

**JOINT STAFF REPORT
WINTER FACT SHEET NO. 1
Columbia River Compact
December 18, 2002**

PURPOSE:	Review sturgeon and smelt stock status and consider non-Indian and treaty Indian fishing options.
TAC:	The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) has reviewed this fact sheet. Copies of the Joint Staff report concerning sturgeon and smelt were provided to the TAC for review prior to being mailed on December 3, 2002.

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Salmon

- A multi-year Management Agreement for upriver spring chinook, summer chinook, and sockeye is in effect.
- All proposed fisheries are included in an ESA Section 7/10 Application that was submitted to the NOAA Fisheries on November 3, 2000 and impacts on listed ESU's by proposed sturgeon and smelt fisheries are expected to be *de minimus*.
- An approved Biological Opinion on the multi-year agreement was received from the NOAA Fisheries.

Sturgeon

- 2003 will be the seventh consecutive year in which a Joint State Agreement is used to guide Columbia River sturgeon fishery management.
- The Oregon and Washington Fish and Wildlife Commissions readopted most of the major tenets of the past Management Agreements in effect during 1997-2002.

Major Tenets of 2003-2005 Sturgeon Fishery Management

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ 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. |
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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.
- During 2002-2003, smelt fisheries will be managed at Level Three in accordance with the Joint State Eulachon Management Plan.

<i>Recommended Fisheries Contained in the Joint State Eulachon Management Plan</i>	
• Fishery recommendations apply to the January - March timeframe, otherwise permanent regulations remain in effect.	
<u>Level One</u>	
✓ 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.	
<u>Level Two</u>	
✓ 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.	
<u>Level Three</u>	
✓ 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.	

WHITE STURGEON STOCK STATUS AND FISHERIES

White Sturgeon Stock Status

- The lower Columbia River white sturgeon population is healthy.
- Indicators for sublegal (<42”) and oversize (>60”) abundance remain good.
- Since 1995, abundance estimates for 42"-60" white sturgeon have declined by an average of 4% annually.
- The abundance estimate for 2002 is not complete at this time.
- During 2002 catches in the lower Columbia River totaled 48,300 white sturgeon (9,800 commercial and 38,500 sport) and 215 green sturgeon.

<i>Estimated Abundance of Harvestable White Surgeon in the Lower Columbia River, 1989-2001.</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

White Sturgeon Commercial Allocation Plan

- A variety of regulations regarding sturgeon retention in commercial fisheries were in effect during 2000-2002 fall fisheries.
- During 2000, white sturgeon retention was allowed throughout the late fall season and target sturgeon fisheries occurred in October.
- During 2001, white sturgeon retention was prohibited during mid-August through October.
- During 2002, a five sturgeon per vessel possession and landing restriction was in effect for most seasons that occurred during August through October and no target sturgeon seasons occurred during the fall timeframe.
- The Joint Staff met with the commercial fishing industry on December 2, 2002 to discuss issues regarding white sturgeon retention in commercial fisheries for 2003-2005. The Joint Staff has developed the following protocol for sturgeon retention during 2003-2005 commercial fisheries, based in part on the results of this public meeting.

<i>White Sturgeon Landings During Commercial Fisheries</i>			
Timeframe	2000	2001	2002
Winter-Summer	2,800	3,550	3,420
Early Fall	2,790	5,740	1,760
Late Fall	5,280	20	4,580
Total	10,870	9,310	9,760

Joint Staff Recommendation

- The Joint Staff recommends that white sturgeon retention in commercial fisheries be managed in accordance with the following protocol:
 - ✓ Fisheries should be managed for white sturgeon catch expectations of 2,500 for the winter-summer timeframe (January-July), 2,500 for the early fall timeframe (August), and 3,000 for the late fall timeframe (September-October).
 - ✓ Landings during SAFE fisheries are to be included in winter-summer and late fall timeframes.
 - ✓ 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.

Winter Commercial Fishery

- The 2002 fishery began with 11 30-hour target sturgeon fishing periods occurring between January 7 and February 15.
- The 2002 winter fishery concluded with 14 salmon fishing periods (14-72 hours) occurring between February 25 and March 27.
- A total of 2,800 white sturgeon and 14,800 spring chinook were landed during the 2002 winter mainstem fisheries.
- An estimated 97% (2,700 fish) of the white sturgeon and 1% (154 fish) of the spring chinook landed during the winter season were caught during target sturgeon fishing periods.

