

The Guide's Forecast - volume 15 issue number 7

Northwest Oregon and Washington's most complete and accurate fishing forecast
Forecasting for the fishing week of **February 8th – February 14th, 2013**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

STOP BY THE PORTLAND SPORTSMAN SHOW !!!

Stop by Booth #366; the Fatal Flash booth where you'll find an awesome Display of 2013 spinner blades for every occasion. You'll also find our Bob's Bait Wraps on show special!

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Willamette Valley/Metro- The Willamette River has given up another spring chinook, this time of hatchery origin. This should come as no surprise and others will follow in the coming weeks. Water conditions remain "good" with decent clarity, average temperature and a very fishable level. Bank anglers at Meldrum Bar are giving it a go, as are a couple die hard back trollers at Oregon City and one to four boats a day are spotted at Sellwood. From Lake Oswego downstream, green label plug cut herring is the standard bait, trolled slowly with four to eight ounces of weight. From Lake Oswego upstream to Willamette Falls, cured prawns, sand shrimp, coon shrimp and cured roe are the favorites, either back trolled or plunked. Expect spring chinook fishing to pick up by mid-March and continue through May.

Catch and release sturgeon fishing in the Portland Harbor has been steady for most. Anglers are reporting good to excellent fishing with a mix of shorts, keeper size and a couple of oversized fish to bend rods. Most all baits are working, including smelt, roll mop herring, sand shrimp and even worms. If you drop your anchor in a spot and give it a solid 30 minutes without any action, get up and find a new spot.

Mackenzie River water levels took a hit from recent rain at the end of January but have been dropping since and should offer winter fly fishing opportunities for reddsides this week.

Although counts of winter steelhead have topped 1,000 at the Falls, that's still not a sufficient number to expect a great deal of action for native winters on the North Santiam although water conditions are decent.

On the Clackamas, steelhead anglers are putting in their time and finding action on most accounts. When water conditions have been favorable, there are fish to be had, but nobody has reported excellent results. February, March and April are the prime months for Clackamas winter steelhead.

The Sandy River continues to kick out nice winter steelhead for both boaters and bank fishermen. Although the catch rate isn't off the charts, more experienced anglers are getting their share and sometimes reporting excellent results. The section between Dodge Park and Dabney Park has been giving up the most steelhead. Plugs fished from a drift boat and bobber and jig combos are the go-to. Expect the action to continue through the first week of April.

Northwest – After a brief period of good fishing following the prolonged low water, action dropped off on most north coast streams despite ideal water conditions. By the weekend, anglers

were lucky to have engaged in a single hook-up for a day's effort. Angler success will change however, as February wears on and certainly into March.

Another rise is expected prior to the weekend, making smaller streams a viable option over the weekend, followed by the larger systems such as the Wilson, Trask and Nestucca, early next week. Bank anglers may see decent opportunities over the weekend in the upper reaches of these systems where conditions tend to improve more rapidly. The best hatcher options will remain on the Wilson and Nestucca systems. Darker, spent fish are starting to show with more regularity on all the other early run systems on the coast.

The north Oregon Coast is coming into a nice minus tide series mid-week, next week. This makes sturgeon fishing an option this weekend and beyond and if the ocean swell cooperates, razor clam digging could be good in the middle of next week too. There is no sign of a cooperative ocean forecast for those seeking bottomfish.

Southwest- Offshore bottom fishing out of central ports has remained an excellent option when ocean conditions allow launching. Reports indicate easy limits of lingcod while it has taken a little longer to fill rockfish limits.

Showers on the south coast have alleviated low, clear water conditions only slightly this week with dry weather forecast to return for the weekend. Even a little freshet can improve steelheading, however.

Mussels may now be taken north of Cape Arago at Coos Bay but harvesting remains closed south of that point.

While mainstem Umpqua flows are rising this week, the South Umpqua is in decent shape for steelheading where a fair to good number of hatchery fish have been making an early appearance this season.

Coos Bay has remained productive for crabbing and will remain so through the coming weekend.

When offshore conditions have allowed, bottom fishing out of Gold Beach has been good. A few pinkfin surf perch have been taken in Rogue Bay although it's early for this fishery to shine. Steelheading has been worthwhile on the lower Rogue. While flows may increase a little over the weekend, fishing should hold up. The middle Rogue has been productive for plug-pullers and side drifters in many stretches up to the mouth of the Applegate River. There will be little interest for anglers on the upper Rogue until winters, which are running late this year, swim this far upstream.

The rising waters of the Chetco are forecast to crest overnight Friday, February 9th, and then drop throughout the coming weekend. For weeks, steelhead have been taken every day and in every condition although it's always better when conditions are conducive, as when flows are moderating.

Eastern – In a news release dated February 4, the ODFW unannounced there will be no spring chinook season on the Deschutes in 2013. Redside fishing has been fair on the lower Deschutes. Rainbows and brown trout have been responding to streamers on the middle river.

The Dalles and the Bonneville Pool have both been producing some keeper sturgeon and will likely continue to do so through the open period.

SW Washington- Steelhead interest is waning but fair numbers of wild fish are beginning to show on some systems. The Washougal boasted fair catches, even for bank anglers last weekend. The Cowlitz and Lewis systems as well as the Kalama should start to see some late season steelhead show with broodstock fish available on a few of these systems.

Razor clam diggers have some options next week:

The schedule for the upcoming dig and evening low tides is:

- Feb. 7, Thursday, 4:22 p.m., -0.5 ft., Twin Harbors
- Feb. 8, Friday, 5:11 p.m., -0.9 ft., Twin Harbors, Long Beach, Copalis, Mocrocks
- Feb. 9, Saturday, 5:56 p.m., -1.0 ft., Twin Harbors, Long Beach, Copalis, Mocrocks
- Feb. 10, Sunday, 6:37 p.m., -0.9 ft., Twin Harbors, Long Beach
- Feb. 11, Monday, 7:17 p.m., -0.5 ft., Twin Harbors
- Feb. 12, Tuesday, 7:54 p.m., 0.0 ft., Twin Harbors

Soapbox Update:

Those who enjoy catching hatchery fish from Oregon coastal rivers should be aware of a proposal currently in discussion the result of which, if implemented, would be in part to:

- **Eliminate fall Chinook on the Miami**
- **Eliminate fall Chinook and winter steelhead on the Kilchis**
- **Eliminate spring Chinook and summer steelhead on the Wilson**
- **Eliminate fry plants of fall Chinook on the Trask**
- **Eliminate fry plants of fall Chinook on the Nestucca**
- **Allow retention in 8 watersheds of wild steelhead**

Which would mean:

- **200,000 less fall Chinook plants**
- **300,000 more spring Chinook plants**
- **40,000 less winter steelhead plants**
- **30,000 more summer steelhead plants**

Read the draft here:

http://dfw.state.or.us/fish/CRP/docs/coastal_multispecies/meetings/2012/DRAFT_Portfolio_1-23-13.pdf

If you would like to voice your opinion on this matter, attend the Mid-Coast Steelhead Management Meeting hosted by Florence STEP to be held at 4 PM on Sunday, February 10, at Mapleton Lions Club Office in the Old School Building on Riverview Avenue in Mapleton, OR.

