

SOA 2011-05

**Priest Rapids Fish Forum**  
**Statement of Agreement on the**  
**Middle Columbia River**  
**White Sturgeon Conservation Aquaculture Program**

Submitted to Priest Rapids Fish Forum on: August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2011

Approved by the Priest Rapids Fish Forum on: December 7, 2011

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this Statement of Agreement (SOA) between the Priest Rapids Fish Forum (PRFF) is to clearly define and mutually agree upon the Public Utility District No 2 of Grant County (Grant PUD) white sturgeon supplementation efforts for the Priest and Wanapum project areas within the middle Columbia River. White sturgeon supplementation includes all areas of brood stock collection, spawning, rearing, and release into the Wanapum and Priest Rapids project areas. This SOA is not meant to replace or deviate from Grant PUD's existing white sturgeon supplementation plans or result in non-compliance with the Federal Energy Regulation Commission's (FERC) or Washington Department of Ecology's (Ecology) 401 Clean Water Act Certification requirements.

Further, this SOA does not supersede the authority of the Co-Managers to regulate Washington State's fish and wildlife resources nor does it supersede the Priest Rapids 401 Water Quality Certification. Instead, this SOA is meant to incorporate the most recent scientific knowledge concerning white sturgeon genetics and stock abundances and parties' responsibilities as they relate to white sturgeon supplementation through the adaptive management process identified in Grant PUD's existing white sturgeon management plan. Additionally, this SOA will ensure that supplementation efforts undertaken by Grant PUD align with regional coordination efforts amongst the Co-Managers, the PRFF, and other public utility districts (PUD's) within the middle Columbia River Basin.

**BACKGROUND**

The development of hydroelectric power generation facilities within the Columbia River Basin has had negative impacts on white sturgeon. White sturgeon within the middle and upper Columbia River now reside as isolated stocks within impounded reservoirs between dams. Isolated stocks of white sturgeon experience complete or frequent recruitment failures that are likely related to river regulation, flooding of historical critical spawning and rearing habitats, impaired water quality, increase in predators due to habitat alteration, introduction

of exotic species, and pollution. At present, what limited natural recruitment does occur is likely insufficient to maintain existing population levels.

On April 17th, 2008, the FERC issued Grant PUD a 44-year license to operate the Priest Rapids Hydroelectric Project located in the middle Columbia River. Under the 401 Certification (6.2 (5)(b)), Grant PUD is required, in consultation with the PRFF, to develop and implement a White Sturgeon Management Plan (WSMP) within one year of issuance of the New License. One of the components of the WSMP requires Grant PUD to implement a hatchery supplementation program. Objectives of the hatchery supplementation program include:

- i. Increase white sturgeon stock abundance to a level commensurate with available habitat in the project area by releasing hatchery origin white sturgeon.
- ii. Determine the effectiveness of hatchery supplementation through a monitoring and evaluation program.
- iii. Adaptively manage the supplementation program based on the results of the monitoring and evaluation program.

**Grant PUD AND THE PRFF REPRESENTATIVES AGREE WITH AND APPROVE OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS**

- i. Grant PUD agrees to work collaboratively with the Co-Managers, PRFF, and other PUD's to implement a regionally coordinated white sturgeon supplementation program for the middle Columbia River. A regionally coordinated white sturgeon supplementation program is one that places a high value on the conservation of white sturgeon stocks, uses the best available science, and involves the appropriate tribal, state and federal fish and wildlife managers and middle Columbia River PUD's.
- ii. The preferred brood stock collection location for white sturgeon is the greater middle Columbia River from Bonneville Dam upstream to Grand Coulee Dam.
- iii. Primary, secondary, and/or tertiary brood stock collection locations, brood stock collection assignments, and appropriate fishing efforts will be discussed and finalized and approved by the PRFF during pre-season meetings among Co-Managers, the PRFF and the Grant PUD.
- iv. The Co-Managers, Grant PUD and PRFF members will communicate regularly in-season to discuss white sturgeon brood stock collection status and coordinate and approve any necessary changes to brood stock collection efforts.
- v. Grant PUD recognizes that the final results of the 2010 and 2011 brood year collection efforts fell short of the stated objectives in the WSMP. Grant PUD recognizes the need to fully participate in regional efforts and provide appropriate resources to acquire broodstock in a manner that two 3 by 3 (male to female)

