

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **February 8<sup>th</sup> – February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

**Oregon Fisheries Update:**

**Willamette Valley/Metro-** For most anglers, this is a good week to troll the isles of the Portland Sportsman Exposition. Promises of a good spring chinook season have most anglers saving their sick days for April.

Sturgeon anglers are encouraged with the increasing water temperature at Willamette Falls, a trend which may improve the sturgeon bite. The fish have been timid biters in the frigid waters, as to be nearly undetectable, especially if it's windy. The lower Willamette is now a few degrees warmer than the Columbia. Sand shrimp and smelt took keepers over the past weekend.

Water temperatures remain too cold to draw smelt upstream. Until the river temperature rises above 40 degrees, smelt will be reluctant to migrate. Cold water temperatures are also keeping sturgeon and salmon from being active in the mainstem Columbia. No salmon or smelt were landed in last weeks commercial openers but gill-netters landed 61 keeper sturgeon.

Snow at the headwaters of the North Santiam will begin melting this week and while part of the snowmelt will contribute to the re-filling of Detroit Reservoir, it will also have the river running high and cold. Fishing has been fair.

Clackamas steelheaders have had a tough week with fish present but scattered and hookups rare in the cold water. Water clarity is usually better above Deep Creek. Eagle Creek has been running a little high with bites few and far between.

**Pro guide Kent Anderson (503-550-6303)** reports that after fishing several days and taking only a few fish, that the steelhead are scattered and not in a biting mood due to the cold water.

Sandy water conditions have been in and out with the most reliable conditions higher in the system. For all metro rivers, the bite should improve with the predicted warming trend this weekend. River flows are also likely to fluctuate creating challenging conditions on a rising river.

Trout planting will resume next week.

**Northwest –** The Wilson River was in fine shape early in the week and produced good catches of steelhead on Monday. There are still a few chinook showing in the catches, they must be released unharmed. Navigational hazards still exist on many coastal streams; don't take any stretch of river for granted.

The upper reaches of the Trask and Nestucca also gave up fish late last week with large baits producing the bulk of the fish. More wild fish are beginning to show in the catches but hatchery broodstock fish will continue to be available in the Nestucca and Wilson Rivers.

Melting snow will likely put the larger coastal river systems out of shape for weekend anglers. Smaller streams like the Necanicum, Kilchis and North Fork Nehalem will be the best bets over the weekend. A mix of spent hatchery fish and fresh wild ones will make up the bulk of the catch.

Effort has dropped on the Siletz River but catches remained fair. Side-drifting continues to

produce the best results but a predicted increase in water levels should cool the fishing over the weekend.

While steelheading on the Alsea was very slow earlier this week, participation remained active with anglers lining the banks.

Rough ocean conditions will keep ocean goers in port this week although rockfish will be ripe for the picking when seas subside. Coastal crabbing remains poor.

**Southwest** – Rivers on the south coast have had periods of brief recovery, but round after round of rain storms have steelheaders seeking smaller streams which drop and clear more quickly.

The Coos and Coquille have been fishing well when in shape but have been running high and muddy this week.

While the Millicoma is also high with marginal visibility, it has periodically allowed anglers the chance for a few fresh winter steelhead.

Elk and Sixes rivers have been blown out for the much of the time over the past few days.

The water level of the lower Rogue was dropping earlier this week but is due to take another hit before the weekend as another storm front moves through.

Chetco flows have been up and down over the past week, reaching flows of 10,000 cfs a couple of times. It was approachable by plunkers on Tuesday this week while at 4,900 cfs, six feet on the gauge at Brookings and dropping. Cold water requires extra patience, although steelhead were taken on Tuesday this week with the better water conditions higher on the system.

**Eastern** – Fishing for steelhead is slow in the lower Deschutes with cold water causing the fish to be lethargic and most of the summers present are well past their pull date. Redside angling is poor.

