

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **January 13<sup>th</sup>, – January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2006**

**Oregon Fisheries Update:**

**Willamette Valley/Metro-** Water, water everywhere. That's the story State-wide this week. The Blacktop, a well-know fishing spot below the mouth of the Clackamas on the lower Willamette is normally well above the river but was under water as of Tuesday this week. No one was fishing and it will be a while before such activity is possible.

Sturgeon fishing is due to improve when the last of the logs and debris have washed out of the lower Willamette. Such obstacles are hazardous to watercraft.

Sturgeon anglers along the entire Columbia took advantage of the break in weather last week and although effort was not big, keepers were tallied from Longview upstream into The Dalles Pool. The bulk of the effort in the lower river is taking place in the Portland to Longview stretch where weather isn't such a significant factor. Almost a keeper for every 7 boats was recorded in this section and numerous sub-legal sturgeon kept anglers busy. Fresh smelt is netting the best results.

Smelt continue to be present in the lower Columbia but not in any great numbers. Commercial netters landed another 400 pounds on the last opener and prices for the prized bait signify that it is a sellers market. Anglers are paying nearly \$7.00/pound for the prized baits. No sign of smelt in the Cowlitz River yet although effort is light. Anglers are scouting for seagulls and harbor seals before justifying a trip to the riverbank.

Sturgeon anglers in the Bonneville Pool netted one keeper and 11 shakers for every 2.5 boats on average. Bank anglers recorded no keepers but shakers were available. Bank anglers outnumbered boats in the Dalles Pool but only a few keepers were tallied over the week.

Clackamas steelheaders have been greeted by limited visibility and high, fast water. With only rain in the forecast it doesn't look promising for the weekend. Eagle Creek is likely to be the only possibility but only a few hundred steelhead are forecasted to return. The Sandy usually recovers ahead of the Clackamas in the wintertime.

The Sandy River showed promise over the weekend with passable color but there were no significant winter steelhead catches reported. By Sunday afternoon, conditions began to deteriorate. With the deluge, it will take some time and a break in the precipitation to recover, but a lower freezing level always helps due to its glacial origin.

If your favorite river is blown out this weekend (and chances are it will be), consider taking in the Portland Boat Show at the Expo Center which runs through Saturday, January 15th. Kids 12 and younger get in free.

**Mid Columbia -** The John Day River continues to run colored. Effort is light for steelhead in the John Day Pool and success will continue to drop as the winter wears on.

**Northwest -** Excited anglers took to the larger systems late last week expecting good results but went away disappointed. The conditions on the Wilson and Trask were ideal last week with guides and anglers giving all they had. Only a rare steelhead was caught and by the numbers of recycled steelhead coming from the South Fork Prison Camp on the upper Wilson, it seems what

few fish are around, are making quick time to the upper reaches. The Wilson River crested 3 feet above flood stage on Tuesday (1/10) and predicted rain will keep this river un-fishable well into the weekend. The Trask and Nestucca Rivers follow suit with the Wilson so steelheaders will have to look to the smaller systems if a weekend expedition is planned. The Kilchis, North Fork of the Nehalem and Three Rivers may be options by the weekend.

Steelheaders may wish to look to Clatsop County for weekend opportunity. The Necanicum fished well late last week and Gnat Creek was reported good before the high waters. Big Creek is also an option and hatchery fish are being recycled on this system.

High surf will keep clams buried deep during the minus tide series that Clatsop Beaches will experience this week. Diggers that do venture out shouldn't expect good results and need to exercise extreme caution.

Tides were right for sturgeon anglers in the middle of the week but dangerous weather conditions kept boats off the water.

Crabbing on coastal estuaries is poor due to the fresh water influx and high winds are keeping bay and ocean anglers and crabbers from harvesting winter bounty.

Lost Lake, Town Lake and Cape Mears Lake (Clatsop County) have recently been stocked with recycled steelhead.

Steelheading showed some promise on the Siletz River last week but conditions quickly blew out with the heavy precipitation.

