

The Guide's Forecast - volume 17 issue number 1

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **January 2nd – January 8th, 2015**

Oregon Fisheries Update:

Willamette Valley/Metro – The Bonneville and upstream pools open for sturgeon retention on the 1st. Here is the official press release from ODF&W:

<http://www.dfw.state.or.us/news/2014/december/121814b.asp>

States set winter sturgeon season for Bonneville Pool

December 18, 2014

CLACKAMAS, Ore. – The Bonneville Pool and adjacent tributaries of the Columbia River will be open to the retention of white sturgeon 7-days-a-week from Jan. 1 through March 1, 2015, unless the harvest guideline is reached sooner. The Bonneville Pool extends from the Bonneville Dam upstream to The Dalles Dam.

Under the split season management structure adopted today, Oregon and Washington fishery managers also anticipate the pool will re-open to a summer retention season starting in June 2015, assuming fish remain available on the harvest guideline.

Managers estimate 40 percent of the 1,100 fish harvest guideline for the pool will be caught during the winter retention period, leaving opportunity for a June re-opening. However, winter catch rates can be highly variable and anglers should be alert to the possibility of early closure.

The daily bag limit is one sturgeon between 38 and 54-inches fork length, and the annual limit is two. Retention sturgeon fisheries also will open as planned in The Dalles and John Day pools on Jan. 1, 2015. Those fisheries will continue 7-days-a-week until harvest guidelines are achieved (see [ODFW website](#)). The daily bag limit in these areas is one sturgeon between 43 and 54-inches fork length, and the annual limit is two.

Anglers fishing the Bonneville Pool in January may see tribal fishers deploying gill nets in designated areas to collect and tag white sturgeon as part of an on-going sturgeon research program. Among other scientific uses, this work is used to calculate the size and status of the sturgeon population in these reservoirs.

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After cresting at 101,000 cfs at the Falls on Christmas day, the Willamette River started to drop. The last available reading online of 78,800 is December 30th. Despite the reduction in flow, visibility remains at less than a foot and that's just fine for sturgeon fishing.

Trout fishing is slow on the McKenzie River.

The Santiam system is high. Both North Santiam and South Santiam Rivers will drop in the coming week but there is little of interest to anglers here.

The Clackamas is coming into shape and is exhibiting decent color. There are a few winter steelhead with

the bulk of the run yet to arrive.

Sandy River levels are returning to normal with water clarity good as long as the freezing level remains high. Winter steelheading is slow as there are only a few fish in the system this early in the run.

Northwest – Following the recent flooding event, steelheaders have enjoyed a good week of early season steelheading. Starting with the smaller streams, good numbers of steelhead were taken by experienced driftboaters with the Necanicum being a prime target for drifters and the North Fork Nehalem a great option for bank anglers. There is a significant navigational hazard downstream of Klootchy Creek on the Necanicum so plan on ferrying your boat across challenging terrain if you float that stretch.

Larger systems came on line early in the week with decent steelhead catches reported on the Trask, Wilson and some on the Nestucca systems. There are still some chinook around but the season officially closed on 12/31 so retention is no longer an option. Early indications point to a good steelhead return this year, as is often the case when we have a good coho return.

With a distinctive east wind, the offshore swell has tamed, allowing bottomfishers and ocean crabbers to get after salty quarry. Friendly conditions may change back to angry by as early as Saturday night however.

Bay crabbing remains challenging, especially on the increasing tide exchange. A calm ocean and minus tide this week could produce good razor clam digging, especially for those willing to bring night lights.

Southwest- Bottomfish anglers out of Newport and Depoe Bay have been taking good numbers of lingcod and rockfish. Check the 2015 regulations as there are some changes in the rules for the New Year.

Conditions for offshore launches are forecast to be good over the coming weekend but be certain to check before making the trip. Among other changes, cabezon may not be retained as part of a rockfish limit until July 1, 2015.

Ocean crabbing remains open with fair catches coming out of central Oregon ports and results diminishing for boats launching out of southern ports.

Wild coho salmon fisheries on Siltcoos, Tahkenitch and Tenmile lakes closed today, January 1, 2015.

The catch-and-release fishery for wild steelhead on the mainstem Umpqua will be moving into the North Umpqua following the rain storms of the past week.

Rock fishing at Coos Bay which shut off with runoff bringing silt into the bay, should return with conditions improving this week. Similarly, crabbing is expected to pick up once again as visibility improves and salinity levels return to normal.

Middle Rogue spawned-out fish have been replaced with fresh, bright winter steelhead but the water temperatures are in the mid-40s even here. On the lower Rogue, flows went from 30,000 cfs to the current 8,500 cfs over the past 10 days. Plunkers and plug-pullers are finding some success with winters. Starting January 1, one wild steelhead may be kept per day up to five for the year. This regulation will apply to the middle and upper Rogue starting February 1.

Chetco flows are approximately 2,200 cfs as of New Year's Day with the flows forecast to gradually moderate into the coming week. Water visibility will determine how good winter steelheading will be.

Eastern – While the Deschutes was not spared a generous wallop of precipitation during storms over the past week, it is settling down although enduring a bit of roller coaster action as it settles down. Steelheading has been mostly a miss in this mess although reddsides have been responding as Blue Winged Olives hatch along with some Caddis. Expect steelheading to improve along with water conditions.

SW Washington- Steelheaders fishing district streams are having much better luck this year than last. In all cases, early returning hatchery fish are at least double of last year's return. The Cowlitz is especially fruitful but the Kalama, Washougal and Lewis are also options.

Anglers should be aware of modified fishing regulations that began January 1st.

Quality rainbow trout continue to be planted in district lakes. Go to the WDF&W website to see what locations offer the best chance for these nice winter fish.

Columbia River Fishing Report – Many of the commercial crabbers are pulling their gear as commercial keepers are becoming a rare catch in the lower Columbia estuary. There are still plenty of sport legals however although few are motivated to pursue them. A high tide series this weekend won't produce optimum options either.

The Guide's Forecast – A minus tide series will offer better clamming than crabbing this weekend. With the east wind influence for much of the week, diggers should be able to find some easy razor clam digging if you're willing to dig at dusk or later. The soft surf should produce good catches but few are either brave or stupid enough to dig in the surf in bone chilling conditions.

Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report – After cresting at 101,000 cfs at the Falls on Christmas day, the Willamette River started to drop. The last available reading online of 78,800 is December 30th. Despite the reduction in flow, visibility remains at less than a foot and that's just fine for sturgeon fishing. For those few keeping track, over 250 winter steelhead are upstream with a daily rate of just one or two.

The McKenzie River is open for catch-and-release trout fishing only from the mouth to Leaburg Dam although only artificial lures and flies are allowed at this time. It is closed above Leaburg Dam until April 25th.

As is usually the case, the Santiam system is slow to recover from a gully washer the likes of which the Willamette Valley experienced just a week ago. True to form, the entire system is running high at this time.

