

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **February 6<sup>th</sup> – February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

**Oregon Fisheries Update:**

**Willamette Valley/Metro-** The water temperature at Willamette Falls remains below 40 degrees. This slows fish metabolism and prevents a good bite. Steelhead fishing is slow although the first springer of the year, a 28-pounder, was caught and released at Oregon City at end of January. Although a rare occurrence given the low run predicted on the Willamette, early salmon are often intercepted by anglers targeting steelhead. The Willamette is open daily for spring chinook fishing until the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission modifies the season. Only fin-clipped fish may be retained.

Sturgeon fishing has also slowed in the Portland Harbor. Fresh smelt, a bait sure to produce results, is becoming increasingly harder to find. Commercial netters have harvested just over 4,000 pounds to date but catches were light on the last opener.

Fly anglers hit the low waters of the McKenzie over the past weekend to take cutthroat and reddsides on nymphs.

With Detroit Reservoir no longer spilling, the North Santiam is a little lower than normal for this time of year but there are few fish present. The South Santiam is also low and very slow.

Steelhead catches have picked up a little on the Clackamas River with steelhead coming from various locations indicating they're scattered. Eagle Creek is low, clear and slow.

The Sandy River is low and clear and though a few steelhead are being taken, they're slow to react in the frigid waters. Steelheading is slow at Cedar Creek.

Although no trout stocking is scheduled this week, Detroit Reservoir has been fishing pretty well recently.

**Northwest –** Rumors of a pilot run of spring chinook in the lower Columbia may stir anglers interest for a weekend outing. The large minus tide series will concentrate what few fish are available along the shoreline where early returning fish can conserve calories for the fall spawn. Spin-n-glos or small herring are the best offerings for the cold water pursuit.

Low, clear streams have steelheaders seeking other activities but the current tide series could motivate fish to migrate into the lower tidewater stretches of the larger systems. The Nestucca and Wilson remain the best bets for hatchery fish while the mainstem Nehalem may produce a few wild fish.

Sturgeon fishing in Tillamook Bay has slowed dramatically although that doesn't seem to deter the effort. Bay City and the South Channel are busy with anglers but success rates are low. It appears the fish have moved out of the estuary.

Although seas were calm during the week, winds from the south are expected to turn seas to unfavorable conditions by the weekend. The ocean is the best option for crabbers although Netarts Bay may produce fair despite the large tide series. Avoid crabbing the afternoon outgoing tide for safety reasons.

Clatsop Beach clam diggers should take advantage of a good tide series beginning today. One of the largest sets in recent history has expectations running high.

**Southwest –** Most south coast streams are low and clear, a situation which has stalled steelheading.

Offshore conditions on the central and southern Oregon coast are forecast to be too rough to cross the bar this coming weekend. Late afternoon minus tides should provide some opportunities for clamming.

Steelheading has been slow on the North Umpqua with the majority of the fish landed of native origin, which must be released. Crabbing is poor in Winchester Bay.

Coos Bay has continued to provide decent crabbing for boaters as well as those dropping traps and rings from the public docks.

Rogue River levels dropped steadily over the past week and the flow was 1,340 cfs at Agness on February 3rd. At this low level and flow, steelhead will be skittish and they won't be moving. Only 400 steelhead have been counted at the dam.

The Chetco was down to 567 cfs as of Tuesday this week. It won't fish until the next rain freshet. Boaters launching out of the Port of Brookings when the ocean has allowed such activity have enjoyed excellent fishing for a variety of rockfish as well as good-sized lingcod.

**Eastern –** Lake Billy Chinook has been providing winter kokanee anglers with some action on jigs. The fish are averaging 11 inches.

Warmer temperatures have put the ice out on the John Day River with reports of a few steelhead in the Rock Creek to Wall Creek area.

**SW Washington –** Sport dippers working the Cowlitz River are still coming up with disappointing results. Catches in the mainstem have dropped off but if warmer weather persists, another run could enter the river giving dippers another chance at the prime sturgeon bait.

Steelheaders continue to pursue fish on the Kalama and Lewis Rivers. Although another round of hatchery fish are due to these systems, expectations are low for good action. Plugs become an effective method for taking fish in the low water.

Clam diggers will have three evening digs scheduled at Twin Harbors, Copalis and Mocrocks Feb. 6-8, while Long Beach is scheduled for two digs Feb. 7-8. As with previous openers, digging will be allowed only during the hours between noon and midnight.

