

The Guide's Forecast - volume 12 issue number 2

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **January 8<sup>th</sup> – January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

**Oregon Fisheries Update:**

**Willamette Valley/Metro** - Lower Willamette River volume nearly doubled to well over 60,000 cfs over the weekend. It's dropping and with the visibility less than one foot, sturgeon fishing should improve.

On years of large returns, early spring chinook can be taken by Meldrum Bar plunkers about this time of year. Although a large return isn't predicted for 2010, it should be one of the better returns in recent years. Steelhead should still be available for plunkers when the flows drop a bit more. The faster the flow, the closer to shore fish will migrate.

ODF&W's 2010 trout stocking schedule is now available from their web site. Although the bulk of the stocking effort won't take place until March, some bodies of water are already being stocked with quality trout. Holdover fish are also available in many ponds and lakes.

McKenzie anglers are catching cutthroat trout but steelhead have been elusive with the water high.

The entire Santiam system is high, forecast to rise this week and will be unfishable by the weekend.

The Sandy is high but has good color with fishing slow to fair. A mix of wild and hatchery fish are in the river with jigs most effective.

Clackamas levels have been very high. Eagle Creek drops and clears rapidly. Now that there are winter steelhead showing, expect it to be crowded most days.

**Northwest** – North Coast steelheaders will again be denied access to the larger systems in the district. Smaller systems like the North Fork Nehalem, Necanicum and Three Rivers in Tillamook County are options although even those streams have been running bank full. Three Rivers was once again putting out fair numbers of steelhead prior to the high water as fish are being recycled.

Small streams in the Astoria area such as the Klaskanine, Big Creek and Gnat Creek will begin to fade as fish start their winter spawn. As fish stake out their spawning territory however, they become more aggressive. Fresh fish may still be available for another week or two but spawned out fish will soon make up the bulk of the catch.

Although the Dam Hole on the Trask fished well recently, high water has this river along with the Wilson and Nestucca high into the weekend. Anglers may still be willing to target steelhead in the slower flows using large baits to entice swift moving fish. Hatchery and wild adults should be well distributed in the high water.

Another low tide series begins this weekend, making for good opportunity for sturgeon anglers on Tillamook and Nehalem Bays. Effort has been low indicating only fair catches.

Offshore weather forecasts indicate poor conditions for surf clam diggers, crabbers and offshore

anglers. Don't attempt a bar crossing.

**Southwest** – As of the latest ODA update, clams are safe to harvest south of the Necanicum River to California and the entire coast is open for the taking of mussels.

Following huge tide swings last weekend, tidal movement will be comparatively tame in the coming week.

The Umpqua, currently high and roiled, should drop and clear sufficiently to fish later this week.

The Coquille system has been an extraordinary producer of winter steelhead but got hammered by recent storms, putting it out of shape. South Fork Coquille anglers did not see the dropping and clearing predicted early this week but conditions are gradually improving and a few winter steelhead are being caught. The East Fork has been non-productive recently.

The Rogue was running high and muddy over the weekend. Hopefully it will clear with a break in the rain this week. Once the river is fishing again, 2010 regulations allow the retention of one wild steelhead 24 inches or longer on the Rogue and up to five per year. Plunkers using Spin 'N' Glos will be the first to connect with chrome winters.

Chetco water levels are dropping and it should be fishing well. Prior to the rise in water level, it was hot one day, cool the next but the freshet surely brought in more fish. Ocean conditions are once again predicted to be too rough to allow for offshore fishing this coming weekend.

There are bright and dark chinook along with winter steelhead on the Elk and Sixes thanks to a very late run here. A greater number of chinook than steelhead on the Sixes were caught on Monday this week, 15 and seven, respectively.

**Eastern** – The Metolius is putting out a few rainbows and the occasional bull trout.

Although ice may still hamper Grand Ronde steelheaders, there are plenty of fish available for those willing to brave cold conditions. The action may also heat up if air temperatures continue to rise.

John Day Pool anglers are still catching fish however effort has dropped off significantly.

