

OREGON AND WASHINGTON DEPARTMENTS OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
JOINT STAFF REPORT: WINTER FACT SHEET NO. 9
Columbia River Joint State Hearing
March 27, 2014

Fisheries under consideration:	Bonneville Pool Recreational Sturgeon
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Bonneville Recreational Sturgeon Fishery

- The Sturgeon Management Task Force met February 12 to consider management recommendations for 2014 Zone 6 white sturgeon fisheries, including potential modifications to harvest guidelines based on updated population assessments. No changes were made to existing harvest guidelines for 2014:

2014 Zone 6 Recreational Sturgeon Harvest Guidelines		
Bonneville Pool	The Dalles Pool	John Day Pool
1,100	300	500

- Under permanent rule, Zone 6 (Bonneville Dam upstream to McNary Dam) recreational white sturgeon fisheries open annually for retention effective January 1. Since 2011, the Bonneville Pool fishery has been managed to provide retention opportunity during winter and summer seasons, with the guideline being shared approximately 50/50 between winter and summer seasons.
- The 2014 winter retention season in Bonneville Pool was open January 1-19, February 1-17, and February 24 – March 9 (50 days).
- Windy conditions for much of January and hazardous weather and a cold river during February reduced angling effort and catch, contributing to lower than expected harvest.
- The combined winter kept catch was 241 fish, or 23% of the 1,100 fish harvest guideline.
- A balance of 849 sturgeon remain available for a summer retention opportunity, which has typically occurred in late June since first initiated in 2011. Kept catch per day during June in 2012 and 2013 was 224 and 227, respectively.

Sturgeon Spawning Sanctuary

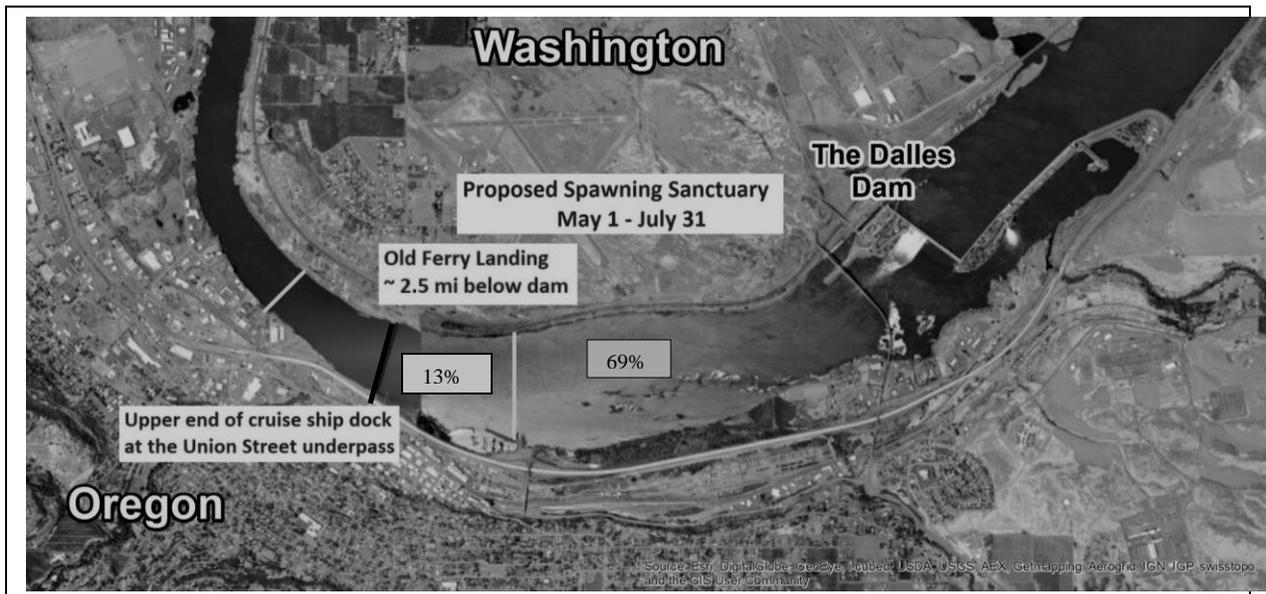
- As part of a public meeting held last November in The Dalles, staff discussed a proposal to implement a permanent May-July sturgeon spawning sanctuary immediately downstream of The Dalles Dam to reduce handle of oversize sturgeon which has been increasing in recent years.
- Similar sanctuaries have been implemented downstream of five Columbia River dams and below Willamette Falls to reduce handling of broodstock-sized sturgeon which may cause stress-induced reproductive failure and mortality.
- Staff felt this proposal should be considered concurrent with adoption of a summer retention fishery in Bonneville Pool since the two actions are related to each other.

