# Wallace River Hatchery winter steelhead (Wallace River)

Hatchery returns from WDFW weekly escapement reports (November through February, 2013–2026), plus when, where and how to fish. Prepared Nov 3, 2026.

The Wallace River Hatchery is WDFW's salmon hatchery on the Wallace River near Startup and Gold Bar, a tributary of the Skykomish. It also traps winter steelhead of the Wallace River Hatchery stock, the same stock as Reiter Ponds, which has its own report. Numbers below are the **Adult Total** on the Wallace River Hatchery winter steelhead row of WDFW's weekly escapement reports (a preliminary, cumulative, season-to-date count at the hatchery trap). Fish WDFW moves from Wallace to Reiter are listed as “Shipped to Reiter” and stay in Wallace's total.

> **Read this first, for 2026–27.** The WDFW rules in the FishWA app (synced Nov 3, 2026, 6:09 PM) show the Wallace River section from 363rd Ave SE / Reece Rd to 200 feet above the hatchery intake open for game fish, trout and Dolly Varden/bull trout Oct 17–Feb 15, with night closure and anti-snagging rules. The app shows no closure notice other than the hatchery weir closure (200 feet below and above the weir while it operates). It also lists salmon Oct 17–Nov 30 (daily limit 4, no more than 2 wild coho, release Chinook and chum). WDFW's June 2026 closure of the Snohomish Basin had named the Wallace among rivers closed unless reopened, and Skykomish salmon is closed Nov 1–30, so check WDFW's emergency-rules page the day you go. Wallace winter steelhead numbers are small, and the rack counts are reported in lumps.

**109**
median season total at the Wallace trap across the 11 seasons with 50+ fish (range 38–643 over 14 seasons)

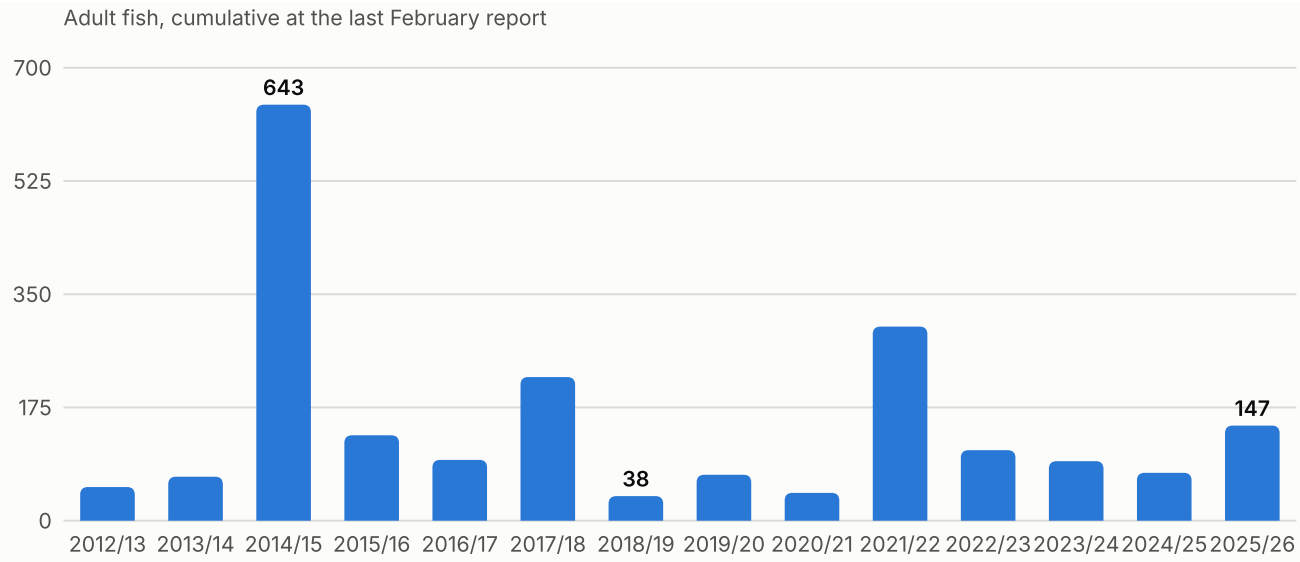
**147**
2025/26 total at the Feb 26 report, fourth-highest of 14 seasons after 643, 300 and 222

