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Boeing Employees' Rod and Reel Club of Everett

Fishing Report Vol. 5, No. 48 - November 29, 2001

1. BERRC notes and reminders

Meetings are every second Thursday of the month at 6:00pm at the Everett Recreation Center. Come out and check the club out. There are always complimentary snacks and beverages and there is no obligation to join. There is a raffle (\$1 per ticket) open to everyone in which you could win anything from lures and plugs to rods and/or reels. Annual dues are \$20/family membership, \$17/individual membership, and retirees are half price. For a limited time (until we run out) you will receive a free cookbook, valued at \$10, when you become a member.

* The next BERRC meeting on December 13, 2001. The guest speaker for the December meeting is TBD. The smoked fish contest was a tie between Mike Grams' #1 entry and Dwight Kannos' #3 entry. There were a total of 7 entries by 3 members. Robin Okubo brought in some smoked salmon prepared by a smokehouse and wasn't considered a valid entry but was eaten just as well.

* 2002 membership dues are now due. You can pay at the next meeting on December 13, 2001. You will be considered delinquent after the February 14, 2002 meeting.

* Don't forget we are giving away a Little Chief Smoker to a member in good standing and who must be present at the meeting when their name is drawn. If you aren't at the meeting you can't win. Al Moran was drawn during the October meeting. We did not have a drawing for the 150 quart cooler at the November 8th meeting. We will try to give away the 150 quart Igloo cooler at the December 13, 2001 meeting.

* If you are planning to fish you might want to consider joining the Cary Barnes Derby for the largest salmon caught in Areas 8-1, 8-2, 9, 10, 11, 13 and any lakes and tributaries emptying into those areas. The derby ends Dec 31, 2001 and it's winner take all. Winnings dependent on how many entries there are at \$10 per person. Must be a BERRC member or Associate member in good standing or a dependent of same. See official rules in the monthly Newsletter. Current prize money is \$60.00.

* The following are candidates (nominees and or volunteers, for 2002 officer positions:

President	Susan Bowen
Vice-president	Steven Ray
Treasurer	Pat McCartney
Secretary	Donna Mudie

Be sure to come to the meeting on December 13 to vote on the new officers.

2. Fishing regulation changes

Fishers must have a current Washington fishing license. Check the 2000 Fishing in Washington rules pamphlet for details on fishing seasons and regulations. Fishing regulations are subject to change. Check the WDFW Fishing hotline for the latest rule information at (360) 902-2500, press 2 for recreational rules. For the Shellfish Rule Change hotline call (360) 796-3215.

A. November 28, 2001

Wild steelhead must be released on Snohomish River system

Action: The Snohomish River system (Pilchuck River, Raging River, Skykomish River, North Fork Skykomish River, South Fork Skykomish River, Snohomish River, Snoqualmie River, Sultan River, Tokul Creek, Tolt River, and Wallace River) will go to wild steelhead release December 1, 2001. All areas will be closed to the retention of wild steelhead for the entire winter season. Only hatchery steelhead may be retained. Hatchery steelhead are identified by a missing adipose or ventral fin and a healed scar in the location of the missing fin.

Effective date: December 1, 2001 through February 28, 2002.

Species affected: Steelhead

Location: Pilchuck River from its mouth to 500 feet downstream of the Snohomish City Diversion Dam; Raging River from its mouth to Highway 18 bridge; Skykomish River from its mouth to Forks; North Fork Skykomish River from its mouth to 1,000 feet downstream of Bear Creek Falls; South Fork Skykomish River from its mouth to 600 feet downstream of Sunset Falls;

Snohomish River from its mouth (Burlington Northern Railroad Bridges near Highway 529) to confluence of Snoqualmie and Skykomish Rivers; Snoqualmie River from its mouth to Snoqualmie Falls; Sultan River from its mouth to 400 feet downstream of Diversion Dam (river mile 9.7); Tokul Creek from its mouth to posted cable marker (approximately 700 feet upstream of its mouth); Tolt River from its mouth to USGS trolley cable near the confluence of North and South Forks, and Wallace River from its mouth to Olney Creek.

Reason for action: The forecast for Snohomish River wild winter steelhead returning this winter (2001/2002) is less than 4,000 or only about 60% of the basin's winter steelhead spawning escapement goal of 6,500. With no harvestable wild steelhead this year, the wild steelhead release regulation will allow access to the returning hatchery fish while minimizing impacts to wild fish.

Other Information: Anglers should be aware these waters will be closed to all fishing as of March 1, 2002, including the spring catch-and-release fisheries. The sport sturgeon fishery downstream of the Highway 2 bridge will remain open.

Information contact: Curt Kraemer, District Fish Biologist, (425) 775-1311 ext. 101

B. November 28, 2001

Wild steelhead must be released on Stillaguamish River system

Action: The Stillaguamish River system (Canyon Creek, Pilchuck Creek, Stillaguamish River, North Fork Stillaguamish River, and South Fork Stillaguamish River) will go to wild steelhead release December 1, 2001. All areas will close to the retention of wild steelhead for the entire winter season. Only hatchery steelhead may be retained. Hatchery steelhead are identified by a missing adipose or ventral fin and a healed scar in the location of the missing fin.

Effective date: December 1, 2001 through February 28, 2002.

Species affected: Steelhead

Location: Canyon Creek from its mouth to forks; Pilchuck Creek from its mouth to Highway 9 bridge; Stillaguamish from its mouth to confluence of North and South Forks at Arlington; North Fork Stillaguamish from its mouth to Swede Heaven Bridge; and South Fork Stillaguamish from its mouth to the 400 feet below fishway outlet at Granite Falls.

Reason for action: The forecast for Stillaguamish River wild winter steelhead returning this winter (2001/2002) is expected to be only 58% of escapement needs. With no harvestable wild steelhead this year the wild steelhead release regulation will allow access to the returning hatchery fish while minimizing impacts to wild fish.

Other Information: Anglers should be aware these waters will be closed to all fishing as of March 1, 2002, including the spring catch-and-release seasons.

Information contact: Curt Kraemer, District Fish Biologist, (425) 775-1311 ext. 101

C. November 28, 2001

Wild steelhead must be released on Skagit River system

Action: The Skagit River system (Fisher Slough, Cascade River, Sauk River and Skagit River) will go to wild steelhead release December 1, 2001. All areas will close to the retention of wild steelhead for the entire winter season. Only hatchery steelhead may be retained. Hatchery steelhead are identified by a missing adipose or ventral fin and a healed scar in the location of the missing fin.

Effective date: December 1, 2001 through February 28, 2002.

Species affected: Steelhead

Location: Fisher Slough from the mouth to the Highway 530 Bridge, the entire Cascade River, Sauk River from mouth to Whitechuck River, Skagit River from mouth to Gorge Powerhouse at Newhalem.

Reason for action: The forecast for Skagit River wild winter steelhead returning this winter and spring (2001/2002) is expected to be 5,022 fish, 83% of the co-managers' interim escapement goal of 6000 spawners. The Skagit escapement for the 2001 spring spawn was 4,584 fish or 76% of goal. With no harvestable wild steelhead this year, the wild steelhead release regulation will allow access to the returning hatchery fish while minimizing impact to wild fish.

Other Information: It is anticipated, the catch-and-release seasons on the Skagit River system will occur as outlined in the Fishing in Washington Rules Pamphlet. Fisheries targeting hatchery steelhead after February 28 may be closed. Data analysis continues regarding the hatchery steelhead fisheries during the month of March 2002. It is anticipated that during January 2002 a final determination will be made whether to allow the fisheries.

Information contact: Pete Castle, District Fish Biologist, 360-466-4345 ext. 230

3. News releases from WDFW

A. November 27, 2001

Contact: Mike Gross, (360) 249-1210

Hoh River steelhead ID rules return to normal

OLYMPIA - Steelheaders on the Olympic Peninsula's Hoh River can once again distinguish hatchery steelhead from their wild counterparts by the lack of an adipose fin on hatchery fish, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) announced today.

Fisheries managers remove the adipose fin - the small, fatty fin on a fish's back near the base of the tail fin - for easy identification of hatchery fish from wild fish. Three years ago a portion of the hatchery steelhead production released into the Hoh River system was not fin-clipped, requiring anglers to use a different, less-precise wild/hatchery identification process.

WDFW fisheries biologist Mike Gross said the hatchery steelhead released in the spring of 1998 with an intact adipose fin have returned over the past two seasons, clearing the way for a resumption of the adipose fin identification method this season. Hatchery steelhead will have a small healed scar in the place where the adipose fin has been clipped.

"There have been reports of anglers measuring dorsal fins and keeping fish with a short dorsal fin but an intact adipose fin," Gross said. "But the vast majority of hatchery fish returning to the Hoh River system this season are properly marked with a clipped adipose fin, so we are returning to this standard method of identifying hatchery and wild steelhead."

More information on identifying an adipose fin-clipped fish, as well as additional steelheading regulation information, is available in the "Fishing in Washington" 2001/2002 sport fishing rules pamphlet.

B. November 28, 2001

Contact: Bob Leland (360) 902-2817

Anglers must release wild steelhead on Skagit, Snohomish, Stillaguamish river systems

OLYMPIA - Anticipated poor returns of wild steelhead to the Skagit, Snohomish and Stillaguamish river systems has prompted the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to require release of all wild steelhead caught beginning Dec. 1.

