

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **March 8th – March 14th, 2013**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- The Willamette River below the falls is giving up spring chinook from bottom to top, with fair reports coming in daily. Water conditions remain excellent with good visibility and an average temperature of 45 degrees. Still, Sellwood is seeing the most action but it is also getting the most traffic. The Multnomah Channel is also putting out its share of early fish and anglers would be well advised to put some time in there. Green label herring, either plug cut or fished whole is the number one bait, but cured prawns are the runner up. Expect fishing to improve as we approach the peak of the run in April, as long as water conditions remain favorable.

Catch and release sturgeon fishing remains fair to good on the Willamette but effort has dropped off as anglers are beginning to target salmon. Smelt, squid and sand shrimp will all get bites in the deeper holes of the Portland harbor.

On the Clackamas, anglers are experiencing improved steelhead fishing, despite the slow start. Fish are spread throughout the system but most action is being had from Carver upstream.

The Sandy River continues to impress Metro area anglers with a better than decent run of broodstock hatchery steelhead. Wild, unclipped fish are also present, as are a surprising early showing of hatchery summer run steelhead. Boaters from Oxbow Park to Dabney Park are scoring best, but fish are spread throughout the system.

McKenzie levels rose with rainfall around the first of March. Expect levels to remain a little high as flows have been slow to moderate. Winter trout fishing is fair to good.

The Santiam system will be on the drop over the weekend. The occasional winter steelhead is being taken on the North Santiam and reportedly a few summers are already in the river.

Northwest – Steelheaders enjoyed optimum conditions through much of the weekend and early this week. Despite entering peak season, anglers still struggled to find good numbers of fish. The Nestucca and Wilson Rivers harbored the greatest number of driftboats and bank anglers with an occasional quality broodstock and wild fish found.

Tom Atchison of Tillamook hooked 3 steelhead on the Nestucca between 4th Bridge and 1st Bridge on Sunday, landing one nice 10-pound broodstock hen and releasing a wild buck. One fish took a plug while the other was taken sidedrifted a small cluster of eggs on a yarn ball.

Steelheaders on the north coast are in agreement; although numbers are clearly down from the previous 2 productive years, quality is up. There is a high percentage of fish above 10 pounds and several over 15.

River levels are expected to remain in good condition into the weekend. Although interest is down from last year, anglers can find even greater solace in streams without broodstock programs. The Trask, Nehalem, Kilchis and Necanicum systems should continue to produce wild fish through March. Bank anglers will score their best results on the smaller systems and bobber and jigs should produce better results in the dropping flows.

Seas were forecasted to calm by mid-week, making offshore fisheries a strong option for hungry lingcod and sea bass in the nearshore. Crabbing is likely to be just fair after an intense commercial crab fishery.

A softening tide series should bring interest for estuary crabbing but don't expect limits of keepers. Crab should be in good condition however.

Southwest- Biologists are predicting a productive ocean salmon fishery off the south coast in the coming season. Most of these chinook will be three-year-olds although the increase of larger four year old fish is forecast to quadruple over last year.

Rough ocean conditions once again kept boats from crossing into the ocean over the past weekend. Offshore conditions are forecast to settle down somewhat by Friday this week. All-depth halibut opens in May.

Fishing for red-tail surf perch is good on south coast beaches whenever the ocean is lying down.

Rogue River levels are dropping rapidly following the passage of a storm front mid-week. Low, clear water which had stalled steelheading on the lower river last week will be alleviated but driftboats on the middle Rogue below the mouth of the Applegate will fare better. With winter steelhead well-distributed, fishing has been fair on the upper river from in the stretch below TouVelle.

A few early spring chinook have been taken on the Umpqua. South Umpqua steelheaders targeting hatchery fish should have a good weekend as water levels drop. Hookups have been good for native steelhead on the North Umpqua.

The Chetco River, low and clear earlier this week, was forecast to rise up to around 6,000 cfs mid-week, then drop into the coming weekend. It should be fishable by Wednesday, with water dropping into mid-March. Chetco steelheaders will find fresh, bright fish this weekend and as the river recovers, steelheading will be good. Opportunity runs to the end of the month when the river closes.

Elk and Sixes Rivers will produce following precipitation as they're dropping but these smaller rivers will get too low rapidly.

The catch rate has remained steady at one trout every couple of hours for ice fishers at Diamond Lake with Power Bait and jigs effective.

Eastern – The level, flow and color are excellent on the lower Deschutes. Blue-Winged-Olive is the principle winter pattern with hatches peaking now. Other insects of interest include caddis, larger stones and midges with most hookups occurring mid-day.

There have been a few large rainbows taken at Fall River recently but the river can get crowded, particularly on weekends.

Guides on the Grand Ronde in eastern Oregon are predicting good spring fishing; when flows drop and temperatures warm.

SW Washington- Wild steelhead and a rare broodstock fish are showing up in district rivers. The Cowlitz will remain the best option for a late season hatchery option while the Lewis River should have some wild fish available through March.

The Washougal system should also produce a few wild fish with the hatchery component largely over.

Anglers are starting to ramp up their efforts on spring chinook. Early season catches and indicators at Bonneville Dam are fueling indications that the run may actually be under-predicted for a change. If water conditions persist, catches will only get better this week.

**Soapbox Update:
Spring Fishing Classic - March 30th - REGISTRATION IS OPEN**

The 21st Annual Spring Fishing Classic will occur on Saturday, March 30, 2013. The Kliever Memorial Armory, 10000 NE 33rd Dr, Portland, OR 97211, is the location of weigh-in, dinner, awards, auctions, raffles.

After fishing has concluded for the day, participants and sponsors enjoy a buffet dinner, door prizes, a silent auction, a bucket auction and a lot of fun. This all day derby commences at daylight; the weigh-in deadline is 3:30 pm.

The number of teams are limited. Register now!!!

Register here <http://www.nsiafishing.org/?event=spring-fishing-classic>

Columbia River Fishing Report – Although action is getting better for spring chinook in the Portland to Longview stretch of the Columbia, the weekly ODF&W creel check doesn't necessarily represent that. Temperatures did chill a bit this week but that didn't have much of an impact on catch rates as numbers present begin to climb, also indicated by dam counts. Admittedly, there was much less chatter on fishing blogs of fish that went home this week. The creel check didn't see any measureable catches but notable is a bump in steelhead catches; both summer and winter runs.

Sturgeon anglers still have nothing to write home about. Catch rates remain low, even if the cooler air and water temperatures had anything to do with it.

There just wasn't much going on in the Columbia this weekend.

The Guide's Forecast – Anglers will hope to continue to see an early spring, which will warm up air and water temperatures more favorable to salmon trollers. In the meantime, as expected, anglers will have to put in their time and prayers, in hopes of early, yummy spring chinook. The most probable area to intercept fish will remain downstream of the mouth of the Willamette and with a low flow regime, it's quite possible that even Willamette bound spring chinook will take the longer route and bypass the Multnomah Channel (although fish are coming from there on a fairly regular basis.

