

OREGON AND WASHINGTON DEPARTMENTS OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
JOINT STAFF REPORT - WINTER FACT SHEET NO. 1
Columbia River Compact/Joint State Sport Hearing
December 13, 2007

Fisheries under consideration: Non-Indian commercial sturgeon and smelt Recreational sturgeon and smelt
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MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Salmon

- The "2005-2007 Interim Management Agreement for Upriver Chinook, Sockeye, Steelhead, Coho and White Sturgeon" provides species specific harvest frameworks and harvest rates for Non-Indian and Treaty Indian fisheries management.
- The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is in the process of developing a new Biological Assessment to cover fisheries during 2008-2017.
- Impacts to listed species from fisheries proposed in this Fact Sheet are expected to be minimal.

Sturgeon

- A Joint State Agreement has been in effect and renewed every three years since 1997 with adjustments as necessary to protect sturgeon populations while maintaining harvest opportunity. The current three-year agreement is in effect through 2008.

<i>Major Tenets of 2006-2008 Sturgeon Fishery Management</i>	
✓	Sturgeon fisheries will be managed for an annual harvestable number of 40,000 white sturgeon unless new information warrants a change.
✓	The harvestable number is to be allocated 80% (32,000 fish) recreational and 20% (8,000 fish) commercial.
✓	Allocate 60% of the recreational harvest to the area downstream of the Wauna powerlines and 40% to the area upstream.
✓	Recreational size limit is 42-60 inches with catch limits of one fish per day and five fish per year.
✓	Commercial target seasons are allowed, as necessary, to access allocation and maximize economic benefit consistent with conservation objectives for other species.
✓	Provide regulatory protection to safeguard the broodstock population.

- The Joint State Agreement also addresses green sturgeon retention regulations; however, following the ESA listing of the Southern Distinct Population Segment as threatened, retention of green sturgeon in Columbia River commercial fisheries was prohibited effective July 7, 2006 and January 1, 2007 in Columbia River recreational fisheries.

Recreational Fishery

- The following management protocol (in place since 2004) is consistent with Commission guidance for 2006-2008 and represents previous input from the Columbia River Recreational Fishery Advisor Group.

<i>Protocol for Regulations Regarding White Sturgeon Retention in Recreational Fisheries During 2006-2008.</i>
<p style="text-align: center;">Fishery Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Minimize emergency in-season action.✓ Balance catch between estuary and non-estuary and maintain diverse recreational fishing opportunities.✓ Maintain fishery monitoring and management capabilities. <p style="text-align: center;">Catch Guideline and Allocation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Manage recreational fisheries for a 30,000 fish catch to provide a 2,000 fish buffer for management flexibility and to reduce the need for in-season emergency actions.✓ Allocate the 32,000 catch guideline 60% (19,200 fish) for fisheries below the Wauna powerlines (estuary) and 40% (12,800 fish) for fisheries above the Wauna powerlines.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The estuary fishery will be managed with a 45-inch minimum size limit instead of the 42-inch minimum during the spring/summer retention season.• The spring/summer season is expected to begin the second Saturday in May and continue through July 4 or until the harvest guideline is achieved.• The estuary management target of 18,000 fish from 42-60 inches translates into 15,000 fish from 45-60 inches. The 19,200 fish harvest guideline (management target plus buffer) for the estuary translates to 16,000 fish from 45-60 inches.✓ Retention restrictions include Youngs Bay and the Willamette River upstream to Willamette Falls.

- The Columbia River Recreational Advisory Group met on November 27, 2007 to discuss sturgeon issues, including white sturgeon stock status, estimated harvest for 2007, harvest impacts outside the mainstem Columbia River including the lower Willamette River, and revised harvest guidelines for 2008.

Commercial Fishery

- Staff met with the Columbia River Commercial Advisory Group on November 29, 2007 and developed season-specific allocations for 2008 commercial fisheries as follows:

<i>Protocol For Management of White Sturgeon Retention in Commercial Fisheries During 2008</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Fisheries should be managed for white sturgeon catch expectations of 1,800 for the winter-spring timeframe (January-June 15) with 1,600 for winter sturgeon and 200 for winter salmon, 500 for the summer timeframe (June 16-July 31), 2,000 for the early fall timeframe (August), and 3,200 for the late fall timeframe (September-October). Any unused allocation from winter-summer fisheries to be re-distributed equally between August and late fall fisheries (50% to each fishery).✓ Manage for a commercial harvest of 7,927 white sturgeon remaining on the cumulative 3-year guideline total.✓ Landings during SAFE fisheries are not to exceed 400 white sturgeon for the entire year with winter/spring/summer fisheries not to exceed 300.✓ Allow some level of incidental white sturgeon harvest to occur during all target salmon seasons.✓ Conduct limited target white sturgeon fisheries during winter timeframe if feasible.

