

Yakama Nation's Sturgeon Hatchery, Restoration and Enhancement for the lower-mid and mid-Columbia River Sturgeon Populations

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Yakama Nation has been collecting and spawning wild white sturgeon for mid-Columbia restoration and enhancement efforts since 2010. The Yakama Nation Sturgeon Hatchery is located southwest of Toppenish, Washington on tribal land. Since 2009 Donella and her staff have constructed a fully functional independent fish hatchery in a former corn field which includes an isolated wild brood spawning and rearing facility with 18 tanks and water temperature manipulation capabilities to synchronize spawning of wild brood. Water is supplied by several wells for a combined output of approximately 900 gpm. The current arrangement can produce approximately 8,000 yearling sturgeon per year. Since 2010, approximately 83,000 yearling sturgeon have been produced for release into Priest Rapids, Wanapum, Rocky Reach and Wells reservoirs for Grant, Chelan and Douglas County Public Utility Districts (PUD's). By spawning the adults and releasing the juveniles sturgeon populations in reservoirs upstream of Priest Rapids Dam have begun to grow and populate missing juvenile year classes. Similarly, downstream of McNary Dam, the John Day Reservoir sturgeon population also is compromised by inconsistent recruitment. Since the late 1980's, via Bonneville Power Administration Project 86-50, tribal and state researchers have studied white sturgeon throughout the Columbia Basin, with an emphasis on the reach from Bonneville Dam to McNary Dam. This project has been instrumental in researching and documenting white sturgeon early life history, population dynamics, spawning habitat and behavior, and movement patterns. The second part of the presentation will focus on the long term changes in population size and structure within Bonneville, The Dalles, and John Day reservoirs, commonly referred to as "Zone 6".