

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **January 9th – January 15th, 2009**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro- Although spring chinook anglers still don't know what the season will be, Washington managers will meet this week to again discuss options. Since the Columbia River is managed by both Oregon and Washington, managers will likely be negotiating a workable allocation shortly after the January 10th Washington Commission meeting. The Washington commission option favors much more sport opportunity than the Oregon option but the goal is to get 45 days of opportunity for sport anglers on the Columbia.

Despite water temperatures in the lower 40s, Willamette sturgeon fishers caught plenty of fish and a few keepers last week before debris became a serious threat. It's forecast to hit flood stage again by January 8th.

While the Sandy and Clackamas rivers were dropping earlier this week, the next round of precipitation will put them both out of shape. It remains to be seen if they'll fish by the weekend. The Dabney ramp was unusable and Oxbow Park was closed as of Tuesday this week.

With three times the average snowpack this year, when it rains and the snow melts simultaneously, the rivers turn to torrents. When the valley rivers finally start to drop and clear, steelheaders should start fishing high on the system and work down as the levels recede.

Trout stocking schedules for 2009 are not yet available.

Northwest – Steelheaders have yet to have a good opportunity for steelhead on the north coast this season. Water levels have either been too high or too low and with another flood threat on the north coast, it will likely be at least the early part of next week before smaller streams drop to low enough levels to fish.

High winds are once again battering the north coast so driftboating district rivers will be hazardous due to fallen trees. The smaller the river system, the greater the threat.

The Wilson River will still offer the best opportunity for steelhead when the system clears but don't count on that until the middle of next week.

These rivers should fish well when they drop into shape and don't let high, slightly off-color water intimidate you. Larger, brighter baits will take willing fish but target steelhead in the softer flows and close to the rivers edge where they are likely to hold until the water clears.

Few anglers took advantage of the Siletz River last week but those that did found success for quality fish using bait. A tributary about 2 miles below Moonshine Park is spewing mud making lower drifts more challenging.

Good sturgeon tides are now underway for Tillamook and Nehalem Bays but waterways are likely to be choked with debris keeping anglers from fishing effectively. Navigation will be a hazard until the debris heads to sea. Anglers are encouraged to check the 2009 regulation booklet for new sturgeon regulations regarding length measurements and gear restrictions. Only one single-point barbless hook is allowed in all state waters when pursuing sturgeon.

Southwest – Rain and melting snow has southwest rivers and streams out of shape and muddy this week. While rain has continued to fall, the south coast is not getting hit nearly as hard as the north coast and Willamette Valley.

Long-range forecasts indicate the weather will break on Friday and dry weather is predicted for several days thereafter. Smaller systems will fish first. Returning adults will migrate very close to shore in the higher flows, saving valuable calories for the spawning ritual. Fish will however take advantage of swollen rivers to get easy access to tributaries that normally would be too small to negotiate.

The ocean forecast indicates there may be some weekend opportunity for offshore anglers wanting to pursue rockfish. Study the ocean conditions extensively before heading out as the weather changes quickly this time of year.

Minus tides in the afternoon into the early evening hours should present some clamming opportunities in bays and estuaries.

The Rogue is forecast to rise to about 6.5 feet on Thursday then drop into the weekend. It may fish by Saturday or Sunday.

Always quick to recover, the Elk River was at a good level and color on Monday this week. Volatile systems like the Elk and Sixes offer narrow windows of opportunity so plan accordingly.

The water level at the Chetco has kept anglers off the river recently but when the river drops, fishing for winter steelhead is expected to be very good. Start with plunking gear then switch up to drifting bait as flows moderate. Use scents liberally when plunking as it is the only technique employed that requires the fish to come to you.

Eastern – During sunny periods over the past week, Blue-Winged Olives were hatching on the Metolius River. With clear skies in the forecast for later this week, it should fish well although anglers should expect chilly conditions.

Lake Billy Chinook produced bull trout over the weekend.

SW Washington – District streams are expected to be hard hit by high precipitation and a dropping of the freezing level. The Cowlitz, Lewis and Kalama Rivers will not be options until the middle of next week. Fishing should be best on the Cowlitz.

Columbia River Fishing Report – With another week of stormy weather, there isn't really any reason to find yourself out on the Columbia River from headwaters to salt. The two viable fisheries that one would consider is the steelhead fishery in the John Day Pool and the crabbing in the estuary. Although steelheading could still be an option as warmer weather can often change the attitude of fish in scenario's like what we are seeing, the fishing was certainly tapering in the first place in this region. Upriver impoundments may hold back a lot of the melting snow and motivated anglers may still find some limited success here.

On the crabbing side of things, the glut of freshwater will certainly have crabs pushed out to sea. Although crabbing is typically still a good option this time of year, the lowering of the freezing level coupled with the flooding issue may have crabbers on hold for a while.

