

**OREGON AND WASHINGTON DEPARTMENTS OF FISH AND WILDLIFE**  
**JOINT STAFF REPORT - WINTER FACT SHEET NO. 8a**  
**Columbia River Compact/Joint State Hearing**  
**March 11, 2025**

<i><b>Fisheries under consideration:</b></i> John Day Pool recreational white sturgeon Non-treaty mainstem commercial smelt
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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 relevant to these fisheries is the 2025 Sturgeon/Smelt Report (January 7, 2025); Joint Staff Reports are available at:*

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

### **RIVER CONDITIONS**

- Through March 10, the recent five-day average outflow at Bonneville Dam is 143.1 kcfs compared to a five-year average of 142.8 kcfs. The five-day average water temperature at Bonneville Dam is 41°F compared to a five-year average of 40°F. Five-day average visibility is 5 feet compared to a five-year average of 6.3 feet.

### **STOCK STATUS**

#### ***White Sturgeon***

- White sturgeon stock status for populations upstream of Bonneville Dam was presented in Winter Fact Sheet #1, dated November 8, 2024.

#### ***Columbia River Smelt (Eulachon)***

- Columbia River smelt (Eulachon) stock status was presented in Winter Fact Sheet #3b, dated January 16, 2025.

### **MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES**

#### ***White Sturgeon***

- Management guidelines for sturgeon fisheries upstream of Bonneville Dam were presented in Winter Fact Sheet #1 and updated in Winter Fact Sheet #6.

#### ***Columbia River Smelt (Eulachon)***

- Smelt management guidelines were presented in Winter Fact Sheet #3b, dated January 16, 2025.

### **2025 NON-TREATY FISHERIES**

#### ***Zone 6 Recreational White Sturgeon Fisheries***

- 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 harvest guidelines.

- At a Joint State Hearing on November 8, 2024 the states modified the Bonneville and The Dalles pools’ fisheries for 2025 by adopting a limited 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.
- During the February 10 and February 19, 2025 Compact/Joint State Hearings, the states opened three additional retention days (February 15, February 22, and February 27) in The Dalles Pool.
- Current recreational sturgeon guidelines and harvest estimates for 2025 Zone 6 recreational fisheries are summarized below (as of March 11):

Pool	Angler Trips	Harvest	Recreational Guideline	Percent of Guideline
Bonneville	2,010	1,365	1,250	109%
The Dalles	1,129	260	275	95%
John Day	3,421	83	105	79%

- Projections indicate that the John Day Pool harvest guideline will be reached soon if action is not taken to close retention. Staff recommend the following closure to stay within the harvest guidelines.

***Recommendation: 2025 John Day Pool Recreational Sturgeon Fishery***

Effective 11:59 PM Thursday, March 13 the retention of sturgeon is prohibited in the mainstem Columbia River from John Day Dam upstream to McNary Dam (John Day Pool) and all adjacent tributaries.

- The projected kept catch in John Day Pool through Thursday, March 13 is 95 fish (90% of the guideline).
- 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. Daily and annual sturgeon bag limits apply to all fisheries statewide.

***Columbia River Commercial Smelt Fishery***

- The pre-season framework provided by the Washington and Oregon Eulachon Management Plan 2<sup>nd</sup> [Edition](#) (WOEMP), which considers recent trends and abundances of run sizes as well as expectations for the upcoming run, placed state-managed fisheries within Harvest Phase 2, with a 2% harvest rate.
- At the Compact Hearing on January 16, 2025, the states adopted commercial smelt fishing periods, running three days per week (Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays), starting Monday, January 20 and ending Thursday, March 13.
- There were no landings through March 3. Given average daily landings were less than 50 pounds through February 25, this resulted in a downgrade into Harvest Phase 1, which entails

a 1% harvest rate for all state-managed fisheries. On March 5, landings averaged 760 pounds per delivery, upgrading state-managed fisheries back into Harvest Phase 2. To date, 6,244 pounds have been harvested in the mainstem Columbia River commercial smelt fishery.

- Since landings have averaged 1,000 pounds per day over three periods between March 5 and March 10, state-managed fisheries have been further upgraded into Harvest Phase 3, which entails a 5% harvest rate.
- Due to the later timing of smelt in the mainstem Columbia River this year and the need for continued run monitoring data, staff is recommending an extension to the commercial fishery that is consistent with the extension adopted in 2024.

<b><i>Recommendation: 2025 Mainstem Commercial Smelt Fishery</i></b>	
<b>Season:</b>	Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays (5 AM to 5 PM) March 17 through March 27 (6 periods)
<b>Area:</b>	Zones 1-3
<b>Gear:</b>	Gillnet only. Mesh size may not exceed two inches stretch measure. Nets may not exceed 1,500 feet in length along the cork line.
<b>Allowable Sales:</b>	Smelt
<b>Misc. Regulations:</b>	Multiple net rule in effect. Nets not specifically authorized for use in this fishery may be onboard the vessel if properly stored. A properly stored net is defined as a net on a drum that is fully covered by a tarp (canvas or plastic) and bound with a minimum of ten revolutions of rope with a diameter of 3/8 (0.375) inches or greater.  24-hour quick reporting required for Washington buyers, pursuant to WAC 220-352-315.  Oregon buyers are required to electronically submit fish receiving tickets pursuant to OAR 635-006-0210. Electronic fish tickets must be submitted within 24 hours of closure of the fishing period, or within 24 hours of landing for fishing periods lasting more than 24 hours.

- The extension would maintain the conservative approach used to stay within harvest limits prescribed in the WOEMP and would continue to provide smelt for the markets. This extension would provide additional biological and run-strength data that is helpful in informing tributary recreational fishery management decisions.

***Tributary Recreational Smelt Fisheries***

- Recent commercial landings indicate the run is large enough to support recreational harvest, therefore Washington has scheduled recreational fisheries on March 12 and March 15 in the lower Cowlitz River.
- Currently, there are no recreational smelt fisheries scheduled in the Sandy River. If smelt return in adequate abundance this year, Oregon will evaluate the potential for recreational fisheries at that time.

## **FUTURE MEETINGS**

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