

The Guide's Forecast - volume 9 issue number 20

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **January 4th – January 10th 2008**

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!

Anglers are reminded that new 2008 fishing licenses and tags must be purchased before recreating in the new year!

Willamette Valley/Metro- Smelt often make an early show on the Columbia this time of year but are absent so far. In recent years, Columbia sturgeon have been exiting the mainstem for better sources of winter food in other Oregon estuaries.

Willamette level and flow is coming down this week. Unfortunately, so is the water temperature; it was 40 degrees on New Years Eve. Sturgeon are biting lightly in the cold water and keeper-sized fish have been rare.

The water has dropped and cleared a little on the North Santiam, but it remains too high to fish well. Numbers of native steelhead are still low but will improve as we move into the New Year.

Clackamas steelheaders have picked up a few fresh winter steelhead above Riverside Park on the Clackamas. Eagle Creek has been producing a few.

Fishing was fair over the past week on the Sandy despite less than ideal water clarity. The prospects here will improve in January and February as additional broodstock steelhead enter.

Metro steelheaders are finding better action when the air temperatures begin to meet water temperatures. Action has been more consistent after 9:30 in the morning. Boat traffic will likely soften after the holiday break.

Storms moving in later this week will keep the McKenzie out of shape.

Northwest – On the north coast, smaller streams are too low for productive fishing and larger rivers remain plagued with colored water and downed trees. The Wilson cleared enough to produce some quality steelhead but effort remains low.

The Trask River remains blocked by a log jam at the railroad bridge. The dam hole produced only a few fish over the Christmas holiday.

Coastal rivers close to the retention of chinook on January 1st. Bright chinook are often caught incidentally well into January.

Forecasted rains will put larger rivers off-color again but the Necanicum, North Fork of the Wilson and the Highway 30 streams may produce a final push of bright, early season steelhead. Early

returning fish will begin spawn by mid-month.

Three Rivers near Hebo is producing light catches near the deadline but the mainstem Nestucca will continue to run brown.

Sturgeon are present in Tillamook Bay and good sturgeon tides begin today. By Sunday, low slack will once again occur after dark making navigation on the bay hazardous. Sand shrimp fished in the deeper slots in the middle and west channel should produce the best results. Crabbing remains poor.

Ocean surf will remain too high for safe and productive razor clam digging.

With recent rainfall and more on the way, crabbing is not worthwhile in Yaquina Bay.

Well over 400 winter steelhead have been counted at the Alsea Hatchery facility. The river will be on the rise into the weekend.

Southwest – Mild tides this weekend will change to minus tides next week although the ebb will occur after dark.

Precipitation will have southwest rivers on the rise for the next several days. The fronts are expected to pass with the promise of dry weather in forecast next week.

The Siuslaw and Lake Creek are fishing well when conditions allow. With no significant rain, Lake Creek will be fishing well by the 1st, and the Siuslaw sometime after.

The Umpqua River has remained high and muddy over the past week although drift boaters in the Roseburg area have caught steelhead over the weekend.

Surf perch fishing has been pretty good off southern Oregon beaches, but the forecasts this week for high wind and waves will probably prevent safe ocean casting.

While the Elk and Sixes have provided only fair fishing periodically, weekend anglers managed to take a few chinook. The Elk River had great color and was at 5.5 feet on New Years Eve.

The Chetco which has been dropping and clearing since December 30th, is predicted to be on the rise again later this week. Steelhead have been moving into the river in good numbers over the past week with anglers picking up 10 to 14 pounders when river and weather conditions have allowed. A 20-pound native steelhead was taken on December 27th.

Eastern – Anglers found snow on the banks of the Deschutes over the weekend. Fishing was fair for a mix of whitefish and reddsides. Steelhead are in the river, though they are getting colored.

Cold temperatures in the eastern part of the state are keeping steelheaders inside. Flow ice and freezing rod guides will keep most from venturing out until temperatures rise in late winter.

SW Washington – The Cowlitz River remains one of the best SW Washington options although steelheading has slowed from recent weeks. The best action is still taking place near the Blue Creek Boat Ramp.

The Lewis and Kalama Rivers are also fair options but catches haven't been all that impressive.

Columbia River Fishing Report – New regulations to pay attention to in the lower Columbia River starting January 1st. The lower river is open to salmon fishing right now (but why go?) up to the I-5 Bridge. Only adipose fin-clipped chinook may be kept and the season is likely to be modified later this month or mid-February.

Sturgeon fishing remains poor with the greatest effort taking place from the mouth of the Willamette to the mouth of the Cowlitz. Effort is light and only a very rare keeper is being taken. The bulk of the effort will remain in the Willamette or Multnomah Channel until water temperatures warm up.