- ✓ Conduct target white sturgeon fisheries during October if necessary to access the commercial allocation.
- ✓ Adopt white sturgeon possession and landing limits if necessary to remain within season-specific catch expectations or to provide white sturgeon for harvest during subsequent salmon seasons.
- ✓ Joint Staff will conduct an annual post-season evaluation of white sturgeon with industry.

Smelt

- A Joint State Eulachon Management Plan has been in effect since 2001 that provides for three levels of fishing based on:
 - 1) parental run strength,
 - 2) juvenile production, and
 - 3) estimates of ocean productivity.

<i>Fishery Structure Contained in the Joint State Eulachon Management Plan</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fishery recommendations apply to the January - March timeframe, otherwise permanent regulations remain in effect. <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Level One</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Great uncertainty in run strength or indications of a poor return. ✓ Commercial fisheries are limited to one 12-24 hour fishing period per week for the Columbia and Cowlitz rivers. ✓ Tributary sport fisheries would also consist of one 12-24 hour fishing period per week in the Cowlitz River. <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Level Two</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Promising abundance in the spawning return and productivity indices that are favorable, yet it is still uncertain whether the run is moderate or strong. ✓ Commercial fisheries would consist of two or three days per week in the Columbia and Cowlitz rivers. ✓ Tributary sport fisheries could be increased to two or three days per week. ✓ Consider expansion of sport and commercial fisheries into other lower Columbia River tributaries. <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Level Three</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Very positive indicators of strong abundance and productivity. ✓ Commercial fisheries would consist of up to four days per week in the Columbia River and all lower Columbia River tributaries. ✓ Tributary sport fisheries should be opened in all tributaries for four to seven days per week.

STOCK STATUS

White Sturgeon

- The lower Columbia River white sturgeon population is healthy.
- Indicators for sublegal (<42”) abundance have shown a modest decline since 2003.
- Abundance of legal-size (42”-60”) white sturgeon decreased in 2006 following two years of increases.
- Predation by sea lions continues to jeopardize the health of the lower Columbia River white sturgeon population.
- In 2007, the states implemented one month of hazing of sea lions directed at reducing predation on adult white sturgeon below Bonneville Dam. This program was expanded to cover three months (December-February) in 2008.

<i>Estimated Abundance of Harvestable White Sturgeon in the Lower Columbia River, 1987-2006</i> ¹ .			
Year	Total Length Interval (inches)		
	42-48	48-60	42-60
1987	75,900	28,100	104,000
1988	34,400	33,700	68,100
1989	31,900	16,800	48,700
1990	25,800	12,000	37,800
1991	32,500	11,700	44,200
1992	70,400	8,700	79,100
1993	115,500	14,200	129,700
1994	N/A	N/A	N/A
1995	143,200	59,000	202,200
1996	137,100	33,500	170,600
1997	146,600	27,700	174,300
1998	116,800	23,900	140,700
1999	116,800	17,700	134,500
2000	117,300	17,400	134,700
2001	102,200	25,300	127,500
2002	87,400	34,200	121,600
2003	89,000	46,300	135,300
2004 ²	N/A	N/A	N/A
2005	106,900	30,000	136,900
2006 ³	87,500	34,000	121,500

1. Historical abundance estimates were reevaluated in 2005 for consistency in methodology and differ from estimates previously reported in Joint Staff Reports and Fact Sheets.
2. Abundance estimates for 2004 were not developed due to data collection and modeling concerns.
3. Preliminary data.

Smelt

- Positive abundance indicators for 2008 include:
 - ✓ A moderately strong adult eulachon return in 2003.
 - ✓ Modest mainstem Columbia River larval densities during the winter of 2003 that equate to Age 5 returns to the Columbia River in 2008.
- Negative abundance indices for 2008 include:
 - ✓ Similar pre-season abundance indices resulted in a small return to the Columbia River in 2006 and 2007.
 - ✓ Low mainstem Columbia River smelt larvae densities during the winters of 2004-2005 that equate to Age 3 and Age 4 returns in 2008.
 - ✓ Ocean climate indices suggest ocean productivity switched to conditions unfavorable for out-migrating smelt survival within the past six years.
 - ✓ Indices of Age 1+ and age 2+ smelt off the west coast of Vancouver Island have declined significantly since 2002.

