

WINTER FACT SHEET NO. 1
Columbia River Compact
Joint State Sport Hearing
December 16, 2004

Fisheries under Consideration: Non-Indian commercial and sport sturgeon and smelt

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Salmon

- An Interim Management Agreement covering fisheries for upriver spring chinook, summer chinook, and sockeye is in effect through 2005.
- Fisheries being considered at this Compact are addressed in a Section 7/10 Application outlining proposed non-Indian fisheries that the states of Washington and Oregon submitted to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on November 3, 2000 which was subsequently covered under a Biological Opinion.
- Impacts to listed species from fisheries described in this report are expected to be minimal.

Sturgeon

- 2005 will be the ninth consecutive year in which a Joint State Agreement is used to guide Columbia River sturgeon fishery management.

Major Tenets of 2003-2005 Sturgeon Fishery Management

- ✓ Sturgeon fisheries are managed on optimum sustained yield approach, which, absent a significant update, results in an annual harvestable number of 40,000 white sturgeon for 2003-2005.
- ✓ The harvestable number is to be allocated 80% (32,000 fish) sport and 20% (8,000 fish) commercial.
- ✓ The plan may be modified in-season if new information suggests a change is warranted.
- ✓ Commercial target seasons are allowed, as necessary, to access allocation and maximize economic benefit consistent with conservation objectives for other species.
- ✓ Green sturgeon-only commercial seasons are not allowed; however, green sturgeon may be taken concurrently during other commercial seasons provided the green sturgeon catch does not exceed levels observed in past fisheries.
- ✓ Commercial size limits are 48"-60" for white sturgeon and 48"-66" for green sturgeon.
- ✓ Sport fishery regulations include; size limits of 42"-60" for white sturgeon and green sturgeon, one sturgeon per day and 10 sturgeon per year catch limits, and barbless hooks required.

- The Oregon and Washington Fish and Wildlife Commissions reduced the annual recreational catch limit to 5 sturgeon per year beginning in 2004.
- Additionally in 2004, the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission adopted a regulation making it unlawful to use more than one single barbless hook while fishing for sturgeon. This new regulation will take effect January 1, 2005 in Oregon. The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission will meet in February 2005 and consider adopting the same regulation.
- The Oregon and Washington Fish and Wildlife Commissions have provided the following guidance to the ODFW and WDFW regarding 2003-2005 sturgeon fishery management.

Commissions' Guidance Regarding 2003-2005 Lower Columbia River

Sturgeon Sport Fishery Management

- ✓ Develop sport fishery regulations consistent with the following objectives:
 - Minimize emergency inseason action
 - Balance catch between estuary and non-estuary and maintain a diverse array of sturgeon fishing opportunities
 - Maintain monitoring and management capabilities
- ✓ Annual catch quota of 32,000 white sturgeon with a 30,000 fish management goal in effect to allow for inseason flexibility and to minimize need for inseason regulations changes.
 - Allocate 60% (18,000 fish) of the sport catch guideline to the area downstream of the Wauna powerlines
 - Allocate 40% (12,000 fish) of the sport catch guideline to the area upstream of the Wauna powerlines

- At the February 6, 2003 hearing the Compact adopted a protocol regarding white sturgeon retention in Columbia River commercial fisheries during 2003-2005.
- Season allocations within the sturgeon commercial fishery protocol were modified for 2005 at the December 2, 2004 Columbia River Commercial Advisory Group meeting.

Protocol For Management of White Sturgeon Retention in Commercial Fisheries During 2005

- ✓ Fisheries should be managed for white sturgeon catch expectations of 2,000 for the winter-summer timeframe (January-July), 2,600 for the early fall timeframe (August), and 3,000 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 and early fall timeframes 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.
- ✓ Until further discussion occurs with the OFWC and the WFWC regarding sturgeon allocation among individual commercial fishers, landings and possession limits will be in the form of per vessel limits and these limits will include both mainstem and Select Area fisheries.
- ✓ 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.
- The Joint State Eulachon Management Plan 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 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.
- Other indices of abundance, such as growth rates and catch per unit effort data, suggest that the declining trend in 42"-60" abundance estimates reversed beginning in 2002.

<i>Estimated Abundance of Harvestable White Surgeon in the Lower Columbia River, 1989-2003.</i>			
Year	Total Length Interval (inches)		
	42-48	48-60	42-60
1989	32,500	16,800	49,300
1990	26,100	12,000	38,100
1991	32,900	11,700	44,600
1992	59,900	8,700	68,600
1993	85,000	14,200	99,200
1994	N/A	N/A	N/A
1995	143,200	59,000	202,200
1996	131,700	33,500	165,200
1997	123,700	33,400	157,100
1998	161,600	24,700	186,300
1999	116,800	17,600	134,400
2000	119,200	17,000	136,200
2001	100,200	22,400	122,600
2002	87,200	33,900	121,100
2003	88,400	45,900	134,300

Smelt

Positive abundance indicators for 2005:

- Strong adult eulachon returns during 2001-2002.
- High mainstem Columbia River larval densities during the winters of 2001-2002.
- High levels of smelt age 1+ and age 2+ bycatch in Canadian ocean shrimp fisheries during 2002-2003.
- Strong abundances of salmonids and pelagic fish in recent years.

