

[The Guide's Forecast - volume 17 issue number 2](#)

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **January 9th – January 15th, 2015**

Oregon Fisheries Update

Willamette Valley Fishing Report – Flows are dropping and winter steelhead counts are gradually improving at Willamette Falls. A few winters are being taken by bank anglers but catch and release sturgeon fishing remains a reliable alternative

While water flows and conditions are good on the McKenzie River, trout fishing is slow.

The Santiams are in decent condition but are between seasons right now, offering little of interest to anglers.

Clackamas River water flows are good as is the water color. Winter steelhead fishing is picking up but the bulk of the run has yet to arrive.

Steelheading has also shown some improvement on the Sandy although the planting of broodstock steelhead here for many years has moved the run timing forward on the calendar. Most of the fish are yet to arrive.

Northwest – prior to the H=high-water event, steelheaders were finding good success on larger streams. The Wilson produced some great catches and is just now coming back into fishable shape.

The smaller streams on the north coast began producing good catches by Thursday. The Necanicum River near seaside as well as the North Fork Nehalem. Hatchery workers on the Nehalem are recycling fish to Vernonia and Coffenberry Lake.

All rivers on the north coast should be producing great catches of steelhead this weekend with larger streams in perfect shape for drift boats but smaller systems a bank fishing show only.

There are nice broodstock fish showing on the Wilson and some on the Nestucca rivers but the early run steelhead are starting to spawn already.

Recently, the ocean has been friendly for bottomfishers. Those seeking lingcod and sea bass are faring well and it looks like opportunity should exist into the weekend.

Not many are participating in estuary crabbing but moderate tides in the afternoon should produce fair results.

Central & South Coast Reports - Ocean conditions have been good this week which has allowed trouble-free offshore launches. Bottom fishing for rockfish and ling cod has been fair to good.

Mixed reports have been coming in with regard to ocean crabbing but it is better off the central coast than it is for ports further south.

Catch-and-release winter steelheading will be picking up once again as water conditions improve on the Umpqua mainstem.

Crabbing has started showing some improvement as salinity levels rise at Coos Bay. Rock fishing from the jetty has resumed as the bay clears following recent storms.

Lower Rogue steelheaders are picking up some fish as are anglers in the middle river as the run is moving upstream. With releases from Lost Creek Reservoir moderating this week, fishing will resume on the upper Rogue River.

Winter steelheading started to pick up on the Chetco at the first of the year and has been quite good at times. With the water dropping and clearing, action has slowed somewhat but it's early in the run so catches will pick up as more fish pour into the system and subsequent storms improve water levels.

Despite cold weather in the Diamond Lake area, it is not yet frozen over to allow for ice fishing.

Central & Eastern - Rainfall from the last storm front has left the lower Deschutes off color although conditions improve somewhat above Maupin. Summer steelhead and trout catches remain slow.

Once again, readers, we appeal to those of you who fish the central and eastern parts of Oregon to send us reports. This time of year is tough to get information from those willing to rise frostbite on their nether regions to pursue waterborne quarry.

Southwest Washington– the Cowlitz River is the rare bright spot in the district. Boaters are faring well for hatchery steelhead and some Coho are still being caught.

The Kalama and Lewis Rivers will produce better later in the season but effort remains low and so does the catch.

Sturgeon fisherman targeting their quarry in the Bonneville pool have not fared all that well. It's especially challenging catching a keeper from the bank here. It's likely the quota will last a while.

Columbia River Fishing Report – No update this week, it's a mess.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Flows have continued to drop at Willamette Falls as water visibility gradually improves. Water temperature have rising from the high 30s to the low 40s. Daily winter steelhead counts are starting to pick up but few that 300 had been counted as of January 8th.

The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission will consider a rule change that will allow salmon, steelhead and trout anglers to use barbed hooks on the lower Willamette River, Youngs Bay, and lower Gnat Creek when it meets in Salem on Jan. 9, 2015. The meeting begins at 8 a.m. at the ODFW headquarters building, 4034 Fairview Industrial Dr. SE, Salem, Ore. 97302.

