

Northwest Oregon's most complete and accurate fishing forecast

Forecasting for the fishing week of **January 28th – February 3rd, 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>.

My boat is for sale! This is an excellent craft at an excellent price! It comes with the extras you want too (for a price of course) but the boat is listed at \$19,000.00 for an awesome outfit. I may even teach you how to fish out of it! Just look at my ad (it's the first boat listed) by clicking over to: <http://www.theguidesforecast.com/boatads.shtml>. Lots of other ads there too!

Sportfishing the Columbia is less than inspiring these days. Sturgeon are not cooperating with sportanglers likely due to cold water temperatures. An anglers best bet would be downstream of the influence of the Willamette River but don't expect good results until the water warms a bit and a fresh batch of smelt appear.

Crabbing would be a poor option since there is so much commercial gear out there.

The Tillamook district is also nothing to write home about. The poor showing of hatchery steelhead and the fact it's too early for the wild steelhead to show is a good reason to stay home and mow the lawn? What??? Mow the lawn! Better go fishin'. The bigger rivers offer the best opportunity over the weekend but again, don't expect much.

A combination sturgeon/crabbing trip may be a better option this weekend however although the tides aren't dynamite for sturgeon fishing. A gradual outgoing flow in the late afternoon may offer some opportunity however. Crabbing in Tillamook estuaries is fair but the ocean may offer some opportunity if the swell calms down.

Sturgeon fishing is gradually improving in the Willamette River and Multnomah Channel as the temperature is slightly warmer than the Columbia. As on the Big River, fishing will be best on the next decent tidal series. Oh yeah, if and when you go, use smelt for bait!

Steelheading is fair for natives but dismal for hatchery fish on the Siletz. Release wild fish carefully.

Crabbing has been fair to good on at Yaquina Bay and out of Waldport. Rockfishing has been fair to for anglers fishing the jetty on Yaquina Bay. Eight rockfish and two lings may be kept per day this year.

The Clackamas is slow for steelhead. Prospects are somewhat better on the Sandy but dramatic improvement is unlikely until we get more rain.

South coast anglers are doing well on the Coquille, Umpqua and Rogue Rivers. Elsewhere it's slow due to low, clear water.

Prospects are bright for fly fishermen on the Grande Ronde River on the East side of the state.

No trout stocking took place this week.

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

Be sure to catch us at the 2005 Portland Sportsman show. The dates for this years show is February 9th – 13th 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. 10th at 6:00 p.m., the 11th at 7:00 p.m., and at noon on the 12th. 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 – The news isn't that great on the Columbia. Thankfully, we have a Sportsman Show to look forward to! Sturgeon fishing on the mainstem remains dismal. Cold temperatures are the most likely cause of poor fishing but with the mild conditions we have been witnessing, there may be a change of pace. After all, it can't get any worse, can it? **Pro guide Dan Ponciano (360-607-8511)** hit the river today trying to find a creative way to catch big river 'gators. Dan did manage to scrape up one keeper but admitted to only catching about 5 fish for a 6 hour effort. Dan fished the shallow water in the gorge from Beacon Rock to Skamania Flats. He targeted the clam beds but admitted he has little confidence when the temperatures drop to below 40 degrees. He measured the river temperature at 38.2 degrees. Pressure was light despite a catch and keep day as Dan only witnessed about 5 other boats fishing. There were 4 of them and he felt lucky to get a 45 incher for the dinner table. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's weekend check mimics Dan's report showing poor results for gorge anglers. Results were not much better for other parts of the river but bank anglers did fair in the gorge and there was a single keeper retained in the Portland to Longview stretch for the 97 boats that were surveyed.

There have been reports of commercial craft making modest takes in the lower Columbia out of Claskanine. Many anglers, anxious to stock up this effective sturgeon bait will make the journey to Washington Rivers where a good day can result in easy limits. Since smelt regulations have changed for the 2005 season, here's a rundown. Smelt dipping opened January 1st and runs through the end of March. While the Columbia is open 24 hours, seven days a week, the Washington tributaries which includes Grays River, Cowlitz River, Kalama River and Lewis River are open only on

Tuesdays and Saturdays from 6 AM to 10 PM.

