

[The Guide's Forecast - volume 17 issue number 9](#)

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **February 27<sup>th</sup> – March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2015**

### **Oregon Fisheries Update:**

**Willamette Valley/Metro** – Reports of an occasional springer is coming from the mainstem Columbia although high effort is yielding mediocre results, as is to be expected. Plunkers and boaters are coming out in fair numbers but despite good water conditions for catching (or at least “good” relative to previous years for this time of year), catches are not that impressive. Steelhead remain an option for lower Columbia beaches too.

Lower Willamette spring Chinook trollers are taking fish occasionally at various locations. Catch-and-release sturgeon fishing is good.

While the McKenzie has been stable for several days, it is expected to rise with rain this week. Trout fishing is spotty.

A few wild winter steelhead are providing some catch-and-release action on the North Santiam but catches will improve in months to come.

**Northwest** – Despite low water conditions, action for steelhead on the north coast remains fair to good. Effort drops off in the less than ideal conditions when flows drop but fish still move into the river systems and will fall to savvy anglers. The Wilson and Nestucca remain primary targets but wild fish are present in every north coast stream.

Smaller streams will remain too low for boating through the upcoming weekend. Despite the recent, albeit light precipitation, river levels won't be on the rise anytime soon. This will continue to favor bank anglers as it's much easier to traverse the smaller reaches in low flows.

Saltwater anglers had some great opportunity on calm seas over the weekend and early this week. Black sea bass and some lingcod fell quite easily for those fishing over productive reefs. Crabbing remains challenging in the bays and the ocean.

**Central & South Coast Reports** - There has been frost on the docks some mornings this week at Depoe Bay, but mostly clear weather has provided comfortable offshore experiences for boats launching this week. The ocean has been producing ling cod limits.

**Central & Eastern** - Trout anglers on the lower Deschutes can sometimes do alright with reddsides over the winter months.

According to **Steve Fleming of Mah-Haw Outfitters (971-533-5733)**, one client caught several smallmouth bass to 19 inches as well as three steelhead this week on the John Day River.

Area beaches along the south coast have been producing pinkfin surf perch this week.

For those looking to book a charter or accommodations, the 2015 spring all-depth halibut dates will be May 14-16, May 28-30, June 11-13 and June 25-27. The nearshore halibut fishery starts July 1st, seven days a week inside the 40-fathom line through the earlier of the quota filling or Oct. 31st.

According to **Robert Campbell at Fisherman's Marine in Oregon City (503-557-5600)**, Tenmile Lake is heating up for largemouth bass with warmer weather this week.

Winchester Bay crabbers have enjoyed an improvement in results with the bay clearing and the salinity level returning to normal. Umpqua mainstem steelhead had it good last week, not so good recently as the water dropped and cleared.

With the Rogue flowing low and clear on the lower, middle and upper sections, catches of winter steelhead have slowed.

While Diamond Lake is clear of ice, the water remains cold. This has made for a light bite.

**SW Washington-** Effort remains light for those in pursuit of steelhead. The Cowlitz remains the best prospect with the weekend check being 8 boat anglers kept 4 steelhead. The fish were sampled from the trout hatchery area.

The Kalama and Lewis systems should have some fish available and you're not likely to come across much competition if you choose to pursue steelhead in this system. Anglers need to be prepared for catch and release fishing however.

**Columbia River Fishing Report** – Anglers are becoming more anxious for fresh spring chinook options on the mainstem Columbia. Plunkers will begin to grow in number with boaters soon to follow. There already is some consistent effort around Kalama but what few fish are being caught are likely steelhead. As we enter March, especially given the mild weather and low flows, anglers will likely start to show up in force especially with a fairly sizable predicted return.

Tides aren't conducive to great fishing but the bigger factor remains, it's still early in the season. Anglers that fish should consider spin-n-glos in the hot colors simply because you're more likely to intercept a steelhead than a salmon and steelies are more receptive to the hotter colors.

Bank anglers will continue to focus on Prescott and Rainier area beaches, downstream of the entrance to Multnomah Channel where the bulk of the Willamette run is likely to enter.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Anglers will likely remain excited about early spring chinook prospects but expectations should remain low given the fact we are still early in the run. Bank anglers should put in their best effort downstream of Sauvies Island, downstream of the mouth of the Willamette, where they will have the best access to springers destined for the Willamette River, which make up the bulk of the catch this time of year.

