

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **February 17<sup>th</sup>, – February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2006**

**Oregon Fisheries Update:**

**Willamette Valley/Metro-** Sturgeon fishing on the mainstem Columbia River was a bust this weekend despite a fair amount of effort. The best fishing remains from the Portland to Longview stretch where sporadic runs of smelt have rewarded commercial netters. Using commercial landing statistics, sport anglers can gauge opportunity. Last week's commercial smelt opener (Feb. 6 & 9) almost 2,500 pounds were landed indicating good numbers of fish still present. Commercial netters targeting sturgeon have landed 174 as of February 10<sup>th</sup> and last week, 9 spring Chinook averaging over 18 pounds were landed in this sturgeon target fishery. The larger sized salmon indicate the larger 5 year-old fish are in the system. Sport dipping on the Cowlitz remains poor.

While winter steelhead crossing Willamette Falls are mostly wild and bound primarily for the Santiam system, it is an indication of how well fish are moving. As flows moderated and visibility improved from zero to well over a foot, the daily numbers went from a mere handful to hundreds. As of February 10th, nearly 1,800 had been counted with over 450 fish crossing that day alone.

The lower Willamette has been fair to good for winter steelhead as smaller rivers have dropped and are running quite clear now. Regulars plunking below the mouth of the Clackamas are seeing sporadic action.

Sturgeon fishers have had a wide variety of experiences this week in the lower Willamette with some boats catching only shakers while others scored multiple limits. The St. Johns area has been productive recently.

Steelheading is reported as only fair on the Clackamas with many anglers spending hours without so much as a bump. Catch improved on Monday however but even the best anglers are only getting a couple of opportunities each trip. Both wild and hatchery fish are in the mix.

With the water in near-perfect conditions, wind hampered anglers on the Sandy River over the weekend. Fishing has been only fair.

Mt. Hood Pond, West Salish Pond and Alton Baker Pond are scheduled for planting in the Willamette Zone.

**Northwest –** North Coast anglers witnessed good results late last week but catch has tapered by early this week. Low flows and clear conditions have smaller schools of steelhead entering the lower drifts of the Wilson, Trask and Nestucca Rivers but a nice mix of wild and broodstock hatchery steelhead are available. Smaller streams like the Necanicum booted out large numbers of hatchery fish last weekend but most of the fish were headed back to the ocean as spawned out adults. The North Fork Nehalem was slow early in the week with anglers hoping for more precipitation to bring in fresh waves of fish.

**Pro Guide Dave Johnson (503-201-4292)** adds this, "We've been getting four or five or better winter steelhead per trip on all north coasta rivers for the last two weeks using a variety of techniques, from sidedrifting to drift fishing to bobber/jigs and plugs. If fishing is this good now March is going to be great, which is good since the next days I have open are in March."

Fair skies tempted Tillamook Bay sturgeon anglers over the weekend but high winds kept many from fishing effectively. Adequate morning tides will offer anglers more opportunity this weekend.

Crabbing picked up somewhat on Tillamook Bay despite turbid waters. Netarts Bay remains excellent for large keeper crab. Reduced precipitation levels and low effort should keep success rates good.

Some of the trees which were brought down in the last storm have been cleared on the Alsea River. There are still some dicey drifts and boaters are advised to use caution as the river drops.

**Southwest -** Dungeness are returning to the bays on the central and South coast as the salinity improves following the last round of storms. It's fair to good at Newport and Waldport.

The Coquille produced some good catches of steelhead late last week, but slowed with water levels dropping very low.

Steelheading has been quite rewarding on the Umpqua with catches reported on the North and South Forks as well as the mainstem. The strong tidal exchange which occurred with the recent full moon provided fine sturgeon action around Reedsport. Pressure was high over the weekend.

The Elk and Sixes Rivers were also fishing well after the drop in river levels. They have since slowed somewhat but fish are still present.

Larger rivers are fishing best now. So it is with the Rogue where the Grants Pass area is producing for plug-pullers and for those drifting cured salmon eggs. In moderating flows and levels at Agness, plunkers in the lower river are scoring winter steelhead. They're also on the lookout for the first spring chinook of the year.