FISHERIES REVIEW

2007 Winter Commercial Sturgeon Fishery

- The winter sturgeon gillnet fishery initially consisted of seven 24-hour weekly fishing periods (6 PM Tuesday through 6 PM Wednesday) during January 9 through February 21. A harvest expectation of 1,600 white sturgeon was allocated to the winter timeframe. Catch was below expectations and two additional 18-hour periods (6 PM Thursday-noon Friday) were adopted for February 15-16 and February 22-23.
- The winter sturgeon fishery landed 1,424 white sturgeon and zero green sturgeon. A total of 194 adipose fin-clipped spring Chinook were also landed.

2007 Recreational Sturgeon Fishery

- Since 2003, the Joint State Agreements have directed lower Columbia River recreational fisheries to be managed for a total catch of 32,000 white sturgeon annually.
- Beginning in 2004, the annual harvest guideline was reduced to 28,800 white sturgeon (12,800 above Wauna and 16,000 below Wauna) to account for the change to a 45-inch minimum size limit during the spring/summer timeframe for the below Wauna fishery.
- In 2006, harvest in the mainstem Columbia River above Wauna was 8,545 fish or 4,255 fish shy of expectations, resulting in revised pre-season guidelines of 14,900 fish for 2007 and 2008 (later reduced to 14,300 fish once lower Willamette River harvest was accounted for).
- Starting February 1, 2007, one additional day of retention per week (Sunday) was added to provide additional opportunity to access the increased guideline.
- Catch rates continued to track below expectations through July; therefore, a 7-day per week retention season was adopted for August 18 through September 30 (dates originally closed to retention), and was subsequently extended through December 31, 2007.
- In the fall of 2007, both the 2006 and 2007 above Wauna harvest estimates were revised upward to account for harvest in the lower Willamette River in excess of baseline levels.
- Based on harvest estimates generated from angler harvest punch cards and creel data, white sturgeon harvest in the Willamette River exceeded the historic 1,200 fish baseline by an estimated 1,200 fish in 2006 and 3,800 fish in 2007.
- The 2007 fishery above Wauna is ongoing and is expected to result in a harvest of 10,950 fish from the mainstem Columbia River and an additional 3,800 fish from the lower Willamette River, for a total harvest of 14,750 fish compared to the revised guideline of 14,300 fish.
- The 2007 recreational fishery below Wauna was managed for a total harvest not to exceed 16,274 white sturgeon, which included 274 fish rolled over from the 2006 guideline.
- At the June 28 Joint State hearing, staff projected that harvest would exceed the below Wauna guideline by 1,200 fish prior to the July 5 scheduled closure date. Based on input from industry and public testimony at the hearing, the States decided to allow the fishery to continue as scheduled.
- Catch and effort exceeded expectations for the final six days, resulting in an estimated 19,131 white sturgeon harvest for the season, leaving 13,143 remaining on the below Wauna guideline for 2008.

2007 Lower Columbia River Sturgeon Recreational Fisheries

Area	Planned Season Structure	Final Season Structure
<u>Above Wauna</u>		
➤ Sturgeon retention allowed Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays only.	January 1-July 31	January 1-31
➤ Sturgeon retention allowed Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and <u>Sundays</u> only.		February 1-July 31
➤ Sturgeon retention not allowed.	August 1-September 30	August 1-17
➤ Sturgeon retention allowed <u>7-days per week</u>		August 18-September 30
➤ Sturgeon retention allowed Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays only.	October 1-December 31	
➤ Sturgeon retention allowed <u>7-days per week</u>		October 1-December 31
<u>Below Wauna</u>		
➤ Sturgeon retention allowed seven days per week, 42-inch minimum size limit.	January 1-April 30	As proposed
➤ Sturgeon retention not allowed.	May 1- May 11	As proposed
➤ Sturgeon retention allowed seven days per week, 45-inch minimum size limit.	May 12-July 4	As proposed
➤ Sturgeon retention not allowed.	July 5-December 31	As proposed

