

WINTER FACT SHEET NO. 1
Columbia River Compact
Joint State Sport Hearing
December 15, 2005

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 TAC submitted a Biological Assessment to National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) describing proposed fisheries consistent with the "2005-2007 Interim Management Agreement for Upriver Chinook, Sockeye, Steelhead, Coho and White Sturgeon". NMFS issued a no jeopardy Biological Opinion on May 9, 2005
- 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 agreement is in effect through 2005.
- A new agreement is being developed by the states of Oregon and Washington, with guidance from both state commissions. The Commissions met in early December and concurred on the following sturgeon management issues:
 - ✓ Retain the three year duration of agreement
 - ✓ Retain the 40,000 fish annual harvest guideline until new population estimates are available (fall 2006).
 - ✓ Retain allocation of harvestable number as 80% sport and 20% commercial and maintain the current within sport and commercial allocations.
 - ✓ Reduce maximum size limit for commercial green sturgeon to 60".
- The Oregon and Fish and Wildlife Commission adopted additional policy direction to create a sturgeon spawning sanctuary just downstream of McNary Dam in John Day Reservoir.
- The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission directed WDFW to "provide sufficient sturgeon spawning sanctuaries or other protection measures where appropriate to ensure adequate recruitment to the population". Specific details regarding sturgeon management for 2006-2008, including spawning sanctuaries, will be developed by the Directors in a new Sturgeon Accord.
- A Columbia River Commercial Advisory Group met on December 7, 2005 and developed season allocations for 2006 commercial fisheries as follows:

Protocol For Management of White Sturgeon Retention in Commercial Fisheries During 2006

- ✓ 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) with an additional 300 maximum rollover from any remaining winter-spring allocation, 2,000 for the early fall timeframe (August) with an additional rollover of any remaining allocation from winter-summer, and 3,300 for the late fall timeframe (September-October).
- ✓ 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 sturgeon harvest to occur during all target salmon seasons.
- ✓ Conduct limited target sturgeon fisheries during winter timeframe if feasible.
- ✓ Conduct target sturgeon fisheries during October if necessary to access commercial allocation.
- ✓ Adopt white sturgeon possession and landing limits if necessary to remain within season specific catch expectation 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.

- The Columbia River Recreational Advisory Group met on September 29, 2005 and discussed sturgeon issues as described in the Joint Commission briefing paper. Alternative season structures were not discussed.

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.

Recommended Fisheries Contained in the Joint State Eulachon Management Plan

- Fishery recommendations apply to the January - March timeframe, otherwise permanent regulations remain in effect.

Level One

- ✓ 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.

Level Two

- ✓ 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.

Level Three

- ✓ 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”) and oversize (>60”) abundance remain relatively stable.
- Abundance estimates for 42”-60” white sturgeon declined by an average of 4% annually from 1996 through 2002.
- The estimate of 42”-60” white sturgeon abundance increased by 11% in 2003.
- Abundance estimates for 48”-60” white sturgeon increased by an average of 38% annually from 2000 through 2003.
- An abundance estimate for 2004 was not developed due to data collection and modeling concerns.

<i>Estimated Abundance of Harvestable White Sturgeon in the Lower Columbia River, 1987-2004¹.</i>			
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

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 will not be developed due to data collection and modeling concerns.

Smelt

- Positive abundance indicators for 2006 include:
 - ✓ Moderate to strong adult eulachon returns during 2001-2003.
 - ✓ Modest mainstem Columbia River larval densities during the winters of 2001-2003.

- Negative abundance indices for 2006 include:
 - ✓ An extremely low run size in 2005 that contradicted modest preseason abundance indices.
 - ✓ Indices of age 1+ and age 2+ smelt off the west coast of Vancouver Island have declined significantly the past three years.
 - ✓ Ocean climate indices suggest ocean productivity switched to conditions unfavorable for outmigrating smelt survival within the past four years.

