

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **March 7<sup>th</sup> – March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

**Oregon Fisheries Update:**

**Willamette Valley/Metro-** The mainstem Columbia remains closed to salmon fishing until mid-March. Sturgeon effort remains light but anglers are looking for fish again in the Columbia River Gorge. With water temperatures on the increase, catches should pick up soon.

With the lower Willamette open seven days a week for spring chinook fishing, the appeal has been more than many anglers can resist. Some trollers have been rewarded over the past week, as well. The Willamette is also open for steelhead with a daily bag limit of two fish, one of which may be a salmon. Sturgeon fishing has been spotty at most locations, good when anglers find a pod of biters.

With water temperatures into the low 50s at times in the lower Willamette, smallmouth bass anglers have started taking some decent fish on fairly deep structure.

Steelhead action on the Clackamas has been sporadic, but when anglers have been on the lower river as fish are moving through, they have done well. Bobber and jogs or plastic worms have drawn strikes recently.

Some steelheaders have been getting into fish on the Sandy while many go without a strike. Bait has been more effective than lures recently.

Expect to see the North Santiam water level to be dropping in the coming week, subject, as always, to the effects of precipitation. Steelheading has been spotty recently.

Creswell Pond and Dexter Reservoir are scheduled to be planted with trout this week.

**Northwest –** Winter steelhead on the Wilson had anticipated the rise in river levels prior to the weather front hitting the coast. Even in low, clear water conditions, several steelheaders took home broodstock fish on Friday until the river began to rise in the afternoon. When conditions returned to ideal, the bulk of those fish migrated upstream and crowds had few fish to catch.

The Wilson River watershed received the bulk of the precipitation and snowmelt also contributed to the rising river levels over the weekend. Good color and tide series may make it a good option over the weekend. Other district streams will remain low and clear.

Other north coast streams showed signs of fewer natives and late returning hatchery fish. The Nestucca put out fair catches but the Nehalem remains challenging in the lower river but fair in the Vernonia stretch.

The North Fork Nehalem and Necanicum will remain poor options until the next rainfall.

Tillamook Bay sturgeon have seemed to disappear although effort has been increasing in front of Bay City.

Weekend ocean forecasts do not look favorable for bottomfishing.

Scheduled for trout planting this week are Hebo Lake, North Lake, South Lake and Town Lake.

**Southwest –** Steelheaders on the South Umpqua have been rewarded with good catches although most have had to be released as the majority of fish are wild at this time. North Umpqua anglers are doing well although most of the fish here are also wild.

When the ocean laid down the last week of February, bottom fishing off the south coast was producing limits of rockfish along with some large ling cod. Ocean crabbing has been poor.

While the Coquille is running low, steelheaders are landing a few by downsizing their offerings but fishing here is only fair at best.

Water at the Elk and Sixes is low and clear as anglers hope precipitation this week will improve conditions.

Lower Rogue River anglers are experiencing fair to good results for steelhead averaging six pounds each. Anglers in the Grants Pass stretch are encountering fair to good numbers of steelhead as the run works its way upriver.

Snowmelt, which had been keeping the Chetco fishable recently, has been tapering off, allowing the river to drop below the 2,000 cfs mark at Brookings this week. Hopefully, rain forecasted to start Friday will ameliorate this situation. Steelheading is winding down for the winter season with many of the fish hooked returning to sea after spawning.

Powers Pond, Saunders Lake, Millicoma Pond, Reinhart Park Pond, Ben Irving Reservoir, Cooper Creek Reservoir, Galesville Reservoir, Herbert's Pond, Loon Lake and Platt I Reservoir are scheduled to be stocked with hatchery trout.

**Eastern –** Periodic Blue-Winged Olive hatches on the lower Deschutes have provided long-rodders with dry fly opportunities. Afternoon hatches have been brief and best on overcast days.

Trollers fishing the opener of the Metolius Arm of Lake Billy Chinook over the past weekend scored a few bull trout in the 18-inch range but overall, fishing was slow.

Late season steelheading on Eastern Oregon streams is picking up again. The Imnaha has been the top producer with catch rates just over 6.4 hours per fish. The Wallowa and Grande Ronde Rivers are also options but not nearly as productive.

**SW Washington –** Effort remains light on most area streams but large, wild fish are returning to some tributaries. The Lewis River will remain a fair option through the month of March and there have been reports of a few spring chinook in the catches.

The Kalama River is another late season option with both late-season hatchery fish and a few wild steelhead in the mix.

The 2008 smelt run is done. Test dipping and commercial catches indicate no presence despite favorable water conditions.