**Southwest** - As with most streams and rivers in Oregon this week, those on the South coast are between bank full and flood stage.

On the lower Umpqua between storms, sturgeon fishermen are getting some action as predicted, but fewer than half of those hooked are **small** enough to keep- that's right, oversized fish seem to be the rule, rather than the exception. On Sunday, January 8th, one angler was surprised when he hooked and landed a sizeable shark.

The Coos and Chetco rivers were on the rise at mid-week. While the Rogue River had dropped in flow early this week, on Tuesday it started to swell once again. It's a tough week with no respite on the horizon.

**Southwest Washington-** The Cowlitz River is currently under flood watch but likely to recede late into the weekend. Angling was poor prior to the rise in river level but the first spring Chinook was recorded at the Cowlitz Salmon Hatchery last week. Small numbers of winter steelhead continue to be recycled on this river system.

The Kalama River is also un-fishable but last week, over 125 winter steelhead were recycled into the lower river from the Kalama Falls Hatchery.

**Eastern** - The Grande Ronde River experienced good results for steelhead in last weeks creel checks. Anglers averaged one steelhead for every 5 hours of fishing. The river is currently experiencing a significant rise in height but may be primed again by late in the weekend.

The Imnaha River is forecasted to remain stable in height and steelheading is reported as improving. The best success will be from Horse Creek and downstream.

**Columbia River Fishing Report** – With more precipitation forecasted for NW Oregon, sturgeon anglers would be doing themselves a favor by staying home this week. Anglers showed some interest for the brief period that the rain did let up and a few keepers were caught from Longview to The Dalles Pool. Some of the best action took place in the Portland to Longview stretch but fair results were calculated in the Bonneville Pool as well.

Three boats took 1 keeper in the gorge while 10 bank rods recorded 2 legal sturgeon. Foul weather kept most anglers fishing downstream. In the Portland to Longview stretch, 6 legal and 259 shakers were counted for 41 boats. Last week, Bonneville Pool anglers recorded four legal white sturgeon kept plus 111 sub-legal sturgeon released for 10 boats and 20 sub-legal sturgeon released for 30 bank rods. The Dalles Pool check was one legal white sturgeon kept plus 30 shaker sturgeon released for six boats and one legal white sturgeon kept plus one oversize and 21 short sturgeon released for 59 bank rods.

Although a bit early, walleye anglers are beginning to hit the water. The pools above the Dalles are the most productive for walleye but the warmer temperatures of spring coupled with smolt out-migration will trigger a better walleye bite.

Another batch of smelt was harvested from the mainstem Columbia last week. Netters took nearly 400 pounds as price motivated commercial fishers. The quarry is going for around \$6 or \$7/pound and anglers seem willing to pay it. It remains hard to find however but at those prices, commercials will likely remain motivated. There is no rumor of smelt in the Cowlitz and commercial fishers are pursuing them well downstream of its mouth.

Steelhead anglers fishing in the middle reaches were dealt a wild card as precipitation on the east side of the Cascades has caused high water issues with John Day anglers. Folks working this part of the state were spending the bulk of their time on the John Day itself while using the mainstem Columbia as a second option. Although the mainstem is still a viable option, it is not as productive as the John Day River itself was. A recent rise in river level may stimulate steelhead prospects as soon as the river returns to fishable shape.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Foul weather is slated to hit NW Oregon this week causing more challenges for anglers in pursuit of sturgeon. High winds and wet weather will keep away most anglers but metro opportunists should target the Portland to Longview stretch in search of a keeper. Although it will be tough to find a keeper in any stretch of the lower river that you fish, shaker action is good enough to justify the trip. The best option however will likely remain the Bonneville Pool and anyone that has fresh smelt will post the best results. Steelheaders in search of summer steelhead may opt to wait out the John Day. The mainstem Columbia fishery will continue to wane but the recent fresh water influx experienced in the John Day Arm may produce some good results once the river becomes fishable. Prior to the high water event, the lower Columbia was still an option for sport crabbing. Flood waters, however, coupled with the commercial opener don't give sport crabbers much reason for a trip to the lower Columbia. What keepers are present, will get culled out by the commercial crabbers.

