

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **December 21st – December 27th 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- Fewer than 100 winter steelhead have crossed at Willamette Falls although plunkers at Meldrum Bar have had some good days. Sturgeon fishing has continued to deliver lots of shakers and a fair number of keeper-sized fish. The stretch from St. Johns Bridge to the lower Multnomah Channel have been most productive. This will be the last full week of a 7-day per week fishery in the Willamette and Columbia River from Wauna Powerlines to Bonneville.

Pro guide Joe Salvey (503-349-1411) reports a good sturgeon bite in the lower Willamette and Multnomah Channel with sand shrimp and smelt top baits.

While the North Santiam is high, the water has cleared. A few wild steelhead have been caught and released.

Clackamas steelheaders have been taking a few very early fresh winters at the mouth, from Eagle Creek and in the stretch below the creek.

A brace of hatchery winter steelhead were taken at the Sandy River by a pair of anglers on December 15th. It's still early but the season has officially started. Wild fish are most prevalent in the catches but more broodstock fish will become available in the new year.

Pro guide Brandon Glass (503-260-8285) reports that catching on the Sandy has picked up from Oxbow up to Cedar Creek.

Pro guide Trevor Storlie (503-695-6515) reports that the majority of steelhead present are natives but hatchery fish will be entering after the first of the year.

Huddleston Pond (Willamina) and Sheridan Pond are scheduled to be stocked with rainbows 16-inches or better.

Northwest – Monday produced well for North Fork Nehalem anglers fishing near the hatchery. The run overall has been disappointing although river levels have cooperated for much of the season. Navigational hazards will be an ongoing issue as high winds will once again sweep the north coast mid-week.

The Necanicum, a late December staple, remains accessible from the gravel pit to the Relief Pitcher take-out. This leaves the rest of the river open to bank anglers and fish are available but private property dominates the bank so be aware of where you are fishing.

Favorite rivers along Highway 30 include Gnat Creek and Big Creek. These rivers are good choices when other north coast streams are too high to fish. Friday and Saturday should be productive on these rivers.

Most Tillamook area rivers remain troublesome for driftboaters. The Wilson has yet to clear due to mudslides near Lee's Camp and the Trask still has a log jam at the Railroad Bridge downstream of Loren's Drift. On the Trask, bank anglers often find success at the Dam Hole in high water conditions. The Kilchis, one of the best options, still has boating hazards downstream of Kilchis Park.

The Nestucca was in good shape early in the week but scheduled to rise again at mid-week. It may drop back in shape by the weekend with wild and hatchery fish well distributed from 4th bridge to Cloverdale. There were a few chinook still in the system late last week but the quality of fish is on the decline.

Hatchery winter steelhead have been taken from the Siletz and Alsea rivers over the past week. The Alsea typically receives hatchery fish earlier in the season while Siletz fish return in higher numbers starting in late January.

Sturgeon anglers will find favorable tides beginning today but by the weekend, low slack will occur after sunset. Sand shrimp will be a top bait but storms may prevent pumpers from attaining adequate supplies for the weekend needs. Check availability before planning a trip.

It's already clear that the ocean crab harvest will be down from previous years. Low success rates amongst the commercial fleet is an indicator that sport crabbing in the estuaries will be more challenging this year.

Southwest – Whale watching officially kicks off on December 26th. Watch for "Whale Watching Spoken Here" signs to find trained volunteers.

A strong tidal series is forecast for the coming weekend with the exchange predicted to exceed ten feet although low tides will occur after sundown.

South coast rivers are on the rise this week with heavy rainfall. This will have a detrimental effect on winter steelheading on the mainstem Umpqua which had improved as the water here was dropping and clearing. Over the weekend, steelheaders fishing above Elkton took fish to 16 pounds although averaging several pounds smaller.

Coquille anglers caught hatchery steelhead with the largest scaling 18 pounds over the past weekend.

Anglers will experience good results for Chinook on the Elk and Sixes when precipitation moderates and these volatile rivers are on the drop.

Steelhead fishing was fair to good on the lower Rogue prior to the water rising and will deliver again once the river starts to drop. This fishery lasts into springtime.

The Chetco rose from 2.6 to over six feet from December 16th to the morning of December 18th with the flow approaching 6,000 cfs. Regular readers know this river fishes best around 4,000 cfs and dropping. Fresh winter steelhead are entering now.