Some, and I do mean some spring chinook were caught in the Columbia and Willamette last week indicating a pilot run has come in. Water conditions could be conducive for a rare opportunity at an early Willamette bound 5 year-old springers. Lower river beaches around Rainier for bank anglers and Jim Crow Sands near Astoria offer the best chances (albeit small chances) for one of these prizes. Colder water doesn't help matters but bigger spin-n-glos or herring would be a preferred offering.

Better write off the crabbing until commercial gear thins out- say in June!

The Guide's Forecast – Don't have high hopes for any fishery on the lower Columbia. Sturgeon fishing in the upper pools like Bonneville and the Dalles offers about as much opportunity as below Bonneville. Seek the warmer water below the Willamette if you are desperate to get after a sturgeon this weekend. Figure out a way to rig a spin-n-glo or herring to your gear without violating any fishing regulations to up your chances for a grand-slam!

Also, prepare yourselves for the upcoming battle to keep "incidental" harvest rates for steelhead at 2% of impacts instead of the proposed increase to 6% in the upcoming winter gillnet fishery. We'll keep you informed so your fishing opportunities aren't stripped from you and all the hard work of the citizens of Oregon don't end up DEAD in a gillnet this season!

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – If you were among the few optimists trying for the first spring chinook of the year you'll have to shoot for 2006. A mysterious angler identified only as "Jerry" caught it plunking below the mouth of the Clackamas River late last week. A Spin 'n' Glo and prawn combo was reportedly the weapon of choice.

Local fishermen are notoriously reluctant to discuss early spring chinook catches but sufficient numbers of sighting have additional catches moved out of the 'rumor' category and into 'reality.' It has started but as we're well-known to say, it's early yet.

Although the spring chinook category appears on the Willamette counts January 1st, a mark did not appear in 2004 until the 7th of March. And yet we try.

Counts at Willamette Falls, up to date as of January 19th, indicate that while winter steelhead continue to cross in modest numbers, there was a spurt of 84 fish on that day which brought totals to 772.

Despite the fact that summer steelhead have been listed among the fish counted at the Falls, those who do the counting have yet to see any. It would seem that some have

slipped past, however, at least to the anglers who caught a few on the North Santiam over the last week. This fishery won't really blossom for a while, however, with the majority of fish present native winter stock which must be carefully released to complete their life cycle.

With snow pack only 25% of average and low rainfall amounts we have received it may be a tough year for inland streams, rivers and reservoirs this year. It would take heavy precipitation combined with a low freezing level to turn around this situation.

A few keeper sturgeon are being taken by grateful anglers in the lower Multnomah Channel which has resulted in fairly heavy boat traffic here. Smelt has become the seasonally-effective bait as sturgeon are keying on them in anticipation of the run soon to come. Fishing isn't hot and one may expect to cull plenty of 'shorts' in seeking on that'll measure, but at least there's the potential to score a keeper now which hasn't been the case in recent weeks.

The Guide's Forecast – Now that the first springer has been taken (and the second, third and a few more that nobody is talking about), expect an increase in plunkers and trollers trying for them. Numbers will be low for a while, but with a predicted return of 254,000 spring chinook in the Columbia (70% of which will be clipped) and another 117,000 destined for the Willamette, that means a potential 370,000 springers to target below the Willamette mouth. Counts will rise from single- to triple-digits at Willamette Falls in March, then to thousands a day in April. That's enough to get any angler excited a little early. It'll remain a long-shot through February but much better than a day at work.

There's finally a temperature advantage in the Willamette River and Multnomah Channel over that of the Columbia. The Big River has been hovering in the high 30s while the Willy is in the mid-40s. It's not a great deal of difference but is enough to encourage a few additional hungry sturgeon to enter. Use smelt!

The lower Willamette is open to sturgeon retention Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays through July 31. Catch rates in the coming week will be only fair but will continue to improve.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – While the Clackamas looks good and a couple of steelhead fell to boats working the mouth, few fish have been taken up into the river. The waters of the Clackamas got plenty of attention from boaters last weekend despite the slow fishing.

