

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **February 14<sup>th</sup> – February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2014**

**Willamette Valley/Metro** – There has been no effort on the Columbia although when temperatures warm, anglers will be motivated. When the snow and ice melt, Cowlitz smelt will be on tap on Saturdays from 6 a.m. until noon.

The weather has kept fishermen off the Willamette leaving little to report. Catch and release sturgeon should continue to be good. If the beach is free of ice and snow, Meldrum Bar anglers will resume the vigil for late winter steelhead and the coveted early springer. One boat was spotted at Sellwood on Saturday, but a report came in that the two anglers came up dry.

McKenzie River levels, high at the beginning of February, dropped at the end of the first week but are headed back up with rain and snowmelt. The river is likely to be out of shape for a couple of weeks.

Water is rising on the Santiams to torrent levels and with no respite in sight through months' end.

Trying to launch a boat on the Clackamas or scurry down the bank to a favorite fishing hole is a dangerous prospect considering the snow and ice. The fish have been completely unmolested since Friday. The river is scheduled to rise substantially this week.

Once the Sandy River drops from the melt-off, winter steelhead should be present. Look to the upper river for the best fishable water late this week.

**Northwest** – This is traditionally the time of year that winter steelheaders look forward to. Bright fish historically enter and are in the rivers in substantial number to make fishing truly worthwhile. This year however, returning adults may not produce the results most are seeking. Anglers will have an idea as to how the late season will produce by the first week in March.

The Trask and Wilson River levels are rising to unfishable levels this week. With the next freshet forecast to hit February 18th, expect these rivers to be out of shape for a while.

Nestucca water levels and flows have increased dramatically this week with snowmelt and precipitation. Expect high, roiled water into the third week of February. Water started rising on the Siletz February 8th and has continued to do so since. Flows are predicted to start moderating around February 20th, but that's a long-term prediction for any Oregon river.

Extensive planting of hatchery trout will begin this week in the Northwest Zone which will include the stocking of larger and trophy trout at many locations. Check the ODFW website for details and locations.

**Southwest** – Bottom fishing has been good when boats have been able to get out but conditions this week will prevent offshore adventures.

Dates for All-Depth Halibut fishing have been announced with the season opening on May 8-10 and 22-24 then continuing June 5-7 and 19-21. Additional dates will be added if the quota doesn't fill.

Steelheading has been good on the Umpqua mainstem and hatchery fish catches had been improving on the South Umpqua. The system will be blown out by the coming weekend, however, but holds promise as the water drops and clears.

The influx of fresh water has a detrimental effect on crabbing but it has been so slow at Coos Bay that

the difference is negligible.

Flows on the Rogue River started reflecting the effect of this week's storm mid-week and will remain out of shape for several days. Middle river steelheaders hoped the freshet would move winters into this stretch, and that probably occurred but it won't be fishable this week. Once the water drops and clears, there are likely to be targetable numbers of fresh steelhead in the upper Rogue.

Lingcod fishing is excellent out of Brookings Harbor whenever ocean conditions allow boats to get out. Rain forecasts last week had Chetco steelheaders rejoicing at the prospect of flows approaching the magic 4,000 cfs mark. The window of opportunity was brief, however, and will be shattered this week as flows are forecast to exceed 20,000 cfs by the weekend to come. There will be fish to catch, but only as the levels drop. Plunkers will score as this occurs followed by drift fishers as the water clears.

Elk and Sixes levels will rise and fall quickly due to their small sizes. Be there when conditions are good to score fresh winter steelhead. Bait fishing will be most effective.

**Eastern** – Steelheaders were reporting fair fishing on the Willamette and Umatilla Rivers but with the cold snap, that has all changed. When the weather warms once again, action should pick up through the spring. The majority of fish taken recently have been of wild origin.

Willamette Lake is largely frozen but the ice is too thin to safely fish. Rainbow trout will be available when it does freeze thoroughly but that may be a while from now.

**Southwest Washington** – Conditions of southwest Washington Rivers mirror those of northwest Oregon; high and off-color with fishing to resume when water levels drop.

All chinook must be released on the Kalama River from the mouth upstream to the upper hatchery (Kalama Falls Hatchery) effective February 17 until further notice.

This same restriction will be in place on the mainstem Lewis River from the mouth to the forks and North Fork Lewis River from mouth upstream to Merwin Dam effective February 17. Any chinook hooked must be released unharmed.

The North Fork Lewis River from Johnson Creek to Merwin Dam is closed to all fishing as of February 17 through May 31, 2014.

**Columbia River Fishing Report** – The Bonneville pool is open for sturgeon retention through February 17th, No reports have come in as of yet, but the weather will render the fishing brutal and difficult through this weekend.

