

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

Forecasting for the fishing week of **February 6<sup>th</sup> – February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015**

**Oregon Fisheries Update:**

**Willamette Valley/Metro** – Nope, no springers at Bonneville yet. An initial springer frenzy has ensued recently but if the metro rivers swell as anticipated, interest will wane. It's too early to invest too much time into these fisheries. I know, they're springers, right?

As the lower Willamette rises and muddies up over the coming week, the burgeoning winter steelhead and spring Chinook fisheries will stall. Catch-and-release sturgeon fishing is expected to remain good.

There's not much reason to send anyone fishing on the McKenzie River in the week to come.

While there are a few summer steelhead available in the Santiams, there are too few winters to target them this early in the season. The Santiams will be high and swift regardless.

**Northwest** – Steelheaders have been waiting for the upcoming rain freshet for a while now. The precipitation should produce good results for the late steelhead run. The Wilson and Nestucca will be primary targets for hatchery fish seekers.

You won't find many boats working the Trask River post freshet, mostly because it's catch and release. This will be a good system to look for trophy steelhead over the next several weeks.

The Kilchis will be one of the early systems to clear and should provide some wild steelhead action.

The smaller, north coast systems should have lots of hatchery fish in them (Necanicum, North Fork Nehalem) but they will largely be spawned out and of poor eating quality.

Forget an offshore effort this weekend but it sure was good last weekend, especially for sea bass out of Garibaldi and lingcod out of Newport.

Crabbing, both in the ocean and in the estuaries, is slow.

**Southwest**- Heavy rainfall over the next several days will hinder crabbing efforts in coastal estuaries.

Surf perch fishing has been quite good, particularly for this time of year. Beaches at Bandon and Coos Bay have been productive although with storms over the weekend make surf fishing unsafe.

A couple of boats out of Newport caught Chinook salmon while bottom fishing.

**Eastern** – Redside fishing is fair to good on the lower Deschutes with Blue-Winged-Olives hatching around mid-day although nymphs fished near the bottom will be effective 'most anytime.

While the Metolius is slow to fair, fly anglers are occasionally picking up some nice trout.

**SW Washington**- With early returns over, anglers are now looking for late season action to fuel their creels until spring chinook. The Lewis, Cowlitz and Kalama Rivers are all tracking ahead of last year's meager steelhead return with the Kalama consistently leading the pack.

The first spring chinook was tallied at the Cowlitz facility, definitely a bit early for this system.

Smelt shouldn't be far from the Cowlitz, be sure to check last weeks archived edition for the smelt season.

Chinook season will not open until August 1<sup>st</sup> on the Siuslaw according to 2015 regulation.

Umpqua mainstem flows will be on the rise this weekend with the water forecast to crest at 60,000 cfs overnight Saturday, February 7th.

Water level on the lower Rogue will rise above the 'Action Level' of 16 feet at Agness on Saturday, February 7<sup>th</sup>. Steelheading will resume and possibly improve as the water drops and clears.

High water stalled fishing efforts on the Chetco River a couple of days ago and just as it's settling down, another front is due to cause a genuine blowout. This freshet should bring fresh winter steelhead into the system.

It looks like ice fishers may not get a change this year as the surface has already started to thaw without ever getting thick enough to support anglers.

**Columbia River Fishing Report** – No news is bad news. Nothing continuing to go on here.

**The Guide's Forecast** – If you need something to read, here is the 2015 forecasts for the spring run of chinook: [http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/forecasts/columbia\\_river/2014-results\\_2015-expects.pdf](http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/forecasts/columbia_river/2014-results_2015-expects.pdf)

**Willamette, McKenzie & Santiam Rivers Fishing Report** – Water level and flow has started to increase at Willamette Falls and soon it will be running muddy. With this additional flow invariably comes debris so boater are advised to use caution, keep an eye upstream and have a knife handy to cut the anchor rope in a worst case scenario where a log, tree or deadhead overruns the anchor line, a situation which can sink a boat in seconds.

McKenzie River levels are already up a little but will become a virtual torrent over the coming weekend.

The North Santiam will rise with the rest of the valley rivers and will remain too high to fish through the coming week. The South Santiam will recover a little more quickly.

A Fly Tying 201 Class will be held at the Orvis Portland Store on Friday, February 6 from 7to 9 PM. The cost of the class is \$25 at the door but pre-registration by phone at 503-598-7680 is required. Everything will be provided but tyers may bring their own tools if they wish.

