OREGON AND WASHINGTON DEPARTMENTS OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
JOINT STAFF REPORT – SPRING FACT SHEET NO. 1
Columbia River Compact/Joint State Hearing
May 1, 2020

Fisheries under consideration: Mainstem recreational salmon

Detailed information on stock status and management guidelines for Columbia River fisheries are presented in Joint Staff Reports, which are produced annually and available on-line. The most recent reports are the 2020 Sturgeon/Smelt Report (January 17, 2020) and the 2020 spring/summer report for Chinook, sockeye, steelhead, and other species (February 7, 2020). Links to the online reports are https://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/management/columbia-river and http://www.dfw.state.or.us/fish/OSCRP/CRM/jsmreports.asp

RIVER CONDITIONS

- Columbia River conditions as measured at Bonneville Dam are currently slightly lower, warmer, and clearer than recent 5-year averages for the end of April. Current outflow is 238 kcfs, which is lower than the recent 5-year average of 286 kcfs. Water temperature currently measures 53° F, compared to the 5-year average of 52° F. Visibility is 6.0 feet, much clearer than the 5-year average of 3.4 feet. The river stage at Vancouver is currently 6.9 feet and is forecasted to remain stable for the next several days (Action Stage is 15.0 feet and Flood Stage is 16.0 feet).

STOCK STATUS

- Adult Chinook passage at Bonneville Dam through April 29 totals 8,549 fish, which is higher than the last three years but only 20% of the 10-year (2010-2019) average cumulative count (42,848) for this date. On average, 15–20% of the run has passed Bonneville Dam by April 29. Based on the preseason forecast and 5-year average timing, about 11,680 fish would be expected at Bonneville Dam by this date. The recent 10-year average 50% passage date at Bonneville Dam is May 9.
- The *U.S. v. Oregon* Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) met on Monday for an initial discussion of the upriver spring Chinook return. Passage at Bonneville Dam has improved over the past week; however, it is too early to attempt an inseason run-size update. TAC intends to meet again May 4, and weekly thereafter.

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

- Forecasts and management guidelines for 2020 spring Chinook fisheries were presented in Winter Fact Sheets #2b and #3a on February 11 and February 19, respectively.
- The management goal for upper Columbia River sockeye is 65,000 fish at Priest Rapids Dam, which under average migration conditions requires passage of 75,000 fish over Bonneville Dam. The escapement goal for the Wenatchee River system is 23,000 sockeye.
- The impact limit on the Columbia River return of ESA-listed sockeye is 1% for non-treaty fisheries.

2020 RECREATIONAL FISHERIES

Mainstem Columbia River Spring Chinook Fishery

- The lower Columbia River recreational spring Chinook fishery was open under temporary regulations from March 1 through March 25, prior to being closed due to concerns regarding the potential spread of COVID-19. Due to low projected returns to the Cowlitz and Lewis rivers, the fishery was restricted to the area from Warrior Rock/Lewis River upstream to Bonneville Dam in order to maximize hatchery returns.
- The spring Chinook fishery from Bonneville Dam upstream to the OR/WA border was scheduled to open April 1 but due to public safety concerns related to COVID-19, this did not occur.
- Through March 25, the estimated catch in the recreational fishery downstream of Bonneville Dam is 89 kept adult fish and 36 released from approximately 8,500 angler trips. Upriver mortalities total 82 adult Chinook, or 3% of the 2,899 available to this fishery prior to a run update. None of the 387 upriver mortalities available for the Bonneville-OR/WA border recreational fishery prior to the run update have been used. Likewise, none of the 400 upriver mortalities available to the lower Snake River recreational fishery prior to the run update have been used.
- On April 27, Washington Governor Inslee announced that freshwater fisheries and state-owned boat ramps are scheduled to reopen on May 5. Some access sites may still be closed due to different ownership.
- Staff have been evaluating logistics of re-opening mainstem recreational spring Chinook fisheries in light of current social distancing recommendations. The traditional aerial effort count method is inconsistent with current social distancing guidelines, but boat-based effort monitoring can be used instead.
- Given the significant balances on the pre-season buffered allocation of upriver spring Chinook (2,817 fish balance for the mainstem fishery below Bonneville, 387 fish above), there is potential for additional angling opportunity. Considering the limited in-season information currently available regarding the abundance and timing of the upriver spring Chinook run, staff recommends a conservative approach moving forward with this fishery, including a limited days-per-week structure for the near-term. This will provide additional recreational opportunity while allowing staff the time to monitor the run and harvest.

