

**OREGON AND WASHINGTON DEPARTMENTS OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
 JOINT STAFF REPORT - WINTER FACT SHEET NO. 6
 Columbia River Compact/Joint State Hearing
 February 19, 2025**

<i>Fisheries under consideration:</i>	Mainstem recreational salmon Select Area recreational salmon Zone 6 recreational white sturgeon
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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 2025 Spring Chinook, Summer Chinook, Sockeye, Steelhead and Other Species Report (January 31, 2025) 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 17, the current Columbia River water temperature at Bonneville Dam of 37°F is cooler than the five-year average for this time in February (39°F). The outflow is about 123.2 kcfs, which is lower than the recent 5-year average of 164.8 kcfs. Visibility is 7 feet compared to the five-year average of 5.4 feet.

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 above 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 12. Over the past ten years, adult returns have averaged 139,676 fish (range 73,105 to 288,993).

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 ESU which is listed under the ESA. Over the past ten years, adult returns have averaged 46,604 fish (range 27,292 to 84,532).

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 these lower river stocks has averaged 20,799 fish (range 6,803 to 34,323) to the tributaries and 12,332 fish (range 2,479 to 21,468) to the Select Areas.

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 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 downstream of Bonneville Dam during November through April are managed as winter steelhead. Over the past ten years, wild winter steelhead returns have averaged 15,611 fish (range 9,440 to 25,396). The 2025 forecast to the Columbia River mouth is 17,400 wild winter steelhead.

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. Passage of upriver Skamania summer steelhead at Bonneville Dam totaled 9,409 fish in 2024. Over the past ten years, upriver Skamania steelhead returns averaged 6,313 (range 1,917 to 13,525).
- 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 2024 passage of A-/B-Index steelhead was 169,745 fish at Bonneville Dam, greater than the recent ten-year average return of 141,504 (range 67,752 to 307,187).
- Preseason forecasts for the 2025 return of summer steelhead are not available at this time; however, the expectation is for abundance to be low again. If so, this would be the tenth consecutive year of lower-than-average returns for these fish.

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 November 8, 2024.

Columbia River Adult Salmon Returns: Actual and Forecasted

		2024	2024	2025
		Forecast	Return	Forecast
Spring Chinook	Upriver Total *	121,000	116,332	122,500
	Upper Columbia	19,400	18,224	21,500
	<i>Upper Columbia natural-origin</i>	2,700	1,609	2,200
	Snake River Spring/Summer **	63,500	70,743	56,200
	<i>Snake River natural-origin**</i>	9,200	10,514	9,800
	Lower River Total	84,600	73,227	95,000
	Total Spring Chinook	205,600	189,559	217,500
	<u>Area-specific detail</u>			
	Willamette River	48,800	37,737	51,200
	<i>Willamette River hatchery-origin</i>	39,300	28,099	36,600
	Sandy River	7,700	5,358	7,300
	Select Areas***	18,100	15,953	16,600
	Cowlitz River	4,700	8,983	13,700
	Kalama River	1,900	2,474	3,000
	Lewis River	3,400	2,722	3,200
	Wind River***	4,200	4,604	4,900
	Drano Lake/Little White Salmon River***	5,300	7,863	7,600
	Hood River***	n/a	881	n/a
	Klickitat River***	1,300	491	1,200
	Deschutes River***	n/a	580	n/a
	John Day River***	n/a	2,430	n/a
	Umatilla River***	n/a	1,319	2,600
	Yakima River***	2,400	2,501	2,600
Summer Chinook	Upper Columbia	52,600	42,511	38,000
Sockeye	Total Sockeye	401,700	761,682	350,200
	Wenatchee	97,000	183,445	94,000
	Okanogan	288,700	572,552	248,000
	Yakima	12,100	4,485	5,000
	Deschutes	100	21	100
	Snake River	3,800	1,179	3,100
Winter Steelhead	Wild	14,400	25,361	17,400

* Upriver totals are developed by the U.S. v. OR 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.

** 2024 return is based on current TAC run reconstruction methodology.

*** Return to tributary mouth.

1/28/2025

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 abundance 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 abundance. The 2025 forecast of Snake River natural spring/summer Chinook represents 8% of the total upriver abundance. Given this, the total ESA impact rate is 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 preseason upriver spring Chinook forecast (i.e., a run-size buffer) to plan and manage the initial phase of the spring Chinook fisheries, which equates to 85,750 upriver spring Chinook. At this abundance, the MA allows for an allowable harvest (kept plus release mortalities) of 6,346 upriver-origin spring Chinook based on the allowed treaty harvest rate of 7.4%.

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 2025 return of 37,883 hatchery spring Chinook, and the FMEP escapement goal of 23,000 hatchery fish, the harvestable surplus totals 14,883 hatchery fish this year. At this level, the entire harvestable surplus is allocated to recreational fisheries while commercial fisheries can harvest up to 1% of the run as incidental catch in non-Willamette spring Chinook target 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 2025 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 2025 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 $\leq 15\%$.

