2008 Steelhead Angling Forecast

Overview

Anglers will have plenty of opportunities throughout the state to hook into winter and summer steelhead. This forecast is intended to help anglers identify productive river systems, target specific locations for pursuing winter steelhead, and highlight recent fishing regulation changes. All anglers are advised to read the 2008 Oregon Sport Fishing Regulations available at license retail outlets and at www.dfw.state.or.us.

"Summer" and "Winter" steelhead

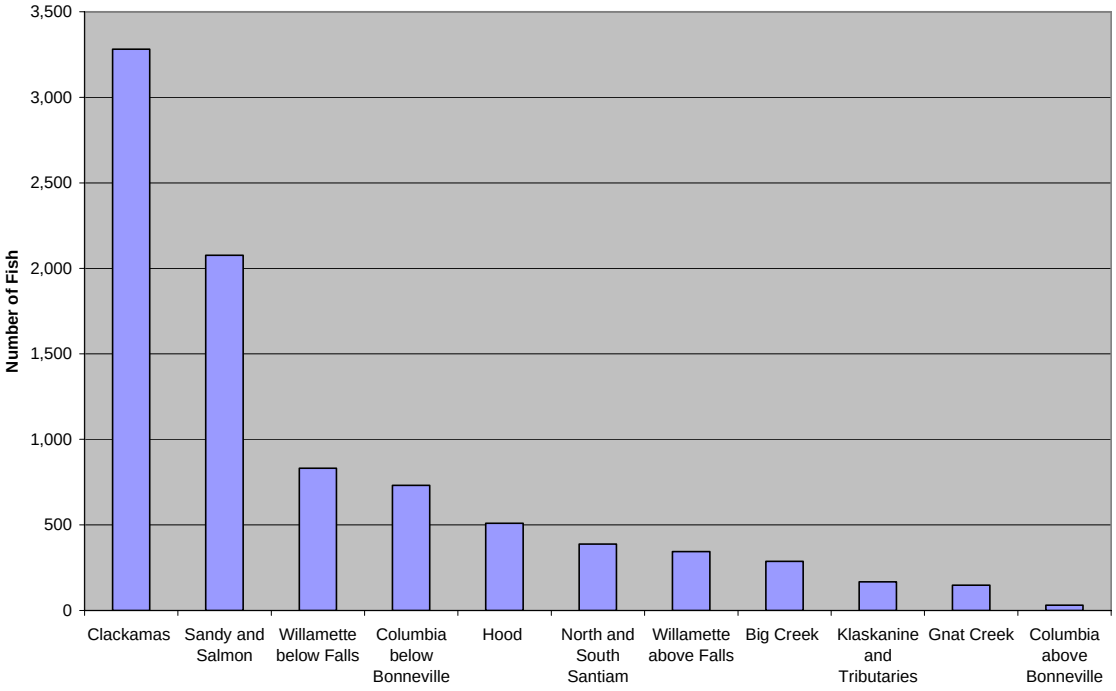
There are two main runs of steelhead in Oregon, a "summer" and a "winter" run. Some river systems have both types of runs while other streams may have one or the other. On the eastern side of Oregon, all steelhead are considered summer run fish. On average, winter steelhead tend to be bigger than their summer relatives. As early as May, summer steelhead enter fresh water in a reproductively immature state—they do not spawn for many months. Winter steelhead migrate when they are closer to reproductive maturity. Summer and winter run steelhead spawn in the spring. Like their name suggests, summer steelhead begin migrating to their birth streams during the summer months. This migration may take place as early as May on some rivers and can last until late fall/early winter. Summer fish generally travel much further to spawn than the winter-run fish. Likewise, winter steelhead begin their migration early winter with some fish continuing to migrate well into spring. Unlike the other salmonids, steelhead are not pre-determined to die after spawning and may live to spawn multiple times. After the eggs have been deposited in the spring, the fry emerge in summer and may spend the next 1 to 3 years in fresh water prior to migrating to the ocean.

Catch Statistics

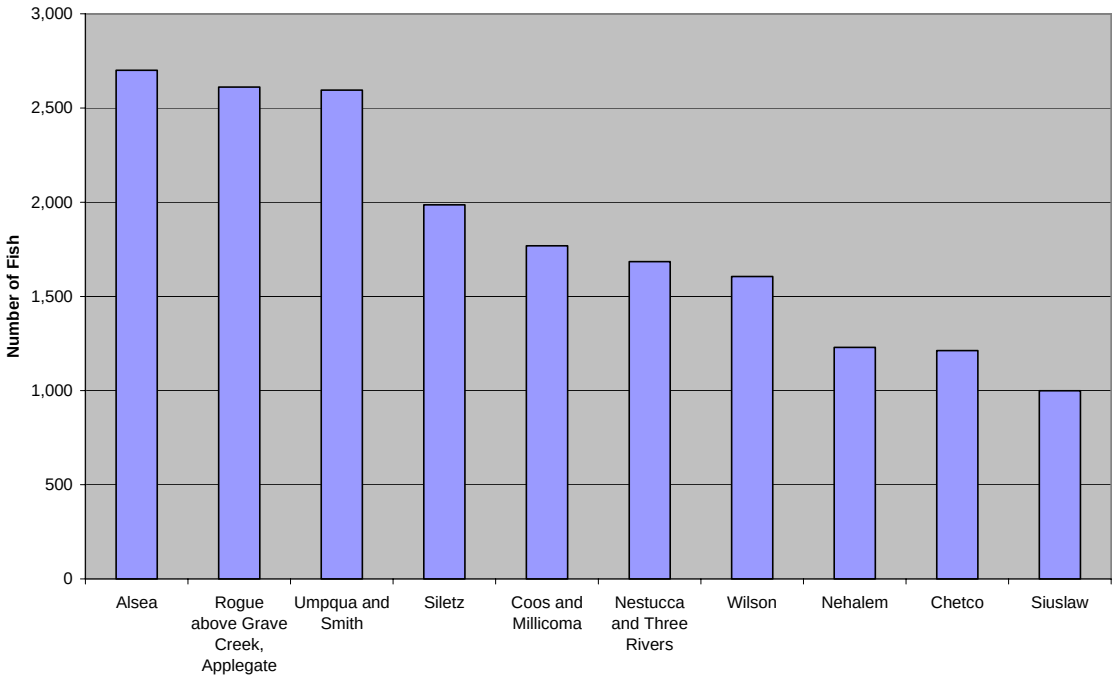
Catch statistics provide anglers with information on timing of steelhead harvest and also which streams are producing high steelhead catches. The new steelhead broodstocks being used for many of ODFW's steelhead program may have different run timing than the stocks of steelhead anglers are accustomed to. The newer broodstocks can have later, more expanded run timing which is similar to wild steelhead they originated from. The catch statistics tables shown below were compiled using information collected from the Combined Angling Harvest cards, also known as "punch cards." Anglers are required to record each fish kept and asked to return these cards at the end each year. ODFW uses the returned cards to estimate harvest within each of the water bodies of the state, identified by unique codes. Because anglers are not required to return their harvest cards, ODFW expands the data from the harvest cards returned to estimate annual harvest. Since the 1990s, return rates of the harvest cards varies from about 15– 25%. To encourage return of harvest cards, ODFW has drop boxes at ODFW offices and point-of-sale (POS) terminals in sporting goods stores, displays at sportsmen's shows, and issues news releases. To further improve return rates, harvest cards returned by June 1 of the following year are entered in a drawing for boats and other sporting goods.

Return of harvest cards is important for ODFW's understanding of the harvest of fish. The harvest card information is a valuable tool for managing fishery resources as ODFW balances harvest opportunities and fish conservation. This information is used in management decisions and setting angling regulations. In some cases, ODFW has on-the-ground creel surveys, but these are more expensive and difficult to conduct, so for many rivers, the punch card information is the only tool ODFW managers have available to estimate harvest. It is important that angler return their harvest cards soon after the end of the year to help maintain this valuable information source.

Five-year Average Catch of Winter Steelhead in Columbia Basin, 2001-2005



Five-year Average Catch of Winter Steelhead in Oregon Coastal Streams, 2001-2005



Steelhead hatchery programs in Oregon

Oregon has many steelhead hatchery programs around the state. Almost all of them have the single objective of providing fish for recreational fisheries; however, some hatcheries are conservation hatcheries which supplement local wild stocks using local broodstock to provide eggs. Steelhead hatchery programs in Oregon are designed to maximize the contribution of hatchery fish to the fishery while minimizing the potential negative impacts of the program to wild fish. Practices that are used to maximize harvest include: releasing hatchery smolts (1 year old steelhead) at a time and size that ensures the highest survival to adult; allowing fish to volitionally leave the hatchery to reduce harmful stress from handling; releasing steelhead smolts in areas with good access for anglers; or using local broodstocks.

Hatchery practices that are used to reduce the potential negative impacts to wild fish include: releasing hatchery steelhead smolts in areas that they can home in on, and return to, a trapping facility (to be removed and reduce competition with wild steelhead); releasing hatchery smolts at a size that they quickly migrate to the ocean and don't compete for food and habitat; or releasing hatchery smolts in areas that are not highly used by wild steelhead.

Winter and Summer Steelhead Hatchery Programs in Oregon.

Rivers where hatchery winter steelhead are released

ODFW Hatchery Steelhead Releases		
Release Location	**Steelhead Run, Brood Stock**	**Production Goals** (number of smolt releases)
Alsea River	Winter; Alsea stock	120,000
Applegate River (Rogue River tributary)	Winter; Local (wild) stock	150,000
Big Creek	Winter; Local (wild) stock	60,000
Big Elk Creek (Yaquina River tributary)	Winter; Alsea stock	20,000
Chetco River	Winter; Local (wild) stock	50,000
Clackamas River	Winter and Summer; Local (wild), Skamania, Big Creek, Donaldson stock	440,000
Coquille River (East Fork, North Fork and South Fork)	Winter; Local (wild) stock	115,000
Deschutes	Summer; Local (wild) stock	165,000

Fall Creek (Willamette River, Middle Fork)	Summer; Skamania stock	153,000
Gnat Creek	Winter; Big Creek stock	40,000
Hood River	Winter and Summer; Local (wild), Skamania stock	150,000
Kilchis River	Winter; Alsea stock	40,000
Klaskanine River	Winter; Big Creek stock	60,000
Little Sheep Creek (Imnaha River)	Summer; Local (wild) stock	330,000
McKenzie River	Summer; Skamania stock	108,000
Millicoma River (East and West Forks)	Winter; Local (wild), Coos stock	88,000
Necanicum River	Winter; North Nehalem stock	40,000
Nestucca River	Winter and Summer; Alsea and Siletz stock	180,000
North Nehalem River	Winter; Local (wild), Big Creek, and Fishhawk Creek stock	90,000
North Santiam River	Summer; Skamania stock	162,000
North Umpqua River	Winter; Local (wild) stock	165,000
Rogue River	Winter; Local (wild) stock	370,000
Sandy River	Winter and Summer; Local (wild), Skamania, Big Creek stock	235,000
Siletz River	Winter and Summer; Local (wild) stock	130,000
Siuslaw River	Winter; Local (wild) stock	100,000
South Fork Coos River	Winter; Local (wild) stock	37,000

South Santiam River	Summer; Skamania stock	144,000
South Umpqua River	Winter; Local (wild) stock	88,000
Tenmile Creek	Winter; Local (wild) stock	20,000
Three Rivers (Nestucca River tributary)	Summer; Alsea stock	30,000
Umatilla	Summer; Local (wild) stock	150,000
Wallowa River	Summer; mixture of steelhead returning to the Snake basin stock	800,000
Willamette River, Middle Fork	Summer; Skamania stock	115,000
Wilson River	Winter and Summer; Local (wild), Alsea, Siletz stock	170,000

Endemic "Local" Broodstocks

Over the past 10 years, many of Oregon's winter steelhead hatchery programs have converted from conventional hatchery stocks to endemic, or locally adapted steelhead broodstocks derived from wild steelhead. These newer broodstock uses wild fish from the stream in which the hatchery steelhead will be released. This practice has resulted in adult hatchery steelhead returning at the same time as wild steelhead–generally January through April. In some cases, this return time is as much as two months later than the previously used steelhead broodstock. The use of local steelhead broodstocks has resulted in hatchery runs of steelhead that return at times when rivers are generally much more fishable, and in some cases, hatchery steelhead adults that hold in the rivers longer before returning to trapping facilities. Both of these traits allow for anglers to catch a greater proportion of the returning hatchery steelhead.

