

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **December 4th – December 10th, 2009**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro - Sturgeon action in the gorge has slowed to a crawl. Cooler weather will likely further subdue the bite.

With water in the lower Willamette in the mid-forty-degree range and about a foot of visibility, sturgeon fishing will be worthwhile. Smelt, anchovies and squid have been productive.

Despite high water over the holiday weekend, fly anglers caught a mix of hatchery and native trout on the McKenzie.

Summer steelhead and a few coho are scattered on the North Santiam. Fishing is slow.

The Clackamas has yet to produce any winter steelhead but there are likely a very few around.

A handful of winter steelhead have been taken on the Sandy but this broodstock run won't be reliable this early in the season.

Be aware that fishing will be more expensive in 2010 with resident licenses increasing from \$24.75 to \$33. Expect similar increases on other licenses, tags and permits.

Starting next year, owners of any kind of boat will need to pay a \$5 fee just as motorized boaters have been paying. This applies to any boat over 10 feet and goes to a fund to fight invasive aquatic species. See any license agent to buy the permit.

Northwest – Effort was high on the Wilson when it finally cleared over the weekend. This system offers the best chance for late run chinook and a mix of Alsea stock steelhead as well as the more desired broodstock fish. Both have made a fair showing the throughout the system in recent days. Most boat anglers are focusing efforts on chinook with the stretch from Mills Bridge to the mouth producing the best catches. Bank anglers are more likely to intercept steelhead and with broodstock plants placed higher in the system, fish should be well distributed after the recent high water.

The Nestucca is the other late season option although a smaller run of chinook is expected. Steelhead should start to show in fair numbers but will only become more challenging as water levels continue to drop.

Most anglers will now focus on steelhead with the Necanicum, North Fork Nehalem, Big Creek and Gnat Creek are good options for bank anglers. There have been good reports coming from the North Fork Nehalem as it was in ideal shape early in the week. Action will likely slow as flows drop.

Recent high winds and high water events most certainly put large wood debris in the waterway. Boaters are encouraged to use extreme caution when floating as hazards to navigation are highly likely this time of year as only become more dangerous as flows drop.

Although salmon effort in Tillamook Bay will still produce a few fish, effort will gradually shift to

sturgeon. Keepers were reported with the recent favorable tides over the weekend with the south channel the likely place to get into action. Sand shrimp will fish best here, on the last part of the outgoing tide.

Bay crabbing remains poor with the recent rain freshet to blame. Larger, offshore boats were able to take advantage of friendly seas on the December 1st opener and likely found great crabbing out of most northern ports.

Pro guide Bill Kremers (541-754-6411) reports there are lots of coho in the lower Alsea, so plenty of action. We even hooked a fresh Chinook and landed one hatchery steelhead.

The Alsea River, like most streams, dropping water will mean a more technical river so use caution when boating.

Southwest – Minus tides after dark this weekend will allow lantern-toting clam diggers good opportunities for limits in estuaries.

Crabbing has held up despite recent rainfall. Recreational and commercial ocean crabbing opened on December 1st.

With most coho dark at Siltcoos, this year's lackluster wild fishery seems to be done.

The Umpqua spiked to over 9,000 cfs at Elkton during the holiday weekend but has been dropping and clearing since.

Action has slowed on the Coos with pressure very light. The winter steelhead season will get underway here in two or three weeks with good returns expected.

A few winter steelhead have been taken by plunkers on the lower Rogue. Catches will improve in coming weeks.

Pro guide Andy Martin (206-388-8988) reports, "The salmon spawn is in full swing in the Chetco River right now, and salmon fishing has slowed considerably on the Southern Oregon river. There are still some fresh salmon coming in with this week's big tides, but fishing is slow. We've been spending more time side-drifting for steelhead than back-bouncing for salmon the past several trips."

Waters of the Elk and Sixes have dropped and cleared, slowing fishing. Chinook catches have been good during brief windows of opportunity during decent water conditions.

