

OREGON AND WASHINGTON DEPARTMENTS OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
JOINT STAFF REPORT - WINTER FACT SHEET NO. 6
Columbia River Compact/Joint State Hearing
February 19, 2026

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| <i>Fisheries under consideration:</i> | Non-treaty mainstem recreational salmon Non-treaty Select Area recreational salmon Non-treaty The Dalles Pool recreational white sturgeon |
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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 Stock Status and Fisheries for Spring Chinook, Summer Chinook, Sockeye, Steelhead and Other Species Report (February 2, 2026) 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 17, the current Columbia River water temperature at Bonneville Dam of 42°F is higher than the five-year average for this time in February (38°F). The outflow is about 178 kcfs, which is higher than the recent 5-year average of 149.3 kcfs. Visibility is 7 feet compared to the five-year average of 6.3 feet.

STOCK STATUS

Upriver Spring Chinook

- The upriver spring Chinook run is defined as all spring Chinook destined for areas upstream of Bonneville Dam plus Snake River summer Chinook. Chinook passing Bonneville Dam between January 1 and June 15 are managed as upriver spring Chinook. Snake River spring/summer Chinook and upper Columbia spring Chinook are components of this run and are federally-listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Spring Chinook returning to other tributaries upstream of Bonneville Dam are part of this run but are not ESA-listed. Based on the recent ten-year average, Bonneville Dam passage is usually 50% complete by May 12. Over the past ten years, adult returns have averaged 126,247 fish (range 73,105 to 187,816).

Willamette Spring Chinook

- Willamette River spring Chinook exhibit broader migration timing than upriver spring Chinook. Spring Chinook destined for areas upstream of Willamette Falls and the Clackamas River are in the Upper Willamette River ESU which is listed under the ESA. Over the past ten years, adult returns have averaged 43,203 fish (range 27,292 to 55,391).

Lower Columbia Spring Chinook

- Spring Chinook returning to other lower Columbia River tributaries are destined for the Cowlitz, Kalama, Lewis, and Sandy rivers (CKLS) and the Select Areas. CKLS populations are in the Lower Columbia ESU which is listed under the ESA; hatchery spring Chinook produced for Select Area fisheries are not considered part of the ESU. Over the past ten years, the combined adult return of these lower river stocks has averaged 20,112 fish (range 6,803 to 33,577) to the tributaries and 12,878 fish (range 2,717 to 21,468) to the Select Areas.

Winter Steelhead

- The geographic range of winter steelhead includes all tributaries of the Columbia River upstream to Fifteenmile Creek on the Oregon shore and the Klickitat River on the Washington shore. Steelhead handled downstream of Bonneville Dam during November through April, and those handled in Bonneville Pool from November through March are managed as winter steelhead. Over the past ten years, wild winter steelhead returns have averaged around 15,344 fish (range 9,440 to 25,396).

Summer Steelhead

- Upriver summer steelhead pass Bonneville Dam from April through October of each year. For the purpose of fisheries management, fish passing from April through June are categorized as upriver Skamania-stock steelhead, and steelhead passing from July through October are categorized as A-/B-Index steelhead.
- Steelhead handled in Bonneville Pool fisheries from April through June are managed as upriver Skamania-stock. Over the past ten years, upriver Skamania steelhead returns averaged 5,530 fish (range 1,917 to 12,238).
- Steelhead handled in fisheries between The Dalles Dam and the OR/WA state line (upstream of McNary Dam) during January through June are considered A-/B-Index fish from the prior run year for the purpose of fisheries management. Over the past ten years, A-/B-Index steelhead passage over Bonneville Dam averaged 117,496 fish (range 67,752 to 171,806).
- Preseason forecasts for the 2026 return of summer steelhead are not yet available; however, the expectation is for abundance to be low again.

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.

