

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **December 14<sup>th</sup> – December 20<sup>th</sup> 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 Bob or Nancy at (503) 377-9696 or email [brees@pacifier.com](mailto:brees@pacifier.com) today!

**Willamette Valley/Metro-** Willamette water temperatures rose with the tropical storm early this month but cold weather is causing the temps to drop again. Water visibility remains less than one foot. Sturgeon fishing is slow for keepers, good for shakers.

The forecast for Willamette spring chinook in 2008 was released this week and is a disappointing 29,000 hatchery fish. Managers will be discussing season options but with only about 6,000 harvestable fish, a compromise in the Columbia fishery below I-5 or the Willamette itself is likely.

From Portland to Bonneville Dam, sturgeon fishing was poor. With dropping temperatures, sturgeon success will continue to drop. Anglers are hopeful that a winter smelt run will stimulate the bite but another poor return is predicted which will restrict sport dippers in pursuit of the favored sturgeon bait.

The Clackamas turned green over the past weekend and is now quite fishable. A few winter steelhead are trickling in but numbers will be low until mid-January.

The water at the Sandy River has cleared but sand has once again become problematic. When the Sandy River opens on the first of January, 2008, the new deadline will be at Salmon River. There will be no bait or lure restrictions.

**Pro guide Brandon Glass (503-260-8285)** wrote to say that the Clackamas is probably a better bet than the Sandy this early in the season.

Water at the North Santiam is running too high to fish and will remain that way due to snowmelt and the reduction of the water level at Detroit.

Trout fishing is slow to fair on the McKenzie, but the reward is fat, feisty fish to 20 inches.

Walling Pond and Walter Wirth Lake are scheduled to be planted with catchable-sized and larger rainbows.

**Northwest –** Following last weeks devastating storm, rivers are now starting to recover but options are limited due to damage inflicted by high winds and saturated river banks.

The bridge to the put-in at the largest Sitka Spruce tree on the Necanicum River is compromised and the road is closed. Portland angler John Weed reported that section of the river "looked like an air raid took place", referencing the large number of downed trees blocking safe boat passage on this north coast favorite. His crew picked up two fresh steelhead in the downstream stretch

from Johnson's gravel pit to the take out at the Relief Pitcher. They were driftfishing roe.

The North Fork Nehalem is reported as poor for steelhead. Sweeper logs are reported across the upper drift from the hatchery to the county line. A sweeper log took the life of Jim Erickson in this same stretch almost a year ago.

End-of-season chinook hopefuls are still waiting for the Wilson to clear from numerous slides still silting the river. It is on the mend but by the time it clears, the river will likely be too low to fish with any success. With few steelhead present and well scattered, anglers will find it challenging to find fish. The winter broodstock collection is underway but to participate, you have to register with STEP biologist Tracy Crews at (503) 842-2741 in the Tillamook office.

The Kilchis River, another December favorite for chinook, yielded poor results last week as it cleared quickly. Steelhead were reported in the tailouts of the upper drift.

The Trask River still has a remnant winter chinook run but like most area streams, it too was affected by the recent storm. A large log jam prevents passage at the railroad bridge about 1.5 miles above the highway 101 takeout.

Steelhead were reported in Three Rivers and the Nestucca was on the mend and is currently fishable. Catches are expected to be light.

**Pro guide Bill Kremers (541-754-6411)** fished the Alsea on Monday, catching jack salmon and coho but no steelhead, On Tuesday, he took one 12-pound steelhead on the Siletz.

The ocean allowed recreational boats to cross the bar out of Newport Sunday and Monday this week where anglers scored rockfish and lingcod and enjoyed good crabbing.

The Alsea and Siuslaw Rivers have cleared of debris and should have a few winter steelhead present. These rivers will be low and clear by the weekend.

**Southwest** – Wind and wave action is forecast to prevent recreational boaters from crossing into the ocean this weekend.

The Umpqua was at good level and color at mid-week. Fishing this weekend should be worthwhile for steelhead and coho.

