

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **January 12th – January 18th, 2007**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- Although thoughts of spring chinook begin to motivate die-hard anglers, water conditions along with a low prediction have a few hopefuls targeting steelhead. The bulk of the run is forecasted to be the larger and earlier returning 5-year olds but it may be several weeks before the first one is taken.

Columbia River anglers are targeting sturgeon close to the mouth of the Willamette and near the mouth of the Cowlitz River. Effort and catch is low. The upcoming cold snap will further challenge anglers and may put a halt on the sparse smelt run.

The lower Willamette which flowed into Clackamette Park over the weekend, has been dropping this week but is still high, swift and muddy. Sturgeon anglers continue to release fair to good numbers of shakers with keeper-sized fish difficult to locate.

The McKenzie River was flowing at 10,300 cfs on Monday this week and will be slow to recover.

The boat slides on the North Santiam at Mehema have been repaired. Numbers of native winters are gradually improving.

Water conditions on the Sandy are good and will improve with cold temperatures this week. The last flood put a great deal of sand in the system, which will impair visibility until it washes out.

The Clackamas is high and off-color but improving. Fishing was fair to good on Eagle Creek this week. When water conditions improve a little, the Clackamas will fish well.

Northwest – North coast steelheaders found ideal conditions on smaller streams like the Necanicum and North Fork Nehalem. The Necanicum however yielded poor results over the weekend while the North Fork fared only slightly better. Most earlier returning hatchery fish start spawning this week and anglers will begin to find a more aggressive but lesser quality fish in coming weeks.

With a cold front on the way, the Wilson, Trask and Nestucca Rivers may offer options over the weekend but driving conditions may be hazardous so use good judgment. In colder temperatures, steelhead are more likely to strike when air temperatures begin to match water temperatures over the course of the day. Late mornings and early afternoons are peak periods. Three Rivers on the Nestucca system is becoming a better option.

Weak tides will favor crabbers this weekend but high surf will once again require cautious boating. Lower Tillamook Bay and Netarts estuaries will be best bets. The best sturgeon fishing will center around the next minus tide series.

With the Siletz dropping this week and only light rain in the forecast, it should fish well in the cold weekend ahead.

Alsea anglers found high, roiled water over the weekend, although persistence paid off for a couple of steelheaders fishing the North Fork. The river was dropping and clearing on Tuesday this week. Winter fish are being recycled back downstream from the hatchery this week. Scout ahead as there are some downed trees in the river. The North Fork Alsea is fishing well now with crowds in the

usual locations.

Brood trout stocking will resume the week of January 15th.

Southwest – Southwest streams and rivers got slammed with the storm front last week pushing water to bankfull or near flood levels at some locations. Dropping flows have improved the conditions and catch in this region.

North Umpqua anglers are catching a few steelhead with the water conditions improving daily. Better steelheading is available in the South Umpqua which opened on December 1st.

Coos and Coquille rivers are offering fair to good steelheading and the action will only get better as water levels drop.

The Rogue River, at the eight-foot-level at Agness on Tuesday this week, will continue to drop and clear after showers mid-week. Numbers of fresh winter steelhead will continue to improve as the run gets fully underway. A terrific season is expected here.

While the Chetco swelled to something over 17,000 cfs overnight on January 3rd, it has since dropped to the 4,000 cfs level and is delivering winter chrome. Some boats reported double digit success on Monday.

Eastern – The upcoming cold snap will slow the steelhead bite in Northeast Oregon but this region will still offer the best opportunities for steelhead in the state. These are summer run fish and catches often reach an average of 1 fish for every 4 hours of effort. The Grande Ronde and Imnaha Rivers are the target destinations.

SW Washington – Heavy precipitation put most area streams out last week but cooler temperatures will improve water conditions. The Cowlitz River remains the best option although the peak of the run is on the downside.

The North Fork of the Lewis and Kalama Rivers are also options but returns to these watersheds are down slightly from last year.

Columbia River Fishing Report – Sturgeon fishing on the lower Columbia continues to be poor with the highest effort near the mouth of the Willamette and Cowlitz Rivers. Shaker action was reported as fair in the Portland to Longview stretch last weekend and 2 keepers were taken for 29 boats in that stretch.

Some of the best sturgeon fishing on the Columbia is taking place in The Dalles Pool. There, anglers tallied 7 keepers, 5 oversize and 53 shakers for 7 boats in this stretch. The Bonneville Pool was a close second with one legal sturgeon kept, plus five sublegals released for two boats; and 12 sublegal sturgeon released for 25 bank rods. Most anglers in this stretch target sturgeon with roll mop herring or shrimp when available.

