

**CONSERVATION AQUACULTURE: AN ADAPTIVE
APPROACH TO PREVENT EXTINCTION OF AN
ENDANGERED WHITE STURGEON POPULATION
(*ACIPENSER TRANSMONTANUS*)**

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) listed the white sturgeon population (*Acipenser transmontanus*) in the Kootenai River as endangered in 1994 due to post-glacial isolation and the virtual lack of recruitment since 1974. The Kootenai River White Sturgeon Conservation Aquaculture Program was initiated to preserve genetic variability, begin rebuilding natural age-class-

structure, and prevent extinction while measures are identified and implemented to restore natural recruitment. The program is part of a comprehensive recovery strategy detailed in the USFWS recovery plan for the Kootenai River population of white sturgeon. A breeding plan, including culture methods to minimize potential detrimental effects of conventional stocking programs, has been implemented to guide recovery, population management, and the systematic collection and spawning of wild adults before they are lost from the wild breeding population. Until suitable habitat conditions are re-established in the Kootenai River ecosystem to increase white sturgeon survival past the egg/larval stage and restore natural recruitment in the wild white sturgeon population, the Kootenai River White Sturgeon Conservation Aquaculture Program, through careful monitoring, review, and implementation, will continue to protect this unique endangered population from extinction.