FLY-FISHING AROUND THE TRI-CITIES

Columbia Basin Fly Casters

Spring 2024

The Tri-Cities area in Washington State is well-situated in the middle of some of the best fly fishing in the U.S. There are several outstanding lake fisheries within a one to two hour drive as well as some river and stream opportunities. In minutes, it's possible to be fly fishing for smallmouth on the lower Yakima River. Within a 12 hour drive are more rivers, lakes, and streams than a normal person can fish in a lifetime. Best of all, there is year-round fishing for the most hardy souls. This summary of places to fish around the Tri-Cities is a both a description of where we fish our favorite waters and when we go there.

Before You Go Fishing

1. **Check state fishing regulations for the water you plan to fish** – seasons and rules change occasionally and the information provided below may no longer be valid. For Washington, go to https://wdfw.wa.gov/ and navigate to the "Fishing and Shell-fishing section. There you can access the fishing regulations pamphlet. Also, check the Emergency Rule Changes for any updates to the regulations.
2. You may also want to check the stocking reports to determine if the lake you plan to fish has been recently stocked. To do this for Washington, go again to the Fishing and Shell-fishing section, then navigate to "Fishing and Stocking Reports", then to "Fish stocking", then to "Catchable trout plant reports." In the "Catchable trout plant reports" section, you can select the county where you plan your fishing trip to determine if the lake has been recently stocked with "catchables" which are typically 10 to 12" fish. Note that some lakes are stocked in fall with small fish fry which grow to catchable size by spring.

Destinations for Fly-fishers Who Are Just Beginning or Do Not Yet Have Floatation Devices.

Columbia Park Pond (Kid's Fishing Pond).

This pond is located close to the Blue Bridge (Highway 395) in Kennewick's Columbia Park. It is open year around for juvenile anglers (under 15 years), senior anglers (70 years or older) and anglers with a disability who possess a designated harvester companion card. Statewide rules on minimum size and number of fish to possess apply; however, CBFC recommends releasing all fish caught.

The pond is usually stocked a few different times in the spring. For a couple of days in April or May it is closed for the Kid's Fishing Day event. About half of the shoreline is open with no trees and good for fly-fishing. The fish are not too selective in what they eat – just about any fly might work.

Hood Park Pond

This pond is close to the Tri-Cities and is open year around although it is usually only stocked a few times each spring with rainbow trout. Much of the area around the lake is open enough for easy casting for fly-fishers. There are no special rules here - statewide rules are in effect.

To reach Hood Park Ponds

1. Cross Snake River Bridge going south.
2. Take exit to Highway 124
3. Travel about 100 yards to Hood Park entrance.
4. Either park in Hood Park or Park off of Hwy 124.
5. Follow trails to the large pond.

Tucannon Lakes: Rainbow Lake and Watson Lake

There are six fishable lakes along the Tucannon River which is located about 15 miles east of Dayton, Washington. These lakes are open from March 1 to November 30 and are planted with catchable trout. Fishing is allowed from shore only – no float tubes. Two of the lakes, Rainbow and Watson Lakes can offer excellent fishing and easy casting. There are also a few camping areas near Rainbow Lake. It's about a 2-hour drive to the lakes, so this is usually a full day adventure. Typically, fishing is best with wet flies such as Pheasant Tails or leech patterns.

To reach Tucannon Lakes:

a. Drive to Dayton, Washington
b. Keep going on Hwy 12 toward Lewiston and Clarkston from Dayton, going up and over a lengthy hill area until you reach bridge over Tucannon on Hwy 12. (about 12.5 miles from Dayton)
c. Turn right onto Tucannon River Road just after bridge.
d. Proceed up Tucannon River valley passing campground/store (The Last Resort)
e. Before reaching Rainbow Lake, pass by Spring and Blue Lakes. These lakes have very limited areas for fly fishers due to brush along the shoreline.
f. Rainbow Lake is about 2 or 3 miles further up road from the Last Resort. Turn left at the sign for the hatchery and Rainbow Lake. Rainbow Lake is a few hundred yards beyond the hatchery. There is a path all around the lake with several sections with no trees or high bushes.
g. Watson Lake is about 2.5 miles up Tucannon Road on left. Look for sign for Watson Lake/ Beaver Lakes. One of the best places to fly-fish Watson Lake is the point that projects from the shoreline.

Rainbow Lake

Watson Lake

Eastlake Drive Pond

This pond is located in West Richland. From Bombing Range Road, Turn east on Northlake Drive. The far east end of Northlake Drive curves south and becomes Eastlake Drive. The pond is located just west of the curve in the road. See the map below for the parking area. Do not park on the street to access the lake.

There is a walkway around the pond which offers several areas for non-obstructed fly casting. The pond contains bluegills and bass. Do not keep any of the fish due to the chemicals and do not wade in the water due to chemicals added to the pond for weed control. Suggested flies include small (#18) Pheasant Tails and small poppers for bluegills and larger flies such as leeches for bass. This is a quiet, residential area so be respectful of the neighboring houses so public access can be maintained.

