

**OREGON AND WASHINGTON DEPARTMENTS OF FISH AND WILDLIFE**  
**JOINT STAFF REPORT - WINTER FACT SHEET NO. 6**  
**Columbia River Compact/Joint State Hearing**  
**February 21, 2024**

<p><b><i>Fisheries under consideration:</i></b> Mainstem recreational salmon Select Area recreational salmon Zone 6 recreational white sturgeon</p>
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*Detailed information on stock status and management guidelines for Columbia River fisheries are presented in Joint Staff Reports, which are produced annually and available online. The most recent report is the 2023 Spring Chinook, Summer Chinook, Sockeye, Steelhead and Other Species Report (February 1, 2024) available at:*

*<https://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/management/columbia-river/reports> and  
<https://www.dfw.state.or.us/fish/OSCRP/CRM/jsmreports.asp>*

**RIVER CONDITIONS**

- As of February 19, the recent five-day average Columbia River water temperature at Bonneville Dam of 39°F is similar to the five-year average for this time in February (38°F). The five-day average outflow is 128.7 kcfs, which is lower than the recent 5-year average of 167.0 kcfs. The recent five-day average visibility of 5 feet is the same as the five-year average.

**STOCK STATUS**

***Upriver Spring Chinook***

- The upriver spring Chinook run is defined as all spring Chinook destined for areas upstream of Bonneville Dam plus Snake River summer Chinook. Chinook passing Bonneville Dam between January 1 and June 15 are managed as upriver spring Chinook. Snake River spring/summer Chinook and upper Columbia spring Chinook are components of this run and are federally listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Spring Chinook returning to other tributaries upstream of Bonneville Dam are part of this run but are not ESA-listed. Based on the recent ten-year average, Bonneville Dam passage is usually 50% complete by May 11. Over the past ten years, adult returns have averaged 152,289 fish (range 73,101 to 288,994). The 2024 forecast to the Columbia River mouth is 121,000 adults (see table on page 3).

***Willamette Spring Chinook***

- Willamette River spring Chinook exhibit broader migration timing than upriver spring Chinook. Spring Chinook destined for areas upstream of Willamette Falls and the Clackamas River are in the upper Willamette River evolutionarily significant unit (ESU) which is listed under the ESA. Over the past ten years, adult returns have averaged 47,807 fish (range 27,292 to 84,532). The 2024 forecast to the Columbia River mouth is 48,800 adults (see table on page 3).

***Lower Columbia Spring Chinook***

- Spring Chinook returning to the tributaries of the lower Columbia River are destined for the Cowlitz, Kalama, Lewis, and Sandy rivers (CKLS) and the Select Areas. CKLS populations are in the Lower Columbia ESU which is listed under the ESA; hatchery spring Chinook produced for

Select Area fisheries are not considered part of the ESU. Over the past ten years, the combined adult return of the lower river stocks has averaged 20,226 fish (range 6,803 to 34,323) to the tributaries and 10,854 fish (range 2,479 to 22,357) to the Select Areas. The 2024 forecasts are listed in the table on page 3.

### ***Winter Steelhead***

- The geographic range of winter steelhead includes all tributaries of the Columbia River upstream to Fifteenmile Creek on the Oregon shore and the Klickitat River on the Washington shore. Populations returning to Washington-side tributaries from the Cowlitz River upstream to the Klickitat River and Oregon-side tributaries from the Willamette River upstream to Fifteenmile Creek are in the Lower Columbia distinct population segment (DPS) and populations from areas upstream of Willamette Falls are in the Upper Willamette DPS. Both of these DPSs are listed under the ESA. Steelhead handled in fisheries downstream of Bonneville Dam during November through April and those handled in fisheries in the Bonneville Pool from November through March are managed as winter steelhead. Over the past ten years, wild winter steelhead returns have averaged 14,564 fish (range 9,440 to 22,379). The 2024 forecast to the Columbia River mouth is 14,400 fish (see table on page 3).

### ***Summer Steelhead***

- Upriver summer steelhead pass Bonneville Dam from April through October of each year. For the purpose of fisheries management, fish passing from April through June are categorized as upriver Skamania-stock steelhead, and steelhead passing from July through October are categorized as A-/B-Index steelhead.
- Steelhead handled in Bonneville Pool during April–June fisheries are managed as upriver Skamania-stock. Over the past ten years, upriver Skamania steelhead returns averaged 6,313 (range 1,917 to 13,525). The 2024 forecast is 4,000 fish, including 1,800 wild fish (see table on page 3).
- Steelhead handled in fisheries between The Dalles Dam and the OR/WA state line (upstream of McNary Dam) during January through June are considered A-/B-Index fish from the prior run year for the purpose of fisheries management. The 2023 estimated total return of A-/B-Index steelhead was 110,687 fish, less than the recent ten-year average return of 152,994 (range 67,752 to 307,187).

