

# Lower Columbia River Sturgeon Annual Update

Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission Meeting

Olympia, Washington  
December 15, 2012

Fish Program

Cindy LeFleur, Fish Program Manager, Region 5  
Brad James, Region 5 Sturgeon Manager



# Purpose

- Provide annual review to the Commission regarding Commission Policy C-3001 “2011-2013 Lower Columbia Sturgeon Management”
- The Lower Columbia white sturgeon population is defined as inhabiting the lower Columbia River (below Bonneville Dam) and associated tributaries and migrates into marine areas, coastal bays and tributaries and Puget Sound

# Annual Review Topics

- Stock status
- Predation rates
- Review in-season management actions
- Accounting of fish left unharvested
- Review of harvest outside lower Columbia River
- By-catch in all fisheries
- Recommended management changes
- Other pertinent information

# Policy Guidance

## 2012 Amendment to the Joint State Accord

- Harvest rate of 16% (10,088 fish) for 2012
- Harvest guideline for 2013 to be determined after assessing population trend relative to management objective of providing population growth



# Population Assessment Tools

- Abundance estimation
  - Two mark and recapture approaches
    - 1) Sample harvest for tag recoveries
    - 2) Research setline survey to obtain recoveries
  - Setline-based estimate
    - Available within a few months
    - Includes all size segments of the population
- Sport fishery CPUE
- Sub-yearling productivity indexing

# Population Estimates – Legal Size Fish

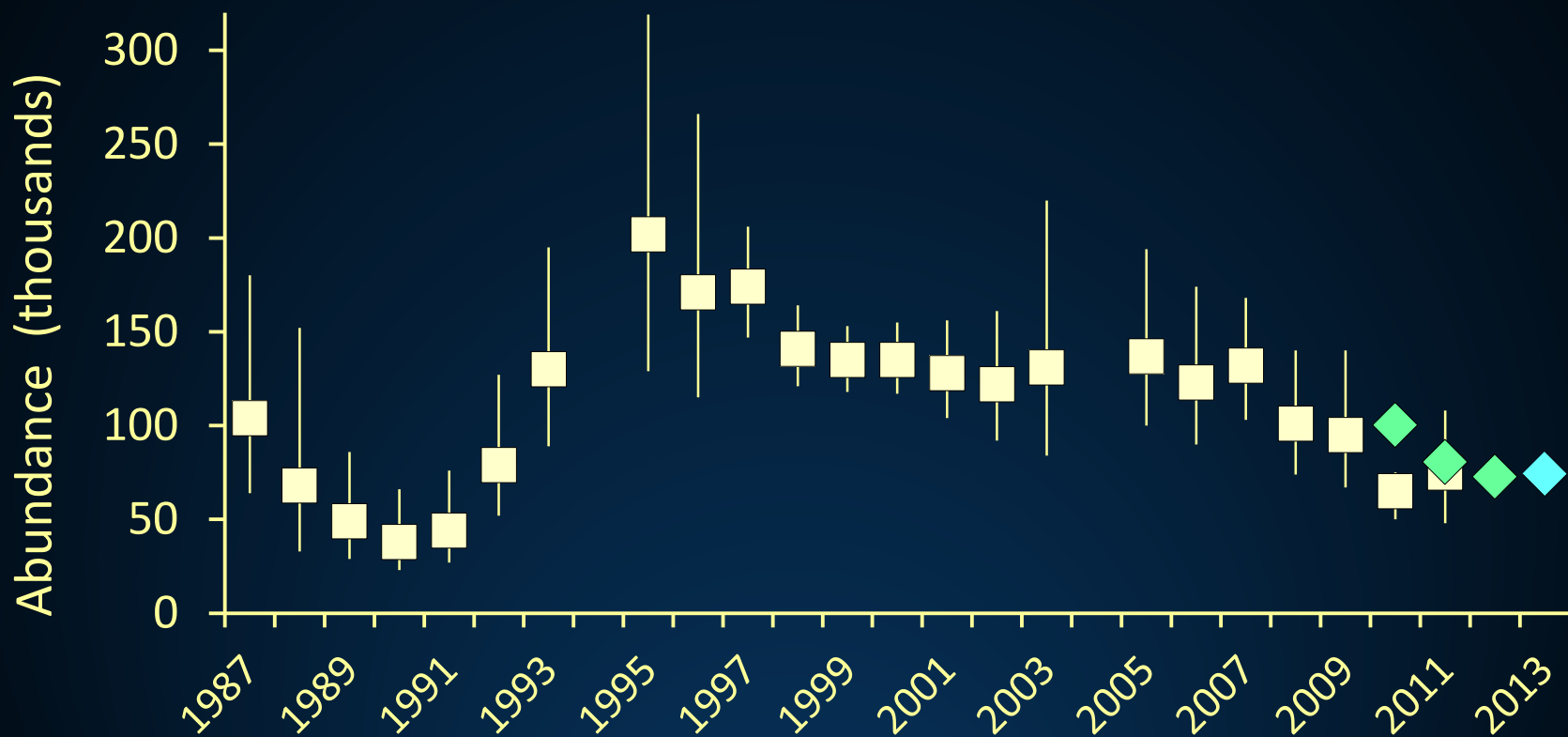
Year	Historic method <sup>1</sup>	Setline method <sup>1</sup>		Harvest guideline
		Actual	Projected	
2008	101,200	N/A	N/A	40,000
2009	95,000	N/A	N/A	40,000
2010	65,300	100,200 <sup>2</sup>	N/A	24,000
2011	72,800 <sup>3</sup>	80,500	77,000	17,000
2012	--	72,700 <sup>3</sup>	65,000	10,400
2013	--	--	74,300 <sup>3</sup>	--