Trollers in The Dalles Pool continue to post good catches of steelhead despite cold weather conditions. These are likely a mix of residual summer steelhead and may continue to provide a fishery in the coming weeks.

**Pro guide Steve Fleming (1-888-624-9424)** reports that as of February 4th the John Day River is frozen shut but once the river temperatures rise, larger bass may become more active but well distributed throughout the river.

**Pro guide Rick Arnold (541-480-1570)** is also influenced by the cold eastside temperatures as he writes that the weather has been the big factor this winter but that a few diehards are fishing for bulls at LBC and the biggest he had heard about was an 8 LB. fish.

**SW Washington** – Anglers anxiously await the districts spring chinook run but late run steelhead should show up on better numbers in the coming weeks. Warmer weather conditions should improve success rates with the Kalama and Cowlitz likely to be the top producers.

Smelt may make a showing in the lower Cowlitz with the upcoming warming trend as well but forecasted numbers don't promise to deliver great catches on the Saturday openers.

**\*\*\* Soapbox Update \*\*\***

Due to increased public interest in 2008 management objectives for the allocation of mainstem Columbia River spring chinook, that agenda item has been moved up to 8 a.m. Friday, Feb. 8. See updated Fish and Wildlife Commission meeting schedule at the link below.

<http://www.dfw.state.or.us/agency/co...uary/index.asp>

**Columbia River Fishing Report** – The Columbia continues to be a non-factor in fish production in these cold winter months. The one exception is The Dalles Pool where trollers are taking good numbers of steelhead on both the Oregon and Washington sides. Oregon creel checkers tallied 12 adipose fin-clipped steelhead, plus three unclipped steelhead released for four boats. Admittedly, we don't know much about this fishery but these are some of the most impressive creel checks of the year for this section of river.

The first spring Chinook of the 2008 season crossed at Bonneville on Tuesday, February 5th.

Sturgeon fishing remains slow and the springers have yet to show up- even in the commercial catches during the last sturgeon opener on the first of February.

**The Guide's Forecast** – With exception to the boat fishery above The Dalles Dam, salmon and sturgeon fishing will be a poor option for the next several weeks on the lower Columbia River. Cold water temperatures will certainly be a factor but the fish do not seem to be present in this section of river.

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report** – Warmer weather predicted this week should improve prospects in most of the Willamette Valley rivers. The greatest benefit, however, will come from moderating rainfall which will allow rivers to drop and clear.

Temperature readings at Willamette Falls have held steady at 40 degrees the past three days but with warmer weather and showers on the way, an increase in the water temp is expected and with it, an improvement in the sturgeon bite.

Wild winter steelhead have been crossing in steady single digits (although 10 were counted on February 1st), for the past couple of weeks or so. During slower seasons past, counts have increased dramatically in the middle of February. If this does not occur in the next 10 days, we can chalk the 2008 upriver Willamette winter steelhead run a bust.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Plunkers on the bank of the lower Willamette below the mouth of the Clackamas down to Meldrum Bar are seeing little action this week. The few boaters working the area have had similar results. It wouldn't be too surprising if some of the trollers working the lower river are, in fact, hoping to nail an early springer. Anglers are a very optimistic lot, after all.

Sturgeon fishing in the lower Willamette is likely to be slow but worthwhile as water temperatures improve. Take a variety of bait including smelt and sand shrimp in your arsenal.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports** – Clackamas has been at good color mid-week with pressure light. Plug-pullers launching from Barton have been hooking steelhead. Cold water has been an ongoing problem here as with many Oregon rivers as it slows the steelheads' metabolism and slows the bite. Clackamas steelheaders have experienced fair to good results,

however, with fish scattered. Patience is required with the fish slow to react in water that has yet to reach the 40-degree mark. The numbers of wild fish requiring release is increasing as the season progresses. The latest water temperature reported at the hatchery is 30 degrees and this is up four degrees from earlier this week! Warmer weather will help in raising the water temperature as well as improving the color which, when more translucent than clear, will more readily absorb solar radiation. The latter will also be positively influenced, ironically, by snowmelt. While fishing on Eagle Creek have been spotty, winter steelhead returns have been good at the hatchery this year. Several anglers have had success floating a jig to fish in the lower creek.