**SW Washington** – Steelhead counts at district facilities have improved in recent weeks. Many Columbia tributary hatcheries are now slightly above 2008 adult returns.

The Cowlitz, Kalama and Lewis Rivers should all be producing fair when water levels drop back down to fishable levels. North Fork Lewis anglers reported fair catches around the salmon hatchery.

Smelt often enter the lower Columbia during periods of warmer water temperatures this time of year. Some anglers are reporting seeing a few fresh smelt available for sale but no confirmed catches have occurred according to sources.

**Columbia River Fishing Report** – The Columbia River remains relatively devoid of anglers. A few steelhead continue to be taken by John Day anglers and that should continue to be the trend for a few more weeks. The warming trend should actually improve the steelhead fishing in the area.

No recent reports of smelt showing up in the Columbia which although early, is a bit of a surprise given the recent warming trend. The run forecast is supposed to be low but that hasn't stopped small pilot runs of smelt from entering the river this early in the season. Rumors of fresh smelt for sale on Craigslist may be true but be sure they're Columbia River smelt if you are pursuing a purchase.

**The Guide's Forecast** – We're still many weeks away from any increase in fishing activity on the mainstem Columbia. Salmon should begin to show in the coming weeks but in such small numbers, I don't think even a gillnet is likely to catch one until later. With the record return forecasted, there could be a fair early push however.

Fresh smelt may soon be on the market but you may want to think twice about purchasing any as they are now petitioned for listing on the endangered species list. If you do purchase smelt, and they do get listed, it may be illegal for you to use them as bait even if you purchased them a year or two in advance.

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report** – Rain raised the water temperature the mid-40s or better in the lower Willamette and Multomah channel resulting in a good sturgeon bite. It has been productive from Oregon City to the Toyota hole. Expect to catch a number of short to locate larger keeper-sized fish.

While no changes have been made for waters in the Willamette Zone fishing regulations yet, further restrictions on sturgeon angling may be in the bureaucratic pipeline.

Junction City Pond has been stocked this week with one-pound trout. The North Coast Zone will be planted starting next week and further stocking will take place in the Willamette Zone. See Random Links, below, for the 2010 schedule.

The Portland Boat Show starts Wednesday, January 13th and will run only five days this year. Previously, it's been a nine day event.

**The Guide's Forecast** – With the Willamette high and roiled, expect sturgeon to be on the bite. Over the last retention period, they were not fussy about the kind of bait anglers were using. Fish were caught on squid, smelt, sand shrimp and herring.

The McKenzie River is on the rise at this writing and while forecast to drop into the weekend, it won't be enough to make it fishable.

The Santiam system is high flowing swiftly and will remain that way through the weekend. It's too much water to fish well or even safely.

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports** – The Clackamas is quite high and, while dropping, is forecast to be over 14 feet at Estacada on Saturday. Eagle Creek kicked out some winter steelhead this week.

Water at the Sandy remains high but is dropping and has turned the right shade of green. Steelheading was worthwhile. Prior to the last freshet and fish appear from catch reports to be scattered throughout the system. Also, no one single has emerged as a hotspot. It was still running river 4,300 cfs at Bull Run on the afternoon of January 7th and it will fish well at 3,000 cfs or less.

**North Coast Fishing Report** – It wasn't a week of opportunity for anglers on the north coast. For most of the New Year, river levels on all popular larger river systems have been out of shape and not fished. Most recently the Trask River at the Dam Hole is beginning to see fair action for bank anglers working the water close to shore.

Smaller streams started to fish around mid-week with the best producer still being the North Fork Nehalem River. Steelhead collection at the N. Fork has been going very well as fish have been moving fast in the higher flows. Although the Kilchis and Necanicum Rivers are also strong small stream options, they haven't been faring quite as well as the N. Fork Nehalem. With the hatchery as an obvious stopping point for fish, they will naturally congregate there in larger numbers making them easy to catch. The hatchery is actively recycling fish now so ample numbers should be available in the coming week.