Trolled green label herring will continue to be the choice but anglers shouldn't overlook red label herring either. Greens can be hard to find right now so don't count on a steady supply; you may want to stock up. Keep those trolled baits very close to the bottom but unless you're an angler with a lot of time on your hands, you may want to wait a little longer until you put in your best effort. Catches will remain light.

And much the same with mainstem Columbia sturgeon, it's a rarity to find a good one right now.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) reports, "The Willamette River below the falls is giving up spring Chinook from bottom to top, with reports coming in daily. Water conditions remain excellent with good visibility and an average temperature of 45 degrees. Still Sellwood is seeing the most action but it is also getting the most traffic. The Multnomah Channel is also putting out its share of early fish and anglers would be well advised to put some time in there. Green label herring, either plug cut or fished whole is the number one bait, but cured prawns are the runner up. Expect fishing to improve as we approach the peak of the run in April, as long as water conditions remain favorable. Catch and release sturgeon fishing remains fair to good but effort has dropped off as anglers are beginning to target salmon. Smelt, squid and sandshrimp will all get bites in the deeper holes of the Portland harbor."

McKenzie levels have been on the drop since the first of March. Trout fishing has been fair to good and a report a very late summer steelhead was reported this week.

The Santiam system was little effected by rainfall this week and is forecast to be cropping with dry weather over the coming week. Spring Chinook will be an option here but not until May.

Late, Good News!

HB 2697 which would allow Oregon anglers to place fish entrails and carcasses back in the water (which is currently illegal but would contribute to nutrient enrichment) passed out of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee with a **unanimous vote** this morning. While it has yet to hurdle the Senate committee and the floor, it should pass without significant resistance.

The Sandy River Chapter of the Northwest Steelheaders will be sponsoring a free springer clinic on March 20th at Glenn Otto Park in Troutdale. The clinic is scheduled from 5 PM to 8 Pm with plenty of free parking near the site. Local guides will be demonstrating how to how, when and where to fish as well as tackle and rigging techniques. For additional information, call Doug at 503 729-2023.

Alton Baker Canal, Huddleston Pond and Sheridan Pond are scheduled for trout planting.

The Guide's Forecast – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) predicts, "Spring Chinook fishing on the Willamette River is underway, with all the boat ramps from Scappoose to Oregon City seeing some boat traffic on a daily basis. The better than average water conditions have made for decent salmon fishing for February and early March. Water clarity is the big kicker, as winter rains normally render the river swollen, with only a few inches visibility at best. But this winter season, our lighter than average rainfall has kept the river in pretty good shape. Additionally, milder temperatures are keeping the river in the mid 40's, which approaches the spring salmons favorite temperature range of 48-58 degrees Fahrenheit. In a nutshell, the conditions are good and anglers looking to dust the cobwebs from their boats and gear might consider purchasing some herring for the trip. Fish have been taken from St. Helens to the top of the Multnomah Channel and from the power lines to Oregon City. Coon Island has seen a healthy number of fish so far, as has Sellwood, but these are popular early season hang outs for both salmon and anglers. Plug cut green label herring is the preferred bait of trollers, but red label, fished whole or plug cut is a sturdy alternative. Larger blue label herring are sometimes used but it's my belief that they draw far fewer strikes than the smaller baits. Cured pink, red or orange prawns take up a close second in the bait line up and fishermen who are seasoned at obtaining the desired, slow corkscrew spin take more than their fair share of springers. Up at Oregon City with the heightened current, back-trolling is the method of choice for boaters and cured prawns, sandshrimp and cured roe are the staple baits. Some anglers will also pick up a few fish on

sardine wrapped Kwikfish. Many boat anglers will take the easier going approach of anchoring in a hog line, plunking the same baits with a buoyant spin n glow in front of their prawn or shrimp. As the water warms, many hog liners will switch to small spinners and prawn/spinner combo's. The weather is scheduled to remain dry and mild for the next few days, only allowing for improving water conditions. Expect more and more fish to show up in the catch as we approach the runs peak in mid-April. Catch and release sturgeon fishing in the harbor is likely fair to good, but effort has diminished since the showing of early springers."

Fly anglers should find worthwhile fishing for trout on the McKenzie. While action hasn't been red hot, it has been steady with water conditions good for this time of year.

With winter steelhead counts still running half the 10-year average at Willamette Falls (fewer than 20,000 thus far), it follows that populations of fish on the North Santiam are a more sparse than most seasons. A few are being taken, however, along with some summers which are very colorful this late/early in the year. On the other hand, with 125 summer steelhead in Falls count and daily passage rivaling that of winters, there's hope that summer steelheading might return to its former glory here.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) reports, "On the Clackamas, anglers are experiencing improved steelhead fishing, despite the slow start. Fish are spread throughout the system but most action is being had from Carver upstream. Free drifted roe and yarn is the preferred bait with the guides but anglers are also scoring well with backtrolled plugs and bobber/jig set-ups. Expect the run to hold up through mid-April.

"The Sandy River continues to impress Metro area anglers with a better than decent run of broodstock hatchery steelhead. Wild, unclipped fish are also present, as are a surprising early showing of hatchery summer run steelhead. Boaters from Oxbow Park to Dabney Park are scoring best, but fish are spread throughout the system. The typical baits and lures are all getting bit, with pink worms getting a lot of attention from the rivers healthy sized steelhead. Expect the action to hold through March and then look for the summer runs to take center stage."

The Guide's Forecast – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) predicts, "On the Clackamas River, winter steelhead are finally showing up in "decent" numbers. It's a 50/50 mix of wild and hatchery broodstock fish and lucky anglers are tangling with some sizable specimens. Boaters working the Feldheimers to Barton, or the Barton to Carver drifts are having the best success. Free drifting cured roe and yarn is the preferred method and backtrolling plugs will get fish as well. When the water begins to clear, jigs fished under a bobber frequently get bites. Most bank anglers are working the upper river, spending time at Dog Creek and McGiver Park. Bobber and jig is the favorite tactic for the bankies these days, but drift fishing bait and a slinky still sees its share of the catch. Water conditions should remain favorable through the weekend, with steelhead anglers enjoying a slow steady drop.

"The Sandy River continues to produce winter steelhead (and a few early summers) for East county fishermen. Although water conditions are on a slow descent, just below prime level of 10ft, fish continue to give themselves up for savvy anglers employing low water tactics. Small baits, fished with a pinch of yarn and jig and bobber combos work best for bank-bound anglers. Spoons and spinners will also get fish if fished slow and deep. Boaters are free drifting small baits and pulling plugs in the longer runs. Bank anglers are sticking to the upper section between Oxbow Park and Cedar Creek. Drift boater are working the Oxbow Park to Dabney Park drift while the jet boaters are staying below Dabney. Fish are spread throughout the river, but anglers

are encouraged to fish lower in the system as the water continues its drop. Expect a continued drop for the next several days until the next rainstorm. Fishing will hold up through the first week of April unless we enter an extended dry spell."

