

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **December 8th, – December 14th, 2006**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- With temperatures stabilizing, gorge anglers had fair to good fishing for keeper sturgeon in the Columbia River Gorge over the weekend. The best fishing remains in the gorge while Kelly Point Park is a distant second. Fishing downriver of the mouth of the Willamette is fair for shakers but keepers are scarce.

Despite a low prediction for returning smelt this winter, rumors of their presence are coming from downriver. Although this used to be an indicator for the winter sturgeon fishery in the lower Columbia, it is no longer a reliable factor.

It was slow going for sturgeon fishers on the Willamette during the last Thursday through Saturday opener, but a few keepers were caught on a variety of baits. Winter steelhead are falling in modest numbers to plunkers at Meldrum Bar. As a natural consequence, the number of anglers along the bank of the Willamette below the Clackamas River is increasing.

As the Clackamas drops and clears, a few early steelheaders are sure to give it a try. Steelhead are occasionally taken in late December, but the run will get underway in December and should be worth a trip in February. Sandy River steelhead are on a similar schedule.

Despite the fact that Detroit Reservoir is not yet down to winter low levels serving as flood protection, the levels of the North Santiam are fishable. Boaters should watch for debris, logs and changes in channels. The number of summer steelhead entering the trap at Foster Dam has dwindled to near-zero and no winter fish have entered.

While few trout plantings are on the schedule for the remainder of the year, the ODFW will periodically stock brood trout and steelhead in valley lakes and ponds in wintertime. So it was with the inadvertently unpublicized planting last week. Anglers will find brood trout in Walling Pond, Walter Wirth Lake, Junction City Pond, West Salish Pond and Sheridan Pond.

Oregon licenses and harvest cards became available on December 1st at license agents state wide.

Northwest – Large numbers of anglers are still trying for late winter chinook in Tillamook Bay. A great bite in the Ghost Hole was witnessed on Monday but it had tapered by Tuesday. There is still lots of wood debris floating in the bay but the water has good clarity.

The Wilson River has been very productive this week with a mixed bag of both dark and bright chinook. Catches have been excellent since the weekend but expect continued high effort. It is clear that the Wilson and Kilchis runs are strong this year. With so many chinook in the river, steelheaders are timid about using lighter gear. Steelhead have been taken on most north coast streams however.

The Nestucca also fished very well for both bright and dark chinook since the weekend. Fresher fish will be found in downstream drifts and although action should slow, persistent anglers are still likely to find success. According to **Pro guide Kent Anderson (503-550-6303)**, "The Nestucca finally got green again and fished good for the past 5 days(Weds-Sun).

Smaller north coast streams like the Necanicum and North Fork Nehalem are likely to be too low for safe

drifting. More rain is forecasted for early next week making these streams prime for the taking of steelhead.

Siletz winter steelhead hopefuls are trying with little success. This is another river with a successful broodstock run which will pick up in January and February

Crabbing in Yaquina Bay has improved, rewarding some folks with limits. Mid-day will be the best time to toss nets, rings and traps this weekend.

The Alsea recently produced good numbers of fresh and colored chinook and an occasional winter steelhead downstream of Five Rivers. The nearby Siuslaw should soon produce winter steelhead as well.

Extreme tides kept most crabbers from attaining easy limits. Tides will soften by the middle of next week.

Southwest – On the Umpqua, Sayers Rapids has rewarded steelheaders with a few bright winter fish over the weekend but sturgeon fishing has yet to take off in the estuary.

A few steelhead have been taken on the Coos and Coquille, with prospects improving along with river conditions. The East Fork Coquille opened to steelheading on December 1st.

Siltcoos and Tahkenitch Lakes have slowed for coho as temperatures have dropped below 45 degrees. These fisheries close on December 15th.

Winter steelheading is improving on the lower Rogue as the river recovers from heavy rains. The Grants Pass stretch is slow. Upper Rogue steelheaders continue to make fair to good catches of summer steelhead.

As Chinook fishing winds down on the South coast, only the Elk and Sixes continue to produce reliably. Levels and clarity were good over last weekend and nearly half the anglers trying scored chrome.

Winter steelhead have started entering the Chetco and several have been caught as Chinook fishing winds down here.