Eastern – Steelhead are scattered on the lower Deschutes and while hookups have slowed, it's still well worth a try. The best stretch to hit is from Warm Springs to South Junction. Trout fishing has been fair.

The John Day Pool and Arm produced mostly natives this week and catch rates dropped from previous weeks. This fishery is likely to fade in the coming weeks with a cold east wind likely to further fan effort.

Crescent Lake has continued to produce good numbers of large lake trout. Fishing here will hold up until winter weather disallows it.

SW Washington – Cowlitz River anglers checking in only 1 steelhead for 47 bank rods over the weekend. Lewis River anglers fared a little better with a steelhead for every 5 rods. Although it's

still too early to tell, early indicators are not encouraging on most district streams.

The Klickitat River was the hot spot where bank anglers did well for late run coho, averaging better than 2 fish per rod. More dark fish are likely to be encountered in this fishery as the weeks progress.

Columbia River Fishing Report – With sturgeon fishing wrapped up for the season, anglers will migrate to the lower Willamette for action and it will continue to pick up as temperature differences between the Willamette and Columbia become more widespread. Effort continues to wane and catches have dropped to season lows in the gorge and downstream.

John Day Pool steelheaders are still after it but cooler air and water temperatures have chilled out the bite. Bank anglers working the area have seen catch rates plummet while boaters are still doing fair but success has dropped significantly since the previous week.

Crabbers working the lower estuary now have the commercial fleet to contend with. Latest reports indicate they are having an impact on sport success rates. One angler reported going from two to four limits of crab for an overnight soak to just 9 for 5 pots. It may just not be worth the effort anymore.

The Guide's Forecast – Action isn't looking good on any front. Sturgeon fishing is effectively over unless you're in pursuit of shakers in the gorge. Steelhead fishing is beginning to slow in the John Day Pool and the John Day River itself is getting pretty low to boat and the crabbing in the estuary has slowed significantly due to a commercial presence in the river.

It may be a good week to stay home or at least off of the mainstem Columbia. Weekend models may be calling for snow but even if that doesn't materialize, it is going to be one cold place to fish!

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Winter steelhead are due in the lower Willamette and Clackamas.

McKenzie levels have been on a continual decline with the water temperature dropping to near the 40-degree mark. Summer steelhead are still entering the trap at Leaburg and will be recycled downstream when and if sufficient numbers accumulate.

With Detroit Reservoir 110 feet below summertime levels, no further water release means only precipitation will effect level and flow on the North Santiam. The South Santiam is closed to trout fishing until spring next year.

The Guide's Forecast – Use smelt or squid to catch sturgeon in the Willamette and Multnomah Channel but expect to sort several shakers in an attempt to locate a keeper-sized fish.

Fish the McKenzie below Leaburg for a shot at a summer steelhead but as the water cools the fish will be more lethargic and less inclined to bite or strike. Trout fishing will remain fair above the dam for a mix of hatchery and wild fish.

Catch and release fishing for native steelhead is slow to fair at the North Santiam.

Starting on January 1, 2010, two fishing rods may be used in lakes and ponds (not in moving waters) with an additional \$17 permit.

ODFW sez, "Large brood trout were released this week at several Willamette Valley ponds, including Junction City, Walter Wirth, Walling and Sheridan. The fish are 4- and 5-year-old rainbow trout from ODFW's Roaring River hatchery and range in size from 8 to 18 pounds."

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Nothing seems to be going on at the Clackamas River yet.

The Sandy is in excellent condition and is expected to maintain good level and color over the coming week. Winter steelhead entering the Sandy and reports of a couple caught have generated interest and created a little traffic on the river. Realistically, however, this fishery won't get underway until January at which time it should be worth the trip.

A Winter steelhead seminar By the Sandy River Chapter of the Northwest Steelheaders will take place on Saturday, December 5th. 10 AM to Noon at the Oregon City Fisherman's Marine.