North Coast Fishing Report – Steelhead fishing the last few years remains all too fresh in the minds of North Coast steelheaders. Although crowds are clearly in the know that we are far from a great run, effort remains fairly high during what is typically considered a peak time frame. North Coast rivers remain in ideal shape and quality steelhead are still available; just not in any great numbers.

The Wilson and the Nestucca Rivers remain the prime targets for most consumptive users, but other systems are producing fair numbers of wild fish also. I drifted the Nestucca River on Sunday, fishing two avid anglers from Fourth Bridge to Farmers Creek. The all-day effort yielded three opportunities for steelhead, netting two of those fish and harvesting one nice 10-pound hen. Two of the three fish fell to side drifted clusters of small eggs, while the other fell to a plug in water too snaggy to side drift. We used the small size #35 black pirate hot shot to catch the 8-pound buck just above Third Bridge. We started our first float from First Bridge to Farmers Creek, only seeing an occasional steelhead for the Sunday float. At last tally, **Pro guide Kent Anderson (503-550-6303)** had taken 63 steelhead since mid-February. Kent indicated that his Nestucca River efforts have yielded largely wild bucks. Broodstock and hens were noticeably absent from his early season catch. As we have mentioned before, quality sized fish are much more common than in previous years. It's quite common this year to catch steelhead over 10-pounds and the opportunity for a fish over 15 pounds is fairly realistic.

Anglers on the Wilson River are also having a hard time with consistency. Water conditions have allowed for fishing in the upper reaches but that has not necessarily produced better catches this year. It still remains one of the best options for North Coast steelheaders, especially those seeking hatchery fish for take-home use. Of course it's no surprise that side-drifting remains the most popular technique but anglers shouldn't overlook the use of alternative techniques since everybody is side-drifting. Plugs can be an effective method for these later returning, more aggressive steelhead and not many people are doing it anymore. My stand-by favorite color remains the black pirate and anglers should continue to employ dark colored plugs in cloudy weather and metallic colored plugs under sunny skies.

With a year witnessing fewer returns than the previous two, smaller streams are getting even less attention than normal. The Kilchis River and Necanicum River are strong late-season wild fish options but interest just remains low for the paltry number of wild fish that have shown so far this season.

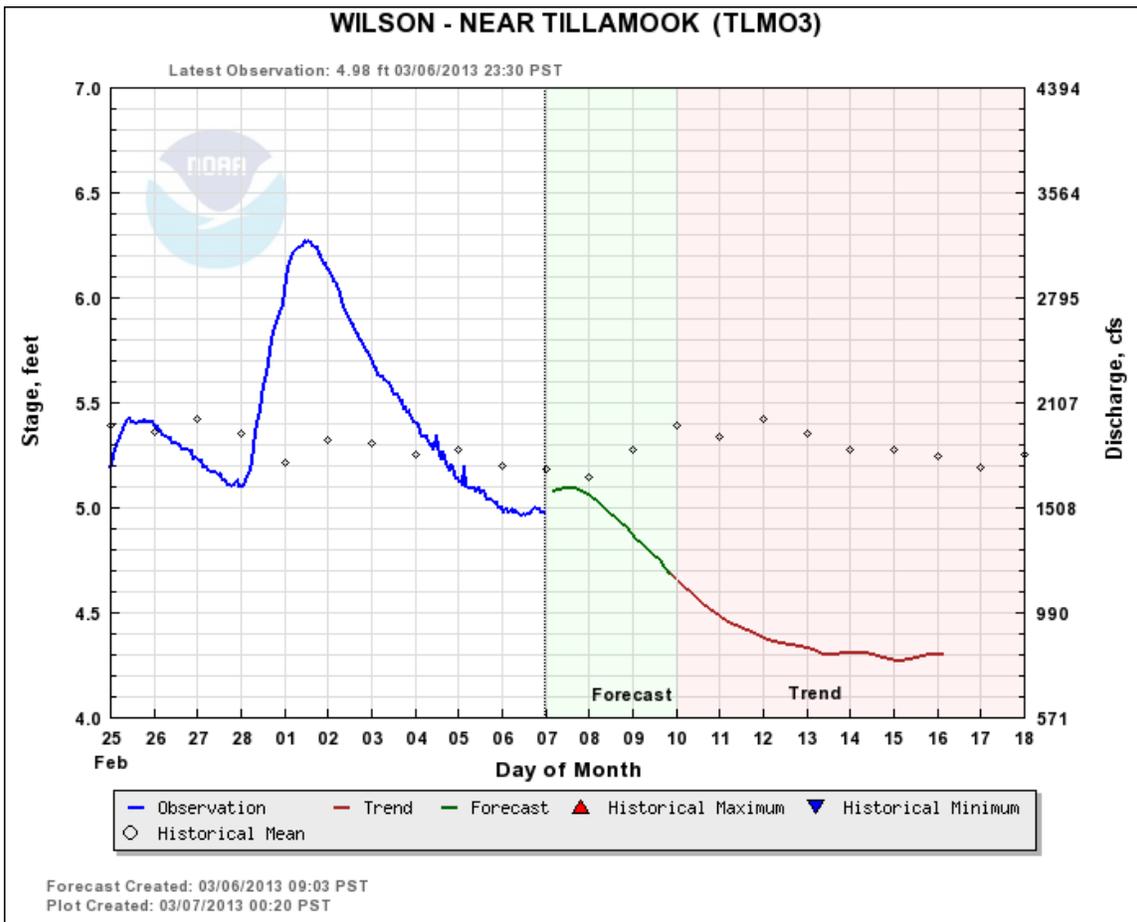
Trask River anglers have shown little interest for steelhead in this watershed. Good numbers of wild fish should begin to show although this run typically peaks a little later than most other North Coast streams. With the water a little higher than normal, the upper reaches on the Peninsula Drift are feasible but again, not many drifters have been pursuing steelhead.

The mainstem of the Nehalem is also a strong March option but with flows a little higher than optimum, anglers are showing greater interest in smaller river systems. Boaters working the remote stretch near Vernonia should start to see a few more fish show in this reach of river.

Crabbing and offshore fishing have been low priority this week but that could change with an improving offshore forecast and a softening of tidal exchanges beginning Friday. Offshore anglers have been very anxious to get after bottomfish species as fish are likely to be very willing to bite.

The Guide's Forecast – Steelhead prospects on the north coast should continue to improve well into early April. March is considered peak season and there's no reason to expect any different this year, despite the lower return rates. We are clearly not going to have the returns of the previous two years but numbers should still be worth the pursuit, at least until spring chinook begin to arrive in better numbers.

The Wilson and Nestucca Rivers will remain in the cross-hairs for those seeking consumptive opportunity. These two systems will also likely produce some of the better catches of wild fish. With the slight bump in the hydrograph at mid-week, most river reaches on these two systems should be accessible. Fish will be well distributed throughout the system, enabling anglers to spread themselves out for the best chance at un-molested biters. Side-drifting in the higher flows will remain the best option for technique but under these conditions, leave no water un-touched as steelhead are likely to hold in shallower water in these higher flows.



