

**OREGON AND WASHINGTON DEPARTMENTS OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
JOINT STAFF REPORT - FALL FACT SHEET NO. 2a
Columbia River Compact/Joint State hearing
August 15, 2007**

Fisheries under consideration:	Non-Indian commercial salmon Recreational sturgeon fisheries above Wauna
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Management guidelines, allocations, and run forecasts for the 2007 fall season were presented in the Fall Fact Sheet #1 (July 26, 2007)

WATER CONDITIONS AND STOCK STATUS

- To date, Columbia River water temperatures during August are averaging 71 °F, which is similar to the recent 10-year average of 70 °F. Flow has averaged 155 kcfs, which is also consistent with the 10-year average (156 kcfs).
- Passage of fall Chinook at Bonneville Dam through August 13 totals 4,955 adults, which is within 2007 preseason expectations. Typically the run is 50% complete around September 7.

NON-INDIAN FISHERIES

2007 Early August Non-Indian Commercial Fishery

- The preseason catch expectation for early August was 2,150 Chinook, including 240 URBs (3% of the 4.1% allocation) and 660 LRHs (33% of the 2.3% allocation).
- Protocol adopted for white sturgeon retention in 2007 fall commercial fisheries includes a harvest of 2,415 (2,000 guideline plus 415 rollover) sturgeon during the month of August and 3,150 fish for September – October fisheries.
- Three 12-hour fishing periods occurred on the nights of August 2, 6, and 9. Open areas included all of Zones 1-5 with a 9-inch minimum mesh restriction and a 12 white sturgeon weekly landing/possession limit.
- Landings from the three periods were 2,285 Chinook and 2,646 white sturgeon. Chinook catch was within expectations but sturgeon catch was greater than expected.

<i>Early August Commercial Fishery Landings, 2007</i>				
Date	Deliveries	Chinook	Coho	White Sturgeon
Aug. 2-3 (Z 1-5) 9" mesh	108	390	0	938
Aug. 6-7 (Z 1-5) 9" mesh	139	732	3	1,104
Aug. 9-10 (Z 1-5) 9" mesh	133	1,163	11	604
Early August Total		2,285	14	2,646

- Stock composition based on CWTs is not complete. VSI from landings indicates 53% of the catch was bright stock, compared to the 60% expectation.

2007 Late August Non-Indian Commercial Fishery

- Catch expectations for the late August period total 2,000 Chinook, including 800 URBs and 300 LRHs.
- The 2007 Fall Management Agreement proposed two fishing periods during late August (23 and 28).
- With the conclusion of the early August fisheries, approximately 1,900 Chinook remain available for harvest.

Recommendation: 2007 Mainstem Commercial Salmon Fishery –Late August		
Season:	8 PM Thursday August 23 to 7 AM Friday August 24, 2007	(11 hours)
Area:	Zones 4- 5	
Sanctuaries:	Lewis-A, Washougal River, and Sandy River.	
Gear:	9" minimum and 9¾" maximum mesh size restriction.	
	It will be legal to have onboard a commercial vessel more than one net, as long as the nets are of legal size for the fishery, or the net has a minimum mesh size of 9 inches. The length of any one net cannot exceed 1,500 feet in length	
Allowable Sales:	Salmon and white sturgeon. A maximum of three white sturgeon may be possessed or sold by each participating vessel during each calendar week (Sunday through Saturday) that the fishery is open. The three white sturgeon possession and sales limit includes mainstem fisheries only.	
Misc. Rules:	5- hour Quick Reporting Rules will be in effect for Washington buyers.	

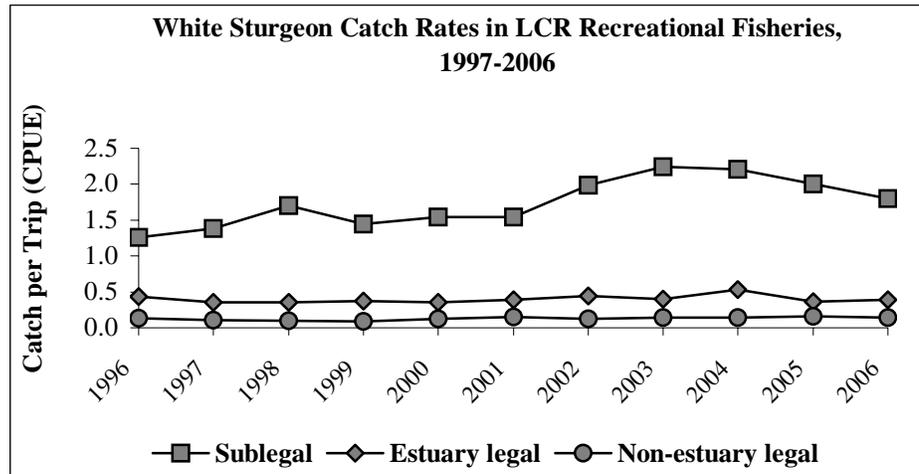
- ✓ Catch expectations include less than 800 Chinook and 150 sturgeon.
- ✓ The Joint Staff realizes that the recommended season does not allow access to the total number of salmon available for harvest. Chinook abundance is very volatile during the late August time frame, and with the few Chinook allocated, season options are limited.
- ✓ The Joint Staff recommends that some opportunity for sturgeon harvest continues considering the limited opportunity for sturgeon harvest during the late fall season.
- ✓ Based on this proposal, the expected sturgeon harvest for the early fall season would be approximately 2,800 fish, leaving about 2,800 sturgeon available for late fall.