**47%**
of fish arrived in December (Nov 0%, Jan 38%, Feb 15%), pooled over 11 seasons

**27,233**
winter smolts released from Wallace in 2025, due back this winter (releases run 21,696–34,031)

## 1. Season returns

Each bar is the Adult Total on the Wallace River Hatchery winter steelhead row of the last February report. WDFW labels every number preliminary.




The 2012/13 bar starts from the January report because the WDFW archive begins in 2013. The 643 in 2014/15 is far above any other season, then 300 in 2021/22. In 2024/25 the Feb 26 total was 74, of which 70 were listed as shipped to Reiter. Releases are small (about 22,000 to 34,000 smolts a year), so rack counts are small.

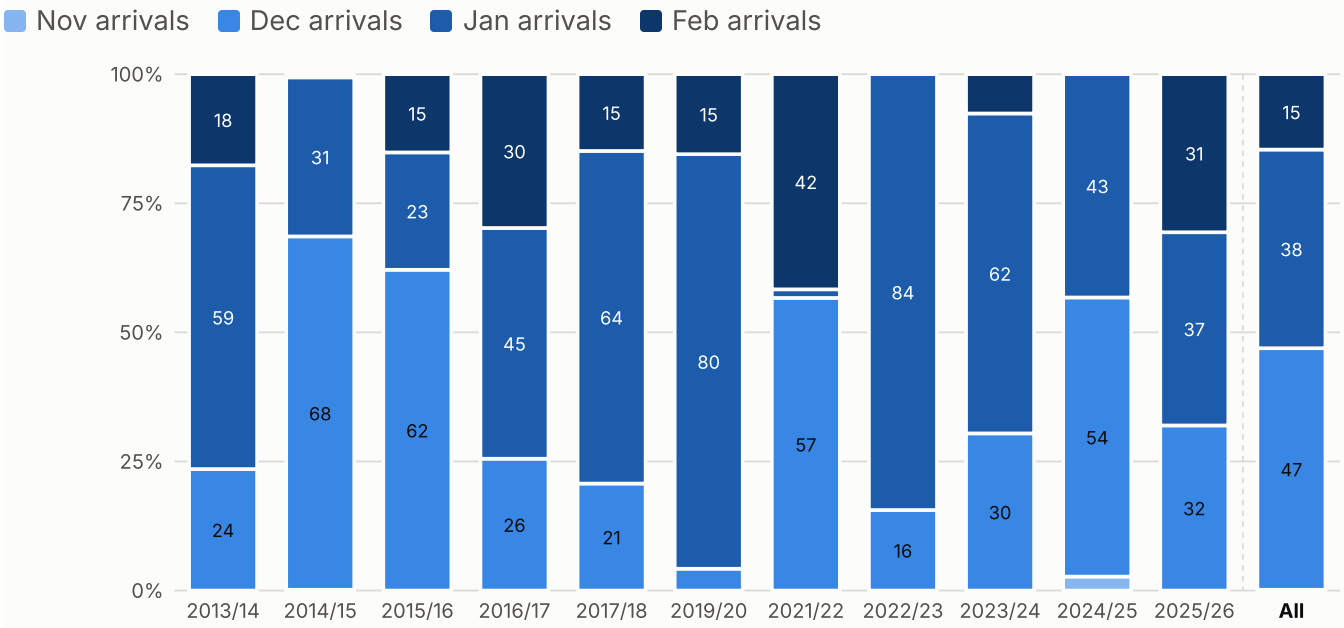
| Season | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Winter smolts released the prior spring | Rack fish per 1,000 smolts |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2026/27 (upcoming) | — | — | — | — | 27,233 | — |
| 2025/26 | 0 | 47 | 102 | 147 | 27,251 | 5.39 |
| 2024/25 | 2 | 42 | 74 | 74 | 26,594 | 2.78 |
| 2023/24 | 0 | 28 | 85 | 92 | 27,248 | 3.38 |
| 2022/23 | 0 | 17 | 109 | 109 | 26,541 | 4.11 |
| 2021/22 | 0 | 170 | 175 | 300 | 24,808 | 12.09 |
| 2020/21 | 0 | 26 | 43 | 43 | 26,485 | 1.62 |
| 2019/20 | 0 | 3 | 60 | 71 | 21,696 | 3.27 |
| 2018/19 | 0 | 11 | 38 | 38 | 27,527 | 1.38 |
| 2017/18 | 0 | 46 | 189 | 222 | 27,600 | 8.04 |
| 2016/17 | 0 | 24 | 66 | 94 | 34,031 | 2.76 |
| 2015/16 | 0 | 82 | 112 | 132 | n/a | — |
| 2014/15 | 1 | 441 | 639 | 643 | n/a | — |
| 2013/14 | 0 | 16 | 56 | 68 | n/a | — |
| 2012/13 | — | — | 18 | 52 | n/a | — |