On the Nestucca, 6th Bridge to Farmers Creek will likely produce the best results while the Wilson will fish best from Vanderzanden's Boat slide to Sollie Smith Bridge. Although higher flows aren't the ideal situation for plug pullers, shallower, snaggy water is still likely to hold fish that boaters can pursue by backtrolling shallow diving plugs. As long as anglers don't go into the day dreaming of double-digit opportunities, they should still enjoy one of the best chances of the year for quality winter steelhead. One fact that fisherman should hold onto is that the chance for a steelhead in the 15 to 20-pound range is more real than ever before. Although it's never a wise choice to target only these fish, they are typically large males that often hang in the deep, dark

boulder filled water. These fish can be hard to target side-drifting so consider employing bobber and jigs or deep diving plugs if you truly want a chance at one of them.

The Trask is a strong second option to these rivers, especially if you are trying to get away from more crowded conditions. Both the upper and lower reaches of this river should produce a few wild fish but serious Trask sportsmen wait just a bit longer for these later returning fish.

The Nehalem will not be one of the better options this week as high flows will make finding a Nehalem metalhead a bit more challenging.

Bank anglers should take advantage of smaller stream options with the Necanicum and Kilchis Rivers being the top two prospects. The Little North Fork of the Nehalem as well as Three Rivers are also options but seem to produce few catches than the more free flowing previous mentioned two systems. Bank anglers should have good access to fish throughout these systems with both the upper and lower reaches producing fair to good results. Again, with no viable consumptive opportunities on these systems, traffic will remain minor in pursuit of catch and release opportunities.

Offshore anglers will be keeping a keen eye on the weather forecast. As it stands now, Thursday and Friday look like the best options with minor wind waves and a small swell with a low frequency. Sea bass and lingcod should be easy targets with cooperative ocean conditions. By the weekend however, the swell is forecasted to pick up and may be out of reach for the anxious saltwater angler. Here is the offshore forecast:

FRI

N WIND 5 TO 10 KT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 5 FT AT 15 SECONDS.

FRI NIGHT

N WIND 5 TO 10 KT. GUSTS TO 15 KT IN THE EVENING.
WIND WAVES 3 FT. W SWELL 5 FT AT 14 SECONDS.

SAT

NW WIND TO 5 KT. WIND WAVES 1 FT. W SWELL 7 FT AT 17 SECONDS.

SAT NIGHT

N WIND 5 TO 10 KT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 9 FT AT 15 SECONDS.

SUN

SW WIND 5 TO 10 KT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 9 FT.

MON

SW WIND 10 TO 15 KT. WIND WAVES 3 FT. W SWELL 8 FT.

Crabbing should also be a viable option, especially in the estuaries with a softer tide series and friendly winds, enabling crabbers to pursue their quarry in areas that are hard to crab under harder currents.

Central & South Coast Reports – On the first of March, I (Michael) start immediately to think spring. As an Oregon native, you'd think I'd know better. Officially, the season changes on the Spring Equinox which is Wednesday, March 20. Can spring-like weather be far behind?

This time of year, the chance to launch for offshore quarry can be infrequent as has been the case in the past few weeks. That situation has changed with conditions this week, however. Boats undoubtedly launched today, March 7th, although this news comes too late for readers to take any action on it. Fortunately, mild wind and wave conditions remain the rule over the next three days. While swells will be increasing slightly on Sunday, with intervals of 14 to 15 seconds and soft breezes, crossing central coast bars should be no problem. Rockfish and ling cod are abundant and eager. Offshore anglers may fish any depth of water through the last day of March but beginning April 1st, bottom fishing will be limited to the 30-fathom line.

Fishing for pinkfin surf perch will be good with wave action moderate this week. Near a bay entrance or at the mouth of a river or stream is often productive but most places where waves break close to shore will indicate a stretch of deeper water where surf perch will be feeding. While sand shrimp are irresistible to these fish, using something a little more substantial such as clam necks will ensure a bait remains on the hook following a cast. Berkeley makes several Gulp baits which have been found effective for pinkfins and those baits are often good for more than one fish. Anglers are allowed a generous daily bag limit of 15.

While some winter steelhead entered the Siletz when it got a decent bump from rain at the first of March, precipitation this week did little but stall the drop here. The river is a little low to fish at its best and will be getting skinny in the week to come.

Alsea water and flow were increasing on Wednesday this week and the water was becoming turbid. It started dropping mid-day today, March 7th and will be dropping over the coming week. There should be some fresh fish in the system for the weekend.

Winchester Bay crabbing has been fair at best but will improve as Umpqua flows moderate with dry weather and salinity levels return to normal in the bay. Anglers casting off the South Jetty are catching striped perch and greenling along with undersized ling cod. The mainstem Umpqua has started to drop with fresh steelhead in the system from the freshet. Most will be natives, all of which cannot be kept on the Umpqua system. Steelheading on the North Umpqua should be ramping up now and there are certainly some long rodders who'd enjoy seeing some improvement in the flies-only stretch. Despite the storm front passage this week, South Umpqua levels didn't top the five-foot level at Tiller. Optimum levels here are generally considered to be somewhat higher but with the hatchery here and the water dropping over the weekend, the South Umpqua still offers the best shot at a keeper.

Crabbing has remained good in Coos Bay where the surface area and depth of the water ameliorate the effect of fresh water entering the estuary with passing storm fronts. Steelheading on the Coos River is winding down with diehards taking primarily spawned out or dark fish although there is an occasional bright winter specimen. Drifted bait has been most effective here.

Coquille steelheading is similar to that on the Coos with numbers of decent winters dwarfed by those which aren't worth retaining. Results have been best on the South Coquille on Cured eggs, corkies or jigs.

While steelheading has been spotty on the lower Rogue, this week's freshet will put fresh winters into the system as well as some spring Chinook. The first springer of 2013 was taken near Gold Beach on the last day of February with another confirmed on the 2nd of March. It's still early for springers on the Rogue but those initial catches spurred interest and increased effort for them.

The return this season is expected to be larger than last years. As has been the case over the last several years, only fin-clipped Chinook may be kept on the Rogue until June 1st. A large river like the Rogue is slower to react and recover from a freshet such as that which occurred this week. Water levels are likely to continue to rise through Friday, then start dropping Saturday morning. There will be some turbidity to deal with but savvy plunkers tossing toss Spin 'n' Glos for winters from banks and gravel bars on the lower Rogue should have some success. Plug pullers will hook up as the water continues to drop and clear. Catches of winter steelhead slowed with little flow and too much clarity on the middle Rogue earlier this week and at this writing mid-day on Thursday, March 7th, the impact of rainfall this week had yet to be seen on this stretch. Come it will, however, with levels rising Friday but as the river recovers, there will be plenty of steelhead to target. Catches on the upper Rogue have been fair but will improve as winter steelhead continue to move upstream.

