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# It's a Fact (Sheet)

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## Upper Columbia River White Sturgeon Conservation Aquaculture Program

2012 is the 11th year that the Upper Columbia White Sturgeon Recovery Initiative (UCWSRI) will release hatchery-raised juvenile sturgeon (from wild-stock adults) into the Columbia River. With funding from BC Hydro and the Fish & Wildlife Compensation program, they are raised by the Freshwater Fisheries Society BC at the Kootenay Hatchery near Wardner in the East Kootenay.

Since 2001 approximately 165,000 juvenile White Sturgeon have been released into the Columbia River from the Grand Coulee Dam to Revelstoke BC.

About 8000 juveniles were released in 2001, slowly increasing to 12,500 in 2004. Since then, release numbers have dropped steadily to about 4000 in 2008 where they have remained. Release numbers will decline through time to zero when, it is hoped, natural recruitment success is attained.

After release, about 25% survive the first six months, 80% the following year and about 90% in year three.

Typically juvenile sturgeon are up to 25 cm in length when released and grow about 10 cm's yearly. The largest known hatchery fish was captured at 10 years of age and measured 135 cm in length and weighs 17.5 kg.

### Stocking Hatchery Juveniles Will:

- Conserve the existing population.
- Help to establish a failsafe population elsewhere.
- Assist in research.
- Help refine hatchery operations.
- Help to develop rigorous fish health protocols that may aid all species.

Some anglers have expressed concern that the success of the sturgeon aquaculture program is having detrimental impacts on other native species such as rainbow trout.

"The numbers don't support this theory," says Gerry Nellestijn, chair of the UCWSRI Community Working Group. "From aerial counts of rainbow spawners and redds - their gravel "nests" - we have seen a consistent upward trend in numbers in the Columbia River from 2000 to 2011. In the last decade counts for both have gone from about 500 to 2,000 - a four fold increase. The numbers show an increasing rainbow trout population."

For more information about the Upper Columbia White Sturgeon Recovery Initiative visit [www.uppercolumbiasturgeon.org](http://www.uppercolumbiasturgeon.org)

