

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **February 23rd – March 1st, 2007**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- Flows at Willamette Falls nearly tripled overnight on February 16th to 36,500 cfs as winter steelhead counts topped 2,100. That number is down about 1,000 from the same date in 2006. Trollers have been taking spring Chinook daily, but the rising and turbid water will negatively impact this fishery.

Sturgeon fishing is good in the Portland Harbor. Many anglers reported good catches of keepers. The warming water temperatures had a lot to do with it but the unsettled weather may cool the bite. **Pro guide Bill Kremers (541-754-6411)** reports that smelt and squid are the top baits.

Most of the steelhead crossing at the Falls are destined for the Santiam system which offers a catch-and-release fishery for wild winter steelhead. The river is a little high but fishable.

The hatchery on Eagle Creek is seeing very good returns of hatchery steelhead. Bait fishers will have the advantage in the off-color water of the Clackamas.

Sandy anglers have had to deal with high, off-color water this week. Steelheading is very slow.

Scheduled for trout planting this week are Cottage Grove Pond, Creswell Pond, EE Wilson Pond, Junction City Pond, Walling Pond and Walter Wirth Lake.

Northwest – Severe precipitation has sent north coast streams soaring although a brief window on Saturday produced fair catches of fish on the smaller streams. A few wild fish and almost an equal number of hatchery spawners made up the catch on the Necanicum and North Fork Rivers.

The Wilson and Nestucca Rivers are primed for a good hit of broodstock steelhead when flows drop. Water levels should reach fishable levels on larger streams by Saturday. Smaller streams could fish by Friday. The first good batch of wild fish should greet anglers on most area rivers. The use of diver and bait on rivers with runs of wild fish is discouraged but drifted baits seem to effectively catch most fish in the corner of the mouth. Weather forecasts have the area's rivers in fishable shape well into next week.

Although no minus tides are scheduled for the upcoming week, tides are significant and the timing for the low tides make sturgeon fishing a good option on Tillamook Bay. Sand shrimp will produce the most action.

Anglers are anxious to jig fresh herring at Yaquina Bay but the baitfish have yet to show. Crabbing has been fair in the upper bay. Tides will be moderate over the weekend.

Steelheading has been fair on the North Fork Alsea when water conditions have been conducive.

The Siletz is forecasted drop into shape after cresting mid-week. About 1,000 winter steelhead have returned to the hatchery here. Anglers will find a mix of native and broodstock fish available. The hydrology from Moonshine Park downstream has changed dramatically so boaters should be aware of the more technical run. Lifejackets are a must if you plan on fishing this stretch.

Big Creek Reservoir numbers 1 and 2 along with Olalla Creek Reservoir are scheduled to be stocked

with trout this week.

Southwest – Rain has caused the Umpqua to run high and off-color. It is unlikely to fish by the weekend.

Over 600 winter steelhead have entered the Whittaker Creek trap on the Siuslaw. Only six of those were unmarked. The Whitaker Creek broodstock program is proving itself productive with good numbers of fish returning to the trap. Unfortunately, poachers broke into the facility taking upwards of 100 fish- both wild and hatchery compromising program needs. According to **pro guide Jeff Jackson (541-268-6944)**, the Siuslaw is rising and may be out of shape for a few days but will fish well when the water drops and clears.

Most South coast streams are running high or completely blown out this week. Smaller streams like the Elk and Sixes will drop and clear very quickly if the precipitation stops for a day or two.

Steelheading was very good last week on the Chetco although warmer temperatures stimulated harder fighting fish and therefore, more challenging conditions to land fish in. Of those landed, another half were natives requiring release. On Saturday night, rain pushed the Chetco out of shape but it quickly dropped and was fishing well again Tuesday this week.

Eastern – The Crooked River below Bowman Dam is fishing very well. Trout are being taken in good number by fly rodders.

Grand Ronde anglers are still catching good numbers of steelhead but need to check water levels before venturing east. The volatile weather pattern may put this sensitive river out depending on precipitation and freezing levels.

Bull trout fishing is good in Central Oregon according to **pro guide Rick Arnold (541-480-1570)**

SW Washington – Last weekend, anglers found challenging conditions to fish in but a few steelhead were taken. The river is between first and second run steelhead but it should pick up into March and although the spring chinook forecast is down, action should begin to pick up in coming weeks.

Pro guide Kevin Newell (360-430-2521) reports." fished the Cowlitz on Sunday. The water was at a great level, 6140 CFS but visibility was only fair with about 2 foot of visibility due to a high level of silt coming out of the reservoirs. I had two customers and we side drifted the whole morning with nothing to show for it but managed to get a nice 12.5 pound hatchery fish in the afternoon after switching to back trolling plugs. The Cowlitz is in between the "A Run" and "B Run" for the winter steelhead and things should improve if there is an increase in visibility as long as the water level stays down."

Commercial smelt catches have been good this week. Perhaps the run won't be a disaster after all.