**Pro guide Kent Anderson (503-550-6303)** reports, "Fished the Clackamas 3 of the past 4 days. Floated between Feldheimers and Riverside (different floats each day). Steelhead are scattered and not in a biting mood due to the cold water. We fished plugs and drift fished/side drifted and all fish came on plugs. In the 3 days we had 7 chances and landed 4. 2 hatchery and 2 natives. Lethargic fish need that slowly presented erratic action to trigger the strike. I feel there are plenty of fish around and when the water warms a few degrees it could really turn on. Water color has been changing daily with the weather mixing between snow and rain, most of the tributaries are dirty and just vary in the amount of flow into the Clack. River from McIver to Barton has been holding pretty steady but that could change with a lot of run-off out of Eagle Creek. We currently have a few feet of snow in Welches and if we get a warm rain I'd recommend looking for high ground. Remember 1996 in February."

Sandy steelheaders have experienced slow to fair but steady catches of steelhead over the past week. The Sandy was fishable over the past weekend when it delivered a few bright steelhead to bank anglers. Spinners, spoons, bobber 'n' jog and drifted corkies have all produced at times. Drift boaters working the stretch from Oxbow to Dabney have had good results as recently as Tuesday this week.

**North Coast Fishing Report** – Reports from the Wilson River indicate another good push of both wild and hatchery steelhead came in during the few days the Wilson was fishable early in the week. Sunday and Monday produced some good catches although not quite as good as the previous productive period. By Wednesday, the river was on its way out again so it won't be a good option for several more days.

The Nestucca produced fair results in the upper reaches over the weekend but the lower river continued to be too high for productive fishing. Fish are clearly in the system but with such high flows and cold temperatures in recent weeks, anglers have been having a hard time accessing them.

The Trask remained a good option in the upper reaches as well. The Dam Hole has produced sporadic results with mostly wild fish in the mix.

Smaller streams have been too low and clear to draw anglers to them in the recent week. Besides the less than ideal conditions, the bulk of the fish present in smaller streams like the Necanicum, North Fork Nehalem and Three Rivers are spawned out hatchery fish. They are good biters but not good fighters.

Although another set of minus tides has befallen coastal estuaries this week, anglers are not inclined to take advantage of them due to the inclement weather. Sturgeon fishing was last reported as sporadic but keepers are certainly available in Tillamook Bay.

The ocean remains too rough for offshore activity and estuary crabbing remains poor.

**The Guide's Forecast** – With so much precipitation in the forecast, rivers are likely to remain high with smaller streams being the primary target for weekend anglers. Rivers such as the Necanicum, North Fork Nehalem and the Kilchis may all offer some good opportunities for wild fish but spent hatchery fish will also contribute to the catch this weekend.

Broodstock fish should be available in the Wilson, Nestucca and a few strays in the Trask but anglers will have to find softer water where fish are more likely to hold up in their migration run. This will make the upper stretches of these watersheds some of the better options for catchable fish. The Wilson will have the best bank access and hatchery fish should be available in the reach above mile post 17. The Dam Hole on the Trask is another strong option in high water.

Sturgeon anglers will want to stay home. The low slack tides are now past sunset and the weather.....well, the weather, need I say more?

**Central & South Coast Reports** – The South coast is forecast to experience 13 to 16 foot swells and wind to 20 to 25 knots Friday and Saturday. Sunday is predicted to be milder but wind gusts to 20 knots and seas 2 and 18 won't encourage any forays on the Big Pond. When wind and waves moderate, winter bottom fishing can be outstanding.

