

WINTER FACT SHEET NO. 1
Columbia River Compact
Joint State Sport Hearing
December 14, 2006

Fisheries under Consideration: Non-Indian commercial sturgeon and smelt
Recreational sturgeon and smelt

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Salmon

- The "2005-2007 Interim Management Agreement for Upriver Chinook, Sockeye, Steelhead, Coho and White Sturgeon" provides species specific harvest frameworks and harvest rates for Non-Indian and Treaty Indian fisheries management.
- The TAC submitted a Biological Assessment to National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) describing proposed fisheries consistent with the "2005-2007 Interim Management Agreement for Upriver Chinook, Sockeye, Steelhead, Coho and White Sturgeon". NMFS issued a no jeopardy Biological Opinion on May 9, 2005.
- Impacts to listed species from fisheries proposed in this Fact Sheet are expected to be minimal.

Sturgeon

- A Joint State Agreement has been in effect and renewed every three years since 1997 with adjustments as necessary to protect sturgeon populations while maintaining harvest opportunity. The current three-year agreement is in effect through 2008.

Major Tenets of 2006-2008 Sturgeon Fishery Management

- | | |
|---|--|
| ✓ | An annual harvestable number of 40,000 white sturgeon unless new information warrants a change. |
| ✓ | The harvestable number is to be allocated 80% (32,000 fish) recreational and 20% (8,000 fish) commercial. |
| ✓ | Allocate 60% of the recreational harvest to the area downstream of the Wauna powerlines and 40% to the area upstream. |
| ✓ | Recreational size limit is 42-60 inches with catch limits of one fish per day and five fish per year. |
| ✓ | Commercial target seasons are allowed, as necessary, to access allocation and maximize economic benefit consistent with conservation objectives for other species. |
| ✓ | Provide regulatory protection to safeguard the broodstock population. |

- The Joint State Agreement also addresses green sturgeon retention regulations; however, following the ESA listing of the Southern Distinct Population Segment as threatened, retention of green sturgeon in Columbia River commercial fisheries was prohibited effective July 7, 2006.

- The states are also pursuing permanent rules prohibiting retention of green sturgeon in Columbia River recreational fisheries.

Recreational Fishery

- The following management approach for 2007 has been in place since 2004, is consistent with Commission guidance for 2006-2008, and represents previous input from the Columbia River Recreational Fishery Advisor Group.

<i>Management Approach for White Sturgeon Recreational Fisheries During 2007</i>	
✓	Provide for flexibility by managing for a 1,000 fish buffer for the below Wauna (estuary) fishery and an 800 fish buffer for the above Wauna fishery.
✓	The estuary fishery will be managed with a 45-inch minimum size limit instead of the 42-inch minimum during the spring/summer (May-July) retention season. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The estuary guideline of 19,200 fish from 42-60 inches translates into 16,000 fish from 45-60 inches. • The management target is 15,000 fish. • The spring/summer season is expected to begin the second Saturday in May and continue through July 4 or until the harvest guideline is achieved. Catch-and-release fishing will be allowed during non-retention periods.
✓	The above Wauna fishery will be managed for retention on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays from January through July and from October through December with no retention during August-September. Catch-and-release fishing will be allowed during non-retention periods.

- The Columbia River Recreational Advisory Group is scheduled to meet on January 18, 2007 to discuss sturgeon issues, including recommendations for accessing uncaught fish remaining from the 2006 above Wauna harvest guideline.

Commercial Fishery

- Staff met with the Columbia River Commercial Advisory Group on December 6, 2006 and developed season allocations for 2007 commercial fisheries as follows:

<i>Protocol For Management of White Sturgeon Retention in Commercial Fisheries During 2007</i>	
✓	Fisheries should be managed for white sturgeon catch expectations of 1,800 for the winter-spring timeframe (January-June 15) with 1,600 for winter sturgeon and 200 for winter salmon, 500 for the summer timeframe (June 16-July 31), 2,000 for the early fall timeframe (August) with rollover of any remaining allocation from winter-summer fisheries to also be utilized in August, and 3,150 for the late fall timeframe (September-October).
✓	Manage for a commercial harvest of 7,850 white sturgeon to account for harvest exceeding the guideline in 2006.
✓	Landings during SAFE fisheries are not to exceed 400 white sturgeon for the entire year with winter/spring/summer fisheries not to exceed 300.
✓	Allow some level of incidental white sturgeon harvest to occur during all target salmon seasons.
✓	Conduct limited target white sturgeon fisheries during winter timeframe if feasible.
✓	Conduct target white sturgeon fisheries during October if necessary to access commercial allocation.
✓	Adopt white sturgeon possession and landing limits if necessary to remain within season-specific catch expectations or to provide white sturgeon for harvest during subsequent salmon seasons.
✓	Joint Staff will conduct an annual post-season evaluation of white sturgeon with industry.

Smelt

- A Joint State Eulachon Management Plan has been in effect since 2001 that provides for three levels of fishing based on:
 - 1) parental run strength,
 - 2) juvenile production, and
 - 3) estimates of ocean productivity.

<i>Recommended Fisheries Contained in the Joint State Eulachon Management Plan</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fishery recommendations apply to the January - March timeframe, otherwise permanent regulations remain in effect.
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Level One</u></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Great uncertainty in run strength or indications of a poor return.✓ Commercial fisheries are limited to one 12-24 hour fishing period per week for the Columbia and Cowlitz rivers.✓ Tributary sport fisheries would also consist of one 12-24 hour fishing period per week in the Cowlitz River.
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Level Two</u></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Promising abundance in the spawning return and productivity indices that are favorable, yet it is still uncertain whether the run is moderate or strong.✓ Commercial fisheries would consist of two or three days per week in the Columbia and Cowlitz rivers.✓ Tributary sport fisheries could be increased to two or three days per week.✓ Consider expansion of sport and commercial fisheries into other lower Columbia River tributaries.
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Level Three</u></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Very positive indicators of strong abundance and productivity.✓ Commercial fisheries would consist of up to four days per week in the Columbia River and all lower Columbia River tributaries.✓ Tributary sport fisheries should be opened in all tributaries for four to seven days per week.

STOCK STATUS

White Sturgeon

- The lower Columbia River white sturgeon population is healthy.
- Indicators for sublegal (<42") and oversize (>60") abundance remain relatively stable.
- Abundance of legal-size (42"-60") white sturgeon has increased with the last two estimates (2003 and 2005). An abundance estimate for 2004 was not developed due to data collection and modeling concerns.
- Predation by sea lions is a new risk that may jeopardize the health of the lower Columbia River white sturgeon population.
- Since 2005 the states have documented predation on white sturgeon and participated in sea lion hazing operations near Bonneville Dam.
- Beginning in 2007, the states intend to implement limited hazing of sea lions directed at reducing predation on adult white sturgeon below Bonneville Dam.

<i>Estimated Abundance of Harvestable White Sturgeon in the Lower Columbia River, 1987-2005¹.</i>			
Year	Total Length Interval (inches)		
	42-48	48-60	42-60
1987	75,900	28,100	104,000
1988	34,400	33,700	68,100
1989	31,900	16,800	48,700
1990	25,800	12,000	37,800
1991	32,500	11,700	44,200
1992	70,400	8,700	79,100
1993	115,500	14,200	129,700
1994	N/A	N/A	N/A
1995	143,200	59,000	202,200
1996	137,100	33,500	170,600
1997	146,600	27,700	174,300
1998	116,800	23,900	140,700
1999	116,800	17,700	134,500
2000	117,300	17,400	134,700
2001	102,200	25,300	127,500
2002	87,400	34,200	121,600
2003	89,000	46,300	135,300
2004 ²	N/A	N/A	N/A
2005 ³	100,700	38,300	139,000

1. Historical abundance estimates were reevaluated in 2005 for consistency in methodology and differ from estimates previously reported in Joint Staff Reports and Fact Sheets.
2. Abundance estimates for 2004 were not developed due to data collection and modeling concerns.
3. Preliminary data.