McKenzie River levels fell sharply over the first three days of the New Year, remaining fairly stable and steady since the.

Water level and flow are fairly stable on the Santiam system and expected to remain so until around mid-month.

The last stocking of extra-large rainbow trout brood trout were released Monday, Jan 5 at four Willamette Valley locations Huddleston Pond in Willamina and Sheridan Pond near Sheridan each received 80 of the trophy-sized trout. Farther south, Timber Linn Lake and Waverly Lake each received 60 of the big fish. An unscheduled release of 9,300 one-pound rainbow trout took place Monday, Dec. 29 at six Willamette Valley fishing sites as the result unexpected low water levels at Leaburg Hatchery. The fish were distributed as follows: Cottage Grove Reservoir – 2,000, Dorena Reservoir – 2,000, Hills Creek Reservoir – 2,000, Junction City Pond – 1,700, Walter Wirth Lake – 1,200, and Walling Pond – 400.

The Guide's Forecast – For action on the lower Willamette River, sturgeon still tops the list. Sure, it's a catch and release fishery but it's often non-stop action when you get into a school of biters. "Action is phenomenal" said **Robert Campbell at Fisherman's Marine in Oregon City (503-557-5600)** today by telephone. "Anchovies are still the best bait, he went on, "followed by smelt, then sand shrimp."

Campbell also reported that anglers at Meldrum Bar, the Sand Hole and along the island are getting some action daily with winter steelhead. This fishery will only improve as more fish move into the lower Willamette in coming weeks. Here's an interesting note. There are reports on the 2015 Springer Report thread at ifish.net but no reports of any fish caught - yet. Further, Robert Campbell at Fisherman's Marine in Oregon City (503-557-5600) noticing a number of folks buying spring Chinook tackle at his store.

Campbell went on to say that the first verified springer in 2014 was taken in the last week of January, it's more common for this to occur in the first couple of weeks in February, and Nonetheless, this prized fish is getting some early season attention. **UPDATE:** Pro guide and infamous stalker of spring Chinook, Wayne Priddy, caught the first spring Chinook of 2015 today, January 8th at "Wayne's World," a location across from Clackamette Park familiar to lower Willamette springer anglers. He fooled the nine pound salmon with a K11X Kwikfish. Photo here:

http://media.oregonlive.com/bill_monroe_impact/photo/16728685-large.jpg

Winter trout fishing is slow and expected to remain that way on the McKenzie. Anglers may fish below Leaburg Dam but the waters above that point are closed until April.

While the North Santiam can boast a decent catch-and-release fishery for wild winter steelhead, with fewer than 300 over Willamette Falls as of today, that fishery, if it develops this season, is months in the future.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Water conditions on the Clackamas are good and forecast to remain that way, at least for a while. The river has been gradually dropping and clearing over the past few days. Eagle Creek has been running at decent level although it is quite clear. Despite the fact that steelhead are from later-running broodstock and that release numbers have been reduced, it has seen some pressure over the past week. No catch reports have come in, however.

Water levels at the Sandy River rose significantly on January 5th. While level and flows have been moderating since that date, they have yet to return to pre-rise levels. Water color and condition will be determined by the freezing level which if above 5,000 feet, may cause glacial runoff and turbidity.

The Guide's Forecast – Robert Campbell at Fisherman's Marine in Oregon City (503-557-5600) reports that "action for winter steelhead has picked up significantly for Willamette, Eagle Creek stock and hatchery broodstock fish. It's not wide-open but decent." Campbell went on to tell of a guide who took four winter steelhead in a day earlier this week. That's a good day at this time of year. According to NOAA predictions, the Clackamas is due to get walloped by the next rainstorm due January 16th. That's a helluva long-range prediction for Oregon weather so we'll see how accurate their forecast remains.

"Winter steelheading is picking up on the Sandy," according to **Robert Campbell** who went on to say that "pink plastic worms are killing them, especially the Mad River worms." he said. "Try the bubble gum or pink with a chartreuse stripe."