Soapbox Report -

**From the desk of Greg Harlow,
Director of Development, Association of Northwest Steelheaders:**

Hello to All Steelheader Leadership,

It's been some time since the Northwest Steelheaders have seen the growth we're now experiencing.

Our organization has doubled over the last year and we've started a push to reach out further, in places where we may have had members, but no chapters and places where we had chapters but they became inactive. And so, I would like to personally invite all Northwest Steelheaders to the first meeting of our newest chapter, Scappoose/ St. Helens.

A little noteworthy background: Late last year Honorary Director Liz Hamilton contacted me to inform me of a need for a chapter in that area. Many anglers were interested in local projects and others wanted a louder voice in Salem and beyond. With that phone call it was pretty clear our next chapter would be somewhere in that area and Liz had a few people in mind who she felt could blaze the trail. About a month later we were contacted by Deborah McQueen who many of you will know as the former owner of Brown's Landing. She would become the point person to organize the effort and it didn't take long for her to realize she was also the best person to fill the shoes of interim President. Very soon she had enlisted the support of others who would fill out the rest of the board. Guide Joe Salvey is one of them.

Interim leaders of the Scappoose/St. Helens chapter entered into agreement with the Association and began organizing in January. They quickly started signing up members and were active at both the Boat and the Sportsman's Show. This week we finalized their meeting location and schedule which will be held the 2nd Thursday of each month.

I'd like to encourage all who can attend the first meeting of the Scappoose/St. Helens chapter on March 8th, 2007 to do so and I would ask chapters to chip in with a door prize donation to make that first meeting as successful as possible. Please coordinate your donations with Chris Keller at the NW Steelheaders office. <ckeller@nwsteelheaders.org>

Please visit the Scappoose/St. Helens chapter webpage for details and a map.
<http://www.nwsteelheaders.org/chapters.htm>

Very shortly we'll begin posting on various fishing boards like iFish and can help out by adding a post of support keeping our posts at the top. Feel free to forward this to interested parties.

Columbia River Fishing Report – Motivated anglers spent some time last weekend pursuing spring Chinook on the lower Columbia River. Both bank and boat anglers were out in high numbers (for this time of year) although catches didn't impress many. Although no fish were tallied in the creel check, conditions were fair for bank anglers with high flows and clean water pushing fish within range of the beach caster. There have been fish taken from the beach when the minus tide was underway- most were the larger 5 year-old fish destined for the Willamette River. Bank anglers have the edge when flows are high or fast- like the minus tide series we are coming off of. Although it is still early, with all the precipitation falling in the cascades on top of what has already fallen, we may have a high water year which will favor bank anglers in the Columbia fishery. Catches weren't great, but it's a start.

Anglers working The Dalles Pool are still taking good numbers of steelhead. I have a call into ODF&W in the area to find out what run of fish this is that sport anglers are harvesting. I have a feeling these are a late run summer steelhead that will soon spawn. It is likely, this fishery will not last much longer but with catch rates like they are witnessing, it may be worth a try. Over the weekend, boat anglers caught five adipose fin-clipped steelhead and two wild steelhead they released for three boats.

Sturgeon anglers are not doing well at all in the Columbia mainstem. The weekend check was very poor but see the Willamette report for some good news for a change! The river is still cold and soon to be dirty which may not hurt sturgeon fishing- but they have to be present. Still no sign of smelt so sturgeon fishing likely won't pick up for a while.

The Guide's Forecast – Don't expect great results for salmon or steelhead on the mainstem Columbia. With dirty water on the way, salmon fishing won't be a great option for quite some time. Most of the fish in the Columbia are destined for the Willamette River. With this in mind, coupled with the turbid water, anglers may want to target salmon in the Multnomah Channel as fish seem to utilize this body of water more when high flows exist. It's best to wait when the river is on the drop and you'll only need about 16 inches of visibility to catch fish- that alone may take some time however.

Sturgeon anglers are better off hitting the Willamette River. The bite is good there. Check our Willamette forecast. Even if the smelt make a show, the action isn't likely to pick up. If you have to fish the Columbia, try the Port of Portland docks just upstream of the Willamette River mouth.

There's hope for Smelt dippers on the Cowlitz with commercial efforts taking limits from the Columbia this week. Dipping is allowed on the Cowlitz River Saturdays only from 6 AM to 10 PM.

Up for something adventurous? Try this fishery for summer steelhead above The Dalles Dam. Trollers are taking some summer steelhead up there but more in this fishery as we learn more about it. Stand by.....or let us know what the heck is going on up there!

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Flows at Willamette Falls peaked on February 17th, swelling to nearly 60,000 cfs. As the flows moderated on Tuesday this week, the water temperature rose to 48 degrees, a positive trend for all fishing hopefuls. When the Willamette is several degrees warmer than the Columbia, sturgeon enter the lower river and fishing improves. That's what's happening now. Although visibility hovers around 12 inches, steelhead and spring Chinook continue to hit the beach for plunkers at Meldrum Bar.

