

[The Guide's Forecast - volume 16 issue number 49](#)

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **December 5th – December 11th, 2014**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro – The Willamette River level has been dropping at the Falls but that will soon change. Catch and release sturgeon fishing is good and is the only fishing available on the lower Willamette.

While McKenzie River levels have been dropping, that will change with December rains. Fishing is slow.

The Santiams offer nothing of angler interest at this time.

Northwest – It's transition time on the north coast as chinook are focused on spawning and winter steelhead have yet to appear in great number. Both species are available however; just view our full length version for which watershed to target which specie.

Chinook are still being caught in Tillamook Bay for the few trollers in pursuit and with a fair late-season showing of chinook in the Trask, the west channel may still be a fair option.

Hatchery workers are reporting daily success, albeit minimal, at the North Fork Nehalem Hatchery. The Highway 30 systems should also have early returning fish available although these stocks of fish can be hard to get to bite.

Minus tides this weekend may produce some catch and release opportunity for anglers in Tillamook Bay but without a consumptive option, few are likely to participate.

The minus tide series would also promote razor clam digging if the surf wasn't going to be so high. The big tides will also minimize estuary crabbing success although the lower Columbia is still an option even though the river is littered with commercial gear.

Southwest- Charters fishing out of Depoe Bay this week have been scoring limits of ling cod. Rock fishing has been slower.

Sport crabbers are plying the ocean for Dungeness with best results coming from just off the mouths of bays and estuaries. Bay crabbing will hold up as well unless a very heavy rain falls.

With wild coho fishing open through December, there are still some good chances to take bright fish at Tenmile.

Chinook fishing is well into the wind-down phase on the Alsea but there will be stragglers which will provide scratch fishing over the next few weeks. Unmarked coho may no longer be kept.

Crabbing has been good on the Umpqua River bar where anglers have dropped posts, pursued bottom fish, then returned to good catches of hard Dungeness.

Rogue Bay is done for the season with Chinook moving upstream. Winter steelhead are entering and have been providing fair fishing on lower river. Those able to fish above the Shady Cove boat ramp, however, will find better water conditions and less leafy debris.

Chetco Chinook fishing is slowing just as winter steelhead catches are improving.

Eastern – Plug pullers at the John Day River report slow fishing for steelhead but that the ice has melted.

Winter trout fishers are landing large lake trout over the gunwale at Crescent Lake. Some of these anglers look forward all year to trolling for Macks in frigid weather.

SW Washington- Coho action has faded dramatically in all of these tributary fisheries but fresh chinook could still be available on the North Fork of the Lewis. This is a hit or miss fishery but none-the-less, it remains an option.

Fair numbers of early winter steelhead are present in the Cowlitz River, indicating a good return may be in order. Managers can often predict the magnitude of the winter steelhead return based on the fall coho run.

Soapbox Update: 'Got one of those salmon enhancement license plates? *"Since 2013, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board hasn't spent a cent of salmon plate money on fixing road impacts. Instead, drivers have paid the salary and office expenses of OWEB's small grants administrator in Salem."* See **Random Links**, below.

Columbia River Fishing Report – Not much left for fishing opportunity on the lower Columbia. Even crabbing prospects are dwindling as the commercial fleet started their program in late November. Commercial catches have been good out of Hammond but commercial crabbers are reporting fair numbers of sport legal, yet undersize commercial legal sized crab available.

The Guide's Forecast – With crabbing the only realistic opportunity on the lower Columbia, crabbers still have an opportunity for fair catches, you'll just have to work a bit harder for limits. An extreme tide series will further damper crabbing prospects but diligent crabbers will have limited opportunity around tide changes.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – The Willamette River level has been dropping at the Falls but that will soon change. Coho have all but disappeared from counts although 77 winter steelhead have been counted. These will all be wild at this time of year. Water level and flow has been dropping recently on the McKenzie River but we are confident that December rainfall will change all that.

The entire Santiam system took a wallop at the end of November, shooting up in level and flow. It has returned to seasonal norms now, rising and falling irregularly.

Trout fishing closed in many places at the end of October. To find out where it's still legal to fish, see **Random Links**, below.

Brood trout from Roaring River Hatchery have been released into Huddleston Pond in Willamina and Sheridan Pond. Each site received 60 of these rainbow trout, ranging in size from 10 to 15 pounds.

Hagg Lake is closed until spring but **Robert Campbell at Fisherman's Marine in Oregon City (503-557-5600)** tells us that there's still hope for a year 'round fishery here. He pointed out that it's opening earlier and closing later.

