

**Bill Bradbury**  
Chair  
Oregon

**Henry Lorenzen**  
Oregon

**W. Bill Booth**  
Idaho

**James A. Yost**  
Idaho



## Northwest Power and Conservation Council

**Jennifer Anders**  
Vice Chair  
Montana

**Pat Smith**  
Montana

**Tom Karier**  
Washington

**Phil Rockefeller**  
Washington

March 4, 2014

### MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Council Members

**FROM:** Lynn Palensky

**SUBJECT:** Submission of final *Columbia Basin White Sturgeon Planning Framework*

The planning team for the *Columbia Basin White Sturgeon Planning Framework* has completed the final framework document in response to the qualifications set forth in the recommendations for the four sturgeon projects (see table below) reviewed in the Research Monitoring, Evaluation (RME/AP) category review. The core planning team members include Blaine Parker (Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission), Tom Rien (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife), and Brad James (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife). With science review and regional review and input, the team submits the framework to the Council to fulfill programmatic issue recommendations (Issue #7) for the sturgeon projects in the RME/AP review.

No action is required by the Council at this time. Planning team members will provide an overview of the document, expectations and next steps. However, this document will be important in guiding future work to protect and restore white sturgeon in the basin. The Council also will consider this document in the program amendment process based on recommendations received.

198605000	White Sturgeon Mitigation and Restoration in the Lower Columbia and Snake Rivers	Oregon Department Of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW)
200715500	Develop a Master Plan for a Rearing Facility to Enhance Selected Populations of White Sturgeon in the Columbia River Basin	Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC)
200845500	Sturgeon Management	Yakama Nation