Negative abundance indices for 2005:

- A low 2004 run size which contradicted strong preseason ocean productivity and abundance indices.
- Relatively low mainstem Columbia River larval densities during the winter of 2000 and potentially poor ocean survival rates due to unfavorable ocean conditions since late 2001.
- Smelt bycatch in the Canadian ocean shrimp fisheries declined significantly in both 2003 and 2004.

FISHERY UPDATES

2004 REVIEW

2004 Winter Commercial Sturgeon Fishery

- Winter sturgeon gillnet fishery consisted of five weekly fishing periods, from January 13 through February 11. Each period was 24 hours from 6 AM Tuesday through 6 AM Wednesday.
- Target sturgeon fishing periods resulted in 1,696 white sturgeon and zero green sturgeon being landed. A total of 35 chinook were also landed.

2004 Sport Sturgeon Fishery

- During 2003-2005 sport fisheries in the lower Columbia River were to be managed for a total catch of 96,000 white sturgeon, (approximately 32,000 fish annually).
- The annual harvest guideline changed to 28,800 white sturgeon in 2004 following the switch to a 45 inch minimum size limit for the below Wauna fishery (12,800 above Wauna, 16,000 below Wauna).
- The 2004 sport fishery was managed for a total harvest of 27,000 white sturgeon (12,000 above Wauna and 15,000 below Wauna) with an 1,800 fish buffer to guard against exceeding the guideline.
- Catch rates below Wauna during 2004 exceeded preseason catch expectations and required inseason management action.

<i>Lower Columbia River White Sturgeon Sport Fisheries During 2004</i>		
<u>Area</u>	<u>Planned Season Structure</u>	<u>Final Season Structure</u>
<u>Above Wauna</u>	January 1-January 31	January 1-January 31
➤ Sturgeon retention allowed seven days per week.	February 1-July 31	February 1-July 31
➤ Sturgeon retention allowed Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays only.	August 1-September 30	August 1-September 30
➤ Sturgeon retention not allowed.	October 1-December 31	October 1-December 31
➤ Sturgeon retention allowed Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays only.		
<u>Below Wauna</u>	January 1-April 30	January 1-April 30
➤ Sturgeon retention allowed seven days per week.	May 1- May 14	May 1- May 14
➤ Sturgeon retention not allowed.	May 15-July 23	May 15-July 3
➤ Sturgeon retention allowed seven days per week.		
➤ 45-inch minimum size limit.	July 24-December 31	July 4-December 31
➤ Sturgeon retention not allowed.		

- Water conditions in the Willamette River during the winter of 2004 were particularly attractive to sturgeon resulting in a harvest that exceeded typical levels by about 2,500 fish.
- An estimated 9,982 white sturgeon have been harvested from the Columbia River above Wauna as of the end of November 2004 with a projected year-end estimate of 10,682 white sturgeon.
- Although the 2004 catch above Wauna was less than the 12,000 fish management target, staff is recommending the 2004 harvest for this area be set at 12,000 fish to reflect the higher than expected catch in the Willamette River.
- A projected 1,818 white sturgeon will remain from the 2003 and 2004 below Wauna buffers and will be available for harvest in 2005.
- No white sturgeon remain from the 2003 and 2004 above Wauna buffers for the 2005 season.

Lower Columbia River White Sturgeon Sport Harvest, 2003-2004, and 2005 Allowable Harvest				
Area	2003	2004	3-year guideline	2005 allowable harvest
<u>LCR</u>				
Management target	30,000	27,000		
Management buffer	<u>2,000</u>	<u>1,800</u>		
Guideline	32,000	28,800	89,600	30,618
<u>Below Wauna</u>				
Management target	18,000	15,000		
Management buffer	<u>+1,200</u>	<u>+1,000</u>		
Guideline	19,200	16,000	51,200	16,000
Harvest	<u>-18,332</u>	<u>-15,050</u>		
No. remaining from guideline	+ 868	+ 950		<u>+ 1,818</u>
				17,818
<u>Above Wauna</u>				
Management target	12,000	12,000		
Management buffer	<u>+800</u>	<u>+800</u>		
Guideline	12,800	12,800	38,400	12,800
Harvest	<u>-13,600</u>	<u>-12,000</u>		
No. remaining from guideline	-800	+ 800		<u>0</u>
				12,800