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report** – Current water conditions make it challenging not just for anglers but also for those of us to whom the task falls to report on fishing. With rivers near flood stage again this week, there isn't any.

Rain again today (Thursday) and Friday will turn to showers (supposedly) over the weekend. This will be an insufficient respite from the rainfall to offer many opportunities to anglers anxious to

take winter steelhead as we enter the time of year when the season is supposed to be cranking up.

Heavy rain is forecast to commence Monday next week.

### The Guide's Forecast –



Yup ... this photo from Ken Johnson sums up the Willamette. At this writing (January 12th), it's still unsafe to boat. The Marine Board issued a warning this week advising boaters to stay off all rivers. Sturgeon hopefuls are urged to keep an eye on the conditions, but hold off 'til there's considerable improvement. When the river is free of tree hazards, the fishing is expected to turn on.

Winter steelheading will pick up with a break in the weather. Year-to-date totals at Willamette Falls were 256 as of January 5th, the latest data available.

It'll be a couple of weeks before the Santiam is approachable and another couple of weeks before there are sufficient numbers of wild steelhead to create a decent catch-and-release fishery.

Conditions will improve so it pays to prepare for when that time comes. This is the best possible time to be sure tackle is in order. Get reels cleaned and re-lined. Tie leaders, flies or jigs. Organize those tackle boxes and bags so you'll know where everything is. Re-stock items that will be needed when conditions once again allow for their use.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports** – The volume of water flowing in the Clackamas would make it decide how much lead one would have to use to touch bottom on a drift if, that is, it was actually possible for a fish to see any offering in the muddy water.

On a brighter note. Eagle Creek is achieving decent color though still high, Over 80 steelhead are reported to have returned to the hatchery,

As of Wednesday, January 11th, the Sandy remained over its banks with zero visibility.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Less rain, lower flows, some (any) visibility will equal steelhead in either the Clack or Sandy. It's time, but without the weather giving us a break, those fish will make a dash for it. Start as high as possible on the system for best results.

**North Coast District Fishing Report** – Anglers didn't get much of a chance to see what the fishing is really like on the north coast last week. A nice reprieve from the rain allowed anglers to ply the waters of most north coast systems. Even larger systems like the Wilson and Trask fished but the Nestucca and Nehalem Rivers remain high and colored. Results were consistent for the anglers putting in the effort however- consistently poor that is! Many qualified guides put in top effort in search of mostly hatchery steelhead this time of year. Most came up with little to show for their effort. Poor results may be the product of such a prolonged period of high water, causing the fish to make tracks while opportunity knocks. Also noteworthy is the simple fact that we could be facing another poor return of hatchery steelhead to the north coast. In a ritual as common as a spawning migration, hundreds of cormorants work the out-migrating smolts during the month of April. Massive mortality takes place here and couple this with a downturn in ocean conditions and it's a double whammy that hinders adult returns. Poor fishing was quite consistent throughout the North Coast however which really points to the one common denominator- poor ocean condition. With system after system hitting the coastline, we may not have to worry about the early hatchery fish anyway.

The best report I had heard recently was a 7 fish day on the Necanicum by **pro guide Dave Johnson (503-201-4292)** on Thursday of last week. He drifted the Sitka Spruce Tree to Johnson's Construction for those fish. We did the same drift the day before (both Dave and I) only coming up with 5 fish for the both of us!

Smaller streams seemed to have been the key however as the North Fork of the Nehalem River also fished well late last week. Between newly arriving steelhead and recycled fish, there was decent opportunity for anglers prior to the weekend. Heavy precipitation however put those streams out again and more weather is expected.

Sturgeon tides were friendly looking by mid-week on Tillamook Bay. Heavy debris and foul weather however kept most people at the dock. The best time to target Tillamook Bay sturgeon is towards the last half of outgoing tide. This time frame fades into the evening by the weekend but foul weather will likely be the limiting factor for most intelligent anglers (is that an oxymoron?).

