

**JOINT STAFF REPORT
WINTER FACT SHEET NO. 11
Columbia River Compact
March 25, 2004**

Purpose: To review the ongoing commercial fishery and consider non-Indian commercial fishing seasons for salmon and sturgeon in the mainstem Columbia River.

STOCK STATUS

Spring Chinook

- Spring chinook enter the lower Columbia River primarily during March and April with upriver stock abundance peaking during the late March to early April timeframe.
- The pre-season spring chinook run size forecasts include returns of 360,700 upriver stock (94% 4-year old) and 109,400 Willamette stock to the Columbia River mouth.
- The upriver spring chinook count through March 22 at Bonneville Dam was 274 spring chinook.
- Current dam counts suggest the run timing is later than average.
- Willamette spring chinook began to pass Willamette Falls in early March with a total of 36 spring chinook (11 wild and 25 hatchery) counted through March 19.
- Run sizes cannot be updated until late April for upriver stock and early May for Willamette stock.

Wild Winter Steelhead

- Wild winter steelhead migrate through the lower Columbia River primarily during January through early April.
- The pre-season forecast was for a return of 32,200 wild winter steelhead to the Columbia River mouth.
- Wild winter steelhead passage over Willamette Falls through March 19 was 6,840 wild fish. The count has already exceeded the historic average total count since 1996 with this year's run only about 50% complete. A very large run is expected.
- The Bonneville Dam steelhead count through March 22 was 321 wild steelhead, which may include a mix of summer and winter-run fish. The counts have increased over the last few days and a larger than average run is now indicated.
- Run updates in Oregon tributaries will be available the end of March. Information available to date indicate the lower Columbia River winter runs are similar to recent averages.

FISHERY UPDATES

Non-Indian Salmon Commercial Demonstration Fishery

- Weekly test fishing has occurred from February 22 through March 21 with all test fishers using small mesh tangle nets.
- Two 16-hour fishing periods occurred on March 2 (5:00 AM - 9:00 PM) and March 4-5 (3:00 PM - 7:00 AM); two 24-hour fishing periods occurred March 9-10 (5 AM - 5 AM) and March 11-12 (10 AM –10 AM); and two 15-hour fishing periods occurred on March 15-16 (3 PM- 6 AM) and March 18-19 (6 PM- 9AM). These fishing periods had 9" minimum and 9-¾" maximum mesh size restrictions in effect.
- A 8-hour fishing period occurred on March 23-24 (9 PM - 5 AM) with a 4 ¼" maximum mesh size restriction in effect.
- Long-term mortality rates used to determine impact rates are the same as those recommended by the TAC: 40% for chinook and 30% for steelhead in large mesh (8" -9¾"), and 18.5% for chinook and steelhead in small mesh (≤4¼").
- Mainstem non-Indian commercial fishery impacts to listed species are estimated to be 0.240% for upriver spring chinook and 0.309% for wild winter steelhead through the March 23-24 fishing period. Total impacts to date represent 30.00% of the total upriver spring chinook impact limit (0.80%) for non-Indian commercial fisheries and 15.45% of the wild winter steelhead impact limit (2.00%) for non-Indian fisheries.
- Over the seven fishing periods, a total of 5,907 chinook were kept with 2,321 fish kept during the most recent 8-hour small mesh fishery. Sampling of landed catch from the small mesh fishery showed 48% percent were upriver fish. The average size of the chinook declined from about 18 pounds to 13 pounds.
- The observed mark rate for chinook was 74% with a total observation of 176 chinook kept and 32 steelhead released for the March 23-24 fishing period. More information from the March 23-24 fishery observations are shown in the table below.

<i>2004 Spring Chinook Fishery Monitoring Data Summary</i>							
Fishing period (Zones 1 - 4)	Gear	Observer Data					
		Drifts	Chinook Marked	Chinook UnMarked	Chinook Mark Rate	Steelhead	Steelhead Mark Rate
Test Fishery Feb. 22	4 ¼"	26	3	2	60%	20	45%
Test Fishery Feb. 29	4 ¼"	22	8	2	80%	14	43%
16 hr. Fishery Mar. 2	9"	77	8	4	67%	4	25%
16 hr. Fishery Mar. 4-5	9"	95	26	17	60%	6	33%
Test Fishery Mar. 7	4 ¼"	19	5	4	56%	18	50%
24 hr. Fishery Mar. 9-10	9"	81	42	10	76%	4	0%
24 hr Fishery Mar 11-12	9"	101	35	10	78%	3	33%
Test Fishery Mar. 14	4 ¼"	17	13	8	64%	12	33%
15 hr Fishery Mar 15-16	9"	81	48	32	60%	0	0%
Test Fishery March 17	4 ¼"	12	17	4	81%	7	29%
15 hr Fishery Mar 18-19	9"	64	42	20	68%	1	100%
Test Fishery March 21	4 ¼"	20	30	8	79%	17	53%
8 hr Fishery Mar 23-24	4 ¼"	80	176	62	74%	32	38%

- For the seven fishing periods a total of 167 sturgeon have been landed which leaves 133 sturgeon on the guideline for the winter-summer timeframe.

