

**Aquatic Settlement Agreement  
Wells Aquatic Settlement Work Group**

**Statement of Agreement Regarding Evaluation and Implementation of  
White Sturgeon Adult Passage Measures (WSMP Objective 5; Section 4.4)**

**Date of Approval: November 8, 2023**

**Statement**

To meet the year 11 requirement found in Section 4.4 of the White Sturgeon Management Plan (WSMP), Public Utility District No. 1 of Douglas County (Douglas PUD) in concert with the Aquatic Settlement Work Group (Aquatic SWG) will:

- 1) Identify the biological benefits of providing upstream passage for White Sturgeon at Wells Dam.
- 2) Document the status of sturgeon passage measures and plans at Columbia and Snake River dams.
- 3) Complete a literature review on sturgeon passage at hydro-electric and dam facilities prior to the end of 2024.
- 4) Acquire and summarize White Sturgeon PIT tag and interrogation data at Mid-Columbia PUD projects. Within fishway acoustic tag detections and video count data will also be included, where available. A draft technical memorandum summarizing these data will be completed by the end of 2024.
- 5) Collect and archive tissue samples from White Sturgeon encountered in the Wells Project during M&E activities for genetic analysis, with an emphasis on sampling fish released from the Wells Fish Hatchery during 2014-2023. Data derived from these samples will be used to estimate the genetic diversity (e.g., allelic diversity) of the existing White Sturgeon population in the Wells Project. Genetic samples may be analyzed at the request and approval of the Aquatic SWG no sooner than 2025 and may include up to 400 unique individuals in the Wells Project area. Results of this analysis will be considered in the assessment of the biological merit of fish passage in the context of connectivity with other White Sturgeon populations in the Columbia River. This step will be completed and approved following the review and approval of steps 1 & 2 above.

Following the completion of items 1-5, the Aquatic SWG may elect to defer additional analyses or steps until 2033 during the next scheduled review of the WSMP Section 4.4 requirement.

**Background**

In the summer of 2023 Douglas PUD and the Aquatic SWG began discussing an approach to meeting the year 11 requirements found in White Sturgeon Management Plan (WSMP)

Objective 5 of Section 4.4. After discussing, the Aquatic SWG agreed that a multi-step process was needed to help inform the biological merits of Adult White Sturgeon Passage at Wells Dam. The language in this statement of agreement is aimed to help inform criteria (i) and (ii) in the WSMP's Section 4.4 and show reasonable and effective progress towards meeting Objective 5 during the duration of the existing license.

#### **4.4 Evaluation and Implementation of Adult Passage Measures (Objective 5)**

In Year Eleven of the new license and every 10 years thereafter for the duration of the new license unless otherwise determined by the Aquatic SWG, the Aquatic SWG shall evaluate the biological merit to providing upstream passage for adult white sturgeon. The assessment of biological merit shall be determined by: (i) evaluating information gathered from monitoring and evaluation activities and determining whether there is significant biological benefit and need for upstream passage; (ii) the availability of reasonable and appropriate means to provide upstream passage; and (iii) consensus from all other operators of the mid-Columbia projects to implement adult upstream passage measures (the intent is to provide connectivity to the Hanford Reach white sturgeon population). If all three criteria above are met, Douglas, in consultation with the Aquatic SWG shall develop adult passage measures that are consistent with measures being implemented by other mid-Columbia project operators.