

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **December 7th – December 13th 2007**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

We've upped our ante! It's an all out salmon roe blow out! With only 3 weekends to choose from (January 12/13, January 19/20 and January 26/27- we have some weekdays to choose from as well), book any 2 nights at the Guide's Guest House in Bay City and we'll give you 6 jars of professionally cured Tillamook Bay fall chinook roe! Book one night, and we'll give you 2 jars! This is the perfect place to plan your winter steelheading trip, sturgeon trip or winter crabbing trip from. It's the finest fisherman's accommodations for the price in Tillamook County! Call or email Bob or Nancy at (503) 377-9696 or email brees@pacifier.com today!

Willamette Valley/Metro- The winter sturgeon fishery in the gorge remained inaccessible during the inclement weather but warmer temperatures may improve the bite slightly. Smelt and shrimp will be the best offering. With the stabilizing weather pattern, the stretch from the mouth of the Willamette to the mouth of the Cowlitz should also improve this week.

The tropical storm which hammered the area early this week has raised water temperatures which were dropping to near 40 degrees late last week. The impact to the lower Willamette sturgeon fishery is a recent improvement. With temperatures remaining somewhat stable, the fishery is likely to continue improving this week. Winter steelhead were caught at Meldrum Bar before the storm passed.

Waters of the North Santiam are high and muddy. It won't fish this week.

A few Eagle Creek stock winter steelhead have entered the Clackamas although the deluge has the water up and roiled. At 24.5 last week, it is predicted to drop from high mid-week levels to 28 feet at Oregon City by the weekend.

The Sandy is not fishable following the torrential rain. Once the river falls into a fishable state, the winter steelhead fishery will be underway. Like the Clackamas, the bulk of the winter steelhead are later returning broodstock or native run although steelhead have already been caught prior to the storm.

Blue-winged olives (a typical winter pattern) will be effective for trout on the McKenzie when it drops back into shape.

Junction City Pond is scheduled to be stocked with 12-inch trout. West Salish Pond was planted with brood trout last week.

Northwest – Northwest Oregon rivers were just falling below flood level late Tuesday and will likely be fishable again by the weekend. For fall chinook, most area rivers are done but the Wilson will likely hold another late shot of quality chinook destined for the Little North Fork of the Wilson when the river recedes.

The Kilchis also typically receives a December run of chinook but if the November run on this river is any indication, anglers shouldn't expect much. This river will clear before any other in Tillamook County. It could fish as early as Thursday.

Winter steelhead have been caught on the Kilchis, Nestucca, Wilson and North Fork of the Nehalem

Rivers. A mix of both Alsea stock and broodstock steelhead were retained. For anglers specifically seeking early returning steelhead, the Necanicum, North Fork Nehalem, Three Rivers, Kilchis, Wilson and Nestucca Rivers in that order, should produce light catches well into the weekend.

Drift clusters of eggs or sand shrimp in higher flows and pull plugs as the rivers drop and fish begin to hold. Chinook are also likely to be found in the tailouts in higher flows and likely to take backrolled plugs. Wild coho will also be present, are likely to be mis-identified as steelhead or small chinook and must be released unharmed. Male chinook will make the best tablefare as hens, even though they may be bright, often have pale flesh as they are so close to the end of the spawning season.

Record setting winds and heavy precipitation have toppled scores of trees along our riverbanks. Driftboaters must exercise extreme caution when drifting. The smaller streams will have accumulated the most obstacles but no river is immune to hazards of navigation. It will be a critical week to wear lifevests.

Bay crabbing is shot in most estuaries but Tillamook and Nehalem Bay sturgeon fishing may be worth a try. Sturgeon were observed in Tillamook Bay at the end of November and with most crabs back at sea, the action could pick up. Softer minus tides in the late afternoon make for ideal conditions for those using sand shrimp. Debris from the recent flood however may hinder success.

Southwest – Heavy rain is likely to have chased Dungeness out of local estuaries. While the ocean is open and forecast to lie down in the coming weekend, winds may prevent crossing of bars. A series of mild minus tides late in the day is predicted for Saturday and Sunday.

Angers hoping for warm rain to improve coho and steelhead fishing on the North Umpqua got it in spades. There should be fish available when levels drop.

The Elk will drop rapidly, as usual, and will provide a decent prospect for chinook to anglers who time it right.

The Rogue was heading for the nine-foot level and over 19,000 cfs at Agness on Tuesday this week. It'll be a while before this river will fish but fresh steelhead are coming in.