The new Fishing Regulations booklets are out. You'll want to pick up a copy, particularly of spring Chinook fishing is of interest.

The Guide's Forecast – Catch-and-release sturgeon fishing is the only game to be played on the lower Willamette but it's a good one. The fish are plentiful and finding a bunch shouldn't be too hard. The trick is finding a bunch of biters but that's the fun. Keep moving around as it is worth it. Be sure to carry a variety of baits, some of which should include squid, herring, anchovy, sand shrimp or smelt.

Winter fly fishing can be an enjoyable solitude exercise. It probably won't be very productive, however.

The Santiams offer nothing of angler interest at this time.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – The Clackamas is forecast to rise through the weekend, drop for a couple of days, then blow out. This appears to be an accurate prediction. Although about done, it was a great coho run this year with biters in the river (for a change). About 13,000 fish were processed at the Eagle Creek hatchery.

The latest report on the Sandy, which is running a 2,600 cfs at the town of Sandy is that despite being a little high, water color was decent. This isn't unusual for this Columbia tributary where water color is often better in cooler weather.

The Guide's Forecast – This is not the best time of year to fish the Clackamas as summer steelheading and coho fishing are wrapping up while winter steelhead have yet to enter in fishable number. Trying at Barton or McIver may produce a few late steelhead as it did for anglers earlier this week. Anglers trying Eagle Creek recently mostly blanked. **Robert Campbell at Fisherman's Marine in Oregon City (503-557-5600)** told TGF by telephone today that the rumors about winter steelhead catches have not been confirmed. That is., until he sees proof or has one on the scale in the store, he won't say it has happened. But it has probably happened.

According to **Robert Campbell at Fisherman's Marine in Oregon City (503-557-5600)**, a few winter steelhead have been caught on the Sandy River. Is it worth the trip? Maybe not but it beats doing chores around the house. As is the case with many rivers, the broodstock fishery management program has moved the run timing forward. It will be worthwhile fishing here after the first of the year. Dabney and Oxbow Park as well as the mouth of Cedar Creek are all good places to intercept and early winter.

North Coast Fishing Report – Although prospects are dropping off, chinook still remain an option in the Tillamook district. Boaters are still working Tillamook Bay with the Ghost Hole and Coast Guard station still producing occasional fish. Avid angler Craig Campbell has put in a couple of successful evenings last week, yielding 2 nice chinook, the biggest tipping the scales at 42 pounds, taken on trolled purple label herring in front of the Coast Guard Station at Garibaldi. Effort remains quite low however as rivers remain in good shape where the driftboat fleet has the better access to fish.

Driftboaters working the Trask and Wilson are finding fresh fish with recent reports from the Trask indicating fresh fish are still coming in. Even some early winter steelhead are being caught from back-bouncers working the Trask River. It's likely that steelhead have been caught on the Wilson as well. Although chinook will likely be the focus in the Tillamook Bay Basin, anglers in other watersheds are gearing up for winter steelhead.

The North Fork Nehalem will be a primary target for steelheaders on the north coast and catches have been fair in recent days. Anglers working the hatchery area are taking fish nearly daily but the upcoming rain freshet should give us a good indication as to how north coast steelheading will fare this winter.

Other prospects for early returning steelhead are the Necanicum, Kilchis and Three Rivers systems.

Reports have been sparse from these rivers but so has the action. It's no secret that these early returning fish are not very aggressive biters.

A small window of offshore opportunity existed at mid-week with bars wide open. Ocean crabbing and bottomfishing were unusual December options although the swell remained a bit untamed by most people's standards. We will exercise the low effort card again for this fishery as most ocean anglers were not geared up or motivated in this rare opportunity. Again, the swell was not all that friendly anyway.

The Guide's Forecast – The upcoming rain freshet is not modeled to be a whopper but high tides coupled with an increase in flow, could stimulate another shot of fresh fish into these river systems. The Wilson and Trask remain the best driftboater options, especially for chinook while early returning steelhead on the Wilson, Kilchis, North Fork Nehalem, Necanicum and Three Rivers could provide a fair early season hatchery steelhead prospect. Although these are definitely transition weeks, the decrease in effort oftentimes affords comparative success with that of the high season. Bank anglers will have their best opportunity on the Necanicum and North Fork Nehalem as well as Three Rivers.

Bay trollers can still exercise a herring option with both sides of the bay an option with a late season showing of Trask River chinook. Trask and Tillamook River fish are most likely to use the west channel where last season trollers late last month produced fair catches. The Ghost Hole and Bay City as well as the Coast Guard Station in front of Garibaldi are also fair options on the incoming tide. Blue label herring is the best bet but purples are getting bit as well. The strike to hook ratio seems to be better on the smaller blues however. The last hour of outgoing tide through low slack may also provide some opportunity, especially for trollers are Bay City.