<sup>1</sup> Historic method is of fish present May-July. Setline method is of fish present at start of year.

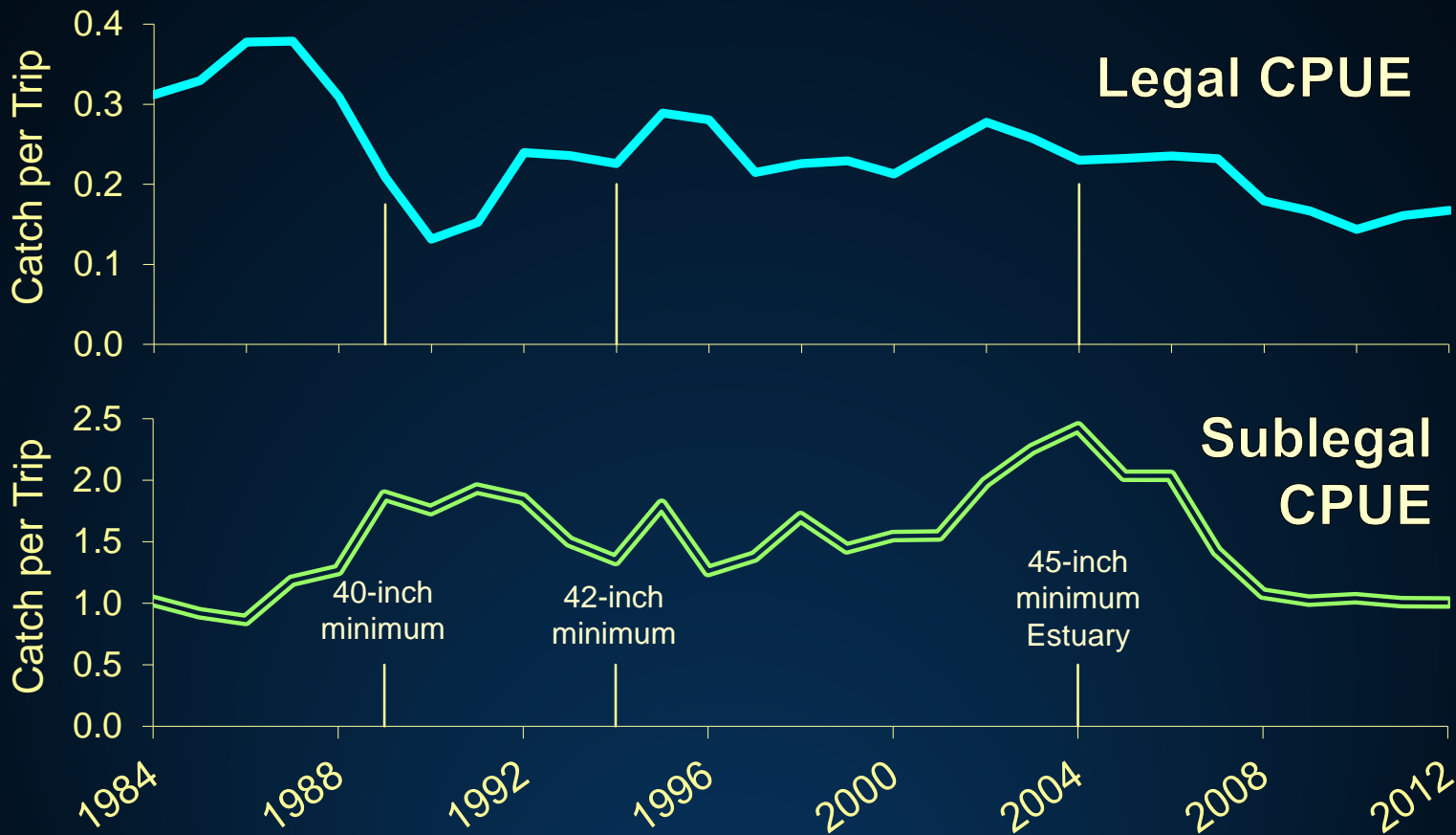
<sup>2</sup> Updated from previously presented value. Revised to represent abundance at start of year.

