



## Joint State Accord on 2011-2013 Columbia River Sturgeon Fishery Management



The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) agree on the following management measures for sturgeon fisheries in the Columbia River and in Washington and Oregon waters where Columbia River origin fish may be found. These fishery regulations shall be in effect in Oregon and Washington boundary waters upstream from McNary Dam, in the lower Columbia River and its tributaries, in Puget Sound and its tributaries, in marine areas, and in coastal basins. Sturgeon fisheries between Bonneville and McNary dams will be managed under agreements negotiated by *U.S. v Oregon* parties.

### MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

- Provide regulatory protection to safeguard the spawning-size segment of the population and ensure adequate recruitment of this segment in subsequent years.
- Regulate the combined recreational and commercial harvest rate for the legal-size segment of the population to increase abundance of all age classes.
- Maintain concurrent Washington and Oregon regulations in the Columbia River.
- Maintain viable and diverse recreational and commercial fishing opportunities.
- Manage the harvest of sturgeon in fisheries outside the mainstem lower Columbia River consistent with lower Columbia River sturgeon conservation and management needs.
- Limit incidental impacts of fisheries directed at white sturgeon on other species needing conservation protection.

### HARVEST MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

#### Harvest Guideline Downstream from Bonneville Dam

- The harvest guideline for white sturgeon fisheries in 2011-2013 will be a maximum of 17,000 legal-sized individuals or a 22.5% harvest rate on the legal-size segment of the population, whichever is less. This number is based on current stock assessments and is intended to provide population growth.
- A harvest guideline will be set annually to meet conservation objectives. It will be based on the most current biological information and stock status assessments and will reflect any changes in regulations (e.g. slot-limit). The guideline will not increase above these maximums while this accord is in effect. Also, unlike in previous accords, fish not harvested in a given year will not be added to the guidelines in subsequent years.

#### Fishery Allocation Downstream from Bonneville Dam

- The harvestable number of white sturgeon in the Columbia River downstream from Bonneville Dam will be allocated 80% to recreational fisheries and 20% to commercial fisheries in 2011. In each year, fish not harvested in recreational fisheries will not be allocated to the commercial fishery or vice versa.
- The recreational fisheries share used to plan retention seasons downstream from Bonneville Dam will be managed to annually provide 60% of the harvest to the area downstream of the Wauna power line and 40% of the harvest to the area upstream. The harvest share between recreational fisheries upstream and downstream from the Wauna power line will be flexible and may be adjusted in-season to meet pre-

season expectations for retention seasons. In-season adjustments to the retention seasons will be based on assessments of effort levels, fishing conditions and catch rates, as described under the “Recreational Fishery Regulations” section below.

- The harvest guideline used to plan retention seasons for the recreational fishery downstream from the Wauna power line will be no more than 6,800 fish. This guideline is calculated by adjusting the share for this fishery (8,160) to account for the differences in the minimum size (41-inch fork length). As described above, in-season adjustments to the guideline may be made if fishery performance differs from pre-season expectations.
- The harvest guideline used to plan retention seasons for recreational fisheries upstream from the Wauna power line will be no more than 5,440 fish. The Columbia River share of the guideline will be 3,410 fish and the Willamette River share of the guideline will be 2,030 fish. The Willamette will be managed under a separate harvest cap of 2,550 fish, which includes a baseline level of 520 fish. As described above, in-season adjustments to the guideline may be made if fishery performance differs from pre-season expectations.
- The harvest guideline for the Columbia River commercial fishery will be no more than 3,400 fish.
- The shares of harvestable fish assigned to each fishery, as described above, are in effect for 2011, during which they will be reviewed in a public process and may be modified for 2012 and 2013.

Fishery	Maximum Harvest Guideline Used to Plan Retention Seasons
Recreational fishery downstream from Wauna (8,160 adjusted to account for difference in minimum size)	6,800
Recreational fishery upstream from Wauna	3,410
Willamette River recreational fishery (includes 520 baseline level)	2,550
Commercial fishery	3,400
Total harvest guideline (17,000 adjusted to account for difference in minimum size in the recreational fishery downstream from Wauna and to include 520 Willamette baseline level)	16,160

### Recreational Fishery Objectives

- Minimize emergency in-season action.
- Manage catches between the fisheries upstream and downstream from the Wauna power line to meet pre-season expectations for retention seasons and provide a diverse array of sturgeon fishing opportunity.
- Maintain fishery monitoring and management capabilities.
- Reduce fishing-related mortality of sturgeon in the spawning-size segment of the population.

### Recreational Fishery Regulations

These regulations are in effect for 2011, during which they will be reviewed in a public process and may be modified for 2012 and 2013.

- Size limit: 38 inches-54 inches fork length. More restrictive size limits may be used to manage within specific areas (e.g. the size limit for the fishery downstream from the Wauna power line after April 30 is 41-54 inches fork length).
- Catch limits: 1 per day and 5 per year. More restrictive annual catch limits may be used to decrease catch rates and extend retention opportunity. Catch and release fishing is allowed after retention of the daily or annual catch limit, except in the sturgeon spawning sanctuary on the Columbia River

downstream from Bonneville Dam and in the sturgeon spawning sanctuary on the Willamette River downstream from Willamette Falls, where no fishing is allowed from May 1 through August 31.