The first spring Chinook was counted at Willamette Falls on February 15th.

Trout fishing has been fair for long-rodders on the McKenzie. During dry spells, midges and Blue-Winged Olives will be hatching.

For those who missed the Sportsmen's show in Portland (or just can't get enough of this sort of thing), catch the Mid Willamette Valley Sportsman, Boat & RV Show in Albany at the Linn County Fair & Expo Center this coming Friday through Sunday.

The Guide's Forecast – Boats drag herring for springers in the lower Willamette effectively early in the season, switching to prawn spinners and then to hardware later in the year. Early catches have been decent for Oregon City area trollers with fish coming over the gunwales from St. Johns up to the Hawthorne Bridge. It would appear the prediction of an early run is accurate. As of Wednesday this week, the water temperature dropped a degree as the visibility slipped below the one foot mark.

Sturgeon Fishing has been good and won't be negatively effected by off-color water. Anglers are catching scores of shakers with most finding a keeper or two in the course of a day's effort. Smelt is the top bait at this time of year although squid and sand shrimp are enticing fish as well. The bite remains very light, so hang on to those fishing rods rather than using a rod holder; chances will be missed otherwise.

Pro guide Bill Kremers (541-754-6411) writes to report "[I] had a great day sturgeon fishing last Sunday on the lower Willamette. Fished just below the Toyota Hole. Lots of sturgeon in the Willamette right now and most boats had a keeper or two. Best baits were smelt and squid. There were a couple of big ships that keep through during the day, so boaters did to be aware that they have move if they are impeding ship traffic.

"Was hoping to get steelhead fishing tomorrow, but the rain has changed all that. Now I will be get out until I return from the Bahamas, a week from Saturday.

"One picture, this Lee resting up on the way home Sunday after battling sturgeon and trying to get the timing down on the sturgeon bites."



Making a recommendation regarding where to fish is a little more challenging with sturgeon scattered now. Move around the lower river and keep an eye out for bent rods. Numbers of sturgeon in the water make chances for a keeper good this weekend. A few places which have been productive recently include the hole off the Toyota Dock, above and below the St. Johns Bridge and in Multnomah Channel.

Anglers are seeing steelhead move through the North Santiam. Catches will improve as the numbers at Willamette Falls climb. As Detroit Reservoir fills into May, the North Santiam should remain in fishable condition with marginal effect from rainfall and snowmelt. Numbers of wild steelhead are improving, creating a worthwhile catch-and release fishery which will continue through March and April. Opportunities are available for both bank and boat anglers

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – The Clackamas River was at fishable level and was turning green the morning of Wednesday, February 21st although anglers remained unable to tempt a steelhead. The hatchery on Eagle Creek is seeing very good returns of hatchery steelhead. Bait fishers will have the advantage the off-color water. Weekend anglers are likely to find the Clackamas at good level and color. Getting a bite there will be a challenge, however, as the water remains too cold to fish well.

The Sandy was in fine shape and producing a few steelhead mid-week. This should be a good bet for the weekend is the valley doesn't receive a deluge.

North Coast District Fishing Report – Well, we got the rain...and then we got some more! For the most part, anglers didn't have a chance to work the north coast streams after the first drop in river levels. By the time most got their gear ready and fishing, the river was on the rise again on Monday. Some of the smaller streams fished fair- I was surprised they didn't fish better. The Necanicum put out

a mix of hatchery "spent fish and wild ones to boot (as predicted). But like I said, rivers were on the rise and this is the most challenging conditions to fish in. With the exception of the smaller streams, most others did not fish between rain freshets but see The Guide's Forecast for good times ahead!

Sturgeon anglers didn't get too worked up about fishing in the stormy weather despite the fact that a minus tide series favored it. Weather kept most crabbers at port as well.

Stormy weather will keep this section of the newsletter a little sparse this week. But all the good news is embedded in the next section.

The Guide's Forecast – Forecasted precipitation should have many north coast streams fishing wonderfully over the weekend. By Friday, most of the smaller streams should be primed for action. In order, target steelhead in the Necanicum and North Fork Nehalem, followed by the Kilchis, Trask, Wilson and Nestucca Rivers. The Necanicum and North Fork will be loaded with spent hatchery fish while the Wilson and Nestucca Rivers should boot out some fair broodstock steelhead. All area rivers should get a good shot of wild fish this week. River levels are forecasted to stabilize meaning showery weather will keep these streams in good shape most of the week.

What'll happen when the streams come into shape, they will be great fishing for about 2 days as fish make their way to the upper watershed. After these 2 days, upper river anglers, that would be bank anglers, have a good shot at these fish. They simply don't stay around forever and you have to chase them upstream the longer the river stays in shape. It is likely that this will be the week of some of the best steelhead fishing of the season.