To Bombing Range Road

Northlake Dr. West Richland

Parking Area

Google Earth Map

Marmes Pond

This pond is accessed from a road just north of Lyons Ferry State Park which is near Kahlotus in Franklin County. It is stocked at least once a year with catchable rainbow trout. It appears from the map that there is ok fly-casting space around the lake. There may also be some areas to fish for bass, bluegill, and crappie nearby.

Marmes Pond

Lyons Ferry

River and Stream Opportunities

The nearby rivers and streams with easy casting for beginners are the Yakima River around the Tri-Cities; the Touchet River flowing through Waitsburg, Washington and through Dayton, Washington; and the Tucannon River about 15 miles east of Dayton.

The Yakima River offers reasonable access and easy casting in a few locations such as downstream of the West Richland bridge and around the Duportail bridge. In the summer when the river flows are low and the water warm, the river can be wadable in in these and other areas without needing waders and wading boots. Smallmouth bass are the targeted species. In the morning and evening, the smallmouth can be caught on surface flies such as poppers. Midday, leeches, Wolly Buggers, and crayfish imitations can work well.

The Touchet River can be accessed from multiple bridge crossings between Waitsburg and Dayton. The river is open from the Saturday before Memorial Day to October 31 with statewide minimum size and daily limits using barbless hooks although catch and release fishing is recommended. It is also open November 1 to April 15 for catch and release fishing, typically steelhead fishing. River flows are higher and colder in June, sometimes too high or too cold to fish without waders. Later in the year, it would be possible to fish without waders although the water is still cool. Both wet flies and dry flies can work here depending on the insect hatches. A Beadhead Pheasant Tail is a good wet fly and either an Elk Hair Caddis or an Adams in sizes 14 or 16 would be a good dry fly. The fish are not large but there are usually a fair number in the deeper pockets.

The Tucannon River can be accessed in multiple locations upstream from Highway 12 well up past the Tucannon Lakes to Cow Camp Bridge in the Umatilla National Forest. The river is open for trout fishing from the Saturday before Memorial Day to October 31 with statewide minimum size and daily limits using barbless hooks although catch and release fishing is recommended. Note that the area from Tucannon Hatchery Bridge upstream to 500' above the Rainbow Lake intake is closed to all fishing. In the lower sections of the river below Last Chance Resort, look for "Feel Free to Hunt" signs which indicate that the landowner allows fishing access. Where there are no signs, you would need specific landowner permission which is often denied. Above the Last Chance Resort, the river flows mostly through National Forest land. Access is by parking along the road and hiking in which can be rigorous in areas with dense vegetation. There are several sections where fisheries personnel have placed large logs in the river which enhance cover and flows for fish but also make for difficult walking along the river. Otherwise, fishing is similar to the Touchet. After opening weekend if the flows are not too high, fishing can be very good for the entire season. Be cautious if the water is high

because a slip while wading can take you into dangerous water around the logs in the river.

Destinations for More Experienced Fly-fishers Who Own Wading Gear and Floating Devices.

Owning a float tube/pontoon boat and wading gear opens up a wealth of fly-fishing water both near the Tri-Cities and within a day's drive. For members of CBFC, some of our favorite waters are Lenice and Nunally Lakes, Quail Lake and other Potholes Lakes, Anthony Lake Area, the Sun Lakes Area, Rocky Ford, Western Idaho freestone rivers, Ringold along the Columbia River, and the Yakima River near the Tri Cities. The following table lists these fisheries plus a sampling of other waters within a 12-hour drive that we have fished in Washington, Idaho, and Oregon and could be greatly expanded if it included areas of Canada and Montana also within a 12-hour drive. The table is followed by more detailed information on some of these fisheries. As noted previously, **Check the Washington State Fishing Regulations and the Emergency Rules before fishing!**

Fly Fishing Water	Location	Equipment Requirements
Amber Lake	14 miles south of Cheney, WA	Pontoon boat/float tube
Beda Lake	11 miles west of Moses Lake, South on Dodd Road about 3-4 miles to turn-off to Beda Lake	Pontoon boat/float tube (Lake may no longer be receiving fish plants)
Bend, Idaho Lakes	Several lakes south and west of Bend	Pontoon boat/float tube
Canal Lake	Potholes Lakes area northwest of Othello, WA	Power boat; pontoon boat/float tube
Coffeepot Lake	About 22 miles by road northeast of Odessa, WA	Power boat; pontoon boat/float tube
Columbia River Bass	Multiple locations including Tri-Cities area and Patterson	Power boats, kayaks, and some shoreline fishing
Deschutes River	From confluence with Columbia River to Bend Idaho	Wade fishing and drift boat fishing
Grande Ronde River	Southeast Washington flowing into Snake River	Raft; wade fishing
John Day River	Central Oregon to Columbia River by John Day Dam	Raft; drift boat; pontoon boat; wade fishing
Jubilee Lake	East of Tollgate, Oregon in Umatilla National Forest	Pontoon boat, float tube
Kelly Creek	Branch of the North Fork of the Clearwater in Western Idaho. The North Fork below Kelly Creek is also good fishing	Wade fishing
Klickitat River	West of Goldendale, WA	Drift boat, pontoon boat, and wade fishing
Lenice/Nunnally Lakes	East of Beverly, WA along Crab Creek Road	Pontoon boat/float tube; walk-in lake
Lenore Lake	North of Soap Lake, WA	Pontoon boat/float tube; wade fishing; (Launch; power boats allowed but cannot use gasoline motor)
Lochsa River	Upper Branch of the Clearwater River in West Central Idaho	Wade fishing for Cutthroat. Somewhat difficult wading
North Fork Coeur d'Alene River	Between Coeur d'Alene, Idaho and Kellog Idaho; North of Interstate 90	Wade fishing
Other Potholes Lakes	Potholes Lakes area northwest of Othello, WA	Varies by lake - some are walk-in lakes with limited shoreline fishing
Owyhee River, Oregon	South of Ontario, Oregon	Wade fishing

