

OREGON AND WASHINGTON DEPARTMENTS OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

JOINT STAFF REPORT - FALL FACT SHEET NO. 2a

Joint State Hearing

July 24, 2008

Fisheries under consideration: Recreational sturgeon

White sturgeon management guidelines and stock status were presented in Winter Fact Sheet #1(December 13, 2008)

Stock Status and Management Guidelines

- 2008 is the final year of a three-year agreement and total allowable recreational harvest must remain within the boundaries outlined within the agreement (96,000 cumulative harvest of 42-60" fish). Therefore harvest above/below the 2008 guideline is not transferable to 2009.
- Sturgeon management protocol for recreational fisheries include 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.
- The 2008 guidelines are 14,180 for the fishery above Wauna and 13,143 for the fishery below Wauna when adjusted for harvest in each of these areas during 2006-2007.

Above Wauna Fishery

- At the December 13 hearing, a 4-day/week (Thursday-Sunday) retention fishery was adopted for January-July and October-December in the mainstem Columbia from Wauna powerlines upstream to Bonneville Dam including the lower Willamette River and Washington tributaries.
- The sturgeon catch through June in the mainstem Columbia is tracking below expectations. The kept catch estimate through June is 1,140 fish from 24,900 angler trips with an additional 150 fish estimated to be harvested through July (1,290 total).
- In the Willamette River, an estimated 4,134 white sturgeon were harvested during March through mid-June from 25,300 angler trips. Based on past creel to punch card relationships, the estimated 2008 annual harvest will be 6,800 white sturgeon, or 5,575 over the 1986-1996 baseline (1,225 fish). Of this total catch projection, approximately 1,630 fish (24%) will be harvested during August-December.
- Including the projected annual Willamette kept catch, an estimated 6,865 white sturgeon will be harvested in the above Wauna recreational fishery through July, leaving 7,315 available for harvest during August through December in the mainstem Columbia.
- The October-December fishery is projected to harvest an additional 4,400 fish, leaving 2,915 fish for additional harvest opportunity during August-September.
- A 4-day/week retention fishery during August-September would harvest an estimated 2,400 white sturgeon, leaving 515 fish remaining on the 2008 above Wauna harvest guideline.

2008 Above Wauna White Sturgeon Catch Summary			
Period	Catch	Number Remaining	Comments
2008 Guideline		14,180	Guideline of 38,400 minus 2006 – 2007 harvest
January – July (preliminary est.)	1,290	12,890	4 days/week (Thursday through Sunday)
Willamette (projected)	5,575	7,315	Harvest in excess of the 1,225 baseline
October – December (projected)	4,400	2,915	Projection at 4 days/week
August – September (estimate)	2,400	515	Projection at 4 days/week
Projected Balance		515	

Below Wauna Recreational White Sturgeon Fishery

- The 2008 below Wauna recreational sturgeon fishery included retention periods during January 1 – April 30 and May 10 – June 24 based on an adjusted harvest guideline of 13,143 fish. With an estimated 4,200 harvestable white sturgeon remaining on the 2008 guideline for this area, eight additional days of fishing (July 10-12, 17-19, and 26-27) were adopted at the June 27 Compact/Joint State hearing.
- Actual January-June harvest for this area was 9,079 white sturgeon from 37,400 angler trips leaving 4,064 fish available for harvest during July.
- Since the fishery re-opened July 10, private boat effort has been the highest observed all season, especially during the July 17-19 retention period when effort increased substantially. The flight on July 19 counted 670 private boats which is the second highest daily count since 1983.
- Catch rates during July for both private and charter boats have also been the highest of the year. Private boat angler catch rates remained nearly identical during the July 10-12 and 17-19 periods at 0.40 fish kept/angler compared to 0.24 fish kept/angler in June. The charter boat catch rate during July has averaged 0.79 fish kept/angler compared to 0.41 fish kept/angler during June.
- The estimated catch for the first six days of the season extension is 3,700 fish, leaving 364 fish remaining on the guideline.

2008 Below Wauna White Sturgeon Catch Summary			
Period	Catch	Number Remaining	Comments
Guideline		13,143	Guideline of 48,000 minus 2006 - 2007 harvest
January 1 – April 30 (actual)	22	13,121	
May 10-31 (actual)	1,689	11,432	
June 1-24 (actual)	7,368	4,064	Adj. balance compared to 4,200 preliminary estimate
July 10-12 (estimated)	1,600	2,464	
July 17-19 (estimated)	2,100	364	
Projected Balance		364	2006-2008 balance through July 19

- Assuming a kept catch of 700-1,000 fish/day, an additional 1,160-1,840 fish would need to be transferred from the above Wauna fishery to cover the scheduled two-day estuary fishery (July 26-27) or 400-760 for Saturday (July 26) only. *(Due to the different minimum size limit for the two areas, these numbers represent 42-60" fish converted to 45-60" fish equivalents)*
- The projected balance of 515 fish (42-60") above Wauna equates to 430 fish (45-60") below Wauna.

Recommendations

<i>Recreational Sturgeon Fishery 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.
Dates:	<u>August-September, 2008</u> White sturgeon retention allowed four days per week (Thursday through Sunday)
Size limit	42-inch minimum and 60-inch maximum size limit
Estimated catch	2,400 kept white sturgeon

- The 4 day/week fishery would continue the season structure that has been in place since January and is scheduled for October-December.
- Allowing sturgeon retention during August provides an additional recreational fishery when opportunities for salmonid angling in this area are limited.
- The season modification presents limited risk of exceeding the guideline for this area; however, the majority (62%) of the above Wauna annual catch estimate is predicted rather than known harvest.
- This recommendation will result in a projected 515 fish remaining on the above Wauna guideline.

<i>Recreational Sturgeon Fishery Below Wauna</i>	
<u>Option 1:</u> <u>Staff Preferred</u>	Retention of white sturgeon in the 2008 recreational sturgeon fishery downstream of the Wauna powerlines be prohibited effective 12:01 AM, Sunday July 27 (rescinds retention fishery previously adopted for Sunday, July 27).
Option 2:	No Action (Allow retention fishery previously adopted for July 26-27, 2008 to proceed as scheduled)
Size limit:	45-inch minimum and 60-inch maximum size limit
Estimated catch:	Option 1: 700-1,000 Option 2: 1,330-1,900

- Option 1 will likely result in the below Wauna guideline being exceeded by 340-640 fish. Option 2 will likely exceed the below Wauna guideline by 970-1,540 fish.
- Rescinding the Sunday retention fishery limits the number of fish that need to be transferred between areas and maintains the catch allocation for above/below Wauna at a 40/60 ratio for the 2006-2008 management period.

- Allowing the retention fishery to continue through Saturday will provide additional time to publicize the proposed season modification and provide for a more orderly conclusion of the estuary fishery.
- Allowing the retention fishery to continue through Sunday does not disrupt the currently adopted fishery on short notice.

Future Hearings

- No additional Compact/Joint State hearings are currently scheduled. The Joint Staff anticipates the need for a Compact hearing in mid-August via teleconference to discuss additional non-Indian mainstem commercial fishing opportunities.