

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **March 14<sup>th</sup> – March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

**Oregon Fisheries Update:**

**With the re-opener of the Columbia and the beginning of a very productive anchor fishery using plugs with sardine wraps, be sure you are stocked up on Bob's Bait Wraps by visiting your local Fisherman's Marine and Outdoor store or go to our on-line tackle store and order yours today.**

**Willamette Valley/Metro-** The mainstem Columbia will reopen between Hayden Island powerlines (west towers) and Bonneville Dam for salmon on Sunday. The daily bag limit is one adipose fin-clipped salmon although anglers are allowed to keep a fin-clipped steelhead as well. The river will close on Tuesday's beginning March 25<sup>th</sup> to allow commercial harvest of salmon through April 29<sup>th</sup>. Although catches are likely to be light on the opener, the absence of commercial nets below I-5 should boost catch rates in this section of the river.

Sturgeon catches below Bonneville remain poor but upriver, The Dalles and John Day Pools are producing a few keepers. Only 100 keepers are allowed to be taken from The Dalles Pool this year and that quota is already half gone.

Willamette Falls counts have been updated indicating over 2,100 winter steelhead along with 67 hatchery summers have crossed as of March 10th. It's still considered a low return for upriver tributaries but the Santiam fishery should perk in the next few weeks.

Sellwood and the Multnomah Channel have continued to kick out a few springers and while it's not hot by any means, trollers and anchor fishers are hooking up daily. Sellwood Bridge experienced an 8-fish day last week and Coon Island reported good catches mid-week as well.

Sturgeon fishing picked up over the last retention period with many boats landing keepers on smelt.

Summer steelhead are in the mix now on the Clackamas River. Smolt release is underway here so avoid the use of bait which frequently causes mortal wounding of these seagoing juveniles.

Steelheading on the Sandy River has continued to slow with many anglers leaving empty-handed. Low water conditions require lighter leaders and smaller baits. Two spring chinook were rumored from the Sandy last week- one at Cedar Creek and the other at Oxbow Park.

McKenzie River fly fishers had a fairly good weekend, but rain this week will blow it out for sure.

Benson Lake, Bethany Pond, Blue Lake, Commonwealth Lake, Dorman Pond, Huddleston Pond, Mt Hood College Pond, Sheridan Pond and Timber Lake are scheduled for trout planting this week in the north Willamette Zone.

In the South Willamette Watershed, Alton Baker Canal, Cottage Grove Pond, Cottage Grove Reservoir, Dorena Reservoir, Junction City Pond, Roaring River Park Pond, Walling Pond, Walter Wirth Lake and E. E. Wilson Pond are to be planted with hatchery rainbows.

**Northwest** – North Coast steelheaders have had good water conditions on many area streams.

Although catches aren't exactly on par with recent years, anglers are finding consistent results on the Wilson River. More wild fish are beginning to show in the catches but quality broodstock fish are still available.

Pictured here is an 8-pound broodstock hen that engulfed a Berkley Powerbait egg and yarn ball combination while side-drifting the lower Wilson. Berkley Gulp crawdad scent was applied just before taking the fish rigged on a #2 Mustad gold hook and 10-pound Big Game fluorocarbon leader.



The Nestucca is also producing fair catches but harbor seals are once again harassing spawning steelhead in the upper reaches. The Nestucca and Wilson offer the best chances at a hatchery fish but the Trask, Kilchis, and Nehalem are other strong options for wild fish when water conditions allow. A Thursday storm front may compromise weekend opportunities on some of the larger streams.

Catchable-sized trout are scheduled to be stocked in Cape Meares, Coffenbury Lake, Devils Lake, Lake Lytle, Lost Lake in Clatsop County, Smith Lake, Spring Lake, Sunset Lake and Vernonia Pond.

**Southwest** – Another rough weekend is in the offshore forecast, preventing boaters from venturing across the bars. Bottomfishing has been good when conditions have allowed while ocean crabbing has been fair but improving.

Temperate coastal lakes have started producing catches of largemouth bass. Catches are spotty at this time of year, but efforts often yield larger-than-average fish.

Following a week of decent conditions and fair to good steelhead catches, snowmelt has once again raised the level and lowered the temperature of the North Umpqua, hampering wading and slowing the bite. It should be rewarding once again when it starts to drop. On a bright note, the first springer, a 31-pounder, was caught below Elkton on Tuesday last week. Pressure on the South Umpqua has moderated.