An unscheduled release of 9,300 one-pound rainbow trout took place Monday at six Willamette Valley fishing sites as the result unexpected low water levels at Leaburg Hatchery. The fish were distributed as follows: Cottage Grove Reservoir – 2,000, Dorena Reservoir – 2,000, Hills Creek Reservoir – 2,000, Junction City Pond – 1,700, Walter Wirth Lake – 1,200, and Walling Pond – 400. Extra-large rainbow trout brood trout were released Dec. 22 into Walling Pond and Walter Wirth Lake. These fish weigh in at 7-15 pounds apiece. Brood trout were also released during the preceding weeks at Junction City Pond, St. Louis Ponds, Huddleston Pond, Sheridan Pond, Mt. Hood Pond, Canby Pond, Timber Linn Lake, and Waverly Lake. See **Random Links**, below, for more details on the emergency trout plantings.

The Guide's Forecast – Robert Campbell at Fisherman's Marine in Oregon City (503-557-5600) reports fairly steady action for plunkers over the past week at Meldrum Bar on the lower Willamette. It goes without saying that these fish, hugging tightly to the bank in ugly water, are headed

for the Clackamas. "They've been getting them pretty good for a few weeks now," quipped Campbell. Another rewarding fishery is that for sturgeon. Sure, it's all catch-and-release but often the action is steady and non-stop. Productive areas recently have included Swan Island, St. Johns area and Milwaukie. One angler reported fishing the shallow bays at Portland Harbor where he caught scores of fish from shakers to oversized on baits of anchovy but remember that the sturgeon's preference for what it'll bite can change from one day to another.

Trout fishing is slow on the McKenzie River.

The Santiams are predicted to drop into what would be considered fishable condition in the coming week although there is little in the way of fish life available at this time.

Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports – As of mid-day Thursday, January 1st, the Clackamas is just below the 13-foot mark and flowing at approximately 4,000 cfs at Estacada. Fresh winter steelhead were taken earlier this week. Water temperatures are in the low to mid 40s. The run has yet to peak as these fish are from broodstock with means, among other things, the run will be later than in years past. Eagle Creek is in good shape and while the later-running stocks will effect fishing here, there have been no reports but rigs are lined up at access points. A few winter steelhead started returning to the hatchery in the first week of December.

Cold weather and a low snow level means good water conditions on the Sandy. Latest reading at the town of Sandy indicate a level of 10.8 feet with the flows around 3,000 cfs. Those same conditions which improve the water can also make fishing miserable for anglers when the wind is blowing on the lower river.

The Guide's Forecast – Unlike many rivers impacted by recent winter rain storms, the Clackamas is exhibiting good color despite still being a little high. **Robert Campbell at Fisherman's Marine in Oregon City (503-557-5600)** reports a couple of bonafide winter fish have been confirmed." He went on to say that one customer caught 17 steelhead over the past week. "That's a lofty number," Campbell went on to say, but he is a real good fisherman who's had plenty of time on his hands lately." Try the stretch from Gladstone to McIver Park where fish are being taken now. All the ramps are open although boaters should be aware that floating debris continues to be a hazard.

Weather conditions are slated to improve for the weekend though it's unlikely this will cause any problems with water clarity on the Sandy River. There are steelhead in the system but it's weeks early to expect the best results here. "They're catching a few" according to **Robert Campbell at Fisherman's Marine in Oregon City (503-557-5600)** who went on to say that "they're mostly wild but are very nice fish. The main problem has been that it's so cold, especially when the east wind is blowing." The bulk of the winter steelhead run has yet to arrive. That said, drifted roe, spinners and spoons will all be effective here at times anywhere from Oxbow Park to Dabney. While it's just speculation, it is the general consensus of those who fish the Sandy River regularly is that it is going to be a good run this season ... when it gets here. In the meantime, keep an eye on the freezing level, particularly if it rains. If it goes too high during periods of precipitation, the water condition could crash.

North Coast Fishing Report – As expected, following the recent flooding event, steelheaders took advantage of the traditional peak season opportunities on north coast systems. Starting with the smaller streams, driftboaters that were willing to put up with a major obstruction on the Necanicum, or fished above it or below it, found pretty good action following the major rain event. One guide reported 6 to 10 steelhead opportunity days with 2 steelhead limits fairly common on the days directly following the high water. Most fish were taken drifting small clusters of eggs although some fish were receptive to plugs too. This guide fished the even more challenging water upstream of Klootch Creek, which often requires

the use of private land to launch your boat. Those that fished downstream of Klootchey Creek often regretted the portage around the significant log jam there; it appears it will impede passage for quite some time.

The other notable small stream option, especially for bank anglers is the North Fork of the Nehalem River. In the recent week, this system too has been producing nicely for bank anglers fishing the water just downstream of the hatchery. Although the river is getting low and clear now, stealthy anglers are still finding fairly consistent success using small clusters of eggs and sand shrimp tails for bait. Some anglers are having success with hardware too.

Of course we can't leave out Three Rivers on the Nestucca system. It too has ample numbers of steelhead available and bank anglers are hitting it hard given the amount of public land available for fishing. Success has slowed somewhat in the dropping flows but those targeting the water closest to the hatchery deadline are still taking an occasional fish, especially at first light.

One last small system we purposely overlook is the Kilchis River where relatively small plants of early returning steelhead often produce meager results. There was fair effort just after the high water event however and often this time of year, fresh chinook can still be caught in this system. Overall, the late season surge of chinook in recent years however has been less than impressive. Not surprisingly, effort ran high for a few days but success rates weren't so impressive. A few steelhead and chinook were caught.

The larger systems, particularly the Wilson, Trask and Nestucca systems are also producing fair catches although action slowed somewhat with the wicked cold east wind we've been experiencing in recent days. The Wilson remains one of the better options for the big Tillamook County 3 although more serious steelheaders won't put in the big effort until the larger, more aggressive broodstock steelhead start showing in late February. None-the-less, the traditional early season, out-of-basin stock can still produce fair catches for motivated anglers. And, you'd have to be motivated with a biting east wind at your back as you fish in the shadows for much of the day. Limits are unlikely but certainly still a possibility. Chinook closed on 12/31 but there were still some being caught up until closing day. Anglers are also reporting ample chinook and coho carcasses littering the river bank. A good indication that wild returns have been impressive this year. Let's hope for more friendly river and ocean conditions for the future too!

Trask River anglers are few but action has been good following the recent rain freshet. Even during the high water event, bank anglers working the dam hole saw some fair action in high flows. Fish seem to rest here before negotiating the falls in that spot. The tail-out fishes best at this spot. There are some hatchery strays that utilize this river but they don't typically show until later in the season; just like on the Wilson and Nestucca systems.