Joint Staff Recommendation

- The Joint Staff recommends adoption of the following commercial sturgeon fishing periods:

Season: Noon Tuesday January 7 – 6 PM Wednesday January 8 (30 hours)
Noon Tuesday January 14 – 6 PM Wednesday January 15 (30 hours)
Noon Tuesday January 21 – 6 PM Wednesday January 22 (30 hours)
Noon Tuesday January 28 – 6 PM Wednesday January 29 (30 hours)
Noon Tuesday February 4 – 6 PM Wednesday February 5 (30 hours)
Noon Tuesday February 11 – 6 PM Wednesday February 12 (30 hours)

Area: Zones 1 - 5.

Gear: 9" minimum and 9 ¾" maximum mesh size restrictions.

Allowable Sales: Adipose fin-clipped salmon and sturgeon.

Sanctuaries: Sandy River sanctuary.

Expected Catch: 1,500 white sturgeon
200 spring chinook
2 upriver wild spring chinook mortalities
2 upper Willamette wild spring chinook mortalities
<10 winter steelhead

Miscellaneous: Quick Reporting Rule in effect for Washington buyers.

- ✓ Fishery is designed to maximize economics while minimizing handle of chinook and steelhead.
- ✓ Winter season structure was initially developed in 1997 with input from commercial fishing industry representatives.
- ✓ Proposed season structure is similar to successful seasons in place during 1997-2002.
- ✓ Fishing time is reduced to maintain catches within season specific catch expectation.
- ✓ Past winter sturgeon fisheries have been conducive to good marketing situations.
- ✓ Proposed season allows access to a portion of the commercial white sturgeon catch guideline while maintaining opportunity to access sturgeon throughout the remainder of 2003.
- ✓ Staff will monitor weekly landings and season adjustments will be considered at future Compact hearings as needed.
- ✓ Salmon target seasons typically begin sometime after mid-February.

SMELT STOCK STATUS AND FISHERIES

Stock Status

- Population estimates are not available, but relative annual abundance may be indexed using landings and catch per unit effort (CPUE) data from commercial fisheries.
- Adult production in Columbia River tributaries, as indexed by commercial landings data, was poor during 1994-1999.
- Returns of parent broods for this year's return were small in 1999 but showed improvement in 2000.
- Commercial landings data indicate a moderate improvement in adult production in 2000 and large increases in adult production in 2001 and 2002.

- Based on larval sampling results, spawning success in 2002 was good.
- Improved ocean conditions are expected to benefit smelt returns in 2003, as was the case in 2001 and 2002.
- Large returns of other pelagic species and Columbia River salmonids suggest that the smelt return in 2003 should be large.
- The large smelt bycatch in Canadian shrimp fisheries also suggests a large smelt return in 2003.
- Staff believes that adult abundance will be strong in 2003 and that Level Three fisheries would be appropriate.

2001-2002 Columbia River Commercial Fishery

- The standard 7-day per week season occurred from December 1 - 31, 2001.
- A Level Two fishery, consisting of two 18-hour fishing periods (3 AM-9 PM every Wednesday and Sunday) per week, was initially adopted for January 2-March 28, 2002.
- Significant smelt landings were observed in January for the first time since 1990.
- CPUE's steadily increased through the end of January with the CPUE reaching 3,900 pounds per delivery during the last week of January.
- Based on the high CPUE's an additional 18-hour fishing period (3 AM-9 PM Friday) was adopted for February 1-March 31, 2002.
- Participation was relatively low due to an influx of significant landings from the tributary commercial dip net fishery.
- Commercial landings totaled 58,000 pounds in the mainstem Columbia River.

2002-2003 Columbia River Fisheries

- Sport fisheries in the mainstem Columbia River and Oregon tributaries are open seven days per week the entire year.
- The commercial fishery is open seven days per week during December 1, 2002 through March 31, 2003 under permanent regulations.
- Commercial landings to date have been small to non-existent with few fishers participating.
- Water temperatures are warm for this time of year. Temperature at Bonneville Dam has ranged between 45-46° during the first 12 days of December.
- The Columbia River above the mouth of the Willamette River is extremely clear with a visibility of 7 feet measured at Bonneville Dam during December 7-12, 2002.
- Columbia River levels have been extremely low with flows at Bonneville Dam ranging between 120-127 kcfs.

<i>Joint Staff 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 Wednesday January 1, 2003 and adopt a Level Three fishery consisting of four 18-hour weekly fishing periods on Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday during January 1, 2003 through March 31, 2003. 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.