### ***White Sturgeon – Zone 6 (Bonneville Dam to McNary Dam)***

- White sturgeon stock status for populations and fisheries upstream of Bonneville Dam was presented in Winter Fact Sheet #1, dated October 31, 2023.
- A stock assessment occurred in The Dalles Pool in 2023. The stock assessment showed increased numbers of fish in the legal-sized slot limit of 43-54-inches fork length. However, it also indicated a decrease in juvenile fish present to contribute to the legal-sized population in future years. The lower numbers of juvenile fish appear to primarily be a result of the recent lower levels of measurable recruitment of age-0 fish.

<i>Columbia River Adult Salmon Returns: Actual and Forecasted</i>				
		2023	2023	2024
		Forecast	Return	Forecast
<b>Spring Chinook</b>	<b>Upriver Total *</b>	<b>198,600</b>	<b>141,179</b>	<b>121,000</b>
	Upper Columbia	41,400	24,917	19,400
	<i>Upper Columbia natural-origin</i>	5,800	2,836	2,700
	Snake River Spring/Summer **	85,900	82,433	63,500
	<i>Snake River natural-origin**</i>	13,200	10,826	9,200
	<b>Lower River Total</b>	<b>117,000</b>	<b>75,407</b>	<b>84,600</b>
	<b>Total Spring Chinook</b>	<b>315,600</b>	<b>216,586</b>	<b>205,600</b>
	<u>Area-specific detail</u>			
	Willamette River	71,000	38,373	48,800
	<i>Willamette River hatchery-origin</i>	53,100	26,094	39,300
	Sandy River	7,800	6,312	7,700
	Select Areas***	22,100	18,789	18,100
	Cowlitz River	9,000	6,217	4,700
	Kalama River	2,400	2,525	1,900
	Lewis River	4,700	3,191	3,400
	Wind River***	4,400	5,068	4,200
	Drano Lake/Little White Salmon River***	8,000	7,550	5,300
	Hood River***	n/a	2,038	n/a
	Klickitat River***	1,400	651	1,300
	Deschutes River***	n/a	2,387	n/a
	John Day River***	n/a	2,686	n/a
	Umatilla River***	2,500	2,502	n/a
	Yakima River***	5,500	2,670	2,400
<b>Summer Chinook</b>	<b>Upper Columbia</b>	<b>85,400</b>	<b>54,722</b>	<b>53,000</b>
<b>Sockeye</b>	<b>Total Sockeye</b>	<b>234,500</b>	<b>329,040</b>	<b>401,700</b>
	Wenatchee	44,300	146,875	97,000
	Okanogan	187,400	179,655	288,700
	Yakima	100	443	12,100
	Deschutes	100	68	100
	Snake River	2,600	1,999	3,800
<b>Winter Steelhead</b>	<b>Wild</b>	<b>15,700</b>	<b>14,699</b>	<b>14,400</b>
<b>Summer Steelhead</b>	<b>Total Upriver Steelhead</b>	<b>67,800</b>	<b>113,891</b>	<b>126,200</b>
(to Bonneville Dam)	Upriver Skamania Index (total)	4,400	3,204	4,000
	<i>(wild)</i>	2,100	1,391	1,800
	A-Index (total)	55,400	90,900	89,900
	<i>(wild)</i>	17,300	30,593	32,400
	B-Index (total)	8,000	19,787	32,200
	<i>(wild)</i>	1,300	1,616	4,000

\* Upriver totals are developed by TAC for use in management of *U.S. v. OR* fisheries. Wild components are included in the stock total. Area-specific estimates for upriver tributaries detailed here are provided by other agencies/entities and may not sum to TAC's upriver abundance estimates.

\*\* 2023 return is based on current TAC run reconstruction methodology.

\*\*\* Return to tributary mouth.

## MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

### *2018–2027 U.S. v Oregon Management Agreement*

- The 2018–2027 *U.S. v Oregon* Management Agreement (MA) provides the treaty Indian and non-treaty fishery harvest frameworks and harvest rate schedules for salmon and steelhead stocks destined for areas upstream of Bonneville Dam.
- Non-treaty fisheries are managed to meet the catch balance provision in the MA for upriver spring Chinook which requires that the total mortality (kept plus release mortalities) of upriver fish not exceed the total allowable catch available for treaty Indian fisheries.
- The MA specifies that when the Snake River natural spring/summer Chinook return is less than 10% of the aggregate upriver run size, the allowable harvest rates will be based on the Snake River natural spring/summer Chinook run size. The 2024 forecast of Snake River natural spring/summer Chinook represents 8% of the total upriver run size. Given this, ESA impact rates are limited to 9.0%, with 1.6% for non-treaty fisheries and 7.4% for treaty Indian fisheries.
- To allow for uncertainty in preseason forecasting, the MA requires a 30% reduction from the upriver spring Chinook forecast (i.e., a run-size buffer) to start the season, which equates to 84,700 upriver spring Chinook. At this run size, the MA allows for a non-treaty harvest (kept plus release mortalities) of 6,268 upriver-origin spring Chinook prior to the first in-season run size update.

### *Willamette Spring Chinook Management*

- The Willamette River Fisheries Management Evaluation Plan (FMEP) includes a sliding scale for escapement goals based on abundance of hatchery fish which determines the allocation of surplus hatchery spring Chinook to recreational and commercial fisheries downstream of Willamette Falls. The escapement goals are also intended to allow for full recreational fisheries in the upper Willamette River.
- Based on FMEP guidance, an expected return of 40,600 hatchery spring Chinook, and the FMEP escapement goal of 25,300 hatchery fish, the harvestable surplus totals 15,300 hatchery fish. At this level, the harvestable surplus is allocated 85% to recreational fisheries and 15% to commercial fisheries.

### *Endangered Species Act*

- A Biological Opinion (BO) based upon the management actions outlined in the MA was issued by NMFS in 2018. ESA impact limits based on 2024 preseason forecasts of upriver-origin spring Chinook are discussed above.
- ESA impacts to wild winter steelhead are limited to 2% for all mainstem Columbia River non-treaty fisheries. ESA impacts to wild upriver Skamania-stock summer steelhead in non-treaty fisheries are also limited to 2%. Additionally, ESA impacts to wild A-/B-Index summer steelhead in non-treaty winter/spring/summer fisheries are also limited to 2% on each stock.
- Compliance with ESA-take authorization for fisheries impacting listed lower Columbia River Chinook (spring run) is determined by the ability to perpetuate these stocks individually over time. Hatchery return expectations are reviewed annually to ensure compliance with escapement goals. The 2024 forecasts for the CKLS rivers are sufficient to meet hatchery escapement goals.

- The Biological Opinion for the Willamette River FMEP provides ESA coverage for take in freshwater fisheries and limits the annual ESA impacts on wild Willamette River spring Chinook to  $\leq 15\%$ .

### ***2024 Spring Chinook Fisheries Management***

- The Oregon and Washington allocation policies for 2024 specific to commercial/recreational ESA-impact sharing and within-recreational sub-allocations are not concurrent.
- Under the WA policy, no more than 70% of the non-treaty allocation can be allocated to the recreational fisheries, and under Oregon rule, no more than 20% of the non-treaty allocation can be allocated to the commercial fisheries.
- Additionally, under the WA policy, no more than 70% of the recreational allocation can be allocated to the Lower Columbia River (LCR) recreational fishery, and under Oregon rule, no more than 25% of the recreational allocation can be allocated for fisheries upstream of Bonneville Dam (Bonneville to OR/WA state line, Snake River).
- Therefore, modeling only utilizes 90% of the non-treaty allocation and 95% of the recreational share of upriver spring Chinook ESA impacts. When combined with catch balance provisions in the MA, the following allocations are available for 2024 fisheries:

**Prior to an in-season run update**, allocation of upriver fish (including release mortalities) for non-treaty fisheries will be:

- 627 unallocated non-treaty
- 3,906 fish for the recreational fishery downstream of Bonneville Dam
- 558 fish for the recreational fishery from Bonneville Dam to the OR/WA state line
- 493 fish for recreational fisheries in the lower Snake River (Washington waters)
- 17 fish for Wanapum tribe (Upper Columbia)
- 279 unallocated recreational
- $\leq 387$  fish for Select Area commercial fisheries
- The approach to 2024 fishery structure is consistent with the ESA management strategies in the Columbia River Basin – fisheries are managed to limit the impacts to ESA-listed fish while providing harvest opportunity for healthy and harvestable stocks.
- Fisheries are also managed by time and area to reduce the potential for handling ESA-listed species or other stocks of concern.