<sup>3</sup> Preliminary.

# Recent Trends in Abundance Legal-Size Fish

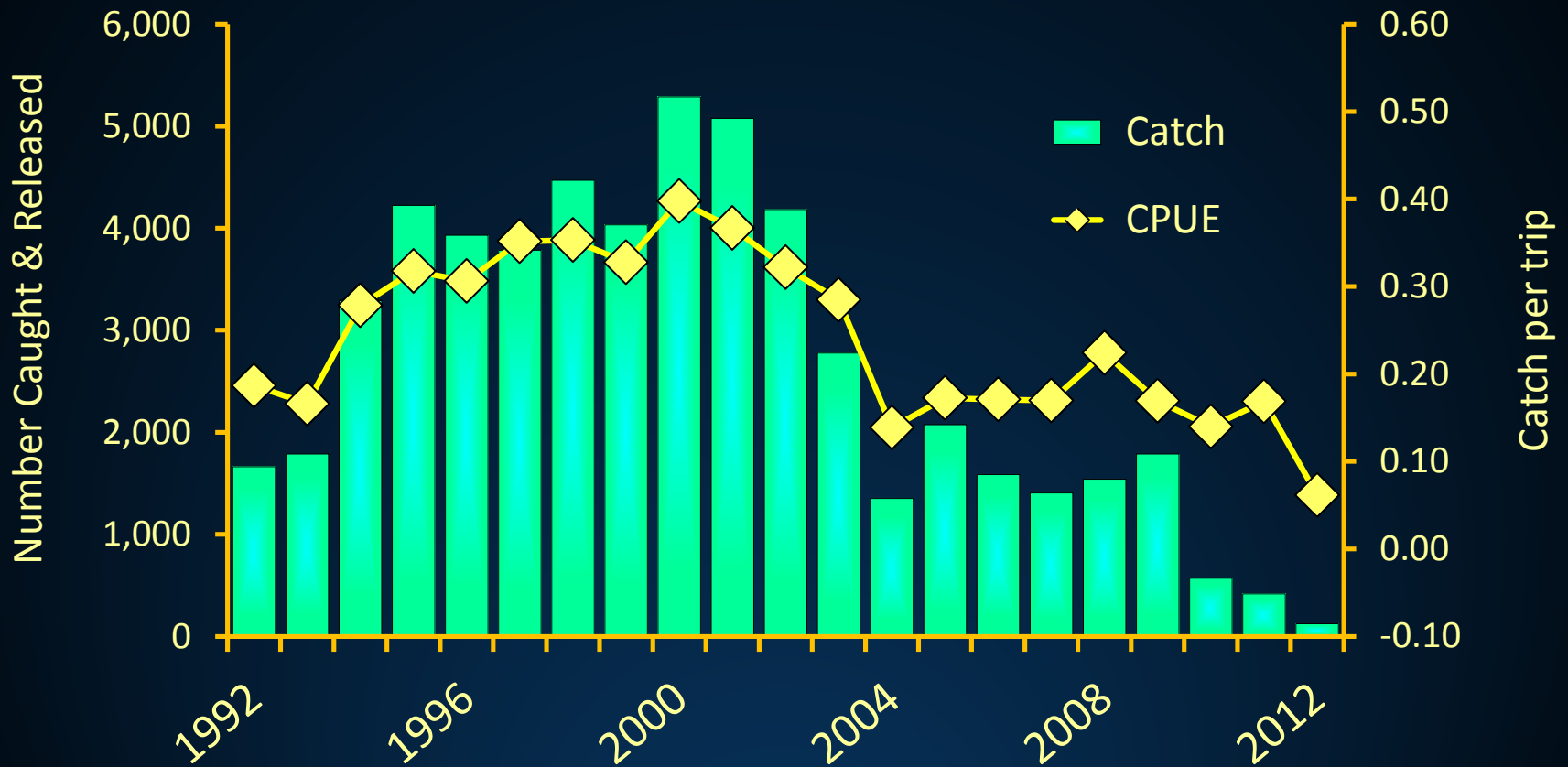