Coos anglers have hooked chinook and coho over the past week but failed to locate and find fresh winter steelhead.

Anglers on the Elk and Sixes have done well for chinook over the past week but action is slowing as these rivers are getting skinny. The Elk is at the four-foot level this week.

With the Rogue River back in shape, anglers should find fresh winter steelhead around Agness.

The Chetco had fallen below four feet and was running at 2,200 cfs at Brookings on Tuesday. Fresh, bright winter steelhead are available, but fishing has become challenging in the low, clear water.

**Eastern** – Deschutes anglers should expect to fish higher flows through the remainder of the steelhead season but braving the cold may be worthwhile with B-run fish in the river now.

**SW Washington –** The Cowlitz and Lewis Rivers are about the only options for hatchery steelhead in the district. Cowlitz River anglers stand the best chance with peak catches happening into early January.

Although too early for smelt, dippers are likely to have a 10-pound limit this season on the Cowlitz River. Managers design smelt and sturgeon fisheries at the compact hearing today in Longview.

**Columbia River Fishing Report –** Sturgeon effort is dwindling on the lower Columbia as anglers were not motivated by high water levels and cooling air and water temperatures. Creel checks indicated fair fishing for shaker sturgeon but no keepers were tallied in the boat or bank fisheries.

With moderating weather conditions, a good steelhead check took place in the John Day Pool over the weekend. Weekly checking showed 18 adipose fin-clipped summer steelhead kept plus 16 unclipped summer steelhead released for 25 boats and no catch for five bank rods. I actually thought this fishery was winding up for the year but I believe the jump in catches were likely due to the post storm weather that increased air temperatures and got fish on the move. A good week to be a steelheader in this section but colder temperatures have since settled back in and the bite should cool as well.

Seasons are still far away from being set but bi-state fishery managers are weighing in their options. With only about 6,000 harvestable Willamette fish to work with, managers will have to decide whether they want to prosecute a full Willamette River season (7 day/week) or possibly a more limited season with some opportunity in the mainstem of the Columbia below the traditional I-5 cut-off. Regardless, gillnets will not be fishing downstream of the I-5 bridge this season due to the exceptionally low hatchery return to the Willamette River.

The meeting for this decision will take place at 10 a.m. Thursday Jan. 24, 2008 at the Water Resource Education Center located at 4600 SE Columbia Way in Vancouver, Washington.

**The Guide's Forecast –** Sturgeon fishing should continue to be unproductive for keepers throughout the lower river. The Multnomah Channel and the Willamette itself are likely to be some of the better bets for keepers in the coming months.

Steelheaders should expect a slight slowing of their fishery this week although fish should still be available until the end of the month. Trolled plugs will effectively take fish in the mainstem and fishing in the John Day itself should remain somewhat stable throughout the rest of the year.

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report –** Sturgeon retention will be allowed seven days a week through the end of the year. Fishing has been fair to good although the vast majority of fish landed have been too small to keep. Sand shrimp seems to be the top bait but squid and smelt are also getting bit. The river above the St. Johns Bridge is getting the most attention with sturgeon in shallower water that when the river is clearer. Visibility remains less than one foot. The debris situation has improved with none of the large logs and trees, which were menacing boaters immediately following the storm. It's still a good idea to keep an eye upstream, though.

Steelheaders have encountered a few winters below Leaburg Dam on the McKenzie.

**The Guide's Forecast –** Steelheaders will once again be plunking from Meldrum Bar when it

reappears as the water level drops. Once conditions improve, the area will produce winter steelhead daily. Move around the lower Willamette above St. Johns to locate larger sturgeon. They tend to group by size. Anglers are wise to carry a variety of baits but be sure to include sand shrimp.

Numbers of winter steelhead will improve on the McKenzie as the season progresses although this river receives only a modest run.