Consistently scented spin-n-glos worked along the shores edges will be responsible for the bulk of the catch this week. Motivated boaters should stick to the Kalama area but again, springers this early are a gift, not a given.

March is often when there is a nice push of wild steelhead on the mainstem Columbia. Be prepared to release some quality wild fish if it happens to come your way. Anchor fishers most often use plugs (flatfish, Kwikfish) but herring worked off the back of the boat in stronger flows has proven itself a viable offering in the early part of the season. One angler reported a springer from the mainstem this week with a belly full of decomposing smelt.

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report** – Waters of the lower Willamette will experience little change from the rainfall that will effect smaller rivers and streams of the next couple of

days. There may be some roiling, however, from muddy water washing downriver. If this occurs, think sturgeon rather than springers. Precipitation over today and tomorrow is likely to effect the McKenzie which has been stable at the same level and flow for the last several days. There are trout available but winter steelhead do not enter in large number as they do other Willamette tributaries.

North Santiam level and flow have been steadily dropping over the past 10 days. There can be a decent catch-and-release fishery for native winter steelhead when there's a decent run on the Willamette and a few have been hooked this week.

Following a complete draining over last summer for weed removal and work could be done on the levee, it has been refilled and is once again open. Having been stocked several times over the past couple of weeks, it will be stocked again this week with 500 legal and 400 larger size rainbow trout. Don't forget your wildlife area parking permit.

The official re-opening of Henry Hagg Lake in Scoggin Valley is March 7th although I found this note to visitors on the Washington County website: *"Although the park remains open during the winter months, limited services are available at Henry Hagg Lake and boating during the winter months is at your own risk."*

**The Guide's Forecast** – sturgeon fishery continues to provide some steady action in the Willamette River, with Portland Harbor, the St. Johns area and Milwaukie producing fish but the head of Multnomah Channel is well worth dropping a bait. "Speaking of which, smelt have been getting bit but herring and sand shrimp are also getting some action." **Robert Campbell at Fisherman's Marine in Oregon City (503-557-5600)**. "Bank anglers are getting fish too. Springers are being landed there, not a ton of them, but they're getting one almost every day. On the trolling side, **Eric Baird with Pla-N Hooky guide service** has taken five springers this week on prawn spinners which seem to be working well in the warmer water. This is the leading edge of the run with plenty to come." Following rainfall this week, the lower Willamette may turn a little muddy. Don't dismay 'cause it's almost March and that means springers. Look for catches to pick up over the next few weeks. As it is, spring Chinook are being caught occasionally at Sellwood, Milwaukie and Oregon City. Most boats are trolling plug-cut herring on a tight spin.

McKenzie River fly fishers have spotted some decent hatches periodically, mostly occurring right in the middle of the day although action has been slow. During drizzle, it's most likely Blue Winged Olives. Otherwise, look for Caddis hatches and March Browns. Expect to see some changes in structure and watch out for logs in the water.

Winter steelhead fishing has shown some improvement on the North Fork Santiam although it is forecast to take a solid het from rainfall over the next couple of days, increasing over a foot in depth and from about 1,700 cfs at Mehama to over 3,400 cfs. Once the level and flow moderate and the color improves, there is certain to be a better population of wild winter steelhead with which to play. If you do so, consider lures only as bait as deep hooking from bait rigs can often be fatal to these fish which should be returned unharmed to propagate the species. South Santiam flows are predicted to experience only a slight impact from precipitation.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports** – While many would describe the Clackamas is low and clear, the ODFW quipped that it is at "early summer flows." Yeah, you could say that. The steelhead which entered on the last freshet are now well distributed. Those who enjoy fishing low water are usually the ones who actually catch some fish in these conditions. There have been a few dandy wild winters landed this week on spinners early and later in the day.

The Sandy River was clear on Wednesday this week but the level was quite fishable. It has started to rise despite only light showers so far this week.

**The Guide's Forecast** – While rain showers this week have had little effect so far on the level and flow of the Clackamas, it is forecast to spike starting today, February 26th, and continue rising through Friday. As it drops and clears, prospects should be better than ever. "One boat hooked 15! Of course he didn't land them all." said **Robert Campbell at Fisherman's Marine in Oregon City (503-557-5600)**. "There have also been at least two spring Chinook landed on the Clack. That's to be expected when the lower Willamette is warm. They swim into the Clackamas seeking cooler water."

