

Initial Meeting in Support of *Species at Risk Act* Listing Process for Upper Fraser River White Sturgeon

Meeting with Fisheries and Oceans Canada and Upper Fraser River First Nations (Tier 2)

Date: June 19, 2018

Time: 9:00AM-12:30PM

Location: Coast Inn of the North, 770 Brunswick St., Prince George, B.C.

Meeting Objectives:

- Outline the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) listing recommendation process for White Sturgeon and provide progress update
- Introduce management scenario component of listing process and discuss where and how First Nations will be engaged to provide input
- Explore opportunities for incorporating further First Nations input into the SARA listing decision

Agenda:

Time	Activity
8:30 am	Registration
9:00 am	Welcome ➤ Elder Opening Introductions and review of meeting objectives and the agenda ➤ Erin Gertzen, Freshwater Species at Risk Biologist, DFO ➤ Mike Staley, Facilitator, FRAFS
9:15 am	SARA listing process for White Sturgeon – brief overview ➤ Erin Gertzen, Freshwater Species at Risk Biologist, DFO ➤ Question and answer period
9:45 am	Discuss White Sturgeon experiences and interests ➤ Mike Staley, Facilitator, FRAFS ➤ Group discussion
10:15 am	Health break
10:30 am	Management and recovery of Nechako River White Sturgeon ➤ Christina Ciesielski, Carrier Sekani Tribal Council ➤ Question and answer period
11:00 am	Introduction to management scenarios and review of current management measures for Upper Fraser River White Sturgeon ➤ Herb Klassen, Freshwater Species at Risk Recovery Planner, DFO ➤ Question and answer period
11:30 am	Next steps: discuss engagement on management scenarios and other opportunities for input ➤ Herb Klassen, Freshwater Species at Risk Recovery Planner, DFO ➤ Mike Staley, Facilitator, FRAFS ➤ Group discussion
12:30 pm	Close [lunch provided by DFO]
1:00-3:00 pm	Optional – room booked for Tier 1 time if group interested

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting summary prepared by Ahdia Hassan (DFO) and Erin Gertzen (DFO)

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

- Opening by Pete Erickson
- The facilitator, Mike Staley (FRAFS), called the Tier 2 meeting to order at 9:15 AM and welcomed participants and reviewed logistics for the day.
- 11 First Nation participants, 1 facilitator, and 6 DFO staff members were in attendance. See Appendix A for List of Attendees.
- Refer to the PowerPoint slides for technical information described below.
- Erin Gertzen outlined the agenda and objectives of the meeting

Announced changes to agenda:

- No elder opening or prayer
- Darren Haskell was unable to attend, therefore presentation on traditional use of White Sturgeon was cancelled

2. SARA Listing Process for White Sturgeon – brief overview

Erin Gertzen (DFO) presented on the topic and Mike Staley (FRAFS) facilitated the discussion. Refer to the PowerPoint presentation for overview of the topic.

Questions or discussion points on the topic:

- Socioeconomic impacts that are considered are non-First Nations' jobs. It doesn't include First Nations socioeconomic losses. Socioeconomic impacts should primarily consider First Nations. What does it mean to us [First Nations] to not fish sturgeon anymore? It has huge impacts on us.
- There are impacts of catch and release. There is evidence in Columbia and Volga River of females becoming stressed, reabsorbing eggs and being unable to spawn after being caught in catch and release fishery.
- Is there any thought around using First Nations knowledge to manage sturgeon? We don't see our information [traditional knowledge] going into the management and recovery plans of sturgeon. It is said decisions are based on science but decision making is skewed by politics.
- What is the end game? Will we ever be able to eat sturgeon?
- Used to see sturgeon in Williams Lake but there have been changes to flows. Is there funding for habitat restoration with SARA listing?
 - *DFO response:* there are proposal-based funding opportunities if listed (HSP and AFSAR). Habitat restoration projects could be discussed at the technical working groups.

3. Discuss White Sturgeon experiences and interests

Mike Staley (FRAFS) facilitated this agenda topic aimed at hearing some experiences managing White Sturgeon and any specific interests in White Sturgeon recovery.

Questions or discussion points on the topic:

- Traditional use of White Sturgeon:
 - When Nechako sturgeon was listed under SARA, great interest in including traditional knowledge but did not know how to use the information. Darren's community has a very well developed traditional use library.
 - We looked at what some of the key questions were in the Nechako population. The Nechako population has a recruitment problem. So one of the questions was, is there information about where sturgeon spawn or juveniles live in your history?
 - It was clear that there was a strong cultural connection to sturgeon and strong knowledge
 - Our job is to develop questions that are easy to understand and respond to.
 - The study is ongoing. We no longer have funding from AFSAR, but the work is continuing.
- We do monitoring to try and keep Sturgeon out of the nets, but not enough funding to document encounters. We're big players in getting information, but it's difficult to make it work without adequate funding.
- HSP gives partial funding for monitoring/boat kit program so it's hit or miss whether a kit is on the right boat as we only have a few boat kits to give out

4. Management and Recovery of Nechako River White Sturgeon

Christina Ciesielski (Carrier Sekani Tribal Council) presented on the topic and Mike Staley (FRAFS) facilitated the discussion. Refer to the PowerPoint presentation for overview of the topic.