There's no sign of improving ocean weather conditions so recreational crabbing and bottomfishing are off the table.

Central & South Coast Reports – Charters fishing out of Depoe Bay this week have been scoring limits of ling cod to 35 pounds for their clients. While rockfish are also being taken, it's has been a little slow recently. These boats will be out to take advantage of good winter bottom fishing whenever conditions allow.

Kidding about "fresh crab" in last week's newsletter confused some readers. The crab from fish mongers or from the seafood case at the local grocer in the past three months wasn't. Fresh that is. There had been no fresh Dungeness harvested during that time so only frozen was available. Commercial harvest, which ended August 31st, began once again on the 1st of December (although they dropped pots on Friday, November 28th).

Sport crabbers are also plying the ocean for Dungeness with best results coming from just off the mouths of bays and estuaries. Catches will decline in a week or so as commercial efforts score thousands of crab, thinning the available numbers.

Bay crabbing will hold up as well unless a very heavy rain falls. As it is now, just keep in mind that crab will move to the lower areas of bays with moderate precipitation.

With wild coho fishing open through December, there are still some good chances to take bright fish at Tenmile. Trolling spinners between the county boat ramp and Rocky Point has been productive as well as in the area of South Tenmile.

Chinook fishing is well into the wind-down phase on the Alsea but there will be stragglers which will provide scratch fishing over the next few weeks. Unmarked coho may no longer be kept. The first winter

steelhead showed up in the hatchery trap this week. To get involved in the broodstock program here, contact the Alsea Hatchery at 541-487-7740.

Crabbing has been good on the Umpqua River bar where anglers have dropped posts, pursued bottom fish, and then returned to good catches of hard Dungeness. There are a few hatchery coho amongst the predominantly wild steelhead on the Umpqua River mainstem. Although closed to trout fishing, there are steelhead available on the North Umpqua though fishing has been slow. The South Umpqua opened again on December 1st although there have not yet been any fishing reports.

Coos Bay has continued to crab well and the jetty is producing decent catches of black rockfish. Winter steelhead fishing will start any time now on the Coos River system. The wild coho fishery is closed.

Rogue Bay is done for the season with Chinook moving upstream. Rogue River water levels are expected to rise starting Saturday, December 6th with the long-range forecast calling for a blowout mid-month. Winter steelhead are entering and have been providing fair fishing on the middle and lower river, stretches that will soon be subject to the aforementioned freshet. Those able to fish above the Shady Cove boat ramp, however, will find better water conditions and less leafy debris. In addition, this stretch of the Rogue has no bait restrictions and roe has often been the best option. In the middle and lower Rogue, plunking Spin 'n' Glos will take fish whenever the water drops and clears. Try flame/chartreuse or Tequila Sunrise. If trout fishing is your forte, Lost Creek Reservoir above the Rogue is producing good catches.

Chetco Chinook fishing is slowing just as winter steelhead catches are improving. The river is forecast to rise this weekend but should be in condition to plunk providing the visibility isn't compromised. A mix of salmon and steelhead will be available for a while but winter steelheading will dominate in a couple of weeks.

At this writing, the Elk and Sixes are low and clear with too little precipitation falling in the southwest corner of the state to improve water conditions here. When there's water in these rivers, late-running Chinook will follow.

Rivers will surely be blown out at times in the coming weeks. Fill in time catching trout in area lakes. Garrison has been fishing well and has some big ones available.

Central and Eastern Oregon – No one expects much in the way of hatches on the lower Deschutes at this time of year but there will be some BWO and caddis larvae in the river so if targeting trout, throwing those imitations or a size 18 egg fly will serve best. It will be slow. Try between Maupin and Warn Springs for steelhead. There will be little competition for the few fish that are around.

A trip to Crooked River is often rewarding for winter fly fishers, particularly of targeting the fairly reliable mid-day Blue-winged Olive hatch.

Plug pullers at the John Day River report slow fishing for steelhead but that the ice has melted.

Winter trout fishers are landing large lake trout over the gunwale at Crescent Lake. Some of these anglers look forward all year to trolling for Macks in frigid weather.

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report for December 1, 2014

North Puget Sound

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

With the holidays drawing near, regional waters offer plenty of gifts for fishers, from Puget Sound's crab and blackmouth salmon, to some great opportunities to catch trout on area lakes.

