

2015 Lower Columbia River Sturgeon Management

Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission Meeting

Tumwater, Washington

April 10, 2015

Guy Norman, Region 5 Director



Purpose

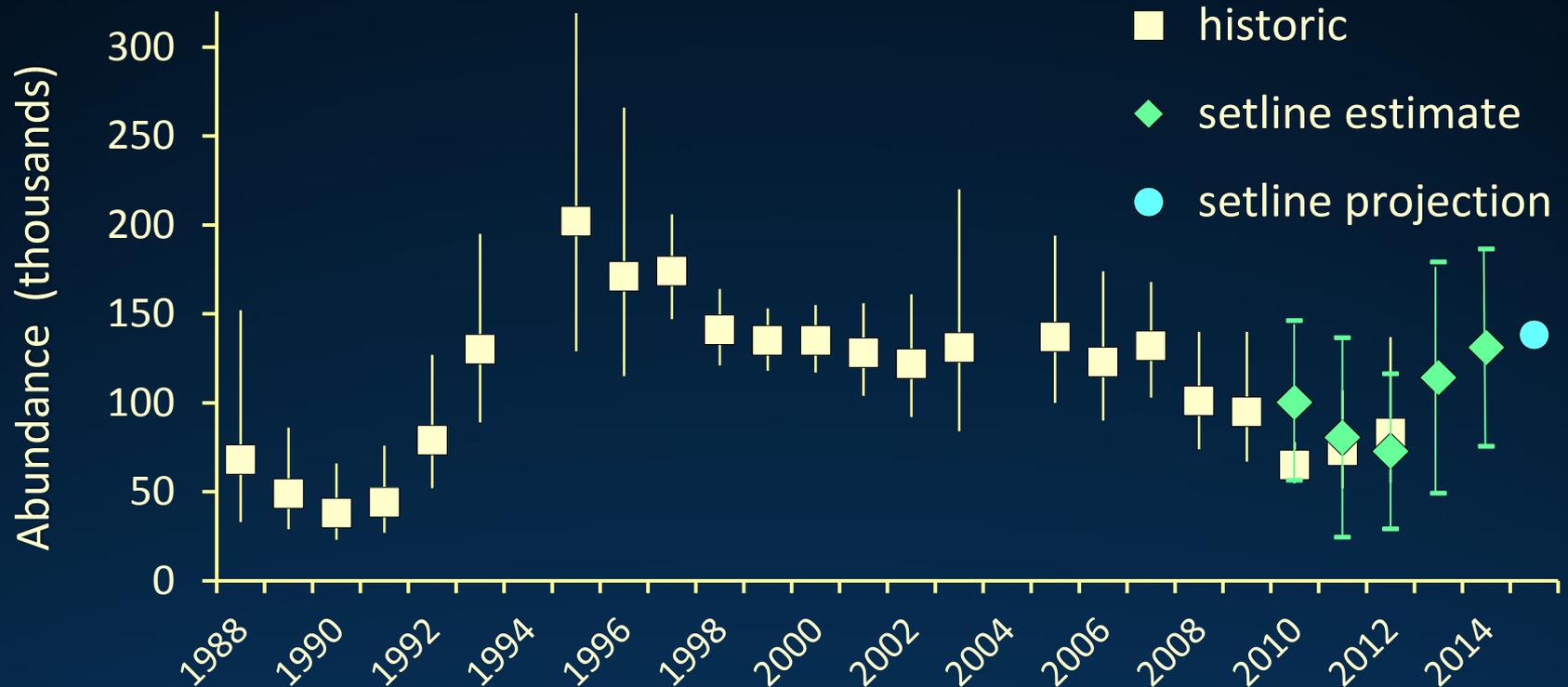
- Review stock status
- Review recent fishery history
- Report on meetings and feedback from constituents
- Discuss limited fishery options for 2015
- Provide a recommendation for 2015 fishery management

