

OREGON AND WASHINGTON DEPARTMENTS OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
JOINT STAFF REPORT - WINTER FACT SHEET NO. 4a
Columbia River Compact/Joint State Hearing
February 9, 2023

<i>Fisheries under consideration:</i> John Day Pool recreational white sturgeon
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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 report relevant to these fisheries is the 2023 Sturgeon/Smelt Report (January 13, 2023) available at:

*<https://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/management/columbia-river/reports> or
<https://www.dfw.state.or.us/fish/OSCRP/CRM/jsmreports.asp>*

RIVER CONDITIONS

- As of February 8, the current Columbia River water temperature at Bonneville Dam of 38°F is similar to the five-year average for this time in February (40°F). The outflow is about 129.8 kcfs, which is lower than the recent 5-year average of 179.3 kcfs. Visibility is 7 feet which is similar to the five-year average of 6.4 feet.

STOCK STATUS

White Sturgeon – Columbia River Zone 6 (Bonneville Dam to McNary Dam)

- White sturgeon stock status for populations upstream of Bonneville Dam was presented in Winter Fact Sheet #1, dated November 9, 2022.

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

White Sturgeon – Columbia River Zone 6

- Management guidelines for sturgeon fisheries upstream of Bonneville Dam were presented in Winter Fact Sheet #1 and updated in Winter Fact Sheet #3a.

2023 NON-TREATY FISHERIES

Zone 6 Recreational White Sturgeon Fisheries

- Under permanent regulations, the area from Bonneville Dam upstream to McNary Dam opens January 1 each year for white sturgeon retention. Upon opening for retention, all three Zone 6 reservoirs are managed to the pool-specific guidelines.
- At the Joint State Hearing on November 9, 2022 the states modified the Bonneville and The Dalles pools' fisheries by adopting a limited days-per-week retention fishery structure. John Day Pool retention fisheries opened under permanent rules on January 1, 2023.
- At the Joint State Hearing on January 24, 2023, the states closed John Day Pool to sturgeon retention effective January 30, because catch projections indicated that the harvest guideline would likely be reached by this date.

- Current recreational sturgeon guidelines and harvest estimates for 2023 Zone 6 recreational fisheries are summarized below:

Table 2. Current sturgeon harvest estimates in Zone 6 reservoirs.

Pool	Angler Trips	Harvest	Recreational Guideline	Percent of Guideline	Fished Through
Bonneville	2,183	600	675	89%	1/11/2023
The Dalles	1,443	188	190	99%	1/25/2023
John Day	2,516	84	105	80%	1/29/2023

- In John Day Pool, 21 fish remain on the harvest guideline and the relatively low daily catch rates indicate additional open days for retention may be warranted. Staff recommend using a days-per-week approach for these additional open days to ensure harvest remains within sustainable guidelines.

<i>Recommendation - 2023 John Day Pool Recreational Sturgeon Fishery</i>		
Season:	Saturday, February 11, Wednesday, February 15, and Saturday, February 18.	3 days
Area:	Mainstem Columbia River from John Day Dam to McNary Dam, and all adjacent tributaries	
Allowable Catch:	Up to 21 white sturgeon Legal size: 43-inch minimum and 54-inch maximum fork length (Fork length is measured in a straight line from the tip of the nose to the fork in the caudal fin (tail) with the fish laying on its side on a flat surface, with the tape measure/ruler positioned flat <u>under</u> the fish) Daily bag limit: One fish Annual bag limit: Two fish	

- The projected total kept catch in the John Day Pool through February 18 is 96 fish (91% of the guideline).
- Permanent regulations allow for catch-and-release sturgeon angling all year, except angling for sturgeon is prohibited May 1 through August 31 within the sanctuary areas designated below each of the dam tailraces.

FUTURE MEETINGS

- A Compact Hearing is scheduled for 10 AM February 14, 2023 via teleconference to consider Select Area (winter-summer) and treaty commercial fisheries.
- A hybrid Joint State Hearing is scheduled for 10 AM February 22, 2023 to consider mainstem Columbia River recreational spring Chinook fisheries. The meeting will be held at the WDFW Ridgefield office (5525 S. 11th Street, Ridgefield, Washington 98642), and a teleconference call-in option will be available.