With Detroit Reservoir above the North Santiam and Green Peter above the South Santiam requiring water release for these impoundments to serve as flood control, the entire system will be too high to fish well for weeks to come. The winter steelhead fishery here is all catch and release as only wild fish are available.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports** – The occasional summer steelhead has been hooked near McIver but with numbers thinning and fish getting long in the tooth, this isn't an active fishery. Anglers are seeking winters now, but it's still early to anticipate decent fishing. Steelheaders have taken a few winter fish out of Eagle Creek but numbers are low this early in the run.

**Pro guide Brandon Glass (503-260-8285)** adds this, "The Sandy River is still coming around, but I figure that any day now there should be a few starting to show up. The effort is slow, but it still early. I hear the Clackamas has a few I'm going to try there tomorrow."

The winter steelhead fishery on the Sandy may be worthwhile as early as mid-January. Although a few early fish will be entering in December, numbers will be too low to offer an appealing fishery. The water at the Sandy River has cleared but sand has once again become problematic. When the Sandy River opens on the first of January 2008, the new deadline will be at Salmon River. There will be no bait or lure restrictions. This additional seven miles of river will give anglers additional opportunities, particularly for springers, which historically stray up to this stretch. With the removal of Marmot Dam, the deadline 200 feet below that point became meaningless.

**North Coast Fishing Report** – The steelhead are in but like recent history, the numbers are not great. Many of the coastal gems that we love to drift are choked with downed logs and there are really no signs indicating they won't remain hazards for several more weeks to come. The high winds took out riparian trees on the Necanicum, North Fork Nehalem and Kilchis Rivers with the Necanicum being the most hazardous so far.

As far as success rates go on these rivers, the Necanicum had fish in it last week as avid angler John Weed of Portland took 2 nice hatchery fish in his boat floating from Johnson's gravel pit to the Relief Pitcher Tavern. The fish were taken driftfishing eggs. John noted the Klootch Creek closure and the fact the river corridor downstream of the bridge looked like Dick Cheney himself called in an air raid! With repairs to the bridge unlikely in the near future, this access point may not be an option for a long time.

The North Fork Nehalem was running clear but action on the river was not all that good. Reports at the hatchery indicated only an occasional fish being taken by bank anglers including the handicap ramp. Sweepers were reported downriver of the hatchery so boaters will have to take extra caution, especially as the river drops, limiting the maneuverability around such obstacles.

The Kilchis was hit hard by December salmon anglers but most came up rather disappointed. The

most popular drift was from the logger bridge downstream and chrome salmon were taken but only rarely. **Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** managed a fish a day for 2 days straight and mentioned how fresh the fish were. Steelhead were also reported in the upper drift but knowledgeable boaters warn that there are numerous trees down and drifting the river will be very hazardous.

The Wilson remains off color and slides on the mainstem as well as the Little North Fork of the Wilson are contributing to the turbidity. A local farmer has been instrumental in clearing the Sollie Smith take-out but traffic has been sparse due to the rivers color.

The Trask River is still rumored to have a large logjam at the railroad bridge. Therefore, assuming the logjam still exists, is impassable to driftboats. There are still some winter run chinook present however and a few hatchery steelhead strays always find their way into that watershed each year.

Let's not leave out Three Rivers. This tributary to the Nestucca has good potential but returns were poor last year. Preliminary results indicate another less than satisfying run this year as well. A few fish are being taken at the hatchery however.

With so much debris floating in the estuary, boats were non-existent this last week unless they were stealing wood for salvage. This is a poor choice to take wood from. Wood debris feeds the ocean ecosystem jump-starting the food chain and should be left intact. Wood cutting permits are CHEAP and firewood very accessible on our state forest lands- take advantage of them, PLEASE!

