

Nechako White Sturgeon; SARA listing experience for Carrier Sekani First Nations



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Overview

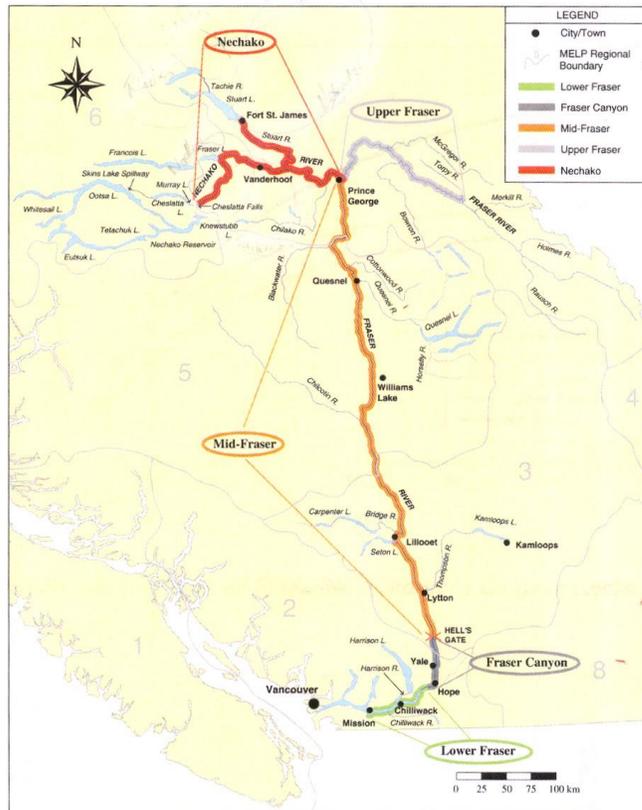
- * Overview of Nechako White Sturgeon species
- * Recruitment failure
- * History of Endangered listing
- * Recovery projects
- * Harm reduction project
- * Impacts to First Nations
- * Pros and Cons to Sturgeon being listed



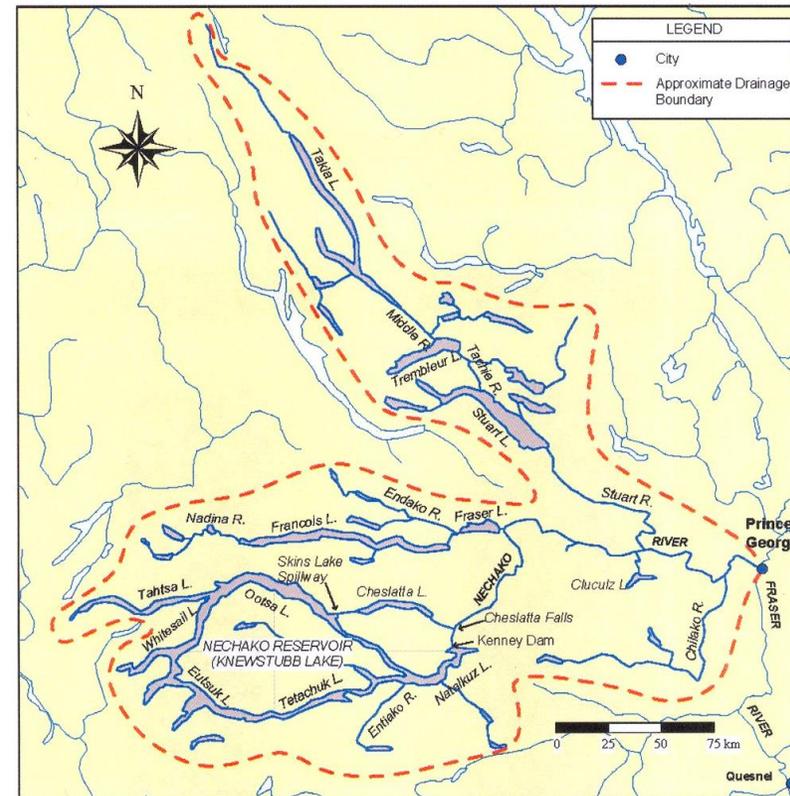
Area of focus



Fraser River



Nechako River



Nechako White Sturgeon

- * Genetically distinct
- * Kenny Dam 1952
 - * Significantly reduced MAD (Watershed Diverted)
- * Alteration of habitat due to flow alterations
- * Recruitment failure
- * Older age class of fish remains



