

**7. PROPOSED UPDATES TO COLUMBIA RIVER STURGEON
MANAGEMENT POLICY C-3001 – (DECISION)**

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“GREEN SHEET”

Meeting dates: February 5-6, 2010 Meeting

Agenda item #7: Proposed Updates to Columbia River Sturgeon Management Policy C-3001 – (Decision)

Staff Contact: Pat Frazier, Region 5 Fish Program Manager (Fish Program)

Presenter(s): Pat Frazier, Region 5 Fish Program Manager (Fish Program)
Bill Tweit, Columbia River/Distant Waters Lead (IRM Program)

Since 1996, the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission have guided lower Columbia River sturgeon management through Commission POL-C3001. The current 1-year policy is due to expire in December 2009 and needs to be renewed. This policy is intended to provide direction during development of joint state fishery management accords 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. Staff is recommending that the current policy be extended for an additional year through 2010 (Attachment 1).

Concurrent with renewal of POL-C3001, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and ODFW have negotiated a series of joint state fishery management accords that establish total allowable harvest, allocation between sport and commercial fisheries, specific sport and commercial fishery regulations, and population monitoring programs. These management accords have included a series of fishery adjustments in response to updated population status information. The accords have been developed to respond to essential population trend data to guide fishery management for the period.

Key issues for the joint state accord are the harvestable number and consideration for expansion of the current spawning sanctuary. Based on recent declines in legal size segment abundance estimates and sublegal size segment catch rates, staff is considering reductions in the harvestable number ranging between 35%-50%. Expansions in the spawning sanctuary being considered include both increased time and area.

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

Adopt a one-year lower Columbia River sturgeon management policy for 2010 that is similar to the existing Policy C-3001 for 2009 (Attachment 1). Provide policy guidance to the WDFW Director for negotiation with ODFW to develop a one-year joint state sturgeon management accord. Policy guidance should confirm management policies and objectives for white and green sturgeon inhabiting the lower Columbia River.

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

- Development of past joint state accords concerning Columbia River sturgeon management has a good track record of high levels of public involvement. For the 2010 policy, several opportunities are provided for public involvement, including testifying at Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission meetings, testifying at Columbia River Compact hearings and providing input at public meetings. Additionally, staff will work closely with the Columbia River sport and commercial advisory groups in negotiating the joint state management accord. Notification of public meetings will occur through standard media channels. To date the following meetings have occurred with the general public and the Columbia River sport and commercial advisory groups:

November 5, 2009 – Public meeting in Vancouver, Washington

November 10, 2009 – Public meeting in Astoria, Oregon

November 18, 2009 – Columbia River Recreational Advisor Group meeting
November 19, 2009 – Columbia River Commercial Advisor Group meeting
January 9, 2010 – Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission meeting

Action requested:

Adopt a policy regarding management of Columbia River sturgeon for the calendar year of 2010. Recommended policy language is included in Attachment 1.

Draft motion language:

Move to adopt proposed updates to Sturgeon Management Policy C-3001.

Justification for Commission action:

Adoption of this policy is necessary to provide guidance to the Director and staff in negotiating a joint state accord with ODFW regarding Columbia River sturgeon management for 2010.

Form revised 10/25/07

FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION POLICY DECISION

POLICY TITLE: Lower Columbia
Sturgeon Management

POLICY NUMBER: C-XXXX

Cancels: POL – C-3001
Adopted _____

Effective Date: January 1, ~~2010~~
Termination Date: December 31, ~~2010~~

Deleted: 2009

Deleted: 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 2010:

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- 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 ~~(2010)~~ Lower Columbia Sturgeon Management Plan that is consistent with these policies and objectives.

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