

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **November 28<sup>th</sup> – December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

**Oregon Fisheries Update:**

**Willamette Valley/Metro-** As expected, the keeper fishery at Bonneville is starting to show signs of a slowdown. Boat and bank anglers are still finding an occasional keeper but cold weather and lower flows will continue to dampen success.

Once sturgeon anglers lose interest, Columbia River anglers will anxiously await the next opportunity, the spring chinook run, with anticipation of great fishing and a longer season on an improving run.

The water temperature at Willamette Falls is down to 48 degrees with the level and flow moderating. Sturgeon fishing was still worthwhile over the last Thursday through Sunday retention period.

McKenzie river levels spiked mid-month but are now down to near normal, but the water temperatures are dropping in to the lower 40's, which typically put fish down until it stabilizes.

While North Santiam has come down from extreme levels mid-month, it's still high for fishing.

Water conditions have improved on the Sandy but it's still early for good steelhead results.

A few winters are in the Clackamas system but plunkers working the lower reaches or at Meldrum Bar just below the mouth on the Willamette, often take the early fish. Rain will improve the numbers here.

**Northwest –** Anglers fishing Tillamook area rivers under ideal conditions were not surprised to find mediocre fishing on the Wilson, Kilchis, Trask and Nestucca Rivers. Fresh fish were available and like the early season, some quality fish pushing 40-pounds were taken. Plugs and bait were both effective in the dropping flows with the Wilson producing the best results on the early part of the week.

Rivers are once again low and clear and a few spawning fish can be found in the tailouts but should be left alone. Chum salmon made up a good portion of the catch but anglers are forbidden to target them after November 15<sup>th</sup>.

Steelhead are already making a strong showing on some district streams. Seventeen steelhead have already made their way to the collection facility on the upper Wilson indicating a strong return is likely this season. The Wilson and Nestucca will be top bets for early returning adult steelhead but the Kilchis, Three Rivers, North Fork Nehalem and Necanicum River are also fair possibilities.

Fresh fish will only trickle in until the next significant rain storm hits. If weather predictions are correct, that won't be until next week at the earliest. Large incoming tides should produce good crab catches on the lower Columbia and Tillamook estuaries over the holiday weekend however. Be sure to pull pots before the strong outgoing tide threatens to take them away.

**Southwest –** The offshore forecast for the central Oregon coast indicates that river fishing would be a safer option.

The first winter steelhead have entered the Umpqua River but it won't fish really well until December.

The Elk and Sixes chinook fishing has been slow in low water. The Elk in particular is a good late season producer and better fishing is likely upon the next rain freshet.

Siltcoos and Tahkenitch Lakes remain open for wild coho salmon. Anglers are allowed to take one adult and one jack and catches should be peaking in the next 10 days. Troll Hot Shots and small spoons for your best chance at a keeper.

Offshore anglers launching out of Gold Beach had success with rockfish and ling cod when the ocean laid down last week. Predictions for the coming weekend are marginal. Fresh winter steelhead are entering the lower Rogue. Anglers in the middle river have continued to take good numbers of half-pounders.

Boats launching out of the Port Of Brookings made good catches of large ling cod and rockfish last week when the ocean laid down. Chinook fishing has been rewarding on the Chetco River over the past week although the chinook fishery is starting to wind down as winter steelheading heats up. It's still a bit early for steelhead with best numbers arriving with the first rains of December. Fishing has been decent for sea-run cutthroat as well.

The scheduled planting of hatchery trout has wrapped up for the year in the Southwest Zone.

**Eastern** – While the Deschutes is closed to trout fishing along Warm Springs Reservation, it has been worthwhile around Maupin. Steelheading picked up a little last week as water conditions improved. Most are in the ten pound range with a few larger fish being taken.

The daily limit for kokanee at Lake Billy Chinook has been raised from five to 25 for the remainder of the year. It will return to five in 2009.

John Day anglers are experiencing a disappointing season despite high returns to the Columbia. Wild fish outnumbered hatchery fish this week in a creel count that revealed .62 steelhead for every boat.