The Nestucca system gets largely overlooked for early season steelheading, likely due to a large number of steelhead that exit right, into Three Rivers, only allowing the lower river to be the most productive until the broodstock fish along with the wild component, arrive later in the winter. For this reason, a large portion of the effort takes place along Three Rivers where bank anglers dominate the fishery. Although there certainly was some traffic on the river post flood event, success was limited but a rare chinook and some steelhead were reported downstream of First Bridge. Action will improve here significantly come late February.

Despite calm seas and green lights on all ocean bars in recent days, effort has been next to non-existent for ocean going bottomfishers the last few days. It's likely the action is great and if you're willing to work for some crab, keepers are likely available although far from pre-commercial harvest success rates. Although the tide exchanges are not quite ideal, Friday and Saturday may offer up some good action.

The Guide's Forecast – Starting with steelheading, the continued dry weather trend offers sub-par conditions for boaters over the next several days. With little precipitation in the forecast, it should remain a bank show for those that have access to good water. Fish won't be moving all that much from their current locations but when they do, the early morning will offer the best chance for fresh ones. The tide series that we're coming into may also offer up some fresh fish in the lower reaches and for the few experienced in tidewater fishing, it could be pretty decent. Overall however, fish will begin getting ready for the spawning phase of their lifecycle and the next opportunity they get to spawn in the tributaries, they'll make that move. Small stream anglers will find their quarry more wary and therefore, more challenging to catch. Big river anglers may find improved success as fish become more concentrated in traditional haunts and more fresh ones move in on the growing tide series. We'll go over the river by river options below:

Highway 30 streams (Klaskanine, Big Creek, Gnat Creek)- These systems should be fading but fresh steelhead should still be available with no one system out-producing the other. There should still be some fresh fish come in with this upcoming tide series but the bulk of the returns are likely already near the hatchery. The upper reaches, near the liberation sites, will produce the best. Fresh fish are being reported in the trap daily.

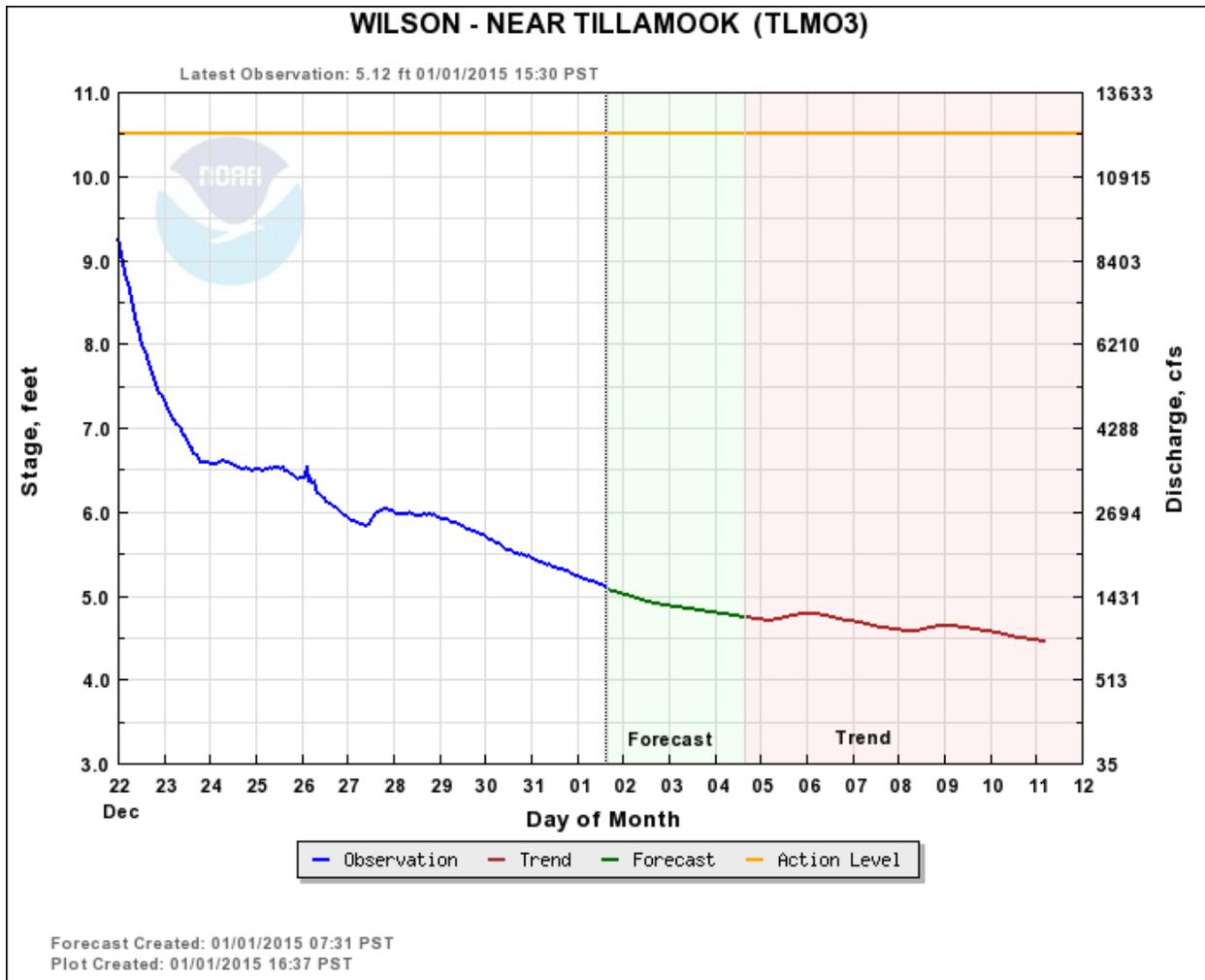
Necanicum River- Along with the North Fork Nehalem, a top option on the north coast but with continues dropping flows, this should provide some good opportunity for bank anglers, especially anglers that can be stealthy. Boaters will likely already have some drifting issues, especially downstream of Klootch Creek where there's a significant windfall, but those willing to bump through the tail-outs and dodge sweeper logs in the lower flows should be rewarded. Both bankies and boaters should find a mix of fresh fish and a few spawned out ones too. Bait will produce the best but boaters should also have some fair luck using plugs on this smaller system and dropping flows. Fresh fish won't be available much longer as we near the spawning cycle.

North Fork Nehalem – Still getting some fresh fish, like many north coast streams, the peak here and fish will be spawning in the coming weeks. The bulk of the effort and catch will take place near the hatchery. Bait will be key here, both shrimp tails and small clusters of bait. Fish are likely to be recycled more regularly as the traps seem to be filling up fast. There remains consistent reports of good action near the hatchery as the water remains a bit colored from the most recent rain freshet. As the color clears and flows drop, anglers will have to suppress their offerings both in size and color if they wish to be successful. This is likely the best north coast option but you won't be by yourself.

Mainstem Nehalem – Still not a great option for a few more weeks although if the wild steelhead run mimics the wild coho return, there could be good action here sooner, rather than later. It won't get much pressure.