# Sport Fishery Catch Trends

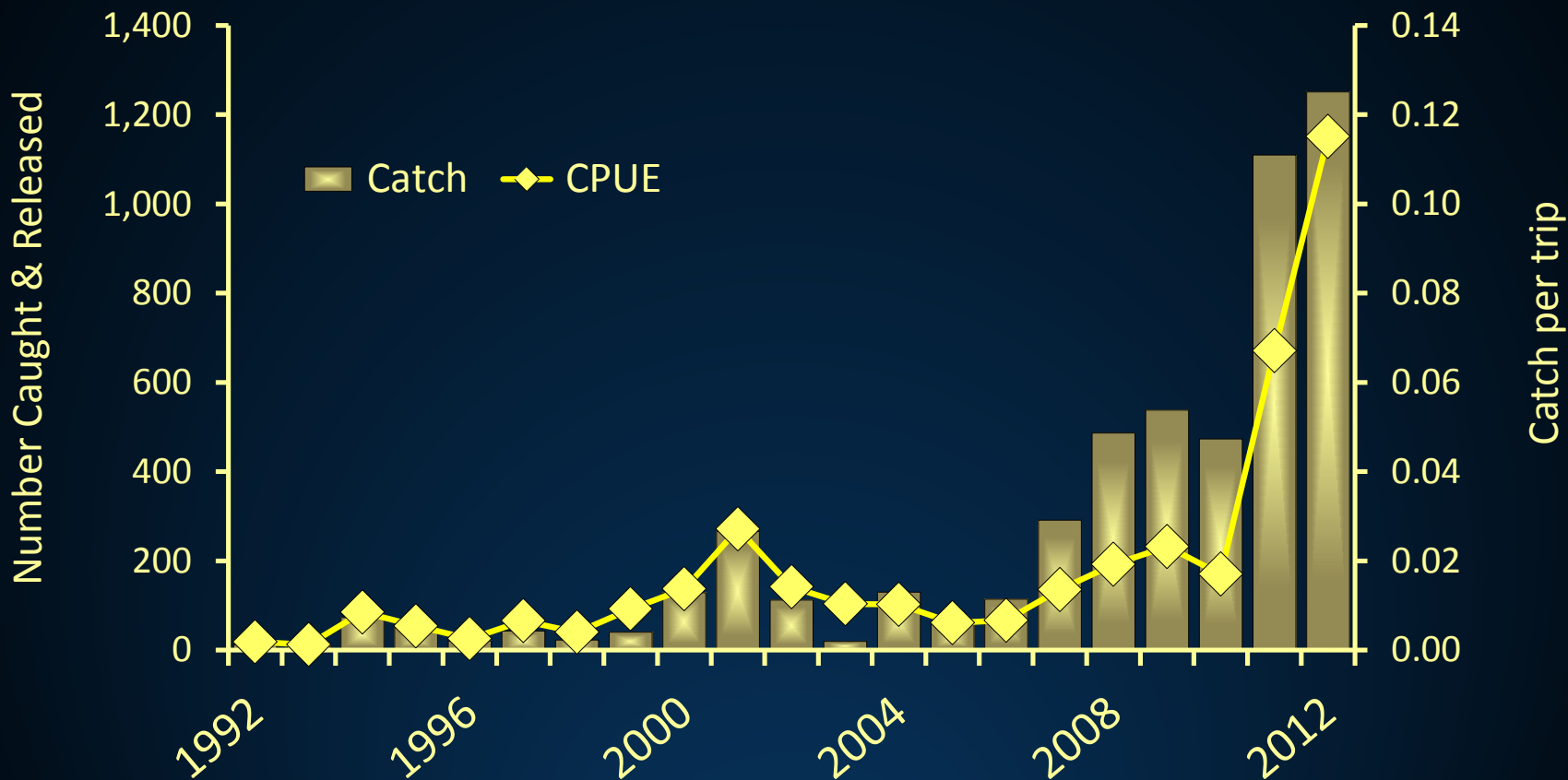




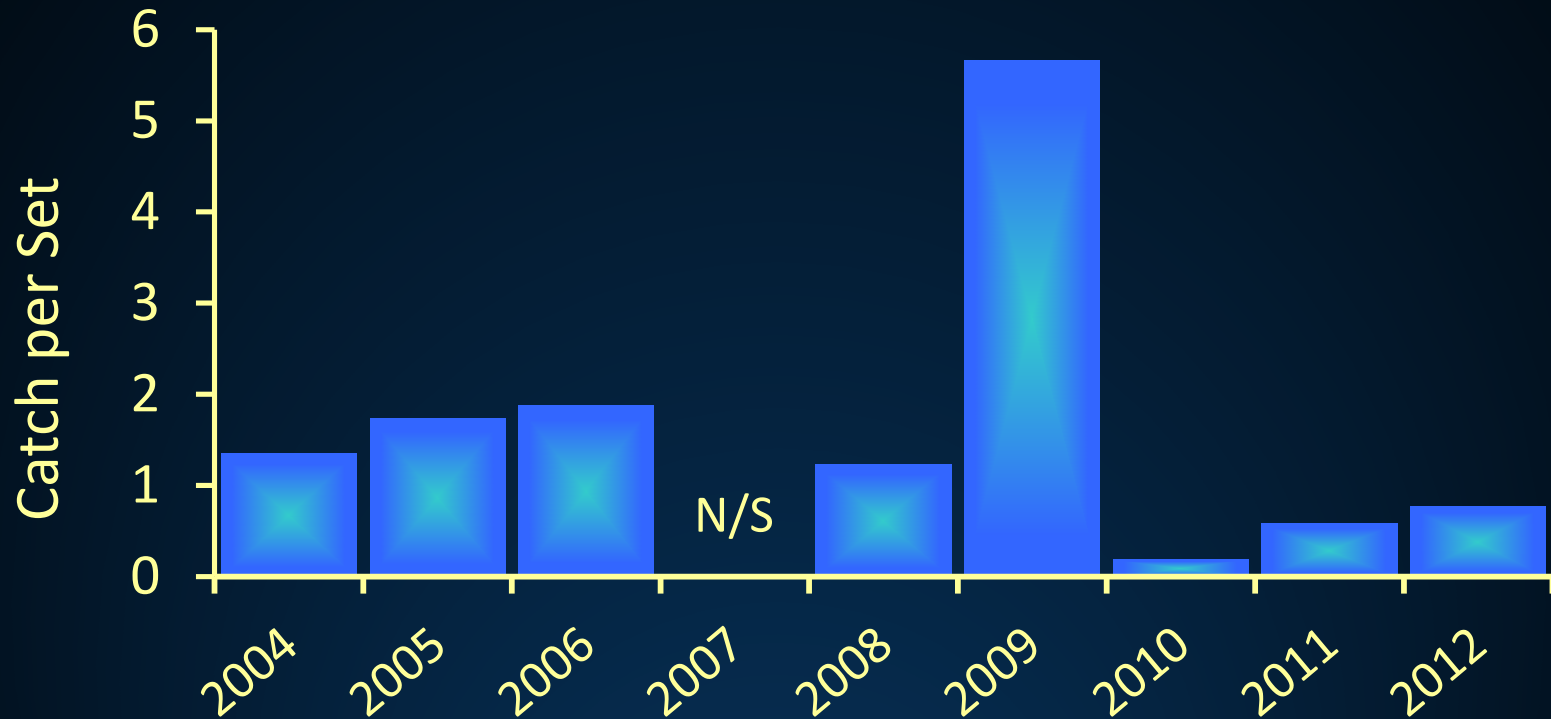
# Over Legal-size