Steelheading is slow at the Grande Ronde with the water temperature below 40 degrees.

**SW Washington** – Coho fishing on the Cowlitz, Toutle and Lewis Rivers is winding down. Anglers are catching winter steelhead on the Cowlitz and Lewis Rivers and numbers should build to an early peak by mid-December.

The Klickitat River should produce some late season coho fishing although this fishery isn't producing the numbers it has in the past.

**Columbia River Fishing Report** – The last fishery of the season is indeed on its last legs. With water temperatures dropping, sturgeon are becoming lethargic and angler success rates are beginning to reflect a phase into winter.

ODF&W's weekly creel check went as follows:

**Gorge Bank:**

Weekly checking showed eight legal white sturgeon kept, plus one legal, five oversize, and 21 sublegal sturgeon released for 111 bank anglers.

**Gorge Boats:**

Weekly checking showed two legal white sturgeon kept and 98 sublegal sturgeon released for 15 boats.

**Troutdale Boats:**

Weekly checking showed 18 sublegal sturgeon released for six boats.

**St. Helens Bank:**

Weekend checking showed one sublegal sturgeon released for three bank anglers.

**Portland Boats:**

Weekend checking showed no catch for one boat.

Smelt and shrimp remain a key bait but there won't be much of any bait that will be effective when the water temperatures drop. The best action remained in the faster flows close to the deadline although good action with shakers making up the bulk of the catch can be had from Cape Horn to Beacon Rock. It likely won't be long before we see the Willamette catches on the increase.

Steelheading remains a bit of a disappointment for anglers that have experienced better years on the John Day Arm and in the John Day Pool itself. Veteran anglers have seen years where double digit opportunities exist but water temperatures had fish on a hard swim to upriver tributaries last year and this year. Although the cooler temperatures are good for migrating fish overall, it doesn't bode well for anxious anglers hoping to hook into good numbers of quality fish this time of year on the mainstem Columbia. This run has been quite consistent in recent years so it is hopeful that this popular fishery will regain its excellence in the coming years. There are some fish being taken in this fishery however and it remains a pleasant place to recreate. The weekend check tallied one adipose fin-clipped steelhead kept for six bank anglers and 14 adipose fin-clipped steelhead kept, plus 19 unclipped steelhead released for 53 boats.

Crabbing is a popular activity this time of year in the lower Columbia and the action should be full steam ahead right now. The high tides will limit when and where you can place your pots but the bottom is seething with keepers!

**The Guide's Forecast** – Sturgeon fishing the gorge really isn't all that fun unless you have the properly equipped boat for cold and wet weather. This fishery is waning so you may start to ply the lower Willamette as an alternative. You won't have to worry about inadvertently intercepting a spring chinook this year but more on that in a later edition. Use smelt and shrimp in the lower Willamette and expect better fishing here as the Columbia continues to cool off into the winter months.

Steelheading is a lot like sturgeon fishing, it's tolerable if you have the properly equipped boat and don't have high expectations of bringing home a keeper. The John Day Pool will offer up the best chance at a holiday keeper. Target these fish by trolling plugs safely upstream of the John Day Dam. The colder the air temperature, the slower you'll want to troll and the slower action you'll want on your plug. Choose the K-11 Kwikfish or a hot shot for a standard producer this time of year. Go with the metallic green or blue pirate under sunny skies.

Be mindful of the strong tides this week and weekend when crabbing the lower Columbia. If you aren't sure how your pots will produce in the swifter flows, don't hesitate to drop them in water

as shallow as 12 or 14 feet. Go deeper when the tide begins to slow but don't wait too long into the outgoing tide or you're likely to lose your gear. It can be productive however to "push the envelope" as typically, some of the best crabbing can take place right at the first part of outgoing tide.

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report** – The flow of the lower Willamette will be sufficient to hold a boat straight regardless of tides and

despite low water temps, sturgeon fishing is expected to be worthwhile.

