

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **January 25<sup>th</sup> – January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2008**

**Oregon Fisheries Update:**

**Willamette Valley/Metro-** Rumbblings of the first spring chinook of the year are coming from some reliable sources. As is often the case, the first spring salmon typically comes from plunkers working Meldrum Bar in pursuit of winter steelhead. Although January chinook have been encountered in recent history, it's typically a sign of a strong run- which would go against biologists predictions for the Willamette run this year.

With frigid weather this week, the flow at Willamette Falls has moderated and the water temperature has fallen once again. Steelhead are being caught by plunkers working the bank at Meldrum Bar. Sturgeon fishing was slow over the last retention period. The Middle Fork Willamette has been producing trout on nymphs for hardy fly fishers willing to brave the cold.

Steelheading on the Clackamas has been slow to fair.

Sandy anglers have been taking winter steelhead daily with the season fully underway at this time of year reports **pro guide Trevor Storlie (503-307-5601)**. Side-drifters are taking fish with a variety of baits and lures and plunkers working the Sandy below the I-84 Bridge have been catching fish as well.

The number of winter steelhead crossing at Willamette Falls has been low, resulting in fairly low numbers on the Santiam system. The recent dry weather and low freezing level has allowed the water flows to moderate, however, creating improved fishing conditions.

Trout stocking will resume the week of January 28th.

**Northwest –** Steelhead action in the Tillamook area finally gave-way over the weekend. After nearly 6 weeks of poor water conditions, the Wilson River came into shape on Friday and great numbers of quality fish were taken over the weekend stated **pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)**. Double-digit days were common on Saturday with one boat reporting 17 landed steelhead for the day's effort. Although a good number of wild fish were collected to jump start the broodstock program, great numbers of hatchery fish were caught from Siskeyville to Sollie Smith Bridge. Robert Campbell of Oregon City landed a 20.5 pound hatchery steelhead sidedrifting on Sunday.

The logjam on the Trask has broken up and a mix of mostly wild fish and an occasional hatchery stray were caught over the weekend.

The Nestucca also produced some good fishing over the weekend but it wasn't as popular or productive as the Wilson. Cool weather with no precipitation predicted until late in the weekend should make for challenging conditions for steelheaders on all north coast streams.

Smaller streams like the North Fork Nehalem and Necanicum reported slow fishing this week with more rain and warmer temperatures needed to stimulate better fishing. Regardless of what river you fish, when air temperatures warm in the early afternoon, steelhead will become more active.

Sturgeon fishers had ample opportunity last weekend to target Tillamook Bay keepers. Although

keepers were caught, many were skinny and most anglers opted to release them in hopes for a higher quality fish. Sand shrimp was the best bait and most of the fish were taken in the middle channel.

Calm seas greeted boaters at mid-week but effort was low for anglers pursuing offshore crab and bottomfish. Most coastal bar conditions will be too rough for weekend passage.

On occasional fresh hatchery steelhead is still available for Alsea anglers reports **pro guide Bill Kremers (503-602-0881)**

**Pro guide Jim Stevenson (503-881-5289)** reports the red-hot Siletz has dropped off steadily since the river started dropping and clearing. Only a rare steelhead is being taken but the fishery will likely light up again on the next weather change.

Crabbing has been very slow this week in Yaquina and Alsea bays.

**Pro guide Bill Kremers (541 754 6411)** reports that fishing on the Alsea has slowed but that plugs are working best.

Steelheaders on the Siuslaw encountered some jumbo steelhead over the past weekend. **Pro guide Jeff Jackson (541-268-6944)** adds that the Siuslaw is in good shape with Whittaker to Wildcat and Wildcat producing good catches of steelhead.

**Southwest –** Dry, cold weather this week has allowed the Umpqua system to drop and clear into fine shape for steelheading. Anglers have hooked some large hatchery fish recently.

The Siuslaw is finally in shape and producing well for steelhead from Whittaker to Linslaw reports **pro guide Jeff Jackson (541-268-6944)**.