Tillamook Bay crabbing remains predictably poor with all the freshwater in the estuary right now. Note the following closure:

#### **SHELLFISH HARVEST CLOSURE LIFTED**

As a precautionary measure to minimize exposure to potentially contaminated waters, the Oregon Department of Agriculture and Oregon Department of Human Services Public Health Division imposed a closure of recreational harvest of shellfish from the beaches, bays, and estuaries from Yaquina Bay north to the Columbia River. **This closure was lifted Thursday, December 13th.**

Please note: when shellfish toxin levels exceed the "alert" level, and a new shellfish closure must be issued, the ODA web pages (**\*[http://oregon.gov/ODA/FSD/shellfish\\_status.shtml](http://oregon.gov/ODA/FSD/shellfish_status.shtml)**) may not be updated as quickly as the shellfish closures recording. Please check ODA's shellfish safety hotline at 1-800-448-2474 or (503) 986-4728 outside of Oregon for current information.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Significant rain is not in the forecast (but does anyone really care after last week?) This dampers prospects on some rivers but may continue to give other rivers a chance to heal. The Wilson is still recovering and by the time it does, the river will likely be too low to fish with any great success. Salmon and steelhead should both be available when it does.

Other north coast streams will be a bank angler's haven until trees get removed from the paths of navigation. It's an easier task in the lower flows but please be aware that what you cut and take out of the river, won't be left for salmon in the river. The Kilchis, North Fork Nehalem and Necanicum will offer the best possibilities for hatchery steelhead.

The Trask should have good visibility but it remains to be seen if the logjam will clear enough for anglers to float it. Stand by on this one.....

The tides this weekend aren't looking so good for sturgeon anglers but the following week hold more promise.

The crabbing tides however look really good and the shellfish closure noted above does not effect the taking of crab. On the downside, it's been poor to fair inside Tillamook Bay/

**Central & South Coast Reports** – The ocean allowed recreational boats to cross the bar out of Newport Sunday and Monday this week where anglers scored rockfish and lingcod and enjoyed great ocean crabbing which sent most back to port with limits.

The Alsea and Siuslaw Rivers have cleared of debris and should have a few winter steelhead present. These rivers will be low and clear by the weekend but rain should start about then. There are problems at most of the boat ramps on the Alsea; broken or missing cables, silt, mud and debris are combining to make launching anywhere from challenging to dangerous.

When fishing steelhead in low, clear water, baits of cured salmon eggs are highly effective but keep the size no larger than a dime.

**Pro guide Bill Kremers (541-754-6411)** reports "Fished the Alsea on Monday and the Siletz on Tuesday. On the Monday trip we put in at Riveredge and floated down to Blackberry. Had a couple of good strikes between Riveredge and Five Rivers, but no hookups. Then between Five Rivers and Blackberry we had several strikes and landed four fish. One was a jack salmon and all the rest were coho. They were still in prime shape. Most of the fish were caught on the K-11 plugs. One guy did put a hook through his finger - see attached photo which were able to clip out. Fishing pressure was very light, only saw one bank angler all day. One is that highway 34 is closed just down river from Blackberry, and I understand it will not open until just before Christmas. The trip on the Siletz was totally different, one strike, one beautiful steelhead. Of the five boats we talked to this was the only fish caught. Once again it was caught on K-11 blue pirate. This fish had both an adipose and left maxillary clip."

Kremers estimated this fish at 12 pounds or a little better:



The Umpqua mainstem is still running high and off color. Steelheading on the North and South Umpqua is slow but will be improving as the season progresses and with better water conditions. There's still plenty of time to choose a window of opportunity, though, as the winter run is just getting started here. Anglers were taking late summer steelhead and coho when prior to the high water event. Crabbing is improving in Winchester Bay.

The Coos River has been slow to fair for steelhead.

Chinook anglers have had some very good days on the Elk and Sixes although water levels are getting low. A few winter steelhead are trickling in and when water conditions cooperate, Chinook action will continue here into January. The Elk is at about the four foot level with water temperature in the mid 40s. Water color at both the Elk and Sixes is excellent.

As of Thursday this week, the Rogue was around the six foot level and 3,590 cfs near Agness with the river on the drop. This would be considered a low water condition and steelheading is slow. Rain this weekend will put some much-needed water into the lower river. Winter steelhead have yet to reach the Grants Pass stretch. The upper river is slow with few anglers fishing here.

The ocean was very friendly out of Brookings on Tuesday, December 11th, but bottom fishing offshore had slowed. No one came home empty-handed, however, with a mix of rockfish and ling cod taken.

