

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **February 28<sup>th</sup> – March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2014**

**Oregon Fisheries Update:**

**Willamette Valley/Metro** – Anglers will be given another open season for sturgeon retention in the Bonneville Pool above the dam, starting on Monday the 24th and going through March 9th. As of now anglers have only harvested 16% of the 1100 fish quota, so further openers are likely. If the weather improves and the water temperature bumps up a few degrees, anglers will burn their way towards the quota much quicker.

With a raging, dirty brown river, little is happening on the Willamette. However, boat anglers in the Portland harbor have been catching and releasing plenty of nice sturgeon despite the dirty water. Get out of the heavy flowing main current and soak sand shrimp, smelt or anchovies. Once the river cleans up in a week or so, spring salmon fishing will be underway at Meldrum Bar, Sellwood and the head of Multnomah Channel. Plug cut green label herring will get the most bites in the lower river, while spin n glos, with or without a prawn, sand shrimp or coon shrimp is favored up at Oregon City.

McKenzie River levels are dropping and the water has cleared this week although there is still lots of water. The prospects are fair for catch-and-release winter fly fishing for wild reddsides. Keep an eye out for March Brown hatches.

Flows at the North Santiam remain big; certainly unsafe to boat and too swift to bank fish. The level and flow are forecast to moderate in the first week of March.

Still a bit high but on the drop, the Clackamas River is starting to kick out a few steelhead. March and April are the prime months for Clackamas winter steelhead. All the drifts from Rivermill Dam down to Riverside Park will produce over the next few days.

On the Sandy, steelhead were showing up in the catch over the weekend. The river from Dodge Park down to Dabney Park will provide the best opportunity, but fresh fish should be spread throughout the system. Look for prime conditions to last through most of the week.

**Northwest** – Offshore bottom fishing has been good when boats have been able to get out of northwest ports but this time of year those opportunities are uncommon due to rough ocean conditions. Check the latest reports prior to launching.

With the hatchery winter run winding down, expect fair fishing for wild steelhead on the Nehalem River depending on water conditions. The river remains a bit high for productive fishing.

Now that the Wilson has dropped and the water clarity has improved, wither steelheaders have been hooking a few on jigs, corkies and drifted egg clusters. The level will remain around five feet near Tillamook this week. Fishing was productive over the weekend for wild and broodstock fish.

The Nestucca was slow to recover following the last storm front. Conditions are improving with catches reported as slow to fair for a mix of broodstock and hatchery winters.

Steelheading has been spotty on the Alsea as fewer than 500 winter steelhead having entered the lower hatchery trap. This is somewhat below the 10-year average.

Trask levels are fishable now although catches have been fairly slow. There have been a few hookups at the Dam Hole.

**Southwest** – Catches have been mixed for sport and charter boats this week. Some are slaying good numbers of rockfish and lingcod while others have boated only a few.

Steelheaders on the Umpqua mainstem have been doing well again this week. The recent storm front brought good numbers of hatchery fish into the South Umpqua, improving results for steelheaders.

Coos Bay crabbing is poor and will remain that way until salinity levels return to normal and Dungeness return from ocean haunts.

The Siuslaw is forecast to be about 7.5 feet near Mapleton by Friday this week and the water color should be good. Fresh winters will have entered during the freshet and will be well-distributed. Try around the Whittaker Creek area or the stretch near Lake Creek.

There's still plenty of water in the lower Rogue although the clarity is decent and this stretch offers the best chance of a hook-up with a fresh winter steelhead for those pulling plugs or drifting egg clusters. Steelheaders on the middle Rogue stand a fair chance of success drifting lures or tossing spinners. Upper Rogue flows were around 4,000 cfs over the past weekend and will remain around 3,500 cfs this week. A few spawned-out summers are mixed with a few fresh winter steelhead.

As the Chetco dropped sufficiently to plunk late last week, it was evident that good numbers of winter steelhead entered with the freshet. While the Chetco is in the low and clear category as of Tuesday, it is still producing winters to 12-pounds and is forecast to rise and color up slightly overnight on Friday, which will only improve conditions.

Boat the Chetco with caution as several accidents have occurred over the past week and one boater was lost below Loeb State Park.

The slush that covered the surface of Diamond Lake has now frozen with fresh snowfall atop. Ice fishing is slow to fair. ODFW will be conducting a "fishing on ice" workshop at Diamond Lake workshop on March 8th. The cost of the workshop is \$52 per adult and \$12 per child under age 18. Register at the ODFW website.