For the past several weeks, a dozen storm fronts have hammered the southwest coast consecutively, causing most rivers to remain out of shape much of the time. While one more round of precipitation will occur early on Friday, February 8th, precipitation is forecast to moderate thereafter, with the south coast getting less rain than the north or even that predicted to fall in the Willamette Valley.

Alsea levels are on the increase today (Thursday, February 7th) but are forecast to start dropping on Friday with conditions continuing to improve through the weekend. Steelhead are entering the hatchery facility on the North Fork at a good clip with the latest total for the season up to 1,150 as of February 5th. Steelheading has been good here but crowds of bank and boat anglers have been discouraging at times. Five Rivers has produced some stellar catch-and-release steelheading recently for wild fish.

A combination of rainfall and snowmelt will have the mainstem and South Umpqua high and off-color into the weekend. Water conditions on the North Umpqua have held up well and is expected to remain productive.

High water has been a problem on the Coos and Coquille rivers recently, a situation which will be exacerbated by rain through Fridays this week. Since these rivers were high and off color to begin with, they probably won't fish well this weekend, although when conditions improve these should be productive.

The Elk and sixes should reward steelheaders once the rain moderates, possibly on Saturday but certainly by Sunday.

Following precipitation on Friday this week, the lower Rogue will be dropping and clearing through the weekend and into next week. Prospects for steelheaders are good in the Agness stretch. As the water drops, plunkers will be the first to score, initially with #2 Spin 'n' Glos, downsizing to #4's as the water further drops and clears. The middle Rogue has produced steelhead up to the Applegate River with drift fishers and plug-pullers hooking up.

The Chetco was at 3,630 cfs and 5.0 feet at Brookings the morning of February 5th but had started coming up by mid-day. The Brookings area is forecast to receive one more round of

rainfall sufficient to increase level end flow through on Friday, February 8th. Thereafter, precipitation is predicted to stop or remain much lighter in the southwest than on the north coast or even in the Willamette Valley. If this occurs as forecast, steelheaders are in for some good fishing.

**Central and Eastern Oregon – Pro guide Steve Fleming (1-888-624-9424)** reports that as of February 4th, "most of the John Day River is iced up clear across the river. I was at the Clarno Bridge on February 1st and the river was froze clear across except for a 20' X 20' patch in the middle of the river. Bad news, the water was very dirty in that small patch. The upper river around Spray is froze up pretty solid. The river below the Cottonwood Bridge has some water flowing in the middle of the river, but still has bank ice out about 10' from each bank and ice floating down the river. There is limited fishing in the Rock Creek area, but there is ice floating down the river even there. There is a warming trend coming the middle of the week, and has lots of rain with it. This may clean the river UP and out by mid-month. The locals know that this is nothing new for the John Day River, it has done the same thing the last two years at this time. This will be a good week to go to Portland and attend the Portland Sportsman Show at the Expo February 6th - 10th. See you there."

The report from **Pro guide Rick Arnold (541-480-1570)** is also influenced by the cold eastside temperatures as he writes, "Weather has been the big factor this winter. We have had our biggest snows in years. The roads have been snow packed the past two weeks. There have been a few diehards fishing for bulls at LBC and the biggest I have heard about was an 8 LB. fish. Feb. should be improving action if we get some weather breaks. I should be getting out for some pre-fishing tune-ups this month between shows. If you are interested in a spring bull trout trip, March and April are prime time. Book in Feb. if possible as I may book up during the shows. I will be at the Portland Show in booth #159, Feb. 6-10. Stop by and see the World Record Rainbow trout....you won't believe it!!"

**Northwest Trout** – Trout planting will resume the week of February 11th.

### **Washington fishing reports:**

#### **From the WDF&W Weekender Report February 6<sup>th</sup> – February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

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

Fishing continues to be spotty for anglers casting for hatchery **steelhead** in several of the region's rivers and streams. However, salmon anglers have found decent fishing for **blackmouth** in a few marine areas of Puget Sound.

"From what I've heard, it sounds like Marine Area 7 and the northern portion of Marine Area 9 are the best places to fish for **blackmouth**," said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. "A number of anglers in those two areas have done really well in the last few days."