At Brookings, the Chetco topped 21,000 cfs and nearly 15 feet earlier this week but was dropping and should be fishable by the weekend. It remains to be seen if any of those late chinook which showed last weekend will remain but there will be winter steelhead available.

Eastern – As steelhead are settling into their winter holding pattern and with little effect from the storm, fishing has shown some improvement on the lower Deschutes.

Crooked River fly fishers are taking a mix of trout and whitefish in cold-weather conditions.

SW Washington – Early returns of winter steelhead to the Cowlitz hatchery are significantly down while Lewis River returns are significantly up from last year. Catch has been minimal but when rivers return to normal levels, steelhead should be available most these rivers along with the Elocoman, Washougal and Kalama.

The coho run is over on these streams with returns slightly down at most facilities.

Columbia River Fishing Report – Effort was understandably light this weekend and early this week with the weather likely to blame for the lack of interest. Besides the foul weather, anglers are quickly understanding that the time to target sturgeon in the gorge is quickly coming to an end. What little effort there was, resulted in poor catches- particularly in the gorge.

Downriver, effort was a little higher despite the bad weather and effort will continue to build in this section. Catch however still remained poor as only 19 shakers were released for 10 boats in the Portland to Longview stretch.

Steelheaders in the John Day Pool are also beginning to lose interest but if the weather stabilizes, it may pick up in effort. Catch in this section is also beginning to wane.

Crabbing in the lower Columbia will likely begin to taper since commercial crabbers put their pots in the lower river prior to Saturday's opener. And with the ocean weather being the way it is, the lower river is likely a popular place for a commercial pot to be. There weren't a lot of commercial keepers out of Hammond as most were just a little larger than sport legal. This may make the area still productive for sport crabbers although another string of stronger tides is due this weekend. High, strong morning incoming tides and a minus outgoing tide in the afternoon are not the ideal conditions to be working crab gear here.

The Guide's Forecast – This is another week not to have high expectations for Columbia River sturgeon. Even though temperatures and weather is expected to moderate, keepers have been culled and water temperatures remain low right now. Slight rises in river temperatures may stimulate some activity but overall, the fishing will be fair at best. The better section will be from the mouth of the Willamette River to the exit (including the Multnomah Channel) to the slough near St. Helens.

Steelheaders working the John Day area should also expect slowing of the fishery. Dam counts are beginning to slide and fish are entering tributaries in larger numbers preparing to over-winter for the season.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Since the storm which hit the Northwest earlier this week was of tropical origin, it appears to have raised the water temperature of the Willamette which had been on a downward spiral heading for 40 degrees in late November. The data for the Falls has not been updated, but warmer water in the lower river will have a positive effect on sturgeon fishing as will high, muddy water.

Plunkers experienced some productive days on Meldrum Bar for winter steelhead before the water came up.

A discussion is underway with regard to the spring Chinook run of 2008. Depressed runs on the Willamette may cause angling restrictions to be put in place and if the projected run is number is very low, springer fishing may not be allowed at all next year in the Willamette. The date set for release of the run projections is on or about December 11th, 2007.

On the other hand, the record numbers of jacks having crossed Bonneville this year is an indicator that the 2008 spring Chinook run on the Willamette will be a barn-burner.

The Guide's Forecast – To say the Willamette River is high and muddy is a gross understatement. The water is way up and the current is very swift. Debris in the form of motor home-sized logs, trees and other debris are moving with remarkable - and dangerous - speed. It may be safe by the weekend, but stay clear until then and investigate from the bank before launching.

As soon as the river is safe, sturgeon fishing should be good. You don't want to be on anchor when a log comes downstream from above your boat. At the rate the water's moving, it wouldn't be pretty.

Plunking on the lower Willamette is likely to be worthwhile as soon as the water clears, even while it's still a little high. Steelhead will hug the bank in high water so watch the old hands and don't cast over the fish. Speaking of the old hands, for those new to this type of fishing, say hello to these guys; they're happy to steer a newbie in the right direction.

Waters of the North and South Santiam rivers will be too high and swift to fish this week.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – While action for summer steelhead has slowed on the Clackamas, a few early winters have been taken thanks to freshets this year. As the river drops and clears, anglers may expect numbers of winter steelhead to improve although this fishery won't really get underway until late December into January. Eagle Creek holds only a few dark coho.

