

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **January 23rd – January 29th, 2015**

Willamette Valley/Metro – A few steelhead are being taken by bank anglers on the lower Willamette. The better bet would be catch-and-release sturgeon fishing.

Waters of the McKenzie are dropping and clearing although fishing here is slow.

Winter steelhead are yet to show in sufficient number to create a fishery on the Santiams.

While the Clackamas rose rapidly following rainfall over the past weekend, it has since dropped and is in good conditions for winter steelheading.

Similarly, the Sandy is on good shape and has been producing some steelhead although the peak of the run has yet to occur.

Northwest – Steelheaders did have one last great crack at fresh winter steelhead on most north coast systems and larger systems came online mid-week. Traffic should be heavy over the weekend with action only likely mediocre. The Wilson and Nestucca will become primary targets as quality hatchery broodstock fish begin to make their way in. We're still several weeks away from peak season however.

The North Fork Nehalem River is recycling more steelhead into district lakes, giving bank anglers a fair shot at less-than-ideal steelhead but still a great option. Fresh early run fish will become increasingly hard to find here and on the Necanicum River, despite a great return this year.

The Nestucca should start to produce better results from the lower reaches as flows drop. High tides this weekend could keep fresh fish running in.

Crabbing will likely be poor as the commercial season catches reflect a downturn in production. Heavy tides this weekend won't help matters.

Southwest- Charter boats launching out of central Oregon ports for rockfish are doing well for ling cod in deep water.

Reports for winter steelhead catches have been good from the mainstem and South Umpqua with steelhead running large.

Crabbing has been improving at Coos Bay this week with Dungeness hard and full of meat. Winter steelhead are being caught on the Coos River system.

Winter steelheading is worthwhile on the lower Rogue and may be slightly better on the middle river. While it's still early in the season, a good run is indicated this year. A few winters have been landed on the upper Rogue although this fishery will improve in February and March.

Boats launching out of the Port of Brookings have been doing well for bottom fish. The Chetco River has recovered from recent storms and has been producing steelhead although it may soon be too low and clear to fish well.

The ice at Diamond Lake is not yet thick enough to allow ice fishing.

Eastern – Trout fishing on the lower Deschutes has been fair to good unlike summer steelheading.

SW Washington- Good fishing district wide here too although we'll start to transition into broodstock returns and more wild fish in the coming weeks. The Cowlitz remains the top bet but the Kalama and Lewis should also see fair action in the coming weeks.

Sturgeon fishing in the Bonneville Pool has largely disappointed anglers so far this year. Action isn't likely to improve anytime soon.

Columbia River Fishing Report – Still no reports with so few options.

The Guide's Forecast – If you need something to read, here is the 2015 forecasts for the spring run of chinook: http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/forecasts/columbia_river/2014-results_2015-expects.pdf

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Water flow at Willamette Falls has once again started to drop with the temperature gradually rising to the mid-40s. According to the latest reading, the visibility is about one foot. Daily winter steelhead passage has once again dropped off to single digits.

Waters of the McKenzie crested on January 18th with rain over that weekend but have been falling since. With mostly dry weather in the forecast, expect this trend to continue through the coming week.

The Santiam system has recovered from the recent freshet and will be on a steady drop over the coming weekend.

The Guide's Forecast – Sturgeon fishing remains the hot fishery in the lower Willamette. Sure, it's all catch-and-release but where else are you going to latch onto multiple fish between three and nine feet long? "We're selling more than just anchovies for sturgeon bait now," said **Robert Campbell at Fisherman's Marine in Oregon City (503-557-5600)** by phone on Thursday this week. "They're biting smelt and sand shrimp and squid has been real good." Regarding steelhead, Campbell mentioned a few getting caught at Meldrum Bar. When asked about spring Chinook, he said, "There will be a pilot run in the first or second week of February that are usually big fish, 20 to 25 pounds that will get everyone excited but steady catches will come sometime after that."

With the winter steelhead count at Willamette Falls yet to top 550, there are not enough fish in the Santiam system to merit a trip.

Winter trout fishing is slow on the McKenzie although catch-and-release angling is legal below Leaburg Dam.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Clackamas levels, unfishable over the past weekend, have dropped and cleared. Fresh winter steelhead are in the system with water conditions and flow predicted to be excellent for the coming weekend.

The Sandy system also got slammed by storms earlier this week but the river has recovered and is in good shape for winter steelheaders.

In an interesting twist, the ODFW is asking Clackamas and Sandy river steelheaders to donate hatchery fish to their broodstock program. If that reads to you like a contradiction in terms, you are not alone. Perhaps the unusual preponderance of biting steelhead in the Clackamas this season played a part in the

development of the program, perhaps pressure from the Native Fish Society. We have no way of knowing. To participate in the program, call Todd Alsbury at 971-673-6011 and leave a message.

The Guide's Forecast – "Winter steelhead catches are steady," according to **Robert Campbell at Fisherman's Marine in Oregon City (503-557-5600)** who went on to say that numbers of broodstock steelhead are good, particularly for this early in the run. Despite the fact that stocking efforts have been reduced, winters have been taken on Eagle Creek this week as well.