Fly Fishing Water	Location	Equipment Requirements
Powerline Lake	North of Mesa, WA on Hwy 17 about 2.8 miles; West on Merion Road about 2.2 miles to parking lot of Windmill Ranch State Fishing and Hunting land	1 mile walk or ride bike north of parking lot; float tube recommended; limited shoreline fishing
Quail Lake	Potholes Lakes area northwest of Othello, WA	1/2-mile walk-in lake; float tube recommended; pontoon boat possible
Quincy Lakes	West of Quincy, WA near Gorge Amphitheater	Varies by lake - some are walk-in lakes with limited shoreline fishing;
Ringold Area	North of Pasco off of Ringold Road by Ringold State Hatchery	Wade/shoreline fishing - steelhead/salmon
Rocky Ford	Between Moses Lake and Soap Lake near Trout Lodge commercial fish hatchery	Shoreline fishing only - no floating devices and no wading in stream
Silver Creek and Wood River	Near Sun Valley, Idaho	Wade fishing
South Fork of Boise River	East of Mountain Home, Idaho - below Anderson Dam	Drift boat and wade fishing
South Fork of Walla Walla River	Southwest of Milton-Freewater, OR	Walk-in and wade fishing
Spokane Area Lakes	Multiple lakes west, south, and north of Spokane	Varies by lake; mostly accessible by pontoon boats and power boats
Sun Lakes Area	Multiple lakes	Dry Falls and Perch Lake - float tubes or pontoon boats; other lakes power boats, pontoon boats, kayak, float tube
St. Joe River	Eastern Idaho River than eventually flows to Coeur d'Alene Lake	Wade fishing for Cutthroat
Touchet River	Near Waitsburg and Dayton, WA	Wade fishing
Tucannon Lakes	Along Tucannon River	Shoreline fishing - no floating devices; wading in lakes allowed
Tucannon River	East of Dayton, WA	Wade fishing
Umatilla River	Between Umatilla, WA and Pendleton, WA	Wade fishing
Wallowa River	From confluence with Minam River to Grande Ronde	Wade fishing; raft fishing
Yakima River - Lower	Tri-Cities Area from Horn Rapids Dam to Columbia River	Kayak; drift boat; pontoon boat possible but slow; limited wade fishing
Yakima River - Upper	From Rosa Dam to upper reaches	Kayak; drift boat; pontoon boat; limited wade fishing
Yellowstone/Henry's Fork	Yellowstone Park and Last Chance, Idaho	Generally, wade fishing; drift boats and pontoon boats possible options

Details on Selected Fishing Lakes/Steams

For more detailed directions to any of these fisheries, try using Google Earth to plot a route.

Amber Lake

Amber Lake is located about 14 miles south of Cheney, Washington. There is a parking lot on the north end of the lake and a primitive boat launch. Overnight camping is not allowed at the lake. The southwest end of the lake is shallower than the rest and has several pockets of lily pad. Typically, the best fishing is on this end of the lake. Chironomids beneath an indicator and trolling or stripping leeches, wooly buggers, and water boatmen are effective techniques. The middle and upper end of the lake are deeper and most effectively fished by trolling. If the wind begins to blow hard, it becomes very difficult to fish and move around on Amber due to the north-south configuration of the lake as it lies below ridges on both the east and west sides. Beyond the spring March-May period, little information is available on fishing Amber Lake.

Amber Lake (Google Earth Photo)

Canal Lake

Canal Lake is located on the middle section of the east side of the Potholes Lakes (Map? Grid? Refer to Potholes Lake Section?) Coming from the Tri-Cities, the lake is best reached by driving

from the fruit processing plants area on the north side of Othello, WA along West McManamon Road to the eastside Potholes Lakes Road. The eastside access road is dusty so don't drive your wife's convertible to these lakes. The best parking area for fly fishermen is just across the bridge that crosses the Potholes Canal between North Teal Lake and Canal Lake. Fly fishing from shore is not effective and access from this parking lot is across desert terrain so carrying in a float tube is about the only practical way to fish Canal Lake. Fishing seems to be best on the southern sections of the lake. Troll with leeches and wooly buggers to find fish. In recent years there have been a fair number of 14-20" carryover fish here. While it is possible to keep fish on Canal Lake, they often have a muddy flavor. Fishing beyond May is not recommended due to warm water temperatures.