"Fish have been piling into the Sandy (and Clackamas) lately despite low water," Reported **Robert**. Good spots to try include Cedar Creek below the Sandy hatchery and the Oxbow to Dabney drift remains a good bet by drift boat. Most fish are showing some color now with only the occasional steelhead a bright one. **Reminder:** The Sandy River will open for smelt dipping on Saturday, March 7th and Sunday, March 15th from 6 a.m. until noon. This is bank only fishing and restricted to dip nets. The bag limit is 10 pounds per person and you do not need a license to harvest smelt. With the WDFW closing smelt for the year, the Cowlitz won't be available again. This may be your last and only chance this year!

**North Coast Fishing Report** – Despite low flows, we are in peak season for north coast steelhead. Persistent low flows is keeping action far from explosive but persistent driftboaters are yielding consistent catches on a fairly daily basis. **Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** reported on back to back days on the Nestucca River this week. Chris fished Wednesday and Thursday, having a 5 for 8 fish day on Wednesday with 1 down-streamer, 1 hatchery broodstock fish and 3 natives. Chris seemed to be one of the better producers for the day as other guide boats reported around 2 fish each for the day's effort. Low flows has deterred the masses but pressure remains consistent on the hatchery option systems. The following day, Thursday, Chris reported going 2 for 3 with one of those fish being a nice wild one for release. He was floating the lower reaches of the Nestucca to achieve this success.

The other popular system of course is the Wilson. Not only because of its hatchery broodstock option, but because it's still a big river system, where you can still catch fish in low flows. Effort remained relatively light here this week as well with anglers focusing downstream of Sollie Smith Bridge, most likely to yield the best results.

Those sticking with the side-drifting theme are producing best bobber-dogging single beads. The more savvy anglers are waiting for the side-drifters to work the water before coming behind them, working plugs, taking advantage of territorial instincts that are going un-checked by sidedrifters. Plugs are well known for their effectiveness in lower flows. The Wilson above Mills Bridge is not a good idea when the Wilson River level drops below 4.7 foot.

The Trask River remains the sleeper with most people focused on hatchery options. There are some hatchery strays on the Trask but it's largely a wild fish option with few people exercising those fish on this system. Like elsewhere, these wild fish are relatively aggressive when a plug comes waddling down their territory. Like the Wilson, the upper reaches are not an option during these lower flow periods.

The remaining big river option is the Nehalem. It has been in ideal shape for the last week. Reports indicate a decent run here this year but the magnitude of the river itself, lends itself to limited success rates itself. Steelhead should be well distributed on this system with fresh tidal fish coming in the lower reaches.

Smaller systems such as the Kilchis, Three Rivers, and North Fork Nehalem are really done. Mostly spawned out fish can be found here with fresh wild ones congregating in the deeper holes of the lower reaches. The tidewater stretches of these systems can produce good results this time of year.

Calm seas prevailed for a good portion of the week, allowing saltwater anglers great offshore opportunities. Sea bass and some lingcod were readily available at Three Arch Rocks off of Oceanside for those launching out of Garibaldi. For most, travel time took longer than limit time as sea bass were especially snappy on red and yellow feather jigs. Stevie Parsons, SUPER volunteer at the Association of NW Steelheaders, took back to back quintuple sea bass stringers (see our home page) in calm seas on Monday. Iron jigs were working well also but why catch one at a time when you can catch 5? Lingcod catches were fairly rare with offshore reefs likely a better producer.

Sport success on ocean crab remained dismal although commercial gear remains prevalent on big blue. Commercially caught live crab is currently being sold at \$11.50/pound out of Garibaldi. Estuary crabbing is also somewhat futile.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Steelheaders will see much the same for river conditions, based on Thursday afternoon's forecast. Weekend river levels are expected to level out but not come up in any significant manner. That will make the lower reaches of north coast systems the sections anglers will want to target this weekend. Here's our river-by-river breakdown for north coast systems.

Necanicum River – Look to the head of tidewater for pooled up pockets of wild steelhead. The upper reaches should still have spawned out boots around but there should be some fresh fish in the tidal reaches if you're into catch and release fishing.