FISHERIES REVIEW

2005 Winter Commercial Sturgeon Fishery

- The winter sturgeon gillnet fishery initially consisted of five 24-hour weekly fishing periods (6 AM Tuesday through 6 AM Wednesday) during January 18 through February 16. A harvest guideline of 2,000 sturgeon was in place for the winter-summer timeframe. With catch significantly below expectations, two additional 24-hour periods were adopted for Tuesday February 22-23 (6 AM-6 AM) and Thursday February 24-25 (6 AM-6 AM).
- The winter fishery landed 473 white sturgeon and zero green sturgeon. A total of 83 adipose fin-clipped spring Chinook were also landed.

2005 Sport Sturgeon Fishery

- The intent for 2003-2005 lower Columbia River sport fisheries was to manage for a total catch of 96,000 white sturgeon (32,000 fish 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 for the below Wauna fishery. The 2003-2005 cumulative guideline dropped to 89,600 white sturgeon with this change.
- The 2005 sport fishery was managed for a total harvest of 30,600 white sturgeon (12,800 above Wauna and 17,800 below Wauna), which included 1,800 fish remaining from the 2003-2004 below Wauna guidelines.
- Catch rates below Wauna during 2005 were less than preseason catch expectations, which allowed for season extensions covering July 5-10 and July 15-August 15.
- The 2005 fishery above Wauna is on-going and is expected to remain within the guideline. The fishery above Wauna experienced higher than normal catch rates during October although a management review of the fishery in mid-October concluded the fishery could progress without exceeding the catch guideline.
- An estimated 17,911 white sturgeon were harvested from the estuary during 2005.
- An estimated 11,846 white sturgeon have been harvested from the Columbia River above Wauna through November 2005 with a projected year-end estimate of 12,663 white sturgeon.
- Essentially all of the white sturgeon allocated to sport fisheries for 2003-2005 will have been harvested by the end of 2005. The cumulative 3-year sport guideline will not be exceeded.

2005 Lower Columbia River White Sturgeon Sport Fisheries

Area	Planned Season Structure	Final Season Structure
<u>Above Wauna</u>		
➤ Sturgeon retention allowed seven days per week.	January 1-January 31	January 1-January 31
➤ Sturgeon retention allowed Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays only.	February 1-July 31	February 1-July 31
➤ Sturgeon retention not allowed.	August 1-September 30	August 1-September 30
➤ Sturgeon retention allowed Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays only.	October 1-December 31	October 1-December 31
<u>Below Wauna</u>		
➤ Sturgeon retention allowed seven days per week.	January 1-April 30	January 1-April 30
➤ Sturgeon retention not allowed.	May 1- May 13	May 1- May 13
➤ Sturgeon retention allowed seven days per week, 45-inch minimum size limit.	May 14-July 4	May 14-July 10 and July 15-August 15
➤ Sturgeon retention not allowed.		July 11-July 14
	July 5-December 31	August 16-December 31

Lower Columbia River White Sturgeon Sport Harvest, 2003-2005

Area	2003	2004	2005	2003-05
<u>LCR</u>				
Management target	30,000	27,000	28,800	
Management buffer	<u>2,000</u>	<u>1,800</u>	0	
No. remaining from guideline	0	0	<u>+1,818</u>	
Guideline	32,000	28,800	30,618	89,600
Harvest (projected for 2005)	<u>31,932</u>	<u>27,050</u>	<u>30,574</u>	<u>89,556</u>
No. remaining from guideline	+ 68	+ 1,750	+ 44	+ 44
<u>Below Wauna</u>				
Management target	18,000	15,000	16,000	
No. remaining from guideline	0	0	<u>+ 1,818</u>	
Management buffer	<u>+1,200</u>	<u>+1,000</u>	0	
Guideline	19,200	16,000	17,818	
Harvest	<u>-18,332</u>	<u>-15,050</u>	<u>-17,911</u>	
No. remaining from guideline	+ 868	+ 950	- 93	
<u>Above Wauna</u>				
Management target	12,000	12,000	12,800	
Management buffer	<u>+800</u>	<u>+800</u>	0	
Guideline	12,800	12,800	12,800	
Harvest (projected for 2005)	<u>-13,600</u>	<u>-12,000</u>	<u>-12,663</u>	
No. remaining from guideline	- 800	+ 800	+ 137	