The Sandy has been fishing well according to **Robert Campbell at Fisherman's Marine in Oregon City (503-557-5600)** who went on to say, "A good winter steelhead run on the Sandy as we're having now seems to be tied to a robust coho run."

North Coast Fishing Report – Following last weekend's freshet, rivers went out of shape in what will likely be the last opportunity for fresh run fish. Admittedly, I largely blew the prediction of ample numbers of un-spawned steelhead available to anglers this week. Of course, the earliest reports came from small systems such as the Necanicum, North Fork Nehalem and Three Rivers. These reports indicate there were lots of quality hatchery fish available following this late season rain freshet.

Starting with the Necanicum, this is a river anglers can really dial in. The small stream aspect makes for reading water fairly easy. Anglers that worked the rivers on Tuesday, reported double-digit success for driftboaters above Klootchie Creek. Small clusters of eggs produced life changing action for the few that were there to experience it. Historically, by this week, anglers largely see an absence of fish as they are busy spawning in tributaries to the systems for which they return.

North Fork Nehalem fishermen experienced somewhat similar results. Bank anglers working the river close to the hatchery witnessed fair to good success early in the week but now that river levels have dropped, success is largely coming from the disabled ramp. Rafters fishing downstream of the hatchery also reported double-digit days but action was a little bit better earlier in the season. Numerous limits were reported off of the disabled ramp on Wednesday. Hatchery workers are recycling fish back downstream as well as to Sunset Lake.

Larger systems just came online Wednesday. The Trask, Wilson and Nestucca Rivers are all now good options. Early reports indicate challenging fishing with one guide reporting just 2 wild steelhead doing an upper Trask float. Pro guide **Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** did an afternoon float on the Wilson on Wednesday. Traffic was horrific in his words. For a middle of the week fishery, over-stuffed parking lots and 4 to 5 anchored boats in each productive drift obviously limited success for anglers. Driftboaters are certainly excited about this year's prospects. Chris reported poor results for his ½ day float with very few success stories from most of the other anglers. Intense pressure might have had something to do with it as these rivers should have seen good results this week, especially given the early season success we've had already.

Anglers targeting steelhead on the Nestucca reported crowds weren't quite as bad but success rates were somewhat similar; a bit disappointing given the results we've already seen this season. The Three Rivers run is still an option for early returning fish but anglers should start to see more broodstock fish appear on the mainstem Nestucca. As the flows drop, effort will increase in the lower reaches downstream of 1st Bridge. It's still early on these seasons.

Finally, for the north coast district, the largely overlooked Kilchis River offered good results early in the week although very few hatchery fish remain in this system. Dropping flows will also make the lower reaches the most productive ones but better wild steelhead action should come in February and early March.

The Nehalem is still out but may become an option by the weekend. It's always the last to clear, given the size of the encompassing watershed.

No offshore effort and no catch and release sturgeon effort either out of the Tillamook district.

The Guide's Forecast – After the weekend rain freshet, all north coast rivers are recovering and fishing right now. It's still early but as we've mentioned before, it looks to be a banner season! Here's the river by river breakdown, keeping in mind that we're entering the 'tweener season as early season fish head to tributaries to spawn and late returning wild and broodstock fish are about to enter.

Highway 30 streams (Klaskanine, Big Creek, Gnat Creek)- These systems only get small runs of steelhead but like other systems this season, numbers are up. These are great systems for bank anglers and it has been a good year. Also like other systems, the run is waning and fresh fish will be hard to find. Spawners should be plentiful however, especially after the weekend.

Necanicum River- What a great run this river has had this season. After this last batch of quality steelhead that hit the river, this system should be getting too low to safely navigate a boat downstream. It will be a bank angler show well through the weekend now. You'll want to dumb down your offerings as the flows drop.

North Fork Nehalem – It's definitely past the peak of the season but action for fresh and spent fish should remain fair through the weekend. The hatchery will remain the best bet, especially in the early morning hours for motivated anglers. Anglers working the disabled ramp will score the best results and spawned out fish will begin to make up the bulk of the catch. It's been a good season here.

Mainstem Nehalem – This system may begin to fish effectively by the weekend. It will remain colored up through the weekend but if you fish near tributary mouths such as the Salmonberry or Clear Creek, some fish should be available. If the rivers remain on the trajectory they currently are, action should pick up by early next week. It's an all wild show here so be prepared for catch and release only but good numbers should be present.

Kilchis River- Too low to float by the weekend but there should be some wild fish available and a few hatchery run-backs too. The best action will remain in the lower reaches where fresher, tidal fish should be present.

Wilson River – It'll be a mad-house here by the weekend with good color and flow expected to produce fair results. You'll have to work hard for results with all the competition here but fresh broodstock fish should be available throughout the system. The most motivated anglers will put in at Donaldson's gravel bar and work the lower reaches for fresh, tidal run fish over the weekend. It wouldn't hurt to put in later in the day and work the water more thoroughly than the boat racers that launch first thing. You'll have to be innovative to out-compete your fellow steelheaders.

