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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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NOAA Seeks Public Comment on Proposal to Protect Threatened Green Sturgeon

NOAA's Fisheries Service is seeking public comment on a proposed rule that generally prohibits acts that would kill or harm a distinct group of North American green sturgeon that spawn in the Sacramento River.

Listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, this distinct segment of green sturgeon is found from Alaska to California but is only known to reproduce or spawn in California's Sacramento River. Data indicate a steady decline of juvenile green sturgeon over the last 30 years. The major cause of decline is likely the loss of spawning habitat in California's Central Valley.

Today's proposed rule prohibits the "take" (harassing, harming, pursuing, hunting, shooting, wounding, killing, trapping, capturing, or collecting the fish, or any attempt to engage in such conduct) of these listed fish, apart from certain categories of activities that contribute to conservation of the species such as some types of scientific research, habitat restoration, or emergency fish rescue operations.

Green sturgeon is just one of over 20 species of sturgeon that have remained virtually unchanged for over 200 million years. They can reach lengths up to eight feet and live as long as 70 years. They reach sexual maturity at approximately 15 years of age and spawn every two to four years.

The effects of the proposed regulations on various aspects of the environment are analyzed in an environmental assessment. Both the proposed rule and draft assessment are found at <http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov>.

Comments on the proposed rule and assessment must be received within 60 days, July 20, 2009. A public hearing will be held if any person requests it within 45 days of publication and the date and location will be announced in the Federal Register. Comments may be submitted by any of the following methods:

- Electronic Public Comments via Federal eRulemaking Portal:
<http://www.regulations.gov>
- Fax: 562-980-4027, Attn: Melissa Neuman
- Mail: Submit written comments to
Chief, Protected Resources Division
Attn: Melissa Neuman
National Marine Fisheries Service Southwest Region
501 West Ocean Blvd., Suite 4200
Long Beach, CA 90802-4213

A list of reference materials for this proposed rule can be obtained via the Internet at <http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov> or by submitting a request to:

Assistant Regional Administrator,
Protected Resources Division

National Marine Fisheries Service Southwest Region
501 West Ocean Blvd., Suite 4200
Long Beach, CA 90802-4213

NOAA understands and predicts changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and conserves and manages our coastal and marine resources. Visit <http://www.noaa.gov>.

On the Web: <http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov>

World Sturgeon Conservation Society: <http://www.wscs.info>
Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES): Sturgeon and CITES:
<http://www.cites.org/eng/prog/sturgeon.shtml>