Another free steelhead clinic will take place December 12th in the Sam Cox Building at Glen Otto park. This is also thanks to the Sandy River Chapter of the Northwest Steelheaders and will be held from 10 AM through 2 PM. Glen Otto Park is located at 1106 E Historic Columbia River Highway (Interstate 84 to Exit 17) in Troutdale. For information on either or both clinics, call (503) 286-2093 or (503) 666-259.

North Coast Fishing Report – With what is likely the last good rain freshet of the salmon season, anglers on Monday fared well on the Wilson River from Sollie Smith Bridge downstream to the mouth. The best action was reported downstream of Sollie Smith Bridge but driftboaters working the water upstream saw fair action as well. Plugs took a good share of the chrome catch but eggs worked well too. By Tuesday, many of the biters had been culled out but persistent anglers still found good catches. Good tides also brought in fair numbers of fish, allowing anglers one last good opportunity before the bulk of the population heads to the spawning grounds.

Steelhead have also been reported in most coastal systems by now but depending on what river system you're focused on, steelhead can sometimes be overlooked if fair numbers of chinook remain in the watershed. The Wilson is the prime example. Steelhead should be well distributed throughout the Wilson with bank anglers able to take advantage of un-fished populations in upstream haunts.

The Trask River remains an option but chinook numbers should begin to dwindle and steelhead numbers should begin to increase. Although this system is primarily managed for wild runs of steelhead, a few hatchery strays are caught over here each year. Winter chinook should be available for the remainder of the week.

The Nestucca still got some unjustified pressure as anglers still struggle to find consistent success over there. Only a few chinook remain and although some steelhead should be available, the bulk of the action won't likely happen until later in February. Anglers report an overall slow chinook season on the Nestucca, the steelhead season holds much more promise.

The Kilchis is almost getting too low for high expectations right now but a few chinook and a rare steelhead are certainly a possibility for motivated anglers working the lower stretches of this system right now. The strong tide series may offer up additional opportunities that wouldn't be likely on a weak incoming tide.

Fair steelheading has been reported on the North Fork of the Nehalem River with the bulk of the catch coming from the handicap platform. Anglers just downstream are also catching fish however.

The Necanicum River should also be producing catches of steelhead but as water levels drop, fish will become more wary of anglers so use stealthy tactics.

Tillamook Bay itself is still getting pressure from trollers working the Ghost Hole and Bay City. **Pro guide John Kirby (406-930-1133)** landed 2 fish around 30 pounds on trolled herring in the Ghost Hole on 12/2. John's specialty is December chinook fishing in the bay and he proved there are still fish to catch, even in a tough year like this one. John had strong tides to work with and just like any other productive day, the best action took place about half way into incoming tide. Keep those herring on the bottom!

And speaking of Tillamook Bay, along with those strong incoming tides come strong outgoing tides. Sturgeon anglers working the south channel last week did come across some quality keeper sturgeon. Sand shrimp caused the demise of a few nice fish for the few anglers pursuing them on the west side of the estuary.

Crabbing in the north coast estuaries is poor with the exception of Netarts Bay. Although action has dropped off from previous weeks, it remains one of the better options with little fresh water influence due to its limited number of tributaries.

Ocean crabbing has been an excellent option for sport crabbers the last few days with an offshore breeze calming wind waves and swell. Like the lower Columbia however, the commercial fleet now dominates the effort.

The Guide's Forecast – Salmon will still likely be the draw for Tillamook area anglers this week but with water levels dropping, success rates will likely continue to drop. Lower river boaters and estuary trollers will likely have the best chance at biters this week. The tide series is beginning to weaken and December is a waning month for returning adults but none-the-less, there will be catchable numbers of chinook present with the Wilson River system offering up the best opportunities.

Oftentimes, it pays to fish steelhead water in higher flows with steelhead plugs that are also effective for salmon this time of year. Chinook will often lie in tailouts in higher flows and fall prey to "multiple specie" plugs such as Tadpolly's or M2 Flatfish or the new Mag Lips Flatfish.