**COLUMBIA RIVER INTER-TRIBAL FISH COMMISSION
JOINT STAFF REPORT - WINTER FACT SHEET NO. 4b
Columbia River Compact/Joint State Hearing
February 9, 2023**

<i>Fisheries under consideration:</i>	Zone 6 treaty commercial fisheries
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Detailed information on stock status and management guidelines for Columbia River fisheries are presented in Joint Staff Reports, which are produced annually and available online. The most recent report relevant to this fishery is the 2023 Sturgeon/Smelt Report (January 13, 2023) available at:

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<https://www.dfw.state.or.us/fish/OSCRP/CRM/jsmreports.asp>*

RIVER CONDITIONS

- The recent 5-day average river temperatures at The Dalles and John Day Dams have averaged 38 degrees which is about two degrees less than the 5-year averages for these dates.
- The recent 5-day average outflow at The Dalles Dam is approximately 135 kcfs which is not unusual for this time of year.

STOCK STATUS

Zone 6 Sturgeon

- The states and tribes work cooperatively to complete white sturgeon stock assessments, which rotate between the three Zone 6 reservoirs on an annual basis. The 2022 survey was conducted in the John Day Pool and indicated a 12% decrease in the abundance of legal sized sturgeon (43–54 inch fork length), and a 6% decline in the overall population (fish greater than 21 inch fork length). The population of over-legal fish (greater than 54 inches) increased by 80%. Lack of successful spawning rather than fisheries is presumed to be the primary cause of the population decline.

Steelhead and Salmon

- From November 1 through February 6, a total of 762 winter steelhead, including 339 unclipped fish, have been counted at Bonneville Dam (45% unclipped). The total count is the second lowest to date in the last 10 years and the total unclipped count is the lowest to date in the last 10 years. There are normally no dam counts available this time of year for The Dalles, John Day, or McNary dams. This year is one of the periodic years where counts are being made at The Dalles and McNary dams. Since January 1, a total of 47 summer steelhead (20 unclipped) have been counted at The Dalles Dam and 212 summer steelhead (82 unclipped fish) have been counted at McNary Dam. These fish are summer steelhead from the 2022-23 run year.
- Chinook counts at Bonneville Dam in January total one fish which may have actually been a fall Chinook.

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Zone 6 Sturgeon

- Winter Fact Sheet #3b contains information on Zone 6 sturgeon harvest guidelines. The treaty commercial guidelines are shown in the harvest table below.
- There is no harvest guideline for the treaty subsistence catch of sturgeon, but these catches are accounted for and used in population assessments. Subsistence harvest typically occurs in association with fisheries targeting other species and is generally low. The 2022 subsistence harvest estimate was 192 fish in the Bonneville Pool, 71 fish in The Dalles Pool, and 12 fish in the John Day Pool.

Steelhead and Salmon

- Steelhead caught upstream of The Dalles Dam from November 1-June 30 are counted as part of the A/B-Index summer steelhead return. There are no specific harvest limits for steelhead in winter season fisheries, but the steelhead catch is low averaging 51 fish annually in The Dalles and John Day Pools combined since 2008 with no recorded catch during the winter gillnet fishery in the past nine years, although there has been some harvest in spring fisheries. The highest observed catch since 2001 was 306 in 2008. Because of generally low steelhead harvest in the winter gillnet fishery, no specific management actions regarding steelhead are expected.
- Steelhead caught in the Bonneville Pool from November 1 through March 31 are counted as winter steelhead. There is no specific harvest limit for winter steelhead, but harvest is generally low. Winter steelhead harvest has averaged 104 fish per year since 2001 and was 40 fish in 2022. Because harvest is generally low, no specific management actions regarding steelhead are expected to be needed.
- Chinook are not expected to be present during the winter gillnet fishery.