As of Thursday, December 13th, the Chetco continues to drop. The level at Brookings was 3,2 with the flow just over 1,500 cfs. The river will be on the rise again starting Friday if predictions hold true. While the Chetco winter steelhead season historically doesn't get rolling until around the first of the year, rains starting around Thanksgiving this year with a second deluge the first week of December delivered fresh chrome early this year and catches have been good. A bonus is that early fish run large here with several hatchery fish hitting the 20-pound mark.

**Central and Eastern Oregon** – B-runs are in the Deschutes. Pressure is light and catches are good. What's not to like?

Anglers on the Grand Ronde are experiencing slow fishing. The lower river has been most productive, but fishers are getting only one or two hookups in an entire day.

Brown trout catches have been good on Crescent Lake which historically produces well in winter months.

**Northwest Trout** – Junction City Pond is scheduled to receive a planting of jumbo broodstock rainbows this week. Check with the locals to see if this actually occurs. Walter Wirth and Walling Pond will be stocked with eight to 10 inchers and some brooders will be stocked at Wirth.

### **Washington fishing reports:**

**From the WDF&W Weekender Report December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2007– January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

#### **North Puget Sound**

Heavy rains and high winds during the first few days of December made fishing difficult for anglers in the region. But several rivers have come back into shape and are fishable again. At the

same time, stalwart anglers that dropped a line in Puget Sound have had some success fishing for **blackmouth**.

"The big storm, and probably some holiday shopping, have kept fishing effort down in the marine areas," said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. "But anglers who did get out on the water in the last few days have actually done pretty well in some areas, especially those fishing in 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) and 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner)." Anglers fishing marine areas 8-1 and 8-2 can keep two hatchery **blackmouth** – resident 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.

Farther south, Thiesfeld said anglers have been averaging about one blackmouth for every five rods in Marine Area 10 (Seattle/Bremerton), where they also have a two-salmon daily limit, and can keep up to two hatchery chinook per day.

"The blackmouth fishery is a good opportunity for anglers to get out on the water during the holidays," Thiesfeld said. "Plus, in some marine areas, you can still do some **crabbing**." Marine areas 4 (Neah Bay), 5 (Sekiu), 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca), 9 (Admiralty Inlet), 10 (Seattle/Bremerton), 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 freshwater, water levels have dropped in most streams, allowing anglers an opportunity to get out on the river and cast for **steelhead**, said Steve Foley, another WDFW fish biologist. "Some of the rivers are actually in pretty good shape," he said. "I've heard the Green and the Skykomish are fishable and there should be some winter-run hatchery steelhead in both of those rivers."

Foley reminds anglers that **salmon** fishing closes in those and most other rivers in the region after Dec. 31.

**Rainbow trout**, however, remain 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. 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**

The Olympic Peninsula's world-class **steelhead** fishery should begin in earnest once rivers drop back into shape after the heavy rains of early December. Meanwhile, anglers and shell fishers around the region can choose from a number of other options, including **salmon** and **razor clams**.

Depending on the outcome of marine toxin tests, **razor clam** diggers may be able to add some clams to their holiday feast, said Dan Ayres, WDFW coastal shellfish manager. The last digs of

the year are scheduled for Dec. 21-23 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 remains closed throughout the 2007-08 season.

"We've found that folks really enjoy going out on a dig around the holidays, when clams are a traditional menu item for many people," said Ayres.

Tentative opening dates and evening low tides are:

- Friday, Dec. 21 (4:12 p.m. -0.4) all beaches (except Kalaloch)
- Saturday, Dec. 22 (5:06 p.m. -0.9) all beaches (except Kalaloch)
- Sunday, Dec. 23 (5:58 p.m. -1.2) Twin Harbors only

No digging is allowed before noon those days. For best results, Ayres recommends that people start digging at least one hour before low tide and take a lantern for evening digs. 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.