Coquille steelheaders have encountered both native and hatchery fish over the past week, the combination of which has provided fair to good fishing with bait drawing more attention than lures or scented yarn. As with many south coast rivers, this one is getting a little skinny for best results, but rain this weekend should improve conditions.

The Rogue River water level and flow has been declining over the past week. Steelheading has been fair in the lower river although there have been brief periods which provided multiple hookups after which, action has fallen off. With the water temperature below 40 degrees, the Grants Pass stretch has yet to provide decent fishing for winter steelhead.

Seals have become a nuisance on the Chetco River as high as Loeb Park. Fortunately for anglers, steelheading has been good above this stretch for those downsizing offerings in the low, clear water. Steelhead are being taken throughout the system. Rain showers later this week will provide additional flow and a little color, both of which are needed here.

**Eastern –** Expect to find snow on the ground on the chilly east side where the Metolius has been providing fly anglers with fair fishing.

Float ice is hampering steelheaders on the Imnaha and Grande Ronde Rivers.

**SW Washington –** Light catches of steelhead are still coming from the Cowlitz and Lewis Rivers but most anglers are more anxious for the Cowlitz River smelt run. Cold weather this time of year often drives schools of smelt back to the ocean.

WDF&W smelt test dip-netting yielded no catch on January 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Columbia River Fishing Report** – No reports of commercially caught spring chinook from the lower Columbia River yet. Sturgeon catches are fair for the gillnet fleet with 123 landed to date with an average size of about 27 pounds. It shouldn't be long before the first springer hits the nets.

Sportfishing on the Columbia is slow however with very little effort downstream of Bonneville Dam. There are still some keeper sturgeon coming from the Bonneville Pool however; falling to anglers using fresh smelt or sand shrimp. A cold east wind is keeping sane fishers from participating in the fishery.

With the onset of colder air and subsequently water temperatures, smelt have exited the river. Commercial landing spun downward with only 17 pounds taken in the last 2 openers. It may be several weeks before water temperatures warm enough to draw them back in.

Sturgeon effort in The Dalles Pool is also picking up with small catches coming from both the bank and boat fisheries. Shrimp or fresh smelt when available will also be a top bait in this river section.

Crabbing effort in the lower Columbia River is low.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Sturgeon will remain the fish of choice for the next several weeks on the mainstem Columbia. The best sections will likely remain in the 2 pools (Bonneville and The Dalles) above Bonneville Dam.

Steelhead are still an option for anglers fishing in the John Day Pool and could be for another few weeks. Although it is unclear what strain of steelhead is providing for this fishery, they do seem to be ready to strike for those willing to brave the cold, including a stiff east wind. Trolled plugs will take the bulk of the fish and don't be too anxious to get out there at first light. A warming afternoon often has its advantages for catching steelhead.

Crabbing may be a better option with a weakening tide series on the lower Columbia. The ocean is scheduled to kick up again so offshore action will likely become a poor option again.

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report** – The lower Willamette water temperature has dipped below 40 degrees which, even with the chilly weather this week, has done nothing to discourage plunkers fishing from the bank below the Clackamas down to Meldrum Bar. Catches have been very slow, however.

Dry weather has allowed the Santiam system to drop in to shape, but the number of wild winter steelhead remains too low to make this an appealing catch-and-release fishery.

Free boat-safety inspections in addition to free Boater Education Card exams will be available on Saturday, January 26th at Clackamette Park, 1955 SE Clackamette Drive in Oregon City. The inspections and tests will be conducted by the Clackamas County Sheriffs Office.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Sturgeon fishing has been fair on the lower Willamette for those willing to experiment with a variety of baits and try different locations and depths. Boaters working the west bank just below St. Johns Bridge have taken a few keepers. Cold water has the sturgeon biting very lightly. Sturgeon may be kept on the lower Willamette Thursdays through Sundays.

The drift on the North Santiam from Shelburn's is risky with logs in the river, but boats should be fine launching at Green's Bridge or Stayton.