2025 Spring Chinook Harvest Management

- The Oregon and Washington allocation policies for 2025 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 2025 fisheries:

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

- 635 unallocated non-treaty
- 4,030 fish for the recreational fishery downstream of Bonneville Dam
- 576 fish for the recreational fishery from Bonneville Dam to the OR/WA state line
- 407 fish for recreational fisheries in the lower Snake River (Washington waters)
- 18 fish for Wanapum tribe (Upper Columbia)
- 288 unallocated recreational
- ≤ 392 fish for Select Area commercial fisheries
- The 2025 fishery structure approach 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)

- The *U.S. v. OR Sturgeon Management Task Force*, a joint state/tribal body, met on January 22, 2025 and recommended increasing the harvest guidelines for 2025–2027 in Bonneville Pool (2,500 fish total guideline: 1,250 for treaty commercial fisheries and 1,250 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	1,250	1,250	2,500
The Dalles	275	825	1,100
John Day	105	210	315

2025 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 feedback on the spring-season fisheries on February 10, 2025.

<i>Recommendations: 2025 Mainstem Columbia River Spring Chinook Recreational Fishery</i>		
Downstream of Bonneville Dam		
Season:	Saturday March 1 through Sunday April 6	37 retention days
Area:	Buoy 10 line upstream to Beacon Rock plus only the Oregon and Washington banks 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.	
Daily Bag Limit:	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.	
Bonneville Dam to Oregon/Washington Border		
Season:	Tuesday April 1 through Saturday April 26	26 retention days
Area:	Tower Island power lines (approximately six miles below The Dalles Dam) upstream to Oregon/Washington border, plus only the Oregon and Washington banks from Bonneville Dam upstream to the Tower Island power lines.	
Daily Bag Limit:	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 5,203 adult Chinook kept (3,961 upriver Chinook mortalities) for the fishery downstream of Bonneville Dam (98% of the pre-update guideline)

for this fishery) and 549 adult Chinook kept (563 mortalities, all upriver Chinook) for the fishery upstream of Bonneville Dam (98% 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 estimate the recommended fisheries will accrue 0.37% ESA impacts to upriver spring Chinook for the LCR and 0.06% 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 2025 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 regulations will be in effect for the Washington bank fishery 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.
- While a key management goal is minimizing in-season emergency actions, due to the dynamic nature of fisheries, these actions may become necessary to remain within the ESA limits and catch balancing requirements.
- Staff will monitor fisheries in-season. If the fisheries are tracking within preseason expectations, they will remain open until the scheduled end dates. After the initial fishery closure, staff will review catch data and determine if additional fishing opportunity is feasible prior to an in-season assessment of upriver Chinook abundance.
- Once the preseason buffer is removed following an initial run size update, staff will determine what, if any, additional fishing opportunities may occur.

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 2025 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.

Recommendation: 2025 Select Area Recreational Fisheries

Effective March 1 – June 15:

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.

On days when the mainstem Columbia River recreational fishery below Bonneville Dam is closed to Chinook retention, the permanent salmonid bag limit regulations for Select Areas apply.

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 reservoirs are managed to the pool-specific guidelines.
- At a Joint State Hearing on November 8, 2024, the states modified the Bonneville and The Dalles pool fisheries for 2025 by adopting a limited two days-per-week retention fishery. John Day Pool retention fisheries opened under permanent rules on January 1, 2025.
- On January 2, 2025, the states took action to close Bonneville Pool and The Dalles Pool to sturgeon retention prior to the next scheduled open day.
- During the February 10 Compact/Joint State Hearing, the states took a precautionary approach and opened only one additional retention day (Saturday, February 15, 2025) in The Dalles Pool given there was a balance of 134 fish.
- Current recreational sturgeon guidelines and harvest estimates for 2025 Zone 6 recreational fisheries are summarized below (as of February 17, 2025):

Pool	Angler Trips	Harvest	Recreational Guideline	Percent of Guideline
Bonneville	2,010	1,365	1,250	109%
The Dalles	621	164	275	60%
John Day	2,222	36	105	34%

- Both catch rates (65% lower) and effort (52% lower) observed on February 15 were lower relative to what occurred on January 1, 2025 in The Dalles Pool. As a result, an estimated 23 fish were harvested on that day, which was lower than expected.
- Therefore, given 111 fish remain available for harvest, staff recommend additional retention days for this recreational sturgeon fishery.

<i>Recommendation - 2025 The Dalles Pool Recreational Sturgeon Fishery</i>	
Season:	Saturday, February 22 and Thursday, February 27 2 days
Area:	Mainstem Columbia River from The Dalles Dam to John Day Dam, and all adjacent tributaries
Allowable Catch:	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 (applicable to any/all sturgeon retention fisheries)

- With this recommendation, the expected catch in The Dalles Pool through February 27 is projected to total 250 fish (91% of the guideline).
- Given John Day Pool has additional fish remaining on its guideline, this fishery can remain open as scheduled. Staff will continue to monitor harvest closely and will recommend management action when needed.
- Green sturgeon are not present upstream of Bonneville Dam and therefore are not expected to be handled during these fisheries.
- 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 downstream of the dam tailraces. Daily and annual sturgeon bag limits apply to all fisheries statewide.

FUTURE MEETINGS

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