Kilchis River- Not a great option right now, especially in the dropping flows. Chinook are closed but still present but early returning fish should be available for boaters willing to work the low, clearing water. Bank anglers don't have great bank access here but early mornings should produce the best options for those motivated to pursue.

Wilson River – This system will remain one of the better options on the north coast for fresh run steelhead, including an occasional surprise early returning broodstock fish. These are quality fish now and through March. With the impending high tide series, anglers should expect some fresh spurts of fish in the lower reaches although fish will move slower in the dropping flows. The good news is that temperatures, air, and therefore water, should be on the rise over the weekend. This should stimulate a better bite in the coming days. Bait should produce best for steelhead but plugs should become effective early next week as fish settle into traditional holding water. Here's the Wilson hydrograph, you can see why the tide series may come into play this week:



Trask River – Not many anglers look to the Trask this time of year but anglers can intercept a few hatchery steelhead over here, both Alsea stock fish as well as quality broodstock fish. The bulk of the steelhead will return to this system after mid-January with most of those being wild fish.

Three Rivers/Nestucca system – Three Rivers will be the primary target for most anglers as these early returning fish are typically destined for the hatchery there. Anglers fishing the mainstem should spend most of their time near the mouth of Three Rivers. Mainstem steelheaders will start to reap higher rewards towards February. Salmon fishing closed on January 1st.

Bottomfishing should be a great option for just the next 24 to 48 hours. Do check bar conditions ahead of time (from our home page) but soft seas should produce good catches of lingcod and sea bass. Ocean crabbing should also be good if you have good crab bait but don't count on limits with the immense commercial pressure as of late. Here is the offshore forecast as of Thursday afternoon:

FRI NW WIND 5 TO 10 KT...BECOMING W 10 TO 15 KT IN THE AFTERNOON. WIND WAVES 3 FT. W SWELL 4 FT AT 11 SECONDS. CHANCE OF RAIN IN THE AFTERNOON.

FRI NIGHT NW WIND 10 TO 15 KT WITH GUSTS TO 20 KT...VEERING TO N AFTER MIDNIGHT. WIND WAVES 3 FT. W SWELL 4 FT AT 14 SECONDS.

SAT NE WIND TO 10 KT...VEERING TO SE IN THE AFTERNOON. WIND WAVES 1 FT. NW SWELL 6 FT AT 13 SECONDS.

SAT NIGHT SE WIND 5 TO 10 KT...BECOMING S 10 TO 15 KT AFTER MIDNIGHT. WIND WAVES 3 FT. NW SWELL 6 FT AT 12 SECONDS.

SUN S WIND 15 TO 20 KT WITH GUSTS TO 25 KT. WIND WAVES 5 FT. NW SWELL 5 FT. RAIN LIKELY.

SUN NIGHT SW WIND 20 TO 25 KT WITH GUSTS TO 30 KT. WIND WAVES 6 FT. W SWELL 7 FT.

MON S WIND 15 TO 20 KT. WIND WAVES 5 FT. W SWELL 9 FT.

TUE S WIND 10 TO 15 KT. WIND WAVES 4 FT. W SWELL 7 FT.

Central & South Coast Reports – Offshore conditions were prime on Wednesday with anglers out of Newport and Depoe Bay enjoying light winds and a flat ocean. Bottomfish did not disappoint either, with limits or near limits taken of both rockfish and lingcod. As of January 1, cabezon cannot be retained as part of a rockfish limit. The taking of cabezon will resume July 1, 2015.

Regulations regarding bottomfish limits in the New Year remain mostly unchanged. Anglers may keep seven rockfish and two ling cod 22 inches or longer per day. However, there will be a sub-bag limit of only one blue rockfish and no retention of copper, quillback or China rockfish. The allowance of one blue rockfish is due to its similarity to the common black rockfish. Offshore anglers should take the time to learn the difference.

There's only so much accuracy possible in predicting ocean conditions off the Oregon coast, so check before making the trip. That said, marine prognosticators are optimistic about a friendly ocean through the coming weekend although swells will pick up starting Monday, January 5th.

Ocean crabbing remains open and while prospects are fair off the central Oregon coast, catches are fewer the further south when one puts in. Offshore crabbing out of Brookings has been described as "miserable."

This is the time of year when lingcod will be moving into shallower water allowing rock and jetty fishers a shot at some larger specimens. Jigs equipped with plastic curly tails in black, white or motor oil are effective.

The recent freshet brought plenty of winter steelhead into the Alsea as a report on Tuesday this week indicated traps at the hatchery were stuffed with fish. Steelhead are being caught here as well.

Wild coho salmon fisheries on Siltcoos, Tahkenitch and Tenmile lakes closed today, January 1, 2015.

The catch-and-release fishery for wild steelhead on the mainstem Umpqua will be moving into the North Umpqua following rain storms in the past week. It's rare to hook hatchery fish in these locations. The better chance for a hatchery keeper is on the South Umpqua with the best fishing in February and March.

Rock fishing at Coos Bay which shut off with runoff bringing silt into the bay, should return with conditions improving this week. Similarly, crabbing is expected to pick up once again as visibility improves and salinity levels return to normal. On the Coos River system, the West Fork Millicoma River is running fairly clear now and is the best bet for winter steelhead.

Water conditions on the Coquille River have improved and are now fishable. Three fin-clipped winter steelhead are allowed per angler per day.

Those of us who live on the Oregon Coast were water-aware last week as extreme high tides coincided with heavy rains and high river levels. The Corps of Engineers intended to ameliorate the impact by maintaining flows from Lost Creek Dam to no greater than 4,000 cfs. As torrents of rain fell, water volume got away from them, however, as it hit more than 21,000 cfs. On the other hand, it would have been disastrous if that dam hadn't been in place. Currently, outflow from Lost Creek Reservoir is around 4,800 cfs which would be OK except the water is murky. This could affect water conditions far downstream. Flow at the old Gold Ray dam site is around 6,000 cfs with water temperature in the lower 40s thanks to cold weather here. Middle Rogue spawned-out fish have been replaced with fresh, bright winter steelhead but the water temperatures are in the mid-40s even here. On the lower Rogue, flows went from 30,000 cfs to the current 8,500 cfs over the past 10 days. Plunkers and plug-pullers are finding some success with winters. As of January 1, the entire Rogue is open to bait-fishing for winter steelhead. Also starting January 1, one wild steelhead may be kept per day up to five for the year. This regulation will apply to the middle and upper Rogue starting February 1.

Chetco flows are approximately 2,200 cfs as of New Year's Day with the flows forecast to gradually moderate into the coming week. As long as visibility is decent, winter steelheading should be good as well. Catches improved slightly last week and will continue to improve into the New Year.

Water conditions are good with levels a little low on the Elk and Sixes. Boats are drifting for winter steelhead with mixed success. While these rivers boast late-running Chinook salmon, that run is about done for the year although there may be a few still around. Call 541-332-0405 for updated river conditions.