The Oversize Catch and Release Fishery

- A catch and release boat fishery targeting oversize sturgeon in the Columbia River gorge (primarily upstream of Skamania Island) developed in the 1990’s.
- Boat angling effort during May-July increased dramatically beginning in 1992, peaking at 13,800 angler trips in 2001 and averaged 11,100 trips the past four seasons.
- Handle of oversize white sturgeon in the May-July boat fishery steadily increased from 1,700 fish in 1992 to 5,300 fish in 2000, and has since declined; averaging 1,700 fish the last two May-July seasons.
- Handle per trip (CPUE) has also declined substantially since 2000.
- Management actions adopted to dampen the possible impact of this fishery on the broodstock population have primarily consisted of time and area closures to establish a spawning ground sanctuary for oversize sturgeon.

<i>Management Actions Taken Concerning White Sturgeon Spawning Sanctuary</i>	
Year	Action Taken
1992	The area between Beacon Rock and Bonneville Dam was closed to angling for sturgeon from a boat during April 16, 1992 through April 15, 1993 (WDFW only).
1996	The area between Beacon Rock and Bonneville Dam was closed to angling for sturgeon from a boat during May and June (Joint State Action).
2000	The boat angling closure was extended to include May through July 15 (Joint State Action).
2004	The angling closure was extended through July 31 and modified to include both bank and boat anglers (Joint State Action).

- The Joint State Management Agreement was modified in 2004 to include a “Best Fishing Practices” program for the oversize sturgeon catch and release sport fishery. The program includes recommendations regarding tackle specifications, handling techniques, and education opportunities to maximize post-release survival rates.

2004-2005 Columbia River Commercial Smelt Fishery

- Smelt fisheries during were initially managed at a conservative Level Two in accordance with the Joint State Eulachon Management Plan. The Compact adopted a season consisting of two 18-hour weekly fishing periods (3 AM to 9 PM every Monday and Thursday) from January 1 through March 31.
- Poor smelt returns and minimal landings resulted in the fishery being downgraded to a Level One status effective February 23. Commercial fishing was reduced to one weekly 18-hour period from 3 AM to 9 PM on Thursdays through March 31.
- Commercial landings totaled 108 pounds in the mainstem Columbia River.

2005-2006 Columbia River Commercial Smelt Fishery

- As per permanent regulations, the commercial fishery in the mainstem Columbia River is open seven days per week during December. Oregon allows sport fisheries in the mainstem Columbia River and Oregon tributaries seven days per week the entire year.
- No commercial landings have been reported to date.
- During the first 12 days in December water temperature in the upper Columbia River estuary has dropped from 46°F to 41°F, average daily flow at Bonneville Dam has ranged between 107-144 kcfs, and visibility has ranged between 9-12 feet.
- Water temperatures to date are colder than normal for December and are approaching conditions that typically delay smelt migration.

FISHERY PROPOSALS

2006 Winter Commercial Sturgeon Season

<i>Joint Staff Recommendation</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Joint Staff recommends adoption of the following 2006 winter commercial sturgeon fishing periods in the mainstem Columbia River: 		
Season:	6 PM Tuesday January 17 – 6 PM Wednesday January 18	(24 hours)
	6 PM Tuesday January 24 – 6 PM Wednesday January 25	(24 hours)
	6 PM Tuesday January 31 – 6 PM Wednesday February 1	(24 hours)
	6 PM Tuesday February 7 – 6 PM Wednesday February 8	(24 hours)
	6 PM Tuesday February 14 – 6 PM Wednesday February 15	(24 hours)
	6 PM Tuesday February 21 – 6 PM Wednesday February 22	(24 hours)
Area:	Zones 1 - 5.	
Gear:	9" minimum and 9 ¾" maximum mesh size restrictions.	
Allowable Sales:	Sturgeon and adipose fin-clipped salmon.	
Sanctuaries:	Sandy River sanctuary.	
Miscellaneous:	Quick Reporting Rule in effect for Washington buyers.	