Selective fisheries for hatchery blackmouth – resident chinook – continue into April in marine areas 7 (San Juan Islands) and 9 (Admiralty inlet), as well as 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) and 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner). Anglers fishing in 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 the waters from Foulweather Bluff to Olele Point in Marine Area 9 remain closed to salmon fishing.

In the rivers, **steelhead** fishing has been slow, said Steve Foley, another WDFW fish biologist. "I did hear that some anglers fishing the Green River did pretty well the first couple days of February, but then it dropped off again," he said.

Foley said anglers on the Green River are finding a mix of hatchery and wild steelhead, and that is likely the same for anglers on most of the region's other rivers. "This is the time of year we start to see a transition from hatchery to wild steelhead," he said. Wild steelhead, bearing an intact adipose fin, must be released in all area waters.

Anglers have through Feb. 15 to fish for hatchery steelhead on the lower portion of the Green River, from the 1st Ave. South Bridge to the South 277th Bridge in Auburn. The upper reach – from the South 277th Bridge in Auburn to the Tacoma Headworks Dam – remains open through the end of February.

Foley notes that other rivers in the region, including the Snoqualmie, Snohomish and the Skykomish, also remain open through Feb. 29. Other rules and regulations for freshwater and saltwater fisheries can be found at WDFW's fishing regulation website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/reggs/fishregs.htm>.

Elsewhere, a stretch of the Cascade River that closed in January has re-opened. The river is once again open from the mouth upstream to Rockport-Cascade Road. Low steelhead returns prompted WDFW to close that portion of the Cascade River for a couple of weeks to ensure enough fish made it back to the Marblemount Hatchery to meet spawning goals.

"Additional changes to fisheries in the basin also are likely this spring to protect wild steelhead," said Bob Leland, WDFW's steelhead program manager. WDFW will continue to monitor returns of wild steelhead, which are listed for protection under the federal Endangered Species Act, to determine the timing of any emergency closures.

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

Razor clams, blackmouth and steelhead could all be on the menu in the coming days — as long as rainy, blustery weather doesn't get in the way.

Dan Ayres, WDFW coastal shellfish manager, said he is advising everyone planning to participate in the late-evening **razor-clam** dig Feb. 6-9 to bring warm, waterproof clothes and a lantern. "The digs are scheduled to take place after sunset and there's always the possibility of rain," Ayres said. "We're hoping for good conditions, but it's always best to be prepared."

Twin Harbors Beach will open Feb. 6-9, while Long Beach will open for digging Feb. 8 and 9 only. As in previous openings this season, no digging will be allowed at any beach before noon.

Ayres recommends that diggers hit the beach at least an hour before low tide for best results.

Evening low tides during the digs are at 6:15 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 6 (+0.1 ft.), 6:52 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 7 (0.0 ft.), 7:27 p.m. Friday, Feb. 8 (+0.1 ft.), and 8:02 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 9 (+0.4 ft.)

Diggers may take no more than 15 razor clams and must keep the first 15 they dig, regardless of

size or condition. 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 Washington state annual shellfish/seaweed license or combination license is still valid. Another option is a razor-clam only license available in annual or three-day only versions. Descriptions of the various licensing options are available on the WDFW website at <https://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov>.

Variable weather has also made for a challenging **steelhead** season from the northern Olympic Peninsula to the Grays Harbor area. On the Olympic Peninsula, the results were mixed as anglers took advantage of some clear weather to get out during Superbowl weekend. A creel check on the upper Hoh credited 33 anglers with 22 wild **steelhead** (all released) and nine hatchery fish, although catch rates were still low below Oxbow Campground, where 67 anglers caught four wild (all released) and one hatchery fish.