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE NEWS RELEASE

February 6, 2013

Rick Boatner, ODFW Invasive Species, Wildlife Integrity coordinator, (503) 947-6308
Meg Kenagy, ODFW Conservation Communications coordinator, (503) 947-6021

Boat inspection stations open in Oregon to target invasive species

SALEM, Ore. — The aquatic invasive species boat inspection station at the Ashland Port of Entry will open on Feb. 11, 2013. Stations in Gold Beach, Klamath Falls, Lakeview and Ontario will open in the coming months.

All vehicles carrying motorized or non-motorized boats (kayaks, canoes, paddleboards, sailboats, etc.) are required to stop. Motorists are alerted to inspections stations by orange "Boat Inspection Ahead" signs followed by a white "Inspection Required for All Watercraft" sign. Failure to stop at an inspection station could result in a \$110 fine.

Inspections usually take less than 10 minutes if boats are free of aquatic invasive species. If a boat is found to be contaminated with species such as quagga or zebra mussels, it will be decontaminated on site by the watercraft inspection team with a hot water pressure washer. There is no penalty or cost for the boat owner if their boat is found to be contaminated with invasive species.

Inspection stations are operated by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife at Port of Entries, highway rest stops and boat ramps across the state.

[2013 Locations of Watercraft Inspection Stations in Oregon](#)

- Ashland I-5, Ashland Port of Entry: 2/11/13 – 10/1/13
- Gold Beach Hwy 101: 7/8/13 - 10/1/13
- Klamath Falls Hwy 97 at Midland Rest Area: 5/1/13 - 9/15
- Lakeview Hwy 395 south of Lakeview: 5/1/12 - 9/15
- Ontario I-84 and Hwy. 20 at Ontario Rest Area: 5/1/13 - 10/1/13

[Full schedule](#) (pdf)

"Boat inspections work," said Rick Boatner, ODFW Invasive Species, Wildlife Integrity coordinator, "but just as important is educating boat owners about how to inspect their own boats. Prevention is the only way to keep aquatic invasive species out of Oregon's waters. Once invasive species are introduced and established there may be very little that can be done. It will affect how all Oregonians use our water resources. "

In addition to quagga and zebra mussels, inspectors are looking for New Zealand mudsnails and Eurasian watermilfoil and other aquatic plants.

Aquatic invasive species discovered on 51 boats during 2012 inspection season

In 2012, fifty-one of 4,675 watercraft inspected were contaminated with aquatic invasive species; 32 had plant material (i.e. Eurasian watermilfoil) or other non-native organisms (e.g. snails, saltwater mussels). Eighteen were contaminated with either quagga or zebra mussels. All boats were decontaminated. Additional information is available in the [2012 Oregon Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Program Annual Report](#) (pdf).

The [Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Program](#) is self-supporting, based on the sales of required Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Permits.

Information

- Learn where and how to buy an Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Permit on [ODFW's website](#)
- The Oregon Marine Board advises: [Clean, drain and dry](#)

Invasive species are identified in the Oregon Conservation Strategy as one of the [Key Conservation Issues that Affect Species and Habitats Statewide](#).

Columbia River Fishing Report – Naturally, no big news for salmon and steelhead anglers on the mainstem but ODF&W reports that there has been at least one chinook taken from the mainstem Columbia. We know there have been Willamette River springers taken.

ODF&W checks indicate a single hatchery steelhead kept for 68 bank rods between Portland and Rainier. Obviously, not a big return on your investment in time.

Sturgeon fishing is pretty good in the Bonneville Pool however. Boaters targeting keepers in that stretch nearly logged a keeper per boat last weekend. Here are the catch stats from the lower 3 pools:

Bonneville Pool:

Weekly checking showed nine sublegal sturgeon released for 56 bank anglers; and 33 legal white sturgeon kept, plus 11 legal, two oversize and 473 sublegal sturgeon released for 48 boats (135 anglers).

The Dalles Pool:

Weekly checking showed one sublegal sturgeon released for 14 bank anglers; and two legal white sturgeon kept, plus one oversize and 10 sublegal sturgeon released for one boat (three anglers).

John Day Pool:

Weekly checking showed one sublegal sturgeon released for 54 bank anglers; and three legal white sturgeon kept, plus four oversize and 12 sublegal sturgeon released for 37 boats (80 anglers).

No keepers were reported downstream of Bonneville this weekend.

The Guide's Forecast – Certainly don't count of great catches of salmon or steelhead from the mainstem this weekend. It's early for catchable numbers but there are obviously some present. It will be a crap shoot no matter where you fish this time of year but you'll likely stand your greatest chance at an early prize downstream of St. Helens.

Sturgeon fishing is a strong option in the Bonneville Pool but it closes after February 10th. Here's how it reads in the ODF&W on-line regulations (pay particular attention to the Bonneville Pool listed immediately below:

Bonneville Reservoir (Bonneville Dam upstream to The Dalles Dam)

- **Effective January 1, 2013, this section of the Columbia River is open to the retention of white sturgeon seven days per week through Sunday February 10, 2013, or until a harvest guideline of 1,100 legal white sturgeon has been met. The daily bag limit is one sturgeon between 38 – 54 inches fork length. The annual bag limit for Oregon in 2013 is one legal white sturgeon total for all zones statewide.**

The Dalles Reservoir (The Dalles Dam upstream to John Day Dam)

- **Effective January 1, 2013, this section of the Columbia River is open to retention of white sturgeon seven days per week until the catch guideline of 300 legal white sturgeon has been met. The daily bag limit is one sturgeon between 43 – 54 inches fork length. The annual bag limit for Oregon in 2013 is one legal white sturgeon total for all zones statewide.**

John Day Reservoir (John Day Dam upstream to McNary Dam)

- **Effective January 1, 2013, this section of the Columbia River is open to retention of white sturgeon seven days per week until the catch guideline of**

500 legal white sturgeon has been met. The daily bag limit is one sturgeon between 43 – 54 inches fork length. The annual bag limit for Oregon in 2013 is one legal white sturgeon total for all zones statewide.

