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Population status of North American green sturgeon, *Acipenser medirostris*

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Abstract

North American green sturgeon, *Acipenser medirostris*, was petitioned for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The two questions that need to be answered when considering an ESA listing are; (1) Is the entity a species under the ESA and if so (2) is the "species" in danger of extinction or likely to become an endangered species in the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range? Green sturgeon genetic analyses showed strong differentiation between northern and southern populations, and therefore, the species was divided into Northern and Southern Distinct Population Segments (DPSs). The Northern DPS includes populations in the Rogue, Klamath-Trinity, and Eel rivers, while the Southern DPS only includes a single population in the Sacramento River. The principal risk factors for green sturgeon include loss of spawning habitat, harvest, and entrainment. The Northern DPS is not considered to be in danger of extinction or likely to become an endangered species in the foreseeable future. The loss of spawning habitat is not large enough to threaten this DPS, although the Eel River has been severely impacted by sedimentation due to poor land use practices and floods. The two main spawning populations in the Rogue and Klamath-Trinity rivers occupy separate basins reducing the potential for loss of the DPS through catastrophic events. Harvest has been substantially reduced and green sturgeon in this DPS do not face substantial entrainment loss. However there are significant concerns due to lack of information, flow and temperature issues, and habitat degradation. The Southern DPS is considered likely to become an endangered species in the foreseeable future. Green sturgeon in this DPS are concentrated into one spawning area outside of their natural habitat in the Sacramento

River, making them vulnerable to catastrophic extinction. Green sturgeon spawning areas have been lost from the area above Shasta Dam on the Sacramento River and Oroville Dam on the Feather River. Entrainment of individuals into water diversion projects is an additional source of risk, and the large decline in numbers of green sturgeon entrained since 1986 causes additional concern. ?? 2006 Springer Science+Business Media B.V.

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