**Southwest Washington-** Sportfishing is winding down on SW Washington streams. The Cowlitz is very slow for steelhead and many anglers are turning their focus to Olympic Peninsula streams as they come into their prime seasons. Good spring Chinook fishing is several weeks away for SW Washington anglers and forecasts are calling for mediocre returns this year.

**Eastern -** Some of the best steelheading in the state is now taking place in Eastern Oregon. The Grande Ronde tops the list but the Imnaha and Umatilla Rivers are also high in success rates. The recent cold snap will dampen the bite but action will likely pick up again when the weather warms again. Trout fishing is closed on all streams and a few lakes in the area.

**Columbia River Fishing Report –** The big news on the Columbia remains the fact that there have been commercially caught spring Chinook landed last week. Nine were counted that were incidentally harvested in the targeted sturgeon fishery and reportedly were selling for a good price. There were also reports of one sport boat that lost a spring Chinook that they had hooked around the mouth of the Kalama River. To date, 174 white sturgeon have been landed in this fishery since early January.

Smelt remain a bit of a mystery with commercial catches remaining respectable in the mainstem Columbia River. Sport dippers again came up shy on the Cowlitz River last Saturday. The cold front that is now upon us usually has a negative impact on smelt runs often chasing them back into the ocean until the water temperatures warm again.

Anglers working the waters for sturgeon found tough fishing last week although big winds certainly hampered effort over the weekend- particularly in the gorge. Catch was very light with best success still coming from the middle river around Warrior Rock. Fresh smelt will offer anglers the best chance at fish.

Walleye effort was gaining momentum in the reservoirs above Bonneville but we are still several weeks away from prime time. Stay tuned on this fishery as it is growing in popularity each year.

**The Guide's Forecast** – I think it's a bit premature getting excited about spring Chinook on the mainstem. If the warmer weather was going to hold, I may encourage anglers to venture out but the forecast is calling for COLD, windy weather. Not only will this not be fun, it could be downright dangerous conditions to be recreating in. For some boaters, fishing may still be comfortable under the vinyl of your boat with a propane heater going full blast but you can count me out!

Cold weather will also likely hamper smelt and sturgeon success throughout the region as well. After the weather we have recently witnessed, it will be hard to believe anyone will be motivated to get out after fish this week.

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report** – Most steelheaders are aware the cold weather will contribute to the clarity of water. With the ground frozen there's virtually no runoff. The classic winter fishing scene is that of an angler on a snow-covered bank where the water may be high but exhibits a perfect "steelhead green" color.

So it is that when rivers are running low and clear as they are this week, the chilly weather only exacerbates the problem of water that's too clear to begin with. But the best time to go fishing remains "whenever you can."

Speaking of time, don't bother setting the alarm to chase steelies over the weekend. The best cold-weather fishing will be mid-day. It will also be safer to be out in the frigid conditions after the sun is up, but if the wind is howling, fuhgedaboutit.

While winter steelhead counts at Willamette Falls have not been updated since the 10th, but it's probable that hundreds of additional steelhead have crossed. The momentum will slow with cold temperatures and effort on the banks of the lower Willamette will wane in the wind but is expected to pick up with even enthusiasm when the weather returns to normal.

Recent reports from the plunkers indicate a few steelhead have been taken daily and there's conversation about a second spring chinook having been landed. This fishery is about to heat up.

Sturgeon fishing has been slow but is improving.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Look for the lawn chair, cab-sitting steelhead and springer hopefuls to start lining the banks below the mouth of the Clackamas en-masse starting next week. Fishing is bound to improve.

Sturgeon fishing in the wind over the weekend will be out of the questions, but should be worthwhile when the winds die down next week. Stay off the river for the next couple of days, though. You'll freeze your smelt off.

For cave-dwellers who might have missed a weather telecast, radio forecast or read a newspaper recently, the next couple of days will combine high winds with extremely low air temperatures.