**Columbia River Fishing Report –** The Columbia River remains a non-factor for most anglers although warming temperatures and good tides are sparking an interest for spring chinook anglers on the lower Columbia. The river is open under permanent regulations, for adipose fin-clipped salmon and steelhead below the I-5 Bridge. Although it's unlikely that many anglers will take advantage of the great tides this week, they are coming up and there are fish in the river. Unfortunately, commercial catch information was not available at this writing to indicate if there was any "by-catch" in the targeted sturgeon gillnet fishery this week. This is typically where the first commercially caught springers appear. Commercial sturgeon seasons coming up are listed here:

6 PM Tuesday February 3 – 6 PM Wednesday February 4, 2009 (24 hours)  
6 PM Thursday February 5 – noon Friday February 6, 2009 (18 hours)  
6 PM Tuesday February 10 – 6 PM Wednesday February 11, 2009 (24 hours)  
6 PM Thursday February 12 – noon Friday February 13, 2009 (18 hours)

To date, commercial netters have landed just over 1,400 sturgeon in the mainstem gillnet fishery averaging about 27 pounds per fish.

With little else to fish for, anglers can only think about last year's fishery as they cross over the river on the I-5 Bridge. Will we or will we not have a 2009 spring chinook fishery this year. That decision is still pending a two-state negotiation process.

On a positive note, commercial sturgeon nets came up with two spring Chinook on Wednesday this week which were identified by ODFW officials as Willamette-bound. So it begins.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Well, if you don't have anything else better to do, you can ignite a campfire and plunk your scent-laden spin-n-glos on a Columbia River Beach this weekend. The tides are great although the water temperatures are colder than most would like them to be. If you don't go fishing with high expectations, you could be surprised with a nice 5-year old springer as they do get caught in the month of February. Some of the first sport catches happen in the lower river around Altoona however. Oftentimes, boats anchored on wing jetties near Jim Crow Sands will take an occasional springer on a herring on the outgoing tide. Go ahead, be a part of history!

Just don't waste your time sturgeon fishing.

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report** – There has been little change in flow or the water temperature of the lower Willamette. The water has been holding at just below the 40 degree mark which has kept winter steelhead movement at a minimum. A few more spring Chinook have been taken by trollers in the Sellwood area this week. Lyn Hill of Portland caught and released the first spring Chinook of the year on January 31st. The 104 boats landing a total of 858 sub-legals, 24 legals taken last week is actually an improvement over prior weeks.

Water levels are a little low on the McKenzie but it's still quite fishable. Prospects are good with the water temperatures climbing into the 40s.

A few wild winter steelhead have been caught and released on the North Santiam over the past week. The South Santiam remains very low and clear.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Springer madness should ensue starting this weekend. There are a few around but with the word out, expect a major aluminum attack as far as the sturgeon fishing goes, it seems fishers are either in 'em or not. A lack of bites would indicate the need to find a different location. Fresh smelt, if available, will tip the odds in the angler's favor at this time of year.

Throw Prince Nymphs on the lower McKenzie for winter trout action. Here's how to tie the hottest pattern: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ggRqaH8NXNQ>

If catch and release native steelhead appeals to you, it'd be wise to wait until numbers improve to give the North Santiam a try.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports** – Improved water temperature at the Clackamas is credited with better steelheading results recently. As the water temps climbed above 40 degrees, winter steelhead catches picked up. Water level is low and boaters should use caution to avoid rocks. The coming rains, while light, will only serve to put some color in the water which will be positive. While steelhead are scattered, catches have been bats below Eagle Creek. Speaking of which, the creek had been fishing well for steelhead and there are good counts reported from the hatchery but it's too low and clear now to fish well. Some relief from low, clear water is predicted to occur this weekend as precipitation falls.

Steelheading has actually been pretty good on the Sandy River and it will only get better in weeks to come with rain and a little color. Fish are scattered so chances are decent everywhere. The river has changed since the last high water event and wading should be done cautiously as sandy banks can be soft and treacherous. Drift bait or a jig and bobber rig for best results.

**North Coast Fishing Report** – It's not all that much more encouraging on the North Oregon Coast. Rivers remain extremely low and clear and with the lack of good tides, action has been slow. The best bet in the district has been the mainstem Nehalem but reports have been scarce from that body of water.

