

RESTORING PALLID STURGEON POPULATIONS IN THE UPPER MISSOURI RIVER BASIN, MONTANA

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Pallid sturgeon (*Scaphirhynchus albus*) was listed as endangered throughout its range in 1990. Very few adult pallid sturgeon remain in Montana with about 160 individuals in Area 2 and < 50 individuals in Area 1. No significant recruitment has occurred in over 30 years. Stocking hatchery-reared pallid sturgeon back into these areas is a short-term goal of the Recovery Plan. Survival, growth and dispersal of hatchery-reared pallid sturgeon were monitored over the course of seven years to determine the effectiveness of the present stocking program. Survival rates for the five year-classes of stocked pallids could only be assessed for the 1997 year-class. The survival rate for this year-class after seven years in the wild was 42 percent and was 4 times greater than the stocking plan model predicted. The recaptured hatchery-reared pallid sturgeon grew at a surprisingly slow rate, averaging 38 mm year⁻¹. Initial results of the stocking program will be used to make appropriate modifications so that anticipated goals will be met.