Eastern - The mid-40-degree water of the lower Deschutes is clearing with steelheading picking up a little this week. Pressure is very low, much like the air temperature on the East side.

The Grande Ronde River is producing decent steelhead catches although the Washington section has higher catch rates. With a warming trend, action should continue to pick up in the coming weeks.

Southwest Washington- Lake Scanewa (Cowlitz basin) boat anglers are averaging 2 coho each with about half being retained for their good tablefare.

Steelhead have yet to make a strong appearance in most SW Washington streams.

Klickitat anglers are averaging nearly a coho per rod in that fishery.

Soapbox Update – 2007 Run Forecast-You Can't Afford to Miss This!

What: WA, OR and ID Fish Divisions give NSIA a look at how 2007 will stack up with 2006. Also, ODF&W will give a short presentation titled:

Opening the black box—What you always wanted to know but were never able to ask about in season modeling of the sport fishery!

Where: Pacific Fishery Management Council HQ Conference Room

7700 NE Ambassador Place (near PDX airport)

Portland, Oregon

When: Tuesday December 19 @ 1:00 pm Sharp!

Space is limited and we have a full Agenda. The agencies will be explaining for us how sport fisheries are “modeled” (measured) in season. As always, the States of WA, OR and ID (Sharon Kiefer is back by popular demand!) will give us their crystal ball preview of fisheries in the northwest for next year.

We will take your RSVP until the meeting room is full. Call Frances at 503 631 8859 or toll free 866 315 NSIA. Come join the leaders at NSIA as we meet with Larry Peck, Deputy Director of WDF&W, Sharon Kiefer of IDF&W, Virgil Moore, Director of ODF&W, and his able deputies, Curt Melcher and Steve Williams.

Columbia River Fishing Report – Sturgeon fishing is beginning to taper but the Columbia River gorge remains the best place to target keeper sized sturgeon. Effort is dropping off which may make limits a better possibility for dedicated anglers. Smelt remains the ticket and a moderation in temperatures has prolonged the opportunity in the gorge. Troutdale to the mouth of the Willamette is the second best place to target keepers but the temperature variance between the 2 big metro rivers is not different enough to stimulate a consistent lower Willamette migration.

Smelt have been rumored in the lower river but reports are unconfirmed. State fish agency predictions for smelt are not all that great this year.

Steelhead anglers working the John Day scored excellent results this week- especially in the boat fishery. While bank anglers averaged 1 steelhead for every 4 rods fishing, boat anglers cleaned up with 1.77 steelhead per boat through the weekend. The moderation in temperature likely stimulated the bite in this region with anglers using bobbers and bait or jigs in the John Day Arm while trolling plugs in the mainstem. This week is likely the peak of the season.

Crabbing in the lower Columbia was more challenging this week with extreme tides. Most of the keepers are smaller than commercial legals which may bode well for extended opportunity if commercial crabbers settle on a price for ocean caught crab.

The Guide’s Forecast – Although we’re not forecasted to experience a weather change until after the weekend, a cool east wind may damper sturgeon success in the Columbia River Gorge. Anglers hugged up against the deadline may stand the best chance of fishing unimpeded and the fishing is good there anyway. Smelt and squid or shrimp combos are still the go to bait but if fresh smelt becomes available to bait fishers, you had better get your hands on some of those!

Although the rest of the lower Columbia to Woodland should provide fair action for sturgeon, only a rare keeper will come from this area. Most keepers that used to frequent these waters have left for more productive hunting grounds along the Oregon Coast.

Keep after those steelhead as nearly 2/3 of them are of hatchery status. Boat anglers are positioning themselves for the best action but bank anglers should have some good opportunities as well. The lower

John Day by trail is the best bet for bankies.

Better tides are predicted for lower Columbia River crabbers. Target the top of the high tide and bring bait that seals don't like- turkey and chicken are top notch in the eyes of the Dungeness.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Willamette flows have moderated to those of the first week in November and water clarity has increased to 2.5 feet. Unfortunately, the temperature has fallen to 42 degrees, down one degree from the first of December, and that's the most critical factor in improving the sturgeon bite. Winter fishing can be very good when the water temperature of the Willamette is higher than that of the Columbia. Steelhead hopefuls are gathering on the banks at Meldrum Bar.

