FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Nechako White Sturgeon Recovery Initiative - Fall Juvenile Index Project Accomplishes Major Milestone

Vanderhoof British Columbia September 16, 2010

A major milestone was accomplished this past week when 33 juvenile sturgeon were captured, measured and released back into the Nechako River. Nine of those sturgeon (that is 27%) were fish that were part of the pilot hatchery program. This is the first time in the history of the Juvenile Index Program that so many juveniles have been captured and released. The Fall Juvenile Index Project is currently in its 5th year of fall sampling. The sampling was conducted by the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council Fisheries Department (CSTC) under direction of the Nechako White Sturgeon Recovery Initiative (NWSRI).

"The members of the NWSRI are cautiously optimistic yet extremely enthusiastic about the news " said Brian Frenkel, Chairperson for the Nechako White Sturgeon Recovery Initiative's Community Working Group. "While the initial numbers captured are low compared to the pilot hatchery fish released the fact that pilot hatchery sturgeon have survived to become juveniles is fantastic and lends support to the success of the hatchery program".

When the pilot hatchery sturgeon were released they were 15cm long and 20grams in size. The nine pilot hatchery sturgeon captured now average 60cm in length and 1.3 kg in size being comparable with their wild caught counterparts. The 9 hatchery sturgeon had been marked with pit tags and released by school children and various community members during the three Save Our Sturgeon release events in the fall of 2006, 2007 and 2008. The pit tags attached to the fish have individual numbers allowing the juvenile sturgeon caught this sampling period to be linked back to the corresponding release event. The NWSRI group is currently sorting through the list of pit tag numbers to identify the individuals that may have released the 9 sturgeon. Juvenile sturgeon sampling will continue this fall and it is expected that more hatchery sturgeon will be captured.

The Nechako White Sturgeon population is listed as endangered under the Federal Species at Risk Act and is still declining. The total number of mature sturgeon of breeding age is now estimated to be less than 450. The NWSRI is focusing part of its efforts on the immediate need for a permanent conservation facility for sturgeon. "The recapture of these juvenile sturgeon is an important milestone that indicates that some of the pilot hatchery sturgeon are surviving in the Nechako" said Christina Ciesielski of the NWSRI Technical Working Group. The CSTC will be completing the second half of the juvenile sampling session at the end of September. The NWSRI has accomplished a major milestone with the capture of these 33 juveniles and eagerly awaits the end of September sampling results!

Backgrounder

The Community Working Group works together with the Technical Working Group to implement and communicate the Nechako White Sturgeon Recovery Initiative. For further background information please visit www.nechakowhitesturgeon.org or contact:

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