“Nov” to “Feb” use the last weekly report of each month. Smolt counts are WDFW's winter releases at “Wallace R,” 2015–2024 releases, which WDFW says return mostly the following winter. The per-1,000 figure is indicative only: it

assumes about 1.5 years from release to return, and rack counts are not total river returns. The 2026/27 row is the upcoming season (the 2025 release).

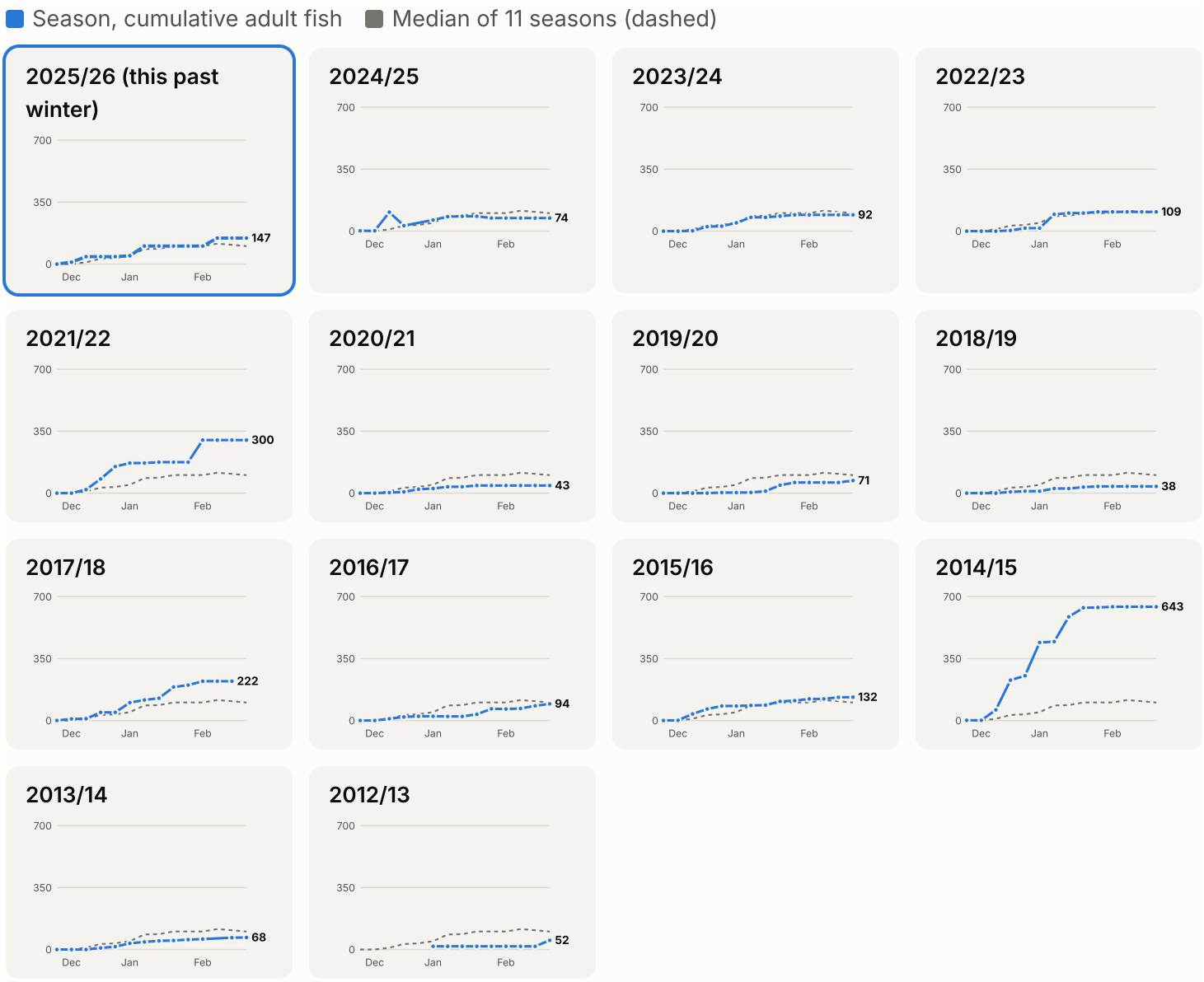
## 2. When the fish arrive

Pooled over the 11 seasons with 50+ fish (1,952 fish): Nov 0%, Dec 47%, Jan 38%, Feb 15%. Median end-of-month cumulative share: Dec 30% and Jan 85% (range 58–100%). With only 6 seasons above 100 fish, I used a 50-fish cutoff here. Wallace's pooled pattern is earlier than Reiter's (Dec 47% against 23%), though the two sets of seasons differ.




## 3. Week by week

Each solid line is one season's cumulative Adult Total from the weekly reports. The dashed line is the median of the 11 seasons with 50+ fish. Wallace's count often stays unchanged for several weeks and then jumps, so single weeks are noisy. Hover a point for the week's add.




