5-YEAR REVIEW
Kootenai River Population of the White Sturgeon
(Acipenser transmontanus)

1.0 GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1 Reviewers

**Lead Regional or Headquarters Office:** Pacific Regional Office, Portland, Oregon

**Lead Field Office:** Idaho Fish and Wildlife Office, Spokane, WA

Jason Flory, Spokane, WA, Fish and Wildlife Biologist
Tracy Melbihess, Boise, ID, Chief of Classification and Recovery
Kathleen Hendricks, Boise, ID, Assistant State Supervisor
Christopher Swanson, Boise, ID, Deputy State Supervisor
Gregory M. Hughes, Boise, ID, State Supervisor

**Cooperating Field Office(s):** Not applicable

**Cooperating Regional Office(s):** Not applicable

1.2 Methodology used to complete the review

This 5-year review was conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Idaho Fish and Wildlife Office in Spokane, WA. Data for this review were solicited from interested parties through a Federal Register notice announcing this review on January 22, 2018. We also contacted members of the Kootenai River White Sturgeon Recovery Team, which included individuals from State and Federal agencies, Tribes, Universities, and Canadian agencies, to request any data or information we should consider in our review. Additionally, we conducted a literature search and a review of information in our files.

1.3 Background

**Species:** Kootenai River Population of the white sturgeon (Acipenser transmontanus)

**Date listed/FR citation:** September 6, 1994; 59 FR 45989

**Classification:** Endangered

**Associated Rulemakings:**

Final Designation of Critical Habitat
FR notice: 66 FR 46548
Date issued: September 6, 2001

Designation of Critical Habitat: Interim Rule
FR notice: 71 FR 6383
Date issued: February 8, 2006

Critical Habitat Revised Designation: Final Rule
FR notice: 73 FR 39505
Date issued: July 9, 2008

Species Recovery Priority Number start of the 5-year review: 3C

Recovery Plan: September 1999 Recovery Plan for the Kootenai River Population of the White Sturgeon (Acipenser transmontanus)
Date issued: September 30, 1999

The 1999 Recovery Plan did not contain delisting criteria, and as a result is currently being revised so that it will include delisting criteria.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Most recent status review

Is the last status review for the species fairly recent, within the last 10-15 years, and relatively up to date?


No

2.2 FR Notice citation announcing this status review:

Has an FR notice announcing this review been published?


No

3.0 ASSESSMENT:

3.1 Information acquired since the last status review:
Have you conducted a thorough search for new information regarding your species, including contacting other field offices and regions within the range of the species?

X Yes
No

See 1.2, Methodology used to complete this review.

3.2 Has new information become available since the most recent status review?

X Yes
No

3.2.1 Have you reviewed the most recent status review and become familiar with the information and analyses on which it is based?

X Yes
No

3.2.2 Have you reviewed and assessed the new information?

X Yes
No

3.2.3 Based on your review of the last status review and new information, is the most recent status review still an accurate representation or assessment of the status of the species, its biology, and the threats affecting it?

X Yes
No

We received additional information from the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho regarding the continued implementation of the Kootenai River Habitat Restoration Program and the Conservation Aquaculture Program. While habitat restoration projects have been, and continue to be implemented in the Kootenai River since the last Status Review (Flory 2011), the population status and distribution of Kootenai River white sturgeon remains the same; the same holds true for the Conservation Aquaculture Program (i.e., hatchery-origin sturgeon have been, and continue to be released into the Kootenai River). This information does not alter our understanding of the species’ current status and distribution.

Since the 2011 Status Review, we also received a final report in 2014 which estimated that wild adult Kootenai sturgeon population abundance had declined from approximately 3,000 individuals in 1990 to about 1,000 individuals in 2011 (Beamesderfer et al. 2014). Annual survival rates appeared to have declined from approximately 97 percent prior to
2008 to 85 percent from 2007 to 2010. These latest estimates are the most current information available on the status of the species and indicate a declining trend in the wild population.

4.0 CONCLUSION:

After reviewing the best available scientific information, we conclude that the Kootenai River population of white sturgeon remains an endangered species. The evaluation of threats affecting the species under the factors in 4(a)(1) of The Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.) and analysis of the status of the species in our September, 2011, Status Review remains an accurate reflection of the species current status. The most recent abundance estimate from Beamesderfer (2014) indicated that the wild adult population consisted of approximately 1,000 individuals in 2011 and was declining at a rate of 15% per year. However, recovery actions that address the needs of Kootenai River white sturgeon have been, and continue to be implemented, including large-scale habitat restoration projects in the Kootenai River basin and continued management of Libby Dam operations. Additionally, since 1990 over 275,000 hatchery-origin Kootenai River white sturgeon have been released into the river. In the spring of 2018, the first instance of a hatchery-origin Kootenai River white sturgeon reaching sexual maturity was documented. As time passes, additional hatchery-origin Kootenai River white sturgeon are expected to begin contributing to the spawning population.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTIONS:

1. Continue to implement the conservation aquaculture program.

2. Continue to manage flow and temperature from Libby Dam ensure spawning and rearing conditions are appropriate.

3. Continue to add nutrients to the Kootenai ecosystem.

4. Continue to implement habitat restoration and enhancement projects in the Kootenai basin.

5. Support Kootenai River white sturgeon recovery efforts with research and monitoring that will inform adaptive management, and conduct a public outreach program.
LITERATURE CITED


Current Classification: Endangered

Recommendation Resulting from the 5-Year Review:

- [ ] Downlist to Threatened
- [ ] Uplist to Endangered
- [x] Delist
- [x] No change needed

New Recovery Priority Number:

Review Conducted By: Jason Flory

FIELD OFFICE APPROVAL

State Supervisor, Idaho Fish and Wildlife Office

Approve [Signature] Date 9/25/18