

The Guide's Forecast - volume 16 issue number 8

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **February 21st – February 27th, 2014**

**Oregon Fisheries Update:**

**Willamette Valley/Metro** – The stormy weather has made fishing impossible on the Columbia River.

The only game in town, for days to come will be catch and release sturgeon fishing on the Willamette. Sturgeon can and will be caught despite the high, murky water. Try the usual Portland harbor sturgeon haunts like Swan Island and the Toyota hole with smelt, anchovies or squid. Next week will be a good time to think about Meldrum Bar springers.

Santiam and McKenzie flows will be too high for consideration by anglers through the weekend.

The Clackamas river is a roaring, brown torrent and it will be days before it approaches fishable. Eagle Creek might come into shape by Thursday or Friday.

Sandy River fishers will be waiting till the weekend for better fishing conditions. Expect the river to drop to a suitable level by late Saturday or Sunday. With any luck, there will be some steelhead around for the catching.

**Northwest** – Steelheaders may still face high, off-color water late this week as a result of the past storm. If so, plunking should take some fish but try drifting egg clusters as the water clears. Plugs and corkies will produce as conditions improve. February and March are prime months for steelheading.

Bay crabbing will suffer from low salinity levels. Often Netarts Bay will yield better results but it has been slow recently.

Trask levels crested on Monday this week and have been dropping since then. Prospects for steelheaders look fair for the coming weekend as numbers of hatchery fish should be improving.

Pressure on the Wilson River is expected to increase as it comes back into shape. It has been fishing best of the Tillamook County rivers so steelheaders are looking forward to further improvement following the freshet.

The Kilchis will drop and clear the earliest of all Tillamook area rivers although fishing was slow before the storm and it is unlikely for any but wild steelhead to be available at this time of year.

Nestucca steelheaders are being challenged by high, muddy water this week. Predictions are for dropping and clearing into the weekend, which means a mix of hatchery and wild winter steelhead. Catches so far this year have been fair but anglers are hoping for improving results.

**Southwest** – The ocean has been uncooperative with boaters recently although long-range forecast show some hope for friendly offshore conditions by the coming weekend. When boats have been able to get out, fishing for rockfish and ling cod has been good. Bottom fishing without depth restrictions will continue through March.

Catch-and-release fishing for wild steelhead was good on the mainstem Umpqua before it blew out in the second week in February. Hatchery fish were being landed in fair number on the South Umpqua. These fisheries will resume as water conditions improve but expect to find levels remaining a little high over the coming weekend.

Crabbing is poor in Coos Bay and will remain that way for a while due to fresh water washing into the bay from the recent storm.

Depending on water color, plunkers should have the edge on the lower Rogue this weekend. Levels will be higher than normal. Winter steelhead are available in the Grants Pass stretch but there will be plenty of water to deal with. Too early for decent results for winters, the upper Rogue will also experience high flows through the weekend.

When boats have been able to fish just outside Brookings Harbor, jigging has produced good catches of lings and

rockfish. Steelheading was good on the Chetco prior to the latest deluge and those who know this river are anticipating worthwhile fishing as the water drops and clears later this week. Flows are expected to be down to 5,000 cfs by Friday, February 21, then moderate further through the weekend. It should be a good one for anglers.

Local steelheaders got in on some action with winters on the Elk River as it rapidly recovered from the freshet this week. Both the Elk and Sixes will rise and fall rapidly as conditions change.

**Eastern** - Temperatures warmed on the east side following heavy snows which resulted in heavy runoff and high, muddy water on the Deschutes River. As the weather clears, river conditions will improve allowing fly anglers to try for resident reddsides although fair results are about the best that can be expected at this time of year.

Crooked River flows remain low and clear with Blue-Winged-Olive and midge patters producing fair but steady results.

**Southwest Washington** - Cowlitz River flows dropped to 5,290 cfs on February 1 and have remained fairly steady. Steelheading is being slow. Smelt dipping will be allowed from the bank only from 6 a.m. until noon each Saturday through March 1.