The Chetco level and flow is on the way up as the winter steelhead run is on the way out. During periods of recovery, fishing is expected to be good for smaller chromers that show at the tail end

of the run.

While boats may not get offshore this weekend, perch fishing on beaches and in bays is as good as it gets. Limits are the rule and while striped and pile perch are abundant, anglers targeting pinkfin in the surf will come away with the better table fare.

Scheduled to be planted with trout this week are Garrison Lake and Libby Pond.

**Eastern –** John Day anglers enjoyed dropping and clearing conditions over the weekend. Anglers have been taking steelhead and the bass fishery has reportedly gotten underway here. Historically, the best fishing for larger smallmouth has been during the month of April.

Rock Creek Reservoir, Pine Hollow Reservoir and Baker Pond are scheduled to be stocked with hatchery trout.

**SW Washington –** Steelhead fishing is picking up on SW Washington streams. Spring chinook have also been landed on the Cowlitz and Lewis Rivers.

The Lewis River has large, wild fish present in limited numbers but light effort increases your chances for a personal best.

The Wind River and Drano Lake fisheries open on Sunday with high expectations of a banner run for this area of Washington. Bonneville Dam passage is underway but numbers are only in the double digits. Parking patrols will be monitoring the area for violators.

**Columbia River Fishing Report –** Although things are about to change for Columbia River salmon anglers, it was another low effort week on the mainstem. With sturgeon the only real game in town, it's a quiet scene. Catches were poor last week with no real improvement in sight. It's been a very poor winter for both sport and commercial fishers.

Anglers looking for sturgeon in the reservoirs above Bonneville have been seeing some success. That comes with a price however as harvest guidelines are coming closer to being met and the season's first closure is about to take place. The press release states: **Sturgeon retention closes March 15 in The Dalles Reservoir**

CLACKAMAS –Sturgeon retention will close at 12:01 a.m. Saturday, March 15 on the Columbia River and associated tributaries, from The Dalles Dam upstream to the John Day Dam (The Dalles pool). The retention closure remains in effect through the end of the year. This stretch of the river is managed for a recreational harvest guideline of 100 white sturgeon. Current projections indicate the recreational fishery in this reservoir will harvest 114 white sturgeon through Friday, March 14.

Catch-and-release angling for sturgeon in this stretch of the Columbia is allowed throughout the remainder of the year, except during May 1 through July 31, when sturgeon angling is prohibited from the west end of the grain silo located near Rufus upstream to John Day Dam, to protect oversize spawning sturgeon. Catch-and-release sturgeon angling in this sanctuary area re-opens Aug. 1.

Warmer water temperature are stirring walleye in the big river with The John Day Pool producing the best catches are nearly a fish per rod landed (and some released). The Dalles and Bonneville Pools also saw some action.

Most anglers are anxiously awaiting the re-opener of the Columbia however with regulations more complicated than ever before. For your convenience, we have posted them here:

**COLUMBIA RIVER MAINSTEM, Buoy 10 Line upstream to I-5 Bridge:** Effective 12:01 AM Monday February 25 this section of the Columbia River is closed to angling for salmon and steelhead. Beginning Monday March 24 through Friday April 4 the lower Columbia River between Buoy 10 and the Hayden Island powerlines (west towers) will be open to angling for salmon and steelhead with a daily bag limit of two adipose fin-clipped adult salmonids (chinook greater than 24" and steelhead greater than 20"), only one of which may be a chinook. Catch limits for jacks remain in effect as per permanent regulations. All non-adipose fin-clipped chinook salmon and non-adipose fin-clipped steelhead must be released immediately unharmed.

**COLUMBIA RIVER MAINSTEM, I-5 Bridge to Bonneville Dam:** This section of the Columbia River is currently open to the retention of adipose fin-clipped steelhead with a daily bag limit of two fish. The retention of spring chinook is prohibited. **Effective March 16 through April 30 the lower Columbia River between Hayden Island powerlines (west towers) and Bonneville Dam** will be open to angling for spring chinook and steelhead EXCEPT all angling for any species (including catch-and-release) is prohibited on Tuesdays during March 25 through April 29 (March 25, April 1, April 8, April 15, April 22, and April 29). The daily bag limit will be two adipose fin-clipped adult salmonids (chinook greater than 24" and steelhead greater than 20"), only one of which may be a chinook. Catch limits for jacks remain in effect as per permanent regulations. All non-adipose fin-clipped chinook salmon and non-adipose fin-clipped steelhead must be released immediately unharmed.