The latest reports indicate that Diamond Lake is not yet sufficiently frozen to allow for ice fishing but colder conditions will change that in coming weeks.

Central and Eastern Oregon – While the Deschutes was not spared a generous wallop of precipitation during storms over the past week, it is settling down although enduring a bit of roller coaster action as it settles down. Steelheading has been mostly a miss in this mess although redsides have been responding as Blue Winged Olives hatch along with some Caddis. Expect steelheading to improve along with water conditions.

Cold weather - really cold weather - just seems to turn on Crescent Lake Mackinaw trollers. This week they've been demonstrating why this is the case, taking some very large lake trout.

From the ODFW:

Wickiup Reservoir

The regulations for Wickiup as they appear in the 2015 Sport Fishing Regulations booklet were formatted incorrectly and this is leading to some confusion. Here, in a clearer format, are the 2015 regulations for the reservoir: Open April 25-Oct. 31. 25 kokanee (no size limit) in addition to other trout species limit. Closed from 1 hour after sunset until 1 hour before sunrise.

Deschutes River Arm, upstream of ODFW marker located new West South Twin boat ramp: Restricted to artificial flies and lures only. 2 trout per day from Aug. 1-Aug. 31, kokanee included in trout limit. Closed Sept. 1-Oct. 31.

For more information contact your local ODFW office:

Bend (541) 388-6363

The Dalles (541) 296-4628

Prineville (541) 447-5111

One more tidbit from the new fishing regs. In all waters of the Southeast Zone, anglers will be allowed to keep 25 kokanee per day in addition to other trout species limits and no size limit on kokanee (from page 75 of the 2015 Oregon Sport Fishing Regulations).

Washington fishing reports:

From the WDF&W Weekender Report for January

Brace for winter and enjoy steelhead, razor clams, views of wintering wildlife

For Washingtonians, the start of the new year is prime time to hunt for ducks and geese, fish for hatchery-reared steelhead and enjoy the annual spectacle of bald eagles, snow geese, elk, big-horn sheep and other wintering wildlife.

Winter storms are good news – up to a point – for waterfowl hunters, who welcome the surge of ducks and geese that comes with wet, blustery weather. Success rates for waterfowl hunters typically pick up when storms roll in.

But winter weather is an important consideration in other outdoor activities as well. Ice fishing is a dicey proposition in most parts of the state and heavy rains can render a river “unfishable” – even dangerous – virtually overnight.

“Preparation is essential for any outdoor activity, especially in winter,” said Mike Cenci, deputy chief of enforcement for WDFW. “Check the weather conditions, river conditions and road conditions – and let people know where you’re going before you head out.”

Good advice for those planning to dig razor clams on ocean beaches over the New Year’s weekend. The dig gets under way Dec. 31 and runs through Jan. 7 at select ocean beaches. More information on those digs is available on WDFW’s website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/shellfish/razorclams/current.html>. January is also a great time to fish for hatchery-reared steelhead on the Olympic Peninsula, squid in Puget Sound and whitefish in the Yakima, Naches and Cle Elum rivers.

Sport crabbers have through Feb. 1 to report their catch during the winter season.

For more information about the full array of fishing, hunting and wildlife viewing available over the next month, see the Weekender Regional Reports posted on WDFW’s website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/weekender/>. These reports are updated throughout the month to provide current information about recreational opportunities around the state.

North Puget Sound

(Island, King, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish and Whatcom counties)

Winter has arrived, and with it come opportunities to hook blackmouth salmon in Puget Sound and steelhead in area rivers.

The San Juan Islands traditionally reward salmon fishers with some of the highest catches of **blackmouth salmon** during winter months. There or elsewhere, it’s always advisable to check Puget Sound [creel reports](#) on WDFW’s website to see where the fish are biting. Samplers collect the information each week at fishing access sites throughout the Sound.

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

Anglers fishing Edmonds Fishing Pier in Marine Area 9 have a two-salmon limit with only one marked or unmarked chinook allowed. The rest of Marine Area 9 (Admiralty Inlet) opens for salmon fishing Jan. 16, with a two-salmon daily limit, but anglers must release wild chinook salmon.

Anglers support the blackmouth winter chinook fishery through their license purchase, a portion of which goes to the Puget Sound Recreational Fisheries Enhancement Fund. The fund currently supports a variety of recreational fishing opportunities through the release of more than one million yearling and almost nine million sub-yearling chinook each year.

In freshwater, the Nisqually River is open to fishing for **chum** and **coho** salmon through the end of the month.

Several rivers are also open for hatchery **steelhead** fishing — including the Skagit, Stillaguamish, Snohomish, Skykomish, Snoqualmie and Green rivers.

The limit for most of these rivers is two hatchery steelhead, however the limit has increased to three on the Cascade from the Rockport-Cascade Road downstream to the mouth.

Anglers should find opportunities to land bright fish through the month, said Bob Leland, steelhead program manager for WDFW. For details on recent rule changes in effect for Whatcom Creek, the Nooksack River, Tokul Creek and the Cascade River see [WDFW's freshwater rule change page](#). Be sure to also check the [fishing pamphlet](#) for area and date restrictions on steelhead fishing.

Winter is also prime time to jig for **squid** in Puget Sound. Good spots include the 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 on [WDFW's website](#).

The **Puget Sound crab fishery** closes Dec. 31 and crabbers are reminded that they are required to report their winter catch to WDFW by Feb. 1. Reports are due for the winter season, whether or not crabbers actually fished or caught Dungeness crab.

To submit catch reports, crabbers may send their catch record card to WDFW by mail or file their reports through the [department's website](#). The mailing address is WDFW Fish Program Card Report Card Office, 600 Capitol Way N., Olympia, WA 98501-1091. For more information on catch record cards, visit WDFW's [catch record card webpage](#).

South Sound/Olympic Peninsula

(Clallam, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Kitsap, Mason, Pierce, Thurston and Pacific counties)

Anglers can choose between steelhead fishing in the region's coastal rivers or salmon fishing in areas of Puget Sound in January. Clam diggers will have ample opportunity to fill their buckets during several openings on Washington's beaches.

Diggers can ring in the New Year with a bucket of **razor clams** during a dig that begins Dec. 31 and runs through Jan. 7. WDFW approved the upcoming opening after marine toxin tests showed the clams are safe to eat.