2023 TREATY INDIAN WINTER FISHERIES

- A setline fishery occurs each January in all three Zone 6 pools under permanent regulations through January 31. This fishery generally has low effort and catch. The setline catches were above average in the Bonneville Pool, average in the John Day Pool, and below average in The Dalles Pool. The Bonneville Pool setline catch was the highest in recent record, but the Dalles and John Day catches were within past ranges. A gillnet fishery was set in The Dalles Pool from February 4 through February 6 and in the John Day Pool from February 1 through February 13. Preliminary catch estimates through Wednesday are shown in the table below. These include both ticketed landings and direct to public sales. There may be some landings in the last few days that have not been recorded yet. No steelhead have been recorded caught in winter gillnet fishing to date.

Table 1. Preliminary Sturgeon Harvest to Date and Modeled Additional Catch with proposed fisheries.

Reservoir	January Setline Total	Gillnet to date	Total to date	Modeled additional Gillnet Catch	Total after Planned Fisheries	Guideline	Remaining	% of Guideline Harvested after planned fisheries
Bonneville	485	0	485	0	485	675	190	71.9%
The Dalles	65	185	250	197	447	560	113	79.8%
John Day	16	24	40	136	176	210	34	83.8%
Total	566	209	775	333	1,108			

- Gillnet catch rates generally start out slow and increase over time as water temperature and effort increase.
- In 2022, The Dalles Pool saw relatively high catch rates while catch rates in the John Day Pool were modest. There have been recent overages in The Dalles Pool which is why a more precautionary approach is being taken this year. The total guideline in the John Day Pool has only been reached in two out of the last seven years.
- Decisions on Bonneville Pool sturgeon fisheries will be made later.
- Estimates of steelhead harvest in platform fisheries are not available yet and will be reported when available. Normally, catches and effort are very low in the winter.

The four Columbia River treaty tribes will adopt regulations consistent with the following:

<i>2023 Treaty Indian Winter Season Commercial Gillnet Fishery (John Day Pool)</i>	
Season:	Extend the ongoing commercial gillnet fishery through 6 PM Monday February 20 (7 additional days for 19.5 days total)
Area:	The John Day Pool only
Gear:	Gillnets with no minimum mesh size restriction
Sanctuaries:	Closed areas include standard closed standard dam and river mouth areas applicable to gillnet gear
Allowable Sales:	Salmon (any species), steelhead, shad, yellow perch, bass, walleye, catfish, and carp may be sold or retained for subsistence. Sturgeon from 43 to 54 inches fork length in John Day Pool may be sold or kept for subsistence purposes. Fish landed during the open periods are allowed to be sold after the period concludes.
Additional:	24-hour quick reporting required for Washington buyers, pursuant to WAC 220-352-315 except that landings must be reported within 24-hours of completing the fish ticket. Oregon buyers are required to electronically submit fish tickets.

<i>2023 Treaty Indian Winter Season Commercial Gillnet Fishery (The Dalles Pool)</i>	
Season:	6 AM Monday February 13 to 6 PM Tuesday February 14 (1.5 days)
Area:	The Dalles Pool only
Gear:	Gillnets with no minimum mesh size restriction
Sanctuaries:	Closed areas include standard closed standard dam and river mouth areas applicable to gillnet gear
Allowable Sales:	Salmon (any species), steelhead, shad, yellow perch, bass, walleye, catfish, and carp may be sold or retained for subsistence. Sturgeon from 43 to 54 inches fork length in The Dalles Pool may be sold or kept for subsistence purposes. Fish landed during the open periods are allowed to be sold after the period concludes.
Additional:	24-hour quick reporting required for Washington buyers, pursuant to WAC 220-352-315 except that landings must be reported within 24-hours of completing the fish ticket. Oregon buyers are required to electronically submit fish tickets.

- The expected sturgeon catch in The Dalles Pool fishery at the end of the planned opening is 447 fish based on last year’s catch rates which were higher than normal. The expected sturgeon catch at the end of the John Day Pool fishery is 176 based on recent average catches per day (2020-2022). The expected catch of steelhead is zero.
- Catch will be monitored to ensure the tribal fisheries remain within management limits. The tribes expect to set additional fishing time after this period or may extend this period if appropriate. The tribes will take action to close fisheries early if harvest limits are projected to be met early.

FUTURE MEETINGS

- The tribes do not request any additional hearings beyond the currently scheduled hearings.