Smelt

- Positive abundance indicators for 2007 include:
 - ✓ Moderate to strong adult eulachon returns during 2002-2003.
 - ✓ Modest mainstem Columbia River larval densities during the winters of 2002-2003 that equate to Age 5 and Age 4 returns to the Columbia River in 2007.
 - ✓ A moderately high level of Age 1 smelt bycatch in Canadian ocean shrimp fisheries in 2003 that may equate to Age 5 returns to the Columbia River in 2007.
 - ✓ Moderate levels of Age 2 smelt bycatch in 2004-2005 Canadian ocean shrimp fisheries that may equate to Age 5 and Age 4 returns to the Columbia River in 2007.
- Negative abundance indices for 2007 include:
 - ✓ Similar preseason abundance indices resulted in a small return to the Columbia River in 2006.
 - ✓ Low mainstem Columbia River smelt larvae densities during the winter of 2004 that equate to Age 3 returns in 2007.
 - ✓ Ocean climate indices suggest ocean productivity switched to conditions unfavorable for out-migrating smelt survival within the past five years.
 - ✓ Indices of age 1+ and age 2+ smelt off the west coast of Vancouver Island have declined significantly since 2002.
 - ✓ Low levels of Age 1 smelt bycatch in 2005 and Age 2 smelt bycatch in 2006 Canadian ocean shrimp fisheries that may equate to Age 3 returns to the Columbia River in 2007.

FISHERIES REVIEW

2006 Winter Commercial Sturgeon Fishery

- The winter sturgeon gillnet fishery initially consisted of seven 24-hour weekly fishing periods (6 PM Tuesday through 6 PM Wednesday) during January 10 through February 22. A harvest expectation of 1,600 white sturgeon was allocated to the winter timeframe. Catch was significantly below expectations and three additional 12-hour periods (6 PM Thursday-6 AM Friday) were adopted for February 2-3, February 9-10, and February 16-17.
- The winter sturgeon fishery landed 288 white sturgeon and zero green sturgeon. A total of 39 adipose fin-clipped spring Chinook were also landed.

2006 Recreational Sturgeon Fishery

- Since 2003, the Joint State Agreements call for lower Columbia River recreational fisheries to be managed for a total catch of 32,000 white sturgeon annually.
- Beginning in 2004, the annual harvest guideline was reduced to 28,800 white sturgeon (12,800 above Wauna and 16,000 below Wauna) to account for the change to a 45-inch minimum size limit for the below Wauna fishery.
- The 2006 recreational fishery was managed for a total harvest of 12,000 (not to exceed 12,800) white sturgeon above Wauna and 15,000 (not to exceed 16,000) white sturgeon below Wauna.
- Catch below Wauna during 2006 equaled preseason expectations and the season closed to retention July 5 as planned.
- The 2006 fishery above Wauna is ongoing with participation and catch rates below preseason expectations.
- An estimated 15,726 white sturgeon were harvested from the estuary during 2006.
- An estimated 8,327 white sturgeon have been harvested from the Columbia River above Wauna through November 2006 with a projected year-end estimate of about 8,600 white sturgeon, leaving approximately 4,200 fish remaining on the guideline to be carried into 2007-2008 recreational fisheries for this area.

<i>2006 Lower Columbia River Sturgeon Recreational Fisheries</i>		
<u>Area</u>	<u>Planned Season Structure</u>	<u>Final Season Structure</u>
<u>Above Wauna</u>		
➤ Sturgeon retention allowed Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays only.	January 1-July 31	As proposed
➤ Sturgeon retention not allowed.	August 1-September 30	As proposed
➤ Sturgeon retention allowed Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays only.	October 1-December 31	As proposed
<u>Below Wauna</u>		
➤ Sturgeon retention allowed seven days per week, 42-inch minimum size limit.	January 1-April 30	As proposed
➤ Sturgeon retention not allowed.	May 1- May 12	As proposed
➤ Sturgeon retention allowed seven days per week, 45-inch minimum size limit.	May 13-July 4	As proposed
➤ Sturgeon retention not allowed.	July 5-December 31	As proposed

