



Yakama Nation Sturgeon Management

2013 Non-Technical Annual Report

April 1, 2012 – March 31, 2013

Project Number: 2008-455-00

Contract Number: 56662 REL 49

Abstract

This non-technical report summarizes the activities of the Yakama Nation Sturgeon Management Project # 2008-455-00 (Project), during the performance period April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013. A non-technical report of work performed is appropriate at this time during Phase 1 of the Project since data collection is ongoing into future years. Progress of the administrative work elements are covered sufficiently through the status reports on PISCES.

Introduction

The long-term goal of the Yakama Sturgeon Management Project #2008-455-00 (Project) is to facilitate restoration of viable populations and fisheries for white sturgeon in mid-Columbia River reservoirs. Phase I (2009-2012 or beyond as determined) of the Project will accomplish the following:

1. Assist in the development of a recovery, research and monitoring strategy, and hatchery Master Plan for depleted sturgeon populations in FCRPS portions of the mid-Columbia (below Priest Rapids Hydroelectric Project) and lower Snake rivers.
2. Continue to develop critical expertise and refine effective sturgeon culture methodology for spawning and rearing of white sturgeon using tribal staff, facilities and resources, and captive broodstock currently maintained on the Yakama Reservation at the Prosser and Marion Drain Hatcheries.
3. Identify facility and staff requirements and costs of hatchery alternatives for use in research/monitoring and hatchery Master Plan considerations (based on #2 and #3 above).
4. Develop a detailed implementation plan, in coordination with other regional efforts, for production and rearing of juvenile sturgeon as appropriate for use in experimental research and hatchery feasibility evaluations (as identified in #1 above).
5. Assist in the development and implementation of effective experimental research and hatchery feasibility evaluations (as identified in #1 above).

This work complements other ongoing sturgeon research and restoration efforts in both the mid-Columbia River and Master Planning efforts undertaken by the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (Project 2007-155-00) (through Fish Accords funding) and directly addresses the objective of the 2004 NPCC Subbasin Plan to increase sturgeon abundance in the lower mid-Columbia mainstem by: 1) continuing to develop hatchery technology and methodologies, and 2) evaluating the need for hatchery supplementation. Over 20 years of dedicated research and management has failed to date to restore natural productivity or opportunities for harvest of mid-Columbia River sturgeon impacted by the hydropower system. Policy choices affecting reservoir conditions and associated sturgeon habitat make it clear that future sturgeon restoration efforts will involve some use of hatchery sturgeon either as experimental subjects for research of

limiting factors or for supplementation of unproductive natural populations upstream from Bonneville Dam.

During Phase I, the Project is not building new hatchery facilities for release of hatchery-reared sturgeon in the FCRPS reservoirs. However, under different contracted obligations we are involved with supplementation efforts in the Grant and Chelan County Public Utility Districts. These efforts are distinctively different from, but are very complementary towards the #2008-455-00 Project. Work associated with the Mid-Columbia PUDs provides substantial opportunities and experience in hatchery techniques and field training.

Phase I identifies hatchery evaluation and development work to be completed concurrent with CRITFC comprehensive strategic and hatchery master planning which will clarify appropriate applications and objectives for hatchery sturgeon in the lower Columbia River (downstream from Priest Rapids). Phase II work of the YN Project will depend on the outcomes of the CRITFC strategic and master planning effort and YN Phase I results. YN Phase II might include significant new facilities contingent on the outcome of the strategic and master planning process. Work will be completed by Yakama Nation tribal fishery program staff in coordination with fishery co-managers from other treaty tribes and the states. Hatchery activities are intended to occur primarily at established tribal facilities at Prosser and Marion Drain Hatcheries, and may involve limited temporary modifications.

Work Elements

A: 165. Produce Environmental Compliance Documentation

The existing contract with the Bonneville Power Administration does not include the development of new facilities. The addition of circular tanks at the Marion Drain Hatchery was solely funded by the Yakama Nation so no environmental clearances were required under this contract.