While the McKenzie is in excellent shape for winter fly fishing, the water is holding in the high 30s, requiring a natural, deep drift and repeated casts.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports** – Low, cold water has slowed steelhead metabolism on the Clackamas, but anglers making natural drifts with bait or scented lures have been picking up a few. It follows that Eagle Creek is even lower, clearer and colder than the main river. Steelhead are present, however, and stealthy anglers are taking a few.

Sandy River steelheaders have been scoring from the mouth up to Cedar Creek, often reporting multiple hookups. Wild steelhead outnumber hatchery fish at this time but enough fish are present to make it worthwhile. Reports earlier this from the Cedar Creek have been encouraging. A few nice, bright fish have been taken recently.

**Pro guide Trevor Storlie (503-695-6515)** adds, "the Sandy has dropped big time. Plugs seem to be the hot ticket. Police are in Oxbow writing tickets to speeders going over 15 mph. Lots of native action."

**North Coast Fishing Report** – Well, we knew it was going to be good, but I never knew it was going to be this good! The Wilson River was nothing short of epic last weekend as guides and anglers alike took to the still colored (but fishable) water of the Wilson. Beginning last Friday, the fish were on a full-steam-ahead march and those that were there scored excellent results. Several of my guide friends reported excellent action and **pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** reported several back to back days with limits of fish for his customers. Chris ended his weekend with a huge 20.5# hatchery steelhead boated by Fisherman's Marine and Outdoor manager Robert Campbell of Oregon City. Check out our homepage at [www.TheGuidesForecast.com](http://www.TheGuidesForecast.com) to view the beast!

Chris reported that another guide landed 17 steelhead on Saturday from the Guide Shop downstream with 2 doubles from the same drift. The river was clearly loaded with fish and everyone was catching them. Although we've been waiting a long time for the Wilson to clear, it still paid to have some color to it as the steelhead were clearly not as spooked in these conditions.

Folks are really taking to sidedrifting and Chris took most of his fish on yarn-balls and EZ eggs. This product is basically buoyant latex fake eggs that float; enabling them to drift right in the face of staging steelhead. Berkley has several similar offerings on the market and more coming soon but look for the Berkley Powerbait Egg Clusters available in 4 different steelhead favorite colors in your favorite stores now. There are some real advantages of fishing these fake egg clusters besides the obvious one- no messy eggs. The soft baits feel natural to the fish and you won't find yourself reluctant to re-bait because you're always fishing! The yarn used in association with the soft baits allows the angler to use a variety of scents as well.

Although other streams didn't fare as well as the Wilson, the Nestucca and Trask also booted out some fish. The log jam is out of the Trask now so it is floatable throughout the system. This river gets many more wild fish than hatchery but hatchery fish are commonly caught as Wilson River strays throughout the season. Hatchery workers at the Trask have been tagging steelhead with red floy tags and anglers are asked to report any landed fish to the Tillamook ODF&W office at (503) 842-2741. You can also sign up to collect wild fish for the broodstock program by calling the same number.

Comparing the Nestucca to the Wilson, broodstock collection is underway for both streams but Wilson anglers dumped 22 steelhead into the tank versus just 5 on the Nestucca. The Nestucca produced best from 4<sup>th</sup> Bridge downstream.

As to be expected, most rivers have slowed down significantly after the initial may lay but fish are certainly still available. As late as Wednesday, one guide fished both the Nestucca and the Wilson yielding only one fish between the 2 drifts.

The smaller streams like the Necanicum have also slowed but one guide reported landing 3 fish for the days float from Klootchie Creek down to the Johnson's Gravel Pit on bobber and bait. Smaller streams like the Necanicum, North Fork Nehalem and the Highway 30 streams are winding down with the bulk of the fish already spawned out. The North Fork Nehalem has been producing poorly in recent days. The river is the lowest and clearest it's been in many weeks.

Sturgeon anglers that fished over the weekend did find some keepers but anglers reported the fish were in rather poor condition. We all know there can be a wide range of sturgeon girths this time of year but the anglers that landed these keeper fish turned them loose because they were so skinny. The fish were taken in the south channel under prime conditions using sand shrimp for bait.