Make note that Fisherman's Marine in Oregon City is running a Steelhead Derby throughout the season. This is for bright hatchery winters only, no boots or smokers. Just bring your catch which must be gutted but not necessarily gilled, to the store and throw it on the scale. Prizes will be awarded weekly, monthly,

then topped off with a grand prize. Further, contest entries may come from any legal waters in Oregon or Washington.

North Coast Fishing Report – Steelheaders have had an impressive start to the season. It's what many theorized after a banner wild and hatchery coho return this fall.

Late last week, before the high water, steelheaders on the Wilson River were reporting double digit opportunities. What is most impressive, is the high quality of fish indicating that the broodstock return is already upon us. Members of the Tualatin Valley chapter of the Association of Northwest Steelheaders reported fantastic fishing on Friday, hooking 15 steelhead and landing high-quality broodstock fish as well as nice wild fish. I was sworn to secrecy as to what they were using to lure in their bites, as members are revealing secrets only to fellow members of the chapter. Yet another good reason to join a chapter near you (www.nwsteelheaders.org). One of the same anglers repeated his float on the Wilson on Sunday, yielding a large 16-pound hatchery buck. With this grade of fish available and the numbers that were seen last week, it is a great indication that we have some fantastic fishing ahead.

Smaller streams were fishing excellent on Thursday as one guide fishing the Necanicum River near Seaside went nine for 15 drifting small clusters of eggs. **Pro guide Andy Betnar (503-791-4094)**, reported about half of the fish they caught were already spent. It's not uncommon to see this kind of ratio this early in the season as these out-of-basin stocks do not have a prolonged period of return time. It's highly likely that in another week, a larger portion of the steelhead present will have already spawned. Andy was admittedly floating in a nontraditional stretch of the river, upstream of the largest Sitka spruce tree put in at Klootchie Creek. It is difficult to get access in this reach for boats to lunch but bank anglers have great opportunity if you're willing to explore your options.

North Fork Nehalem bank anglers are reporting similarly high success rates. Hatchery workers are reporting great catches the last few days with water conditions near ideal after the most recent rain freshet. Hatchery workers are also recycling fish into district lakes as well as back to the Aldervale ramp for fish that remain in good condition. Hatchery traps have been overflowing with steelhead the last few weeks.

The Trask River also was giving up fish at midweek. Although river levels remained high, slightly less than ideal, there were some hatchery strays in the system. The dam hole was a great option at midweek.

Although no confirmed reports from the Nestucca River recently, it too should be getting a good shot of early returning, high-quality broodstock steelhead. It should just be coming into fishable shape now but Three Rivers has been a great option the last few days.

With good numbers of broodstock steelhead making an early season showing, it stands to reason we have a good late winter run to look forward to. Don't be surprised however when these other streams start to lose their high quality possibilities. These early returning fish are likely in the act of spawning about now. We will get into better detail in the forecast section.

Saltwater anglers have realized some nice ocean conditions in recent days. Bottomfishing has become a good option, targeting lingcod and black sea bass. Not many people have been fishing out of Garibaldi but Newport and Depoe Bay have seen some activity recently. Lingcod fishing was far from slam dunk but ample numbers of bass were available. Saltwater anglers need to be mindful of upcoming changes to the bag limits. Cabezon remains closed right now.

Not many people were bragging about their ocean crabbing experiences. After a hard season of commercial culling, not many keepers remain. Crab prices remain high so effort should be as well.

The Guide's Forecast – It should be a productive week for steelheaders but depending on the body of water you target, your results will vary. Here's our river-by-river breakdown for what lies ahead this week:

Highway 30 streams (Klaskanine, Big Creek, Gnat Creek)- Stocks of fish on these systems are of the early returning and nearing peak spawning right now. There will be a rare fresh fish available this weekend but you'll likely start to see down runners in these systems. They will be getting low and clear this weekend and you'll likely see some spawning taking place in the tail-outs of several of these systems.