**Columbia River Fishing Report –** With spring chinook opportunities still another week away, what little focus on the mainstem is still directed towards sturgeon. Catches and effort remain light but interest is growing in the Columbia River Gorge. Downstream of Bonneville Dam, the keeper catch was non-existent according to the creel counts. A little better action was noted in the Bonneville and John Day Pool creel census.

Walleye anglers are starting to turn out in bigger numbers with all pools above Bonneville showing signs of improvement. From the ODF&W recreation report, the following was reported:

**Bonneville Pool:**

Weekly checking showed two walleye kept for five boats.

**The Dalles Pool:**

Weekly checking showed one walleye released for two bank rods; and nine walleye kept plus one walleye released for 13 boats.

**John Day Pool:**

Weekly checking showed no catch reported for three bank rods; and 17 walleye kept plus six walleye released for 45 boats.

As temperatures increase and walleye move toward the spawn, catch rates are likely to improve even more.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Anglers are anxiously awaiting the re-opener of the Columbia for the retention of spring chinook. We'll report in much more detail in next weeks report.

As for sturgeon, with warming water temperatures, activity should increase although the Columbia River Gorge is still several weeks away from producing more consistent results. The best area below Bonneville Dam to intercept a keeper will still be in the Portland to Longview stretch with the mouth of the Willamette a stronger option.

Walleye anglers may want to look into their upriver options in the next several weeks as walleye begin to become more active in the warming Columbia. Catches will begin to peak this month and will drop off rapidly after the spawn. The John Day Pool typically produces the highest effort but The Dalles Pool produced the best catch rates last week.

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report** – At this writing (late Thursday, March 6th, 4 PM) the Willamette Falls counts have gone without an update since February 15th. This is not gone unnoticed by the fishing community, thousands of whom are concerned by the low numbers as well as the seeming indifference by those to whom falls the responsibility for updating this data. Fresh Falls counts have been promised by Friday this week. Let's hope so. It's been nearly three weeks since the numbers have changed.

Several springers have been taken on Multnomah Channel recently on trolled, plug-cut herring. Spring Chinook can also be seen coming over the gunwales at Sellwood. As has been the case lately, sturgeon fishing was unpredictable over the past weekend, no less for the derby held on Saturday, March 1st. Of over 300 three-man teams registered, only 10 boats caught limits although about one-third of the contestants landed legal sturgeon with the largest just over 50 pounds. All sturgeon caught during the derby were kept alive and released after weighing.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Spring Chinook are being caught every day in the lower Willamette and Multnomah Channel. Trolled herring seems to be punching the springer's ticket so get out there if you can. Plunkers on the bank of the Willamette below the mouth of the Clackamas have seen an improvement in catches recently as summer steelhead are supplementing catches. This would be a viable alternative in the coming week for bank-bound anglers. Spin 'n' Glos combined with prawns are used by nearly all those participating in this fishery. St. Johns is expected to be productive for sturgeon this week with squid and smelt top baits. If keeper-sized fish aren't

forthcoming, move downriver to deeper water.

Look for March Browns in larger sizes to appear on the McKenzie. Early fishing can be quite good here if the offering matches the hatching insects.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports** – Effort is low with slow fishing on the Clackamas. Action is expected to pick up with warmer weather and spring showers bringing fresh steelhead into the system.

The Sandy River float by the eponymous chapter of the Northwest Steelheaders and a number of volunteers took place on Saturday, March 1st. Much trash was cleared from the riverbanks, but despite the presence of a number of highly accomplished anglers, very few native steelhead were taken for the local broodstock program, an indication of the slow the weekend fishing. Steelhead are present in decent number on the Sandy from the mouth to Cedar Creek, it has just been challenging to entice them to bait or lure.

**North Coast Fishing Report** – After fighting weeks of low, clear water conditions, north coast anglers got a fair rain freshet to offer up another good opportunity for returning adult steelhead. Most rivers rose around a half-of-foot but it was enough to change the color and flow of the larger coastal systems.

Interestingly, on the Wilson, the steelhead seemed to know that the weather system was moving on shore as they staged pretty heavy in the lower river on Friday, February 29<sup>th</sup>, the morning before the front hit the coastline. Several people reported great catches on Friday with one guide reporting limits by 10:30 in the morning.

I was on the mainstem Nehalem that day and under good conditions, we only came up with one wild fish in the early part of the drift. The barometer was dropping quickly as the morning wore on with heavy rain hitting us by the afternoon. We went from sunglasses in the morning to 2 different raincoats by the afternoon.

