



Many hands brought success on the Nechako White Sturgeon's road to recovery

After many years of hard work, political wrangling, and fundraising by many parties, the Freshwater Fisheries Society of B.C. hosted the grand opening of their new Nechako White Sturgeon Conservation Centre on June 17th, 2014 in Vanderhoof, B.C.

BCWF Members may remember passing a resolution submitted by the Vanderhoof Fish and Game Club in 2010 urging the Province of B.C. to step forward with funding for the recovery efforts needed to save the Nechako White Sturgeon, a SARA-listed species. The resolution was passed and went on to win the award for Resolution of the Year at the BCWF AGM & Convention that same year in Prince George.

Securing funding for the Centre was not easy. The city council of the District of Vanderhoof, led by Mayor Gerry Thiessen, stepped up to the plate and committed municipal funds to the project. In fact, Vanderhoof may be one of the first communities anywhere in Canada to budget municipal funds for a SARA list species.

The Province of B.C. contributed to the project as well, with Minister of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations Steve Thomson announcing the government's commitment. Additional funds were provided by Rio Tinto Alcan and the Nechako Environment Enhancement Fund. In total, more than \$10 million has been set aside to ensure construction and operations of the White Sturgeon Conservation Centre over the next decade.

Soon after the speeches were over and the ribbon was but, cut, staff and community volunteers got right to work, successfully spawning six females in a marathon one-day event that was not completed until well after midnight. Each female's eggs were divided and fertilized with 12 different males, creating 72 different families, an important issue

as we move to protect the unique DNA gene pool of the Nechako White Sturgeon that remains in the Nechako River.

If there was ever any debate about the support of the local community for this conservation centre, one only needs to see the tremendous commitment of the constant stream of volunteers that rotate through the facility to help with each stage of the spawn. Through word of mouth and the help of social media, we have had many individuals show up from over 100 kilometers away – including the University of Northern B.C. – to help us through this process.

Although this is an important milestone in the recovery of the Nechako White Sturgeon, our work is not complete. It is critical that the Province of B.C. continue to work with the community of Vanderhoof to manage the remaining flows of the Nechako River in a manner that will create a flow and temperature regime that allows for natural recruitment of this endangered species.

To learn more about the Nechako White Surgeon and the new conservation centre in Vanderhoof, visit www.gofishbc.com and search for "Nechako White Sturgeon Conservation Centre".



(L to R): Cory Williamson, Freshwater Fisheries Manager; MLA John Rustad, Nechako Lakes; Mark Angelo, renowned river conservation and guest speaker at the opening; Mike Long, Superintendent Modernization Plant, Rio Tinto Alcan; Minister Steve Thomson, FLNRO, Don Peterson, President, Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC.



The new Nechako White Sturgeon Conservation Centre on the Nechako River near Vanderhoof, BC