Phase 1 of the Project does not include any outplanting of hatchery fish into the environment so NEPA and ESA compliance was not necessary during the contract period.

B: 63. Rear Fish C:157. Collect/Generate/Validate Field and Lab Data & D: 176. Produce Hatchery Fish

Approximately 97 captive brood, 3,000 BY07, 115 BY08, 35 BY09, 5,000 BY10, 1,000 BY11 and 3,000 BY12 fish were maintained during the project period. The fish were fed a daily ration according to their body weight and water temperature. Dissolved oxygen was monitored and maintained within the proper parameters and tanks were cleaned on a regular basis to provide a healthy rearing environment for the fish.

None of the captive brood were spawned during BY13. Two separate spawning events were conducted at the hatchery which consisted of wild origin brood captured from the John Day and Wanapum Reservoirs. The first spawn consisted of a 3 female x 3 male matrix and the second spawn a 1 female x 2 male matrix. The brood collection and spawning effort was funded by independent contracts with the mid-Columbia Public Utility Districts of Grant and Chelan counties. The fish were reared for approximately 10 months before they were tagged and released in to the PUD project areas. Approximately 3,000 fish were retained at the hatchery for further grow out to evaluate growth and survival rates in comparison to the progeny of the captive brood fish spawned at the hatchery in the previous brood years.

H: 189. Coordination-Columbia Basinwide

The Project described is closely affiliated and complementary to the ongoing sturgeon mitigation and restoration project in Columbia and Snake River reservoirs upstream from Bonneville Dam and the comprehensive strategic and master planning effort initiated under the MOA by the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission. Restoration needs and alternatives were identified in Phases I and II of the joint agency and tribal Columbia River sturgeon project (BPA #1986-050). Phase I of the CRITFC strategic and master planning project (BPA #2007-155) will involve all management partners in a comprehensive planning process to provide guidance for further restoration and monitoring actions in the FCRPS portion of the mid-Columbia and lower Snake rivers, including guidance for appropriate usage of hatcheries for sturgeon research or supplementation. Phase I of the Project will provide critical input into the strategic and hatchery master planning process, help determine the potential suitability of tribal hatchery facilities for sturgeon, and facilitate implementation of appropriate hatchery-related measures identified in the strategic and master planning process. Guidance in the Strategic and Master Plans will be incorporated into Phase III of the joint Columbia River sturgeon Project and further work by the Yakama Sturgeon Management Project.

Representatives from the Yakama Nation participated in the “White Sturgeon Strategic Planning Workshop for the Lower Columbia and Lower Snake River Impoundments” in Boardman, Oregon in December 2009, January 2011 and Troutdale Oregon in January 2012 and March 2013 as well as various technical coordination meeting with various state and CRITFC employees.

Sturgeon mitigation issues in upper mid-Columbia River reservoirs operated by the Public Utility Districts (PUDs) fall under the purview of FERC license requirements of Grant County PUD (Priest Rapids, Wanapum), Chelan County PUD (Rock Island, Rocky Reach), and Douglas County PUD (Wells).

The Yakama Nation is independently involved in discussions with the PUD’s regarding objectives, opportunities, and alternatives for sturgeon mitigation in PUD project areas. FCRPS sturgeon restoration and monitoring efforts can provide a useful template and expertise for

effective implementation of sturgeon mitigation measures in PUD portions of the system. Coordination of hatchery development and monitoring efforts among areas may also promote economies of scale.

The work with the PUD's is ongoing and is proving successful in providing a successful and cost effective means to produce hatchery fish for stocking into various areas throughout the basin from a centralized location. The collaborative brood collection and spawning effort has produced multiple factorial spawning matrices to maximize diversity of fish that are to be released back into the system. The information and experience learned during these efforts has been invaluable in refining and implementing the expertise and techniques necessary for the artificial production of sturgeon.

I: 174. Produce Plan

Phase I of the CRITFC strategic and master planning project (BPA #2007-155) is ongoing and the first draft of the strategic plan was not completed during this contract period.