



Guidelines for Angling White Sturgeon in BC

Most white sturgeon populations in British Columbia are protected under the federal Species at Risk Act and are closed to recreational angling. The lower and middle Fraser River populations are designated as endangered, but are considered healthy enough to support a catch and release sport fishery. Catch and release angling can be low impact if extra care is taken to ensure sturgeon health and survival. To sustain this treasured fishery, the following angling practices are necessary:

1. Use only single barbless hooks and appropriate tackle

Only single barbless hooks are permitted while sturgeon angling. Use heavy rod and reels, with at least 130 lb. manufacture rated test line.

2. Play sturgeon quickly

Play and release sturgeon as quickly as possible. Sturgeon played too long may not recover. If you hook a **large sturgeon** (by definition large sturgeon are 1.5 meters and greater in length) when boat fishing, release the anchor and play the fish to a pre-determined landing location. This will significantly reduce stress on the sturgeon by reducing time played and by not fighting the river current.

3. Choose your fishing location carefully - Keep sturgeon in the water

Never lift a large sturgeon out of the water. Fish suffocate out of water. Large sturgeon are at risk of internal injuries due to their own weight. Ropes, tailers, nooses or other devices must not be used to hold or land sturgeon.

From shore: Your fishing location must be suitable for landing sturgeon. Elevated docks are not suitable. Do not drag sturgeon out of the water onto the shore or dock. Release smaller sturgeon at the side of the dock. Be prepared to get wet when releasing sturgeon.

From boat: Do not lift or drag a large sturgeon into a boat. Land and release large sturgeon at the side of the boat. Never tow a large sturgeon by the tail to shore. Towing by the tail is damaging and can be lethal.

Release **small sturgeon** (by definition small sturgeon are less than 1.5 meters in length) at the side of the boat. If you lift a small sturgeon into a boat then cradle it with two gloved hands – one placed behind the front fins or on the mouth and the other hand placed just forward of the tail. Once in the boat use as many people as necessary to support the sturgeon. Never pull a sturgeon into a boat by using a rope or by the sturgeon's gill plates, pectoral fins, or by its mouth or tail only.

4. Remove hooks quickly but gently

Remove deeply embedded hooks with long needle-nose pliers or a hook remover. Grab the bend on the hook and twist. Be quick, but gentle. Sturgeon that are deeply hooked, hooked on or near the gills, or bleeding heavily have lower survival rates. Improve survival by cutting the leader and releasing the sturgeon with the hook left in.

5. Handle and recover sturgeon with care – Be prepared to take photos quickly

Never squeeze or hug sturgeon. Keep your fingers away from the gills and out of the gill plates. If you want photographs, always leave large sturgeon in the water. Have your camera ready and be quick. Recover sturgeon by pointing nose-first upstream into the current and letting go when it struggles to swim.

Fraser River Sturgeon Conservation Society, Fraser Valley Angling Guides Association, Recreational Sturgeon Anglers of BC, Fisheries & Oceans Canada, and the Province of BC supported the development and encourage the practice of these Guidelines.