The McKenzie has continued to drop and moderate in flow with water temperatures in the low to mid 40s.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Sturgeon fishing will not be hot in the lower Willamette, but those who put in their time with herring, sand shrimp and squid should be able to take home a keeper. A few smallmouth are being taken but with the water cooling, slow down presentation to draw strikes as this fishery winds down.

While it's early to expect to connect with a winter steelhead on the lower McKenzie, there should be a few late-season summers around.

With the North Santiam high and the fish population low, your fishing time would be best spent elsewhere.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports** – The Clackamas and Sandy Rivers are both in fishable condition, but there are few fish in the Clack. By the same token, it's early for the Sandy to produce winter steelhead since it has been a broodstock river for several years. Despite that later-running strain, winters have been caught this week and the Sandy is the best bet for chrome in the metro area over the long holiday weekend.

**North Coast Fishing Report** – After a productive stint of chinook fishing on the north coast, action has slowed down as water levels dropped. The Wilson was the highlight of the north coast systems (as expected) but the Nestucca showed signs of life as well. Consistent with the early part of the season, quality of quantity was the highlight of the good action. Several fish in the high 30's and a few in the 40-pound class was just another clear indicator that a few of the 5-year old and 6-year old fish fed well this year. The 4 and 5-year old fish that make up the bulk of the run on Oregon's coastal tributaries did not fare well when they first entered the ocean as smolts. Thankfully, relief seems to be for future broods and younger age salmon (chum, coho and chinook jacks) showed a remarkable recovery this year so it should change around if not next year, the year after.

In the dropping flows, the lower reaches of the Wilson and Nestucca produced the best results. Some boats did well late last week but the action has been slowing since the middle of last week. Tidewater has also been producing light catches but a group of boats remain diligent in Tillamook Bay itself with only a few scoring results. **Pro guide John Kirby (406-930-1133)** has been one of the lucky ones recently scoring 3 nice chinook on 11/26 in the Ghost Hole. John admitted he felt like one of the lucky ones as he didn't see much action from others in the fleet other than a few other anglers reporting getting an occasional drive by bite. In the bay, effort is centered around the Ghost Hole and fish seem to be responding about every day.

And speaking of responding, crabbing in Tillamook Bay has been surprisingly productive. We crabbed in the lower bay today scoring 2 limits of nice Dungeness crab in about 2½ hours time at the top of the tide. Lyster's Corner and the south jetty has been producing well in recent days.

Although the conditions are ripe, sturgeon anglers have not been out in force on Tillamook yet this season. After the recent flooding event, keepers should be moved in for the winter months, feeding on juvenile crab and shrimp that are very available in the estuary right now. The tides are right but more about that in the next section of this newsletter.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Driftboaters won't have ideal conditions to be floating down a river over the holiday weekend. River conditions continue to clear and flows are dropping on all systems. High tides are certain to bring in fresh salmon and steelhead but fish will likely only be available in the tidewater stretches of these coastal systems.

Stealthy driftboaters may find some early winter steelhead on the Wilson or Nestucca River (below Three Rivers) as they are less intimidated by low flows. Early arriving fish have been taken on a few north coast systems and could be well distributed from the last high water event.

Motivated anglers may also wish to continue to target salmon in Tillamook Bay itself with the Ghost Hole and Bay City likely producers of the few fish that are likely to be caught. Herring seems to be the best producer for these late season fish and the last 3 hours of incoming tide seem to produce the best results. These fish are likely destined for the Kilchis and Wilson Rivers and with the large tides this week, will likely enter the tidewater stretches of the Wilson River. Bobbers and eggs are likely to produce results as the tide nears low slack.

Sturgeon anglers may have to go to battle with juvenile crab again but keeper sturgeon should be available in the upper reaches of the west channel and the middle channel for those using sand shrimp.