Tillamook Bay will still hold promise as well and trollers should focus their effort on the east side of the estuary, the Ghost Hole and Bay City to be exact, using herring for bait and targeting the last half of incoming tide. The weaker tide series usually draws anglers to the inside of the north jetty but that was a bust on the last similar tide series. Stick to the middle bay.

You may want to bring your sturgeon gear as well. Better numbers of keepers should be entering the estuary for winter feeding opportunities. Sand shrimp will prove to be the best bait and with all the fresh water, crabs should not be a big issue right now. The west and middle channels will be the best bets. Prime tides will be past sunset but anglers may want to focus on early morning tides although they are not as extreme as the late afternoon ones.

Steelheaders can take advantage of holding fish this week. With the lower flows, fish will be more concentrated in defined slots and drifts. Opportunities abound and anglers can prioritize their efforts in these systems:

- 1) Wilson River,
- 2) North Fork Nehalem and Necanicum Rivers,
- 3) Highway 30 systems like Gnat Creek and Big Creek,
- 4) Nestucca River,
- 5) Kilchis River,
- 6) Trask River

Anglers should consider dropping down their bait size offerings in the lower flows. Eggs will likely produce the best results but sand shrimp can also take fair numbers of biters. Rivers like the Wilson and Nestucca harbor broodstock steelhead and therefore, fish should be better distributed throughout the system. The other systems receive the standard Alsea stock fish that tend to pool up close to their liberation site and aren't quite as aggressive when it comes to biting.

Good clam tides this weekend and a more friendly surf may make for some good digging. Don't bother crabbing this weekend unless you are in the ocean.

Central & South Coast Reports – Ocean crabbing opened on Tuesday this week and those who got out had good results. Crab catches inside bays and estuaries has remained very good although with commercial efforts starting on December 1st, results are expected to decline.

Anglers on the Alsea are seeing the first of the winter steelhead run. A couple have even landed on jigs, but, as with most locations, it's too early to expect great results. although the hatchery has seen a couple of winters return to the trap. The river opened above Five Rivers on December 1st.

Pro guide Bill Kremers (541-754-6411) reports, "Fished the lower Alsea today. Lots of coho in the river, so plenty of action. We even hooked a fresh Chinook and landed one hatchery steelhead. We caught about half the fish on spinners and other half on plugs – K=11 blue and green pirates. The river will be dropping so boaters need to watch the river levels for safe boating.

"This photo is Paul Huber with the steelhead we landed today. It was caught on K-11 green pirate."



The occasional bright coho has been boated this week, but overall it has been extremely slow. From reports, it seems never to have heated up this season. Many of the coho present are now dark.

Winchester Bay is producing limits or near limits for crabbers. Fishing is slow on the mainstem Umpqua for summer steelhead and coho. Steelheading has stalled on the North Umpqua as well. The South Umpqua is open but there has been little interest with few coho and steelhead around to catch.

Crabbing has been excellent in Coos bay with those trying from local docks taking near-limits daily.

Anglers plunking from gravel bars on the lower Rogue are taking slow but steady catches of fresh winter steelhead. The last freshet all but terminated the Chinook and coho fishery in the bay as fish took advantage of the increased level and flow to migrate upstream. Steelheading has been good on the middle Rogue although the majority of fish caught here at this time of year are wild summers which must be released. Find these fish at the mouths of tributaries awaiting the next round of precipitation. Coho in this stretch are hitting brightly colored plugs fished in deep runs. Steelheading is slow on the upper Rogue for both fly and bait fishers due to low, clear cold water. Half-pounders are in the mix wherever steelhead can be found.