Crabbing?.....Are you kidding? Bottomfishing? Get real.....

**The Guide's Forecast** – More rain in the forecast is expected to put the Wilson River above flood stage again by Friday. This makes North Coast steelheading a poor option again this week. Smaller streams may be an option by late in the weekend but will certainly be based on rainfall amounts.

Look to the North Fork Nehalem and Necanicum Rivers as well as Three Rivers on the Nestucca as the best Tillamook district options. All those rivers have peaked for hatchery winter steelhead and although fish will still be present, many of the fish will be spawning this week in smaller tributaries. The good news.....spawned out fish bite much better!

Further north, the same applies to Gnat Creek and Big Creek along highway 30. They may be the best options for steelheaders on the far North Coast but the fish available will not be in top condition. Both systems receive early returns of hatchery fish.

Clam tides are once again favorable through the weekend but high surf will not only keep clams from feeding near the surface, it will create dangerous clamming conditions for those that participate.

**Central & South Coast Reports** – When the Siletz becomes fishable, there should be some broodstock plants available, although it'll be a modest run this year due to a reduced smolt release three years ago. The good news is that the fish which do make it back will be recycled.

Steelheaders took a few Monday this week despite high water on the Coos and Coquille. Tuesday brought another eight inches of water and with it, a rapid halt to fishing on the South coast. As with many Oregon rivers, now through February is considered primetime, so look forward to improved catches once again when the water drops and clears.

Both the North and South Forks of the Umpqua River were raging torrents filling the bank with brown water as of Wednesday this week. The mainstem is no better. Write this one off for this week.

Plunkers fishing gravel bars on the lower Rogue would ordinarily be taking winter steelhead with some regularity at this time of year, but not this week. It remains a blowout. It'll be next week at the earliest for the Rogue River to achieve fishability.

**Central and Eastern Oregon** – No reports.

**Northwest Trout** - Excess broodstock steelhead were recently planted in Town Lake, Cape Mears Lake and Lost Lake ( the latter in Clatsop County). Although Walter Wirth and Walling Pond in Salem were scheduled to get the regular "catchable-size" trout (eight-to-ten-inchers) this week. In an ironic twist, these waters will get a few broodstock steelies instead. It seems the crummy weather has stunted the growth of the hatchery planters. Go figure. Lake-stocked steelhead aren't too tough to catch and don't have to be entered on (or even require) a Harvest Card.

**SW Washington** - High, dirty water has brought steelhead fishing to a virtual standstill in rivers throughout the region, but **sturgeon** are a different story. "Sturgeon actually seem to like these conditions," said Joe Hymer, WDFW fish biologist. "Warm, turbid water with lots of debris seems to invigorate them." The best place to find those conditions right now is around the mouth of the Willamette River, which is where Hymer suggests anglers go if they're looking to hook a sturgeon in the lower Columbia River.

Other options include the pools farther upstream. At the Bonneville Pool, boat anglers have been averaging one legal-sized sturgeon for every six rods, although fishing has been slow for bank anglers. The Dalles Pool and John Day Pool have also been giving up some legal-sized fish. All three pools are open to sturgeon fishing under the same rules as last year. (See WDFW's 2005-06 Fishing in Washington rules pamphlet.) Below Bonneville Dam, the fishery is open Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays downstream to the Wauna powerlines near Cathlamet and seven days per week below the Wauna powerlines to Buoy 10.

**Smelt** make great sturgeon bait, but they don't come cheap. Hymer said fresh/frozen smelt were retailing for nearly a dollar per fish after commercial boats landed 399 pounds in the lower Columbia on Jan. 5. (Another 445 pounds were landed Jan. 9). No recreational landings had been reported on the Cowlitz River as of Jan. 10, but Hymer said that should change once river

conditions improve. The popular fishery on the Cowlitz runs from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. each Saturday through March 31, with a daily catch limit of 10 pounds per person. All other tributaries to the Columbia River are closed to smelt dipping until further notice.