Only hatchery steelhead, which are identified by a missing adipose fin or ventral fin and a healed scar in the missing fin's location, may be kept from Dec. 1 to Feb. 28, 2002.

"The low run size estimates of the wild steelhead stocks on these three northern Puget Sound systems are of serious concern," said Bob Leland, WDFW's steelhead program manager.

The pre-season forecast for returning Skagit River wild winter steelhead is slightly more than 5,000 fish, which is just over 80 percent of the wild spawning requirement of 6,000 fish for the system. Leland said any estimated steelhead return below that number means no wild steelhead can be retained.

It is anticipated the catch and release seasons on the Skagit River system will occur as outlined in the "Fishing in Washington Rules Pamphlet." Fisheries targeting hatchery steelhead after Feb. 28 may be closed. Leland said a decision on continuing the fishery into March won't be made until January.

The pre-season forecasts for wild steelhead for the Snohomish and Stillaguamish river systems are well below each system's spawning objective of 6,500 fish and 950 fish, respectively. The Snohomish and Stillaguamish systems will close to all fishing beginning March 1, 2002, except for the sport sturgeon fishery in the Snohomish River downstream from the Highway 2 bridge.

The wild steelhead release regulations allow fishing to occur on returning hatchery fish while minimizing impacts to wild fish, Leland said.

4. Fishing reports and articles from the Seattle P.I.

A. November 29, 2001

Outdoors Report: **Thieves targeting anglers on Sky**

By GREG JOHNSTON

SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER REPORTER

Authorities are advising anglers parking along the Skykomish River in Snohomish County not to leave valuables in their cars because of a rash of "smash and dash" thefts in recent months.

"We've got a big problem with that," Sultan Police Chief Fred Walser said yesterday. "We've had two in our city, and the county has had quite a few at boat launches and public-access parking areas."

The thieves are smashing the windows of vehicles and taking things like fishing rods and reels, tools, compact discs and other items. Many of the thefts have been in broad daylight.

They apparently began in September, when this fall's large run of pink salmon entered the river, and continued through the coho run, which was also bountiful and is now fading. At least one theft was reported last Saturday.

"It's hit-and-run," Walser said. "The fishing has been so good our fishing access on the Sultan River has been full of cars and trucks. We are concentrating patrols in that area."

Other spots hit include the state boat launches on the Ben Howard Road between Sultan and Monroe, High Bridge east of Gold Bar and a parking area along U.S. 2 anglers use to reach the Reiter Ponds drift.

Walser said his officers were urging anglers not to leave valuables in their cars, and many who fish the river regularly are spreading word about the need to be vigilant and report suspicious activity.

On the fishing scene recently, stormy weather has limited activity on the saltwater and pushed the rivers back up to unfishable levels.

But many rivers were in fishing condition at times over the last week and producing more encouraging signs that this winter's hatchery steelhead runs will be better than average. While winter steelhead have been taken in virtually all their traditional streams, as well as on west side beaches of Whidbey Island, the best reports are coming from coastal rivers such as the Bogachiel and Calawah near Forks. Some regular anglers there have reported catching more than two dozen already, with the usual peak of the hatchery run about a month away.

"We need a big push of fish, and then we'll know," said Curt Kraemer, Department of Fish and Wildlife biologist. "The nice thing I'm hearing is that the two-salt fish (those that spend two years at sea) are nice-sized fish, 6 pounds or thereabouts. Could it be the start of something good? Let's hope so."

The state yesterday announced that wild steelhead release rules already in effect will remain in effect -- they had been scheduled to be lifted Friday -- in the Skagit, Stillaguamish and Snohomish river systems. Wild steelhead returns to those systems were abysmal last winter, and state biologists fear not enough will make it back this year either.

Anglers will be allowed to keep only hatchery-origin steelhead lacking an adipose fin.

On that topic, a proposed statewide wild steelhead release rule will be the subject of serious debate at the state Fish and Wildlife Commission meeting in Vancouver on Dec. 8. Many anglers argue that dwindling returns require that all wild steelhead be protected by release rules in all streams at all times. Others argue that on streams still producing viable returns in excess of spawning needs, such as on the north coast, anglers should continue to be allowed to keep limited numbers.

Anglers on both sides of the issue are planning to send large contingents to the meeting in Vancouver, where public testimony will be taken on that proposal and others for the 2002-03 fishing season. A commission spokesperson said testimony on the rule changes will be taken around 12:45 p.m. on Dec. 8. The meeting is at the Best Inn and Suites, 221 NE Chkalov Street.

In other outdoors news:

Chinook fishing on inland marine waters closes at the end of the day tomorrow, and if winds keep up, for all practical matters it might be done already.

The best spots earlier this week and over the holiday weekend were Midchannel Bank off Port Townsend and Point No Point at the south end of Admiralty Inlet, which produced fish 4 to 14 pounds.

Several other spots have been fair, including Elger Bay in Saratoga Passage, Possession Bar west of Edmonds, and the Clay Banks at Point Defiance.

Duck hunting should be good this weekend, with plenty of migratory birds now down on the major estuaries of Western Washington, and plenty of water to hold them, thanks to the recent storms.

"If anybody wants to go duck hunting, now would be the time," said John Garrett, manager of the state's Skagit Wildlife

Area. "Conditions are great."

B. November 27, 2001

Tulalips claim \$36 million for salmon lost to Sultan dams

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

EVERETT -- The Tulalip Tribes are claiming \$36 million for loss of treaty rights from dams that reduced salmon and steelhead runs in the Sultan Rivers over a 45-year period.

Snohomish County, Everett and the Snohomish County Public Utility District have 60 days to respond to the claims filed Monday before the Tulalips may proceed with a lawsuit.

County, city and PUD officials said they are willing to meet with tribal negotiators.

City Attorney Mark Soine said one result could be higher water rates.

"If the city pays out any money on this, it will have an impact on water rates not only for the folks who live in the city of Everett, but for the folks who live outside the city (and buy city water)," he said.

When diversion dams were built to provide water and later electricity, starting in 1916, no fish ladders were installed, blocking migratory fish runs. A replacement dam was built in 1930.

Based on a study, the Tulalips believe they lost as many as 1.5 million fish from their share of the harvest in the succeeding 45 years, said John McCoy, the tribes' governmental affairs director.

In 1980, the PUD paid the Tulalips \$1 million for loss of fish over the 50 years beginning in 1961, but negotiators remained at odds for the earlier period.

In the early 1980s, the Tulalips submitted claims to the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Justice Department for review and prosecution, but no action was taken after years of studies and tribal leaders don't want to wait any longer, McCoy said.

"We want to resolve this issue," he said.

The Tulalips have hired the Holland and Hart law firm of Denver, which handled similar treaty-based fishing claims for the Nez Perce Tribe in northern Idaho. That case ended in a \$39 million settlement with Washington Water Power Co., now Avista Corp., in 1999.

C. November 27, 2001

Lengthy, costly work lies ahead for culverts in Washington and Oregon

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON -- Federal land managers have decades of costly work ahead to help fish pass through Washington state and Oregon culverts, a report from congressional investigators concluded yesterday.

And the eight-month study from the General Accounting Office said Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management officials don't know if already implemented improvements are working.

Culverts are metal or cement pipes that allow water to pass under roads.

If they are too high or steep, they can cut off migrating fish from their habitat.

George Behan, a top aide to Rep. Norm Dicks, D-Wash., said the congressman's advisers believe culverts are the most easily identified, and most easily fixed, impediments to the Northwest's threatened and endangered salmon.

Dicks requested the report from the GAO, Congress' investigative arm, to get an independent audit of progress made by the Forest Service and BLM, which control 93 percent of the 44 million federal acres in Oregon and Washington state.

Both agencies generally agreed with the report's findings.

As senior Democrat on the House spending panel, Dicks hopes to use the report in efforts to secure more money and guide future spending decisions.

D. November 29, 2001

U.N. data on fisheries wrong, says study that predicts decline

By JOHN HEILPRIN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON -- Overreporting by China has masked dramatic declines in global fish catches for more than a decade, researchers say.

The amount of seafood landed each year has actually been decreasing during the 1990s by nearly 800 million pounds per year, rather than increasing by 700 million pounds annually, scientists based at the University of British Columbia at Vancouver found.

The overreporting has thrown off the global fisheries statistics that the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations compiles for use by all nations. The FAO relies on voluntary reporting of catches from countries to estimate the amount of fish the oceans hold.

The studies being reported today in the journal *Nature* call into question the veracity of FAO figures.

Further skewing the numbers are catches of the abundant Peruvian anchoveta, which is used only for fish meal and whose population fluctuates because of the weather phenomenon known as El Nino. Discounting the anchoveta makes an even more striking decrease apparent: 1.5 billion pounds a year less seafood available for human consumption.

This new picture of the world's oceans raises serious concerns about the supply of fish and the world food supply. Some believe that fish farming can make up the difference.

However, study authors Reg Watson and Daniel Pauly warn that the current trends in fish farming would have to fundamentally change for it to provide a net gain.

The trend in aquaculture now is to raise carnivorous fish such as salmon and shrimp, which require large inputs of fish meal and oils that add pressure on the seas.