Figure 2 Canal Lake (Google Earth Photo)

Coffee Pot Lake

About a 2-hour drive from the Tri-Cities and approximately 22 miles northeast of Odessa, W; Coffee Pot Lake can offer a change in scenery and some large fish. Fishing is best on both ends of the lake. The Northeast end is close to the parking area and boat launch is easily fished from a float tube or pontoon boat. The Southwest end is a long row with a pontoon boat but reportedly worth it. Some take a float tube in a larger motorized craft to reach this area.

Leeches and Wooly Bugger patterns seem to work well. The best chironomid fishing is on the Southwest end.

Figure 3 Coffeepot Lake (Google Earth Photo)

Columbia River Bass

A number of backwaters on the Columbia River can provide smallmouth bass opportunities. While these backwaters are probably best fished with spinning gear, CBFC members have successfully fly fished the Crow Butte Area which is located about 10 miles south of Patterson, WA. The Patterson Sloughs are also fishable for bass and crappie in the spring, but access is somewhat limited without a boat or kayak.

John Day River

The John Day River starts in Central Oregon in the Blue Mountains and empties into the Columbia River about a half mile upstream of John Day Dam. The lower 50 miles or so can be reached with about a two-hour drive from the Tri-Cities making day trips feasible. There is a camping area at the Cottonwood Bridge. The camp area is semi-developed with specific campsites and restrooms but no electrical hook-ups. The lower John Day is excellent for

smallmouth in the spring and summer as soon as spring run-off subsides and good for steelhead from late October through February as long as the river is ice free and flows have not spiked due to runoff or rain.

Lenice/Nunnally Lakes

These two lakes are among the favorite lakes we fish. Recently the open season for both lakes has run from March 1 to the end of November. Regulations have allowed retaining one fish, but almost everyone fishing there practices catch and release fishing. The lakes are well-stocked with rainbows a couple of times each year and hold several carryover fish. Unfortunately, the lakes are very popular and can feel a bit crowded although there is always room to fish there. Opening day will find up to 30 rigs in the Lenice parking lot so most of our club members wait a few weeks to fish Lenice.

Both lakes are located off of Crab Creek Road which runs east of Hwy 243. The turnoff from 243 is just north of Beverly, Washington. The turnoff from Crab Creek to the Nunally Lake parking lot is 1.9 miles from Hwy 243. The turnoff to the Lenice Lake parking lot is about 5 miles from the highway. Both lakes are walk-in lakes with a hike of about .3 miles. Fly-fishers either carry float tubes strapped on their backs or push pontoon boats on wheels.

Leeches are almost always a good choice to start the day here. Fishing can also be excellent when matching hatches of chironomids and Callibaetis mayflies.

Lenice and Nunnally Lakes (Google Earth Photos)

Quail Lake

Quail Lake is a small but beautiful lake in the Potholes Lakes Area. It is open for year-around fishing although it is usually frozen over in the winter and doesn't offer really good fishing until mid-March. From the Tri-Cities, go to the north end of Othello by the potato processing plants. Travel west on W. McMammon Road to the east entrance to Potholes Lakes – about 3.3 miles from the north end of the potato plants. Travel about 1.1 miles north on Potholes East Entrance dirt road to the turnoff to Herman Lake and Quail Lake. Park at Herman Lake. Walk through the gate following dashed line to Quail Lake.

Fishing is usually best in the two shallower areas on both ends of the lake but can be good also in the deeper mid-sections. The lake can have good hatches of chironomids and Callibaetis mayflies as well as damsels. Leeches are always a good fly choice. Quail Lake doesn't produce a lot of double-digit catches, but the fish are very decent sized.

Quail Lake (Google Earth Photo)

Quincy Lakes

There are multiple lakes in the Quincy Lakes area of varying sizes and different fisheries. Quincy Lake, Burke Lake, Dusty Lake, and Ancient Lakes seem to be the best lakes for trout fly fishing. Some of the other lakes hold spiny ray fish such as bass and bluegill. There are also some smaller lakes that are reported to hold large trout.

Access to the lakes is from the north end only. Go 5.7 miles north of George, WA on Hwy 281, turn west on White Trail Road for about 3 miles to the entrance to the Quincy Lakes on the south side of the road. Burke and Quincy Lakes have boat launches. Dusty and Ancient Lakes are walk-in lakes. Occasionally we get good reports of fishing from this area, but generally it is a bit slower than Lenice and Nunally.

Figure 9 Quincy Lakes

Rocky Ford

Rocky Ford can be difficult for beginners, but a very enjoyable area to fish after a bit of experience fishing there. The fish come from the nearby trout farm and can be very large when they release brood stock. Regulations require fly fishing only, barbless hooks, catch and release, fish from shore only, and no wading. Beware that some of the game agents do not consider plastic egg patterns legal for fly fishing.