Crabbing should remain a viable activity during the long weekend but be conscious of where you place your pots and what the tide is doing. We are on an extreme tide series and pots crabbers think got stolen are actually floating out to sea due to inadequate weight to keep them secure on the bottom. The commercial fleet will likely begin deploying their gear a few days before the December 1<sup>st</sup> opener. The bar is forecasted to be too rough for most of the sport fleet so stick to the Nehalem, Netarts and Tillamook Bays this weekend.

**Central & South Coast Reports** – The ocean opens for sport and commercial crabbing on Monday, December 1<sup>st</sup>. Results should be good for all. Crabbing has been decent in Yaquina Bay.

The Christmas boat parade will take place in Newport on Saturday, December 6<sup>th</sup> at 5 PM and will last about an hour. For information, call 541-265-6200.

Bottom fishing is scheduled to remain open with no depth restrictions for the remainder of the year.

Clams and mussel harvesting is closed coast-wide due to the naturally occurring toxin PSP. This closure includes beaches, rocks, jetties and any bay entrance. Clamming inside the bay is allowed and will be safe.

If offshore fishing is the plan for the coming weekend, reschedule to spend some meaningful moments with the family. It will be rough again but settling down in the coming week.

Preliminary data has been released regarding halibut quota recommendations. Expect to see a reduction in 2009.

Siltcoos Lake trollers have had fair results for wild coho over the past week. Several have picked up a fish per boat with some blanking. Thanksgiving is traditionally the peak of the season, however.

Coos Bay has been producing good numbers of mostly-hard Dungeness, but with the ocean opening Monday, results will be better offshore if conditions allow.

The Elk and Sixes remain low and clear with fishing slow to fair until the next rainfall.

The best change for winter steel on the south coast is the lower Rogue even though the season is just beginning. The best chance at actually taking home a fish for the grill is the Grants Pass stretch where half-pounders are being taken in decent number.

A variety of baits, lures and techniques are taking Chinook at the Chetco River as this fishery begins to wind down. Most fish taken here are in the 20 pound range with a few in the 30s. A few winter steelhead have been caught but this fishery won't really turn on until rainfall starts next month. When the ocean has laid down (unlike the coming weekend) offshore anglers have scored good catches of rockfish along with some large ling cod. Even surf fishermen are scoring with perch, though not many pursue them at this time of year.

**Central and Eastern Oregon** – Deschutes steelheading has been an on and off affair, but when it's good it's very good. There is no predicting it but with another month of fishing remaining, get out there if cold weather steelheading is your thing.

The John Day River is in need of rain, but after it gets some, should be worthwhile. Bundle up for the remainder of the season here as it will be cold.

### **Washington fishing reports:**

#### **From the WDF&W Weekender Report November 26<sup>th</sup> – December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

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

Anglers are still finding a few **chum salmon** in some of the region's rivers, but the run is winding down and **steelhead** are starting to take center stage. On Puget Sound, **crabbing** is open in several marine areas and **blackmouth** fishing is beginning to pick up.

"Up until recently, it had been a pretty slow November for **blackmouth** fishing in the region," said John Long, WDFW's statewide salmon manager. "But it has improved in the last several days, and anglers seem to be doing pretty well as we move into December." Creel checks in the region show decent fishing for blackmouth - resident chinook - in Marine Area 10 (Seattle/Bremerton). At Shilshole Ramp, 15 anglers were checked with six chinook Nov. 22, while 75 anglers took home 26 chinook the following day.

Those fishing Marine Area 10 are currently allowed to keep one chinook as part of a two-salmon daily limit. Daily bag limits for that area change beginning Dec. 1, when anglers will be allowed to

keep two hatchery chinook as part of their two-salmon daily limit. They must, however, release wild chinook, which have an intact adipose fin.

But time is running out for anglers to hook blackmouth in Marine Area 9 (Admiralty Inlet). The salmon fishery in that area runs through Nov. 30. Until then, anglers can keep up to two hatchery chinook per day.