The Bogachiel produced its best numbers so far, with 22 anglers catching five wild steelhead (four released) and three hatchery fish. Although effort was low, seven anglers on the Calawah caught 12 wild steelhead and kept six. The Sol Duc on the other hand, slowed down a bit from previous weeks, yielding about one fish per angler. Of the 26 fish caught, 17 were wild. Of those, 10 were released.

"The cold weather is good for anglers on the Hoh, especially in the early morning when the water's clear and there's a couple feet of visibility," said David Low, WDFW fish biologist. "On the other hand, when the water's low and clear on the Sol Duc, it's hard to catch a fish — if you can see them, they can see you."

With wild fish now making their push upriver, Low reminds anglers that retention of wild steelhead is currently limited to one fish per year on the Bogachiel, Calawah, Clearwater, Dickey, 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>).

Farther south on the popular Wynoochee River in Grays Harbor, the fishing has been fairly consistent despite the variable weather, said Larry Phillips WDFW fish biologist.

"The most successful anglers are picking and choosing their days, paying attention to water flow and conditions," he said. Low hatchery returns this year haven't helped either, Phillips said. "But with the push of wild steelhead coming in the weeks ahead, anglers should have more success on area rivers."

Phillips reminds anglers that the Chehalis River continues to run high and muddy from flooding, making it difficult to fish.

Meanwhile, those looking to catch some **blackmouth salmon** will have four more marine areas to fish starting Feb. 16, with seasons scheduled to run through April 10. Fishing is non-selective in those waters, including marine areas 5 (Sekiu), 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca), 11 (Tacoma-Vashon) and 12 (Hood Canal).

"People really enjoy this opportunity to catch some blackmouth," said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. "So far, catches in the north sound have been good, which suggests that these new openings will be productive as well."

The daily limit is one salmon, regardless of species. Chinook must measure at least 22 inches. There is no size limit for other species of salmon.

Anglers can kick off the season in competitive style by entering the Discovery Bay Salmon Derby, which takes place President's Day Weekend near Sequim. The derby is the oldest running derby in the state and features \$10,000 in prizes. The derby starts at daylight Feb. 16. The award ceremony will begin at 2:00 pm on Monday, at the Gardiner Boat Ramp.

Derby participants should note that selective fishing rules will be in effect, requiring that all wild salmon be released. Only fish with a clipped adipose fin may be submitted for this year's derby. For more details, call 360-797-7711 or visit <http://www.discobaysalmonderby.com>.

### **Southwest Washington:**

With warmer weather in the forecast, anglers may finally get a break from the deep freeze that has slowed fisheries around the region in recent weeks. The question is whether rain and rising temperatures will push area rivers too far in the other direction, said Joe Hymer, WDFW fish biologist.

"Most rivers have been running low and cold, but a thaw could result in too much of a good thing," Hymer said. "We have a big snowpack this year, which could swamp area rivers if it melts too quickly."

Late-run **winter steelhead** are now returning to the Cowlitz and Kalama hatcheries, but fishing has remained slow during nearly three weeks of frigid temperatures. A creel check conducted Feb. 2-3 on the Cowlitz River tallied seven boat anglers with one hatchery steelhead; two bank anglers had no catch. Fishing was also slow in the Kalama River, which also has a significant return of late-run fish.

"If conditions are right, that fishery could heat up in the next few weeks," Hymer said. "That run usually peaks in late February."

During the last week of January, Tacoma Power employees recovered 207 adult **coho salmon** and nine **winter-run steelhead** at the Cowlitz Salmon Hatchery separator. Thirty-one adult coho and two winter-run steelhead were released into Lake Scanewa at the Day Use Site and five adult coho were released into the Tilton River at Gust Backstrom Park in Morton.

Meanwhile, creel checkers observed no catch in the fisheries for **sturgeon** or **smelt** during the first weekend in February. With water temperatures hovering around 39 degrees, those fisheries probably won't improve until the rivers warm up a bit, Hymer said.

