

**COLUMBIA RIVER INTER-TRIBAL FISH COMMISSION
 TRIBAL STAFF REPORT - WINTER FACT SHEET NO. 2b
 Columbia River Compact/Joint State Hearing
 January 29, 2014**

<i>Fisheries under consideration:</i>
Treaty Indian winter gillnet fishery

STOCK STATUS

- Stock status and historic winter season harvest data are reported in the 2014 Sturgeon/Smelt Joint Staff Report referenced in Fact Sheet 2a.
- There will be a meeting of the Sturgeon Management Task Force on February 12 to consider the latest stock assessment for the John Day Pool as well as other Zone 6 sturgeon management issues.

TREATY INDIAN FISHERIES

- There is an ongoing sturgeon setline fishery in Zone 6 that will end on January 31. The preliminary harvest estimate through 1/28/14 is shown in the table below.

2014 Treaty Commercial Sturgeon Harvest		
Pool	Jan Setline	Average Weight (lbs)
Bonneville	8	20.8
The Dalles	0	na
John Day	30	32.4
Total	38	

- There is normally low effort and low catches in the winter setline fishery. This catch is similar the total catch in last year's harvest in the January setline fishery which included 16 fish from the Bonneville Pool, 8 fish from The Dalles Pool and 33 fish from the John Day Pool for a total of 57 fish in 2013.
- Under permanent regulations, a winter gillnet fishery is open in Zone 6 from noon February 1 to 6:00 p.m. March 21. Allowable sales include sturgeon, salmon, steelhead as well as miscellaneous non-native fish caught with gillnets and with platform/hook & line gear within Zone 6. There is no mesh size restriction in the winter gillnet fishery and diver nets are allowed. For a number of years the slot limit for allowed retention in tribal fisheries has been 43-54 inches fork length for The Dalles and John Day Pools and 38-54 inches fork length for the Bonneville Pool. Up until the early 2000's, the slot limits for the tribal fishery were the same in each pool.

- Part of the rationale for using an expanded slot limit including smaller sized fish in the Bonneville Pool was to take advantage of a large abundance of these smaller fish and try to see if improved growth rates might be a result of removing some of the abundant smaller size fish.
- Moving to this slot limit does not seem to have produced a measurable impact on growth rates in the Bonneville Pool.
- Meat recovery rates for smaller sized fish are not as good as for larger sized fish. There is a significant weight difference for fish caught in the Bonneville Pool. The average weight for the fish caught in the Bonneville Pool so far this year is nearly 10 pounds less than the average weight for fish caught in the John Day Pool. In 2013, the average weight of fish from the Bonneville Pool was 19.3 pounds compared to 24.7 pounds for The Dalles Pool and 29.7 pounds for the John Day Pool.
- Tribal fishers support uniform regulations where possible and uniform size regulations facilitate proper catch reporting.
- The tribes are proposing the following change for the slot limit in the Bonneville Pool.

Tribal Staff Recommendation:

Effective February 1, 2014: The slot limit for legal size sturgeon in Bonneville Pool tribal fisheries will be 43-54 inches in fork length

- Because there is a skewed population abundance in the Bonneville Pool where there are significantly more fish in the 38-42 inch size group compared to the number of fish in the 43-54 inch size group. This will necessitate a decrease in the commercial harvest guideline for the tribal fishery compared to the 1,100 fish guideline currently in place. The tribes intend to review stock assessment and modeling information and discuss what a proper guideline for the Bonneville Pool should be under this new slot at the February 12 Sturgeon Management Task Force Meeting.
- Because of a lower number of fish available at this slot limit, the tribes do not view waiting for the Sturgeon Task Force meeting to determine the harvest guideline as a significant concern. The tribes do not predict the Bonneville Pool fishery will harvest a large number of fish prior to the February 12 Sturgeon Task Force meeting.
- Based on information in the stock assessment report for the 2012 Bonneville Stock assessment that was used to set the current harvest guidelines in January 2013, the estimated number of fish in the 38-42 inch size group was 11,757 and the number of fish in the 43-54 inch size group was predicted to be 2,455. Approximately 17% of the fish in the combined 38-54 inch size group were expected to be 43 inches and over. Based on this proportion, tribal staff predicted a range of expected catches. This range is based on actual catches from 2007-2013 adjusted for the smaller number of larger sized fish. These projections are shown in the table below.

2007-2013 Bonneville Pool Winter Gillnet Fishery Sturgeon Harvest for the First Two Weeks of the Fishery							
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Week 1	0	0	147	656	89	36	15
Week 2	12	17	284	747	85	152	188
Total for first 2 weeks	12	17	431	1,403	174	188	203
Estimate of the number of fish ≥ 43 " based on 17% adjustment	2	3	73	239	30	32	35

- Based on the last three years, tribal staff projects a harvest of 30-35 sturgeon from the Bonneville Pool in the first two weeks of the fishery. If catch rates are high, the catch could be up to about 75 which would be similar to 2009. The tribes view 2010 as an anomaly with some of the highest catch rates ever observed. This was likely in part due to favorable weather. In 2010, there were also very high catch rates in both the January setline fishery which caught 137 fish just in the Bonneville Pool and high catch rates in the sport fishery which met its guideline in mid-February. We have not observed similar catch rates so far this year and do not expect them. If catch rates for the first week in February are much higher than expected, the states and tribes could discuss if any fishery modifications were warranted prior to the Sturgeon Task Force meeting. The tribes would not expect the harvest prior to February 12 to preclude discussions regarding the Bonneville Pool commercial harvest guideline.
- Tribal staff will be collecting biological and PIT tag data from the commercial fishery. Tribal staff will also work with tribal buyers to account for their purchases and will estimate other "non-ticket" sales. They will continue to work closely with state staff to account for and report harvest in the winter gillnet fishery on a timely basis.
- Fisheries downstream of Bonneville do not require Compact action as the tribes are not proposing any changes from the permanent regulations in place. Sturgeon retention is not allowed in the tribal bank fishery downstream of Bonneville.