Sport **crabbing** also is an option for anglers out on the Sound. Marine areas 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca), 9 (Admiralty Inlet), 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) and 12 (Hood Canal) are open for sport crabbing seven days a week through Jan. 2. Crab fishing also is open seven days a week through Jan. 2 in marine areas 4 (Neah Bay), 5 (Sekiu), and 13 (south Puget Sound).

Sport crabbing is closed in marine areas 7 (San Juan Islands), 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay), 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) and 11 (Tacoma/Vashon Island).

The daily catch limit in Puget Sound is five Dungeness crab, males only, in hard-shell condition with a minimum carapace width of 6¼ inches. In addition, fishers may catch six red rock crab of either sex per day, provided those crab measure at least 5 inches across. Additional information is available on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/crab/index.htm>.

In the rivers, anglers are still finding some **chum** salmon. But many anglers are turning their attention to hatchery **steelhead**, which are starting to show up in some of the region's rivers. "Even though it's a bit early, there are some steelhead in the Skagit River," said Brett Barkdull, WDFW fish biologist. "And fishing has been pretty good so far." Barkdull reminds anglers that chum retention is prohibited on the Skagit River.

Farther south, there also have been reports of fair steelheading in the Reiter Ponds area of the Skykomish River.

**Rainbow trout** also are an option for anglers. About 1,800 hatchery rainbows - averaging approximately 3 to 5 pounds each - were released in Beaver Lake near Issaquah in early November. Beaver Lake, one of several westside lowland lakes open to fishing year-round, is best fished by small boat, although anglers can also be successful fishing from shore. The daily bag limit is five fish, and bait anglers must keep the first five trout they catch.

Before heading out to the lakes, rivers, or Puget Sound, anglers should check the rules and regulations for fisheries in WDFW's *Fishing in Washington* pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

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

Weather permitting, anglers have some opportunities to catch **winter steelhead** and **coho** and **chum** salmon in the days ahead. Meanwhile, a razor clam dig is scheduled for mid-December.

**Winter steelhead** are making their return to Olympic Peninsula rivers where anglers are catching early-run hatchery fish along with coho salmon in the Satsop, Wynoochee and Humptulip rivers in western Grays Harbor. "With the recent nice days, anglers have been out in force," said Scott Barbour, WDFW fish biologist. "Coming up, it could be promising as long as the weather holds."

Farther north, there's been a decent showing of steelhead on the Bogachiel River, which typically gets early returning hatchery fish the first few weeks in December, followed by the Sol Duc and

the Hoh rivers. "Then the wild steelhead start showing up in January," Barbour said. The daily limit for hatchery steelhead is two fish.

Starting Dec. 1, wild steelhead-retention rules go into effect on the Bogachiel, Calawah, Clearwater, Dickey, Hoh, Hoko, Pysht, Quillayute, Quinault and Sol Duc rivers. Anglers fishing those rivers may retain one wild steelhead per license year (Dec. 1 through April 30). Barbour strongly recommends that anglers check the 2008-09 *Fishing in Washington* pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) for rules on area rivers before heading out.

That's good advice for salmon anglers too, because fishing rules change for a number of rivers Nov. 30. Rivers in the Quillayute system, along with the Clearwater and Hoh, close that day to salmon fishing along with the Elk, Hoquiam and Johns rivers and Joe Creek in Grays Harbor, the Bear and Niawiakum rivers in Pacific County, and the Carbon River in Pierce County.

Several popular **chum** fishing sites such as Kennedy and McLane creeks close Nov. 30, but anglers can still try their luck on the Nisqually River, which is open through January. Minter Creek in Pierce/Kitsap counties is open through December, while the Dosewallips and Duckabush rivers in Jefferson County close Dec. 15.

Anglers still have time to catch **hatchery coho** on several Grays Harbor streams where the Chehalis, Satsop, Wynoochee and Humptulips rivers are open through January and the Wishkah River is open through December. The Skokomish River in Mason County closes to all salmon fishing Dec. 15.