Necanicum River- Much like the Highway 30 streams, fish will degrade in quality from here on out. Since this systems only gets an early hatchery run, good consumptive opportunity is on the way out. Some natives will start to appear and lots of spawned out fish are in your future here. These fish bite quite readily.

North Fork Nehalem – Recycling efforts to Coffenbury and Vernonia Lakes are underway, a sure indication that spent fish are starting to dominate the hatchery. Catches should remain fair but fresh fish will become hard to find. In the dropping flows, fish will be most concentrated near the hatchery but also be slower to move upstream.

Mainstem Nehalem – Too high to fish and too early to get excited. Look for a good return come late February here though.

Kilchis River- Early season system meaning fresh fish will become hard to find. Some wild fish should begin to appear but more-so come mid-February.

Wilson River – This should become a dynamite option this weekend. It's likely already underway and good action should grace this waterway well into April. Broodstock fish are already available in fair numbers and it's only going to get better from here. Beads in size 12 mm was "the secret" I was alluding to in my above report; it's really no secret as you can't really find them on store shelves right now. They have been producing outstanding catches on this and other systems. Come Saturday, this system will have already seen its post freshet best action but savvy anglers should be able to find some willing fish over the weekend. Remember to be innovative as you'll have plenty of competition out there this weekend. Here's the hydrograph:



Trask River – Some hatchery fish available (strays) but mostly wild fish on this system. This means a later peak than other district streams although there are fish present right now. In the dropping flows, the lower reach below Loren's Drift will make for the best option.

Three Rivers/Nestucca system – Three Rivers should fade fast but the Nestucca should be ramping up with broodstock options. We're still weeks away from great fishing but on a year like what we're to experience this season, there will be an early season, motivated crowd. The entire Nestucca system should have fish in it.

Yes, beads, 12 mm and pink or variations thereof. Just as with any fishing, you have to "match the hatch" for best success. Chinook are still spawning in several of these systems but so are coho. As the season progresses, you'll want to drop down in size and change the color up as the steelhead begin to spawn. Like any new and up and coming technique, you'll have to perfect your practice but since this is really catching on, you'll end up just like everyone else; struggling for results as more people catch onto the proper way to catch fish this way.

Moving onto saltwater, sea bass and lingcod should remain a viable option as long as the weather does. No one port will out-produce the other but Depoe Bay and Newport offer fairly close near-port reefs to explore. Here is the offshore forecast:

TONIGHT SE WIND 10 TO 15 KT WITH GUSTS TO 20 KT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 5 FT AT 16 SECONDS. SECONDARY SWELL SW 6 FT AT 11 SECONDS.

FRI SE WIND 10 TO 15 KT...BECOMING S 5 TO 10 KT IN THE AFTERNOON. WIND WAVES 1 TO 2 FT. W SWELL 5 FT AT 14 SECONDS. SECONDARY SWELL SW 5 FT AT 10 SECONDS.

FRI NIGHT SW WIND 5 TO 10 KT...VEERING TO W AFTER MIDNIGHT. WIND WAVES 1 FT. W SWELL 5 FT AT 14 SECONDS. SECONDARY SWELL SW 4 FT AT 10 SECONDS. CHANCE OF RAIN.

SAT NW WIND 5 TO 10 KT. GUSTS TO 15 KT IN THE MORNING. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 5 FT AT 13 SECONDS. SECONDARY SWELL SW 3 FT AT 9 SECONDS.

SAT NIGHT W TO SW WIND 10 KT OR LESS. WIND WAVES LESS THAN 1 FOOT. W SWELL 5 FT AT 12 SECONDS.

SUN S WIND 5 TO 10 KT...RISING TO 10 TO 15 KT IN THE AFTERNOON. GUSTS TO 20 KT. WIND WAVES 3 FT. W SWELL 5 FT. CHANCE OF RAIN.