Eastern – John Day anglers continue to catch a mix of hatchery and wild fish in the John Day

Pool itself. Trollers are taking the bulk of the summer runs but bank anglers are also taking a few.

Anglers fishing the Grande Ronde and lower Imnaha Rivers are landing steelhead at an average of 1 fish for every 9 or 10 hours recreating. These catch rates should remain stable if temperatures don't fluctuate too much in the coming week. Cold temperatures may cause icing however.

SW Washington – Cowlitz River steelheading was rumored to be excellent as the river was clearing late last week. Side-drifters and boon-dogglers took numerous hatchery fish. The action likely won't last long.

The Lewis River is another option this time of year but isn't quite enjoying the returns being witnessed on the Cowlitz.

Hatchery steelhead are already being recycled on the Washougal River. The run is tracking ahead of last year.

Columbia River Fishing Report – With the gorge fishery on the down-slide, what few anglers still participating in the fishery are concentrating their effort downstream from the mouth of the Willamette (and into the Portland Harbor) to St. Helens (and into the lower reaches of the Multnomah Channel. Cooler water temperatures has keeper action concentrated in the Willamette itself but a few keepers and a fair number of shakers are coming from the Columbia and adjacent waterways. This stint of poor fishing has become quite common this time of year and hinges on the showing of smelt in the Cowlitz River. The season's first smelt are due to show in the coming weeks.

Fishery managers set a plethora of seasons last week at the Compact meeting in Longview on Thursday. Click here for the seasons the bi-state managers delivered:

http://www.dfw.state.or.us/fish/OSCRP/CRM/CAN/08/07_12_13_notice.pdf

Contained in the above document is the sturgeon and smelt season for winter gillnet fishing below Bonneville Dam, the set-line fishery above Bonneville Dam and sport seasons for sturgeon and smelt below Bonneville Dam. This makes a great reference tool for when you are planning your trips.

There is still some focus on steelhead in the John Day area. Weekend creel checks indicated eight adipose fin-clipped summer steelhead kept plus 13 unclipped steelhead released for 18 boats and two adipose fin-clipped summer steelhead kept plus one unclipped steelhead released for 14 bank rods. Trollers are taking most of the fish just upstream of the John Day Dam. The John Day River itself is producing fair results for bobber and jig or shrimp anglers in the lower 10 miles of the river. Ice is beginning to form which can make wading more challenging and dangerous. Icing of the guides is another factor one must deal with when fishing this region.

Crabbing effort in the lower Columbia has dropped off. With the opening of the commercial season coupled with the recent storm fronts moving on shore, interest is waning. Crab should still be available but with the freshwater influx will certainly have a toll on success rates. Overall, the ocean commercial crabbing has dropped off in the recent week. The crab have been of high quality but their numbers are not impressive.

The Guide's Forecast – Sturgeon fishing will remain poor until water temperatures rise or the

smelt show up. Neither is likely to happen in the coming week. The exception may be the mouth of the Willamette or the Multnomah Channel. Smelt and shrimp will take fish there but you may have to search them out before you find consistent results. Most anglers will be re-focusing their efforts in the lower Willamette.

For anglers willing to brave the cold, the troll fishery in the John Day Pool should be holding up for another few weeks. Remember to use darker plugs on the overcast days and on the rare sunny day, switch to metallic plugs. The black/silver glitter will continue to be a producer into the winter months.

Crabbing may be a poor option with the weather forecast the way it is. More debris is likely to wash into the system as well so be cautious when boating the lower Columbia.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – The winter steelhead count had climbed to 111 as of December 18th with nearly half that number crossing over the past week, indicating the fish are on the move. Water flow and temperature is in the rise, a positive indicator for sturgeon fishing. Winter steelhead catches have been improving for plunkers at Meldrum Bar.

Pro guide Joe Salvey (503-349-1411) reports, "There is still a good sturgeon bite here in the Lower Willamette, and Multnomah Channel, lots of fish, quality keepers and a few oversized around. The best bait has been sand shrimp and smelt."

A reliable report indicated that a couple of early 2008 summers have been taken on the North Santiam but these fish won't be arriving in fishable numbers until March. Detroit Reservoir is nearly at winter level low at which time it will no longer be dumping additional water into the river.