The Oversize Catch and Release Fishery

- The majority of the handle of over size sturgeon occurs during May through July in the Columbia River gorge primarily upstream of Skamania Island.
- A catch and release fishery targeting sturgeon residing in this section of the river began developing in the 1990's.
- Boat angling effort in this fishery has increased slightly from 8,900 angler trips in 1992 to 13,300 angler trips in 1995 and has remained relatively stable through 2001.
- During the past three years, boat angler effort has decreased steadily from 13,800 angler trips in 2001 to 9,700 angler trips in 2004.
- Handle of the oversize white sturgeon in the gorge from Corbett to Bonneville Dam rarely exceeded 2,000 fish prior to 1992 and has ranged between 2,400 and 8,200 from 1992 to 2004.
- As the oversize catch and release fishery developed, managers became concerned over the possible impact of this emerging fishery on the status of the White Sturgeon broodstock population.
- 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 over size 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 expanded to include both bank and boat anglers (Joint State Action).

- Additional management actions taken have focused on fishing techniques and handling practices to maximize post release survival rates of fish handled in this fishery. These actions include:
 - A regulation adopted in 2000 prohibits oversize sturgeon being removed, totally or in part, from the water.
 - 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 occurring just below Bonneville Dam. The program included recommendations regarding tackle specifications, handling techniques, and education opportunities.

2003-2004 Columbia River Commercial Smelt Fishery

- During 2003-2004, smelt fisheries were managed at Level Three in accordance with the Joint State Eulachon Management Plan.
- The mainstem Columbia River was open seven days per week during December 2003 (as per permanent regulations). Level Three restrictions took effect January 1, 2004, consisting of four 18-hour fishing periods (3 AM-9 PM every Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday) per week, during January 1-March 31, 2004.
- Commercial landings totaled 16,000 pounds in the mainstem Columbia River.

2005 FISHERIES

2004-2005 Columbia River Smelt Fishery

- As per permanent regulations, the commercial fishery in the mainstem Columbia River is open seven days per week during December 2004 and sport fisheries in the mainstem Columbia River and Oregon tributaries are open seven days per week the entire year.
- No commercial landings have been reported to date.
- During the first 12 days in December temperature has ranged between 48-49F°, flow has ranged between 126-158 kcfs, and visibility has ranged between 6-7 feet.

- Water temperatures to date have been warmer than those observed in December 2003 with a low, warm, and clear river benefiting early smelt migration.

FISHERY PROPOSALS

2005 Winter Commercial Sturgeon Season

<i>Joint Staff Recommendation</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Joint Staff recommends adoption of the following commercial sturgeon fishing periods in the mainstem Columbia River: 		
Season:	6 AM Tuesday January 18 – 6 AM Wednesday January 19	(24 hours)
	6 AM Tuesday January 25 – 6 AM Wednesday January 26	(24 hours)
	6 AM Tuesday February 1 – 6 AM Wednesday February 2	(24 hours)
	6 AM Tuesday February 8 – 6 AM Wednesday February 9	(24 hours)
	6 AM Tuesday February 15 – 6 AM Wednesday February 16	(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.	
Expected Catch:	1,500-1,800 white sturgeon 50 spring chinook	
Miscellaneous:	Quick Reporting Rule in effect for Washington buyers.	

- This proposal is consistent with the Joint State Agreement and Commission guidance for 2003-2005 fisheries.
- This proposal was supported by the Columbia River Commercial Advisory Group at the December 2, 2004 meeting.
- The winter sturgeon fishery should be managed for a catch of about 1,800 white sturgeon, which would provide 200 white sturgeon for spring and summer chinook fisheries.
- The proposed fishery is designed to maximize economics while minimizing handle of chinook and steelhead.
- The proposed season allows access to a portion of the commercial white sturgeon catch guideline while maintaining opportunity to access sturgeon throughout the remainder of 2005.
- Staff will monitor weekly landings and season adjustments, including weekly landing limits, will be considered at future Compact hearings as needed.
- 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.

2005 Sport Sturgeon Seasons

2005 Sturgeon Sport Fishery Recommendation for Above Wauna	
<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> - Sturgeon retention allowed Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays only. <u>August 1-September 30</u> - Sturgeon retention not allowed. <u>October 1-December 31</u> - Sturgeon retention allowed Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays only.
Other restrictions:	As per permanent regulations.
Expected effort & catch:	59,400 angler trips 12,000 white sturgeon kept.

2005 Sturgeon Sport Fishery Recommendation for Below Wauna	
<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> - Sturgeon retention allowed seven days per week. <u>May 1-May 13</u> - Sturgeon retention not allowed. <u>May 14-July 4</u> - Sturgeon retention allowed seven days per week. <u>July 5-December 31</u> - 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:	42,800 angler trips 17,000 white sturgeon kept.

