

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **March 2<sup>nd</sup> – March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

**Oregon Fisheries Update:**

**Willamette Valley/Metro-** Flows are up and water temperatures down at Willamette Falls. The visibility remains below one foot as temps dipped to 44 degrees on February 26th. Counts through the 19th indicate a reasonable passage of winter steelhead with the total pushing 3,000. Sturgeon fishing has slowed as a result of the lower water temperatures. Many sub-legal fish are being released in the course of finding a keeper. Springer fishing remains a gamble with fish being taken only occasionally. Trolled herring is most effective for early spring Chinook although a few are taken by plunkers at Meldrum Bar.

Steelheading remains slow in the cold water of the Clackamas, although a couple of springers have been taken at the mouth. Flows are a little high here.

Sandy River steelheaders drifting bait are picking up a few fish. Cedar Creek was productive early this week but will be crowded on the weekend. Fish that blew through the system just a few weeks ago are collecting in good numbers closer to Marmot Dam reports **pro guide Brandon Glass (503-260-8285)**. As the season progresses, this stretch will only get more productive.

Level and flow of the Santiam system was dropping on Tuesday this week, but heavy rain could impact the river. Most of the native steelhead currently crossing Willamette Falls are destined for the North Santiam.

Henry Hagg Lake, which opens the first Saturday in March each year, received 18,000 legal-sized trout and 120 broodstock rainbows on Monday this week in anticipation of the heavily-attended opener. Also scheduled to be planted this week are Huddleston Pond, Sheridan Pond, St. Louis Pond, Alton Baker Canal, Cottage Grove Reservoir, E. E. Wilson Pond and Junction City Pond.

**Northwest –** With high water and poor coastal pass conditions, effort has been light on most north coast streams. Colder water temperatures also have fish less than enthused.

Smaller streams like the Necanicum and upper Nestucca and Trask Rivers were fishable just prior to the weekend but results were not all that good. High accumulations of snow will have north coast streams flowing consistently high and likely to rise again over the weekend.

When these area rivers do begin to drop and clear, steelheaders should be on for peak season wild fish on all systems.

Good tides are scheduled over the weekend for sturgeon fishing and clamming. The weather however will keep conditions from being comfortable for most.

Crabbing remains poor on most north coast estuaries.

Steelheading is fair to good on the Siletz River although rain this week may put it out of shape.

**Southwest –** Precipitation is predicted to moderate this weekend in the Southwest region.

Steelheading will improve on the Umpqua as it drops and clears this week. The better fishing is likely to be on the South fork. The majority of fish will be natives, one of which may be retained on the

mainstem, but no more than five per year.

The Elk River has been producing nice winter steelhead and will recover rapidly following heavy precipitation.

Plunkers on the lower Rogue have been taking a few steelhead but the action has been moving upriver. The Grants Pass stretch is a better bet. Anglers using eggs should score decent results in the coming weeks. Over 2,200 steelhead have passed Gold Ray Dam giving upper river anglers ample opportunity.

The productive Chetco River was high and muddy on Tuesday but dropping and should fish well by the weekend. Traffic should be heavy however as the annual steelhead derby will coat the river with effort.

The Coquille has booted out respectable numbers of fish this season but recent precipitation will likely have it unfishable into the weekend. When it does come into shape, fishing should be excellent.

Reinhart Park Pond is scheduled to be stocked with hatchery trout this week.

The southern Oregon ocean outlook is not encouraging for anglers wishing to pursue bottomfish and ocean crab. High winds and seas are in the forecast.

Crab are plentiful in the area's estuaries but most are sub-legal.

**Eastern –** Good catch rates continue to persist on the Grande Ronde River **reports pro guide Mac Huff (800-940-3688)**. Although fish have clearly moved upstream of Troy, steelhead should remain in fair numbers in the Troy area well into March.

Catch rates climbed to 1 fish for every 6 hours on the Wallowa River indicating this run is well underway. Inclement weather will call for cautious travel but will likely not slow the catch rates for steelhead in this region.

**SW Washington –** Heavy precipitation has had the best SW Washington streams too high to expect good results. The North Fork of the Lewis River is one of the better options and a few wild fish have succumbed to plugs. When flows drop closer to 5,500 CFS, success will improve. The Cowlitz is not a good option.

Smelt dippers finally found results on the one-day Saturday opener last week. Although temperatures are likely to drop again in the near future, dippers should have another crack at spawning smelt this Saturday. Although few dippers managed their 10 pound limit, most did find success downstream of Lexington.

