

OREGON AND WASHINGTON DEPARTMENTS OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
JOINT STAFF REPORT - SUMMER FACT SHEET NO. 9
July 21, 2009

Fisheries under consideration: Recreational white sturgeon below Wauna

Stock status and management guidelines and season recommendations for 2009 sturgeon fisheries were presented in Winter Fact Sheet #1 (December 18, 2008).

Management Guidelines and Fishery Review

- 2009 is the final year of the Joint State Accord on 2006-2009 Columbia River Sturgeon Fishery Management. Harvest must remain within the limits outlined in the agreement, therefore harvest above/below the 2009 guideline is not transferable to 2010.
- Sturgeon management protocol for recreational fisheries include the objectives to minimize emergency in-season action, balance the catch above/below Wauna at a 40/60 ratio, and maintain fishery monitoring and management capabilities.
- Based on the agreement and catch during 2006 through 2008, a total of 15,529 fish are available for 2009 fisheries below Wauna.
- Seven-day/week retention fisheries were adopted for January 1-April 30 and May 9-June 28, and daily for July 2-5 based on this available harvest.
- An estimated 1,125 white sturgeon were kept during January through May. Based on preliminary data, an estimated 10,412 fish were kept during June 1-July 5 bringing the season total kept catch to approximately 11,537 as of July 5.
- With a balance of approximately 4,000 fish, six additional retention days (Friday-Sunday on July 10-12 and 17-19) were added to the estuary season with an expected catch of 3,000 kept white sturgeon.
- Catch during the first period (7/10-12) was well below expectations (averaging 178 kept fish/day) due to reduced effort and inclement weather on July 12. During the second period (7/17-19), catch rates improved, averaging 334 kept fish/day which is similar to rates observed during mid-June through July 5.
- The preliminary estimated kept catch for July 10-19 is 1,536 fish, leaving a balance of 2,456 fish available for the remainder of 2009.

<i>2009 Below Wauna White Sturgeon Catch Summary</i>			
Period	Catch	Number Remaining	Comments
Guideline		15,529	4-year cumulative guideline of 64,000 minus 2006 - 2008 harvest
January 1 – May 31 (actual)	1,125	14,404	
June 1-28 (preliminary)	9,074	5,330	Preliminary in-season estimate
July 2-5 (preliminary)	1,338	3,992	Preliminary in-season estimate
July 10-12 and 17-19	1,536	2,456	Extended season dates
Projected Balance		2,456	Unused balance

- Assuming an average catch of 334 kept white sturgeon per day (July 17-19 catch rate), the remaining balance equates to over seven additional retention days.

Recommendations

<i>Recreational Sturgeon Fishery 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.
Season	Friday July 24 – Sunday July 26 (3 days) Friday July 31 – Sunday August 2 (3 days)
Size limit	41-inch fork length minimum and 54-inch fork length maximum size limit
Additional Regulations	Retention of green sturgeon prohibited as per permanent regulations
Estimated catch	~2,000 kept white sturgeon

- Given 2009 is the final year of the agreement and the potential for catch rates to increase, staff recommends a conservative approach for setting the balance of the 2009 estuary season.
- The season recommendation provides additional harvest opportunity with limited risk of exceeding the guideline. Catch could increase to 409 kept fish per day without exceeding the guideline.
- Modifying the staff recommendation to include only one weekend day would not likely result in enough savings to consider additional retention days.
- The catch rates modeled by staff project an unused balance of about 450 fish, however, the final catch estimate for June and July could potentially increase.
- The options allow for weekly catches to be reviewed after each fishing period.

Future Hearings

- A fall Compact hearing is scheduled for July 29, 2009 at 10:00 AM at the Seafood Consumer Center, located at 2021 Marine Drive, Suite 200, Astoria, Oregon.