- These proposals are consistent with the Joint State Agreement and Commission guidance for 2003-2005 fisheries.
- These proposals were supported by the Columbia River Recreational Advisory Group at the October 14, 2004 meeting.

2004-2005 Columbia River Commercial Smelt Fishery

2005 Commercial Mainstem Smelt Fishery Recommendation	
<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 Saturday January 1, 2005 and adopt a Level Two fishery consisting of two 18-hour weekly fishing periods on Mondays and Thursdays during January 1, 2005 through March 31, 2005. 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.

- A combination of weak to moderate productivity and abundance indices support a Level Two fishery.
- The proposed season is the minimum under a Level Two fishery described in the Joint State Eulachon Management Plan.
- Anticipated low participation, in combination with fishery structure and the run size expectation, will ensure that the proposed mainstem fishery will not overexploit the return.
- 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 Wednesday, February 16, 2005.

Treaty Indian Sturgeon Fisheries

- Under permanent Compact rules a treaty Indian commercial setline season occurs from noon January 1, 2005 to noon January 31, 2005.
- The current size limits for sturgeon caught for tribal subsistence and commercial purposes are 4'-5' in length in The Dalles and John Day and between 45-60 inches in the Bonneville pool.
- The Sturgeon Management Task Force (SMTF) will meet in January 18 to review stock status, and develop recommendations for subsequent Zone 6 sturgeon management in 2005.
- The report from the SMTF will be presented at a future Compact hearing.

2005 Treaty Indian Winter Season Proposal	
Season:	12PM (Noon) February 1, 2005 through 12PM (Noon) March 21, 2005.
Area:	All of Zone 6.
Sanctuaries:	Standard river mouth and dam sanctuaries in effect except no Spring Creek sanctuary.
Gear:	No mesh size restrictions.
Allowable Sale:	Chinook salmon, steelhead, walleye, carp and shad. Sturgeon between 4-5 feet in length in The Dalles and John Day pools and between 45-60 inches in the Bonneville pool may be sold or retained for subsistence purposes.
Miscellaneous:	Sale of platform caught fish is allowed during open commercial gillnet seasons. Quick Reporting Rule in effect for Washington buyers.

FUTURE MEETINGS

- The next Compact hearing is scheduled for Friday, January 28, 2005 at 10 AM at the Water Resources Education Center in Vancouver, Washington to review salmon, steelhead, sturgeon, and smelt stock status; consider fishing options in the mainstem Columbia River and Select Areas.
- A Joint State meeting to consider spring chinook sport fisheries in the mainstem Columbia River is scheduled to occur immediately following the January 28, 2005 Compact hearing.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
December 16, 2004

Washington Tributary Smelt Fisheries

2004 Commercial Fisheries

- The Cowlitz, Kalama, and Lewis rivers were open to commercial fishing 6 PM Sunday through 6 PM Tuesday and 6 PM Wednesday to 6 PM Friday.
- Effective 6 PM March 18th, the tributary fishery was reduced to two 12-hour fishing periods per week (6 PM Sunday through 6 AM Monday, and 6 PM Wednesday through 6 AM Thursday). The season terminated at midnight Wednesday March 31st.
- The Sandy River in Oregon was open year-round, 7 days/week, 24 hours/day, per permanent regulations.
- Tributary landings totaled 120,700 pounds.

2005 Washington Tributary Commercial Fishery Recommendation

Season:	6 PM Sunday to 6 AM Monday and 6 PM Wednesday to 6 AM Thursday from January 1, 2005 through March 31, 2005.
Area:	Cowlitz River (downstream of Peterson's Eddy) and Lewis River (mainstem and North Fork downstream of overhead power lines near Eagle Island).
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 Wednesday, February 16, 2005.

2004 Sport Fisheries

- Consistent with Level Three fisheries all Washington tributaries were open to sport dipping 6 AM-10 PM seven days per week during January 1-March 31, 2004.
- The daily limit in Washington sport fisheries was 20 pounds per person.
- Effective 6 PM March 18th, the season was restricted to 6 PM Sunday through 6 AM Monday, and 6 PM Wednesday through 6 AM Thursday, with the season closing 6AM Monday March 30th. The Cowlitz, Kalama, and Lewis rivers were kept open, but all other Washington tributaries were closed.

2005 Washington Tributary Sport Fishery Recommendation

Season:	6 AM to 10 PM Tuesdays, and Saturdays from January 1, 2005 through March 31, 2005.
Area:	Grays River, Cowlitz River, Kalama River, and Lewis River.
Daily Limit:	10 pounds per person.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
December 16, 2004