The ocean out of the Port of Brookings has been kicking up but those taking advantage of calm mornings are making early nearshore forays to make good catches of ling cod and rockfish. With the Chetco River running about 1,000 cfs near Brookings, Chinook fishing has stalled but this river condition looks conducive to steelhead and has local anglers anxious. Early winters are entering in decent number and spawning Chinook have them keying on single egg imitations although driftboaters doing well long-lining plugs. The next round of rainfall will improve steelheading here along with low, clear water conditions. Chinook fishers at the Icebox deadline are hooking some fish but most are turning dark.

Pro guide Andy Martin (206-388-8988) reports, "The salmon spawn is in full swing in the Chetco River right now, and salmon fishing has slowed considerably on the Southern Oregon river. There are still some fresh salmon coming in with this week's big tides, but fishing is slow. We've been spending more time side-drifting for steelhead than back-bouncing for salmon the past several trips.

"A handful of steelhead have already been caught in the Chetco by side-drifters casting below spawning salmon. Avoid spooking or drifting over the salmon on the redds. Try fishing the faster water below the tailouts where the salmon are spawning for fresh steelhead.

"This week the best bet for steelhead has been from the Piling Hole down to the tidewater. With afternoon outgoing tides, the outflow from Social Security down to Joe Hall Creek has been an option. Salmon are being caught by anglers back-bouncing roe in the Culvert Hole, Loeb Park, Moffit Rock and Highway Hole, but catches have only been fair at best. By mid-December, steelhead fishing should really pick up, Martin says. "All indications are we will have a great steelhead run."

With Chinook scattered, holding in deeper holes and not biting on the Elk and Sixes, low, clear water conditions will be solved with the next round of rainfall. It appears that fishing at the mouth of the Elk has wrapped for the year and with many of the fish that are in the river darkening, the opportunity to catch a bright one is limited.

Central and Eastern Oregon – The recent increase in water level on the John Day was apparently insufficient to move steelhead upriver. It has been non-productive up around Service Creek. Fish the lower river for the time being where jigs have been taking fish although it has been slow with the water very cold.

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report November 25th – December 8th, 2009

North Puget Sound

Salmon fishing has been slow in the region's river and streams, but stalwart anglers on Puget Sound have had some success hooking blackmouth.

"We saw a drop off in fishing effort in the marine areas during this recent stretch of wet and windy weather," said John Long, WDFW's statewide salmon manager. "However, fishing for **blackmouth** was decent for the few anglers that did get out on the water, especially those in central Puget Sound."

Marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay), 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner), 9 (Admiralty Inlet) and 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) are open for salmon. Anglers fishing those marine areas have a two-salmon daily limit, but must release wild chinook.

Long reminds anglers that only a few days remain to fish for salmon in Marine Area 9. The salmon fishery in that area is open through Nov. 30. Beginning Dec. 1, however, salmon fishing will open in Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands), where anglers will have a two-salmon daily limit, but must release wild chinook.

Crabbing also is an option in select marine areas. Marine Area 10 and most of Marine Area 9 are open for crabbing seven days a week through Jan. 2, 2010. The portion of Marine Area 9 south of a line from Foulweather Bluff to Olele Point is closed for the season. 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).

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. Fishers may catch six red rock crab of either sex per day, provided those crab measure at least 5 inches across. For more information about recreational crabbing in Puget Sound, see WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/crab>.

In the rivers, fishing for **chum** salmon has been slow and many anglers are gearing up for hatchery **steelhead**, which are expected to arrive in greater numbers in the coming weeks.

Rainbow trout also is an option for freshwater anglers, who might want to try casting for lunkers at Beaver Lake near Issaquah. About 2,000 hatchery rainbows - averaging about 3 pounds each - were released in the lake in early November. The lake, which is one of several westside lowland lakes open to fishing year-round, is best fished by small boat, although anglers also can 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, anglers should check the regulations for all freshwater and saltwater 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 returning winter steelhead on area rivers in the days ahead. Meanwhile, a razor-clam dig is planned for early December.