**Pro guide Brandon McGavran (360-607-1327)** reports, "I fished on the N. Fork Lewis last weekend. It was cold and rainy and the water conditions weren't great but we managed to catch 1 native and had 2 other fish on that we lost close to the boat both of which were native as well.

The Lewis is up at 8,500 FPS and clarity has been a problem all winter. The river is green but has a glacial milky ness and at best there is about 1.5 ft visibility on a good day. Back trolling plugs is the best option in these conditions. Ideal flows here are 5,500 FPS and under. Definitely need the rain to stop.

The water temp on the Columbia at I-5 is currently 41.5 degrees (but dropping) with plenty of visibility.

I am looking forward to getting out this Friday for an early spring Chinook. I will be fishing just below

the I-5 bridge on the Columbia since the water downstream is muddy because of the Willamette. Hoping the rain stops and Willamette clears so I can get downstream to fish at Kalama/Goble to Rainer when the good tides come mid March. It's going to be good earlier then later again this year (I think).

**Columbia River Fishing Report** – With poor weather conditions, including cold and turbid water in the lower Columbia, anglers were not very motivated to pursue salmon this week. The weekly creel check indicated poor catch but a few wild steelhead were released from the bank.

Gillnet catches indicate that fish are present. Almost 200 spring chinook were “incidentally” harvested while targeting sturgeon in the lower Columbia. Test fishing results showed salmon present with a high incidence of Willamette “white-faced” chinook in the catch. Also in the catch- wild steelhead with nearly 1 steelhead for every chinook landed.

With these catches, it looks like a decent year for wild winter steelhead to the metro rivers and some quality salmon are in the river. The fish and game departments are not recommending a salmon fishery likely due to the high number of steelhead present. This may allow for a higher escapement of salmon into the Willamette River this week.

With the arrival of smelt into the Columbia River and the possibility of using fresh bait in pursuit of sturgeon, anglers should be motivated to try their luck on the mainstem this week. Weekend creel checks however indicate that the few people attempting were not seeing great results. **Pro guide Brandon McGavran (360-607-1327)** reports, “There are smelt in the Cowlitz. There were large crowds working the River with lots of people getting easy limits. I took advantage of that after my trip was over last Saturday and got my bait fresh for the Sturgeon Derby this Saturday. Lot’s of Sturgeon fisherman having good success in the lower Cowlitz. As the Smelt enter the river the Sturgeon are quick to migrate with them for the easy buffet.”

Upstream, the walleye bite seemed to slow likely due to the onset of colder weather. Fish should begin to move into their pre-spawn shallow water making them an easier target to dedicated walleye anglers.

**The Guide’s Forecast** – Although a warming trend is in the forecast, turbid water will likely keep success rates low for Columbia River anglers this week. Water temperatures will remain cold but should slowly be in the rise. Bank anglers may do fair with bright colored spin-n-glos with heavy scent. The higher and swifter the flow, the closer to the bank you want to target these fish. Boat anglers fishing above the mouth of the Willamette (to the I-5 deadline) stand a fair at best chance at an early upper Columbia bound springer. It’s a bit early for consistent action in this stretch however.

Sturgeon anglers should be excited about the smelt run into the lower Cowlitz last weekend. Commercial catches climbed as well. This however, does not mean great opportunity for lower Columbia sturgeon anglers. There may be some fair catches near the mouth of the Cowlitz River and in the Cowlitz itself but by no means, should one count on gangbuster fishing.

Upper reservoirs on the Columbia will likely remain poor for sturgeon but with the warming trend, should pick up for walleye anglers. Spinner and worm combinations will likely produce the best results.

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report** – With the Willamette at near-zero visibility, the spring Chinook fishery which showed a glimmer of life in the form of early catches has stalled. Sturgeon like the muddy water but the water temperature has fallen another degree to 42 the last day of February which will slow the bite. Keepers will still come but not with the frequency seen last week. The year-to-date winter steelhead count is pushing 3,200 at Willamette Falls.

Boaters interested in a 'learn the River trip may meet at Green's Bridge at 9 AM on Saturday, March 3rd. Experienced fishermen and guides will lead the way starting at 10 AM to drift to Buena Vista and usually catch and release a few along the way. The North Santiam River Guides Association, Steelheaders, and North Santiam Watershed Council participate and put the event together. See the **Inbox** below for more Santiam information.