<i>2006 Lower Columbia River White Sturgeon Harvest in Recreational Fisheries</i>	
Area	
<u>LCR</u>	
Management target	27,000
Management buffer	<u>1,800</u>
Guideline	28,800
Harvest (projected for 2006)	<u>24,476</u>
No. remaining from guideline	+ 4,324
<u>Below Wauna</u>	
Management target	15,000
Management buffer	<u>+1,000</u>
Guideline	16,000
Harvest (preliminary)	<u>-15,726</u>
No. remaining from guideline	+ 274
<u>Above Wauna</u>	
Management target	12,000
Management buffer	<u>+800</u>
Guideline	12,800
Harvest (projected for 2006)	<u>-8,600</u>
No. remaining from guideline	+ 4,200

The Oversize Catch and Release Fishery

- A catch and release boat fishery targeting oversize white sturgeon in the Columbia River gorge (primarily upstream of Skamania Island) developed in the 1990’s.
- Boat angling effort during May-July increased dramatically beginning in 1992, peaking at 13,800 angler trips in 2001 and averaged 10,350 trips from 2004-2006.
- Handle of oversize white sturgeon in the May-July boat fishery steadily increased from 1,700 fish in 1992 to 5,300 fish in 2000, and has since declined; averaging 1,700 fish from 2004-2006.
- Handle per trip (CPUE) declined substantially in 2004 but has increased slightly since then.
- Management actions adopted to dampen the possible impact of this fishery on the broodstock population have primarily consisted of time and area closures to establish a spawning ground sanctuary for oversize white sturgeon.

<i>Management Actions Taken Concerning White Sturgeon Spawning Sanctuary</i>	
Year	Action Taken
1992	The area between Beacon Rock and Bonneville Dam was closed to angling for sturgeon from a boat during April 16, 1992 through April 15, 1993 (WDFW only).
1996	The area between Beacon Rock and Bonneville Dam was closed to angling for sturgeon from a boat during May and June (Joint State Action).
2000	The boat angling closure was extended to include May through July 15 (Joint State Action).
2004	The angling closure was extended through July 31 and modified to include both bank and boat anglers (Joint State Action).
2006	The angling closure boundary was extended an additional 1.6 miles further downstream to Navigation Marker 85 (Joint State Action) effective May 1.

2006 Columbia River Commercial Smelt Fishery

- 2006 smelt fisheries were managed at a conservative Level One in accordance with the Joint State Eulachon Management Plan. The Compact adopted a season consisting of two 9-hour weekly fishing periods (7 AM to 4 PM every Monday and Thursday) from January 1 through March 31.
- Commercial landings totaled 13,099 pounds in the mainstem Columbia River.

December 2006 Columbia River Commercial Smelt Fishery

- As per permanent regulations, the commercial fishery in the mainstem Columbia River is open seven days per week during December. Oregon allows recreational fisheries in the mainstem Columbia River and Oregon tributaries seven days per week the entire year.
- To date, only small numbers of smelt have been landed.
- During the first 13 days in December water temperature in the upper Columbia River estuary has dropped from 46°F to 44°F and average daily flow at Bonneville Dam has ranged between 135-175 kcfs.
- Water temperatures to date are normal for December and favorable for smelt migration.

FISHERY PROPOSALS

2007 Winter Commercial Sturgeon Season

<i>Joint Staff Recommendation</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Joint Staff recommends adoption of the following 2007 winter commercial white sturgeon fishing periods in the mainstem Columbia River:		
Season:	6 PM Tuesday January 9 – 6 PM Wednesday January 10	(24 hours)
	6 PM Tuesday January 16 – 6 PM Wednesday January 17	(24 hours)
	6 PM Tuesday January 23 – 6 PM Wednesday January 24	(24 hours)
	6 PM Tuesday January 30 – 6 PM Wednesday January 31	(24 hours)
	6 PM Tuesday February 6 – 6 PM Wednesday February 7	(24 hours)
	6 PM Tuesday February 13 – 6 PM Wednesday February 14	(24 hours)
	6 PM Tuesday February 20 – 6 PM Wednesday February 21	(24 hours)
Area:	Zones 1 - 5.	
Gear:	9" minimum and 9 ¾" maximum mesh size restrictions.	
Allowable Sales:	White sturgeon and adipose fin-clipped salmon.	
Sanctuaries:	Sandy River sanctuary.	
Miscellaneous:	Quick Reporting Rule in effect for Washington buyers.	