The Sandy River, running high and muddy a week ago fell to good levels, achieving a glorious green color by last weekend. This attracted a number of fishermen but not the steelhead. Fishing remains very slow according to reports Monday and Tuesday this

week.

Pro guide Trevor Storlie adds this, "The Sandy has slowed down a bit from last week. The high water has moved the bulk of last week's fish into the upper river. Cedar creek and Dodge Park have both had some great days. Mid river only produced low numbers, most boats came up empty handed. We were able to get lucky and hooked fish each day, but the numbers were nothing like last week. Plunkers faired well in the lower end during the high water conditions, but they to have slowed. As the water continues to drop the fish moving into the system will start to stack up. The mid river and lower end should start to produce again if the weather stays the same and does not get too crazy. This picture is Kevin Knittel with a 14 lb steelhead from the Sandy River, caught this week with Red's Guide Service."



The Guide's Forecast – The Clackamas River has been a tough nut to crack for many steelheaders who report seeing fish which they are unable to entice. Reports early this week indicate the best shot at intercepting a Clack steelie is on the stretch from McIver to Feldheimers. Try tiny baits or jigs.

Despite the smelt sightings in the lower Columbia and that there has been a smelt run on the Sandy River in Oregon in years past, with the modest returns expected this year it won't amount to anything worthwhile.

There's nothing in the weather reports to alter conditions on the Clack so anglers may

reasonably expect another slow week.

North Coast District Fishing Report – Well, this rain was not “just what the doctor ordered”, as most of us were thinking. Reports from the North Coast are disappointing as large numbers of steelhead did NOT show on any of the coastal systems of the northern lands. Most rivers fished fair at best but there were numerous skunked boats on all systems. When the fishing is like this, it really isn't a matter of how good you are (although that certainly helps), it's really a matter of being in the right place at the right time. **Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377)** started his post-rain freshet fishing on the Trask River to come up with a 1 for 3 trip in the lower stretch. Equally disappointing were the Wilson and Nestucca Rivers where numerous boats came up with nothing to show for their efforts although there were a few boats that got a couple of fish each in the lower stretches. On the Nestucca, **pro guide Jesse Zalonis (503-392-5808)** reports, “The rain came and we had a great rise in the river. It is currently in good shape and a few new fish showed up over the last few days. Fishing the mid river was good, but it seems that a bunch of the fish just blasted through. The mid river should remain good and as the river drops further, continue to migrate down river. The lower river from Beaver down will be a good place to find fresh fish, and we should see good numbers around the Hebo area here in a few days. We have seen a few Brood Stock fish, but not very many yet. Drifting bait has been the way most everyone is fishing, but with the height of the river, pulling plugs may be a good option, but look who's talking here... Also, as the river becomes more clear, jigs work great here. We have always done very well on pink and white, or pink and peach. I personally have been doing the best with pink and green colors on my drift gear, and pink and peach jigs... Have a good week, and we will see good fishing coming up very soon.” The fishing that Jesse is talking about is our anticipation of a good run of wild fish despite the poor hatchery returns. **Avid angler Rich Riley** also reported from the Nestucca. Rich stated, “Fished the Nestucca today with a friend, in his drift boat. We fished divers (plugs) and sand shrimp...no take-downs. Saw bout 8 boats, 6 boats reported same results (no fish) and two boats said that they each had 1 steelhead. Lots of trout ... (14" - 18)”

And what is the reason for poor hatchery returns? Talking with local ODF&W personnel, there was a clear drop in liberated numbers of hatchery steelhead smolts. Couple this with poor out migrating conditions for these smolts and you have a disaster waiting to happen. Extremely effective are the diving cormorants (working with Great Blue Herons) and groups of seals taking advantage of released schools of 5,000 – 15,000 fish. These are very opportunistic conditions for predators of the smolts. I am not really sure what the answer is but the smolt protection program helped several years ago when the legislature appropriated funds for this cormorant hazing on Tillamook, Nestucca and Nehalem Bays. It may be challenging to recoup this funding base with the current budget crunch that we are in right now but private funding may be appropriate. What we also need to look at is hatchery policy for liberating these fish. There must be

some way to improve the release of tens of thousands of fish at one time? I am sure it would take a lot of money to modify the release schemes. What ever the answer is, you can rest assured that it will take time and money to implement and a great deal of lobbying to change things from the way they are.