And here's what the WDF&W's web site says:

"Bonneville Pool – Effort and catch both increased last week. Including fish released, boat anglers averaged a legal per every 3 rods. No legals were observed kept by bank anglers. Through Jan. 27, an estimated 90 (8%) of the 1,100 fish guideline had been taken. Retention in the winter season remains open through Sunday Feb. 10."

We just got confirmation that despite the fact there remains a lot of sturgeon on the 1,100 fish guideline, the fishery will close after Sunday. There will be a summer season (likely in June or July) for the remainder of the quota.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) reports, "The Willamette River has given up another spring Chinook, this time of hatchery origin. This should come as no surprise and others will follow in the coming weeks. Water conditions remain "good" with decent clarity, average temperature and a very fishable level. Bank anglers at Meldrum bar are giving it a go, as are a couple die hard back trollers at Oregon City and one to four boats a day are spotted at Sellwood. From Lake Oswego downstream, green label plug cut herring is the standard bait, trolled slowly with four to eight ounces of weight. From Lake Oswego upstream to Willamette Falls, cured prawns, sand shrimp, coon shrimp and cured roe are the favorites, either back trolled or plunked. Expect spring Chinook fishing to pick up by mid-March and continue through May. Catch and release sturgeon fishing in the Portland Harbor has been steady for most. Anglers are reporting good to excellent fishing with a mix of shorts, keeper size and a couple of oversized tankers to bend rods. Most all baits are working, including smelt, roll mop herring, sand shrimp and even worms. If you drop your anchor in a spot and give it a solid 30 minutes without any action, get up and find a new spot"

Winter steelhead are crossing at Willamette Falls to the tune of 40 or 50 a day with around 1,100 upstream as of February 6th. Of perhaps only academic interest but a promise of things to come: two coho have been counted. Can springtime really be that far off?

The McKenzie River had been dropping earlier this week but is forecast to be at good level and flow while holding mostly stable over the next several days. The river is in great shape for winter fly fishing.

North and South Santiam water level and flows are good and will be moderating slightly through the coming weekend.

The 2013 Northwest Fly Tier and Fly Fishing Expo is scheduled for March 8th and 9th at the Linn County Expo Center in Albany.

According the ODFW, Walter Wirth Lake, Walling Pond and Waverly Pond will each be stocked this week with 250 trout averaging 2½ pounds apiece. Alton Baker Canal is scheduled for trout planting this week. Extensive planting will resume in the coming week. The seasonal brood stock planting program is over and won't resume until late in 2013. Incidentally, in speaking to the ODFW regarding the planting of brooders, I was curtly informed it is not a "program" but believe the word reads better than "thingie."

The Guide's Forecast – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) on Herring for Willamette springers 101:

"If I was to narrow down the three most important factors to successful plug cut herring fishing, and by "successful" I mean, consistently catching fish, season after season. I would list, in order of importance ... 1. QUALITY BAIT, 2. DESIRABLE SPIN and 3. GET IT IN FRONT OF A FISH.

"When thinking of quality bait, herring in this case, this is what to consider. Make sure your bait is less than a year old and it has NEVER been thawed and re-frozen. If it has, it will appear bloodshot and often have a bit of dried blood in the package. If it has even been partially thawed and refrozen, your bait has been drastically compromised. Herring, with its high oil/fat content, quickly breaks down and decomposes once it begins to thaw, leaving you with a bait that will be soft and prone to falling apart, or "mushrooming" as some anglers call it. Also, its stands to reason that the ever so important fresh scent of the bait might be compromised as well, likely to offend the picky spring Chinook. Vacuum packed is great if you will be storing your bait in the freezer for a few months, but if you plan on using it up rather quickly, it's not all that necessary. When you choose your bait, look for the scales to be shiny and intact. Missing scales means less flash. The bright, strobing flash of a rolling plug cut herring is what gets the springers attention. Buy your bait from a reputable source, as the bait companies never put a packing date on it, so you never really know how fresh it is. While fishing, keep your bait in a cooler with ice or frozen gel packs, it will deteriorate in 30 minutes if not kept cool and crisp.

"To brine, or not to brine is a matter of personal preference. I like fresh thawed bait because it's the most natural looking and smelling. It has unmolested blood and partials of flesh and guts that drive Chinook wild. If I have left over bait that has been kept cold in my cooler, I will brine it with one of the liquid brines and fish it for up to three days after first thawing it out. This way I'm not throwing out good bait every day and the day old bait get toughened up in the brine and stays on the hook well. To your brine you can add various scents like anise or anchovy oil. Every seasoned Chinook angler has his top secret brine with fourteen different top secret additives and all these anglers claim their brine is the best out there. They all work some of the time and some may work well most of the time. But plain old blood and guts works almost every time, if you can manage get it in front of a biter.

"Getting that "drill bit" spin out of every cut bait is a challenge for most salmon anglers. Following are some tips to achieve a tighter spin. Whether you use a plug cutter (herring guide) is a matter of preference, but consistency is paramount. A good suggestion for beginners is to use a proven cutter box, follow the directions and to stick with it. How you hook up your bait and hook placement is more critical than the brand of box. A super sharp knife is necessary to get the sharpest cut possible. Sloppy, jagged cuts mushroom out and are less likely to spin properly. Use smaller/lighter hooks if you can't get your bait to easily roll and even going to lighter leader material helps tremendously when your spin is labored. For green label herring, I use 3/0 and 4/0 hooks with 25 lb test leader. With the larger blue label bait, two 5/0 hooks on 25 or 30 lb test works well. Adjust boat speed to as slow as possible and your bait should spin effortlessly. Not every bait has to spin the same, but keeping your roll within a 3" diameter imaginary tube is what you are looking for.

"Most novice anglers fail to achieve #3 and wonder why they aren't having the desired results. The Willamette runs murky most of the year, but especially in the winter and spring. All that murk filters out light and gives the springers a sense of cover in relatively shallow water. It's my feeling that Chinook prefer "near darkness" and will seek out low light for that feeling of safety. Early in the morning or on dark days, it's not uncommon to hook springers at just seven feet below the surface, even if the water depth may be 20 feet or more. When the fish have that sense of cover, they are likely to suspend in the water column, only traveling as deep as needed to escape most of the penetrating light. My rule of thumb is: In water that is 20 foot or less, fish

from the bottom up (and tight to the bottom is preferable most of the time). In water that is over 20 ft. in depth, fish from the surface down, letting out "ten pulls"(i.e.) or to a set depth on a line counter reel. Now all this can vary greatly depending on line size, sinker weight and trolling speed. Three to twelve ounce cannonball sinkers covers all the bases for the Willamette springers, but 6, 8 and 10 ounces easily gets you to the desired depth. Fish with the heavier sinkers and watch your catch rate go up."