Catch Trend Columbia River Gorge



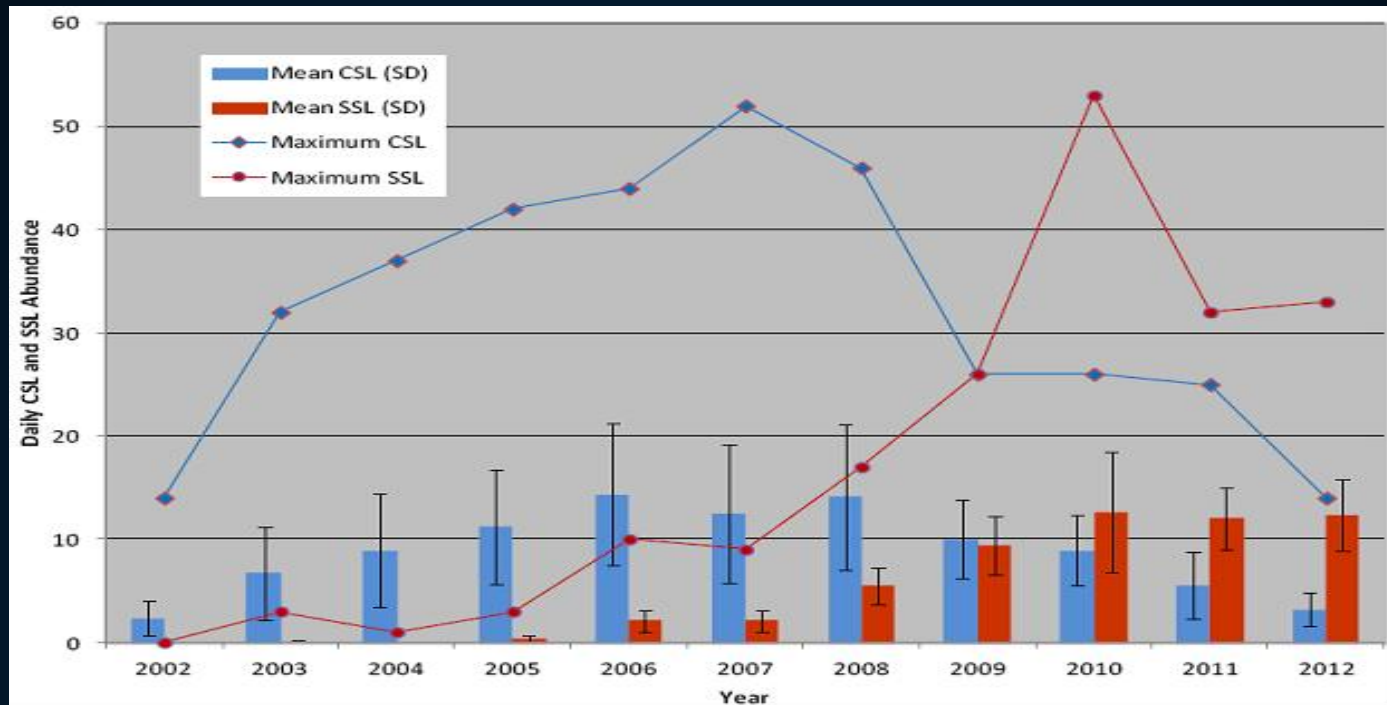
# Over Legal-size Catch Trend Willamette River