The Northwest Fly Tyer and Fly Fishing Expo will take place on March 9th and 10th at the Wheeler Pavilion at the Lane County Events Center in Albany. This year, the event has been expanded to two days and moved to a much larger venue.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Plunkers on the bank of the Willamette below mouth of Clackamas River will continue to pick up a few steelhead. Spring Chinook will start to bite again when the water warms a little. Sturgeon fishing will be a little more challenging with the tournament going on Saturday. Let's hope the cold water keeps the bit slow and the kill low so there will be some keepers remaining in the lower river for the rest of us in weeks to come. Smelt has been the hot bait most days with herring squid and sand shrimp effective at times. Keepers have come from Oregon City to St. Johns, the Portland Harbor through Multnomah Channel. With sturgeon fishing poor in the Columbia, the lower Willamette will be jammed.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports** – Spinners have produced a few steelhead on the Clackamas, but most have had to be released as they were wild. This is fine sport, though. A combination of fluctuating water levels and low water temperatures are challenging conditions, however. That's what steelheaders on the Clackamas have faced recently along with fishless trips for the most part. Once the river settles down and the water temperature rises, fishing will improve. On Monday this week, the water temp was 39 degrees at the hatchery. While Eagle Creek delivered some steelhead over the weekend, cold water this week has stalled the steelhead bite. Over 900 winters have returned to the holding pond.

**Pro guide Brandon Glass (503-260-8285)** adds this, "Well the Sandy has been producing good numbers of fish in the upper reaches from Dodge to Marmont dam. The lower river has had a few fish this week and my self have been getting about 2-5 a trip. The rain has been a little on the heavy side so the water has not been dropping as fast as we would like. The sand is still around, but the Cedar Creek up to Marmont has seemed to be flushed out. Have had one 18# native and have heard of a few more."

Conditions on the Sandy are improving this week from the high, silty, off-color flows witnessed over the weekend. The Sandy fell two and a half feet during the last week of February and was 9.8 feet at Bull Run on the morning of March 1st. Numbers of broodstock steelhead are improving with about 100 entering the hatchery facility last week. Steelheading is fair and improving. The Sandy will remain productive through March thanks to the later-returning winter steelhead. Cedar Creek has been fair for anglers drifting bait this week.

**North Coast District Fishing Report** – Too low, too high, too windy, too snowy, too cold.....and on, and on, and on.....North coast steelheaders are still waiting for the right conditions to hit before they bring their boats over from the Willamette Valley. Smaller streams were looking promising by mid-week but volatile weather patterns have highways treacherous to travel and conditions less than ideal to fish in. The cold snap that began earlier in the week also dropped stream temperatures- causing the fish to go off what little bite did exist. It's hard to gauge if the fish are actually present since very little effort has been put forth in the recent week. Smaller streams did not produce great catches of fish so it doesn't look like we are missing much.

**Pro guide Dave Johnson (503-201-4292)** reports this from local Tillamook area streams, "We've been getting three to four a day in the Tillamook rivers. Water has been real high so bait has been the best option. If we get the warm weather that's predicted this weekend I'd say the rivers are going to be toast."

Further south on the Nestucca, **pro guide Jesse Zalonis (503-392-5808)** reports, "With this recent weather, the Nestucca is shot. The color is alright, which is a surprise, but there is just too much flow to fish in comfort and safety. If we continue to see these snow flurries, it might, MIGHT!, fish by Wednesday. There should be a bunch of fish around, we just need to see some better conditions, and we'll find them somewhere. As for now, look toward big, bright, colored baits, like rags, and plugs. As the river clears, then we can start to down size on gear and fish like normal, with all tactics working well. As for now, it is still winter here. Be safe and we will see you when the thing comes into shape."

Also reporting from the Nestucca is **pro guide Kent Anderson (503-550-6303)**. Kent writes, "Not much to report from the Nestucca. High water this week has taken everybody off the river. As of today (Tues 3 pm), the river is about 8 feet in level but has returned to a decent green color. As long as the snow in the upper elevations doesn't melt too quickly we might be fishing on Thursday. Prior to the current rise, fishing was a little slower than expected. I managed to get trips in on Thursday afternoon, Friday and Saturday morning last week (between high water events). The river was high but fishable and light pressure but catches were slow. We only landed 3 steelhead in the 3 trips, all were wild fish. We caught 2 side drifting and 1 on a plug. Bring back the sunshine!"

Despite good tides, no effort was observed sturgeon fishing on Tillamook Bay. The wind was cold and anglers are exposed full frontal to the weather this time of year. It makes some sturgeon trips downright painful! Crabbers are having the same experience and keeper crab catches have been slow anyway!