The fish can be very picky eaters and don't like shiny tippet. In the morning – fish scuds with very light tippet, very slow retrieve with a clear, intermediate line or fish them below an indicator. In the late morning, try chironomids below indicator or watch for a Baetis or Callibaetis hatch. Later in the afternoon toward dark, cast wooly buggers or large leeches; black, brown, olive, or rust color.

To get there from the Tri-Cities

1. Drive to Moses Lake taking Hwy 395 followed by Hwy 17.
2. Stay on Hwy 17 which will by-pass around Moses Lake (Follow signs to Ephrata)
3. Continue on Hwy 17 past Moses Lake Airport to Junction with Hwy 282 which leads to Ephrata.

4. Make right turn at junction/continue on Hwy 17.
5. About 3.5 miles from junction, look for sign for Trout Lodge or Public Fishing
6. Turn right at sign and proceed to Trout Lodge Hatchery.

Rocky Ford

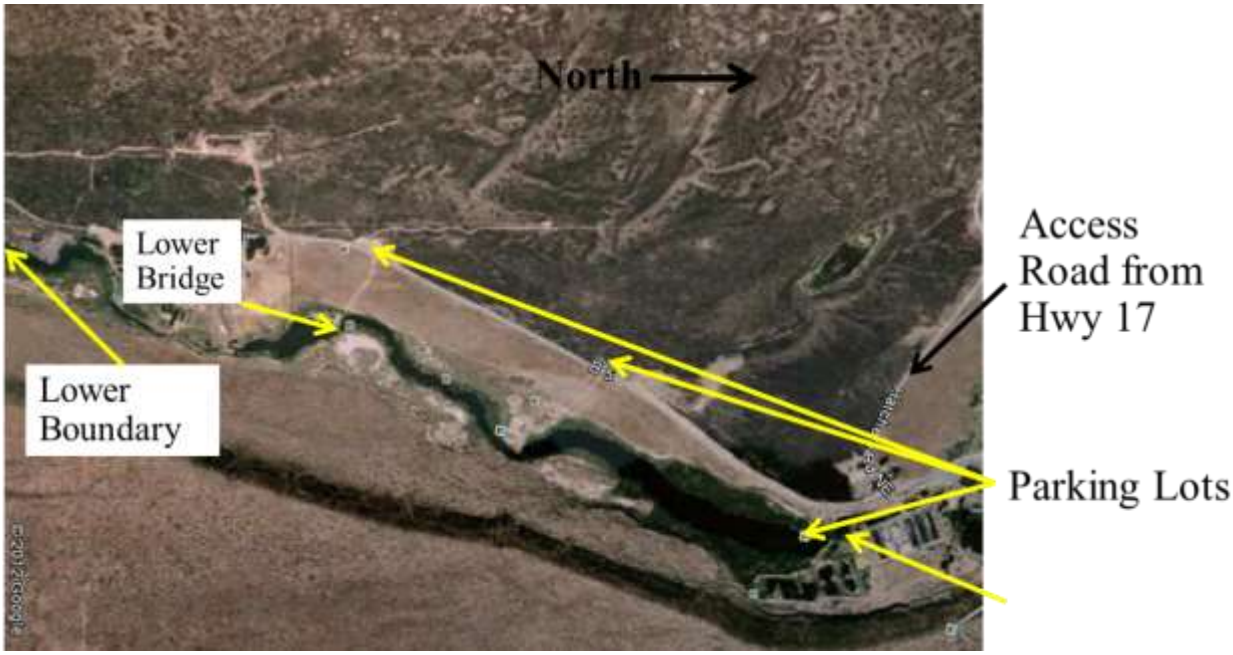

Figure 10 Rocky Ford (Google Earth Photo)

CBFC FLY FISHING CALENDAR

The table below summarizes a potential fly-fishing calendar and is followed by more detailed suggestions on how to plan your fishing year. This table and the information that follows is not rigid: each of our member's fishing "calendars" varies year to year as we try new waters; our calendars vary from person to person depending on individual preferences for what we fish for, how we fish, and favorite waters; and our calendars have to adapt to changing weather patterns and fishing regulations.

MONTH	WHERE WE FISH (Always consult state fishing regulations before you go)
January	Rocky Ford for trout and Ringold and Coastal Rivers if steelhead fishing is open
February	Same as January plus Upper Yakima River for trout and Umatilla River, John Day River, and Grande Ronde River for steelhead if steelhead season is open.
March	Same as February plus WA Early Season Lakes
April	WA Early Season Lakes; WA April Lakes; Kamloops, B.C.; Owyhee River; Upper and Lower Yakima, and Sun Lakes Area (after season opens)
May	Same as April, WA Spiny-Ray Lakes, John Day bass,
June	Same as May plus WA June 1 Rivers, Henry's Fork and Yellowstone Park,
July	Lenice/Nunnally; WA Spiny-Ray Lakes; Upper and Lower Yakima; Mountain Lakes and Streams; Idaho, Montana, Canada rivers and streams; Summer Steelhead Rivers if open; and John Day bass. Most mountain rivers such as the St. Joe and Lochsa become fishable.
August	Same as July depending on water levels and lake.
September	Same as August
October	Summer Steelhead Rivers; John Day Steelhead; Ringold; Grande Ronde; Clearwater; Lenice, Nunnally, and Lenore Lakes;
November	Ringold, John Day Steelhead, Grande Ronde, Clearwater
December	Ringold plus other steelhead waters ice free, Rocky Ford