Already, a third of all fish landed globally go into fish meal and oils used for agriculture and aquaculture. But raising more vegetarian fish like tilapia and shellfish and not supplementing their food with fish meal or oils would help, the authors said.

In 1988, the world's seafood supply peaked at 34 pounds a person each year.

But the effects of overfishing and increasing human populations have reduced the amount to only about 25 pounds a person per year now, according to the findings.

The trend is projected to continue rapidly downward to less than 17 pounds of seafood a person each year by 2020.

5. Fishing reports and articles from The Seattle Times

A. November 29, 2001

Fishing: High water, high hopes for steelhead

By Mark Yuasa
Seattle Times staff reporter

Don't let the rain and snow dampen your thoughts of winter steelhead fishing.

Once rivers drop back into good fishing condition, anglers should find more mint bright winter fish.

"We're definitely seeing some early hatchery steelhead on many coastal rivers," said Bill Freymond, a state Fish and Wildlife biologist. "We've seen some fish arriving to hatchery facilities at Aberdeen and the Bogachiel.

"The high water flows attract fish to move upstream ... But that doesn't tell us what the magnitude of the runs will be."

Good coastal options once rivers recede are Quillayute, Bogachiel, Calawah, Hoh, Quinault, Wynochee and Humptulips. Salmon Creek, a tributary of the Queets, has a strong tribal hatchery return, and fishing has been very good for quality-sized steelhead.

In the Puget Sound region, while most rivers were high and unfishable yesterday, more winter steelhead are moving upstream.

"I've heard of some hatchery fish caught, but because of all the high water it has been hard to get a good read, plus some anglers are confusing a bright female coho for a steelhead," said Curt Kraemer, a state Fish and Wildlife biologist.

The Snohomish, Skagit and Stillaguamish river systems go to wild steelhead release regulation Saturday through Feb. 28, to protect expected poor wild fish runs.

"We don't expect to see many three-salt fish this season, and how many two-salts return is still a big mystery," Kraemer said. "I find it hard to be optimistic about wild fish runs for the next year or two."

Most early winter fish are of hatchery origin and referred to as two-salts, meaning they spend a year in freshwater and two years at sea before returning to spawn.

Most hatchery fish return in late December through early January, with the wild runs peaking at the end of February through April.

Local rivers worth a shot once they drop are the Snohomish, Skykomish, Snoqualmie, Green, Skagit, Stillaguamish and Puyallup.

In the southwest region, top billing goes to the Cowlitz (Blue Creek opens Saturday for hatchery fish), Washougal, Elochoman, Grays, Kalama and Lewis.

The west shoreline of Whidbey Island from Bush Point to Fort Casey was slow to fair at best.

Fishing/hunting spots

Birds - "There should be some very good hunting for waterfowlers," said John Garrett, the Skagit Wildlife Area manager. "The grain fields have lots of puddles, which makes for ideal decoy shooting."

Try the Samish Unit, near the Skagit Wildlife Headquarters, Lecque Island and the Fir Island segment. Good snow-goose opportunities at Levrick Farm south of Stanwood, which is open for hunting by permission. The pheasant season ends after tomorrow.

Blackmouth in saltwater: The salmon season from Sekiu to Apple Cove Point-Edward Point boundary in Puget Sound closes after tomorrow. Central Sound is open for catch and release Dec. 1-15, then catch and keep Dec. 16-31. Southcentral and South Sound is open for catch and keep through Dec. 31.

Chum in Hood Canal and Puget Sound: Catch rates dropped off at the Hoodsport terminal fishery and near Potlatch State Park on Hood Canal; both were fair at best last weekend.

Fishing remains fair to good near Johns River, Minter Creek, Kennedy Creek, Skokomish River, Perry Creek, Whatcom Creek and Chico Creek.

Point Defiance area, Tacoma - Fair for blackmouth off the Clay Banks.

Squid off Seattle and Puget Sound piers - "The main attraction is squid jigging, and it's just about the only show in town," said Maria Beppu, owner of Linc's Tackle Shop in Seattle. Along the Seattle waterfront, try at nights off Piers 66, 69 and 86. Other spots are the Point Defiance Pier in Tacoma, Fautleroy Ferry Landing and Edmonds Marina Pier.

Green River - Fair to good bite for chum, but most are dark in color.

Chehalis and Satsop rivers - "I know of three friends who fished the Satsop on Monday, and caught 35 to 40 mint bright coho and the first two were 18 and 19 pounds," said Tony Floor, a state Fish and Wildlife spokesman. "They fished below the

Highway 12 Bridge." The Satsop hosts a late-timed coho run that offers good fishing through next month. The Chehalis and Satsop remain decent for chum fishing.

Snohomish River system - Fair for chum in the Skykomish and Snohomish. Poor fishing conditions yesterday.

Skagit River - "A few steelhead showing up and lots of chum," said Kim Weymouth at Skagit Fly Anglers Shop in Mount Vernon. "Despite the rain, the river was in good fishing shape."

Kalama River - Fair for coho, although most are being released.

Lewis River - Fair for coho.

Cowlitz River - Heavy effort below barrier dam where anglers averaged one coho per rod, and most were released.

Columbia River - Fair for sturgeon in the lower river. Fair in John Day Pool for steelhead and chinook.

Southwest coho plants - Last week, 2,338 adult coho went into Lake Scanewa, and 723 adult coho into Skate Creek Bridge in Packwood. More than 1,652 coho were released in the Tilton River at Gust Backstrom Park in Morton. More than 733 coho were released into Mayfield Lake at Ike Kinswa Park ramp.

B. November 27, 2001

Scientists say salmon continue to shrink

By The Associated Press

ANCHORAGE - Salmon from two rivers in Alaska and Russia have shrunk in size over the past 30 years.

Scientists at the University of Alaska Fairbanks used high-resolution digital-imaging equipment to look at about 2,000 fish scales taken from chum salmon caught on Alaska's Yukon River and Russia's Anadyr River over more than 30 years.

By looking at the width of the scales, scientists determined that chum salmon decreased in size by about 25 percent between 1965 and 1997, said William Smoker, director of the School of Fisheries at the university and lead investigator for the three-year, \$262,000 federally funded study.

While scientists have known for years that the size of Pacific salmon has decreased, the scale study reveals just when growth slowed during the life of the fish, Smoker said yesterday.

The study found that the fish grew well in the first year of life, but growth rates decreased when the fish foraged for food in the Gulf of Alaska before returning to rivers to spawn.

Fishermen and scientists have speculated that competition with hatchery fish for ocean food caused the crash in Yukon River salmon populations in recent years.

Genes could be responsible for why salmon are getting smaller, said Buel Rodgers, an instructor of medicine at Johns Hopkins University's School of Medicine who has been studying growth rates in fish. Rodgers said the preference for larger fish by commercial and sport fishermen could be removing those bigger fish from the gene pool, leaving only the genetically smaller fish to reproduce.

C. November 27, 2001

Tribes claim fish runs blocked

By Janet Burkitt
Times Snohomish County reporter

The Tulalip Tribes say dams built on the Sultan River have blocked salmon and steelhead trout from reaching traditional tribal fishing areas, wiping out decades of potential fish runs.

About \$36 million worth of fish runs.

That's how much the Tulalip Tribes have suffered in economic losses because of dams built and operated on the river before June 16, 1961, according to lawyers representing the tribes.

The lawyers say they've notified the city of Everett, the Snohomish County Public Utility District and Snohomish County of their claim - a precursor to a lawsuit. However, tribal officials indicated "a willingness to meet to resolve the claims" to avoid resorting

to a suit.

But the issue originated much earlier - in 1916, when, the tribes' attorneys say, the city of Everett started building a dam on the Sultan, a tributary of the Skykomish River.

They contend the dam, completed in 1918, and a replacement dam finished in 1930, did not allow passageways for migrating fish to reach spawning and rearing habitats in areas where the tribe has fishing rights dating to 1855, under a treaty that also established the Tulalip Reservation.

"You had very large fish runs taking place during the early years," said Peter Houtsma, one of the attorneys representing the tribes, "(but they) were basically dried up because they were unable to get past the dam. By the time the 1960s rolled around, most of the damage had already been done."

The tribes arrived at the \$36 million figure by consulting fish biologists and an economist, Houtsma said.

Officials with the three government agencies were caught off guard by the tribes' claim. Everett officials said they received notice in the mail from the tribes' lawyers only yesterday afternoon; PUD and county staff said they hadn't yet seen the notice.

"I can say we were surprised to hear about this," Everett City Attorney Mark Soine said "We'll be spending some time reviewing it and looking back at historical records."

It's too early to say what the city's position will be, he said, adding, "I don't see any reason why we would not sit down and listen to what the Tulalips have to say."

It is clear that if the claim were successful or even partly so, it would have a significant effect on water rates for the city and its wholesale customers, officials said.

PUD spokesman Neil Neroutsos said his agency was further surprised by the claim because the PUD didn't build or operate dams on the river before 1961.

County officials, too, said that while they need to study the issue more, they believe they had little, if any, involvement in the ownership or operation of the dams.

"We're going to do our homework ... and work amicably with (the tribes) to resolve this," said Jim Hammond, an intergovernmental-relations analyst for the county executive's office.