Steelheaders did exceptional last weekend with 19 boats posting 24 adipose fin-clipped steelhead kept plus 13 unclipped steelhead released and four adipose fin-clipped steelhead kept plus two unclipped steelhead released for 16 bank rods.

The Guide's Forecast – Steelheading will continue to be the best thing going on the Columbia this week although catches will be directly linked to weather patterns. Weather will also dictate angler effort. High temperatures are expected to be above freezing making an afternoon run seem more plausible. Trolled plugs will take the majority of fish in the mainstem while slow drifted bobbers and jigs or bait will take fish in the mainstem John Day River itself. Keep in mind that fish will not be aggressive so your presentation must reflect slow reaction times. Pick the deep, slow water using subtle presentations to experience higher success rates.

Crabbing in the lower Columbia may still be a viable option but high winds may compromise safety for boaters this week so exercise extreme caution. We are once again on a strong tide series so plan accordingly.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Bank angler plunking Spin 'n' Glos at Meldrum Bar saw an improvement in catches over the past week. As of January 1st, sturgeon retention on the lower Willamette and Multnomah Channel changed from seven days a week to Thursdays through Sundays. Sturgeon fishing has been fair to good for shakers but slow for keeper-sized fish.

The North Santiam which had been recovering from the last round of precipitation is sure to take a hit from rain this week. The river has trees in it which move around with each high water event.

The Guide's Forecast – The NOAA predicts the lower Willamette River will increase in depth by over four feet at Oregon City by Sunday, January 6th. As it starts to fall, plunkers should make short casts as hatchery winter steelhead will be near the bank as they make their way to the Clackamas River. The sturgeon fishing will improve as the water temperature increases. Sand shrimp, smelt, anchovies and squid have been getting bit recently.

There has been no update on the log jam reported on the North Santiam between Shelburn and Green Bridge. Scratch this one off your list of fishing destinations, at least for the coming week.

Don't forget to buy your 2008 license and tags.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – As of Wednesday, January 2nd, rain had

increased the level of the Clackamas and put some color in the water which had been too clear. The color remained good on Thursday this week. Fresh fish continue to enter although the fishing has only been slow to fair with spinners, jigs and drift gear taking fish. Although the McIver stretch has produced with some regularity and fish are scattered throughout the system. A few steelhead have been caught at Eagle Creek. The Clackamas level, currently (01/03/08) at just over 26 feet at Oregon City, is forecast to rise two feet by Saturday.

Most of the steelhead in the Sandy are natives but numbers of hatchery steelhead will improve into January and February. Fishing has been fair with the water low and cold, a situation which will change with storms this week. Expect to see the water level rise a couple of feet by the weekend.

North Coast Fishing Report – Guess what? It's raining again on the north coast! Good news for some, bad news for others. The "others" that I am referring to are the anglers that prefer to fish the coasts larger river systems like the Wilson, Nestucca and Trask Rivers.

Good reports continue on north coast streams however but low water put steelhead off with a few exceptions. The Necanicum continued to produce fish early in the week but big numbers were not the rule. Stealthy bank anglers did the best as fish are well distributed throughout the system.

The North Fork of the Nehalem witnessed some good fishing for bank anglers working the river below the hatchery. Although fish are still being recycled, fresh, sea-lice laden chromers are still in the mix. Another sweeper snag has been reported about a mile downstream of the hatchery put-in which will be challenging to negotiate when water levels drop.

Highway 30 streams also produced nicely on the last water drop but fish were concentrated best in just a few holes. Anglers that had access to those holes on Big Creek and Gnat Creek did post some good numbers.

High flows and turbid water kept most motivated steelheaders on the smaller streams. **Berkley bait's Buzz Ramsey** spent a few days pursuing steelhead from the bank at the Dam Hole over the holiday. Buzz had a 4-fish day and a 2-fish day there recently with most of the fish likely of the native strain. The Dam Hole is a favorite in higher flows and with this kind of action this early in the season, things are looking good for the March run this year! The lower Trask remains closed to boat traffic due to the massive log jam at the Railroad Bridge.

On Wednesday (1/2), the Wilson was clearing nicely in the higher reaches and catches were reported throughout the river for the few people fishing it. Fair numbers of hatchery fish were also reported at the holding facility at the South Fork Camp. The higher flows kept fish on the move with few people willing to spend the time to intercept them in the turbid waters. It's raining now (eve of 1/2) and the river is forecast to rise once again.

Further south, the Nestucca River has remained turbid for quite some time. The bulk of the effort in this watershed remains in Three Rivers with fair numbers of fish being taken at the deadline near the hatchery. Drifted baits are best in this water but the area does produce catches all day long as fish are continually moving into the area.