In addition to this fishing calendar, other resources should be used to plan fly fishing trips. The State of Washington fish and game website, wdfw.wa.gov, includes fishing reports and more importantly when trout have been delivered to lakes under the "Catchable Trout Plant Weekly Report" section in the fishing subject area. The weekly report can show both what lakes received fish in the previous week and by county, when specific lakes where planted during the year. CBFC meetings are another source of information both at the beginning of the meeting when members are asked for fishing reports and during conversations around dinner. There are also website boards that include reports from around the state.

Month by month waters to consider follow. Check regulations before fishing anywhere, especially steelhead waters which have been closed some years.

January

January is probably our toughest month for fly fishing. Temperatures around the Tri-Cities hover around freezing. Outside the Tri-Cities temperatures are frequently below freezing with snow on the ground, ice on the lakes, and ice on the rivers. While this is a great month to tie flies, hunt waterfowl, ski, travel to tropical locations, etc., fly-fishing is limited. The two best options are Ringold and Rocky Ford. The primary limiting factor for each location is air temperatures so cold that the fly rod guides build up too much ice. If the air temperature is within about four or five degrees of freezing or higher, ice binding in the guides is workable.

Ringold fishing can be productive for steelhead in January but the fish will have started to turn dark, especially the females. Also, some of the upper sections of the Ringold area may be occupied by duck hunters and/or be inaccessible following a heavy snowfall. The area right around the hatchery is generally always accessible. Best fishing times can vary but it often seems like the time around 1 and 2 is slowest. Check the Emergency Rules on the WA State Department of Fish and Wildlife to ensure that the season is still open for steelhead.

Fishing at Rocky Ford can be good to excellent as long as daytime temperatures are close to or above freezing. The water temperature remains constant due to the spring nature of the creek and there may be hatches of midges and blue wing olives. In 2016 the water levels were higher than normal in January which made it difficult to access the better fishing areas. Bring waders in case the water is high into the weeds along the bank, but remember that wading in the stream itself is prohibited.

Coastal waters in Washington and Oregon may have steelhead in the system. Water levels are a function of rainfall and can be checked on the USGS water level web site. Slightly rising water levels can bring in fresh fish from the ocean but significantly higher water levels can quickly blow out these rivers. CBFC club members have limited experience on these waters. Some of the presenters at CBFC meetings have covered fishing these waters in their programs and have indicated that crowding is also a factor in fishing these waters.

February

Rocky Ford fishing generally improves in February. Mornings up to about 1 pm can be good with grayish/olive scuds under an indicator or slowly stripped with an intermediate line. The most effective scud patterns do not incorporate shiny materials such as a bright bead. About an hour before sunset, switch to black, olive, or rust mini-leeches either under an indicator or stripped with an intermediate line.

Ringold fishing can be hit or miss at this time of year with the best fishing near the hatchery steam but outside the marked no fishing zone. All of the fish are turning darker at this time so plan on releasing all fish.

The John Day and Umatilla Rivers in Oregon and the Grande Ronde in Washington can all hold steelhead at this time of year but fishing can be limited due to either ice in the river or air temperatures too low for fly fishing. High water is usually not as much a problem due to rain or snowmelt in February, but check water levels before going.

Although few CBFC members have experience on the Upper Yakima in late winter/early spring, some of our program speakers have stated that this can be the best time of year to catch the larger Yakima River trout. The program speakers recommended watching for a slight increase in water temperature and fishing downstream of rock gardens – especially those where whitefish are feeding.

March

Depending on regulations, steelhead fishing can continue to be an option at the aforementioned locations. In addition, the Wallowa River in Oregon can really turn on at this time of year if the water levels are normal. The best fishing on the Wallowa seems to be the section downstream of the junction with the Minam River. There is an active rail line on the east side of the river that provides access to miles of fishing for those willing to walk or acquiring a ticket on the train. Switch rods with an indicator and a small egg-bead work well. This fishery is crowded on weekends as the end of the season approaches in mid-April.

March also marks the opener for many of the Eastside Lakes that are not open year-round and the beginning of good fish in those that are open all year. Typically the ice cover in lakes is gone at this time, but not always. In the Potholes Lakes around Othello, Quail Lake can produce some good, but not great fishing in March. Canal Lake and Sage Lakes are other possibilities for float tubers. Some of the other Potholes Lakes open on March 1 but fishing can be spotty in many of the lakes. Lenore Lake north of the city of Soap Lake may offer fishing for Lahotan cutthroat at either the north or south ends of the lake although fishing at the lake has suffered over the past few years due to poaching and other factors. Lenice and Nunnally Lakes can offer decent fishing. The parking lots by these lakes may appear crowded but there is plenty of room on either lake for the float tubers and pontoon boats. These lakes are best fished with midge imitations or leeches.