| <i>Columbia River Adult Salmon Returns: Actual and Forecasted</i> | | | | |
|---|---|------------------|----------------|------------------|
| | | 2025 Forecast | 2025 Return | 2026 Forecast |
| Spring Chinook | Upriver Total * | 122,500 | 154,703 | 147,300 |
| | Upper Columbia | 21,500 | 22,193 | 16,300 |
| | <i>Upper Columbia natural-origin</i> | <i>2,200</i> | <i>4,002</i> | <i>2,400</i> |
| | Snake River Spring/Summer | 56,200 | 82,973 | 61,600 |
| | <i>Snake River natural-origin</i> | <i>9,800</i> | <i>12,864</i> | <i>12,500</i> |
| | Lower River Total | 95,000 | 97,799 | 81,400 |
| | Total Spring Chinook | 217,500 | 252,502 | 228,700 |
| | <u>Area-specific detail</u> | | | |
| | Willamette River | 51,200 | 50,527 | 43,700 |
| | <i>Willamette River hatchery-origin</i> | <i>36,600</i> | <i>40,582</i> | <i>32,000</i> |
| | Sandy River | 7,300 | 7,123 | 6,400 |
| | Select Areas** | 16,600 | 19,818 | 13,700 |
| | Cowlitz River | 13,700 | 11,377 | 9,300 |
| | Kalama River | 3,000 | 4,235 | 3,300 |
| | Lewis River | 3,200 | 4,719 | 5,000 |
| | Wind River** | 4,900 | 8,529 | 6,100 |
| | Drano Lake/Little White Salmon River** | 7,600 | 12,235 | 11,300 |
| | Hood River** | n/a | 3,005 | n/a |
| | Klickitat River** | 1,200 | 1,480 | 1,700 |
| | Deschutes River** | n/a | 1,953 | n/a |
| | John Day River** | n/a | 2,111 | n/a |
| | Umatilla River** | 2,600 | 2,395 | n/a |
| | Yakima River** | 2,600 | 3,765 | 3,600 |
| Summer Chinook | Upper Columbia | 38,000 | 43,642 | 41,000 |
| Sockeye | Total Sockeye | 350,200 | 167,549 | 274,900 |
| | Wenatchee | 94,000 | 63,716 | 85,200 |
| | Okanogan | 248,000 | 101,551 | 184,000 |
| | Yakima | 5,000 | 839 | 2,300 |
| | Deschutes | 100 | 175 | 100 |
| | Snake River | 3,100 | 1,268 | 3,300 |
| Winter Steelhead | Wild | 17,400 | 17,445 | 17,400 |
| <i>Note: Italicized wild and hatchery components are included in the stock total</i> | | | | |
| * Upriver totals are developed by TAC for use in management of U.S. v. OR fisheries. Wild components are included in the stock total. Area-specific estimates for upriver tributaries detailed here are provided by other agencies/entities and may not sum to TAC's upriver abundance estimates. | | | | |
| ** Return to tributary mouth. | | | | |
| 1/26/2026 | | | | |

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

2018–2027 U.S. v. Oregon Management Agreement

- The 2018–2027 *U.S. v. Oregon* Management Agreement (MA) provides the treaty Indian and non-treaty fishery harvest frameworks and harvest rate schedules for salmon and steelhead stocks destined for areas upstream of Bonneville Dam.
- Fisheries are managed to meet the catch balance provision in the MA for upriver spring Chinook which requires mortalities of these fish in non-treaty fisheries to not exceed the total allowable catch available for treaty Indian fisheries.
- Based on the MA and the 2026 preseason forecasts of 147,300 upriver spring Chinook and 12,500 Snake River natural-origin spring Chinook, ESA impacts for 2026 fisheries are limited to 10.0%, with 1.7% for non-treaty fisheries and 8.3% for treaty Indian fisheries.
- To allow for uncertainty in preseason forecasting, the MA requires a 30% reduction from the preseason forecast (i.e., a run-size buffer) to plan and manage the initial phase of the spring Chinook fisheries, which equates to 103,110 upriver spring Chinook. This abundance applied to the 8.3% allowed treaty harvest rate results in an allowable harvest (kept plus release mortalities) of 8,558 adult upriver spring Chinook.

Willamette Spring Chinook Management

- The Willamette River Fisheries Management Evaluation Plan (FMEP) limits annual freshwater fishery impacts on wild Willamette River spring Chinook to $\leq 15\%$.
- The Willamette River FMEP includes a sliding scale for escapement goals based on abundance of hatchery fish which determines the allocation of surplus hatchery spring Chinook to recreational and commercial fisheries downstream of Willamette Falls. The escapement goals are also intended to allow for full recreational fisheries in the upper Willamette River.
- Based on FMEP guidance, an expected 2026 return of 32,800 hatchery spring Chinook, and the FMEP escapement goal of 23,000 hatchery fish, the harvestable surplus totals 9,800 hatchery fish this year. At this level, the entire harvestable surplus is allocated to recreational fisheries while commercial fisheries can harvest up to 1% of the run as incidental catch in non-Willamette spring Chinook target fisheries.