Sturgeon effort has been light but there are fish present in the bay. The well defined slots of the middle bay and the south channel have been producing the best for anglers using sand shrimp. Crabbing in Tillamook and Nehalem Bays and adjacent ocean waters remains poor and dangerous for those considering crossing into the pacific. It's simply NOT an option.

The Guide's Forecast – With back-to-back weather systems once again slamming into the north coast, all rivers will be out for a short while. Smaller systems like the North Fork Nehalem, Necanicum, Three Rivers and Highway 30 creeks could fish by Sunday if hydrograph models hold true. The larger streams like the Wilson, Trask and Nestucca will continue to blow mud for at least another 10 days.

Steelheaders will likely begin to see some of the first spawned out fish this week. Adults are likely to find smaller tributaries to spawn in while flows remain high on the larger systems. These fish become more aggressive on their way back downstream and their numbers will continue to climb into early February.

Bait will be a big bonus this week with shrimp and eggs leading the pack. The higher the flow, the bigger the bait. With the high number of hatchery fish still in the system, anglers can run diver and bait relatively guilt free. As wild fish begin to show in higher numbers, the use of diver and bait becomes a bit unethical.

I would recommend sturgeon anglers make their way into Tillamook Bay but the weather doesn't look all that friendly to fish in. If you have a covered boat, this may be a good week to exercise its use.

Netarts Bay will be about the only option for crabbers this week although higher tides will not be conducive to productive catches.

Central & South Coast Reports – Southern Oregon streams and rivers continued to drop on Thursday, January 3rd, although rain is predicted to move in later today. Water levels at the Siletz and Alsea rivers have started to climb and will continue to do so through the weekend. Heavy precipitation is in the forecast for the next few days.

Siletz anglers have experienced fair to good fishing for a mix of wild and broodstock steelhead.

The Alsea has been getting a good return of winter steelhead this season, but the pressure from anglers has been tremendous.

Steelheading will resume on the Umpqua system and should have improved when the weather breaks. As of January 1st, no wild steelhead may be retained anywhere on the Umpqua.

With the Coos River at good level and color on Wednesday this week (January 2nd), steelheaders enjoyed good fishing for a mix of wild and hatchery fish. Bait fishers had the edge, enjoying multiple hookups. While the Coos will likely go out of fishable condition later this week, it'll fish well again when the weather breaks.

While the fall Chinook run is well into the winding down phase, the Elk and Sixes are the last place on the coast where one could feel optimistic about hooking up. Chinook may not be retained from the Sixes but the Elk will remain open for catch-and-keep salmon through the month of March. That said, the odds of hooking up a winter steelhead are better than that of Chinook at this time of year.

The Applegate has been low as it is a small tributary subject to rapid changes with weather conditions. It fishes best when flows are below 800 cfs and dropping. As of January 3rd it was at 428 cfs. on Thursday this week. While a few winter steelhead have been taken, the run gets underway here around mid-January.

Anglers on the lower Rogue have been making good catches of a mix of wild and hatchery steelhead over the past week. Bank and boat anglers alike have been hitting fish. Winter steelhead, which normally start to arrive toward the end of December, have been a no-show in the Grants Pass stretch. Consequently, there's not much going on here and very few are trying it. While a few steelheaders continue to take very late-season summers on the upper Rogue, winters don't usually appear until February. The Rogue will continue to deliver winter chrome for months.

Most years the steelhead run on the Chetco doesn't get worthwhile until after Christmas. With the early arrival this season, steelheaders have been taking fish for a month. While the majority of steelhead are in the 12-pound range, many of the fish large and a couple have hit the 20-pound mark. The best numbers of steelhead this season have been moving in over the past week. While one wild steelhead may be kept here (up to five per year), this will probably change in the near future. The native run is not endangered, but a general consensus in the angling community indicates an ethical objection to retention. The Chetco was at 2,400 cfs and four feet at Brookings but is forecast to top 15 feet by Saturday morning.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Cold weather is deterring outdoor activity on the east side. The Deschutes holds decent prospect for steelhead from Shearer's Falls to the mouth, but there's almost no effort taking place.

Northwest Trout – Trout stocking is scheduled to resume next week although no information was available as of January 3rd.

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/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.

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

Trout leap to freedom in incredible escape

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/news/news.html?in_article_id=501222&in_page_id=1770

Unusual vacation rental:

<http://www.registerguard.com/csp/cms/sites/dt.cms.support.viewStory.cls?cid=30917&sid=40&fid=2>

Finally up - 2008 Oregon Fishing Regulations (downloadable PDF):

http://www.dfw.state.or.us/fish/docs/2008_oregon_fish_regulations.pdf

Weekly Quote – "Young anglers love new rivers the way they love the rest of their lives. Time doesn't seem to be of the essence and somewhere in the system is what they are looking for." - Thomas McGuane

GOOD LUCK!