Blackmouth salmon season has started off strong in central Puget Sound, where baitfish have been more prevalent, said Ryan Lothrop, Puget Sound recreational salmon manager with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). Marine areas 7 (San Juan Islands), 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island, and Skagit Bay), 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) and 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) are open for hatchery chinook **salmon** fishing throughout December.

Anglers fishing those marine areas have a two-salmon daily limit, but must release wild chinook salmon. Marine Area 9 (Admiralty Inlet) is closed for fishing chinook and other salmon species in December.

Anglers support the blackmouth winter chinook fishery through their license purchase, a portion of which goes to the Puget Sound Recreational Fisheries Enhancement Fund. The fund currently supports a variety of recreational fishing opportunities through the release of more than one million yearling and almost nine million sub-yearling chinook each year.

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

While on the Sound, why not drop a crab pot? **Sport crabbing** is open in most marine areas of Puget Sound seven days a week through Dec. 31. The exceptions are Marine Area 10 (Seattle-Bremerton) and 11 (Tacoma-Vashon Island).

The daily catch limit in Puget Sound is five Dungeness crab, males only, in hard-shell condition with a minimum carapace width of 6¼ inches. In addition, fishers may catch six red rock crab of either sex per day, provided those crab measure at least 5 inches across. Additional information is available on the [WDFW website](#).

All Dungeness crab kept in the late-season fishery must be recorded on winter catch cards, which are valid until Dec. 31. Winter cards are available at license vendors across the state. Those catch reports are due to WDFW by Feb. 1, 2015. For more information on catch record cards, visit WDFW's [recreational crab fishing website](#).

For anglers targeting **trout**, the department has been stocking 47 western Washington lakes with some 340,000 catchable-size trout this fall and winter. Increased bag limits are also still allowed on 17 lakes in Island, King, Snohomish, and Thurston counties, doubling angler's catch limits from five to 10 trout on selected lakes.

A list of lakes stocked, those offering the bonus bag limit, and the department's stocking plan is available for viewing at the department's [Fall into Fishing webpage](#). Videos on basic and cold-weather techniques for trout fishing can be found on the department's [YouTube page](#).

At Lake Sammamish, anglers trolling for **cutthroat trout** are having great success fishing near the surface, over deeper portions of the lake, said Danny Garrett, a WDFW fish biologist. "Lake Washington is a different story. Anglers targeting cutthroat in Lake Washington are often most successful trolling near the bottom in 50-80 feet of water."

Other good bets during December are Lake Washington and Lake Sammamish, where anglers can hook **perch** and **smallmouth bass**. "Anglers targeting perch should fish near deep ledges, 50-80 feet, using night crawlers," said Garrett.

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

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

Anglers have several good excuses for skipping the crowded malls and getting out on the water, including hatchery steelhead on several coastal streams, crab and salmon in Puget Sound and trout in a variety of lakes. Razor clams are also on the menu at several ocean beaches.

Shellfish managers have approved a weeklong set of **razor clam** digs beginning Dec. 3. The approved dates, low tides and beaches include:

- Dec. 3, Wednesday; 4:14 p.m., -0.1 feet, Long Beach, Twin Harbors
- Dec. 4, Thursday; 5:02 p.m., -0.6 feet, Long Beach, Twin Harbors
- Dec. 5, Friday; 5:45 p.m., -0.9 feet, Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks
- Dec. 6, Saturday; 6:26 p.m., -1.0 feet, Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks, Copalis
- Dec. 7, Sunday; 7:05 p.m., -0.9 feet, Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks
- Dec. 8, Monday; 7:44 p.m., -0.6 feet, Long Beach, Twin Harbors
- Dec. 9, Tuesday; 8:21 pm, -0.2 feet, Long Beach, Twin Harbors

WDFW has two additional digs tentatively scheduled later in December, including a one-day dig on New Year's Eve. The full schedule, along with digging tips and razor clam recipes, is available on [WDFW's razor clam webpage](#).

Sport **crabbing** is open seven days a week through Dec. 31 in most waters of Puget Sound. They include marine areas 4 (Neah Bay), 5 (Sekiu), 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca), 7 (San Juan Islands), 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island, and Skagit Bay), 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner), 9 (Admiralty Inlet), 12 (Hood Canal), and 13 (South Puget Sound).

The daily catch limit in Puget Sound is five Dungeness crab, males only, in hard-shell condition with a minimum carapace width of 6¼ inches. In addition, fishers may catch six red rock crab of either sex per day, provided those crab measure at least 5 inches across.

All Dungeness crab caught in the late-season fishery must be recorded on winter catch cards, which are valid through Dec. 31. Winter catch reports are due to WDFW by Feb. 1, 2015. Additional information is available on [WDFW's website](#).

