

THE PLIGHT OF THE PALLID: THE COST OF LIVING IN AN ENDANGERED ECOSYSTEM

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Although sturgeons have been in existence since the Mesozoic Era, currently many sturgeon species are in jeopardy of extinction. The pallid sturgeon was listed as endangered in 1990, however naturally recruiting populations remain in real danger of going extinct. We argue that no significant efforts have been made to resolve the fundamental ecosystem alterations that originally caused the decline of pallid sturgeon. For example, to date we have failed in addressing the most pressing "Actions needed" as listed in the 1993 Recovery Plan. Therefore, is there any reason to expect that our current trajectory will avert the pallid sturgeon's extinction? The rivers inhabited by pallid sturgeon will remain highly modified unless societal values change regarding dams and the services they provide versus services provided by naturally functioning large river ecosystems. Thus, society should be realistic about what can be expected regarding recovery of pallid sturgeon. We surmise the next era for pallid sturgeon will be the "Propagation Era" and we propose some ideas that will be necessary to cross the threshold into the "Recovery Era."