The Nestucca, Wilson, Trask and especially the mainstem Nehalem have been out all week.

Highway 30 streams like Big and Gnat Creeks were also putting out some steelhead recently. High water sends fish quickly to their liberation point, making the hatchery facilities one of the better options. Returning numbers don't look as impressive at these facilities as they do for the Nehalem system.

Tides were poor for sturgeon this week but will improve over the weekend.

Crabbing is poor in the estuaries because of all the fresh water. A very rough ocean kept sport boats at bay this week.

**The Guide's Forecast** – Conditions are shaping up for steelheaders on the north coast. Rains have finally subsided and action is underway on smaller streams as you read this. Your best bets for the weekend and beyond are listed below in order of productivity:

North Fork Nehalem, Three Rivers, Necanicum and Kilchis Rivers- These smaller streams will produce results first. The first two have hatcheries on them and therefore, fish will congregate more at these facilities than other rivers without hatcheries. Use bait such as eggs or shrimp in higher flows and drop down to small baits, bobbers and jigs or just plain corkies when flows get low and the water clears; that could be by the weekend if you can believe that already.

The Highway 30 Three- That would be Big Creek, Gnat Creek and the Klaskanine River. All should have fish although many will be showing signs of spawning. These earlier returning fish will start to deteriorate rapidly from here but could provide good sport and fair tablefare for another week. Eggs work best on these streams.

The upper and lower stretches of the Trask River – Not as large a watershed as the other systems, the Trask clears relatively quickly and could provide some early season wild fish action. There are always a few hatchery strays that come into this system so be sure to check all fins before releasing. All salmon must be released unharmed.

The Wilson and Nestucca Rivers – These two systems offer the best option for quality broodstock fish as well as a last opportunity for early returning stock. Both of these rivers should begin to fish good by Friday morning and fish well into the weekend. Fish are likely to be well distributed throughout the system with sidedrifted bait taking the majority of fish. Match larger baits in faster flows and do be afraid to go gaudy in more turbid waters. Bank anglers higher in the Wilson and Nestucca watersheds should also stand a fair chance at a fish. Remember to sign up

for the broodstock collection program so we can continue to experience quality steelheading into the future!

Good sturgeon tides will funnel into Tillamook Bay beginning on Saturday. Although the weather is not forecasted to be all that friendly, a good afternoon tide may make keeper fishing in the west channel a fair option. Soak sand shrimp at the channel edges.

Crabbing will remain poor in all coastal estuaries and the offshore forecast will again keep sensible sportcraft in the harbor. It may be a while before we get to venture out there again but when it does become safe, the fishing should be great!

**Central & South Coast Reports** – Mentioned in this space last week, ODFW catches up with TGF:

**"For Immediate Release Monday, Jan. 4, 2010**

"Marine bag limit remains seven fish

"NEWPORT, Ore. – The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife wants to remind anglers that the marine fish daily bag

limit remains seven fish in 2010. The reminder is prompted by an error in the 2010 Oregon Sport Fishing Regulations that says the limit is six.

"The marine fish bag includes rockfish and other species such as greenling and cabezon. The higher bag limit went into effect May 1, 2009 based on a favorable stock assessment for black rockfish, the dominant species in the nearshore groundfish fishery. There are separate daily limits for lingcod (two) and flatfish other than Pacific halibut (25). Yelloweye rockfish and canary rockfish may not be retained.

"The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission adopted the seven fish limit into permanent regulations in April 2009. The error in the 2010 Oregon Sport Fishing Regulations booklet occurs on page 100 where it states the daily bag limit for marine fish (rockfish, greenling, Pacific cod, cabezon, skates and other species not listed on pages 100-101) is six fish in aggregate; it should be seven fish in aggregate. The online version of the regulation booklet will be updated to show the corrected bag limit."

New for 2010 is an Albacore Tuna Landing License which, for \$127, allows boats without commercial licenses to sell tuna. There are plenty of other changes, additions and increased fees. For a complete rundown, see Random Links, below.

