

OREGON AND WASHINGTON DEPARTMENTS OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
JOINT STAFF REPORT: WINTER FACT SHEET NO. 8
Columbia River Joint State Hearing
April 5, 2012

Fisheries under Consideration: Recreational salmon downstream of Bonneville Dam

Water Conditions

- The Willamette River crested at 15.8 feet and is currently at 15.4 feet (Morrison gauge) with a projected drop to 11.3 feet by Monday April 9. Water clarity is currently less than 1.0 foot (Willamette Falls) and water temperature is currently 48° F.
- The Columbia River crested at 16.0 feet and is currently at 14.9 feet (Vancouver) with a projected drop to 11.1 feet by Tuesday April 10. Discharge at Bonneville Dam is currently at 346 kcfs (136.5 kcfs of which is spill) compared to a 5-year average discharge of 215 kcfs for this date. Water visibility is 3.0 feet compared to the 5-year average for this date of 4.2 feet. Water temperature is currently 44.0° F compared a 5-year average of 45.4° F for this date. So far, monthly (Jan-Apr) average water temperatures have been colder than both the 5 and 10-year averages.

Stock Status

- Bonneville Dam passage of Chinook through April 4 totals 49 adults. Passage at Bonneville averages less than 1% complete through April 4, and has been late-timed for six of the past ten years. The average 50% passage date is May 7, ranging from April 24 to May 12 over the past ten years. It is still too early in the run to make any conclusions regarding run size.

Lower Columbia River Recreational Fishery

- The Columbia River downstream of Bonneville Dam is scheduled to close for Chinook retention effective Saturday April 7 (tomorrow). The area from Bonneville Dam upstream to the Oregon/Washington border is scheduled to be open for Chinook retention through May 2.

- Through March, angler effort was tracking at 69% of expectations, while catch rates were much lower. So far in April, effort and catch rates have been minimal due to poor weather and water conditions.

Preliminary Summary of the Lower Columbia Recreational Fishery during Feb 1 – Apr 6, 2012.			
	Angler Trips	Total Kept Catch	UR Catch (kept + rel mort)
Feb	8,188	37	20
Mar	41,983	1,634	1,060
Apr 1-6 (proj.)	~4,000	125	83
Total	~54,200	1,796	1,163

- Preliminary catch estimates of spring Chinook (all stocks) in the Columbia River downstream of Bonneville Dam through March 31 total 2,024 fish (1,671 kept) from 50,171 angler trips.

- The projected catch for April 1-6 is only 150 fish (125 kept) due to the poor water conditions.

- Of the total projected catch (kept and released) through April 6 (2,174 fish), about 1,380 are estimated to be upriver stock. The kept and release mortality for upriver fish is estimated at 1,163 fish, or 9% of the 12,700 available for the recreational fishery downstream of Bonneville Dam prior to a run update.
- Fishing conditions are expected to improve slightly in the upcoming week, which may result in increased angler effort and success.
- Given the large remaining balance of upriver fish, many options exist for additional recreational fishing opportunity in the lower river. Unfortunately, predicting catches beyond next week is difficult without knowing if, and how much, river conditions will improve. Therefore, staff is proposing extending the fishery one additional week which poses little risk given current conditions and avoids setting fisheries beyond staff's ability to project catches.

2012 Mainstem Columbia River Spring Chinook Recreational Fishery - Staff Recommendation	
Downstream of Bonneville Dam	
Season:	Extend the ongoing fishery from Saturday April 7 through Friday April 13, 2012, except closed Tuesday April 10 (6 days)
Area:	Buoy 10 upstream to Beacon Rock (boat and bank) plus bank angling only from Beacon Rock upstream to the Bonneville Dam deadline. Legal upstream boundary defined as: "A deadline marker on the Oregon bank (approximately four miles downstream from Bonneville Dam Powerhouse 1) 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 salmonids per day, but only one may be a Chinook. Only adipose fin-clipped fish may be kept. All other permanent regulations apply.
Additional regulations:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective through June 15, 2012 for the mainstem Columbia River salmon and steelhead fishery from the Rocky Point/Tongue Point line upstream to OR/WA border, it is unlawful when fishing from vessels which are less than 30 feet in length (substantiated by Coast Guard documentation or Marine Board registration) to totally remove from the water any salmon or steelhead required to be released. • In Washington, on the mainstem Columbia River below Bonneville Dam, anglers may not possess in the field fish mutilated so that size, species or fin clip cannot be determined until the angler has reached their automobile or principle means of land transportation and has completed their daily angling. • Effective through May 15, 2012, the mainstem Columbia River will be open for retention of adipose fin-clipped steelhead and shad ONLY during days and seasons open for retention of adipose fin-clipped spring Chinook. • Effective through June 15, 2012, on days when the mainstem Columbia River recreational fishery below Bonneville Dam is open to retention of Chinook, the salmonid daily bag limit in Oregon and Washington Select Areas will be the same as mainstem Columbia River bag limits. On days when the mainstem Columbia River fishery is <u>closed</u> to Chinook retention, permanent salmonid bag limit regulations apply. 	

- The proposed extension would continue the ongoing fishery, and provide six additional days of opportunity. Staff would recommend a hearing on Thursday April 12, to review catch and consider additional opportunity beyond April 13. This step-wise approach to season extensions is conservative and allows for more accurate projections of future fisheries.

- The catch estimate for the proposed fishery is 1,500 Chinook (1,245 kept), including 875 upriver mortalities. Through April 13, the projected upriver mortalities would total 2,038 fish, or 16.1% of the 12,700 available for the recreational fishery downstream of Bonneville Dam prior to a run update. The corresponding upriver impact rate would be 0.077%, or 11% of the 0.666% pre-update impact rate allowed for the mainstem recreational fishery downstream of Bonneville Dam.

Future Meetings

- Staff is recommending a Compact hearing be scheduled for 1 PM Monday April 9, 2012 and a Joint State hearing be scheduled 11 AM Thursday April 12, 2012.