The city and the PUD paid the tribes damages two decades ago for destruction of fish runs dating from 1961 until 2032, attorneys said. The settlement payment was \$1 million, they said.

But the parties were not able to resolve the dispute over the earlier decades, and the tribes forwarded the matter to the U.S. Department of Justice and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, but the federal government took no action, Tulalip officials said. And "the tribe simply got to the point where it said, 'It's time for us to take matters into our own hands,' " said Houtsma.

Houtsma's firm, Holland and Hart, won a landmark \$39 million fishing-rights settlement for the Nez Perce Tribe, against Washington Water Power, renamed Avista Corp., in 1999. The tribe claimed that two dams acquired by Washington Water Power had blocked fish passage, violating the tribe's treaty-reserved fishing rights.

"We just want to get it resolved and get it behind us," John McCoy, Tulalip governmental-affairs director. "It's just been sitting there like the elephant in the middle of the room. We just want to get it out."

At this point, all parties say they're uncertain as to what that resolution will look like.

"You're looking back to 1916 and trying to make it right today, and that's an interesting process," said Dale Preboski, spokeswoman for the city of Everett. "How do you do that?"

6. Fishing reports and articles from The News Tribune

A. November 28, 2001

Fishing Report: **River fish starting to turn dark**

Bob Mottram; The News Tribune

River fishing continued to hold anglers' interest the past few days around Western Washington, although many of the salmon in the rivers were becoming too dark to retain.

Meanwhile, saltwater salmon angling was winding down, with season closures scheduled on Friday for the Strait of Juan de Fuca, the San Juans and northern Puget Sound.

The Seattle area will go to a 15-day catch-and-release fishery on Puget Sound starting Saturday, then will revert to a catch-and-keep fishery before its final season closure on Dec. 31.

Tacoma's fishery will continue uninterrupted through Dec. 31, as will that for South Puget Sound. In the South Sound only, anglers will get a catch-and-release salmon fishery Jan. 1 through Feb. 15.

On Hood Canal, most salmon angling closes Friday, but it continues through Dec. 15 in the Hoodspout Hatchery Zone.

The details:

SALT WATER

Tacoma - Fairly good fishing Sunday afternoon, with blackmouth to 17 pounds, mostly off the claybanks, said Tom Cromie of the Point Defiance Boathouse & Marina. Fishing dropped off on Monday to just a handful of fish that topped out about 8 pounds.

Hood Canal - Chum salmon fishing has slowed a little at the Hoodspout Hatchery, but picked up around the tribal hatchery south of Potlatch State Park, said Buck Setera of Cushman Boats in Hoodspout.

RIVERS

North Puget Sound area - A few winter steelhead in the Snohomish system, said Mike Chamberlain of Ted's Sports Center near Lynnwood, but only fair fishing. Still a few chum salmon around, mostly in the Skagit, but many are dark. Anglers took a few steelhead in saltwater on the west side of Whidbey Island.

Green - Lots of chum and a few steelhead showing, but the chum are getting quite dark, said Mike Canaday of Auburn Sports & Marine.

Puyallup - A little high, but fishable, according to staff at Great Northwest Fishing & Archery on the Puyallup River Road. Some chum being caught in both the upper and lower river, and a couple of anglers reported hooking steelhead, but pressure is light.

Cowlitz - Lots of effort below the barrier dam during the weekend, said Joe Hymer of the Department of Fish and Wildlife's Vancouver office. Nearly 200 bank anglers sampled Saturday, and they had averaged about one coho per rod, about half of which were too dark to keep. The lower portions of Blue Creek and Mill Creek, both Cowlitz tributaries, will open Saturday to fishing for hatchery sea-run cutthroat trout and hatchery steelhead.

Kalama - Still producing some hatchery coho, Hymer said, but many are dark.

Lewis - Bank anglers averaged one hatchery adult coho keeper for every three rods last week, and boaters averaged about one-half fish apiece, Hymer said. Quite a few dark fish.

Yakima - Anglers have done well on rainbow trout by tossing buggers and nymphs and bouncing big stone flies off the bottom, said Travis Wallace of the Worley Bugger fly shop in Ellensburg.

Olympic coast - Lots of salmon and steelhead, and the rivers are fishable, said Bob Gooding of Olympic Sporting Goods in Forks.

B. November 26, 2001

Hylebos flooding creates FWay dilemma

PATTERN: When the creek overflows, as it did recently, officials consider dredging, raising concerns over salmon

Sean Robinson; The News Tribune

Sunshine peeked through the November mist Friday, perhaps saving Federal Way leaders from an unpleasant decision to dredge a local salmon-bearing creek.

Heavy rains the week before Thanksgiving found an outlet in Spring Valley, a wet rural pocket in Federal Way's south end. The water swelled Hylebos Creek and gushed toward a little bridge at South 373rd Street near Highway 99.

Neighbors and residents watch the collision every year. The latest version followed the usual pattern. The stream, brown and gorged with silt and gravel, roared through a pasture toward South 373rd. It scoffed at the narrow clearance below the bridge

and cascaded across the road.

Out came the city's battered "water over roadway" sign. Drivers splashed through what was now a pond, sending plumes of water into the pasture land on either side of the road.

Solving the problem was simple in the 1980s before Federal Way became a city. King County work crews dredged the stream every year and deepened the channel. Now, stronger environmental regulations and the Endangered Species Act create procedural roadblocks.

Last week, the city was ready to declare an emergency at South 373rd and dredge the stream to save the bridge from damage. State officials were leery. Local fish-watchers were alarmed.

They spotted endangered chinook salmon under the bridge last year, and say coho and chum are laying eggs there. Dredging would wipe out the nests.

"The question is, what's more important to the City of Federal Way - the bridge at 373rd Street or the fish in Hylebos Creek?" said Chris Carrel, executive director of the Friends of the Hylebos Wetlands, local stewards of the stream.

During the pre-Thanksgiving storm, city officials arranged a hasty meeting at the bridge with the state Department of Fish and Wildlife. There, habitat biologist Don Nauer reiterated the state's position.

"Maintenance dredging does not solve the problem," Nauer said. "We've absolutely discouraged it. We're looking for a more functional, viable solution."

State laws allow the city to declare an emergency, making it easier to gain permission to dredge. Yet, a permit could require approval from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and set off a battle between the city and local environmentalists.

City leaders don't relish the prospect.

"At this point, we find ourselves in a spot that we prefer not to be in," said Cary Roe, the city's public works director. "We hope to continue to evaluate through this week. It'd be nice not to dredge - we'd rather do it in the off season."

Even if the weather cooperates, leaders still face a long-term problem at the bridge. The stream brings gravel from sites farther north, constantly raising the stream bed almost to the bridge deck. Dredging stops the effect - but only temporarily.

"We're fighting a crossing structure that's too low," said Nauer. "It's driving a square peg into a round hole - it doesn't work."

The issue divides residents who normally share the common goal of protecting the Hylebos stream system in Spring Valley. Carrel and other stream-watchers oppose dredging, but Ted Enticknap, a Spring Valley resident who has battled developers for decades, wants the city to go ahead.

"They should," he said. "I think it's going to help in the long run."

For now, the city is delaying action, thanks to favorable weather. Carrel praised leaders for their restraint last week, but Cary Roe warns the issue won't go away.

"There may be folks out there, particularly from environmental groups, that are concerned," he said. "I understand that concern, but they need to look at the bigger picture. We're trying to be good stewards of the environment and good stewards of the infrastructure."

C. November 28, 2001

A mint run of chum

Initial fishery at Minter Creek recovering from slow start

Bob Mottram; The News Tribune

The first chum salmon fishery on Minter Creek near Purdy started to get better last week, observers said, after a slow start earlier in the month.

The fishery opened Nov. 1 in the stream below the Department of Fish and Wildlife's Minter Creek Hatchery on Carr Inlet, to take advantage of what was expected to be a large return of chum salmon. It remains open through Dec. 31.

"It's been good so far," Eric Kinne, a hatchery specialist, said last week. "We're starting to see more fish come back, and they're starting to catch a few fish."

One day last week, about 500 chum entered the hatchery, Kinne said, a number that included fish that had gathered in front of the facility during the weekend. The following day, the number jumped to about 1,000, and on the next day, 668 had returned by midafternoon.

"Out front, it looks like there's a couple of thousand more sitting there," Kinne said.

The fish should continue to return in large numbers at least through the end of next week, he said, and perhaps through the week after that. Returns probably will taper off during the last half of December.

The fish are not silver-bright, Kinne said.

"They're in spawning colors," he said, "but the flesh inside is still in pretty good condition."

Many anglers have caught the chum on a chartreuse Corky and yarn, a green fly or a silver spinner, Kinne said. The limit is four chum per day. Other species must be released. The open area extends from the mouth of the creek upstream to markers about 50 feet below the hatchery rack.

Fish biologist Chuck Baranski called the fishery "a first for Minter Creek.

"All indications are that considerably more chum salmon will return to the creek than we need to meet the hatchery escapement goal," he said, "and we want to give fishers every opportunity to catch those excess fish."

Kinne said adequate parking for anglers exists at the hatchery.

The fishery, he said, "is contingent on honoring people's private property and not bothering the neighbors. That's part of the contingent to stay open or continue for the next few years."