2006-2007 Lower Columbia River White Sturgeon Harvest in Recreational Fisheries

Area	2006	2007	2008
<u>LCR</u>			
Guideline	28,800	30,574	27,043
Harvest	<u>- 25,471</u>	<u>- 33,881</u>	
No. remaining from guideline	+ 3,329	- 3,307	
<u>Above Wauna</u>			
Management target	12,000	12,000	12,800
Management buffer	+ 800	+ 800	0
No. remaining from guideline	<u>0</u>	<u>+ 1,500</u>	<u>+ 1,100</u>
Guideline	12,800	14,300	13,900
Willamette adjustment	- 1,200	- 3,800	
Harvest (projected for 2007)	<u>- 8,545</u>	<u>- 10,950</u>	
No. remaining from guideline	+ 3,055	- 450	
<u>Below Wauna</u>			
Management target	15,000	15,000	16,000
Management buffer	+1,000	+1,000	0
No. remaining from guideline	<u>0</u>	<u>+ 274</u>	<u>- 2,857</u>
Guideline	16,000	16,274	13,143
Harvest	<u>-15,726</u>	<u>-19,131</u>	
No. remaining from guideline	+ 274	- 2,857	

2007 Columbia River Commercial Smelt Fishery

- 2007 smelt fisheries were managed at a conservative Level One in accordance with the Joint State Eulachon Management Plan. The Compact adopted a season consisting of two 9-hour weekly fishing periods (7 AM to 4 PM every Monday and Thursday) from January 1 through March 31. The fishery was conducted without the need for in season management.
- Commercial landings totaled 7,087 pounds in the mainstem Columbia River.

December 2007 Columbia River Commercial Smelt Fishery

- As per Washington permanent regulations and Oregon temporary rule, the commercial fishery in the mainstem Columbia River is open seven days per week during December. Oregon allows recreational fisheries in the mainstem Columbia River and Oregon tributaries seven days per week the entire year.
- To date, there are no reports of smelt being landed.
- During the first 10 days in December water temperature in the upper Columbia River estuary has ranged from 44.4°F to 46.8°F and average daily flow at Bonneville Dam has ranged between 111-169 kcfs.
- Water temperatures to date are normal for December and favorable for smelt migration.

FISHERY PROPOSALS

2008 Winter Commercial Sturgeon Season

<i>Joint Staff Recommendation- winter commercial white sturgeon</i>		
Season:	6 PM Tuesday January 8 – 6 PM Wednesday January 9	(24 hours)
	6 PM Tuesday January 15 – 6 PM Wednesday January 16	(24 hours)
	6 PM Tuesday January 22 – 6 PM Wednesday January 23	(24 hours)
	6 PM Tuesday January 29 – 6 PM Wednesday January 30	(24 hours)
	6 PM Tuesday February 5 – 6 PM Wednesday February 6	(24 hours)
	6 PM Tuesday February 12 – 6 PM Wednesday February 13	(24 hours)
Area:	Zones 1 - 5.	
Gear:	9" minimum and 9 ¾" maximum mesh size restrictions.	
Allowable Sales:	White sturgeon and adipose fin-clipped salmon.	
Sanctuaries:	Sandy River sanctuary.	
Miscellaneous:	24-hour Quick Reporting Rule in effect for Washington buyers.	

- This proposal was supported by the Columbia River Commercial Advisory Group at the November 29, 2007 meeting.
- The winter sturgeon fishery proposal is consistent with 2008 sturgeon management protocol.
- The proposed season allows access to a portion of the commercial white sturgeon catch guideline while maintaining harvest opportunity throughout 2008.

- Staff will monitor weekly landings and will consider in season adjustments as needed, including weekly landing limits or additional fishing days per week to optimize harvest while remaining within the season-specific guidelines.
- Due to the limited commercial allocation of Willamette hatchery fish, it is likely the sturgeon season will not continue beyond mid-February.

2008 Recreational Sturgeon Seasons

<i>Sturgeon Recreational Fishery Recommendation for Above Wauna</i>	
Area:	Mainstem Columbia River from the Wauna powerlines upstream to Bonneville Dam, all adjacent Washington tributaries, and the lower Willamette River upstream to Willamette Falls, including Multnomah Channel.
Seasons:	<u>January 1-December 31, 2008</u> White sturgeon retention allowed Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays only
Other restrictions:	Retention of green sturgeon prohibited as per permanent regulations.
Expected catch:	10,700 white sturgeon kept in the mainstem Columbia River <u>2,500 projected white sturgeon kept in the Willamette River</u> 13,200 combined above Wauna harvest

<i>Sturgeon Recreational Fishery Recommendation for Below Wauna</i>	
Area:	Mainstem Columbia River from the Wauna powerlines downstream to the mouth at Buoy 10, including Youngs Bay, and all adjacent Washington tributaries.
Seasons:	<u>January 1-April 30</u> - White sturgeon retention allowed seven days per week <u>May 1-May 9</u> - White sturgeon retention prohibited <u>May 10- June 24</u> - White sturgeon retention allowed seven days per week
Other restrictions:	42-inch minimum size limit January 1 through April 30 45-inch minimum size limit May 10 through June 24 Retention of green sturgeon prohibited as per permanent regulations
Expected catch:	13,100 white sturgeon kept

- The proposed seasons are consistent with Commission guidance for 2006-2008 white sturgeon fisheries.
- The proposed seasons should maintain harvest within the remaining allocations for each area.
- These recommendations are based on information provided to the Columbia River Recreational Advisory Group at the November 27, 2007 meeting.
- The anticipated June 25 closure date for below Wauna was determined based on the range in dates that 13,100 fish were estimated to have been caught in prior years (June 24, 2004, July 10, 2005, June 27, 2006, June 23, 2007).