You'll think spring arrived early on the McKenzie over the next several days as the Pacific Northwest is forecast to be blessed with mostly dry and sunny days. Nymphs will be effective but keep an eye out for BWO hatches during the warmth of the day.

While water conditions on the Santiams are conducive to fishing, it's moot without quarry. There are a few long-in-the-tooth summer steelhead in the rivers but too few winters to target yet.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – Pro guide Chris Vertopoulos (503-349-1377) reports, "On the Clackamas, steelhead anglers are putting in their time and finding action on most accounts. When water conditions have been favorable, there are fish to be had, but nobody has been "lighting it up". February, March and April are the prime months for Clack winter steelhead.

"The Sandy River continues to kick out nice winter steelhead for both boaters and bank fishermen. Although the catch rate isn't off the charts, more experienced anglers are getting their share and sometimes reporting excellent results. The section between Dodge Park and Dabney Park has been giving up the most steelhead. Plugs fished from a drift boat and bobber and jig combos are the go-to. Expect the action to continue through the first week of April."

North Coast Fishing Report – After an initial good push of fish following the extended low water, steelhead fishing dropped off to mediocre-at-best for the rest of the week and weekend. Overall, anglers were disappointed with the results from most river systems, employing any variety of techniques under prime conditions producing little reward.

Smaller systems like the Necanicum River near seaside produced fairly late last week with one boat recording five steelhead by noon, of which they retained three. Bait fishermen produce the best results on the smaller streams under ideal conditions but bobber and jig fishing can become productive this time of year as well. By the weekend, the smaller systems were getting too low and clear for productive fishing.

Although other systems like the Kilchis River and North Fork Nehalem produced only mediocre results, there are fish in the system. The North Fork Hatchery reported recycling 250 fish on Wednesday and indicated despite good water conditions and good numbers of fish present, the bite has been slow. Three Rivers has been even slower than these other systems.

On Friday, I had the pleasure of fishing with Buzz Ramsey on the upper Nestucca. Side-drifting and plug pulling our way down from Sixth Bridge to Farmers Creek only yielded two steelhead for a full day's effort. Both fish came on side drifted eggs with one being an 11-pound bright hen and the other a dark hatchery fish, both of which were released. Other boats that we talk to on the drift did not fare well either. The water conditions were in prime shape.

Like the Nestucca River, the Wilson produced fair at best results late last week and over the weekend as well. The river was in great shape through the weekend but anglers had to work hard to produce any results. Effort predictably ran high on these two rivers as they are the late-

season hatchery producers. With river levels expected to remain stable, fishing success and pressure will likely also be stable.

The Nehalem River remains a little high to productively fish this week. This season should start to produce once the water drops clears a little bit more.

As we have mentioned before, most anglers are not anticipating as good of a return as we had last year but in the coming weeks a concerted effort should still yield results as we near the peak period.

The Guide's Forecast – With North Coast Rivers scheduled to peak on Thursday, river conditions for the weekend again look ideal, with smaller systems producing results immediately and the larger system coming online even before the weekend. Anglers are most likely to find dark hatchery fish with bright wild ones from now through early April on almost all streams with the best opportunity for bright hatchery fish remaining on the Nestucca and Wilson Rivers. Even though it is still before the peak of the late run steelhead, this week has historically produced some good catches of broodstock fish on the Wilson and the Nestucca Rivers.

Side-drifted roe will be your key to success but plugs should become more effective as the flows drop.

Anglers will find fewer interested people on the native streams that offer no late-season hatchery option. With fewer Anglers participating in these native steelhead fisheries, anglers will be able to explore other options and not feel so rushed in pursuit of their quarry. The Necanicum, Kilchis and Trask Rivers will be your best bets for getting away from people and should offer great wild fish opportunities into late March.

After viewing the Wilson River on Thursday, although still a little bit high, it will clearly fish good prior to the weekend. Anglers should not expect great catches however as with much of last week, stable water conditions mean there will be no new strong push of fish. Boaters will find by the weekend that they will be largely dependent on fish riding the high tide through the tidewater stretches. For this reason, action will remain the best on those lower reaches from Donaldson's downstream on the Wilson and First Bridge downstream on the Nestucca. Motor boaters working downstream of Sollie Smith Bridge should also find fair to good opportunities through the weekend.

Steelhead anglers will once again dominate Tillamook County waterways this weekend but sturgeon fishing in Tillamook Bay is a pretty good option from a tidal perspective. We are currently on a good low tide series now with a minus tide series coming early next week.

Effort has remained somewhat light for sturgeon but there are reports of keepers being caught from the west channel and middle channels in Tillamook Bay. There has been minimal effort at Bay City.

Anglers motivated by bottom fishing opportunity will be put on hold for a while longer. The ocean swell and wind wave forecasts do not look conducive for small craft. Success would surely be high if only the ocean weather would cooperate.

Estuary crabbing has been subpar, which is to be expected with all of the freshwater inundation and a commercial fishery going on in the nearshore. Netarts Bay remains the best option but limits are far from the rule.

Central & South Coast Reports – Boats were able to launch on Wednesday this week out of Newport and Depoe Bay to take advantage of good offshore fishing for rockfish and lingcod. The ocean is looking less than friendly for the remainder of the week, however, making steelheading or a trip to the Sportsmen's Show a better option.

The Alsea produced several winter steelhead for anglers fishing there earlier this week. Pink plastic worms have been mentioned in numerous reports this season here and elsewhere but whether that's due to these lures being particularly effective this year or just a resurgence in popularity is yet to be determined.

Siletz River steelheaders are enjoying fair to good winter steelheading with side-drifting bobberdogging popular here. Use caution when drift boating on coastal rivers and wear those PFDs. Another boat overturned here on Wednesday this week. Two to three fish for a day's effort is a good day on the Siletz right now.

Steelheaders are hooking fish with regularity on the Siuslaw and water conditions look positive over the next several days with the Whitaker Creek stretch is getting the most pressure. Plug-pullers are doing well.

With dirty water flowing from the Umpqua into Winchester Bay this week, crabbing is on the skids. It will improve once the river clears. Thousands of spring Chinook are bound for the Umpqua but it'll be a while before they show. Some really large hatchery steelhead have been caught from the South Umpqua recently and while a few out-sized finclips have come from the North Umpqua as well although the legitimacy of the latter is apparently in question as there's no hatchery on that fork.

Anglers in the Coos, Coquille, and Tenmile basins will be able to keep an additional fin-clipped steelhead per day for a total aggregate of three. While we've mentioned it previously, this is the time of year when it might actually be possible to fill that daily bag limit.

