

6. Columbia River Sturgeon Management—DECISION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Decision Page/"Green sheet"	<i>i-ii</i>
Policy C-3001, 2006-2008	1-2
Proposed Policy C-3001, 2009	3-4

GREEN SHEET

Meeting dates:	December 12-13, 2008, Commission Meeting
Agenda item #6:	Columbia River Sturgeon Management—DECISION
Staff Contact:	Cindy LeFleur, Columbia River Harvest and Hydro Management —Intergovernmental Resource Management
Presenter(s):	Guy Norman, Director—Director's Office-Region 5 Pat Frazier, Fish Program Manager—Region 5 Brad James, Sturgeon Biologist—Fish Program

Background:

In 2006, the Commission adopted Policy C-3001, 2006-08 (Attachment 1) lower Columbia sturgeon management. This was the fourth consecutive policy guiding sturgeon management in the Columbia River; the first policy was adopted in 1996. The current policy, which expires December 2008, was adopted to guide development of fishery management agreements with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and includes conservation principles, regulation consistency with Oregon sport and commercial allocation, and specific fishery management objectives.

Concurrent with renewal of Policy C-3001 every three years, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and ODFW have negotiated a series of three-year fishery management agreements, which include total allowable harvest, specific sport and commercial fishery regulations, and population monitoring programs. These three-year management agreements have provided fishery stability within the annual management process and coincide with the ability to assess population trends in order to make recommendations for management adjustments.

In 2008, WDFW staff initiated development of a white sturgeon management plan for Washington waters statewide. WDFW is working jointly with ODFW to complete that portion of the plan that includes the lower Columbia River. ODFW and WDFW, in cooperation, are in the process of developing an Oregon Management and Conservation Plan for the lower Columbia River white sturgeon population. These plans will examine the factors and threats that are limiting abundance and productivity of white sturgeon in the lower Columbia River, refine population goals, and develop strategies and actions to address the limiting factors. Preliminary drafts of the plans are due to be completed in 2009. WDFW and ODFW staff members are recommending that the current three-year sturgeon management agreement between WDFW and ODFW be renewed for one year while the white sturgeon plans are being developed, and the two agencies jointly develop an agreement for long-term sturgeon management.

Policy issue(s) you are bringing to the Commission for consideration:

Consider adopting a one-year lower Columbia sturgeon policy for 2009 similar to existing Policy C-3001. Provide policy guidance to the WDFW Director for negotiation with ODFW to develop a one-year extension of the current joint agreement on sturgeon management. Policy guidance should confirm white and green sturgeon management objectives and guidelines for white sturgeon in the lower Columbia River for 2009.

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

Department staff met with the Columbia River Commercial and Recreational Advisory Groups on October 23, 2008. Staff members presented an update of stock status and the concept of continuing for one year, the existing management agreement between Washington and Oregon. Some members of the advisory group felt that a reduction in the harvestable number was warranted, however, there was general support for Department staff recommendation for continuation of the existing agreement for one year to allow for a more thorough assessment of population status.

Action requested:

Adopt a one-year lower Columbia sturgeon policy for 2009, equivalent to existing Policy C-3001 (Attachment 2). This policy delegates the authority to the Director to work with the appropriate ODFW representative to implement the provisions of the policy, by the adoption of a one-year Lower Columbia Sturgeon Management Plan (Joint State Accord on 2009 Columbia River Sturgeon Fishery Management) in order to have concurrent regulations on the Columbia River.

Draft motion language:

I move to adopt the Lower Columbia Sturgeon Management Policy C-3001 effective January 1, 2009 through December 31, 2009.

Justification for Commission action:

The basic stock assessment work that is necessary as the foundation for a three-year agreement will be completed in 2009, and WDFW and ODFW will also finalize new conservation and management plans for white sturgeon in 2009. Consequently, adoption of a one-year continuation of the existing policy and agreement will allow staff members to focus on stock assessment updates and plan development.

Communications Plan:

A joint staff report will be distributed early December 2008 that discusses sturgeon stock status, review of fisheries, and recommendations for future fisheries. Compact/Joint State hearings will be held December 18 and in January 2009, to adopt sturgeon seasons for 2009. In previous business, the Washington and Oregon Commissions adopted a new standard for measuring sturgeon (i.e. fork length versus total length) to be implemented in 2009. The joint staff of WDFW and ODFW will develop a flyer that explains the new fork length measurements for sport and commercial fisheries. The flyer will be distributed to the Columbia River Advisory Groups, and sport and commercial fishing groups, posted at fishing access sites. A news release will be distributed.