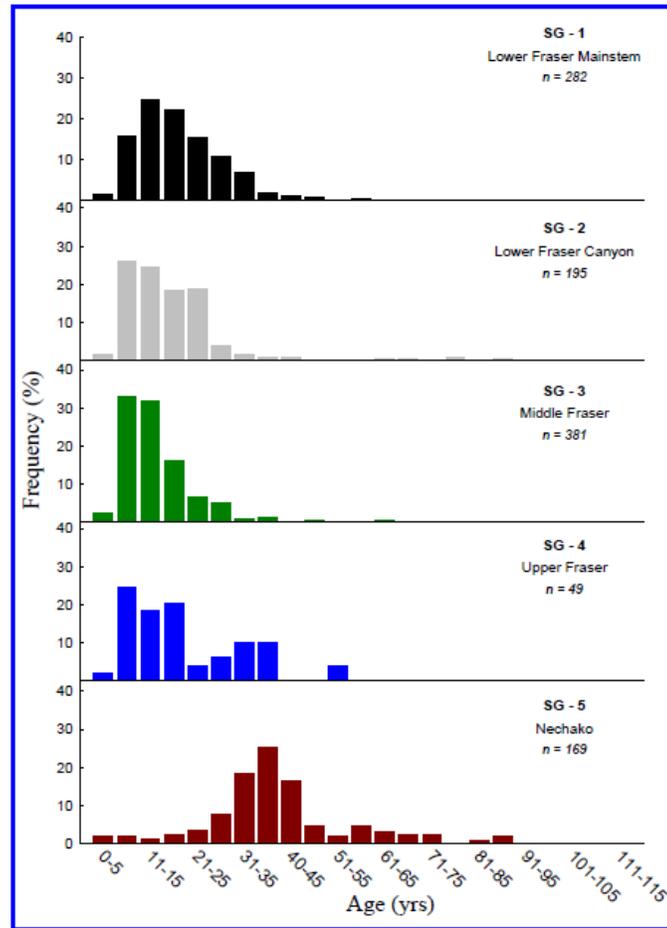
Nechako Population



Lower Fraser

Comparison of Age Composition

Comparison of Age Composition Between Fraser River Stock Groups (SG1-4) and the Nechako River Drainage Stock Group (SG-5)



- * Recruitment failure related to discharge regulation; likely cumulative factors



Process and Listing

- * COSEWIC Endangered (2003)
- * Nechako White Sturgeon Recovery Initiative (NWSRI) formation 1999-2001
 - * Recovery Team/Technical Working Group
 - * Community Working Group (CWG)
- * SARA Schedule 1 (2006)
- * CSTC partner NWSRI since 1999



First Nations commitment to conservation

- * Several CSTC member communities made an informal commitment to go without directed harvests of sturgeon after 1994. This has been followed for the last 24 years.
- * CSTC started work with member communities (early 2000s) to build support for the recovery initiative and work with communities and fishers to reduce harm (incidental by-catch) in salmon fisheries (largely).
- * Species at risk Act listing in 2006; its prohibitions caused confusion and fear for FN fishers conducting their rights-based salmon fisheries.



Current Status



- * COSEWIC reassessments (2012)
- * New Designable Unit (2012)
- * Ongoing Nechako-specific Recovery Plan (2004)
- * National Recovery Strategy – all NSPs/DUs (2014)
- * New population est. for Nechako 600+



CSTC projects



- * Partner Nechako White Sturgeon Recovery Initiative (NWSRI)
- * Spawn monitoring
 - * Telemetry
 - * Acoustic array
 - * Egg mats
 - * Fyke nets
- * Juvenile indexing



Spawn Monitoring program

- * Only known spawning area is near Vanderhoof.
- * Three components to Spawn Monitoring Program:
 - * Telemetry - see how close to spawning area
 - * Egg mats - confirm spawning and eggs viable.
 - * Acoustic array - Confirm timing of spawning, length of stay, depth
 - * Fyke nets – confirm larvae emerging and timing of Spawn