- spawning crosses can be accomplished in the next two and future years. This may involve 8 weeks of collection effort with a 3 week reserve period in case of poor collection success during the initial 8 week period. Broodstock collection, juvenile larval collection, and all M&E activities will be conducted in accordance with the WSMP and in consultation with the PRFF.
- vi. Grant PUD will provide funding for necessary and appropriate expertise, methodology and equipment to assure that broodstock collection complements ongoing regional sturgeon restoration efforts.
  - vii. The tribal, state and federal fishery managers, Grant PUD's, and the PRFF will discuss the use of lower and upper Columbia River white sturgeon stocks as brood sources for middle Columbia River supplementation post-season. However, the ultimate authority to use either brood source lies with the fishery managers.
  - viii. White sturgeon brood stock holding, gamete collection, fertilization, egg incubation, and juvenile rearing will occur at the Yakama Nation's Marion Drain Facility or other alternative primary facility agreed upon by the Co-Managers, Grant PUD, and PRFF.
  - ix. White sturgeon satellite hatchery facilities may be employed by the PUD's as part of the overall regionally coordinated supplementation efforts as a means to spread the risks inherent with culturing wild origin fish. Culture activities performed at satellite facilities includes egg incubation and juvenile rearing. Grant PUD may be responsible for funding any white sturgeon satellite hatchery facilities in fulfillment of their white sturgeon management plan goals and objectives.
  - x. The Co-Managers and PUD's will follow and complete all necessary fish health screening protocols identified in the Co-Manager's Fish Health Policy during spawning at Marion Drain and prior to any transfer of fertilized gametes and/or juveniles to an authorized white sturgeon satellite hatchery facility.
  - xi. Factorial mating will be employed annually at the Marion Drain Facility or other alternative primary facility to the greatest extent possible with a 2X2 cross recognized as the minimum acceptable spawning matrix target by the Co-Managers, Grant PUD and the PRFF.
  - xii. White sturgeon will be reared to an age-1 juvenile with an average weight of 150 grams (approximately 3.0 fish per pound).
  - xiii. The Co-Managers, Grant PUD, and PRFF will discuss and identify release dates that correspond to low flow conditions in the Wanapum and Priest project areas.
  - xiv. The Co-Managers recognize and understand that implementation of a regionally coordinated white sturgeon supplementation program may require Grant PUD contracts with third parties to fulfill certain objectives of the program. Contracting with third parties creates some level of uncertainty where certain program objectives may not be achieved as required in the WSMP. If such events arise and they have been adequately presented, discussed, agreed upon and documented in the PRFF meeting minutes, the Co-Managers through the PRFF agree to advocate before

Ecology and FERC that Grant PUD supported and financially invested in a regionally coordinated white sturgeon supplementation program and expended a reasonable level of effort to achieve goals of the Priest Rapids White Sturgeon Management Plan. Grant PUD agrees to strive to pursue all available options with the PRFF to resolve such uncertainties as they arise.

**TERMS AND CONDITIONS:**

- i. Modification or termination of this SOA shall be made by mutual consent of the Co-Managers, Grant PUD, and PRFF through the issuance of a new SOA.
- ii. This SOA reflects an entirely voluntary commitment between the Co-Managers, Grant PUD, and PRFF. However, all parties agree to work in good faith to adhere to the white sturgeon supplementation program statements listed above and fulfill the requirements of the 401 Water Quality Certification Appendix C, White Sturgeon.
- iii. Nothing in this agreement changes the goals, objectives, tasks, and other requirements of the 401 Water Quality Certification Appendix C, White Sturgeon Management Plan. If this SOA and White Sturgeon Management Plan are found to be inconsistent, then the Management Plan shall prevail.
- iv. This SOA is limited to a two year period commencing upon approval of all of the Parties of the PRFF. The PRFF will revisit this agreement in the winter of 2014.