<i>Chinook and Steelhead During 2004 Demonstration Fishery</i>											
Fishing Period	Gear	Del	Chinook Kept			Chinook Released			Steelhead Released		White Sturgeon
			Total	Upriver Stock	L River Stock	Total	Upriver Stock	L River Stocks	Total	Wild Winter	
Mar 2 (16 hr) + Mar 4-5 (16 hr)	9"	179	572	71	501	370	106	264	168	110	51
Mar 9-10 (24 hr) + Mar 11-12 (24hr)	9"	291	1,366	232	1,134	408	150	258	143	104	54
Mar 15-16 (15 hr) + Mar 18-19 (15 hr)	9"	258	1,648	382	1,266	952	437	515	18	0	54
Mar 23-24 (8 hr)	4 ¼"	161	2,321	1,107	1,214	818	589	229	416	187	8
Total			5,907	1,792	4,115	2,548	1,282	1,266	751	407	167

Select Area Fishery

- Youngs Bay and Blind Slough Select Area winter fisheries landed 1,341 chinook, with a combined upriver impact of 0.023%. Total impacts to date represent 2.88% of the total upriver spring chinook impact limit (0.80%) for non-Indian commercial fisheries.
- The majority of the upriver impacts for Select Area Fisheries are expected to occur in spring seasons set to open the third week in April.
- A total of 9 white sturgeon have been landed in these fisheries.

Sport Fishery

- The mainstem Columbia (mouth to Bonneville Dam) recreational spring chinook catch estimate for the period of Feb. 1 - March 21 is 1,097 fish kept and 329 released for 35,291 angler trips, for an upriver impact rate of 0.017%. In addition, 431 steelhead were kept and 368 steelhead were released during this same time period.

Smelt Fishery

- A Joint State Eulachon (Smelt) Management Plan has been in effect since 2001.
- Two 18-hr commercial smelt fisheries (3 AM - 9 PM) are scheduled for March 26 and March 28 on the mainstem Columbia.

FISHERY RECOMMENDATIONS

Non-Indian Salmon Commercial Demonstration Fishery

The Joint Staff is recommending the following fishing period to allow the commercial fishery access to their Willamette River hatchery spring chinook allocation.

<i>Recommendation</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Joint Staff is proposing the following additional fishing period for the commercial demonstration fishery.
Season:	9 PM Thursday March 25 to 5 AM Friday March 26 (8 hours)
Options	
Area:	Mouth to Kelley Point (Zones 1-4)
Sanctuaries:	Grays River, Gnat Creek, Elokomina –B, Abernathy Creek, Cowlitz River, Kalama-B, and Lewis-B.
Gear:	<p>Net length not to exceed 150 fathoms. 4 1/4' maximum mesh size restrictions. Use of monofilament nets is prohibited.</p> <p>Optional use of a steelhead excluding panel hung between the cork line and the tangle net mesh. Excluder panel must be a minimum of 5' in depth and not exceed 10' in depth with a 12" minimum mesh size restriction in effect.</p> <p>Use of weedlines or droppers, used in smelt bobber nets, are allowed in place of a steelhead excluder panel. Weedlines or droppers must extend a minimum of 5' above the tangle net mesh.</p> <p>Net length can increase from 150 to 175 fathoms for nets constructed with a steelhead excluder panel, weedlines, or droppers.</p>
Allowable Sales:	Adipose fin-clipped chinook salmon and sturgeon. A maximum of 3 white sturgeon may be possessed or sold by each participating vessel.
Participants:	Columbia River commercial fishers with appropriate licenses and legal gear that attended a state-sponsored workshop concerning live captive commercial fishing techniques and possess a certificate that allows participation in this fishery.
Miscellaneous Regulations:	<p>Soak times, defined as time elapsed from when first mesh enters the water to when last mesh leaves the water, must not exceed 45 minutes.</p> <p>Red corks are required at 25-fathom intervals and red corks must be in contrast to the corks used in the remainder of the net.</p> <p>Use of recovery boxes is required on all lethargic or bleeding salmonids.</p> <p>Each participant is required to have 2 operable recovery boxes or one box with two chambers in place to participate in this fishery. Operable recovery boxes require a flow of 16-20 gallons per minute to the box or each chamber. Each box shall be operating during any time that the net is being retrieved or picked.</p> <p>Lighted buoys required on each end of nets being fished between sunset and sunrise.</p> <p>Quick reporting rule in effect for Washington buyers.</p>

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- Non-Indian commercial fisheries will be managed for an overall 0.8% upriver impact with 0.2% reserved for Select Areas and as a management buffer.
- Through the March 23-24 fishing period, the non-Indian mainstem commercial fishery upriver impacts are estimated to be 0.240% which is 40% of the 0.6% upriver impact reserved for this fishery.
- Through the winter seasons, the Select Area upriver impacts are estimated to be 0.023%.
- Based on these guidelines and impacts accrued through March 24, staff is projecting two additional tangle net fishing periods are likely.
- Staff is proposing one fishing period to occur Thursday March 25-Friday March 26 and is considering a possible Monday March 29 fishing period.

NEXT COMPACT HEARING

- Staff is proposing the next Compact occur via telephone at 8:30 AM Monday March 29 to review the ongoing fishery and consider additional fishing options.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
March 25, 2004