The other North Coast Favorites have been rather void of anglers. A rare trailer has been at Sollie Smith Bridge and the float from Mills Bridge down will require some dragging to get your boat downstream. Forget the other river systems except for the extreme lower portions of the Trask and Nestucca Rivers. We need a weather system!

Sturgeon fishing on Tillamook has dried up as well. Whether you are fishing at Bay City, the West Channel or in the middle, it's hard to find a motivated sturgeon or even one that isn't motivated. It's almost as if they've disappeared! Even on the current tide series, the fish just don't seem to be there.

Bottomfishers working the nearshore reefs have not been successful either. It seems the bottomfish are in the deeper water when the temperatures range this cold. For boats with longer range capabilities, the fishing is quite good.

Crabbing reports remain very poor in the estuaries. The Netarts report is poor and other district favorites are yielding only an occasional keeper with lots and lots of smaller crab in the catches. Ocean catches of Dungeness are not that much better although certainly much better than from the nearby estuaries.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Mixed reports have the weekend steelhead options in the air for this writer. The weather forecast is calling for a chance of showers while the river forecast center (available from our homepage [www.TheGuidesForecast.com](http://www.TheGuidesForecast.com)) indicate some of our favorite streams could rise prior to the weekend and provide some excellent weekend opportunity. How about that..... we can't predict the weather. It'll be a fine line as to whether to try the lower stretches of the Wilson, Trask or Nestucca River or do some pioneering work by working the lower tidewater stretches of these systems using bobbers and jigs or worms or backtrolling plugs in some random places. More will be revealed if you watch the water levels. The good news is, everyone else is at the Sportsmen Show so you'll have the river to yourself (but don't quote me on that). If we get the river rise that is predicted on the hydrograph as of 3:00 a.m. on Thursday, by the weekend, most of the drifts on the big three in Tillamook County should fish well. Couple a good tide series with a long dry spell and success rates are sure to look good. The only thing is, I don't think we are going to get the measurable precipitation that is in the forecast so I'm banking on some pioneering methods. I'll report back next week.

As for sturgeon, well, as it stands now, despite the good tides, it seems to be a waste of time. Of course sturgeon could move back into the estuary or all of a sudden decide they should feed if in fact they are still present in the bay. With the ocean condition the way it is, there could be easier food sources in places other than Tillamook Bay.

The ocean forecast doesn't look all that good. As a matter of fact, with the strong minus tides in the afternoon, the bar doesn't look to be a friendly place to be. I suggest keeping your recreation inside the points of demarcation.

Razor clam digging looks to be a strong option on most north coast beaches. Clatsop Beaches will be a favorite on this tide series but given the recent clam set, the action could be great for many of Oregon's north, central and south coast beaches.

**Central & South Coast Reports** – There has been some discussion among those people who make such decisions that rockfish and ling cod limits, currently six and two 24 inches or better respectively, may be increased to thriving stocks. If there are any further developments, you'll read it here.

Following the last freshet, the Siuslaw provided some winter steelhead limits just above tidewater. It needs another shot of rain.

Umpqua anglers are finding a little winter steelhead action on the mainstem around Elkton by plunking despite the water being a little low for this technique. Fishing has been slow on the South Umpqua in low water conditions but the North Umpqua has remained fairly productive for steelhead with occasional flurries of decent numbers although the majority of steelhead landed here have been natives. Due to a loss of smolts in 2007, returns this year are running about three-fourths wild fish but the future runs are promising with 100,000 winter steelhead smolts scheduled to be released this year.

Boats are crabbing Coos Bay for near-limits of good-quality Dungeness. While those crabbing off docks aren't getting as many as the boats, it's still a worthwhile activity.

Only the deepest water is holding steelhead on the Coquille and those fish have not been cooperative. It's very slow. Regulations require the release of radio tagged steelhead here.

The Rogue River water level was down to 2.5 at Agness with the flow at 1,260. Low, clear water has stalled winter steelheading despite optimum water temperatures in the mid-40s. The water level is less than 1.5 at Grants Pass as of this writing on Thursday, February 5th, but is forecast to rise to nearly three feet by Saturday this week. Similarly, the water level at Agness is expected to increase from to nearly five feet at Agness. If the prediction of dropping water on Sunday comes to pass, that'll be the day to be on the Rogue. The middle river has been most productive but action down river should improve with water conditions. No spring Chinook have been taken as yet but perhaps the freshet this weekend will be sufficient to draw the first fish of the year into the lower river.