Crabbing has been decent in Coos Bay although effort here has been light. Although a few have started targeting them, no sturgeon catches have been reported but anglers are reminded that if they land a legal-sized fish and keep it, here or anywhere in Oregon, that's the bag limit and they're done for the year. As the Coos River drops and clears into the weekend to come, fishing for fresh winter steelhead is expected to be worthwhile. Catches are expected to pick up on the East Fork and West Fork Millicoma rivers as well. Drifted eggs or bobber and jig will take fish.

Steelheading has been good on the Coquille and is expected to remain so as the river drops over the next several days.

Historically, a few springers should be showing in lower Rogue catches but don't count on finding decent action here until later in March and early April. Water will start dropping early Saturday, February 9th, and continue through the weekend. Steelheading should be fair to good. Winter steelhead have made their way upstream to populate the middle Rogue and catch results are reflecting it with both bank and boat fishers finding success. The upper Rogue is forecast to spike on Friday then start dropping as the weekend progresses. Winter steelhead are expected to be showing below the mouth of Elk Creek in decent number following this change in flows.

Despite the current rising water at the Chetco, it will be a good level and dropping for the weekend according to hydrological projections. Steelhead has been good here, particularly for side-drifters using good quality cured eggs or scented yarn. Bank fishers drifting similar baits will also score.

Elk River steelheaders scored fresh winters earlier this week as showers put a little color in the water but with mostly clear skies predicted into the coming week, it will be low too low and clear for a while and clear to provide best results for steelhead.

Alder, Buck, Carter, Cleawox, Dune, Elbow, Erhart, Georgia, Lost, Munsel, North Georgia, Perkins and Siltcoos Lagoon. Most waters will receive both barely legal and 16-inch (trophy) rainbows.

Central and Eastern Oregon – Deschutes level and flow dropped a little this week but is now fairly stable which should mean fair to good results for redsides on the lower river over the coming weekend. Streamers on the middle Deschutes will be effective for 'bows as well as browns. The occasional jumbo brown trout has been hooked but not always landed. As announced by the ODFW this week and in the Fisheries Forecast, above, the Deschutes will not open to spring Chinook fishing this year. According to a fisheries biologist, fewer than 650 springers are forecast to return to Warm Springs to spawn and the returns must be predicted at 1,000 or better in order to afford and recreational harvest. The reason for a poor return this season is not known.

Fishing has been good on the Metolius this week although few are on the river trying it. Brown trout and whitefish have been cooperative.

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report for February 2013

Last updated February 7, 2013

North Puget Sound

With fishing for steelhead and other game fish closing on several rivers in the region, anglers are shifting their attention to the marine areas where blackmouth salmon fisheries are under way.

Over the last couple of years, the San Juan Islands have been the most productive for anglers fishing for **blackmouth salmon** in February, according to fish biologists with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). Anglers fishing waters around the San Juan Islands (Marine Area 7)– as well as marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay), 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner) and 9 (Admiralty Inlet)– have a two-salmon daily limit, but must release wild chinook salmon.

Seattle/Bremerton waters (Marine Area 10) are closed to salmon fishing, except for certain fishing piers including the Elliott Bay Fishing Pier at Terminal 86, Seacrest Pier, Waterman Piers, the Bremerton Boardwalk and Illahee State Park Pier. Detailed season and rule information is available [on the WDFW website](#).

Before heading out, anglers can check [creel reports](#) for information on catch and effort in Puget Sound. Recreational fishery samplers with WDFW collect the information each week at fishing access sites throughout Puget Sound.

Winter is also prime time to jig for **squid** in Puget Sound. Good spots include the Des Moines Pier, Redondo Pier, Elliott Bay Pier in Seattle and the Edmonds Pier. More information is available on the department's [squid fishing webpage](#). Information on fishing piers is available [here](#).

Fishing for **steelhead and other game fish** closes Feb. 1 in many regional river systems. However, some waters near WDFW fish hatcheries will remain open through Feb. 15 to provide anglers an opportunity to catch and keep hatchery steelhead. Those waters include portions of the Skagit, Wallace, Skykomish and Snoqualmie rivers. Anglers should check [WDFW's sportfishing regulations pamphlet](#) for details.

Freshwater anglers may also want to try their luck on local lakes. Lake Washington and Lake Sammamish are good spots to fish for **perch, cutthroat** and **smallmouth bass**, said WDFW fisheries biologist Danny Garrett. "Anglers have had success catching trout at both lakes recently, and bass and perch have been caught as well," he said.

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

Blackmouth fishing opportunities expand in February, when several marine areas in Puget Sound re-open for salmon. In the rivers, steelhead are still the best bet – especially on the coast, where two razor clam digs also are scheduled at ocean beaches.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has given the green light to an evening razor clam dig at several ocean beaches. The opening dates and evening low tides are:

- Feb. 7, Thursday, 4:22 p.m., -0.5 ft., Twin Harbors
- Feb. 8, Friday, 5:11 p.m., -0.9 ft., Twin Harbors, Long Beach, Copalis, Mocrocks
- Feb. 9, Saturday, 5:56 p.m., -1.0 ft., Twin Harbors, Long Beach, Copalis, Mocrocks
- Feb. 10, Sunday, 6:37 p.m., -0.9 ft., Twin Harbors, Long Beach
- Feb. 11, Monday, 7:17 p.m., -0.5 ft., Twin Harbors
- Feb. 12, Tuesday, 7:54 p.m., 0.0 ft., Twin Harbors

Later in February, WDFW will proceed with another digging opportunity if marine toxin tests are favorable. Tentative opening dates and evening low tides for that dig are:

- Feb. 23, Saturday, 5:12 p.m., +0.3 ft., Long Beach, Twin Harbors
- Feb. 24, Sunday, 5:47 p.m., +0.1 ft., Long Beach, Twin Harbors

Clam diggers are reminded that they should take lights or lanterns for the nighttime digs and to check weather and surf forecasts before heading out. No digging will be allowed before noon on any of the razor-clam beaches. 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.

All diggers age 15 or older must have an applicable 2012-13 fishing license to harvest razor clams on any beach. Licenses, ranging from a three-day razor clam license to an annual combination fishing license, are available on [WDFW's website](#) and from license vendors around the state.

Meanwhile, anglers will have additional opportunities to fish for blackmouth in the marine areas of Puget Sound on Feb. 1, when marine areas 11 (Tacoma-Vashon) and 12 (Hood Canal) open for salmon. Marine areas 13 (South Puget Sound) and 6 (eastern Strait) are already open for salmon fishing.