200850400	Sturgeon Genetics	Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC)
-----------	-------------------	--

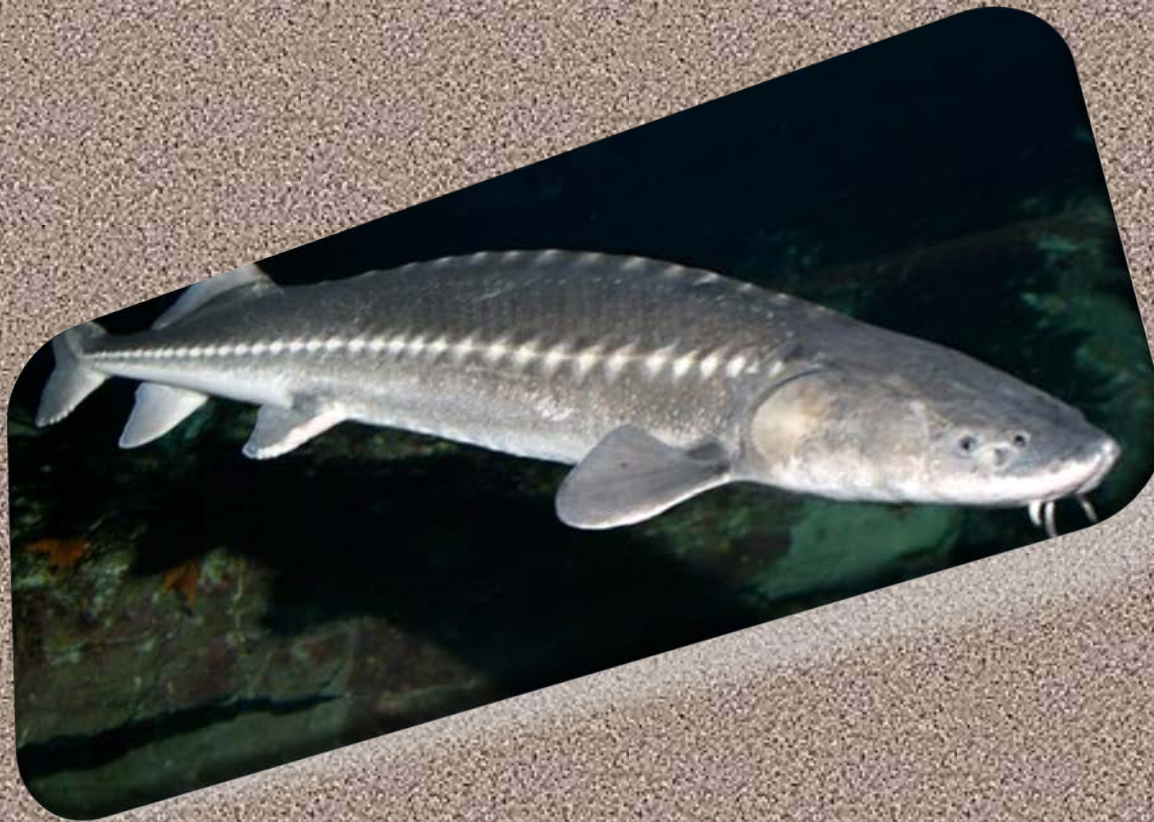
## **Background**

In the final 2011 programmatic recommendations (Issue #7) for the sturgeon projects in the RME/AP review (table above), the Council called for the “*development of a comprehensive management plan for white sturgeon through a collaborative effort involving currently funded projects*” and submission to the Independent Science Review Panel (ISRP) for review. The draft framework was developed and serves to summarize and synthesize the large volume of active sturgeon research monitoring and management efforts on a basinwide scale; provide information specific to individual management units; and provide regional goals for conservation, management, restoration, and mitigation activities. In March 2013, the Council solicited regional review and comments on the draft framework concurrent with the ISRP review, at the team’s request. The team then incorporated ISRP and regional/public comments into the final framework submitted at this meeting.

## **Connection to the program amendment process**

The Council received many recommendations related to sturgeon and the framework. Council members will see those recommendations reflected in the draft program language for consideration. The recommendations vary slightly, but the majority called for the planning framework to be adopted and included in the program in some fashion, either as a program appendix or as a chapter within the mainstem plan, or by simply pulling in the recommendations for restoration and recovery into the program. Either way, the framework represents a comprehensive body of knowledge on white sturgeon in the Columbia River Basin and will help guide future work to protect and restore sturgeon.

# Columbia River Basin White Sturgeon Framework



Tom Rien - ODFW

Blaine Parker - CRITFC

Brad James - WDFW



Presentation to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council  
March 12, 2014



# Introduction

- Framework – Our planning document, developed to guide efforts to protect and restore white sturgeon within the basin
- Scope:
  - Basin-wide summaries of current and past research, monitoring, evaluation, conservation, and management activities;
  - The management region for our four projects is from the mouth of the Columbia upstream to Priest Rapids Dam and Lower Granite dam

# Schedule

**2010**

- NPCC & ISRP Categorical Review, call for basin-wide plan

**2009-2013**

- Planning workshops

**2012**

- Regional input and review of Framework elements

**2013**

- Circulated draft for regional and ISRP review
- Input incorporated and Framework finalized

**2014**

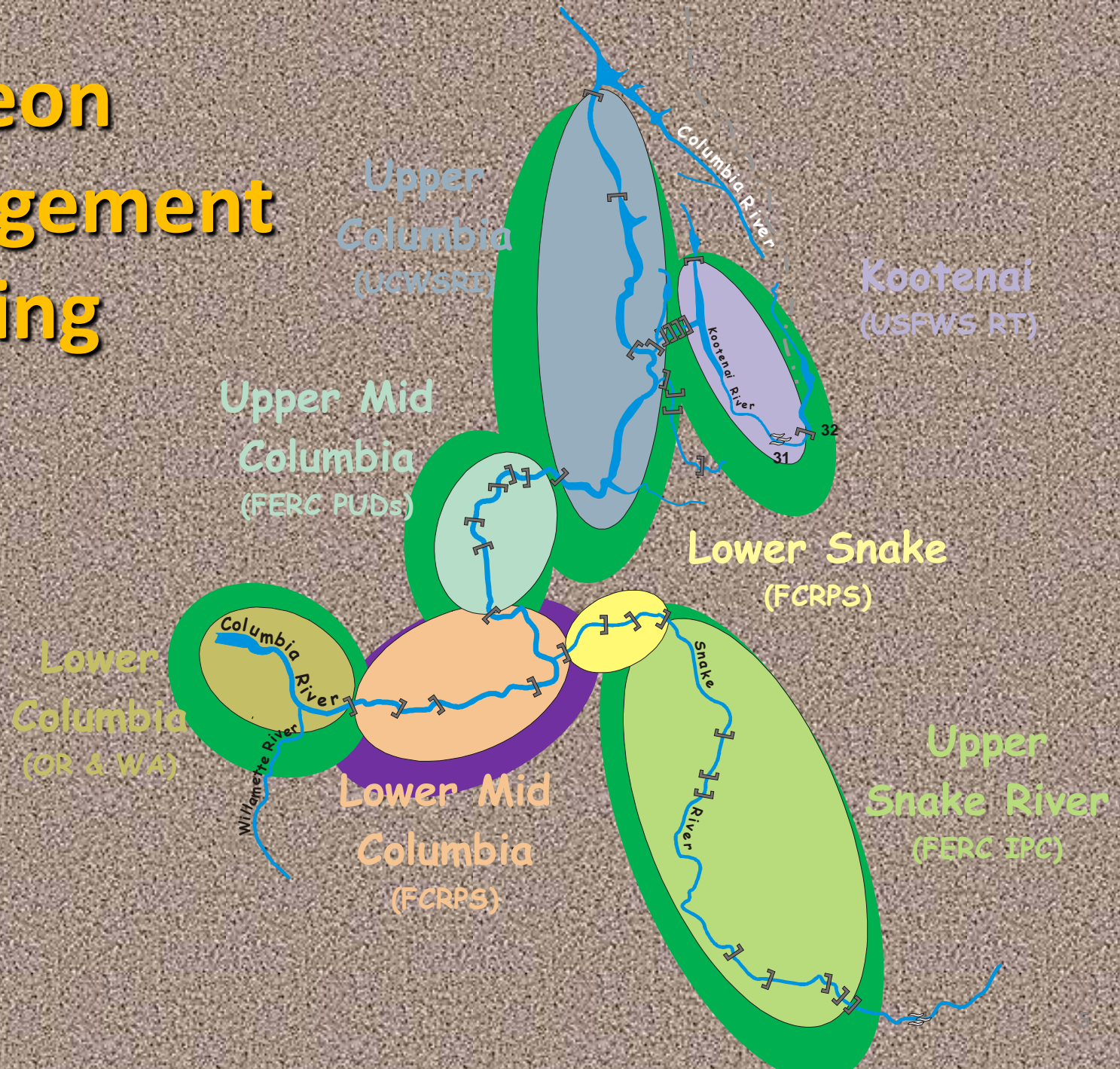
- Submitted today in fulfillment of programmatic issue recommendation
- Recommend adoption into the Council F&W Program