Back to fishing.....what are the options for the North Coast? Sturgeon fishing remains in the spotlight although there isn't a great deal of pressure, the success of this fishery is noteworthy. **Garibaldi Marina's Val Folkema (503-322-3312)** reported that her mud shrimp is flying out the door on the weekends when they are open. If the bait is this popular, the fishing must be good. Anglers fishing the upper bay and west channel are finding consistent success although it is certainly spotty from boat to boat. With the limited amount of fish that are available in this fishery, this is what we'd expect. It is important that you make sure your bait is fishing effectively and that's why mud shrimp are more effective- the crab seem to leave them alone more. Sand shrimp fall prey to crab more often as they are more fragile. Val stated they will take bait reservations on mud shrimp so it may pay to call ahead. Val also reported that crabbing was good on the "icy" weekend (2 weekends ago) but dropped to just fair over last weekend. The drop in pressure likely had something to do with the added success. No doubt that crab are plentiful- especially in the ocean this year so take advantage. The ocean has been friendly to crabbers but weather can change at any moment so prepare for bay crabbing!

The Guide's Forecast – There isn't a whole lot to look forward to this weekend on the North Oregon Coast. The rivers are beginning to recede which will allow for a plethora of techniques an angler can employ and fish will settle down into their more classic water so holding areas can be easier identified. The problem is, there won't be a lot of fish to fish on! The larger systems will offer the best opportunity with the Wilson and Nestucca high on the list. It is a bit early for great numbers of wild fish to show (although I think this will happen later on in late February) and getting late for quality (no-show) hatchery steelhead. As a matter of fact, a fair percentage of the hatchery fish an angler may encounter this weekend, could, in fact be spawned out. There have been an abnormal number of steelhead reported that have had undeveloped egg sacks for what reason, I don't know. They could be protesting the federal government's proposal to de-list wild fish on the North Oregon Coast. The Nehalem is also a river to target for wild winter fish but again, it is simply too early to get excited about this prospect.

Sturgeon fishing may be a possibility in the late afternoon on the weekend with a combo crabbing trip in the morning. Tides are a bit favorable on that late tide even though we are not in a minus tide series. The crabbing should also be fair seeing how we haven't had major precipitation for a while. It would be best to keep to the lower bay and the ocean if possible- weather dependent of course! The sturgeon bite on Nehalem Bay has not taken off, as of yet anyway.

Central & South Coast Reports – One of the best returns on the investment of time and equipment for many folks recently has been in the pursuit of Dungeness. Good results have come to crabbers dropping traps and nets at Yaquina and Waldport.

Jetty fishermen have been taking limits of rockfish off the jetties at Yaquina Bay this week. Jigs and sand shrimp are accounting for the fish. The rockfish bag limit is reduced from the 10 fish a day limit allowed in 2004 to eight in the 2005 season. Two ling cod over 24 inches are allowed. Newport charters have been experiencing fine bottomfish catches offshore.

A few bright native fish have been taken by Siletz steelheaders with no report of any hatchery fish this week. The total lack of any steelhead photos taken in January this year at Coyote Rock is indicative of the hatchery fish catches.

Conditions on the Umpqua are good and improving along with the winter steelhead catches. Limits of hatchery steelhead have come from the South Umpqua near Roseburg.

Steelheading has slowed at the Chetco, Elk and Sixes as are all suffering from low, clear water. Rain is needed to turn around the prospects here.

Most of the fish present in the South Fork of the Coquille River are bright, hatchery winter steelhead. Numbers are high and catches have been good. Go get 'em.