Recommendations: 2020 Mainstem Columbia River Spring Chinook Recreational Fishery	
Downstream of Bonneville Dam	
Season:	Tuesday May 5, Thursday May 7, Saturday May 9, and Wednesday May 13 4 days
Area:	Warrior Rock line upstream to Beacon Rock (boat and bank) plus bank angling only from Beacon Rock upstream to the Bonneville Dam deadline. Angling for and retention of steelhead, salmon, and shad is prohibited from the Warrior Rock line downstream to Buoy 10. Legal downstream boundary defined as: A line projected from the Warrior Rock lighthouse on the Oregon shore through red USCG buoy #4 then to the piling dolphin on the lower end of Bachelor Island (Warrior Rock line). Legal upstream boat boundary defined as: A deadline marker on the Oregon bank (approximately four miles downstream from Bonneville Dam Powerhouse One) in a straight line through the western tip of Pierce Island to a deadline marker on the Washington bank at Beacon Rock.
Daily Bag Limit:	Two adult hatchery salmonids (Chinook or steelhead) per day, but only one may be a Chinook. Shad may also be retained. All other permanent regulations apply.
Bonneville Dam to Oregon/Washington Border	
Season:	Tuesday May 5, Thursday May 7, Saturday May 9, and Wednesday May 13 4 days
Area:	Tower Island power lines (approximately 6 miles below The Dalles Dam) upstream to Oregon/Washington border, plus the Oregon and Washington banks between Bonneville Dam and the Tower Island power lines.
Daily Bag Limit:	Two adult hatchery salmonids (Chinook or steelhead) per day, but only one may be a Chinook. All other permanent regulations apply.

- Estimating the kept catch for the proposed fisheries is complicated by circumstances associated with the current COVID-19 situation such as reduced bank access, boat ramp closures, recommendations for restricted travel, and limited previous opportunity to fish the mainstem Columbia River.
- Considering these factors and catch rates during prior-year fisheries in May, the estimated kept catch for the proposed fishery downstream of Bonneville Dam is not expected to exceed 1,400 adult Chinook (1,430 upriver mortalities), based on an expected handle of about 1,690 adults. Nearly half of the catch is expected to occur on May 5.
- With the proposed extension, projected cumulative upriver mortalities (1,512 adults) would represent 52% of the 2,899 mortalities available to the recreational fishery below Bonneville Dam prior to a run update.
- Under normal circumstances, the fishery from Bonneville Dam upstream to the OR/WA border would be expected to accrue 140–240 upriver mortalities, representing 36%–62% of the available pre-update mortalities. However, limited access may reduce harvest potential under current circumstances.

- A limited days-per-week structure provides a controlled and systematic approach for progression of the season while allowing staff to manage within the buffered upriver spring Chinook allocation for these fisheries.
- Staff will be prepared to review fishery results on May 6 and again on May 11 to determine if catch rates align with expectations and consider if any season modifications are needed.
- An upriver spring Chinook run size of 44,000 adults would cover the projected cumulative mortalities for these fisheries and pre-update set-asides for other non-treaty fisheries.
- Impacts to other listed stocks are expected to remain within take limitations based on recent year results. Fishery-specific impact rate expectations can be found in the latest Spring/Summer Joint Staff Report in the 2020 Winter, Spring, and Summer Season Expectations section.

Mainstem Columbia River Steelhead and Shad Fisheries

- Under permanent rules, the lower Columbia River from the Tongue Point/Rocky Point line upstream to the I-5 Bridge opens May 16 for hatchery steelhead and hatchery jack Chinook. Shad retention opens May 16 from Buoy 10 upstream to Bonneville Dam under permanent regulations. Hatchery steelhead retention upstream of the I-5 Bridge opens June 16. Shad retention upstream of Bonneville Dam will be allowed consistent with permanent regulations (open year round).
- Given the improved sockeye forecast of 246,300, staff recommends retention of sockeye be allowed concurrent with the recreational steelhead fishery downstream of the I-5 Bridge.

Staff Recommendation - 2020 Mainstem Columbia River Recreational Fishery
Effective Saturday May 16, retention of sockeye is allowed in the mainstem Columbia River from the Tongue Point/Rocky Point line upstream to the I-5 Bridge. The daily adult bag limit remains at two adult fish (hatchery steelhead and sockeye only). All sockeye are considered adults and must be recorded as adults on the combined angling tag. All other permanent regulations apply, including bag limits for hatchery jack Chinook.

- Given typical run timing, sockeye harvest prior to June 16 is expected to be low. Sockeye retention will continue during the summer season.

FUTURE MEETINGS

- No additional Compact/Joint State hearings are currently scheduled. The Joint Staff anticipate a hearing may be needed during the week of May 10 to consider Columbia River recreational salmon fisheries.