And you should even leave your chainsaws at home this week. You'll likely be seeing lots of large wood floating westward over the next several weeks but this resource is very valuable to the

ocean ecosystems. Let it break down in the salt and jump start the micro-organisms that feed our salmon and steelhead. Keep your woodcutting to the terrestrial areas!

The Guide's Forecast – The best action will be watching what the Washington Commission does to help sport anglers attain a fair spring and summer chinook season this week. Their meeting was recently rescheduled to a conference call so let's hope they keep us in mind when striking their final decision.

Sturgeon, salmon and steelhead anglers, it's best to work on gear this weekend. There will certainly be better times ahead. Crabbers too!

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – The last flood seems to have washed out most of the debris which has created serious hazards on the lower Willamette. The flow remains heavy, however, and boaters should keep a cautious eye upstream for the occasional log or tree which can sink a vessel if it lands on an anchor line. Keep a sturdy knife handy to get free in this worst case scenario.

Other valley rivers will be too high and muddy to offer fishing possibilities.

According to the ODFW website, eight to 15 pound brood stock rainbow trout were released this week at Sheridan Pond, Walter Wirth Lake, Walling Pond, Junction City Pond and Salish Pond. The 2009 schedule has yet to be placed online but the ODFW indicates regular trout planting won't resume until springtime.

The Guide's Forecast – Sturgeon fishing should be worthwhile but the ratio of keepers to smaller fish is unlikely to have improved. Anglers putting in their time with various baits and scents should do well.

Retention of legal-sized sturgeon is allowed only three days a week as of January 1st. Sturgeon may be kept on the lower Willamette and Multnomah Channel only on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday each week. New rules are also in place regarding the method of measurement for retaining sturgeon. In 2009, anglers must measure from the tip of the nose to the fork in the tail and keepers must have a minimum fork length of 38 inches and a maximum fork length is 54 inches. See Random Links, below, for a diagram.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Waters of the Clackamas are high and muddy. While there may be an opportunity by Sunday, it could just as well be next week before the water clears sufficiently for high-water steelheading. Eagle Creek will fish first, of course, and fish are entering the hatchery facility there.

The Sandy River was still high and muddy at mid-day January 8th. There's no possibility it will fish until next week. Once the river drops and clears, prospects here are good for broodstock winter steelhead.

North Coast Fishing Report – This weather sure does make it easy for a reporter to do his work. Can you believe it? It's raining again! At the time of this writing, the Wilson River is quickly headed towards cresting and is forecast to remain above flood stage into Friday. The river will remain too high to fish until Sunday or Monday.

Anglers did not have a chance to fish larger systems before the next weather system battered watersheds but some smaller river systems did put out a few, and I do mean a few fish. The lower Columbia tributaries, Gnat Creek and Big Creek produced very limited results and the North Fork Nehalem produced poor results overall prior to the current rise in rivers.

High winds continue to rack coastal headlands and when levels once again drop to fishable levels, anglers will have to watch for sweepers along river banks. Trees will certainly recruit into river systems, causing hazards to navigation on many river systems.

This week would have been a good time to target sturgeon along coastal estuaries but the wood debris that will be associated with the torrential downpours will make navigation hazardous for several more weeks. The fresh water influx will certainly wash out competing juvenile crab, making it once again, safe to dunk baits on the bay bottoms.

Bacteria levels soar in conditions like these and the Oregon Department of Agriculture closes estuaries to commercial harvest of oysters. It may be wise to not take advantage of the low tide series over the weekend, leaving bay clams more time to clean themselves out from the cow manure and other associated fecal coliform seething in our waterways right now.

Crabbing may be an option on Netarts Bay only. Other systems are too inundated with fresh water to make it worth the effort.

The Guide's Forecast – The weekend doesn't hold much hope for steelheaders but some of the smaller streams may actually be an option by Sunday. The Necanicum, North Fork Nehalem, Big Creek, Gnat Creek, the Klaskanine River, The Kilchis and Three Rivers may all hold hatchery steelhead in fishable conditions this weekend but there is no indication that there are high numbers of fish present. The rivers may green up by then but they will still be high so if you choose to put in some effort, use big, bright baits and target adults in the slower flows at the rivers edge. Be sure to let your drifted baits swing all the way to the rivers edge downstream of you as willing biters will most likely be utilizing these softer flows.

Crabbing? Sturgeon fishing? Are you kidding me? Sorry to say, the tides are ripe for sturgeon fishing but the estuaries will be choked with debris, likely to foul your lines before you have a chance to catch a fish.

How about offshore fishing? If I was to guess what the ocean would be like, looking out my window now, I'd say take up kite flying but....fair weather is ahead and ocean fishing may actually become an option by Friday. But as everyone knows, a weather forecast more than 30 minutes old is inaccurate so be sure to keep checking the weather conditions if you choose to venture out. I use this site: <http://seaboard.ndbc.noaa.gov/data/Forecasts/FZUS56.KPQR.html>.