With waters already running high throughout the region, 22 anglers interviewed Jan. 2-6 on the Cowlitz River had caught just two **steelhead** - one at Mission Bar, the other at Olequa. Although the peak of the early hatchery run has passed on most area rivers, Hymer noted that the Cowlitz and Kalama rivers have late runs that should provide good fishing into March. Anglers have been catching some steelhead in the Dalles Pool, but fishing effort has been down in most areas as the rain continues to fall.

Meanwhile, Tacoma Power employees recovered more than 1,000 salmon during the first week of 2006 at the Cowlitz Salmon Hatchery - including the **first adult spring chinook** of the new year. More than 750 adult coho and 13 winter-run steelhead were released into the upper Cowlitz River at the Lake Scanewa Day Use site above Cowlitz Falls Dam. Crews also released 132 adult coho at Franklin Bridge in Packwood, 85 winter-run steelhead at the Massy Bar boat launch and 150 adult coho into the Tilton River at Gust Backstrom Park in Morton.

Still, looking for a way to shake the high-water blues? Lake fishing may be the answer. During the first week of January, WDFW stocked Sacajawea Lake in Longview with 123 five-pound rainbow trout and 36 ten-pounders. Horseshoe Lake in Woodland got 16 five-pound fish and four ten-pounders; Rowland Lake near Lyle got 100 five-pounders and 75 ten-pounders; and Spearfish Lake near Dallesport got 90 five-pounders and 25 ten-pounders. The department plans to continue planting approximately 1,000 catchable-size rainbows in Klineline Pond every other week through the winter.

**North Central Washington** – Fishing for **hatchery steelhead** has improved considerably in the upper Columbia River system with recent warmer weather melting most of the ice in both the Methow and Okanogan rivers. WDFW district fish biologist Bob Jateff of Omak says steelhead that have been relatively undisturbed for more than a month are now biting, although WDFW enforcement officers report that participation has been low. Most fish are being caught with small jigs used with a foam-type bobber as a strike indicator.

By law, anglers must release any steelhead with an intact adipose fin or a disc tag they intercept in the fishery. Officers estimated that only one out of six steelhead recently caught were hatchery-reared "keepers." The daily catch limit is two fish with a minimum size of 20 inches. Statewide gear rules and night closures are in effect. Anglers can check the WDFW access areas for signs about gear rules and closed areas.

Jateff also reminds **whitefish** anglers that standard whitefish gear rules do not apply in areas where there is an ongoing steelhead fishery. In the open steelhead sections of the Similkameen and Methow Rivers, selective gear rules will apply, with no bait allowed, during the Dec. 1 to March 31 whitefish seasons.

Winter fishing is currently very slow for **rainbow trout** in such Okanogan County lakes as Little Twin, Davis, Sidley and Bonaparte, where warm temperatures have made the ice unsafe to walk on and shore and boat fishing risky. **Walleye** fishing has been productive recently at Potholes Reservoir, even from the MarDon Resort dock.

**South Central Washington** - Fishing participation has been low throughout the region with rain and snow melt leaving rivers and streams high and muddy. WDFW enforcement officers recently checked a few die-hard **whitefish** anglers on the Yakima River near Cle Elum but catches were light. Other recent river and stream patrols have turned up few or no anglers. Just one steelhead was checked from the Columbia River near Plymouth in Benton County. As water

levels and conditions settle out, catch rates should improve.

WDFW fish biologist Jim Cummins of Yakima reports the warmer weather has melted most of the ice on the region's year-round lowland **rainbow trout** lakes, so they may be more accessible.

Anglers can bone up and gear up for future opportunities at the 13th annual **Tri-Cities Sportsmen Show**, Jan. 20-22, at the TRAC in Pasco. Among the many fishing guide and gear vendor displays and demonstrations, there's a kids' fishing pond and free seminars, including fly-fishing expert Jim Teeny and an outdoor cooking camp hosted by TV personality Butch "C.W." Welch. Show hours are 1-8 p.m. Jan. 20, 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Jan. 21 and 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Jan. 22. Admission prices are \$7 for adults, \$3.50 for kids six to 12, and free for kids five and under.

