



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



Chilliwack, Kamloops and Prince George
May and June, 2018

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

Meeting Agenda

- Overview of SARA listing process and progress update
- Recovery of Nechako River White Sturgeon
- Introduction to management scenarios and review current management regime for Lower Fraser River and Upper Fraser River White Sturgeon
- Next steps: discuss engagement on management scenarios and other opportunities for input

Ground Rules

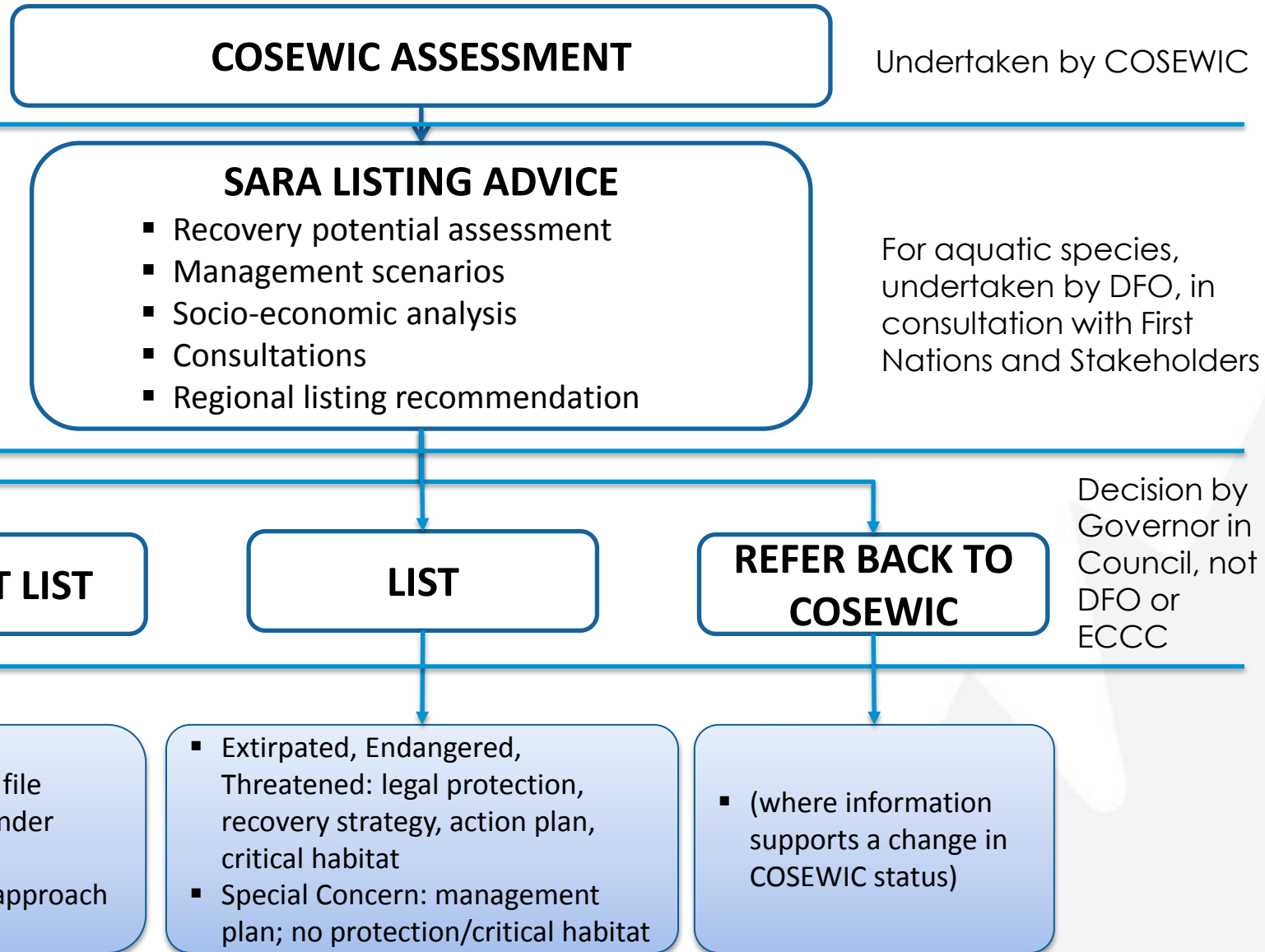
- Aim for useful outcomes
 - Focus on workshop objectives
- Be good to people, tough on issues
 - Challenge ideas, not people
- Listen generously
 - Ensure everyone gets heard
- Participate
 - Share your ideas and perspectives
- Respect
 - Respect differences