Digging days and evening tides during the upcoming opening are:

- Dec. 31, 2014, Wednesday, 3:05 p.m., 0.6 feet, Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks, Copalis

- Jan. 1, 2015, Thursday; 4:01 p.m., 0.2 feet, Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks, Copalis
- Jan. 2, Friday; 4:49 p.m., -0.2 feet, Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks, Copalis
- Jan. 3, Saturday; 5:32 p.m., -0.5 feet, Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks, Copalis
- Jan. 4, Sunday; 6:12 p.m., -0.5 feet, Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Mocrocks
- Jan. 5, Monday; 6:48 p.m., -0.5 feet, Long Beach, Twin Harbors
- Jan. 6, Tuesday; 7:23 p.m., -0.3 feet, Long Beach, Twin Harbors
- Jan. 7, Wednesday; 7:57 p.m., -0.1 feet, Long Beach, Twin Harbors

Digs also are tentatively scheduled to begin in mid and late January. The list of proposed digs and additional information about razor clam digging are posted on [WDFW's razor clam webpage](#).

December and January are typically great months for **hatchery steelhead** fishing on the north coastal rivers. Anglers fishing the Quillayute and portions of the Bogachiel, Calawah, Hoh, and Sol Duc rivers have a daily limit of three **hatchery steelhead**. Information on weekly steelhead catches in the Quillayute River system and the Hoh River is available on [WDFW's website](#).

South coastal rivers also are an option for hatchery steelhead fishing in January. Anglers fishing the Humptulips, Chehalis, Wynoochee and Satsop rivers have a daily limit of two hatchery steelhead; the same is true when fishing the Willapa Bay tributaries.

Freshwater anglers looking to hook salmon also have opportunities in January. Anglers can find **late-run coho** salmon in some of the region's rivers, including the Chehalis, Satsop, Willapa and Naselle rivers. On Puget Sound, Marine Area 13 (South Puget Sound) remains open for **salmon**. Anglers have a daily combined limit of two salmon but must release wild chinook. Those anglers who have a two-pole endorsement can fish with two poles.

Anglers should be aware that salmon fisheries in marine areas 11 (Tacoma-Vashon Island) and 12 (Hood Canal) are closed in January.

In the Strait of Juan de Fuca, Marine Area 6 (Eastern Strait) remains open for salmon through April 10. Anglers fishing Marine Area 6 have a daily limit of two salmon, but must release wild chinook. Marine Area 5 (Seiku) is closed to salmon fishing.

Before heading out, anglers should check [WDFW's sportfishing regulations pamphlet](#) for details. Anglers can also 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.

The **Puget Sound crab fishery** closed Dec. 31 and crabbers are reminded that they are required to report their winter catch to WDFW by Feb. 1. Reports are due for the winter season, whether or not crabbers actually fished or caught Dungeness crab.

To submit catch reports, crabbers may send their catch record card to WDFW by mail or file their reports through the [department's website](#). The mailing address is WDFW Fish Program Card Report Card Office, 600 Capitol Way N., Olympia, WA 98501-1091. For more information on catch record cards, visit WDFW's [catch record card webpage](#).

Southwest Washington

(Clark, Cowlitz, Klickitat, Lewis, Skamania and Wahkiakum counties)

Winter steelhead are still the name of the game for many anglers in the lower Columbia River Basin, although several other fisheries are beginning to compete for their attention. Starting Jan. 1, sturgeon

retention is allowed seven days a week from Bonneville Dam upstream to McNary Dam, and 45,000 freshly planted rainbow trout will be available this month in 14 lakes around the region.

The Cowlitz River is currently the best bet for **steelhead**, and several other area rivers are also producing fish, said Joe Hymer, a fish biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). The Lewis, Kalama, Grays, Washougal, Elochoman rivers – and Salmon Creek in Clark County – can also make a steelheader’s day in January, he said.

“As usual, river conditions basically determine success at this time of year,” Hymer said. “Most anglers do best when water levels are rising or dropping. It’s a lot harder to catch steelhead in the peaks and troughs.”

The daily limit for steelhead on all area rivers is two marked, hatchery-reared fish. Any steelhead with an intact adipose fin must be released. Barbless hooks are required.

Anglers should also be aware that Dec. 31 is the last day to fish for steelhead in Mill Creek, a tributary of the Cowlitz River. It is also the last day to catch salmon in the Elochoman, Grays (including West Fork), Tilton and Washougal rivers, or on the mainstem Columbia from the I-5 Bridge upstream to the Hwy. 395 Bridge at Pasco. The same is true for salmon fishing on Drano and Mayfield lakes.

Starting Jan. 1, anglers may retain up to two hatchery adult chinook salmon per day on the mainstem Columbia downstream from the I-5 Bridge, and in the lower Cowlitz River and Deep River. On the Lewis and Kalama rivers, the daily limit is one hatchery adult chinook per day.

Although the popular **spring chinook** run isn’t expected to begin in earnest until March, some often start catching early-arriving fish by late January or early February.

“It’s good to keep the chinook regulations in mind, even if you’re fishing for steelhead,” Hymer said. “Somebody has to catch the first springer of the year, and it could be you.”

Fishery managers recently released preliminary forecasts of Columbia River salmon returns for 2015, predicting an upriver run of 232,500 adult spring chinook. If that prediction is correct, the coming year’s springer returns will be similar to those in 2014, and the 6th largest since 1979.

As for **summer chinook**, the forecast of 73,000 fish is also virtually the same as last year’s actual return. However, the projected return of 394,000 sockeye salmon in 2015 is just over half of last year’s record run of 645,100 fish.

Rather catch **sturgeon**? Starting Jan. 1, retention fishing for white sturgeon opens seven days a week in the Bonneville Pool and its tributaries. Anglers can retain one white sturgeon measuring 38 inches to 54 inches long (fork length) per day. State fishery managers anticipate re-opening Bonneville Pool for a summer retention season during June 2015.

Anglers should be aware that a sturgeon research program may still be ongoing in Bonneville Pool in early January. Tribal fishers will be deploying gillnets in designated areas to collect and tag white sturgeon for multi-agency stock assessment work.

Anglers can also retain sturgeon starting Jan. 1 from The Dalles Dam upriver to McNary Dam, including adjoining tributaries. The daily catch limit is one white sturgeon measuring 43 inches to 54 inches (fork length) until harvest guidelines are reached.

Sturgeon fishing remains closed below Bonneville Dam, but catch-and-release fishing is open there and in areas open to retention fishing.

Another option is to head for a local lake and catch some **trout**. From December through January, WDFW expects to plant near 45,000 catchable sized rainbows in 14 lakes and reservoirs around the region. Those trout were raised at state hatcheries in Goldendale and Vancouver with the intent of providing winter fishing opportunities in the southwest region, said John Weinheimer, WDFW District 9 Fish Biologist.

"We want to give area anglers a chance to get outdoors in the wintertime and catch some fish," Weinheimer said. "All of these waters can be fished from shore, so you don't need a boat and a lot of gear to get in on the action." He suggests fishing mid-day, when the water warms up, the light is good, and the fish are on the bite.

Weather and road conditions allowing, WDFW plans to stock catchable-size rainbows in Fort Borst Park Pond (1,500) in Lewis County and Silver Lake (3,000), Sacajawea Lake (2,500), Horseshoe Lake (2,400) and Kress Lake (2,000) in Cowlitz County.

