

**COLUMBIA RIVER INTER-TRIBAL FISH COMMISSION
 JOINT STAFF REPORT - WINTER FACT SHEET NO. 7a
 Columbia River Compact
 February 25, 2026**

<i>Fisheries under consideration:</i>	Zone 6 treaty commercial setline 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 2026 Sturgeon/Smelt Report is available at:

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

RIVER CONDITIONS

- The recent 5-day average river temperature at The Dalles Dam tailrace has averaged 41.6 degrees which is approximately 2 degrees higher than the recent 5-year average for these dates.
- The recent 5-day average outflow at The Dalles Dam is approximately 178.4 kcfs compared to the 5-year average for these dates of 145.0 kcfs.

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 2025 survey was conducted in the John Day Pool and was reviewed by the Sturgeon Management Task Force (SMTF) on January 27.

Steelhead and Salmon

- No chinook or steelhead are handled in sturgeon setline fisheries and are therefore not discussed in this Fact Sheet.

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Zone 6 Sturgeon

- The SMTF, which is a joint state and tribal body, met January 27 to review the stock assessment for the John Day Pool. Current guidelines are presented in the table below.

Pool	Current Zone 6 Harvest Guidelines		
	Overall Guideline	Treaty Commercial	Recreational Retention
Bonneville	2,500	1,250	1,250
The Dalles	1,050	825	225
John Day	315	210	105

- 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.

2026 TREATY WINTER FISHERIES

- 2026 Sturgeon Setline fisheries to date have included the following openings:

Bonneville	The Dalles	John Day
Jan 19-29	Jan 8-17	Jan 8-17
	Feb 2-7	
Feb 12-16	Feb 18-21	Feb 18-21

- Catches through February 21 are shown in the table below. These include both ticketed landings and sales directly to the public. No salmonids were handled by setline gear.

Table 1. Projected Sturgeon Harvest to date.

Reservoir	January/ February Setlines	Guideline	Remaining	% of Guideline Harvested
Bonneville	1,039	1,250	211	83.1%
The Dalles	296	825	529	35.9%
John Day	78	210	132	37.1%
Total	1,413	2,285		

- Catch rates for The Dalles and Bonneville pools have continued to be lower than in recent years although water temperature has been warm and effort has been good. Catch rates for the John Day Pool were the highest observed in recent years for January, but there was no effort in the last opening. Catch rates tend to increase over time throughout the season.
- Catches and effort for steelhead harvest in platform fisheries are normally very low in the winter and will be reported when available.

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

2026 Treaty Indian Winter Season Commercial Setline Fishery (The Dalles and John Day Pools)	
Season:	6:00 AM Thursday February 26 through 6:00 PM on Wednesday March 4, 2026 (6.5 days).
Area:	The Dalles Pool and John Day Pool only
Gear:	Setlines
Sanctuaries:	Closed areas include standard closed areas applicable to setline gear.
Allowed Sales:	Sturgeon between 43 to 54 inches fork length may be sold or kept for subsistence. Fish landed during open periods are allowed to be sold after the period concludes.

Additional:	24-hour quick reporting is 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 receiving tickets pursuant to OAR 635-006-0210.
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- The tribes have used conservative estimates of likely average daily catches based on higher than average observed catches from recent years, which are higher than observed catches so far in 2026.
- The Dalles Pool catch rates in the first opening were 12 fish per day, 20 fish per day in the second opening and 18 fish per day in the third opening. Based on these catch rates, the expected catch in the planned opening would be no more than 130 fish. Catch rates would need to exceed 81 fish per day to exceed the limit and the tribes do not project that catch rates will be this high.
- The John Day Pool catch rate in the first opening was 11 fish per day, which would equate to a catch of 39 fish. The tribes anticipate very little effort in the John Day pool and project catch rates to be no more than 15 fish per day and project any catch would be less than the remaining available.
- The expected catch of steelhead in setline gear is zero.
- Catch will be monitored to ensure the tribal fisheries remain within management limits. The tribes expect it may be possible to set additional fishing time after these openings close.

FUTURE MEETINGS

- The tribes may request a hearing during the week of March 9, if sufficient fish remain on any harvest guideline.

**OREGON AND WASHINGTON DEPARTMENTS OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
JOINT STAFF REPORT - WINTER FACT SHEET NO. 7b
Columbia River Compact/Joint State Hearing
February 25, 2026**

<i>Fisheries under consideration:</i>	Non-treaty The Dalles Pool recreational white sturgeon Non-treaty mainstem commercial smelt
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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 reports relevant to these fisheries are the 2026 Stock Status and Fisheries for White Sturgeon Report (January 21, 2026) and the 2026 Smelt Report (December 22, 2025) available at: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/management/columbia-river/reports> and <https://www.dfw.state.or.us/fish/OSCRP/CRM/jsmreports.asp>

RIVER CONDITIONS

- As of February 23, the current Columbia River water temperature at Bonneville Dam of 42°F is higher than the five-year average for this time in February (39°F). The outflow is about 188.4 kcfs, which is higher than the recent 5-year average of 143.6 kcfs. Visibility is 6.8 feet compared to the five-year average of 6.3 feet.