When Saturday rolled around, I looked back to the Wilson River for action and so did the other folks that had such a great day the day before. The water was still a little off-color but good enough to think we stood a reasonable chance at a fish. We went strikeless. Thinking that indeed the river was a bit too high, we headed over to the Kilchis River thinking it would be in ideal shape. It was low and clear with next to no one fishing. The Kilchis watershed clearly didn't get the precipitation that the Wilson did and snowmelt clearly contributed to much of the Wilson River run-off.

Sunday brought about great color and water conditions and many more boats on the river. Action was somewhat slow but we did hook 2 fish in the hemlock hole just a hole downstream of the Guide Shop. We were side-drifting Berkley Powerbait eggs with yarn balls. It was a busy river with some boats reporting 2 fish but many reporting even less.

Monday, we wrapped up our time on the Wilson with another float from Siskeyville to Donaldson's gravel bar hooking 3 fish and landing 2. By 11:00, one of my customers was nearly hypothermic so we headed to the barn. That day, **pro guide Jim Stevenson (503-881-5289)** landed his largest steelhead ever; a 21-pound broodstock fish downstream of Mills Bridge. Congratulations Jim! Despite ideal water conditions, it was not a banner day on the Wilson.

Other area rivers produced fair results on the last freshet with the Trask and Nestucca Rivers

favorites this time of year. Levels didn't come up high enough to make the upper floats very accessible but fish were found throughout the systems. Overall, the recent weather change didn't do much good for the steelheading so most are still anxiously awaiting the next, hopefully more significant weather system.

Sturgeon anglers have recently been rather disappointed in results on Tillamook Bay. West channel fishers have come up short in recent days but Bay City dwellers are having a bit more luck and the word has got out. Sand shrimp is the top bait.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Steelheaders typically are enjoying some prime fishing this time of year but river conditions aren't working for most drifters. Another rain freshet is needed to jump start the late run of wild and broodstock fish and it may be coming- just not in time for weekend anglers. As many of us know, weather forecasters don't always nail the forecast but if they are correct this week, the river should start rising on Sunday, making for some good possibilities early next week.

In the meantime, the mainstem Nehalem may offer the best chances at some quality wild fish with the Beaver Slide to the Mohler Sand and Gravel pit take-out. The gravel pit is closed on the weekend making Roy Creek the other option. For those that don't know, Roy Creek is buried in mud so plan on bringing a tow rope to drag your boat across some pretty deep mud. You had better be pretty motivated to drift down to that take-out as you will be working hard at the end of the float.

Smaller systems are out of the question unless you are a bank angler. Even for bank anglers, the rivers will be so low and clear that fish are likely to be quite spooked during your presentation.

It may be a whole different show after the weekend if the precipitation actually comes to fruition. It's always a roll of the dice when it comes to weather forecasting however. If and when we do actually get that next significant rain freshet, and we don't get the good push of wild fish that we are all anticipating, there may be something pretty wrong with our wild returns this year. It's pretty clear there has been a good hatchery return, let's take some inventory of our wild stocks.

A good morning tide series will greet weekend sturgeon anglers but the verdict is out as to whether there are still fishable numbers in Tillamook Bay. Recent results have not been impressive but we should have a better grip after the upcoming tide series.

And speaking of a minus tide series, razor clam digging hasn't been all that productive this year. It's pretty clear that the beach erosion has taken its toll on our razor clams this winter. Bay clamming should still be productive in most coastal estuaries if cockles and steamers are your quarry.

A rough ocean is forecasted for this weekend making bottomfishing a poor option.

**Central & South Coast Reports** – Siletz steelheaders have been taking fish at Moonshine Park and upriver. Some hatchery steelhead are showing color in which case bucks are far more likely to be appropriate for table fare than hens. A reminder that the access road to the upper Siletz is open only on weekends.

Siuslaw steelheaders have continued to see action but many of the fish hooked are 'downrunners' which have already spawned. These fish will hit just about anything that moves.

Surf fishing is very good off southwest beaches, tributary mouths and bay entrances at this time

of year with many anglers scoring limits of striped and pinkfin perch.

Ocean salmon models are looking grim for 2008. With early forecasts predicting a coho run of 276,00 south of Cape Falcon compared to the 2007 run of 460,000. The Pacific Fishery Management Council has stated that they expect poor returns to effect ocean fishing for Fall Chinook as well. Expect to see restrictions and limited offshore seasons this year.

Steelheaders have been doing fairly well this week on the North and South Umpqua. Numbers of wild steelhead are being hooked, but only those of hatchery origin may be retained.