Smelt dipping is allowed from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. each Saturday through March 29 on the Cowlitz River and daily on the lower Columbia River. For weekly updates see the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/smelt/index.htm>. For sturgeon seasons, which vary by area, see the *Fishing in Washington* rules pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

Unlike those species, **razor clams** don't mind a little cold weather. As recently announced by WDFW, Long Beach will open for late-evening digs Feb. 8-9 and Twin Harbors will open for evening digs Feb. 6-9. All other beaches will remain closed to digging.

As with previous digs this season, digging will be allowed only during the hours between noon and midnight. Evening low tides during the digs are at 6:15 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 6 (+0.1 ft.), 6:52 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 7 (0.0 ft.), 7:27 p.m. Friday, Feb. 8 (+0.1 ft.) and 8:02 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 9 (+0.4 ft.). The digs were approved after marine toxin tests showed the clams were safe to

eat.

Diggers may 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.

### **Eastern Washington:**

The recent deep freeze has left ice relatively solid at most winter or year-round fishing lakes, providing opportunities for ice-fishing. Forecasted warmer weather could change those conditions quickly, so anglers are advised to be cautious and check out ice-fishing safety tips at [http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regions/reg1/ice\\_fishing.htm](http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regions/reg1/ice_fishing.htm).

A recent creel check at Fourth of July Lake on the Lincoln-Adams county line found that anglers have been catching **rainbow trout** through the ice at the far south end of the lake. Fishing was slow in other parts of the lake, however. Anglers are reminded that Fourth of July Lake has a five-trout daily catch limit, only two of which may be over 14 inches, the most common size.

Hog Canyon Lake, in southwest Spokane County, is under the same catch regulation, although it has many more rainbows under 14 inches, said WDFW enforcement officer Curt Wood. The challenge at Hog Canyon is getting to the lake. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) gate near the shoreline had to be closed and locked because people were getting vehicles stuck in the heavy snow cover there, Wood explained, so anglers must make a long walk in from the upper parking lot.

One lake that rarely ices up completely is Rock Lake in Whitman County. Open water fishing for rainbow and **brown trout** at the year-round lake is good for those willing to brave cold and windy conditions, either from a carefully-maneuvered boat or from shore.

Fishing at Lake Roosevelt has been slow on net-pen reared rainbows, at least in part because there were simply fewer of them released last year. Anglers who catch the occasional **kokanee** in the big reservoir need to watch for tagged wild fish, which cannot be retained until a study is completed. From Feb. 1 through March 21, harvest of wild kokanee salmon (non-adipose fin clipped) with an external red plastic spaghetti tag adjacent to the dorsal fin is prohibited throughout Lake Roosevelt, including Hawk Creek and the San Poil, Spokane and Kettle arms. Research scientists from WDFW, the Spokane Tribe, the Colville Confederated Tribes and Eastern Washington University are conducting a three-year biotelemetry study on habitat use and behavior of wild kokanee. Researchers are anesthetizing fish captured for tagging, and under Federal Drug Administration (FDA) rules they cannot be consumed for a period of time.

### **North Central Washington:**

Bob Jateff, WDFW fish biologist from Omak, reported that winter ice fishing opportunities in Okanogan County have improved considerably due to colder temperatures.

"For **rainbow trout** the best lakes to try are Rat, Big and Little Green, and Davis, while Patterson Lake is good for **yellow perch**," Jateff said. "Powerbait for trout and a small jig tipped with a worm for perch are successful methods for ice fishing."

Other reports indicate that ice fishing for perch has also been good at Fish Lake in Chelan County, Jateff said.

The Northwest Ice Fishing Festival will be held Feb. 16 at Sidley Lake near Molson. Sponsored by

the Oroville Chamber of Commerce and Molson Grange, registration is 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Molson Grange Hall or at the office on the lake. The cost to enter is \$20 for adults, \$10 for kids 14 and under, with prizes awarded. For more information, contact Robin Stice at (509) 485-4002.