STOCK STATUS

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

- White sturgeon stock status for populations and fisheries upstream of Bonneville Dam was presented in Winter Fact Sheet #1, dated November 13, 2025.

Columbia River Smelt (Eulachon)

- Columbia River smelt stock status was presented in Winter Fact Sheet #3, dated January 8, 2026.

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

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

- Management guidelines for white sturgeon fisheries upstream of Bonneville Dam were presented in Winter Fact Sheets #1 and #5b.

Columbia River Smelt (Eulachon)

- Smelt management guidelines were presented in Winter Fact Sheet #3, dated January 8, 2026.

2026 NON-TREATY FISHERIES

Recreational White Sturgeon – Zone 6

- 2026 recreational white sturgeon retention seasons and management considerations were presented in Winter Fact Sheets #1 and #5b.
- During the Compact/Joint State hearing on February 11, the states took a precautionary approach and opened only one retention day (Monday, February 16, 2026) in Bonneville and The Dalles pools given the expectation for high levels of effort and harvest. An estimated 50 fish were harvested in The Dalles Pool during this fishery.

- During the February 19 Joint State hearing, the states added two more retention days (Sunday, February 22 and Thursday, February 26) in The Dalles Pool given there was a balance of 225 fish.
- Effort on Sunday, February 22, was slightly higher than expected, but catch was as expected with 83 fish harvested in The Dalles Pool fishery. Given this result, staff expect that catches for this coming Thursday will remain within previous projections.
- Current recreational sturgeon guidelines and harvest estimates for 2026 Zone 6 recreational fisheries are summarized below (as of February 25, 2026):

Pool	Angler Trips	Harvest	Recreational Guideline	Percent of Guideline
Bonneville	1,582	982	1,250	79%
The Dalles	670	133	275	48%
John Day	929	99	105	94%

- Based on the expected level of effort and catch, and the projected balance remaining on the harvest guideline, staff recommend adding one additional day of opportunity in The Dalles Pool.

<i>Recommendation - 2026 The Dalles Pool Recreational Sturgeon Fishery</i>	
Season:	Tuesday, March 3 1 day
Area:	Mainstem Columbia River from The Dalles Dam to John Day Dam, and all adjacent tributaries
Allowable Catch:	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 (applicable to any/all sturgeon retention fisheries)
	Annual bag limit: Two fish (applicable to any/all sturgeon retention fisheries)

- With this recommendation, the expected catch in The Dalles Pool is projected to total 253 fish (92% of the guideline).
- If the recommendation is adopted, staff will assess harvest after the already scheduled retention fishery on Thursday, February 26, and will recommend management action if needed.
- Green sturgeon are not present upstream of Bonneville Dam and therefore are not expected to be handled during these fisheries.
- 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 downstream of the dam tailraces. Daily and annual sturgeon bag limits apply to all fisheries statewide.

Columbia River Commercial Smelt Fishery

- The pre-season framework provided by the Washington and Oregon Eulachon Management

Plan 2nd [Edition](#) (WOEMP), which considers recent trends and abundances of run sizes as well as expectations for the upcoming run, placed state-managed fisheries within Harvest Phase 2, with a target harvest rate of 2%.

- At the Compact Hearing on January 8, 2026, the states adopted commercial smelt fishing periods, running three days per week (Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays) starting Monday, January 12 through Thursday, February 19 and two days per week (Mondays and Thursdays) Monday, February 23 through Thursday, March 19, with the intent to assess the potential for additional opportunity in-season.
- There were no landings through February 5. Landings averaged greater than 600 pounds per delivery between February 9 and February 19. On Monday, February 23, a total of 249 pounds was landed. To date, 28,560 pounds have been harvested in the mainstem Columbia River commercial smelt fishery.
- Since landings have exceeded 400 pounds per day over a minimum of three periods, state-managed fisheries have been further upgraded into Harvest Phase 3, which entails a 5% harvest rate.
- Due to the higher allowed harvest rate, staff are recommending an expansion of the commercial fishery back to three periods per week, consistent with fisheries that occurred in 2024 and 2025.

Recommendation: 2026 Mainstem Commercial Smelt Fishery

From Monday March 2 through Thursday March 19, the mainstem commercial smelt fishery will also be open on Wednesdays with the same daily open hours, area, gear, allowable sales, and miscellaneous regulations as for the previously adopted periods.

All other previously adopted regulations for this fishery remain in effect.

- While the presence of smelt in the mainstem Columbia River appears to have decreased this week, this recommendation would maintain the conservative approach used to stay within harvest limits prescribed in the WOEMP and would continue to provide smelt for the markets.

Tributary Recreational Smelt Fisheries

- After commercial landings indicated the run was large enough to support recreational harvest, Washington set recreational smelt fisheries for February 18 and February 21 in the lower Cowlitz River. A total of 114,675 pounds were harvested on these two days. Washington will continue assessing the run to determine if future dates can be approved.
- Currently, there are no recreational smelt fisheries scheduled in the Sandy River. If smelt are observed in the Sandy River, Oregon will evaluate the potential for recreational fisheries at that time.

FUTURE MEETINGS

- No additional Compact/Joint State hearings are scheduled at this time. Joint staff will monitor fisheries and recommend additional hearings as needed.