**2025/26 against the median.** The season tracked the median closely, never more than 38 fish ahead, and finished 38 ahead (147 against 109). Weekly adds, Dec 4 through Feb 26: 11, 31, 0, 0, 5, 55, 0, 0, 0, 0, 45, 0 and 0. The two big steps were the week ending Jan 8 (+55) and Feb 12 (+45), with flat counts in between.

**Typical pattern.** The five weeks ending Dec 11 through Jan 8 brought in 62% of the fish counted week to week (1,188 of 1,909). The biggest single week led in Jan 8 (3 seasons), and in Dec 11, Jan 1 and Jan 22 (2 seasons each); Jan 29 and Feb 5 led once each.

### Cumulative adult fish, week by week

| Season | Nov | Dec 4 | Dec 11 | Dec 18 | Dec 25 | Jan 1 | Jan 8 | Jan 15 | Jan 22 | Jan 29 | Feb 5 | Feb 12 | Feb 19 | Feb 26 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2025/26 | 0 | 11 | 42 | 42 | 42 | 47 | 102 | 102 | 102 | 102 | 102 | 147 | 147 | 147 |
| 2024/25 | 2 | 2 | 107 | 31 | — | 63 | 82 | 84 | 84 | 74 | 74 | 74 | 74 | 74 |
| 2023/24 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 25 | 28 | 47 | 78 | 78 | 85 | 92 | 92 | 92 | 92 | 92 |
| 2022/23 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 17 | 17 | 95 | 102 | 102 | 109 | 109 | 109 | 109 | 109 |
| 2021/22 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 80 | 150 | 170 | 170 | 175 | 175 | 175 | 300 | 300 | 300 | 300 |
| 2020/21 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 7 | 22 | 26 | 36 | 36 | 43 | 43 | 43 | 43 | 43 | 43 |

