

OREGON AND WASHINGTON DEPARTMENTS OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
JOINT STAFF REPORT - SPRING FISHERY UPDATE #1
May 1, 2019

RIVER CONDITIONS

- Columbia River conditions recently measured at Bonneville Dam are about average for flow and temperature, with roughly half the visibility, when compared to the recent 5-year averages for this date in April. Current outflow is 280 kcfs (including 118 kcfs spill), which is similar to the recent 5-year average of 284 kcfs. Visibility is 2.0 feet and improving, but still less than the average of 4.5 feet. Water temperature currently measures 53° F, which is the slightly higher than the recent 5-year average. The river stage at Vancouver is currently 6.9 feet and is forecasted to continue receding slightly through this weekend to an average of about 6.0 feet.

STOCK STATUS

- Adult Chinook passage at Bonneville Dam through April 30 totals 4,705 fish, which is the 2nd lowest passage in the last 10 years and only 9% of the 10-year (2009-2018) average cumulative count (50,527) for this date. On average, 23% of the run has passed Bonneville Dam by April 30 (range: 3% - 52%). As evidenced by the variability in proportion passage complete by this date, cumulative counts through April are not a reliable indicator of final passage. Cumulative passage to-date for 2019 is roughly midway between counts observed when compared to the late-timed runs of 2017 and 2018. The recent 10-yr average 50% passage date at Bonneville Dam is May 9.
- Weekly test fishing in the lower Columbia River began on Monday, March 18, with seven weeks completed so far. In reverse order, the last seven weeks of catch rates have been 3.7, 3.5, 5.0, 0.5, 0.9, 0.7, and 0.3 Chinook per drift, with the rates above three Chinook per drift since mid-April. Catch rates during 2018 over comparable weeks were 6.4, 8.1, 6.8, 2.3, 0.9, 0.9, and 0.9.
- Through April 29, Cowlitz and Lewis hatcheries report 105 and 86 adults have returned, respectively.

Mainstem Columbia River Spring Chinook Recreational Fishery - Below Bonneville Dam

- The lower Columbia River (LCR) recreational spring Chinook fishery was open under temporary regulations from March 1 – April 10, April 13-14, April 20-21, and April 27-28. Due to low projected returns to the Cowlitz and Lewis rivers, the fishery has been restricted to the area from Warrior Rock line (just upstream of the Lewis River) upstream to Bonneville Dam.
- Water temperatures through April 10 were much colder than average but river conditions were otherwise favorable for fishing except during the last couple of days. High flow and/or turbidity negatively affected catch rates for all of the recent weekend openings. The estimated catch for April 27-28 is 37 adult spring Chinook kept (plus 10 released) and four steelhead released from 725 angler trips. The combined season kept catch through Sunday April 28 is estimated at 1,676 adult spring Chinook from 31,707 angler trips.

- Upriver mortalities through April 28 are estimated to be 1,471 adult Chinook, or 40% of the 3,689 available to this fishery prior to a run update.

Mainstem Spring Chinook Recreational Fishery – Bonneville Dam to OR/WA Border

- The recreational spring Chinook fishery is currently open through May 5 from Bonneville Dam upstream to the OR/WA border under temporary regulations.
- Current estimates indicate no fish have been harvested as of April 28. Effort has been low (357 angler trips) due to low Chinook passage and recent poor water conditions.

Select Area Commercial Fisheries

- Select Area commercial fisheries are currently open in all Oregon sites.
- Winter season landings totaled 695 spring Chinook (74% of recent 5-year average) and 18 sturgeon.
- Spring season landings through April 30 include 278 Chinook, which is well below average for this point in the season, and 29 sturgeon.

FUTURE MEETINGS

- A Joint State hearing is scheduled for 3 PM Wednesday May 8, 2019 to consider Columbia River recreational salmon fisheries, and potentially Select Area commercial fisheries.