

Welcoming Dave Graybill To The Nickel Ads Classifieds

The Fishin' Magician

Happy New Year everyone! I had a Holiday season full of visits with family and some old friends. I ate too much, stayed up too late and overall had a great time. I hope you all did too. As the Holidays fade away we can all get back to business, and the business of planning out winter fishing adventures.

We kicked off the New Year with some disappointing news for steelhead anglers. Most of the steelhead fisheries on the upper Columbia River and some of the tributaries closed on the 2nd of January. This included the whitefish seasons on the Wenatchee, Entiat and Methow rivers. Only the Okanogan and Similkameen rivers remain open to steelhead and whitefish. I had mentioned in previous reports that anglers should expect some closures to the steelhead fishing, but I didn't expect them to be as extensive as they were when announced.

There were several reasons for this action. This year's run had a high percentage of wild or adipose present steelhead. This increased the number of wild fish that were caught and released. This happened even earlier than usual in the season as we've had a very mild winter so far this year, and anglers have been able to fish all of our rivers since the season opened. In most years, ice forming in our tributary streams has made fishing pretty much impossible for large parts of the season. This didn't happen this year. Another factor was the high number of triploids that were being caught on the main stem Columbia River below Chief Joseph and Wells Dams. Although there were adjustments made to compensate for anglers reporting released triploids as released wild steelhead, the mortality rate quota was being reached on the Wenatchee, the Methow as well as the upper Columbia.



The department said that a steelhead run update will be produced next month, and there is the possibility that some fisheries may be reopened. Keep an eye on the WDFW web site and I'll do my best to keep you up to date on any potential reopening of steelhead fisheries.

I have already switched gears. I have plans to fish Rufus Woods, of course, but last weekend I spent a morning at Fish Lake, fishing for perch and rainbow through the ice. An old friend of mine was in the area. Terry Rudnick, author of the best guide book to fishing in Washington, Washington Fishing. He had just completed doing the updates on the seventh edition to the book, which he first put together in 1995. Rudnick and I worked together as writers at Fishing and Hunting News years ago and have stayed in touch

ever since. He called and said he would be spending a few days in Plain, and agreed to an interview on the new book for my Outdoor Insider TV Show, and he also said he wondered if it would be possible to try ice fishing at Fish Lake. He has fished the lake in the spring and summer, but never in the winter. I logged onto lakewenatcheeinfo.com and the Fish Lake web cam every day, watching the ice form, and fortunately there was enough safe ice for trip while he was here.

There was a thin layer of snow, ice and water on top of about 5 inches of good ice on Fish Lake. It was sloppy going out to the middle of the lake, where we drilled our holes and tried our luck. The fishing wasn't great, but we caught some perch and one rainbow. I had brought along a variety of baits, which included Power Bait, nightcrawlers, meal worms and wax worms, and we caught fish on all of them. I did some more video of our ice fishing, and a show that features our interview on the new edition of Washington Fishing, and our morning of ice fishing will be broadcast on the new Outdoor Insider TV Show in late February.

I mentioned in an earlier report that one of the first places to look for good perch fishing through the ice is at the marina in Coulee City. Well, not this year. Kathy Thompson at Big Wally's reminded me

that it will be a while before any fishing will be going on in the marina. Banks Lake was drawn down last year and the marina remains high and dry. She said that work on the South Dam has been completed and the pumps will be turned on to start filling the lake, at a rate of 12 to 16 inches a day. Fishing at Banks Lake is anticipated to be good as the lake fills. Bass and walleye will be looking for food, which has been in short supply as the lake shrank in size last summer and fall.

We are about to start the sports show season and I will remind you about them as they come up. The first one this year will be the Tri-Cities Sportsmen Show at the TRAC in Pasco. It begins on Friday, January 20th and runs through the weekend. This is a nice intimate show where you can really get to talk to the exhibitors and seminar presenters. It is the first show where you can see what's new from some of the manufacturers of fishing and hunting gear, and there are always some great bargains available at these shows, too. On Wednesday, January 25th the Washington Sportsmen's Show starts in Puyallup. This is one of the biggest sports shows on the West Coast.

There is a lot to look forward to in January, both indoors and outside. I plan to be busy finding the best that our region offers for winter fishing, and putting it all on video so you can see it on the new Outdoor Insider TV Show!

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