Four evening **razor clam** digs are tentatively scheduled at Copalis and Mocrocks Dec. 11-14, while Long Beach and Twin Harbors are scheduled for three evening digs Dec. 12-14. Kalaloch Beach is closed for the fall season. Evening low tides during the dig are 5:23 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 11 (-1.1 ft.), 6:13 p.m., Friday, Dec. 12 (-1.5 ft.), 7:02 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 13 (-1.6 ft.), 7:50 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 14 (-1.4 ft.)

Recreational **crab** fishing continues in four marine areas of Puget Sound and is open seven days a week through Jan. 2. Crab fishing is open in marine areas 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca), 9 (Admiralty Inlet), 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) and 12 (Hood Canal).

Crab fishing will also remain open seven days a week through Jan. 2 in marine areas 4 (Neah Bay), 5 (Sekiu), and 13 (south Puget Sound), where the fishery has continued uninterrupted since June 18.

The daily catch limit in Puget Sound is five Dungeness crab, males only, in hard-shell condition with a minimum carapace width of 6¼ inches. In addition, fishers may catch six red rock crab of either sex per day, provided those crab measure at least 5 inches across. Additional information is available on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/crab/index.htm>.

### **Southwest Washington:**

As Thanksgiving drew near, **winter steelhead** continued to move into tributaries to the lower Columbia, setting the stage for the unofficial start of the season. Meanwhile, anglers are still catching legal-size sturgeon below Bonneville Dam, although strong winds have made boat fishing in the gorge an on-again, off-again proposition.

Although the lower Cowlitz River has been running muddy, early birds were catching some bright **hatchery steelhead** and **sea-run cutthroat** below the trout hatchery. They also picked up a few **hatchery coho**, although that run is fading fast, said Joe Hymer, a WDFW fish biologist.

"The Cowlitz seems to be getting the most attention right now, but fishing for hatchery steelhead should start picking up soon in a number of tributaries to the lower Columbia," Hymer said. Good bets include the Kalama, Lewis, Washougal, Elochoman and Grays rivers, along with Salmon Creek in Clark County, he said.

Blue and Mill creeks, both tributaries to the Cowlitz, are scheduled to open for hatchery steelhead Dec. 1. Blue Creek also opens for hatchery sea-run cutthroat that day. Nov. 30 is the last day of the extended night closure/non buoyant lure restriction on the Cowlitz from Mill Creek upstream to the barrier dam.

Meanwhile, the Toutle River - including the mainstem, North Fork and Green River - will close to fishing for salmon and hatchery steelhead at the end of the day Nov. 30. It is also the last day of the extended trout season at Swift Reservoir.

Specific regulations for all those waters are described in the *Fishing in Washington* rule pamphlet at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>. As always, anglers are required to release any steelhead without a clipped adipose fin.

During the third week of November, 186 winter steelhead found their way to the salmon hatchery on the Cowlitz River. During that week, Tacoma Power employees transported 1,122 coho adults, 106 jacks and two winter-run steelhead to Lake Scanewa above Cowlitz Falls Dam on the upper Cowlitz River. They also hauled 374 coho adults 47 jacks, 30 fall chinook adults and 18 cutthroat to the Tilton River at Gust Backstrom Park in Morton plus more than 500 coho to the upper Cowlitz at Skate Creek and to the Cispus River above the mouth of Yellow Jacket Creek.

Like last year, WDFW plans to start planting surplus early run steelhead in Swofford Pond and Kress Lake in the weeks ahead, Hymer said.

The **sturgeon** fishery on the mainstem Columbia River is beginning to wind down, although bank anglers fishing below Bonneville Dam kept one legal-size fish for every 13 rods during the third week of November. Bank anglers also caught a few legal-size sturgeon in the Longview area, and in the lower Cowlitz River. "Sturgeon seem to actually like muddy water," Hymer said.

### **Eastern Washington:**

The winter-only **rainbow trout** fishery in the region won't be the best this season. Two of the four lakes that open Dec. 1 - Hatch and Williams lakes in northern Stevens County - were treated this fall to rid them of yellow perch and will not be re-stocked with trout until spring. Chris Donley, WDFW district fish biologist of Spokane, said Fourth of July Lake, on the Lincoln-Adams county line, is full of fathead minnows and trout fishing may be slow.