# Sub-Yearling Production Index



# Trend in Sea Lion Numbers and Consumption of White Sturgeon USACE Bonneville Dam Observations

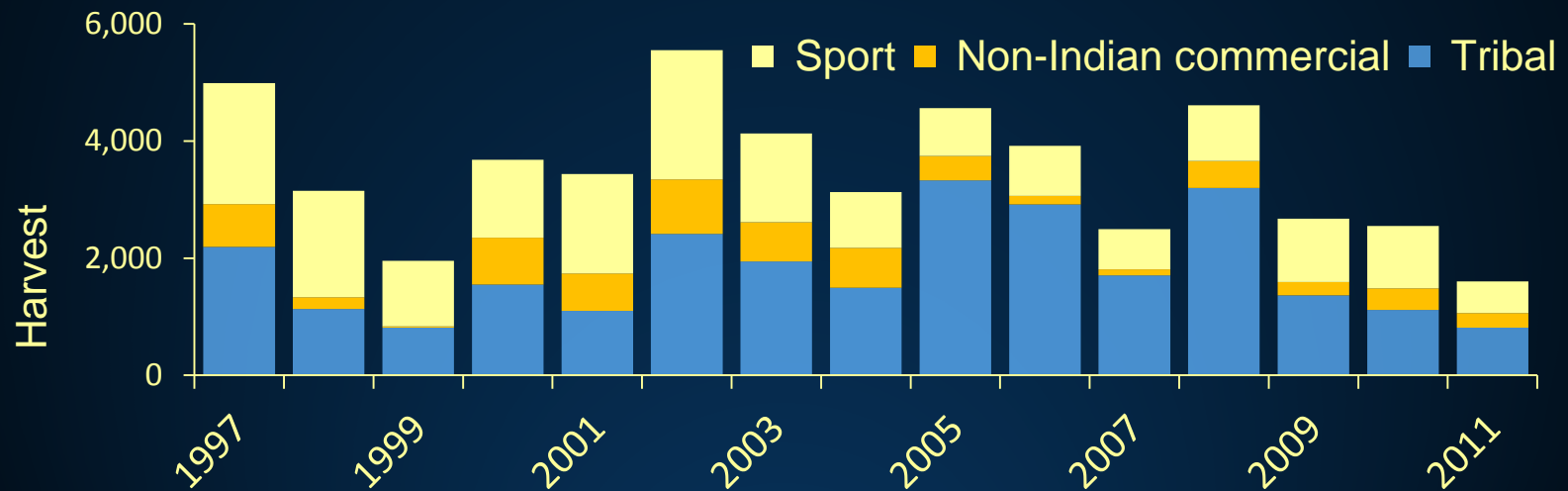


# 2012 Management Lower Columbia River Fisheries

Fishery	Allocation	Actual
Sport – Estuary	4,160	4,466
Sport – Above Wauna	2,080	1,859
Sport – Willamette River	<u>1,768</u>	<u>1,535</u>
Sport total	8,008	7,860
Commercial	<u>2,080</u>	<u>1,906</u>
Combined total	10,088	9,766

# Harvest Outside Columbia River

- 2012 harvest guidelines for Willapa Bay and Grays Harbor reduced by the same 39% as for the Columbia River
- Retention season implemented for Puget Sound, reduced to 2.5 months from year-round