High seas will keep boats at bay if weekend forecasts hold true. Recreational ocean crabbing has been excellent when conditions allow and commercial efforts are enjoying the best results in several years. Bay crabbing will improve as rain moderates and salinity levels rise.

There are no depth restrictions for bottom fishers and with the new year, cabezon and once again be kept by boat anglers.

The Alsea is predicted to take a hit from Rain on Friday and early Saturday but is forecast to be dropping on Sunday.

Steelheading has been slow on the mainstem Umpqua but fresh fish entered with the freshet and action will improve as levels drop. A few are being taken on the South Umpqua as it has started to drop and clear. The North Umpqua was still high on the afternoon of Thursday this week.

Steelheading has been good on the North Fork Coquille recently. Levels of the East Fork and South Fork have dropped and are fishing well.

The West Fork and East Fork Millacoma are also fishing well although decent water levels here while nearby rivers are high has caused some crowding here at times.

Plunkers are taking steelhead on the lower Rogue as water conditions recover from recent storms. With winter steelhead scattered throughout the river and the first couple of hundred over Gold Ray Dam, steelheading will be good when the roiled waters clear.

The Chetco has dropped below 3,800 cfs. This ocean trib fishes best between 1,500 and 4,000 cfs and following the high water event, given the time of year, fishing has been good and should only improve. Providing decent conditions endure, it will remain good here for several weeks. Recent spawning surveys on the Chetco revealed that the 2009 Chinook run was the largest in 15 years.

Elk and Sixes rivers drop and clear quickly and are in fine shape now. Steelheading has been good and improving here. There are still some Chinook available on the Elk River although bright ones are getting to be more challenging to locate. Retention of chinook on the Sixes was closed as of December 31.

### **Washington fishing reports:**

**From the WDF&W Weekender Report January 6-19, 2010**

#### **North Puget Sound**

Anglers have been reeling in some blackmouth in the marine areas and there have been a few scattered reports of steelhead caught in the rivers but, overall, fishing in the region continues to be slow. "It's been quiet out there," said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fisheries biologist. "Effort continues to be light, and those who are getting out have had to work to find fish."

One bright spot has been the San Juan Islands, where fishing has been fair for **blackmouth**, Thiesfeld said. "Like elsewhere, there are not a lot of anglers fishing there, but those who have put in some time over the last week are finding fish."

Anglers fishing Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands) - as well as marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay), 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) and 10 (Seattle/Bremerton) - have a two-salmon daily limit, but must release wild chinook.

Thiesfeld reminds anglers that Marine Area 9 (Admiralty Inlet) re-opens for salmon fishing beginning Jan. 16. Anglers fishing that area will also have a two-salmon daily limit, but must release wild chinook.

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. 8 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 2010-11 season.

To submit catch reports, crabbers may send their catch record card to WDFW by mail or file their report on a special webpage on the department's licensing website. The mailing address is WDFW CRC Unit, 600 Capitol Way N., Olympia, WA 98501-1091. The online reporting system is available Jan. 3-15 at [https://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov/wdfw/puget\\_sound\\_crab\\_catch.html](https://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov/wdfw/puget_sound_crab_catch.html).

In the rivers, there have been reports of anglers hooking some bright steelhead. However, returns of hatchery **steelhead** to a few rivers have been low, prompting the department to close portions of some rivers, including the North Fork Stillaguamish, the North Fork Nooksack and the Cascade. The early closures are necessary to ensure hatcheries in the three rivers can meet their egg-take goals for winter steelhead.

Details on those emergency rules can be found on WDFW's fishing regulation website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>. Anglers are advised to check that website for news about the Cascade River, which could re-open soon, said Bob Leland, WDFW's steelhead program manager.

### **South Sound/Olympic Peninsula**

January is typically the best month for catching hatchery steelhead, but heavy rain rendered most area rivers unfishable during the first days of the new year. After several weeks of good fishing, most anglers decided to take cover until the rain subsided and the rivers dropped back into shape.

