

OREGON AND WASHINGTON DEPARTMENTS OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
JOINT STAFF REPORT - WINTER FACT SHEET NO. 2
Columbia River Compact/Joint State Hearing
January 3, 2024

Fisheries under consideration: Zone 6 recreational white sturgeon

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 these fisheries is the 2023 Sturgeon/Smelt Report (January 13, 2023); the 2024 version is expected to be distributed next week. Joint Staff Reports are 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 January 1, the five-day average outflow at Bonneville Dam is 127 kcfs compared to a five-year average of 142 kcfs. The five-day average water temperature at Bonneville Dam is 44°F compared to a five-year average of 42°F.

STOCK STATUS and MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

White Sturgeon

- White sturgeon stock status and management guidelines for populations and fisheries upstream of Bonneville Dam were presented in Winter Fact Sheet #1, dated October 31, 2023.

2024 RECREATIONAL 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 harvest guidelines.
- At a Joint State Hearing on October 31, 2023 the states modified the Bonneville and The Dalles pools' fisheries by adopting days-per-week retention regulations for these fisheries. The season set for Bonneville Pool allowed retention on Mondays, Wednesdays, Saturdays from January 1 through February 7. Similarly, the season set for The Dalles Pool includes retention on Mondays, Wednesdays, Saturdays from January 1 through January 29. John Day Pool retention fisheries opened under permanent rules (open seven days per week) on January 1, 2024.
- Weather and water conditions have been conducive to sturgeon angling at the start of the new year. As a result, observed effort and catch rates were very high on the first day of the retention season. Current recreational harvest estimates for 2024 Zone 6 recreational fisheries are presented and compared to current guidelines below:

Table 1. Current recreational sturgeon harvest summary in Zone 6 reservoirs (January 1, 2024).

Pool	Angler Trips	Harvest	Recreational Guideline	Percent of Guideline
Bonneville	992	570	675	84%
The Dalles	482	150	190	79%
John Day	283	16	105	15%

- Bonneville Pool and The Dalles Pool experienced higher than average effort and catch rates on January 1, and projections indicate that these guidelines will be reached soon if action is not taken to close retention. Staff recommend the following closures to stay within the harvest guidelines.

Recommendation - 2024 Bonneville Pool Recreational White Sturgeon Fishery

Effective 11:59 PM Wednesday, January 3 the retention of sturgeon is prohibited in the mainstem Columbia River from Bonneville Dam upstream to The Dalles Dam (Bonneville Pool) and all adjacent tributaries.

- The projected kept catch in Bonneville Pool through Wednesday, January 3 is 650 fish (96% of the guideline).

Recommendation - 2024 The Dalles Pool Recreational White Sturgeon Fishery

Effective 11:59 PM Wednesday, January 3 the retention of sturgeon is prohibited in the mainstem Columbia River from The Dalles Dam upstream to John Day Dam (The Dalles Pool) and all adjacent tributaries.

- The projected kept catch in The Dalles Pool through Wednesday, January 3 is 181 fish (95% of the guideline).
- Given John Day Pool has additional catch remaining on its guideline, this fishery can remain open at this time. Staff will monitor harvest closely and will recommend management action when needed.
- 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. Daily and annual sturgeon bag limits apply to all fisheries statewide.

FUTURE MEETINGS

- A Compact Hearing is scheduled for 10 AM January 23, 2024 via teleconference to consider non-treaty Columbia River commercial smelt fisheries and Zone 6 treaty commercial fisheries.
- A Compact Hearing is scheduled for 10 AM February 13, 2024 via teleconference to consider Select Area (winter, spring, and summer season) and treaty commercial fisheries.
- A hybrid Joint State Hearing is scheduled for 10 AM February 21, 2024 to consider mainstem Columbia River recreational spring Chinook fisheries. The hearing will be held at the City of Vancouver Water Resources Education Center (4600 SE Columbia Way, Vancouver, WA 98661) and a teleconference call-in option will be available.