- This proposal was recommended by the Columbia River Commercial Advisory Group at the December 7, 2005 meeting.
- The winter sturgeon fishery should be managed for a catch of about 1,600 white sturgeon and the winter salmon fishery should be managed for 200 white sturgeon, leaving 500 white sturgeon for potential summer Chinook fisheries.
- The proposed season allows access to a portion of the commercial white sturgeon catch guideline while maintaining harvest opportunity throughout the remainder of 2006.
- Staff will monitor weekly landings and will consider season adjustments at future Compact hearings if necessary, including weekly landing limits or additional fishing days per week to optimize harvest while remaining within the season-specific guidelines.
- Harvest and release mortalities of any ESA-listed salmonids are expected to be minor and will remain well within the guidelines set forth in the Biological Opinion.

2006 Sport Sturgeon Seasons

<i>Sturgeon Sport Fishery Recommendation for Above Wauna</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Joint Staff recommends the following recreational sturgeon fishery in the lower Columbia River above Wauna.	
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-July 31</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Sturgeon retention allowed Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays only. <u>August 1-September 30</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Sturgeon retention not allowed. <u>October 1-December 31</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Sturgeon retention allowed Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays only.
Other restrictions:	As per permanent regulations.
Expected effort & catch:	79,900 angler trips 12,000 white sturgeon kept.

<i>Sturgeon Sport Fishery Recommendation for Below Wauna</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Joint Staff recommends the following recreational sturgeon fishery in the lower Columbia River below Wauna.	
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> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Sturgeon retention allowed seven days per week. <u>May 1-May 13</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Sturgeon retention not allowed. <u>May 14-July 4</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Sturgeon retention allowed seven days per week. <u>July 5-December 31</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Sturgeon retention not allowed.
Other restrictions:	42-inch minimum size limit Jan 1 through April 30 45-inch minimum size limit May 14 through July 4 As per permanent regulations.
Expected effort & catch:	44,800 angler trips 15,000 white sturgeon kept.

- These proposals are consistent with Commission guidance for 2006-2008 fisheries.
- This season structure incorporates an 1,800 fish buffer within the 28,800 harvest guideline for inseason management flexibility.
- Sport sturgeon harvest in the estuary will be monitored weekly during June to ensure that harvest does not exceed the guideline.

2006 Columbia River Smelt Fishery

<i>Commercial Mainstem Smelt Fishery Recommendation</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Joint Staff recommends the adoption of the following commercial smelt fishing periods in the mainstem Columbia River:	
Season:	Close ongoing 7-day per week fishery effective Sunday January 1, 2006 and adopt a Level One fishery consisting of one 18-hour weekly fishing period on Mondays from January 1, 2006 through March 31, 2006. Open hours are 3 AM to 9 PM.
Area:	Zones 1-5.
Gear:	Gill net, dip nets, or trawls as per permanent regulations.
Participants:	Columbia River commercial fishers with appropriate licenses and legal gear.
Miscellaneous:	Quick Reporting Rule in effect for Washington buyers.

- Most productivity and abundance indices support a Level One fishery designation.
- The proposed season fits a Level One fishery described in the Joint State Eulachon Management Plan.
- Anticipated low participation, in combination with fishery structure, should ensure that the proposed fishery would not approach the maximum 10% harvest rate allowed under Level One.
- The Columbia River Commercial Advisory Group proposed an alternative season structure that retains the staff recommended 18 hours of fishing each week but splits the time over two separate days each week.
- Commercial smelt landings will be monitored weekly for the purpose of tracking run status and making in-season fishery management decisions with a formal fishery checkpoint set to occur at the next scheduled Compact meeting on Thursday, January 26, 2006.