Coos and Coquille rivers are running too low and clear to offer optimal fishing.

Unlike the majority of southwest rivers, the Rogue has held up and has continued to provide fair to good steelhead action in the lower river, where side-drifters and plug-pullers are scoring and bank anglers have taken fish on drifted bait and lures. Steelhead are in the Grants Pass stretch in sufficient number to provide action for anglers here. As winter steelhead counts top the 1,000 mark at Gold Ray Dam, upper river fishers are enjoying improving angling on the upper river.

It would appear, according to late forecasts, that rain this weekend will be insufficient to have much of a positive impact on southern coast rivers in need of water.

Chetco flows will drop below 1,500 cfs by evening today, March 6th. Until precipitation brings it back to fishable level, this one won't be worth the trip. Most catches were spawned-out fish and smallish chromers before the bottom dropped out and snowmelt couldn't keep up with dropping water conditions.

**Central and Eastern Oregon –** No recent reports.

**Northwest Trout –** Cool, muddy water at Hagg Lake made for a slow opening weekend but prospects will improve with warmer weather. A few boats caught trout on the troll and a couple of large fish in the 11 to 12 pound range were weighed at the Lake Stop store. Bank anglers caught trout on PowerBait. Hagg Lake remained slow on Wednesday this week, with debris floating in the muddy water. Delaying the derby this year until later in the year when conditions will be more pleasant was a great idea. Additional trout will be stocked for the May 10th event.

Colton Pond has been producing some beautiful rainbows thanks to a recent stocking of larger fish by the ODFW.

Creswell Pond and Dexter Reservoir stocking in the Willamette Valley will be **delayed** due to unexpectedly slow growth of trout intended for these locations. Scheduled for trout planting this week in the Northwest Zone are Hebo Lake, North Lake, South Lake and Town Lake.

### **Washington fishing reports:**

**From the WDF&W Weekender Report March 5<sup>th</sup> – March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

#### **North Puget Sound**

**Steelhead** are still hard to find on the Skagit and Sauk rivers, but warmer weather and spring-

like conditions have made for decent **blackmouth** fishing in several areas of Puget Sound.

"It looks like the best action for **blackmouth** in northern Puget Sound has moved to the Whidbey and Camano areas," said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. "The San Juan Islands had been hot the last couple of weeks, but the bite seems to have slowed in that area."

Recent creel samples show anglers have been hooking some blackmouth - resident chinook - throughout the region, but the best harvest numbers were seen at checks on Camano and Whidbey islands. For example, 46 anglers were checked with 20 chinook March 1 at the Camano Island ramp. The following day, 59 anglers were checked with 24 chinook at the Camano ramp, while four anglers were checked with four chinook at Whidbey's Oak Harbor Marina.

Selective fisheries for hatchery blackmouth continue into April in marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) and 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner), as well as Marine Area 9 (Admiralty inlet). Anglers fishing in those areas can keep two hatchery blackmouth as part of their two-salmon daily limit. They must, however, use single-point hooks and release wild chinook, which have an intact adipose fin.

Thiesfeld reminds anglers that regulations are different for Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands), where anglers have a daily limit of one chinook salmon.

Later this month, anglers will have a chance to participate in the **Anacortes Salmon Derby**. Tickets for the event, which is scheduled March 29-30 out of the Cap Sante Marina, are \$50 per person and proceeds will go toward scholarships to benefit young adults interested in pursuing an education in fisheries and a related natural science. Top prize for the derby, which is hosted by the Fidalgo Chapter of Puget Sound Anglers, is \$10,000. For more information visit <http://www.anacortessalmonderby.com>.

Meanwhile, casting for **steelhead** is still an option, although a number of rivers closed to steelhead fishing at the end of February. The Skagit and portions of the Sauk remain open, but Brett Barkdull, another WDFW fish biologist, reminds anglers that regulations for those two rivers changed last month. The changes were made to protect wild steelhead because low returns are expected back this year to the Skagit River basin, he said.

Anglers fishing the Sauk and Skagit rivers, as well as Fisher Slough, must now follow selective gear rules. The rules require anglers to use unscented artificial flies or lures with single-point barbless hooks and knotless nets. Those and other selective gear rules are listed on page 26 of WDFW's Fishing in Washington regulation pamphlet, which is available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>. There are some exceptions, however, for the use of motorized vessels on the Skagit River.

On the two rivers and the slough, anglers have a daily limit of two hatchery steelhead. "I've heard reports of anglers on the Skagit catching and releasing a few wild fish, and some anglers have even hooked a few hatchery steelhead as well," Barkdull said.