A week after rain and high winds pelted the Olympic Peninsula, most rivers from the north coast to Grays Harbor were still too high to fish. But anglers looking for steelhead may have some opportunity by the Dec. 15 weekend, said Scott Barbour, WDFW fish biologist. "The rivers really got flooded out, but the Wynoochee and the Satsop should be plunkable soon and I hear conditions should be better on the north coast soon."

In Puget Sound, angler effort has been low in Marine Area 11 (Tacoma/Vashon Island), but people "who know what they're doing and are familiar with the area," are still landing **blackmouth**, said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. Thiesfeld said those fishing near Point Defiance averaged about one fish for every 2½ rods over the Dec. 8 weekend. He reminds anglers the salmon season ends Dec. 31 in marine areas 11 and 13 (south Puget Sound).

Once the rain subsided, anglers on the Nisqually River began landing some late-run **chum salmon**. "The chum here are still pretty bright and high-quality," Thiesfeld said. "With the river coming back into shape, anglers should be able to land some nice fish." Anglers have been successful fishing between the WDFW handicap access and the railroad bridge due south of Old Nisqually Road. The Nisqually River remains open through Jan. 31, with a limit of six salmon, only two of which may be adults. Wild, unmarked chinook must be released.

For these and other fisheries, anglers are advised to check WDFW's *Fishing in Washington* pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) for more information.

Meanwhile, area **crabbers** have through Jan. 2 to sink a pot or two. Marine areas 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca), 9 (Admiralty Inlet), 10 (Seattle/Bremerton), 11 (Tacoma/Vashon), 12 (Hood Canal) and 13 (South Puget Sound) are open for sport crabbing seven days a week through that date.

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>. Once the fishery is over, Puget Sound crabbers will have until Jan. 15 to submit their winter catch record cards to WDFW (the mailing address is printed on the back of the cards). A drawing will be held for free fishing licenses after the filing period.

### **Southwest Washington:**

Heavy rains brought fishing to a near standstill during the first week of December, swamping tributaries throughout the lower Columbia River Basin. But as those rivers drop back into shape, fishing – particularly for **hatchery steelhead** – should be better than ever, said Joe Hymer, WDFW fish biologist.

“We’ll have to see what’s around when the water levels drop, but we’re moving into prime time for hatchery-reared winter steelhead,” Hymer said. “The fishery usually starts to take off in mid-December.”

As of Dec. 10, water levels were still running high on the Lewis and Cowlitz rivers, the two largest tributaries to the lower Columbia River on the Washington side. But anglers were pulling a fair number of hatchery steelhead out of the Lewis and Cowlitz rivers before the rains hit, and should do so again once stream flows drop, Hymer said.

Hymer noted that the North Fork Lewis River opens to hatchery steelhead and hatchery coho fishing Sunday, Dec. 16 from Colvin Creek upstream to the overhead power lines below Merwin Dam. In addition, the mainstem Grays River opens for hatchery steelhead Dec. 15 from the Highway 4 Bridge to the south fork; the West Fork also opens that day from the mouth to the footbridge at the hatchery intake.

“Smaller rivers like the Grays and the Elochoman were still running dirty a week after the heavy rains, but they should be the first to drop into shape,” Hymer said. “They, along with the Kalama and Washougal rivers, could be a good bet if the Lewis and Cowlitz rivers are still running high.” Chris Wagemann of the WDFW Kalama Research Team noted that the “first real big push of hatchery winter steelhead” – 105 fresh fish – were handled and recycled to the lower Kalama River boat ramp by hatchery crews Dec. 10.

Anglers are reminded that any wild steelhead they intercept with an intact adipose fin must be released. See the 2007-08 *Fishing in Washington* pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) for more information about hatchery steelhead and other fisheries.

As with many area rivers, there were no reports of angling success on the Cowlitz River during the first week of December, although fish were still moving up the river. During that week, Tacoma Power recovered 3,013 **coho salmon** adults, five **fall chinook** adults, 101 **summer-run steelhead** and 108 winter-run steelhead at the Cowlitz Salmon Hatchery separator during seven days of operations.