A smelt dipping season is going to be given to anglers Starting now and going through March 1st on the Cowlitz River. Dipping is allowed on Saturdays only from 6 AM till noon with a 10 pound limit. Take a scale with you, but 10 pounds is roughly a 5 gallon bucket three quarters full.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Frigid temperatures and heavy winds are going to make sturgeon fishing unbearable. Anglers intent on sturgeon fishing, yet not concerned with keeping fish would be better served to go to the lower Willamette for some action.

Smelt dipping starts this Saturday and if the fish are in the river, dippers will get their ten pounds each. Frigid cold temperatures will be the only hindrance.

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** reports, "Reports (and photos) have surfaced of early season spring Chinook being taken from the Columbia, Multnomah Channel and Willamette river at the head of the channel. One from a beach plunker and the others by boats trolling red or green label herring. Also, there is a unconfirmed rumor of a springer being taken from Meldrum bar. Although frigid temperatures are slated for the weekend, catch and release sturgeon fishing on the Willamette River will be much easier than the "keeper" fishing on the Columbia above Bonneville dam. The fishing has been good with plenty of action to go around. Expect best fishing in the deep holes below the Broadway Bridge. Although, smelt, sand shrimp, roll mop herring and worms (yes worms !) will all get bit, frozen anchovies have been the favorite bait. A few late steelhead have been picked up at Meldrum Bar by both back-trollers and bank plunkers. It's time to add some bait to your presentation as an early springer could be biting the next time a bell rings."

Winter trout fishing has been slow to fair for fly anglers on the McKenzie River where water level and flow indicate only the effects of extended dry weather as of today, February 6th. That's about to change.

A few winter steelhead have provided catch-and-release action on the North Santiam but there are too few to provide a reliable fishery.

With the opening of Hagg Lake less than a month away, speculation regarding the facility being open year-around (as the Lake Stop store had been telling anglers last year) continues. The fishing regulations booklet still shows the lake closing in November again this year as does the Washington County website for the lake. It opens March 1st but doesn't look good for a never-ending Hagg Lake experience.

**The Guide's Forecast – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** predicts, "The brutal weather will keep many anglers off the water, but you but if you have a boat with a top, a drop curtain and a good propane heater, catch and release sturgeon fishing might not be a bad option. The cold will keep many anglers off the beach at Meldrum bar, but there will likely be a few file barrels burning hot to keep the dedicated warm."

Frigid weather will make alternate activities far more appealing than any of those which might occur outdoors when fishing is slow, as it will be on the Santiams and McKenzie. Starting next week. Levels will be rising, creating a whole `mother kind of reason to fish elsewhere.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** reports, "The water is clearing up on the Clackamas river but the level is still good and on a very slow drop. The occasional report comes in of one or two steelhead being hooked but nobody is lighting it on fire. We are quickly approaching prime time for Clack winter steelhead, but they have yet to make a strong enough appearance that would indicate many are coming at all. Regardless, we have decent water conditions and there are a few fish to be had. Put your effort in above Riverside Park for the best opportunity.

"For all purposes, Sandy River winter steelhead are M.I.A. The water is again low and clear and the fish have been far and few between. Fishermen who put in their time are scoring every now and then between Dodge and Dabney Park. The coming rain (snow) Is welcomed by anglers and will hopefully bring the water level up soon. On a brighter side, smelt dippers are getting a season, Saturdays only from March 1 through March 22. Dippers can only dip between 6 AM and noon with a 10 pound limit."

**The Guide's Forecast – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** predicts, "Far too cold with far too few fish to make it worthwhile stay home and tie leaders. Wait for the river to start dropping after this weekend's rise.

"One of the coldest rivers in NW Oregon when the wind blows. Steelhead fishers would be well advised to stay home until the weather changes. Smelt dippers should keep watch for the tiny fish to enter the river over the next few Saturdays."

**North Coast Fishing Report** – Crabbing on the Columbia River below Astoria remains slow. Sport crabbers are really having to work their pots to get a mess of keepers compared to previous seasons when the pickings were easy. Plan your trips during the smallest incoming tides.

Like the valley, the North coast streams have been less than stellar. The Necanicum has been merely a creek much of the season. Small pods of steelhead have been making their way upstream, but many have already spawned and are heading back to the sea. A small wild run shows up in Feb and March.

The big Nehalem is finally coming into shape from last week's rain. By Thursday it should be in fishable shape above the falls.

The water is low and on the North Fork Nehalem. Like the Necanicum that gets an early hatchery run of winter steelhead, most fish are down-runners this late in the game. The NF gets a small but nice run of late natives through March.

The Wilson gives up a fish or two every now and then with most being taken in the lower ten miles below Kansas Creek. Pressure has been very light with 1 to 4 boats a day drifting the lower stretches. Let's hope the wild broodstock and the native counterpart show up in better numbers after the expected rise.