"Steelhead Recycling"

In some locations, where staffing and fishery conditions allow, adult hatchery steelhead that return to trapping facilities are transported downstream to swim through the fishery a second time. This practice is called "recycling." Recycled hatchery steelhead have a second chance to be caught by anglers, although the rate at which they are caught can be low sometimes. Recycled steelhead also have a second chance to stray away from the trapping facility and compete with wild steelhead. For these reasons, not all trapped hatchery steelhead in all locations are recycled.

General Angling Tips

If you want to be a successful steelhead angler, you should concentrate on the techniques and tactics. Many of the world's best steelhead anglers call Oregon home and they tend to focus on four major elements: **When, Where, What and How.**

When are there steelhead in the river?
Winter steelhead generally return to rivers from November through May, depending on the river. Steelhead anglers need to learn the run timing of the rivers they fish, watch for concentrations of other anglers, contact local hatcheries for return information, read fishing articles, and check several Websites for updated information on steelhead returns. Also, successful winter steelhead angling depends primarily on water temperature, river levels or flow rates, and water clarity. Anglers can go to http://www.wrd.state.or.us/OWRD/SW/near_real_time.shtml for current river flows and water temperatures. Contact local ODFW offices for current water conditions as well. Local sporting good stores are also an excellent source of information on the current local river conditions and steelhead angling techniques.

Where are the steelhead in the river?
Not only do steelhead anglers need to fish in rivers when the fish are present, they need to fish in the rivers where steelhead tend to congregate. In general, ODFW has reduced or eliminated "scatter planting" of steelhead to avoid straying and possible spawning by hatchery fish. This means that most of the better fishing for hatchery fish will be at or below the fish hatchery or a single release location. Within the river, steelhead typically prefer some type of holding water. While this varies with water conditions, anglers should generally focus their effort on runs or glides of moderate depth and current. Many experienced steelhead anglers concentrate on learning the rivers they fish. Try to avoid wasting time chasing down rumors of hot fishing. Instead learn where the steelhead are by getting to know one or two rivers well. This can involve visiting the river in the summer and other seasons to observe holes, resting places, riffles, and other habitat features that add to your knowledge of where to fish effectively. It is often said that 90% of the fish are caught by 10% of the fishermen, and this is probably truer with steelhead than any other fish.

How are the steelhead caught?
There are many steelhead fishing techniques, from fishing a bright pink worm under a bobber to swinging a small nymph on a fly line. The key is for the steelhead angler to refine the technique they use so that they are confident that the bait, lure, or other chosen offering is in front of as many steelhead as possible. Time spent re-rigging, casting to poor holding water, or fishing when no fish are present lower your chances to hook a steelhead. Successful anglers know how to detect a subtle strike, and are prepared to handle a large, aggressive fish if they get one on the line. When steelhead do bite the take is often soft, but the results of hooking a fish are not as steelhead tend to explode out of the water when hooked. Slack line, dull hooks, wind knots, and lack of concentration are common causes that lead many anglers to miss their opportunity to land a steelhead. The more you practice your technique and focus on the subtleties of steelhead fishing, the more steelhead you will hook. In each area section of this report, look for recommended special techniques that apply just to that area to increase your success.

What do I use to catch steelhead?
As shown by the variety of gear for sale in the local sporting good stores, you may think that a steelhead will bite almost anything. Drift-fishing small, buoyant lures, with or without bait, along the bottom is often effective. Other popular methods include fishing a bobber and jig

combination, or bait under a bobber. The most popular baits are cured salmon or steelhead eggs, and sand shrimp. Casting spoons or spinners account for many fish. Fly-fishing for steelhead in the winter is challenging due to high water flows that reduce the success rate. Boaters often backtroll plugs or diver and bait combinations. Other baits used include worms, crayfish tails, and prawns. The idea is to get comfortable with a bait, lure, or fly, and fish what you know most of the time. After you feel that you have mastered the basic technique, start trying out new gear or methods. Remember, if you are consistently pulling your line out of the water to change your lure, it is not fishing and you are not catching anything!

Surplus hatchery steelhead returning to ODFW hatcheries are often stocked into local lakes to provide additional angling opportunities. Casting lures or flies from the shore or a boat are the most common technique for catching steelhead released in lakes. We hope you get the opportunity to feel the fight of the steelhead on your line; it is definitely a one-of-a-kind experience.

Angling Ethics

We hope you enjoy the experience of fishing some of the nation's most beautiful steelhead waters. Please help us keep them beautiful. We ask that you be courteous and respect other fishermen—there is plenty of room for everyone to enjoy themselves. When boat fishing, it is considered poor angler ethics to cast into holes that bank anglers are using from a boat.

In order to preserve Oregon's wild stocks of steelhead, many of Oregon's wild steelhead are catch and release only. To increase fish survival, it is suggested that anglers use the following techniques to minimize impacts to wild fish:

- Use barbless hooks are encouraged. Studies have shown that use of barbless hooks can improve the survival of steelhead by minimizing handling impacts, although other factors such as gear type, hook placement, stream temperatures, and handling impacts have significantly more affect on overall steelhead survival after release. Therefore, currently use of barbless hooks is not mandatory in most of Oregon's fisheries.

- Landing your fish quickly will also increase survival rates.

- Remove the hook, using needle nose pliers to remove deeply imbedded hooks. Cut the leader to leave hook in place if necessary.

- Keeping your fish in the water can be crucial. Fish can be injured if allowed to flop on shore. Keep the fish in water at least 6 inches deep. Grasp fish by the tail and place your other hand under the belly, lifting slightly. If you plan to take a photograph of the fish, make sure that you have framed the picture and focused the camera before taking the fish out of water, and then only hold the fish out of water (preferably only partly out of water) for one or two seconds.

- Revive the fish before release. Keep the fish upright facing into the current. If current is slow, move fish back and forth slowly to help oxygenate the gills.

2008 Steelhead Angling Information

Northwest Zone

Flooding in early December 2007 has changed many rivers and brought large amounts of wood and debris downstream. Anglers should use caution when floating rivers and be aware of potential new hazards. Road access may also be blocked in some locations.

North Coast

Several local streams host early returning (December through January) hatchery winter steelhead. The North Fork Nehalem River is generally one of the better early season streams, with hatchery steelhead also available in the Necanicum, Kilchis, Wilson, and Nestucca rivers. A fair number of hatchery steelhead also wander up the Trask River, although none are planted there. The Wilson and Nestucca rivers, which have wild broodstock hatchery programs, will have hatchery steelhead available throughout the winter and early spring. Wild steelhead are available throughout the winter and the run generally peaks in March. Anglers should contact the local ODFW office in Tillamook at 503-842-2741 for more information on angling techniques, locations, and updated angling conditions. Recorded fishing information for the North Fork Nehalem is available at 503-368-5670.

Lower Columbia

Hatchery steelhead are released in Gnat Creek (40,000), Big Creek (60,000), and the North Fork Klaskanine River (40,000). Angling for steelhead is restricted to the lower portions of the streams below the hatcheries. Hatchery fish are primarily available during December and January, with numbers of fish tapering off quickly after that. These streams are small and are primarily fished from the banks. Access is available at the hatcheries, at Big Creek County Park, and along roads following the streams. Anglers may call 503-458-6529 for recorded Big Creek fishing information. The Lewis and Clark River, Young's River, and the South Fork Klaskanine River also are open to steelhead angling. While anglers will encounter some stray hatchery fish, these streams offer mostly catch-and-release angling for wild steelhead.

Necanicum River

The Necanicum River offers excellent small-stream steelhead fishing throughout the winter. Hatchery steelhead (the river is stocked with 40,000 smolts at a several locations up to Black's Bridge)) are caught in the early winter months, and wild fish are more commonly caught later in the season. The Necanicum is open to steelhead angling through March 31, downstream of the Highway 53 Bridge at Necanicum Junction.

Bank access is available along Highway 26, especially at Klootchie Creek Park and around Black's Bridge (about 1.5-2 miles above Klootchie Creek). Boaters may launch at the park, and a takeout is located along Highway 101 just south of Seaside. The Necanicum River is one of the first North Coast streams to clear following heavy rains.

Nehalem River Basin

The Nehalem basin offers a multitude of steelhead angling opportunities. Hatchery steelhead (90,000 smolts) are released in the North Fork Nehalem at or below Nehalem Hatchery on Highway 53. The best angling for hatchery steelhead is usually in December and January. Hatchery steelhead are recycled from Nehalem Hatchery weekly during the peak of the run. Call

503-368-5670 for recorded fishing information. Angling for wild steelhead in February and March can be productive and is usually much less crowded.

