

The Guide's Forecast - volume 6 issue number 29

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **January 21<sup>st</sup> – January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2005**

**Fisheries Update:** Whether you are driftfishing, bobberfishing or wondering which river on the North Coast to fish, our series of technical reports will up your odds of a successful fishing trip. All you have to do is log on and pick which ones will help you catch more fish! These reports and several more are available at: <http://www.theguidesforecast.com/techrpt.shtml>.

It has been the fundamental philosophy at The Guide's Forecast to report the fishing accurately. We don't 'spin' the facts into more or less than what they really are, and this week following the floods, there's not a lot of good news.

Sturgeon fishing is really slow with the recent inclement weather. The even more recent warming trend may stimulate smelt and a sturgeon bite in the middle river however so stay tuned.

Crabbing has turned OFF in the lower river. Competition with commercial gear is likely a major factor.

Tillamook streams were still not very productive prior to the flooding event but the recent rain freshet could put a whole new look on things- even prior to the weekend. Most don't anticipate great hatchery results this weekend but a nice mix of wild and broodstock fish could be present on some of your more popular rivers.

South coast rivers, while hit with rain and suffering from high water, offer some of the better prospects. Steelheading should be OK this weekend and is expected to pick up on the Umpqua and Rogue as these rivers drop. The winter steelhead season is winding down on the Siuslaw.

Tillamook Bay sturgeon fishing was not bad prior to the rain and the recent flood shouldn't hurt this fishery either. Shrimp (both mud and sand) will remain the best bait for winter sturgeon. The Nehalem bite may get started as well. Crabbing will slow in the north coast estuaries.

The Clackamas is recovering, dropping with improving color, but the fish are nowhere to be found. Sandy anglers report that it's still muddy. Eagle Creek has good color but seems relatively fish-free.

Trout have been planted this week in Olalla Creek Reservoir and Big Creek Reservoirs numbers 1 and 2.

Note to boat owners: Some insurance companies are now offering discounts to owners holding an Oregon Boater Safety Card. It's worth your time (and money) to make an inquiry with your agent.

**Soapbox Update:**                    **HELP US HELP YOU!!**

Be sure to catch us at the 2005 Portland Sportsman show. The dates for this year's show is February 9<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> and we will be in **booth #317** with plenty of fishing supplies and information. I will also be giving the 2005 run forecast information in the Blue Theater on Feb. 10<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m., the 11<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m., and at noon on the 12<sup>th</sup>. I have some exciting news about our upcoming sportfisheries and will give you insight you won't find anywhere else. After the presentation, feel free to stop by the booth for any other questions you may have.

**Columbia River Fishing Report** – Pretty simple reporting this week on the Columbia River. Sturgeon fishing....sucks. Crabbing.....sucks. Spring Chinook.....not yet. How's that? But really, this may be the first time that a legal sturgeon was not recorded as kept catch by ODF&W in the entire Columbia River. Of course it is likely that someone did catch a keeper this week but both effort and success was critically low this week on the Columbia. Very bad weather kept most people home- thankfully. But cold weather and water conditions would have hampered the success on the lower river anyway. And then came the pineapple express....but more on that

in the forecast.

We soaked crab pots on Thursday evening just out of Hammond hoping for a last minute opportunity for a fresh catch. The commercial crabbers had already started to soak their pots and were scheduled to pick about 12 hours after we picked ours. For 6 pots, we had a whopping 1 crab (it was a keeper) to show for it. The north wind had kicked up Thursday night making the river down-right dangerous, not to mention very frigid. Extreme tides and commercial competition certainly took its toll but we expected much better results. It's time to write this fishery off for the year. The commercial pressure will only intensify as foul weather will keep many crabbers at port.

It's too early for springers on the Columbia- not to mention too cold!

**The Guide's Forecast** – The only good news coming from this part of the state is that the warm blast could stimulate the smelt migration on the lower Columbia. Biologists are not sure what to expect and thus are managing for only a fair run. As the water begins to subside and the temperature begins to creep upwards, we could find a decent pilot run of smelt in the lower Columbia. This will give commercial smelt netters an opportunity to sell some quality bait and may stimulate some good sturgeon action in the middle river. The run into the Cowlitz should not really get going for several more weeks but if this pilot run does materialize, some fish could certainly make it into the Cowlitz so pay attention to reports.