**Puget Sound** – Heavy rains and rising rivers have forced anglers to avoid the region's murky streams and instead turn to saltwater for fishing opportunities. **Steelhead** fishing has come to a virtual halt as rain continues to fill North Sound rivers. But stalwart anglers willing to brave the wind and rain in Puget Sound are having some success with **blackmouth**. The best bet for anglers seems to be the waters near Everett, said Steve Foley, WDFW biologist. The weather, however, is keeping most people off the water. "The few people that are out there fishing are catching some fish," Foley said. "But with this weather pattern the way it is, it's tough for people to get out." Blackmouth catch counts at the Everett boat ramp gave some indication of angler success. On Jan. 8, 13 anglers checked in six chinook.

Those heading out on the Sound can take advantage of the region's islands for some protection from harsh weather. If a south wind is blowing, anglers might want to try the east side of Whidbey Island, said Steve Thiesfeld, a WDFW fish biologist. "Areas like Penn Cove, Holmes Harbor and Utsalady Bay give anglers a shot at catching some blackmouth while providing protection from a south wind," Thiesfeld said. This is also a good time for anglers to take their time and learn the blackmouth fishery. "It really pays off," he said. "Those that have learned the fishery are having success."

Marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay), 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) and 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) are open for blackmouth fishing, although Area 10 closes Jan. 31. Marine areas 7 (San Juan Islands) and 9 (Admiralty Inlet) remain closed for blackmouth. Anglers should check the 2005/2006 [Fishing in Washington](#) pamphlet for more information.

When the rain does let up and rivers in the region start to drop, anglers should first try fishing the upper reaches of rivers, said Foley, who recommended Tokul Creek, a tributary of the Snoqualmie River, and the Cascade River, which is a tributary of the Skagit River. "Upper reaches drop and clear up first, while the lower reaches can remain dirty," he said.

**Olympic Peninsula** – High water and steady rain have put a damper on fishing area rivers, forcing anglers to consider other options. One possibility is a three-day **razor-clam** dig tentatively scheduled Jan. 27-29 at four ocean beaches. WDFW will give the final word on that dig - and another opening tentatively scheduled at all five ocean beaches Feb. 24-26 - once toxin tests determine whether clams remain safe to eat.

Both digs are geared to evening tides, with no digging allowed before noon any day. Low tides during the three-day dig proposed this month are at 5 p.m. Jan. 27, 5:49 p.m. Jan. 28 and 6:34 p.m. Jan. 29.

The four beaches tentatively scheduled to open those days are Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks and Kalaloch. Copalis Beach will remain closed to digging in January to ensure that enough clams are available for harvest in April, when the tides allow for morning digs, said Dan

Ayres, WDFW coastal shellfish manager. Copalis is, however, tentatively scheduled to open for digging along with the other four beaches Feb. 24-26, Ayres said. "Since the weather is usually better in February, it made more sense to take a break this month," he said.

Due largely to rough weather, diggers averaged just 6.7 clams per day during the opening held over New Year's weekend, Ayres said. "But a lot of the more experienced, better-prepared diggers did get their 15-clam daily limit," he added. "A lot depended on finding the right location, being able to spot 'shows' and packing a good lantern." "Shows" are small holes in the sand, indicating the presence of a clam below the surface.

Meanwhile, **steelhead** fishing has stalled throughout the Olympic Peninsula, as heavy rains continue to push area rivers out of shape. On the Quillayute River system, where 165 anglers caught 67 steelhead (including four wild fish) over New Year's weekend, catch totals and angler participation steadily declined as flows increased. By Jan. 10, the Quillayute and virtually every other river in the region was un-fishable. "All the rivers in the Grays Harbor area - the Satsop, Chehalis and Wynoochee - are completely blown out," said Scott Barbour, a WDFW fish biologist. "Your best bet (for seafood) right now is to drop a crab pot in the harbor."