**Eastern** - Take the Deschutes off your fishing list for a while, it's just not worth the trip.

The low flows of the Crooked River are producing fair catches of mostly small trout. Blue-Winged Olives and midge patterns are most effective here.

**Southwest Washington** - According to WDFW creel checkers, no steelhead are being caught on the Washougal River but few are trying.

From I-5 downstream on the Columbia, catches are poor to slow with only a few spring chinook being landed. Most anglers are concentrating efforts in the Vancouver stretch.

Commercial effort for smelt showed a marked improvement in catches this week. The last scheduled chance for recreational dipping on the Cowlitz River will be March 1st.

**Columbia River Fishing Report** – With anglers most likely to concentrate their efforts below the mouth of the Willamette, things aren't looking too good as a muddied Willamette will further impede what little opportunity there was in the first place. Not much effort has taken place this week in these roiled waters.

**Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** reports, "Anglers have been given another open season for sturgeon retention on the Bonneville Pool above the dam, starting on Monday the 24th and going through March 9th. Up to now anglers have only harvested 16% of the 1100 fish quota, so further openers are likely. If the weather improves and the water temperature bumps up a few degrees, anglers will burn their way towards the quota much quicker. All the standard sturgeon baits apply but anchovies have been the proven favorite as of the last two seasons, sand shrimp will take close second place. Boats are already starting to show at I-5 and Davis Bar and plunkers are starting to line the beaches hoping for a spring salmon to ring their bell. By mid-month, some amount of success should be expected."

**The Guide's Forecast** – Although waters should begin to clear and some springers should begin to move into the system, it's still a shot in the dark for anglers to expect any spring chinook success. It won't be long however before they start to show in better numbers. Mid-month should begin to produce better numbers although the bulk of the Columbia Run (upriver Columbia fish) won't make a strong showing until the last week of March, depending on water temperatures and flows.

**Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** predicts, "Sturgeon fishers will try to fill their tags in the Bonneville Pool fishery and with any luck, a few keepers will be plucked from the masses of sub-legal fish. The wind will always be a problem up there but sometimes the early morning will get a break from the torrential gusts that make fishing impossible."

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** reports, "With a raging, dirty brown river, little is happening on the Willamette. However, boat anglers in the Portland harbor have been catching and releasing plenty of nice sturgeon despite the dirty water. Even the kayak fishermen are getting in on the action reporting double digit days. Get out of the heavy flowing main current and soak sand shrimp, smelt or anchovies. Pay close attention to floating debris, some of it is quite large and can easily foul an anchor rope or worse, sink a boat. Once the river cleans up, spring salmon fishing will be underway at Meldrum Bar, Sellwood and the head of Multnomah Channel. Plug cut green label herring trolled behind a flasher will get the most bites in the lower river, while spin n glows, with or without a prawn, sand shrimp or coon shrimp is favored by the plunkers up at Oregon City. Soon enough, boats will be back-trolling cured roe/shrimp in the Garbage Hole, along the island and the deteriorating bulkhead below the mouth of the Clackamas."

Flows on the McKenzie remain swift, registering around 7,000 cfs near Vida as of mid-day on February 27th.

While North Santiam flows have ben moderating, it's currently about 15,000 cfs at Jefferson and that's plenty of water. The winter steelhead counts at Willamette Falls are approaching the 1,000 mark which means there should be a couple hundred of these fish in the North Santiam.

A free Fly Clinic will be held on March 1st from 10 AM to 4 PM at The Caddis Fly Angling Shop, 168 West 6th Ave. in Eugene.

Alton Baker Canal, Cottage Grove Pond, Cottage Grove Reservoir, Dexter Reservoir, E.E. Wilson Pond, Junction City Pond, Sunnyside Park, Huddleston Pond, Sheridan Pond and St Louis Pond are scheduled to be planted with hatchery trout.

**The Guide's Forecast – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** predicts, "The Willamette is slowly clearing and some die-hard spring Chinook fishers have their sights set on the coming weekend. More conservative anglers will wait for better visibility, likely to happen mid next week. In the meantime, catch and release sturgeon fishing continues and it will continue to play out through March and into April."

McKenzie level and flow should be fishable over the coming weekend. It won't be fast and furious but there should be a few reddsides around to provide a little entertainment to fly fishers throwing nymphs, BWOs and midges. There may even be a few March Browns around and every so often, a large reddsides.

There are some winters available on the North Santiam for catch-and-release anglers although the odds remain in the fish's favor. Early next week the river will be on the rise once again.

