and Mill creeks in Lewis County will open to hatchery steelhead fishing Dec. 1. Blue Creek also opens for retention of hatchery **sea-run cutthroat** that day.

As in past years, all wild steelhead with an intact adipose fin must be released unharmed. For additional regulations applicable to specific rivers, anglers are advised to check the *Fishing in Washington* rule pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

Since hatchery steelhead planted last spring will make up most of this year's catch, Hymer suggests reviewing WDFW's 2006 smolt stocking report to gauge fishing prospects for various rivers. That report, posted at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/harvest/harvest.htm> on the department's website, "isn't a surefire guide to successful fishing but does provide an indication of how many smolts were planted in each river," Hymer said.

Until winter steelhead make their move in mid-December, the late-run hatchery coho fishery may be the best bet in the lower Columbia River Basin, Hymer said. In addition to the Cowlitz River, the North Fork Lewis River has also been yielding decent catches of hatchery coho. Hymer reminds anglers that they must continue to release fall chinook on the Lewis River, where spawning ground surveys indicate the escapement goal will not likely be met this year. He also notes that the adult hatchery coho catch limit on the Cowlitz River – and portions of the Cispus and Tilton rivers – is six fish per day. "We want people to catch those fish, because that's why we raised them," he said.

During the week ending Nov. 24, Tacoma Power recovered 1,754 coho salmon adults, 60 coho jacks, 14 fall chinook adults, 70 summer-run steelhead and 29 winter-run steelhead salmon at the Cowlitz Salmon Hatchery separator during six days of operations. Tacoma Power employees then released 218 adult coho into Lake Scanewa at the Day Use Site; 132 adult coho into the Cispus River above the mouth of Yellow Jacket Creek; 269 adult coho into the upper Cowlitz River in Packwood; and 162 adult coho and 81 fall chinook adults into the Tilton River in Morton.

Meanwhile, **sturgeon** fishing has continued to slow on the lower Columbia River, where water temperatures have dropped to around 50 degrees. During the week ending Nov. 27, no catch

was observed among boat anglers fishing from the Wauna powerlines to Bonneville Dam, where the retention fishery is scheduled to remain open daily through Dec. 31. In the gorge, 157 bank anglers landed seven legal-sized white sturgeon the last half of November.

### **Eastern Washington:**

Four winter-only **rainbow trout** fishing lakes open Dec. 1 in the region and at least two of them will provide good opportunities this season. Fourth of July Lake, on the Lincoln-Adams county line, has lots of rainbows over 14 inches. WDFW District Fish Biologist Chris Donley said that as many as 70 percent of the fish there are over 14 inches, which means a fishing trip to Fourth of July may be short. The lake has a five trout daily catch limit, but only two of the five can be over 14 inches.

Hog Canyon Lake, in southwest Spokane County, is under the same catch regulations, but there should be lots of five-fish limits caught there, Donley said. Hog Canyon has more fish overall, and many more under 14 inches. "Whether these two lakes will be completely iced up on the opener is the big question," Donley said. "We don't monitor or measure that, so anglers need to just be prepared for all kinds of winter conditions."

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

Fishing for rainbow and **brown trout** at year-round Rock Lake in Whitman County has been good. Lake Roosevelt rainbows are also biting well now, especially from Seven Bays up to near Grand Coulee Dam.

Snake River **steelheading** has slowed somewhat, said Joe Bumgarner, WDFW fish biologist. "Some steelheaders are wondering where the fish are, and some seem to think they've moved upstream earlier this year, perhaps because of our relatively warmer fall," he said. Throughout the Snake system, anglers are averaging about 16 hours of fishing per steelhead. The best catch rates were about nine hours per fish in the mid-Snake section above the interstate bridge and 13.6 hours per steelhead in the section between Lower Monumental and Little Goose dams. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's (ODFW) recent creel checks on the Lower Grand Ronde River, on either side of the state line, show 15-20 hours of effort per steelhead. Bumgarner said the lower Grand Ronde near the mouth is catch-and-release fishing only, so catch rates can't be measured easily. For the full creel survey, see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/snake/index.htm>.

### **North Central Washington:**

Although **steelhead** anglers are still having some success on the Methow, Okanogan, Similkameen, and mainstem Columbia rivers, recent colder water temperatures have resulted in reduced catch rates, reported Bob Jateff, WDFW district fish biologist.