Rainfall this week caused the Chetco to rise but flows topping 4,000 cfs. This should be of little concern as the Chetco fishes best at flows between 2,000 and 4,500 cfs at Brookings. The water level and flow will be dropping into the coming week but will be in excellent shape over the coming weekend with water clarity on the mend. Fresh winter steelhead will have entered the system with this freshet and as productive as steelheading has been recently, it should be prime time on the Chetco for anglers targeting winters.

Pressure at Diamond Lake will be greatest over the weekend. Fishing is fair but steady and the ice is stable. Trout to 24 inches are being taken with Power Bait most popular although jigs or nightcrawlers are also effective.

Budget cuts have the ODFW scrambling to cover all the tasks normally required such as reporting south coast trout stocking. Information has been spotty but we'll share reports as they come in.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Trout fishing has been fair on the Deschutes below Warm Springs with a few Skwalla stoneflies joining the BWOs, caddis and midges.

Crooked River flows have been gradually rising over the last couple of weeks. It's still low by most river standards with rainbows and whitefish being caught.

Cold water temperatures seem to have slowed the bite at Ochoco Reservoir although the few trout that have been taken recently were large.

Fly fishers are taking a few trout out of Klamath Lake.

The Central Oregon Sportsman's Show continues through March 10th at the Deschutes County Fair & Expo Center. See **Random Links**, below for the info link.

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report for March 2013

Last updated March 4, 2013

North Puget Sound

(Island, King, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish and Whatcom counties)

With steelhead fishing closed in the region, anglers are now turning to other species, including rainbow trout in many of the region's lakes and blackmouth salmon in Puget Sound.

Anglers fishing marine areas 7 (San Juan Islands), 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay), 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner), and 9 (Admiralty Inlet) have a two-**salmon** daily limit, but must release wild chinook salmon. Marine Area 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) is closed to salmon fishing.

Steve Thiesfeld, Puget Sound salmon manager for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), said anglers fishing for blackmouth have had the most success in the San Juan Islands. "Central Puget Sound has been slow, but anglers fishing the San Juans have done really well this winter," he said.

Before heading out, anglers can check [creel reports](#) for information on catch and effort in Puget Sound. Catch samplers with WDFW collect the information each week at fishing access sites throughout Puget Sound.

Anglers looking for some competition might want to enter the **Everett Blackmouth Derby** on March 16. Prizes include \$3,000 for the largest fish, \$1,500 for second place and \$500 for third place. For details, visit the [derby's website](#).

Looking forward to the **summer salmon fishing** season? Several public meetings have been scheduled throughout March as fishery managers continue to develop the 2013 salmon seasons, which will be finalized in early April. For more information on the meetings, visit WDFW's [North of Falcon website](#).

Rather catch **trout**? The lowland lakes trout season doesn't officially get under way until late-April, but anglers in the region can get an early start on the action. Twenty-three lakes that are open to fishing year-round will be stocked with 97,000 fish in March. Those lakes include:

- **Island County:** Cranberry and Lone.
- **King County:** Alice, Angle, Beaver, Green, Meridian, Rattlesnake (selective gear rules, catch-and-release only), and Sawyer.
- **Snohomish County:** Ballinger, Blackmans, Cassidy, Chain, Flowing, Gissberg Ponds (Twin Lakes), Ketchum, Loma, Lost (Devil's), Martha (Warm Beach), Panther, Shoecraft, Silver, and Tye.

Other good bets include lakes Goodwin and Roesiger in Snohomish County, where several thousand rainbow trout that were stocked in December should be growing to catchable size this spring and summer.

"Whether you're new to the sport or a veteran, there are plenty of fishing opportunities for both boat and shore anglers," said Justin Spinelli, fisheries biologist for WDFW.

Fishing for **kokanee** should pick up this month, particularly at Angle, Stevens, Cavanaugh and Samish lakes. "Because kokanee feed near the surface in low light conditions and then move deeper as the day progresses, successful anglers vary their depth and tackle throughout the day," said Spinelli.

Fishing for **bass, yellow perch, catfish, black crappie,** and **bluegill** is also an option. In March, these species can still be found around bottom structure (rocky outcroppings, points, and humps) in deep water, said Danny Garrett, fisheries biologist for WDFW.

"Anglers should slowly work their gear and plan to change location regularly because these fish are on the move in spring," Garrett said. "As water temperatures warm later in the month, yellow perch begin to congregate in schools in shallower depths to spawn, while bass and other warmwater species aggressively feed in preparation for spawning in May and June."

Before heading out, anglers should check the [Sportfishing Rules Pamphlet](#) for more information on fishing regulations.

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

(Clallam, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Kitsap, Mason, Pierce, Thurston and Pacific counties)

Blackmouth salmon fisheries are in full swing in Puget Sound, the lingcod season gets under way mid-March in ocean areas south of Cape Alava and several ocean beaches are scheduled to open for razor clam digs this month.

State fishery managers have approved an evening razor clam dig that will run March 7-11 at Twin Harbors, March 8-10 at Long Beach and March 9-10 at Copalis and Mocrocks. No digging will be allowed at any beach before noon.

In planning a trip to the beach, all diggers should be aware that Daylight Saving Time starts March 10, said Dan Ayres, coastal shellfish manager for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). "If you forget to set your watch ahead, you could miss an hour of prime digging," he said, noting that the best digging occurs an hour or two before low tide.

Evening low tides for the upcoming dig are as follows:

- March 7, Thursday, 3:06 p.m., +0.3 ft., Twin Harbors
- March 8, Friday, 4:01 p.m., 0.0 ft., Twin Harbors, Long Beach
- March 9, Saturday, 4:50 p.m., -0.2 ft., Twin Harbors, Long Beach, Copalis and Mocrocks
- March 10, Sunday, 6:33 p.m., -0.2 ft., Twin Harbors, Long Beach, Copalis and Mocrocks
- March 11, Monday, 7:12 p.m., 0.0, Twin Harbors

WDFW also plans to open second dig later in the month, provided that marine toxin tests show the clams are safe to eat. The timing of that time reflects the seasonal switch to morning low tides, Ayres said.

"Every year in late March, the lowest low tides switch from evenings to mornings, so we structure razor clam digs accordingly," Ayres said. Tentative opening dates and morning low tides for late March are:

- March 28, Thursday, (7:57 am -0.3 ft.): Twin Harbors
- March 29, Friday, (8:40 a.m., -0.6 ft.): Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis, Mocrocks
- March 30, Saturday, (9:26 a.m., -0.7 ft.): Twin Harbors, Long Beach, Copalis, Mocrocks
- March 31, Sunday, (10:16 a.m., -0.6 ft.): Twin Harbors

Under state law, diggers can take 15 razor clams per day, and are required to keep the first 15 they dig. Each digger's clams must be kept in a separate container.

All diggers age 15 or older must have a valid fishing license to harvest razor clams on any beach. Licensing options range from a three-day razor clam license to an annual combination fishing license, which can be purchased on [WDFW's website](#) and from license vendors around the state.