Another lake option in March is the Tucannon Lakes located in the Tucannon River Valley east of Dayton. The lakes are under-going a multi-year remediation process so check the game department website for information on which lakes are open. Two of the lakes, Rainbow and Watson, are better for beginning fly fishers due to the open area for a backcast and an abundance of easy to catch hatchery fish. Also, this is a good place to catch a limit of fish to take home. One of the better flies to use in these lakes is a #16 brown fly that resembles a food pellet.

Further north, Coffee Pot Lake near Odessa typically opens on March 1 although it may fish better later in spring as long as the wind is not too strong. The lake provides some excellent fishing on the east end near the boat launch and on the west end which is a long row/paddle of a couple miles. The water in between can be up to 100 feet deep and is not as productive. There are 6 or 7 camping spots at Coffee Pot available on a first-come-first-served basis.

Amber Lake south of Cheney opens on March 1 and can be productive all spring. Note that there is no overnight camping allowed near Amber Lake.

Previous program presenters at CBFC meeting have indicated that the Clackamas and Sandy Rivers can fish well for both steelhead and Spring Chinook. These rivers are highly susceptible to snowmelt and rain. The Sandy has some good access along Oxbow Park on the lower end. Not much is known by club member about fishing the Clackamas. Both of these waters can be crowded on the weekends so weekday trips are recommended.

April

The warmer temperatures of April bring improved fishing to any of the lakes already open. Hatches of callibaetis mayflies can bring some brief dry fly action to the lakes in midday so long as wind doesn't disturb the surfaces. Damsel nymphs become more effective as well.

Additional lakes either open to fishing or are planted in April. Beda Lake has been a club favorite for years and hopefully the game department continues planting trout there. The Sun Lake area lakes open typically on the last Saturday in April but are probably best fished the following week after the hordes of bait fishermen diminish. For the past few years, the club has held an outing in the Sun Lakes starting mid-week after the season opener. Dry Falls Lake in this area is a fly fishing only lake but has not been exceptionally productive in recent years except for a few wizards that have mastered deep midge fishing. Powerline Lake northwest of Mesa is planted with trout in early to mid-April. Although this lake requires a mile hike to the water, and float tubers can be carried in or it's also possible to bike in with a float tube strapped to your back. Midges, leeches, and damsel nymphs work well. It's possible to hook into a good sized largemouth here.

Depending on water levels, the lower Yakima River can produce decent sized smallmouth on heavier minnow and leech patterns.

Quincy Lakes and Spokane area lakes – There are several lakes in the Quincy area that are fishable from a float tube and some that are open to fly fishing only. The Spokane area also has several lakes that are fished well from a float tube include West Medical, Badger Lake and Amber Lake.

Kamloops BC – In and around Kamloops, BC are several lakes that hold very large fish. CBFC has not hosted a trip there nor have many of the club members fished this area. It is an area that should be explored by the club in the future.

The Owyhee River in Oregon (near Ontario, Oregon) is fishable in February and March, but warmer April and May weather makes this area more attractive at this time. The fly fishing water is below the Owyhee River dam approximately a six hour drive from the Tri-Cities, but well worth the trip. Although the flows and hatches improve in May, fishing can be excellent in April.

May

Lake fishing continues to be good into May although it may slow down toward the end of the month as water temperatures rise and the many of the planted fish have been harvested. Bluegill and crappie fishing pick up in May as the fish near spawning season. In the past, Thompson Seeps has been one of our favorite spiny ray questions lakes but low water has become a significant factor. There are other spiny ray options in the Quincy Lakes, dune lakes west of the Potholes Reservoir, in some areas around the Snake River, and in side pockets off the Columbia River such as the Patterson area and Crow Butte State Park. Poppers and damsel nymphs work well for bluegill and crappies while minnow imitations work well for bass.

June

June offers so many options that the whole month should be blocked off on the calendar.

First of all, the Tucannon and Touchet Rivers have been opening on the before Memorial Day (consult fishing regs before fishing the area). Most of the fish in these waters are steelhead

smolt that delay or entirely forgo their migration to the ocean. A large fish is 13-14 inches but there can be lots of them in some holes and they are hungry. Water levels may be a bit high for comfortable wading the first week in June, but subside each week. If the salmon fly hatch is still on at the Tucannon, 50 to 100 fish days are possible. The Tucannon is a freestone stream so dry flies such as a stimulator need to be larger than on the Touchet in order to float well. In Oregon, the South Fork of the Walla Walla River opens on June 1 but fishing then can be hampered by spring salmon that bully the resident rainbows into hiding. The South Fork might be a better option later in the summer.

The larger Eastside lakes such as Lenice and Nunnally continue to fish well all summer. Leech Lake near White Pass receives a generous planting of fish early in the month and is very productive for several weeks after the plant.