"We put some **tiger trout** in Fourth of July Lake to reduce those minnows and some of them will be up to 14 inches now, so it's not like there aren't any trout to catch," Donley said. "But it's definitely not going to be the best year for this usually productive lake. Water levels are down, too, so boat access will be difficult."

Another winter-only lake in the region - Hog Canyon in southwest Spokane County - is full of tench and bullheads and is slated for rehabilitation next year. Donley said Hog Canyon, like Fourth of July, still has rainbows, but fishing may be slow. Some pre-season sampling at Hog Canyon showed the trout range from eight to 12 inches, with most 10 to 11 inches. Both spinning and fly tackle worked, using everything from a gold spoon to a crystal flash dragonfly nymph, and catch rates were better in the afternoon in the middle of the lake.

Donley said better bets for late fall-early winter fishing are year-round open waters like Lake Roosevelt, and Sprague and Rock lakes.

"Roosevelt is full of 15-inch rainbows that can be caught close to shore by bank anglers," Donley said. "A total of about 750,000 rainbows from the net pens are out there waiting to be caught."

Sprague Lake continues to produce limits of one-pound, 16-inch and better rainbow trout. "We've had phenomenal growth rates on the hatchery trout we stocked in Sprague last spring," Donley said.

Rock Lake in Whitman County yields nice rainbow and **brown trout** for those willing to brave the wind there.

Another good cold weather fishery that's open through February is Waitts Lake in southern Steven County. Net-pen-reared rainbow and brown trout carry over well through the winter at Waitts, and there are also **largemouth bass, yellow perch, and pumpkinseed sunfish**.

**Whitefish** season opens Dec. 1 on the middle section of the Little Spokane River, from the state Highway 291 bridge to the West Branch of the river. Whitefish gear is restricted to one single-point hook with a maximum hook size of 3/16-inch from point to shank (hook size 14). Up to 15 whitefish can be retained daily. Most will run from 10 to 13 inches and can be found in groups in deep pools, and usually caught with maggots or small artificial flies or lures.

Sherman Creek in Ferry County opens to all gamefish Dec. 1 and will mostly produce catches of rainbow trout, with some mountain whitefish in the upper reaches. John Whalen, WDFW regional fish program manager, explains Sherman Creek's unusual fishing season, which runs through Aug. 31, protects an in-stream kokanee spawning trap for hatchery kokanee production during the September through November period. The only year-round closed portion of Sherman Creek is from the hatchery boat dock to 400 feet upstream of the hatchery water diversion dam.

Snake River hatchery **steelhead** fishing has been good with recent rain and snow, especially in the Hellar Bar/Grand Ronde mouth and Clearwater mouth areas along the Washington-Idaho border. The latest WDFW creel surveys are posted at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/snake/index.htm>.

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

WDFW district fish biologist Bob Jateff of Omak notes that a few Okanogan County lakes open for catch-and-keep **trout** fishing Dec 1. Rat Lake near Brewster, and Big and Little Green lakes near Omak are on a catch-and-release season through Nov. 30, but change to catch-and-keep Dec. 1 with a daily limit of five trout.

Jateff also notes Little Twin Lake near Winthrop, which used to be open for a winter fishery, closed Oct. 31 this year. "Anglers who used to fish Little Twin in the winter can fish either Patterson Lake, which is open year round, or Davis Lake, which has a split season and is open now through March," he said. Both lakes are in the Winthrop area.

Also opening Dec. 1 is the winter **whitefish** season on portions of the Chewuch, Entiat, Methow, Similkameen, and Sinlahekin rivers. Jateff notes the river stretches open to whitefish angling are listed in the current sport fishing pamphlet. "Anglers need to be aware that in areas where there are ongoing steelhead fisheries, whitefish anglers must use single barbless hooks and no bait is allowed," he said.