Henry Hagg Lake, the jewel of Scoggin Valley, opens for fishing at sunrise on March 1, 2014. The opener is expected to be well-attended, really well-attended. To further complicate matters, Ramp A is reported to be out of commission so boats will be able to launch only at Ramp C. There is still no confirmation of a year-around fishery here but the source of this rumor has always come back to a local-area convenience store where folks stop on their way to the lake.

We've explained this in seasons past but it's worth mentioning again. Hatchery trout will not venture deeper than eight or ten feet for the first 10 days or two weeks after being planted. This is due to being held in shallow concrete tanks, after which, water any deeper than that will cause discomfort in their swim bladders. Once acclimated, they will seek deeper haunts. Further, these fresh plants will form "schools" (though not schooling fish; it's habitual) and cruise around the shoreline at their depth of comfort. This is why you will see bank fishers sitting idle for a while, then a number of rods will 'light up' with bites with the action passing along the area like a wave after which is calms down again. This is also why bank fishers will often do better than trollers for freshly-stocked trout.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** reports, "Still a bit high, the Clackamas River is starting to kick out a few steelhead. The river is forecast to bump up a bit on Friday and then start another drop by the weekend. March and April are the prime months for Clackamas winter steelhead. All the drifts from Rivermill Dam down to Riverside Park will produce over the next few days, but expect the best action to happen when the river is between 12 and 13 feet on the gauge.

"On the Sandy, steelhead were showing up in the catch over the weekend. Nobody is reporting great, or even good success but fish are there for the catching. The river should stay within optimum fishing range for the next several days barring any unexpected storms. The river from Dodge Park down to Dabney Park will provide the best opportunity, but fresh fish should be spread throughout the system. Look for prime conditions to last through most of the week."

**The Guide's Forecast – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** predicts, "Sunday and Monday should be the best days to fish the Clackamas as the river is slated to be at or nearest to optimum before the next predicted rise. Expect an equal mix of both native (unclipped) and hatchery winter steelhead to show up in the catch.

Like the Clackamas, the Sandy River gets a fair number of wild fish along with the hatchery broodstock fish that show in March and into April. The river is slated to stay at or close to optimum water level for the next several days. Expect fresh winter steelhead to be caught, but overall, this year's run has been less than impressive."

**North Coast Fishing Report –** Steelheaders finally got the rain freshet we've all been waiting for and it produced better results than most had imagined. As is usual, the smaller streams fished best when the larger rivers were still a day or two out. The action started on the Kilchis and Necanicum with some remaining action on the North Fork Nehalem. Wild fish dominate these smaller streams this time of year and the Kilchis was a good producer last Friday and Saturday. Boats working side-drifting gear, followed

by plugs in the dropping flows produced good results until waters cleared and fish became spooky by Sunday. Very few hatchery fish were available on these systems as they most often harbor earlier returning stocks of fish that are largely done for the season.

By Sunday, the Wilson was "game on" with several guides taking early limits of broodstock steelhead along with some wild fish as well. Sidedrifters dominated the catches with bait and beads taking the bulk of the catch. Once waters began to drop and clear, plug pullers can often score good results behind the fleet of sidedrifters. Boaters working the upper stretches (Vanderzanden's down) on Saturday and Sunday did the best and as flows dropped, boaters were wise to target the lower reaches downstream of Mills Bridge. Given the early season bust of hatchery fish that showed, anglers were quite surprised and pleased of the showing of late season hatchery and wild winter steelhead.

The Nestucca was also a nice surprise on the dropping river last weekend. Boaters working from Blaine downstream found fair to good numbers of steelhead through traditional methods such as sidedrifted and driftfishing. Although maybe not quite as productive as the Wilson, the Nestucca did produce better than I had anticipated for a poor early season show this year. Flows and dropped now, requiring successful minded anglers to target the lower reaches of these systems and break out alternative gear such as plugs and bobbers and jigs or worms. The late season steelhead show is clearly underway.

The Trask was also a good option although far fewer anglers are fishing it due to the lack of hatchery fish available over there. Anglers seeking solitude would be pleased with the traffic on the Trask and although the bulk of the wild fish seem to show up a bit later on this system, there should be ample numbers now available. Like the other systems, even though these rivers are maintaining some good color to their flow, lower water tactics will produce as well as sidedrifted bait or beads as fish become more skeptical of all the offerings passing by their heads. Wild fish in particular can respond to a properly backrolled plug quite readily.

The Nehalem is still a bit out of shape but may come in by the weekend. It's also a bit early for full production on this system but there should certainly be some fish available on this all-wild river system.

