



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Upper Columbia River Basin Field Office
11103 E. Montgomery Drive, Suite 2
Spokane, WA 99206

May 31, 2000

Brigadier General Carl A. Strock
Division Engineer
U. S. Army Corps of Engineers
North Pacific Division
220 NW 8th Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97206-3589

Subject: Kootenai River Sturgeon Spawning/Incubation Flows; Fish and Wildlife Service
Operational Request No. 00-1

Dear General Strock:

On March 1, 1995, the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), in accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, issued a jeopardy biological opinion regarding the effects of the Federal Columbia River Power System on the Kootenai River white sturgeon (sturgeon). The reasonable and prudent alternatives (RPAs) included in the biological opinion were designed to enhance sturgeon reproduction based on the best available information regarding the relationship between the annual timing, magnitude, temperature, and duration of flows below Libby Dam. The biological opinion, however, acknowledged that the precise relationship between these factors had not yet been demonstrated. Accordingly, the RPAs provided for adaptive management. This year emphasis is being placed on in-river survival of progeny of wild fish now being spawned in the Kootenai Tribal Hatchery. The intent is to better define the life stage where most mortality is occurring for more efficient recovery actions in the future, as a means to better deal with system configuration constraints.

The enclosed 2000 sturgeon operational guidelines for Libby Dam were developed after consultation with the Sturgeon Recovery Team. These guidelines are consistent with the March 1, 1995, biological opinion, the final Sturgeon Recovery Plan, and have been determined by the National Marine Fisheries Service to be consistent with the flow requirements for listed anadromous fish. Coordination has also occurred with the Service's Helena, MT office regarding ramping rates and water temperature for bull trout for this year. These guidelines supersede those of 1999.

If you have any questions regarding this matter or need additional information, please call Bob Hallock, Deputy Field Supervisor of the Service's Upper Columbia River Basin Field Office, at

(509)891-6839 or John Young at, Division of Consultation Planning, in the Portland Regional Office at (503)231-6241.

Sincerely,

Susan B Martin

Supervisor

CC: FWS, Portland (Shake/Olney)
FWS, Portland (Barry/Finn/Young)
FWS, Helena (walker)

Enclosure

**2000 STURGEON GUIDELINES
FOR
LIBBY DAM OPERATIONS
(Fish and Wildlife Service Operational Request No.00-1)**

1. Regulate flows from Libby Dam consistent with laws and treaties, (including flood control objectives in place when the existing, 1995, biological opinion was issued), to achieve flows at Bonners Ferry initially to maximize the survival of larvae to be released from the preservation stocking program and to promote natural recruitment¹ for a new year class of sturgeon.
2. Maintain minimum outflow until June 5. Then begin ramping up over a 6 day period until 25,000 cfs is being released and reaching Bonners Ferry by sunset of June 11. Larval sturgeon from the Kootenai Tribe Hatchery are expected to be available for release at that time. Specifics of the ramp-up recommendation: Between 4,000 cfs and 9,000 cfs, ramp-up at no more than 1,250 cfs per day. Above 9,000 cfs, ramp up within established criteria as needed to allow delivery of 25,000 cfs at Bonners Ferry by sunset June 11.
3. After reaching 25,000 cfs release, maintain this rate for 19 days. In the event of an increased natural runoff event below Libby Dam during this 19 day period, continue to release 25,000 cfs until previously consulted upon flood control criteria (near 1770 feet measured at Bonners Ferry) is approached.
4. At the end of this 19 day period, ramp-down to a minimum bull trout flow to be specified under separate cover by Region 6 of the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). This ramp-down should be accomplished by a reversal of the specifics in recommendation 2 above
5. The above recommendation, developed in consultation with National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), is based on a 6.45 MAF April to August runoff forecast, end of August reservoir elevation of 2439 feet, and approximately 1.21 MAF (including ramp up and down volumes) being released each for sturgeon and salmon.
6. The duration of this 25,000 cfs sturgeon flow recommendation may be extended depending on the results of the June 1 forecasts.
7. Water volumes necessary to conduct the recommended controlled spill tests at Libby Dam may be taken from the sturgeon release volume resulting in a slightly less than 25,000 cfs average release rate over the 19 day period.

¹Tentatively, the sturgeon recovery team has defined that natural recruitment is achieved when "a natural produced year class is demonstrated through detection by standard recapture methods of at least 20 juveniles from that class reaching more than 1 year of age."

8. The selective withdrawal structure on the face of Libby Dam should be used to the extent necessary to release water in the 12 to 13 degree Centigrade range. If deemed necessary, the Action Agencies should reestablish floating boat barriers near the Libby Dam selective withdrawal facilities, allowing withdrawal very near the surface of the reservoir.
9. Daily load following will be limited to 10% change in outflow from Libby Dam during sturgeon flows. An exception to this may occur during the controlled spill tests scheduled during this same period.
10. Ensure the availability of stored water of sufficient quantity for successful out-year needs of all listed species in the Columbia River basin.