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Annual Juvenile White Sturgeon Release, May 6

April 25, 2014

CRESTON It's that Sturgeon time of year once more! The annual juvenile White Sturgeon release will occur between **2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday May 6**, at the Old Ferry Landing at the end of Kootenay River Road just to the west of Creston. If you have not yet released your very own juvenile White Sturgeon yet, then this free, public, event provides a great opportunity to do so.

The Kootenai Tribe of Idaho has been working hard for many years to ensure that White Sturgeon remain part of the local ecosystem. It initiated a sturgeon conservation aquaculture program, with funding from Bonneville Power Administration, in 1991. The program, the first of its kind, collects wild broodstock adult Sturgeon from the river and raises the juveniles in the Tribal Hatchery in Bonners Ferry, Idaho and in the Bull River hatchery in the East Kootenay.

"There continues to be virtually no natural recruitment – that is to say the survival through the egg, larvae, and into the juvenile stage – in the river, and this has been the case for more than four decades now," says Kootenai Tribe of Idaho's fish & wildlife program director, Sue Ireland. "This is a stop-gap measure, but a critical one in the conservation effort as we, and many other partners, work toward implementing habitat restoration measures that should provide conditions for fish to successfully reproduce in the wild. It is a critical program if we are to avoid this population becoming extinct."

The release is coordinated by the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program (FWCP) in the Columbia region (a partnership between the Province of B.C., BC Hydro, First Nations and the public), with support from the Freshwater Fisheries Society of B.C., Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area, FortisBC, the Ministry of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations, and Kootenai Tribe of Idaho.

"This is always a great event that draws people from many different communities," says Trevor Oussoren, the program manager for FWCP-Columbia. "Not surprising given the fact that White Sturgeon are amazing prehistoric-looking creatures, and it is like holding part of our natural history in your hands since they have remained largely unchanged for 175 million years."

In 2014 approximately 1,500, ten-month old juvenile White Sturgeon, each with an average weight of 75 grams, and measuring between 15 and 25 centimetres in length, will be released near Creston, with more being released in the U.S. They can grow to the length of a canoe and live for over 100 years.

The FWCP is a partnership of:



The Kootenai River sturgeon population is endangered in both Canada and the U.S. due to a variety of human impacts, including the operation of Libby Dam that has altered the natural flow of the river. There has been virtually no natural reproduction in the wild since 1974. There are thought to be less than a 1,000 adults living on both sides of the border.

For more information about Kootenai River White Sturgeon, visit gofishbc.com/Sturgeon.htm. If you would like more information on the juvenile Sturgeon release event contact the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program at (250) 352 1300.

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