Form revised 10/16/2008 - sdy

**FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION
POLICY DECISION**

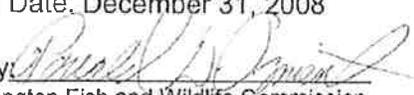
POLICY TITLE: Lower Columbia
Sturgeon Management

POLICY NUMBER: C-3001

Cancels: POL – C-3001
Adopted January 1, 2003

Effective Date: January 1, 2006
Termination Date: December 31, 2008

See Also:

Approved by: 
Chair, Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission

Lower Columbia Sturgeon Management Policies:

- Manage lower Columbia River sturgeon through a three-year agreement with Oregon, with the ability to reopen policy discussions if there is a substantial change to population abundance or significant new biological information.
- Provide adequate recruitment and regulatory protection to safeguard the broodstock population.
- Manage for optimal sustainable yield (OSY) by setting a combined sport and commercial harvest rate for the legal-sized population.
- Maintain concurrent Washington and Oregon regulations in the Columbia River.
- Maintain viable and diverse recreational and commercial fishing opportunities.
- The base period for determining viability and diversity for recreational opportunity among geographic areas should be calculated using recent years (e.g., 1995-2000).
- Manage sturgeon harvests outside the mainstem lower Columbia River consistent with lower Columbia River sturgeon conservation and management needs.
- Limit incidental impacts on other species needing conservation protection during fisheries directed at white sturgeon.

Management Objectives for 2006-2008:

- Manage for an annual combined sport and commercial harvest of white sturgeon to provide population growth towards OSY.
- Maintain the 80/20 sport/commercial harvest allocation.
- Develop sport fishery regulations consistent with the following objectives:
 - Minimize emergency in-season action;
 - Balance catch between estuary and non-estuary fisheries and maintain a diverse array of sturgeon fishing opportunity; and
 - Maintain fishery monitoring and management capabilities.
- Develop commercial fishery regulations consistent with the following objectives:
 - Optimize economic value (adjust to market needs);
 - Spread harvest opportunity throughout the year; and
 - No green sturgeon target fisheries.
- Provide sufficient sturgeon spawning sanctuaries or other protection measures where appropriate to ensure adequate recruitment to the population.
- Provide appropriate added protective measures to prevent further decline of green sturgeon.

- Conduct all practical research to assess broodstock abundance and to quantify impacts of commercial and recreational fisheries on broodstock abundance.
- Delegate negotiation and adoption authority to the Director for a new three-year (2006-2008) Lower Columbia Sturgeon Management Plan that is consistent with these policies and objectives.

FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION PROPOSED POLICY

**POLICY TITLE: Lower Columbia
Sturgeon Management**

POLICY NUMBER: C-3001

Supersedes: POL C-3001, 2006-2008

Effective Date: January 1, 2009

Termination Date: December 31, 2009

See Also:

Approved by: _____
Chair, Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission

Lower Columbia Sturgeon Management Policies:

- Manage lower Columbia River sturgeon through a one-year agreement with Oregon, with the ability to reopen policy discussions if there is a substantial change to population abundance or significant new biological information.
- Provide adequate recruitment and regulatory protection to safeguard the broodstock population.
- Manage for optimal sustainable yield (OSY) by setting a combined sport and commercial harvest rate for the legal-sized population.
- Maintain concurrent Washington and Oregon regulations in the Columbia River.
- Maintain viable and diverse recreational and commercial fishing opportunities.
- The base period for determining viability and diversity for recreational opportunity among geographic areas should be calculated using recent years (e.g., 1995-2000).
- Manage sturgeon harvests outside the mainstem lower Columbia River consistent with lower Columbia River sturgeon conservation and management needs.
- Limit incidental impacts on other species needing conservation protection during fisheries directed at white sturgeon.

Management Objectives for 2009:

- Manage for an annual combined sport and commercial harvest of white sturgeon to provide population growth towards OSY.
- Maintain the 80/20 sport/commercial harvest allocation.
- Develop sport fishery regulations consistent with the following objectives:
 - Minimize emergency in-season action;
 - Balance catch between estuary and non-estuary fisheries and maintain a diverse array of sturgeon fishing opportunity; and
 - Maintain fishery monitoring and management capabilities.
- Develop commercial fishery regulations consistent with the following objectives:
 - Optimize economic value (adjust to market needs); and
 - Spread harvest opportunity throughout the year; and
 - No green sturgeon target fisheries.
- Provide sufficient sturgeon spawning sanctuaries or other protection measures where appropriate to ensure adequate recruitment to the population.
- Provide appropriate added protective measures to prevent further decline of green sturgeon.

- Conduct all practical research to assess broodstock abundance and to quantify impacts of commercial and recreational fisheries on broodstock abundance.
- Delegate negotiation and adoption authority to the Director for a new one-year (2009) Lower Columbia Sturgeon Management Plan that is consistent with these policies and objectives.