The Santiams remain at good level and color and while there is a viable summer steelhead fishery high on the rivers, numbers of winter steelhead remain too low to target them.

While it's not possible to gift your favorite angler with a license or harvest card, gift certificates are available at all locations for 2007 licenses now.

The Guide's Forecast – In spite of less than optimal conditions on the lower Willamette, sturgeon fishing has been fair, rewarding a few anglers with shaker action along with the occasional keeper-sized fish. Successful anglers have taken fish on smelt, squid, herring, sand shrimp, even nightcrawlers. Plunkers working the waters below the Clackamas mouth are taking a steelhead or twp for the group every day. If the forecast of rain is accurate, the warming influence should improve prospects for both steelhead and sturgeon.

Winter steelhead numbers of winter steelhead have been crossing daily at Willamette Falls, and while these fish will become a component in a worthwhile catch and release fishery, it won't be worth the trip until February or March of next year.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – These rivers are both recovering well from the earlier flooding rains. Clackamas anglers have run across a few early winter steelhead and numbers will gradually increase through the month. January will produce better catches.

The Sandy has moved to 100% broodstock program. This means the run timing will be that of the fishes genetic heritage. They'll be entering in January with March providing the better opportunity for a hookup. Start low on the system as the run begins.

North Coast District Fishing Report – What a great week for driftboaters on many north coast streams. The Wilson was tops for traffic and success. A mix of fresh and dark fish fell to anglers since late last week. Weekend anglers found the best fishing of the year (given it's been blown out all season). Fish were motivated and on the move allowing for ample numbers of chromers to bite backbounced and backrolled baits in the lower Wilson. With Donaldson's put-in out of commission, the first likely float is from Mills Bridge downstream to Sollie Smith Bridge. There are 2 strategies for catching fish with the mass of boats you will encounter in this stretch. First, you can blow by most of the boats after an early put in and fish the lower mile of the drift. There is excellent water and fresh fish should be coming in on every tide. If you get far enough ahead of the boats, you can have some great water to yourself before other boats come into the area. OR, you can just take it easy with a later start hitting all the water thoroughly with the best baits you can fish and come up with results. Most people choose to "boat race" and it compromises the experience but can pay dividends. The more people that are fishing, the more people that are likely to anchor to stake their claim on a spot. It's the way these fisheries have progressed these

days. For those anxious to get a jump start on broodstock steelhead collection on the Wilson, our ODF&W STEP bio has this to report: The pumps at Hughey Creek Acclimation Pond were damaged with the recent floods and are in the process of being replaced. We are still continuing with the collection of broodstock but need to have the fish dropped off at Trask Hatchery until we are able to get the pond at Hughey Creek up and running. The phone number at the hatchery is (503) 842-4090. Sorry for the inconvenience. We will let you know as soon as we have it up and running again. Thanks!

The Kilchis is still putting out fish but the lowering of the water has caused fish to be spooky. Fresh fish are still coming in on these big tides so lower river fishing should yield results. The Kilchis may once again become the best option if rain returns to the coastal drainages.

The Nestucca fished well last week with a surprising number of bright fish available. Plugs took a good number of quality fish to 30 pounds and people had a hard time focusing on steelhead with so many salmon present. The best drifts were from Farmer Creek to Cloverdale and with fish clearly on the move, fish were holding in all kinds of water. Some steelhead have been taken on the mainstem. **Pro guide Kent Anderson (503-550-6303)** reports, "The Nestucca finally got green again and fished good for the past 5 days(Weds-Sun), multiple fresh chinook everyday (5-10 hookups/day). Most fish caught backtrolling Kwikfish. We also did a little prospecting with the side drifting gear and landed 1 nice hatchery steelhead below 3 Rivers. Please remind anglers that many of the female chinook are getting very ripe and even though they still look "bright" the meat is not table quality. Best way to tell is if the belly is "saggy" and the "egg tube" is beginning to protrude the fish should be released. Keep the bucks and let the hens make more for the future.

Pro guide James Stevenson (503-580-4162) was on the same river and reports, "[I] drifted the Nestucca, landed 5 one good one, several other bites. The sun is setting on the Chinook we need the Steelhead. A few years back we would have plenty by now, that's our fish management process."