**COLUMBIA RIVER MAINSTEM, Bonneville Dam to McNary Dam:** This section of the Columbia River is currently open to the retention of adipose fin-clipped steelhead with a daily bag limit of two fish. The retention of spring chinook is prohibited. **Effective March 16 through May 10, 2008** the retention of adipose fin-clipped spring chinook will be allowed from the Tower Island powerlines (located approximately 6 miles downstream of The Dalles Dam) upstream to McNary Dam plus the Oregon and Washington banks between Bonneville Dam and Tower Island. Boat angling between Bonneville Dam and Tower Island powerlines is prohibited. The daily bag limit includes two adipose fin-clipped adult salmon or steelhead (chinook greater than 24" and steelhead greater than 20"). Catch limits for jacks remain in effect as per permanent regulations. All non-adipose fin-clipped chinook salmon and non-adipose fin-clipped steelhead must be released immediately unharmed.

**The Guide's Forecast** – So, are you ready for this? It's finally salmon season time and we actually have something to fish for! The spring chinook run will be one of the few bright spots in the 2008 season so it would behoove sport anglers to take advantage of it! Get after them with these top picks:

1. The Columbia above I-5. Although I am not intimately familiar with this stretch of river, it has become more popular in recent years. The Washington side has an extended sandbar with a depth of about 20 – 25 feet. Trolling and anchor fishing should be productive here. I prefer trolling green label herring because if you are not in the right slot, you won't catch fish.
2. Government Island is a favorite for anchor anglers working plugs. With shallower depths, it makes it easier to find the bottom and the island, acting as a bottleneck, funnels more biters into your gear!
3. Reed Island is another fishery similar to Government Island. With the channel on the south side of the island, fish depths of 12 to 20 feet and hope you are in the right lane.

Plugs are most commonly used here also.

4. The Shad Rack along Ives Island is another popular hang out for anchor anglers and although salmon passage at the dam is underway, fishing in this section will not be so impressive until later on in April. Of course we could all be surprised as we have witnessed some pretty strong March runs in recent history. Please..... let us be surprised!

Undoubtedly, there should be some salmon caught on the opener but water temperatures remain cool and the run is just getting underway. Don't have high expectations but no trip will be a wasted trip as you are likely to learn something if this is a new fishery to you.

Herring often works well in the cooler water temperatures but plugs can be effective as well this early in the season. We'll certainly have more to report in the coming weeks!

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report** – As of March 12th, the lower Willamette flow is on the increase as is the temperature which was 48 at the Falls as of March 12th. It appears an effort is being made to keep fish counts up to date, for which outdoor writers and anglers are grateful. Modest numbers of native winter steelhead are crossing daily along with a handful of hatchery summers.

Undoubtedly, the summer steelhead count at the Falls which started on March 1st, is less than accurate as summers have been caught on the North Santiam for the past month or so. This situation would indicate an earlier start accounting for these fish would be in order.

About 10% of boaters in the lower Willamette are bringing spring Chinook over the gunwales. That doesn't sound great, but it is an improvement over a week ago. Catches of keeper-sized sturgeon also picked up over the retention period last week. Combine this with the summer steelhead available and it's easy to understand that pressure on the lower Willamette has been quite high.

Mid-week, the March Brown hatch was underway on the lower McKenzie with cutthroat and rainbows moderately cooperative.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Try for springers on anchor with puls or prawn spinners and by trolling herring, either whole with a flasher or plug cut. Trolling is both are popular and effective on the incoming tide. St. Johns, the head of Multnomah Channel and Coon Island are possibilities. Sturgeon fishing should be rewarding with the water if the lower Willamette warming. Squid has been effective but take smelt if you can find (and afford) them to improve the odds. With fresh spring Chinook and large keeper sturgeon available, expect steelhead to get little deliberate attention.

Steelheading on the North Santiam remains a hit-or-miss affair with the middle and lower river most productive. As summer steelhead numbers improve, so will fishing here. This has been a stellar summer fishery in years past and we can only hope it will become so again.

The McKenzie water level is expected to become unfishable with heavy precipitation. As much as an inch of rain is predicted to fall Thursday through Saturday this week.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports** – Steelheading on the lower Clackamas has been a spotty affair, fair one day, offering nothing on the next. Since there's no way of

determining which day will be worthwhile, the best course of action, as always, is to just go fishing. Catches improved last week with water temperatures improving and summers showing in the mix. As the level falls following rain this week, steelheading should be worthwhile.