Meanwhile, several of the region's lakes have been stocked with large **rainbow trout**, including in Offutt Lake and Longs Pond in Thurston County and Harts Lake in Pierce County. A complete list of those lakes, most of which were stocked in November, is available [online](#).

"Fishing is a fall and winter tradition for many Washington anglers," said Chris Donley, WDFW inland fish program manager. "These fisheries offer a great excuse to skip the malls and enjoy a fun day out on the water with family and friends."

Up-to-date stocking information for lakes throughout the state is available on the department's weekly [catchable trout stocking report](#).

In the rivers, the **hatchery steelhead** fishery is going strong. Anglers fishing the lower sections of the Quillayute, Bogachiel, Calawah, Sol Duc and Hoh rivers have a daily limit of three hatchery steelhead. In the Grays Harbor area, anglers fishing the Chehalis, Humptulips, Satsop and Wynoochee have a daily limit of two hatchery steelhead.

Coho salmon also can be caught in some of the region's rivers this time of year.

Anglers fishing the Satsop and Chehalis rivers were having success hooking coho in late November, said Mike Scharpf, fisheries biologist for WDFW. "Fishing has been great on those two rivers, and I suspect

that will continue throughout December as more late-run coho arrive," he said.

Beginning Dec. 1, anglers fishing the Satsop and Chehalis rivers, as well as the Skookumchuck, have a daily limit of six salmon, including up to two adult salmon of which only one may be a wild coho. Scharpf reminds anglers fishing the Satsop and Chehalis rivers that they must release all chinook. Chum salmon must also be released starting Dec. 1 while fishing the Chehalis upstream of the confluence with Black River.

For **winter chum** salmon, anglers might want to try fishing the Nisqually River. The late-chum run hits full stride mid- to late December and generally remains strong until at least mid-January.

For details on the region's freshwater salmon and steelhead fisheries, check the [fishing regulations](#) on WDFW's website.

Portions of Puget Sound also will be open for salmon. In the Strait of Juan de Fuca, Marine Area 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca) reopens for salmon Dec. 1. Anglers fishing that area have a daily limit of two salmon, but must release wild chinook. Marine Area 5 (Sekiu) remains closed for salmon fishing. Farther south, anglers fishing marine areas 11 (Tacoma-Vashon Island) and 13 (South Puget Sound) can keep two **hatchery chinook** as part of a two-salmon daily limit. On Hood Canal (Marine Area 12), anglers have a daily limit of four salmon, but only two of those fish can be chinook. All wild chinook must be released.

Anglers support the blackmouth winter chinook fishery through their license purchase, a portion of which goes to the Puget Sound Recreational Fisheries Enhancement Fund. The fund currently supports a variety of recreational fishing opportunities through the release of more than one million yearling and almost nine million sub-yearling chinook each year.

Before heading out, anglers can check [creel reports](#) for information on catch and effort in Puget Sound on WDFW's website.

Southwest Washington

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

This year's **winter steelhead** season got off to a promising start just before Thanksgiving, when the first wave of fish started snapping up anglers' lures in several Columbia River tributaries. With decent river conditions, catch rates should continue to improve in the weeks ahead.

"The first jag of winter steelhead was definitely on the bite," said Joe Hymer, a fish biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). "So long as the rivers don't rise too high or fall too low, we could be looking at a darn good fishery this year."

Hymer recommends the Cowlitz, Lewis (including north and east fork), Kalama, Grays, Washougal and Elochoman rivers, along with Salmon Creek in Clark County and Abernathy Creek in Cowlitz County.

Anglers might also want to try Lower Rock Creek in Skamania County, which is open to fishing for hatchery steelhead until further notice. Last year, WDFW released 20,000 smolts there and first adults are expected to return during the 2014-15 winter season.

All streams have a two-fish daily limit, but anglers should check the [Fishing in Washington](#) rules pamphlet for other rules specific to each river. As with all steelhead fisheries in southwest Washington, only hatchery fish with a clipped adipose fin and healed scar may be retained. All wild steelhead must be released.

As basic preparation for a steelheading trip, Hymer recommends checking the [Northwest River Forecast](#) or other sources for river conditions before heading out. "Most anglers do best when water levels are rising or dropping," Hymer said. "It's a lot harder to catch steelhead in the peaks and troughs." In deciding where to fish, it also helps to know how many smolts were planted in specific rivers and how many adult fish have returned to area hatcheries. Hymer recommends checking WDFW's steelhead [smolt-planting schedule for 2013](#), along with [hatchery returns](#) posted on a weekly basis.