Bank access on the North Fork is available near the hatchery and on neighboring industrial forestlands. The Nehalem Hatchery Barrier Free Fishing Platform was recently expanded and allows increased access for anglers possessing the required disabled angler permit. Boaters may float the North Fork below the hatchery, but extreme caution is necessary. Several bedrock rapids make drifting this river hazardous, and should only be attempted by experienced boaters. Rafts are highly recommended. ODFW is conducting a volunteer creel survey on the North Fork with several kiosks in various locations along the river. Anglers are asked to stop and fill out a short survey about their angling activities and catch for each day of fishing with the goal being to collect information on the catch rates of each winter steelhead hatchery stock raised at Nehalem Hatchery. One stock is marked with an adipose fin mark only, while the other is marked with an adipose and right maxillary clip. Please check the fish closely for the respective mark. The main Nehalem River is a very productive catch-and-release fishery for wild steelhead. Best angling is February to early April. Some very large steelhead (topping 20 pounds) are caught from this river. Access is along Nehalem Forest Road. The lower river can be boated from the Beaver Slide (below Nehalem Falls) to Roy Creek County Park. The Salmonberry River, a tributary of the Nehalem about 7 miles above Nehalem Falls, offers good wild steelhead angling in February and March. The Salmonberry closes March 31. **The road bridge over the Salmonberry River near the mouth was removed by the December 2007 flooding. It is unknown at this time when repairs will be made.**

Tillamook Bay Streams

The Wilson River, Kilchis River and Trask River offer excellent angling opportunities. Hatchery steelhead usually begin returning in late November, with good angling through January. Approximately 40,000 early returning hatchery smolts are released in each of the Kilchis and Wilson Rivers. An additional 80,000 wild brood smolts are released in the Wilson River. The Kilchis is stocked up to Kilchis Park. Smolts in the Wilson River are primarily released in several locations in the lower river up to Siskeyville, but a portion are released in the South Fork Wilson. The river is not stocked, but hatchery strays are present in the Trask River. Wild broodstock hatchery steelhead are available in the Wilson River throughout the winter and early spring (primarily January- early April). Wild steelhead are available through the winter in each stream, with the best angling in March. All three streams offer ample access. Highway 6 follows the Wilson River from the lower reaches to the angling deadline at the South Fork. The Little North Fork Wilson River and first mile of the South Fork Wilson River are open December 1- March 31 for steelhead angling. These streams provide good opportunities when the mainstem Wilson River is high.

The Kilchis River is accessible at the Mapes Creek launch, Kilchis Park, and along Kilchis forest road up to the deadline at the confluence of the North and South forks. The Trask River is accessible at Trask Hatchery and Loren's Drift, off Chance Road, and along Trask River Road. The North and South Fork Trask are accessible by forest roads that follow each stream. The North Fork Trask deadline is at Bark Shanty Creek and the South Fork deadline is at Edwards Creek. Boat launches are available on the mainstem Kilchis, Wilson, and Trask rivers.

The Tillamook and Miami rivers are open to steelhead fishing though March. A few stray hatchery fish and smaller populations of wild fish are present in each stream. The Miami River offers access in the upper stretches along Miami Forest Road; however, public access is very limited on the Tillamook River.

Nestucca Basin
Early-returning hatchery steelhead (55,000 smolts), marked with and adipose and left maxillary fin clip, are available from late November into February, with a peak in late early January. Wild broodstock hatchery steelhead (55,000 smolts; adipose and right maxillary clipped) are available in the Nestucca through the spring (recent creel surveys show the catch to be primarily January to early April). All hatchery steelhead smolts have been released in recent years Bays Creek, a tributary just below Baline to facilitate an on-going study of the hatchery program in the Nestucca basin (future release locations may change starting in 2008; contact ODFW in Tillamook for more information) Wild steelhead are caught throughout the winter, with a peak in March. ODFW employees may interview anglers on the Nestucca and Three Rivers this year as part of a "creel" survey designed to examine the contribution of the new wild broodstock hatchery program to the fishery. Nestucca River Road parallels the upper Nestucca River, beginning at Beaver and continuing upstream to the angling deadline at Elk Creek. Best bank access is above Blaine, with many pullouts along the river. The use of bait is prohibited in the Nestucca River above Blaine. Angling in the upper Nestucca is best later in the season, as primarily wild fish return to the upper river. Boat access is available at boat ramps located at the first and fourth bridges above Beaver, at a primitive boat slide above the fifth bridge, and at the sixth bridge. Only experienced boaters should launch upstream of the fourth bridge due to some hazardous water. The lower Nestucca River offers limited bank access, but some very good boat access. Launching/takeout is available at boat ramps located at the Rock Hole, Farmer Creek wayside, the mouth of Three Rivers, and at Cloverdale. Bank access is available at those sites also. Three Rivers, a tributary entering the Nestucca at Hebo, offers very good bank access in the lower river and excellent opportunity for anglers targeting early-returning hatchery steelhead, as well as later returning wild broodstock hatchery steelhead. Good numbers of steelhead ascend Three Rivers on their return to Cedar Creek Hatchery. Bank access is available at the hatchery, at the "heart attack" hole (on the south side of the stream), on the "S" curve just above Hebo, and by the sewage treatment plant in Hebo. The upper Three Rivers is accessible along Hwy 22, but fewer fish are present above the hatchery weir and bank access is limited. Fish are recycled downstream from Cedar Creek Hatchery, usually at least once per week during the peak of the run. The Little Nestucca River offers fair opportunity for steelhead. A few stray hatchery steelhead are present throughout the winter season. Wild fish may be caught and released through the winter, with the run peaking in March. Limited public access is available along Little Nestucca River Road between Hwy 22 and Hwy101.

North Coast Lakes
Coffenbury Lake, Lost Lake, Vernonia Pond, Cape Meares Lake, Loren's Pond, and Town Lake receive excess adult hatchery steelhead periodically. Tahoe Lake, Smith Lake and Spring Lake also receive fish when available. Check the weekly fishing report for updated information on fish releases. Steelhead caught in these lakes are considered trout, and do not have to be recorded on a harvest tag. Only one trout over 20 inches per day is allowed.

Mid Coast

The Mid-Coast winter steelhead migrations typically peak during December through March depending on the location, flow conditions and broodstock. Please note that **only hatchery fin clipped winter steelhead may be harvested. If you do catch a wild steelhead, please handle it carefully and try not to remove wild fish from the water while unhooking them**. The following is a description of steelhead angling opportunities throughout the Mid-Coast District.

Siletz Basin
Summer steelhead are native only in the Siletz River and fly fishing is popular method to catch summer steelhead. The summer steelhead start arriving in May with peak in early July. A second push of summers are present with the first fall rains. The winter steelhead begin arriving in late November with a peak in January-February and extending into March. The winter steelhead hatchery program in the Siletz Basin uses wild fish as broodstock which provides excellent angling opportunities. These fish return later in the year than traditional hatchery steelhead. Best catches are expected from January through March. Drift boat anglers crowd the river during peak season, and bank angling access is mostly focused around Moonshine Park, where hatchery fish are released and upstream through the gorge. The Siletz gorge road is a private logging road and open only during the weekend. Bank anglers also plunk with stationary gear in the lower river. An active recycling program for hatchery winter steelhead captured in ODFW fish traps continues to provide additional angling opportunities in the lower mainstem.

Yaquina Basin
The Yaquina Basin receives a small release (20,000 smolts) of traditional Alsea Hatchery winter steelhead stock. The Alsea Hatchery stock is an early returning stock. Typical migration peaks for this stock is December through January, depending on location and flow conditions. Good bank access is available on the upper Big Elk Creek at the release site (river-mile 21) and several miles downstream. There is no boat angling on Big Elk Creek.

Alsea Basin
The Alsea Basin provides good angling opportunities for hatchery winter steelhead. This is the fifth year of returns from the wild winter steelhead brood stock program, which provides angling opportunities into March. The 120,000 smolt released in the Alsea are split between the traditional Alsea Hatchery stock and the new, wild Alsea brood stock. Bank anglers should focus their efforts around the Alsea Hatchery during high water periods. A new parking lot provides anglers with off-road parking just below the hatchery. Private property is clearly posted, and barrels are provided for trash. Drift boat anglers fish the Alsea from boat launches a short distance downstream from the town of Alsea to the head of tidewater. Angling from a boat is prohibited in areas from Mill Creek and upstream. Surplus hatchery steelhead are being recycled downstream as far as Blackberry Launch. These recycled hatchery winter steelhead are tagged and transported downstream to provide additional angling opportunities.

Siuslaw Basin
The Siuslaw broodstock fish return later than traditional mid-coast hatchery stocks. The fishery continues through March, with an extended fishery in the Siuslaw River from Whittaker Creek downstream to 200 yards below the mouth of Wildcat Creek through April 15. The Siuslaw River near the Whittaker Creek campground site offers good boat and bank access. It is heavily fished, particularly on weekends. Lake Creek and its major tributaries has become a very productive catch-and–release-fishery for wild steelhead as well as offering a lesser opportunity to catch hatchery fish. Hatchery steelhead captured at District trap sites are recycled downstream to provide additional angling opportunities. After April 1, bright hatchery steelhead captured at district traps or from district hatcheries are transported to Carter Lake for the Youth Angling Enhancement project.

Salmon River (located north of Lincoln City along HWY 18) offers good catch and release wild winter steelhead fishing opportunities.

Drift Creek-Siletz (located just south of Lincoln City) offers anglers good wild steelhead fishing and occasional stray hatchery steelhead. The Siuslaw National Forest provides access throughout much of the basin with several good hike-in opportunities.

Drift Creek-Alsea offers anglers good wild steelhead fishing in a remote setting (including the Drift Creek Wilderness Area) and occasional stray hatchery steelhead.

Yachats River (located in the town of Yachats) is a very productive winter steelhead river with access from a county road bordering the stream. It is not stocked with hatchery fish, but offers good catch and release opportunities for wild steelhead.

Cummings Creek (located approximately 4 miles south of Yachats on HWY 101) is a small stream located in the Cummings Creek Wilderness area. It offers anglers good wild winter steelhead fishing in an old growth setting.

Ten-Mile Creek (located approx 6 miles south of Yachats on HWY 101) consistently produces good catches of wild winter steelhead when conditions are right. Much of the area is in private ownership.

Big Creek (located south of Yachats approx. 8 miles on HWY 101) can be good fishing as steelhead move into the river at high tide. A good road borders the stream and most areas are owned by the forest service.

Cape Creek (located at Heceta Head off HWY 101) is a small tributary that offers wild winter steelhead.

Southwest Zone

South Coast

The Oregon South Coast offers the winter steelhead angler a diverse group of rivers to fish for steelhead. Anglers can fish tiny Brush Creek, battling steelhead and willows, or sit in the comfort of a jet boat running plugs on the mighty lower Rogue River. Steelhead appear in fishable numbers in the Rogue River by Thanksgiving Day. By mid-December, fish arrive in the Chetco River. All rivers are providing good steelhead fishing in early January. The peak of the runs on all non-Rogue River rivers is January thru February, and most of the fish are spawned-out by mid-to-late March. When anglers look to go steelhead fishing, flow and water clarity are two key factors in determining success. The best time to fish for steelhead is after a storm when river flows are dropping and waters begin to clear. The South Coast steelhead report will help anglers identify streams and creeks that will fish best after a storm. Many rivers open to steelhead angling in the Coos-Coquille-Tenmile basins are open through April 30.

Winchuck River

The Winchuck is slow to muddy and clears quickly after rains. The upper river is primarily Forest Service with good access for bank anglers. Anglers can float the river, but by only experienced oarsman. Anglers are reminded but that fishing from a boat is prohibited.