As of February 17, no Chinook may be retained until further notice on the Kalama River from mouth to the upper hatchery, the mainstem Lewis River from mouth to forks and the North Fork Lewis River from mouth of forks upstream to Merwin Dam.

Walleye fishing will resume in The Dalles and John Day pools when the Columbia River settles down.

**Columbia River Fishing Report – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** reports, "The stormy weather has made fishing the Columbia impossible. The Bonneville pool catch and keep sturgeon fishery ended on Wednesday, look for a possible additional opener as the quota wasn't likely reached."

**The Guide's Forecast – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** predicts, "Stay tuned for an additional opener for Bonneville pool sturgeon."

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** reports, "The only game in town has been catch and release sturgeon fishing on the Willamette. Sturgeon can and will be caught despite the high, murky water. Few sturgeon fishers ventured out during the last week leaving little to report. The usual Portland harbor sturgeon haunts like Swan Island and the Toyota hole will give up fish. Try smelt, anchovies, sand shrimp or squid. Combo baits laced together with stretchy thread are also favorites of seasoned sturgeon slayers. A smelt or anchovy with a sand shrimp tied alongside has always been a sturgeon delicacy, but anglers shouldn't discount the old standby "worm" as an individual or addition to another bait. It's time to start thinking about Meldrum Bar springers. A few eager bank plunkers were spotted at the gravel bar during the weekends stormy weather, but no one reported any action, other than a couple of youths in a jacked up pick-up truck getting stuck in the river. As the river begins to clear over the next week, more anglers will put in some time and the likelihood of a February springer hitting the bank will increase dramatically. Anglers fishing from the bank almost entirely use spin n glows but a smile blades or a thin twin in front of a couple of corkies and a prawn or sand shrimp gets it done too. Remember to keep your offering anchored to the bottom inside of the main current as these early fish travel close to the shoreline. If you are fishing in water that's 13 or 14 feet deep, that's too deep, keep it close to the bank."

McKenzie water levels, at flood stage on Friday last week, dropped below bank full overnight on Wednesday this week.

The North Santiam will be high and roiled through the weekend and beyond although predictions for the South Santiam indicate some improvement over the next few days.

The highly-anticipated opener of Henry Hagg Lake will occur on March 1st. That's just one week from Saturday. Sure, it's a zoo but will usually produce a few hatchery trout in excess of 10 pounds ... and the boat ramps are always a source of entertainment on opening day.

**The Guide's Forecast – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** predicts, "It will be many days or weeks before the Willamette River turns green again, but that doesn't mean the sturgeon stop biting. Continue to try the usual spots and use your depth finder looking for wads of fish. If you are marking stacked fish give it go. As reported, the river is brown, but salmon fishing will start again in earnest once a foot of visibility is reached. Look for a concentration of anglers and fish at Sellwood and Meldrum Bar in the coming weeks and soon enough the power lines at the head of Multnomah Channel will see a regular armada of boats."

There will be too much water in the McKenzie River to make it a viable option for anglers this coming weekend

While the North Santiam is blown, South Santiam steelheaders will find dropping and clearing conditions, particularly late on Saturday and into Sunday this week. There still aren't a lot of fish in the river for anglers to target, unfortunately.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** reports, "The Clackamas river is still a roaring, brown torrent and it will likely be Sunday or Monday before it approaches fishable shape. Eagle Creek is already looking good and local anglers are giving it a try for winter steelhead. But this fishery hasn't been its old self for quite a few years since the numbers of fish raised and planted from the hatchery have been drastically reduced.

Sandy River fishers will be waiting till the weekend for better fishing conditions. The upper river is starting to look good but don't expect the lower river to drop to a suitable level until late Friday or Saturday..... and with any luck, there will be some steelhead around for the catching."