Start out the weekend using big, bright baits and drift bobbers fishing the slower flows and edges of the current as fish are more likely to avoid the heavy flows when the water recedes. As flows drop, fish will begin to hold in their traditional haunts- shallow, broken surfaced water, deeper runs and tail-outs (but only in the morning). Smaller streams may drop low enough to use bobbers and jigs but larger systems will fare better using plugs and bait.

Upper floats will produce better on the early part of the drop and lower drifts later in the receding water. The best action will certainly take place over the weekend and it will gradually slow as the week progresses.

There are still some good sturgeon tides anglers can focus on over the weekend. Keeper should be available in the middle and upper bay but anglers may want to venture to the lower end of the South Channel as crabs shouldn't be a problem in the higher freshwater flows we have been experiencing. Sand shrimp will be the bait of choice but may be in short supply this week as terrible weather may have kept pumpers from pumping. Call ahead to check supplies.

Crabbers are better off waiting for a lower fresh water influx and better weather. Period.

Central & South Coast Reports – For those looking for entertainment alternate to fishing, the Newport Seafood and Wine Festival takes place at the Rogue Ales Warehouse, 2320 OSU Drive, just south of downtown Newport Friday through Sunday.

Optimistic weekend weather forecasts have turned around today, February 22nd. Let's hope doesn't blow out the rivers this weekend.

Just over 1,000 winter steelhead had returned to the Alsea Hatchery as of February 15th. That's nearly half the run for the season on the this river.

According to **pro guide Jeff Jackson (541-268-6944)**, "The Siuslaw is coming back up and may be unfishable for the next few days. The Siuslaw Broodstock program took another hit this week as someone broke into the adult trap at Whitaker Creek. We're not sure how many fish were taken, but up to 100 may have been taken. The biggest loss in this whole deal is that there were wild steelhead in the trap as well.

"Over two days last week, nearly 1000 adult steelhead were worked through the Whitaker Creek trap, so fish are streaming in. Fishing should be great once the river clears a little."

As of mid-week, the mainstem Umpqua was still high and muddy. It will fish very well when it drops and clears but it probably won't be fishable by this weekend. The Umpqua at Elkton is predicted to crest at 10.72 feet on Friday morning. While wild fish make up about three-quarters of the fish present, this is one of the South coast rivers where one a day may be retained. It was hoped the recent freshet would encourage the sturgeon mite in Winchester Bay, but water temperatures are too low for things to get rolling here.

Coos and Coquille steelheaders have been taking fish although these rivers have been running high in the course of the week.

Plug-pullers will do well on the Elk and Sixes this weekend if the precipitation holds of as predicted.

Plunkers continue to take a few steelhead in the lower Rogue but the better fishing is upstream. The spring Chinook run is still on the horizon. Rogue River steelheaders will want to concentrate efforts on the Grants Pass stretch this weekend and, if precipitation has moderated sufficiently for water conditions to improve, can expect consistent action. Actually, it should be hot on the Rogue anywhere below the Applegate River where the hatchery facility is located as high water has encourages massive numbers of steelhead to charge upriver. In addition, one wild steelhead may be retained per day (up to five in a year on the Rogue below Hog Creek This is a blessing to anglers wishing to take home a fish as the majority of those present at this time of year are natives.

A steelhead tournament scheduled for this weekend will jam the Chetco but fishing should be decent if rains hold off. This river has been extremely productive all season, but is prone to rapid changes in levels and flow. At 4,000 cfs or less, the Chetco delivers.

Ocean conditions will keep offshore bottom fishers in port this weekend. When safe crossing has been possible, bottom fishing has been excellent.

The Jackson County Sportsmen's and Outdoor Recreation Show is taking place this weekend in Central Point.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Pro guide Rick Arnold (541-480-1570) reports from central Oregon, "Still a bull trout game for big fish here in C.O. right now. My buddy Steve Kelly picked up his biggest bull to date at 13 Lb. while fishing with me on Valentine's day. He backed it up with a 9 LB. hen and I got a 6 LB. fish. (8) total fish for the day.....work the boundary area and look for kokanee schools to find the bulls."

Trout fishing has been slow to fair on the Deschutes. While a few summer steelhead are around, they're past their prime and should be left alone this late in the season.

Northwest Trout – In the Willamette Valley this week, Cottage Grove Pond, Creswell Pond, E. E. Wilson Pond, Junction City Pond, Walling Pond and Walter Wirth Lake were planted with hatchery trout.

In the Norwest Zone, Big Creek Reservoirs 1 and 2 along with Olalla Creek Reservoir were stocked.

Some trout stocking in the Southwest, originally scheduled for February, has been postponed due to the chilly water temperatures at hatcheries stunting the growth of trout. Another month will put some size on 'em.

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report February 21st – March 6th, 2007

North Puget Sound

Periods of wind and rain haven't hampered the **blackmouth salmon** fishery in Puget Sound, where anglers continue to do well from Point No Point to the San Juan Islands. "So far, this has been the best blackmouth season I've seen in the last five years," said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. "If you enjoy fishing for blackmouth, then you want to make sure you get out on the water."