Chetco River

The Chetco is slow to muddy and clears quickly after a rain event. It is the only non-Rogue River stream with a hatchery program. ODFW has maintained a wild broodstock collection

program on the Chetco River for more than 125 years, releasing up to 50,000 steelhead smolts annually. Releases occur at Social Security Bar, approximately 3 miles upriver from Highway 101. The majority of the returning hatchery steelhead stay within the lower 8 miles of the river, providing a very good fishery from early winter to March. The heaviest concentrations are around the mouth of the North Fork Chetco River up to Loeb State Park. The Chetco River also has a tremendous wild steelhead population. Both runs return at the same time, and most fish are spawned out by mid-March. The wild fish generally move through the lower river during rain events, providing excellent fishing. The majority of wild fish spawn in the upper river. Flows are a key factor in determining when to fish and what method to use. Anglers can keep an eye on the Chetco River flows at http://waterdata.usgs.gov/or/nwis/uv?14372300. Anglers usually start plunking spin and glows around 9,000 cfs and drift boat anglers do best at 4,000 cfs and dropping.

Anglers are reminded that to maintain a wild broodstock program ODFW staff are regularly netting wild steelhead on the Chetco River. At times, these broodstock collection efforts may interfere with other anglers fishing. Please be courteous to all ODFW personnel and volunteers that assist in collecting steelhead during these times.

Pistol River
The Pistol muddies quickly during rain events, and is slow to clear. Pistol River has a very good run of steelhead. Most anglers use roe or cast spinners. Access is limited by private property. In recent years, access to the lower 4 miles has been very limited and anglers are reminded to ask first before entering private property. Only the lower 4-5 miles is floatable. The best access for bank anglers is around the mouth of Deep Creek, and the South Fork.

Hunter Creek
Hunter Creek muddies quickly and is slow to clear. Bank access is very good, with most landowners allowing bank access if asked. Anglers can float the river during moderate flows, using plugs for the best success. Hunter Creek is closed to steelhead fishing until January 1st of every year in an effort to protect spawning fall Chinook,

Euchre Creek
Euchre Creek muddies slowly, but clears quickly. Like all South Coast streams Euchre Creek has a good wild steelhead run. Euchre Creek is all private ownership, but bank anglers who ask are generally allowed access to fish. This creek is too small and brushy for boats. Most anglers use roe or cast spinners.

Brush Creek
Brush Creek is a small creek that muddies slowly and clears quickly. The lower river is all within Humbug State Park, providing ample bank access. Anglers will have to search for pools free of willows to fish, but are usually rewarded with a steelhead. Unlike most the South Coast rivers and creeks, Brush Creek is closed to the harvest of wild steelhead.

ODFW annually monitors Euchre, Hunter, and Brush Creek's wild steelhead populations through juvenile steelhead smolt trapping. With these efforts ODFW can continue to ensure anglers have an opportunity to catch wild steelhead, and anglers can keep a steelhead once in a while.

Elk River
Elk River is slow to muddy during rain events, and clears quickly. It has an excellent steelhead run that is best fished by a boat. Elk River fishes best at 5.0 feet and dropping. Anglers can call Elk River Hatchery (541-332-7025) for daily gage heights and water clarity. Limited bank angling is available, but the majority of land along the river is private property. Most drift boaters put in at Elk River Hatchery and float to Ironhead boat ramp, both are ODFW properties. This past fall, ODFW and volunteers worked on a new boat ramp and access at Ironhead. With this new access, boat launching and retrieval is greatly improved. Anglers are reminded to park only in the parking lot, pack out all garbage, and respect adjacent property owners. Hatchery strays are occasionally present, providing harvest opportunity

Sixes River
Sixes River muddies quickly, clears slowly, and boasts an excellent steelhead run. Bank angling and boat access are available. Anglers can access the river at several well-marked points, including state parks, ODOT, ODFW, and BLM properties. Boat anglers can find floats that range from 2 miles to 12 miles. Most anglers fish roe, spinners, or run plugs.

Floras Creek
Floras Creek muddies quickly, clears slowly, and has an excellent steelhead run. Bank and boat access are all on private ownership.

Coos/Millicoma, Coquille, and Tenmile Lakes Basins
The winter steelhead season in the Coos, Coquille, and Tenmile Lakes basins had just begun when the 2007 post-Thanksgiving "pineapple express" storm hit the Oregon Coast. Rivers that were muddy and flooding their banks should be dropping back into shape as this report is issued.

Steelhead must be adipose fin-clipped in these basins to legally harvest, but with strong hatchery programs, there are plenty of marked fish available to anglers. Hatchery and wild steelhead are generally available to catch from late November through April. Peak harvest usually occurs from late December to late February. Steelhead usually arrive later in Tenmile Creek than other area rivers, often not making the first appearance until mid- to late December. Sand accumulation where Tenmile Creek enters the ocean can sometimes restrict the entry of salmon and steelhead in the fall and early winter until it flushes out.

The hatchery programs in the Coos, Coquille, and Tenmile utilize local stocks of fish for broodstock. In years past, hatchery stocks from other river basins such as the Alsea River were used to produce a hatchery run of fish in local rivers. This practice was discontinued, and now only local stocks are used. Unmarked, wild steelhead are incorporated into the egg-take each year, in an effort to keep the genetics, behavior, and other characteristics of the hatchery stock as close as possible to those of the wild population. One possible effect of using localized broodstock is a lengthening of the run timing, with fish returning from late November through spring. This provides a longer steelhead season than in the past.

Angling Techniques
Novice anglers are encouraged to try drift-fishing roe and yarn on a leader about 20 to 24 inches under a three-way swivel. On the third eye of the swivel attach a short dropper (4-6 inches) of line, weighted to bounce slowly along the bottom. Adjust the amount of weight to allow the bait to drift at a natural rate, ticking the bottom periodically. Cast slightly upstream so that the bait is on the bottom by the time it is straight out from the angler. Bobber and jig combinations can also be a good method for the novice angler; if the bobber-to-bait length is adjusted accordingly

it will keep the hook away from bottom snags. Long, straight runs with a uniform depth are good places to try this gear type. Sand shrimp are often added to the drift-fishing rig or on the jig, to further entice a steelhead to bite.

Coos/Millicoma Basin

In the South Coos River, the lowest five miles above the head of tidewater (located at Dellwood) are best for hatchery steelhead angling. The Big Creek Acclimation Site, also known as the "Fivemile Hole" at milepost 5 is very successful at targeting adult steelhead back to the lower river. Above milepost 6, most winter steelhead hooked will be unmarked and must be released. This area is an excellent catch-and-release fishery for anglers who want to get away from the crowds. Primitive drift boat slides are located at several points above Dellwood, and many popular bank angling holes are accessible for drifters or plunkers. Access to the South Coos River above Dellwood is by permit from Weyerhaeuser Company, and is subject to their rules. The company has delegated sales of their access permits to local businesses in North Bend and Coos Bay. Anglers can call the Weyerhaeuser hotline number at 1-888-741-5403 for recorded information on access and permit purchases.

Excellent steelhead angling opportunities are available on both the East and West forks of the Millicoma River system. On the East Fork Millicoma, bank access is available in Coos County's Nesika Park, with several excellent fishing holes and drifts from which to choose. On the West Fork, public access is available at ODFW's Millicoma Interpretive Center (MIC), about nine miles upriver from the mouth near Allegany. Located on Oregon Department of Forestry-administered lands, the banks at MIC and for several miles upstream provide excellent steelhead angling opportunities. The ponds at MIC are used for acclimation of steelhead smolts, so adult fish are drawn back to this area of the West Fork Millicoma by their homing instincts. Limited boat angling for steelhead occurs in the lower 3-4 miles of the West Fork, with access for launching and pullout on private property and subject to landowner permission. The West Fork has bedrock and boulder areas that make for difficult boating when flows are low.

The local chapter of NW Steelheaders usually puts on a "Steelhead Fishing Clinic" each winter at the Millicoma Interpretive Center. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife staff from the Charleston field office and many local Northwest Steelheaders (http://www.nwsteelheaders.org/) members are happy to give tips and advice to novice anglers.

Coquille River Basin

Prime steelhead angling on the South Coquille River is downstream of the National Forest boundary. Acclimation sites at Beaver Creek and Woodward Creek are very successful at targeting adult hatchery steelhead back to this section of river. Above Powers, most winter steelhead are wild, offering an excellent catch-and-release fishery for those anglers wanting to get away from the crowds. The river upstream of the Forest Service boundary is closed to all angling to protect spawning and rearing steelhead. Drift boat launches are located at the mouth of Beaver Creek and at the confluence of the Middle and South forks. Beaver Creek, Myrtle Grove State Park, and Powers Memorial State Park provide access to popular bank angling holes for drifters or plunkers. On the other forks of the Coquille River, most angling is conducted from the bank, although limited drift boating occurs in a few places. On the North Fork, the most popular steelhead holes are located in Laverne County Park. An acclimation site is located here, so hatchery returns to the area are plentiful. On the East Fork, acclimations occur at Hantz Creek in Frona County Park, and excellent angling is also available here. Land ownership along the East Fork is a "checkerboard" pattern, with alternating sections of private lands and BLM-

administered public lands. Upstream of Frona Park, to the marker at the lower end of Brewster Gorge, the majority of fish will be wild steelhead providing for a catch-and-release fishery.

The Middle Fork Coquille River has no hatchery steelhead releases. This river, characterized by boulder and "pocket water", is a spawning and rearing area for wild steelhead. The steelhead angling here is primarily catch-and-release for unmarked fish, but definitely an area to leave the crowds behind. While their presence is very low, adipose fin-clipped steelhead are legal to harvest in the Middle Fork.

A steelhead telemetry study has been conducted the last two winter seasons, and funding will be sought to conduct additional tagging and tracking in 2008-09. The first two years of the study were funded by a Restoration and Enhancement program (R&E) grant. The study includes radio telemetry, creel survey, and observations on spawning grounds. Preliminary results from radio telemetry showed heavy concentrations of hatchery adult steelhead in the area of the smolt acclimation/release sites, indicating success in the use of acclimation to concentrate returning adult hatchery steelhead in areas of high angler use. The study will also look at whether or not hatchery steelhead are mixing with wild steelhead on the spawning grounds, and the success of providing anglers with a high catch rate on hatchery steelhead. Most of the radio tags placed in steelhead were "sponsored" by individuals, corporations, or angler groups. Sponsors were given the opportunity to name their sponsored fish, and received in-season and post-season reports on the movement and behavior of their tagged steelhead. Results of the first two seasons are under analysis, and future funding may be sought for an additional study.

Tenmile Lakes Basin

Steelhead angling access is available at the Forest Service's Spinreel Park, just west of Highway 101. This area is popular for plunkers and drift anglers. The Forest Service charges a fee for day use in the park. Steelhead smolts are acclimated and released at the mouth of Saunders Creek in Spinreel Park, and at the outlet to Eel Lake. Adult hatchery steelhead are drawn back to these areas and provide for excellent catch rates. Steelhead angling is open in Eel Creek (below Eel Lake) from January 1 through April 30. Lower Tenmile Creek is an interesting water body to fish for winter steelhead. Consisting of mostly sand bottom, it has a different "feel" than fishing rivers with a gravel bottom. It can be difficult to locate where fish will hold in this creek, as it does not exhibit the typical pool-riffle pattern like other rivers. Fishing lower Tenmile Creek downstream of Spinreel Park presents a hike through the dunes, and offers a unique steelhead angling experience.