**The Guide's Forecast** – It's more of the same for north coast steelheaders. Volatile weather systems will have larger streams a hit-or-miss option over the weekend. The best bet will be just prior to the weekend but rivers may very well be on the rise by as early as Friday. Back to back events are forecasted for northern Oregon making smaller streams like the Necanicum, North Fork Nehalem, Kilchis and upper Trask the best options. The tree that is impeding passage just downstream of Kilchis Park is still rumored to be an issue. It should be visible from the park so look before launching. With all the high flows, bank anglers may once again have an advantage as fish will tend to move upstream quickly in these conditions. Cold water temperatures however may prevent a rapid migration.

Large, colorful baits like eggs and rags should produce some of the best results for anglers. In these flows, fish should be holding in the tail-outs of holes and on the inside edges of the faster main current. Be sure to let your offering eddy out at the end of your drift as this is the current these fish are likely to hold in when we experience these types of flows.

Favorable tides are getting a little late this weekend for productive sturgeon fishing on Tillamook Bay. Do you really want to be sitting out there anyway in the cold, wet weather? Crabbing will not be that much better of an option. Mexico anyone?

**Central & South Coast Reports** – All coastal rivers lacking a broodstock steelhead program will offer another type of catch-and-release sport in addition to wild steelhead, that for down-runners. Steelhead which have spawned and are returning to the ocean are easier to hook than when they were running upstream, intent on procreation. Run-back fish aren't table-worthy but are worthy adversaries and will bite aggressively. Easy to distinguish from steelhead yet to spawn, these will be remarkably slender. Let 'em go to run again next year.

Broodstock steelhead are available in the Siletz river. At 6.5 and dropping on Thursday this week, it should fish well by the weekend. It can be stressed too strongly that the launch at Moonshine Park is dangerous. The spot just downstream is challenging even for expert drift boaters.

North Fork Alsea steelheaders will find high, fast flows but nice color this week. The water is very cold, but with a broodstock program here as well, fin clipped steelhead are in there. It will fish this weekend only if the snow pack doesn't melt too quickly with the warming trend.

Over 1,400 winter steelhead have returned to the Whitaker Creek facility on the Siuslaw, the vast majority of which returned during the month of February. This total indicates a marked improvement over runs in previous seasons. Unfortunately, the water is high and isn't dropping very quickly.

Umpqua anglers have been enjoying outstanding results with steelhead on the South Fork. It's forecast to crest Saturday morning over 10 feet but will be heading for the six foot level on Sunday. Steelheading is improving on the North but the mainstem is blown out.

High, muddy water will probably prevent the Coos and Coquille from being fishable this week. When conditions improve, however, these will deliver the goods throughout the month. The South Coquille will fish first and should fish well. Snowmelt will be effecting level and flow here for a while so be sure to check it before making the trip.

Steelheaders have continued to take fish in Elk and Sixes despite less than ideal water conditions. Keep an eye on these as they both get a late winter run and will drop and clear in a flash in the absence of precipitation.

One unclipped steelhead per day up to five per year may be kept on the Rogue River from the mouth to Gold Ray and native fish is about all that steelheaders may expect to hook at this time of year. No springers have been reported as yet. It's been a wild ride weather-wise for Rogue anglers who face a blown river this week. The upper Rogue has been the only stretch that was fishable mid-week with winter steelhead counts pushing the 2,800 mark at Gold Ray Dam. With a promise in weather forecasts of moderating rainfall, plunkers may find a few fish down low but it's getting late in the run to expect stellar results. The middle Rogue is not expected to fish by the weekend.

Applegate anglers have been enjoying decent steelheading although high, roiled water has been a problem here as well.

The Chetco has suffered this week from the effects of excessive rain and snowfall. It's forecast to rise into Saturday, cresting in the afternoon at around six feet and 6,000 cfs; too much water for good fishing. As it recovers, it should be very good. The Chopper Westbrook Derby is being held on both the Chetco and Smith Rivers this weekend, so it'll be under extra pressure in marginal conditions. I'd put my money on the plunkers.

**Central and Eastern Oregon – Pro guide Mac Huff (800-940-3688)** reports, "The catch rate for steelhead in northeast Oregon and southeast Washington continues at an exceptional pace. There was never much of a lull in the catching this winter, even during some very unfriendly weather during December and January.

"Now the weather has moderated, but not so much that it has adversely affected the rivers and the catching continues at a great rate. The Grande Ronde in Washington had the slowest catch rate at about 6 hours per fish. The Washington fishery will remain good and get better as March progresses. Oregon statistics look good at 3.8 hours per fish, but only one fish was caught. There were only three

anglers interviewed, too, so the "word on the street" is that the fish are gone upriver from the Troy area. The word on the street is probably wrong. Good numbers of fish usually remain in the Troy area through mid March, so there are good fishing opportunities here with little company, if you like that scenario.

