

FRSCS Position Statement: Recreational Fishery for Fraser River White Sturgeon

Background

The FRSCS has a vision that *'White Sturgeon are wild, healthy, and naturally sustaining throughout the Fraser River watershed.'* We achieve this vision through our mission to work collaboratively with Indigenous, provincial, and federal governments, and other partners, by leveraging science and Indigenous knowledge to accelerate the recovery of White Sturgeon throughout the Fraser River ecosystem.

The FRSCS provides expertise regarding White Sturgeon biology, ecology, and habitat requirements to be considered in the decision-making process regarding the management of Fraser River White Sturgeon.

FRSCS Position

The FRSCS recognizes that the recreational fishery for White Sturgeon in BC is important for many people, and provides opportunities for anglers to experience, value, and learn about White Sturgeon. The development of strong connections between people and sturgeon is a critical component for increasing awareness, encouraging positive changes, and generating support and funding for conservation and recovery efforts.

The FRSCS recognizes recent advancements in the handling of White Sturgeon captured in the recreational fishery and supports ongoing monitoring and improvement of fishing and handling practices to, if necessary, reduce the potential of injury and stress.

The FRSCS considers rod-and-reel angling to be the best method for capturing sturgeon for sampling and tagging in the Fraser River. This position is based on work by leading scientists to assess survival rates for sturgeon caught using a variety of capture methods, wherein survival rates for sturgeon caught and released by anglers were very high. Sampling by angling is typically effective, and experienced anglers can catch sturgeon of various size/age groups and sample sturgeon throughout the lower Fraser River.

The FRSCS is aware of the concerns regarding potential non-lethal physical and physiological effects on sturgeon imposed by angling and pre-release handling actions. Some potential non-lethal impacts of concern include reduced spawning success and reduced growth rates. These concerns require further research and data.

The FRSCS encourages and supports measures that monitor, and if necessary, limit the numbers of sturgeon captured in the recreational fishery each year. The FRSCS also supports the collection of additional information on the potential effects of different angling gear types, post-capture handling methods, and environmental conditions (such as elevated water temperatures) on sturgeon captured in the recreational fishery. The FRSCS will continue to ensure that the best possible capture and handling methods are used in all sturgeon sampling projects conducted by the FRSCS.

The FRSCS is committed to maintaining a positive relationship with the recreational fishery to:

- continue to improve sturgeon handling methods;
- monitor and, if necessary, reduce the number of sturgeon caught and released each year;
- educate and encourage anglers to, if necessary, reduce targeting individual large sturgeon; and
- identify times and locations where angling should not be permitted, if necessary.

The FRSCS will continue to monitor and assess abundance trends as well as review related research and modify or adjust its position accordingly.

Approved: November 18, 2022