With a broodstock program having fully supplanted hatchery steelhead plantings on the Sandy River, the run timing here is similar to that of the wild stocks. Expect to see increasing numbers of winter steelhead through December with worthwhile fishing in January and February. The early fish taken here so far this year have been of native origin. Water here remains muddy from the recent rainfall, anyway.

North Coast Fishing Report – Well, this will be an easy section to write. Shoulda' been here Sunday.....Believe it or not, Tillamook County is still here. The wind damage likely far exceeds the water damage but both played an integral part of a small natural disaster here on the coast. So, with not much to write on recent fishing excursions, I guess old news is better than no news at all. Prior to the storm, fishing was fair for chinook and the first few winter steelhead of the season in area streams. The lower Wilson produced some fair catches of chinook in the stretch from Sollie Smith Bridge to Highway 101 and bright chinook were still being taken in the Ghost Hole and west channel of Tillamook Bay.

Some of the season's first catches of winter steelhead were reported on the lower Wilson, Nestucca, North Fork Nehalem and although steelhead weren't reported "caught" on the Necanicum, they were certainly spotted in the tail-outs of this low water north coast stream late last week. The season is certainly underway.

That's about all we have for pertinent news for last weeks fishing! How about we spend more time on what to expect this week.

The Guide's Forecast – If there is one thing that folks should have foremost on their mind if they plan on fishing in the near future, it's to be overly cautious of river conditions, sweepers and new hazards to navigation. It's a dangerous week to be fishing after what happened to us here in Tillamook County early in the week. Who knows how many trees are down along compromised river banks and slides certainly contributed more wood debris to our rivers and streams. If there was any time to be wearing a lifejacket, that would be this week! Please be safe!

If it's chinook you want, you'll want to focus your efforts on the Wilson River. The Kilchis will fish first and likely, the water conditions will be ideal late Thursday or certainly by Friday. The problem is, the fish have been absent on the Kilchis all season! Most people are remembering back to the massive landslide of 2003 up a large tributary to the Kilchis when silt suffocated miles and miles of chinook and chum eggs that were incubating in the gravel at that time. It could be a few years of poor returns on the Kilchis before we see better times. None-the-less, there should be chinook present in

the river over the weekend and a few early returning hatchery steelhead to boot.

The Wilson will likely be the better bet and barring any major slides on the Wilson, it should fish by as early as Saturday. The lower stretches will produce the best results with Sollie Smith downstream to highway 101 one of the better bets. Driftboaters working the Mills Bridge to Sollie Smith run should also do well as a good deal of the fish returning this time of year are destined for the Little North Fork of the Wilson River. Now that you know which rivers to fish for chinook, where will the fish be holding?

In higher flows, the water would still be a bit off color or still so green that you can't see more than 14 inches below the surface, fish will be well distributed throughout the river system. Fish will also be holding in several different water types. Most biters will still be seeking the path of least resistance with edges of currents and tailouts good spots to ambush fish. In these conditions, anchoring is not a bad strategy (although this is something I don't necessarily advocate for, if you are going to do it, it shouldn't be on water that other people are likely to fish). And that's the beauty of fishing in conditions like these; fish are likely to be so well distributed, that they will be in areas where anglers aren't so likely to fish. On the Wilson, these conditions are likely to exhibit themselves on Friday or Saturday this week. On the Kilchis, it will be Thursday and Friday. Now with several different species present in these streams, you may wish to pick gear that is likely to take both species (chinook and hatchery steelhead) that you are allowed to right now. Plugs work effectively for both chinook and steelhead in the tailouts in these higher flows. Backbounced or backrolled eggs are also very effective. Larger baits will often take larger fish but smaller baits will work on both species.

When the waters drop, just a day or two later than the prescribed days above, the fish will begin to hold more in what anglers deem "traditional" water. Steelhead will begin residing in shallower, broken surfaced water and on the sides of the heavier flowing drifts. Chinook on the other hand, will begin holding in the deeper, slower eddy's and slots and are more susceptible to backbounced plugs or eggs. Only in the early morning will you find them in shallower water- they will be on the move for just the first 30 minutes of sunrise.

It should be a good weekend for salmon fishing and fair for steelhead. With the weather forecast, it may be a busy one but maybe most anglers are ready to start their Christmas shopping.

Sturgeon fishers may have a shot of some fish in the Tillamook or Nehalem estuaries. Sturgeon have been seen in Tillamook Bay- particularly the west channel. No confirmed catches have taken place lately but with an afternoon minus tide and a good flushing of freshwater that should exit the crab to the ocean, prospects are good. Use sand shrimp and start off shallow near the edges of the channels, working your way deeper as the tide gets close to low slack.