OVERVIEW OF SARA LISTING PROCESS FOR WHITE STURGEON

Species at Risk Act (SARA)

- Purpose:
 - Prevent wildlife from becoming extinct in Canada
 - Secure the recovery of Extirpated, Endangered and Threatened species
 - Manage species of Special Concern to prevent them from becoming further at risk
- Provides legal protection to species listed as Extirpated, Endangered and Threatened
- In Pacific region, 51 listed aquatic species at risk

The SARA Listing Advice Process



SARA Prohibitions

For threatened, endangered or extirpated species, no person shall:

s.32 (1)

- kill, harm, harass, capture, or take

s.32 (2)

- collect, buy, sell or trade an individual or any part or derivative of such an individual

s.33

- damage or destroy residence

s.58 (1)

- destroy any part of the critical habitat

Permitting (SARA s. 73, 74)

An activity **may** be permitted if its purpose is:

- Scientific research relating to the conservation of the species
- Benefits the species or is required to enhance its chance of survival
- Affecting the species is incidental to the carrying out of the activity

Preconditions **must** be met, most notably:

- The activity will not jeopardize the survival or recovery of the species

Exceptions and Exemptions

- Exceptions may be authorized if they are:
 - e.g., Necessary for protection of public safety, health or national security
 - e.g., In accordance with conservation measures for wildlife species under a land claims agreement
- Exemptions may be identified in recovery documents and authorized under an Act of Parliament
 - e.g., Conservation hatchery operations for Nechako and Columbia White Sturgeon

White Sturgeon

- Culturally significant
- Largest and longest lived freshwater fish in North America
- Live primarily in large rivers, lakes and tributaries
- In decline in part of its range



Threats to White Sturgeon

- Key threats:
 - Loss of habitat quality and quantity
 - Reduced or altered food supply
 - Fishing effects
- Other threats:
 - Pollution
 - Effects of small population size
 - Hatchery and aquaculture effects on health and population
 - Change in ecological community

White Sturgeon, COSEWIC and SARA

COSEWIC 2003

- All White Sturgeon: Endangered

SARA 2006

- Lower Fraser NSP: Not Listed
- Middle Fraser NSP: Not Listed
- Nechako NSP: Endangered
- Upper Fraser NSP: Endangered
- Upper Columbia NSP: Endangered
- Upper Kootenay NSP: Endangered

COSEWIC 2012

- Lower Fraser DU: Threatened
- Upper Fraser DU: Endangered
 - Includes:*
 - Upper Fraser NSP
 - Middle Fraser NSP
 - Nechako NSP
- Upper Columbia DU: Endangered
- Upper Kootenay DU: Endangered