Most marine areas in the region - with the exception of Marine Area 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) - are open for blackmouth, and all seem to be producing good catch numbers, Thiesfeld said. Anglers in marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) and 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) 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. Anglers in marine areas 7 (San Juan Islands) and 9 (Admiralty Inlet) have a daily limit of one salmon, and chinook must measure at least 22 inches in length.

"We've seen good mark rates, about 60 to 70 percent of the legal-size salmon caught are marked hatchery chinook," Thiesfeld said. "That tells us one of two things: we've either had better survival of hatchery fish or more blackmouth decided to stick around the Sound this year. Whatever the reason, this is a good year to go blackmouth fishing."

Thiesfeld reminds anglers that a number of shakers are still out there. "Anglers should use larger spoons and plugs in order to minimize their catch of those juvenile chinook," he said. "Treat those fish with extreme care when releasing them because they are next year's crop of blackmouth."

Anglers participating in the recent Roche Harbor Salmon Derby took advantage of the area's hot fishing. A total of 326 anglers landed 89 fish during the two-day derby. Mark Simms finished first with a 21-pound, 3-ounce fish he caught in San Juan Island's Rocky Bay. The Woodinville resident took home \$10,000, while Andy Holman of Friday Harbor pocketed \$5,000 for his second-place 20.05-pound salmon. Dave Reep of Mount Vernon was awarded \$1,500 for his third-place fish, which weighed in at 19.03 pounds.

Up next for derby anglers in the region is the inaugural Anacortes Salmon Derby scheduled for March 10-11 out of the Cap Sante Marina. Tickets for the event are \$50 per person, with proceeds going toward scholarships to benefit young adults interested in pursuing an education in fisheries and a related natural science. Top prize for the derby, which is hosted by the Fidalgo Chapter of Puget Sound Anglers, is \$5,000. For more information visit <http://www.anacortessalmonderby.com>.

Time is running out for steelheaders in the region. A number of area rivers, including the Snohomish, Nooksack and Skykomish close to **steelhead** fishing at the end of the month.

Most areas of the Skagit River, however, remain open for the harvest of hatchery steelhead through March 15, then switch to catch-and-release for all steelhead from March 16 through April 30. Wild steelhead are distinguished from hatchery fish by their intact adipose and ventral fins.

Brett Barkdull, WDFW fish biologist, reminds steelheaders on the Skagit fishing from boats, sleds or any

other floating device equipped with a gas or electric motor that it's illegal to fish while under power during the catch-and-release season. Rules and regulations for the Skagit River fishery, as well as other freshwater and saltwater fisheries, can be found in WDFW's 2006/2007 Fishing in Washington pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

The line-up for the next several weeks includes blackmouth, steelhead, and the prospect of a razor clam dig in mid-March. Changeable, late-winter weather always is a factor, especially for clam diggers and steelhead anglers.

Fishing for **blackmouth**, however, is better than ever, according to Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. "People should grab their poles and get out there. It's been a long time since I've seen such good fishing."

According to Thiesfeld, anglers have been doing especially well in northern Hood Canal (Marine Area 12) and at Point Defiance (in Marine Area 11). More than a third of anglers in recent days have been bringing in blackmouth at the Misery Point Ramp in Seabeck and the Point Defiance Boathouse near the Tacoma Narrows.

The fishing didn't disappoint in the eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca (Marine area 6) either. Great weather, plenty of fish and lots of anglers made the 31st Discovery Bay Salmon Derby near Sequim quite a success over President's Day weekend. This year's derby saw the most fish caught in many years, with a total of 131 salmon submitted by 118 anglers. Jack Gourlie of Port Townsend, won first prize of \$3,250 for reeling in the biggest fish weighing 18 pounds 7 ounces.

In marine areas 6, 11 and 12 - all of which opened Feb. 16 - anglers have a daily limit of one salmon. Chinook must measure at least 22 inches in length.

Meanwhile the **steelhead** fishery has been a mixed bag for anglers on the northern Olympic Peninsula, where recent rains caused key rivers to rise nearly three feet.

"People like the rain because it brings the fish in," said David Low, WDFW fish biologist. "But when a lot of water is moving through, there's more debris; it's muddy and visibility is almost nil." That proved true on the Hoh and Bogachiel where few anglers caught fish in the week ending Feb 18.

"Once the rivers drop back into shape and the large, wild fish start coming in, we could see some trophy steelhead," said Low.

The Calawah and Sol Duc were the best producers of late. In a recent creel check, 146 anglers fishing the Sol Duc, reported releasing 73 wild steelhead and keeping 21. Twenty-five anglers on the Calawah caught and released 20 of the wild fish.

High-water conditions have also affected fishing conditions in the Grays Harbor area, said Scott Barbour, WDFW fish biologist. "The Satsop is in flood stage and the Wynoochee, Chehalis and Wishkah are out of shape," he said. "But fish sense the freshet and will start moving into the rivers. I expect we'll see some good catch-and-release fishing for wild steelhead when the rivers drop back in."