If you do recreate this weekend, no matter where you go, don't discount any conditions, either river or sea as this is the time of year when water commands your full attention and respect. This is the time of year when most lives are commonly lost and preventable measures could have been taken. Be safe in the new year!

Central & South Coast Reports – Rains this week will have pushed crab out of central Oregon coastal bays and estuaries. While the ocean is open to sport and commercial crabbing and Dungeness are in prime condition at this time of year, rough offshore conditions have kept boats from making an effort over the past week.

Bottom fishing is excellent offshore during the winter months when conditions allow the activity. Limits of rockfish are common and in the new year, boaters may once again retain cabezon. Lingcod move into shallower water in anticipation of spawning in January and February so larger specimens will be showing in catches.

Forecasts indicate the Siletz will be fishable by Saturday but unless this freshet has dramatically improved the winter steelhead population here, it is expected to be slow.

The Alsea, also predicted to fish by Saturday, should be more productive, particularly on the North Fork. Try drifting cured eggs, sand shrimp or even nightcrawlers.

Sturgeon like rainfall and turbid water conditions. Catches have been picking up in the lower Umpqua and Winchester Bay. Crabbing has been worthwhile despite the recent freshet. The Umpqua mainstem has produced steelhead for plunkers periodically but action has only been fair. North Umpqua anglers have witnessed a roller coaster of water levels and few opportunities while the South Umpqua is expected to fish very well for winters when it starts to drop.

Crabbing is expected to be good in Coos Bay during the minus tidal series which is occurring this week and continuing for several days. Since this is a late-day event, crabbing, which has held up here despite rainfall, should be good on the early morning incoming tide.

Despite predictions of a poor winter steelhead return and marginal water conditions, Coquille anglers have been taking fish this week. A reminder that radio tagged fish, even of hatchery origin, must be released.

Early this week, plunkers scored steelhead on the lower Rogue but a mid-week rise turned off the action. Winters are entering in good numbers, however, and fishing will resume as the Rogue starts to drop this weekend. Plunkers use a combination of a Spin 'n' Glo and bait effectively when the water is too high to drift fish. Winter steelhead are into the Grants Pass stretch where boaters are intercepting them.

The Elk and Sixes are at fishable levels and color as of this writing on Thursday, January 8th and steelhead are being caught on drifted bait. With a stretch of dry weather, prospects will improve but these small, volatile rivers will quickly become too low for best results.

Bottom fishers are hoping for a break in rough ocean conditions off Brookings to take advantage of excellent bottom fishing offshore but it looks like they won't get it this weekend. The Chetco River, at 5,000 cfs on Wednesday this week, was rising by the morning of Thursday, January 8th, and over 6,000 cfs. Plunkers will score fresh winter steelhead when the rain stops and the water starts to drop. Fishing with all types of bait and lures will be productive by the weekend.

Central and Eastern Oregon – The Deschutes doesn't see much pressure at this time of year but a few hearty souls are always willing. While there's no winter steelhead run here, trout are always available. It will be best to wait until the river drops and clears.

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report January 7th – January 24th 2008

Whether fishing, hunting or clam digging, be wary of weather-related hazards

Wild weather – including a deep freeze followed by a Pineapple Express – has presented challenges for anyone hoping to fish, hunt or otherwise spend time outdoors in the new year. With much of the state buried in snow, simply getting to recreation areas has been a problem in recent days.

As conditions improve, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is urging everyone to exercise caution as they venture outside to take advantage of recreational activities around the state.

“Right now, many rivers are near flood stage, and many lakes in eastern Washington are covered with a thin layer of ice. Many roads are still slick or buried in snow,” said Mike Cenci, WDFW deputy chief of enforcement. “These and other weather-related conditions should be on the top of everyone’s mind as they head outdoors to take advantage of recreational opportunities now available around the state.”

One such opportunity is a razor clam dig scheduled Jan. 8-11 at Twin Harbors, Copalis and Mocrocks, and Jan. 9-11 at Long Beach. Digging will be allowed only during the hours between noon and midnight.

Dan Ayres, WDFW coastal shellfish manager, reminds diggers to bring a lantern or a flashlight, and to be mindful of the surf. “There are plenty of clams to harvest and, hopefully, the weather and surf will cooperate,” he said.

Some lakes in eastern Washington have also been producing good catches of trout, although area biologists are advising anglers to steer clear of those covered by thin ice. According to U.S. Coast Guard guidelines, no one should venture onto ice less than four inches thick. As much as nine inches may be needed to safely support snowmobiles or other vehicles.

“All the snow we’ve had in this region has insulated a relatively thin ice cover on many lakes,” said one WDFW biologist working out of the department’s Spokane office. “We don’t recommend going out on ice like that.”