Winter steelhead are starting to move into Olympic Peninsula rivers, but anglers will have to wait for a break in the weather to see much success, said David Low, WDFW fish biologist. "The fish are there, but with the rains we've had, the rivers are all blown out," Low said. "If the rivers get a chance to drop, the fishing should be good."

Low said the Bogachiel River typically gets early returning hatchery steelhead during the first weeks in December, followed by the Sol Duc and the Hoh rivers. "Then the wild steelhead start showing up in January," he said.

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. Because retention rules and the length of the wild steelhead season vary for each river, Low strongly recommends that anglers check the 2009-10 *Fishing in Washington* pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) 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.

The popular chum fishery on Kennedy Creek also closes 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.

Four evening **razor clam** digs are scheduled Dec. 2-5 at Twin Harbors. Copalis and Mocrocks will be open Dec. 3-5, Long Beach will be open Dec. 2, 4 and 5, and Kalaloch Beach will be open for digging Dec. 4 and 5 only. No digging will be allowed at any beach before noon.

Evening low tides during the dig are at 6:32 p.m. Wednesday, Dec.2 (-1.2 ft.), 7:18 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 3 (-1.4 ft.), 8:04 p.m. Friday, Dec. 4 (-1.3 ft.), 8:51 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 5 (-0.9 ft.). The best time to start digging is an hour or two before low tide. Clam diggers should also take lights or lanterns and check weather and surf conditions before heading out.

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 2009 annual shellfish/seaweed license or combination fishing license is still valid. Another option is a razor-clam only license available in annual or three-day only versions. Descriptions of the various options are available on the WDFW website at <https://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov> .

More digs are tentatively scheduled Dec. 31 - Jan. 3, subject to the results of marine toxin tests.

Recreational crab fishing is under way in five marine areas of Puget Sound, including marine areas 4 (Neah Bay), 5 (Sekiu), 10 (Seattle/Bremerton), 13 (south Puget Sound), and a portion of Marine Area 9 (Admiralty Inlet). Crab fishing in those areas is open seven days a week through Jan. 2, 2010. The portion of Marine Area 9 south of a line from Foulweather Bluff to Olele Point is closed for the season.

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. Fishers may catch six red rock crab of either sex per day, provided those crab measure at least 5 inches across.

Recreational crabbers are required to send in a winter catch card or report their catch online by Jan. 15. People failing to submit their winter reports will receive a \$10 fine when they apply for a

2010 Puget Sound crab endorsement. For more information about recreational crabbing in Puget Sound, see WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/crab>.

In the South Sound, anglers fishing in marine areas 11 and 13 (Vashon Island to South Puget Sound) may retain **wild chinook** as part of their two-fish daily limit, but only one chinook - hatchery or wild - may be retained.

Anglers are advised to check the 2009-2010 *Fishing in Washington* rules pamphlet at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm> before heading out.

Southwest Washington

Anglers have reportedly taken a few early **winter steelhead** and others are still catching some late-run **coho**, but fishing is generally slow throughout the lower Columbia River Basin at this time of year. That includes sturgeon fishing, which picked up in mid-November then dropped off a week later.

"A lot of anglers knock off for a few weeks until winter steelhead fishing begins in earnest," said Joe Hymer, WDFW fish biologist. "Of course, hunting is always an option at this time of the year."

After a quick start, returns of **winter steelhead** on several rivers have lagged, Hymer said. The number of fish returning to hatcheries on the Lewis, Kalama and Washougal rivers are all down from last year. While it's too early to gauge the strength of the run from those early returns, early-bird steelhead anglers have their work cut out for them, Hymer said.

Those fishing for **hatchery coho** may have better luck, particularly in the Lewis and Klickitat rivers. Both rivers continue to provide some coho action, although anglers are releasing an increasing number of dark fish. **Cutthroat trout** are a good option on the Cowlitz River, where WDFW recently recycled about 500 of them downstream to the Barrier Dam boat launch.