| Season | Nov | Dec 4 | Dec 11 | Dec 18 | Dec 25 | Jan 1 | Jan 8 | Jan 15 | Jan 22 | Jan 29 | Feb 5 | Feb 12 | Feb 19 | Feb 26 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2019/20 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 11 | 45 | 60 | 60 | 60 | 60 | 71 |
| 2018/19 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 11 | 11 | 26 | 26 | 34 | 38 | 38 | 38 | 38 | 38 |
| 2017/18 | 0 | 9 | 10 | 46 | 46 | 101 | 116 | 126 | 189 | 200 | 222 | 222 | 222 | — |
| 2016/17 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 20 | 24 | 24 | 23 | 23 | 35 | 66 | 65 | 68 | 83 | 94 |
| 2015/16 | 0 | 1 | 37 | 65 | 82 | 82 | 85 | 87 | 108 | 112 | 122 | 122 | 131 | 132 |
| 2014/15 | 1 | 1 | 60 | 228 | 253 | 441 | 446 | 586 | 637 | 639 | 643 | 643 | 643 | 643 |
| 2013/14 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 16 | 35 | 43 | 49 | 51 | 56 | 59 | — | 67 | 68 |
| 2012/13 | — | — | — | — | — | 18 | 18 | 18 | 18 | 18 | 18 | 18 | 18 | 52 |
| **Median** | **0** | **0** | **10** | **31** | **35** | **47** | **85** | **87** | **102** | **102** | **102** | **115.5** | **109** | **101.5** |

### Fish added each week

| Season | Dec 4 | Dec 11 | Dec 18 | Dec 25 | Jan 1 | Jan 8 | Jan 15 | Jan 22 | Jan 29 | Feb 5 | Feb 12 | Feb 19 | Feb 26 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2025/26 | 11 | 31 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 55 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 45 | 0 | 0 |
| 2024/25 | 0 | 105 | -76 | – | – | 19 | 2 | 0 | -10 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2023/24 | 0 | 2 | 23 | 3 | 19 | 31 | 0 | 7 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2022/23 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 13 | 0 | 78 | 7 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2021/22 | 0 | 20 | 60 | 70 | 20 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 125 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2020/21 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 15 | 4 | 10 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2019/20 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 7 | 34 | 15 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11 |
| 2018/19 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 4 | 0 | 15 | 0 | 8 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2017/18 | 9 | 1 | 36 | 0 | 55 | 15 | 10 | 63 | 11 | 22 | 0 | 0 | – |
| 2016/17 | 0 | 10 | 10 | 4 | 0 | -1 | 0 | 12 | 31 | -1 | 3 | 15 | 11 |
| 2015/16 | 1 | 36 | 28 | 17 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 21 | 4 | 10 | 0 | 9 | 1 |
| 2014/15 | 0 | 59 | 168 | 25 | 188 | 5 | 140 | 51 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2013/14 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 7 | 19 | 8 | 6 | 2 | 5 | 3 | – | – | 1 |
| 2012/13 | – | – | – | – | – | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 34 |

Week columns are the weekly report nearest each date, within three days; “Nov” is the last November report. A negative number means WDFW revised its cumulative count down, and “–” means no report fell in that week. Weeks with no hatchery row count as 0. The median rows use the seasons that clear the fish-count cutoff and carry a missing week forward from the week before.

## 4. Outlook for 2026–27

**There is no published WDFW forecast.** I found no 2026–27 hatchery return forecast for the Wallace River Hatchery in WDFW's steelhead pages, its season-setting documents or its emergency rules. WDFW has published such forecasts in past emergency rules, and a regional office may have an internal number. What WDFW does publish is the smolt release behind this winter's run: **27,233 winter smolts in 2025**, which WDFW says return mostly in the 2026–27 winter. The 2024 release was 27,251.