North Puget Sound

A snowy holiday season made for tough fishing throughout most of the region. But weather conditions have improved for anglers, who now have a choice to make: cast for **steelhead** in the local rivers or fish for **chinook salmon** on Puget Sound.

Since the start of the new year – when marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay) and 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) opened for **salmon** fishing – the catch rate has improved on the Sound, said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist.

According to creel checks in the region, 14 anglers were checked with five chinook at the Camano Island ramp Jan. 2, while six anglers took home six chinook the following day. “That’s good fishing,” Thiesfeld said. “Hopefully that wasn’t just an opening week spurt, and fishing continues to be good in the coming weeks.”

Those fishing for chinook – resident chinook – in marine areas 8-1 and 8-2 can keep two hatchery chinook as part of their two-salmon daily limit. They must, however, release wild chinook, which have an intact adipose fin.

Anglers also are finding a few nice-size chinook in Marine Area 10 (Seattle/Bremerton), which is open through January under the same regulations as 8-1 and 8-2. But, overall, fishing has been

slow in Marine Area 10, said Thiesfeld. Beginning Jan. 16, anglers will have more options, when Marine Area 9 (Admiralty Inlet) opens for salmon.

With Puget Sound now closed to **recreational crab fishing**, all crabbers licensed to fish in those waters are required to report their winter catch to WDFW by Jan. 15. Reports are due for the season running Sept. 2 to Jan. 2, whether or not crabbers actually fished or caught Dungeness crab. Sport crabbers who file their catch reports by the Jan. 15 deadline will be entered in a drawing for one of 10 free combination fishing licenses, which allow the holder to fish for a variety of freshwater and saltwater species during the 2009-10 season.

To submit their catch reports, crabbers may either send their catch record card to WDFW by mail, or file their report on a special webpage on the department's licensing website. Catch record cards may be mailed to WDFW CRC Unit, 600 Capitol Way N., Olympia, WA 98501-1091. The online reporting system is available Jan. 2-15 at <https://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov>.

In the freshwater, hatchery **steelhead** fishing has been fair in a number of rivers, including the Snoqualmie and Skykomish. However, returns of hatchery steelhead to a few rivers have been low, prompting the department to close some areas. Unscheduled closures in the region include:

- A portion of the North Fork Stillaguamish River, downstream from the Whitehorse Bridge approximately four river miles to the French Creek confluence, is closed to sportfishing until further notice.
- The Cascade River, from the Rockport-Cascade Road downstream to the river's mouth, is closed through Jan. 31.
- A portion of the North Fork Nooksack River, from the yellow post located at the upstream most corner of the hatchery grounds, approximately 1,000 feet upstream of the mouth of Kendall Creek, downstream to the Mosquito Lake Road Bridge, is closed until further notice.

The early closures are necessary to ensure egg-take goals are met for hatchery winter steelhead in the three rivers.

For more information on the rules and regulations for all fisheries check WDFW's *Fishing in Washington* pamphlet (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

A chilly start to the new year slowed angler effort on some area rivers, but a warming trend should help pick up the pace. Meanwhile, several razor clam digs are set to take place on four ocean beaches.

Evening **razor clam** digs are scheduled at Twin Harbors, Copalis and Mocrocks Jan. 8-11, while Long Beach is scheduled for three digs Jan. 9-11. Digging will be allowed only during the hours between noon and midnight. "There are plenty of clams to harvest and, hopefully, the weather and surf will cooperate," said Dan Ayres, WDFW coastal shellfish manager.

Harvesters are allowed to take no more than 15 razor clams and must keep the first 15 they dig, regardless of size or condition. Each digger's clams must be kept in a separate container.

A license is required for anyone age 15 or older. Any 2008 Washington state annual shellfish/seaweed license or combination license is still valid. Another option is a razor-clam only license available in annual or three-day only versions. Descriptions of the various licensing options are available on the WDFW website at <https://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov>.

Opening dates and evening low tides:

- Thursday, Jan. 8 (4:13 p.m., -0.2 ft.) Twin Harbors, Copalis, Mocrocks
- Friday, Jan. 9 (5:07 p.m., -0.8 ft.) Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis, Mocrocks
- Saturday, Jan. 10 (5:58 p.m., -1.1 ft.) Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis, Mocrocks
- Sunday, Jan. 11, (6:45 p.m., -1.2 ft.) Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis, Mocrocks

More digs are tentatively scheduled Feb. 6-8. Kalaloch Beach in Olympic National Park (ONP) will remain closed through the winter but may open in spring 2009 if the clam population grows to harvestable size.

Ayres also reminds diggers that Washington's beaches, which are managed by the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, are considered state highways and all rules of the road apply. Under the law:

- Seatbelts must be worn at all times.
- The speed limit on the beach is 25 mph.
- Pedestrians have the right-of-way and vehicles must yield at all times.

Visitors should not park on approaches to the beach or block passage for vehicles that are entering or exiting.