So far, he said, anglers and hatchery neighbors appear to have gotten along well enough.

Information on the state of the Minter Creek fishery is available at 253-857-5077.

D. November 28, 2001

Retaining wild steelhead key issue at meeting

Bob Mottram; The News Tribune

The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission will take testimony Dec. 8 on a proposal to prohibit anglers from retaining wild steelhead in any Washington river at any time.

Public comment is on the agenda for the second day of a two-day commission meeting at the Cascade Park Inn and Suites, 221 N.E. Chkalov Drive in Vancouver.

The meeting gets under way at 9:30 a.m. Dec. 7 and continues at 9 a.m. Dec. 8. The steelhead issue, along with other sportfishing rule proposals for 2002-2003, is scheduled for discussion at 12:45 p.m. Dec. 8.

Other items on the two-day agenda include decisions on a proposal to allow pursuit-only seasons in which cougars may be chased by hounds, on a proposal to establish a negotiated hunting boundary for Medicine Creek Treaty Indian tribes that would allow them to continue to hunt elk in the Packwood and Mount St. Helens areas, on a proposal to upgrade the bald eagle from "threatened" to "sensitive" on the state's Endangered Species List, and on a proposal that would establish a formula for allocating Columbia River spring chinook salmon between commercial and recreational fishermen.

Sports fishing rules

The commission will adopt a sportfishing rules package in February. Besides the steelhead issue, the package includes a

barbless-hook proposal for all saltwater fishing; proposed changes in Dungeness crab catch limits, oyster and Dungeness crab size limits and shrimp pot limits; proposed establishment of marine protected areas; proposed size-limit changes on bass, channel catfish and walleye; a two-pole proposal for freshwater fishermen; and proposed changes in fishing seasons for many lowland lakes.

It includes two wild-steelhead proposals, either of which would impose uniformity on rules governing retention of such fish by sportsmen. Currently, rules for rivers and streams on the Washington coast vary from one wild fish per day and two per year on the Hoh to one per day and 10 per year on the Quillayute system to one per day and 30 per year on Goodman Creek. In the Puget Sound watershed, anglers may keep as many as two wild fish per day and 30 per year where it is legal to retain wild steelhead.

One proposal would prohibit retention of wild steelhead everywhere. The other proposal would provide for a standardized bag limit of one wild fish per day where wild fish retention was allowed, and a limit of 10 wild fish per year, from all rivers combined. The combined annual limit for wild and hatchery fish would remain at 30.

The package also contains a proposal to prohibit use of barbed hooks except for forage fish, such as herring, on all waters where a saltwater fishing license is valid. Currently, barbed hooks are prohibited only when fishing for salmon or sturgeon.

Another proposal would require shellfish gatherers to measure oysters on Hood Canal for the first time, by imposing a minimum shell size requirement of 2.5 inches, measured lengthwise. Such a limit already is in force in Puget Sound areas other than Hood Canal. Other proposals would limit the number of shrimp pots that may be fished per boat to a maximum of four from Neah Bay to Olympia, would reduce the daily limit of Dungeness crabs to four from six from Neah Bay to Olympia, and would boost the Dungeness size limit on Hood Canal to 6 1/4 inches from 6 inches.

Other proposals would establish a marine preserve at Zee's Reef near Fox Island, which would be closed to all non-Indian fishing except fly fishing for salmon, would establish another marine preserve at Scatchet Head at the south end of Whidbey Island, and would establish marine conservation areas near Fort Casey State Park and Admiralty Head on Whidbey Island and at Rosario Head near Anacortes.

Conservation areas are closed to all non-Indian fishing, while some fishing is allowed in marine preserves.

Another proposal would allow an angler to use two poles in areas where a freshwater fishing license is valid, provided he purchased a second freshwater license. Another would discontinue the March 1 openers or year-round openings on 29 Columbia National Wildlife Refuge Lakes in the Columbia Basin, moving the lakes to seasons of April 1-Sept. 30 in order to minimize disturbance to ducks. Proposals would remove three other lakes on that refuge from the fishing pamphlet so refuge officials could manage them for non-fish species such as salamanders and frogs, and would close Royal Lake and Slough to fishing, at the refuge manager's request.

Other proposals in the package would impose restrictions aimed at conserving yellow perch in the Columbia Basin's Banks Lake, native cutthroat trout in Lake Chelan, walleye in Crab Creek and Moses Lake, and yellow perch and crappie in Potholes Reservoir.

The package contains a proposal to close the gamefish season in the two lower sections of King County's Green River on July 31 instead of Aug. 15, and to close the season on wild steelhead in the Green on Nov. 30 instead of the following Feb. 28.

If the commission decided not to impose a statewide closure on wild steelhead, other proposals would prohibit wild steelhead retention specifically in the Stillaguamish, Snohomish and Skagit river systems. Another proposal would create a buffer zone between the fishery for the general public and one for wheelchair-bound anglers on Blue Creek, a tributary of the Cowlitz River.

The entire proposed sportfishing rules package and the commission's meeting agenda are available on the Department of Fish and Wildlife web site at www.wa.gov/wdfw.

7. Fishing reports and articles from the Herald

A. November 29, 2001

Foul weather pleases fowl hunters

Wayne Kruse, Outdoor Writer

Recent stormy weather has been a bonanza for waterfowl hunters, on both sides of the Cascades.

On the Skagit Delta, Wednesday's wind, rain and snow provided top shooting on all three of the state Fish and Wildlife Department's major Skagit Wildlife Area units, according to area manager John Garrett.

"The Lequi Island (just west of Stanwood), Headquarters (southwest of Conway) and Samish units are all puddled up nicely and offering good decoy shooting possibilities now," Garrett says, "particularly with weather like we had this morning (Wednesday)."

Pass shooting on windy days is always a good bet, at any of the wildlife area's access points on the bayfront, Garrett says. Ducks from Samish and Padilla bays are using the planted grain on the Samish Unit well (just west of Bow/Edison on the south edge of Samish Bay), and on the planted island segment near Headquarters.

Most successful snow goose hunting has been on the Lervick farm, south of Stanwood, Garrett says, and he warns pheasant hunters that the Western Washington pheasant season ends Friday.

Duck hunting in the Columbia Basin started off even better than last year, says Marilyn Meseberg at MarDon Resort on Potholes Reservoir in Grant County, mostly on locally produced birds. Since then, however, it has been a little spotty.

"Shooting has been very good on some days, not so good on others, even though, traditionally, our best hunting comes after Thanksgiving," she says. "We haven't seen any northern birds yet, and things should definitely pick up when those flights start coming in."

The Meseberg Brothers Duck Taxi service (1-800-416-2736), providing transportation and blinds on the reservoir, is in operation again this year, and the Mesebergs have added a large, leased cornfield near Royal Lake.

"It's a really nice, wood-lined pit blind setup," Marilyn Meseberg said, "and the guys will take hunters to whichever venue - the lake or the cornfield - they feel will produce best. This snow today (Wednesday) should improve the field shooting everywhere in the basin where there are cut cornfields to draw birds."

Steelhead: Saturday marks the unofficial start of winter steelhead season, and nobody takes it more to heart than those die-hards who will be out at midnight Friday, with lanterns and glo-balls, to fish the switchover on the North Fork Stillaguamish from flies-only summer rules to winter all-tackle regs.

"Friday night's the night at Fortson for the annual lanternfest," says river guide Tom Nelson (tom@fishskagit.com), and with the weather situation and the early fish showing elsewhere, there should be good numbers of summer-runs there and enough winter hatchery brats to spice things up."

Nelson says local steelheaders should remember that the smaller streams drop and clear more quickly after a deluge than do most of the larger rivers. "Matter of fact, the Sultan and Wallace have been putting out relatively good numbers of winter steelies, for this time of year, and on Saturday you can add the Pilchuck to the list," he says. "Another possibility, almost always, is the Skagit above the mouth of the Sauk."

Bob Gooding at Olympic Sporting Goods (360-374-6330) in Forks said the winter steelhead season has begun there perhaps better even than last year's good start. Top rivers, as they usually are, have been the Bogachiel and Calawah, where early-returning hatchery fish are the target. A lot of rain Tuesday and Wednesday, however, could put the rivers out for this weekend, Gooding said.

Anticipated poor returns of wild steelhead to the Skagit, Snohomish and Stillaguamish river systems has prompted the state to require release of all wild fish caught beginning Saturday. A decision on a possible March season on the Skagit won't be made until some time in January, according to state steelhead program manager Bob Leland in Olympia.

River salmon: Don't give up on salmon in the rivers, says Arlington resident and river guide Sam Ingram (S&S Guide Service, 360-435-9311) just because winter steelhead are starting to show. Ingram says fresh chums are still available on the Skykomish, well scattered from Monroe down to the Lewis Street takeout in Monroe.

In fact, he says, right now offers a good chance to hit both species. He went out Saturday, when the yo-yoing river dropped in for a few hours, and pulled a bait diver with sand shrimp, looking for steelhead. What he found was a bunch of chums to 15 pounds, the majority of which came still equipped with sea lice.

"They're hanging on the softer side of the river in this high water, though," Ingram says, "instead of the deeper slots where you usually find them."