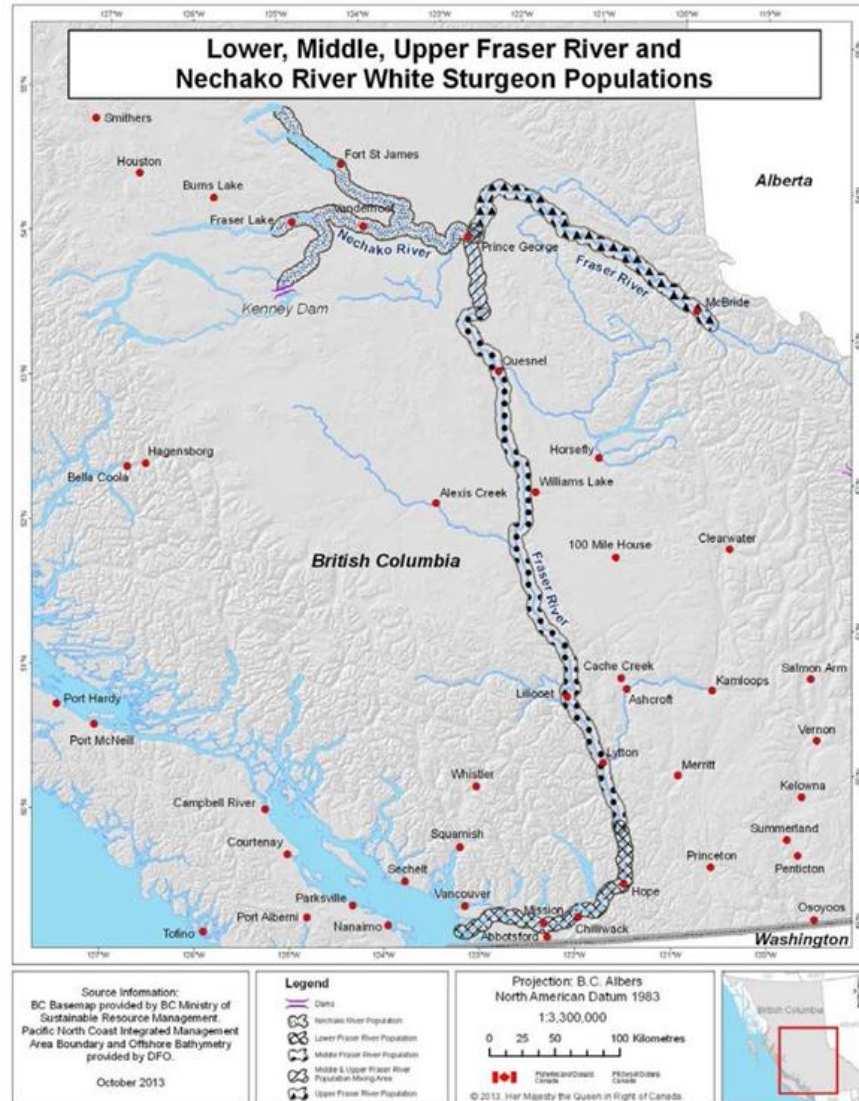
SARA – Today

- Lower Fraser DU: Under consideration
- Upper Fraser DU[‡]: Under consideration
 - Includes:*
 - Upper Fraser NSP
 - Middle Fraser NSP
 - Nechako NSP
- Upper Columbia DU: No change (EN)
- Upper Kootenay DU: No change (EN)




* Nationally Significant Population

‡ Upper Fraser NSP and Nechako NSP are still listed as Endangered under SARA

Lower Fraser and Upper Fraser DUs



Timelines for SARA Listing Advice

STEP		TIMELINE
COSEWIC Assessment		Nov 2012
SARA Listing Advice		
• Recovery potential assessment complete		2016 / 2018
• Management scenarios complete		Fall 2018*
• Socio-economic analysis complete		Fall 2018*
• Regional public consultations on potential listing of Fraser River White Sturgeon		Winter 2019*
Regional Listing Recommendation sent to Minister		Spring 2019*

INTRODUCTION TO SARA MANAGEMENT SCENARIOS

The SARA Listing Advice Process

COSEWIC ASSESSMENT

(Nov 2012: Upper Fraser DU Endangered; Lower Fraser DU Threatened)

SARA LISTING ADVICE

- RPA (2016-2018)
- **Management scenarios**
- Socio-economic analysis
- Consultations
- Regional listing recommendation

→ We are here

DO NOT LIST

- Not a SARA file
- Managed under alternative regulatory approach

LIST

Upper Fraser: Endangered
Lower Fraser: Threatened

- Legal protection
- Recovery Strategy
- Action Plan
- Critical habitat identified/protected