Meanwhile, a number of anglers have been fishing for **steelhead** on several north coast rivers despite the recent chilly weather. Creel checks conducted during the January 2-3 weekend found 46 anglers on the Bogachiel River with three wild steelhead (all released), 15 adult hatchery fish and eight jacks. Twenty-one anglers fishing the Sol Duc caught eight wild steelhead (seven released) and 12 hatchery fish.

Catch rates were slower on the lower Hoh, where 95 anglers caught six wild steelhead (four released) and 16 hatchery fish. While effort was low, catch rates were better above the Oxbow Campground, where 18 anglers caught three wild steelhead (all released) and seven hatchery fish.

"Recent weather conditions have stalled overall effort, but anglers venturing out are having some success, especially on the Sol Duc," said Mike Gross, WDFW fish biologist.

With more wild fish beginning to show up in the catch, Gross reminds anglers that they can retain one wild steelhead per year from one of 10 Olympic Peninsula rivers, which include the Bogachiel, Calawah, Clearwater, Dickey, Hoh, Hoko, Pysht, Quillayute, Quinault and Sol Duc. Elsewhere, all wild steelhead-identifiable by an intact adipose fin-must be released.

There is no annual limit for hatchery steelhead, although daily limits apply. For more information on rules and regulations, Gross recommends checking the *Fishing in Washington* rules pamphlet before heading out (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>).

The cold snap has also slowed fishing farther south in the region, said Scott Barbour, WDFW fish biologist. "So far, there's been little effort on the Wishkah and Wynoochee rivers, plus the fish are moving slow due to recent cold temperatures," Barbour said.

Warmer weather and rain will get the fish moving, but anglers may not be happy with the result. "High and muddy waters are not the best conditions for fishing," Barbour said.

Anglers should be aware that several area rivers – including the Chehalis Copalis, Humptulips, Naselle, Nemah, Nisqually, Satsop and Wynoochee – will close to salmon fishing Jan. 31. Marine

areas 5 (Sekiu), 6 (eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca), 11 (Tacoma-Vashon Island) and 12 (Hood Canal) are now closed to salmon fishing but will reopen Feb. 14. Marine Area 13 (South Puget Sound) remains open through Jan. 31.

With Puget Sound now closed to recreational crab fishing, all crabbers licensed to fish in those waters are required to report their winter catch to WDFW by Jan. 15. Reports are due for the winter season ending Jan. 2, whether or not crabbers actually caught or fished for Dungeness crab.

Sport crabbers who file their catch reports by the Jan. 15 deadline will be entered in a drawing for one of 10 free 2009 combination fishing licenses, which allow the holder to fish for a variety of freshwater and saltwater species.

Catch record cards may be mailed to WDFW CRC Unit, 600 Capitol Way N., Olympia, WA 98501-1091, or reported online at https://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov/wdfw/puget_sound_crab_catch.html.

Southwest Washington

Snow followed by heavy rain created some tough fishing conditions throughout the region during the first week of the new year. Steelheaders took some limits on the Kalama River and creeled a few fish on the Cowlitz River near Blue Creek, but catch rates sank under high water conditions on most area rivers. Sturgeon fishing has also been slow on the Columbia River below Bonneville Dam, where an estimated 900 anglers caught no legal-size fish at all during the month of December.

"These are definitely die-hard fishing conditions," said Joe Hymer, a WDFW fish biologist. "Some anglers are catching fish during breaks in the weather, but it's largely a matter of timing and determination."

With more precipitation in the forecast, Hymer offered a few suggestions for maximizing angling success:

- Check weather forecasts and stream-flow conditions before heading out. Stream-flow conditions are available online at <http://waterdata.usgs.gov/wa/nwis/current?type=flow>
- Fish for trout in one of more than a dozen lakes and ponds scheduled to be planted this winter. Weekly planting reports are available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/weekly/>. During the first full week of January the department planted 4,000 half-pound rainbows in Kline Pond, 1,500 into Battle Ground Lake and 1,800 into Kidney Lake near North Bonneville.
- Look for sturgeon in the plume of the Willamette River, where higher water temperatures improve the bite at this time of the year. Bank anglers have also done fairly well on the lower Cowlitz River. Because sturgeon fishing tends to improve when the smelt run arrives, anglers are advised to check WDFW smelt reports at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/smelt/index.htm>.

Some **smelt** have turned up in sturgeons' bellies on the lower Cowlitz River but the main run isn't expected until February, Hymer said. "The forecast suggests another poor year for smelt, but there are some indications that returns could improve," he said.

Regardless of fishing conditions, anglers planning to fish for **salmon** or **steelhead** on the Columbia River or its tributaries should also be aware of seasonal regulation changes that took effect New Years Day.