Meanwhile, fishing for **blackmouth** – resident chinook – is an option in several areas of Puget Sound. Anglers fishing marine areas 6 (eastern Strait), 11 (Tacoma-Vashon) and 12 (Hood Canal) have a two-salmon daily limit, but must release wild chinook. Those fishing marine areas 5 (Sekiu) and 13 (South Puget Sound) have a daily limit of one chinook salmon.

"Fishing has been really good in the straits," said Steve Thiesfeld, Puget Sound salmon manager. "The straits and Hood Canal are the places to be for blackmouth fishing now."

Before heading out, anglers can check [creel reports](#) for information on catch and effort in Puget Sound. Recreational fishery samplers with WDFW collect the information each week at fishing access sites throughout Puget Sound.

Rather hook a **lingcod**? Fishing for lingcod gets under way March 16 in marine areas 1-3, south of Cape Alava. The minimum size for lingcod in these areas is 22 inches, with a daily limit of two fish per angler. For lingcod fishing regulations, check the [Fishing in Washington pamphlet](#).

In the rivers, wild **steelhead** returns to northern peninsula streams reach their peak in March. As in years past, anglers may retain only one wild steelhead per license year on the Bogachiel, Calawah, Clearwater, Dickey, Hoh, Quillayute, Quinault and Sol Duc rivers. On all other rivers, anglers may retain only hatchery-reared steelhead marked with a clipped adipose fin and healed scar. For more information on steelhead fishing regulations, check the [Fishing in Washington pamphlet](#). Information on weekly steelhead catches in the Quillayute River system and the Hoh River are available on [WDFW's website](#).

Meanwhile, there's still time to provide input on the **summer salmon fishing** seasons. Several public meetings have been scheduled throughout March as fishery managers continue to develop the 2013 salmon seasons, which will be finalized in mid-April. For more information on the meetings, visit WDFW's [North of Falcon website](#).

Southwest Washington

(Clark, Cowlitz, Klickitat, Lewis, Skamania and Wahkiakum counties)

Despite modest run-size forecasts, this year's **spring chinook** fishery got off to an early start on the lower Columbia River, where anglers were reeling in ocean-fresh "springers" by mid-February. Fishing will continue to ramp up through March, as the bulk of the run moves in from the ocean, said Joe Hymer, a fish biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

"The fishery got off to a fairly quick start, no doubt due to favorable weather and river conditions through late February," Hymer said. "If those conditions continue, anglers should do well in the weeks ahead."

Sport fishing for salmon and steelhead has been open since Jan.1 below the Interstate 5 bridge, but expands upriver to Beacon Rock beginning March 1. Bank anglers can fish up to the fishing boundary below Bonneville Dam but boats will be limited to Beacon Rock downstream.

The fishery below Bonneville Dam is scheduled to run through April 5, but will close on two Tuesdays – March 26 and April 2 – to accommodate possible commercial fisheries.

Above Bonneville Dam, the fishery will be open to boat and bank anglers on a daily basis from March 16 through May 5 between the Tower Island powerlines six miles below The Dalles Dam and the Washington/Oregon state line, 17 miles upriver from McNary Dam. Bank anglers can also fish from Bonneville Dam upriver to the Tower Island powerlines during that time.

Effective March 1, the daily limit is six adipose-clipped salmonids, including no more than two adult fish and no more than one adult chinook below Bonneville Dam. The limit is the same above the dam, except that anglers may keep two adult chinook starting March 16.

To facilitate the release of wild, unmarked fish, anglers fishing for salmon, steelhead or cutthroat trout are now required to use **barbless hooks** on the mainstem Columbia River downstream of the Washington/Oregon state line.

Barbless hooks are not currently required on Columbia River tributaries, but that issue will likely be considered during this year's North of Falcon season-setting process. The public will have an opportunity to comment on that and other issues at a meeting scheduled March 12 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Vancouver Water Resources Education Center, 4600 SE Columbia Way, Vancouver, Wash.

Based on this year's preseason forecast, 141,400 upriver spring chinook will return to the Columbia River in 2013 – about 25 percent below the 10-year average. That forecast follows three years of strong returns of fish destined for waters above Bonneville Dam, including last year's run of 203,000 upriver fish.

"The preseason forecast is definitely down this year, but – for perspective – it is still twice as large as those we saw in the 1990s," Hymer said.

Based on that forecast, the initial harvest guideline allows anglers fishing below the dam to catch up to 5,000 hatchery-reared upriver chinook before the run update in late April or early May. Another 670 adult fish will be reserved for anglers fishing between Bonneville Dam and the Washington/Oregon state line, 17 miles upriver from McNary Dam.

Fishery managers expect anglers fishing below Bonneville to reach the 5,000-fish guideline by April 5, but could extend the season if enough fish are still available for harvest, said Ron Roler, WDFW Columbia River policy manager. "Salmon returns are highly variable, and we'll have a better idea what the season holds once the bulk of the run starts moving upriver," he said

While upriver fish make up the bulk of the catch, spring chinook returning to the Willamette, Cowlitz and other area tributaries also contribute to the mainstem fishery. However, due to subpar run projections, in-river fisheries for spring chinook will be closed or curtailed in several of those rivers this year to meet spawning goals at area hatcheries. Rivers affected by emergency rules are:

- **Lewis River:** All chinook must be released from the mouth upstream to the mouth of the East Fork until further notice. The mainstem Lewis remains open for hatchery steelhead.
- **North Fork Lewis River:** All chinook must be released from the mouth of the East Fork upstream to Merwin Dam until further notice. Through May 31, fishing is closed for all species from Johnson Creek (located downstream from the Lewis River Salmon Hatchery) upstream to Merwin Dam. The North Fork Lewis from Johnson Creek downstream remains open to fishing for hatchery steelhead.
- **Kalama River:** All chinook must be released from the boundary markers at the mouth upstream to the upper salmon hatchery (Kalama Falls Hatchery). The Kalama River remains open to fishing for hatchery steelhead.
- **Wind River:** The entire river will be closed to fishing March 16-31. From April 1 through July 31, anglers will be limited to one hatchery chinook or one hatchery steelhead per day from the mouth (boundary line/markers) upstream to 400 feet below Shipherd Falls. Wild chinook and wild steelhead must be released. All fishing is closed until further notice from 400 feet below Shipherd Falls upstream, including all tributaries.

For additional information, see the [rule change notices](#) on the WDFW website.

Hymer said WDFW will monitor returns to all four rivers to determine if the emergency restrictions can be lifted. No emergency restrictions are currently planned for the Cowlitz River, Klickitat River, or Drano Lake, where fishing regulations for spring chinook and steelhead are consistent with those in the [Fish Washington](#) rules pamphlet.

In other waters, anglers should be aware that March 15 is the last day to fish for **steelhead** on Abernathy, Cedar (Clark Co.), Germany, Mill (Cowlitz Co.), Rock (Skamania Co.), and Salmon (Clark Co.) creeks and on the Coweeman, Elochoman, Grays, East Fork Lewis, South Fork Toutle, and Washougal rivers.