Nothing is happening at the Elk and Sixes rivers where only a good rainfall will fire up these fisheries.

With the Chetco at just over 500 cfs and 1.35 feet, fishing has all but ceased. This will change in the coming weekend if predictions are accurate as the level climbs to nearly 3.5 on Saturday and starts to drop on Sunday. More and heavier rainfall in the long-range forecast for next week.

Steelheading should be worthwhile. When the ocean has laid down, offshore boaters have enjoyed stellar bottom fishing and almost all have scored limits of rockfish and lings. Surf perch fishing has continued to reward of beaches when wave action has allowed.

**Central and Eastern Oregon** – Trout fishing is fair to good at Green Peter.

Fishing the Deschutes in winter can be challenging but can also be rewarding. Stick with nymph-type patterns and the most productive time of day – late morning through early afternoon.

### **Washington fishing reports:**

**From the WDF&W Weekender Report February 4<sup>th</sup> – February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

#### **North Puget Sound**

Anglers are finding a few hatchery steelhead in some rivers, but the best bet in the region is the Puget Sound blackmouth fishery, which got a big boost with the opening of the San Juan Islands.

"**Blackmouth** fishing in the San Juan's got off to a smoking start," said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. "Over the last several years, the Islands have been a great place to go blackmouth fishing. And, at least early on, that seems to be the case again this year."

The fishery for resident chinook around the San Juan Islands opened Feb. 1 and, according to creel checks that day, anglers took advantage of a hot bite. At the Bellingham Ramp, 89 anglers were checked with 36 chinook while five anglers were checked with four chinook at Friday Harbor Marina. At the Washington Park boat launch, 110 anglers were checked with 44 chinook.

Anglers fishing in Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands) can keep two hatchery chinook as part of their two-salmon daily limit. They must, however, release wild chinook, which have an intact adipose fin. Thiesfeld reminds anglers that - unlike in previous years - selective gear rules apply through April 15 in the Marine Area 7 blackmouth fishery.

Elsewhere, the blackmouth fishery in Marine Area 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) seems to have slowed after several weeks of decent fishing, Thiesfeld said. Anglers in Marine Area 8-1, as well as marine areas 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) and 9 (Admiralty Inlet), also can keep two hatchery chinook as part of their two-salmon daily limit.

"For whatever reason, the northern marine areas of Puget Sound seem to be the place to be for blackmouth fishing this year," Thiesfeld said. "Earlier this season it was Marine Area 8-1, and now it seems the San Juan's are where anglers are finding the best fishing for blackmouth."

On the rivers, there have been a few reports of anglers hooking some nice hatchery **steelhead**. But, overall, steelhead fishing has been slow, said Brett Barkdull, WDFW fish biologist. "Effort is way down," he said. "It seems that most anglers have been out on the Sound blackmouth fishing."

Angler effort could increase in the coming weeks, however. Portions of three rivers - the North Fork Stillaguamish, the Cascade and the North Fork Nooksack - recently re-opened for hatchery steelhead fishing.

Meanwhile, wild steelhead are starting to show up in the Skagit. Barkdull reminds anglers fishing the Skagit that they must release any wild steelhead they intercept.

Freshwater anglers looking for a change of pace might want to try fishing for cutthroat trout in Lake Washington. Anglers have had success in recent weeks hooking trout around the creek mouths. The daily limit is five trout, but rainbow trout measuring more than 20 inches and steelhead must be released.

For more information on the rules and regulations for Lake Washington, as well as other freshwater and saltwater fisheries, check WDFW's *Fishing in Washington* pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

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

Midwinter is no time to stay home with a **razor clam** dig coming up and several **blackmouth** fisheries opening Feb. 14. Meanwhile, river anglers are looking forward to the return of wild steelhead.

As long as the weather cooperates, **razor-clam** diggers should do well during the Feb. 6-8 opener, said Dan Ayres, WDFW coastal shellfish manager. "There are plenty of clams and the low tides are early enough for folks to get out during daylight hours."

Twin Harbors, Copalis and Mocrocks will open Feb. 6-8, while Long Beach will open for digging Feb. 7-8 only. No digging is allowed before noon. Evening low tides during the dig are 3:55 p.m., Friday, Feb. 6 (-0.1 ft.), 4:50 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 7 (-0.4 ft.), 5:39 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 8 (-0.6 ft.).

