

OREGON AND WASHINGTON DEPARTMENTS OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
JOINT STAFF REPORT: WINTER FACT SHEET NO. 6
Columbia River Joint State Hearing
April 6, 2011

<i>Fisheries under Consideration:</i> Recreational salmon downstream of Bonneville Dam

Water Conditions

- The Willamette River is currently at 14.5 feet (Morrison gauge) with an expected crest of 15 feet tomorrow, and a projected drop to 11 feet by Monday April 11. Water clarity is currently between 2-2.5 feet (Willamette Falls and Morrison). Water temperature is currently 47° F.
- The Columbia River is currently at 14.6 feet (Vancouver) with an expected crest at 15 feet (flood stage is 16 feet) tomorrow, followed by a drop to 11 feet by Monday April 11. Discharge at Bonneville Dam is currently at 390 kcfs (167 kcfs of which is spill) compared to a 5-year average discharge of 177 kcfs for this date. Water visibility is 2.0 feet compared to 4.0 feet on Friday (April 1). The 5-year average visibility for this date is 4.7 feet. Water temperature is currently 46° F. So far, monthly (Jan-Apr) average water temperatures have been colder than both the 5 and 10-year averages.

Stock Status

- Bonneville Dam passage of Chinook through April 5 totals 338 adults. Passage at Bonneville averages about 1% complete through April 5, and has been late-timed for five of the past six years. The average 50% passage date is May 4, ranging from April 18 to May 13 over the past ten years. It is still too early in the run to make any conclusions regarding run size.

Lower Columbia River Recreational Fishery

- The Columbia River downstream of Bonneville Dam closed as scheduled for Chinook retention effective Tuesday April 5. The area from Bonneville Dam upstream to the Oregon/Washington border is scheduled to be open for Chinook retention through April 24.
- Preliminary catch estimates of spring Chinook (all stocks) in the Columbia River downstream of Bonneville Dam total 5,800 fish (4,500 kept) from 82,300 angler trips.
- Of the total catch (kept and released), about 4,700 have been upriver stock. The kept and release mortality for upriver fish is estimated at 3,820 fish, or 49% of the 7,750 available. Under a run size buffer of 30%, a balance of 3,930 upriver fish remains available for the recreational fishery downstream of Bonneville Dam prior to a run update.

Preliminary Summary of the Lower Columbia Recreational Fishery during Feb 1 – Apr 4, 2011.				
	Angler Trips	Total Catch	Kept Catch	UR Catch (kept + rel mort)
Feb	5,598	327	280	266
Mar	59,220	4,531	3,492	2,967
Apr 1-4	17,524	985	739	586
Total	82,342	5,843	4,511	3,819

- Through late March, angler effort was tracking very close to expectations, while catch rates were slightly below expectations. However, during the final eight days of the fishery, effort began to lag and catch rates were much less than expected due to poor weather and water conditions.
- Given the large remaining balance of upriver fish, many options exist for additional recreational fishing opportunity in the lower river. Staff has provided two possible options below:

<i>2011 Mainstem Columbia River Spring Chinook Recreational Fishery - Staff Options</i>	
Downstream of Bonneville Dam	
Area: Buoy 10 upstream to Rooster Rock (boat and bank) plus bank angling only from Rooster Rock upstream to Bonneville Dam	
Option 1: Saturday April 9 through Wednesday, April 13, 2011 (5 days) Expected kept catch; 1,600-2,350 spring Chinook (1,300-1,900 upriver stock)	
Option 2: Friday April 8, 2011 until further notice Kept catch not projected. Fishery would close when upriver quota is projected to be met	
Catch limit below Bonneville Dam:	Two adult salmonids per day, but only one may be a Chinook Only adipose fin-clipped fish may be kept. All other permanent regulations apply.
Additional regulations:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective through June 15, 2011 for the mainstem Columbia River salmon and steelhead fishery from the Rocky Point/Tongue Point line upstream to OR/WA border, it is unlawful when fishing from vessels which are less than 30 feet in length (substantiated by Coast Guard documentation or Marine Board registration) to totally remove from the water any salmon or steelhead required to be released. • In Washington, on the mainstem Columbia River below Bonneville Dam, anglers may not possess in the field fish mutilated so that size, species or fin clip cannot be determined until the angler has reached their automobile or principle means of land transportation and has completed their daily angling. • Effective through May 15, 2011, the mainstem Columbia River will be open for retention of adipose fin-clipped steelhead and shad ONLY during days and seasons open for retention of adipose fin-clipped spring Chinook. • Effective through June 15, 2011, on days when the mainstem Columbia River recreational fishery below Bonneville Dam is open to retention of Chinook, the salmonid daily bag limit in Oregon and Washington Select Areas will be the same as mainstem Columbia River bag limits. On days when the mainstem Columbia River fishery is <u>closed</u> to Chinook retention, permanent salmonid bag limit regulations apply. 	

- Option 1 would re-open Chinook retention beginning Saturday April 9 through Wednesday April 13. Given current water conditions, Option 1 poses minimal risk of exceeding the number of upriver fish that remain available prior to a run update. Catch estimates are based on an expectation of river conditions improving toward the end of the proposed fishing period and would therefore be conservative if that does not occur. The expected upriver mortalities would range from 1,330-1,970, or 34%-50% of the 3,930 balance remaining.
- Under Option 1, approximately 2,000-2,600 upriver fish (kept + release mortalities) would remain available after April 13 and could be used for additional fishing opportunity to be determined upon conclusion of this five day fishery. Given the proposed closure is mid-week, a hearing to consider additional opportunity would not likely occur until *after* the April

16-17 weekend. This would allow time for management staff to accurately compile catch data.

- Option 2 would re-open spring Chinook retention beginning this Friday (April 8) and continue until further notice. Catch rates would likely start out slow but should improve rapidly once water conditions begin to improve. A season end date and total catch cannot be projected at this time given the current river conditions. This option may require short notification of a closure since catch could escalate rapidly as fishing conditions improve.
- A third option would be to open the fishery for two Friday through Sunday periods (April 8-10 and April 15-17). Catch expectations of upriver Chinook would be about 1,000 fish total for the first opener, and could increase to 1,000 fish *per day* on the second opener (assuming river conditions improve). This scenario would give anglers a set season for the next few weeks, and would allow staff to review catch after the first opener and make season modifications if necessary.
- Staff has also received public comment suggesting to post-pone a decision until next week which may allow for a better assessment of river condition trends. This option would likely result in fewer open fishing days and greater uncertainty in catch projections as the potential for large daily catches increases.

Future Meetings

- No additional Compact/Joint State hearings are currently scheduled.
- The Joint Staff will monitor the fishery daily and recommend additional hearings as needed.