

OREGON AND WASHINGTON DEPARTMENTS OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
JOINT STAFF REPORT: WINTER FACT SHEET NO. 11
Columbia River Compact/Joint State Hearing
April 12, 2017

<i>Fisheries under Consideration:</i>	Recreational salmon downstream of Bonneville Dam Select Area commercial fisheries
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Stock status and management guidelines for 2017 Chinook fisheries were presented in Winter Fact Sheet #5 (February 23, 2017).

- Adult Chinook passage at Bonneville Dam through April 10 totals 217 fish. Based on the pre-season forecast and 5-year average timing, about 1,600 fish would be expected at Bonneville Dam by this date. The (5-yr ave) 50% passage date at Bonneville Dam is May 7.
- Test fishing conducted on April 9 indicates Chinook abundance in the lower mainstem Columbia continues to increase, with 7.8 Chinook per drift observed compared to 6.0 per drift on April 2. Peak Chinook per drift rates observed in recent years include 2.5 in 2015 (April 5th) and 2.7 in 2016 (April 3rd)
- Columbia River conditions as measured at Bonneville Dam are currently much higher, colder, and more turbid than recent 5-year averages for the first half of April. Current outflow is 400 kcfs, which is nearly 40% higher than average. Water temperature currently measures 47° F, which is colder than the average of 49° F. Visibility is 2.0 feet compared to the average of just over 4.0 feet. The river stage at Vancouver is currently 12.9 feet and is forecasted to crest at 14.5 feet on April 15 (Action Stage is 15.0 feet and Flood Stage is 16.0 feet).

Mainstem Columbia River Spring Chinook Fishery - Below Bonneville Dam

- The lower Columbia River (LCR) recreational spring Chinook fishery closed effective Tuesday April 11, following a 4-day (April 7-10) in-season extension.
- Due to poor fishing conditions through early April, kept catch and upriver mortalities were well below pre-season modeling expectations. The estimated Chinook catch through Monday April 2 was 82 kept adult fish and 6 released from 10,578 angler trips. Steelhead catch included 20 fish kept and 43 released.
- Fishing conditions and catch rates improved this past week (April 3-10) with 1,052 Chinook kept and 117 released from 11,549 angler trips, for a season total of 1,134 kept and 117 released Chinook from 22,127 angler trips. Total steelhead catch through April 10 included 35 fish kept and 18 released.
- Upriver mortalities through April 10 are estimated to total 702 adult Chinook, or 10% of the 6,905 available to this fishery prior to a run update.
- Given the river conditions and indications of increasing Chinook abundance, effort and catch is expected to increase moving forward, but remains dependent on river conditions. To facilitate an orderly progression for the fishery, staff recommends shifting to a days-per-week approach for future fishery openings. This will provide extended recreational opportunity when Chinook abundance is high while allowing time to estimate catches prior to potential subsequent openings.

<i>Staff Recommendation: 2017 LCR Recreational Spring Chinook Fishery</i>	
Season:	Thursday April 13 through Sunday April 16 (4 days)
Area:	<p>Buoy 10 upstream to Beacon Rock (boat and bank) plus bank angling only from Beacon Rock upstream to the Bonneville Dam deadline.</p> <p>Legal upstream boat boundary defined as: “A deadline marker on the Oregon bank (approximately four miles downstream from Bonneville Dam Powerhouse One) in a straight line through the western tip of Pierce Island to a deadline marker on the Washington bank at Beacon Rock.”</p> <p><u>Except no angling is allowed within a closure area near the mouth of the Lewis River. This closure area is defined as: A line from a marker on the lower end of Bachelor Island through USCG buoy Red #4 to the Oregon shore, downstream to a line from the lower (north) end of Sauvie Island across the Columbia River to the downstream range marker (0.7 miles downstream of the Lewis River) and continuing along the wing jetty to the Washington shore.</u></p>
Daily Bag limit:	<p>Two adult salmonids per day, but only one may be a Chinook.</p> <p>Only adipose fin-clipped fish may be kept. All other permanent regulations apply.</p>
Additional Rules:	<p>Effective through May 15, the Columbia River will be open for retention of adipose fin-clipped steelhead from Buoy 10 to the Highway 395 Bridge and shad from Buoy 10 to Bonneville Dam <u>only</u> during days and in areas open for retention of adipose fin-clipped spring Chinook.</p> <p>Effective through June 15, when the 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.</p>

- Estimating future catch is complicated by unstable weather and river conditions. Therefore, staff is only capable of providing a range for estimated handle of between 1,200-2,400 spring Chinook for the proposed extension, dependent on environmental conditions. Combined season-total upriver mortalities (kept and release mortalities) should not exceed 2,200 fish, or 32% of the pre-season allocation.
- Shifting to a days-per-week structure provides a controlled and systematic approach for progression of the season while allowing staff to manage within the buffered upriver allocation for this fishery. Additional weekly fishing periods will be considered prior to the run update.
- Given the significant balance of upriver mortalities, an alternate season approach would be to open the fishery effective tomorrow (April 13) and continue uninterrupted until the pre run-update allocation is achieved. Considering catch estimates are produced on a weekly basis, this is a more challenging approach for staff and could result in the need for a short notice closure announcement with a higher risk of exceeding the upriver Chinook allocation.

Select Area Commercial Fisheries

- The 2017 winter/spring/summer seasons were adopted at the January 31, 2017 Compact hearing. Additional fishing periods have been added through Compact/Oregon State action.
- Winter season fishing periods are currently scheduled to conclude later this week (April 13-14) with a final period set for Oregon State waters in Blind Slough.
- Combined Select Area landings through April 11 (includes additional periods) total 583 Chinook, or 81% of the recent 5-year average harvest of 721 spring Chinook. The catch includes an estimated 76 upriver spring Chinook.
- Ex-vessel price has remained high averaging \$12.25 per pound last week.
- Recent reduced-area openings in upper Youngs Bay and upper Blind Slough have yielded improved, but modest catches. Upriver spring Chinook interceptions did increase in the April 10 Youngs Bay period but staff believes some limited additional winter fishing time can be provided heading into the scheduled start of the spring season on April 20.

<i>Staff Recommendation: 2017 Select Area Commercial Fisheries</i>
<p>Modify the winter season Select Area commercial fisheries to include additional fishing periods as follows:</p> <p><u>Youngs Bay (upstream of Alternate Hwy 101 Bridge):</u></p> <p>8:30 AM to 11:30 AM Thursday April 13 (Oregon State Action)</p> <p>11 AM to 2 PM Monday April 17 (Oregon State Action)</p> <p>The open fishing area extends from the Alternate Highway 101 Bridge upstream to the upper boundary markers at the confluence of the Youngs and Klaskanine rivers, including the lower Walluski River upstream to the Highway 202 Bridge.</p> <p><u>Blind Slough only:</u></p> <p>7 PM Thursday April 13 to 7 AM Friday April 14 (Compact Action) (opens concurrent waters downstream of the Blind Slough Railroad Bridge)</p> <p>7 PM Monday April 17 to 7 AM Tuesday April 18 (Oregon State/Compact Action)</p>
<p>*All other previously adopted regulations specific to each site remain in effect.</p>

- Although reduced in area and time, the proposed fishing periods provide some additional opportunity while limiting impacts to upriver stocks. With the proposed additions, the proportion of upriver impacts accrued in winter season fisheries is expected to remain within the recent-year average.

Future Meetings

- If the staff proposal for the LCR recreational fishery is adopted, a hearing is recommended for Wednesday April 19 via teleconference to review stock status and consider the recreational spring Chinook fishery downstream of Bonneville Dam.