While the Sauk, from the mouth to the Darrington Bridge, remains open through March 31, portions of the Skagit close March 15. Before heading out, anglers should check WDFW's website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) for details on the Skagit River basin rule changes.

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

From bays to beaches, rivers to ocean waters, the region offers a variety of options for anglers, clam diggers and wildlife enthusiasts this month.

Clam diggers who were stymied by poor weather in February will get another chance to catch their limit of **razor clams** during a six-day dig set for March 7-12. Twin Harbors will be open for digging all six days, while Long Beach will be open the weekend of March 8-9 only. No other beaches will be open for digging, including Kalaloch, which is closed for the 2007-2008 season.

The dig will open on evening tides March 7 and 8, then switch to morning tides March 9-12, said Dan Ayres, coastal shellfish manager.

Clam digs on evening tides are allowed only during the hours between noon and midnight, while each morning dig must be completed by noon, Ayres said.

Ayres also reminds diggers to note the switch from standard to daylight time, which begins March 9.

Opening dates and tides are:

- March 7, Friday, 6:21 p.m., +0.3: Twin Harbors only
- March 8, Saturday, 6:58 p.m., +0.5: Twin Harbors and Long Beach only
- March 9, Sunday, 8:28 **a.m.**, +0.3: Twin Harbors and Long Beach only  
**(switch to morning tides; daylight savings time starts)**
- March 10, Monday, 9:12 **a.m.**, 0.0: Twin Harbors only
- March 11, Tuesday, 9:59 **a.m.**, -0.1: Twin Harbors only
- March 12, Wednesday, 10:51 **a.m.**, 0.0: Twin Harbors only

Meanwhile, **steelhead** fishing is holding steady on the Olympic Peninsula, where the Sol Duc is providing anglers with the highest catch rates. A WDFW survey from the first weekend in March showed 75 anglers caught 72 wild steelhead (65 released) and three hatchery fish on the river. On the Bogachiel, 47 anglers caught 15 wild fish, 12 of which were released, while farther south on the Hoh River, 69 anglers on the upper portion caught 25 fish (22 wild, all released). Results tallied on the lower Hoh showed an average of one fish for every five rods.

Retention of wild steelhead is 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>).

Success in catching **blackmouth**, which has been sporadic since the Feb. 16 opener, depends on where the baitfish are, said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. "Fish are biting in Hood Canal and anglers are having some success along the Strait near Sekiu and Port Angeles," he said. "Those are the places that likely have the food they need." That may explain the struggles farther south, where anglers fishing near Point Defiance are coming up empty. A creel check over the March 1-2 weekend showed 52 anglers caught just two blackmouth.

On the coast, anglers can look forward to the opening of the **lingcod** fishery, which gets under way March 15 in marine areas 1-3, south of Cape Alava. Anglers should note the minimum size for lingcod in these three areas is 22 inches. In Marine Area 2 (Westport/Ocean Shores), recreational fishing for rockfish or lingcod is not allowed in waters deeper than 30 fathoms from March 15 through June 15. Additional information about the lingcod fishery and other bottom fish is available on the WDFW Fishing Hotline (360) 902-2500 and the department's website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

Anglers looking ahead to **halibut** season might want to check out opening dates and other information on the WDFW website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/halibut/>). Seasons will open April 10 in most areas of Puget Sound, followed by additional openings in May on the coast and the western Strait of Juan de Fuca. This year, fishing off the coast of Westport (Marine Area 2) will be limited to two days a week (Sundays and Tuesdays) after the initial opening day on Thursday, May 1.

### **Southwest Washington:**

Sturgeon are slow to bite and late-run hatchery steelhead are, well, running late, but the future is looks bright for Columbia River anglers. Starting Sunday, March 16, the **spring chinook** fishery will get under way upriver from the west power lines on Hayden Island buoyed by a pre-season forecast that calls for a strong return of upriver fish.

The Wind River and Drano Lake also open for spring chinook fishing March 16, and the Cowlitz, Kalama, and Lewis rivers have been open for chinook since Jan. 1. Anglers have already pulled a few "springers" from those rivers, although the fish usually don't start arriving en masse until early April.

When they do, fishery managers are expecting 269,300 chinook salmon to return to the Columbia River and its tributaries above Bonneville Dam, the third-largest run since 1977. That compares to just 86,230 fish last year.

"If the forecasts are on target, this should be a terrific year for spring chinook fishing," said Joe Hymer, a WDFW fish biologist. "We expect to see a lot of chinook salmon moving upriver this year."