Population Estimates Legal-Size Fish

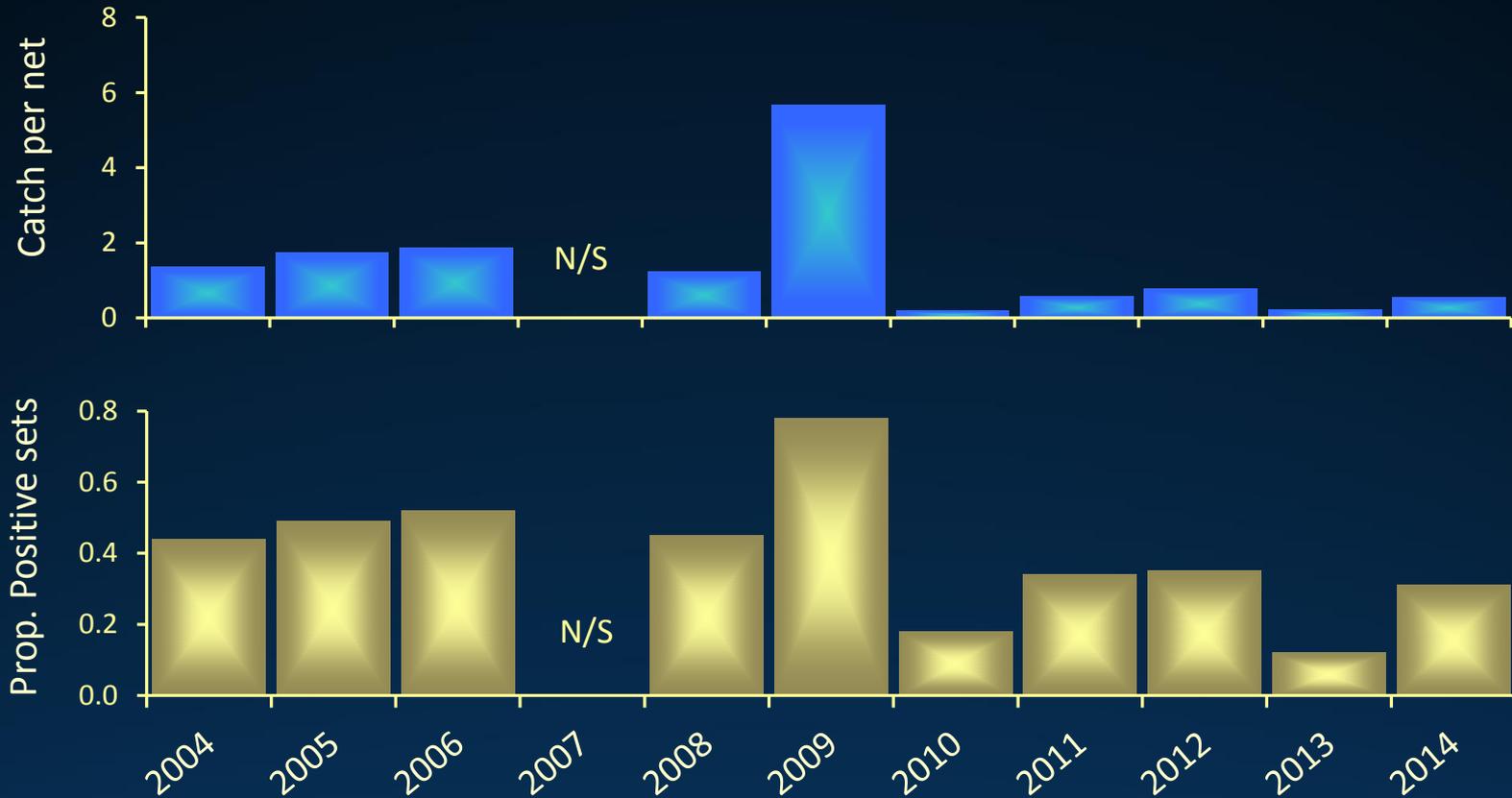
Year	Historic method	Setline method		Harvest guideline
		Estimate	Projected	
2009	95,000	--	--	40,000
2010	65,300	100,200	--	24,000
2011	72,800	80,500	77,000	17,000
2012	83,400	72,700	65,000	10,400
2013	--	114,200	74,300	10,105
2014	--	130,990 ¹	131,700	0
2015	--		138,200 ¹	--

¹ Preliminary.

Recent Trends in Abundance Legal-Size Fish



Sub-Yearling Production Index



Public Meetings Held In 2015

- January 14- Columbia River Advisors
- March 16- North of Falcon, Vancouver
- April 6- North of Falcon, Olympia

- Received public comments both in support and not in support of a 2015 fishery.
- Several letters were received from the public after fishery options were presented on March 16.

Angler Trips Annual Averages

Period	Estuary	Above Wauna & Willamette River	Combined
2002-2011 avg.	46,800	88,200	135,000
2012-2013 avg.	18,100	27,200	45,300
2014	1,700	4,200	5,900

Fishery Considerations 2015

- Current legal-sized population is large enough to provide harvest opportunity
- Harvest impact should be limited to a modest level to ensure brood stock population growth
- Options focused on less than 6% impact on the legal-sized population
- 2015 fishery options focused on bringing anglers back to the lower Columbia in the late spring.