2007 Mainstem Sturgeon Recreational Fishery

- The recreational white sturgeon fishery downstream of the Wauna powerlines (estuary) was open for retention during January 1 – April 30, and May 12 – July 4. The preseason harvest guideline was 16,274 fish including a rollover of 274 fish from 2006.
- The preliminary catch estimate for the estuary fishery is 19,159 fish, or 2,885 fish over the adjusted 2007 guideline.
- The combined 2006-2008 harvest guideline for the recreational sturgeon fishery above Wauna is 38,400 fish, which equates to a 12,800 annual guideline. This guideline was adjusted to 14,900 for 2007 and 2008 based on an estimated rollover of unharvested fish from 2006.

- During January-July, 2007, anglers harvested an estimated 2,827 sturgeon in the mainstem Columbia River upstream of Wauna.

- Catch rates of legal size sturgeon in the above Wauna fishery have been stable since 1996; however, a significant amount of angler effort (winter-spring) appears to have shifted into the Willamette River in recent years.



- A preliminary review of sampling and punch card data indicates that harvest of white sturgeon in the Willamette River increased above baseline levels in 2006 and 2007, similar to 2004. Unfortunately, only minimal creel sampling is conducted in the Willamette River during January and February, therefore staff made several assumptions regarding Willamette River sturgeon harvest during these months. If these assumptions are accurate, the annual harvest guideline should be 14,500 for 2007 and 2008.
- The catch estimate through July 2007 in the above Wauna fishery is 5,200 fish when adjusted for an estimated 2,400 sturgeon (in excess of baseline levels) harvest in the Willamette River.
- Approximately 9,300 sturgeon remain available for harvest from the adjusted 2007 guideline (14,500).

2006-2008 Recreational White Sturgeon Harvest			
	2006	2007	2008
Below Wauna			
Guideline	16,000	16,274	13,115
Harvest	<u>15,726</u>	<u>19,159¹</u>	
Remaining	274	-2,885	
Above Wauna			
Guideline	12,800	14,500 ²	14,500 ²
Columbia R. Harvest	8,545	2,827 ³	
Willamette Harvest Adj.	<u>800</u>	<u>2,400</u>	
Total Harvest	9,345	5,227	
Remaining	3,455	9,273	
¹ Preliminary estimate			
² 2007 and 2008 guidelines adjusted to 14,900 prior to realization of need to adjust for Willamette R. harvest in excess of baseline levels. The actual adjusted annual guideline for 2007 and 2008 should be 14,500.			
³ Preliminary harvest estimate through July 2007.			

- The Joint Staff met with the Recreational Advisory Group (CRRAG) August 7, 2007 to discuss sturgeon harvest above Wauna. The group's main concerns were for population

conservation and developing a 2007 season that wouldn't reduce the 2008 sturgeon guideline.

- A variety of season modifications could be considered to maximize harvest opportunity in the above Wauna fishery, each having a different level of risk.
- The Joint staff has compiled the following table that illustrates some of the possible modifications and the associated harvest estimates:

Summary of estimated (2006) and projected (2007) harvest in the above Wauna recreational sturgeon fishery under various season scenarios.				
Season Scenarios	Harvest Summary			
	2006¹	2007²	Sum	2008 balance
No change (4 d/wk Jan-Jul and Oct-Dec)	9,345	11,200	20,500	17,900
4 d/wk effective August 18, 2007	9,345	12,300	21,600	16,800
7 d/wk Aug. 18-Sep. 30 and 4 d/wk Oct- Dec	9,345	13,100	22,400	16,000
5 d/wk effective August 18, 2007	9,345	13,200	22,500	15,900
7 d/wk effective August 18, 2007	9,345	13,800	23,100	15,300

¹ Includes final Columbia River harvest and preliminary Willamette River harvest in excess of baseline.
² Includes preliminary and projected harvest

- Projecting accurate catch estimates is difficult since some of the scenarios have not been conducted recently or at all.
- Conservative options provide a larger balance for 2008 and/or conservation but offer more flexibility if catch estimates are low.
- Aggressive options allow for greater harvest opportunity and therefore less surplus in 2007 and 2008, but pose some risk of exceeding the recommended 14,500 harvest guideline.
- Staff has the ability to update catch on a monthly basis and can recommend fishery modifications as the season progresses.

<i>Recommendation – Modify the 2007 Recreational Sturgeon Fishery Above Wauna</i>	
Current Season:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January 1-31: White sturgeon retention allowed Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays only. • <u>February 1-July 31</u>: White sturgeon retention allowed Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays only. • <u>August 1-September 30</u>: Sturgeon retention not allowed. • <u>October 1-December 31</u>: White sturgeon retention allowed Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays only.
Staff Recommendation	Allow retention of white sturgeon in the above Wauna fishery a minimum of four days (Thursday-Sunday) each week during August 18 through September 31, 2007.
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.
Other restrictions:	Retention of green sturgeon prohibited effective January 1, 2007.

- The proposed season modification provides immediate harvest opportunity with little risk that the estimated catch (12,300) will exceed the recommended annual harvest guideline of 14,500. Expanding the fishery to 7 days/week during August and September would increase the annual harvest by 800 fish to 13,100 but should still pose limited risk of exceeding the 2007 guideline.
- The projected harvest of 13,800 fish for a 7 day/week retention fishery throughout the remainder of 2007 is also below the revised guideline (14,500). Staff acknowledges the risk of exceeding the guideline is higher with this potential season option.
- Staff understands that consistency in season structure is important to constituents, management and enforcement, but caution that further season modifications may be necessary due to uncertainty in projecting harvest as we attempt to provide additional fishing opportunity.

FUTURE MEETINGS

- The Joint Staff will review commercial landings following the proposed fishery and recommend a Compact hearing if warranted to set additional commercial fisheries.
- The Joint Staff recommends a Columbia River Compact hearing be scheduled for Thursday September 13, 2007 to consider commercial fishing periods for the late fall season expected to begin the week of September 17.