While winter steelhead are the main attraction right now, **late-stock coho** will continue to bite through December. As of mid-November, boat anglers were averaging one hatchery coho per day on the Cowlitz River, where returns to Cowlitz Salmon Hatchery through Nov. 17 have been on a record pace with 88,306 adults. The Klickitat River has also been producing strong coho catches.

State regulations allow anglers to catch and keep up to six adult coho salmon per day on the Cowlitz, Klickitat, Kalama, Lewis and Washougal rivers – and on the lower portion of the Grays River. Only those fish with a clipped adipose fin may be retained, except in the Klickitat River where anglers can also keep unmarked coho.

For **fall chinook**, the North Fork Lewis should continue to produce catchable fish through December. Any chinook, adipose fin clipped or not, may be retained on the Lewis.

Hymer flagged several new fishing regulations that take effect on or around Dec. 1 on area rivers:

- **Grays River** – Fishing opens Dec. 1 for hatchery steelhead, hatchery coho, and adipose and/or ventral fin clipped chinook from the Hwy. 4 Bridge to the South Fork, and from the mouth of the West Fork Grays River to 300 yards below hatchery road bridge.
- **Green River, North Fork Toutle River, and mainstem Toutle River from mouth to the forks** – Nov. 30 is the last day to fish for hatchery steelhead and hatchery salmon in these waters.
- **South Fork Toutle River** – Nov. 30 is the last day to fish for hatchery steelhead from the 4100 Bridge upstream. The stretch from the mouth to the bridge remains open, with selective gear rules in effect beginning Dec.1.
- **Swift Reservoir** – Nov. 30 is the last day to fish for trout.
- **Cowlitz River** – Under permanent rules, Nov. 30 is the last day of the night closure and anti-snagging rule from Mill Creek to the barrier dam.
- **Mill Creek** (tributary to Cowlitz River) – Beginning Dec.1, the creek opens to fishing for hatchery steelhead from the mouth to the salmon hatchery road crossing culvert. Night closures and anti-snagging rules will be in effect for the one-month fishery.
- **North Fork Lewis River** – Starting Dec. 1, night closure and anti-snagging rules are lifted on the North Fork Lewis from Johnson Creek to Colvin Creek.
- **Wind River** – Nov. 30 is the last day of the catch and release game fish season above Shipherd Falls.
- **Klickitat River** – Starting Dec. 1, fishing closes for trout, hatchery steelhead and salmon, except for the salmon fishery from the Fisher Hill Bridge downstream which remains open through Jan. 31.

For something different, the **whitefish** season on the Klickitat River opens Dec. 1 from 400 feet above Fishway #5 upstream to the Yakama Reservation boundary. Whitefish gear rules will be in effect. If Thanksgiving is about turkey, the next day is about **trout**. With the national holiday approaching, WDFW hatchery crews stocked 33 lakes – including six in southwest Washington – for the "Black Friday" trout-fishing event Nov. 28.

Thousands of rainbows weighing 1¼ pounds each will be waiting for anglers that day – and the weeks ahead – in Battleground Lake and Klineline Pond in Clark County; Kress Lake in Cowlitz County; Fort Borst Park Pond and South Lewis County Park Pond in Lewis County; and Rowland Lake in Klickitat County.

"Those Black Friday fish should carry through December really well," said John Weinheimer, a WDFW fish biologist. He noted that additional fish will also be planted in Kline Pond and Battleground Lake in December.

Eastern Washington

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

Four of the region's **rainbow trout** fishing lakes open for a winter-only fishing season Dec. 1 through March 31, and all promise to provide good catches, depending on weather and access.

Hatch Lake, southeast of Colville in Stevens County, has an abundance of rainbow trout ranging between 12 and 16 inches in very good condition. Williams Lake, north of Colville in Stevens County, has a fair rainbow population, boosted last month with extra one-pound hatchery fish.

"Fishing and catch rates at Hatch Lake will be very similar to the past few years," said WDFW northeast district fish biologist Bill Baker of Colville. "Our fry plants are now averaging around 12 inches and there are lots of winter carryovers up to 16 inches. Hatch was frozen over, and it should provide action through the ice if it stays that way – but be very cautious about getting out on it."

Baker said Williams Lake appears to have a growing goldfish population that compete with trout, so expectations for that fishery this winter are somewhat lower. The local high school education program at the Colville Fish Hatchery, in cooperation with Stevens County, provided 500 one-pound rainbows that were stocked in Williams earlier this fall, so catch rates should be fair to good. Williams Lake is still mostly open water and is unlikely to have enough ice formed to allow ice fishing early in the season.