### ***White Sturgeon – Zone 6 (Bonneville Dam to McNary Dam)***

- Management guidelines for white sturgeon fisheries upstream of Bonneville Dam were presented in Winter Fact Sheet #1, dated October 31, 2023.
- The *U.S. v. OR* Sturgeon Management Task Force, a joint state/tribal body, met on January 18, 2024 and recommended increasing the harvest guidelines for 2024–2026 in The Dalles Pool (1,100 fish total guideline: 825 for treaty commercial fisheries and 275 for recreational fisheries). Current white sturgeon harvest guidelines in Bonneville, The Dalles, and John Day reservoirs are shown in the table below:

Pool	Recreational Guideline	Treaty Guideline	Total Guideline
Bonneville	675	675	1,350
The Dalles	275	825	1,100
John Day	105	210	315

## 2024 NON-TREATY FISHERIES

### *Mainstem Columbia River Spring Chinook Recreational Fisheries*

- The Columbia River downstream of the I-5 Bridge is currently open through March 31 for hatchery Chinook under permanent regulations.
- Regulations allow steelhead retention through March 31 from the Buoy 10 line upstream to the OR/WA state line and closed thereafter, except when spring Chinook angling is open.
- The Columbia River Recreational Advisory Group (CRRAG) provided discussion and feedback on the spring-season fisheries on February 6, 2024.

<i>Recommendations: 2024 Mainstem Columbia River Spring Chinook Recreational Fishery</i>		
<b>Downstream of Bonneville Dam</b>		
<b>Season:</b>	Friday March 1 through Friday April 5	36 retention days
<b>Area:</b>	Buoy 10 line upstream to Beacon Rock (boat and bank) plus bank angling only from Beacon Rock upstream to the Bonneville Dam deadline.  Legal upstream boat boundary defined as: A deadline marker on the Oregon bank (approximately four miles downstream from Bonneville Dam Powerhouse One) in a straight line through the western tip of Pierce Island to a deadline marker on the Washington bank at Beacon Rock.	
<b>Daily Bag Limit:</b>	Two adult hatchery salmonids (Chinook or steelhead) per day, but only one may be a Chinook.  Shad may also be retained. All other permanent regulations apply.	
<b>Bonneville Dam to Oregon/Washington Border</b>		
<b>Season:</b>	Monday April 1 through Thursday May 2	32 retention days
<b>Area:</b>	Tower Island power lines (approximately six miles below The Dalles Dam) upstream to Oregon/Washington border, plus the Oregon and Washington banks between Bonneville Dam and the Tower Island power lines.	
<b>Daily Bag Limit:</b>	Two adult hatchery salmonids (Chinook or steelhead) per day, but only one may be a Chinook.  All other permanent regulations apply.	

- Catch expectations are approximately 4,400 adult Chinook kept (3,334 upriver mortalities) for the fishery downstream of Bonneville Dam (85% of the pre-update guideline for this fishery) and

about 500 adult Chinook kept (516 mortalities, all upriver stock) for the fishery upstream of Bonneville Dam (92% of the pre-update guideline for this fishery).

- The CRRAG supported the proposed season approaches for the LCR and upstream of Bonneville Dam fisheries.
- Fishery recommendations were developed to remain within and comply with:
  - Impact limits for species listed under the ESA.
    - ✓ The most constraining stock for both fisheries is upriver spring Chinook. Staff estimates the recommended fisheries will accrue 0.32% impacts to upriver spring Chinook for the LCR and 0.05% for fisheries upstream of Bonneville Dam.
    - ✓ Fishery-specific ESA impact rate expectations for other species and stocks are expected to remain within the estimates provided in the 2024 Spring/Summer Joint Staff Report in the Winter, Spring, and Summer Season Expectations section.
  - Run-size buffer and catch balance provisions outlined in the MA.
  - Policy guidance and management objectives provided by the Commissions.
- Hand-cast bank-only regulations will be in effect for the Washington shore from both Beacon Rock to Bonneville Dam and from Bonneville Dam to Tower Island power lines.
- The use of barbless hooks is required when angling for salmon or steelhead in mainstem Columbia River waters from the mouth upstream to the OR/WA state line.
- A key management goal is to minimize the need for in-season emergency action. However, due to the dynamic nature of fisheries and fish runs, in-season action may be necessary to remain within ESA limits and/or catch balancing requirements.
- Staff will monitor the fisheries in-season. If the fisheries are tracking within preseason expectations, staff intends to allow them to run through the proposed end dates. After closure of each fishery, staff will review catches and determine if additional fishing opportunity is warranted.