Speaking of Ingram, he is taking on the job of trying to represent local river salmon anglers - a group pretty much not heard from in the season-setting process and a group which thus receives only the leftovers from annual salmon allocations. Ingram has placed signature sheets at most area tackle shops and he asks interested river salmon anglers to sign. He'll then take the signatures to the "North of Falcon" season-setting meetings with the feds, state fish agencies, tribes and commercial fishermen, and lobby for a larger share of the available fish.

"We need everyone's signature," he says, "and if you have a specific river, species, and season you'd like to see in place, I need to hear from you."

Ingram's phone number is 360-435-9311. He probably can't return long-distance calls, so keep trying.

And while huzzahs are being handed out, another round to Doug Olson and other members of the Everett Steelhead and Salmon Club, who have "seeded" the Snohomish watershed this fall with more than 54,000 pounds of salmon carcasses.

"Research shows that spawned-out salmon carcasses left in the streams are more beneficial than those sold by the state for cat food," says member Tom Nelson. "Doug researched a similar program on the Keough River in British Columbia as part of a cooperative effort with the WDFW to increase the productivity of our Snohomish County streams."

Saltwater: The last weekend of the early winter blackmouth season locally was a good one, particularly since wind was a bother off and on. State checks at the Port of Everett ramp Saturday and Sunday showed 200 anglers with 52 chinook, averaging 6-7 pounds. The season closes Friday, to reopen in mid-February.

At Cornet Bay, the check was five anglers with three chinook, averaging 9 pounds. At Anacortes it was 23 anglers with three chinook, averaging 10 pounds, and at Bellingham, 14 with four, averaging 9 pounds.

Clams: The next recreational razor clam dig on the coastal beaches will be Dec. 13, 14 and 15, with the lows as follows: minus 0.6 at 5:27 p.m. on the 13th; minus 0.7 at 6:13 p.m. on the 14th; and minus 0.7 at 6:56 p.m. on the 15th. Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis and Mocrocks are open for digging on the first two dates, joined by Kalaloch on the 15th.

Authorities are warning diggers that drifting logs from a huge barge spill off the Oregon coast early this month are coming northward and could pose a hazard for surf recreationists in the weeks ahead.

B. November 22, 2001

Help for stranded salmon

Biologists rescue fish after creek ladder is damaged

By Brian Kelly
Herald Writer

ARLINGTON -- The cornucopia wasn't full, but the culvert was pretty crammed -- with coho, fat and frustrated.

Biologists from the Stillaguamish Tribe jumped into Kruger Creek on Wednesday afternoon to rescue a cluster of stranded salmon. A fish weir in the creek next to Burn Road had been damaged by fast-moving storm water, leaving the fish unable to make it upstream past Kent Prairie Elementary School.

Instead, the salmon struggled in a culvert under 209th Street NE and the small pool on the north side of the street.

The cause? A log in a nearby man-made weir, a set of steps that help salmon move up the rising grade of the stream, had recently washed away.

"The leap was too great," said Bill Blake, environmental coordinator for Arlington, who donned waders to help save some salmon.

Rescuers blocked off a downstream part of the creek with wood pallets, then used wire mesh screens to block off the 6-foot-wide culvert so the fish could be captured. Classes at Kent Prairie Elementary had just finished, and some students watched the biologists scoop up the salmon in big fishing nets.

Seven salmon, from 6 to 15 pounds, were placed in plastic coolers filled with cold water. The salmon salvagers hoisted the

coolers into the back of a pickup and took the fish to a section of the creek about 200 feet upstream, on the other side of Burn Road, and put them back in the water.

It was important to move the fish, Blake said, because the salmon had stopped trying to swim upstream and were destroying the egg nests of other salmon as they made new ones for themselves in the gravel of the creek bottom.

Fisheries workers for the tribe heard about the stranded salmon after Blake saw the fish Tuesday and called the tribe.

"He's ubiquitous in these parts," said Jason Griffith, a biologist for the tribe.

Griffith said the section of Kruger Creek hasn't contained salmon for many years. But last month, the tribe fixed a fish-blocking culvert just downstream. The culvert was too small and a few feet higher than the creek itself.

"They were jumping up into the culvert, but just getting blasted out," Griffith said.

Arlington had also improved a section of the creek near Pioneer Ponds, which has helped the salmon get farther upstream to spawn.

"We got them done just in time for the fish to come back," Blake said.

There's probably 30 to 40 fish in that part of the creek now, Griffith said. The salmon run is really low, so the tribe is not taking salmon from it.

"It's not that there's a lot of fish, but the passage here has been improved. A lot more fish are getting past," Griffith said. "In a really big coho year, this would probably be solid fish."

But both Blake and the tribe's workers said the fish rescue was a temporary solution and more needs to be done to improve the stream.

Griffith said the tribe is hoping to get a small grant next year to put "meanders" in the stream, which would decrease its velocity and create more spawning areas. Removing the too-small culvert might also be a solution, he said.

Blake said it was good for the schoolchildren and others to see that Kruger Creek does contain salmon. Litter and trash are common along that stretch of stream, a pop can's toss from busy Burn Road.

"This is about one of the most hammered streams in Arlington," Blake said.

9. Volunteer Opportunities

No reports this week

10. Weekender Report from WDFW for period November 27 - December 11, 2001

Contact: Margaret Ainscough, (360) 902-2408 or Madonna luers, (509) 456-4073

Approaching winter brings new fishing, wildlife viewing opportunities

With the approach of a new season, winter fishing and wildlife viewing opportunities are popping up throughout Washington.

Several rivers and streams open to fishing Dec. 1, most for mountain whitefish only. This native salmonid is abundant, and congregates in large pools during the winter where it will take most baits, flies and other artificial lures.

Whitefish usually run up to a foot in length and 12 ounces in weight. The daily catch limit is 15. They make for excellent eating though, because they are relatively bony, they often are smoked. See regional reports below for details on waters newly open for whitefish or other species.

Several eastern Washington lakes are open Dec. 1 through March 31 to fishing for hatchery-stocked rainbow trout. Most of these lakes will have open water for boat launching on the Saturday opener. Details on these winter-only fishing spots follow in the eastern Washington regional report, below.

On the west side, winter steelhead are beginning to show up, although anglers should note recently announced wild-release

rules that take effect Dec. 1 on the Skagit, Snohomish and Stillaguamish river systems.

Wintry weather has moved new birds into the state - "northerners" moving south for more food. That makes for renewed birdwatching possibilities, and a chance to add unique species like lapland longspur, hoary redpoll, or snow bunting to your life list. The migrants are also a reminder to keep those backyard bird feeders cleaned and filled and open water available- it helps birds a little, but mostly enhances viewing opportunities.

Other wildlife viewing can be enhanced by winter weather too. Large ungulates such as moose, elk and deer are often more visible as they forage throughout the day and night in lower elevations closer to human development and snow-covered terrain makes them easier to spot.

Here's more on current fishing, viewing and hunting opportunities:

North Puget Sound:

Fishing: The beginning of December also means the beginning of steelhead fishing throughout northern Puget Sound, and there are reports of hatchery steelhead showing up in most of the region's rivers, said WDFW fisheries biologist Curt Kraemer. That's the good news. The bad news is that forecasts of weak wild steelhead returns on the Skagit, Stillaguamish, and Snohomish river systems have led to a requirement for wild steelhead release on those three systems. Effective Dec. 1 to Feb. 28 only hatchery-marked fish may be kept. Hatchery steelhead are marked with either an adipose fin clip or a ventral fin clip-check for a missing fin and a healed scar mark in either place, and you've got a hatchery fish. "There are also fair numbers of coho in many streams, and some people may be confusing brighter female coho with steelhead," Kraemer said. If salmon and trout fishing is getting to be old hat, why not go after mountain whitefish? Averaging 10- to 13- inches, mountain whitefish are most easily caught on maggots, small grubs, stonefly nymphs or sparsely tied artificial flies and small lures fished along the bottom of deep pools in winter. "Fishing for whitefish is generally best during periods of low flows," Kraemer said. "The Green, Snoqualmie, Skykomish, Wallace, North Fork Stillaguamish and Skagit rivers all can produce good fishing." Try a single egg on an egg hook and fishing downstream from spawning chum salmon, or in the deeper, slower parts of pools. To fish with even lighter tackle, try an artificial maggot pattern on a fly rod.

Hunting: Recent heavy rain and wind combined with good numbers of ducks are improving success rates for the region's bird hunters, said regional wildlife program manager Lora Leschner. There's also good forest grouse hunting scattered throughout the Cascade foothills. The upland bird season runs through December.

Wildlife viewing: Birdwatchers in northern Puget Sound report sighting a few cattle egrets in the Stanwood area. Check the shorelines of Puget Sound for ancient murrelets in flocks of up to two dozen or more. It's a good bet that bald eagles will soon start showing up along many northern Puget Sound streams to feed on carcasses left behind from the salmon spawning. This is also a good time of year to look into participating in WDFW's Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary program. The agency has a packet with information to help property owners become wildlife habitat managers, including a pamphlet on the right type of plants and trees to use to attract wildlife, plus information on how to best feed birds, butterflies, and other local wildlife.