# Sturgeon By-catch

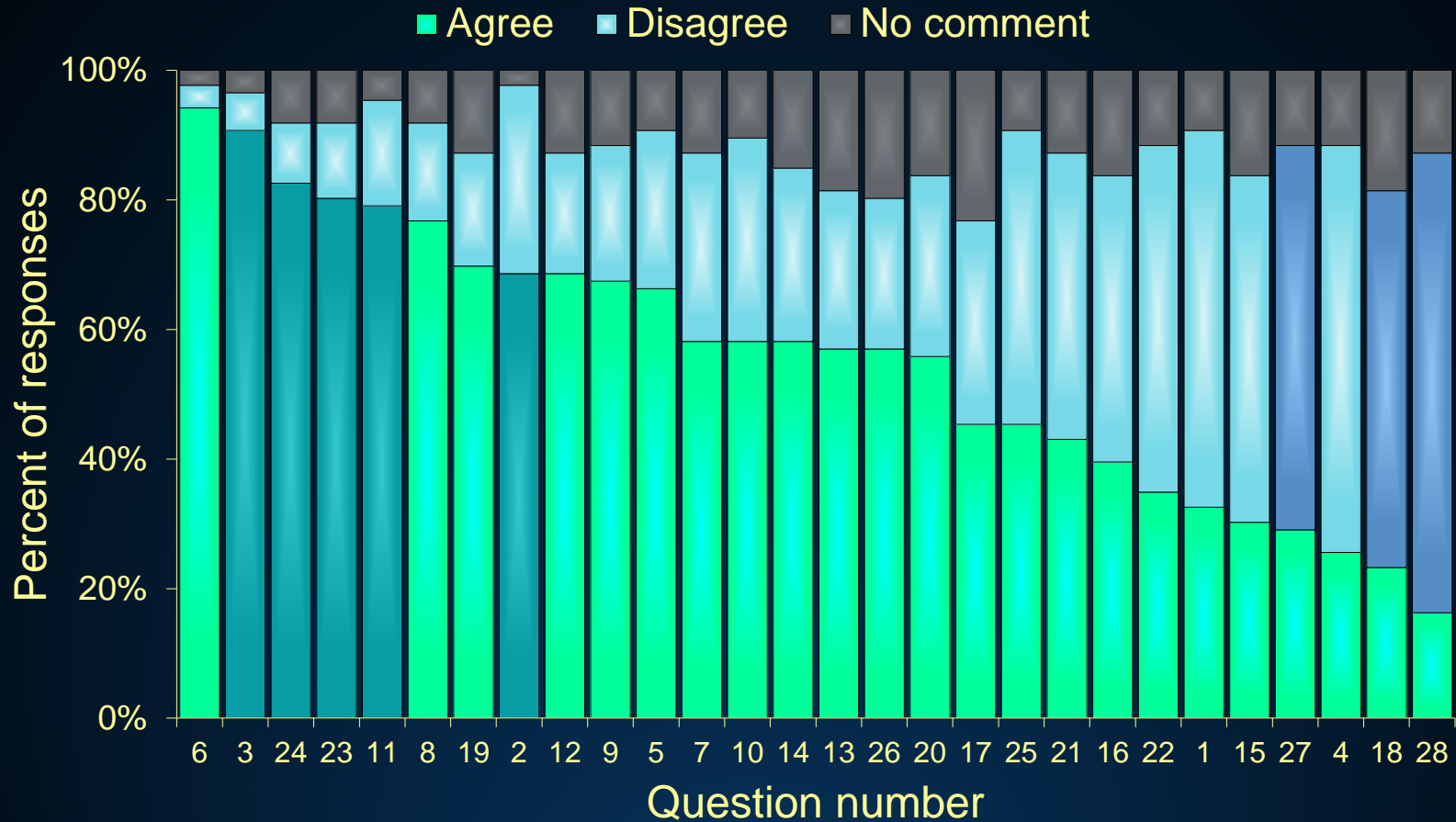
- Commercial and sport fisheries were monitored for by-catch during the fall of 2012
- Preliminary results are consistent with past observations
- A final report will be completed in early 2013

# Public Involvement

- Staff hosted six public meetings on sturgeon management during 2012:
  - Portland (July 17)
  - Longview (July 18)
  - Astoria (July 19)
  - Raymond (July 24)
  - Montesano (July 31)
  - Puget Sound at Mill Creek (July 26)
- A questionnaire was distributed at the meetings covering a broad range of topics – 28 questions
- Topics included management objectives and fishery regulations



# Questionnaire Results



# Other Information

## Zone 6 Management (Bonneville Dam to McNary Dam)

- Managed under *U.S. v Oregon*
- The fish are isolated within each reservoir
  - Considered separate populations
  - Distinct from the lower Columbia River population
  - Healthy enough to support sport and tribal harvest

# Recommended Changes

## Columbia River Fishery Management Workgroup

- Sport/commercial allocation – no change, except reduce the guideline by 10% as a conservation buffer
- Consider non-retention fisheries beginning in 2013
  - Lower Columbia River
  - Washington and Oregon coastal areas
  - Puget Sound