Only sparse catches of commercially caught smelt have been reported from the mainstem Columbia.

The Guide's Forecast – Action for Columbia River sturgeon will likely not improve in the coming weeks. With a weak smelt prediction, sturgeon will likely continue to exit the Columbia River in search of alternative food sources up and down the coast. Anglers desperate for action should seek the pools above Bonneville Dam. Smelt will remain the best bait but roll mop herring or shrimp or any of these baits in combination will produce. Fresher bait is better.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Willamette sturgeon anglers have had it only a little better than those in the Columbia although historically these critters will seek the warmer water here.

The Guide's Forecast – Shallow flats with a little less current in the lower river and Multnomah Channel have been providing fair to good shaker action and the occasional keeper-sized sturgeon. Alternate baits of sand shrimp or squid have been effective in these areas with smelt drawing bites when sturgeon can be found in deeper holes. Plunking for steelhead from the bank below the mouth of the Clackamas will resume when the water level drops, possibly by this weekend in very chilly conditions.

High water on the Clackamas has kept angling effort low, but without precipitation in the forecast, this situation will improve. Steelhead catches have been sparse.

The water is gradually dropping on the Sandy as well, but has been slow to clear. There are few of the late-running broodstock steelhead in the system.

Be aware that air temperatures will be near or below freezing for days to come. Use extra caution on the boat ramps. Sand or kitty litter can improve traction.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – The Clackamas is coming into fine shape and, while still higher than most steelheaders would like, should look great by the weekend. The water remains quite cold, though, and weather this week won't improve the water temperature. With steelhead scattered, anywhere from Gladstone up to McIver will hold fish. Catches of broodstock steelhead will continue to improve as the month progresses. A few days of cold, dry weather will put Eagle Creek too low and clear to offer any fishing possibilities.

Cold weather (or anytime the freezing level is low) has a positive effect on the Sandy River so improvement in the cloudy water color is imminent although billowing sand will continue to hamper fishing. Numbers of the late-running broodstock steelhead remain low, however. It's still early for the Sandy.

North Coast District Fishing Report – Steelheaders on the north coast continue to be disappointed with results we are witnessing on most area streams. Fortunately, this is NOT an indicator of the wild steelhead run to come. Anglers have been concentrating their efforts in the smaller streams as they have been the only ones in fishable shape. Guides reported excellent success on the Necanicum on January 1st but remarked subsequent trips on this river, despite optimum conditions have yielded very poor results. It is likely that hatchery steelhead have headed to the tributaries for spawning in the higher flows and will return shortly, very willing to bite. The North Fork Nehalem is very similar with anglers reporting poor results with good water conditions. Coastal passes have been treacherous to travel keeping angler effort lower than usual.

Although the mainstem Nestucca has been the better place to find fish, Three Rivers has recently improved slightly and anglers are taking a few fish near the hatchery. The hatchery itself has only taken in about 165 steelhead but more are expected to return. Overall, it looks like early hatchery returns to the north coast are not impressive.

Weak tides have estuary users more geared towards crab than sturgeon. Crabbing remains poor in most of Tillamook Bay but the extreme lower end remains fair for quality Dungeness. High seas have kept most crabbers away from the inside of the jetty but crabbers using fresh bait have done

well. Netarts Bay is also yielding fair catches of keeper crab.

Ocean surf may subside slightly as the weekend nears. It remains to be seen if the bar will open for recreational fishing and crabbing opportunity. I'd like to retrieve my crab pots after a 2 week soak. That's likely the first tax write-off of the 2007 season. Bottomfish catches should be outstanding if weather permits.

The Guide's Forecast – Steelheaders have been anxious to get back after coastal steelhead after another long period of high water has put bigger river systems out of range for quite some time. Unfortunately, anglers shouldn't get too excited about the Alsea strain of steelhead that is due back this time of year. The Wilson and Kilchis receive these plants and between lower than normal plants and high estuary mortality on outmigrating smolts, there won't be much for returns. Hopefully, returns should improve in the coming years as funding for cormorant hazing in the Tillamook basin is taking place thanks to an un-named donor.