# Framework Development

- Co-manager authorship
- Solicited expert input from each regional management unit
- Used regionally-based planning meetings as scoping and information gathering forums

# Sturgeon Management Planning Units





# Vision and Goals

- Viable, persistent populations throughout their historical range, where feasible
- Significant, stable and sustainable fisheries and harvest
- Diverse, functional ecosystem supporting essential habitat, conditions, and resources



# Impacts of Hydrosystem Development and Operation

Reduced abundance, diversity and productivity of white sturgeon populations through:

- Habitat fragmentation
- Altered flow and flow variation
- Reduced habitat diversity and quantity
- Reduced floodplain connectivity
- Reduced availability and productivity of prey species

# Opportunities

- Sturgeon losses can be effectively addressed
- Most management units are well served by existing groups
- Integrate status & trends and action effectiveness monitoring to allow effective adaptive management



# **Review Process and Incorporation of Input**

Draft plan submitted to Council March 2013 and circulated for public review

- ISRP review and comments
- Co-manager review and comments
- Columbia River Basin White Sturgeon Workshop No. IV (March 26-27, 2013) dedicated to reviewing Framework

# Incorporation of ISRP Comments

- Specify studies to address information gaps:
  - Needs identified by mgmt unit or region-wide
- Investigate recruitment factors:
  - Revised to highlight regional critical uncertainties
- Revised to better emphasize importance of estuary/ocean on production below Bonneville
- Hatchery risks – use as interim strategy:
  - Considered in Framework on a case-by-case basis per Council Master Planning process



# Recommended Actions

- Supplementation, including hatcheries (Accord Project in progress)
- Hydrosystem operations (i.e. “slow roll”)
- Ecological and population dynamics
- Council Dashboard and HLI websites for white sturgeon ✓ completed

# Hatchery Recommendations

- Hatchery releases are an appropriate tool to achieve recovery and mitigation goals
- Be conservative and responsible in releasing hatchery fish. Build from ongoing efforts in other areas
- Carrying capacity can be addressed through inference or experiment through an adaptive approach



# Hydro Recommendations

- Increased flow and velocity improves recruitment
- There is a broad flow-recruitment relationship, but still need to identify optimal in-year operations
- Experimental designs to assess salmonid survival should also be evaluated for sturgeon
- Additional investigations of passage options

# Endorsement & Recommendations

- The Adopt the Framework into the Program or as an appendix to the Program
- Build a surgeon program of short-term and long-term measures
- Consolidate recommended measures into set of strategies as a chapter in the Mainstem Plan
- BPA needs to adequately fund surgeon recovery and recommended actions



# Next Steps

- Work with US v OR parties on Lower Mid-Columbia & Lower Snake mgmt units
- Need Council support for additional resources to implement recommendations of Framework Plan
- Act on recommendations for the Lower Mid-Columbia and Lower Snake management units
  - Complete US v OR mitigation plan to identify and implement actions for these two management units
  - Complete Hatchery Master Plan, implement, monitor and evaluate
  - Retool BPA Project 86-50 to monitor and evaluate effectiveness of actions

# Thank you