**The Guide's Forecast – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** predicts, "The Clackamas River will come back into shape by the weekend and steelhead fishing will resume. We are getting into prime time for the Clack and if anything at all is going to show, anglers should start posting some numbers this coming week.

Expect the Sandy to fishing within a dozen hours of this writing. The upper river will drop in first and the lower river will be in its prime sometime over the weekend. The time is now for native steelhead and broodstock fish, expect some action this weekend."

**The 2014 Saltwater Sportsmen's Show**, sponsored by OCEAN (Oregon Coalition for Educating Anglers, a non-profit organization). will be at the Oregon State Fairgrounds in Salem on March 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> starting at 8 AM each day. This is an opportunity to learn more about fishing saltwater thanks to numerous seminars on halibut, tuna and salmon fishing as well as info on bar crossing and ocean safety.

**North Coast Fishing Report –** Boats Launching out of Garibaldi will find offshore conditions improving daily through the coming weekend. The combination of dry weather, low winds and soft swells at long duration will make for pleasant ocean outings. In addition, bottom fishing is expected to be great.

Water at the Nehalem was still high and muddy the morning of Thursday, February 20<sup>th</sup> but all that water surely enticed fresh fish into the system.

High and off-color mid-week, the Nestucca will be dropping and clearing into the weekend.

A drive by the Wilson River on Wednesday this week had this writer re-thinking the prediction of a weekend fishery here. It's going to take some time for the cafe au lait water color to improve and for the gold course in Tillamook to finish draining in order for the level to return to levels which would allow steelheaders any chance of a hookup.

While Trask River levels will be dropping through the weekend, there is a lot of recovery which needs to take place following repeated storm front that hammered the north coast.

Although the Kilchis is quick to recover from high, muddy water, there aren't a lot of fish in the system. Anticipate results to be fair at best with most steelhead unmarked, requiring release.

Steelheaders with an eye on the Alsea have reason for optimism as levels will be rapidly dropping over the next

several days.

Siuslaw steelhead should have a shot as the recent freshet has caused a great deal of fish movement.

**The Guide's Forecast** – This is the peak time of year to take large ling cod from rocks and jetties. These fish come into shallow water in late January through February to spawn, making them easily accessible by shore-bound anglers equipped with heavy tackle and jigs. While rough ocean conditions have prevented anglers from fishing the rocks safely for several weeks, wind and wave action will moderate over the coming weekend. It's a good idea to release large females to help sustain this fishery.

Plunkers have been known to pull steelhead out of the Nehalem when the water has looked too muddy to fish, They use large Spin 'n' Glos tipped with a glob of cured eggs. It beats nor fishin' and you just never know ....

Nestucca steelheading has been kind of a ho-hum affair this season but there's always hope following a freshet. Three Rivers was high but clearing rapidly on Wednesday this week.

Even the updated NOAA forecast is less optimistic regarding the chances of decent water conditions on the Wilson River although does indicate a fairly rapid drop well into the coming week. Plunking might be worthwhile late in the weekend but next week would be a better bet. This system is going to need some recovery time.

Plunkers may score on the Trask but the water is currently opaque. Winter steelhead will be scattered and fair results are about the best one can expect here.

As the weekend approaches, fish the upper stretches on the Alsea. Try drifting from Mill Park or plunk lower sections until the water further drops and clears.

Siletz steelheaders should find fresh fish in the system as the water recedes. Try drifting egg clusters here to entice winters.

Weekend conditions actually look promising on the Siuslaw River. Start high on the system if the water is up or off-color.

**Central & South Coast Reports** – Offshore conditions are settling down for the weekend which should allow recreational and charter craft to launch out of Newport and Depoe Bay over the weekend to come. Expect conditions to improve through Monday in the coming week. Results for rockfish and ling cod are expected to be good.

Rock and jetty fishing will be an option with the ocean laying down this weekend. One angler showed photos of a couple of nice lings he took on jigs from the Yaquina jetty this week.