Anglers will likely still be motivated as they have not had the opportunity to fish many of these larger streams so don't expect to fish these rivers by yourself. The upper drifts will produce the best results when the color comes in and thanks to the Association of NW Steelheaders, the Siskeyville Ramp on the Wilson River is again functional. Association president **Marc Davis** provided these photos and labor as well:





Anglers that have witnessed recent success on smaller systems like the Necanicum and North Fork Nehalem will likely begin to see downstream running steelhead in the coming weeks. They have "done their thing" and will make the journey back to sea, quite willing to bite anglers offerings on their way down. These spent fish are not of the best tablefare but are fun to catch and can be smoked as hatchery fish are there for put and take fisheries.

The Trask will also offer up some opportunity with some of the best bank angling access in the area. Fish the water above the residential areas to the Dam Hole for best success. Some wild fish are available and even a few hatchery strays are common this time of year. Use bigger, brighter lures and baits until flows drop down and rivers turn clear.

Sturgeon anglers on Tillamook Bay will have some weekend opportunity to look forward to. Although the minus tides begin on Tuesday, a significant enough low tide will occur on Sunday in the late afternoon. Cold air temperatures don't effect the sturgeon bite quite like steelhead and seeing how it's an afternoon show, the weather may actually be tolerable (but still a bit cold). Sand shrimp will offer an angler the best chance and both shakers and a few keepers have been reported recently in the estuary. Crabs in the sturgeon ground aren't such a problem this year with all the fresh water we've had. The west (some call it south), middle and Bay City channels should all be holding fish this time of year. It'll pay to wait until low slack and even the first part of incoming tide before folding it up for the day.

Tides will not be conducive to productive crabbing on Tillamook Bay unless you soak your pots overnight and make an early morning pick. The minus tide will also make bar crossings dangerous for most of the day so don't count on much ocean opportunity for any specie.

Central & South Coast Reports – Historically, from mid-January through February, ling cod enter shallow water to spawn. This makes them vulnerable to anglers tossing offerings off rocks and jetties. Special attention should be on ocean conditions, choice of a mild day and it's wise to keep an eye out for 'sneaker' waves. That said, anglers try for lings with bobber and herring or large jig heads trailing soft plastics. Preference of color ranges from white to motor oil so likely matters more to the angler than to the ling cod. With the minimum retention size reduced from 24 to 22 inches in 2007 in order to reduce by-catches of other rockfish, limits of two fish per day will come more quickly, a blessing on those colder days.

While surf fishing is usually a springtime activity, long-rodders have been catching some recently.

Siletz steelheaders will encounter good color water with the river still a bit high. Boater should be very cautious in the stretch just below Moonshine Park which has been the cause of multiple driftboat incidents recently. The water level was 6.5 mid-day on Thursday, January 11th and is predicted to drop a foot by Saturday.

Over 450 winter steelhead have entered the hatchery facility at the Alsea River, over half of them in the first nine days of January. The forecast is for the water level to drop steadily through the week ahead. Steelheading is good here.

It is hoped that the recent freshet will jump-start the winter steelhead fishery at the Siuslaw which is overdue.

The Umpqua will improve for steelhead on the mainstem as the water drops and clears. Metalhead movement slowed along with angler effort on the North Umpqua with high water. Crabbing in Winchester Bay has stalled with fresh water from the recent rains. Anglers are hoping for an improvement in the sturgeon fishery here.

Fishing well at good level and clarity mid-week, the Elk and Sixes are likely to be too low and clear to be productive by the weekend.

Rogue River plunkers were enjoying higher water conditions and very good winter steelhead catches. Anglers were scoring here at the inside turns of gravel bars with Lobster and Quostana creeks prime spots when the water up. Side-drifting boaters have the edge now that the water level has dropped. Winters are up into the middle river in good number, creating a worthwhile fishery although flows are still a little strong in the Grants Pass stretch. Winter steelhead are as high as the upper Rogue thanks to the recent freshet. Fishing for summers is well into wind-down high on the Rogue with most fish too dark to be table-worthy. One wild steelhead per day may be taken below Grave Creek up to a total of five in the year.

Steelheading on the Chetco has been excellent. Plunkers do well here when flows are between 4,000 and 6,000 cfs while boaters have the edge when the river is running at 4,000 or less. On the morning of Thursday, January 11th, the Chetco was flowing 3,100 cfs at Brookings and dropping in dry conditions.

Northwest Trout – The ODFW, in continuing its broodstock trout planting program, placed 175 fish averaging four to five pounds in Expo Pond near Jackson County Fairgrounds on Wednesday this week. Also planted with 50 brooders was Reihart Park Pond which was formerly All Sports Pond in Grants Pass. The daily bag limit on the steelhead planters is one fish longer than 20 inches. Powerbait, spinner, spoons and smaller steelhead-type jigs will entice these big trout. Look for a bright one to take home as a percentage of these fish are always a little on the dark side for decent

table fare. Only one trout over 20 inches may be retained and lake-dwelling steelhead don't require a harvest card.

