

North Santiam River Report: 12/29/13 by Bill Sanderson

The most important variable for running the North Santiam River is the volume. Obviously, clarity of water and weather and numbers of fish are important also.

Shortly before the holiday, volume at Packsaddle (the same as the Niagara reading) dropped down to around 1,300 cubic feet per second measured below the Detroit complex. River depth at Mehama has been around four feet, give or take a couple of inches. Little North Fork flow has been around 400 cfs, and it varies a lot according to rainfall and snowmelt. That is certainly a factor when considering the run from Mehama to Stayton.

A few new steelhead are coming upstream from Oregon City, and the numbers are not big but at least they are improving. A few anglers have actually caught some very fresh steelhead in the Fishermen's Bend area, and others have been caught between Mehama and Stayton.

The North Santiam is clearly one of the best recreational rivers in Northwestern Oregon. We have a delightful mix of whitewater and wildlife with many parks and areas of solitude. Other rivers have their own strong points, but the best balance of steelhead and whitewater may be right here in the North Santiam Canyon.

North Santiam River Guides Association will have their annual banquet on January 25, Saturday, at the Gates Fire Hall. Trexler Farms and Gene's Meats will cater the food, and social hour starts at 5:00 p.m. for the early birds and 6:00 for the regular schedule. Dinner should be served between 6:00 and 7:00 with the program starting at 7:00. Reservations are desirable or necessary, and contacts should be made with Chap Milbank, Mike Ferris, or Bob Lusk.

The series of "Learn the River" trips will start on the first Saturday in March, conditions permitting, with the trip from Green's Bridge to Santiam Rest Stop under the I-5 Bridge. Under some adverse weather conditions, the trip might be delayed. The trip usually is able to proceed on this weekend, and we hope for tolerable weather and river levels.

We will have good river and weather conditions several days each week during the Winter and early Spring. With good planning, river trips can be organized to take advantage of our seasonal delights. Both scenic raft trips and fishing driftboat trips are available on all sections of the North Santiam between Packsaddle Park and the Willamette River.

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