"Fishing has been very good in the eastern Strait and Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands), especially at Coyote, Hein and Partridge banks," said Ryan Lothrop, WDFW's Puget Sound recreational salmon fishery manager. "That should continue into February."

Later in month, anglers will also have a chance to hook blackmouth in Marine Area 5 (Sekiu), where salmon fishing open Feb. 16. "Last February, blackmouth fishing started strong at Sekiu, and anglers continued to do well over the next several weeks," Lothrop said. "Hopefully fishing will be just as good this year once the season gets under way."

Saltwater anglers in southern Puget Sound are hooking resident **coho salmon**, said Larry Phillips, district fish biologist for WDFW. "The Tacoma Narrows has been decent for resident coho, and I've heard they are finding a few blackmouth as well," he said. "The Squaxin Island area and Eld Inlet off Evergreen Beach are two other spots anglers might want to try fishing for resident coho this time of year."

Anglers can check [creel reports](#) for information on catch and effort in Puget Sound. Recreational fishery samplers with WDFW collect the information each week at fishing access sites throughout the Sound.

Winter is prime time to jig for **squid** in Puget Sound. Good spots include the Point Defiance Park and Les Davis piers in Tacoma, and the Illahee State Park, Waterman and Indianola piers in Kitsap County. More information is available on the department's [squid fishing webpage](#). Information on fishing piers is available [here](#).

Another option is to head to a local lake and hook some trout. Anglers fishing American Lake (Pierce County) and Saint Clair Lake (Thurston County) have been doing well for rainbow trout, said Phillips. "They've been hooking some nice trout in the 13- to 16-inch range at both lakes, which have decent carry over rates for trout stocked the previous summer," he said.

In the northern rivers, the hatchery **steelhead** run is winding down, but more wild steelhead are arriving each week, said Kirt Hughes, regional fishery manager for WDFW. Beginning Feb. 16, anglers can retain one wild steelhead per license year on the Bogachiel, Calawah, Clearwater, Dickey, Hoh, Quillayute, Quinault and Sol Duc rivers. Those eight rivers are the only waters in Washington where wild steelhead retention is allowed.

"The abundant wild steelhead populations returning to those rivers also provide great catch-and-release fishing opportunities," Hughes said. Information on weekly steelhead catches in the Quillayute River system and the Hoh River are available on [WDFW's website](#).

Farther south, anglers can still find hatchery steelhead in the Skookumchuck, Satsop, Wynoochee and mainstem Chehalis rivers, where late-run steelhead are still being caught, said Hughes.

Before heading out, anglers should check [WDFW's sportfishing regulations pamphlet](#) for details on all fisheries.

Looking for some competition? Anglers can take part in the **Olympic Peninsula Salmon Derby** over Presidents' Day Weekend near Sequim. Details are available at the [derby's website](#).

Southwest Washington

Ocean bright **spring chinook salmon** are beginning to move into the Columbia River, setting the stage for one of the state's most popular fisheries. Anglers typically start landing early-returning "springers" in early February, but the fishery usually doesn't catch fire until March.

"This is a good time to dust off your gear, order your bait, prepare your boat, and maybe do a little prospecting," said Joe Hymer, a fish biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). "You want to be ready to go when the bulk of the run arrives."

The spring chinook fishery is open below the Interstate 5 Bridge until March 1, when new rules approved by fishery managers from Washington and Oregon extend the fishery further upriver. The current limit is two adult hatchery fish per day.

Barbless hooks are required to fish for salmon, steelhead and cutthroat trout in the mainstem Columbia River from the north jetty to the Washington/Oregon border above McNary Dam. Anglers may still use single-point, double-point, or treble hooks in those waters, so long as any barbs have been filed off or pinched down.

As in previous years, only hatchery-reared fish marked with a clipped adipose fin and a healed scar may be retained. All wild spring chinook, identifiable by an intact adipose fin, must be released unharmed.

Anglers may also retain two adult hatchery spring chinook per day on the Cowlitz and Deep rivers. The limit on the Lewis River, East Fork Lewis and Kalama river is one spring chinook per day through Feb. 14, after which all or part of those rivers will close to retention of spring chinook will close until further notice. See WDFW's [Emergency Rules webpage](#) for details.

"The Cowlitz River and waters near the Willamette River are probably the best bets early in the season, because spring chinook usually start showing up there first," Hymer said.

Starting March 1, the chinook fishery on the mainstem Columbia River will expand upriver to Beacon Rock – and to Bonneville Dam for bank anglers – under new fishing seasons approved in late January. The initial spring chinook fishery is scheduled to run through April 5, but could be extended if enough fish are still available under the harvest guideline, said Ron Roler, WDFW Columbia River policy manager.

According to the pre-season forecast, a total of 141,400 upriver spring chinook will return to the Columbia River Basin this year – well below last year's return and the recent 10-year average of just under 200,000 fish. Another 67,600 spring chinook are expected to return to lower-river tributaries such as the Willamette and Cowlitz rivers.

"Salmon returns are highly variable, and we'll have a better idea what the season holds once the bulk of the run starts moving upriver," Roler said. "Although the preseason forecast is smaller than in recent years, it is still twice as large as those we saw in the 1990s."

The harvest guideline through April 5 will allow anglers to catch up to 5,000 hatchery-reared upriver chinook below Bonneville Dam before the run forecast is updated in May. Another 670 adult fish will be reserved for anglers fishing between Bonneville and the Washington/Oregon state line, 17 miles upriver from McNary Dam.

For more information on the new season, see the [news release](#) and the [fishing rule change](#) on the WDFW website.

Meanwhile, anglers continue to reel in **hatchery steelhead** from waters ranging from the Cowlitz River to the John Day Pool and beyond. In general, the steelhead in the lower tributaries are winter-run fish, while those above Bonneville Dam are left over from last year's summer run, Hymer said.

"Hatchery-reared late-run winter steelhead are still moving up the Cowlitz and Kalama rivers and should be available to anglers for weeks to come," he said.

Anglers fishing the Columbia River can also catch and keep legal-size **white sturgeon** in areas both below and above Bonneville Dam. Anglers can keep one fish measuring 38-54 inches (fork length) per day from The Dalles Dam downstream and 43-54 inches (fork length) upstream from The Dalles Dam.

Below Bonneville Dam, the retention fishery downstream from the Wauna powerlines is open on a daily basis. Waters above the powerlines to the dam are open for sturgeon retention Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays only. Through April, angling is prohibited in the slough formed by Sand Island along the Oregon shore east of Rooster Rock State Park on the Columbia River.