"It's a waiting game right now," said Ron Warren, regional fish manager for south Puget Sound and the Olympic Peninsula. "Lots of hatchery steelhead are moving into the rivers, but they're tough to catch under these conditions."

Anglers waiting for the rivers to drop might consider fishing for **blackmouth salmon** in one of a number of areas open in Puget Sound. Some nice fish were recently checked at the Pleasant Harbor boat ramp on Hood Canal, and Marine Area 9 (Admiralty Inlet) opens for salmon fishing Jan. 16.

Another **razor clam** opening is also tentatively scheduled later this month. If marine toxin tests show the clams are safe to eat, diggers will get a chance to hit the beach starting Jan. 27. Assuming the tests go well, Long Beach and Twin Harbors will be open for digging Jan. 27-31, Copalis and Mockrocks will be open Jan. 29-31 and Kalaloch beach Jan. 30-31.

Digging at all five beaches will be restricted to the hours between noon and midnight. Dan Ayres, WDFW coastal shellfish manager, said final word on the dig will be announced once test results show whether the clams are safe to eat. If the dig is approved, he strongly advises clam diggers to check weather and surf forecasts before heading out.

Weather and stream conditions have been a major preoccupation for **steelheaders** for more than a month. In early January, the drop-off in participation was especially apparent on the Bogachiel River, where WDFW interviewed only four anglers with two fish from Jan. 1-3. By comparison, 163 anglers were checked with 120 hatchery steelhead - and 15 fish released - from Christmas Day through Dec. 27.

"High water has also put a damper on steelhead fishing in rivers around Grays Harbor, but that will change once we get some clear weather," Warren said.

Wild steelhead-retention rules are now in effect on the Bogachiel, Calawah, Clearwater, Dickey, Hoh, Hoko, Pysht, Quillayute, Quinault and Sol Duc rivers. Anglers may retain one wild steelhead per license year on those rivers. On all other rivers, anglers may retain only hatchery-reared steelhead marked with a clipped adipose fin and healed scar.

Specific rules for each river are described in the 2009-10 *Fishing in Washington* pamphlet at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>.

Recreational **crab** fishers are also reminded that all Puget Sound marine areas are now closed to crab fishing and that winter catch reports are due by Jan. 15. Crabbers may report their catch by sending their winter catch card to WDFW or by filing their report online. People who fail to submit their winter reports will receive a \$10 fine when they apply for a 2010 Puget Sound crab endorsement. For more information about recreational crabbing in Puget Sound, see WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/crab>.

## Southwest Washington

Rivers are running high throughout the lower Columbia Basin, but anglers are still hooking up with inbound hatchery winter steelhead between rainstorms. Meanwhile, sturgeon fishing is now open in all areas of the mainstem Columbia below the Highway 395 Bridge, and catchable-size rainbow are still available in a number of lakes throughout the region.

As in December, timing is key for anglers hoping to catch **hatchery steelhead** in the first weeks of the new year, said Joe Hymer, a WDFW fish biologist.

"Since mid-December, we've seen a progression of frigid-water, low-water and now high-water conditions," Hymer said. "Catch rates have been up and down, but fishing has generally been pretty decent for anglers who hit it between major weather events."

Some of the best fishing has been on the North Fork Lewis River around the salmon hatchery, Hymer said. During creel checks in the week leading up to New Year's, 136 bank anglers checked on the North Fork had caught 23 steelhead and released nine others - most using jigs and bobbers around the salmon hatchery. Twenty-six boat anglers checked during the same period took home six more winter steelhead.

On the Cowlitz River, boat anglers fishing between the trout and salmon hatcheries accounted for the largest share of the catch. Seventy-eight boat anglers reported 24 "keepers" while 44 bank anglers accounted for four more during creel checks ending Dec. 31.

The Kalama, Grays, Elochoman and Washougal rivers - plus Salmon Creek in Clark County - should also be good bets in the days ahead, Hymer said.

"The early run usually peaks around New Year's, but there are still plenty of fish in those rivers," he said. "The late winter run is also starting to arrive, which can provide decent steelhead fishing in the Cowlitz and Kalama rivers through March."