No reports from boats crossing the Tillamook Bay bar in pursuit of bottomfish or crab but it should have been good. Tuesday and Wednesday presented the best options as a soft east wind knocked down the ocean and sunny, warm skies prevailed in the afternoon. A minus tide however may have scared boaters from trying an afternoon trip despite the good weather.

**The Guide's Forecast** – With more cold weather in the forecast, it looks like the bulk of the precipitation may fall as snow. Only moderate rises in river levels is forecasted so anglers will have to take a hard look at their presentation options for weekend steelheading.

Smaller streams will not be great options this weekend unless air temperatures warm and more precipitation falls as rain rather than snow. Look to the Wilson, Nestucca, Trask and maybe even the main Nehalem for the best action this weekend. Low water levels will keep prospects higher in the lower reaches of each of these streams with quality hatchery fish coming mostly from the Wilson and Nestucca Rivers.

Low water tactics will bring the best results with bobber and worm or jigs offering up some of the best options. With lower flows, side-drifting and plug pulling will not be great options. Small offerings may be key in the clearing streams.

Don't have high expectations of great fishing like what was experienced last week. The initial push is through, and quite frankly, should be available to bank fishers working the upper drifts of these rivers. A few more wild fish should begin to show in the catches but a mix of spent early run hatchery fish, quality broodstock hatchery fish and wild fish should show in the mix of the Wilson and Nestucca as well as a few strays into the Trask and Nehalem Rivers.

Sturgeon fishers won't have the best tides to work with this weekend on Tillamook Bay. Early morning outgoing tides however will offer up some opportunity if you can travel safe and are willing to brave the cold predicted for the weekend. Bay crabbing should begin to pick up with the exiting of fresh water from previous weeks weather systems. Netarts Bay will still offer the best opportunities but Nehalem and Tillamook Bays as well as Nestucca could produce fair catches as well.

The ocean is forecasted to rise significantly by the weekend making westward recreation a poor option.

**Central & South Coast Reports** – The International Halibut Commission met late last week and decided on a quota for Oregon of more than 250,000 pounds, which is only six percent less than last year. Originally, the commission had recommended a 25% reductions, so this should come as good news to offshore fishers. In addition, a proposal to ban electric reels for recreational halibut fishing was denied.

To voice your opinion regarding the number of days and the dates during which spring all-depth halibut will be open, attend the meeting on Thursday, January 24th at 7 PM at Embarcadero Resort in Newport.

Following a lackluster fall Chinook run, the strong, early return of winter steelhead is encouraging to ODFW biologists. Good numbers have been reported from the Siletz to the Coquille and all rivers between. Not to forget the Chetco further south, which has been producing good catches and the occasional 20-pounder.

The Siletz fished well over the weekend despite very heavy pressure from drift boaters. With limited bank access here, boaters have a definite advantage. Watch out for predators intent on having your hooked steelhead for dinner as one ambitious seal has been spotted as high as Moonshine Park. With the water getting skinny here, stealth tactics will be in order.

Seas were friendly out of Depoe Bay on Tuesday this week, allowing recreational watercraft to make a rare, safe foray offshore. Bottom fishing was good as is often the case at this time of year.

Boats also crossed the bar out of Newport, taking a few ling cod but crabbing was slow to fair offshore.

Catches on the North Fork Alsea fell off this week with water low, clear and cold. The next round of precipitation will rejuvenate fishing here.

**Pro guide Bill Kremers (541 754 6411)** adds this, "Steelhead was slow on the Alsea on Tuesday. Fished all day for one fish - a chrome hatchery hen. Caught on the steelhead on K-11 green pirate. The river was in great shape, hopefully the fishing will improve next week."