Questions or discussion points on the topic:

- On recruitment failure: we don't know a lot about sturgeon spawning, and the reason we know about it in Nechako is thanks to First Nation knowledge. We are trying to see what triggers sturgeon to choose a spawning site.
- Finding high predation rates on young fish, potentially from otters. The Nechako is now a smaller and clearer river than it was historically and I suspect it has made it easier for visual predators like otters.
- Younger people aren't trapping anymore and the population of predators such as otters may be increasing as a result.
- In the Lower Fraser we have many spawning areas and have been trying to get fisheries no-go-zones. Catch and release fishers say they are good stewards but are fishing sturgeon in high numbers.
- DFO monitors First Nations. There needs to be monitoring of sport fishers.
- No sturgeon sport fishing in Upper Fraser River.
- Can conservation agreements with industry to support recovery objectives and initiatives be worked on?

5. Introduction to management scenarios and review of current management regime for Upper Fraser River White Sturgeon

Herb Klassen (DFO) presented on the topic and Mike Staley (FRAFS) facilitated the discussion.

Questions or discussion points on the topic:

- On selective fishing: Each area on the river has different techniques. In our area, most of our fishing is through dip nets. Rare to see a sturgeon in a dip net. Once you go above Williams Lake, the sites are not conducive to dip nets. Beach seines work in some areas but are expensive.

- *DFO comment:* If we go forward with a do not list scenario, we would be delisting the two NSPs. The management of those would then fall under the provincial jurisdiction. If a list scenario, all three populations would be protected under SARA, and funding would be available.
- Is there an option to leave listed NSPs as is?
 - *DFO response:* No
- Can we send back to COSEWIC?
 - *DFO response:* We may not fit the criteria for the option to refer back to COSEWIC unless substantial new information is presented. We can go back and do some more research on whether we meet the criteria to refer back to COSEWIC. We can look into this and discuss more on the first call.

6. Next steps: discuss engagement on management scenarios and other opportunities for input

Herb Klassen (DFO) presented on the topic and Mike Staley (FRAFS) facilitated the discussion. Refer to the PowerPoint presentation for an overview of the topic.

Questions or discussion points on the topic:

- List and delist options are open to input
- Can we make a recommendation now to get something back to COSEWIC?
 - *DFO response:* We can go back and do some more research on whether we meet the criteria to refer back to COSEWIC. We can look into this and discuss more on the first call.
- Many First Nations people in Thompson and Fraser and Lillooet are against the catch and release. They would like to have them shut down. If these units are kept separate and listed under SARA, what would the bigger picture be? Would there be bigger science, bigger protection and management?
 - *DFO response:* If the recommendation is that they need to be managed separately, we would like to hear about that.
- In certain areas, if listed, First Nations may not be able to fish as they traditionally have.
- I don't see First Nations wanting to change fishing techniques because they might lose their traditional practices.
- I'm hearing some First Nations will want to add their own cultural/social/economic packages.
 - *DFO response:* Cultural significance statements can be submitted at any time.
- Will there be resources to support work? This is a very deep matter that requires deep consultation and accommodation.
 - *DFO response:* we can offer resources for travel, but not for time
- You want us to consult, and want us to do work but there is no money. There is no end game in this. I want an end-game where I will once again be able to eat sturgeon. It is an afterthought. If we continue at the current intensity of the program, maybe I can tell my children that in several generations we might be able to again eat sturgeon. There has to be a more robust program than the current one which is not working.
 - *DFO response:* the recovery strategy contains a future exemption for First Nation consumption when sturgeon is no longer in jeopardy

7. Closing Comments

See section 6. The meeting adjourned at 12:25 PM.

Other discussion and parking lot items

None.

Action Items

DFO and others to follow up about refer back to COSEWIC policy.

Appendix A: List of Attendees

Name	Affiliation <i>Name of Organization</i>
Martin Louie	Nadleh Whut'en
Pete Erickson	Nakazdli Whut'en
Harold Prince	Nakazdli Whut'en
Christina Ciesielski	Carrier Sekani Tribal Council
Ashley Watson	Saulteau First Nation
Kent Gerow	Tsil Kaz Kah (Burns Lake)
Ken Malloway	Tzeatchen
Shamus Curtis	Upper Fraser Fisheries Conservation Alliance
Brian Toth	Carrier Sekani Tribal Council / Lheidli T'enneh
Dave Feil	Northern Shuswap Tribal Council
Andrew Meshue	Northern Shuswap Tribal Council
Mike Staley (facilitator)	FRAFS

DFO Staff

Name	DFO Branch
Erin Gertzen	SARP
Herb Klassen	SARP
Ahdia Hassan	SARP
Linda Stevens	Resource Management
Robin McCullough	Resource Management
Phillip Taylor	C&P