Unprotected skin will freeze in these conditions. Hey, we love to fish as much as anyone, but doing so in windy, freezing weather would be ... what's the technical term? Oh, yeah ... stoopid. Seriously, if you must go out, use protection against environmentally transmitted maladies.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports** – Although anglers experience slightly better results earlier this week than they did over the weekend, most are returning home empty-handed. Many report spending hours without finding any evidence of fish.

The Sandy River has been less that rewarding for the majority of anglers over the last few days.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Steelheading is likely to improve on the Clackamas River, but it probably won't happen this weekend.

Chasing steelhead on the Sandy over the weekend is not such a great idea. The gorge wind which tears down the Columbia is forecast to be wicked with gusts to 60 miles an hour. In these temperatures it'll be miserable, even dangerous, which would be unacceptable even if the fishing got better. Which it won't.

**North Coast District Fishing Report** – After last weeks flurry of activity, fishing has tapered with the lower, clearer flows of most North Coast streams. Some pretty impressive results came from the Wilson, Nestucca and Trask River systems last week and smaller streams like the Necanicum gave up great numbers of fish as well. Most of the fish on the smaller streams like the Necanicum and North Fork Nehalem were spent hatchery fish but those streams will soon switch over to a wild fish focus. Good numbers of broodstock fish were collected last week although many qualified anglers were at the Sportsmen's Show and opted for cement over metal- as in metalheads. The Trask fished good as late as last Sunday but it too has tapered with the lower flows. Can you believe anglers have the gall to pray for more rain?

Sturgeon effort remained light last week mostly due to high winds that would have kept anglers from fishing effectively. The tides were adequate but the SW wind would have made it difficult to see any bites.

Crabbing remains best on Netarts Bay where folks were still taking good numbers of large Dungeness Crab. Tillamook Bay crabbers were also faring well for the few that had confidence in the turbid waters of the estuary.

Anglers anxious to get out into the ocean will once again find unfavorable conditions for bottomfishing and crabbing over the weekend. The ocean may calm down by early next week but little effort exists for bottomfish north of Newport.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Weather forecasts are calling for very cold, windy conditions well into the weekend. This will mean hazardous conditions for anglers traveling from the valley and tough conditions for steelheaders that make the outing. Typically, when temperatures plummet, steelhead become inactive. Low, clear conditions will persist well into next week causing anglers to use low water tactics such as bobber and jigs to entice reluctant fish. I strongly recommend anglers waiting until temperatures rise before putting in any great lengths of time. As air temperatures rise to match water temperatures, fish will become more likely to bite.

The lower drifts of most rivers will produce the best results as fish will be slow to move in the cooler temps and low flows. On the Wilson, the river from Donaldson's boat ramp into tidewater will produce the best results keeping in mind that there are no take-outs below Sollie Smith

Bridge besides the Tillamook Bay Memaloose Ramp. On the Trask the Loren's Drift to 101 ramp should produce the best results and Farmer's Creek to Cloverdale on the Nestucca will likely produce the best results. Keep in mind that these river systems just got done producing some really good fishing and given the upcoming conditions with this simple fact, anglers should not be expecting great results.

Sturgeon anglers don't really have anything to get excited about either. With high, cold winds in the forecast, conditions will not be friendly for those in pursuit of sturgeon on Tillamook Bay. Crabbers may have some limited time where soaking of crab pots is feasible but I recommend taking the weather very seriously this week as dangerous conditions will exist.

Razor clam digging once again becomes an option on Wednesday, February 22<sup>nd</sup> in the afternoon. The height of the surf will determine digging success.

**Central & South Coast Reports** – Look to the lower stretches now where modest pods of metalheads will be found in drifts. While fish will be well-distributed following the last freshet, the upper stretches will be challenging in low-water conditions.

Anglers will find a mix of hatchery and wild fish. While some river allow limited retention of unclipped steelhead, most do not; check the regulations. Drifting corkies, bait or bobber & jigs will bring strikes as will pulling plugs such as Wiggle Warts or Hot Shots.

Siletz steelheaders using low-water techniques should see some action above the 17-mile stretch of tidewater.