Tacoma Power employees then released 60 coho adults and four jacks into Lake Scanewa at the Day Use Site; 271 coho adults, 10 coho jacks and four winter-run steelhead into the Cispus River above the mouth of Yellow Jacket Creek; and 130 coho adults into the upper Cowlitz River at the Skate Creek Bridge in Packwood. They also released 188 coho adults, five fall chinook adults, one winter-run steelhead and two cutthroat trout into the Tilton River at Gust Backstrom Park in Morton.

Meanwhile, 13 anglers caught 10 **rainbow trout** at Kline Pond, which was planted with 2,000 catchables Dec. 4. Icehouse Lake near the Bridge of the Gods was also planted with 1,500 catchables that day.

Only one of the 52 bank anglers checked while fishing for **sturgeon** immediately below Bonneville Dam took home a legal-size fish during the first week of December. Nine boat anglers

checked from Vancouver to the Gorge had released 35 sub-legal sturgeon, but had caught no legal-size fish.

Under standing rules, retention fisheries for sturgeon will reopen Jan. 1 above Bonneville Dam upriver to McNary Dam. Sturgeon may be retained until the guidelines for each of the three pools are met. In addition, fishery managers from Washington and Oregon will meet at 10 a.m. Thursday, Dec. 13 to consider 2008 fishing seasons for both white sturgeon and **smelt**. The meeting, scheduled at the Kelso City Hall at 203 South Pacific Avenue in Kelso, is open to the public. Watch the WDFW website for news on these seasons.

#### **Eastern Washington:**

Catch rates for **steelhead** fishing on the Snake River and its tributaries in southeast Washington are among the best so far this season. WDFW creel checkers found steelheaders on the stretch from the Oregon state line to the mouth of the Walla Walla River averaging just over five hours of effort per fish caught. Steelheaders on the mainstem Snake River between Lower Monumental and Little Goose dams averaged just under six hours per fish caught. Those on the mid-Snake stretch above the interstate bridge near Clarkston were averaging just under seven hours per fish caught. On the Washington section of the lower Grande Ronde River, from Bogans Oasis to the Oregon state line, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife creel checkers reported an average of nine hours of effort per steelhead caught. For the full report, see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/snake/index.htm>.

Fishing has been good at the region's central district winter-only **rainbow trout** fishing lakes that opened Dec. 1. Anglers averaged two to three trout on the opener in open water conditions at Hog Canyon Lake in southwest Spokane County, and Fourth of July Lake, on the Lincoln-Adams county line. Scott Young, WDFW regional access manager, reported Dec. 12 that both lakes had only about two inches of ice – enough to keep boats from being launched but not enough to walk on safely.

WDFW does not make regular checks of ice conditions or make any guarantees about safety. While ice safety can never be assured, no one should venture onto the ice unless it is at least four inches thick, clear and solid, according to U.S. Coast Guard guidelines. As much as nine inches may be needed to safely support snowmobiles or other vehicles. Such ice depths can form after at least a week of below freezing temperatures, day and night.

Angler effort has been light at the region's north district winter-only lakes – Williams and Hatch in Stevens County. Neither lake has recently been stocked with trout since both are infested with stunted, illegally introduced yellow perch. Both are candidates for fishery rehabilitation next year. Boat anglers willing to brave winter conditions have found decent fishing for Lake Roosevelt **rainbow trout**. The hot spot seems to be from Seven Bays up to near Grand Coulee Dam. Roosevelt rainbows usually range from 18 to 24 inches.

Waitts Lake, just west of Valley in southern Stevens County, remains open to fishing through February to allow continued opportunity on **rainbow** and **brown trout** that range up to 15 inches. At last check, however, Waitts had only about an inch or so of ice about 100 yards out from shore, so fishing may be delayed until conditions are safer. Silver Lake, a mixed species water open year-round in southwest Spokane County, also had only about an inch of ice.