Fishery options considered

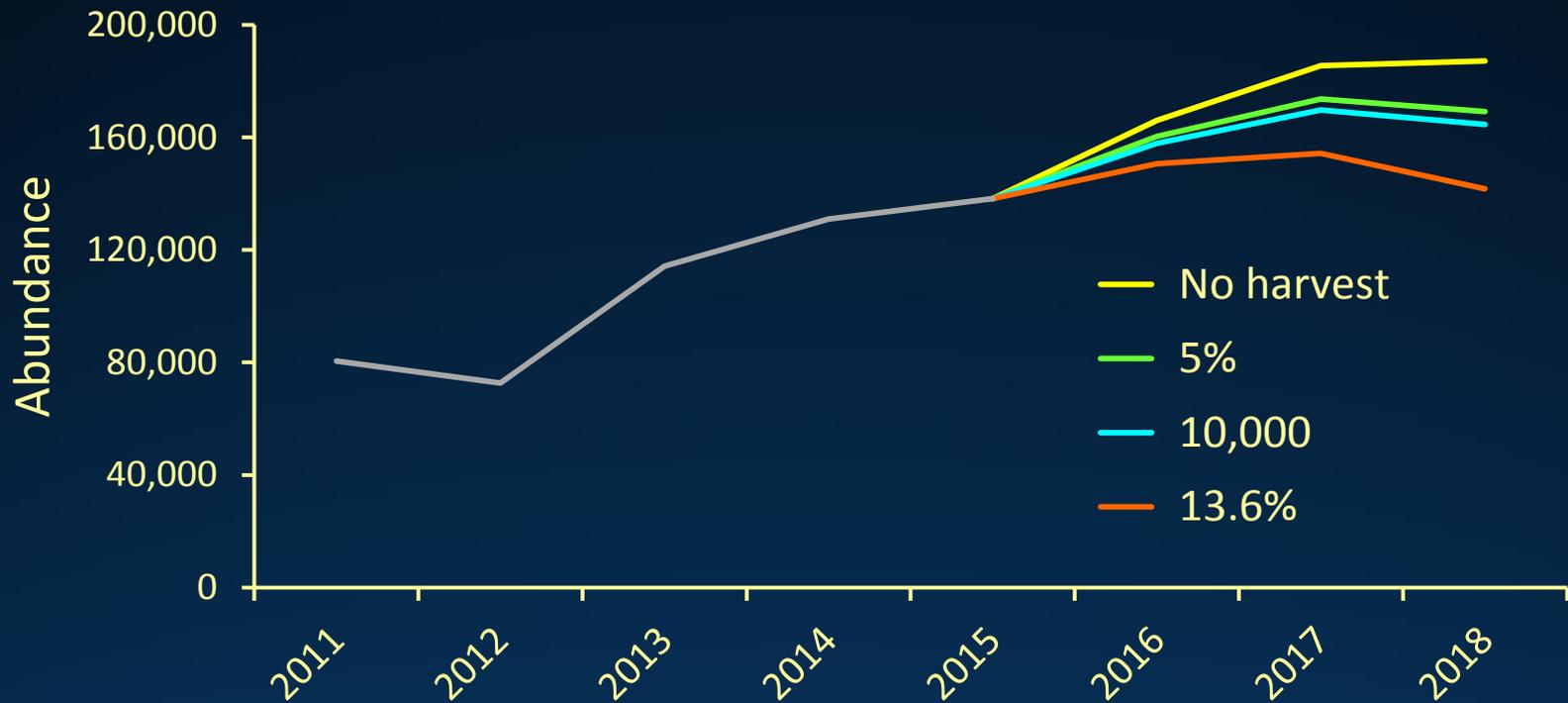
- Narrow legal-size slot to reduce harvest.
- 30-day fishery in Columbia River estuary only
- Expected to generate 30,000 angler trips
- Commercial harvest 20% of total harvest as per Commission Policy

White Sturgeon Harvest Scenarios

Legal-Size (inches)	Retained Harvest		Legal-Size HR	
	Sport	Comm	Simple	Brood Stock Equivalent
38-54	13,080	3,270	11.9%	11.9%
42-50	5,800	1,450	5.2%	5.9%
44-50	3,750	940	3.4%	4.6%