The Alsea is getting a good run this year. With decent numbers entering the hatchery facility, steelhead are being recycled downstream regularly giving anglers another shot at them. Trees which closed a stretch of the Alsea following the storm have been cleared. There are still some dicey drifts and boaters are advised to use caution as the river drops.

The Coquille produced some good catches of steelhead late last week, but slowed with water levels dropping very low. Similar conditions are reported from the Coos system.

While both the North Fork and mainstem Umpqua have been productive recently, steelheaders fishing the South Fork are reporting the better catches by quite a margin. Sturgeon anglers fishing below Reedsport continue to see decent action despite a moderation of tides.

Conditions on the Rogue continue to improve with anglers in the Grants Pass area doing well and Plunkers in the lower stretches seeing improving catches this week. Spring chinook are expected to enter the system soon.

TGF welcomes new contributors **Rogue Excursions (800-797-4293)** who kick off this relationship with this dandy report: "Well, well, well...that is how the fishing is going right now in Southern Oregon. The Rogue river in the immediate Grants Pass area is producing solid steelhead days, with many multiple hook ups per boat. And, this is the time of year when you can keep one of the natives as long as it is over 24 inches long. While the Wild and Scenic multi-day section of the Rogue is still a bit too high for great fishing, the upper sections are good. The lower Rogue near Gold Beach is starting to get green as well, so it should be just a matter of days for that section to be fishable.

"The Chetco is hitting great numbers. Roe and plugs are working on this river. The steelhead are holding in some of bigger holes which means lots of opportunities to land them. Upper river drift boat trips are especially rewarding at this point due the solid fishing, scenery and lighter use.

Most of the fish are fresh and some are over 10 pounds. The Sixes and Elk river are fishing strong to, with four to eight fish per boat, and some hitting 14 pounds!

"The weather looks to be holding with a drier pattern than in January. River levels on Tuesday were ideal for coastal and upper river reaches. The forecast is for a week of good weather with mixed cloud days and great fishing."

## Central and Eastern Oregon –

**Northwest Trout** - Big Creek Reservoir #1 and #2 and Olalla Creek Reservoir will be stocked with trout this week in the Northwest Zone. Mt. Hood Pond, West Salish Pond and Alton Baker Pond are scheduled for planting in the Willamette Zone.

Although this next item concerns Southwest trout, the planting this week of Lake Selmac, All Sports Pond, Whetstone Pond and Expo Pond is without precedence for a couple of reasons. Initially, these spots aren't usually stocked 'til spring. In addition, the trout tossers will be schlepping over 7,000 unusually large fish. These are left over from releases which didn't happen last Fall, so have grown from the eight-to-ten-inch fish normally planted to chubby rainbows up to 13 inches and two pounds. That ought to entertain the kids.

**SW Washington** - The "**smelt** watch" is intensifying on the Cowlitz River. With the river dropping and commercial landings mounting in the Columbia River, the popular fish could start entering the Cowlitz at any time, said Joe Hymer, WDFW fish biologist. "We had one unsubstantiated report of some guys getting smelt in the river last Saturday, but nothing's confirmed yet," Hymer said Jan. 24. "All I can say at this point is the conditions are right." The recreational smelt fishery in the Cowlitz River is open from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. Saturdays only, with a 10-pound daily limit. No other tributaries are open to smelt dipping, but the mainstem Columbia River is open seven days per week, 24-hours a day, with a 25-pound daily limit. Updates on the [smelt fishery](#) are posted on WDFW's website.

Lower stream flows are also improving **steelhead** fishing, particularly on the smaller rivers. No current reports were available for the Cowlitz River since water levels started dropping, but anglers reported good steelhead fishing on the Kalama River during the weekend of Jan. 21-22. However, Hymer noted that a majority of those fish were wild, unmarked steelhead, which must be released unharmed. During the previous week, hatchery workers recycled 217 hatchery winter steelhead into the river below Kalama Falls Hatchery, planted 74 hatchery fish into Kress Lake and passed 70 wild fish above the hatchery.