**Pro guide Jeff Jackson (541-268-6944)** reports, "The Siuslaw is finally in shape, and has been for the last few days. Whittaker to Wildcat and Wildcat to Linslaw are producing good catches of steelhead. There has been a good amount of pressure as well. All methods are producing equally well. If you want to search for fish with less pressure, try one of the put-ins along Stagecoach Road, or try the drift from Swisshome to Tide. Also - a reminder to folks coming out this way - the Wildcat launch is now a Lane Co. parking permit area. Last time I checked there was no fee station there. Parking passes can be purchased at Joe's in Eugene or Randy's Riverview Market in Mapleton (they open at 6 a.m. every day except Sun).

South Umpqua anglers have been doing well with hatchery steelhead taken recently weighing into the high teens. On the North Umpqua, anglers are reporting very good numbers of fish in the system. The entire Umpqua system has been running cold this week, so will benefit from a warming rain. Don't bother catching the first light bite at this time of year; fishing doesn't turn on 'til mid-day when the weather is cold.

The Elk River delivered fresh, bright steelhead over the weekend to side-drifters. Yarn balls were effective but this system is in need of precipitation now.

Coos and Coquille anglers using low water tactics this week have taken some winter steelhead, but anglers are looking forward to the coming showers.

The Rogue River water level and flow has been declining over the past week. Steelheading has been fair to good in the lower river although there have been brief periods which provided flurries of hookups. With the water temperature below 40 degrees, the Grants Pass stretch has yet to provide decent fishing for winter steelhead although some are being hooked in the lower portion of the middle river. Steelheaders on the upper Rogue have had it slow with baitfishing the better option.

As great as steelheading has been on the Chetco, the river is suffering this week from lack of rain. With the water low and clear, concentrate on tail-outs and riffles on the Chetco. Once the next front has passed and the water level is dropping, this will be well worth the trip. With the ocean laying down and offshore wind mild mid-week, anglers launched out of Brookings to find good numbers of willing rockfish and ling cod.

**Northwest Trout** – While not on the trout stocking schedule, Junction City Pond and West Salish Ponds will each receive 500 brook trout broodstock weighing from 1 to 2 1/2 pounds this week.

### **Washington fishing reports:**

#### **From the WDF&W Weekender Report - January 23 - February 5, 2008**

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

Fair – but cold – weather has helped anglers on Puget Sound, where fishing for **blackmouth** has picked up recently. Meanwhile, fishing continues to be slow for anglers casting for **steelhead** in several of the region's rivers and streams.

"Both hatchery and wild **steelhead** returns are down this year to a number of rivers in the region, particularly those in the Skagit River basin," said Bob Leland, WDFW's steelhead program manager. "Because of that, steelhead fishing just hasn't been that great this winter."

Those low steelhead returns prompted WDFW to close a portion of the Cascade River to recreational fishing to ensure enough steelhead make it back to the Marblemount Hatchery to meet spawning goals. The Cascade is closed until further notice from the mouth upstream to Rockport-Cascade Road.

"This closure will help the Marblemount Hatchery meet its broodstock needs, but additional fishing closures in the basin also are likely this spring to protect wild steelhead," Leland said. Catch-and-release fisheries in the Skagit and Sauk rivers are among those fisheries that could close, he said. WDFW will continue to monitor returns of wild steelhead, which are listed for protection under the federal Endangered Species Act, to determine when emergency closures could take effect.

A stretch of the North Fork Nooksack River that closed in December to steelhead fishing has re-opened. The river is once again open from a yellow post at the corner of the Kendall Creek Hatchery farthest upstream, approximately 1,000 feet upstream of the mouth of Kendall Creek,

downstream to the Mosquito Lake Road Bridge.

Out on the Sound, fishing has been good for **salmon**. Recent creel checks show anglers have been hooking **blackmouth** – resident chinook – throughout the region. On Jan. 19, four anglers were checked with four chinook at the Oak Harbor Marina, while 51 were checked with eight chinook at the Everett Ramp. The following day, 10 anglers were checked with four chinook at the Manchester Ramp, while seven anglers accounted for five chinook at the Maple Grove Ramp. “That’s pretty good fishing for this time of year,” said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. Selective fisheries for hatchery blackmouth in marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay), 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) and 9 (Admiralty inlet) continue into April. However, anglers only have a few more days to catch blackmouth in Marine Area 10 (Seattle/Bremerton), which closes at the end of January. Anglers fishing in each of those areas can keep two hatchery blackmouth 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.