#### **North Central Washington:**

**Steelhead** fishing above Wells Dam on the upper Columbia River has slowed considerably in recent days due to colder weather, said Bob Jateff, WDFW district fish biologist in Omak. "The Methow, Okanogan and Similkameen rivers all have flowing ice, and very little angler effort has been observed," he said. "A few fish are still being caught by shore anglers fishing upstream of

Wells Dam using jigs tipped with a shrimp."

Rufus Woods Lake, the Columbia River reservoir created by Chief Joseph Dam near Bridgeport, continues to produce good catches of **triploid rainbow trout** that weigh up to four pounds, Jateff reported. "Both shore and boat anglers are having success using both bait and lures and flies," he said. "Just remember that Rufus Woods has a two-fish daily catch limit for trout." Jateff noted Rat Lake near Brewster in Okanogan County should provide good fishing for 10-12-inch **rainbow trout** during the winter catch-and-keep season, which started Dec. 1. "Davis and Little Twin lakes near Winthrop should also be good this winter for rainbows once the ice is thick enough to walk on," he said.

Columbia Basin waters are freezing up, said Jeff Korth, WDFW district fish biologist in Moses Lake. But none of the year-round big waters, like Potholes Reservoir, Moses Lake, or Billy Clapp Lake are ready to provide safe ice-fishing.

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#### **South Central Washington:**

Year-round fishing waters in the Yakima and Ellensburg areas recently received more broodstock from WDFW's Goldendale Fish Hatchery. WDFW district fish biologist Eric Anderson of Yakima reports that several lakes and ponds have each been stocked with 140 six-to-ten-pound rainbows. They include I-82 Pond 4 and Rotary Lake in the Yakima area and Mattoon and FioRito lakes in the Ellensburg area. Myron Lake near Yakima will be stocked later. "These big fish really spice up the winter fishery in our local year round waters," Anderson said. For all catchable-size trout plants see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/weekly/>.

Anderson also noted that FioRito and Mattoon lakes should see improved fishing in the future with new funding of aquatic weed-control work at both. "We were just awarded a major grant from the Washington Department of Ecology to control and prevent re-infestation of Eurasian watermilfoil, purple loosestrife and yellow flag iris that threaten these lakes' fisheries," he said. "This grant is the result of a cooperative effort spearheaded by the Kittitas County Noxious Weed Board and the Kittitas County Field and Stream Club."

WDFW fish biologist Paul Hoffarth of Pasco reminds anglers that the **steelhead** fishery in the Ringold area of the Columbia River, from the Highway 395 bridge to the old Hanford town site, remains open through the end of March. Anglers are allowed to retain two hatchery (adipose-fin-clipped) steelhead.

Hoffarth also notes anglers will be allowed to fish for and retain **sturgeon** below McNary Dam Jan. 1.

#### **Reader Email -**

Reader Roger K. wrote to TGF co-editor Michael Teague on Sunday, December 9th, "I am considering fishing Till Bay Monday the 10th...should I be worried about debris and chocolate water...thanx for any input."

"I checked with Bob Rees and he says to expect most of the debris to be gone

but that the water is still off-color. As late as it is in the season, there probably aren't many Chinook in the bay, though, The Wilson, a logical alternative, is still running muddy due to slides upstream and the Trask isn't really an option either due to a log jam.

"Sorry I didn't have a better outlook for you. If you go anyway, let me know how you do."

**Update:** The bay is still off-color although a few are fishing it, the Wilson remains muddy below Jones Creek and the log jam hasn't broken up as of Thursday, December 13th. I haven't heard back from Roger.

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**

600 pound shark taken on fly tackle. Lotsa high-flying pics:

<http://www.riverandreef.com/articlelive/articles/126/1/Giant-Mako-on-Fly/Page1.html>

More water for Columbia fish:

<http://www.idahostatesman.com/newsupdates/story/234286.html>

New shellfish web page from the ODFW:

<http://www.dfw.state.or.us/MRP/shellfish/>

**Weekly Quote** – "New jobs are like hooked fish: they feel big at first but tend to be smaller once you get to know them." - Chinese Proverb

**GOOD LUCK!**