

Hi Everybody. The fall steelhead season is quickly coming to close. So, I thought I better let you know what the steelhead rules will be for the spring seasons which starts on January 1, 2018.

Our Commission met this morning and decided to extend the current rules through the spring season. That means the statewide steelhead limit will remain at two (2) fish per day, and in the Clearwater River basin and the Snake River downstream of Couse Creek, you can not keep any fish greater than 28 inches. This size restriction was left in place because our evaluation of the current run size (to the Clearwater) and what has been harvested/impacted by tribal and sport fisheries suggests additional harvest opportunity on the larger fish could limit our ability to reach brood needs.

In case you are wondering, brood collection at Dworshak Hatchery is going smoothly. The ladder to the hatchery has been opened three times (October, November, and December), and it didn't take long to trap the fish we needed. The hatchery will continue to collect fish into April.

Fishing effort has certainly been down this year (about 1/3 of previous years) which is not surprising due to the lower run size and rule restrictions. However, many of those who have been steelhead fishing have indicated they are loving it as they don't have to worry about competing with other anglers. In addition, our creel surveys suggest catch rates this year are similar to previous years when the returns were much larger. This is likely due to less competition and because the larger fish, which must be released, can be caught multiple times. So, if you are wondering what to do over the holidays, you may want to give steelhead fishing a try.

Finally, I want to give a shout out to all of you who like to fish the South Fork Clearwater River. We will likely start up our localized brood collection this February. For those of you who don't know, we depend on anglers to catch these fish for us because we don't have any way to trap steelhead in the South Fork. People often refer to this as "tubing" as those steelhead that are donated to this cause are put in large PVC tubes that rest in the river until hatchery trucks come by to pick them up. I suspect, catch rates will be decent this spring seeing we aren't allowing people to harvest the larger fish downriver. So, I hope many of you still plan to help us out as we depend on you for this program to be successful.



I hope you are all having a great fall, and Happy Holidays!

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