SUN NIGHT SE WIND 10 TO 15 KT WITH GUSTS TO 20 KT. WIND WAVES 4 FT. W SWELL 5 FT. CHANCE OF RAIN.

MON S WIND 5 TO 10 KT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 6 FT.

TUE E WIND 5 TO 10 KT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 6 FT.

Crabbing should also be an offshore and estuary option this weekend. Of course fresh bait will produce the best catches but it may be difficult to expect limit crabbing. Clamming was good on the last minus tide series but we'll have a short wait for the next opportunity.

Central & South Coast Reports - The ocean was friendly on Wednesday this week, allowing Charters to venture offshore out of Depoe Bay and Newport. Catches of ling cod and rockfish were good with

limits common on a flat ocean. Offshore anglers are reminded that cabezon may not be retained as part of a rockfish limit until July 1.

One complaint heard repeatedly this week regarding offshore ling cod fishing is that the wind has been too light to get a decent drift. No complaints about ocean conditions, though.

Crabbing has been slow in the ocean out of Newport but it's still worse for ports to the south. It's hardly worth the effort out of Brookings, for instance.

Today, January 8th would be a good day for an offshore launch, as would any day this coming weekend and into the coming week. Small swells at decent intervals will be accompanied by soft breezes if the current predictions hold true.

Winter steelheading is taking off on the Siuslaw River. Slowly, but it is beginning to show a little life. Give it time; it's still early in the season.

Steelheading on the mainstem Umpqua will remain a catch-and-release affair for the most part as the vast majority of fish hooked will be wild. A similar situation will exist on the North Umpqua as numbers build here. Most of the steelhead on the South Umpqua will be of hatchery origin so this would be the logical destination for anglers looking to take a winter home for dinner.

Boats launching for bottom fish out of Coos Bay are doing well for rocks and ling cod, the latter of which are being caught in 20 to 100 feet of water as they are moving shallower at this time of year to spawn. High, murky water which shut down rockfishing along Coos Bay jetties has cleared with catches starting to pick up once again. Crabbing is also improving as salinity levels return to normal. The West Fork Millicoma River has produced some winter steelhead this week.

The Rogue was running in the 4,000 cfs range at Agness on Thursday, January 8th although it is forecast to gradually moderate over the coming week. There will be no significant drop in water level according to NOAA predictions. Steelheading has been fair to good for drift fishers. Winters are entering the middle Rogue where catches have been picking up for side drifters. On the upper Rogue, flows resulting from Lost Creek Reservoir releases are moderating which has allowed fishing to resume here.

New Year's Day was marked the turning point for the Chetco River, from producing a few steelhead to steadily pumping out a mix of bright hatchery fish and chrome wild steelhead. Over the last week, a native steelhead three feet in length and estimated to weigh 19 pounds was caught and released by a guide boat client who was side-drifting roe. Another angler landed a 20-pounder on a plug. The river was at roughly 1,000 cfs the morning of January 8th, forecast to drop to less than 850 cfs early in the coming week. It remains to be seen when precipitation will turn around this low water condition. Recently, side-drifting and drift-fishing bait has taken fish. Low water has caused the action to slow but the Chetco is expected to produce winter steelhead into March.

Snow has fallen periodically on the banks of Diamond Lake but the water has yet to freeze sufficiently to allow for ice fishing.

Central & Eastern - Rainfall from the last storm front has left the lower Deschutes off color although conditions improve somewhat above Maupin. Summer steelhead and trout catches remain slow.

Once again, readers, we appeal to those of you who fish the central and eastern parts of Oregon to send us reports. This time of year is tough to get information from those willing to rise frostbite on their neither's to pursue waterborne quarry.

Write to the TGF staff:

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Random Links

Ice Fishing Marion Lake:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5zMdVdMCPuE#t=440>

How to Make the Best Shrimp Fly:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wPpn_BgAU4

Sea-Doo at 3 Arches January 3rd:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ZXzgSiAryc#t=138>

Killer Whales Chasing a Speed Boat:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ImpM4LRQvqo#t=20>

GOOD LUCK!