The Tenmile Lakes and Eel Lake are open year-round for harvest of adipose fin-clipped steelhead. Anglers often troll the upper ends of the lake arms for steelhead. Many unmarked steelhead are destined for the tributary streams emptying into these lake arms, however, and they must be released unharmed. Rainbow trout over 20 inches in Tenmile Lakes are considered steelhead from January 1 until April 30, and from November 1 through December 31. These fish may be harvested if they are adipose fin-clipped, and must be tagged as a steelhead. From May 1 to Oct. 31, rainbow trout over 20 inches will be considered trout, and may be harvested one fish per day, in accordance with Southwest Zone regulations. They do not need to be fin-clipped to harvest during this "trout" angling period, nor do they need to be recorded on a tag. This regulation allows harvest of some large "trophy" rainbow trout from the ODFW stocking program that sometimes achieve a large size. Anglers have reported rainbow that have been 17" in length or more. A few have been reported as exceeding 20". This is not a directed program, but an offshoot of the ODFW legal stocking program and also the productivity of the Tenmile

Lakes. During the period when wild steelhead are passing through the lakes on their way to spawning grounds, this regulation helps protects the unmarked fish from harvest.

Umpqua River Basin

Note: This summer, the Fish and Wildlife Commission voted to close the retention of wild steelhead in both the mainstem Umpqua and the North Umpqua. This regulation change takes effect on January 1, 2008. Even without a wild fish harvest this year, anglers should still enjoy good fishing and will be able to harvest some nice hatchery steelhead.

The Umpqua River Basin has a strong population of winter steelhead. Fishing opportunities within the basin are best from late January through March, with peak harvest from February through March. The Umpqua River mainstem and North Umpqua River to Soda Springs Dam, Smith River, South Umpqua River, and Cow Creek are all open for adipose fin-clipped winter steelhead angling. Early December rains and recent high winter flows will affect winter steelhead fishing throughout the Umpqua Basin. The North Umpqua and Smith River are typically the first waters to come back into fishable shape. The mainstem Umpqua and South Umpqua are best fished on the rise or fall of flow events. Higher flows cause the migrating winter steelhead to travel closer to the banks making them easier for bank anglers to catch. Many of the best plunking holes can only be fished at higher flows. Contact the District Office of ODFW at Roseburg, 541-440-3353, for more information on angling techniques, and up-to - date angling conditions.

In 2007, a total of 9,371 winter steelhead crossed Winchester Dam. This was the third highest count since 1997-98, and exceeds the 9 year average of 8,300 fish. Data combined from Winchester Dam fish counts and radio telemetry studies in the basin estimated that the overall 2007 run in the Umpqua basin was about 37,700 steelhead. Updated Winchester Dam counts are also posted on the ODFW website at www.dfw.state.or.us.

Winter steelhead angling in the mainstem Umpqua River begins just above tidal influence at Scottsburg. Bank angling areas begin at Family Camp and continue upstream on the south side of the Umpqua River to Lutsinger Creek. Sawyer's Rapids and Scotts Creek are just upstream and are popular bank and drift boat spots. Drift boaters can access the river at the Scotts Creek boat ramp and the Sawyers Rapids RV Park. Bank anglers can take advantage of the Bunch Bar wayside, which is owned by Douglas County. Located on the south side of the river downstream of Bunch Bar is the Hesters boat ramp. Boat anglers put in and fish upstream of the boat ramp. Boat angling is also available upstream of the town of Elkton, at Yellow Creek, Osprey, James Woods, and Umpqua boat ramps. There is also access at Cleveland Rapids, and River Forks Park boat ramps. Bank angling can also be successful at Yellow Creek, Cleveland Rapids, and River Forks Park. Day drift trips can be made from many of these ramps. Anglers are reminded that 100 percent of the hatchery adult population passes through these angling locations. Based on data collected, approximately 50% of the wild winter steelhead run use the mainstem Umpqua and tributaries for spawning.

North Umpqua River

Boat access is readily available on the North Umpqua River. Hestness Landing provides access for anglers to the lower North Umpqua River, and Amacher Park boat ramp is located just below Winchester Dam. A drift from Amacher Park to Hestness Landing is often productive for winter steelhead anglers. Above Winchester Dam, boat access is available at Whistlers Bend Park, Gravel Pit boat ramp, Colliding Rivers' boat ramp, and a drift boat slide on Lone Rock Road. A boat take-out-only is located on the south side of the river off of Page Road. Bank angling is

limited to Whistlers Bend Park, near Colliding Rivers, and just below Rock Creek. Winter steelhead fishing from the flies-only area to Soda Springs Dam is limited to bank angling. Anglers need to remember that the North Umpqua no longer has a wild fish harvest. Adipose fin-clipped steelhead may be kept in this area, but few fin-clipped fish stray past Rock Creek. Catch and release angling with fly fishing gear is good above Rock Creek. There is a summer steelhead hatchery program on the North Umpqua. The goal of the program is to release about 100,000 summer steelhead smolts each year. This provides a hatchery run that starts in March and continues through the fall.

South Umpqua River

The South Umpqua is the center of the Umpqua's winter steelhead hatchery program. The goal of the hatchery program is to acclimate and release 80,000 –120,000 winter steelhead smolts per year. Acclimating the smolts help ensure that they will return to the area thereby enhancing the fishery and reducing straying by the hatchery fish. To help maintain the best possible genetics for the hatchery program, about 70% or more of the fish used for the broodstock are wild fish. Some of these fish are provided to the program through guides who have received permits from the ODFW and Oregon State Police, while the rest of the fish are captured at various traps in the South Umpqua basin.

The South Umpqua winter steelhead program also provides a lot of public outreach. Volunteers from ODFW's STEP program are an integral part of operating the acclimation sites and assisting with the broodstock collection. The ODFW also runs one acclimation site in cooperation with a school. The STEP program and volunteers provide a variety of tours and field events at the acclimation sites so visitors can learn about fish life-cycles, the needs of fish, and fish management techniques.

The returning hatchery adults from the South Umpqua are available to anglers in the mainstem Umpqua and South Umpqua Rivers, including Cow Creek. Since these steelhead spent 2 years at Rock Creek Hatchery on the North Umpqua prior to acclimation, some hatchery winter steelhead do stray into the North Umpqua. Overall, the wild and hatchery returns should be average in 2008.

The South Umpqua River and Cow Creek provide an excellent opportunity to catch adipose fin-clipped steelhead. The Umpqua Fish District maintains two acclimation sites on Canyon Creek and one on Deer Creek. Adipose fin-clipped winter steelhead smolts are held at the sites for three weeks, and then are released each spring into the South Umpqua River. This provides hatchery fish that linger in the Canyonville area and Roseburg area. Both bank and boat access is available to anglers on the South Umpqua and Cow Creek. Boat ramps include Templeton Beach, in Roseburg, Douglas County Fair Grounds, and Happy Valley. Several unimproved boat ramps are located at Boomer Hill, Gazley Bar, Stanton Park, and Canyonville County Park. These boat ramps tend to be in the portion of the South with the highest concentration of hatchery fish. Above Canyonville there are unimproved ramps at Days Creek, Lavadoure Creek, Milo, and Tiller. Catch and release for wild steelhead is popular in this upper section of the South. Bank angling can be good at Templeton Beach, the Myrtle Creek Bridge, and Stanton County Park. There is also bank fishing available behind Seven Feathers Casino. Cow Creek opportunities are limited to bank angling, which is quite productive. Both Cow Creek and the South Umpqua River also provide above-average opportunities to catch and release large wild winter steelhead.

Smith River
Smith River provides anglers an opportunity to catch and release wild winter steelhead. The regulations do allow harvest of adipose-clipped steelhead, but there is no hatchery program in the Smith River basin and stray hatchery fish are rare Bank access below Smith River Falls is limited due to private landownership. Boat access below the falls is available at the Wasson Creek Bridge, a drift boat slide near Dailey Creek, a wayside just above Doe Creek, and a unimproved boat slide just below the falls. Bank angling access improves above Smith River Falls, as landownership becomes BLM and private industrial. Several unimproved boat slides exist above the falls, with good boat access at Vincent Creek. Several good drifts are available in the Smith River basin

Angling Techniques
Bank anglers on the mainstem find success plunking with a spin-n-glo, with or without prawns or roe, on a 20-24-inch leader, rigged with appropriate weight from a three-way swivel. Bank anglers on the North and South Umpqua Rivers prefer drift fishing with a corky, yarn and roe rig. Most will use pencil lead or a slinky about 24 inches above the bait, with just enough weight to keep the bait near the bottom. Most boaters in the Umpqua basin prefer side drifting or pulling plugs.

Rogue River Basin
The Rogue River offers steelhead fishing opportunities nearly every month of the year. Winter steelhead migrate up the Rogue from December through May, followed by summer steelhead May through November. A strong run of wild winter steelhead is supplemented by releases of hatchery fish in the Rogue and Applegate rivers. Returns are likely to be slightly below average for 2008; however, there should still be plenty of steelhead to provide good angling when river conditions are favorable. Steelhead provide a popular fishery on the Rogue River, but do not draw the huge crowds like spring chinook. Bait, lure, and fly anglers all enjoy good success. The Rogue has not experienced the extreme weather conditions and flooding seen in other parts of western Oregon this winter. Even when winter freshets create high flows and turbid water, anglers can typically still find fishable water on the Rogue between Cole Rivers Hatchery and Big Butte Creek, where the reservoir outflow of clear water makes up most of the river flow. Following a freshet, the Illinois sub-basin clears more quickly than the remainder of the Rogue.

Middle Rogue River
Winter steelhead normally start to arrive in the area around Grants Pass in late December, with the highest abundance occurring in February and March. There is plenty of good bank access along the middle Rogue. Between the city, county, and state parks, and the federal recreational areas, there are over 20 developed access sites. In addition, much of the land along the river below Hellgate Canyon is owned by the Bureau of Land Management. Some of the most productive sites include Valley of the Rogue State Park, Matson Park, Griffin Park, and Robertson Bridge. Bank anglers drift bait, cast lures, plunk, and fly fish.

This section of the river also offers good opportunities for fishing from both drift and motorized boats. With boats ramps distributed every three to five miles along the river, there are a lot of options. Boat anglers cast bait, lures, and flies; back bounce and side drift bait; and backtroll plugs. The new boat ramp at Coyote-Evans Park in the City of Rogue River is now open. No ramps are available between Coyote-Evans and Savage Rapids Dam. Drift boat anglers will not be able to pull out over the rocks at Savage Rapids Park due to ongoing construction. For the section from Hog Creek (below Merlin) to Gold Ray Dam (near Gold Hill), anglers may keep

non-adipose fin-clipped steelhead at least 24 inches in length, one per day and five per year, from Feb. 1 to April 30. Adipose fin-clipped steelhead may be kept the entire year.

