



Kootenay Lake Critical Habitat for *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) listed Upper Kootenay River White Sturgeon (*Acipenser transmontanus*)

Species Information

The White Sturgeon is the largest, longest-lived freshwater fish species in North America, with individuals over 6 metres in length and over 100 years of age having been reported in Canada. The species' most distinguishing features include a mainly cartilaginous skeleton, long scaleless body covered with rows of large bony plates (called scutes) on the back and sides, shark-like tail, and four barbels between the mouth and an elongated snout (Figure 1).

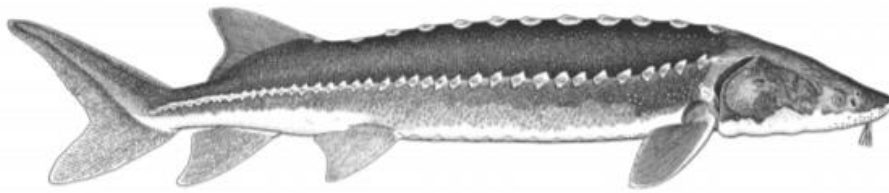


Figure 1. White Sturgeon, *Acipenser transmontanus*

Biological factors most limiting to White Sturgeon population growth are very low early life stage survival and delayed maturation. Females and males may spawn for the first time at 26 and 11 years of age respectively, but often it is later. White Sturgeon require sufficient suitable habitat, an abundant food base, and appropriate water conditions to complete their full life cycle.

The Upper Columbia River, Upper Kootenay River, Upper Fraser River and Nechako River nationally significant populations of White Sturgeon were listed as **Endangered** under SARA in 2006. The primary human activities that threaten White Sturgeon in the wild are: loss of habitat quality and quantity, direct and indirect harvest, river regulation, reduced prey supply, introduction of non-native species, hatchery and aquaculture effects on health and populations, effects of small population size, floodplain development and pollution.

Additional information on the species can be found in the *Recovery Strategy for White Sturgeon (Acipenser transmontanus) in Canada* published in March 2014 on the Species at Risk Public Registry: https://www.registrelep-sararegistry.gc.ca/virtual_sara/files/plans/rs_esturgeon_blc_wh_sturgeon_0314a_e.pdf



Upper Kootenay River White Sturgeon Distribution

The Upper Kootenay River White Sturgeon population extends from Kootenai Falls, Montana, located 50 river-kilometres below Libby Dam (Idaho), downstream through Kootenay Lake to Corra Linn Dam on the lower West Arm of Kootenay Lake and Duncan Dam at the northern end of Kootenay Lake, British Columbia (Figure 2)