Fishing seasons on the mainstem Columbia River, announced by WDFW last month, are as follows:

- **Buoy 10 to the west power lines on Hayden Island:** Salmon fishing will be open seven days per week from March 24 to April 4 with a daily limit of one hatchery adult chinook salmon.
- **West power lines on Hayden Island to Bonneville Dam:** Salmon fishing will be open from March 16 through April 30, with a daily limit of one hatchery adult chinook salmon. Beginning March 24, the sport fishery will be closed for all species from one hour after official sunset Mondays to one hour before official sunrise Wednesdays.
- **Bonneville Dam to McNary Dam:** Salmon fishing will be open seven days per week from March 16 through May 10 with a daily limit of two hatchery adult chinook salmon. Bank fishing only from Bonneville Dam upstream to the Tower Island power lines located about six miles below The Dalles Dam.

As in previous seasons, anglers must release any chinook salmon with an intact adipose fish to conserve wild fish.

Below Bonneville Dam, this year's fishery will focus on waters upriver from Hayden Island, a strategy designed to protect a weak run to the Willamette River. Catch limits will be restricted to one chinook salmon a day on that part of the river to meet escapement goals and to help extend the length of the season.

"The fishing really gets good in early April, so we wanted to give anglers as many days on the

water that month as we could," Hymer said. "This could be a great spring in southwest Washington for people who like to fish for salmon."

That is especially true above Bonneville Dam, where anglers fishing the mainstem Columbia River will be able to keep two chinook salmon and two steelhead from March 16 through May 10.

Drano Lake, at the mouth of the Little White Salmon River, is expected to be a major contributor to that fishery, with an expected run of 36,800 spring chinook this year. That would be a record, topping the return of 20,600 fish in 2002, Hymer said.

Anglers should be aware that the shoreline outside the mouth of Drano Lake will be open for bank fishing for the first time in 30 years. In all, this year's fishing regulations will open up 40 additional miles of bank fishing on the mainstem Columbia River from Bonneville Dam to the Tower Island power lines six miles below The Dalles Dam.

"I think the best bet will be at the mouth of Drano Lake," Hymer said. "Casting a plug or lure from shore is sure to produce fish." Anglers fishing the newly opened bank are asked to follow three rules: Don't cross the highway, don't trespass over the railroad tracks and don't interfere with tribal fisheries.

The Wind River, with an expected run of 10,000 fish, should also contribute to fisheries above Bonneville Dam this year. Less than half that many fish returned to the Wind last year, prompting WDFW to curtail fishing seasons.

That is unlikely to happen again this year, Hymer said. "The pre-season forecast indicates that we should have plenty of fish to meet escapement goals and still provide a full fishery," he said.

One exception is the Klickitat River, which opens in April with a one-fish daily limit. Like last year, only about 1,100 spring chinook are expected to return to the Klickitat this season and fishing will again be limited to only Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Anglers planning for fish for spring chinook can get a daily count of fish passing Bonneville Dam at <https://www.nwp.usace.army.mil/op/fishdata/home.asp>.

It is still possible that the late **steelhead** run to the Cowlitz, and Kalama rivers will arrive in time to keep anglers busy until the spring chinook arrives en force, Hymer said. "The early hatchery steelhead run did fairly well, so I still have to think that anglers are going to start picking up some late run fish in those tributaries," he said.

**Pro Guide Brandon McGavran (360-607-1327)** reports, "Floated the Kalama 3-5-08. We were 2 for 3. We caught an 8 # hatchery winter Steelhead and an 11 # native we released. Had one other chance but did not land the fish. We hooked all of our fish on the new K-9 extreme. The Lewis has been producing some quality Steelhead for me as well. Back trolling has produced the best results."

In the picture below, McGavran is about to release a dandy Steelhead taken during the Lewis River float.



The **smelt** season, on the other hand, is probably over for the year. Since Feb. 16, when some dippers took some limits on the Cowlitz River, very few fish have been detected throughout the river. "Those who were there on the right Saturday got some, but that appears to be it for the year," Hymer said.

**Trout** anglers should know that WDFW recently planted 1,500 catchable-size rainbows in Sacajawea Lake in Longview, 300 rainbows in Maryhill Pond in Klickitat County and 1,000 half-pound rainbows in Klineline Pond. At Klineline, 45 bank anglers kept 60 rainbows and released 75, according to a recent creel count. Anglers did best when fishing with lures, flies and shrimp. Otherwise, fishing with bait was slow.