Harvesters are allowed to take no more than 15 razor clams and must keep the first 15 they dig, regardless of size or condition. Each digger's clams must be kept in a separate container.

A license is required for anyone age 15 or older. Any 2008 Washington state annual shellfish/seaweed license or combination license is still valid. Another option is a razor-clam only license available in annual or three-day only versions. Descriptions of the various licensing options are available on the WDFW website at <https://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov>. Kalaloch Beach remains closed but may open for a spring dig if the clam population grows to harvestable size, Ayres said.

Meanwhile, salmon anglers will have some new areas to cast a line starting Feb. 14. Fisheries for blackmouth salmon - resident chinook - will run through April 10 in marine areas 5 (Sekiu), 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca), 11 (Tacoma-Vashon) and 12 (Hood Canal) with a one-fish daily limit.

Anglers can kick off the season in competitive style by entering the Discovery Bay Salmon Derby, which takes place President's Day Weekend near Sequim. This the longest-running derby in the state and features \$10,000 in prizes, with a \$5,000 first prize for the largest salmon. Details are available at [www.discobaysalmonderby.com](http://www.discobaysalmonderby.com)

The derby starts at daylight Feb. 14, which means participants will be "fishing blind," in Marine Area 6, said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. "The derby's the same day as the opener, so there's no time for any pre-fishing. That just makes it more challenging."

For other blackmouth fishing in the Strait of Juan de Fuca, Thiesfeld suggests trolling the Coyote Bank, located about 13 miles north of the Washington coast between Port Angeles and the Dungeness Spit. "The strait produces some tasty blackmouth, but it's a good idea to keep your eye on the weather," Thiesfeld said.

Another derby will take place Feb. 28 through March 1 at Brinnon in northern Hood Canal. Anglers can call the Geoduck Restaurant at (360) 796-4430 for more information.

Thiesfeld reminds anglers that Marine Area 13 (South Puget Sound) is now closed to salmon fishing and will reopen March 1.

On the freshwater, success was mixed for river anglers enjoying pleasant weather over Superbowl weekend. Creel checks conducted during the Jan. 30 - Feb. 1 weekend showed 127 anglers on the lower Hoh River with seven wild **steelhead** (six released) and 12 hatchery fish. Catch rates were better for those fishing above the Oxbow Campground, where 61 anglers caught 17 wild steelhead (all released) and 14 hatchery fish. Thirty-two anglers on the Sol Duc came up with 15 wild steelhead (12 released) and three hatchery fish, but effort and catch rates were low on the Bogachiel, where 20 anglers caught three wild steelhead (one released).

"The weather's been fair and the rivers are in good shape, but it's stacking up to be a slow year," said Mike Gross WDFW fish biologist. "Hopefully, the fishing will pick up once we make the transition from hatchery to wild steelhead, but we just can't tell yet."

The same holds true for Grays Harbor rivers, where weather and water conditions have been fair, but the results less than satisfactory, said Scott Barbour. "Anglers have been having some success on the upper Wynoochee above the mouth of Schaefer Creek, but it's been tough going for the average angler," he said.

Anglers may retain one wild steelhead per year from one of 10 Olympic Peninsula rivers, which include the Bogachiel, Calawah, Clearwater, Dickey, Hoh, Hoko, Pysht, Quillayute, Quinault and Sol Duc. Elsewhere, all wild steelhead-identifiable by an intact adipose fin-must be released. There is no annual limit for hatchery steelhead, although daily limits apply. For more information on rules and regulations, anglers should check the *Fishing in Washington* rules pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

### **Southwest Washington**

The lower Columbia River Basin can be hard on anglers in early February when nice weather beckons but good fishing can be hard to find. Sturgeon and smelt seasons are open, but fishing has been slow due in part to frigid water temperatures. Some late-run steelhead have begun to show up in the Cowlitz and Kalama rivers, but the bulk of the run usually doesn't arrive until later in the month.

So what's an angler itching to get outdoors to do?

Digging **razor clams** is one option. Evening digs have been approved Feb. 7-8 at Long Beach and Feb. 6-8 at Twin Harbors, Copalis and Mocrocks. As with previous openers, digging will be allowed only during the hours between noon and midnight. Evening low tides during the dig are 3:55 p.m., Friday, Feb. 6 (-0.1 ft.), 4:50 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 7 (-0.4 ft.), 5:39 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 8 (-0.6 ft.).