REFER BACK TO COSEWIC

- (where information supports a change in COSEWIC status)

Purpose of Management Scenarios

- To clearly identify the proposed actions to mitigate threats to White Sturgeon should the species be listed or should it not be listed
- The two scenarios support advice for a government listing decision whether to list or to not list the species



Baseline/Status Quo

- Outlines current management regime for White Sturgeon
- Provides the foundation on which to build management scenarios

Management Scenario 1:

Do Not List

- Outlines proposed actions to mitigate threats to White Sturgeon if it is not listed under SARA
 - May rely on other legislation or agreements (e.g. *Fisheries Act*)
 - May rely on collaborative actions
- Includes additional actions beyond current management actions (status quo) to facilitate species recovery

Management Scenario 2: List under SARA

- Outlines additional proposed actions for species recovery, and considers restrictions in implementing a List decision:
 - Actions and federal funding in support of recovery
 - SARA prohibitions
 - Allowable harm
 - Permitted or exempted activities, as applicable

Parameters for Management Scenarios

- Do Not List:
 - Current management actions as a foundation
 - Additional actions under agreements or legislation other than SARA
- List:
 - Current management actions as a foundation
 - Additional actions under agreements or legislation other than SARA
 - SARA prohibitions, permits, exemptions
 - SARA-funded research and recovery actions

OVERVIEW OF CURRENT MANAGEMENT REGIME FOR LOWER FRASER RIVER WHITE STURGEON

Current Management Actions for Lower Fraser River White Sturgeon DU

- Current Management Actions to address:
 - Loss of habitat quality and quantity
 - Reduced or altered food supply
 - Fishing effects

Current Management Actions: Loss of Habitat Quality and Quantity

- *Fisheries Act:*
 - Prohibitions against Serious Harm
 - Reviews of activities and works where authorizations or permits requested
- *B.C. Water Sustainability Act:*
 - Notifications and approvals for working near water

Current Management Actions: Reduced or Altered Food Supply

- Wild Salmon Policy
- Southern Salmon Integrated Fisheries Management Plan:
 - Salmon Enhancement Program
 - Fishery Management Objectives for Stocks of Concern
 - Management Plans by Species
 - Stock Assessment, Catch Monitoring and Compliance
 - Selective fishing
- Eulachon:
 - SARA listing process (GIC decision pending)
 - Collaborative management of the species

Current Management Actions: Fishing Effects

- FSC Salmon Directed Fishery:
 - Licence condition to release non-target species unharmed:

All efforts and attempts shall be made to return all non target species including steelhead and sturgeon to the water alive and unharmed. Steelhead and Sturgeon must not be retained.

- Encouraged to report White Sturgeon encounters, but not mandatory
- Commercial and Economic Opportunities Fisheries:
 - Non-retention of White Sturgeon
 - Mandatory reporting of White Sturgeon encounters

Current Management Actions: Fishing Effects

- Recreational Fisheries:
 - Non retention of White Sturgeon in all areas
 - White Sturgeon catch and release fishery:
 - Single barbless hook
 - Daylight hours only
 - Angling Guides (non-tidal only):
 - Voluntary closures in identified spawning /staging areas (May 15 to July 31)
 - Voluntary closures when temperatures exceed 23°C
 - Recreational salmon directed fishery:
 - Single, barbless hooks
 - Recreational resident fish fishery:
 - Single, barbless hooks

Current Management Actions: Fishing Effects

- Other Measures:
 - Ghost net removal program each September from Lillooet to Hope (by LFFA, FRSCS, volunteers)
 - Catch monitoring and reporting of White Sturgeon releases in salmon directed fisheries
 - River Guardian program funded through licence surcharges

OVERVIEW OF CURRENT MANAGEMENT REGIME FOR UPPER FRASER RIVER WHITE STURGEON

Current Management Actions

- Current Management Measures to address:
 - Loss of habitat quality and quantity
 - Reduced or altered food supply
 - Recovery
 - Fishing effects