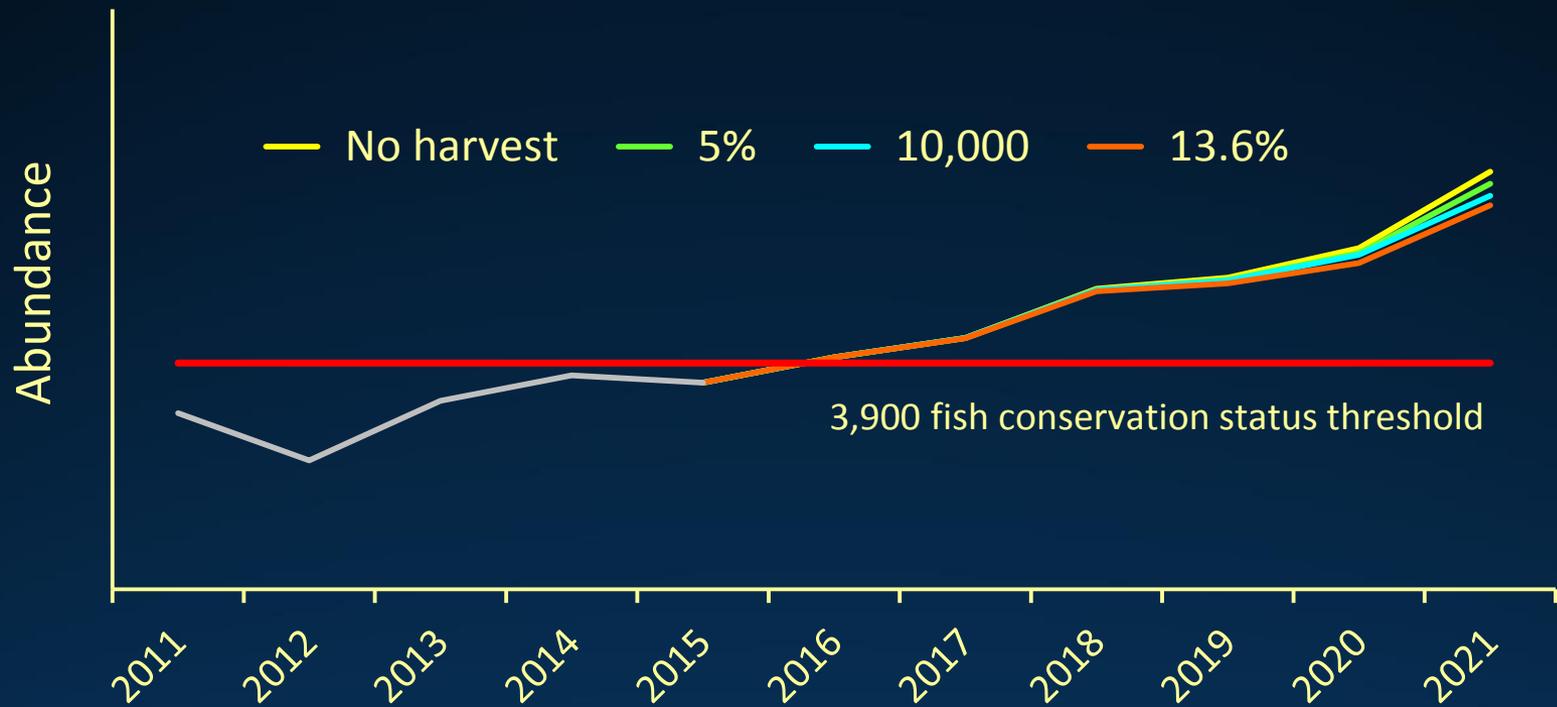
Harvest Scenarios

Legal-size Abundance



Harvest Scenarios

Spawner-size Abundance



Recommendation

- WDFW negotiates a 2015 accord with ODFW that includes a low level white sturgeon retention fishery in the lower Columbia River
 - Consistent with the Conservation objectives in Commission Policy C-3001.
 - Focused on attracting anglers back into the lower Columbia River estuary
 - Managed at less than 6% harvest- rate of the legal-sized population

Questions?