- This proposal was recommended by the Columbia River Commercial Advisory Group at the December 6, 2006 meeting.
- Additional winter season white sturgeon fishing periods will be considered at the January 25, 2007 Compact consistent with recommendations of the Columbia River Commercial Advisory Group.
- The winter sturgeon fishery should be managed for a catch of 1,600 white sturgeon and the winter salmon fishery should be managed for 200 white sturgeon. As recommended by the Columbia River Commercial Advisor Group, any unharvested fish remaining from either of these two fisheries will be added to the August allocation.
- The proposed season allows access to a portion of the commercial white sturgeon catch guideline while maintaining harvest opportunity throughout 2007.
- Staff will monitor weekly landings and will consider season adjustments at future Compact hearings if necessary, including weekly landing limits or additional fishing days per week to optimize harvest while remaining within the season-specific guidelines.
- Harvest and release mortalities of any ESA-listed salmonids are expected to be minor and will remain well within the guidelines set forth in the Biological Opinion.

2007 Recreational Sturgeon Seasons

<i>Sturgeon Recreational Fishery Recommendation for Below Wauna</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Joint Staff recommends the following recreational white sturgeon fishery in the lower Columbia River below Wauna.	
Area:	Mainstem Columbia River from the Wauna powerlines downstream to the mouth at Buoy 10, including Youngs Bay, and all adjacent Washington tributaries.
Seasons:	<u>January 1-April 30</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- White sturgeon retention allowed seven days per week. <u>May 1-May 11</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Sturgeon retention not allowed. <u>May 12-July 4</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- White sturgeon retention allowed seven days per week. <u>July 5-December 31</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Sturgeon retention not allowed.
Other restrictions:	42-inch minimum size limit Jan 1 through April 30 45-inch minimum size limit May 12 through July 4 As per permanent regulations. Retention of green sturgeon prohibited effective January 1, 2007.
Expected catch:	15,000 white sturgeon kept.

<i>Sturgeon Recreational Fishery Recommendation for Above Wauna</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Joint Staff recommends the following recreational white sturgeon fishery in the lower Columbia River above Wauna.	
Area:	Mainstem Columbia River from the Wauna powerlines upstream to Bonneville Dam, all adjacent Washington tributaries, and the lower Willamette River upstream to Willamette Falls, including Multnomah Channel.
Seasons:	<u>January 1-July 31</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- White sturgeon retention allowed Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays only. <u>August 1-September 30</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Sturgeon retention not allowed. <u>October 1-December 31</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- White sturgeon retention allowed Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays only.
Other restrictions:	As per permanent regulations. Retention of green sturgeon prohibited effective January 1, 2007.
Expected catch:	12,000 white sturgeon kept.

- These proposals are consistent with Commission guidance for 2006-2008 fisheries.
- Recreational white sturgeon harvest in the estuary will be monitored weekly during June to ensure that harvest does not exceed the guideline.
- The Columbia River Recreational Advisor Group is scheduled to meet on January 18, 2007 to review 2006 fisheries.

- Staff will consult with the group on how best to utilize the anticipated excess fish remaining on the above Wauna guideline in 2006.
- Modifications to the above Wauna recreational fishery designed to access the carryover will be considered for adoption at the Compact/Joint State Hearing scheduled for January 25, 2007.

2007 Columbia River Smelt Fishery

<i>Commercial Mainstem Smelt Fishery Recommendation</i>	
•	The Joint Staff recommends the adoption of the following commercial smelt fishing periods in the mainstem Columbia River:
Season:	Close ongoing 7-day per week fishery effective January 1, 2007 and adopt a Level One fishery consisting of 9-hour weekly fishing periods on Mondays and Thursdays from January 1, 2007 through March 31, 2007. Open hours are 7 AM to 4 PM.
Area:	Zones 1-5.
Gear:	Gill net, dip nets, or trawls as per permanent regulations.
Participants:	Columbia River commercial fishers with appropriate licenses and legal gear.
Miscellaneous:	Quick Reporting Rule in effect for Washington buyers.