Upper Rogue River

Winter steelhead are normally caught in the upper river above Gold Ray Dam (near Gold Hill) from February through mid-May, with peak fishing activity occurring in March and early April. Bank angling access in this stretch is good. Bank anglers can enjoy good success between the hatchery and the Highway 62 Bridge, and at public access points such as Casey State Park, Rogue Elk Park, and Touvelle State Park. The river gets smaller in this section, with more defined holes. The area just below Cole Rivers Hatchery usually remains fishable when the rest of the river is rendered not fishable by storm events. Drifting bait, casting lures, and back-trolling plugs are all popular techniques. Later in the season, fly fishing can be very productive. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife maintains a fish counting station at Gold Ray Dam to monitor the abundance and timing of the various runs in the upper Rogue River. This information can be viewed on the Department's web site at www.dfw.state.or.us/fish/fish_counts/gold_ray_dam.asp. In the reach from Gold Ray Dam to Cole Rivers Hatchery, anglers may keep non-adipose fin-clipped steelhead at least 24 inches in length, one per day and five per year, from Feb. 1- April 30. Adipose fin-clipped steelhead may be kept the entire year.

Illinois River

The Illinois River provides excellent catch and release angling for non-adipose fin-clipped winter steelhead up to Pomeroy Dam. A few adipose fin-clipped hatchery steelhead and rainbow trout stray from the Rogue River into the Illinois and may be kept; however few are available during the winter. Winter steelhead are caught from December through March, with peak activity usually occurring in January and February, depending on river conditions. The Illinois River flows out of California into the Illinois Valley, before entering a long canyon leading to the Rogue River at Agness. In the Illinois Valley, private land limits access to the river. In the canyon, most of the land is in public ownership. A lack of developed access points and technical whitewater limits angling opportunities from a boat. In addition, topography in the canyon makes access to the river difficult in most places, but this also keeps the angling pressure down. Anglers willing to make the effort can have a beautiful section of river to themselves. With clear water, outstanding scenery, and big fish, the Illinois River is a good destination for a quality angling experience. The river is full of boulders that make drift fishing difficult in most places, so casting flies and lures are popular angling methods. Due to the local geology, the flow in the Illinois can increase rapidly during a storm; however, the river drops and clears quickly afterward. The mainstem of the Illinois River upstream to Pomeroy Dam near Cave Junction is open for adipose fin-clipped steelhead and trout from Jan. 1 to March 31, and May 24 to Dec. 31. The river is closed to salmon angling. Five adipose fin-clipped rainbow trout may be kept per day, eight-inch minimum length. All non-adipose fin-clipped rainbow trout and steelhead and all cutthroat trout must be released unharmed. Angling is restricted to artificial flies and lures only.

Applegate River

The Applegate River is smaller than the neighboring rivers, and offers good opportunities for wading anglers due to well-defined holes and runs, and a gravel bottom that makes it easier to fish. Winter steelhead are usually caught in the lower river starting in mid-January, with the fishery peaking from mid-February through the end of the season on March 31. Fishing in March can be excellent. Drifting bait works well, and casting spoons is popular. The river also offers one of the best opportunities in the area to catch a winter steelhead on a fly. Traditional

steelhead flies and nymphs both work well. Fly anglers will find the best conditions when flows out of Applegate Dam are below 800 cfs, but the river is fishable at higher flows as well. Reservoir outflows can be monitored at the Copper USGS stream flow gauge (#14362000) at http://waterdata.usgs.gov. No angling is allowed from a floating device. Much of the river is in private ownership, so anglers must use caution and always avoid trespassing. Cantrall Buckley Park and Fish Hatchery Park are prime fishing sites. The mainstem Applegate upstream to Applegate Dam is open to angling for adipose fin-clipped steelhead from Jan. 1 through March 31. Use of bait is allowed. All non-adipose fin-clipped rainbow trout, steelhead, and cutthroat trout must be released unharmed.

Willamette Zone

Winter steelhead begin moving through the Willamette system during the winter months, with the lower river fishery beginning in December. The native late-run steelhead headed upriver really start to run during the latter part of February and continue into early May. Returns for the last four years have averaged 12,500 fish over Willamette Falls in Oregon City. Hatchery returns to the lower river over the past few years have also been note-worthy. Prospects for this season should be good in the Willamette Zone for the persistent angler.

Lower Willamette

The fishery for winter steelhead in the lower Willamette River (below Willamette Falls in Oregon City) usually begins in early December. A dry spell followed by a high flow event in December typically brings in the first flush of winter steelhead into the Willamette. With the change to a native broodstock in the Clackamas River, winter steelhead should be available in the lower Willamette through the early part of the spring Chinook season. Many of the fish caught are headed for the Clackamas River and tributaries above the falls including the Molalla, Tualatin, Santiam, and McKenzie rivers. The most popular and accessible bank-angling site in the lower Willamette is located at Meldrum Bar in Gladstone. Many long-time Meldrum Bar anglers have good success in high, muddy water by fishing close to the bank (within 15 feet) using brightly colored gear such as a Spin-n-Glo or spinner. The best tip would be to spend some time on the bank watching other anglers to see how it is done, as the Meldrum Bar fishery can be a little different than most bank fishing. Winter steelhead are known to hold in shallow water below the mouth of the Clackamas River, waiting for higher flows and warmer water temperature. Steelhead in the Willamette are very lethargic and less prone to taking the bait during low, cold winter flows. Look for river flows ranging from 12,500 – 20,000 cfs and water temperature from 42-48 degrees for the best opportunity. Willamette River flows, temperatures, and Willamette Falls fish counts can be found at http://www.dfw.state.or.us/fish/fish_counts/willamette%20falls.asp. Keep in mind while viewing the fish counts that steelhead passing the falls after May 15 are all considered summer steelhead.

Clackamas River

The Clackamas River provides a highly valued fishery near the Portland Metropolitan area. In fact, it is the leader in recreational catch for the Columbia River tributaries. The hatchery winter steelhead program on the Clackamas River is comprised of two stocks of fish, the Clackamas stock and the Eagle Creek stock. The Clackamas stock is a localized stock that incorporates wild fish returning to the river into the production. It is important to keep in mind that with the discontinuation of Big Creek stock releases in 2001, the run timing of winter steelhead in the Clackamas is now later than many anglers remember. Winter steelhead fishing usually begins slowly in December, but noticeable numbers of fish do not enter the system until high water events occur in January. Catch of Eagle Creek stock usually peaks from mid-January to mid–

February, with the run typically lasting from late December through March. Catch of Clackamas River stock usually peaks in March and April, with the run ranging from late January through April. Even though these fish peak in the spring, keep in mind that they can still be caught in the lower river and even in the Willamette during late winter. Also, summer steelhead are released into the Clackamas River and return from March through October (peak late spring and early fall). Counts of fish passing North Fork Dam on the Clackamas River can be found at http://www.portlandgeneral.com/community_and_env/hydropower_and_fish/clackamas/daily_fish_counts.asp?bhcp=1. Hatchery fish are acclimated and released from the Clackamas Fish Hatchery at McIver State Park, Cassidy Pond near river mile 11 (just above the confluence of Foster Creek), and the Eagle Creek National Fish Hatchery on Eagle Creek. In addition, a new acclimation pond was used for the first time last year at the mouth of Foster Creek (river mile 11). The Clackamas River above North Fork Reservoir is managed as a "Wild Fish Sanctuary" and is closed to angling for steelhead and salmon. The Clackamas River typically fishes best at flows with a gage reading of 10-13 feet, although anglers have been known to catch fish at levels up to 14.5 feet (measured at Rivermill Dam; http://waterdata.usgs.gov/or/nwis/uv/?site_no=14210000&agency_cd=USGS). When the river is high and off color, anglers concentrate their efforts at the mouths of tributary streams such as Clear Creek, Eagle Creek, or Dog Creek (at the hatchery outlet). The best fishing is two to three days after a high water event, when the river has dropped and fish start to hold in pools or pool tail-outs.

Of special interest is a study undertaken during the summer and fall of 2007 by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Oregon State University Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, and the Oregon Hatchery Research Center. Approximately 80 hatchery summer steelhead were implanted with radio-tags and the location and behavior of the tagged fish were tracked. The small radio transmitting tag sent a signal that was recorded by one of several stationary and portable receivers along the river. The information recorded measured the behavior and movements by telling officials where and when the fish were moving, as well as the type of habitat they preferred. As some fish may still be in the system, it is useful to know that radio-tagged fish can be identified by an antenna trailing from the abdomen, and a plastic tag inserted just below the dorsal fin on the back of the fish. The plastic tag carries a unique number to identify each fish. The department reminds anglers it is against the law for anyone to retain a radio-tagged fish in this river, and these fish must be released unharmed. In addition, these fish have been anesthetized for surgery to implant the radio tags and are not fit for human consumption. Anyone who catches one of the tagged steelhead is asked to record the number printed on the plastic tag, without removing the tag from the fish, and notify ODFW of the date and location where the fish was caught and released by calling the Clackamas Office any time at (971) 673-6000. All reports of tagged fish will provide important information for the study.

Bank anglers can find access to the Clackamas River in the High Rocks/Cross Park area in Gladstone, Riverside Park in Clackamas, in Carver near the mouth of Clear Creek, Barton Park, McIver Park near Dog Creek, and near River Mill Dam. Easy access to Eagle Creek can be found at Bonnie Lure and Eagle Fern Park. Walking down Eagle Creek to its confluence with the mainstem Clackamas can also access good bank angling area on the Clackamas River. Boat anglers can find ramps at McIver Park (note: upper ramp should only be used by experienced boaters due to hazardous whitewater), Feldheimer's Road, Barton Park, Carver Park, Riverside Park, or Clackamette Park.

Eagle Creek

Eagle Creek offers a popular winter steelhead fishery that provides easy access for the bank angler. The first steelhead of the season will typically start showing up right after Thanksgiving, but it is usually early January before anglers will find significant numbers of fish in the creek. Excellent winter steelhead fishing can be expected in Eagle Creek from January on into March. In addition, many of the steelhead caught at Meldrum Bar and in the lower Clackamas are actually destined for Eagle Creek National Fish Hatchery. Eagle Creek is very susceptible to precipitation and its flows can change dramatically after a good rainfall. Often it will blow out quickly and be not fishable in a matter of hours. On the flip side, it also clears very quickly. It doesn't take long for the water color to improve, even though the flows may be somewhat high. If there is a long period of cold, dry weather it can get very low and clear, making steelhead angling a bit more of a challenge. Many different types of gear can be successful on the creek, with color often dictated by the clarity of the water. Try brighter colors during the murky water conditions and darker, less flamboyant colors during times when the creek is crystal clear. Types of gear that have consistently proven to be successful would include bobber and jig, sand shrimp, corkies and yarn, and small egg clusters with yarn. The skilled fly angler can do very well using steelhead flies also. Starting from the mouth of the creek, the first place to try would be Bonnie Lure Park, which is off of Dowty Road. Take a right from Hwy 224 in the community of Eagle Creek to find the park area. From Bonnie Lure Park you can also access nearly a half-mile of the Clackamas River for bank angling. The creek passes under Hwy 224 just past Eagle Creek Store and there is also some bank access there. Very close to this highway crossing is Wildcat Mountain Road. Go left towards the hatchery, then follow the hatchery signs on Eagle Fern Road, you will soon encounter several pull-offs on the right that provide great access to the creek. A short way up from there is Eagle Fern Park that has many good holes to try. This access area runs for about a half mile on up to Snuffin Road Bridge. From Snuffin Road you can continue up Eagle Fern Road (also called George Road), and after about three miles, turn right down Rainbow Road to Eagle Creek National Fish Hatchery. Angling can be very good below the hatchery if you are willing to make the hike. Much of Eagle Creek flows through private property. Longview Fiber and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are the largest landowners along the creek and they are not usually concerned about anglers for most of the year. However, it is advisable that you get permission before accessing Eagle Creek on individual private landowner's property.