Barbour noted that plunkers had some success catching hatchery coho in high water on the Wynoochee River during the first week of January, but gave up when the skies opened up again. "Give the rivers a couple days to drop back into shape after the rain stops," advises Mike Gross, another WDFW fish biologist. "Once they do, there's usually a bunch of fresh fish waiting to move upriver."

Or, anglers can go **blackmouth** fishing. Most marine areas are closed to salmon fishing, but Marine Area 10 is open for blackmouth through the end of January and Marine Area 13 is open through April 30. Catch rates aren't red hot, "but people are getting some nice fish," said Steve Thiesfeld, Puget Sound recreational fishing coordinator for WDFW. Anglers are reminded that several area rivers - including the Humptulips, Copalis, Minter and lower Chehalis (below Porter Bridge) - will close to salmon fishing Jan. 31. Thiesfeld advises anglers to check the WDFW [Fishing in Washington](#) pamphlet before they head out.

**Eastern Washington** - Snake River **steelheading** has been slow with high, muddy flows from abundant rain and snow melt in the tributaries and full pool in all sections of the mainstem river. Latest creel checks showed anglers averaged five hours per steelhead caught on the Touchet River and more than 29 hours per fish caught on the Snake between Ice Harbor and Lower Monumental dams. (See the full report at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/snake/index.htm>.) When water conditions settle out from current high levels, steelhead action should pick up, especially in and at the mouth of the tributary streams.

The same wet, unseasonably warm weather has left most of the region's winter or year-round fishing lakes unsafe for ice fishing, which drew crowds in December. Boat launching and shore fishing might also be risky at this time on some waters. A forecasted cold snap might ice things up again, but WDFW district fish biologist Chris Donley of Spokane warns that it will have to be a sustained freeze to make ice fishing safe again. "Now's the time to fish Lake Roosevelt for **kokanee** and **rainbow trout**," Donley said. "It's been good for both boat trolling and bank fishing, from the mouth of the Spokane River all the way to Grand Coulee Dam." Donley also noted that Whitman County's year-round Rock Lake continues to produce catches of **brown** and rainbow trout.

WDFW district fish biologist Curt Vail of Colville reported that fishing at winter-only Williams Lake in Stevens County is available only to brave, small boat anglers, since ice conditions have deteriorated. "Getting your boat in and out will require some risk and ingenuity," he said, "but

there are some great rainbows in there for those willing to try." He noted that other waters in the northeast district are in similar shape. "Waitts Lake just barely got completely frozen before the current thaw," he said. Winter-only Hatch Lake, which is in need of rehabilitation to restore its once-healthy trout fishery, is yielding skinny **yellow perch** about six inches long. "You could cook fillets with three passes over a 100-watt light bulb," he said.

## Reader Email

Kapt Ken Johnson sent his regular weekly update on the lower Willamette as of January 10: "Noah???.....NoooooooooahhhhhHHHHHhhh?.. This is "The Lord!" And the Lord sayeth, let it rain for 40 days and 40 nights...Ok, enough about that...Folks are praying however..For the rain to let up...Just a bit anyway!!! Now being a fisherman I do lie just a bit, sometimes, but not always, HONEST!!! But, I did not see any ARKS out there today...However, I did see, TWO FISHERMAN on the "Bank!" I was "Told" the other day that "No one in their right mind would even get near a river as "deluge" as the Willamette River is in right now...Nope, not even a fool would put a line in there, and especially would not be out in a boat...!" Well, honestly, I didn't see a boat, Or an ARK either, but I did see a Deluge and I did see.....