**The Guide's Forecast** – The lower Willamette has been producing a few winter steelhead and the occasional spring Chinook to anglers in the Meldrum Bar stretch and near the mouth of the Clackamas at the popular Blacktop. A Cornelius resident named Tim Van Dyke caught the first verified spring Chinook at Sellwood on Sunday, February 1st. He then went out a caught a second, estimated at 17 pounds, on Monday, February 2nd. While it will be perhaps a week until conditions improve sufficiently for these spots to produce, anglers may expect steady action from sturgeon even as the water rises and turns muddy. Many contend the bite improves in these conditions. One such angler reported hooking fish as fast as he could get his bait back into the water. That bait, by the way, was anchovy. Sardine has also been getting bit this week while smelt has not drawn much interest but that is likely to change as the smelt run gets underway. "We're still selling a variety of baits for sturgeon," says **Robert Campbell at Fisherman's Marine in Oregon City (503-557-5600)**. Portland Harbor around Swan Island has been producing consistently but, as always, move to find biters. Having been privileged to a recent discussion

where it was misunderstood by a few catch-and-release sturgeon fishers, a harvest card is required, even when fishing where you do not intend to (or cannot legally) keep any sturgeon.

Write off the McKenzie River for the coming week. When it recovers, expect slow to fair results for trout with BWOs hatching occasionally. Look for Caddis starting mid-month or so.

Even with more than 1,100 winter steelhead over Willamette Falls, numbers remain too low to create much of a fishery on the North Santiam. A few of these fish will get taken during the month of February but this catch-and-release fishery doesn't start to shine until later in the year.

With the Portland area forecast to receive three or more inches of rain over the next couple of days, **Robert Campbell at Fisherman's Marine in Oregon City (503-557-5600)** gives up his Best Bet for the coming weekend: "Go to the Sportsman's show," says he. "It has a steelhead stream that won't blow out."

**Clackamas and Sandy River Fishing Reports** – Clackamas levels dropped to a point earlier this week where it was challenging to fish and impossible for any craft other than pontoons or drift boats to navigate it. "I actually prefer it that way," said **Robert Campbell at Fisherman's Marine in Oregon City (503-557-5600)**.

Despite periodic milky glacial runoff (a condition which some experienced steelheaders actually prefer), the Sandy River has been productive for winter steelhead.

**The Guide's Forecast** – "She's gonna blow." Yep, the Clackamas will blow out, predicted to crest at 16.5 feet at Estacada with a flow greater than 12,000 cfs. That's moving right along. The good news (and no surprise to steelheaders) is that all this water will bring in fresh fish. "The Clackamas has been fishing good," said **Robert Campbell at Fisherman's Marine in Oregon City (503-557-5600)**, "Eagle Creek has been fishing good as well." This will continue and should even improve as the peak of the run is approaching.

"The Sandy has been good, good, good," quipped **Robert Campbell at Fisherman's Marine in Oregon City (503-557-5600)** today by telephone, "It has really been a bright spot and will only get better after the rain." That 'after that rain' period will involve some dropping and clearing which will probably not occur until Wednesday or later in the coming week.

**North Coast Fishing Report** – Anglers this week had low water conditions to contend with. Persistent low, clear water tested anglers abilities in such conditions. The challenging conditions did not keep everybody from trying for steelhead but those that did, were far short of limits for their efforts.

Smaller systems were predictably most challenging as fish were hunkered down in pocket water and mostly too timid to strike offerings. What few reports came from these systems were less than impressive with most fish engaged in the spawning phase of their life cycle. The north district rivers from the North Fork Nehalem, Necanicum and Highway 30 systems produced meager results for low quality fish. This of course was no surprise to experienced anglers as these systems fade fast after mid-January.

Larger systems such as the Wilson, Nestucca and Trask also produced mediocre results with few anglers reporting fair success for fresh run steelhead. Like the previously mentioned river systems, early run hatchery fish are spawned out but small pods of fresh fish are hanging mostly in the lower reaches of these systems.

Experienced Wilson River anglers reported 2 to 3 opportunities for a Saturday float but more challenging success rates were experienced by the vast majority. Most folks wanted to get their effort in Saturday in preparation for a leisurely Super Bowl Sunday.

Nestucca anglers were much the same with best results coming in the extreme lower reaches with fair at best results reported by the savviest of anglers. Most anglers have the same idea, wait until the next rain freshet, when things should blow wide open.

What few anglers that were pursuing fish on the Trask, reported fair results. With sparse effort, due to mostly catch and release fishing, anglers had a greater chance at unmolested fish. Despite low clear water, plug pullers reported fair action for mostly wild fish.

Nehalem River anglers had ideal conditions over the weekend. This larger system produces its best catches when other systems are low and clear. Although we've received few reports, the big tide series should have attracted a few pods of fresh steelhead into the lower reaches. These fish are most challenging due to the sheer size of the Nehalem. Fish are able to disperse in the larger river system, making it more challenging to fish on concentrated numbers. February through March is the most productive period for this system however.