Trask River – This system is primarily comprised of a wild run and therefore, comes back a bit later than the typical hatchery fish in the district. Given the size of the run expected this season, more fish should begin to show in the coming weeks and effort will be drastically different here than on other systems. Action should start to pick up here by mid-February.

Three Rivers/Nestucca system – Three Rivers is about done for the year but effort will remain intense near the hatchery, especially given good returns this year. Broodstock fish are starting to show in decent numbers on the mainstem and anglers should see a decent showing by the weekend. The action will certainly pick up better by mid-February however.

The ocean is a poor option this weekend. Big seas! Big tides won't do much for the crabbing effort either, in the ocean or estuaries.

Central & South Coast Reports – This time of year, many anglers think of fishing rocks and jetties or boating nearshore for ling cod. While that logic is solid as these fish are moving shallower to spawn, charter boats out of Newport and Depoe Bay have been scoring well fishing deep water for lings.

We mentioned last week that the proposed rule to allow only a single blue rockfish in a seven-fish bag limit in 2015 became three by the time the bureaucratic dust had cleared. We mention it here by way of a reminder. In the future, however, look for further restrictions on the number of blue rockfish allowed in order that stocks may rebuild. Some are recommending that offshore anglers release all blue rockfish now to avoid further restrictions, even the possibility, albeit remote, of a total closure.

While China, copper, yelloweye and quillback rockfish are illegal to keep, expect to see one canary rockfish allowed as part of a limit starting in March of this year. We'll share the date with readers as soon as it is announced.

Speaking of limits, who knew that offshore anglers out of Oregon ports were allowed 25 Opah per day? For a colorful (and printable) chart of ocean limits, see **Random Links**, below.

Reports for winter steelhead catches have been good from the mainstem and South Umpqua with steelhead running large. One report was of a 48-inch steelhead from the mainstem but that report was not accompanied by a photograph. Pulling plugs has been most effective this week.

Crabbing has been improving at Coos Bay this week with Dungeness hard and full of meat. Rockfishing slowed following the last spate of rain but has also been picking up over the past few days. Winter steelhead has been decent on the Coos River with best results coming from the West Fork Millicoma although prospects are improving on South Fork Coos and East Fork Millicoma.

Anglers say so, professional guides believe it and ODFW fisheries biologists defend it: An early winter steelhead run on the Rogue River is an indicator of a strong run to come. That being the case, 2015 should be an absolutely outstanding winter steelhead season as the first fish showed at Cole Rivers hatchery on December 30th, the earliest in the 41-year history of the facility. So early in fact, the computer had to be re-programmed according to David Pease, hatchery manager, as there was no allowance for winter steelhead coming in December. Catches on the river so far this season seem to indicate a good run, indeed. Bank and boat anglers have been taking good numbers of fresh winter steelhead on the lower Rogue this week. Drift rigs and plugs have been drawing strikes. Flows on the middle Rogue was about 3,000 cfs at mid-day today, January 22nd with the forecast indication a gradual drop through the weekend and into the week to come. Plugs have been effective this week and catches have remained consistent. With most winters in this stretch returning to the hatchery on the Applegate River, best results have been coming from the stretch downstream from the mouth of that tributary. Winter steelhead numbers are building on the upper Rogue and while it's still early, anglers are targeting them, landing a few here and there.

Boats out of the Port of Brookings have been blessed with excellent bottom fishing this January. Consistent limits of ling cod have often been comprised of larger fish which are nearshore as the spawn approaches. Lings have not been selective, either, as they are devouring every bait or lure thrown at them. Steelheading has been good as the Chetco has been recovering from rain storms earlier this week but level and flow will drop and water visibility will clear to combine for challenging conditions in the next few days. At this writing on Thursday, January 22nd, the Chetco is just below 3,000 cfs at Brookings and fishing well. The problems will come when the level drops below 1,000 cfs on Sunday as predicted.

Rain over the past weekend put some water and fresh steelhead into the Elk and Sixes rivers with reports of hatchery fish being taken on the Sixes. Winters are scattered now as water levels drop and clear.

The frozen surface at Diamond Lake is still too thin to allow for ice fishing. If the ice doesn't firm up soon, the season could be a wash this year.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Results for reddsides on the lower Deschutes has been fair to good recently while fishing for summer steelhead has been dismal. Why not concentrate efforts where there's likely to be some action, then? Trout are responding to Blue-Winged Olive and Caddis patterns with an October Caddis Pupa a good bet for larger fish.

Early trollers have continued to try for kokanee at Green Peter with very few kokes to show for their efforts.

Crescent Lake has continued to produce large lake trout for deep trollers who love fishing this way in the wintertime.

Write to the TGF staff:

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Random Links

Ocean fishes - What can I keep and how many?:

http://www.dfw.state.or.us/mrp/regulations/sport_fishing/docs/what_can_i_keep_how_many_02092015.pdf

2015 SALTWATER SPORTSMEN'S SHOW Feb. 28th & March 1st:

<http://www.saltwatersportsmensshow.com/>

Understanding water conditions for winter steelhead:

<http://www.csnw.com/outdoors/understanding-water-conditions-winter-steelhead>

GOOD LUCK!