The other two regional lakes opening Dec. 1 are Fourth of July Lake, on the Lincoln-Adams county line south of Sprague, and Hog Canyon Lake in Spokane County northeast of Sprague. Randy Osborne, WDFW central district fish biologist, says anglers can expect good fishing at both lakes, although changing conditions may delay the action.

"Recent warming temperatures and rain have deteriorated ice conditions on these and other lakes, making them unsafe for anglers and possibly difficult to launch boats or even cast from shore," Osborne said. "I encourage anglers to use common sense each and every time they venture out on or near any frozen water body."

Test fishing of Fourth of July Lake late last month showed the presence of large rainbow trout, measuring 14 to 22 inches. At that time, about a quarter of the lake on the northern end was frozen, so anglers may have to walk to find open water. Much of the land around Fourth of July Lake is private, so it's important that anglers obey posted signs, pack out any trash, and not block any gates with vehicles.

No sampling was possible at Hog Canyon Lake because of ice, but Osborne says anglers should see rainbow trout in the 9-14 inch range once the lake is fishable.

Anglers should be aware of the special regulations in effort on both Hog Canyon and Fourth of July lakes: no minimum size, daily limit of five fish, but no more than two fish over 14 inches may be retained. Osborne said the retention limit on large fish is designed to extend the fishery through the season – especially at Fourth of July Lake where most fish are large. Once anglers using bait catch and keep two fish over 14 inches, they should switch to lures or flies so that large fish can be released unharmed, Osborne said. (See "[Bait Rules](#)" under "Statewide Freshwater Rules" on page 16 of the fishing pamphlet.) Dec. 1 is also the opening of **whitefish** season on the stretch of the Little Spokane River from Highway 291 upstream to West Branch. There's no minimum size and the daily limit is 15 whitefish. Whitefish gear rules apply – one single-point hook, maximum hook size 3/16-inch pint to shank (hook size 14).

Meanwhile, some waters that are open year-round can produce some decent catches of trout and other gamefish.

Rainbow trout fishing on Lake Spokane (Long Lake) continues to produce some nice fish, although access is limited during lower water conditions. Anglers have recently reported good fishing for 10-12-inch rainbows, which were part of the 10-year annual cooperative stocking effort between Avista and WDFW.

Lake Roosevelt fishing is fair to good for **rainbow trout** running about 16 inches and 1½ to 1¾ pounds. Whether fishing from shore or trolling, anglers have been catching good numbers of lunky rainbows reared in net pens in the big reservoir off Grand Coulee Dam.

Once ice conditions materialize and become safe, year-round-open waters such as Silver Lake in southwest Spokane County, and Eloika Lake in northern Spokane County, should produce some **yellow perch**. Newman Lake in eastern Spokane County should have some decent fishing for **black crappie** if anglers can locate them.

Blue and Spring lakes, the Tucannon River impoundments on the Wooten Wildlife Area in Columbia County, remain open to trout fishing through the end of December. But Wooten manager Kari Dingman reports the lakes have developed thin ice layers with recent cold temperatures that hinder fishing.

Snake River **steelhead** fishing continues to be productive in some areas, despite drops in water temperatures that usually slow the bite.

Anglers who fish through the ice on any waterway with an open fishing season through the winter are reminded to check [ice-fishing safety information](#) on WDFW's website.

Northcentral Washington

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

Steelhead fishing on the Upper Columbia River continues to be productive for anglers braving the cold and putting in the time to land nice fish.

WDFW district fish biologist Travis Maitland reports that although steelheading has not been "red hot" recently, there are decent fish being landed by the hardy and tenacious. In late November, Maitland watched an angler pull steelie from the pool behind Rocky Reach Dam that measured 38 inches and weighed 15 pounds.

The mainstem Columbia River from Rock Island Dam to 400 feet below Chief Joseph Dam and portions of several tributaries (Wenatchee, Entiat, Methow, Okanogan, Similkameen rivers) are currently open to hatchery steelhead fishing until further notice. Anglers must wild steelhead, but retain hatchery fish (marked by a clipped adipose fin) to help increase the proportion of natural-origin steelhead on the spawning grounds. The catch limit is two hatchery steelhead per day.

All anglers must possess a valid fishing license and a Columbia River Salmon/Steelhead Endorsement. The season can close at any time due to impacts on natural origin steelhead, as noted on [WDFW's website](#).

Three lakes in Okanogan County open for "catch and keep" trout fishing Dec. 1. Rat Rat Lake near Brewster and Big and Little Green lakes near Omak switch from a catch-and-release regulation to a five-trout daily catch limit. All three lakes provide good angling throughout the winter months, whether open

water as they mostly are now, or iced-over later in the season. Usually catches of rainbow trout in the 10 to 12-inch range are made on a variety of bait, lures, and flies.