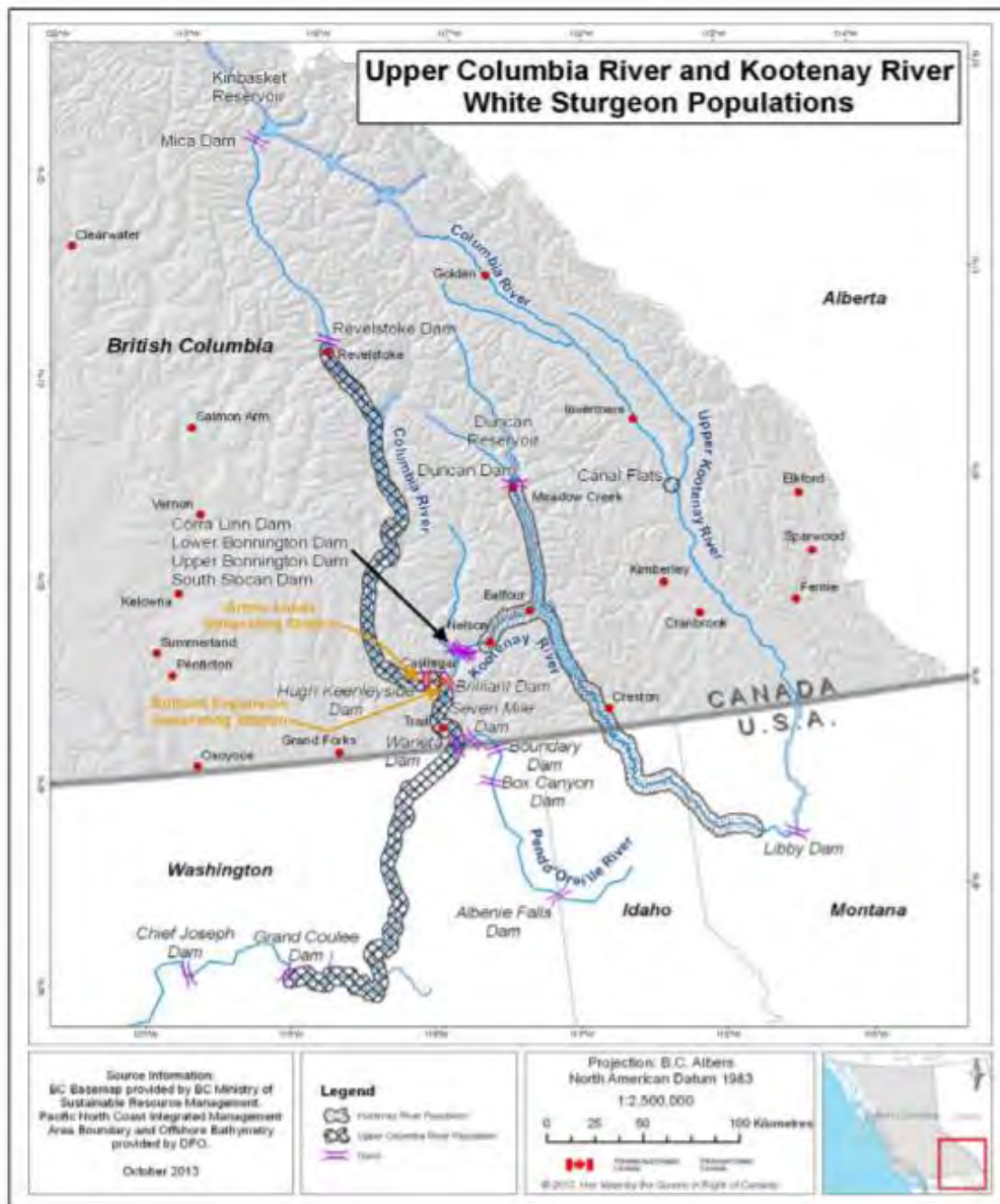


Figure 2. Reference map for Upper Kootenay River and Upper Columbia River White Sturgeon distribution



Upper Kootenay River White Sturgeon Critical Habitat

Critical habitat is defined as the habitat that is necessary for the survival or recovery of a listed wildlife species that is identified as the species' critical habitat in the recovery strategy or in an action plan for the species.

This information sheet highlights the Upper Kootenay River White Sturgeon critical habitat, which is found in:

1. Duncan Delta on Kootenay Lake (Figure 3)
2. Crawford Creek Delta on Kootenay Lake (Figure 4)
3. Kootenay River Delta and Lower Kootenay River (Figure 5)

Additional information sheets are available that outline critical habitat areas for other White Sturgeon nationally significant populations. Maps and coordinates for all White Sturgeon critical habitat locations can be found in the Recovery Strategy on the Species at Risk Public Registry.

Projects Near Water

When undertaking a **construction or development project** in or near fish habitat you are responsible to adhere to a number of provisions under the *Fisheries Act* and the *Species at Risk Act*, including prohibitions against destruction of critical habitat. Please refer to the Projects Near Water and SARA Information Letter or <https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/pnw-ppe/index-eng.html> for more information.