"The fish have certainly moved upriver on schedule, though, and anglers are taking advantage of 6 hours per fish catch rates on the Wallowa River. Nearly 100 anglers were interviewed in last week's creel survey, so the word is out for this segment of the run."

Whenever the sun breaks through to add a little warmth on the Deschutes, Mayflies and dark cadisces are hatching. When this occurs, fly fishing for trout has been fair to good. Alternately, nymphing will take a few.

Fishing for bull trout has been rewarding on the Metolius.

**Northwest Trout** – Henry Hagg Lake, which opens this Saturday, March 3rd and the ODFW planted 18,000 legal-sized trout and 120 broodstock rainbows on Monday this week. The opener will be celebrated by hundreds of anglers, some of whom will be competing in the Bi Mart Hagg Lake Fishing Derby running until 2 PM. Catching one of 200 specially tagged fish will win a prize. The ODFW says the broodstock released in Hagg Lake weighed 18 to 20 pounds apiece. That ought to surprise the Power Baiters.

Also scheduled to be planted this week are Huddleston Pond, Sheridan Pond, St. Louis Pond. Alton Baker Canal, Cottage Grove Reservoir, E. E. Wilson Pond and Junction City Pond.

### **Washington fishing reports:**

**From the WDF&W Weekender Report February 21<sup>st</sup> – March 6<sup>th</sup>, 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 Russ K, wrote this week, "I was traveling back from Bend area this week and decided to drive a different route. I took highway 20 through Sweet Home. I saw some great fishing water coming down and having fished mostly the north Santiam River and not the south, was wondering if you would enlighten me as to the difference between the two rivers and how good the south is. I am only a bank fisherman and would like to know more about the south Santiam."

TGF co-editor Michael Teague replied, "The fishery of greatest interest in the South Santiam is spring Chinook.

Numbers of springers will start streaming over Willamette Falls when the water temperature reaches 55 degrees. They'll travel up to 15 miles in a day in the upper river. While anchor fishermen catch a few, springers often seem to have lockjaw above the Falls. Once they enter the mainstem of the Santiam River, they slow down and bite better. This is where bait, either below a bobber or drifted, becomes effective. Upriver, the better spring Chinook fishing is in the South Santiam. Bank fishing is available at Lebanon Dam, Waterloo Park and Wiley Creek.

"I've fished the North Santiam and know several other anglers (some of whom are very good) who do so as well as it's closer to home for us than the South. There are many places which offer bank fishing opportunities. There are winter steelhead present now in modest number as upwards of 80% of those crossing at Willamette Falls are destined for this river. Because there's no winter hatchery stocking program, winter steelhead are wild here and must be released although a number of anglers fish it just for the sport. The run of summer hatchery steelhead which enters the North Santiam has been fair one year, good the next. During a good year, however, it's well worth the trip.

"You've fished the North so you may already be aware of all the above, but my South Santiam knowledge is limited so I gave you what I've got. <g> Here's a link which will provide you with South Santiam fish counts at Foster Dam:  
[http://www.dfw.state.or.us/swwd/fish\\_home.html](http://www.dfw.state.or.us/swwd/fish_home.html) 'Hope this has been somewhat helpful. Please write again anytime."

Robert M. used the contact for at the TGF website to ask, "Last week you displayed an ad for some anti seal stickers I would like to purchase but cant find the ad this week. Please get me a # and name."

Michael replied, "'Happy to help share the sentiment regarding seals and sea lions. The contact info was in the 'Random Links' section two weeks ago. Here it is: <http://www.salmonthief.com/>"

**Pro guide Rick Arnold (541-480-1570)** wanted to share this, "By the way, if you get a chance and you have satellite, the national TV program (Direct TV and Dish carry it) we did with the American Outdoorsman (it is on the Men's Outdoor and Rec. channel in the US and Wild TV in Canada) crew has been airing this month. You can get the info off the front of my website on schedules. We did a bull trout program last April and it is showing this month."

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**

WDFW Smelt Updates:

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/smelt/>

WDFW Salmon Forecasts:

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/do/newreal/release.php?id=feb2707a>

**Weekly Quote** – "If you are a passionate angler, the chances are that someone caused you to be that by hooking you on fishing when you were young. Those of us who are hooked young, by someone who knows what he (or she) is doing, rarely get off, and often turn into fishers of kids ourselves." - Charles Gaines

**GOOD LUCK!**