<i>Recreational Mainstem Smelt Fishery Recommendation</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Joint Staff recommends the adoption of the following recreational smelt fishing periods in the mainstem Columbia River:	
Season:	Open 7 days a week, 24-hours a day during January 1, 2006 through March 31, 2006.
Area:	Zones 1-5.
Limit:	25 pounds per person
Miscellaneous:	Concurrent rules with Oregon

Miscellaneous Regulations

<i>Joint Staff Recommendation</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Joint Staff recommends adoption of the following miscellaneous regulation change: Reduce the maximum green sturgeon size limit for lower Columbia River commercial fisheries to 60 inches.	

- This recommendation is consistent with Commission guidance for 2006-2008 fisheries.

Treaty Indian Sturgeon Fisheries

- Under permanent Compact 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 between 45-60 inches in the Bonneville Pool.
- The Sturgeon Management Task Force (SMTF) will meet in January to review stock status, and develop recommendations for subsequent Zone 6 sturgeon management in 2006.
- The report from the SMTF will be presented at a future Compact hearing.

FUTURE MEETINGS

- The next Compact hearing is scheduled for Thursday, January 26, 2006 at 10 AM at the Museum of the Oregon Territory at 211 Tumwater Drive in Oregon City, Oregon. The purpose will be to review salmon, steelhead, sturgeon, and smelt stock status; consider fishing options in the mainstem Columbia River and Select Areas.
- A Joint State meeting is scheduled to occur immediately following the January 26 Compact to consider spring chinook sport fisheries in the mainstem Columbia River.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
December 15, 2005

Washington Tributary Smelt Fisheries

2005 Commercial Fisheries

- The Cowlitz, Kalama, and Lewis rivers were initially open to commercial fishing 6 PM Sunday through 6 AM Monday and 6 PM Wednesday to 6 AM Thursday from January 1 through March 31.
- Effective 6 PM February 23, the Kalama and Lewis rivers were closed to fishing and the fishery on the Cowlitz River was reduced to one 12-hour fishing period per week (6 PM Wednesday through 6 AM Thursday). The season terminated at 6 AM Thursday, March 31.
- The Sandy River in Oregon was open year-round, 7 days/week, 24 hours/day, per permanent regulations.
- Landings in the Cowlitz River totaled 100 pounds. No other landings were reported.

2006 Washington Tributary Commercial Fishery Recommendation

Season:	6 PM Sundays to 6 AM Mondays from January 1, 2006 through March 31, 2006.
Area:	Cowlitz River (downstream of Peterson's Eddy).
Gear:	Dip nets.
Miscellaneous:	Quick Reporting Rule in effect for Washington buyers.

- Commercial smelt landings will be monitored weekly for the purpose of tracking run status and making in-season fishery management decisions with a formal fishery checkpoint set for Thursday, January 26, 2006.

2005 Sport Fisheries

- Consistent with Level Two fisheries, the Grays, Cowlitz, Kalama, and Lewis rivers were open to sport dipping 6 AM-10 PM Tuesdays and Saturdays from January 1-March 31, 2005.
- The daily limit in Washington sport fisheries was 10 pounds per person.
- Effective Wednesday, February 23, fisheries in the Grays, Kalama, and Lewis rivers were closed and the season on the Cowlitz River was restricted to 6 AM-10 PM Saturdays, with the season closing 6 PM Saturday, March 27.

2006 Washington Tributary Sport Fishery Recommendation

Season:	6 AM to 10 PM Saturdays from January 1, 2006 through March 31, 2006.
Area:	Cowlitz River.
Daily Limit:	10 pounds per person.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
December 15, 2005