Figure 3. Critical habitat area for Upper Kootenay River White Sturgeon - Duncan Delta on Kootenay Lake



Figure 4. Map of critical habitat for Upper Kootenay River White Sturgeon - Crawford Creek Delta on Kootenay Lake

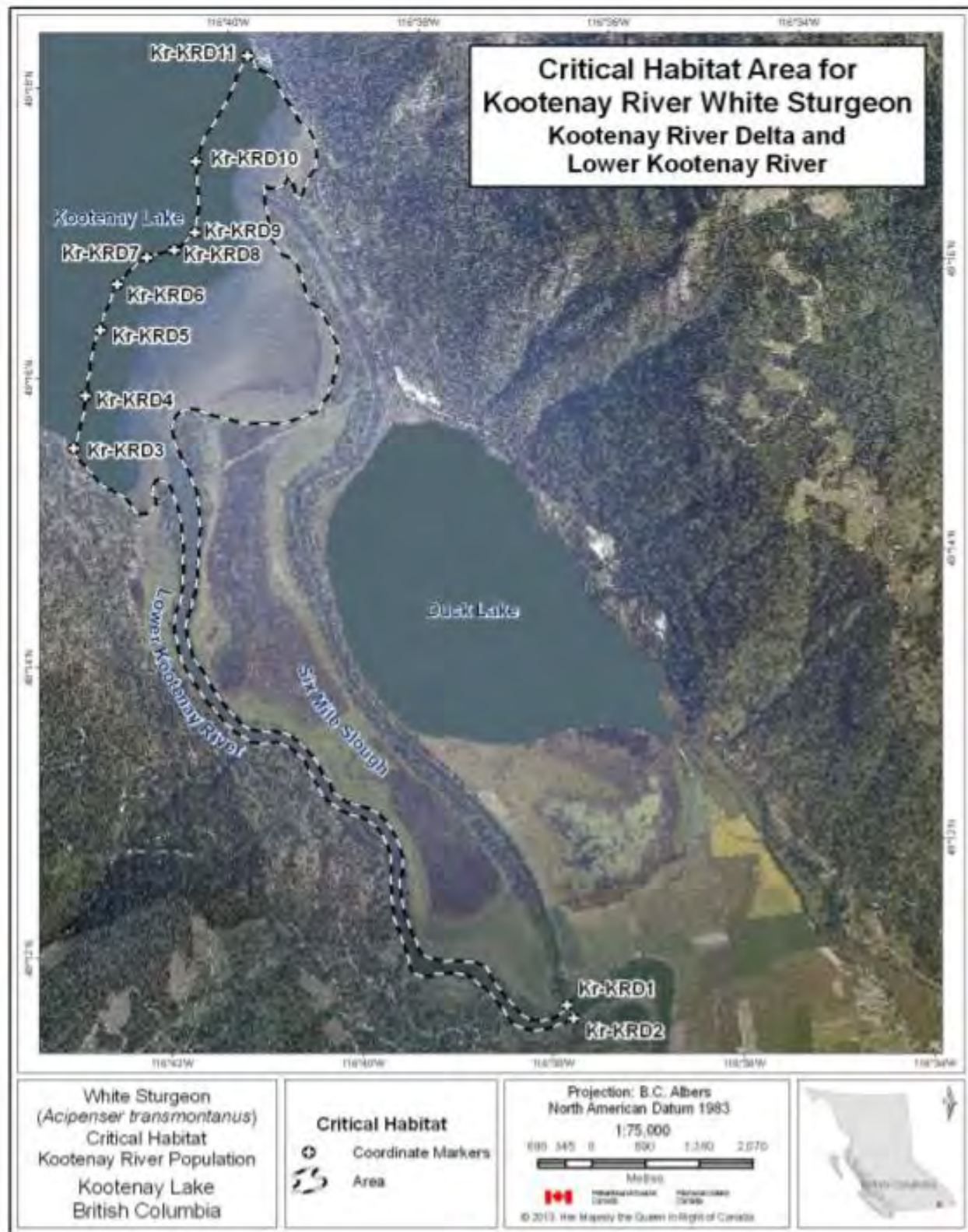


Figure 5. Map of critical habitat for Upper Kootenay River White Sturgeon - Kootenay River Delta and Lower Kootenay River