Sandy River

The Sandy River provides another highly valued fishery near the Portland Metropolitan area. In fact, it is the second highest in recreational catch for Columbia River tributaries. The localized hatchery program is comprised of a native broodstock, meaning that the hatchery fish are derived from a portion of wild fish returning to the river. Since the Big Creek stock is no longer released into the river, the run timing has become more like the wild returns. This results in a later run than most anglers are used to in the Sandy River. Winter steelhead begin returning to the river in December, but larger numbers do not start showing up in the catch until mid-February. The fishery usually runs from January through April. It is important to note that summer steelhead are also released into the Sandy River, and return from March through June. Past counts of fish passing Marmot Dam on the Sandy River can be found at http://www.portlandgeneral.com/community_and_env/hydropower_and_fish/sandy/daily_fish_counts.asp?bhcp=1. All Sandy River winter steelhead are released from the Sandy Fish Hatchery on Cedar Creek, so the majority of angler effort should concentrate from Cedar Creek downstream. The Sandy River is a glacier-fed system that typically runs very muddy when warm winter rains melt the glaciers on Mt. Hood. The river will clear up within 3-4 days after high water if the snow level drops below 4,000 feet and the rain stops or is reduced to showers.

The Sandy fishes best at gage readings of 8-11 feet (measured at Marmot Dam; http://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/uv?14142500).

Of special note is the recent removal of Marmot Dam at river mile 30. The river became free-flowing again in mid-October 2007, providing fish unimpeded passage to the upper basin. With this dam removal, be aware that river flows and patterns will likely continue to change. It may take several years for the sediment to leave the system, possibly altering your favorite fishing hole in the meantime. In addition, the angling deadline, which was located at Marmot Dam, will be permanently located at the mouth of the Salmon River beginning January 1, 2008. Please keep in mind that the construction zone at this site is currently closed to public access. Please obey these "No Trespassing" signs for as long as they are posted. The area above the deadline is still managed as a "Wild Fish Sanctuary" and is closed to angling for salmon and steelhead.

Anglers can access the Sandy River from many parks including Lewis and Clark, Dabney, Oxbow, and Dodge. Access is also available at the mouth of Cedar Creek near the Sandy Fish Hatchery. Boat anglers access the river at Dodge Park (recommended only for expert boat operators due to hazardous rapids), Oxbow Park, Dabney Park, and Lewis & Clark Park near Troutdale. Jet boats are allowed downstream from Dabney Park. Please remember also that angling from a floating device is only allowed starting from a point that is 200 feet downstream of the Oxbow Park boat ramp.

For more information on steelhead fishing in the Lower Willamette, Clackamas, or Sandy rivers, contact the North Willamette Watershed District office at (971) 673-6011.

Upper Willamette

There are no longer any hatchery winter steelhead programs in place for the upper Willamette, so virtually all returning adult winter steelhead are unmarked and must be released unharmed. Early in the season, anglers can target steelhead in the mainstem Willamette River between San Salvador, near St. Paul and the mouth of the Santiam River. One popular and successful method is to plunk near the bank, either from shore at numerous greenway access points or from a boat that can be launched at one of the four public ramps in this stretch of river. About 70-80 percent of the fish ascending Willamette Falls are destined for the Santiam River system, and about two-thirds of these fish are headed into the North Santiam. Winter steelhead are available in the Santiam as early as late February and contribute significantly to the fishery through April. By then, summer run steelhead, most of which are marked (adipose fin-clipped) hatchery fish, have moved in and become the target catch. Winter steelhead typically are fished with a variety of steelhead lures, spin-n-glo with bait, or bobber and jig. The North Santiam River is generally preferred by anglers over the South Santiam because water clarity is better during the winter and spring months, and both bank and boat access are better.

Both the North and South Santiam rivers are stocked with summer steelhead smolts that return to the rivers after spending 2 or 3 years in the ocean. They begin to show up in the Santiam in mid-April with the run peaking from May through July. Anglers typically fish low in the system early in the season and move up the streams along with the fish. Summer steelhead are collected through the summer months at ODFW trapping facilities near the dams and transported back down the river to be fished on again. A significant portion of these "recycled" fish end up being caught by fishermen on their second or third run up the river. Boaters do well on both forks, but bank access is more plentiful on the North Santiam. A late spurt of fish destined for the Little North Santiam can provide good opportunities for steelheading October through December.

Water conditions in the North and South Santiam Rivers varies. Typically, flows are relatively high in November and early December as the Corps of Engineers drafts the reservoirs down to accommodate flood waters. After that, flows are driven by precipitation until reservoir refilling begins in February. A good site for up-to-date flow information is at the USGS website. http://waterdata.usgs.gov/or/nwis/current?type=flow

The Molalla River is another stream in the Upper Willamette that can provide good opportunity for catch and release fishing for winter steelhead. The Molalla River is no longer stocked with hatchery winter steelhead, but adipose clipped summer steelhead may be present in the system and can be found in many of the same areas where winter steelhead are typically found. The river is open to fishing year-round for adipose fin-clipped salmon and steelhead up to the Horse Creek Bridge located on BLM land in the upper basin. For more information on steelhead fishing in the Molalla River, call the North Willamette ODFW Watershed District office at (971) 673-6011. For information on other Upper Willamette tributaries, call the ODFW South Willamette Watershed District office at (541) 757-4186 x 249 or the ODFW Springfield Field office at (541) 726-3515.

Central Zone

Angling Techniques
Anglers use a wide variety of techniques. Successful anglers cast sinking flies, spinners, spoons, or plugs, or drift fish with artificial lures and jigs.

Hood River
Unlike most winter steelhead streams, the Hood River provides steelhead fishing opportunities for summer and winter run steelhead during the winter months. Angler opportunity peaks, however, when the winter run steelhead begin returning in late winter. As one of the easternmost populations of winter steelhead in the Columbia Basin, the Hood River run is later than most winter run populations. The hatchery population is comprised entirely from wild broodstock, so hatchery and wild fish return at nearly the same time. Winter run steelhead typically start returning to the Hood River in late January and continue through May, with the peak of the run not occurring until April. Unique to the Hood, anglers have the opportunity to catch winter run steelhead, as well as summer run steelhead on the same trip. Summer run steelhead have a very protracted run timing in the Hood River, and are available to anglers throughout the year. While the winter run may be late in the Hood, anglers should not discount the opportunity to fish early in the season for early returning winter run fish, while also fishing for summer run fish.

Research work has been conducted on both hatchery and wild steelhead in the Hood River since the early 1990's. This work is primarily based out the Powerdale Fish Facility at Powerdale Dam, located at rivermile 4.5, where all returning steelhead are trapped and management decisions are made on each returning fish. Wild origin fish are tagged and released upstream of facility, although a few fish are held for future hatchery broodstock. Hatchery steelhead escapement is controlled upstream of the dam, and hatchery origin fish in excess of escapement needs are tagged and returned to the mouth of the river, where they offer anglers additional angling opportunity. Beginning in 2008, anglers will be able to view weekly trap catches from the Powerdale Fish Facility on ODFW's web site under the fishing resources section at http://www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/fishing/.

Research biologists generate yearly predictions for the wild component of the Hood River winter run. This estimate is based upon natural production estimates, basin environmental conditions,

and several other factors. The prediction for this year's wild winter run to the Hood River is approximately 250 fish. The prediction does not include the hatchery component of the population returning to the Hood River, as factors effecting their survival are different from that of wild fish. Hatchery winter steelhead releases in the Hood River have averaged between 40,000 to 50,000, which return approximately 1,000 hatchery fish annually back to the Powerdale Fish Facility. An angler harvest survey has been conducted on the Hood River since 1996 in order to evaluate various management actions. During that period, angler harvest has averaged approximately 500 hatchery steelhead per year.

The Hood River is open to adipose fin-clipped steelhead the entire year from the mouth of the river to Powerdale Dam, located about 4.5 miles upstream. Anglers are allowed an additional adipose fin-clipped steelhead per day, for a total daily limit of 3 adult fish. PacifiCorps, which owns and manages much of the land downstream of the dam, allows public access throughout their lands. The Hood River is known for its erratic flow regime, and anglers should pay attention USGS flow information available on the internet at http://waterdata.usgs.gov/or/nwis/current?type=flow for optimum fishing conditions. In general, anglers will find best angling success on dropping flows following high water events. Successful anglers use a variety of techniques from casting flies, spinners or spoons, or drift-fishing with a variety of baits and jigs.

Deschutes River

While the Deschutes River is famous for its summer run steelhead, however, good fishing opportunities exist well into the winter for summer run hatchery fish remaining in the river. Deschutes steelhead typically don't begin spawning until early spring and slowly migrating or holding fish provide anglers excellent opportunity throughout most of the winter. While not as popular as the summer fishery, winter time steelhead anglers can be quite successful. Anglers will experience greater solitude than in the busy summer months, with considerably fewer other anglers on the river. Winter anglers on the Deschutes should be able to get away from the typically wet winter steelhead angling conditions in other places in Oregon as anglers can often experience dry but cool temperatures in the arid Deschutes River Canyon.

The ODFW releases approximately 180,000 hatchery steelhead annually into the Deschutes from Round Butte Fish Hatchery. Hatchery fish are released into the Deschutes at rivermile 100, downstream from the base of PGE's Pelton Dam. Additionally, somewhat unique to the Deschutes is the large number of hatchery fish from other hatcheries, or strays as they are called, which enter the Deschutes. These stray hatchery steelhead are from hatcheries throughout the Columbia Basin, and often stay in the Deschutes for extended periods, where they provide anglers with considerable additional harvest opportunity. Good numbers of steelhead can be found throughout the river during the winter, but areas upstream from Sherars Falls generally provide some of the greatest angler success. The ODFW estimated nearly 26,000 hatchery fish and 4,000 wild fish migrated past Sherars Falls last season. Preliminary ODFW data suggests that another larger return of hatchery fish will be available to anglers this winter. ODFW conducts yearly summer steelhead population estimates for the Deschutes from the Sherars Falls Fish Trap. All fish captured at the Sherars Falls Trap are tagged which assists biologists to estimate the run size. Anglers are encouraged to contact the local ODFW district by phone at 541-296-4628, or through the ODFW web page if they catch any tagged steelhead in the Deschutes. Tag recoveries from anglers are utilized in developing the yearly population estimates. Current catch data from the Sherars Falls Trap is available on ODFW's web site under the fishing resources section (http://www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/fishing/).