Sturgeon retention is also open on a daily basis in The Dalles and John Day pools, but will [close in the Bonneville Pool](#) at the end of the day Feb. 10 to preserve a portion of the 1,100-fish quota in that area for a summer fishery. Fishery managers anticipate that 850 (or more) legal-size fish will be available for that purpose after the closure this month. Catch-and-release fishing will continue in the Bonneville Pool, where dates for a summer fishery will be announced in the coming weeks.

At the same meeting where fishery managers set new spring chinook rules, they also established joint sturgeon-fishing seasons below Bonneville Dam that reflect ongoing concerns about sturgeon populations in the lower Columbia River. For more information, see the [news release](#) and [fishing rule change](#) on the WDFW website.

Fishing for **Columbia River smelt** will remain closed in both fresh and saltwater statewide. In 2010, the federal government declared eulachon a "threatened" species under the Endangered Species Act.

Rainbow trout, on the other hand, are readily available in lakes throughout southwest Washington. WDFW stocked are lakes with tens of thousands of them in the past two months, and most are still available to anglers, said John Weinheimer, another WDFW fish biologist based in Vancouver. In addition, Battle Ground Lake and Kline Pond will each be stocked with 3,000 catchable-size trout in February.

Weinheimer said he's also getting reports of **kokanee** being caught at Merwin Reservoir, adding that the action should pick up throughout the month.

Anglers and hunters who want to get prepped for the seasons ahead might want to drop by the [Pacific Northwest Sportsmen's Show](#), which runs Feb. 6-10 at the Portland Expo Center. WDFW will have a booth at the show, which will also feature plenty of outdoor gear, a kids' trout pond and experts on topics ranging from fly fishing to elk bugling.

Eastern Washington

February fishing throughout the region can be good for those willing and equipped to brave wintery conditions.

In the central district, two winter-only **rainbow trout** lakes continue to produce decent catches. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) district fish biologist Randy Osborne reports fishing at Hog Canyon Lake, in southwest Spokane County off the Fishtrap I-90 exit, has been slow but anglers are hooking rainbows from 11 to 18 inches. Meanwhile, Fourth of July Lake, on the Lincoln-Adams county line south of the town of Sprague, was producing catch limits of fish over 14 inches. Osborne reminds anglers that the daily catch limit at both lakes is five fish but only two fish over 14 inches may be retained.

The region's other two winter-only fishing lakes – Hatch and Williams in northern Stevens County – also continue to provide catches of rainbows through the ice.

Osborne reminds anglers to “use common sense” when ice fishing. The ice depth at Fourth of July is about eight inches at the narrows and about five inches at the south end, Osborne said. Although that ice is safe for the most part, there may be some thin sections or open water around the edges. Repeated thawing and re-freezing can make ice unsafe. Tips to help keep an outing safe include:

- Don't fish alone. Let others know exactly where you and your fishing partners are going and when you plan to return.
- Keep fishing holes small and few. When drilling fishing holes with an ice auger, keep the diameter under eight inches. Bigger holes are not necessary to land fish and can create a safety hazard for others.
- Watch your step. Avoid ice fishing near feeder streams or known springs; brush, logs, plants or docks; multiple ice cracks or ice that is popping or otherwise audible; and dark-colored ice that may be weak.
- Spread out. Too many people congregated in one area may be more than the ice can safely support. Disperse weight and fishing holes.
- Be prepared with appropriate clothing and equipment for weather conditions and emergencies.

Year-round-open fishing lakes in the region are also a good bet in February. The best is probably Lake Roosevelt, the huge reservoir off Grand Coulee Dam that stretches along the north border of Lincoln County and between Ferry and Stevens counties. Most of the best fishing has been lower in the reservoir near the dam.

“Rainbow trout and **kokanee** fishing has been really good for those willing to be out on the water braving the cold,” said Osborne, who was recently among those fishing at the lake. “We’ve heard many reports of limits of rainbows ranging from 15 to 18 inches. And although fewer and farther between, anglers have been catching kokanee weighing up to 3.5 pounds.”

Other smaller year-round waters still producing include Silver Lake in southwest Spokane County and Eloika Lake in northern Spokane County, both with good catches of **yellow perch** up to 9

inches. Rock Lake in Whitman County has been consistent through the winter for rainbow and **brown trout** catches, but anglers should be prepared for wind. Sprague Lake, on the Lincoln-Adams county line, has been fair for rainbow trout. Bead Lake, north of Newport in Pend Oreille County, traditionally has catches of **burbot** at this time.

Waitts Lake in southern Stevens County, which has provided decent catches of both trout and perch, closes at the end of February.

Northcentral Washington

Fishing for **steelhead** in northcentral Washington continues through February on three waterways: 1) the mainstem Columbia River from Rock Island Dam to the boundary markers below Wells Dam and from Highway 173 Bridge in Brewster to 400 feet below Chief Joseph Dam; 2) the Okanogan River from the mouth upstream to the Highway 97 Bridge in Oroville; and 3) the Similkameen River from the mouth upstream to 400 feet below Enloe Dam.

"It's been slow steelheading in the mainstem Columbia River above Brewster due to cold daytime temperatures," said Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Okanogan District Fish Biologist Bob Jateff. "Fishing should pick up as things start to warm up a little this month."

Jateff reminds steelheaders that the Okanogan and Similkameen rivers are under selective gear rules, and there is a mandatory retention rule in effect for all steelhead fishing areas. The daily catch limit is two adipose-fin-clipped, hatchery-origin fish, with a minimum size of 20 inches. Any steelhead with an adipose fin must be released unharmed and can't be removed from the water.

WDFW Chelan District Fish Biologist Travis Maitland also reports steelheading on the Upper Columbia River from Rock Island Dam to Wells Dam has been slow, although a few harvestable hatchery steelhead are being caught.

Beginning Feb. 8, the **Wenatchee** and **Icicle rivers** will open for steelhead fishing. The Wenatchee River will be open from the mouth to 400 feet below Tumwater Dam, while the Icicle River will be open from the mouth to 500 feet downstream of the Leavenworth National Fish Hatchery Barrier Dam. Anglers can also fish for whitefish beginning Feb. 8 on the Wenatchee River, from the mouth to the Highway 2 Bridge at Leavenworth.

The daily limit on the Wenatchee and Icicle rivers is two hatchery steelhead, marked with a clipped adipose fin and measuring at least 20 inches in length. Anglers must retain any legal hatchery steelhead they catch until they reach their daily limit of two fish. For more information, check the [fishing rule change](#).

Other fishing opportunities in the region through February are through the ice for trout and spiny-ray fish at year-round or otherwise still-open lakes.

Maitland reports quite a bit of weekend ice fishing pressure at Fish Lake north of Leavenworth, with mixed bags of **yellow perch** and **rainbow trout**. Some of the larger perch have been 11 to 12 inches, he said.