Tillamook Bay had some good fishing early in the week. Can you believe this fishery is still holding up? Since Monday, the bite in the Ghost Hole has tapered and this fishery is overdue to crash. Extreme tides aided anglers this week and we head into a soft tide series after the weekend.

Crabbing remains poor in Tillamook Bay and slowed somewhat in Netarts on the extreme tides this week. Although the ocean is open to recreational crabbers, we have no reports from folks trying this out. The ocean should have been comfortable to attempt this at mid-week but we're not sure if the bar opened up for recreational crabbers.

The Guide's Forecast – Anglers should be able to get away with good water conditions for at least the first day of the weekend. Although fishing on the Wilson will hold up through mid-month, we've seen the best of the season this week so expect action to taper. Freshest fish will be found the closer you get to Sollie Smith Bridge and sledders working the water below Sollie Smith should have some opportunities as well. A mix of plugs and eggs tipped with shrimp will be the ticket. The real ticket is any of the two techniques will work if you are one of the first drifters through. If you find a pod of fish, bounce eggs at them along with shrimp. You will take fish. Steelhead should begin to show in greater numbers and may even migrate upstream somewhat slow given the water conditions have moderated this week. Be prepared for more wet weather as next week begins however and the Wilson is likely to blow out again as early as Sunday. I hate fishing a rising river! Saturday will be the best option if you have to fish weekends!

The Trask is open! There should be some fish around but the Wilson will likely be the better producer. Fish should be well settled in the deeper, more defined holes where eggs can effectively take them. Be prepared to encounter dark fish. Release hens that are not chrome bright as they will have loose eggs and white meat.

The Kilchis should still produce some good catches of winter chinook and a few steelhead may become available. Chinook will be in the deep water while steelhead in the shallow runs and riffles- particularly downstream of spawning chinook!

The Nestucca should begin to taper and the focus will switch to steelhead. The salmon should all be dark by now with few exceptions. Target steelhead from Three Rivers downstream. They will be moving fast towards the hatchery tributary and fish should be available from the hatchery deadline downstream for bank anglers.

The Necanicum, and Gnat Creek have put out steelhead. These are excellent rivers for bank anglers. The Necanicum is getting almost too low to drift and although fresh salmon were taken last week, this run should be well on its way out. The Necanicum has trees across the river downstream of Highway 101 and the Johnson Brother's take-out is a pay-to-use ramp. Be prepared for the worst on this river- bring a chainsaw but don't cut critical habitat if you don't have to!

Tillamook Bay should begin to slow down- especially with the weak tide series ahead. Although tides were ideal for sturgeon fishing early this week, I did not see anyone attempting. There were several days however that there were 30+ boats in the Ghost Hole. Softer tides will challenge bay salmon fishers at this point. It may be best to target Chinook in the rivers at this point although some fish will still be present.

Crabbing may improve in Tillamook Bay but Netarts is the best option as it has very little freshwater influence and the softer tide series should bode well for crabbers this week.

Central & South Coast Reports – Regarding the fine crabbing in Yaquina Bay, **avid angler Bob G.** reports, "Went Crabbing off the Loading wharf immediately behind Rogue Brewery at Newport Saturday. Crabbed (Incoming Tide) from 4:30 pm until 12:30 am. 6 rings (3 Adults with Shellfish Tags) Baited with chicken. Caught 20 Dungeness keepers, Shells full & firm. Unbelievable!!! Only saw two females the whole time (1 full of eggs the other juvenile). Cold as could be but dang were they cooperative!!!"

It's a little early for winter steelhead on the Alsea, but that didn't deter **pro guide Bill Kremers (541-754-6411)**, who reports, "[I] ran my first winter steelhead trip on the Alsea River Monday. River was in great shape as the level was right at five feet. We floated from Five Rivers to Blackberry. To my surprise we caught mostly fall chinook, all fairly bright and full of fight. They were hitting a variety of steelhead plugs and all took awhile to land on steelhead tackle. The final count was 4 chinook, a couple more broken off, several more strikes and one winter steelhead. No idea how much longer the chinook fishing will last." Bill went on to say that he'll send pictures when he gets them back.

Pro guide Jeff "Action" Jackson (541-268-6944) reports, "The Siuslaw is really starting to come into shape, and Lake Creek has been looking good for a few days now. Even though river levels are good, fishing has been only fair for Chinook. A few Winter Steelhead are being picked up by drifters. The steelhead run will be building from here into January.