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report **January 10th – January 23rd:**

North Puget Sound

Unpredictable weather has made fishing spotty for both saltwater and freshwater anglers in the region.

On Puget Sound, angler effort increased during the Christmas holiday, but has tapered off since the arrival of another round of wet and windy conditions. Only five anglers were checked with two **chinook** at the Everett ramp during creel checks the first week of January. That's well below the 99 anglers who brought in 26 blackmouth during the final week of 2006.

"Windy conditions have made it difficult for some anglers to get out on the water," said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fisheries biologist. "However, some experienced anglers, who have found breaks in the weather, are putting nice fish in their boats."

Thiesfeld said marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) and 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) have been productive. However, Marine Area 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) has been slow.

Anglers participating in the selective fishery in marine areas 8-1 and 8-2 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 Marine Area 10 (Seattle/Bremerton), anglers have a daily limit of one salmon, and chinook must be at least 22 inches long. Thiesfeld reminds anglers that the salmon season in Marine Area 10 closes at the end of the month.

In the rivers, recent storms have made **steelhead** fishing a bit erratic. However, anglers who made it out to some of the region's rivers during favorable weather conditions have done fairly well, said Chad Jackson, WDFW fish biologist. "I've heard reports of anglers doing well at Reiter Ponds and at Tokul Creek," Jackson said. "Anglers on the North Fork of the Stillaguamish have also been picking up a few steelhead."

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

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

Fishing: Prospects look good for **steelhead** fishing and another **razor clam** dig this month, but neither was certain as of the second week of 2007.

For **steelhead** anglers, weather remains the biggest unknown. After a month of heavy rain and high water, rivers throughout the region were dropping into shape in advance of the Martin Luther King Jr. Day holiday. With snow on the ground, the weather forecast called for a string of cold, dry days in mid-January.

"Anglers are getting pretty antsy," said David Low, WDFW fish biologist. "Steelhead fishing could be

spectacular if the forecast holds and the water keeps dropping. Anglers should be able to find fish anywhere they go."

While anglers have been finding fish in some of the smaller rivers and creeks on the northern Olympic Peninsula, large rivers such as the Bogachiel and Hoh were still running too high to fish through the first week in January, Low said. "The smaller rivers usually drop back into shape the quickest," he said.

Low cautioned anglers that wild steelhead are making up a growing percentage of the fish moving into area rivers. "So it's important to take a close look at them if you plan to keep them," he said.

As most anglers know, wild steelhead can be distinguished from hatchery fish by their intact adipose and ventral fins. Retention rules for wild steelhead are outlined on page 29 of the Fishing in Washington rule pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

While anglers keep an eye on the weather, **razor clam** enthusiasts are waiting for final word on new digs tentatively scheduled this month and next.

As recently announced, Twin Harbors Beach will be open for razor clam digging Jan. 19-21 if marine toxin tests show the clams are safe to eat. Results from those tests are expected about one week before the planned dig. As with previous openings this season, digging would be restricted to the hours between noon and midnight.

"This month's opening is specifically designed to give diggers an opportunity to take advantage of the large number of clams still available at Twin Harbors," said Dan Ayres, WDFW coastal shellfish manager. "At most other beaches, we're trying to conserve clams so there will still be some available for digs this spring."

Clam diggers may, however, have a greater selection of beaches during the first two days of a three-day dig tentatively scheduled in February.

Four beaches - Twin Harbors, Long Beach, Mocrocks and Kalaloch - will be open for digging Feb. 16 and 17 between noon and midnight if marine toxin tests are favorable. Twin Harbors will also remain open Feb. 18 during the same hours if the test results allow the dig to proceed as planned.

As with this month's proposed dig, Copalis Beach will remain closed in February because of the relatively low number of clams available for harvest there, Ayres said.

Anglers planning ahead may also want to note that the 31st Discovery Bay Salmon Derby will be held Feb. 17-19, with drop-off stations at the Port Townsend Boat Haven gas dock, Gardiner Boat Ramp and John Wayne Marine. Anglers participating in the state's oldest-running derby will compete for cash and other prizes worth more than \$10,000. Details and rules are available at <http://www.DiscoBaySalmonDerby.com> or by calling 360-797-7711.