Despite high water, 28 bank anglers caught 31 catchable-size rainbow trout in Kline Pond that week. Those fishing in the swimming area with worms or Rapala lures had the best results. Since Jan. 17, WDFW has planted 1,250 catchable-size rainbows in Kline Pond, 1,500 in Kress Lake, 5,200 in Battleground Lake and 1,000 in Kidney Lake near North Bonneville.

Anglers are also catching some legal-size **sturgeon** on the mainstem Columbia River, notably in the pools above Bonneville and The Dalles dams. Sturgeon retention is allowed seven days per week below the Wauna power lines and on Thursdays, Friday and Saturdays from the power lines upriver to Bonneville dam. For regulations above Bonneville Dam, see the 2005-06 rules/efishrules/index.jsp" target="\_blank">Fishing in Washington rules pamphlet.

For anglers who want to stay dry, WDFW will have a booth Feb. 8-12 at the Pacific Northwest

Sportsmen's Show at the Portland Expo Center.

**North Central Washington** – Upper Columbia River **steelhead** fishing has slowed a bit due to cooler temperatures, said WDFW district fish biologist Bob Jateff of Omak. "But anglers should keep a close eye on any warming trends," he said, "since a few degrees can make a big difference in fish activity and success rates." That fishery includes portions of the Okanogan and Methow rivers; steelheaders should check all [regulation details](#) of the season on WDFW's website. **Whitefish** fishing can also be productive at this time of the year on both the Methow and Similkameen rivers, Jateff said. But whitefish anglers need to remember that in sections of the river that have an ongoing steelhead fishery, selective gear rules are in effect. Jateff also noted that Rufous Woods Lake continues to be good fishing for **triploid rainbow trout** up to five pounds for both bank and boat anglers. The daily limit is two trout.

WDFW district fish biologist Art Viola of Wenatchee said **yellow perch** and trout fishing through the ice at Fish Lake north of Leavenworth in Chelan County remains excellent but ice conditions have deteriorated. "There is at least 12 inches of water-soaked snow on top the ice, making walking very difficult," he said. "And the ice is beginning to weaken." Viola noted that the ice is unsafe on Roses Lake, another popular Chelan County year-round fishery north of Manson. He also noted that steelhead angling remains slow on the Columbia River between Rocky Reach and Wells dams.

**Walleye** and **yellow perch** fishing at the Interstate-90 bridge on Moses Lake has been sporadic, says WDFW district fish biologist Jeff Korth of Moses Lake. "It's still pretty much iced up," he said. "But things are starting to thaw."

**South Central Washington** - The catch-and-keep season for **sturgeon** got under way this month on a portion of the Columbia River from the Dalles Dam to McNary Dam in Benton County. Minimum size for keeping a sturgeon is 48 inches, maximum size is 60 inches, and the daily catch limit is one fish. The stretch of the Columbia from McNary Dam to the Old Hanford townsite wooden power-line towers are open year-round for sturgeon, under the same rules. Feb. 1 is the opening of sturgeon fishing on the stretch from the Old Hanford townsite wooden power-line towers to Vernita Bridge, also under the same size and catch rules.

**Whitefish** are available on portions of the Bumping, Klickitat, Naches, Tieton and Yakima rivers. Anglers can do fairly well on whitefish once they find the winter schools. Whitefish make for very tasty tablefare, especially smoked. Only one single hook 3/16-inch or smaller measured point to shank (size 14) may be used to avoid hooking off-limits fish such as steelhead or salmon. There's no minimum size limit on whitefish and up to 15 can be taken daily.

Warmer weather and rain has melted most of the ice on the region's year-round lowland **rainbow trout** lakes, so they may be more accessible. Anglers are reminded that the region's winter-only fishery at North Elton Pond has a two-trout daily catch limit.

**Puget Sound** – As the weather improved, so did the fishing. And if the conditions stay favorable, anglers will continue to have more opportunities to catch fish. The recent respite from rain and wind gave anglers a chance to get out on Puget Sound and hook some **blackmouth**. "I've heard there's some nice fish out there," said Steve Thiesfeld, a fish biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). "With a break in the weather, more people headed out on the sound to fish for blackmouth, and those that did seem to have had some success."