Don't go crabbing or springer fishing. Your time is better spent preparing for the upcoming runs!

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report** – The Willamette River flow at the Falls as of January 18th, the latest data available, is 12,200, about a quarter of the mid-December volume. The water temperature is up to 38 from a reading of 32 earlier this week. I guess it had to get warmer since it just couldn't get any colder. Steelhead counts have been mostly single-digits over the last ten days or so.

Sturgeon fishing won't suffer from the high water nor will there be any negative repercussions from meteorological effects on water temperatures whether it increases or decreases. It was so bad prior that any negative effect will be imperceptible; an improvement will occur eventually and certainly with improved water temperatures.

**The Guide's Forecast** – The only hope for action on the lower Willamette is plunking in the Meldrum Bar area which might offer a modicum of action. We can only hope for better conditions with another week of improving water temperatures.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports** – The increase in flow can only serve to improve fishing on the Clackamas where steelheaders, anxious for action, have been plying the waters for weeks. Results have been mixed and often frustrating. That's fishing, though, and at its worst is universally agreed to be better than working.

The Sandy was swollen and muddy mid-week. **Pro guide Trevor Storlie** adds this, "The Sandy fished well for most anglers before the high water hit. The fish seemed to be held up in the faster water. Bobber and Jigs were the hot ticket on this day, however we did have several days when we caught fish on small baits, mainly eggs. As of today, the Sandy is still very high and off color. With the freezing level coming down the water will drop much quicker than it has been in the last 48 hours. When the water's high fish high. Last weeks fish will move up and it will be a few days before the mid river will really start to kick in again. Plunkers in the lower river will be a good indicator of what will be coming in the next couple of weeks. With this higher water I would go back to plugs and bait to stop those chromers in there tracks."

Trevor sent this picture from the above-mentioned pre-flood trip.



**The Guide's Forecast** – The Clackamas is settling down and clearing up according to spies on the river today, January 20th. The fishing is reported as dead slow. There's no reason to anticipate a dramatic improvement for the weekend, but fishing may improve next week if the weather has a warming effect on the water.

Eagle creek has cleared and is in fine shape, but reports indicate steelhead are not present. The Sandy will require a few more days of decent weather to clear sufficiently for good fishing. In the meantime, plunkers should be able to intercept a metalhead or two this weekend as the broodstock run has started. Steelheaders can expect steady improvement into February when the run peaks.

**North Coast District Fishing Report** – From one extreme to the other, the north coast just got pummeled with wind and rain causing the uncharacteristically low river levels to swell to flood stage. Many north coast rivers reached flood stage on Friday but are rapidly receding and getting primed for the best freshet of the winter steelhead season. The big question is, will they be there? More on this in the forecast.

Here's a picture taken by Marie Will of Tillamook Bait (1-800-317-6885) of the Wilson River in the parking lot on the morning of Tuesday, January 18th. Normally, the river is behind the shop rather than in front of it. She added that the river dropped rapidly during the day. It continues to do so and is forecast to drop below 4.5 this weekend.



Prior to the abundance of rain, the action was far from fantastic although there were a few fish around. The Wilson and Nestucca were both producing some results but far from impressive. **Pro guide Jesse Zalonis (503-392-5808)** reports, "The Nestucca remains very slow, as most of the north coast streams are. The water is in good shape, perhaps just a tad clear. Hopefully this good soaking rain we are currently getting will shove in a bunch of new chromers. For now, work the lower river hard with small baits, and you might get bit."

If it wasn't the cold weather and poor fishing that kept anglers from fishing late last week, the rains started in on Friday intensifying by late over the weekend. The Wilson River was producing a few fish for those employing low water techniques. Many anglers found un-crowded conditions but that didn't seem to help their success rates. The real tale will be told when flows subside and whatever hatchery fish are coming, will be around.

On the sturgeon side of things, there are a few of those around and avid angler **Rich Riley** hit the water with some of his friends to find some decent keepers. Rich hit the upper Tillamook Bay on Sunday, January 16<sup>th</sup>. They had found a place that was producing fairly consistently and came up with a total of 5 sturgeon of which 2 were keepers in the 43 and 44 inch range. Rich noted there weren't many other boats fishing and the boats that were present didn't seem to be too occupied reeling fish in. The Bay City side of the bay has not been producing good results and much of the effort has been in the south channel.