Fishery managers have tentatively scheduled a three-day **razor clam** dig March 16-18 at various ocean beaches on evening tides. Final word on the dig will be announced about a week ahead of time, once marine toxin tests determine whether clams on those beaches remain safe to eat.

The dig planned next month is the last chance this season to harvest razor clams on afternoon tides, although fishery managers may open some beaches for morning digging in April.

As currently scheduled, the following beaches will be open for razor clam digging between noon and midnight on the following days:

- March 16, Friday - Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks (low evening tide: 5:31 p.m., +0.1 ft.)
 - March 17, Saturday - All beaches: Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis, Mocrocks, Kalaloch (low evening tide: 6:16 p.m., -0.1 ft.)
 - March 18, Sunday - Long Beach, Twin Harbors and Kalaloch (low evening tide: 6:58 p.m. -0.1 ft.)
- No digging will be allowed before noon any of those days.

The Ocean Shores Chamber of Commerce is planning a razor clam festival March 17 to coincide with the scheduled dig at Copalis Beach, which includes the beach at Ocean Shores. Information on the festival, which includes chowder cook-offs and live music, is available on the chamber's website (<http://www.oceanshores.org/>) or by calling 360-289-2451.

A license is required for anyone age 15 or older. Any 2006 annual shellfish/seaweed, razor clam or combination license is still valid. Licenses can be purchased via the Internet at <https://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov>, by telephone (1-866-246-9453), or in person at more than 600 license vendors throughout the state. A list of vendors can be found at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/lic/vendors/vendors>.

The sport **oyster** season opens March 1 at Cushman Park in Mason County on the west side of Hood Canal. The season will run indefinitely depending on the oyster population. The limit for gatherers is 18 oysters, with a minimum size of 2½ inches. Oysters must be shucked on the beach, with shells left at the same place and tide height where they were collected. Cushman Park (Saltwater Park) is located about 13 miles north of Shelton on Highway 101. For more information, contact Alex Bradbury, WDFW, at 360-586-1498, ext. 208.

Southwest Washington:

The Dalles Pool may be the best place in the region to catch fish while areas farther west recover from a week of heavy rain. In creel surveys conducted through Feb. 18., boat anglers fishing the Columbia River behind The Dalles Dam averaged nearly one steelhead per rod. Eleven walleye were also pulled aboard seven boats during the same period.

Elsewhere, rising temperatures and heavy rains broke winter's grip on the region but rendered many waters virtually unfishable.

"We needed some rain to get fish moving, but we didn't need this much," said Joe Hymer, WDFW fish biologist. "The good news is that fishing should improve once the rivers drop back into shape."

Sturgeon fishing below Bonneville Dam may pick up first, now that water temperatures are warming up, Hymer said. Although few legal-sized fish were landed anywhere on the river during the week ending Feb. 19, Hymer said the waters off the mouth of the Willamette River are a good place to try in the days ahead. "Sturgeon like high, dirty water, and the 'Willamette plume' has that to offer," Hymer said.

High water should also draw more **steelhead** and **spring chinook salmon** into the lower Columbia River, Hymer said. Late-run hatchery steelhead, bound for the Kalama and Cowlitz rivers, are expected to arrive any day, and the first angler-caught spring chinook was taken (at Willamette Falls) Feb. 15. An

aerial survey conducted two days later counted 71 boats and 158 bank anglers downstream from the Interstate 5 bridge - a significant increase from recent weeks.

In addition, increasing numbers of seals gathering near Longview indicate that **smelt** have re-entered the Columbia River after retreating to the ocean to escape the winter freeze. Commercial boats landed 120 pounds of smelt there Feb. 19.

"I can't make any promises, but there's a chance the smelt might reach the Cowlitz River soon," Hymer said. "Although predicted returns are low this year, past experience shows this is prime time to dip smelt." The Cowlitz River is open to smelt dipping from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. each Saturday through March 31.

Anglers may also want to try their luck at three landlocked waters recently planted with steelhead and **rainbow trout**. Kline Pond was planted with 1,100 catchable-size rainbows, Horseshoe Lake near Woodland received 1,500 half-pound rainbows and South Lewis County Park got 13 winter steelhead in mid-month.

A **razor clam** fishery has been tentatively scheduled on afternoon tides March 16-18 at various ocean beaches. See the Sound Sound/Olympic Peninsula report for details.

Eastern Washington:

Dozens of lakes throughout the region will open for trout fishing March 1, including seven man-made impoundments along the Tucannon River in Columbia County. Most of those lakes, along with a number of others lakes in southeast Washington that open March 1 or are open year-round, will be planted with catchable-size trout - and some "jumbo" trout - in time for the March 1 opener.

"Ice shouldn't be an issue for anglers, since the weather is warming up quickly here in the southeast part of the state," said Glen Mendel, a WDFW fish biologist stationed in Dayton. "However, soft roads may affect where and when the tanker trucks can move fish."

