

## STORY: STURGEON HABITAT RESTORATION

Air Date: For Immediate Release

Length: 3:16

*suggested lead:* THERE'S ONLY A HALF-MILE STRETCH LEFT OF THE ST. LOUIS RIVER THAT CAN PROVIDE GOOD SPAWNING HABITAT FOR LAKE SUPERIOR STURGEON. AND IT'S GETTING A MAKEOVER TO HELP BRING THAT SPECIES BACK FROM NEAR EXTINCTION. THE DNR'S DENNY BEHR HAS MORE.

*roll tape:*

01:03:24 LUTHER nats "...let's put a pair right out here...one right outside of the stake..."

THE PROJECT IS HUGE...

nats: machine

...LIKE THE FISH THAT ONCE THRIVED HERE. THIS IS THE ST. LOUIS RIVER, JUST BELOW THE DAM AT FOND DU LAC, IN NORTHEASTERN MINNESOTA. HISTORICALLY IT WAS A RICH SPAWNING GROUND FOR LAKE SUPERIOR STURGEON.

music

IN THE 1800'S AND EARLY 1900'S YOU COULD CATCH GOOD SIZED FISH LIKE THESE HERE... HUGE FISH...MAN-SIZED FISH. BUT IN LATER YEARS THEY WERE DECIMATED BY OVERFISHING, POLLUTION, AND LOSS OF HABITAT.

01:04:00 LUTHER nats "...that's good...pull her back...there you go...that's good..."

THAT'S MINNESOTA DNR RIVER ECOLOGIST LUTHER AADLAND. HE'S DIRECTING THE PLACEMENT OF 1500 TONS OF ROCK...CREATING RIFFLE, GLIDE, AND CASCADE HABITAT ... AND 'CELLS.'

02:03:42 LUTHER "...the individual cells that we created within the rapids create semi-protected pools where there's a cascade effect that also drives oxygenated water down into the streambed, where the sturgeon are likely to spawn..."

AND IF THIS WORKS...

01:27:13 ART "...to improve the spawning grounds here will make it possible for the sturgeon to spawn in the wild for the first time in decades..."

THAT WOULD BE GOOD NEWS TO THE NATURE CONSERVANCY, THE DNR, AND OTHER AGENCIES AND GROUPS THAT HAVE PARTNERED IN THIS PROJECT.

nats (water rushing/ vhs tape)

THE DNR HAS HAD SOME SUCCESS IN STOCKING STURGEON. THIS IS AN EGG-STRIPPING OPERATION ON THE LITTLE FORK RIVER IN NORTHERN MINNESOTA, IN 1990. THE STOCKING OF THE ST. LOUIS RIVER BEGAN AT ABOUT THAT SAME TIME .

01:52:22 JOHN "...we started rehabilitating the population back in 1983, and since that time we've put in 14-year classes...and that totals about 150,000 fingerling sturgeon..."

THEY'RE BEGINNING TO SEE SOME SMALL STURGEON RETURN ON THE ST. LOUIS. BUT THE FEMALES DON'T SPAWN UNTIL THEY'RE 20 TO 25 YEARS OLD...AND THEY NEED THE RIGHT KIND OF HABITAT.

nats: water

THE FIRST TEST OF THIS RESTORED AREA IS SIMULATING HOW IT WILL CHANNEL WATER IN THE SPRING.

nats: horn

UPSTREAM WATER IS RELEASED... EIGHT TIMES THE FLOW OF WATER FOUND HERE ON A NORMAL SUMMER DAY THUNDERS DOWNSTREAM.

nats: roaring water

IT 'LL BE A WHILE BEFORE STURGEON CAN BE FISHED FOR HERE AGAIN.

01:56:48 JOHN "...the plan is to wait until the first year that we document natural recruitment and then probably wait a whole nother generation, so that we have fish that were naturally spawned coming back to spawn on their own, and then I think we would declare that we've fully restored the lake sturgeon population is western Lake Superior...that would be 20 to 25 years from now..."

SOMETIMES LEAVING THINGS BETTER FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF PEOPLE IS A REWARD OF ITS OWN.

02:06:50 LUTHER "...it's always enjoyable to see a restoration project come together...because it's something that's kind of a legacy that you leave..."

I'M DENNY BEHR, FOR THE MINNESOTA DNR.

*Suggested tag:* SOME LAKE STURGEON CAN LIVE UP TO 150 YEARS OLD. THEY ARE LISTED AS ENDANGERED, THREATENED OR A SPECIES OF SPECIAL CONCERN IN 19 OF 20 STATES THROUGHOUT THEIR RANGE.