Mainstem Nehalem – This system fishes ideal when other north coast options are low and clear. You won't ever likely post big numbers of fish on this system because the fish have so much room to scatter from your offerings but bobbers and jigs or small drifted baits in the deeper pockets should yield catches. It's a bit early for the Vernonia stretch but the Beaver Slide to Roy Creek could be a fair option over the weekend.

Kilchis River– Too low and clear but small boat pluggers may find some biters below the Logger Bridge. No hatchery fish left to speak of.

Wilson River – This system will remain a prime target for most steelheaders although the masses will wait until the next significant rain. This doesn't mean you can't yard fish out of these low flows, you just have to be savvy in order to be successful. Like most systems in the district, the lower reaches will have the freshest fish, the most aggressive biters. Most steelheaders have taken to sidedrifting or bobber-dogging but don't overlook pulling plugs in conditions like these. The season is just getting started on these late-run fish.

Trask River – This should continue to get overlooked by many steelheaders so if you want a more serene experience, this will be your river system (or the Nehalem as well). The Loren's Drift to Highway 101 will prove the best float and again, these wild fish get quite excited over territorial invaders to consider plugs when fishing this system.

Nestucca system – Since this system is a little more out of the way, you'd think fewer metro anglers might be fishing it. Well, not really. Although it's not plugged with boats, there is a fair amount of traffic here as catches remain steady. It looks as if wild fish are slightly outnumbering hatchery fish for now but bobber-doggers and plug pullers are consistently taking fish out of the system. Like the Wilson, the season is just getting started here so get your practice in now.

More calm seas ahead for bottomfishers but maybe for only 1 day, Sunday. The fish are quite hungry out there but always beware that weather conditions are constantly in motion and the forecast is never dead on. Here is the forecast in case you're considering an offshore foray, crabbing, both inside and out, will remain challenging:

**FRI**

NW WIND 10 TO 15 KT...BECOMING N 5 TO 10 KT IN THE AFTERNOON. WIND WAVES 3 FT. W SWELL 8 FT AT 11 SECONDS. SHOWERS WITH SMALL HAIL AND A SLIGHT CHANCE OF TSTMS.

**FRI NIGHT**

N WIND 10 KT...VEERING TO NE AFTER MIDNIGHT. GUSTS TO 15 KT. WIND WAVES 2 FT. W SWELL 8 FT AT 9 SECONDS. CHANCE OF SHOWERS AND A SLIGHT CHANCE OF TSTMS.

**SAT**

NE WIND 10 TO 15 KT WITH GUSTS TO 20 KT. WIND WAVES 3 FT. W SWELL 6 FT AT 10 SECONDS.

**SAT NIGHT**

NE WIND 10 TO 15 KT...EASING TO 5 TO 10 KT AFTER MIDNIGHT. GUSTS TO 20 KT. WIND WAVES 4 FT... SUBSIDING TO 2 FT AFTER MIDNIGHT. NW SWELL 5 FT AT 9 SECONDS.

**SUN**

NE WIND 5 TO 10 KT...BECOMING N IN THE AFTERNOON. WIND WAVES 2 FT. NW SWELL 4 FT.

**SUN NIGHT**

NW WIND 5 TO 10 KT. GUSTS TO 15 KT IN THE EVENING. WIND WAVES 2 FT. NW SWELL 3 FT.

**MON**

NW WIND 10 TO 15 KT. WIND WAVES 4 FT. NW SWELL 6 FT.

**TUE**

NE WIND 10 TO 15 KT. WIND WAVES 4 FT. NW SWELL 7 FT.

**Central & South Coast Reports** - There has been frost on the docks some mornings this week at Depoe Bay, but mostly clear weather has provided comfortable offshore experiences for boats launching this week. The ocean has been producing reliable ling cod limits and decent numbers of rockfish. Ocean crabbing has been slow. The limit for rockfish is seven per day, only three of which may be blue rockfish. Cabezon are off-limits until July 1st. The ODFW assures us that sometime in March a rockfish bag limit will be allowed to contain one canary rockfish. The holdup is that the Feds must pass the ruling as well.