- ✓ Abundance and productivity indices support Level Three fisheries.
- ✓ Proposed season is consistent with Level Three fisheries described in the Joint State Eulachon Management Plan.
- ✓ Proposed season is similar to season that was in place during 2002.
- ✓ Effort is expected to be low, as was the case in 2002.
- ✓ Low participation, in combination with fishery structure and large run size expectation, will minimize the possibility of the proposed fishery overexploiting the return.
- ✓ The proposed fishery will be closely monitored inseason and modified as needed through emergency or scheduled Compact hearings.

Washington Tributary Commercial Fisheries

- Washington tributary commercial fisheries were originally open for two 12-hour fishing periods (6 PM Sunday - 6 AM Monday and 6 PM Wednesday - 6 AM Thursday) per week in the Cowlitz River during January 1-March 31, 2002, which was consistent with Level Two fisheries described in the Joint State Eulachon Management Plan.
- In response to the strong return, Washington tributary fisheries were expanded to include an additional 12-hour fishing period (6 PM Tuesday - 6 AM Wednesday) and the open areas were expanded to include the Lewis and Kalama rivers during February 5-March 31, 2002.
- Considerable landings occurred in Washington tributary fisheries which led WDFW to expand fisheries to Level Three by adding an additional 12-hour fishing period (6 PM Thursday - 6 AM Friday) per week in all three open tributaries during February 26-March 31, 2002.
- Commercial landings during the 2001-2002 season included 169,600 pounds from the Cowlitz River, 493,600 pounds from the Lewis River, and zero pounds from the Kalama River.

<i>Washington Tributary Commercial Fishery Recommendation</i>	
Season:	Sunday, Tuesday, and Wednesday nights from January 1, 2003 through March 31, 2003. Open hours are 6 PM to 6 AM (12 hours).
Area:	Cowlitz, Kalama, and Lewis rivers.
Gear:	Dip nets.
Miscellaneous:	Quick Reporting Rule in effect for Washington buyers.

Washington Tributary Sport Fisheries

- Consistent with Level Two fisheries all Washington tributaries were open to sport dipping for three fishing periods (6 AM-10 PM Saturdays, Sundays, and Wednesdays) from January 1-February 25, 2002.
- Washington sport fisheries were expanded to Level Three fisheries when all Washington tributaries were opened 7-days per week (6 AM-10 PM) and the daily bag limit was increased to 20 pounds per person during February 26-March 31, 2002.

<i>Washington Tributary Sport Fishery Recommendation</i>	
Season:	6 AM to 10 PM daily from January 1, 2003 through March 31, 2003.
Area:	All Washington Columbia River tributaries.
Daily Limit:	10 pounds per person.

TREATY INDIAN FISHERIES

- Under permanent Compact rules, a treaty Indian commercial setline season occurs noon January 1, 2003 - noon January 31, 2003.
- The Sturgeon Management Task Force (SMTF) will meet in January to review stock assessment updates, review management options including harvest guidelines, and make recommendations for subsequent Zone 6 sturgeon management in 2003.
- The report from the SMTF will be presented at the February 6, 2003 Compact hearing.
- The current size limits for sturgeon caught for tribal subsistence and commercial purposes are 4'-5'.
- The tribes are expected to propose a winter gillnet fishery as described above.

<i>Treaty Indian Winter Season Proposal</i>	
Season:	Noon February 1, 2003-Noon March 21, 2003.
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:	Salmon, steelhead, walleye, shad, carp, and sturgeon between 4 and 5 feet in length.
Miscellaneous:	Sale of platform caught fish is allowed during open commercial gillnet seasons. Quick Reporting Rule in effect for Washington buyers.

FUTURE MEETINGS

- A Joint State meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 30, 2003 at 10 AM at the Water Resources Education Center in Vancouver, Washington to consider sport sturgeon fishing seasons in the mainstem Columbia River downstream of Bonneville Dam.
- The next Compact hearing is scheduled for Thursday, February 6, 2003 at 10 AM at the Water Resources Education Center in Vancouver, Washington to update salmon, steelhead, sturgeon, smelt, and shad stock status, consider fishing options in the mainstem Columbia River and Select Areas, and consider miscellaneous regulations for Columbia River commercial fisheries.
- A Joint State meeting to consider spring chinook sport fisheries in the mainstem Columbia River and modifications to the currently adopted sport fishery in the lower Columbia River is scheduled to occur immediately following the February 6, 2003 Compact hearing.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
December 18, 2002