The Guide's Forecast – Hatchery winter steelhead hug the bank along Meldrum Bar as they work their way upstream looking for that left-hand turn into the Clackamas. Fishing will be beat as the water level is dropping.

According to the ODFW, flows have moderated on the Santiam system, although flows remain a little high. A few fresh winters and late-season summer steelhead are available.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Clackamas anglers have seen an improvement in winter steelhead catches over the past week. A few bright summers have been taken as well. With plenty of water in the river, jet sleds have been running up above Barton. Boaters unfamiliar with the water should be cautious, however. Eagle Creek has kicked out a few winters as well. So many fish around this early bodes well for the season to come, which normally doesn't really get started until mid-January.

Pro guide Brandon Glass (503-260-8285) reports from the Sandy River, "Well the rivers are looking great and hopefully the rain doesn't hurt us too bad here. The catching has been a bit slow in the lower river, but the catching has picked up in the upper reaches from Oxbow up to Cedar Creek. I heard a report that most of the fish have been native, but a few larger ones in the mix."

Pro guide Trevor Storlie (503-695-6515) adds this, "The Sandy has been in great shape for the last week. I have been on the water and talked to lots of guys and most of them have had a tough time finding fish. The best activity has been in the Oxbow stretch. Warning: sand swirls are a problem. Fish in areas that are clear of sand. Most of the fish this year and last year have

been hooked in the areas that are clean. Drift fishing seems to be the top producer for the guys that did hook up over the weekend. I also talked to anglers up in the Dodge park area that also had some spotty activity. It was about the same as the rest of the river one here and one there. Very few hatchery fish. These fish will really start to make there show after the first of the year. There are fish here right now just not big numbers. The lower river has changed quite a bit. Jet boaters need to use caution. Sand bars have moved out into the middle of the river and a lot of new spots are very shallow. "

TGF co-editor Bob Rees passed this along, "Robert Campbell of Fisherman's Marine and Outdoor recently spent some time on the Sandy River from Dodge Park to Oxbow. Although he clearly stated this drift has become more hazardous to navigate recently, he reported excellent results last week. His pontoon boat crew landed 10 fish on the drift with 4 hatchery fish in the mix. He stated they had several other opportunities as well. Keep in mind this guy is a fishin' machine and does better than most other anglers but Robert made it clear that there were plenty of fish around for the average angler. The Oxbow area recently has also been producing fish. The bulk of the fish are native but hatchery fish are available.

"On the Clackamas, another Fisherman's Marine and Outdoor staffer, Kelly Richner, also fared well in the Carver stretch. Kelly's crew had a 6 fish day making it sound like this river was going to fish well this winter."

North Coast Fishing Report – Not much has changed from last week's report on the north coast with one exception- the fish are in! Steelheading has been good here on the north coast- something we really haven't been able to say for the last several years! As far as the "not much has changed phrase", water conditions and river navigability issues remain a pain in the "boat".

The Wilson remains muddy except in the higher reaches. Currently the river is on another sharp rise and even the upper reaches will once again become turbid. Hopefully, the winter chinook will still have the opportunity to spawn with eggs incubating unencumbered in the silted gravel. It likely won't recover for quite a while- maybe after the New Year!

The Trask still has a log jam that is low on the priority list given the amount of storm damage that has happened to other parts of Tillamook County. It may be a while as well but the Dam Hole may offer up some good fishing in the higher flows.

The Kilchis is producing a few fish but trees still prevent safe boating above the logger bridge. It was on the rise and colored on the afternoon of the 20th. Bank fishers around Kilchis Park may do the best by the weekend. With the higher flows, the majority of the fish will not spend much time in the lower reaches.

The North Fork Nehalem has been a recent highlight. Anglers working the water close to the hatchery have been having good success recently. After a slow start many fish were taken on Monday. By Wednesday, action had slowed somewhat and the river was on a rapid rise and very muddy. There are good numbers of fish in the trap at the hatchery and recycling is likely to begin taking place.

The story is the same on the Necanicum. With rising conditions, fish will be put off until the weekend. This river will remain a good option but boaters will only have access to the lower stretch from the Johnson's gravel pit to the Relief Pitcher take-out. For bank anglers willing to climb over trees, there should be some great un-molested water for the taking.