With the low freshwater influx prior to the big storm, crabbing in the bay has been fair. Ocean crabbing has been great as a large amount of activity is noted on the ocean at night.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Certainly, this rain freshet will give the north coast steelhead fishery a much needed jump start. However, I predict that although fair numbers of hatchery fish may show themselves this weekend, wild and broodstock fish will make up the bulk of the catch. From hatchery numbers realized this season already, it is clear that the Alsea stock of fish are not coming back in any great numbers. Although it is a bit early for great returns of wild fish, there should be a fair showing on many of the larger north coast streams.

Reports of fish coming from the Necanicum prior to the high water were likely true. After this rain, the Necanicum should fish really well. It will be the first river along with the North Fork of the Nehalem to produce good numbers of steelhead. These two rivers will likely be the highlight prior to the weekend. The Kilchis will be a close second but better numbers will likely always come from the previously mentioned. Keep in mind that you need a permit from the Johnson Construction Company if you plan on using their boat ramp just a few miles out of Seaside.

By the 21st the larger rivers like the Wilson, Trask and Nestucca should be fishing good. The rivers will

still be high so higher drifts like Siskeyville on the Wilson, Cedar Creek or bank fish the dam hole on the Trask and 5½ Bridge to 1<sup>st</sup> bridge on the Nestucca should be fishing the best. Remember, as a rule, higher drifts in higher water and lower drifts as the flows start to come down. Bait will be a better bet and the fish will be well scattered with all the options higher flows bring. This is the time to leave no water unmolested as all types will hold fish. As the flows begin to stabilize later into the weekend, pluggers may find more success fishing tail-outs (still high water) and slots in the 3 to 5 foot range. It is also a good idea to leave no water un-touched when pulling plugs and look for the calmer water on the rivers edge when flows are still high. There is one stretch on the lower Wilson that consistently produces for me in higher flows and it is literally just a few feet from the bank. This will be the last opportunity for quality Alsea strain steelhead on the North Coast before these fish go into spawning mode.

Sturgeon anglers may still have good opportunity in Tillamook Bay with the recent rain. The freshwater will drive many of the crab out of the estuary opening up some of the lower areas for bait plunkers. Stick to the south and middle channels however using mud or sand shrimp for best results. Late afternoon minus tides start on Saturday making for some good opportunity for those willing to wait out the tide.

Crabbing in the bay should taper off but good opportunity may still exist from crab harbor seaward. Desperate crabbers may look to the ocean if the seas are calm but I recommend waiting until more consistent weather comes about in the summer months.

**Central & South Coast Reports** – The week in fishing has been a remarkable contrast in extreme conditions. Frigid temps and freezing rain changed overnight to record highs and floods. It's been tough for anglers.

Fishing in Oregon is always effected by and often dependent upon the weather. With unsettled conditions predicted for the weekend, success with the fishes is a crapshoot.

Fortunately for south coast anglers, the steelheading which was pretty good prior to this upheaval in meteorological conditions, is expected to continue to entertain. Over the weekend, the NOAA indicates South coast rivers will be dropping. It follows that these tributaries will also clear which is the better news as turbidity is the primary problem now. Bait will take more fish than lures in these conditions.

The Siletz has yet to shine this season and it remains to be seen if the clipped fish will show as in years past or will disappoint as has been the case in some of the Northerly rivers.

Alsea steelheaders were finding brilliant metalheads available last weekend. Hopes are high for this one as conditions improve.

The Umpqua around Elkton has been productive with good numbers of fresh steelies moving through. Many anglers did well earlier this week on the South Fork Umpqua as well. The entire system should hold up well in the coming weeks.

The Siuslaw is on the tail end of a winter steelhead run which occurs earlier than most other South coast rivers. The last deluge probably drew a curtain on this one, but the coming week will tell. There are preferable locations for action.

