

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

## **Nechako White Sturgeon Recovery Initiative Emergency Sturgeon Release Boat Kit is a Success!**

**Vanderhoof, British Columbia September 28, 2011**

During August, the Nechako White Sturgeon Recovery Initiative (NWSRI) and the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council (CSTC) implemented a pilot study aimed at maintaining the Nechako White Sturgeon. In addition to our research programs that focus on identifying the problem(s) and determining ways to fix the habitat and overall health of the Nechako watershed, we are conducting a hands-on outreach program with Fisher Families aimed at reducing sturgeon mortality associated with the salmon gill net fishery.

The NWSRI is providing up to 20 First Nation fisher families with the tools necessary for the successful release of live sturgeon from a gill net. Community Working Group (CWG) Chair Brian Frenkel said today, “we put together an ‘Emergency Sturgeon Release Boat Kit’ which contains all the tools necessary to successfully live release a sturgeon from a gill net as well as patches and needles to mend nets that have been damaged as a result of a live release. The Boat Kit can be signed out by any Fisher Family that would like to participate in the program and is small enough to remain within the boat at all times.” The goal of this pilot program is an immediate reduction in the harm and deaths of sturgeon in the Nechako-Stuart-Takla system as a result of by-catch by providing the means to live release the sturgeon from the net.

Annual incidental mortality of adult sturgeon at their current low abundance could have a large influence on the ability of the population to successfully recover. Frenkel said, “any adult mortality will compromise conservation fish culture efforts by decreasing the potential number of breeding adults.” Recovery Coordinator, Lana Ciarniello, states that “the ‘boat kit’ should be viewed as more than just a set of tools but also a method that further allows for people and communities to take a leadership role in the plight of the white sturgeon. The tool kit provides a realistic solution to the current fishing situation.”

Since August 30<sup>th</sup> Fisher Families from Saik’uz have live released 10 sturgeon from gill nets. Tl’azt’en also has 5 boat kits and has live released 2 sturgeon. Frenkel stated that “The efforts of the Fisher Families in the Saik’uz and Tl’azt’en First Nation Bands should be commended. It takes patience, time and commitment to successfully live release a sturgeon and we are grateful for their support of this pilot program and their dedication to the conservation of sturgeon.”

*If you know someone that would be interested in participating in this program please contact us at [info@nechakowhitesturgeon.org](mailto:info@nechakowhitesturgeon.org)*

## **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](http://www.nechakowhitesturgeon.org) or contact.

Brian Frenkel  
Chair NWSRI Community Working Group  
Vanderhoof BC  
250-567-6603  
250-567-8620 cell  
[bfrenkel@avison.bc.ca](mailto:bfrenkel@avison.bc.ca)

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