Olympic Peninsula/South Sound:

Fishing: Returning hatchery steelhead are starting to show up at the Aberdeen and Bogachiel hatcheries on the coast, reports Bill Freymond, acting regional fish program manager. Those early returns likely indicate a high-water year, he added. Heavy rains, although making for less-than-pleasant conditions for fishers, typically trigger early returns to the rivers. Fishing for hatchery steelhead should peak between Christmas and early January. Chum fishing continues in various locations such as the Skokomish River. The Hoodsport Hatchery zone on Hood Canal is open through Dec. 15 with a daily limit of four chum. For razor clam fans who want to plan ahead, the next scheduled digs are Dec. 13 and 14 at Long Beach, Twin Harbors, Copalis and Mockrocks and Dec. 15 at those beaches plus Kalaloch. Low tide will occur at 5:27 p.m. on Dec. 13; at 6:13 p.m. on Dec. 14, and at 6:56 p.m. on Dec. 15. These digs are all contingent on the results of marine toxin tests typically conducted several days before the first dig. Additional digs are scheduled Dec. 30-31 and Jan. 1.

Hunting: Hunting for waterfowl is good on ponds, sloughs and side channels in the Chehalis River valley, reports Jack Smith, regional wildlife manager. A number of farms in the area are open to hunters- to find them drive the road between Montesano and Oakville and watch for posted signs, he said. Some farms require hunters to secure advance written permission. South Thurston County, including the Deschutes River basin south of Scott Lake also offers decent waterfowl hunting, but hunters need to choose their locations carefully in this urbanizing area. Closer to the coast, waterfowl hunting is good in Grays Harbor and Pacific counties, although hunters there and elsewhere in Goose Management Area 2 must be trained and certified in species recognition as part of an effort to protect dusky Canada geese. Even with training, distinguishing duskies from other Canada geese "is an extremely difficult call to make in the air," Smith notes. One trait, besides differences in size and appearance, that distinguishes the dusky goose from other species is its tendency to fly in small, low-elevation groups. Late

season archery and muzzleloader hunters are finding deer in the south Peninsula and Pacific County, as well as Vail Tree Farm east of Olympia. Elk hunting has been strongest on the south coast south of State Route 12.

Wildlife viewing: Wintering raptors and more common bird species are in sight in the lower Chehalis Valley. Try Brady Loop Road, where gyrfalcons, peregrine falcons, black-shouldered kites and red-shouldered hawks have been spotted recently. The WDFW wildlife area at Oyehut Sink near Ocean Shores and nearby Catala Lagoon are other good spots to look for wintering birds. The area where the Grays River meets the ocean has the varied habitat to support an array of species. Kennedy Creek Salmon Trail off Highway 101 between Olympia and Shelton remains a good place to watch spawning chum salmon. Built just last year by the South Sound Salmon Enhancement Group on land owned by the Taylor Shellfish Co., the trail remains open Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. To get there from Highway 101, turn west at mile post 356 onto the Old Olympic Highway. Travel eight-tenths of a mile, then turn west onto an unnamed gravel road marked with the Kennedy Creek Salmon Trail sign.

Southwest Washington:

Fishing: Hatchery winter steelhead fishing is heating up with December openings on two Cowlitz River tributaries. Blue Creek (near the trout hatchery) opens Dec. 1 for both hatchery steelhead and hatchery sea-run cutthroat trout with a daily limit of five fish, no more than two of which may be steelhead. The area around the hatchery outlet is reserved for wheelchair-bound anglers. Mill Creek (near the salmon hatchery) will also open Dec. 1 for hatchery steelhead. The streams will be open through December. Besides the Cowlitz, the Grays, Elochoman, Kalama, Washougal and Lewis rivers and Salmon Creek should see increasing numbers of returning winter steelhead shortly, says Joe Hymer, WDFW fish biologist in Vancouver. The area near Salmon Creek Park in Hazel Dell makes an easy-to-reach steelheading spot that often is productive, Hymer noted. Fishers interested in checking river flows before they set out may call Tacoma Public Utilities fishing line at 1-888-502-8690 for Cowlitz River information and Pacific Power and Light information line at 1-800-547-1501 for flow conditions on the North Fork Lewis River. Sturgeon fishing still is going strong from Longview to the Bonneville Dam, where anglers recently were averaging a half legal fish per boat. Last week the action was best near Vancouver. There's still some late hatchery coho activity to be had, especially on the Cowlitz River, where effort and catches remain fairly high. Last Saturday some 200 anglers were checked below Barrier Dam, and on Monday 100 anglers were out on the river. Catches, including releases, were averaging one fish per rod, Hymer said. Hatchery coho still are being planted in the upper Cowlitz, Tilton and Cispus rivers, as well as Lake Scanewa. For the latest information on fish releases into the upper Cowlitz watershed, anglers can consult Tacoma Power's website at <http://www.ci.tacoma.wa.us/tpunews/fishreport.htm> on the Internet.

Hunting: The Nov. 21 opening day of the southwest Washington goose season was a bit slow with all check stations reporting fewer birds in the hunter bag than in previous years. The check stations were visited by 159 hunters who shot 290 geese. In an effort to protect dusky Canada geese, hunters are required to participate in a home study program on species recognition and pass an exam with an 80 percent score to participate in this hunt. All geese harvested are checked by WDFW employees to determine the subspecies. Check station employees measure the culmen and check breast color against a chart to determine if a goose meets the dusky legal definition. Information on leg banded birds is also recorded.

Wildlife viewing: Large numbers of buffleheads and some gadwalls, along with other more common resident winter ducks, are visible at the Julia Butler Hansen National Wildlife Refuge near Cathlamet.

Eastern Washington:

Fishing: Four winter-only rainbow trout lakes open on Dec. 1 in the region: Fourth-of-July in Lincoln County, Hog Canyon in Spokane County, and Hatch and Williams in Stevens County. Fourth-of-July Lake will be the premier fishery with 62 percent of the rainbows between 14 and 21 inches. The only "problem" fishers may find is getting to a full five-fish limit since only two trout over 14 inches are allowed at Fourth-of-July Lake, notes WDFW Fish Biologist Chris Donley of Spokane. Those who want to keep fishing after catching their two 14-plus-inchers will have to use selective gear rules (no bait, barbless hooks) so that large fish can be released unharmed. Donley reports that Fourth-of-July Lake was stocked with 60,000 fry and 12,000 catchables last spring. Recent sampling shows those fish have grown to lengths ranging from 9 1/2 to 14 1/2 inches. Despite this year's drought and warm fall weather, water levels are sufficient for boat access at both Fourth-of-July and Hog Canyon. Donley's recent sampling at Hog Canyon, where there is also a "no-more-than-two-over-14-inches" rule, showed a large population of fish from 10 to 14 inches. Hog Canyon was stocked with 22,000 fry (now 10-12 inches) and 12,000 catchables (now 12-14 inches). WDFW fish biologist Curt Vail of Colville reports that Hatch Lake is down six to eight feet from normal water level. Vail's sampling shows that Hatch's rainbows are eight to 10.5 inches but their condition is not up to par. Hatch was stocked with 12,000 rainbow fry last spring. Vail's sampling also turned up two young yellow perch that could not have survived the 1999 lake rehabilitation treatment, so are presumably new illegal introductions. The better bet in Stevens County will probably be Williams Lake where rainbows are faring better. Vail's sampling at Williams indicated that the 18,000 rainbow fry stocked last spring are now running 9-1/4 to 10 inches and carryovers are 15 to 16 inches. Winter mountain whitefish only fishing opens Dec. 1 on the Little Spokane River from the Highway 291 bridge to the west branch. Fishing for all gamefish opens Dec. 1 on

Ferry County's Sherman Creek, from the mouth at Lake Roosevelt to 400 feet upstream of the hatchery water diversion dam. Lake Roosevelt continues to produce nice rainbows, plus some walleye and kokanee. The latest creel checks of steelhead trout fishers on the Snake River and its tributaries showed an average of 2.6 hours of fishing per steelhead caught on the Walla Walla River; 1.8 hours per fish caught on the Tucannon River; 61.7 hours per fish near Ice Harbor Dam on the mainstem Snake; 9.4 hours per fish near Lower Monumental Dam, and 23.8 hours per fish near Little Goose Dam. The Grand Ronde River was not checked over Thanksgiving weekend, but prior to that it had been producing steelhead at a rate of 1.9 hours per fish caught.

Hunting: Late archery and muzzleloader deer hunters should be aided by recent new snow cover. Those seasons continue through Dec. 8 or 15, depending on the game management unit. Bird hunters, both upland and waterfowl, should also get a boost from more wintry weather. Pheasants, quail, and partridge often hold tighter with good snow cover, rather than flushing out of range. More ducks and geese may be pushed this way with winter storms.

Wildlife viewing: The winter feeding and viewing station for bighorn sheep at Hall Mountain on the Sullivan Lake District of the Colville National Forest in Pend Oreille County will be operational the first week of December. With snowfall expected to continue, some sheep could be readily visible at the feeders by the weekend of Dec. 8-9. This site is about 80 miles northeast of Spokane. Follow Hwy. 20 north from Newport or east from Colville to Hwy. 31 and the vicinity of Ions; just south of Ions, cross the bridge over the Pend Oreille River to the east and continue up the hill on Sullivan Lake Road about eight miles; turn off to the east on the Noisy Creek campground road near the south end of Sullivan Lake. County road crews plow the road into a limited parking area near the site when schedules permit, but unplowed snow and ice are common. Be prepared to walk from the parking area to the viewing platform one-quarter mile uphill on snow and/or ice. No pets are allowed and all visitors should minimize noise for the best close-up views of these wild animals.

