

**OREGON AND WASHINGTON DEPARTMENTS OF FISH AND WILDLIFE**  
**JOINT STAFF REPORT – FALL FACT SHEET NO. 8a**  
**Columbia River Compact/Joint State Hearing**  
**October 26, 2017**

Fisheries under consideration:	Above Wauna recreational sturgeon Mainstem recreational - night angling
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*Detailed information on stock status and management guidelines for Columbia River fisheries are presented in Joint Staff Reports, which are produced annually and available on-line. The most recent relevant report is the 2017 Joint Staff Report Concerning Stock Status and Fisheries for Sturgeon and Smelt (January 30, 2017) located at: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/crc/> or <http://www.dfw.state.or.us/fish/OSCRP/CRM/reports.asp>.*

*White sturgeon stock status and management guidelines were presented in Fall Fact Sheet #7.*

**2017 WHITE STURGEON FISHERIES**

***Recreational White Sturgeon Fisheries***

Estuary Fishery

- Earlier in 2017, the states of Oregon and Washington adopted a white sturgeon retention fishery for the Columbia River estuary to occur during the first two weeks of June.
- The 2017 estuary white sturgeon retention fishery consisted of five days during June 5-14. Effort was substantially higher than expected (14,844 trips observed compared to 8,510 expected), requiring in-season action to rescind the final scheduled day (June 17). The kept catch was 3,235 fish, or 108% of the 3,000 fish guideline.
- It is anticipated that the 2018 estuary guideline will be reduced to account for the overage (235 fish) from the 2017 fishery.

Above Wauna Powerlines Fishery

- On October 11, the states adopted a white sturgeon retention fishery for the mainstem Columbia River from the Wauna powerlines upstream to the Bonneville Dam angling deadline. The season consisted of two days: Saturday, October 21 and Thursday, October 26.
- The expected kept catch for the two-day fishery was 1,050 white sturgeon (44-50 inch fork length) based on modeling that assumed high effort and moderate catch rates.
- Actual estimated kept catch for Saturday, October 21 was 184 white sturgeon (35% of the 525 one-day catch expectation. Although inclement weather likely reduced potential effort, it was still higher than expected; an estimated 4,700 anglers participated in the fishery. However, kept catch rates were much lower than expected (0.04/angler vs 0.12/angler).
- With 1,061 fish (85% of the 1,245 fish guideline) available, and only one additional retention day scheduled (today, October 26), additional fishing opportunity exists.

<b><i>Recommendation: 2017 Wauna-Bonneville Dam Recreational Sturgeon Fishery</i></b>		
Season:	Saturday, October 28	1 day
Area:	Mainstem Columbia River from the Wauna powerlines upstream to the Bonneville Dam angling deadline(s).	
Allowable Catch:	Up to 1,245 legal-sized white sturgeon for the 2017 season. Retention of green sturgeon is prohibited.	
	Legal size: <b>44-inch minimum</b> and <b>50-inch maximum</b> fork length (Fork length is measured in a straight line from the tip of the nose to the fork in the caudal fin (tail) with the fish laying on its side on a flat surface, with the tape measure/ruler positioned flat under the fish).	
	Daily bag limit: One fish	
	Annual bag limit: Two fish (applicable to any/all 2017 retention fisheries)	

- Setting additional fishing time after conclusion of the second scheduled retention day would be the preferred approach but with limited time remaining this month, today provides the best opportunity to add additional retention days for October.
- Improved weather for today's opener and through the weekend should result in better fishing conditions and high participation levels.
- Given the low catches last Saturday, the kept catch for today and October 28 can still average 530 fish/day (nearly three times the rate observed last Saturday) and remain within the fishery guideline.
- Per permanent regulations, catch and release fishing is allowed all year.

## **2017 WARMWATER FISHERIES**

### ***Mainstem Columbia Recreational Fisheries – Night Angling***

- Permanent rules in Oregon prohibit night angling for salmon, steelhead, shad, sturgeon, trout, and whitefish, except angling for salmon and steelhead is allowed 24-hours/day in the mainstem Columbia River from McNary Dam upstream to the OR/WA border. Washington's permanent rules generally allow night fishing for salmonids in the Columbia River and tributaries with some exceptions.
- Due to low forecasted returns for upriver summer steelhead in 2017, both states enacted rules for June 16 – December 31 from Buoy 10 upstream to the powerlines at the old Hanford townsite prohibiting night angling, except for anglers enrolled in the Pikeminnow Sport-Reward Program and targeting Pikeminnow.
- These rules were intended to close night-time steelhead target fisheries but effectively closed all night angling including warmwater fisheries targeting walleye and catfish which handle few, if any steelhead.

- Since implementation, staff has received substantial correspondence, especially from walleye anglers, opposed to this temporary night closure rule.
- Considering steelhead run timing and the extremely low likelihood of steelhead encounters in non-salmonid fisheries, the Joint Staff recommends that current temporary rules pertaining to night fishing be liberalized.

***Staff Recommendation - 2017 Mainstem Columbia River Recreational Fisheries***

Effective Saturday October 28 through Sunday December 31, in the mainstem Columbia River from the mouth at Buoy 10 upstream to the old Hanford townsite powerline towers, it is unlawful to angle for or retain salmon, steelhead, shad, sturgeon, trout, or whitefish except during daylight hours.

- The proposed modification will allow night angling opportunity for warmwater species, with no expected increase in steelhead handle or mortalities, while retaining the closure for other species for the remainder of the year.

**FUTURE MEETINGS**

- The Joint Staff will recommend additional hearings as needed.