Current Management Actions: Loss of Habitat Quality and Quantity

- *Fisheries Act:*
 - Prohibitions against Serious Harm
 - Reviews of activities and works where authorizations or permits requested
- *B.C. Water Sustainability Act:*
 - Notifications and approvals for working near water

Current Management Actions: Reduced or Altered Food Supply

- Wild Salmon Policy
- Southern Salmon Integrated Fisheries Management Plan:
 - Salmon Enhancement Program
 - Fishery Management Objectives for Stocks of Concern
 - Management Plans by Species
 - Stock Assessment, Catch Monitoring and Compliance
 - Selective fishing

Current Recovery Measures: Recovery of listed NSPs

- Conservation aquaculture program in Nechako
- Spawning habitat restoration trials in Nechako
- Research on causes of low recruitment rate
- Community awareness programs in Nechako

Current Management Actions: Fishing Effects

Fraser River from Hell's Gate to Prince George

- FSC Salmon directed fishery:
 - Licence condition to release non-target species unharmed

All efforts and attempts shall be made to return all non-target species including steelhead and Sturgeon to the water alive and unharmed. Steelhead and Sturgeon must not be retained.
- Demonstration fisheries (for sale purposes):
 - Non-retention of White Sturgeon
 - Mandatory reporting of White Sturgeon encounters

Current Management Actions: Fishing Effects

Fraser River from Hell's Gate to Prince George

- Recreational Fisheries:
 - Non retention of White Sturgeon in all areas
 - White Sturgeon catch and release fishery:
 - Year-round closure upstream of Williams Lake
 - Seasonal closure 15 September to 15 July in Region 5 downstream of Williams Lake
 - Single barbless hook
 - Daylight hours only
 - Recreational salmon directed fishery:
 - Single, barbless hooks
 - Recreational resident fish fishery:
 - Single, barbless hooks

Current Management Actions: Fishing Effects

Fraser River from Hell's Gate to Prince George

- Other Measures:
 - Ghost net removal program each September from Lillooet to Yale (led by St'at'imc and Nlaka'pamux Nations), expanded in 2017 to mouth of Fraser (LFFA, FRSCS, volunteers)
 - Traditional Knowledge studies:
 - Upper Fraser led by UFFCA and Carrier Sekani Member Bands
 - Lillooet area by Splitrock Environmental, Sekw'el'was, St'at'imc
 - Catch monitoring and reporting of White Sturgeon releases in salmon directed fisheries
 - Boat kits to allow for quicker release from fishing gear (

Current Management Actions: Fishing Effects

Nechako and Upstream of Prince George (SARA-Listed White Sturgeon populations)

- SARA prohibitions apply:
 - No person shall kill, harm, harass, buy, sell, trade, collect
- Recreational salmon fishery regulations:
 - Barbless hooks
 - Non-retention of by-caught White Sturgeon
- Recreational resident fish fishery regulations:
 - Year-round closure for targeted White Sturgeon fishing
 - Non-retention of by-caught White Sturgeon