As the season progresses, temperatures warm and numbers of summer steelhead increase, fishing on the Sandy River is expected to pick up as well. Hopefully, rain this week will bring up the water level after which it will be dropping into next week which will be reason for optimism. The winter steelhead fishery will move upstream with anglers concentrating on summers in the lower stretches.

**Pro guide Trevor Storlie (503-307-5601 )** reports "The Sandy has dropped big time. Fish are all in the deeper holes. Lots of Summer Steelhead are starting to show up along with some nice big Natives. I have heard of 2 Spring Chinook caught in the last week one at Cedar Creek and one out of Oxbow Park. Side drifting is starting to slow down. The best things to use when it gets low and clear like this are jigs and straight shrimp or eggs. Guys using 6lbs and 8lbs test will have the most action. Spinners are a good option. Fishing will continue to be a little slow until we to get a little rain. 3 Summers caught this week in the lower river."



**North Coast Fishing Report –** There are late winter steelhead around although not all north coast streams are consistent. Recently, the Wilson has been the bright spot with snow still contributing to stable water levels and excellent color conditions lately. Most recently, I fished Rob Boaz of WebSteel Buildings as he was the guest of Phil Knight of Service Partners. On 3/12, we started our day at the Siskeyville Boat Slide with several other boats ahead of us. By taking our time, working the water harder and with rather unconventional methods in these side-drifting times, we had 3 opportunities using plugs and one fish fell to sidedrifting. The plugs we used were the K11 and K9 Extremes with bites coming on the Michael Jackson, green pirate and a metallic purple, all above Mills Bridge. Once we got to the well-worked water below Mills Bridge, we broke out the sidedrifting gear and took our second hatchery broodstock keeper on the rigging shown in the main body of the short version newsletter. A close up of the rigging is here:



Overall, most of the early part of the week was productive for side-drifters using eggs but the value of fishing these PowerBait eggs is the durability, and reliability not to mention how much cleaner they are than real eggs. And in my opinion, just as effective. What makes them so effective is their buoyant quality. As a matter of fact, I strongly recommend shortening up your leaders to about 20 to 25 inches as this puts your baits right in the zones of these fish faces! They work!

Other rivers have not been so good. News from the Nestucca indicates that success is not nearly as good. Do you think it has anything to do with the seals that are plying the spawning beds in the upper watershed?

Trask anglers have been rather quiet but river levels have allowed for some good opportunity over there. There is likely some fair catching of wild fish over there with a rare broodstock stray in the creel as well.

The Nehalem has been somewhat quiet as well although the recent rise in river levels has put this stream a bit too high to expect great results. Smaller streams like the Necanicum and North Fork Nehalem have been too low to float although it's likely lower stretches have been productive for native fish for the few taking advantage of it.

**From the ODFW:  
For Immediate Release Wednesday, March 12, 2008  
March, April ocean chinook salmon season closes**

NEWPORT – With northern California chinook salmon runs forecast to be at historic lows, the sport salmon season south of Cape Falcon scheduled for March 15 through April 30 has been closed.

"Chinook salmon forecasts for runs that contribute to ocean salmon fisheries off Oregon are estimated to be at very low levels," said Eric Schindler, ocean salmon supervising biologist for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. "Critically low numbers of fall chinook within the Sacramento River and a very low forecast for Klamath River three-year-old chinook head the list of problems facing salmon managers this year."

The commercial ocean troll salmon fishery for all species except coho between Cape Falcon, Oregon and the Oregon/California Border that was scheduled to open for the period of March 15

through April 30 was also closed.

Both actions were by the National Marine Fisheries Service in consultation with the Pacific Fishery Management Council, the State of Oregon, and fishery interests.

"This closure will allow fishery managers to better develop a range of fishing options for the 2008 ocean salmon seasons," Schindler said. "The National Marine Fisheries Service and the Pacific Fishery Management Council are still considering options for fishing opportunity within this area that could start as early as April 15."

A decision on any April seasons will be made at the Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting April 6-12.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Rivers are forecasted to rise this week and the rain is just now getting underway this late night on the 12<sup>th</sup> of March. Levels are supposed to come up as much as 1 foot which shouldn't hurt weekend opportunities too bad. A rise in river levels coupled with a favorable tide series could draw in some better numbers of fish.

This Wilson will likely continue to be a go-to river on the north coast with the Trask a good second option if you want to get away from the crowds. Hatchery fish will be most available on the Wilson and Nestucca Rivers. The upper drifts from 5½ Bridge to Three Rivers will likely be one of the better options for drifters.