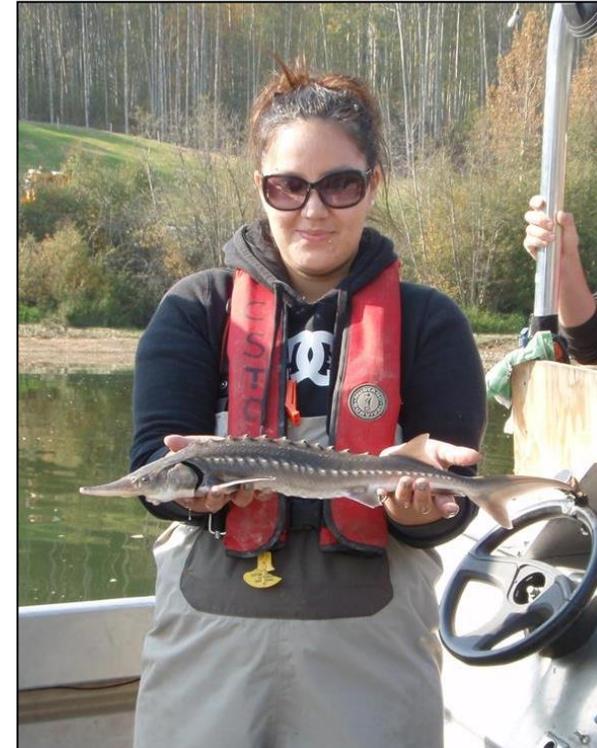


Egg mats, Telemetry, Larvae



Juvenile project

- * Monitor the juvenile population to determine changes in recruitment and success of hatchery releases.
- * Conducted regularly since 2004
- * Setlines preferred method
- * Not as many hatchery juveniles as expected
- * Lower survival than Columbia and Kootenay systems



Contemporary By-catch



- * Extensive historical harvest, use and sale
- * Prominent within culture
- * Contemporary; annual incidental catch of 10-15 Nechako White Sturgeon historically resulted in several mortalities annually.



Developing the Emergency release boat kit

- * Knowledge of encounters is key...
 - * Sturgeon tend to damage nets
- * How do we engage the First Nation fishers?
 - * Presented the CWG with the idea to offer an incentive for fishers to engage ... via the “emergency release boat kit” project



Emergency release boat kits

- * Proposal was funded by HSP
- * All kits are in a waterproof, floating bag
- * Contain items to help with release of sturgeon, record data and mend nets
- * PIT tag readers for catch monitors



Sturgeon by-caught during salmon fishing



Being flipped upside down calms the sturgeon and aids the person taking measurements



Towel is to protect against the scutes and keep a grip on the tail

Sturgeon release boat kit results

- * More encounters are reported
- * Used in 7 communities since 2011
- * From 2011-2016; 65 sturgeon encountered
- * 58 live released, 7 died in gill nets
- * One incident that resulted in restorative justice



Our experience (First nations organization)

Challenges

- * Program funding
- * Policy, Rights and C&P- confusion
- * Consultation is incomplete – the *Accommodation* subject
- * Cultural differences
- * Everyone learning; one of the first SARA listings with direct implications on extensive rights-based practices
- * Initial uncertainty about if or how FSC fisheries would continue

Opportunities

- * Partnerships working towards the common goal of conservation and recovery
- * Capacity building
- * Building relationships and trust



Good and Bad experiences with SARA

Good...	Bad...
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. SARA listing opens up avenues for funding – supporting recovery, research and harm reduction2. Created substantive capacity building and employment for CSTC (note these opportunities had to be advocated for by the FNs).	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Formally made the harvest of the species illegal (directed harvest curtailed as per cultural protocol prior to listing)2. Creates some enforcement and cultural conflict



Pros and Cons continued

Good...	Bad...
<p>3. Has not constrained rights-based salmon fisheries that by-catch white sturgeon; not a guaranteed ongoing scenario within other areas/fishery contexts (unclear how that would look with DU change)</p>	<p>3. Has constrained salmon fisheries that DFO considers non-rights based (i.e. Demonstration/ Commercial Fisheries)</p> <p>4. FN's FSC fisheries bear the brunt of scrutiny (because of the tangibility of captured fish)</p>

Pros and Cons continued

Good...	Bad...
4. Provides some optimism for recovery and rebuilding	5. Limited or no effect on known causative factors or harmful activities (i.e. RTA flow regulation, pulp mill effluent, sockeye escapement objectives, etc.) 6. No impact on land/resource use with known cumulative affects
	7. Potential to create conflict within and between agencies and FN and non-FN governments and stakeholders

Snachaliya (Thank you)

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* Nechako White Sturgeon Recovery Initiative (NWSRI)

www.nechakowhitesturgeon.org

To see full video “Every Sturgeon Counts”

Search Youtube, or check NWSRI website