Maitland reports that year-round-open Fish and Roses lakes in Chelan County are not safely iced over yet.

"Once solid, safe ice forms on these lakes, we should have good fishing for **rainbow trout** on Roses Lake," he said, noting that WDFW stocked 16,000 rainbows there in November. "Fish Lake should continue to be a good producer of average sized **yellow perch** through the ice," he said. "We just need some colder temps to get these fisheries going."

Year-round-open Moses Lake in the Columbia Basin usually provides good **yellow perch** fishing as the fish bunch up into large schools. WDFW district fish biologist Chad Jackson says that some winters Moses Lake freezes over and provides good ice fishing for both perch and rainbow trout. The most popular ice fishing location is near Blue Heron Park.

Anglers who fish through the ice on any waterway are advised to check out the ice fishing safety information on [WDFW's website](#).

Southcentral Washington

(Benton, Franklin, Kittitas and Yakima counties)

Catch rates for **hatchery steelhead** have picked up in the Hanford Reach, where bank and boat anglers are working the slots and seams where the steelies hold. Paul Hoffarth, a district fish biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), said fishing should remain productive through March as steelhead mill around waiting for the spring spawn.

Columbia River anglers should be aware that an additional stretch of the Hanford Reach opened to fishing for hatchery steelhead on Thanksgiving Day. Anglers can now retain up to two hatchery steelhead on the Columbia River from the Highway 24 bridge (Vernita Bridge) upstream to Priest Rapids Dam. Under the new regulation, anglers must retain any hatchery steelhead they intercept and must record those fish on their Catch Record Cards. "Selective gear rules" are in effect in this area, although the use of bait is allowed.

The area is scheduled to remain open through the winter months, but may close early. Check the WDFW website for emergency rule closures. As with all area steelhead fisheries, only hatchery fish with a clipped adipose fin and healed scar may be retained. All wild steelhead must be released.

Just how many anglers will brave the elements to fish for hatchery steelhead in area waters remains to be seen. "Angler participation definitely drops off as we head into the winter months," Hoffarth said. "The fish are still out there, but fishing tends to get spotty – good one day, bad the next."

During the third week in November, both bank and boat anglers averaged 11.5 hours per steelhead caught. Through Nov. 23, anglers had caught 686 since the fishery got under way Oct. 1.

In the early morning, steelhead often lie in as little as 5 feet of water, but can be found as deep as 20 feet late in the day. Bank anglers tend to work the seams close to shore, working progressively deeper throughout the day as the sun climbs higher and as anglers' casts and boat traffic spook fish deeper and further from shore.

Another option is **walleye**. Anglers don't typically catch as many walleye each day as during the summer months, but the fish they do catch are often much larger. Some record-holders have been taken in the dead of winter.

Retention fishing for **sturgeon** is currently closed on Lake Umatilla (John Day Reservoir) and Lake Wallula (McNary Reservoir), but catch-and-release fishing is allowed. Lake Umatilla will reopen to allow the harvest of sturgeon Jan. 1, 2015, and Lake Wallula will open for retention Feb. 1. Check the Washington Sport Fishing Rules for more details.

The Yakima River Basin is closed to steelhead fishing, but the **whitefish** season opens Dec. 1 on both the Yakima and Naches rivers. As in years past, the catch limit is 15 fish per day, but anglers are required to use a single-point hook measuring no more than 3/16 inch from point to shank (hook size 14).

Anglers fishing the Yakima from Easton Lake to Keechelus Dam can catch **eastern brook trout** under selective gear rules. No size or daily limits are in effect for eastern brook trout, but fishing is strictly catch-and-release for all other species of trout.

In other waters, WDFW will stock 2,000 jumbo **rainbows** in the North Elton Pond near Selah, which opens to fishing Dec. 1 with a two-fish daily limit. Additional waters may be stocked with the large rainbow trout brood stock in the next few weeks, depending on availability. Watch for further word on [weekly fish plants](#) on WDFW's website.

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Random Links

Oregon salmon license plate money funds only Salem bureaucrats:

http://www.oregonlive.com/environment/index.ssf/2014/12/oregon_license_plate_money_mea.html#incart_river

Trout Water Open All Year: <http://www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/fishing/trout.asp>

Check before you go. Oregon Bar Cams:

http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/pqr/marine/bars_mover.phpS

A look at buoy 10 fishing from the air and on the water:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PaN6xTUOwdU>

GOOD LUCK!