Crabbing should be poor on all coastal estuaries except Netarts Bay. The boat ramp at Netarts may be cleared of debris and usable by Saturday, but electricity may not be available until next week. The ocean would be good if it ever calms down. The weather buoy that most NW Oregon anglers check has broken free in the last storm (can you believe that?) and likely won't be replaced anytime soon. The ocean swell and wind wave forecast doesn't look favorable until Sunday. If that prediction holds true, it could be a pleasant day to crab offshore! I hope at this point there is no need for me to reiterate caution, but USE CAUTION. It is rarely a friendly sea this time of year and even if it is, there are ALWAYS sneaker waves that can get you!

Central & South Coast Reports – A discussion of fishing following a flood event is, for the most part, academic. All that can be written is the way it was before the torrential rains and guess at what will be worthwhile when the water recedes.

As this report is being written on December 6th, many areas are just recovering from what emerged as a devastating catastrophe for people some areas. It's challenging to write about a leisure activity under these circumstances, but it's our responsibility to do so.

Bottom fishing and ocean crabbing are generally excellent in winter months when conditions allow safe crossing into the Big Pond. It may be possible this weekend with conditions looking best on Sunday, but err on the side of caution and wear those PFDs.

The Alsea and Siletz Rivers were over their banks on Monday, December 3rd, but levels are falling rapidly this week. Anglers hope for winter steel when these rivers are back in shape.

Crabbing had been better inside Alsea Bay than at Yaquina recently. Now that the storm has passed, boaters may take advantage of an open ocean season when the weather permits bar crossings.

Fishing for coho and late summer steelhead should improve when water levels cooperate in the North Umpqua thanks to the warming influence of the tropical storm. The South Umpqua opened December 1st but no reports have come in as yet.

Water level of the Coquille River has been dropping more rapidly than expected. Both the Coos and Coquille should fish for fresh winter steelhead this weekend.

Anglers started successfully fishing the Elk River Wednesday this week with the level at five feet and green. The Sixes River was still running muddy at that time. The Elk and Sixes will be worthwhile destinations and should produce through the weekend. The Elk gets a late run of Chinook and also has winter steelhead entering. As of Thursday morning this week, the water level was 4.9.

The Elk River Ocean Terminal Fall Chinook Salmon Fishery from Humbug Mountain to Cape Blanco out three miles, is open until December 15th and is the only ocean salmon fishery off the Oregon coast at this time.

The Rogue at Agness remains over nine feet at Agness as of Thursday this week but is dropping slowly. Steelheading is slow. With flows at 3,000 cfs in the Grants Pass stretch, fishing is fair to good for a mixed bag of steelhead, coho and Chinook. Action picked up this week on the upper Rogue with anglers taking coho and steelhead.

Chetco levels were just over six feet and running 5,800 cfs as of today (December 6th). With a late Chinook run and winter steelhead entering, plunkers are starting picking up some fish. Drift boaters should start seeing action by the weekend with flow in the 4,000 cfs range. Before the storm hit, hatchery steelhead to 20 pounds were caught here.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Pressure has been light on the Deschutes although steelhead catches from Sherars Falls to the mouth have been decent. Steelheaders are taking a few 'B' run fish now. Trout fishing has been fair for fly anglers throwing nymphs.

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report November 28th – December 11th, 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 Mocrocks. 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:

Bob Rees: brees@pacifier.com

Doug Rees: doug@TheGuidesForecast.com

Michael Teague: Michael@TheGuidesForecast.com

Random Links

Trout back in Diamond Lake after tui chub poisoning:

http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/O/OR_DIAMOND_LAKE_TROUT_OROL-?SITE=ORBEN&SECTION=STATE&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT

More here:

<http://www.mailtribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071206/LIFE/712060311/-1/LIFE1302>

ODFW seeks public input on development of 2009 Oregon Sport Fishing Regulations. Info packer here:

http://www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/fishing/docs/2009_Public_Process_Packet_w_ODFW_proposals_12-3-07_final_draft_2_.pdf

Weekly Quote – "A young environmental engineer I met once, who was wise beyond her years, said 'the solution to pollution is dilution' and she is right, especially with fisherman. Dilute the number of fisherman on any stretch of water and they all do better. Dilute the catch limits and they also always do better." - Warner Durocher

GOOD LUCK!