| Rough estimate from past rack rates (my arithmetic, not WDFW's) | Rack fish per 1,000 smolts | Fish at the rack for 27,233 smolts |
|---|---|---|
| Median of past seasons | 3.33 | about 90 |

| Rough estimate from past rack rates (my arithmetic, not WDFW's) | Rack fish per 1,000 smolts | Fish at the rack for 27,233 smolts |
|---|---|---|
| Middle half of past seasons | 2.47 to 6.05 | 67 to 165 |
| Lowest to highest past season | 1.38 to 12.09 | 38 to 329 |
| Last winter (2025/26), for comparison | 5.39 | 147 fish |

Method: the 2025 release multiplied by each past season's rack fish per 1,000 smolts (the ten seasons 2016/17 to 2025/26, with rates from 1.38 to 12.09). The estimate ignores ocean conditions, closures and fishing that remove fish before the rack, and rack counts are not total river returns. Treat it as a rough range, not a prediction. Wallace's counts are small and include fish later shipped to Reiter, so they swing more from season to season.

### How long steelhead spend in the ocean

Steelhead do not spend just one year at sea. They typically spend about one to three years at sea, and a few spend four. The usual Puget Sound winter steelhead is a “two-salt,” a bit under two years at sea; fewer return as one-salts, and some as three-salts. The early-winter hatchery smolts in these reports are released as yearlings in spring and mostly return the winter after next, about 1.5 years later. Fish that stay out an extra year arrive the following winter, so one release can feed two winters, and my rack fish per 1,000 smolts slightly understate a release's total contribution. Unlike Pacific salmon, steelhead can survive spawning and return to sea, which is part of why wild fish should be released unharmed.

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## 5. Where and when to fish the Wallace River

This is a small stream with a modest run, and there is no section-by-section catch data. The calls below combine the hatchery arrival timing above (measured), the regulations (verified from eRegulations, last updated Oct 5, 2026, and WDFW rule filings) and local reports (anecdotal). The Skykomish water around the Wallace mouth is covered in the Reiter Ponds report.

**Hatchery section: 363rd Ave SE / Reece Rd to 200 feet above the hatchery water intake**
Best: Dec 10–Jan 10.

This is where fish gather before the trap. The five weeks ending Dec 11 through Jan 8 brought 62% of the fish, and December alone 47%. Reports describe bank fishing along the trail below the hatchery (“the pipes”) with small pink and orange jigs. The water 200 feet below and above the hatchery weir is closed while the weir operates, the hatchery grounds are closed from dusk to 7 a.m. (WDFW has stated this in its rule notices), and floating devices are prohibited from Nov 1 to Feb 15. Risk: WDFW closed the Wallace to protect broodstock from Dec 30, 2016, reopening Jan 26, 2017, and again Jan 7 to 14, 2019.

Confidence: moderate.

**Lower: mouth (railroad bridge) to 363rd Ave SE / Reece Rd**

**Best: Dec 1–Dec 31, after a rain pulse drops.**

Fish enter from the Skykomish through here, and Wallace's run is early (47% of the fish in December). Open Oct 17–Feb 15 under the 2026 rules (confirmed in the FishWA app for the hatchery section), with floating devices prohibited from Nov 1. One angler's report describes three fish in a day on a small pink and orange jig near a creek mouth. Confidence: low to moderate.

**Upper: 200 feet above the intake to Wallace Falls**

**Best: no data; Jan if you try it.**

Open Nov 1–Jan 31 with floating devices prohibited. I found no reports of steelhead catches above the hatchery, so treat this reach as unproven. Confidence: very low.

Wild steelhead are also in the Wallace (one report describes a 12-inch wild steelhead caught and released), and the Snohomish Basin wild run is critically low. Release all wild fish and avoid handling them.

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## 6. Most favored lure and method

**A float (bobber) and small jig in pink or orange, on a long leader, or eggs under a float.** A fishing outfitter describes the Wallace as bobber-and-jig water for winter steelhead.