Unseasonably calm weather produced awesome offshore opportunity for short and long range anglers last weekend. The larger tide exchanges caused some issue with bar crossings at times but ocean opportunity was largely unrestricted on Friday and Saturday. Depending on where you fished, lingcod and sea bass were readily available. I started at dinner reef on Saturday, putting in a good effort, only to yield a 25 inch lingcod and a nice sea bass for the first hour and a half in the morning. I finally got motivated enough to traverse southward to Three Arch Rocks off of Oceanside. That trip yielded our additional 27 sea bass in no time flat. We even took a quadruple on shrimp flies during one drift. I started the early morning program with herring but ended it with shrimp flies and buzz bomb like jigs. The lighter jigs performed well, almost better than live bait.

Ocean crabbing did not impress participants with reports of mostly females in the catches. One boat reported just a single keeper per pot, working the water south of the Tillamook Bay entrance. Bay crabbing was not much better.

**The Guide's Forecast** – The much anticipated rain freshet is scheduled to inundate the north coast on Thursday. Gale force winds and heavy rains should produce a significant rain freshet for all north coast systems. This will certainly produce positive results for those ready to take advantage of the opportunity over the weekend.

As we frequently mention, smaller systems like the Highway 30 rivers and creeks, the Necanicum and North Fork Nehalem should produce excellent numbers of spent fish. Steelhead this late in the season are most commonly spawned out fish that are headed back downstream in hopes of a future spawning run. The Necanicum and North Fork Nehalem are both known for these aggressive biters. On occasion, you can still catch a bright one, but it likely has spawned or is getting close to it.

Mainstem Nehalem – This systems will blow out by the weekend if the precipitation prediction comes to fruition.

Kilchis River- Might be the best bet for the weekend if the weather forecast is accurate. It's possible, based on how much rain Tillamook County gets, that the Kilchis could come into shape as early as Saturday, but more likely Sunday. It'll be mostly wild fish here but they should be plentiful.

Wilson River – Based on the graph below, action here might not get going until the middle of next week, maybe Tuesday. It should fish good in high flows and maybe even on the early part of the rise but early

next week, there should be ample numbers of fish around, both spent early returning fish but mostly the highly desirable winter broodstock fish that so closely mimic their wild cousins, except without the fin of course. Drifted bait will work best in the higher flows but as they drop, "beading" has become quite popular now and will only catch on more as the technique has proven itself in recent years. Look for fish in the slower flows when the water remains high, there should be ample numbers of them on the drop next week.



Trask River – This system should closely mimic the Wilson but produce mostly wild fish. Even though this river seems to get a later run of wild fish, it can produce good catches by this time of year and an occasional hatchery stray. You can fish the upper reach (Stone’s Camp to the upper Peninsula drift) in higher flows but by the time it drops to 8 foot, the upper reach becomes harder to navigate.

Three Rivers/Nestucca system – Three Rivers is about done but the Nestucca should just start to get cooking. The upper reaches should fish well by early next week and broodstock fish should start to show in earnest. By late next week, target the lower reaches for the best action. The broodstock fishery should really start to jumpstart early next week on the Nestucca mainstem.

Don’t even think about the ocean. Combined seas to 14 foot most days, we’re not even going to post the offshore weather forecast.....

**Central & South Coast Reports** – As our regular contributor **Robert Campbell** advised above, this is a good weekend to head for the NW Sportsman’s Show with rain and wind preventing offshore outings for the next several days. Weather fronts are destined to mess with angler’s steelheading plans, too, as southwest rivers will swell over the next couple of days.

Heavy rainfall over the next several days will hinder crabbing efforts in coastal estuaries as fresh water drops the salinity levels. This is too bad as bay crabbing has generally been a better bet than ocean crabbing out of southwest ports for most this season.

As mentioned in an earlier issue of TGF, while the ocean rockfish limit will remain seven in 2015, only three may be blue rockfish which are tough to tell from black rockfish. We like the smallmouth/largemouth bass comparison in that the mouth (maxillary) on a black rockfish extends to the rear of the eye socket (as with largemouth bass) while it does not extend to that point on a blue rockfish (or a smallie). The folks at the Curry Coastal Pilot newspaper out of Brookings produced this graphic to show other distinctions between the two:

[http://www.myoutdoorbuddy.com/fishing\\_report.php?fishing=10038](http://www.myoutdoorbuddy.com/fishing_report.php?fishing=10038)

Surf perch fishing has been quite good, particularly for this time of year. Beaches at Bandon and Coos Bay have been productive although with storms over the weekend, it will be Wednesday next week before the ocean lays down sufficiently for this activity.

