

**Supplement Analysis**  
for the  
**Kootenai River White Sturgeon and**  
**Burbot Hatcheries Program**  
(DOE/EA-1901/SA-01)

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Background**

In February 2013, Bonneville Power Administration (Bonneville) completed the Kootenai River White Sturgeon and Burbot Hatcheries Program Environmental Assessment (DOE/EA 2126) (Kootenai Hatchery EA). The Kootenai Hatchery EA analyzed the potential environmental impacts from funding the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (Tribe) for upgrading its existing Tribal Hatchery and constructing, operating and maintaining a new Twin Rivers Hatchery for additional white sturgeon and burbot production. An integral component of hatchery operation was the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan for Kootenai River White Sturgeon (M&E Plan) (Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, 2012), which was incorporated by reference to the Kootenai Hatchery EA.

Consistent with Kootenai Hatchery EA, this Supplement Analysis (SA) analyzes the effects of sampling efforts in the Kootenai White Sturgeon Contaminant Study (KWSCS) conducted by the Tribe that would implement monitoring and evaluation actions analyzed in the Kootenai Hatchery EA. The project objectives are to conduct juvenile sampling consistent with the M&E Plan and retain up to 60 juvenile white sturgeon to conduct contaminant analyses.

This SA analyzes the effects of the KWSCS to determine if they are within the scope of the analysis considered in the Kootenai Hatchery EA, including whether there are substantial changes to the proposal analyzed in the EA. It also evaluates whether the proposed project presents significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns that were not addressed by the EA. The findings of this SA determine whether additional National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis is needed pursuant to 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 1502.9(d) and 10 CFR 1021 *et seq.*

**Proposed Activities**

As part of the KWCS, Bonneville proposes to fund the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (Tribe) to collect and euthanize up to 60 juvenile Kootenai River white sturgeon so that tissue samples can be obtained and analyzed for the presence of contaminants (e.g., selenium). Juvenile sturgeon are considered to be individuals aged 3 to 24 years and less than a total length of 120 centimeters. The juvenile collection and removal effort would occur in summer 2023. If additional sampling is needed it would occur in summer 2024 (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2023).

Juvenile white sturgeon would be collected during the annual juvenile sturgeon monitoring efforts conducted by the Tribe and Idaho Fish and Game (IDFG). Bonneville has funded this annual monitoring effort since 2012 to evaluate survival, condition, growth, movement, and habitat use of hatchery reared juvenile white sturgeon. Juvenile sturgeon are collected in accordance with the M&E Plan (KTOI, 2012) between July to September each year using gillnets, angling or setlines. Standard sites have been established based on suitability for fishing gillnets and catch effectiveness. Each site is sampled on two

or more occasions per year. Cumulative sampling effort is typically 400 to 600 gillnet hours per year. Annual catch has ranged from 200 to over 1,000 sturgeon.

Bonneville evaluated the effects of the annual monitoring as part of the proposed project for the Kootenai Hatchery EA. The collection and euthanization of up to 60 juvenile Kootenai River white sturgeon for the purposes of a contaminant study is a new action under this KWSCS proposal. Contaminant testing and lab processing would be funded by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Bonneville would not provide funds for contaminate testing and lab processing.

In a letter dated May 30, 2023, the USFWS confirmed the Tribe's proposal to remove up to 60 juvenile Kootenai River white sturgeon for contaminant sampling is consistent with the actions described in the Section 10 Permit (TE-798744-9) USFWS issued to the Tribe for its Kootenai Hatchery actions (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2023). To ensure minimal effects to Kootenai River white sturgeon during the implementation of the collection and removal effort, the Tribe would implement all terms and conditions included in their Section 10 Permit.

### **Analysis**

The KWSCS would involve the lethal removal of up to 60 juvenile Kootenai River white sturgeon for the purposes of conducting a contaminant study. Fish would be collected during regular annual sampling following protocols established in the M&E Plan.

Below is a description of the potential effects on fish and wildlife and an assessment of whether these effects are consistent with those described in the Kootenai Hatchery EA. Because the sampling would only occur from boats on the Kootenai River during regular annual sampling and would be conducted consistent with the previously established M&E Plan, there would be no new effects to the other environmental elements that were evaluated in the Kootenai Hatchery EA: Land Use and Recreation, Vegetation and Wetlands, Floodplains, Geology and Soils, Water Quantity and Water Quality, Visual Resources, Cultural Resources, Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice, Noise, Transportation, Air Quality, and Climate Change.

#### **1. Fish and Wildlife**

The effects on fish from the removal of up to 60 juvenile Kootenai River white sturgeon are consistent with the analysis in the Kootenai Hatchery EA. Section 3.8.2 ("Environmental Effects—Proposed Action-Fish") describes overall effects as low-to-moderate for fish.

The collection of juvenile Kootenai River white sturgeon for the KWSCS would utilize the efforts of the Tribe and IDFG during annual monitoring, which is described their M&E Plan for Kootenai River White Sturgeon (Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, 2012) and incorporated into the Kootenai Hatchery EA by reference. The collection of the 60 fish would not require any additional sampling effort and would, therefore, not have new effects on non-target aquatic species, aquatic habitat, and wildlife species beyond those effects previously analyzed in the Kootenai Hatchery EA. The KWSCS would result in the collection and euthanization of up to 60 juvenile Kootenai River white sturgeon from the in-river population. Because of annual releases from the Kootenai River White Sturgeon Hatchery Program, there is an estimated 15,000-20,000 juvenile Kootenai River white sturgeon currently in the Kootenai River and Kootenay Lake (Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, 2021). In their letter dated May 30, 2023, the USFWS acknowledges that this request to euthanize 60 Kootenai sturgeon is consistent with the actions described in the Section 10 Permit No. TE-798744-9; therefore, no further consultation is needed. Because of the abundance of fish

relative to the number that would be removed and the USFWS determination that the action is consistent with their existing permit, the KWSCS would result in a low effect on the overall population.

**Findings**

Bonneville finds that the proposed activities and potential impacts related to the KWSCS are similar to those analyzed in the Kootenai River White Sturgeon and Burbot Hatcheries Program Environmental Assessment (DOE/EA 2126) and Finding of No Significant Impact. There are no substantial changes in the EA's Proposed Action and no significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns bearing on the EA's Proposed Action or its impacts within the meaning of 10 CFR § 1021.314 and 40 CFR §1502.9(d). Therefore, no further NEPA analysis or documentation is required.

/s/ Ted Gresh

Ted Gresh  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

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Katey Grange  
NEPA Compliance Officer

## References

KTOI (Kootenai Tribe of Idaho). 2012. Monitoring and Evaluation Plan for Kootenai River White Sturgeon (*Acipenser transmontanus*). Prepared for the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho by P. Anders, R. Beamesderfer, and S. Young. Appendix B In: Kootenai River Native Fish Conservation Aquaculture Program Step 2 Submittal. Prepared by the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho for the Northwest Power and Conservation Council and Bonneville Power Administration. August 2012. 48 pp.

KTOI (Kootenai Tribe of Idaho). 2021. Hatchery Management Plan Supporting Kootenai River White Sturgeon Restoration. Prepared for the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho by S. Young and N. Jensen. Edited by Meridian Environmental, Inc. (J. Heltzel and R. Rice). March 2021. 77 pp.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) , May 30, 2023, Letter to Shawn Young, RE: Proposal to Capture and Euthanize 60 Hatchery Origin Endangered White Sturgeon.