Jateff says **steelhead** fishing above Wells Dam on the upper Columbia River has been slow due to cold temperatures and icy conditions. "Expect success to improve as temperatures start to moderate during the month of February," he said. All steelhead with a floy or anchor tag attached must be released when caught above Wells Dam, including all tributaries.

From Jan. 31 through March 31 anglers can retain hatchery (adipose fin-clipped) steelhead with anchor or floy tags in the parts of the Columbia and Wenatchee rivers that are open to steelhead. The tags, which were attached for previous sampling operations, are no longer required for monitoring purposes in open areas below Wells Dam. For more information on this rule change, see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>.

Fishing at Rufus Woods Reservoir (behind Chief Joseph Dam) has also slowed in recent weeks, but anglers can still expect catches of **triploid rainbow trout** in the two-pound class on bait, lures, and flies, Jateff reported. "Shore access is limited to a few locations on Rufus Woods, but for boat anglers there is a well-developed launch site just upstream of Chief Joseph Dam maintained by the Army Corps of Engineers," he said.

Chris Anderson, WDFW enforcement captain, reminds anglers about the two-fish daily limit at Rufus Woods. "If you're fishing with bait you have to count the first two fish caught," Anderson said. "Because lots of folks are catching multiple fish using bait, we're seeing lots of fish mortality. We and tribal police have been writing numerous tickets for folks exceeding the daily bag limit, including tickets for four individuals from Spokane who had 47 trout in possession."

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

Jim Cummins, WDFW fish biologist, said he has heard reports that **whitefish** fishing is good in the Yakima River. "From what I've heard, the fish are large, often running from 14 to 18 inches in length, with some even larger," Cummins said.

Cummins also noted that fly-fishers are after **rainbow trout** in the Yakima River. "But there's about four miles of the river from Roza Dam upstream that are frozen, and there's shoreline shelf-ice everywhere," Cummins said.

Cummins also recently observed good numbers of anglers fishing through the ice at year-round Myron Lake and winter-only North Elton Pond in Yakima County. "I'm not sure how they were doing, but both the lake and pond have been well-stocked with trout," he said.

Those that would rather stay indoors can head to the 18th annual Central Washington Sportsmen Show, which is scheduled for Feb. 15-17 at the Yakima SunDome. The show includes a WDFW information booth and features daily fishing seminars, a fly casting pool, fly tying demonstrations, trout bobbing contests, an outdoor cooking camp, and vendors of fishing and hunting gear, guides and lodges. For show hours, admission prices and other details, see <http://www.shuylersproductions.com/index.php>.

#### **Reader Email -**

Subscriber **Pete L.** writes to ask, "The weather people say that Mount Hood has 171% of normal and the coast range has over 350% of normal. What do you foresee regarding spring flooding and spring flows on the Columbia and the related impact on fishing."

TGF co editor and **pro guide Bob Rees** replied, "Pete, most importantly, out-migration conditions should be good for salmon and steelhead smolts headed to sea!

"The coast range snow pack is a moot point but the Columbia should see high flows all spring and some of the summer. With fluctuating flows at Bonneville, anglers there will be challenged to find consistent fishing. Fish are also likely to move quicker upstream in the higher flows, especially when the temperatures rise a bit. Overall, it likely will still be a productive spring salmon season but we've found lower flows relate to higher catch rates. If flows are high, bank anglers tend to do really good too!"

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

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### **Random Links**

Up-to-date nautical charts you can view on the Internet:

**<http://ocsdata.ncd.noaa.gov/OnLineViewer/>**

Nautical Charts Online from the NOAA:

**<http://ocsdata.ncd.noaa.gov/OnLineViewer/PacificCoastViewerTable.htm>**

**Weekly Quote** – "The more salmon fishing one does, the more one realizes that here is a creature about which it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to lay down any rules or laws. Often in former days I settled some point to my complete satisfaction, and then no sooner had I come to this conclusion than something happened to upset all the preconceived ideas." - Major Kenneth Dawson

**GOOD LUCK!**