The mainstem Nehalem is likely to go out again with the incoming weather fronts and the smaller streams like the Necanicum and North Fork will likely be best for bank anglers as levels are likely to remain low. Wild fish and a few spawned out hatchery fish will dominate the catches here.

The minus tide series will likely draw a few motivated sturgeon anglers to Tillamook Bay in search of keepers once again. No reliable sturgeon reports have come from the bay since the last tide series and they weren't all that favorable a few weeks ago. Effort has dropped off but this tide series will tell us as to whether they are still around or not.

Crabbing remains poor and the ocean forecast is for rough seas so bottomfishers are likely to be shut out once again.

**Central & South Coast Reports** – Siuslaw water levels were low but allowed drift boats to launch at Whitaker Creek on Wednesday this week. Steelhead remain present with about half of those available of hatchery origin. According to NOAA projections, the water level at Mapleton is forecast to increase from the current level of just over five feet to nearly nine feet overnight Saturday, March 15th.

While the first spring Chinook was taken below Elkton last week, most anglers have been concentrating on the South Umpqua where steelheading has been best over the past few weeks. Bottom fishing has been excellent offshore out of Winchester Bay, but ocean conditions this weekend will have anglers looking for action elsewhere. Rain this week will add an additional four feet to the water level at Elkton by this weekend.

Although steelheading has been fair to good in the Coos and Coquille system, scratch them off your list this weekend as these will be too high to fish. Even the South Fork Coquille which has both fished well and produced large steelhead, will be out of shape with the river at Powers topping five feet.

Perhaps some good will come from all this high, off-color water, though. Even though tides aren't particularly conducive, this much water could trigger a sturgeon bite in the lower Umpqua or Coos rivers.

No fewer than two spring Chinook have been landed at Gold Beach on the lower Rogue, and while it's still too early to target springers with any degree of optimism, these events confirm that salmon are on their way. Until the Chinook arrive in mass, steelhead fishing as the run winds down has been good in the lower Rogue and should continue to entertain anglers for a while. Although the Rogue will get hammered by precipitation this week along with other southwest rivers, the outlook on the Grants Pass stretch is good as it drops next week. Steelheading has been steadily improving on the upper Rogue, too, as the run moves upriver.

Incidental hookups with striped bass have occurred while long-rodders have been taking advantage of the outstanding surf perch fishing off the south coast. Anglers ill-equipped to handle these brawlers will have their hands full but those successful in landing one are in for a genuine culinary treat; these fish eat as well as they fight.

### **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 Kline Pond. At Kline Pond, 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/>.

### **Washington fishing reports:**

#### **Reader Email -**

**George G.** (who's also a regular at ifish.net) wrote this week, "Hey Michael, Love your fishing reports. Look forward to them every week.

"I fished Hagg lake on the opener and boy was it muddy with lots of debris in the water. Boaters need to watch where they are going or could get themselves in a lot of trouble. Fishing was pretty slow for the guys in boats with the water clarity only about 18 inches. Our boat did get 13 fish but it took 10 hours to do. I did manage to take a brood trout that was 29 inches long and weighed in at 11lbs 12 oz but it was only the second biggest fish weighed at the Lake Stop store. There was a fish that was 12.6lbs. All in all the day was pretty good. The fish are there if you are willing to work for them."



In reply, **TGF co-editor Michael Teague** wrote, "Thank you for your kind comments, great report and cool picture. Hopefully, conditions at Hagg will improve as we move into spring.

"Hope we'll be hearing from you again soon!"

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

Write to the TGF staff:

Bob Rees: [brees@pacifier.com](mailto:brees@pacifier.com)

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

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

### **Random Links**

Ocean salmon closes and now this - *Tribe to fish downstream of Bonneville Dam:*

[http://www.columbian.com/sports/localNews/2008/03/03132008\\_Tribe-to-fish-downstream-of-Bonneville-Dam.cfm](http://www.columbian.com/sports/localNews/2008/03/03132008_Tribe-to-fish-downstream-of-Bonneville-Dam.cfm)

Speaking of Chinook problems - *Bering Sea pollock fishery accidentally takes 130,000 prize chinook:*

<http://www.topix.net/content/cp/2008/02/bering-sea-pollock-fishery-accidentally-takes-130-000-prize-chinook>

**Weekly Quote** – "Good roads lead to bad fishing" - Eric Wight, Maine Game Warden

**GOOD LUCK!**