- Hook requirement: One single-point barbless hook.
- Retention Seasons: Modify as necessary so that harvest is no greater than the prescribed recreational fisheries guideline. Different season structures may be used for areas upstream and downstream from the Wauna power line, and in the lower Willamette River, to accomplish specific fishery objectives. If harvest guidelines have not been met, retention seasons may be extended beyond those initially set in Joint State Hearings if the level of fishing effort, catch rates, fishing conditions (river conditions and weather) or other relevant factors haven't met expectations.
- Miscellaneous regulations: Maintain the miscellaneous regulations as described for sturgeon recreational fisheries in Oregon and Washington regulation pamphlets.
- Spawning Sanctuaries: Close the Columbia River from the upper end of Skamania Island upstream to Bonneville Dam, and the Willamette River from the I-205 Bridge upstream to Willamette Falls to angling for sturgeon from May 1 through August 31 to protect sturgeon in the spawning-size segment of the population.
- Incidental Handle of Sturgeon in the Spawning-Size Segment of the Population: Minimize the handle of sturgeon in the spawning-size segment of the population during times and/or in areas associated with spawning. Because incidental handle outside these sanctuaries may still occur, fishers who encounter sturgeon in the spawning-size segment of the population will be encouraged, and in certain cases required, to implement the following precautions to reduce impacts on this segment of the population:
  - Minimize handling time by using proper gear and techniques to land fish quickly. The intent is to limit handling stress which may improve reproductive success and reduce mortality. The states will post these protocols and the purpose of these measures on informational signs at boat launches used by participants in fisheries that have a higher encounter rate of sturgeon in the spawning-size segment of the population.
  - Do not remove the fish totally or in part from the water (OR and WA regulation).
- Recreational fishery from McNary Dam upstream to the Oregon-Washington border: Allow retention from February 1 through July 31 annually, with a 43-54-inch fork-length size limit in effect.

### **Commercial Fishery Objectives**

- Optimize economic value.
- Spread harvest opportunity throughout the year.
- Maintain fishery monitoring and management capabilities.
- Minimize handling time and stress of sturgeon in the spawning-size segment of the population.

### **Commercial Fishery Regulations**

These regulations are in effect for 2011, during which they will be reviewed in a public process and may be modified for 2012 and 2013.

- Size limit: 43 inches-54 inches fork length.
- Landing limits: Landing limits per vessel per fishing period may be implemented as necessary to spread harvest opportunity and optimize economic value.
- Seasons: Allow sturgeon fishing outside salmon fishing seasons as necessary to optimize economic benefit, consistent with conservation objectives for white sturgeon and other species. Allocate the commercial share of white sturgeon among seasons annually in coordination with the Columbia River Commercial Fishery Advisory Group.
- Miscellaneous regulations: Maintain the miscellaneous regulations in effect for the commercial harvest of sturgeon since 1996.

## FISHERY AND POPULATION MONITORING MEASURES

The following programs are a high priority within the two agencies and will be continued.

- Statistical creel survey of the Columbia River recreational fishery.
- Statistical creel survey of the Willamette recreational fishery (expanded as needed to cover months not previously sampled).
- Sampling of the Columbia River commercial fishery (including daily catch estimates).
- Tagging to estimate abundance and/or size distribution of the white sturgeon population.
- Summer setline sampling from the estuary upstream to Bonneville Dam.
- Young-of-the-year surveys.
- Carcass surveys and autopsies downstream from Bonneville Dam.
- Monitoring of marine mammal predation (incidental to other field activities).
- Monitoring of the spawning-size segment of the population, including continuation of efforts to assess and quantify impacts of commercial and recreational fisheries on abundance.

## MANAGEMENT OF FISHERIES OUTSIDE THE COLUMBIA RIVER

Harvest of white sturgeon in fisheries outside the mainstem Columbia and Willamette rivers will be managed consistent with lower Columbia River sturgeon conservation and management needs. Management actions include:

- Update management plans for Willapa Bay and Grays Harbor consistent with stock status reviews and population updates.
- Track recreational fisheries harvest in tributaries to the lower Columbia River, Oregon and Washington coastal estuaries and Puget Sound and its tributaries, using estimates generated from Washington catch record cards and Oregon harvest tags.
- Evaluate, and modify as needed, recreational fishery regulations in tributaries to the lower Columbia River, Oregon and Washington coastal estuaries, and Puget Sound and its tributaries.

## GREEN STURGEON

Retention of green sturgeon is prohibited in Washington and Oregon recreational and commercial fisheries as a conservation measure consistent with the 2006 listing of the Southern Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of green sturgeon as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Washington and Oregon will:

- Continue to work with regional co-managers and NOAA Fisheries to review stock status and management of green sturgeon consistent with the ESA listing.
- Continue research and monitoring efforts designed to estimate abundance, distribution, and habitat use of green sturgeon aggregations in Washington and Oregon coastal estuaries.



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Date



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2/28/11

Date