- Salmon fishing closed on the lower Columbia River from the I-5 Bridge upstream but opened downstream from the I-5 Bridge to Buoy 10. The limit is six fish, no more than two of which may be adults. Anglers must release wild chinook, wild coho, sockeye, and chum.
- Daily salmon limits revert to two adult fish per day on the Deep River, Cowlitz River, Lake Scanewa, Kalama River, Lewis River and the Washougal River. Marked chinook salmon may be retained, but all wild fish – except for adults on the Washougal River – must be released.
- Salmon fishing closed on the Elochoman River and Drano Lake, Mill Creek near the Cowlitz Salmon Hatchery closed to all fishing.

Sturgeon anglers are reminded that a new method of measuring sturgeon for retention took effect statewide on New Year's Day. Under the new rules, sturgeon size limits are based on the measurement from the tip of the nose to the fork in the tail (rather than the tip of the tail).

"The new measurements for minimum and maximum sizes are simple conversions of the old method of measuring sturgeon," Hymer said. "They do not mean anglers can keep smaller fish, only that the method of measuring 'keepers' has changed."

Sturgeon seasons and related regulations for 2009 are summarized below:

Mouth of the Columbia River to the Wauna power lines: Retention of white sturgeon is open seven days per week through April; May 9 through June 28; and from July 2 to July 5 or until the harvest guideline is reached. From Jan. 1 to April 30, the fork length of retained **sturgeon** must be a minimum of 38 inches and a maximum of 54 inches. From May 9 to June 28 and from July 2-5, the fork length of retained sturgeon must be a minimum of 41 inches and a maximum of 54 inches. Catch-and-release fishing is allowed May 1-8, June 29 to July 1, and July 6 to Dec. 31.

Wauna power lines to Bonneville Dam: Retention of white sturgeon is open three days per week (Thursday through Saturday) through July 31, and Oct. 1 through Dec. 31. The fork length of retained sturgeon must be a minimum of 38 inches and a maximum of 54 inches. Catch-and-release fishing is allowed Aug. 1 through Sept. 30 and on days when retention is prohibited. All fishing for sturgeon will be closed from May through July in the sturgeon spawning sanctuary downriver from Bonneville Dam 5.5 miles to Navigation Marker 85.

Bonneville, The Dalles, and John Day pools: Retention of white sturgeon is open seven days per week until individual catch guidelines are met in the Bonneville, The Dalles and John Day pools. In the Bonneville Pool, the fork length of retained sturgeon must be a minimum of 38 inches and a maximum of 54 inches. In The Dalles and John Day pools, the fork length of retained sturgeon must be a minimum of 43 inches and a maximum of 54 inches. Catch-and-release fishing is allowed after the guidelines are met in all three areas above Bonneville Dam. All fishing for sturgeon will be closed from May through July in spawning sanctuaries located below John Day Dam downstream 2.4 miles and from McNary Dam downstream 1.5 miles.

Catch guidelines for areas above Bonneville Dam to McNary Dam will be evaluated in January, but are likely to remain the same as this year for Bonneville Pool and for John Day Pool. The population in The Dalles Pool appears to be on the rebound and the population may be healthy enough to allow managers to relax the guideline for 2009.

Eastern Washington

Lake Roosevelt **rainbow trout** fishing may be the best bet, said WDFW District Fish Biologist Chris Donley, although boat access on the federal reservoir is limited (call the Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area headquarters office at 509-633-9441 for current information). Donley

said shore anglers on the reservoir's bays where open water may still be available, might do as well as anyone in current winter conditions.

Eloika Lake in north Spokane County is one of the few year-round fisheries that is reachable because county road crews plow the right-of-way at the public access site. Donley says fishing for **brown trout**, **yellow perch** and **crappie** could be decent at Eloika.

Most other year-round or winter-season fisheries in the region are tough to get to or fish safely at this time, Donley said. Deep snow and ice conditions have made Hog Canyon Lake in southwest Spokane County and Fourth of July Lake on the Lincoln-Adams county line almost unreachable. Sprague Lake's trout fishery continues to draw some anglers but ice conditions may be risky there.

"All the snow we've had in this region has insulated a relatively thin ice cover on many lakes," Donley said. "We don't recommend going out on ice like that."

According to U.S. Coast Guard guidelines, no one should venture onto ice unless it's at least four inches thick, clear and solid. As much as nine inches may be needed to safely support snowmobiles or other vehicles. Such ice depths can form after at least a week of below freezing temperatures, day and night.

WDFW advises ice fishers to not fish alone; let others know where you are going and when you plan to return; keep fishing holes few and small (under eight inches diameter); disperse weight and fishing holes across ice; avoid ice fishing near streams, known springs, or otherwise potentially weak ice; and be prepared for weather conditions and emergencies. For more information on ice fishing safety see http://wdfw.wa.gov/factsheets/ice_fishing.htm.

Snake River **steelhead** action is reportedly good from the mouth of the Clearwater River to the mouth of the Grand Ronde River along the Idaho border. Check for latest Snake River steelhead creel surveys posted at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/creel/snake/index.htm>.

