

## **KTOI Response to Review of Project 23017 by CBFWA, USFWS, and ISRP**

Project Number: 23017

Project Title: Assess Surface-Water Flow and Feasibility of Enhancing White Sturgeon Spawning Substrate Habitat, Kootenai River, Idaho

Sponsor: KTOI/USGS

Summary of Reviews of Project 23017 by CBFWA, USFWS, and ISRP

**CBFWA Recommendation:** Using the NWPPC criteria adopted into the Council's 2000 amended Fish and Wildlife Program, this project was recommended as a "High Priority A" project.

**USFWS Recommendation:** The USFWS reviewed all of the project proposals using the solicitation criteria provided by the NWPPC. In addition, the USFWS staff provided input on projects that were needed or required by the recent Biological Opinion regarding white sturgeon and bull trout. This project was identified by USFWS as a high priority project that addresses the Biological Opinion for white sturgeon.

**ISRP Recommendation:** This project received a N/A recommendation from the ISRP. Specifically the ISRP wrote: "This resident fish proposal does not address imminent risks to ESA stocks by offering direct on-the-ground benefits with one-time funding. The proposal focuses on modeling and assessment. This proposal is being reviewed as part of the Mountain Columbia review, which is an appropriate venue for review and potential funding."

### **KTOI Comments:**

**Issue:** The ISRP states "this resident fish proposal does not address imminent risks to ESA stocks by offering direct on-the-ground benefits with one-time funding." Conversely, CBFWA and USFWS reviews rated this as a High Priority project on the A list that addressed Reasonable and Prudent Alternative *3i* and *3j* for white sturgeon in the December 20, 2000 USFWS Biological Opinion.

The disparity is due to interpretation of the threshold criteria. We believe that this project does address an imminent risk to an important ESA stock. The imminent threat directly addressed by this proposal is to the ESA listed Kootenai River white sturgeon population, in the form of a persistent lack of natural recruitment on decadal scales; this endangered population has provided only 2 strong year classes during the past 40 years: 1961 and 1974 (USFWS 1994, Duke et al. 1999; USFWS 1999).

The goal of the proposed project is to enhance native Kootenai River white sturgeon spawning habitat in order to assist with recovery of the population. The objectives and products of Phase I of this proposed high priority project will provide the appropriate and

valid scientific information to the white sturgeon recovery team's adaptive management decision process for determining whether or not to implement substrate enhancement measures in the spawning reach. The objectives and products of Phase II deal with implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of in-stream spawning habitat structures.

NWPPC support for funding this project will begin the long-overdue process of rehabilitating dysfunctional post-development habitat in the Kootenai River and its historic floodplain.

### References

- Duke, S., P. Anders, G. Ennis, R. Hallock, J. Hammond, S. Ireland, J. Laufle, L. Lockard, B. Marotz, V. Paragamian., and R. Westerhof. 1999. Recovery Plan for Kootenai River white sturgeon (*Acipenser transmontanus*). *Journal of Applied Ichthyology* (15):157-163.
- USFWS (U.S. Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service). 1994. Determination of endangered status for the Kootenai River white sturgeon population. *Federal Register* 59(171) 45989.
- USFWS (U.S. Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service). 1999. Recovery Plan for the White Sturgeon (*Acipenser transmontanus*): Kootenai River Population. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Portland, Oregon.

**From:** Susan Ireland <ireland@kootenai.org>  
**To:** "tom@cbfwf.org" <tom@cbfwf.org>  
**Date:** 2/9/01 7:13AM  
**Subject:** KTOI response to high priority review

Hi Tom:

Here is the Kootenai Tribe response to the review of high priority projects.

Thanks!  
Sue Ireland

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