The Deschutes River is open for steelhead angling the entire year from the mouth of the river upstream to the northern boundary of Warms Springs Indian Reservation. Anglers are reminded to consult current Oregon Sport Fishing Regulations before fishing the Deschutes. Bait fishing in prohibited on most of the Deschutes, except in a short reach downstream from Sherars Falls. Large tracts of public land provide bank access, along with boat access throughout much of the river. Anglers are allowed an additional fin-clipped steelhead per day, for a total daily limit of 3 adult fish.

Northeast Zone

Grande Ronde and Imnaha Rivers
This year is again expected bring excellent steelhead angling opportunity in the Grand Ronde and Imnaha systems. Substantial returns of both hatchery and wild fish have moved above Lower Granite dam on the Snake River. Wild and hatchery summer steelhead enter these eastern Oregon streams in late summer through spring. Harvest is limited to adipose fin-clipped hatchery fish only.

The best fall and early winter angling opportunity is restricted to the lower reaches of both the Grande Ronde and Imnaha rivers. Public bank angling access to both streams is generally good. The Troy area, on the lower Grande Ronde, contains substantial Bureau of Land Management and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife lands. The Imnaha River below Fence Creek boasts several points in US Forest Service ownership. Mid to late-winter offers angling opportunity up into the Wallowa River and middle reaches of the Imnaha River as fish push upstream. Public access is plentiful along the lower 20 miles of the Wallowa River. However, the upper reaches of the Imnaha River are mostly private.

Water conditions often limit angler success during these larger run years. Icing and high, turbid flows can affect angling for much of the winter some years. Generally, flows below 2000 cfs on the Grande Ronde River and 500 cfs on the Imnaha River provide the best fishing. Flow information can be found at http://waterdata.usgs.gov/or/nwis/uv/?site_no=13333000&PARAmeter_cd=00065,00060 and http://waterdata.usgs.gov/or/nwis/uv?site_no=13292000, respectively. Given good water conditions, it is not uncommon to see catch rates in the 2-4 hours/fish range during the fall. Catch rates generally drop-off with colder water conditions in late fall and early winter, then pick-up again in late winter. Recent colder weather has created icing conditions and reduced angler effort and success.

Angling Techniques
Successful anglers use a variety of techniques. Casting flies, spinners and spoons, and drift fishing with bait are all effective during moderate temperature conditions. During low flows and/or icing conditions many anglers utilize bobbers and bait or jigs to increase effectiveness by targeting fish holding in deeper, slower water.

Both systems have hatchery programs operated with funding provided through the Lower Snake River Compensation Plan. Hatchery smolt releases are made at two acclimation locations in the Wallowa River system, one near Minam and the other at Wallowa Hatchery near Enterprise. Imnaha smolts are released at an acclimation site on Little Sheep Creek, near the town of Imnaha. The program includes use of the Wallowa stock in the Grande Ronde system. This stock was developed from fish collected at Snake River dams in the late 1970s early and 1980s. An Imnaha River endemic stock is used there. Most adults return to traps at the acclimation

sites. A recent broodstock project in the Grande Ronde attempts to increase the proportion of hatchery fish returning to the river in the fall to compensate for the tendency of the Wallowa stock to arrive later than wild fish. This project is designed to increase the number of fish available to fall anglers and to reduce straying in lower Columbia River tributaries.

For further information contact the ODFW Enterprise District Office at (541) 426-3279.

John Day River

The summer steelhead fishery here has much in common with coastal winter steelhead streams. There are no hatchery fish released into the John Day River and approximately 90 to 95 percent of those caught throughout the entire basin are wild and must be released unharmed. Any hatchery steelhead are strays from other streams and are found mostly in the lower portions of the river below Cottonwood Bridge.

Anglers can help ODFW accomplish its management goals by removing any stray adipose clipped steelhead before they spawn. The fish are small (4-6 lbs) and have been out of the ocean for over 6 months. They do not migrate like a typical summer steelhead but tend to hold in deep slow pools for weeks at a time. Once these preferred holes are located an angler can return to them day after day. There are 340 miles of river open to winter fishing but it can be narrowed down as follows:

In Oct. and Nov. steelhead are only found in the lower 100 miles. They are bright, fat and full of energy. Lures, plugs, bait and flies are all used effectively. The proportion of ad-clipped fish is much higher in this section of the river (approximately 50% are marked but these strays later turn around and return to the Columbia). Access is limited to only three drive-to sites or by boat.

During December and January the fish have migrated up to Kimberly (river mile 185) but cold water and ice limits their willingness to take lures. Bait is the most frequent offering. Access is much more available from Service Creek at river mile (RM) 135 to Kimberly at RM 185 with numerous public land access points and boat launches.

Once February arrives the steelhead have migrated up to where good access is available. The fish split into the three major forks of the river and assume a more normal migration pattern. Temperatures are still cold and high, muddy water frequently disrupts the fishery but between events the fishing can be very productive. Once the ice breaks up in February, the fishery begins in earnest in the Middle and North Fork John Day Rivers. All along the river steelhead turn up the tributaries in preparation to spawn. These tributaries are closed to protect spawners and fishermen are limited to fishing the main river.

The fishery is open year round below Kimberly but most fish are spawned out by April 15. Above Kimberly, the North and Middle forks are open up to where Highway 395 crosses and the mainstem John Day River is open up to Indian Creek above the town of John Day. The season above Kimberly closes April 15. The best access for the February to April fishery is between Kimberly and Service Creek off of Highway 19 onto scattered BLM and private lands. Always ask permission before fishing on private property. Primitive public boat ramps are found at Kimberly, Pine Tree, Shady Grove, Spray, Muleshoe Campground and Service Creek.

Anglers in the lower reaches have good success using typical steelhead fishing tactics; among the most popular are flies, small spinners, and drifting a small bait (prawns, nightcrawlers, or cluster eggs) with a small buoyant float and yarn. The most popular method for the upper river fishery

is to use bait (nightcrawlers, cluster eggs, or prawns) and drift gear. Floats and marabou jigs are becoming more popular, particularly during low water conditions. Angler success is highly dependent upon river conditions.

Umatilla River
Wild and hatchery summer steelhead enter the Umatilla River in late summer through spring. This year is again expected to offer good angling opportunity with an expected return of 2,800 hatchery and wild fish. Approximately 30 percent of the returning steelhead are expected to be harvestable, hatchery-origin fish. Water conditions generally determine angler success. Bank fishing is generally best when river flow ranges from 300-600 cfs. Drift boaters usually prefer about 800 cfs to traverse shallow areas. Fishing success declines rapidly at flows greater than 1,000 cfs. Visit the following website for up-to-date flow information: www.usbr.gov/pn/hydromet/umatilla/index.html.
Bank angling access on publicly owned land in the lower river is limited to Steelhead Park and Riverfront Park at the Westland Road Bridge, and Bureau of Reclamation owned lands downstream of Riverfront Park and downstream of Three Mile Dam. Most fishing in the lower river occurs below Three Mile Dam. A successful fall fishery has developed at the mouth of the Umatilla River in September and October, and anglers are utilizing bobbers, jigs or bait. Upriver fishing is concentrated from Pendleton downstream to Barnhart. Publicly owned access is limited, but the City of Pendleton Parkway provides access to some good fishing holes and several landowners downstream of Pendleton have allowed anglers bank access at several points in past years. Always ask landowner's for permission. The best fishing in this area typically occurs from March through the mid-April closure. Successful anglers cast flies, spinners and spoons, and drift fish with bait. During low flows many anglers utilize bobbers and bait or jigs. For further information contact the ODFW Pendleton District Office (541) 276-2344.

Walla Walla River
Significant numbers of summer steelhead enter the Oregon portion of the Walla Walla River beginning in February. While most of the steelhead returning to Oregon waters are wild, a small number (less than 10%) are hatchery strays. The fishery requires release of wild fish, but harvest of adipose-clipped hatchery fish is allowed. This year is expected to offer fair to good angling opportunity. However, public access is very limited. For further information contact the ODFW Pendleton District Office at (541) 276-2344.

Snake River Zone

Snake River
Large numbers of hatchery steelhead are released in Snake River tributaries and at the base of Hells Canyon Dam. As a result, good numbers of adipose-clipped summer steelhead are generally available for harvest from October through March. This year is no exception. Anglers without jet boats are limited to a few access points on the Oregon side, a couple at Hells Canyon Dam and the other at Dug Bar. Dug Bar is accessed by traveling to Imnaha, then north down the Imnaha River. The road is not suitable for passenger cars.

Fishing conditions in the Snake River just below Hells Canyon Reservoir are usually stable through mid-December due to flow management at upstream dams, but heavy rains can temporarily disrupt water quality and catch rates in other parts of the River. A heavy snow pack and warm weather can also cause fluctuations in flow management during late winter and early spring in preparation for spring runoff. Flow information is found at http://www.idahopower.com/riversrec/waterlevels/streamflow/maps/basinMaps.cfm?basin=1.

The river is large and usually difficult to wade. Updated creel surveys are not available, but angling is generally good from late October through early February just below the dam. Good bank angling is available directly below the dam and about a mile down at Stud Creek, using either bobbers or drift fishing techniques. There is also a lot of fishing out of jet boats using lures, drift-fishing techniques, and plugs. Ethical fishing is very important when boat and bank fishermen are in close quarters with each other. Please be respectful and remember that when boat fishing, do not cast into holes being fished by bank anglers.

To provide additional fishing opportunities, 1000 returning adult steelhead are trapped annually below Hell's Canyon dam and put into Hells Canyon Reservoir. These fish are then considered trout over 20 inches and a tag is not needed, but only one may be kept per day. For further information contact the La Grande District Office at (541) 963-2138 and ask for Tim Bailey or Nadine Craft.

Columbia River Zone

Columbia River (John Day Dam to OR/WA State Line)
Large numbers of steelhead migrate up the Columbia River destined for spawning tributaries throughout the mid and upper Columbia and Snake River basins. Steelhead pass John Day Dam throughout the year, but the primary run is from June through October, with the peak usually in late September. Popular angling locations include the John Day Arm, and the forebay and tailraces at John Day and McNary Dams, at the Umatilla River mouth, and at the Irrigon Fish Hatchery. While most fishing is from boats, bank anglers are successful at both dams and locations near the Oregon and Washington border. Bank anglers generally float bait with bobbers and a few plunk Spin-n-Glo, plugs, or spinners. Boat anglers pull plugs or float bait with bobbers. In most locations, the best fishing typically occurs from mid-October to late November, but can also be quite good at times in December and January. At Irrigon Hatchery, early season steelhead fishing typically runs from mid August to mid October. Steelhead fishing near the hatchery is poor when spawning salmon are present from mid October thru November. Fishing picks up again in December and continues thru March. For further information contact the ODFW Pendleton District Office at (541) 276-2344 or the John Day District Office at (541) 575-1167