"Fishers on the Okanogan and Similkameen rivers are using mostly spoons," Jateff said. "Methow River anglers are using flies and jigs, with black and purple the most popular color choices, and on the mainstem Columbia from Wells Dam to Chief Joseph Dam, success has been good at times with jigs rigged with a whole shrimp." Jateff reminds anglers that the mainstem Columbia allows the use of standard gear and bait, but the Okanogan, Similkameen, and Methow rivers are under selective gear rules.

**Whitefish** season opens Dec. 1 on the Methow and Similkameen rivers, and the same sections

that are closed to steelhead fishing are also closed to whitefish fishing. On the Methow River, all fishing is closed from the second powerline crossing upstream to the first Hwy 153 Bridge. On the Similkameen River, all fishing is closed from the Railroad Trestle Bridge upstream to Enloe Dam. Anglers can see the complete steelhead emergency rule change at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>.

Jateff reminds whitefish anglers fishing in areas also open to steelhead that selective gear rules must be followed and bait is not allowed.

The four-month season for **whitefish** also opens Dec. 1 on portions of the Chewuch, Entiat and Wenatchee rivers and Sinlahekin Creek. The daily catch limit is 15 fish using the standard whitefish gear rule — one single-point hook, size 14 or smaller (no more than 3/16-inch from point to shank). The gear rule is designed to minimize the chances of catching other gamefish, which are not legal to harvest at this time.

Dec. 1 also marks the shift to a catch-and-keep season with standard fishing gear on four Okanogan County lakes – Little Twin near Winthrop, Big and Little Green near Omak, and Rat near Brewster. Jateff said all four lakes should provide good fishing through the winter for **rainbow trout**. The daily catch limit is five fish and bait is allowed.

Fishing at Rufus Woods Lake, the Columbia River reservoir on the Okanogan-Douglas County line east of Bridgeport, continues to be good and anglers are catching limits of two- to four-pound **triploid rainbow trout**. Jateff reminds anglers that the daily catch limit at Rufus Woods is two fish, and when using bait the first two fish caught are part of the daily limit whether kept or released.

Jim Brown, WDFW enforcement sergeant, noted that officers are finding several catch-limit violations and bait-caught fish “sorting” at Rufus Woods.

### **South Central Washington:**

The region’s only designated winter-season **rainbow trout** fishing lake — North Elton Pond, a 15-acre lake near Selah in Yakima County — will open Dec. 1. The pond will be stocked with 2,000 half-pound rainbow trout just before the opener, said Eric Anderson, WDFW district fish biologist. He reminds anglers the daily catch limit is two trout and internal combustion motors on boats are prohibited. The pond is open to fishing through March 31.

Anderson also said there may not be any excess rainbow trout broodstock from WDFW’s Goldendale Hatchery to stock the many year-round fishing lakes in Yakima and Kittitas County this year. “At this point all the fish we have are needed in the hatchery and we may not know until January if we have excess brood fish,” he said. “Transporting those fish over Satus Pass into the Yakima Valley may not be practical due to weather or iced-over lakes. In the past we’ve stocked 600-700 five- to ten-pound rainbow broodstock in this area in early December, so I’m sure we’ll get lots of phone calls from anglers wondering where the big fish are this year.”

Whitefish season opens on the Bumping, Naches and Tieton rivers on Dec. 1. The Yakima River above Roza Dam also opens for whitefish on Dec.1, but remains catch-and-release with selective gear rules for trout. The Yakima River is open year-round below Roza Dam, with the exception of a short reach below the dam, which opens Dec. 1.

On the Columbia River, which is open year-round, the Vernita Bridge to Priest Rapids Dam reach should also provide some good whitefish fishing, but that reach is closed for salmon and steelhead, said Jim Cummins, WDFW fish biologist. The daily whitefish catch limit is 15 fish using the standard whitefish gear rule — one single-point hook, size 14 or smaller (no more than 3/16-

inch from point to shank). The gear rule is designed to minimize the chances of catching other gamefish, which are not legal to harvest at this time. Anglers should check the fishing rules pamphlet for all details.

### **Reader Email -**

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

Write to the TGF staff:

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### **Random Links**

Physical education teachers encouraged to apply for fishing and boating grants:

**<http://www.rbff.org/page.cfm?PageID=5&NewsID=211>**

**Weekly Quote** – "There is no use in your driving 200 miles to fish when you can be just as unsuccessful near home." - Mark Twain

**GOOD LUCK!**