- Most productivity and abundance indices support a Level One fishery designation.
- The proposed season fits a Level One fishery described in the Joint State Eulachon Management Plan.
- Anticipated low participation, in combination with fishery structure, should ensure that the proposed fishery will not approach the maximum 10% harvest rate allowed under Level One.
- The Columbia River Commercial Advisory Group proposed an alternative season structure consisting of two 12-hour fishing periods per week.
- Commercial smelt landings will be monitored weekly for the purpose of tracking run status and making in-season fishery management decisions with a formal fishery checkpoint set to occur at the next scheduled Compact meeting on Thursday, January 25, 2007.

<i>Recreational Mainstem Smelt Fishery Recommendation</i>	
•	The Joint Staff recommends the adoption of the following recreational smelt fishing periods in the mainstem Columbia River for Washington waters:
Season:	Open 7 days a week, 24-hours a day during January 1, 2007 through March 31, 2007.
Area:	Zones 1-5.
Limit:	25 pounds per person
Miscellaneous:	Concurrent rules with Oregon

Treaty Indian Sturgeon Fisheries

- Under permanent Compact rules a treaty Indian commercial setline season occurs annually from noon January 1 to noon January 31.
- The current size limits for sturgeon caught for tribal subsistence and commercial purposes are 48-60 inches in The Dalles and John Day pools and 45-60 inches in the Bonneville Pool.
- The Sturgeon Management Task Force (SMTF) will meet January 18, 2007 to review stock status and develop recommendations for subsequent Zone 6 sturgeon management in 2007.
- The report from the SMTF will be presented at a future Compact hearing.

FUTURE MEETINGS

- The next Compact hearing is scheduled for Thursday, January 25, 2007 at 10 AM at the Kelso City Hall, Council Room located at 203 S Pacific Avenue in Kelso, Washington. The purpose will be to review salmon, steelhead, sturgeon, and smelt stock status; and to consider commercial fishing options in the mainstem Columbia River and Select Areas.
- A Joint State meeting is scheduled to occur immediately following the January 25 Compact to consider modifications to the above Wauna recreational sturgeon fishery and spring chinook recreational fisheries in the mainstem Columbia River.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
December 14, 2006

Washington Tributary Smelt Fisheries

2006 Commercial Fisheries

- Consistent with Level One fisheries, the Cowlitz River was open to commercial fishing 6 PM to midnight on Sundays and Wednesdays from January 1 through March 31.
- The Sandy River in Oregon was open year-round, 7 days/week, 24 hours/day, per permanent regulations.
- No smelt were reported landed in the Cowlitz and Sandy rivers.

2007 Commercial Fisheries

<i>2007 Washington Tributary Commercial Fishery Recommendation</i>	
Season:	6 PM to midnight Sundays (6 hours) and 6 PM to midnight Wednesdays (6 hours) from January 1, 2007 through March 31, 2007.
Area:	Cowlitz River (downstream of Peterson's Eddy).
Gear:	Dip nets.
Miscellaneous:	Quick Reporting Rule in effect for Washington buyers.

- Commercial smelt landings will be monitored weekly for the purpose of tracking run status and making in-season fishery management decisions with a formal fishery checkpoint set for Thursday, January 25, 2007.

2006 Recreational Fisheries

- Consistent with Level One fisheries, the Cowlitz River was open to sport dipping 6 AM-10 PM Saturdays from January 1-March 31, 2006.
- The daily limit in the Washington sport fishery was 10 pounds per person.
- Very limited numbers of smelt were reported dipped from the Cowlitz River in early February.

2007 Sport Fisheries

<i>2007 Washington Tributary Sport Fishery Recommendation</i>	
Season:	6 AM to 10 PM Saturdays from January 1, 2007 through March 31, 2007.
Area:	Cowlitz River.
Daily Limit:	10 pounds per person.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
December 14, 2006