"...A lone fisherman was "Caught" fishing at the Blacktop today. I tried to get him to stand near his rod holder and put a name to the rod, be he didn't even want me to take a picture of his SUV, let alone himself. He said he didn't want a new handle (River name, like "Kaptn Ken!") that might have something to do with "El'Stupido" or something close to it, but he did let me take a photo of his fishing rod...I actually caught TWO Crazy Fishermen with rods in the water this fine rainy WET day. "This Guy" in the first photo, said he had worked his way down the Clackamas from Carver, and then down to the mouth of the Clackamas, here at "The Blacktop" Now, if you notice, generally the Clackamas River is meandering by at 1-2 mph about 50-60 feet away from the water line near where this pole is sitting. 20' out, or so, is where you'll generally find 10-20 cars and trucks tightly parked during the height of Springer Chinook Season on a good day. The water in this photo is at least 6'-7' deeper than the pavement level on "The Blacktop's" parking deck itself. Now, I have to tell you, about 10-11 years ago, a buddy of mine and myself parked in this very same spot with our trucks facing down the ramp...The water was about 2' shallower than it is in this photo...We figured it to be about 3'-4' deep above the asphalt level. The water

was a bit slower than in this picture but not much at about 2.5-3mph+.

We "carefully calculated" how much weight using a pyramid sinker, that we would need to hold us tight on the Blacktop surface. I used an 8 ounce Pyramid...My buddy used 10. I cast in, "Up Pavement" so my offering, a Pink Cheater with Pink Yarn and nothing else, almost immediately clunked down on the asphalt deck somewhere near the outside edge of it. It started to slide but stopped almost straight out from me, at about 10 degrees down "Asphalt" from me. My buddy cast his 10 ounce right at my line and then drifted about 15' down from me. You could almost hear the lead sliding on the asphalt. He pulled his rig in about 6'-8' so his Thin Twin Black and Pink "pill" was inside of my offering.....So, we sat there after getting set up in the water, fishing on the pavement, literally, and both looked at each other and both said at about the same time..."What a couple of Stupid F'ng idiots. (Can I say that on TGF?) Speaking of ourselves, of course! Hey, it's official fishermen's language anyway, SO THERE! Anyway, we were there for nearly 2 hours. We had to check our lines about 4-5 times in the 2 hour period because of quite a bit of "Salad" and TREES passing by at breakneck speed. We were just about ready to give up when my buddies rod first went limp, then \*\*\*POW!\*\*\* Ziiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiing, FISH ON!!! The fight was on and we both just about peed ourselves! We were totally not expecting this. Actually fishing "ON The Blacktop", IN the parking area, in about 4' of water, and feeling really stupid about it, and WHAMO! He had a pretty stout GL '3', I believe with 18 pound line...Good thing, as the Steelie first headed downstream, then out towards the middle of the riv...uuhhhh, Blacktop, and then luckily a bit up river.

After about 15+ minutes of finessing this fish, he brought it to the bank...errrrrrrrrr, uuhhhhhhhhh, the asphalt ramp. I have to admit, the fish was tired and "she" slid nicely up the ban...Uhhhh, asphalt, about 3' up from the fast waters edge. Never did weigh that hatchery fish but she was a good 7, maybe 8 pounds. Bright as a new shiny quarter. Annnnd, I never got to taste any of it! Moral of the story: "You can't catch a fish unless your line's in the water!" And, be sure you take someone who will share! Actually, his family of five made short order of that BBQ's Steelie! See you at the river's edge!!!

"Oh, I actually caught another guy fishing too, on the Willamette, if you can believe that..but you can't see his rod-He was at the "Garden Hole in Meldrum Bar Park, or "The Bulkhead" parking area. Look at the photo below...



"Generally the water is a good 12'-15' below the parking edge of where everybody parks and if you look close, the water is about 1', or less, from the parking edge!!!"

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### **Random Links**

The Winter Steelhead Report courtesy of the ODFW:

[http://www.dfw.state.or.us/RR/fishing\\_forecast/](http://www.dfw.state.or.us/RR/fishing_forecast/)

How to save your own life in winter water:

<http://www.exn.ca/video/?Video=exn20020325-icewater.asx>

**Weekly Quote** – "Soon after I embraced the sport of angling I became convinced that I should never be able to enjoy it if I had to rely on the cooperation of the fish." - Sparse Grey Hackle (Alfred W. Miller)

**GOOD LUCK!**