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Policy Guidance for 2014

Policy C-3001 revised and extended 5 years

- March 1, 2014 through December 31, 2018

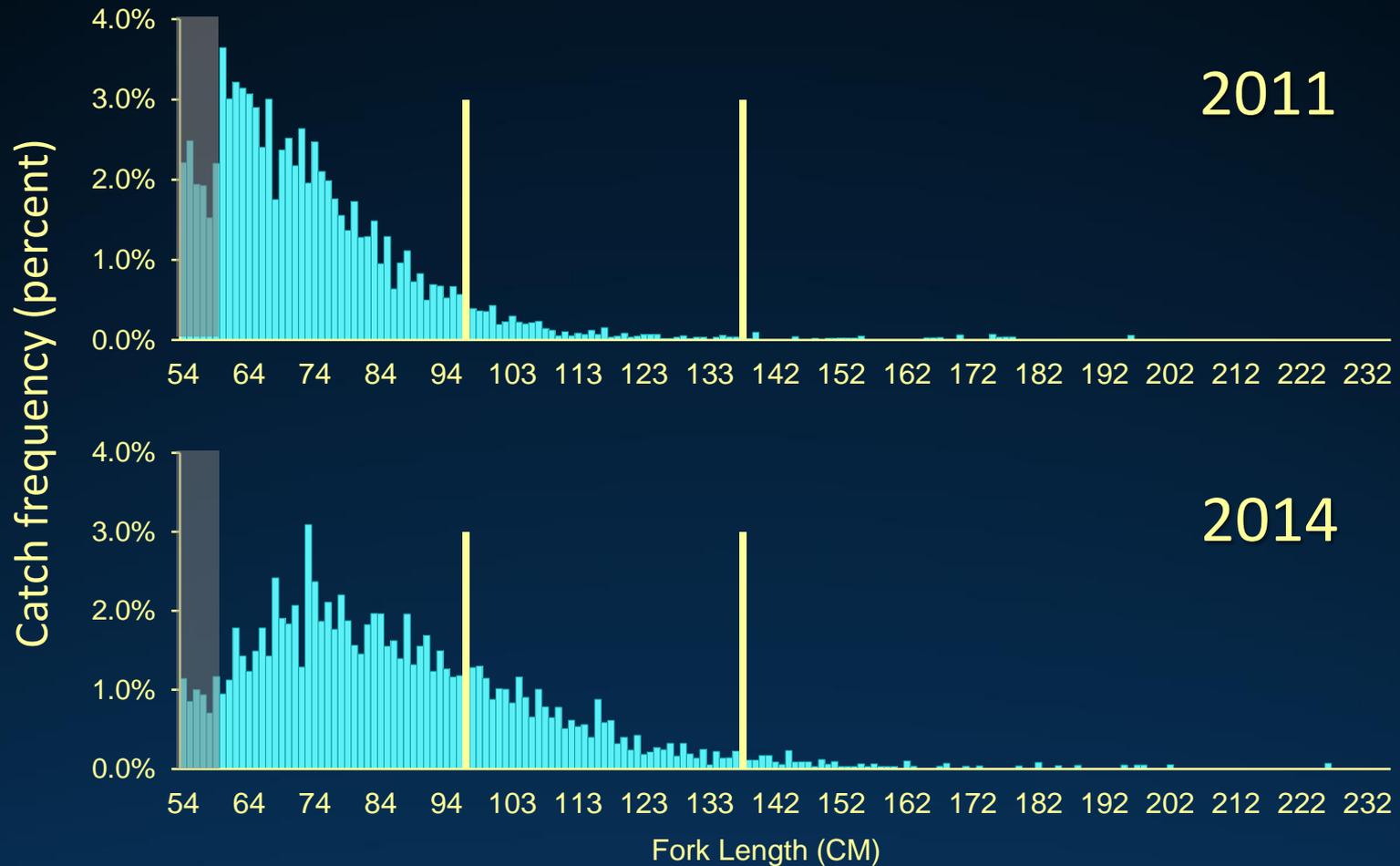
Retention Prohibition

- Prohibit retention in the Columbia River below Bonneville Dam, the WA coast, Puget Sound, and their tributaries, effective Jan. 1, 2014.

Population Estimates Spawner-Size Fish

- Abundance of spawner-size fish (fish >165cm) is currently below the Oregon Plan conservation status threshold of 3,900 fish
- It appears that sufficient numbers of sub-adult fish (fish 137cm – 165cm) have already escaped the fishery to allow the spawner-size population to increase above the threshold within a couple years

Setline Catch-Frequency by Size



Production and Recruitment

Sub-yearling Index Survey

- Both indices show peak production in 2009 followed by the four lowest years, just with differing magnitudes
- Unknown how years surveyed compare to historic production

Setline size frequency

- 2009 year-class may have shown up in 2011 setline catch
- Proportion of smallest juveniles has declined since 2011
- Likely in the middle of a period of decent recruitment to legal-size (2004-2009 sub-yearling production and maybe a bit before), to be followed by a decline in recruitment to legal-size