

COLUMBIA RIVER INTER-TRIBAL FISH COMMISSION
JOINT STAFF REPORT - WINTER FACT SHEET NO. 3b
Columbia River Compact/Joint State Hearing
January 24, 2023

Fisheries under consideration:

Zone 6 treaty commercial fisheries

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 is the 2023 Sturgeon/Smelt Report (January 13, 2023) 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 river temperature at The Dalles Dam has averaged 39 degrees over the past 5 days which is close to the 5-year average.
- The recent 5-day average outflow at The Dalles Dam is 137 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 are rotated 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 January 22, a total of 703 winter steelhead, including 311 unclipped, have been counted at Bonneville Dam (44% unclipped). The total count is the second lowest to date in the last 10 years and the total unclipped count is the third 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 32 summer steelhead (10 unclipped) have been counted at The Dalles Dam and 186 summer steelhead (69 unclipped fish) have been counted at McNary Dam. These fish are 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

- The Sturgeon Management Task Force which is a joint state tribal body reviews stock assessment information and harvest guidelines for one of the Zone 6 reservoirs each year. This

year the Task Force recommended continuing the target average exploitation rate of 5% which equates to the same harvest guidelines in use over the past three years.

- The harvest guidelines in place for 2023 are shown in the table below.

Pool	Treaty Commercial Guideline	Recreational Retention Guideline	Total
Bonneville	675	675	1,350
The Dalles	560	190	750
John Day	210	105	315
Total	1,445	970	2,415

- 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 is 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 2021. 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. This year’s catches to date are below average in the Bonneville and John Day pools, and near average in The Dalles Pool; however, they are within past ranges. Current sturgeon catch estimates for the season are shown in the table below. These include both ticketed landings and direct to public sales. The tribes expect additional catches in the January setline fishery of 40 sturgeon in the Bonneville Pool, 10 sturgeon in The Dalles Pool, and 15 sturgeon in the John Day Pool. Salmon and steelhead are not harvested in setline fisheries.

Reservoir	January Setline to Date	Expected Additional Setline catch	Total Setline	Modeled Gillnet Catch	Total after Planned Fisheries	Guideline	Remaining	% of Guideline Harvested
Bonneville	97	40	137	0	137	675	538	20.3%
The Dalles	34	10	44	210	254	560	306	45.4%
John Day	16	15	31	146	177	210	33	84.3%
Total	147	65	212	356	568			

- Gillnet catch rates generally start out slow and increase over time as water temperature and effort increase.
- Average past catch rates indicate the John Day Pool guideline may be reached in about 20 days and the fishery guideline in The Dalles Pool may be reached in about seven days. As a precautionary approach, the initial plan is for a 2.5-day fishery in The Dalles Pool and a 12.5-day fishery in the John Day Pool. Actual catch rates are impacted by weather, river conditions, and effort. If there are remaining available fish after the planned opening, then additional fishing time will be scheduled. For any additional fisheries, expected catch rates will be adjusted based on actual fishery performance.
- In 2022, The Dalles Pool saw relatively high catch rates while catch rates in the John Day Pool were modest. There have been 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</i>	
Season:	6 AM Wednesday February 1 to 6 PM Monday February 13 (12.5 days)
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</i>	
Season:	6 AM Saturday February 4 to 6 PM Monday February 6 (2.5 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 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 Platform and Hook and Line Fishery</i>	
Season:	6 AM Wednesday February 1 to 6 PM Saturday March 18
Area:	All of Zone 6
Gear:	Hoop Nets, Dip Nets, Hook and Line
Sanctuaries:	Closed areas include standard closed standard dam and river mouth areas applicable to platform and hook and line gear
Allowable Sales:	Salmon (any species), steelhead, shad, yellow perch, bass, walleye, catfish, and carp may be sold or retained for subsistence. Sturgeon from 38 to 54 inches fork length in the Bonneville Pool and from 43 to 54 inches fork length in The Dalles and John Day Pools may be kept for subsistence purposes. Sturgeon within the legal-size limit and caught in the platform and hook and line fishery may only be sold only if caught during the open period and open Pool of an open gillnet fishery. 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 intent of the platform fishery regulation is to allow any sturgeon caught incidentally with platform or hook and line gear to be sold if they are caught in a Pool with an open commercial gillnet fishery and to allow the sale of any steelhead that may be caught.
- The expected sturgeon catch in the Dalles Pool fishery at the end of the planned opening is 254 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 177 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 request a Compact Hearing on February 8 or 9 if there is an opportunity for remaining fish on The Dalles Pool guideline or if adjustments are needed John Day Pool fishery.