Lakes receiving catchable-size trout are Battleground Lake (8,500), Kline Pond (8,500), and Lacamas Lake (8,000) in Clark County; Icehouse Lake (1,000), Little Ash Lake (1,000), and Kidney Lake (1,000) in Skamania County; and Rowland Lake (3,000), Spearfish Lake (2,000) and Maryhill Pond (500) in Klickitat County.

Weinheimer notes that some area lakes also have good numbers of triploid rainbows averaging 1.25 pounds each left over from the Black Friday opener in late November. Good bets include Fort Borst Park Pond, South Lewis County Park Pond, Kress Lake, Battleground Lake, Kline Pond and Rowland Lake. See the [weekly stocking reports](#) for additional news on trout plants.

Eastern Washington

(Asotin, Columbia, Ferry, Garfield, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, Walla Walla and Whitman counties)

Anglers need to be cautious of conditions when ice-fishing this month. Fishing on or through ice is only safe after temperatures remain below freezing for an extended amount of time. Anglers also should be wary of thin ice along the shorelines of rivers and streams.

Due to unusually warm weather, very few of the region's winter-only **rainbow trout** lakes had sufficient ice in late December to be safe for fishing. But if more wintery conditions prevail, those lakes should start to provide catches through the ice this month.

Randy Osborne, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) central district fish biologist of Spokane, reports that Fourth of July Lake, on the Lincoln-Adams county line, has a good number of large **rainbow trout**, many over 14 inches long. Hog Canyon Lake, in southwest Spokane County, has trout ranging from nine to 13 inches.

At both lakes, only two of the five-trout daily catch limit can be over 14 inches. Osborne said the retention limit by size extends the fishery for the December-through-March season, especially at Fourth of July Lake where most fish are large. After catching the limit of two large fish, anglers using bait should switch to lures or flies to facilitate the release of fish over 14 inches. See "Bait Rules" under "Statewide Freshwater Rules" on page 16 of the [fishing pamphlet](#).

Williams Lake, north of Colville in Stevens County, has some fat rainbow trout that are 16 to 17 inches as well as many trout stocked this year that are averaging 13 inches, reports Bill Baker, WDFW northeast district fish biologist of Colville. Catch rates were fair when the season began in early December, so anglers should not expect to catch the five-trout limit quickly, Baker said.

Hatch Lake, southeast of Colville, had an abundance of rainbow trout ranging between 12 and 16 inches in early December. But the lake had only a thin ice cover, making for poor ice-fishing in late December, Baker said.

Waitts Lake, south of Chewelah in Stevens County, is open for fishing through February and usually is good for rainbow and **brown trout** and **yellow perch** at this time. In late December there was not sufficient ice cover to provide safe conditions for fishing through the ice, which is the most popular method at this time of year.

WDFW does not measure ice on fishing lakes and cannot guarantee ice fishing safety. But here are a few tips to help keep an outing safe:

- 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 for weather conditions and emergencies. Dress in layers and wear thermal underwear, fleece or wool, and wind and waterproof outerwear, especially for feet, hands and head. Take extra clothes, food, water, sand for on-ice traction, and a sled for easy on-ice transport of all equipment. Carry equipment such as ice picks or awls, rope, and personal flotation devices. Also pack a first-aid kit and matches for starting a fire.

January is a good time to fish Lake Roosevelt, the Columbia River reservoir off Grand Coulee Dam that is open year-round. Fishing has been very good on the impoundment, where anglers are catching rainbow trout in the 15-18 inch range, Osborne said. For tips on fishing Lake Roosevelt in winter, check out [WDFW's instructional video](#).

Baker also notes that January is a good time to catch **lake whitefish** in Lake Roosevelt. "Whitefish are currently grouped together for spawning," Baker said. "They should be easy to locate on a fish finder. Look for windswept shorelines with cobble and gravel bottoms in 40 to 50 feet of water." Learn more by watching [WDFW's new video](#) on fishing for lake whitefish.

The **mountain whitefish** is a smaller native species found in some of the region's waterways, including the Spokane and Little Spokane rivers. A whitefish season runs through March 31 on the stretch of the Little Spokane River from Highway 291 upstream to West Branch. There's no minimum size and the daily limit is 15 whitefish. Whitefish gear rules apply – one single-point hook, maximum hook size 3/16-inch point to shank (hook size 14).

"This is also a good time to fish for **burbot** in Lake Roosevelt and at Bead and Sullivan lakes in Pend Oreille County," Baker said. "Normally, we'd have enough ice cover on Bead Lake to allow for safe ice fishing by this time, but obviously that's not the case this year."

Instead, anglers can fish from boats or from the shoreline by casting jigs or plunking bait. The south end of Sullivan Lake is an area that anglers target burbot at this time of year. On Lake Roosevelt, the mouth of the Colville River and the mouth of the Spokane River are good spots, Baker said. See a [new video](#) on how to catch burbot.

Anglers also do well at this time of year on **yellow perch** in Silver and Eloika lakes, both in Spokane County. Long Lake (or Lake Spokane, the Spokane River reservoir off Long Lake dam) is a good spot for catching **crappie** and **yellow perch**. Anglers have been catching good numbers of the rainbow trout at Long Lake and at Sprague Lake on the Lincoln-Adams county line.

Snake River **steelhead** fishing continues through March 31. No current creel check information is available at this time, but traditionally the stretch of river near Clarkston on the Idaho border and the mouth of the Grand Ronde River (and the Grand Ronde itself) are the most popular.

Northcentral Washington

(Adams, Chelan, Douglas, Grant and Okanogan counties)

Anglers need to be aware of and prepared for the potentially dangerous conditions of fishing waterways, due to winter weather that has been warmer than usual winter so far. "Shelf ice" along the shorelines of rivers and streams can be hazardous and lake fishing on and through ice is only safe after extended day and night time below freezing temperatures.

WDFW district fish biologist Travis Maitland reports Upper Columbia River **steelhead** fishing continues until further notice for those willing to put in the time necessary to land one.

The mainstem Columbia River also remains open to hatchery steelhead fishing from Rock Island Dam to 400 feet below Chief Joseph Dam, along with portions of the Wenatchee, Entiat, Methow, Okanogan and Similkameen rivers. Anglers must retain hatchery steelhead, identifiable by a clipped adipose fin, caught to help increase the proportion of natural-origin steelhead on the spawning grounds. The daily bag limit is two hatchery steelhead.

All anglers must possess a valid fishing license and a Columbia River Salmon/Steelhead Endorsement. The season can close at any time due to impacts on natural origin steelhead; see more details in the [emergency rule change](#).

Maitland also notes that Fish and Roses lakes, open year-round in Chelan County, are not safely iced over yet.

"Once solid ice forms on these lakes, we should have good fishing for **rainbow trout** on Roses Lake," he said. "We stocked 16,000 rainbows there last month. Fish Lake should continue to be a good producer of average sized **yellow perch** through the ice. We just need some consistently colder temps to get these fisheries going."