Southwest Washington:

Most area rivers have been running too high for serious **steelhead** fishing so far this year, but that could change in the days ahead. A cold front moving into the area during the second week of January could slow flows enough to improve fishing conditions just in time for the Martin Luther King Jr. Day holiday, said Wolf Dammers, WDFW fish biologist.

"If the snow doesn't turn to rain, the rivers could drop back into shape in time for the weekend," Dammers said. "Anglers have been catching a few hatchery steelhead at Blue Creek and the Barrier Dam on the upper Cowlitz River, but steelhead fishing has been pretty tough in most other areas."

One exception is Kress Lake near Kalama, where WDFW has planted more than 1,000 excess hatchery steelhead from the Cowlitz River since late December. The department hasn't been conducting creel surveys there, but Dammers said he's heard from several anglers who have done very well. "A guy from Lake Stevens called last week to say that he and his buddy hooked 10 to 17 steelhead each day over a four-day period," Dammers said. "The angler said all the fish were in good condition and that he and he and his fishing partner had a great time."

Anglers may catch and keep up to two steelhead per day as part of their five-trout limit in Kress Lake, and are not required to record steelhead caught in the lake on their catch record cards. The same rules apply at South Lewis County Park Pond near Toledo, where WDFW is also planting excess hatchery steelhead from the Cowlitz River. Dammers said he didn't have any current reports on fish at the county pond.

Meanwhile, the Columbia River **sturgeon** fishery has reopened up to McNary Dam, although most of the action has been in The Dalles Pool, said Brad James, WDFW fish biologist. Eighteen boat anglers reported catching six legal-size fish and releasing one more in a week-long creel survey ending Jan. 7, he said. Four boat anglers fishing the Bonneville Pool caught one legal-size fish and five sub-legals that week.

"Most sturgeon are out of the estuary and have moved upriver at this time of year," James said. "Fishing will improve throughout the river in the next few months as the water warms up and sturgeon redistribute themselves."

Current fishing rules for white sturgeon on the Columbia River are as follows:

- From the mouth to the Wauna powerlines: sturgeon may be kept seven days a week through April 30. The minimum size is 42 inches.
- From the Wauna powerlines to Bonneville Dam: Sturgeon may be kept Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays only through July 31 - except for the spawning sanctuary from Marker 85 upstream which is closed to all fishing from May through July. The minimum size is 42 inches.
- Bonneville, The Dalles and John Day pools: Sturgeon may be retained seven days a week until the guidelines are met. However, fishing will be closed from May through July in the two spawning sanctuaries, located below John Day Dam downstream 2.4 miles and McNary Dam downstream 1.5 miles. From Bonneville Dam to The Dalles Dam, the minimum size is 42 inches. From The Dalles Dam to McNary Dam, the minimum size is 48 inches.

James noted that fishery managers will sponsor a public hearing Jan. 25 in Vancouver to consider adopting season modifications for the sturgeon fishery from the Wauna powerlines to Bonneville Dam. At that hearing, fishery managers will consider options for providing additional retention opportunity to access up to 4,000 sturgeon left over from last year's harvest guideline. The hearing will be held at the Water Resource Education Center, 4600 SE Columbia Way, Vancouver, Wash. For more information, see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/crc/crc14dec06notice.htm>.

Smelt dippers caught a few fish Jan. 6 on the Cowlitz River, "but so far we haven't seen anything like a big push upriver," James said. Returns are expected to be poor this year, but chances of getting a limit should increase through mid-February, when the run usually peaks, he said. The Cowlitz River is open to smelt dipping from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. each Saturday through March 1.

Eastern Washington:

WDFW enforcement officers patrolling winter fishing lakes in the Spokane area report recent

weather patterns of deep freezes followed by warm-ups, wind and rain have not produced adequate ice for safe fishing. The last time ice on Hog Canyon Lake was eight inches thick was New Year's Eve. At the same time, ice on Fourth of July Lake was only about three inches thick. U.S. Coast Guard guidelines recommend at least four inches of solid, clear ice for safe use by fishers. See more information about ice fishing safety at http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regions/reg1/ice_fishing.htm. Sporadic fishing at both of those **rainbow trout**-stocked lakes has been producing good catches, including a few 20-inch-plus fish. Another extended deep freeze, as currently forecasted, could make ice fishing at those lakes a possibility once again.

Anglers are catching some **Yellow perch** and **crappie** at Eloika Lake in north Spokane County and at Sprague Lake on the Lincoln-Adams county line. Patrolling officers recently reported "sketchy" ice at Sprague Lake access areas, but changing conditions could make for decent ice fishing.