One recreational boats out of Newport have been took multiple Chinook offshore on herring in 400 feet of water while targeting bottom fish. An angler on another boat hooked one on a shrimp fly.

Halibut season off the central Oregon coast for 2015 will be shaped during a 7 PM meeting on February 11th at the ODFW Marine Resources Program office located at the Hatfield Marine Science Center in Newport. The fisheries to be set are spring all-depth fixed and back up dates. Interested parties who can't make that meeting in person can join by online webinar, information about while will be posted at <http://www.dfw.state.or.us/MRP/finfish/halibut/index.asp> or via the online survey at <https://oregondas.allegiantecotech.com/cgi-bin/qwebcorporate.dll?idx=KUGRVD>

Many steelheaders are just going through the motions at the Siletz although boat anglers are taking a few. One pair had four on and landed two over the past weekend.

While there's a little controversy amongst anglers as to whether the Siuslaw receives any spring Chinook at all, the point has become moot as the 2015 regulations indicate the river opens to Chinook fishing on August 1 this year.

Umpqua mainstem flows will be on the rise this weekend with the water forecast to crest at 60,000 cfs overnight Saturday, February 7th. Fishing had been good for winter steelhead earlier this week despite low, clear, cold water and will once again be decent when conditions allow. The South Umpqua is a best bet for hatchery winters as there should be a good population of them once the river drops and clears.

Water level on the lower Rogue will rise above the 'Action Level' of 16 feet at Agness on Saturday, February 7th, but is forecast to fall short of 'Flood Level' which would be 17 feet. The flow is predicted to hit nearly 50,000 cfs at that time. As recently as Wednesday this week, it was running extremely low and clear for this time of year. Of course, this freshet is well-timed as fresh winter steelhead and possibly (though not probably) the first of this year's Rogue springers. The middle Rogue was fishing best of any stretch earlier this week but as with the lower river, the Rogue won't fish until later in the coming week. Upper Rogue steelheaders were hooking up with winters occasionally but after the water clears following heavy precipitation this week, there will be an improvement;

High water stalled fishing efforts on the Chetco River a couple of days ago and just as it's settling down, another front is due to cause a genuine blowout - to the tune of a predicted flow greater than 30,000 cfs at Brookings. The river is forecast to crest on Saturday, February 7th, and is unlikely to be fishable by any means prior to the middle of the coming week. Prior to the freshet earlier this week, low, clear water challenged steelheaders but fish were caught daily regardless. Count on the Chetco kicking out winters the moment it drops and clears a little, with plunkers scoring initially. When the river comes back into shape, side-drifting roe has been a consistent producer although plug-pullers are also taking their share. Expect the Chetco to produce winter steelhead through March, giving anglers plenty of opportunities when the river will be in fine shape.

Rain on Tuesday this week bright water levels up at the Elk and Sixes but also caused some murky conditions. Just as these rivers were dropping and clearing, high winds hampered steelheading efforts. When the forces of nature have cooperated, fishing for winters has been fair to good here.

It may be time for ice-fishers with their eyes on Diamond Lake to hang up their jigging rods for the 2015 season. The lake's surface never did fully freeze and now there's evidence that ice-out is occurring early this year. With almost no pressure over the winter months, there may be more large trout available as the surface thaws.

**Central and Eastern Oregon** – Most of the summer steelhead on the lower Deschutes have moved into tributaries to spawn. Redside fishing is fair to good with Blue-Winged-Olives hatching around mid-day although nymphs fished near the bottom will be effective anytime. Expect Caddis to be hatching around the middle of February. Can spring be far behind?

There's not a lot of pressure on the Metolius at this time of year although a few anglers are getting out. One fly caster took a gorgeous 16-inch redbase over the past weekend.

Trout fishing has been fair on Crooked River this week. A good place to start is just below Bowman Dam, then cast as you hike downstream. Expect to hook a good number of whitefish as well.

Trollers at Green Peter are spotting plenty of kokanee on their depth finders and report many jumpers seen but fishing has been poor lately.

Lake Billy Chinook has continued to produce good numbers of kokanee to trollers. Targeting bull trout has been productive at times.

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#### **Random Links**

ODFW Family Fishing Events Calendar:

[http://www.dfw.state.or.us/education/angling/family\\_fishing.asp](http://www.dfw.state.or.us/education/angling/family_fishing.asp)

Oregon Angler with Disabilities Site Map:

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=zeE1L8gPP2EA.kM43k44ArJ4Y>

Summer Steelhead and Paradise Lost by Carmen Macdonald:

<http://www.ifish.net/board/blog.php?a=4511&b=40>

**GOOD LUCK!**