Northcentral Washington

Recent cold temperatures and snow have slowed fishing for **steelhead** on the upper Columbia River, according to WDFW District Fish Biologist Bob Jateff in Omak.

"A few fish are still being taken above and below Wells Dam as well as from the docks in Pateros," Jateff said. "But it's pretty slow, overall."

Other fishing opportunities continue to improve as colder air temperatures have helped increase ice cover on many Okanogan County lakes, he noted. Rat Lake near Brewster, Davis Lake near Winthrop, and the Green lakes near Omak all should provide good fishing for rainbow trout in the 10- to 15-inch range.

"Those wanting to fish for **yellow perch** should give Patterson Lake near Winthrop a try for catches in the seven- to nine-inch range," Jateff said. "A small panfish jig tipped with a mealworm is an effective method. There's a public access site at Patterson, but anglers will need a four-wheel drive vehicle there."

Jateff reminds anglers to be prepared for possible access problems at any of these lakes due to frequent snowstorms, and to be cautious about safe ice cover.

According to U.S. Coast Guard guidelines, no one should venture onto ice unless it's at least four inches thick, clear and solid. As much as nine inches may be needed to safely support

snowmobiles or other vehicles. Such ice depths can form after at least a week of below freezing temperatures, day and night.

WDFW advises ice fishers to not fish alone; let others know where you are going and when you plan to return; keep fishing holes few and small (under eight inches diameter); disperse weight and fishing holes across ice; avoid ice fishing near streams, known springs, or otherwise potentially weak ice; and be prepared for weather conditions and emergencies. For more information on ice fishing safety see http://wdfw.wa.gov/factshts/ice_fishing.htm.

Southcentral Washington

WDFW Fish Biologist Jim Cummins said there is a lull in fishing activity in the region because of changing weather conditions. "The warming trend and rain will increase flows in the rivers that are open for **whitefish** fishing," he said. "The Yakima and Naches rivers were flowing ice last weekend but that's changing rapidly. Shelf ice along the shorelines makes these rivers dangerous to fish."

Cummins also noted local year-round and winter-only **rainbow trout** fishing lakes are ice covered, but the warmer weather could make walking onto the ice dangerous.

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Reader Email -

Reader Kurt G. wrote recently via the Contact Form and Bob Rees responded.

"Kurt- Thanks so much for providing the detailed feedback that you did recently. I have pasted it into this email and hope to address some of your concerns outlined in red (my responses). We sincerely value your input.

Here's the constructive feedback I said I would provide from myself and others. I was a fairly early subscriber, but the value has gone down over time.

I have prioritized the issues:

Accuracy of the reports is suspect, and serve the Guides not the Fishermen/Clients.

One that stands out was the Summer Chinook season on the Columbia River, in Volume 9, Issue 43 as published:

"Willamette Valley/Metro - Headlining the metro opportunities is the summer chinook season only open briefly through Saturday. Catches are good with surprising numbers of adults passing Bonneville Dam indicating a larger than predicted return this year. Boaters plunking spinners and plugs in the Columbia River gorge should continue to find success until the closure reports pro guide Dan Ponciano (360-607- 8511). The river upstream of Bonneville will remain open until July 31st or until the catch guideline is met. Pro guide Bill Kremers (541-754-6411) reports fair to

good summer Chinook fishing on spinners below Bonneville."

On June 28th I wrote back to you:

"I have been on the CR all week, and have been in contact with numerous guides and fisherman up and down the river - from the mouth of the Cowlitz, to above and below I-205 bridge, along Government Island, up to Milepost 88 on the Oregon side, and at the Rock Pile on the Washington side - as well as the Oak Tree just below Bonneville and the back channel above Beacon Rock. Oh, and let's not forget that the Gill Netters were in from Tuesday 7PM to 5AM Wednesday. I bet that really helped the sport catch for the rest of the week (half of our season).

It has been DEAD. The summer Chinook catch has been no better than POOR. The flow rate of the river is at nearly 3 times what it was in April for Springer season."

I think I did miss the boat on this report but I think we are quite accurate almost all of the time. In the course of guiding full time, I don't often find the time to have personal contact with guides working in that area. There is not a lot of guides that are targeting summer chinook so we often can't get quality reports from fishers in that area. Again, I think this is the exception. We often times offer a free subscription to anglers (whether they are professionals or not) that agree to help us with our reports. It sounds like you may qualify if you care to submit an occasional report, we'd love to have you! When I don't get updated reports from our guide contacts, I often go to the state fishing report (Oregon or Washington) to look at their creel data and formulate a report from that. Being a creel checker myself several years ago, I feel I can put together an honest report on what's actually happening. Admittedly, Washington seems to have oddly better reports than what Oregon does. I don't honestly know if this is coincidental or not.