"Siltcoos and Tahkenitch Lakes have slowed down for Coho. Water temperatures have really cooled off (44 degrees) and fish aren't chasing plugs and spinners as well. It's still worth a try on a nice day as the lakes don't close until Dec. 15.

"There should be a few sturgeon in Siuslaw Bay, but so far there's been no effort. Crabbing is slow."

Steelheaders are taking fair numbers on the lower mainstem and North Fork of the Umpqua River. Although the South fork Umpqua opened the 1st of December, a fishable number of steelhead will be present the last week of December and into January. A few Chinook and coho are available as well. Sturgeon anglers have yet to see the bite turn on and since the water has cleared, it may be a while before

this fishery gets underway. Crabbers are taking limits in Winchester Bay.

Coos and Coquille steelheaders have experienced fair to good fishing over the last week with numbers of fish continuing to increase.

Despite the Elk and Sixes dropping to a fairly low level this week anglers are still catching fair to good numbers of bright fish. A 40 pounder was taken last Wednesday on the Sixes and another Chinook in the 40-pound class was landed on the Elk River this week. Trolled anchovy and wrapped Kwikfish have been equally effective.

Lower flows and water temperatures have reduced summer steelhead catch rates on the upper Rogue. Corkies and single egg imitations have been most effective over the last week. Plug-pullers have drawn the most strikes below Shady Cove. Steelheaders in the Grants Pass stretch are struggling to draw a strike and winter steelhead have yet to appear. While it looked like the winter steelhead season would get underway last week in the lower Rogue, cold water has slowed fishing. Ironically, the Rogue, like many rivers, would benefit from the warming effects of rainfall.

Coles River Hatchery on the Rogue River trucked fin-clipped steelhead downstream to TouVelle State Park this week to give anglers another shot at them. Nearly 1,300 summer-runs have been recycled so far this year and the hatchery hopes to do so once more before the end of the year. In addition, the hatchery will donate about 800 hatchery coho to the Oregon Food bank for distribution to those in need over the holidays. This brings the total coho donated to nearly 1600 in 2006.

John Austin of Brookings, Oregon, not only took the first winter steelhead of the year from the Chetco River last week, it was also the first steelhead of his life. The Chetco is expected to have an excellent run this season. A few bright Chinook are still available here and despite declining numbers, Chetco anglers have continued to enjoy decent catches along with improving winter steelhead action.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Pro guide Mac Huff (800-940-3688) chimes in from the Far East with this, "It sounds like the weather has lightened angling pressure on your side of the state too. The creel checker on the Grande Ronde River interviewed about 15 anglers in each state, Oregon and Washington, last week during four days of checking. Oregon anglers averaged about 12 hours per fish, while Washington-based anglers averaged less than 4 hours per fish. The weather is warming this week into the 40s, which will invigorate the fish and probably attract more interest among the angling community."

Northwest Trout – While few trout plantings are on the schedule for the remainder of the year, the ODFW will periodically stock brood trout and steelhead in valley lakes and ponds in wintertime. So it was with the inadvertently unpublicized planting last week. Anglers will find brood trout in Walling Pond, Walter Wirth Lake, Junction City Pond, West Salish Pond and Sheridan Pond. The ODFW has vowed to be more diligent regarding future winter plantings of this nature.

Washington fishing reports:

As supplied by the WDF&W web site, the Weekender Report:

North Puget Sound

Fishing: Saltwater anglers who braved recent heavy rains and frigid temperatures did fairly well fishing for **chinook salmon**. "A number of anglers that did get out on Puget Sound found some fish," said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fisheries biologist. "That could be a good sign as we move into December."

Catch counts were already showing some improvements by the last week of November. At the Everett Ramp, 27 anglers were checked with four chinook Nov. 24, and 48 anglers brought home 20 chinook the following day. At the Camano Island ramp, six anglers checked two chinook Nov. 24, while 28 anglers hauled in four chinook the next day.

Thiesfeld reminds anglers that salmon fishing in marine areas 7 (San Juan Islands) and 9 (Admiralty Inlet) closes Nov. 30, and a one-salmon daily limit begins Dec. 1 in Marine Area 10 (Seattle/Bremerton).

