
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Environment

FRASER RIVER STURGEON BENEFIT FROM LIVING RIVERS GRANT

CHILLIWACK – A provincial government Living Rivers grant of \$150,000 to the Fraser River Sturgeon Conservation Society (FRSCS) this fiscal year will support recovery projects for Fraser River white sturgeon and recovery planning initiatives for all stocks of white sturgeon in B.C., Environment Minister Barry Penner and Man In Motion Rick Hansen, chair and founder of the FRSCS, announced today.

Penner and Hansen made the announcement after catching and releasing white sturgeon in the Fraser River during a tagging expedition.

“Those of us who live in the Fraser River area know how important the white sturgeon is to our province’s heritage,” said Penner. “Rick Hansen and the FRSCS have shown great dedication to this species.”

“The Living Rivers grant helps us continue in our goal of stabilizing and restoring wild white sturgeon stocks and habitats in the lower Fraser River to healthy, self-sustaining levels,” said Hansen. “The FRSCS’s initiatives in the Fraser include a continuation of our volunteer-driven monitoring and assessment program, the development and implementation of a watershed-wide conservation plan, and an interactive First Nations stewardship program.”

Fraser River white sturgeon were driven to near extinction by an aggressive commercial fishery a hundred years ago. Although commercial fishing was halted, the remaining population has been fighting to recover over the past century under increased pressures from urbanization. FRSCS volunteers have tagged and released more than 22,000 live white sturgeon in the past five years as part of a monitoring and assessment program.

A portion of the Living Rivers grant will also be used to extend leadership, planning, and stock recovery initiatives across all six stocks of white sturgeon in B.C. through the establishment of a provincewide white sturgeon recovery process and strategy.

“Our government is committed to the recovery of the white sturgeon throughout the province,” said Penner. “The funding for the project is from our government’s Living Rivers Trust Fund, which supports healthy watersheds, sustainable ecosystems and thriving communities.”

“For over a decade, the provincial government has increased its leadership and support of white sturgeon stock assessment and recovery,” said Hansen. “The most important next steps are to follow through with key actions identified by the recovery teams, which include the identification and protection of critical habitats, reduction of various fishery interceptions and mortalities, and continued monitoring of populations and stock structure.”

Hansen founded the FRSCS in 1997 with a mandate to conserve and protect Fraser River white sturgeon and their habitat. The society includes representatives from provincial, federal and First Nations governments.

The Living Rivers Trust Fund is a long-term strategic effort to undo past damage and improve the health of B.C.'s rivers and watersheds.

To download a photo of Environment Minister Barry Penner and Rick Hansen with a sturgeon, go to: <http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/pac/taggingsturgeon.htm>

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