The Tucannon River impoundments opening March 1 include Beaver, Big Four, Blue, Deer, Rainbow, Spring and Watson lakes. All are scheduled to be planted with **catchable-size trout** and some **jumbos** (14 inches and larger) in time for the opener. Anglers may also encounter some carryovers from last year in Blue, Rainbow and Spring lakes, Mendel said. Curl Lake, another impoundment off the Tucannon River, will remain closed until the last Saturday in April, said Mendel, who noted that Dayton Juvenile Pond, also in Columbia County, will reopen in late March after renovations are completed.

Other lakes such as Pampa Pond in Whitman County, and Fishhook Pond in Walla Walla County, will also open March 1.

Year-round lakes scheduled to receive plants by March 1 include Bennington, Quarry, Lions Park and Jefferson Park juvenile fishing ponds in Walla Walla County; and Golf Course and West Evans ponds in Asotin County.

Virtually all lakes stocked for the March 1 opener will continue to receive fresh plants of trout throughout the spring, Mendel said. Anglers can check the weekly stocking list at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/weekly> to see which lakes were recently planted.

Farther north, Coffee Pot Lake in Lincoln County should provide plenty of action when it opens for fishing March 1 under selective gear rules, said Chris Donley, a WDFW fish biologist stationed in Spokane Valley. "The lake was stocked last spring and they're getting big," said Donley, noting that the

daily limit there is two trout. "Coffee Pot is a good place to catch a couple of nice rainbow."

So is Amber Lake, which opens for catch-and-release fishing March 1. As with some other lakes in Spokane County, ice conditions could be "a little dicey" at Amber Lake for a few weeks, Donley said. "But anglers usually get on the water by early April," he said, noting that Amber Lake provides good catch-and-release fishing for both rainbow and **cutthroat trout**.

Donley said trout fishing has been "on and off" at Lake Roosevelt, which is open year round. But anglers are catching good-size triploid trout downriver at Rufous Woods Lake behind Chief Joseph Dam. The daily limit there is two trout, no minimum size.

North Central Washington:

Prospects are good for anglers planning to fish the March 1 lake opener in the southern part of the region, where the ice is quickly melting off most waters. Meanwhile, anglers fishing through the ice farther north have been catching good numbers of **rainbow trout, kokanee** and **yellow perch**.

"Warm temperatures, a little rain and a lot of wind have worked wonders on the ice," said Jeff Korth, a WDFW fish biologist working out of Ephrata. "The forecast for the rest of the month is for warm temperatures, so all waters should be ice-free on the opener."

As for fishing prospects, Korth offered this assessment of several popular lakes opening March 1:

- **Burke and Quincy:** The largest of the March 1 trout waters, these lakes may be the best bet for fishing under statewide rules in the region, he said. Both were rehabilitated the fall of 2005, and surveys indicate excellent survival - and growth - among trout fingerlings planted a year later. "We anticipate limits of 10-12 inch rainbow as soon as the ice is gone," Korth said. Burke Lake received 35,084 rainbow fingerlings - Quincy Lake, 22,017 - last fall.
- **Upper, Lower, and West Caliche Lakes:** Trout fishing was poor last year, due in part to the presence of yellow perch. This year, Upper Caliche Lake was stocked with larger fall fingerlings, with should run about 9 inches by the opener. In all, the Upper Caliche received 9,500 fingerlings, Lower Caliche 5,000 and West Caliche 500. More catchables may be planted as ice conditions permit.
- **Martha Lake:** Cormorants and sunfish have been a problem for fingerling survival. However, the lake has open water at the north end, making it possible to stock up to 5,000 catchables (12 inch rainbows) before opening day. Martha Lake was also stocked with 11,200 rainbow fingerlings last spring.
- **Quincy Walk-In Lakes:** These small waters on the west side of the Wildlife Area offer anglers a chance to explore the scabland and get a little exercise. Success rates vary lake-to-lake and season-to-season. Yearlings range from 9-12 inches, with carryovers 14-18 inches. Crystal, Cup and Spring lakes have been the most consistent.
- **Dusty Lake:** Rehabilitated in 2003, this lake offers good numbers of 16-20 inch rainbows, with some real whoppers remaining from the 2004 triploid rainbow plant. Tiger trout have also been stocked since 2004 and, more recently, brown trout. *Dusty Lake is managed under the selective fishery rules (no bait, single barbless hook, 1 fish limit; see pamphlet).*
- **Lenice and Nunnally Lakes:** Sunfish have taken a toll on fingerlings, but yearlings should run 14 inches and both lakes have received regular plantings of 1-1.5 pound triploid rainbow. There are also brown and tiger trout stocked in small numbers. The last two state records for tiger trout have come from these waters. 2006 plants in Lenice Lake include 9,445 rainbow trout, 1,007 tiger trout and 2,000 brown trout, all fingerlings. Plants in Nunnally Lake include 12,005 rainbows, 2,014 tiger trout, and