Attend the **Lower Umpqua Flycaster's Fly Fishing Expo** this coming Saturday, February 22nd at the Reedsport Community Charter School on South 22nd St. in Reedsport. It will be ongoing from 9 AM to 3 PM. There will be free door prizes as well as raffle drawings .

Crabbing in Winchester Bay is poor as fresh water has pushed crustaceans back out into the ocean. Pressure is nil on the Umpqua mainstem as it is high and muddy currently but will be dropping and clearing through the weekend. Catch-and-release fishing for native steelhead should pick up. This week's freshet will have drawn hatchery steelhead into the South Umpqua where improving numbers will be making the effort here worthwhile.

Coos Bay crabbing will be an exercise in frustration until salinity levels return to normal following the week-long gully-washer. It will take a while for rock and jetty fishing inside the bay to return to normal as well. Water levels on the Coos system should allow steelheaders to fish over the weekend. Best results may come from the South Coos but be sure to pick up a permit from Weyerhaeuser to do so. There's a three-steelhead limit through April on all rivers in the Coos system through but it would take a stellar day to fill that bag limit.

Plunkers on the lower Rogue have been picking up some fish as have boaters running Spin 'n' Glos and plugs. Catches will only get better as water visibility improves over the rest couple of days. Steelheaders on the middle Rogue are expected to experience increasing success on a variety of lure as water conditions improve. Flows are expected to moderate from 4,000 cfs to 3,500 cfs through the course of the weekend so there will still be some

volume of water with which to contend. Even the upper Rogue will be a couple of feet deeper much more swift than it was even a week ago. A few winters will be in the upper river with the recent freshet.

Flows are still high on the Chetco as of February 20<sup>th</sup> and the water remains off-color. Plunkers are fishing today and will probably continue on Friday but water conditions are predicted to improve enough to allow drift fishing and side-drifting by the weekend. Following the latest cycle in water levels and given decent results prior to the storm, winter steelheading is expected to be good as water levels drop and clear.

The Elk River will be producing steelhead over the next couple of days but will drop and clear very rapidly. Sixes visibility is poor due to mud at this writing on February 20<sup>th</sup> but it will clear in a day or two.

Recent warm weather has caused the ice at Diamond Lake to become unstable. People are still accessing the surface to drill holes but extra caution is advised. If you have the option to postpone a trip it might be wise to do so.

**Central and Eastern Oregon** – While water levels crested and started falling mid-week, the Deschutes River is still running high and muddy. It won't be a possibility over the coming weekend. On an optimistic note, there should be plenty of water in the river for summertime.

Water remains too high for fishing at the Grande Ronde. It won't produce steelhead until sometime in the coming week and that's providing another storm doesn't hit.

The ramp at Lake Billy Chinook is reported as clear and the few who have recently trolled there took some nice fish.

Green Peter is producing fair numbers of bright kokanee but far short of the allowable 25-fish limits here. The cleaning stations at Sunnyside has yet to open.

**Write to the TGF staff:**

Bob Rees: [brees@pacifier.com](mailto:brees@pacifier.com)

Michael Teague: [TGFMichael@gmail.com](mailto:TGFMichael@gmail.com)

Chris Vertopoulos: [chrisv@pacifier.com](mailto:chrisv@pacifier.com)

Doug Rees: [doug@TheGuidesForecast.com](mailto:doug@TheGuidesForecast.com)

**Random Links**

**17th annual FisherPoets Gathering February 21-23 in Astoria:**

<http://www.fisherpoets.org/fisherpoets-gathering-2014.html>

**Introduction to Family Ice Fishing Workshop - Diamond Lake:**

[http://www.dfw.state.or.us/education/outdoor\\_skills/workshops/family\\_ice\\_fishing.asp](http://www.dfw.state.or.us/education/outdoor_skills/workshops/family_ice_fishing.asp)

**Tillamook Weather Live:**

<http://weather.tpud.org/>

**GOOD LUCK!**