Offshore fishing and crabbing has not been all that friendly lately, mostly due to a continued rough ocean. That may change by the weekend however.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Over the weekend, anglers will once again be challenged by dropping and clearing conditions. Thankfully, we seem to be headed into a more typical winter weather pattern where another rain freshet is on the horizon. Of course, you can't count on anything when trying to predict the weather.

The Wilson and Nestucca will remain primary targets for those seeking hatchery opportunities. Sidedrifters will likely have to modify technique as fish become wary of continues offerings passing by them. These kinds of conditions call for beads under bobbers and jigs and worms worked from floats also. Plugs can become increasingly effective in dropping flows but you have to be willing to work them where the fish are; in the deeper, swifter heads of holes, where they feel most secure.

More specifically, on the Wilson, where hatchery and wild fish will be available, anglers will want to focus their efforts from Mills Bridge and downstream. With the flows dropping below ideal conditions, action will largely be dependent on new fish coming in on the high tides. It's for this reason, the lower you target your quarry, the better your chances of getting into fish that haven't had a target on their heads for the last several days. With the dropping flows, fish are not likely to migrate very far, very fast. Anglers will also have to downsize their offerings with smaller baits and more neutral colors in the dropping and clearing conditions. This is also when plugs can be effective, especially on fish that have been worked over by sidedrifters in previous days. Plug pullers will find that the added use of scents will pay higher dividends.

The Nestucca will be the second primary target, especially for steelheaders seeking a consumptive opportunity for hatchery fish. Like the Wilson, the lower reaches will produce the best in the lower flows. Target steelhead from first bridge downstream but anglers fishing downstream of Three Rivers will most effectively target new tidal fish. Bobbers with your favorite offering will likely be the best way to pursue steelhead downstream of Three Rivers. Use jigs, rubber worms, or small baits to entice steelhead in this stretch. Plugs can also be effective here but steelhead are often moving through this section rather quickly; plugs most effectively catch holding fish. Regardless of where you start, you want to be sure to take out at Cloverdale. With the strong afternoon outgoing tides, even anchoring your boat with plugs could be effective around the Cloverdale area. Fishing the upper reaches above 5½ Bridge will be quite challenging with the rocky chute that exists above that put in.

The Trask River will be the best big system steelhead option for wild fish, even though the bulk of the run returns later in the season. Sticking with the theme, anglers putting in higher than Loren's Drift will not only risk life and limb, but won't have the availability of fresh fish that downstream anglers will have. Plugs and small side-drifted baits should produce the best results.

Smaller north coast systems such as the Kilchis, Necanicum, North Fork Nehalem and Three Rivers have all "shot their wad" of consumable steelhead. Good wild fish numbers exist on the Necanicum and Kilchis and therefore, may become a bank anglers mecca in these dropping flows. None-the-less, like the boating fleet, fresh fish are most likely to be found in the lower reaches, unfortunately, that is also where a lot of the private, therefore inaccessible waters exist.

The mighty Nehalem may become a weekend option with action likely to be best downstream of the Beaver Slide. No matter how low this river is, there is a lot of water to cover so anglers will still have to work hard for success. Regardless, this river should be in ideal shape by the weekend. Bait often produces best on this system as fish seem to easily avoid a wall of plugs on these bigger systems.

After a prolonged period of being out-gunned as far as ocean conditions, there may be a window in the coming days for offshore anglers to get after lingcod and some sea bass. While sea bass remain somewhat uninspired, the lingcod bite continues to be quite good this time of year and fish are even more accessible as they near coastal shorelines during the spawning season. Saturday may offer up the best chance but even a 3 foot predicted wind wave is NOT a fun ocean. Here is the offshore forecast, of course, always subject to change:

**FRI**

NE WIND 10 TO 15 KT WITH GUSTS TO 20 KT. WIND WAVES  
3 FT. W SWELL 5 FT AT 12 SECONDS.

**FRI NIGHT**

N WIND 10 TO 15 KT...VEERING TO NE AFTER MIDNIGHT.  
WIND WAVES 3 FT. W SWELL 6 FT AT 14 SECONDS.

**SAT**

SE WIND 10 TO 15 KT WITH GUSTS TO 25 KT. WIND WAVES  
3 FT. W SWELL 5 FT AT 13 SECONDS.

**SAT NIGHT**

SW WIND 5 TO 10 KT WITH GUSTS TO 15 KT. WIND WAVES  
2 FT. W SWELL 7 FT AT 13 SECONDS.

**SUN**

S WIND 10 TO 15 KT WITH GUSTS TO 20 KT. WIND WAVES 3 FT.