As in past years, all wild steelhead must be released. Anglers may retain only hatchery-reared fish with a clipped adipose fin and a healed scar. That also applies to **spring chinook salmon**, which could start entering the Columbia River in small numbers any day, Hymer said. Marked springers are available for harvest on a daily basis in the Columbia and its tributaries from the I-5 Bridge downstream until 2010 seasons are set in mid-February, he said.

Regulations for these and other fisheries are described in the *Fishing in Washington* rule pamphlet, available online at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>.

As outlined in the rule pamphlet, **sturgeon** fishing is now open in all areas of the mainstem Columbia below the Highway 395 Bridge. Anglers may retain sturgeon daily except in the area from the Wauna powerlines to Bonneville Dam, where retention fishing is limited to Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays only. Fishing opportunities for sturgeon from March-December 2010 on the mainstem Columbia River will be decided by Washington and Oregon at a joint state hearing Feb. 18.

While temperatures are still a bit cold for red-hot sturgeon action, Hymer noted that anglers surveyed in The Dalles Pool caught three legal-size fish during the first three days of 2010.

Just as soon fish for **trout**? During the final days of 2009, WDFW planted nearly 15,000 catchable-size rainbows in seven area waters to give anglers some options during the cold of

winter. Battleground Lake got 2,500 Dec. 21; Kline Pond 2,500 Dec. 21; Icehouse Lake (near Bridge of the Gods) 1,022 Dec. 29; Spearfish Lake (near Dallesport) 2,002 Dec. 24; Rowland Lake (near Lyle) 4,057 Dec. 24; and Maryhill Pond (in Klickitat County) 501 Dec. 29. In addition, Fort Borst Park Pond, open only to juveniles under 15 years old, got 3,029 on Dec. 28.

Anyone curious about prospects for **smelt** dipping on the Cowlitz River and other Columbia River tributaries is encouraged to attend a public meeting sponsored by WDFW on that subject Jan. 6 in Kelso. The meeting will be held from 6-8 p.m. on the third floor of the Cowlitz County Administration Building at 207 4th Ave. N. in Kelso.

Last month, representatives of WDFW and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife set sport and commercial smelt-fishing seasons for the Columbia River, but delayed decisions about the tributaries due to a low run projection and the fact that smelt is under consideration for listing under the federal Endangered Species Act. The sport limit on the mainstem Columbia River is 10 pounds per day.

### **Eastern Washington**

The hottest fishing in the region is for net-pen-reared **rainbow trout** on Lake Roosevelt - the Columbia River reservoir off Grand Coulee Dam on the Lincoln, Ferry and Stevens county lines. John Whalen, WDFW regional fish program manager, said daily limits of five rainbows, running 14 to 20 inches, are readily being caught from Hunters downstream. Anglers who regularly fish the big reservoir say it's the best it has been in the past 10 years.

Bill Baker, WDFW district fish biologist, said fishing for **rainbow trout** remains good at Hatch and Williams lakes in Stevens County. The two lakes are the only winter-only season (Dec. 1 - March 31) waters that have fish to catch. Spokane County's Fourth of July and Hog Canyon lakes were treated last fall and will not be re-stocked with trout until spring.

Sprague Lake, on the Lincoln-Adams county line, continues to provide good catches of **rainbow trout** through the ice, although recent warmer weather and rain has left the safety of that ice questionable. WDFW Regional Enforcement Capt. Mike Whorton said that Sprague is under the same catch rules as Lake Roosevelt - five trout daily with no more than two over 20 inches - and the size of most fish there sometimes tempts anglers into violations. Whorton also notes that anglers who leave equipment or debris on the ice - from buckets to old armchairs - can be fined for littering.

Chris Donley, WDFW district fish biologist, reports Whitman County's Rock Lake is producing catches of rainbow and most notably **brown trout**. Spokane County's Eloika and Silver lakes are yielding lots of **yellow perch** through the ice, but anglers need to be cautious about "rotten ice" during recent thawing and re-freezing.