Another small stream favorite, Three Rivers was also kicking out some fish close to the hatchery

early in the week. Early returns look favorable and this stream will be another good target for the weekend opportunists. The Nestucca itself will be out but when it was fishing earlier in the week, action was fair with a few chinook still in the mix.

The Highway 30 streams; Gnat and Big Creek will also be producing some catches over the weekend. Watch out for private property on these waterways however.

The Guide's Forecast – Regardless of your destination, it's fair to say that the runs of winter steelhead coming back to north coast streams is better this year than in recent history. With the most recent weather system pushing onshore, all north coast streams will be out until the smaller ones begin to clear around Friday. By the weekend, there should be several options for NW steelheaders from Astoria to Hebo. We may get a reprieve from precipitation that will allow the larger streams to recover although the Wilson and Nehalem (mainstem) are likely to be out for a while longer.

Bait will be a good choice in the higher flows and target steelhead in the softer flows closer to the rivers edge. Remember, these fish will be seeking the path of least resistance and preserving precious calories in these higher flows.

As the water recedes, bobbers will become more effective and fish will pool up in the slower flows a bit better. It may be a while before we see these conditions however.

Crabbing won't be a great option and although there are some good clam tides happening, the surf is expected to be high which should keep the razor clams from feeding close to the surface. There may be some additional shellfish closures with the recent weather system so be sure to check with the Oregon Department of Agriculture at **1-800-448-2474 toll free or (503) 986-4728 outside of Oregon.**

Sturgeon tides will be best on Friday and Saturday but the weather won't necessarily be working for you. There hasn't been a lot of sturgeon activity given the weather and water conditions but there should be some fish available. Sand shrimp may be hard to come by as pumpers aren't likely to make much of an effort with the recent weather conditions.

Central & South Coast Reports – Once again, extreme tides have officials concerned about the public's safety on beaches, rocks and jetties. At Newport, the high tide occurring at 9:30 AM this coming Saturday will be 10.5 with a minus 1.7 ebb occurring at 4:59 PM. Similar extreme tides will occur on Sunday and Monday.

If the river prediction for the Alsea is accurate, it may fish by Saturday. This is a good time of year to score winter steelhead here.

Just as the winter steelhead season was heating up on the mainstem and North Umpqua with water levels dropping last week, the storm hit and put a halt to angling here. Water levels doubled from five to 10 feet at Elkton, but look for fresh, bright chrome when the water starts to come down.

Water levels of the Rogue at Agness have steadily increased over the past week. Steelhead fishing was just taking off prior to this week's storm and will be good when the river level turns around.

The Elk and Sixes should fish this weekend as these small systems drop into shape quickly. There will be some late-season Chinook available and winter steelheading is just starting here. As of

the morning of December 20th, the Elk was at eight feet and both rivers were muddy but no rain is in the forecast again until Saturday at the earliest.

With the flow approaching 20,000 cfs overnight December 19th, the Chetco River is un-fishable but with a break in the weather, plunkers will catch fresh sinter steelhead.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Pressure on the lower Deschutes remains low yet catches of steelhead have been quite good.

Northwest Trout – In addition to Huddleston Pond (Willamina) and Sheridan Pond being scheduled to be stocked with rainbows 16-inches or better, some of the brood trout stocked last week at Junction City Pond are still available.

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report December 12th, 2007– January 8th, 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/reggs/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.

WDFW does not regularly check ice conditions or make any guarantees about safety. While ice safety can never be assured, people should not 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.

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 -

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

2008 angling regulation pamphlet has been available at license agents for a month or so but has yet to appear online. **When it does**, it'll be here:

<http://www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/fishing/>

Lower Columbia River sturgeon fishery will have tighter catch limits in 2008:

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/do/newreal/release.php?id=dec1407b>

Outdoor notebook: Missing the smelt dipping frenzy:

http://www.columbian.com/sports/localNews/2007/12/12132007_Outdoor-notebook-Missing-the-smelt-dipping-frenzy.cfm

Weekly Quote – "My elation at taking that particular fish was quite beyond rational justification. I experienced an illusion of triumph which contained not only the impression that I had finally succeeded in outfoxing a shrewd and calculating adversary, but that the trout had been made to know the humiliation of defeat." - Harold Blaisdell

GOOD LUCK!