Meanwhile, anglers can catch and keep **white sturgeon** from Buoy 10 upstream to Bonneville Dam, and in The Dalles and John Day pools. Fishing has been slow, but anglers have been landing a few legal-size fish, particularly in the John Day Pool.

The daily limit is one white sturgeon per day in all waters where retention is allowed. The annual retention limit is currently five fish in Washington, although the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission recently voted to reduce the annual limit to one fish starting May 1. Watch the [WDFW website](#) for more information on the new annual retention limit in the weeks ahead.

Fishery managers from Washington and Oregon reduced this year's harvest rate for white sturgeon by 15 percent on the lower Columbia River, but that reduction is largely offset by a slight increase in the legal-size sturgeon population – the first indication of improvement in five years. As a result, the harvest guideline for the recreational sturgeon fishery below Bonneville Dam will remain virtually unchanged at 7,790 fish.

As in years past, 80 percent of the allowable catch will be allocated to the sport fishery and 20 percent to the commercial fishery. Under the new harvest rate, the portion of the catch available to recreational fisheries will be allocated as follows: 4,040 fish in the estuary, 2,020 above the Wauna powerlines, and 1,730 in the Willamette River.

Fishing seasons approved for 2013 in the lower Columbia River are as follows:

- **Buoy 10 to the Wauna powerlines:** Retention of white sturgeon is allowed daily from Jan. 1 through April 30 and from May 11 through June 30. From Jan. 1 through April 30, sturgeon must measure between 38 inches and 54 inches (fork length) to be retained. From May 11 through the end of the season they must measure between 41 inches to 54 inches (fork length) to be retained. Catch-and-release fishing is allowed on days when retention is prohibited.
- **Wauna powerlines to Bonneville Dam:** Retention of white sturgeon is allowed three days per week (Thursday through Saturday) from Jan. 1 through June 15 and from Oct. 19 through Dec. 31. Sturgeon must measure between 38 inches and 54 inches (fork length) to be retained. Catch-and-release fishing is allowed on days when retention is prohibited. Effective through April 30, angling is prohibited from a line between the upstream end of Sand Island, located east of Rooster Rock State Park, to a marker on the Oregon shore downstream to a line between the lower end of Sand Island and a marker on the Oregon shore.
- **Pools above Bonneville Dam:** Fishery managers reduced the harvest guideline for the Bonneville Pool from 2,000 fish to 1,100, because monitoring data indicate that the sturgeon population did not increase over the past three years as expected. Sturgeon retention was allowed through Feb. 10, with additional days possible in June. Retention fisheries in the two reservoirs between The Dalles and McNary dams are scheduled to proceed until their respective 300 fish and 500 fish guidelines are met.

Another option is **walleye**, which are now on the bite above Bonneville Dam. The **kokanee** fishery is also picking up in Merwin Reservoir and should improve throughout the month. For other freshwater fishing options, check the [stocking schedule](#) on WDFW's website for **trout** plants throughout the region.

Eastern Washington

(Asotin, Columbia, Ferry, Garfield, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, Walla Walla and Whitman counties)

About a dozen lakes throughout the region open to fishing March 1, and all should be ready for action.

Six Tucannon River impoundments on WDFW's Wooten Wildlife Area in Columbia County – Big Four, Blue, Deer, Rainbow, Spring and Watson lakes -- are looking good, said area manager Kari Dingman. "It already looks like spring on the Wooten," Dingman said. "The lakes are all stocked and the campgrounds are cleaned up and ready for opening day. There is still snow up high on the ridge tops, and it's still a little muddy along the lake shorelines, but the sun has been shining and the pussy willows are starting to bud."

Big Four Lake received its allotted 2,000 "catchable" rainbow trout (10- to 12-inch, one-third pounders) and 300 "jumbo" rainbows (measuring more than 14 inches and weighing one pound each). By the opener the other five lakes will receive the first of several plants of similar sized rainbows, with subsequent stocking periodically through June.

Glen Mendel, WDFW district fish biologist, said because Beaver Lake, a seventh Tucannon River impoundment, is weedy and shallow it will not be stocked for the third consecutive year. Fish Hook Pond in Walla Walla County also will not be stocked this year, he said.

WDFW Tucannon Fish Hatchery Manager Doug Maxey reports that other year-round-open fisheries in southeast Washington will be stocked. Asotin County's Golf Course and West Evans ponds; Columbia County's Dam, Dayton Juvenile and Orchard ponds; and Walla Walla County's Bennington Lake and Hood Park, Jefferson Park, Lions Park and Quarry ponds, are all receiving initial trout plants. Quarry and Dalton lakes, as well as Marmes Pond in Franklin County, will be stocked by March 1, as will Golf Course and West Evans ponds in Asotin County. Pampa Pond, in Whitman County, opens March 1 and will be well-stocked with catchable-size rainbows.

Anglers can find the total trout allotments for these and other fisheries, as well as weekly catchable trout plant reports, on WDFW's [website](#).

Other fisheries in the region that open March 1 rely more on "put, grow and take" trout stocking, says Randy Osborne, WDFW central district fish biologist. "These are about eight-inch trout stocked last fall or spring that have grown and are ready to harvest this season," he said.

Amber Lake, in southwest Spokane County, was stocked with 5,000 rainbows and 1,000 **cutthroat trout** last May. It opens for catch-and-release only fishing March 1, and then shifts to a two-trout-per-day harvest season April 27.

Medical Lake, in southwest Spokane County, was stocked with 2,500 rainbows last May, and will be stocked with another 1,000 rainbows, plus 2,500 **brown trout**, this spring. Medical Lake is under selective gear rules, motors are prohibited, the minimum size limit for trout is 14 inches, and the daily catch limit is two trout.

Downs Lake, east of Sprague on the Lincoln/Spokane county line, should be stocked with 5,000 rainbows by the March 1 opener if weather allows. Downs also has warmwater fish species, and there is a minimum size limit of nine inches for black crappie and a daily catch limit of 10.

Liberty Lake, in eastern Spokane County, received 45,000 brown trout fry last fall and 700 "jumbo size" (at least one-pound) browns this spring. Liberty is also being stocked this spring with 5,000 catchable size (one-third pound or 10-inch) rainbows, and 100 jumbo size rainbows.

Coffeepot Lake in Lincoln County received 5,000 "put, grow and take" rainbows last spring, and will receive another 5,000 this year. Selective gear rules are in effect, plus an 18-inch minimum size and one-fish daily catch limit.

Osborne also notes that March is the last month to fish the winter-only lakes in the region – Hog Canyon Lake in Spokane County, Fourth of July Lake in Lincoln County, and Hatch and Williams lakes in Stevens County. These Dec. 1-March 31 fisheries are mostly ice-fishing opportunities, but Osborne notes recent mild weather has probably left ice conditions dangerous.

Year-round-open waters in the region can be very productive during March. Lake Roosevelt is still providing catches of rainbow trout and **kokanee**, mostly in the Grand Coulee Dam area. Rock Lake in Whitman County is still producing decent catches of rainbow and brown trout. Silver Lake in Spokane County has been yielding **yellow perch** up to nine inches through the ice, although ice conditions are likely deteriorating.