In addition to upcoming salmon opportunities from Bonneville Dam to McNary Dam, **walleye** fishing can be quite good there this time of year. Some **sturgeon** are also being caught in that region.

Like to dig **razor clams**? See the South Sound/Olympic Peninsula report for information on a dig scheduled March 7-12.

### **Eastern Washington:**

The March 1 fishing season opener in the southeast part of the region, where most lakes are ice-free and well stocked with hatchery **rainbow trout**, was a satisfying experience for many winter-weary anglers.

"The fishing here on the Tucannon Lakes is outstanding," reported WDFW Tucannon Fish Hatchery specialist Dave Clark. "Lots of limits were caught over the first weekend. Power bait or salmon eggs fished on the bottom seemed to work the best."

Clark said that only one of the seven Tucannon River impoundments - Big Four Lake - was still too iced up to stock with trout by the first of the month. But with warming temperatures it won't be long before it, too, will be open and full of fish. Meanwhile, the other six lakes - Beaver, Blue, Deer, Rainbow, Spring and Watson - continue to provide catches of one-third to one-half pound rainbows.

Fishhook Pond in Walla Walla County and Pampa Pond in Whitman County are also open and well-stocked with rainbows from WDFW's Lyons Ferry Hatchery.

Most waters that opened March 1 in the central part of the region continue to be too icy for fishing. "Maybe a few politicians could help us out with some hot air and wind," said WDFW district fish biologist Chris Donley.

When thawing occurs - in whatever form - fishing should be good for large **brown, rainbow, and tiger trout** under selective gear rules at Medical Lake near the town of the same name in Spokane County. Prospects are also good for **yellow perch, largemouth bass, crappie, and rainbow trout** at Downs Lake in the southwest corner of Spokane County; **largemouth and smallmouth bass, yellow perch, crappie, and brown and rainbow trout** at Liberty Lake, east of Spokane near the Idaho border.

Anglers should find some nice **lake and rainbow trout, largemouth and smallmouth bass, crappie and yellow perch** at Deer Lake in southern Stevens County; **rainbow and cutthroat trout** for catch-and-release only at Amber Lake in southwest Spokane County; **rainbow trout, yellow perch and black crappie** under selective gear rules at Coffeepot Lake in Lincoln County; and **rainbow trout** at North Silver Lake in southwest Spokane County. Selective gear rules are in effect at North Silver Lake, where anglers must release adipose-fin-clipped fish.

Donley also noted that anglers planning to fish the Spokane River should consider attending a March 11 program about protecting the river's native **redband rainbow trout**, hosted by Spokane Falls Trout Unlimited. The program, which starts at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Building at 35 W. Main Ave. in downtown Spokane, will feature WDFW fish biologist Jason McLellan on redband research and how river flows and water quality affect the fish. WDFW Enforcement Officer Lenny Hahn will also discuss fishing regulations and poaching problems on the river. For more information, contact Spokane Falls Trout Unlimited Conservation Chair Jerry White at [jerrywhitefish@gmail.com](mailto:jerrywhitefish@gmail.com)

### **North Central Washington:**

Considering the conditions, fishing is generally good at several Columbia Basin **rainbow trout** lakes that opened March 1, reported Jeff Korth, WDFW district fish biologist from Moses Lake. "Icy conditions minimized participation over opening weekend at some lakes, but they will just have good fishing longer when they open up," he said. "While windy conditions also hampered success at other lakes, many of these fisheries are in good shape and catch rates should pick up when weather stabilizes."

Under sunny skies and temperatures up to 50 degrees, Korth and other WDFW staff checked anglers on the opener at several lakes. Some of the best fishing occurred at Upper Caliche Lake, which was completely ice-free. Many anglers caught their five-fish limit of 12-inch rainbows in an hour or less and the average was 4.1 fish per angler. Martha Lake was mostly ice-free and also produced lots of limits in an hour or less of fishing. Martha Lake anglers averaged 3.9 fish each, with about two percent of the catch in 18-26-inch rainbow broodstock. Burke Lake was mostly ice-covered on the opener, but anglers still managed to average 3.9 fish each, catching mostly 13-inch yearling rainbows with 14 percent in 15-19-inch carryovers. Quincy Lake was almost totally ice-covered. Of the few anglers checked, the average was four, 12-inch rainbows per angler.