Maitland also notes that year-round Lake Chelan usually has fair fishing for **lake trout** (mackinaw) throughout the winter. Anglers usually troll just off the bottom for them.

Year-round Rufus Woods reservoir, on the Okanogan County south boundary off Chief Joseph Dam on the Columbia River, has big **triploid rainbow trout** that can be caught throughout the winter months. Several areas upstream of Chief Joseph Dam can usually be accessed by shore anglers. Boat anglers often launch at the Army Corps of Engineers boat ramp and can explore upstream any one of numerous back bays and shorelines that could hold triploids.

Three lakes in Okanogan County have been open for "catch and keep" rainbow trout fishing since the first of December: Rat Lake near Brewster and Big and Little Green lakes near Omak switched from a catch-and-release regulation to a five-trout daily catch limit until March 31. These fisheries provide good angling throughout the winter months, whether in open water or through the ice. **Rainbow trout** running 10 to 12 inches can be caught on a variety of bait, lures, and flies.

Leader Lake, located three miles west of the town of Okanogan on Hwy. 20, is open year-round for just the second year now, and fishing for **black crappie**, **bluegill** and rainbow trout should be fair when conditions allow.

Other traditional year-round fishing opportunities in Okanogan County that will provide through-the-ice fishing sooner or later are Patterson and Davis lakes in the Winthrop area. Davis Lake, which shifted in September to catch-and-keep through March, usually has rainbows in the 10-12 inch range. Patterson Lake typically has **yellow perch** in the seven to eight-inch range.

Anglers are cautioned to be alert and aware of changing ice conditions at these and other waters. WDFW does not measure ice on fishing lakes and cannot guarantee ice fishing safety. But here are a few tips to help keep an outing safe:

- 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 for weather conditions and emergencies. Dress in layers and wear thermal underwear, fleece or wool, and wind and waterproof outerwear, especially for feet, hands and head. Take extra clothes, food, water, sand for on-ice traction, and a sled for easy on-ice transport of all equipment. Carry equipment such as ice picks or awls, rope, and personal flotation devices. Also pack a first-aid kit and matches for starting a fire.

Southcentral Washington

(Benton, Franklin, Kittitas and Yakima counties)

Anglers continue to reel in hatchery steelhead from portions of the Columbia and Snake rivers, although the lure of bigger fish will undoubtedly prompt some to switch gears. Starting Jan. 1, the John Day Pool (Lake Umatilla) will reopen for retention of **white sturgeon** that measure 43 to 54 inches from their snout to the fork in their tail.

Paul Hoffarth, a district fish biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), suggests sturgeon anglers hit John Day Pool sooner rather than later, because there is a 500-fish annual quota for sturgeon in the reservoir.

"Last year the season lasted until June, but in the previous years the quota has been reached in just a couple of months," Hoffarth said. "I'd advise anglers to get out early if they want to take a sturgeon home for dinner."

Another option is McNary Pool (Lake Wallula) which reopens for sturgeon retention Feb. 1. There is no quota on that pool, allowing anglers to keep fishing up until the area closes to sturgeon retention Aug.1. There's also a chance of catching a **monster walleye** in those waters. While walleye fishing can get slow in winter, some of the largest walleye of the year are boated during the winter months near the Tri-Cities. That includes the 20.3-pound state record taken in Lake Wallula last year.

Typical of the winter fishery, **steelhead fishing** has been up and down in recent weeks, when some of the best catches have been reported in the Ringold area of the Columbia River. The fishery is open for

retention of hatchery steelhead near the Tri-Cities from John Day Dam upstream to the wooden power line towers at the old Hanford town site through March 31.

The lower Snake River is also open for the retention of hatchery steelhead through March 31. The daily limit on the Snake is three hatchery steelhead. Anglers should be aware that barbless hooks are required when fishing for salmon, steelhead, and sturgeon in the Columbia and Snake Rivers.

Meanwhile, **winter whitefish** seasons are currently open on the Yakima, Naches, Tieton, Cle Elum and Bumping rivers. Whitefish gear rules are in effect on the Yakima River from the Highway 223 Bridge at Granger to Keechelus Dam through Feb. 28. Whitefish seasons for the other rivers run Dec. 1 to March 31.

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). Bait is allowed. Anglers are advised to check the [Fishing in Washington rules pamphlet](#) for regulations that apply to specific river reaches.

Eric Anderson, a WDFW fish biologist stationed in Yakima, recommends that whitefish anglers target deep pools below riffles. Most whitefish are caught with a small fly, tipped with a maggot, he said. The individual limit is 15 whitefish per day, most of which range from 10 to 15 inches long.

Rather catch **trout**? A catch-and-release trout fishery is open year-round above Roza Dam under selective gear and whitefish gear rules. Above Easton Lake, there is no size or catch limit for eastern brook trout.

Those interested in fishing local ponds near Yakima should know that WDFW recently stocked I-82 pond #4 with 130 rainbow broodstock and Sarg Hubbard Park Pond with 65 broodstock rainbows. The fish average over 5 pounds apiece. Sarg Hubbard Park Pond is open only to juvenile anglers under 15 years old and anglers with a disability who have a designated harvester-companion card. Several other waters stocked with big trout in November are also still worth a try, Anderson said. North Elton Pond near Selah got 2,000 jumbo rainbows averaging 1.5 pounds apiece, while North Fio Rito and Mattoon Lakes in the Kittitas Valley got 260 rainbow broodstock (over 5 lbs. each). Anglers are reminded to check the [Fishing in Washington rules pamphlet](#) for special gear and catch limits that apply on lakes and ponds.

Write to the TGF staff:

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Random Links

New Year's Random Links-a-Palooza:

Steelhead Life Cycle, Spawning Migration, and Physiology:

http://gormanflyfishing.com/the_steelhead_life_cycle.htm

Hatchery moves quickly to release trout to local fishing spots:

<http://www.dfw.state.or.us/news/2014/december/122914.asp>

New issue Swing Magazine for spey fishers:

<http://www.joomag.com/magazine/swing-the-fly-issue-23-winter-2014-15/0453762001415824776>

ODFW Family Ice Fishing Workshop Jan 24:

http://www.odfwcalendar.com/?tribe_events=family-ice-fishing-workshop

Fossil finds yield a surprise about Oregon's sabertooth salmon:

<http://around.uoregon.edu/content/fossil-finds-yield-surprise-about-oregons-sabertooth-salmon>

Fish hatchery truck crash kills 11,000 salmon:

http://www.oregonlive.com/pacific-northwest-news/index.ssf/2014/12/fish_hatchery_truck_crash_kill.html#incart_river

Interesting site for offshore wind predictions:

<https://www.windyty.com/?surface,wind,now,45.466,-123.710,4>

GOOD LUCK!