Another kind of fishing is available at the Inland Northwest Wildlife Council's 53rd annual [Big Horn Outdoor Adventure Show](#), March 21-24, at the Spokane County Fair and Expo Center. Some 5,000 trout are stocked in three huge indoor lakes for kids to catch at "Fishing World," as well as a "Virtual Reality Fishing Simulator," a fishing demonstration tank, lots of fishing seminars by experts, and hundreds of fishing equipment and charter service vendors. WDFW staff will be on site selling fishing licenses and talking with visitors about all things fish and wildlife.

Northcentral Washington

(Adams, Chelan, Douglas, Grant and Okanogan counties)

Fishing for **whitefish** and **hatchery steelhead** opens March 1 on the Methow River, from the mouth at the Highway 97 bridge to the confluence with the Chewuch River in Winthrop.

The re-opening of the steelhead fishery will help reduce the proportion of hatchery fish on the spawning grounds and further reduce competition between natural origin and hatchery juvenile production.

Steelheaders have a daily limit of two fish, with a minimum size of 20 inches, and must keep hatchery steelhead – identifiable by a missing adipose fin. Adipose-fin-present steelhead must be released unharmed and cannot be removed from the water prior to release. Night closure and selective gear rules are in effect. Anglers are required to possess a Columbia River Salmon/Steelhead Endorsement as part of their valid fishing license.

Whitefish anglers must follow selective gear rules in areas open to steelhead fishing, and the daily limit is 15 whitefish.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) district fish biologist Bob Jateff said the Methow and other steelhead fisheries may be closed on short notice depending on participation and catch rates of natural origin fish. He advises anglers to regularly check the fishing hotline at 360-902-2500 or the [WDFW webpage](#).

Also opening March 1 are dozens of Columbia Basin lakes stocked with **rainbow trout**, and WDFW District Fish Biologist Chad Jackson reports almost all are ice-free and fishable.

“Anglers should expect to have good catch rates on 12-inch yearling rainbows in Upper Caliche, Martha, Burke, and Quincy lakes,” Jackson said. “Upper Caliche and Quincy lakes will be the best bets for carryovers. Burke Lake was rehabilitated last October and restocked with about 12,000 catchable size rainbows in mid-February, so it should fish well, but there will be no larger carryover fish there.”

Jackson said another March 1-opening fishery -- Lenore Lake, near the town of Soap Lake in Grant County - still had about 20 percent ice coverage in late February.

“But with all the wind and warmer weather, I wouldn’t be surprised if Lenore is ice free on the opener,” he said. “Either way, it’s still fishable.” Lenore is on a catch-and-release only season through May. Big **Lahontan cutthroat trout** are the draw there.

March 17 marks the close of steelheading on two sections of the Okanogan River to protect natural origin steelhead. The sections are from the first powerline crossing downstream of the Highway 155 Bridge in Omak (Coulee Dam Credit Union Building) to the mouth of Omak Creek, and from the Tonasket Lagoons Park boat launch to the Tonasket Bridge (4th Street).

Other northcentral region waters that will continue to be open for steelhead angling until further notice include:

- Mainstem Columbia River from Rock Island Dam to boundary markers below Wells Dam and from Highway 173 Bridge at Brewster to 400 feet below Chief Joseph Dam.
- Wenatchee River from the mouth to 400 feet below Tumwater Dam, including the Icicle River from the mouth to 500 feet downstream of the Leavenworth Fish Hatchery Barrier Dam.
- Okanogan River from the mouth to the Highway 97 Bridge in Oroville, except for the two sections that close March 17.
- Similkameen River from the mouth to 400 feet below Enloe Dam.

March is the last month for the catch-and-keep fishing season at several Okanogan County lakes that shift to catch-and-release April 1. Big and Little Green lakes near Omak, Rat Lake near Brewster, and Davis Lake near Winthrop have been producing **rainbow trout** catches through the ice. Year-round-open Patterson Lake near Winthrop has also been a good trout ice fishing spot. But Jateff warns anglers to use caution as the weather starts to warm this month and ice thickness diminishes.

Southcentral Washington

(Benton, Franklin, Kittitas and Yakima counties)

Spring chinook salmon are moving up the Columbia River, steelhead fishing should pick up soon and trout fishing will definitely improve starting early this month.

“We start stocking **trout** in year-round lakes in early March and continue right through June,” said Eric Anderson, a fish biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). “This fishery is really our bread and butter, and anglers look forward to it all year.”

In March, WDFW will stock 20 lakes and ponds in Yakima, Kittitas, Franklin and Benton counties with thousands of “catchable size” rainbows, along with hundreds of jumbo trout weighing 1 to 1½ pounds. For more information, see the regional [trout stocking report](#) on the department’s website.

Paul Hoffarth, another WDFW fish biologist, said anglers should also be aware fishing for **hatchery steelhead** usually picks up right before the season closes March 31. Some of the highest catch rates of the season are often recorded in March near the Ringold Springs Hatchery, he said.

“A lot of steelhead that have been hanging out all winter will make their final spawning runs,” Hoffarth said. “That’s when catch rates start rising again.”

Fisheries for hatchery steelhead are open through March on the Snake River and on the Columbia River downstream from the wooden powerline towers at the Old Hanford townsite. Steelhead fishing is not permitted anywhere on the Yakima River.

Rather catch **white sturgeon**? The retention fishery for sturgeon is expected to run through July 31 above McNary Dam (Lake Wallula). Lake Umatilla, which extends from John Day Dam to McNary Dam, is also expected to remain open through March for white sturgeon.

Hoffarth notes, however, that the Lake Umatilla fishery is managed on a quota system and could close abruptly when the quota is reached. Anglers planning to fish the lake should keep an eye on the WDFW website for possible updates.

In both areas, anglers may retain only those white sturgeon that measure between 43 inches and 54 inches when measured from the tip of the snout to the fork of the tail.

Hoffarth also reminds anglers that some of the year’s biggest **walleye** are caught in the spring. These fish are now preparing to spawn and are nearing their highest weight of the year, he said. Once commonly caught in Lake Umatilla below McNary Dam, walleye are now routinely caught above McNary Dam in Lake Wallula, including the lower Snake River and the Hanford Reach.

TGF Inbox - Reader E-mail

Write to the TGF staff:

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Random Links

Central Oregon Sportsmen's Show® Information:

<http://www.thesportshows.com/coss/>

Video - Göran Andersson on fishing the Deschutes:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=yO97EE6Ldi8

New Record Striped Bass (with jaw-dropping pic):

<http://www.grindtv.com/outdoor/blog/51239/alabama+anglers+monstrous+striped+bass+is+one+for+the+record+books/>

Habitat created by Oregon Bass & Panfish Club at Hagg Lake:

http://www.oregonlive.com/sports/oregonian/bill_monroe/index.ssf/2013/03/hagg_lake_and_northwest_oregon.html

GOOD LUCK!