"There are plenty of clams and the low tides are early enough for folks to dig during daylight hours," said Dan Ayres, WDFW coastal shellfish manager.

But fishing for **lake trout** may be the best bet for anglers who want to feel a fish tug on their line. At Kline Pond, for example, 47 bank anglers recently took home 91 catchable-size rainbows, plus a couple of broodstock rainbows weighing up to 5 pounds apiece. WDFW also stocked Kline Pond with 1,500 catchables Jan. 26, and Battleground Lake got 150 broodstock rainbows early this month. Spearfish Lake in Klickitat County got 30 broodstock lunkers along

with 1,100 catchable-size rainbows, while Horseshoe Lake in Cowlitz County got 30 broodstock rainbows and 1,500 catchables.

"Those trout should offer up some really good fishing," said John Weinheimer, a WDFW fish biologist. "Fishing on year-round lakes really starts to improve throughout the region when the weather warms up like this." For a complete listing of weekly trout plants throughout the region, see WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/weekly/>.

**Smelt** dipping also may improve as water temperatures increase, but there were few signs of success during the last Saturday in January, said Brad James, another WDFW fish biologist. For updates on the fishery, check the weekly smelt report on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/smelt/index.htm>.

The Cowlitz River is open to smelt dipping from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. each Saturday through March 28, with a daily catch limit of 10 pounds per person. All other tributaries to the Columbia River in Washington state are closed to smelt fishing until further notice.

This is also the time of year when thousands of anglers start to look forward to fishing for **spring chinook** salmon, which usually start to arrive in significant numbers in March. (The first springer of the year - a 28 pounder - was reportedly hooked and released Jan. 31 in the Willamette River.) According to a recent projection, nearly 300,000 spring chinook are expected to return to the river this year, which would make the run the third-highest on record.

However, fishing seasons have not yet been set for the fishery because of a disagreement between the fish and wildlife commissions of Washington and Oregon over a catch-sharing plan for recreational and commercial fisheries. The fishery is currently open downriver from the Interstate 5 Bridge under 2008-09 rules while the two commissions continue working to reach an agreement.

### **Eastern Washington**

Ice fishing has slowed considerably at year-round and winter-season lakes that have good ice cover. Chris Donley, WDFW central district fish biologist in Spokane, said that the longer ice cover is maintained, the colder the water temperatures below. "Most fish are usually less active and harder to catch in lower water temperatures," he said. "For whatever reason, ice fishing seems to be best during early morning or late evening hours."

Catches include **rainbow trout** at Sprague Lake on the Lincoln-Adams county line and at Hog Canyon Lake in southwest Spokane County; **yellow perch** and **crappie** at Eloika Lake in northern Spokane County; and **burbot** at Sullivan and Bead lakes in Pend Oreille County.

Recent warmer daytime temperatures may create some thawing and re-freezing of ice cover, so ice fishers should be careful. According to U.S. Coast Guard guidelines, no one should venture onto ice unless it's at least four inches thick, clear and solid. As much as nine inches may be needed to safely support snowmobiles or other vehicles. Such ice depths can form after at least a week of below freezing temperatures, day and night.

WDFW advises ice fishers to not fish alone; let others know where you are going and when you plan to return; keep fishing holes few and small (under eight inches diameter); disperse weight and fishing holes across ice; avoid ice fishing near streams, known springs, or otherwise potentially weak ice; and be prepared for weather conditions and emergencies. For more information on ice fishing safety see [http://wdfw.wa.gov/factsheets/ice\\_fishing.htm](http://wdfw.wa.gov/factsheets/ice_fishing.htm).

Fishing the open water of year-round Lake Roosevelt has been "hit-and-miss," according to Donley. Some net-pen-reared rainbow trout and kokanee continue to be caught throughout the Columbia River reservoir off Grand Coulee Dam by both boat and shore anglers. Walleye fishing is sporadic, with some big fish caught near the mouth of the Spokane River and in the upper reservoir near Kettle Falls.

### **Northcentral Washington**

Bob Jateff, WDFW district fish biologist from Okanogan, reports **steelhead** fishing has been very slow in open waters on the Columbia River and its tributaries above Wells Dam.

"As the water temperature increases during February, fishing should improve on the mainstem Columbia, as well as in the tributary areas," Jateff said. "Anglers need to remember that selective gear rules are in effect for the Okanogan, Methow, and Similkameen rivers. The mainstem Columbia above Wells Dam also requires selective gear, but bait is allowed. We encourage folks to retain the first two adipose fin-clipped hatchery-origin steelhead caught."