Gold Beach and Brookings area beaches have been producing pinkfin surf perch this week. While most catches are short of 15-fish limits, many of these have been three pounds or better. A local favorite is the two-inch Berkley Gulp! Sandworms in Camo or Blood Red.

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A meeting held by the Ocean Salmon Industry Group is taking place in Newport today, February 26, at the Hallmark Resort. In the course of this gathering, the 2015 ocean salmon abundance forecast will be revealed and with it, information for south coast salmon anglers as to what they might expect from this

years' offshore runs. While the announcement will affect all ocean salmon trollers, this is of particular interest to salmon fishers on the Brookings area who often fish for salmonids destined for the Klamath and Sacramento rivers. This information will appear following the meeting at [\\*pcouncil.org](http://*pcouncil.org), the PFMC website.

The Siletz River is low and clear. As a matter of fact, at less the four feet at Siletz as it is now, it's considered too low to drift safely in many places.

The new cleaning station at the Port Launch in Florence has been completed. Crabbing in Siuslaw tidewater has been slow with lots of undersized Dungeness.

**According to Robert Campbell at Fisherman's Marine in Oregon City (503-557-5600)**, Tenmile Lake is heating up for largemouth bass with warmer weather this week. "One fella caught six one day and eight the next; nice ones, too!"

Winchester Bay crabbers have enjoyed an improvement in results with the bay clearing and the salinity level returning to normal but it is still only fair. South jetty fishers have been picking up some rockfish. Umpqua mainstem steelhead had it good last week, not so good recently as the water dropped and cleared. Steelheaders on the South Umpqua were getting a few hatchery keepers according to a report on Monday this week but the river is getting pretty low to fish well.

Crabbing has improved at Coos Bay although most traps and nets are bringing in a lot of red rock crab. Slack tide has been most productive for rockfish and ling cod fishing along the jetties. As is the case for most southwest rivers, the Coos system is low, clear and slow for winter steelhead.

With the lower Rogue flowing at a mere 3,800 cfs at Agness, catches of winter steelhead have slowed. There are still no reports of any spring Chinook hooked here. A similar situation exists on the middle river which as of today is flowing at a paltry 1,900 cfs. Those willing to fish first light are catching winters occasionally on small baits or lures. Waters of the upper Rogue are at bare minimum winter levels which makes steelheading in this stretch a long shot at best.

Offshore anglers launching from Brookings Harbor have been taking mostly limits of rockfish and ling cod. Head either north or south once across the bar. It's been good either way. The Chetco is low and clear now but stealthy, early morning steelheaders have continued to catch winters. Sand shrimp, a popular bait here, drifted under a bobber has accounted for a number of hookups.

The light sprinkling of rain in the area of the Elk and Sixes has done nothing to alleviate low, clear water conditions but more precipitation is forecast for later today and on Friday.

While Diamond Lake is clear of ice, the water remains cold. This has made for a light bite with smaller dabs of Power Bait most effective.

**Central & Eastern** - Trout anglers on the lower Deschutes can sometimes do alright with redsides over the winter months. Try around Maupin with mid-day holding the best chance for a hookup. This time of year, the most action will generally occur late morning through early afternoon.

Crooked River is at good level and flow this week. Trout fishing has been fair to good with dries getting some attention but a scud under an indicator has been more reliable. Mid-day fishing has been best for trout to 15 inches or better and large whitefish.

According to **Steve Fleming of Mah-Haw Outfitters (971-533-5733)**, one client caught several smallmouth bass to 19 inches as well as three steelhead this week on the John Day River. The biggest smallmouth are historically landed here in April.

The Metolius arm of Lake Billy Chinook will open on March 1st. There are opportunities for both rainbow and brown trout here. To fish here, in addition to a state-issued fishing license, a permit from the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs is required.

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**Random Links**

Trolling Herring for Springers

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntnvw9AW3dE>

2015 NW Fly Tyer & Fly Fishing Expo

<http://nwexpo.com/>

2016 ODFW art competitions

<http://www.dfw.state.or.us/news/2015/february/022415.asp>

NFR\* - 2015 Land of Umpqua Photo Contest Winners

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/umpqua/news-events/?cid=STELPRD3830492>

World Record Catfish?

<http://www.grindtv.com/outdoor/outposts/post/italian-catches-huge-wels-catfish-record/>

\*Not fishing related

**GOOD LUCK!**