**Avid angler Jerry Harding** sent this report, "A neighbor of mine called at 6:30 PM on Sunday evening and said a friend of his from Myrtle Point had called and everyone was catching Steelhead on the Coquille. So we packed up our gear and left La Pine at 4:30 AM Monday for the Coast. My neighbor knew a spot up the East Fork above Dora and we arrived about 10 O'clock. The water looked a little high ( we found out later that with the warm weather, the river had risen about a foot overnight ) but we decided to give it a try. After all, we had driven about 250 miles. We tried roe, rags, spin-n-glos, wiggle

warts, spinners and even, as a last resort, night crawlers. Nothing, nil, nada. The warm weather had done it's job. We packed it in about 4:30 and decided to head home. 500 miles, 10 HRS on the road and all we had to show for it was 6 nice crab given to us. But, it was a fun day and I would do it again, just for the chance to catch a

nice Steelhead. Going to try Lake Billy Chinook later in the week for some Kokanee and Bull Trout. Let you know how we do."

Rogue River levels increased from just over four feet to nearly 6.5 at Agness and continued to rise mid-week. Forecasts indicate receding levels into the weekend which makes for excellent steelhead prospects.

**Central and Eastern Oregon – Regular contributor and pro guide Mac Huff (800-940-3688)** reports, The fishing news this week from northeast Oregon is that you should have been here last week. For the next few days anglers can console themselves knowing that this week's high water is bringing more fish upstream in the rivers. This could put moderate numbers of steelhead into the Wallowa River, a few weeks ahead of usual. The bulk of the Wallowa River fish are likely to arrive on schedule later in February, but fish poised at Rondowa may take this opportunity to relocate.

Water conditions in the Wallowa River were good last week. Relatively low, clear water with temperatures in the upper 30s gave anglers ample opportunity. Scarcity of fish was the only significant problem. This week, as the snow pack warms in the foothills of the Wallowa Mountains, tributaries are responding slowly and there is still hope that the headwaters could remain fishable throughout the week.

Downstream in the Grande Ronde River the prospects for fishing are diminishing with each hour. The snow level in the Wallowa Mountains appears to be near 7,000 feet early this week and a forecast for near freezing temperatures in the Wallowa Valley leave hope that pending freshets will only be moderate. The rising water level in all the streams will yield warmer water temperatures during the freshet. Interestingly, late last week water in the Grande Ronde River measured 34 degrees, while the Wallowa River, 80 miles upstream, measured 38 degrees. This week's freshet should bring all of the rivers up into the low 40s.

Oregon's Department of Fish and Wildlife creel survey for last week yielded excellent results. Oregon anglers averaged two hours per fish and Washington anglers tallied five hours per fish.. The bulk of the effort centered around gear fishing, drifting bait, bobbers, and perhaps backtrolling plugs. Water conditions were suitable for fly fishing and earlier in the week we produced a couple fish on flies

**Northwest Trout -** No matter how dreadful the fishing prospects, the ODFW planted fish in the Northwest Zone this week which are sure to cooperate. Olalla Creek Reservoir and Big Creek Reservoirs numbers 1 and 2 got truckloads of legal-sized rainbows for your Power-Baiting pleasure.

### **Reader Email**

With the floods this week, our mail bag is empty. Did we mention how much we enjoy getting Email?

Write to the TGF staff:

Bob Rees: [brees@pacifier.com](mailto:brees@pacifier.com)

Doug Rees: [drees@TheGuidesForecast.com](mailto:drees@TheGuidesForecast.com)

Michael Teague: [SailCat@TheGuidesForecast.com](mailto:SailCat@TheGuidesForecast.com)

**Random Links**

Check river levels state-wide: [\\*http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/pqr/forecasts2.php](http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/pqr/forecasts2.php)

Check 7-day weather forecast state-wide: [\\*http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/pqr/forecasts2.php](http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/pqr/forecasts2.php)

Pacific Northwest Sportsmen's Show starts February 9th. Here's the scoop:

[\\*http://www.oloughlintradeshows.com/ots-shows-ss-pnw.html](http://www.oloughlintradeshows.com/ots-shows-ss-pnw.html)

Judge says lawbreaker can't eat salmon"

[\\*http://www.canada.com/national/nationalpost/news/story.html?id=49d79f5f-bb25-4688-adf8-ea72d6f780bc](http://www.canada.com/national/nationalpost/news/story.html?id=49d79f5f-bb25-4688-adf8-ea72d6f780bc)

**Weekly Quote** - "It seemed to me that my good fortune was almost overwhelming when I caught my first fish. ... Since that early day the expectancy and thrill of capture, whether of a trout, a lordly salmon, or a six-inch bluegill, has lessened none in its intensity, and I hardly expect that it ever will." - John Atherton

**GOOD LUCK!**