W SWELL 5 FT. RAIN LIKELY.

### **SUN NIGHT**

S WIND 20 TO 25 KT WITH GUSTS TO 30 KT. WIND WAVES 6 FT. W SWELL 5 FT. SECONDARY SWELL S 6 FT. RAIN.

### **MON**

S WIND 20 TO 25 KT. WIND WAVES 6 FT. SW SWELL 10 FT. SECONDARY SWELL W 6 FT.

### **TUE**

S WIND 15 TO 20 KT. WIND WAVES 5 FT. W SWELL 10 FT. SECONDARY SWELL S 6 FT.

**Central & South Coast Reports** – If your offshore boat (and its skipper) finds five-foot swells at 4 or 5 seconds do-able, there are rockfish and lingcod awaiting you in the ocean out of Depoe Bay and Newport this weekend. Keep in mind that this \*is\* called a prediction, however. Sport boats have been taking limits of rockfish and lingcod this week.

Winter steelhead are being caught daily on the Siuslaw which has remained productive from the day it dropped and cleared following the storm front last week. As of today (Thursday), it looks great and is fishing well.

Offshore boats have been doing well for rockfish and lingcod out of Winchester Bay when they have been able to get out but muddy water flowing from the Umpqua is preventing effective effort inside the bay except for a window of opportunity right a high tide when fresh seawater adds some clarity. Springers will show up sometime in March. Waters of the Umpqua mainstem are running off-color which has slowed steelheading efforts with some anglers trying elsewhere. Conditions are better on the South Umpqua and hatchery keepers are available. As a result, pressure has been fairly heavy here at times but fish are being taken in fair to good number by bank as well as boat anglers. Rainfall next week should raise the South Umpqua only a foot or so and will ensure ongoing action for steelheaders here.

While Coos Bay has yet to recover from the recent storm and start once again producing crab catches, boats launching out of Charleston have been doing very well for bottomfish. Waters of the Coos remained dark and angry at the last report from there.

Action picked up this week on the lower Rogue as it dropped and cleared following a high water event resulting from the recent storm. Best results have come between Agness and Gold Beach where most techniques have been effective at times. Expect to hear about the first spring Chinook of the season very soon. Steelheaders on the middle Rogue are enjoying the first good flush of fish which is creating opportunities from Gold Hill to Rainie Falls with the hotspot below the mouth of the Applegate River. Both boat and bank anglers have been hooking up this week. Upper Rogue water flows are still a little strong but quite fishable. As of February 19th, fewer than 160 winters had entered the trap at the hatchery facility. Those who have hooked up have either been throwing lures from the bank or pulling plugs or side-drifting from boats. Starting Tuesday next week, the river will rise to unfishable levels. On the other hand, that freshet should bring a decent number of winters into the upper stretches of the river.

The Chetco near Brookings is flowing at 2,000 cfs where it should remain through the coming weekend. Winter steelheading has been fair to good through most water conditions short of a complete blowout so the next couple of days should be productive.

Ice fishers at Diamond Lake are auguring through 10 to 12 inches of the hard stuff which has been covered by several inches of the soft, white, fluffy stuff. Trout fishing is fair with anglers claiming to miss many of the bites. Power Bait remains the first choice of these well-insulated folks.

Bradley Lake, Johnson Mill Pond. Powers Pond and Saunders Lake are scheduled for trout planting.

**Central and Eastern Oregon** – Water conditions have improved this week on the Deschutes as levels dropped and the color went to green instead of gray. While results with reddsides have been only fair at best, they are responding to Midge and Blue-Winged-Olive patterns.

The tricky Metolius has been producing a few dandy reddsides to those anglers who have been able to crack the code.

Hood River water conditions are poor as snowmelt is roiling the water. Chinook fishing is closed on the entire length of the Hood. It's closed to trout fishing until May 24th on which date catch-and-release angling will be allowed.

Small, colorful rainbows can be seen rising to tiny midges on the Crooked River although these fish are spooky in the low, clear water.

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#### **Random Links**

Info on Family Ice Fishing Workshop at Diamond Lake March 8th:

[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)

Central Oregon sportsman show March 6th through 9th:

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

Captain Obvious says, "For better salmon survival be sure to keep salmon eggs and newly hatched fish under the water.":

<http://kuow.org/post/how-one-dam-increased-fish-survival-managing-its-water>

Video - Wolves fish for salmon:

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/news-video/video-wolves-fish-for-salmon-in-images-captured-by-remote-controlled-camera/article15280656/#video0id15280656>

**GOOD LUCK!**