It's shaping up to be another great year for winter steelhead on the Rogue River. This fabulous resource seems to stand up well to whatever pressure is put upon it and comes year after year as one of the most productive rivers in Oregon. Bait or lures will take winter steelhead from Galice to Grants Pass now. Angling in the lower river has been hampered by low, clear water. Plunkers are taking a few from deeper holes. Summer steelhead, a fishery rejuvenated by mid-week rain showers, is a viable alternative and the fish remain in fine shape. The Hatchery Hole is a good place for a shot at a mid-winter summer run using cured salmon eggs.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Once again this week, **pro guide Mac Huff (800-940-3688)** delivers with this detailed report:

"Northeast Oregon experienced similar weather to the rest of Oregon during late January, which put the Grande Ronde River out of shape for a few days, but by the weekend the river had stabilized steelheaders were landing fish.

"There was no state creel survey last week, but Bill Vail at Boggan's Oasis estimates that the catch rate was about 8 hours per fish.

"The Grande Ronde River is dropping daily and since the middle of last week has dropped from 3,200 cfs to about 1,900 cfs.

"February's outlook for steelhead fishing in northeast Oregon is shaping up perfectly. The region had a bout of cold weather in mid-January and for most years this is the last we'll see of subzero temperatures.

"During the January storm cycle cold weather arrived, followed by a pineapple express bringing a thaw and some rain, which raised the Grande Ronde River above 3,000 cfs. The warmer water and higher flows will move fish up and through the river system and fishing will improve from the good fishing during December and January where anglers were often hitting catch rates of less than four hours per fish.

"Anything under 6,000 cfs is considered fishable and 3,000 cfs and below is very good for fly fishing. The prospects for February are good with good numbers of steelhead already in the river and more waiting to move up from the Snake River."

Northwest Trout - There will be no trout stocked in Oregon Lakes and Ponds this week although Huddleston Pond will receive 500 legal-sized trout on Monday, January 31st. Take the kids out for some easy, local fishin.'

Reader Email

This week, Ken Johnson wrote to Michael (and owes me a Meldrum Bar report) to ask, "During their twice yearly migration up The Metolius River to spawn, what are the "traditional" times of the year (months) when the Kokanee pool up at the entrance to The Metolius River in Lake Billy Chinook???"

"Also, other than the traditional Buzz Bomb, what are the "FAVORITES" that regulars use when their pitching spoons, jigs or whatever, up there at the mouth of The Metolius???"

"I might just go up there and freeze my arse off trying for a few of those beauties! I remember going in the first week of September, one year, and absolutely bangin' on them. We had 4 fisher folks in the boat and jigged with "My Secret Weapon." In 1.5 hours we had our limit of 100 nice fat BRIGHT Kokanee. We usually used a Buzz Bomb and were having fun and occasionally catching a few fish. This 16-17 year old kid and his little brother came trolling into the mix there in 15-18 feet of water at the mouth of The Metolius. They anchored in a spot with some pitchin' clearance and began to fish. I swear, that on just about every cast they were pulling in Kokanee after Kokanee. Finally, they had their limit (50 16"-18" FAT FISH!) and began to pull out. It seem an untold rule up there that no one talks to other fishermen.....Except me, that is. I asked

the kid what he was using and he reached down to his pole and cut off the lure...He tossed it to me as it immediately dug into the palm of my hand. (He's young...He didn't think ahead that his hooks were "Sharp Enough!") Anyway, I tied the "lure" on and started pitching it out. BAM...Fish on...Bam...Another fish on. I would honestly say I was getting one fish for every two casts+/- . The "Secret Lure" was a 1/2oz. banana sinker painted with bright red nail polish on one side. That was the side with the 1/2 stamp on it. The smooth side had been lightly scraped with a knife and clear polish applied to keep it "Chromy." A small #8 or #10 treble hook was attached to the opposite end from the bead chain. That's it. I have more recently tied up my own and have varied the color from bright orange, blue, pink & hot pink, and green. The reds and the pinks seem to work the best.

"In the meantime, I have seen guys in other boats pitching a spoon, probably a 1/2 ounce, in red, bright orange, red & chrome and pink. These seem to work equally well as my homemade lure. That's what I want to find out. In honor of the "Silence Treatment" up there, I haven't been bold enough to ask them what they're using.