Lake Roosevelt's winter rainbow trout fishery continues to produce for anglers willing to brave the elements on the big water. Large net-pen-reared rainbows, often ranging from 18 to 24 inches, are usually biting well through January, especially in the lower reservoir from Grand Coulee to Seven Bays.

Trout fishing has been poor this season on winter-only Williams and Hatch lakes in Stevens County because of growing populations of illegally introduced yellow perch that feed on and out-compete the trout. Curt Vail, WDFW fish biologist, said the perch themselves are small, so the fishery overall is poor.

Snake River **steelheading** has slowed. According to the most recent creel survey, the best catch rate was about 12 hours of fishing per steelhead caught in the stretch on the mainstem Snake from Ice harbor Dam to Lower Monumental Dam. See the full survey at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/snake/index.htm>.

North Central Washington:

Art Viola, WDFW district fish biologist, said **steelhead** fishing remains slow in the Columbia River from Rocky Reach to Wells Dam. **Whitefish** angling in the Wenatchee River is also poor, he said.

Viola also reports a mix of conditions for winter trout fishing in the district. "Fish Lake is frozen with about five inches of hard ice but also a foot of slush on top," he said. "For those brave enough to venture out on Fish Lake, fishing has been very good for both **yellow perch** and **rainbow trout**. The ice on Roses and Antelope lakes is thin and dangerous."

Bob Jateff, WDFW Okanogan district fish biologist, said winter ice fishing in the Okanogan has been pretty good so far, with recent colder temperatures providing adequate ice cover for anglers. "Little and Big Green lakes in the Omak area, Rat Lake near Brewster, and Davis Lake near Winthrop are all producing catches of **rainbow trout**," he said. "Anglers can expect to catch fish in the 10-12 inch range at these lakes."

Patterson Lake in the Winthrop area opened Jan. 1 to ice fishing for **yellow perch**. The season will run through March 15 and there is a plowed-out WDFW access site at the lake with a toilet. Jateff said anglers can expect to catch perch in the eight to nine-inch range, along with some rainbow trout.

Jateff also reports **steelhead** fishing on the Columbia River in the Brewster/Bridgeport area has slowed over the past few weeks with anglers averaging a fish every 12 hours. The most popular spots are the Pateros area, as well as just above and below Wells Dam. WDFW enforcement officers recently patrolling Okanogan waterways found no fish caught by steelheaders and no angles out after **whitefish** on the Methow River.

South Central Washington:

This is the time to focus fishing efforts on the flowing, open waters of streams and rivers, as most of the region's year-round, trout-stocked ponds and lakes are iced over, but not necessarily thick enough for safe ice fishing.

Some of the best river and stream fishing now is for whitefish, open on the Bumping, Naches, Tieton and Yakima rivers, and the Columbia River between Vantage and Priest Rapids Dam. Averaging 10 to 13 inches, these bony fish may be best smoked. They are relatively easily caught on maggots, small grubs, stonefly nymphs or sparsely tied artificial flies and small lures fished along the bottom of deep pools. The daily catch limit is 15 fish using the standard whitefish gear rule - one single point hook size 14 or smaller (no more than 3/16-inch from point to shank). The gear rule is designed to provide a winter fishing opportunity but minimize the chances of catching other gamefish, which are not legal to harvest at this time. Check the fishing rules pamphlet for all details.

Anglers can bone up and gear up for future opportunities at the 14th annual Tri-Cities Sportsmen Show, Jan. 19-21, 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 by experts on virtually every kind of fishing imaginable. Show hours are 1-8 p.m. Jan. 19, 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Jan. 20 and 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Jan. 21. Admission prices are \$7 for adults, \$3.50 for kids six to 12, and free for kids under six. For more details, see <http://www.shuylarproductions.com/index.php>.

Reader Email

Got a question, story to tell or information to share? Shoot us an Email!

Write to the TGF staff:

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Random Links

Know of any cool, fishing-related websites? Send 'em in. 'Til then, or when we find some more, here are some boating statistics:

Watercraft Progressive, a boating insurance company, reports that:

- 2 percent of all boaters have dropped an anchor on their foot.
- 2 percent of boaters have lost their wedding rings.
- 7 percent have jumped from the boat to the dock and fallen into the water.
- 52 percent of all items lost overboard are hats.

Weekly Quote – "Fishing friends are long friends because the doing of it is an intense perceptive preoccupation and one that is charged with unexpected humor." - Edward Weeks

GOOD LUCK!