And while **sturgeon fishing** has been slow in recent days, it could always pick up again, Hymer said. Anglers fishing from the Wauna powerlines upstream to the dam can keep one white sturgeon measuring between 38 and 54 inches fork length per day on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays only. "You're best bet is to fish around the mouth of the Willamette River, where the water is warmer than in the mainstem Columbia," Hymer said. "Sturgeon tend to gravitate there at this time of year."

Anglers should also be aware of several rule changes that take effect Dec. 1:

- **Grays River:** Hatchery steelhead fish opens - two weeks earlier than in recent years - from the Hwy. 4 Bridge upstream to the South Fork and the West Fork from the mouth upstream to the hatchery intake/footbridge.
- **Blue and Mill creeks (tributaries to the Cowlitz):** The lower sections of these streams open to fishing for hatchery steelhead. In addition, hatchery sea run cutthroats may be kept on Blue Creek. See the 2009-2010 Fishing in Washington pamphlet for details.
- **Klickitat River:** Fishing for trout - including hatchery steelhead - closes. However, salmon fishing remains open below the Fisher Hill Bridge while fishing for whitefish opens from fishway #5 upstream. Special gear rules will be in effect for whitefish.
- **Swift Reservoir:** Fishing closes for trout and salmon.

Meanwhile, Tacoma Power employees recovered 3,135 coho adults, 118 jacks, 332 sea-run cutthroat trout, 77 winter-run steelhead, 60 summer-run steelhead and 14 fall chinook adults at the Cowlitz Salmon Hatchery separator during the week ending Nov. 22. Also that week, they released:

- 337 coho adults, five jacks, three fall chinook adults and five cutthroat trout into the Tilton River at Gust Backstrom Park in Morton.
- 864 coho adults and 52 jacks into Lake Scanewa above Cowlitz Falls Dam, 654 coho adults and 23 jacks into the upper Cowlitz River at the Skate Creek Bridge in Packwood
- 533 coho adults and 18 jacks into the Cispus River above the mouth of Yellowjacket Creek.

Eastern Washington

Chris Donley, WDFW central district fish biologist, says this is his favorite time to fish for **steelhead** in the Snake River system in the south end of the region. "A lot of people have given up on them because the initial surge of returning fish is over and we haven't had any rain to provide a pulse of water to move fish up the tributaries," Donley said. "So they're all hanging out in deep holes in the mainstem river. When you find them in those holes, the fishing is really good. A lot of steelhead are shuffling around now from one deep hole to another in the reservoir above Lower Granite Dam."

Donley said steelheading on the Snake's tributaries, like the Grand Ronde, can still be productive if anglers change their tactics to fish low, clear water. "You've got to downsize your gear and weights and be very quiet," he explained. "There are some steelhead in those tributaries, but if we get a warming trend with rain, instead of snow holding in the mountains, that flush of water will bring even more of them into those smaller waterways."

Lake Roosevelt is providing excellent **rainbow trout** fishing now, Donley reports. "A few **kokanee** are being caught in the reservoir, but the big net-pen-reared rainbows are the big attraction," Donley said.

Donley also said big rainbows continue to come out of Sprague Lake. "Both shore fishers and those trolling in boats are hauling in 7 to 8-pound rainbows," he said.

Rainbow trout fishing also remains productive at Z-Lake on WDFW's Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area in central Lincoln County. Juli Anderson, area manager, says the lake, which is a walk-in only site off Telford Road, has lots of planted rainbows. "The largest reported hooked this year was 15 inches," she said. "With dry ground right now, it's fairly easy to access from either the north or south end."

Two of the region's four **winter-only trout lakes** that normally open Dec. 1 will not open this year because they don't have any fish after fall rehabilitation treatments. Fourth of July Lake, on the Lincoln-Adams county line near Sprague, was treated with rotenone to rid it of fathead minnows. Hog Canyon Lake, in southwest Spokane County, was treated to rid it of bullheads and tench. Both lakes will be re-stocked with rainbow trout next spring and will re-open for fishing in December 2010.