- During retention period sampling in 2011 and 2012, catch was 1 oversize per 2.1 legal (kept and released) in 2011 and 1 oversize per 1.2 legal in 2012. During non-retention sampling, catch was 3.3 oversize per legal (released) in 2011 and 3.5 oversize per legal in 2012.

Estimated sturgeon effort and catch RM 189-192 in June and July, 2011 and 2012								
Year	Retention season				Catch & release season			
	Angler trips	Oversize catch	Legal kept	Sample days ¹	Angler trips	Oversize catch	Legal released	Sample days ¹
2011	150	46	98	4	347	140	34	9
2012	803	282	344	4	453	247	72	9

¹ Closed season sampling in 2011 included 4 days in June and 5 days in July. Closed season sampling days for 2012 were all in July.

- Based on 2006-2013 May-August sampling data, 89% of the oversize sturgeon handle occurred from the Tower Island powerlines upstream to The Dalles Dam. Within that area, 18% of the handle occurred in the 2.6 mile section from Tower Island upstream to Bargeway Road (river mile 189), 13% occurred in the next 1.0 mile stretch up stream to the public boat ramp (river mile 190), and 69% occurred from the boat ramp upstream 1.8 miles to The Dalles Dam.



Staff Recommendations

Sturgeon Spawning Sanctuary

- Based on the available information, staff recommends the following sturgeon spawning sanctuary downstream of The Dalles Dam:

<i>Staff Recommendation: Bonneville Pool Sturgeon Spawning Sanctuary</i>
Angling for sturgeon prohibited during May through July from The Dalles Dam downstream 2.4 miles to a line from the Old Ferry landing on the Washington shore across to the upstream end of the Union Street dock on the Oregon shore.

- The staff proposal would create a sturgeon spawning sanctuary in Bonneville Pool extending 2.4 miles downstream from The Dalles Dam.
- The size and duration of the sanctuary is similar to what exists downstream of John Day and McNary dams.
- The proposed sanctuary was generally supported after discussion at the November public meeting. However, recent feedback from the angling public in this geographic area has been less supportive of the proposed time and/or area.

Summer Retention Season

- During June 2012-2013, kept catch averaged 225 fish per day which would allow for approximately 3-4 retention days. However, if the proposed sanctuary is adopted, the kept catch could drop to around 150 fish per day, allowing for a longer season.
- Staff is proposing the following summer white sturgeon retention season for Bonneville Pool:

<i>Staff Recommendation: 2014 Bonneville Pool Summer Recreational White Sturgeon Fishery</i>	
Season:	June 20-21 (Fri-Sat) and June 27-28 (Fri-Sat), 2014 (4 days)
Area:	Mainstem Columbia River from Bonneville Dam upstream to The Dalles Dam, including adjacent tributaries. <i>Angling for sturgeon prohibited during May through July from The Dalles Dam downstream 2.4 miles to a line from the Old Ferry landing on the Washington shore across to the upstream end of the Union Street dock on the Oregon shore.</i>
Allowable Catch	White sturgeon between 38-inches and 54-inches fork length.

- Splitting the summer fishery into two, 2-day periods allows staff time to estimate harvest for the first period and recommend modifications to the second period if needed.
- If the sanctuary is adopted and catch rates decline as expected, additional early-July fishing opportunity could be considered.

Future Meetings

- A Compact Hearing is scheduled for 1:00 p.m. Monday March 31, 2014 via teleconference to consider non-Indian commercial fisheries.