In general, whitefish gear is restricted to one single-point hook with a maximum hook size of 3/16-inch from point to shank (hook size 14). Up to 15 whitefish can be retained daily. Most run from 10 to 13 inches. In winter, they congregate in deep pools, and are usually caught maggots or small artificial flies or lures.

Anglers fishing for hatchery **steelhead** in the lower Okanogan and Similkameen rivers are averaging one fish for every 10 hours of fishing. Jig and bobber set-ups are the most popular. Steelhead moving into the Okanogan system are larger this year and are averaging eight to 12 pounds.

"The Methow has slowed considerably due to lowering water temperatures," Jateff said. He reminds anglers that the Methow is closed to fishing for species other than steelhead, unless they're listed under 'special rules' in the current sportfishing pamphlet.

"The docks at Pateros on the mainstem Columbia River continue to provide good fishing for steelhead using jig and bobber tipped with a whole shrimp," Jateff said. Average catch rates there are also about one fish per 10 hours of angling.

### **South Central Washington:**

On Dec. 1 fishing opens on North Elton Pond, alongside Interstate 82 near Selah in Yakima County. WDFW District Fish Biologist Eric Anderson of Yakima reports North Elton just received 2,000 half-pound **rainbow trout** from the Goldendale Fish Hatchery. The daily catch limit at North Elton throughout the winter season is two trout.

Also opening Dec. 1 is the winter **whitefish** season on sections of the Naches and Klickitat rivers; check the fishing rules pamphlet for specific river stretch descriptions. Whitefish gear is restricted to one single-point hook with a maximum hook size of 3/16-inch from point to shank (hook size 14). Up to 15 whitefish can be retained daily. Most will run from 10 to 13 inches. They are usually found in deep pools, and are usually caught on maggots or small artificial flies or lures.

Anderson also reports that year-round Mattoon and North Fio Rito lakes in Kittitas County were recently stocked with five to eight-pound rainbow trout from Goldendal. Each lake received 140 of the big fish.

WDFW District Fish Biologist Paul Hoffarth of Pasco reports the catch rate recently dropped off in the Ringold area **steelhead** fishery on the Columbia River. "Bank anglers are averaging one steelhead for every 11 hours of fishing and boat anglers are averaging one steelhead for about eight hours of fishing," he said. "We've seen roughly 45 percent fewer anglers and steelhead, compared to two weeks ago."

Hoffarth reported a total of 172 steelhead were caught during the week of November 17-23, including 63 adipose and right ventral fin-clipped steelhead, 105 adipose-fin clipped steelhead and three unclipped steelhead. That creel sample represents about 42 percent of all angler effort, he explained.

The steelhead sport fishery opened Oct. 1 from the Highway 395 bridge at Pasco/Kennewick upstream to the wooden power line towers at the former Hanford town site (Ringold area fishery). Starting Nov 1, WDFW regulations allow anglers to retain any hatchery steelhead identified by an adipose clip as part of the anglers daily limit of two steelhead. All wild steelhead (adipose fin not clipped) must be released.

**Reader Email -**

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

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**Random Links**

The Scientific Angler, Being a General and Instructive Work on Artistic Angling = Complete book online:

[http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&id=U6gCAAAYAAJ&dq=%22the+scientific+angler%22&printsec=frontcover&source=web&ots=2USCQbdhOO&sig=GZBu0qqUAlmlHoeAZQgctztMX34&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&resnum=1&ct=result](http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&id=U6gCAAAYAAJ&dq=%22the+scientific+angler%22&printsec=frontcover&source=web&ots=2USCQbdhOO&sig=GZBu0qqUAlmlHoeAZQgctztMX34&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=1&ct=result)

Topographic/hydrographic maps online:

<http://terraserver-usa.com/image.aspx?T=2&S=17&Z=10&X=16&Y=202&W=1>

**Weekly Quote** – “Happy Thanksgiving!” – Bob, Doug & Michael

**GOOD LUCK!**