A few wild steelhead have been caught and released on the Trask, but pressure is very light this early in the season. Better times should be ahead as the wild fish show up in better numbers in Feb and March.

Nothing new on the Nestucca either. Small groups of fresh steelhead enter the river on most tides, but the fish appear to be sparsely scattered throughout the system. With the water dropping as it is, better conditions are offered in the river below Fourth Bridge.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Estuary crabbing is going to be tougher yet with the cold windy weather. With the decent tides coming next week, razor clamming on the Clatsop beaches might be a better bet.

North coast rivers are going to have very tough fishing conditions with the low, clear water and the extreme cold.

**Central & South Coast Reports** – Offshore bottom fishing has been good whenever boats have been able to get out. This is typical winter fishing. This coming Saturday shows promise for low swells and light wind but it will be a wet, cold day to fish the ocean.

This is the time of year when rock and jetty anglers stand the best chance of hooking ling cod. Most of the fish will be males as it is their responsibility to be on guard duty until the eggs hatch. Jigs or baitfish are effective.

Catches of surf perch will be improving in February with best results on the incoming tide on any day the ocean is laying down. Pick a steeper beach where waves will be breaking closer to shore. Perch will take a variety of bait including clams, mussels and prawns.

Siletz steelheaders have been hooking a few winters but landing them has been challenging. Fishing has been fairly slow this week but that may change after rainfall starting this week.

Winter steelhead fishing for natives on the Umpqua mainstem has been good although these fish must be released unharmed. Considering the South Umpqua has started producing a few hatchery summer steelhead even though it is early for best results here, following rain and snowfall this week there should be even better numbers of fish to target. Additional wild winters will enter the North Umpqua with this freshet, providing improved catch-and-release fishing opportunities.

Rock and jetty fishers have been doing well for rockfish and the occasional ling cod in lower Coos Bay although crabbing has remained slow to fair, rewarding only those few who really put in some effort with Dungeness limits. Winter steelhead have been caught from deeper runs this week but precipitation should rejuvenate this fishery as the water drops and clears. The ODFW reminds steelheaders fishing the South Fork Coos to pick up an access permit from the Weyerhaeuser Dellwood office. Through the month of April, steelheaders are allowed one wild fish for a daily bag limit of three fish.

Three steelhead per day limit which includes one wild fish is also allowed on the Coquille. Steelheaders have been picking up a few winters from deeper areas of the river with results expecting to improve following the freshet this week.

Winter steelhead held up in the Chetco River through low water and now that rain is falling, those fish which were holding in the deeper runs will be on the move (read: more cooperative) while the freshet is expected to bring fresh winters into the system. Steelheading will be quite rewarding whenever water levels are dropping through February.

Lower Rogue water levels will be on the rise through the coming weekend and beyond. When the flows start moderating on Monday next week, fishing is expected to be good until the next storm front, predicted for mid-week, moves through and increased flows yet again. Middle river steelheading should show a little improvement as the water drops and clears and as winter move through Grants Pass with improved flows. While precipitation will fall as snow in the mountains, the effect on the upper Rogue will be moderate into the weekend. Watch for changes to occur starting Monday next week. It's still the same story for aging summers although improved flows will result in slightly better numbers of winter steelhead in the upper river. The upper river will shine in March and April.

Rain this week will provide a brief window of opportunity on the Elk and Sixes rivers during which action for steelhead should be worthwhile.

Diamond Lake has continued to provide fair trout catches to anglers willing to drill through the foot of ice covering the surface of the water to fish Power Bait near the bottom.

**Central and Eastern Oregon** – Trollers are making fair to good catches of bull trout at Lake Billy Chinook. Anglers are advised to release fish quickly and carefully.

While there have been some beautiful sunny days at Crescent Lake, the water is only in the high 30s. Large lake trout don't seem to mind it, though, responding well to angler's trolled lures.

Fly fishers on the Metolius have been enjoying the good weather, occasionally hooking a few fish and every so often a nice brook or brown trout. Blue-Winged Olives have been hatching every so often.

Green Peter trollers targeting kokanee are seeing fair results for bright fish 10 to 12 inches in length. Small hoochies in punk or orange and wedding rings have been productive around the 30-foot level.

Fly Fishing Film Tour 2014 will be at the Aladdin Theater, 3017 SE Milwaukee Ave. in Portland on February 8th at with showings at 5 pm and 8 pm. Tickets: <http://www.flyfilmtour.com/>

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### **Random Links**

OCEAN AERIALS by Wayne Davis - Pilot/Photographer:

<http://oceanaerials.com/>

Homemade silverware spoons:

<http://www.oregonfishingforum.com/showthread.php/22952-Searun-spoon-saga>

Castaway survives 13 months adrift at sea:

<http://blogs.marketwatch.com/themargin/2014/02/04/castaway-survives-13-months-adrift-at-sea/>