Jateff also reported that **yellow perch** fishing on Patterson Lake in the Winthrop area continues to be good at least for those anglers willing to show patience, since the fish have a tendency to turn on and off quickly. Average size being caught is seven to eight inches with some fish up to 11 inches. "A small panfish jig tipped with a mealworm and fished off the bottom works best," he said.

WDFW enforcement officers also report successful ice fishing for perch at Palmer Lake north of Loomis. Palmer also has **burbot** or freshwater ling cod and catches of that species are slowly picking up.

**Rainbow trout** are being caught through the ice at a number of lakes in Okanogan County, Jateff noted. Rat Lake near Brewster, Big Green Lake near Omak, Sidley Lake near Oroville, and Davis Lake near Winthrop are all producing catches of rainbow trout in the 10- to 13-inch range, plus some larger fish. Powerbait in a variety of colors works well in all of these waters, Jateff said.

The annual **Northwest Ice Fishing Festival** will be held Saturday, Feb. 14, at Sidley Lake, sponsored by Oroville Chamber and hosted by Molson Grange. Although food, music and dog-sledding is available, the festival's key event is a fishing tournament from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., with registration at the Molson Grange Hall or office on the lake. Cost to enter is \$20 for adults, \$10 for kids 14 and under, with prizes awarded. All proceeds go to maintaining the Hwy. 97 Visitors Center at the U.S. - Canada border. For more information contact Robin Stice at (509) 485-4002.

Fishing for big net-pen-reared rainbows at Rufus Woods Lake - the Columbia River reservoir off Chief Joseph Dam on the Okanogan-Douglas county line, has recently slowed, perhaps because of frigid conditions. Although citations continue to be written by WDFW enforcement officers for exceeding limits or fishing without a license, compliance with the rules is improving.

### **Southcentral Washington**

Eric Anderson, WDFW district fish biologist from Yakima, reports that year-round Myron Lake in Yakima was recently stocked with more than 100 5- to 8-pound **rainbow trout**. Anderson reminds anglers that Myron's daily catch limit is one trout and selective gear rules are in effect. Most of the region's year-round lowland lakes have a thin layer of ice cover, notes Jim Cummins, WDFW fish biologist from Yakima. "With few, if any, exceptions, the ice is very likely unsafe for fishing," Cummins said. "Conditions may change rapidly, but Fio Rito and I-82 Ponds 4 and 6 have some open water and could produce rainbow trout for those who want to fish from shore. A few other lakes may have some open water, too."

Cummins speculated the best fishing now is probably for **whitefish** in those sections of the Naches, Yakima and other rivers in the region that are open through February or March. Whitefish anglers should check the *Fishing in Washington* rules pamphlet for specific river stretch descriptions at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm> .

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, found in winter groups in deep pools, and usually caught on maggots or small artificial flies or lures.

Fishers and other outdoor recreationists can collect information and gear at the 20th annual **Central Washington Sportsmen Show** at the Yakima SunDome, Feb.13 -15. The show includes guides, outfitters and lodges from all over the Northwest; the latest in fishing gear, boats, motors and accessories; the region's only officially scored horn and antler competition; and informative seminars presented by outdoor professionals. For more information on show hours and fees, see <http://www.shuylersproductions.com/cwss.php> .

Good buddy (and good fisherman) Fernando C. reports from the Clackamas, "Allow me to keep updated on my last trip. I want to assure you the water level are awesome but unfortunately too dang cold. Holding temperature at about 37-38°F and that is the biggest bumme dude! I fish the mouth of Eagle creek and Clackamas with every great effort. I plan on taking this weekend off to do the sportsman's show."

No question from subscriber Bernie M. but it's always nice to get positive feedback. He wrote via the Contact Form at the TGF website, "I have lived in Central Oregon for over ten years and TGF has to be the best fishing report for our area, even Sportsman's Warehouse reports! Keep up the great work guys."

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**

Our favorite Fisherwoman, Jennie Logsdon Martin is at the Sportsmen's Show with ifish.net. Here's the webcam, see for yourself:

<http://198.145.139.26:8080/>

Goggle Earth adds cool, new feature - Ocean floor and surface data from marine experts:

<http://earth.google.com/>

**GOOD LUCK!**