As far as serving the guides, it's true that these guides get publicity for sending in reports to us but it is a rare time when this translates into a booking for them. They often do this as a courtesy of TGF and to our readers as they are willing to help out the general angler as many of us feel we have an obligation to do so. We have VERY little advertising to offset our expenses for sending out the free version of the fishing report to over 5,000 subscribers. I don't think the mention of a guide's contact info is an unfair ask.

Timeliness of the reports

By the time we receive the reports, it is often "old news" and "should have been here yesterday, or last week".

Although we often report on what happened over the weekend, we take very timely information from our guide pro-staff and I use very up-to-date info from the fisheries that I participate in. Of course the greatest value comes from the "Forecast" section of our newsletter that gives a window of how the fishing should be the next week.

I can get 80% of the report from the Oregonian. Good for you that you were able to sell your summary reports to the Oregonian, but this takes value away from your paying clients. Now about a million people get the bulk of the information, and most often, I read the Thursday Morning Oregonian BEFORE I receive my email from TGF for the same week's report. The value of the TGF Subscription is significantly diminished.

We have beefed up our free report to give The Oregonian the necessary words (about 800) they need to print a column. There are weeks that we do have relatively little "new" news happening but when the season is full on, I think we have a lot more value in our full length version than the Oregonian version. Again, we feel the value is really in the forecast section of the newsletter.

Lack of Coverage for other parts of the State

Early in TGF's life there were consistent reports on non Portland-Metro centric waters. Specifically Central Oregon (high lakes, Deschutes,) and shellfish reports at various points up and down the coast (not just Astoria or Tillamook). The feedback I received is that TGF used to have much more comprehensive coverage for our opportunities.

You may be right about this but I'd have to go back and check. When TGF first started, we had several guides pretty excited about joining our prostaff. As guides realized they were not booking trips from the info they provided, they lost interest. I think the only way to recapture these accurate reports is to actually pay them for their reports (which would mean a price increase) or seek actual writers (that we would also have to pay an even larger fee) to get this information. We'll be looking at these options in the very near future as we near the "all or nothing" decision many publications are needing to make these days.

Again, thanks for your feedback Kurt. It is truly appreciated as we hope to continue to win your trust in The Guide's Forecast. Good luck fishing this year!"

Bob replied to another reader in which he quotes the writer, "Ken, you wrote: "I was wondering about the latest info on the season for springers on the columbia and willamette. Is there a place on your site to keep me abreast or is could you tell me were to go (be nice)."

Thanks for being a subscriber to The Guide's Forecast. If you are a paid member, you will see that you will get this info in a timely manner. The info is always changing and that's why our newsletter is weekly! We'll keep our readers (especially our paying subscribers) up to date as the season wears on but the fishing upstream of I-5 on the Columbia should be dynamite this year. We're still waiting to see if there will be a Willamette sport fishery but we should know in the very near future. Best of luck this season and see you on the water!

Reader Randy V. wrote to ask, "Do you have info regarding the optimum fishing levels of Oregon coastal rivers for salmon and steelhead?"

Bob replied, "I typically use the Wilson River gauge as an example for several other rivers that don't have river gauges on them. I am most familiar with north Oregon Coast river levels.

"Using the link from our home page at www.TheGuidesForecast.com, when the Wilson River is between 4.5 and 6 foot, it is fishing at optimum levels. Any lower than 4.5 foot and it is typically low and clear. When the Wilson is running at 6.5 to 8.0, oftentimes, smaller streams like the Kilchis, Necanicum and North Fork Nehalem are running good. When the Wilson is running at "optimum" levels (again, between 4.5 and 6 foot), the Trask and Nestucca are generally fishing good. Both of those rivers have their own gauges however that you may want to become more familiar with. I know the Trask fishes best between 6.5 and 8 foot. Finally, when the Wilson is low and clear, the mainstem Nehalem is typically fishing well.

"Hope that helps, you question is timely as it is getting to be that time of year.....Steelhead! Good luck!"

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

Write to the TGF staff:

Bob Rees: brees@pacifier.com

Doug Rees: doug@TheGuidesForecast.com

Michael Teague: Michael@TheGuidesForecast.com

Random Links

How to measure a sturgeon from now on:

http://www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/fishing/docs/sturgeon_angler_notice_flyer.pdf

Portland Boat Show info: <http://otshows.com/PBS/>

New crabbing report from the ODFW:

<http://www.dfw.state.or.us/MRP/shellfish/crab/reports.asp>

"Today she met me at the door, said I would have to choose, if I picked that fishing pole today, she'd be packing all her things and she'd be gone by noon....well I'm gonna miss her when I get home tonight. Right now I'm on this lake shore, and I'm sitting in the sun! I'm sure it'll hit me when I walk thru that door tonight. Yeah, I'm gonna miss her. Oh lookie there, I gotta bite!"

- Brad Paisley

GOOD LUCK!