Thiesfeld reminds anglers that beginning Feb. 1, a selective fishery for hatchery blackmouth will open in Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands) under the same regulations as 8-1, 8-2 and 9. Other rules and regulations for all freshwater and saltwater fisheries can be found at WDFW’s fishing regulation website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>.

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

Clear skies boosted the number of anglers – and, in some cases, **steelhead** caught – on area rivers during the third weekend in January. After weeks of heavy rain and high water, boats and trailers again clogged boat launches from the Satsop River to the upper Hoh.

As in previous weeks, the Sol Duc River yielded some of the highest catches. Creel surveys conducted Jan. 18-20 credited 52 anglers with 31 wild steelhead (24 released) and six hatchery fish. At the same time, 34 anglers checked on the Bogachiel had caught only four steelies, all but one of them wild.

No river showed more improvement than the upper Hoh, where 48 anglers caught 19 wild steelhead (all released) and four hatchery fish. But catch rates were still slow below the Oxbow Campground, where 80 anglers caught five wild steelhead (three released) and two hatchery fish that same weekend.

“Even so, it’s good to see that the Hoh is finally making a showing,” said Dave Low, WDFW fish biologist. “Up until the weekend, we really hadn’t seen any action on that river this season.” Farther south, the Wynoochee, Satsop and the Skookumchuck rivers are also getting more attention from anglers, although results have been mixed. On the Wynoochee, Low said he’d observed nine boats with seven steelhead near the diversion dam during the third week of January but the action appeared to drop off by the weekend. Although fishing conditions are also good on the Satsop River, success rates have been up and down, he said.

The Chehalis River, meanwhile, has continued to run high and muddy since the December floods, said Scott Barbour, another WDFW fish biologist. “Right now, the river still looks like a chocolate mocha,” he said. “I’ve seen some people plunking, and that’s probably the best way to fish it right now.”

Anglers should be aware that several area rivers – including the Humptulips, Copalis, Nisqually, lower Wynoochee and lower Chehalis (below Porter Bridge) – will close to salmon fishing Jan. 31. Marine areas 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) and 13 (South Puget Sound) will also close to **salmon** fishing Jan. 31, but several others are scheduled to reopen Feb. 16. Areas reopening to salmon

fishing that day include 5 (Sekiu), 6 (Port Angeles), 11 (Tacoma) and 12 (Hood Canal). Marine Area 9 (Admiralty Inlet) reopened to salmon fishing Jan. 16.

With wild fish now becoming increasingly prevalent, Low also reminded anglers that retention of wild steelhead is currently limited to one fish per year in the Bogachiel, Calawah, Clearwater, Dickey, Green, Goodman, Hoh, Hoko, Pysht, Quillayute, Quinault or Sol Duc rivers. Elsewhere, they must be released. Retention rules for wild steelhead are outlined on page 33 of the *Fishing in Washington* rule pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

Eager for news about the next **razor clam** dig? Check the WDFW razor clam website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/razorclam/season.htm>) Jan. 25 for information about future openings.

### **Southwest Washington:**

Anglers are still picking up some nice hatchery **winter steelhead** in rivers throughout the lower Columbia River Basin, although late-run fish are just beginning to arrive and water temperatures have been a tad chilly for **sturgeon** and **smelt**.

That being the case, anglers might want to focus on catching some **rainbow trout** until conditions improve for those other species, said Joe Hymer, a WDFW fish biologist. In recent days, the department has stocked seven area lakes with rainbows ranging from catchable-size fish to 10-pound broodstock.

Lakes planted with catchable-size rainbow weighing up to half a pound apiece include:

- Horseshoe Lake in Woodland got 1,504 fish Jan. 10.
- Battleground Lake got 4,105 fish Jan. 16.
- Kline Pond got 1,000 fish Jan. 14.
- Icehouse Lake near the Bridge of the Gods got 802 fish Jan. 11.
- Kidney Lake near North Bonneville got 1,000 fish Jan. 14.
- Rowland Lake near Lyle got 3,038 fish Jan. 11.