On a larger scale, the Henry's Fork in Eastern Idaho and some of the waters in Yellowstone Park become productive. The famous Harriman Ranch section opens on June 15 and can offer exciting fishing for large rainbows feeding on PMDs and Green Drakes. Be prepared for crowds there but by claiming water early in the morning or moving around, it's possible to work fish on your own. Most of the fly fishermen here practice good etiquette. In the Park, the Firehole and Madison Rivers fish very well through most of June. All of these rivers can produce some great mayfly and caddis hatches in June as well as some frustration in scrambling to find the right fly especially in the evening. Be prepared for absolutely any kind of weather from steaming hot to hail to snow. Another option in this area is Yellowstone Lake which has been good for spawning cutthroat along the northern shores. Wooly Buggers and leeches in black and olive have worked well. If the wind is blowing too hard for fly fishing, we don't frown on switching to spinning gear.

Smallmouth fishing on the lower Yakima, Snake River, and Columbia backwaters continues to be very good into June. The John Day is another good option for smallmouth, especially wade fishing around Cottonwood State Park.

July

The Tucannon River can continue to fish well into July. The Touchet River water levels fall substantially and the fish become very skittish. Leech Lake, Lenice, Nunnally, can fish well if the weather isn't unbearably hot.

Depending on water levels, four rivers in Idaho become wadable and fish well. The North Fork of the Coeur D'Alene River, the St. Joe River, Kelly Creek, and the Lochsa are all worth fishing. Since it takes a 4 to 6 hour drive to reach these rivers, plan to stay and camp a few days. These are primarily cutthroat fisheries. Flies that work well include hoppers, stimulators, coachman, elk hair caddis, and other common dry flies.

July also is the beginning of summer steelhead fishing on some Columbia River Tributaries. The Klickitat River and Deschutes River begin to produce fish at this time and continue on into November. The Klickitat can run off color if temperatures rise much above 85. Some of the guides claim that the river does begin to clear later in the day. The Deschutes River can also go off color if the White River off of Mt. Hood is experiencing heavy run-off.

August

The four Idaho Rivers previously mentioned continue to fish well into August as long as river levels don't drop too much. Fishing with hopper patterns can be really productive.

Steelhead fishing becomes a function of water temperatures in the Deschutes. If the river temperatures rise much above 65, fishing becomes very difficult and fish may hold in the Columbia. The Klickitat runs much colder but the high temperatures can bring significantly off-color water. An interesting option is the steelhead fishing area around the upper end of Drano Lake if the season is open. Pontoon boats or prams are pretty much of a necessity. Nine to ten foot 7 or 8 weight rods with an intermediate line work well. This is pretty much stillwater, so flies are cast and stripped.

Another option for option can be the lakes south of Bend, Oregon. In particular, Eastlake has a callibaetis hatch that can be fun and challenging.

September

September and early October are prime fishing times for summer steelhead on the Deschutes. With cooler temperatures, new fish move in every day. The Klickitat can also fish well but the large numbers of chinook salmon seem to put off the steelhead somewhat and attract crowds of drift boats. Another option is fishing salmon with a fly rod at Drano Lake or in other river inlets along the Columbia.

The Idaho Rivers have stabilized this time of year and may actually see more water if it rains. Kelly Creek can be a good destination. At this time of year many of the fish have descended from the higher reaches toward the North Fork of the Clearwater.

One of the favorite CBFC group trips is the annual Anthony Lakes outing in September (or sometimes August). The camping and the fellowship are outstanding and the fishing can also be outstanding. Other lakes such as Lenice and Nunnally seemed to be forgotten this time of year and may offer exceptional fishing.

October

In addition to the Deschutes and Klickitat Rivers, the Ringold section becomes an option for steelhead if it opens on October 1. The later part of the month may see some fish coming into the John Day River. The Clearwater River in Idaho and the Grande Ronde also have good numbers of steelhead. For planning purposes, the Deschutes, Klickitat, and John Day Rivers can be day trips while the Clearwater and Grande Ronde are best fished with overnight trips.

Other than the lakes open year-around, some lakes close for fishing at the end of October. Lenice and Nunally are currently exceptions as they close at the end of November. Some fly-fishers have done well at the south end of Lake Lenore but fishing has only been poor to fair in the past few years.

November

Options become limited in November with steelhead being the primary target. Fishing usually improves on the John Day in November as long as the air temperature doesn't drop too far below freezing. Fish in the Deschutes spread out significantly in November. The Klickitat water becomes much clearer and the steelhead seem to be a bit more wary. The Grande Ronde may also continue to fish well as the fish move upstream. Many of the migrating fish have passed

through the Ringold area but several fish remain and are very catchable. The Wenatchee and Methow Rivers may become options if the steelhead season opens there.

December

Fly fishing options dwindle significantly in December. Ringold around the hatchery remains a very good fishery for steelhead if the season is open. Intermediate or Type III sink tips may work better as the water cools, but steelhead flies off of floating lines can still take fish. Larger and darker flies also seem to work better in December.

Rocky Ford is also a possible fishing destination, but higher water flows may be a factor. Scuds, chironomids, and Blue Wing Olive imitations are good flies to start with.