

Response Statement for White Sturgeon

October 22, 2004

Common Name: White Sturgeon

Scientific Name: *Acipenser transmontanus*

Status assessment by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC): Endangered

Reason(s) for status designation provided by COSEWIC: A long-lived species with a 30–40 year generation time and late maturity, that has suffered over a 50% decline in the last three generations. Three of six populations are in imminent threat of extirpation. Extant populations are subject to threats of habitat degradation and loss through dams, impoundments, channelization, dyking and pollution. Illegal fishing (poaching) and incidental catches are also limiting. In addition, a developing commercial aquaculture industry may also impose additional genetic, health and ecological risks to wild populations.

Occurrence: British Columbia

Competent Minister(s):

Minister of Fisheries and Oceans

Provinces and territories to be consulted:

British Columbia

Applicable federal legislation: Fisheries are managed and fish habitat is protected under the *Fisheries Act*.

Conservation activities underway: Recovery plans have been developed for white sturgeon populations in the Kootenay, Columbia and Nechako rivers, and one is under development for Fraser River populations. Harvest has been prohibited since 1994. Fisheries are closed for Kootenay, Columbia and Nechako River systems. The sport fishery in the Fraser is restricted to catch and release and efforts are made to reduce by catch mortality in commercial and First Nation fisheries. Active monitoring, research and stewardship programs are underway for all populations.

How the Minister of the Environment intends to respond to the assessment: The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans will undertake consultations for a period of 9 months with the government of British Columbia, Aboriginal peoples, stakeholders, and the public on whether or not the White Sturgeon should be added to the *List of Wildlife Species at Risk* (Schedule 1) under the *Species at Risk Act*. Information respecting opportunities to comment and updates on the progress of consultations will be posted on the public registry. Following consultations, the Minister of the Environment will forward the COSEWIC assessment of the White Sturgeon to the GIC. The Minister of the Environment will then review the comments received and, following consultation with the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, will make a recommendation to the GIC on whether or not to add the White Sturgeon to the List. The GIC will make a decision within nine (9) months of having received the assessment.