As participation in the saltwater fishery grows, so does the harvest. Catch counts at the Everett boat ramp showed 35 anglers checked in 12 chinook on Jan. 21, and 54 anglers accounted for another 12 blackmouth on Jan. 22. At the Camano Island public ramp 32 anglers hauled in 11 chinook on Jan. 21, and 44 anglers accounted for seven blackmouth Jan. 22.

Thiesfeld recommends pursuing blackmouth in Marine Areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) and 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) through January. "Those are the areas where people are picking up fish right now," Thiesfeld said. "But once Marine Areas 7 (San Juan Islands) and 9 (Admiralty Inlet) open in February, anglers might want to consider those areas as well." Marine Area 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) is also open for blackmouth fishing through Jan. 31. Marine Areas 7 and 9 are scheduled to open on Feb. 1, with a daily bag limit of one chinook in both areas. Marine Areas 8-1 and 8-2 each have a daily bag limit of two hatchery chinook, and wild chinook must be released. Anglers should check the 2005/2006 [Fishing in Washington](#) pamphlet for more information.

After nearly a month of rain, the region's swollen rivers finally began to subside. And if the weather continues to cooperate, **steelhead** harvests could pick up. "The rivers are coming back into shape, and the fishing should be getting better," said Chad Jackson, WDFW fish biologist. Anglers should have a shot at hooking hatchery steelhead in the Snoqualmie and the Skykomish rivers into February, Jackson said. Anglers might want to keep an eye on the area's stream gauges before heading out.

If river conditions don't improve, Jackson recommends dropping a line in one of the region's lakes that have been stocked with **kokanee**. "Winter is a good time to fish for kokanee because they are usually up high in the water column," he said.

**Olympic Peninsula** – After a record-breaking 35 days of rain, fishing prospects are finally looking up. Rivers began dropping back into shape and clam diggers were busy booking motel reservations for a series of evening razor clam digs in late January. Still, conditions remain uncertain in the days ahead, prompting words of caution from fishery managers.

Three ocean beaches - and maybe four - will open to **razor clam** digging on evening tides Jan. 27-29. As of Jan. 20, WDFW had approved digs on evening tides at Long Beach, Mocrocks and Twin Harbors beaches after marine toxin tests confirmed that the clams on those beaches are safe to eat. Heavy surf earlier thwarted efforts to test clams at Kalaloch, delaying a decision on opening that beach to a public dig until the afternoon of Jan. 26. WDFW will announce the decision on its Shellfish Hotline (866-880-5431) and post it on the department's [razor clam season](#) website.

Because the surf remains heavy, diggers planning to hit the beach during the three-day opening should make sure to take a good lantern and raingear, said Dan Ayres, WDFW coastal shellfish manager. "It's important to come prepared," Ayres said. "Particularly during night digs, we also ask people to keep a close eye on young children."

Washington State Parks is also advising beach goers to remain 300 feet away from the toe of bluffs where slides have occurred or could occur. Since the last clam season, a major bluff has fallen into the ocean near Roosevelt Beach access road, south of Moclips.

As in previous openings, no digging will be allowed at any beach before noon. Evening low tides during the three-day dig are:

Friday, Jan. 27: 5 p.m. (-0.3 ft.)  
Saturday, Jan. 28: 5:49 p.m. (-0.7 ft.)  
Sunday, Jan. 29: 6:34 p.m. (-1.0 ft.)

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, Ayres said. The closed beach lies between the Grays Harbor North Jetty and the Copalis River, and includes Ocean Shores, Oyhut, Ocean City and Copalis.

Meanwhile, **steelhead** fishing picked up quickly after the rain clouds parted and the rivers became "fishable" again. "Rivers have been dropping into shape throughout western Washington, drawing an increasing number of anglers," said Mike Gross, WDFW fish biologist. One popular choice was the Sol Duc River, where checkers interviewed 63 anglers with 29 wild steelhead (including 25 that were released) and nine hatchery fish Jan. 20-22. By comparison, checkers counted just 10 anglers on the river - with just five fish among them - during the previous four days. The story was much the same on the Bogachiel, Calawah and Hoh rivers, although catch rates were considerably lower than those on the Sol Duc.

