

OREGON AND WASHINGTON DEPARTMENTS OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
JOINT STAFF REPORT - FALL FACT SHEET NO. 12
Columbia River Compact/Joint State Sport Hearing
December 17, 2010

Fisheries under consideration: Non-Indian winter commercial sturgeon Recreational sturgeon above Wauna Powerlines

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

White Sturgeon - Lower Columbia River

- Conservation plans are still in development and a revised Accord (and associated harvest guideline and fishery protocols) will not be available until February.
- New information regarding the status of the white sturgeon population in the lower Columbia River is under review, and is expected to lead to reductions in the overall amount of harvestable sturgeon available to Columbia River fisheries.
- Based on this information, the Joint Staff is recommending the 2010 guideline of 24,000 sturgeon be reduced by 29% beginning in 2011. This reduction would result in a 2011 guideline of 17,000 white sturgeon. Harvest allocation between user groups would remain 80% recreational and 20% commercial fisheries. The 2011 commercial allocation of white sturgeon would be 3,400 fish.
- Given the draft status of the conservation plan and sturgeon accord, the intent is to allow recreational and commercial sturgeon fisheries in the lower Columbia to commence beginning in January, 2011 with further action planned for February when management policies for 2011 have been decided. Because harvest is relatively small in both winter season commercial and recreational fisheries, it shouldn't affect future policy decisions.
- Staff briefed the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission on the status of the Columbia River white sturgeon and potential harvest guidelines, fishery protocols and allocation. Oregon staff will brief their commission in January.
- Staff met with the Columbia River Commercial Advisory Group (CRCAG) on October 26 and December 16 to discuss possible season-specific allocations for 2011 commercial fisheries. Similar to 2010, the group agreed about 10%-12% of the total commercial sturgeon guideline should be allocated to the winter fishery.
- Staff conducted public meetings December 6-9 to discuss white sturgeon population trends and potential harvest reduction scenarios for 2011.

2010 FISHERIES REVIEW

Winter Commercial Sturgeon Fishery

- The 2010 winter sturgeon gillnet fishery consisted of five (24 hour) fishing periods between January 19 and February 17 in Zones 1-5. Fishing periods occurred once weekly with a 9-inch minimum mesh size in affect and landing limits of 15 sturgeon per week (per vessel). Deliveries ranged from 14 to 35 during the season.
- A total of 518 white sturgeon were landed, compared to the 600 fish allocation (12.5% of the 4,800 fish commercial guideline). A total of 80 adipose fin-clipped spring Chinook were also landed.

FISHERY PROPOSALS

2011 Winter Commercial White Sturgeon Fishery		
Season	6 PM Tuesday January 18 – 6 PM Wednesday January 19, 2011	(24 hours)
	6 PM Tuesday January 25 – 6 PM Wednesday January 26, 2011	(24 hours)
	6 PM Tuesday February 1 – 6 PM Wednesday February 2, 2011	(24 hours)
	6 PM Tuesday February 8 – 6 PM Wednesday February 9, 2011	(24 hours)
Area:	Mainstem Columbia River, Zones 1-5.	
Gear:	Drift gillnet. 9" minimum and 9 ¾" maximum mesh size restrictions.	
Allowable Sales:	White sturgeon (43-54 inch fork length) and adipose fin-clipped salmon. A maximum of 10 white sturgeon may be possessed or sold by each participating vessel during each calendar week (Sunday through Saturday) that the fishery is open.	
Sanctuaries:	Sandy River sanctuary.	
Miscellaneous:	24-hour Quick Reporting Rule in effect for Washington buyers.	

- Based on input from the CRCAG, season structure is based on a guideline of about 12%, or 400 fish from the expected commercial allocation of 3,400 white sturgeon.
- Input from the CRCAG on the December 16 meeting was mixed, with some fisherman wanting to start the season earlier than the proposed date of January 18, and others wanting to delay the fishery by one week - start January 25 and continue through February 15.
- The proposed fishery is similar to the 2010 fishing season considering the reduced allocation and an attempt to balance the mixed input from CRCAG.
- The Joint Staff will monitor catch and review the fishery at the February 8 Compact hearing.
- Catch from the proposed fishery is expected to remain within the 400 fish season allocation.

2011 Above Wauna Recreational Sturgeon Fishery

- The fishery in the area above Wauna is open for sturgeon retention three days per week and continues into 2011 with the same season structure, which will be reviewed at the February 8 Compact hearing.
- In the winter of 2010, ODFW observed a large aggregation of white sturgeon in a slough at Rooster Rock State Park between Sand Island and the Oregon shore.
- Sturgeon catch rates in this specific area were extremely high in the winter and spring, which jeopardized the 2010 season structure for the gorge fishery (above Wauna powerlines)
- In April of 2010, the States took action and closed Sand Island slough to all angling through the month of July.
- Implementing the same action earlier in the season would likely stabilize the fishery, and reduce the potential need for inseason modifications.

2011 Recreational Sturgeon (Above Wauna Powerlines) minor area closure

Effective January 1 through July 31 2011, prohibit angling for all species from a line between the upstream end of Sand Island and a marker on the Oregon shoreline, downstream to a line between the lower end of Sand Island and a marker on the Oregon shoreline.

FUTURE MEETINGS

- A Compact/Joint State Hearing is scheduled for February 8, to consider the following issues and fisheries:
 - ✓ March-December 2011 mainstem Columbia recreational sturgeon fisheries.
 - Willamette River sturgeon fishery (Oregon State consideration)
 - ✓ 2011 recreational spring salmon seasons.
 - ✓ 2011 Select Area winter-summer commercial fisheries.
 - ✓ 2011 winter commercial fishery review
 - ✓ 2011 non-Indian commercial winter/spring commercial salmon fishing plan.