### ***Tributary Spring Chinook Fisheries Downstream of Bonneville Dam***

- No changes to permanent regulations are anticipated for spring Chinook recreational fisheries in the Sandy, Clackamas, and Willamette rivers in Oregon. Recreational spring Chinook fisheries are expected to be open in the Cowlitz, Kalama, and Lewis rivers in Washington; however, modifications to season structure and/or daily bag limits may be considered.

### ***Select Area Recreational Fisheries***

- Permanent angling regulations for Oregon waters within the Select Areas of Youngs Bay and Blind Slough/Knappa Slough are listed in the 2024 Oregon Recreational Fishing Regulations booklet. These waters are open year-round to Chinook salmon (hatchery only during January 1 – July 31), hatchery steelhead, and hatchery Coho except for some seasonal tributary closures.
- Permanent Washington recreational fishing rules list waters of Deep River from the mouth to the town bridge as open to Chinook salmon (hatchery only during January 1 – July 31), hatchery steelhead, and hatchery Coho the entire year.

- ESA impacts to non-local Chinook and steelhead (including wild fish) are expected to be minimal since the majority of fishing effort is concentrated in upper tidewater areas or in the tributaries.
- To ease enforcement of co-occurring recreational fisheries in Select Areas and the mainstem Columbia River, staff recommends that daily bag limit in Select Area recreational fisheries be modified to match those of the mainstem when the fisheries are open concurrently.

<b><i>Recommendation: 2024 Select Area Recreational Fisheries</i></b>
<p>Effective March 1 – June 15:</p> <p>On days when the mainstem Columbia River recreational fishery below Bonneville Dam is open to retention of Chinook, the salmonid daily bag limit in Oregon and Washington Select Areas will be the same as mainstem Columbia River bag limits.</p> <p>On days when the mainstem Columbia River recreational fishery below Bonneville Dam is <u>closed</u> to Chinook retention, the permanent salmonid bag limit regulations for Select Areas apply.</p>

***Recreational White Sturgeon – Zone 6***

- Under permanent regulations, the area from Bonneville Dam upstream to McNary Dam opens January 1 each year for white sturgeon retention. Upon opening for retention, all three Zone 6 reservoirs are managed to the pool-specific guidelines.
- At a Joint State Hearing on October 21, 2023 the states modified the Bonneville and The Dalles pools’ fisheries for 2024 by adopting a limited days-per-week retention fishery. John Day Pool retention fisheries opened under permanent rules on January 1, 2024.
- At a Joint State Hearing on January 3, 2024, the states closed Bonneville Pool and The Dalles Pool to sturgeon retention effective 11:59 pm on Wednesday, January 3, 2024. Higher than average angler effort and catch rates meant these fisheries were likely to exceed their respective harvest guidelines if they proceeded as originally scheduled.
- Current recreational sturgeon guidelines and harvest estimates for 2024 Zone 6 recreational fisheries are summarized below (as of February 20):

Pool	Angler Trips	Harvest	Recreational Guideline	Percent of Guideline
Bonneville	1,364	692	675	103%
The Dalles	652	189	275	69%
John Day	2,129	71	105	68%

- Given the updated guideline, there are 86 fish now available for harvest in The Dalles Pool. Therefore, staff recommend additional retention days for this recreational sturgeon fishery.

***Recommendation: 2024 The Dalles Pool Recreational Sturgeon Fishery***

<b>Season:</b>	Saturday, February 24 and Wednesday, February 28	2 days
<b>Area:</b>	Mainstem Columbia River from The Dalles Dam to John Day Dam, and all adjacent tributaries	
<b>Allowable Catch:</b>	Up to 86 white sturgeon	
	Legal size: 43-inch minimum and 54-inch maximum fork length (Fork length is measured in a straight line from the tip of the nose to the fork in the caudal fin (tail) with the fish laying on its side on a flat surface, with the tape measure/ruler positioned flat <u>under</u> the fish)	
	Daily bag limit: One fish	
	Annual bag limit: Two fish	

- With this recommendation, the kept catch in The Dalles Pool through February 28 is projected to total 264 fish (96% of the guideline).
- Given John Day Pool has additional catch remaining on its guideline, this fishery can remain open at this time. Staff will monitor harvest closely and will recommend management action when needed.
- Permanent regulations allow for catch-and-release sturgeon angling all year, except angling for sturgeon is prohibited May 1 through August 31 within the sanctuary areas designated below each of the dam tailraces.

**FUTURE MEETINGS**

- No Compact or Joint State hearings are scheduled at this time. Joint staff will monitor fisheries and recommend additional hearings as needed.