

State set restrictions on steelhead fishing

Lowest return since 1980 prompts move

OLYMPIA – The state Department of Fish and Wildlife has imposed restrictions on summer steelhead fishing in the Columbia River Basin in response to projections of the lowest returns in 37 years.

Fish managers expect that about 130,700 summer-run steelhead will return to river this year, the lowest number since 1980. The forecast is especially weak for wild steelhead returning to the Snake River and the upper Columbia above Priest Rapids Dam.

To conserve those runs, the



A steelhead, caught on a fly pole. SUBMITTED PHOTO

department plans to reduce daily catch limits, prohibit night fishing and close sport fishing for steelhead in some waters during months when those fish are passing through.

manager, said the new restrictions are necessary to conserve wild steelhead protected under the federal Endangered Species Act and to ensure that enough steelhead reach area hatcheries to support future fisheries.

“Many of the fish returning this year were subjected to drought conditions in the Columbia Basin in 2015 and

several waters:

- Columbia River from the Megler-Astoria bridge to the Highway 395 bridge in Pasco.
- Cowlitz River downstream from the Lexington Drive/Sparks Road bridge.
- Lewis River downstream from the confluence with the East Fork Lewis River.
- Wind River downstream from Shipherd Falls.

As before, anglers may retain only those steelhead marked as hatchery fish with a clipped adipose fin and healed scar. All wild steelhead must be released.

Ron Roler, a state fishery

unusually warm water in the ocean through 2016,” Roler said. “We saw the effects of these conditions in last year’s upriver steelhead return, and this year they’re even more pronounced.”

From June 16 through Oct. 31, emergency rules issued by the department will reduce the catch limit for hatchery steelhead to one fish per day and prohibit fishing at night in

- Drano Lake.
- White Salmon River downstream from the county road bridge.

The restrictions and other protective measures adopted for the upcoming season are described in the department’s 2017-18 Sport Fishing Rules pamphlet, available online at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regulations/>. Printed copies of the pamphlet will be available soon.