The selective fishery continues in marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) and 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner), where anglers can keep up to two hatchery chinook per day, so long as the fish measure at least 22 inches in length. Wild chinook salmon, which have an intact adipose fin, cannot be brought aboard the boat.

In the rivers, anglers should still find some **chum salmon**, said Thiesfeld. "But this is really the time of year when most people are gearing up to fish for **steelhead**."

Elsewhere, about 3,000 hatchery **rainbow trout** - averaging approximately three pounds each - were released into Beaver Lake near Issaquah in mid-November, said Chad Jackson, WDFW fish biologist. Beaver Lake, one of several westside lowland lakes open to fishing year-round, is best fished by small boat, although anglers can also be successful fishing from shore, said Jackson. The daily bag limit is five fish, and bait anglers must keep the first five trout they catch.

Back on the saltwater, **crabbing** is still an option in seven marine areas of Puget Sound. Marine areas 4 (Neah Bay), 5 (Sekiu), 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca), 9, 10, 12 (Hood Canal) and 13 (south Puget Sound) are open seven days a week through Jan. 2 unless catch quotas for those areas are reached before then. Marine areas 7S (San Juan Islands), 7E (Anacortes to Bellingham), 7N (Bellingham to Pt. Roberts), 8-1, 8-2 and 11 (Tacoma-Vashon Island) will remain closed to sport crabbing for the season.

Anglers should check WDFW's *2006/2007 Fishing in Washington* pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) for more information on those and other fisheries in the region.

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

Weather permitting, anglers will have some good opportunities to catch winter **steelhead**, **coho** and **chum** salmon in the days ahead. Then again, clam diggers can look forward to another productive **razor clam** opening in early December, regardless which way the weather turns.

"Despite rough weather, most diggers got their 15-clam limits during the last opening," said Dan Ayres, WDFW coastal shellfish manager. "We expect that will hold true during the upcoming dig, too." Four beaches - Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocoorks, and Kalaloch - will open for **razor clam** digging Dec. 2 and Dec. 3 between the hours of noon and midnight each day. Twin Harbors will also be open for a third day of digging from noon to midnight Dec. 4. Copalis Beach will remain closed to digging due to the low number of clams in the total allowable catch.

The best time to start digging is an hour or two before low tide, said Ayres, who recommends taking a lantern for evening digs. Evening low tides for the upcoming dig are as follows:

Saturday, Dec. 2 (4:16 p.m. -0.4) Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocoorks, Kalaloch

Sunday, Dec. 3 (5:07 p.m. -1.0) Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocoorks, Kalaloch

Monday, Dec. 4 (5:56 p.m. -1.3) Twin Harbors only

Ayres noted that fishery managers have tentatively scheduled another dig over the New Year's holiday. If marine-toxin tests are favorable, an evening dig will be held Dec. 31 at all five ocean beaches - including Copalis - followed by another Jan. 1 at Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks and Kalaloch. One beach, Twin Harbors, would also remain open for an evening dig Jan. 2.

Meanwhile, rivers throughout the region have been dropping into shape for fishing since the recent freeze-up, said Bill Freymond, WDFW regional fish manager. "If it stays cold, the Satsop, Wynoochee and a lot of other rivers should be in prime condition," he said. "Right now, the focus is still on late-run **coho**, but **steelhead** are right behind them." David Low, a WDFW fish biologist, is already hearing reports of anglers catching steelhead in area rivers, noting that a friend caught "three hatchery steelhead and a 'Christmas king'," during the last weekend in November.

Hatchery steelhead are also showing up in tribal catches, said Low, adding that he'll have a better sense of the sport catch once WDFW resumes creel surveys during the first week in December. Survey results for the Quillayute River system and the Hoh River will be posted on the WDFW Fishing/Shellfishing website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishcorn.htm>) under the heading "Fishing Reports." Low strongly recommends that anglers review steelhead-fishing rules discussed in WDFW's *Fishing in Washington* pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regsfishreg.htm>) before attempting to hook up.

Chum anyone? Many popular chum salmon waters such as Kennedy Creek and McLane Creek will be closing to salmon fishing at the end of the day Nov. 30. But that's just when the late-run chum fishery on the Nisqually River gets rolling, said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. "Anglers should get some nice, chrome-bright chum salmon right through the month of December," he said. "That what makes that fishery so popular."