Lakes planted with broodstock rainbows averaging 6.25 and 10 pounds each include:

- Carlisle Lake near Onalaska got 41 of the 6.25 pounders and 34 ten pounders Jan. 14.
- Horseshoe Lake in Woodland got 42 each of the 6.25 and 10 pounders Jan. 10.
- Icehouse Lake got 40 of the 6.25 pounders.

Future release dates are dependent upon road conditions, but hatchery tanker trucks and crews are expected to be busy in the weeks ahead, Hymer said. For a weekly update, see the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/weekly/>.

In addition to trout plants, the department is also stocking Kress Lake near Kalama with up to 50 to 100 surplus **hatchery steelhead** per week through early February, said Chris Wagemann, another WDFW biologist. During the week of Jan. 14-20 an additional 38 steelhead were released bringing the total to about 250 fish. Anglers have been catching these fish mostly with spinners. About a dozen late-run hatchery steelhead had returned to the Kalama Hatchery by mid-January, with the bulk of the run expected to arrive in the Kalama and Cowlitz rivers in February, Hymer said. Meanwhile, anglers are still picking up some early-run steelies on rivers throughout the area, notably in the Cowlitz River around Blue Creek. Wild steelhead, bearing an intact adipose fin, must be released in all area waters.

Anglers fishing the Cowlitz, Kalama, and Lewis rivers should be aware that the prohibition on retaining **chinook salmon** in those waters has been lifted. The rules now in effect are those shown in the *Fishing in Washington* regulation pamphlet. "There aren't a lot of spring chinook

around just yet, but reeling in a keeper hatchery fish could definitely brighten up someone's day," Hymer said. Per permanent rules, all wild chinook with an intact adipose fin must be released.

Preseason forecasts for the 2008 Columbia River spring chinook return – along with other salmon and steelhead runs – are available on the WDFW website at [http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/forecasts/salmon/salmon\\_columbia08.htm](http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/forecasts/salmon/salmon_columbia08.htm).

For **smelt** and **sturgeon**, the fishing forecast probably won't improve until water temperatures warm up a bit, Hymer said. Despite some commercial landings on the Columbia the previous week, there was no sign of smelt in the Cowlitz River during the weekly opening Jan. 19. Sturgeon fishing has also been slow in all areas, Hymer said.

"Smelt prefer water temperatures above 40 degrees, and sturgeon are also more likely to bite when the water warms up," he said. "Until that happens, we're probably not going to see much action in either fishery."

Eager for news about the next **razor clam** dig? Check the WDFW razor clam website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/razorclam/season.htm>) Jan. 25 for information about future openings.

#### **Eastern Washington:**

Fishing for **rainbow trout** through the ice at winter-only lakes – Hog Canyon in southwest Spokane County and Fourth of July on Lincoln-Adams county line – is good. **Yellow perch** at year-round Eloika Lake in north Spokane County are also coming through the ice in good numbers.

Despite recent below-freezing weather, WDFW district fish biologist Chris Donley advises anglers to be cautious on the ice. Deep snow can cover – and insulate – what could be thinner-than-expected ice on some lakes.

WDFW does not make regular checks of ice conditions nor 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. Look for more "Ice Fishing Safety" information at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/reg/region1.htm>.

Open water fishing for rainbow and **brown trout** remains good at year-round Rock Lake in Whitman County for those willing to brave cold and windy conditions, either from a carefully-maneuvered boat or from shore.

WDFW fish biologist Jason McLellan reports fishing for big net-pen-reared **rainbow trout** on Lake Roosevelt is picking up on the lower end of the reservoir near Spring Canyon just east of Grand Coulee Dam. Roosevelt anglers are also occasionally catching a **kokanee** or two, he said. Snake River **steelheading** is cold and slow. See the latest steelhead catch rates throughout the Snake system at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/snake/index.htm>.