Snake River **steelheading** remains productive for anglers who find the fish pooled up near the mouths of tributaries. WDFW Fish Biologist Joe Bumgarner reports the latest creel check data shows the best catch rates below Hellar Bar near the mouth of the Grand Ronde River, and in the lower Grand Ronde itself where anglers average a little over six hours of fishing per catch. In the mainstem Snake, from Ice Harbor to Lower Monumental dams, steelheaders average almost 12 hours per fish caught. From Lower Monumental to Little Goose dams, the average is just under 17 hours per catch, and from Little Goose to Lower Granite dams, the average is 17.5 hours.

### **Northcentral Washington**

WDFW regional fish program manager Jeff Korth reports a variety of fishing opportunities throughout the region, but with recent warming trends he cautions anglers about deteriorating ice conditions, both on lakes and along river shorelines.

"Ice fishing for **rainbow trout** at the Windmill/Canal lakes in the Potholes Reservoir area in Grant County has been good," Korth said. "Ice fishing for **yellow perch** has been decent at Moses Lake and at Fish Lake in Chelan County. And ice fishing for **whitefish** at Banks Lake near Coulee City is reportedly good. But with thawing and re-freezing, anglers need to be sure the ice is safe before venturing on or near it."

WDFW district fish biologist Bob Jateff of Twisp reports good **rainbow trout** fishing through the ice at Rat Lake near Brewster, Sidley/Molson Lake near Oroville, Big and Little Green lakes near Omak, and Davis Lake near Winthrop. Patterson Lake near Winthrop is producing **yellow perch** in the 7-8-inch range, with some larger fish to 10 inches.

Jateff also reports that upper Columbia River **steelhead** fishing picked up slightly in the tributaries above Wells Dam while air temperatures were above freezing. "Fishing will taper off as the temperatures fall and ice forms in the rivers, so anglers planning a trip should call ahead first to check weather conditions," he said. "Anglers do best when drifting the slower-moving, deeper runs as the fish tend to hold in these areas during the winter months."

Jateff reminds steelheaders that a mandatory retention of adipose-fin-clipped hatchery steelhead is in effect during the fishery.

The Methow River is open to **whitefish** from Gold Creek upstream to the falls above Brush Creek and the Chewuch River from the mouth to the Pasayten Wilderness boundary. The Similkameen River is open from the mouth to the Canadian border. Anglers fishing for whitefish in areas that are currently open for steelhead must use selective gear (single barbless lures and flies, no bait allowed).

### **Southcentral Washington**

Anglers are taking limits of **whitefish** on the Yakima River and other local streams, according to WDFW district fish biologist Eric Anderson. "Some of the best whitefish areas besides the mainstem Yakima are the Naches, Tieton, Cle Elum and Bumping rivers," Anderson said. "Check the fishing rules pamphlet for specific river stretch descriptions."

Whitefish gear is restricted to one single-point hook with a maximum hook size of 3/16-inch from point to shank, hook size 14. Fish are usually caught with a small fly tipped with a maggot. Up to 15 whitefish can be retained daily. Most fish are 10 to 15 inches. Anderson recommends that anglers concentrate fishing efforts in deep pools below riffles.

**Steelhead** fishing in the Ringold area of the Columbia River near the Tri-Cities is still producing for bank anglers and boaters alike, reports WDFW Ringold/Meseberg Fish Hatchery specialist Mike Erickson. "At least for the few willing to brave the weather," he added.

### **TGF Inbox - Reader E-mail**

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**

For those who follow it, 2010 trout stocking:

[http://www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/fishing/trout\\_stocking\\_schedules/](http://www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/fishing/trout_stocking_schedules/)

New (and old) fees for 2010 licenses and tags:

[http://www.dfw.state.or.us/agency/budget/docs/Post\\_Legislation\\_Final\\_Fees.pdf](http://www.dfw.state.or.us/agency/budget/docs/Post_Legislation_Final_Fees.pdf)

**GOOD LUCK!**