Hatch and Williams lakes in Stevens County are well-stocked and will open Dec. 1 as usual. Both should provide decent catches of rainbows up to 14 inches.

Whitefish season opens Dec. 1 on the middle section of the Little Spokane River, from state Hwy 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, found in winter 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. WDFW regional fish program manager John Whalen explains that 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.

Northcentral Washington

Art Viola, WDFW district fish biologist, of Wenatchee reports **steelhead** fishing on the Wenatchee River is slowing down. Both angling effort and catch rates have declined, likely due to low water temperatures, he said. Viola's latest measurement showed 38-degree water at mid-day.

Steelheading effort and catch rates on the Entiat River have recently increased. Viola reports anglers are catching about 50 percent hatchery fish (those with clipped adipose fins) and 50 percent wild fish, which must be immediately released. Both effort and catch rates seem to be holding steady on the mainstem Columbia River, from Rock Island Dam to Wells Dam.

"On all rivers anglers are retaining every hatchery fish they can, which is what we want and the new rules require," Viola said. "Unfortunately, anglers are confused by some fish with partially clipped adipose fins. Many, including myself, have caught hatchery steelhead with some of the adipose fin still intact. The guideline to follow is that if the fin is obviously clipped, but not completely gone, and if the cut is healed, the fish should be kept as a hatchery marked fish."

Bob Jateff, WDFW district fish biologist from Omak, notes a few Okanogan County lakes open for catch-and-keep **rainbow 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.

Also opening Dec. 1 is the winter **whitefish** season on portions of the Chewuch, Entiat, Methow, Similkameen, and Sinlahekin rivers. Jateff notes that 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 but unlisted special 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 will run from 10 to 13 inches, found in winter groups in deep pools, and usually caught with maggots or small artificial flies or lures.

Southcentral Washington

Paul Hoffarth, WDFW district fish biologist from Pasco, reports steelhead fishing effort and catch rates remain steady on the Ringold area of the Columbia River near the Tri-Cities.

The latest weekly creel estimated 148 **steelhead** were caught at Ringold. Of those, 115 hatchery steelhead were harvested and 27 wild steelhead were released. Recent high winds slowed angler effort on some days. Bank anglers were averaging 20 hours per steelhead caught and boat anglers were averaging 6.5 hours per steelhead.

Eric Anderson, WDFW district fish biologist from Yakima, notes recent stocking of big **rainbow trout** in local year-round lakes. Hatchery surplus rainbow brood stock were planted in Mattoon and North FioRito lakes near Ellensburg in Kittitas County. Each lake received 150 rainbows that run about four pounds each, plus a few 8-pounders. All year-round lakes are on statewide rules with a daily catch limit of five trout.

Anderson also reported North Elton Pond, near Selah in Yakima County, received 2,000 half-pound rainbows in preparation for its Dec. 1 - March 31 fishing season. Daily catch limit at North Elton is two trout.

"Portions of local rivers, like the Yakima below Roza Dam, and the Naches and Tieton rivers will open for **whitefish** on the first of December," Anderson said. "Be sure to check the fishing regulation pamphlet for all the details."

TGF Inbox - Reader E-mail

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

Write to the TGF staff:

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Doug Rees: doug@TheGuidesForecast.com

Michael Teague: Michael@TheGuidesForecast.com

Random Links

Fish biologists studying the happy return of wild coho above Willamette Falls

http://www.oregonlive.com/environment/index.ssf/2009/11/fish_biologists_studying_the_h.html

Check conditions at Crescent Lake here

<http://www3.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/nwcc/sntl-data0000.jsp?site=660&days=7&state=Oregon>

2010 fishing and hunting licenses went on sale December 1st and may be purchased as gifts. Buy online at

http://www.dfw.state.or.us/online_license_sales/index.asp

ODFW YouTube Channel

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GOOD LUCK!