"Do you know???"

Why heck, buddy, we know everything at TGF! Actually, that's absurd, but we do have years of reports in our archive pages at [*http://www.theguidesforecast.com/](http://www.theguidesforecast.com/) which are accessible to all subscribers.

Specifically, the ODFW says that the Metolius Arm of Lake Billy Chinook is closed while rest of the reservoir is open year round. They also claim there's great fishing now for bull trout in the Deschutes and Crooked Arms. I(was unable to find a reference to this specific area in the 2005 regulations online, so check the written regs to fins out when it opens. In the past it's been the first of March, but it's worth finding out for sure.

That said, reports from years past indicate the earliest fishing endeavors are mid-March with better fishing in April. Most people prefer trolling but since you didn't ask about that technique (which we cover every year in detail and in season), on to the jigging.

Regarding the favorite Buzz Bomb colors, it sounds as if you've already got it. There have been a number of anglers who have reported using banana weights with plain, unpainted versions often most effective. Alternately, a grey or pale-colored Buzz Bomb has been quite effective in the half-ounce range. At times, green, yellow, orange and hot pink are effective with Nordics and Zingers working as well as Buzz Bombs when the kokes are on a jig bite. Orange is an early-season favorite. People who have had the best success will jig 'til the bite tapers off, move and start catching fish again.

Good luck and as always, Let us know how you do!

Subscriber and regular contributor **Dobe** adds additional information with this report: "Well I did make it fishing on Thursday 1/20 to Lake Billy Chinook. Weather was

beautiful and water calm. Found out the hot item was large plugs or herring trolled at about 100 ft deep. Heard that some, fishing from the bank had even had luck casting from shore. Of course, we are talking Bull Trout. Also, toward the end of the day, we spotted Kokanee jumping up in the Deschutes arm in front of the swimming area. Casting Gibbs Minnows (pink and white) proved to get us a few up to about 13 inches. Hot spot for the Bull Trout seemed to be right out across from the Crooked arm boat ramp. The water was only down about 1 1/2 ft, so launching was easy. Later in the spring its gets a little dicey if you don't know which part of the ramp to use. The campground at the top of the hill on the way in is the only one open right now and of course, not crowded. We have had clear weather for the last week and highs around 60. Watch the forecast and if it continues this a great destination to work out the winter doldrums."

To every angler who receives Email (and hates spam): Those fish pictures which are making the rounds purported to be deep water specimens washed up on the beach following the tsunami **are fake**. Oh, they're real critters from the deep, alright, but unrelated to the disaster. I've received 'em several times. Dunno why people start these things but smart TGF readers will break the chain and save our bandwidth for something really important ... like fishing reports. <G>

Write to the TGF staff:

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Random Links

From the ODFW, the 2005 winter steelhead update zone by zone (Adobe Acrobat required):

<http://www.dfw.state.or.us/news/2005/january/014.pdf>

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is seeking written public comment on the following Hatchery Genetic Management Plans in the Umpqua Watershed:

<http://www.dfw.state.or.us/HGMP/main.htm>

Oregon officials say scientists are wrong and Bush is right. Huh? Oregonian article today (01/27):

http://www.oregonlive.com/news/oregonian/index.ssf?/base/front_page/1106830508174240.xml

On the other hand, a smart idea from the Oregon Coast Guard - File a Float Plan. Here's how:

<http://www.uscgaux.org/~floatplan/>

Weekly Quote - "How like fish we are: ready, nay eager, to seize upon whatever new thing some wind of circumstance shakes down upon the river of time! And how we rue our haste, finding the gilded morsel to contain a hook. Even so, I think there is some virtue in eagerness, whether its object proves true or false. How utterly dull would be a wholly prudent man, or trout, or world! Did I say a while ago that I waited "for prudence" sake? That was not so. The only prudence in fishermen is that designed to set the stage for taking another and perhaps a longer chance." - Aldo Leopold

GOOD LUCK!