Endangered Species Act

- A Biological Opinion (BO) based upon the management actions outlined in the MA was issued by NMFS in 2018. ESA impact limits based on 2026 preseason forecasts of upriver-origin spring Chinook are discussed above.
- ESA impacts to wild winter steelhead are limited to 2% for all Columbia River non-treaty fisheries. ESA impacts to wild lower river Skamania and wild upriver Skamania-stock summer steelhead in non-treaty fisheries are limited to 2% each. Additionally, ESA impacts to wild A-/B-Index summer steelhead in non-treaty winter/spring/summer fisheries are also limited to 2% on each stock.
- Compliance with ESA-take authorization for fisheries impacting listed lower Columbia River Chinook (spring run) is determined by the ability to perpetuate these stocks individually over time. Hatchery return expectations are reviewed annually to ensure compliance with

escapement goals. The 2026 forecasts for the CKLS rivers are sufficient to meet hatchery escapement goals.

- The Biological Opinion for the Willamette River FMEP provides ESA coverage for take in freshwater fisheries and limits the annual ESA impacts on wild Willamette River spring Chinook to $\leq 15\%$.

2026 Spring Chinook Fisheries Management

- The Oregon and Washington allocation policies for 2026 specific to commercial/recreational ESA-impact sharing and within-recreational sub-allocations are not concurrent.
- Under the WA policy, no more than 70% of the non-treaty allocation can be allocated to the recreational fisheries, and under Oregon rule, no more than 20% of the non-treaty allocation can be allocated to the commercial fisheries.
- Additionally, under the WA policy, no more than 70% of the recreational allocation can be allocated to the recreational fishery downstream of Bonneville Dam, and under Oregon policy guidance, no more than 25% of the recreational allocation can be allocated for fisheries upstream of Bonneville Dam (Bonneville to OR/WA state line, Snake River).
- Therefore, modeling only utilizes 90% of the non-treaty allocation and 95% of the recreational share of upriver spring Chinook ESA impacts. When combined with catch balance provisions in the MA, the following allocations are available for 2026 fisheries:

Prior to an in-season run update, allocation of upriver fish (including release mortalities) for non-treaty fisheries will be:

- 856 unallocated non-treaty
- 5,513 fish for the recreational fishery downstream of Bonneville Dam
- 788 fish for the recreational fishery from Bonneville Dam to the OR/WA state line
- 491 fish for recreational fisheries in the lower Snake River (Washington waters)
- 16 fish for Wanapum tribe (Upper Columbia)
- 394 unallocated recreational
- ≤ 501 fish for Select Area commercial fisheries
- The 2026 fishery structure approach is consistent with the ESA management strategies in the Columbia River Basin – fisheries are managed to limit the impacts to ESA-listed fish while providing harvest opportunity for healthy and harvestable stocks.
- Fisheries are also managed by time and area to reduce the potential for handling ESA-listed species or other stocks of concern.

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.

2026 NON-TREATY FISHERIES

Mainstem Columbia River Spring Chinook Recreational Fisheries

- The Columbia River downstream of the I-5 Bridge is currently open through March 31 for hatchery Chinook under permanent regulations.
- Permanent regulations allow steelhead retention through March 31 from the Buoy 10 line upstream to the OR/WA state line.
- The Columbia River Recreational Advisory Group (CRRAG) provided feedback on the 2026 spring-season fisheries at their meeting on February 4.

| Recommendations: 2026 Mainstem Columbia River Spring Chinook Recreational Fishery | | |
|--|---|--|
| Downstream of Bonneville Dam | | |
| Season: | Sunday March 1 through Wednesday April 8 | 39 retention days |
| Area: | Buoy 10 line upstream to Beacon Rock plus only the Oregon and Washington banks from Beacon Rock upstream to the Bonneville Dam deadline. | 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. |
| Daily Bag Limit: | Two adult hatchery salmonids (Chinook or steelhead) per day, but only one may be a Chinook. Shad may also be retained. All other permanent regulations apply. | |
| Bonneville Dam to Oregon/Washington Border | | |
| Season: | Wednesday April 1 through Sunday April 26 and Saturday May 2 | 27 retention days |
| Area: | Tower Island power lines (approximately six miles below The Dalles Dam) upstream to Oregon/Washington border, plus only the Oregon and Washington banks from Bonneville Dam upstream to the Tower Island power lines. | |
| Daily Bag Limit: | Two adult hatchery salmonids (Chinook or steelhead) per day, but only one may be a Chinook. All other permanent regulations apply. | |

- Model outputs indicate these recommendations could result in 5,819 adult Chinook kept (4,963 upriver spring Chinook mortalities) for the fishery downstream of Bonneville Dam (90% of the pre-update guideline for this fishery) and 704 adult Chinook kept (722 mortalities, all upriver stock) for the fishery upstream of Bonneville Dam (92% of the pre-update guideline for this fishery).
 - The staff recommendation for the fishery downstream of Bonneville Dam provides two more April days compared to the initially-adopted 2025 fishery.
 - The staff recommendation for the fishery upstream of Bonneville Dam provides as many pre-update April days as was adopted in 2025 plus an additional early May weekend day.

