

Reports on Meetings to Develop a Recovery Plan for the Conservation of White Sturgeon in the Fraser River, British Columbia, Canada.

Prepared by Dr. Dave Lane, Malaspina University College, Nanaimo, BC.

Technical Group meeting, Jan 22, 2004

Fourteen technical "experts" were invited to a workshop to define the areas of concern regarding white sturgeon in the Fraser River from the McBride area in the upper river to the mouth in the St. of Georgia. A recovery plan is already in place for the Nechako River, a major tributary of the Fraser, so this river was largely excluded from the discussion. The underlying reason for the meeting was the declaration of white sturgeon as endangered in Canada (the Fraser is the only Canadian River with the species). Attendees represented the provincial Ministry of Water, Lands and Air Protection (MWLAP), Fraser River Sturgeon Conservation Soc. (FRSCS), Consulting Companies, largely biological, Dept. of Fisheries/Aquaculture, Malaspina Univ. College, federal Dept. of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), and First Nations. A preliminary list of 15 areas of concern to the populations in the Fraser were ranked for future consideration. Ranking involved consideration of priorities for possible action and future research needs. Areas that received high rankings included spawning habitat, mainstream and off channel rearing habitats (largely due to gravel extraction and dredging), effects of fishing (catch and release, and poaching), food supply, effects of a hatchery and small population effects (upper river stock). These concerns were taken to a public meeting one week later (see below).

Public forum on the future of white sturgeon in the Fraser River. Held January 29, 2004 in Chilliwack, British Columbia, Canada

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This forum was hosted by the FRSCS, BC Aboriginal Fisheries Commission and the Fraser River Basin Council. About 100 people attended the meeting mostly first nations members, government personnel, fishing guides, fishers and members from the technical workshop (MWLAP, FRSCS, Mal U., DFO, Consultants). Discussions were wide ranging and highlighted the need to develop a recovery plan to satisfy the endangered status that white sturgeon have been given by the federal government including the steps that are to be followed for classification under the Species at Risk Act (SARA), a relatively new federal act to define and protect rare and endangered species in Canada. The concerns developed in the technical meeting (above) were discussed at length. A report is being prepared and will be available in the near future.

Details of both meetings can be obtained by contacting Troy Nelson, email tnelson@lgl.com or Todd Hatfield, email hatfield@solander.bc.ca.

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