Several lakes with selective gear rules and one-fish retention limits that opened March 1 were also checked. Dusty Lake was completely ice-free but very windy. The few anglers who were out, averaged two 14-20-inch rainbows each. Lenice and Nunnally lakes were also completely ice-free but windy and fishing trips were short. The average catch at Lenice was less than one fish each,

but they were mostly 17-21-inch rainbow and **brown trout**. The average catch at Nunnally was 4.5 fish, mostly 17-21-inch rainbows. Lenore Lake, which offers **Lahontan cutthroat trout** and is catch-and-release at this time, was 80 percent ice-covered on the opener so no checks were made there.

Bob Jateff, WDFW district fish biologist from Omak, reminds anglers that **steelhead** fishing in the Methow, Wenatchee, and mainstem Columbia rivers is now closed. "Wild fish impacts from the fishery were reached on February 24, which necessitated an early closure of the fishery," he explained.

"The Okanogan and Similkameen rivers remain open to fishing for steelhead, but anglers should be aware of closed sections on these two rivers," Jateff said. On the Okanogan, the area from 500 feet below the Highway 155 Bridge in Omak to 500 feet above Omak Creek and the area from the Highway 97 Bridge in Oroville to Zosel Dam are both closed. On the Similkameen River, the area from the Railroad Trestle Bridge - one mile upstream of Highway 7 Bridge -- to Enloe Dam is closed.

Jateff also noted selective gear rules are in effect for both the Similkameen and Okanogan rivers. Daily catch limit is two adipose-fin-clipped steelhead and 20-inch minimum size. Adipose fin-clipped steelhead containing an anchor (floy) tag may not be harvested. Any steelhead caught with an intact adipose fin must be released immediately and may not be totally removed from the water.

**Whitefish** angling is open on the Methow, Jateff says, but with some restrictions. The Methow is closed to all fishing, including whitefish, from the mouth to Gold Creek. Gear rules are one, single point hook, maximum hook size 3/16-inch measured point to shank (size 14), and bait is allowed. Jateff also reminds anglers that steelhead fishing is closed on the entire Methow River and close monitoring will take place during the duration of the whitefish season.

**Rainbow trout** ice fishing opportunities in Okanogan County are still available through March at Rat Lake near Brewster, Patterson Lake near Winthrop, Sidley Lake near Oroville, and Green Lake near Omak. Jateff warns that anglers should test ice very carefully because early spring's warmer temperatures, coupled with wind, can reduce ice thickness very quickly.

### **South Central Washington:**

As spring-like weather pushes winter aside, fishing enthusiasts are plying the waters of the region's year-round lake fisheries. Jim Cummins, WDFW fish biologist from Yakima, reports "plenty of folks" fishing the Fio Rito lakes southeast of Ellensburg in Kittitas County, as well as many others.

Catchable-size (about one-third pound) **rainbow trout** have been planted in most of the region's year-round lowland lakes in the Yakima and Ellensburg areas, and all are ice-free. Details on fish stocking are available on WDFW's Southcentral Region webpage (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/regions/reg3/index.htm>).

"As the ice and snow melts and roads open up, we'll be stocking the mid- elevation lakes," Cummins said.

Cummins reminds anglers that although many lakes are open for fishing, most rivers are closed until June 1. "We need to protect downstream migrating salmon and steelhead smolts, and spring spawning fish such as steelhead and rainbow trout until then," he explained. There are exceptions, such as the Yakima River and streams that have winter **whitefish** seasons, such as

the Naches River, close March 31 to all fishing, and remain closed until June 1. "Anglers need to read the regulations pamphlet carefully," he said.

North Elton Pond, near Selah alongside Interstate 82 in north Yakima County, closes March 31. Cummins noted this fishery is the region's only winter season water, having opened Dec. 1. "It was well stocked with half-pound rainbows and continues to see considerable fishing effort," he said.

Cummins also reminds anglers that current fishing licenses are valid through March 31. New fishing licenses must be purchased and in possession starting April 1. Licenses can be purchased at vendors throughout the region, listed at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/lic/vendors/vendors.htm>, or on-line through the WDFW website at <https://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov/>.

### **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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Doug Rees: [doug@TheGuidesForecast.com](mailto:doug@TheGuidesForecast.com)

Michael Teague: [Michael@TheGuidesForecast.com](mailto:Michael@TheGuidesForecast.com)

### **Random Links**

Northwest Fly Tyer and Fly Fishing Expo 2008 - March 7 and 8 , 2008:

<http://www.nwflytyerexpo.com/>

Beautiful Deschutes video

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfWwEyYxmXk>

**Weekly Quote** – "There is certainly something in fishing that tends to produce a gentleness of spirit, a pure serenity of mind." -Washington Irving

**GOOD LUCK!**