# WDFW 2013-14 Sport Fishing Rule Proposals

- Potential changes included in proposal package for public comment:
  - Catch and release only/changes to open areas
  - Size limit changes
  - 2-fish annual limit
  - Changes to gear requirement (i.e. circle hook required)

# Other Information

## Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission

- September 7, 2012 – adopted 2-fish annual limit effective January 1, 2013
- December 7, 2012:
  - Adopted 1-fish annual limit effective January 1, 2013
  - Adopted rule prohibiting white sturgeon retention in the Columbia River and tributaries downstream of Bonneville Dam and for Oregon coastal estuaries and river systems effective January 1, 2014

# Action Requested

Per Commission Policy C-3001, decision making authority has been delegated to the Director

- Provide guidance to the Director to move forward with developing rules for lower Columbia River and tributaries, Washington coastal estuaries and rivers, and for marine and freshwater areas of Puget Sound

# Thank You

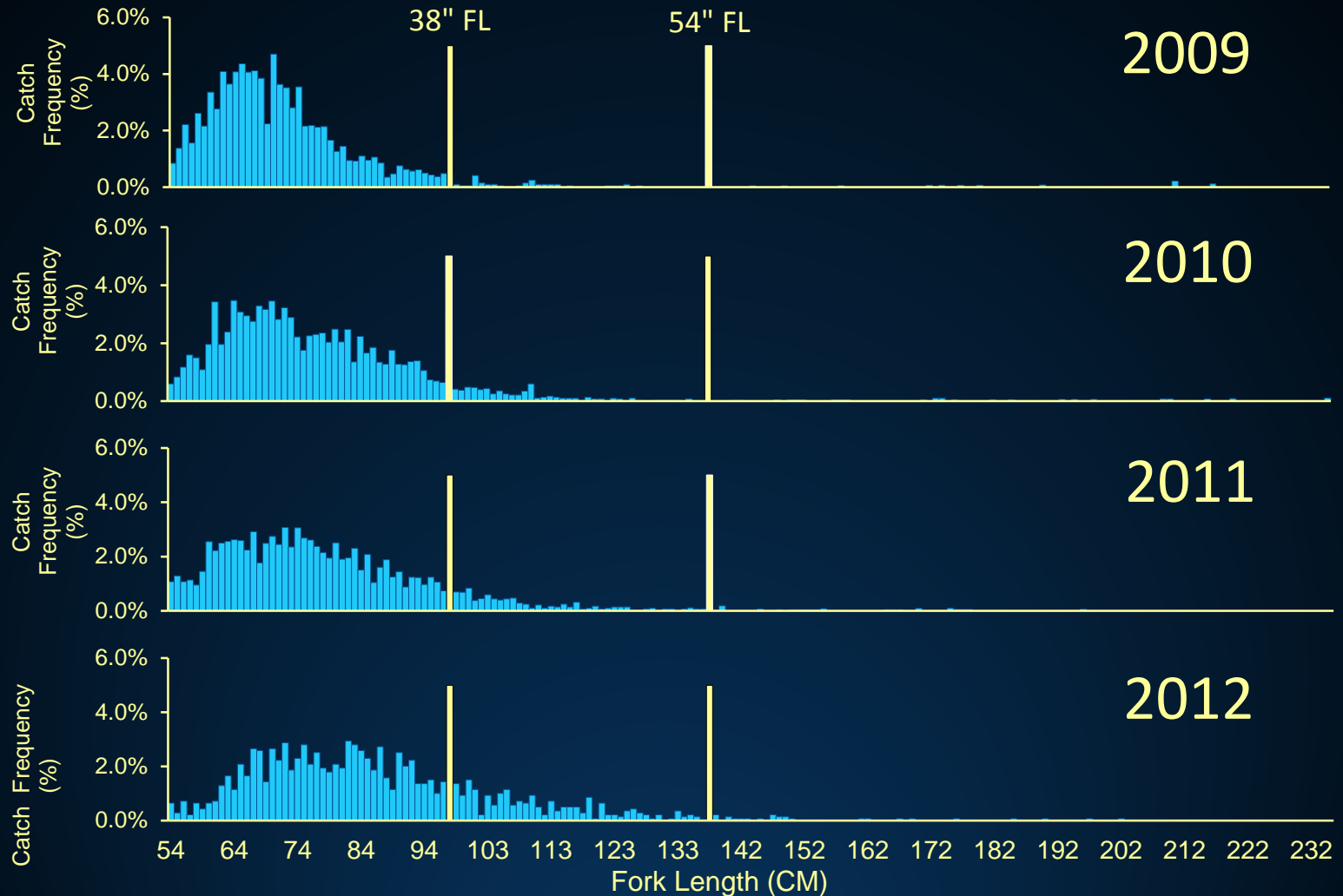


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Additional slides



# Setline Catch-Frequency by Size



# Over Legal-size Catch Trend Columbia River Estuary

