

## [Hatchery Steelhead, Whitefish Angling Closes Soon on Upper Columbia, Others](#)

### Local News

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OLYMPIA, Wash. - Most steelhead fisheries on the upper Columbia River will close Jan. 2 from Rock Island Dam to Chief Joseph Dam, as will steelhead fisheries on the Wenatchee, Icicle, Entiat and Methow rivers. Whitefish angling also will close Jan. 2 on the Wenatchee, Methow and Entiat rivers. However, steelhead and whitefish seasons will remain open until further notice on the Okanogan and Similkameen rivers, under previously published rules. Jeff Korth, the regional fish manager for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), said the closures are necessary to keep impacts on wild steelhead within limits established under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). "This year's run is smaller than in recent years and contains a relatively high proportion of wild steelhead," Korth said. "Those factors, combined with steady angler effort, increased the rate of encounters with natural-origin fish this year." The federal permit authorizing the steelhead fisheries sets a maximum allowable mortality of natural-origin steelhead to accommodate variation in run strength and angling effort on specific waters. WDFW closely monitors the fisheries and enforces fishing rules to protect wild steelhead.

Although anglers must release any wild, unmarked steelhead they intercept in area fisheries, some of those fish do not survive and are counted toward ESA impact limits. The primary reason the upper Columbia steelhead fisheries are permitted is to remove excess hatchery fish from spawning grounds, Korth said. In addition, those fisheries provide recreational opportunities and economic benefits for rural communities throughout the region. A portion of the hatchery steelhead that have not been harvested will over-winter in the Columbia River and return to tributaries in the spring, when they may again be targeted for harvest. WDFW fisheries managers are analyzing fishery impacts to date, and will produce a steelhead run update next month, Korth said. Some areas could be reopened at a later date for additional fishing opportunities, and anglers should keep a close eye on the WDFW website for these possibilities. Details on waters that will close to fishing for steelhead Jan. 2 until further notice include:

- **Mainstem Columbia River:** From Rock Island Dam to 400 feet below Chief Joseph Dam.
- **Wenatchee River:** From the mouth to the Wenatchee River at the Icicle Road Bridge, including the Icicle River from the mouth to 500 feet downstream of the Leavenworth National Fish Hatchery Barrier Dam.
- **Entiat River:** Upstream from the Alternate Highway 97 Bridge, near the mouth of the Entiat River to 800 feet downstream of the Entiat National Fish Hatchery.
- **Methow River:** From the mouth to the confluence with the Chewuch River in Winthrop.

Areas that will close for whitefish angling Jan. 2, until further notice include:

- **Wenatchee River:** From the mouth to the Highway 2 bridge at Leavenworth.
- **Entiat River:** Upstream from the Alternate Highway 97 Bridge, near the mouth of the Entiat River to Entiat Falls.
- **Methow River:** From Gold Creek to the falls above Brush Creek.

Areas that remain open to fishing for hatchery steelhead include:

- **Okanogan River:** From the mouth upstream to the Highway 97 Bridge in Oroville.
- **Similkameen River:** From the mouth upstream to 400 feet below Enloe Dam.

When these fisheries are open, anglers must retain any legal hatchery steelhead (with a clipped adipose fin) that they catch until they reach their daily limit of two fish. Once they have retained two fish, they must stop fishing for steelhead. Night closure and selective gear rules remain in effect for all areas where steelhead seasons remain open.

All anglers must possess a valid Washington fishing license and a Columbia River Salmon/Steelhead Endorsement to participate in these fisheries. Revenue from the endorsement supports salmon or steelhead seasons in the Columbia River system, including fishery enforcement and monitoring. The endorsement has generated more than \$1 million annually to maintain and increase fishing opportunities throughout the Columbia River basin.