North Central Washington:

Fishing: Winter-only rainbow trout fishing opens Dec. 1 at four Okanogan County lakes: Green, Lower Green, Little Twin, and Rat. At this writing all had open water and were not expected to freeze over enough by the opener to allow safe ice fishing. WDFW Fish Biologist Heather Bartlett of Okanogan reports that the Green lakes should be excellent fishing, with 12-14-inch rainbows and limits taken in 90 minutes or so. Water levels are down in Little Twin but it has 12-inch fish and some bigger carryovers. Rat Lake not only has 10- 17-inch rainbows, Bartlett says, but also nice 15-inch-and-better brown trout and some brook trout. Several North-central rivers and streams open Dec. 1 for mountain whitefish, including the Chewuch, Methow, Similkameen, and Sinlahekin in Okanogan County and the Entiat and Wenatchee in Chelan County. The Methow is especially known for many excellent whitefish holes, Bartlett says, that over the four-month-long season produce big whitefish, usually caught on maggots. Whitefish anglers must remember that the Methow and most other North-central rivers and streams are closed to steelhead fishing now, she notes. Portions of the Okanogan and Similkameen rivers are open now for a special hatchery-only steelhead trout season that continues through March; the rivers were opened in early November to allow fishers to take advantage of large numbers of hatchery steelhead returning. Only hatchery steelhead, marked with clipped adipose or ventral fins, can be retained, and all wild steelhead must be released unharmed. Conconully Reservoir is also open now for a special season on all gamefish, Bartlett notes, to allow anglers to take fish that probably won't make it through the winter because of excessively low water levels this year. Due to the shallow water, fishing at the reservoir is now through the ice; it remains open through Feb. 28.

Hunting: Winter storms are bringing more "northerners" - ducks and geese from Canada - to the Columbia Basin, so waterfowl hunters should be productive now. Upland game bird hunters should also be aided by new snowfall, which generally has pheasants, quail, and partridge holding tighter rather than flushing out of range. Late archery deer hunting continues through Dec. 8 in select units and hunters should find new snow cover helpful in tracking. Mule deer units are restricted to three-antler-point minimum bucks.

Wildlife viewing: With new snow cover, it's a good time to easily spot and photograph deer throughout this region, from the Columbia Basin's whitetails to the Okanogan's mulies. Bucks may still be chasing does and showing other signs of the rut or breeding season that has been underway for a few weeks. Watch for snow buntings among the more common horned larks along the open-country roadsides, and northern shrikes on fence and power lines. Keep an eye out for redpolls migrating in from the north and mixing with those house finches at your backyard bird feeders; both species sport that beautiful rosy color, but check your field guide and you'll see there are lots of distinguishing characteristics.

South Central Washington:

Fishing: North Elton Pond, just off Interstate 82 near Selah, opens Dec. 1 for the winter-only rainbow trout fishing season. WDFW fish biologist Eric Anderson reports that it was stocked with 2,000 one-pound-each rainbows, plus 75 3- to 5-pound excess hatchery rainbow broodstock, so some big catches are bound to be made. With recent winter storms and the relatively small size of North Elton Pond (15 acres), it could freeze up soon and provide ice-fishing. Fishing opens Dec. 1 for mountain

whitefish on several southcentral rivers, including the Bumping, Naches and Tieton in Yakima County, the CleElum in Kittitas County, and the Klickitat in Klickitat County. Anderson says it's a little early for the best whitefish fishing, but by mid-December it should be very productive. Steelhead trout fishing on the Hanford Reach of the Columbia River has slowed down, with boat anglers averaging 17.4 hours per fish caught and bank anglers averaging 21 hours per fish caught. This special fishery, on hatchery steelhead only, is open through March in the Columbia from the Hwy. 395 bridge at Pasco to the Old Hanford townsite wooden power line towers upstream of the Ringold Hatchery.

Hunting: Late archery and muzzleloader deer hunting continues through Dec. 8 in select units and hunters should find new snow cover helpful in tracking. Bird hunters, both upland and waterfowl, should also get a boost from wintry weather. Pheasants, quail, and partridge often hold tighter with good snow cover, rather than flushing out of range. More ducks and geese may be pushed this way with winter storms.

Wildlife viewing: Winter feeding of elk and bighorn sheep has not yet started at WDFW's Oak Creek Wildlife Area, just off Highway 12 west of Naches, since the area's first snow fell Nov. 28 and there is still plenty of natural forage available. Area Manager John McGowan reports that feeding will begin when a consistent winter weather pattern develops, probably by mid-December. Some elk are already gathering in the winter feeding yard in anticipation of the free meals. McGowan notes that elk viewers are welcome anytime, but the best herd views are yet to come. McGowan also advises being prepared for winter driving conditions and packing binoculars and telephoto camera lenses for best views and pictures.

11. November 22, 2001

Headed to my favorite run on the Skagit River in search of some early winter steelhead. Only one other guy on the run and I had the pool to myself (Although I offered to share!). Worked through the head of the run one time with a heavy sink tip and no takers, but a number of chum rolling. Went back to the head of the run and worked through again with the heavy sink tip, a weighted fly, big mend, and a step down after the mend. Got the fly down this time and hooked-up after about twenty casts. A chum nailed my fly on the strip and shot out of the water, then started to roll. Within minutes I had a 10 lb hen in the shallows. She was in great shape, but definitely colored. I removed the hook and released her. After another ten casts, I had another hook-up. This fish also shot out of the water and did a number of jumps on the way out to the middle of the river. A big buck! Within minutes, I slowed the fish down and got it turned around. I thought for sure I was going to land it, but it threw the hook....damn!

Hope this doesn't sound too much like a commercial....this was my first chance to really test my Redington 7/8 large arbor reel. The line pulled off smoothly when the fish ran and I was able to retrieve it quickly when the fish tired. In short, it performed flawlessly!

No steelhead this time, but the winter run should be showing soon!

[Chris G.](#)

12. Hi All,

I caught a 12 pound hatchery steelhead in the Skykomish River Reiter Pond area on Friday and a 10 pound hatchery steelhead yesterday. The river was high on Friday, but the clarity in the upper river was fishable. Yesterday, the river level had dropped approx. 3 feet and the clarity was good. I fished until 10:00 AM on Friday and I saw eight fish caught by other fishermen. My neighbor Ed and my friend Tad who came with me didn't catch anything.

I caught the fish on Friday using a float with artificial green eggs, orange yarn, pearl pink and white corkie, and I squirted some Mike's shrimp oil on my yarn. One fisherman fishing above me asked me what I caught it on and he didn't believe me. He was telling me how to play my fish and my friend Ed was ready to tell him to shut up. He offered to help me land the fish but I told him no thank you, so I did it myself.

Yesterday, I caught the fish using a float with fresh eggs, orange yarn, pearl pink and white corkie, and I squirted some Mike's shrimp oil on my yarn. I had another fish on but I lost it. I fished until noon and I saw six fish caught by other fisherman including the fisherman on the opposite side of the river from me.

FYI, one lady I spoke to who was checking the opposite side of river on Friday, told me she caught a kid breaking into her truck. She was only gone five minutes. The kid apparently broke her driver's side window and told her he was returning some items that belonged to her. I've never parked my car on this side of the river but I suggest keeping any personal items in your vehicle out of sight. The Reiter Pond Hatchery parking lot where I parked my car seems pretty safe.

I fished Whatcom Creek yesterday afternoon with my friend Tad and the chum fishing is still excellent. There are some chrome bright chums being caught still. Tie up at least 15 pound leaders with green or chartreuse yarn. I squirt smelly jelly anis or sardine scent on my yarn and I use a green corkie sometimes. We were fishing across from the wall and we had strikes on almost every cast. It was pouring rain at times but that didn't discourage the crowds of people. One fly fisherman fishing next to me was catching chums, too.

Good luck fishing out there.

[R. Robin Okubo](#)

13. Went up to Whatcom Creek last Saturday (11/24) and found the chums as thick as ever. Still looks like the first week of that fishery. Expect it will be good again thru this weekend. Don't know how much longer it will last as I would have expected this run to normally be over by the 2nd weekend of November and here it is almost December. Caught four keepers by 9:30am and kept two of them for the smoker. A lot of the fish are still bright and not many caught have been on the rotting side. Many of the chums are in the 14 pound plus range. I caught a couple that were that size and in very good shape but were foul hooked. I took home a hen and a buck and cured the eggs. I don't even try to keep track of the ones that are foul hooked and released.

I've been using a 2/0 or 3/0 barbless hook with chartreuse yarn, anise oil, and about a 1 inch length of 3/16 pencil lead. I drop the line in the pool and let it set there. I don't try to set the hook with every bump I feel as I will foul hook a fish every time. Instead I let my line just sit there and when the rod loads up I apply slight pressure. If it is foul hooked I try to give it a little slack to release. Sometime it works but mostly it doesn't. This method provides more hookups in the mouth than foul hookups. Most importantly is if you aren't getting any hits look and see what color yarn the people getting hookups are using.

[Dwight K.](#)

THE END