Southwest Washington:

Icy roads, rather than fishing conditions, could be the biggest concern for anglers hoping to spend some time on area rivers in the days ahead. With many parts of southwest Washington still in the grip of late-November storms, anglers might want to consider putting fishing plans on hold until driving conditions are less dicey, said Wolf Dammers, a WDFW fish biologist.

"There are still a lot of late-running **coho** around, but the **winter steelhead** fishery is just getting started," Dammers said. "Anglers aren't going to miss much if they wait for driving conditions to improve."

For those fishing during the week ending Nov. 26, the Cowlitz River remained a hotspot for coho. In creel surveys conducted on the Cowlitz that week, 77 anglers kept 22 adult coho and released 22 others. Fifteen anglers contacted on the Klickitat River also did well that week, landing 19 coho and releasing 13 others.

An increasing number of coho caught in those, and other, Columbia River tributaries are dark, a sure sign that those fisheries are winding down, Dammers said. As of Nov. 22, the daily limit for marked, hatchery coho was increased to three fish (minimum size, 12 inches) on the Washougal, Kalama and Lewis rivers. The daily limit was also increased to three coho, marked or unmarked, on the Klickitat River.

Meanwhile, bright hatchery **steelhead** are just starting to show up in the catch - and at area hatcheries. As of Nov. 22, a total of 30 winter run steelhead had returned to the Grays River Hatchery. Also that week, two winter steelhead were recorded in a creel check on the Cowlitz River and 47 others were recovered at the Cowlitz Salmon Hatchery. Blue Creek and Mill Creek, both tributaries to the Cowlitz River, will both open to hatchery steelhead fishing Dec. 1. Blue Creek also opens for hatchery **sea-run cutthroat** fishing that day.

The 47 winter-run steelhead recovered at the hatchery were released back at the Interstate 5 boat launch along with 39 summer-run steelhead. Tacoma Power employees also released 1,979 coho adults at the

Day Use Park on Lake Scanewa, 525 coho adults on the Cispus River and 520 coho adults at the Franklin Bridge near Packwood.

At Kline Pond, bank anglers fishing in the swimming area are catching 12- to 18-inch **brown trout** on biscuit dough. On Nov. 21, Kline Pond was also planted with 1,000 catchable-size rainbows and Lacamas Lake was planted with 5,000 catchable-size rainbows.

On the Columbia River, the **sturgeon** fishery has cooled off along with the weather. In a recent survey, 66 bank anglers fishing from the Wauna powerlines upstream to Bonneville Dam had caught just three legal-size fish. The water temperature at the dam has dropped to 51 degrees.

Eastern Washington:

Four winter-only **rainbow trout** lakes open Dec. 1 for a four-month season. At least three of them should provide good action if anglers can reach them through current icy and snowy conditions.

Chris Donley, WDFW central district fish biologist, said recent sampling indicates prospects at Fourth of July Lake on the Lincoln-Adams county line and Hog Canyon Lake in southwest Spokane County are better than expected. Donley said both lakes are under a five trout daily catch limit, with no more than two over 14 inches. About half the fish in Fourth of July are 14 inches or better, he said. "If your first two fish at Fourth of July are at least 14 inches, you're done for the day," he said. Hog Canyon has more of the 9- to 11-inch fish, although enough 14- to 18-inchers to make fishing interesting. Donley recommends Hog Canyon for anglers who want to take home limits. "Fourth of July anglers might see some **tiger trout** in their catch for the first time this season," he said. "Those fish were put in there to try to help control the fathead minnow population."

The other two winter-only trout lakes are Williams and Hatch in Stevens County. Williams Lake has 9- to 10-inch rainbows from this year's fry plants, and some 14-inch or better carryovers from last year. But illegally-introduced yellow perch are starting to compete with the trout, so this may be the last year of decent trout fishing at Williams. Hatch Lake fishing will again be poor since it has had a growing infestation of yellow perch and received only minimal hatchery trout.

Also opening Dec. 1 is a four-month **whitefish** season on the Little Spokane River from the state highway 291 bridge near Nine Mile Falls to the west branch tributary north of Chattaroy. Up to 15 whitefish of any size can be taken daily, but fishing gear is restricted to one single point hook no bigger than size 14 (no more than 3/16-inch from point to shank). The gear rule is designed to minimize the chances of catching other gamefish, which are not legal to harvest at this time.