Improving conditions have also brought a flood of steelhead anglers to rivers in the Grays Harbor area, said Scott Barbour, another WDFW fish biologist. "There were lots of boats on the Wynoochee (River) last weekend, and I know a lot of people were catching fish. Barring another torrential downpour, steelhead fishing in other area rivers - including the Satsop, Humptulips and the Chehalis - should also be good in the days ahead." **Sturgeon** fishing on the Chehalis River should also pick up, now that smelt are moving in, he said.

Another change, noted by anglers and fish biologists alike, is that wild steelhead are becoming predominant in the catch. As most anglers know, retention of wild steelhead is limited to one fish per licensing year (April 1-March 31), taken from one of the following rivers: the Bogachiel, Calawah, Clearwater, Dickey, Goodman, Green, Hoh, Hoko, Pysht, Quillayute, Quinault or the Sol Duc. (The retention period for wild steelhead on the Green River closed Nov. 30). Elsewhere, they must be released. Wild steelhead can be distinguished from hatchery fish by their intact adipose and ventral fins.

Rather catch a salmon? **Blackmouth** fishing opens Feb. 1 in Marine Area 9, and should afford some good opportunities, said Tim Flint, WDFW statewide salmon manager. "These fish haven't seen a bait or lure since the end of November," Flint said. "That, together with the fact that catch rates are picking up in the chinook selective fishery in Marine Areas 8-1 and 8-2, suggests that fishing in Marine Area 9 could be good." Popular areas include Possession Bar, Midchannel Bank and Point No Point.

**Eastern Washington** - Snake River **steelhead** fishing is picking up on tributaries that are running high and fast. Latest creel surveys showed an average of just two-and-half hours per steelhead caught on the Touchet River, just under three hours per fish on the Walla Walla River, and a little over four hours per fish on the Tucannon River. The [full report](#), which includes Snake River mainstem stretches, is on the WDFW website.

WDFW district fish biologist Chris Donley of Spokane reports that most of the ice has melted at the district's winter-only **rainbow trout** lakes, Fourth of July on the Lincoln-Adams county line and Hog Canyon in western Spokane County. "Go get 'em," Donley said, "but be careful out there." Boat launching and shore fishing continue to be challenging with thin shoreline ice from freezing nights. Donley recommends fishing Lake Roosevelt for **kokanee** and rainbow trout, either by boat trolling or bank fishing from the mouth of the Spokane River up to Grand Coulee Dam. Donley also noted that Whitman County's year-round Rock Lake continues to produce **brown** and rainbow trout.

WDFW district fish biologist Curt Vail of Colville said Williams Lake in Stevens County has about four inches of ice covered with almost as much slush and water. "It's pretty risky to walk out on,"

he said. Those managing to get a line in are doing well, with near limits of **rainbow trout** that run from just under 10 inches to 14 inches.

### **Reader Email**

**Kapt Ken Johnson** updates TGF readers regarding the bank fishing prospects on the lower Willamette this week: "There is definitely a run of Steelhead coming into the Meldrum Bar area. No hype, just truth. Counts are in the hundreds at the falls, now, and those counts are being reflected on the beach. More and more boats are "Hoggin" it up at the mouth of the Clackamas and the word is that a fish or three has been caught there. Chilly weather is in the forecast but that's why General Motors invented heaters in their cars and trucks. Many a fisherman toughs it in the luxury of the cab of their pickup, keeping out of the wind and rain if possible. If the bell goes off, hell with the rain. At that point, it's "What Rain???" Water levels are good and great for the fish. No blow outs yet. Rhonda is predicting snow mixed with rain in the next couple of days but I don't think anyone will notice. It's time to get out there with your long johns and catch some fish. Mother Columbia was born to keep us WARM, so gear up, hang a prawn on a hook, and go catch dinner! See you there!"

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**Weekly Quote** – "There is certainly something in fishing that tends to produce a gentleness of spirit, a pure serenity of mind." - Washington Irving

**GOOD LUCK!**