Roses Lake, just north of Manson, has been producing mostly rainbows through the ice, Maitland says, but there are some nice perch to be found also.

"Last year the perch at Roses ran on average larger than those caught out of Fish Lake," he said. "We also still have some of those large **tiger** and **brown trout** in Roses Lake. One angler told me that he had hooked into something that he could not control and eventually broke his line. Who knows what that was?"

Jateff says ice fishing is in full swing during February in Okanogan County at the following lakes:

- Davis (near Winthrop) for rainbow trout 11-13 inches
- Patterson (near Winthrop) for yellow perch 7-9 inches and kokanee to 11 inches
- Leader (near Omak) for bluegill, black crappie, bass, yellow perch, rainbow trout
- Big and Little Green (near Omak) for rainbow trout to 13 inches
- Rat (near Brewster) for rainbow and brown trout to 15 inches
- Palmer (near Loomis) for yellow perch to 10 inches and kokanee
- Sidley/Molson (near Oroville) for rainbow trout 11-14 inches
- Bonaparte (near Tonasket) for eastern brook trout and kokanee

Jateff and Maitland remind anglers to take a cautious approach when ice fishing. Repeated thawing and re-freezing can make ice unsafe. Here are some ways to reduce the risk of fishing on ice:

- Don't fish alone. Let others know exactly where you and your fishing partners are going and when you plan to return.
- Keep fishing holes small and few. When drilling fishing holes with an ice auger, keep the diameter under eight inches. Bigger holes are not necessary to land fish and can create a safety hazard for others.
- Watch your step. Avoid ice fishing near feeder streams or known springs; brush, logs, plants or docks; multiple ice cracks or ice that is popping or otherwise audible; and dark-colored ice that may be weak.
- Spread out. Too many people congregated in one area may be more than the ice can safely support. Disperse weight and fishing holes.
- Be prepared with appropriate clothing and equipment for weather conditions and emergencies.

WDFW staff will be available to answer fishing and other questions at the first annual Wenatchee Valley Sportsmen Show, Feb. 22-24, at the Town Toyota Center in Wenatchee. For more info see <http://www.shuylrproductions.com/wvss.php> .

Southcentral Washington

Winter has cast a chill on many area fisheries, but the action should pick up for several species in the weeks ahead. Steelhead fishing usually starts to come alive in late February or early March and walleye fishing should improve as water temperatures start to rise.

In addition, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) will start stocking Dalton Lake, Quarry Pond and the Columbia Park juvenile-fishing pond with trout next month.

But for **whitefish**, prime time is now. Relatively hard to find during most months of the year, whitefish appear during the winter months and tend to go on the bite after the snow starts to fly. Hardy anglers are now catching whitefish on the Naches and Tieton rivers, and on the Yakima River upstream from Union Gap.

"February is a perfect time to catch whitefish," said John Easterbrooks, WDFW fish manager for southcentral Washington. "Now is when they start to congregate and the catch levels rise."

Anglers can catch and keep 15 whitefish per day, but fishing gear is restricted to one size 14 single-point hook. The standard bait is a whitefish fly and a maggot. While bony, whitefish – often served smoked – have a dedicated following.

Easterbrooks reminds anglers that all fishing is closed on the Yakima River between the Highway 223 Bridge in Granger to the Interstate 82 Bridge in Union Gap. WDFW and the Yakama Nation closed that stretch of the river to protect steelhead listed under the federal Endangered Species Act.

Sturgeon fishing is another option, especially since the McNary Pool (also known as Lake Wallula) opened Feb. 1 for retention of legal-size fish. Drawing anglers from throughout the region, the fishery extends from McNary Dam upstream to Priest Rapids Dam on the Columbia River and upstream to Ice Harbor Dam on the Snake River.

Paul Hoffarth, a WDFW district fish biologist located in Pasco, said the opening at Lake Wallula should take some pressure off the fishery under way at Lake Umatilla (John Day Pool), where anglers have been chiseling away at the annual quota. "That quota has been reached very early in recent years, so anglers should go soon – and keep an eye out for updates," he said.

In both areas, only sturgeon measuring 43-54 inches from their snout to the fork in their tail may be retained.

Meanwhile, anglers continue to catch some **hatchery steelhead** at Ringold, both from the bank and by boat. Although fishing has been spotty this winter, catch rates should pick up in late February or early March, Hoffarth said. The lower Snake River is also open for the retention of hatchery steelhead through March 31. The daily limit in the Snake River is three hatchery steelhead and barbless hooks are required.

Walleye fishing can also slowdown in winter, but there's always a chance of catching a lunker. Hoffarth said some of the largest walleye of the year are boated during the winter months near the Tri-Cities – including the 19.3-pound state record taken in Lake Wallula in 2007. The Oregon record, just shy of 20 pounds, was taken on Lake Umatilla during the winter of 1990.

For additional information on all these fisheries, see the [Fishing in Washington](#) pamphlet, available online.

Anglers and hunters who want to get prepped for the seasons ahead might want to drop by the [Central Washington Sportsmen Show](#), running Feb. 15-17 at the Yakima Sundome. **WDFW will have a booth at the show, which will also feature plenty of outdoor gear, a fly-casting pool and experts on topics ranging from fly fishing to elk bugling.**

TGF Inbox - Reader E-mail

Subscriber Monty M. wrote to **Bob Rees** this week to ask, "I always wonder why there is so little comment in your report about the Nestucca, Siletz and Alsea. What gives?"

Bob replied, "Thanks for taking the time to write us at TGF. I report on the Nestucca and Michael often does the Siletz and Alsea. We've just been in a bit of a rut with low angler participation.

We're between early and late season steelheading but that should change in the coming weeks. I just fished the Nestucca yesterday so you'll definitely see a bump in info there.

"Feel free to keep us on track in the future and look for more detail in the upcoming issues. Thanks for being a TGF subscriber!"

Bob Rees also received these photos in his Email this week with the subject: Other than that, how was fishing? We'll share a few of them without comment.



Write to the TGF staff:

Bob Rees: brees@pacifier.com
Michael Teague: TGFMichael@gmail.com
Chris Vertopoulos: chrisv@pacifier.com
Doug Rees: doug@TheGuidesForecast.com

Random Links

From long-time reader, Kaptn Ken, comes The Ocean as you have never seen it (view in full screen): <http://www.youtube.com/embed/mcbHKAWIk3I>

Check out the Sportsmen's Show from the ifish booth: <http://67.23.201.10:8080/>

UN-DAM IT! The Story of Kellogg Dam near Milwaukie:
<http://strawbalefilms.com/home.html>

GOOD LUCK!