- Staff will monitor white sturgeon harvest as the season progresses with a formal fisheries checkpoint in early June to make in season fishery modifications as necessary.
- The proposed season for above Wauna considers the potential for harvest in the Willamette River of 2,500 fish above the 1986-1996 harvest baseline.

2008 Columbia River Smelt Fishery

<i>Commercial Mainstem Smelt Fishery Recommendation</i>	
Season:	Close ongoing 7-day per week fishery effective January 1, 2008 and adopt a Level One fishery consisting of 9-hour weekly fishing periods on Mondays and Thursdays from January 1, 2008 through March 31, 2008. Open hours are 7 AM to 4 PM.
Area:	Zones 1-5.
Gear:	Gill net, dip nets, or trawls as per permanent regulations.
Miscellaneous:	24-hour Quick Reporting Rule in effect for Washington buyers.

- The proposed season is consistent with a Level One fishery as described in the Joint State Eulachon Management Plan.
- Anticipated low participation, in combination with fishery structure, will allow management to track harvest and make any in season modifications necessary.
- A fishery checkpoint will occur in mid-February to review run status and consider any necessary modifications to the proposed season.

<i>Washington State Recreational Mainstem Smelt Fishery Recommendation</i>	
Season:	Open 7 days a week, 24-hours a day during January 1, 2008 through March 31, 2008.
Area:	Zones 1-5.
Limit:	25 pounds per person
Miscellaneous:	Concurrent rules with Oregon

Treaty Indian Sturgeon Fisheries

- Under permanent rules a treaty Indian commercial setline season occurs annually from noon January 1 to noon January 31.
- The current size limits for sturgeon caught for tribal subsistence and commercial purposes are 48-60 inches in The Dalles and John Day pools and 45-60 inches in the Bonneville Pool.
- The Sturgeon Management Task Force (SMTF) will meet in January 2008 to review stock status and develop recommendations for Zone 6 sturgeon management in 2008.

Tributary Smelt Fisheries

2007 Commercial Fisheries

- Consistent with Level One fisheries, the Cowlitz River was open to commercial fishing 6 PM to midnight on Sundays and Wednesdays from January 1 - March 31, 2007.

- The Sandy River in Oregon was open year-round, 7 days/week, 24 hours/day, per permanent regulations.
- Commercial landings totaled 1,200 pounds in the Cowlitz River. No smelt were reported landed in the Sandy River.
- A fishery checkpoint will occur in mid-February to review run status and consider any necessary modifications to the proposed season.

2007 Recreational Fisheries

- Consistent with Level One fisheries, the Cowlitz River was open to sport dipping 6 AM-10 PM Saturdays from January 1-March 31, 2007.
- The daily limit in the Washington sport fishery was 10 pounds per person.
- Very limited numbers of smelt were reported dipped from the Cowlitz River in early January and late February.

2008 Washington Tributary Smelt Fishery

<i>2008 Washington Tributary Commercial Fishery Recommendation</i>	
Season:	6 PM to midnight Sundays (6 hours) and 6 PM to midnight Wednesdays (6 hours) from January 1 through March 31, 2008.
Area:	Cowlitz River (downstream of Peterson's Eddy).
Gear:	Dip nets.
Miscellaneous:	24-hour Quick Reporting Rule in effect for Washington buyers.

<i>2008 Washington Tributary Sport Fishery Recommendation</i>	
Season:	6 AM to 10 PM Saturdays from January 1 through March 31, 2008.
Area:	Cowlitz River.
Daily Limit:	10 pounds per person.

FUTURE MEETINGS

- The next Compact hearing is scheduled for 10 AM Thursday, January 24, 2008 at the Water Resources Education Center in Vancouver, Washington. The purpose will be to review salmon, steelhead, sturgeon, and smelt stock status; and to consider non-Indian commercial fishing seasons in the mainstem Columbia River and Select Areas. The treaty tribes may also propose commercial fisheries at this hearing.