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

Colder temperatures on the upper Columbia River above Wells Dam have slowed the **steelhead** fishing considerably in the last few weeks, reported Bob Jateff, WDFW district fish biologist from Omak.

"However, there are still a few fish being caught on the mainstem in and around Pateros by boat anglers," Jateff said. "The Okanogan, Methow, and Similkameen tributaries are still largely un-fishable due to extremely cold temperatures and ice flows."

Rufus Woods continues to produce **triploid rainbow trout** in the two- to four-pound range. Jateff reported both boat and shore anglers are having success with bait, as well as flies and lures. When using bait, the first two fish caught are part of the daily limit whether kept or released. The daily limit at Rufus Woods is two trout.

Patterson Lake in Winthrop is starting to provide some success for **yellow perch** anglers through the ice. Jateff says the perch are mostly in the seven- to eight-inch range, with some fish approaching ten inches. Small perch lures tipped with a worm and/or maggot seem to be the most effective method.

Ice fishing opportunities for **rainbow trout** in Okanogan County include Rat Lake near Brewster, Big and Little Green lakes near Omak, and Sidley or Molson Lake near Oroville.

Jateff reminds anglers to check ice thickness carefully before moving too far out into the lake. WDFW does not regularly check ice conditions nor 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. Look for more "Ice Fishing Safety" information at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/reg/region2.htm>.

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

Ice on local small fishing waters is probably thicker with recent colder temperatures, but there are no guarantees for ice fishing safety, said WDFW fish biologist Jim Cummins of Yakima. A minimum of four inches of solid, clear ice is the safety standard established by the U.S. Coast Guard.

No creel checks have been conducted at the region's winter-only **rainbow trout fishery** – North Elton Pond off I-82 near Selah – but it was well-stocked with half-pound fish earlier. Other year-round fishing waters, including I-82 Pond 4, Rotary Lake, and Myron Lake in the Yakima area and Mattoon and FioRito lakes in the Ellensburg area, received six-to-10-pound rainbow trout broodstock last month.

The Yakima River winter **whitefish** season continues, although anglers should be cautious about shoreline shelf-ice. Cummins also reminds anglers there are special whitefish rules on the catch-and-release reach of the Yakima now. Whitefish gear – one single-point hook, maximum hook size 3/16-inch point to shank (hook size 14) with bait – is allowed only for whitefish.

**Sturgeon** fishing remains open on the Columbia River's John Day Pool (from John Day Dam to McNary Dam). WDFW fish biologist Paul Hoffarth of Pasco reminds anglers that this is a quota fishery, open for retention until a certain number of sturgeon are caught. The fish are scattered throughout the pool in the winter with good fishing in the Boardman and Irrigon areas and in the usual locations below McNary Dam. Hoffarth notes sturgeon fishing remains open year around above McNary Dam up to the wooden powerline towers at the old Hanford town site. It will open above the power line towers to Priest Rapids Dam Feb. 1.

**Walleye** fishing in the Columbia River can be very good both above and below McNary Dam during the winter months. "The state record walleye, 19.3 pounds, was taken in early February last year above McNary Dam," Hoffarth said.

The Columbia River from John Day Dam up to the wooden powerline towers at the old Hanford town site is open for hatchery (adipose-fin-clipped) **steelhead** until March 31.

### **Reader Email -**

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

Write to the TGF staff:

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### **Random Links**

Wear a cool green jacket! Become a whale watch volunteer:

<http://whalespoken.org/OPRD/PARKS/WhaleWatchingCenter/volunteering.shtml>

Winter fishing? Henry Miller of the Statesman Journal shares some insight:

<http://www.statesmanjournal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080124/COLUMN0401/801240329/1075/OUTDOORS>

### **Weekly Quote –**

"What do you want to do this afternoon, old man?" he asked. "Fish," I said. "But you can't always fish," he said. I told him I could and I was right and have proved it for thirty years and more.

"Well, well, " he said, "please yourself, but isn't it dull not catching anything?" And I said, as I've said a thousand times since, " As if it could be. " - Roland Pertwee

**GOOD LUCK!**