Snake River **steelhead trout** fishing continues to be best in the tributaries, although effort recently increased in the mainstem section from Lower Monumental to Little Goose dams following the release of about 1,000 surplus adult steelhead from WDFW's Lyons Ferry Hatchery. The recent cold snap may have steelhead holing up in deep, slow-moving water, which can make for hot fishing. The latest creel checks on the Tucannon River indicate anglers have been averaging about nine hours of fishing for every steelhead caught. Anglers in the mid-Snake River section above the stateline bridge were averaging about 9.5 hours per fish caught. Those in the stretches of the mainstem from Lower Granite to Lower Monumental dams were averaging a little less than 10 hours per steelhead. For details on the latest creel see

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/snake/index.htm>.

North Central Washington:

Bob Jateff, WDFW district fish biologist, said catch rates for **steelhead trout** have recently slowed a bit on the mainstem Columbia River above Wells Dam. "Anglers are averaging one fish per 10 hours of fishing effort," he said. "The area around Pateros has been the most popular location."

The four-month season for **whitefish** opens Dec. 1 on portions of the Chewuch, Entiat, Methow, Similkameen, and Wenatchee rivers and Sinlahekin Creek. The daily catch limit is 15 fish using the standard whitefish gear - one single point hook size 14 or smaller (no more than 3/16-inch from point to shank). The gear rule is designed to minimize the chances of catching other gamefish, which are not legal to harvest at this time. Jateff recommends that anglers on the Methow regularly check the WDFW website's emergency fishing season changes (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) for special closures during the whitefish season. At this time, the Methow, Okanogan, and Similkameen rivers are closed to fishing for steelhead.

Dec. 1 also marks the shift to a catch-and-keep season with standard fishing gear on four Okanogan County lakes - Little Twin near Winthrop, Big and Little Green near Omak, and Rat near Brewster. Jateff said all four lakes should provide good fishing for **rainbow trout**, although recent deep-freeze conditions could delay or complicate access until a major thaw or safe ice depth develops. The daily catch limit is five fish and bait is allowed.

South Central Washington:

North Elton Pond, the region's only designated winter season rainbow trout fishing lake, is open for fishing from Dec. 1 through March 31. The 15-acre lake near Selah, in Yakima County, has been stocked with 2,000 rainbows that average about three-quarters of a pound and 10 to 13 inches. But WDFW Fish Biologist Jim Cummins said the recent deep freeze has iced-up the water and there may be no safe opportunity to fish on the opener. If wintry conditions persist, there may eventually be fishing through the ice. The daily catch limit is two trout.

Eric Anderson, WDFW district fish biologist, said two year-round lakes in Kittitas County were recently planted with surplus hatchery rainbow trout broodstock. North FioRito and Mattoon lakes near Ellensburg each received 125 fish that range from five to 10 pounds each.

More similar-sized rainbow broodstock from WDFW's Goldendale Hatchery were slated for some Yakima County year-round waters on Nov. 29, barring any access problems from snow or ice. Rotary Lake and I-82 Pond #4 were each to receive 125 fish and Myron Lake was to get 84.

Whitefish season opens on the Bumping, Naches and Tieton rivers Dec. 1. Cummins said the Columbia River between Vantage and Priest Rapids Dam and the Yakima River are also good bets for whitefish. The daily catch limit is 15 fish using the standard whitefish gear - one single point hook size 14 or smaller (no more than 3/16-inch from point to shank). The gear rule is designed to minimize the chances of catching other gamefish, which are not legal to harvest at this time. Check the fishing rules pamphlet for all details.

Reader Email

Got a story to tell or information to share? We'd love to hear from you!

Write to the TGF staff:

Bob Rees: brees@pacifier.com

Doug Rees: drees@TheGuidesForecast.com

Michael Teague: SailCat@SailCat.com

Random Links

Instructions for the Annual Rogue River lottery for float permits are posted on BLM's website. The lottery drawing takes place in February 2007

<http://www.blm.gov/or/resources/recreation/rogue/index.htm>.

Weekly Quote – "The deepest pleasures of angling are measured in the soul." - W.H. Lawrie

GOOD LUCK!