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Sent: Monday, October 09, 2006 5:08 PM
To: Baugh, Zenobia
Subject: FY07-09

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Dear Dr. Walker,

I understand comments for the new budget were due on 6 October. I hope you accept this comment because I have been over seas trying to get some work started on the Amur River (between Russia and China). I just went through my email and found something that I am very concerned with. I sincerely hope you accept this comment.

This has to do with a Columbia River Sturgeon Project (86-50). I understand that the Northwest Planning Council has funded Dr. Molly Webb to (a) develop a nonintrusive method to predict sex for white sturgeon and (b) describe the maturation cycle for male and female white sturgeon. I am a sturgeon specialist with Wildlife Conservation Society, and at one time studied reproductive biology of fishes. Dr. Webb has collaborated on numerous studies with me.

First, I must thank the Council and Bonneville Power Administration for funding Dr. Webb's work. Your funding helped to produce a method to estimate sex and maturation in sturgeons without having to conduct surgeries. We were able to test that method on green sturgeon in the Rogue River, and found that it worked quite well. I plan to ask Dr. Webb to collaborate on another project in Russia and China to implement that method with Amur and Kaluga sturgeons. These fish are endemic to the Amur River, and it is likely that, because they are rare, the Russian and Chinese governments will not allow us to perform surgeries to identify sex and maturation. Because understanding sex and maturation (and understanding spawning periodictiy, which can be predicted without performing surgeries because of your support for Dr. Webb) is needed for stock assessments and management, the method that you helped to develop can and will help

with conservation and management of sturgeons world wide.

I understand that Dr. Webb has been trying to describe the spawning periodicity (cycle) of wild white sturgeon, which is always much different than spawning periodicity of captive sturgeon. Understanding how frequently individuals spawn is extremely important for managing this species. Results of stock assessments are dependent on the spawning periodicity. Hence, this information is vital for recovery and management of this species. Dr. Webb needs only 3 more years of funding (at a relatively low level) to complete this project.

The concern I have is that management often puts a lot of money into a project, but then stops funding after most of the work has been completed but before results are completed! I saw this on the Rogue River with green sturgeon. The Bonneville Power Administration has been supporting this work since 2000. Dr. Webb needs only 3 more years (at much lower funding level) to complete this important work. If the plug is pulled now, then much of the 0.5 million that you have spent will be wasted. As a private taxpayer in Oregon, that is alarming. As an international sturgeon scientist, that is discouraging. As a conservationist, that is shameful.

I hope you will consider funding Dr. Webb to complete her important work. This information is needed to manage white sturgeon stocks.

Sincerely,

Daniel L. Erickson