- **Jig:** light pink and orange Aero-style jigs under a float were the pattern in one report that landed three winter fish in a day; another put a fish on an orange jig.
- **Bait:** eggs and shrimp under a float are also reported, and eggs worked on the Wallace in a November 2008 report that landed a 9-pound hatchery hen at first light.
- **Technique:** the water is shallow, so hold a little tension on the float to lift the jig just off the bottom. A small river means fish are easier to locate, and expect to share the hatchery bank.

This is the consensus of published reports and forum posts, not a catch-by-lure survey. I found no creel data that ranks lures for this river.

**Regulation notes (eRegulations, updated Oct 5, 2026; confirm in the WDFW pamphlet and emergency-rule page before you fish)**

- **Mouth to 363rd Ave SE / Reece Rd, and Reece Rd to the hatchery intake:** open Oct 17–Feb 15 for game fish (night closure and anti-snagging Oct 17–Nov 30); no floating devices Nov 1–Feb 15; closed 200 feet below and above the hatchery weir while it operates.
- **Above the intake to Wallace Falls:** Nov 1–Jan 31, no floating devices. Statewide hatchery steelhead size and daily limit apply, with wild steelhead released.
- **Season for the hatchery section (FishWA app, WDFW rules, synced Nov 3, 2026):** Dolly Varden/bull trout (20-inch minimum, kept within the trout limit), other trout and other game fish all Oct 17–Feb 15; salmon Oct 17–Nov 30 (12-inch minimum, daily limit 4 with no more than 2 wild coho, release Chinook and chum); night closure and anti-snagging; closed 200 feet below and above the hatchery weir while it operates. The app does not show a separate steelhead row, so hatchery steelhead fall under the game fish rules and the statewide limits.
- **2026 status:** the June 2026 closure covered the Skykomish and named the Wallace among rivers closed unless reopened; the Oct 22 rule closes Skykomish salmon Nov 1–30. The app's Nov 3 sync shows no Wallace closure, but I cannot tell whether it includes same-day emergency rules.
- The Wallace release goal is 27,600 winter smolts (WDFW, 2019). In low-return years WDFW can close the Wallace water with little notice.

## How the numbers were checked

- I downloaded all 231 weekly reports (Nov–Feb, 2013–2026) directly from WDFW and read the Winter Steelhead tables from the PDF text layer. In 708 of the 711 hatchery rows parsed (all facilities), the Adult Total equals on-hand + lethal spawned + released + shipped + mortality + surplus; the other three are off by one jack and are not Wallace rows.
- The same parse re-checked the 149 Whitehorse Pond numbers from the earlier Stillaguamish report with zero mismatches.
- Wallace's reported total jumped around in 2024/25 (107 on Dec 12, 31 on Dec 19, 42 on Dec 30) as fish were shipped to Reiter; the reports do not explain the rest of the drop. I show WDFW's numbers as filed.
- Wallace reports sometimes carry an eggs-only row in older years; I took the adults row. Eggs are not reported here.

**Using this report.** This is an independent analysis of public WDFW hatchery escapement reports, WDFW's smolt-release tables, published regulations and public fishing reports. It is not an official WDFW product. Hatchery counts are WDFW's preliminary numbers. Facts are as of Nov 3, 2026, and fishing rules in this area change with little notice, so confirm the current rules on WDFW's emergency-rules page or the Fish Washington app before you fish. Where a point rests on anglers' reports rather than counts or regulations, the text says so.

## Sources


- WDFW hatchery escapement reports (weekly PDFs, 2013–2026)
- WDFW steelhead smolt releases
- Washington eRegulations, Puget Sound special rules S–Z
- WDFW, Snohomish Basin fisheries closed to protect wild Chinook (2026); Skykomish salmon closure, Nov 1–30, 2026
- WDFW rule notice, Feb 1, 2019 (release goals, hatchery grounds hours); Dec 2016 / Jan 2017 closure; Jan 2019 closure
- FishWA app screenshots of the Wallace River rules (CRC 860), provided by the user, synced Nov 3, 2026; Riptide Fishing, Skykomish fishing spots (Wallace River); Northwest Fishing Reports, Wallace jig report; Wallace report, Jan 2014; Wallace report, Nov 2008