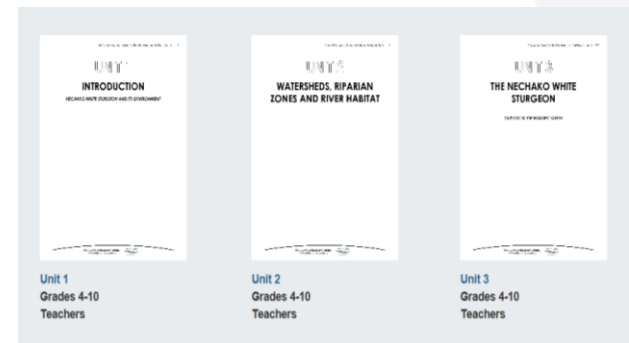
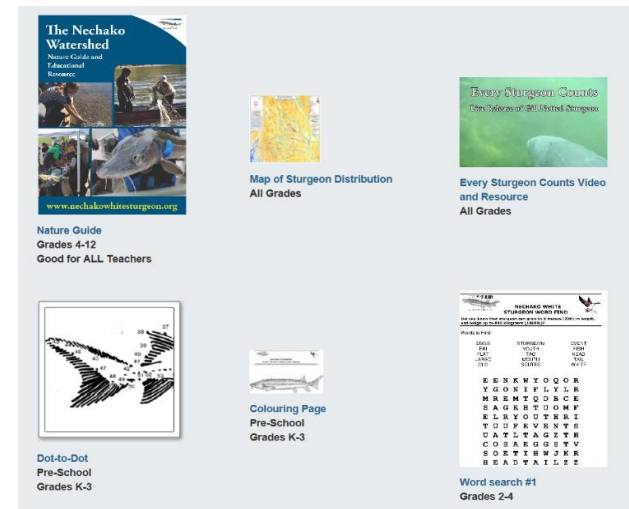
Current Management Actions: Fishing Effects

Nechako and Upstream of Prince George (cont.) (SARA-Listed White Sturgeon populations)

- Demonstration fisheries (for sales purposes):
 - Non-retention of White Sturgeon
- Food, Social, Ceremonial fishery:
 - Non-retention of White Sturgeon
- Habitat Stewardship Program:
 - Species at Risk funded

Current Management Actions: Fishing Effects

- Examples of Habitat Stewardship Program-funded projects:
 - Boat Kit Program and monitoring
 - Storm drain marking
 - School curriculum
 - Hatchery release event
 - Community newsletter
 - NWSRI website
 - Billboards at boat launches



NEXT STEPS

Engagement in Management Scenario Development

- Input into management actions that could be taken in the event of:
 - Do Not List
 - List
- Input being sought from:
 - DFO Sectors
 - Province
 - First Nations
 - Key Stakeholders

First Nations Engagement in Management Scenario Develop

- Review and discuss current actions that address threats to White Sturgeon as they relate to First Nations fishing activities
- Discuss additional actions to support recovery through mitigating these threats if White Sturgeon are listed, or if they are not listed
- Ongoing discussions how and when First Nations input can be incorporated into the SARA Listing process

Other Opportunities for Input

- Regular DFO-First Nations conference calls on White Sturgeon listing:
 - To begin in **Summer 2018**
 - Topics to include:
 - Input and review of Management Scenarios,
 - Preparing for Socio-economic Analysis
 - Provision of cultural significance statements, and
 - Other information identified as relevant to the process
- Consultations on the listing recommendation:
 - Anticipate to occur in **Winter 2019**
- Other opportunities that are brought forward

Input into Management Scenario Development (List, Do Not List Actions)

- FSC fisheries
- Demo/economic opportunity fisheries
- DFO managed recreational fisheries
- Provincially managed recreational fisheries
- Loss of habitat quality and quantity
- Reduced or altered food supply

Contact Information

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APPENDIX

White Sturgeon Threats by DU

KEY THREATS	Relative Risk Level
Loss of habitat quality and quantity	Upper Fraser / moderate Middle Fraser / moderate Nechako / high Lower Fraser / high
Fishing effects	Upper Fraser / low Middle Fraser / moderate Nechako / moderate Lower Fraser / high
Reduced or altered food supply (including fishing of white sturgeon prey base)	Upper Fraser / high Middle Fraser / high Nechako / high Lower Fraser / moderate
OTHER THREATS	Relative Risk Level
Pollution	Upper Fraser / low Middle Fraser / moderate Nechako / low Lower Fraser / moderate
Effects of small population size	Upper Fraser / high Middle Fraser / moderate Nechako / high Lower Fraser / low
Hatchery and aquaculture effects on health and population	Upper Fraser / moderate Middle Fraser / moderate Nechako / moderate Lower Fraser / low
Change in ecological community (predation/competition)	Upper Fraser / low Middle Fraser / low Nechako / low Lower Fraser / moderate