

## HSBC Fraser River Sturgeon Education Program



### Urban Planner Stakeholders

With the Greater Vancouver Regional District experiencing continual population growth the challenge of creating a sustainable, livable city is at the fore front of many urban planners in the region. Growth can be both a blessing and a curse. It places great opportunity and challenges on those responsible for organizing and designing our region and its land use.

There are many pressures and priorities placed on those who are responsible for making decisions about how to design our cities and plan the development of infrastructure, business, industry, recreational land use, residential growth and its various amenities. Rarely are the interests of a threatened species placed at the center of these pressing concerns. The habitat of the white sturgeon has suffered irreparable damage in the last century as unchecked growth has left its indelible stamp on the landscape of the Fraser River Valley. Urban sprawl throughout Metro Vancouver has seen hundreds of salmon and sturgeon bearing streams culverted, destroying important spawning grounds and juvenile rearing habitat. Sensitive riparian zones have been dyked and transformed into industrial and commercial land uses which demand access to water and rely on the cheaper land prices associated with food plains. Port and dock facilities are built to service the commercial interests of a burgeoning city and its economic priorities. Railways and highways are located strategically along river corridors often paralleling the course of the Fraser. Residential growth out into the Fraser Valley is the byproduct of rapid population growth and the loss of affordable land close to urban centers. Even with the gentrification of some parts of old urban cores, such as Yaletown, urban planners find it difficult to stop the horizontal expansion of residential land use in the municipalities and cities east of Vancouver up the Fraser River Valley.

All this development places extra pressure on the water and sewage systems needed to support urban growth. Increased volumes of waste water, solid wastes and the demand for the building materials needed in infrastructure construction, such as sand and gravel and other aggregates, pose a threat to the habitat of white sturgeon trying to survive into the next few decades. Another million residents are expected to move into the region by 2025. Where will all these people live? How do we need to design our cities so that life is more sustainable as we attempt to reduce our ecological footprint on the Fraser River watershed? How can we lessen the impact on endangered species that need our help in order to survive?

The enormous challenges are offset by the profound opportunities to increase tax revenue as more property owners contribute to the growing base. We need growth to sustain our cities and make them vibrant and dynamic places of commerce and culture. We can not pretend that growth will stop or slow down suddenly. Future growth is inevitable so we must find ways to mitigate environmental degradation without jeopardizing the livability of our region.