3,028 brown, all fingerlings. *Selective fishing regulations are in effect on both lakes (one fish, single, barbless hook, no bait; see pamphlet).*

- **Lake Lenore:** Fishing has been good for the last three March openers, and the lake is currently carrying as many cutthroat as ever. Three- to four-year-old fish, weighing three to five pounds, should be numerous. About 55,000 Lahontan cutthroat fingerlings have also been released each year. *Lake Lenore has selective fishery regulations, with catch and release requirements in effect from March through May.*

Meanwhile, anglers are still catching good numbers of fish on iced-up lakes in the northern part of the region, said Bob Jateff, a WDFW fish biologist based in Omak. Patterson Lake, Near Winthrop, is producing rainbow trout as well as yellow perch, he said. Anglers fishing Bonaparte Lake (East of Tonasket) are catching eastern brook trout and kokanee.

Other popular ice-fishing lakes include Sidley (Molson area), Rat (Near Brewster), and Big Green (North of Omak), all of which are producing catches of rainbow trout, Jateff said. "The ice on all these lakes is still pretty solid, averaging around a foot thick," he said.

In addition, Rufus Woods Lake above Chief Joseph Dam continues to produce triploid rainbow trout for both shore and boat anglers. Jateff notes that there are two well-developed boat launches and limited shore access at the lower end of the Lake.

Due to a recent regulation change, Spectacle Lake will open to fishing on April 1, rather than March 1 as in past years. Anglers are advised to consult the *2006-2007 Fishing in Washington* pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) for clarification on the Spectacle Lake season.

Steelhead fishing on the Columbia above Wells Dam has been slow with very few fish being caught in recent weeks. Anglers are reminded to check the WDFW website for updates, since the season can close at any time when wild fish "take" limits are reached.

South Central Washington:

Most lakes in the southcentral region are open year round, but many receive their first plants of hatchery **rainbow trout** at this time of year. Some also have carryovers from last fall ranging from 1.5 to 5 pounds. "Since most of our lakes are open year round, anglers can start fishing any time," said Eric Anderson, a WDFW district biologist in Yakima.

In the Yakima area, hatchery personnel will begin planting a number of lakes and ponds with catchable-size trout (10-12 inches long) from Feb. 26 through March 16. Some jumbo trout, weighing about a pound each, will also be planted in those waters, including Granger Pond, I-82 Ponds 4 & 6, Myron Lake, Rotary Lake and Sarge Hubbard Park Pond. Wenas Lake, a popular recreational fishery in the Yakima valley will no longer be stocked because the land owner has decided to not renew the public access agreement.

Several lakes and ponds will also be stocked in the Kittitas Valley during the same period, including FioRito Lakes, Mattoon Lake, McCabe Pond and Woodhouse Ponds. There and throughout the region, trout plants will continue through spring and early summer. Anglers can check the weekly plants list at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/weekly> on the WDFW website to see which lakes were recently planted.

Following the initial round of planting, another wave of stocking will occur in April, Anderson said. "Additional lakes will be stocked at higher elevations as the weather continues to warm up and the snow and ice packs recede," he said.

Although most of the lakes in the Yakima and Kittitas valleys are open to fishing year round, special regulations are in effect on some waters. For that reason, Anderson strongly advises anglers to check WDFW's *Fishing in Washington* rule book (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>) before casting a line.

Reader Email

Subscriber Tom H. wrote this week to ask, "I am curious if you guys could make a new tech report about bottom fishing around the Oregon coast? I see this question come up quite often on the local fishing websites and it would be nice to have such a great report on how, where, types of fish, and different techniques for boat and bank fishing."

TGF **co-editor Michael Teague** responded, "Thanks for writing.

"It's interesting that you'd ask about such a report. I have been working on a rock- and jetty-fishing tutorial for quite a while now. While I hadn't considered incorporating offshore bottom-fishing, it would be a natural addition. It's motivating to hear that there's interest in it and that should light a fire under me to get it done. <G>

"Once that's wrapped up, I'll be compiling a report on Northwest bass and panfishing as well.

"Your input is sincerely appreciated. Please write again anytime."

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

Colossal Squid taken in New Zealand:

http://news.yahoo.com/photo/070222/481/nzl80102220629&g=events/wl/022207largesquid;_ylt=AsIoOoyPScaq5wS0r2mYSEZxieAA



Rod Building with video how-to:

<http://www.flyfisherman.com/rodbuilding/>

Weekly Quote – "Say you are in the country; in some high land of lakes. Take almost any path you please, and ten to one it carries you down in a dale, and leaves you there by a pool in the stream. There is magic in it. Let the most absent-minded of men be plunged in his deepest reveries – stand that man on his legs, set him a-going, and he will infallibly lead you to water, if water there be in all that region ... Yes, as every one knows, meditation and water are wedded forever." - Herman Melville in Moby Dick

GOOD LUCK!