- The CRRAG supported the proposed season approaches for both fisheries. Additionally, there was some support by CRRAG members to consider not including the May weekend day within the staff recommendation for the upstream of Bonneville Dam fishery in order to allow for an in-season decision.
- Fishery recommendations were developed to remain within and comply with:
 - Impact limits for species listed under the ESA.
 - The most constraining stock for both fisheries is upriver spring Chinook. Staff estimate the recommended fisheries will accrue 0.39% ESA impacts to upriver spring Chinook for the fishery downstream of Bonneville Dam and 0.05% for the fishery upstream of Bonneville Dam.
 - Fishery-specific ESA impact rate expectations for other species and stocks are expected to remain within the estimates provided in the 2026 Spring/Summer Joint Staff Report in the Winter, Spring, and Summer Season Expectations section.
 - Run-size buffer and catch balance provisions outlined in the MA.
 - Policy guidance and management objectives provided by the Commissions.
- Hand-cast regulations will be in effect for the Washington bank fishery from both Beacon Rock to Bonneville Dam and from Bonneville Dam to Tower Island power lines.
- While a key management goal is minimizing in-season emergency actions, due to the dynamic nature of fisheries, these actions may become necessary to remain within the ESA limits and catch balancing requirements.
- Staff will monitor fisheries in-season. If the fisheries are tracking within preseason expectations, they will remain open until the scheduled end dates. After each fishery closure, staff will review catch data and determine if additional fishing opportunity is feasible.

Select Area Recreational Fisheries

- Permanent angling regulations for Oregon waters within the Select Areas of Youngs Bay and Blind Slough/Knappa Slough are listed in the 2026 Oregon Recreational Fishing Regulations booklet. These waters are open year-round to Chinook salmon (hatchery only during January 1 – July 31), hatchery steelhead, and hatchery coho except for some seasonal tributary closures.
- Permanent Washington recreational fishing rules list waters of Deep River from the mouth to the town bridge as open to Chinook salmon (hatchery only during January 1 – July 31), hatchery steelhead, and hatchery coho the entire year.
- ESA impacts to non-local Chinook and steelhead (including wild fish) are expected to be minimal since the majority of fishing effort is concentrated in upper tidewater areas or in the tributaries.
- To ease enforcement of co-occurring recreational fisheries in Select Areas and the mainstem Columbia River, staff recommends that the daily bag limit in Select Area recreational fisheries be modified to match those of the mainstem when the fisheries are open concurrently.

Recommendation: 2026 Select Area Recreational Fisheries

Effective March 1 – June 15:

On days when the mainstem Columbia River recreational fishery downstream of 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 recreational fishery downstream of Bonneville Dam is closed to Chinook retention, the permanent salmonid bag limit regulations for Select Areas apply.

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.
- Effort on Monday, February 16, was as expected for the Bonneville Pool fishery, but the catch rate was slightly higher, resulting in an estimated harvest of 982 sturgeon. Effort in The Dalles Pool fishery was somewhat lower than expected and the catch rate was similar to expectations; an estimated 50 fish were harvested in this fishery.
- Current recreational sturgeon guidelines and harvest estimates for 2026 Zone 6 recreational fisheries are summarized below (as of February 17, 2026):

| Pool | Angler Trips | Harvest | Recreational Guideline | Percent of Guideline |
|------------|--------------|---------|------------------------|----------------------|
| Bonneville | 1,582 | 982 | 1,250 | 79% |
| The Dalles | 154 | 50 | 275 | 18% |
| John Day | 929 | 99 | 105 | 94% |

- Given these results, there is not enough of a balance remaining on the guideline for Bonneville Pool to add any more retention opportunity this year.
- However, based on the observed catch rate in Monday's fishery, expected level of effort, and the balance remaining on the harvest guideline, staff recommend the following retention sturgeon fisheries in The Dalles Pool.

| <i>Recommendation - 2026 The Dalles Pool Recreational Sturgeon Fishery</i> | | |
|---|--|--------|
| Season: | Sunday, February 22 and Thursday, February 26 | 2 days |
| 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 196 fish (71% of the guideline).
- If the recommendation is adopted, staff will continue to monitor harvest closely, 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.

FUTURE MEETINGS

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