Guidelines for ecological risk assessment of marine aquaculture

Losses in pond aquaculture by otters
Aqua Nor FORUM programme
EC consultation on aquaculture development
Decline of sturgeon populations is a global phenomenon today. It is mainly caused by human activities, such as illegal fishing, dam construction, habitat degradation and pollution. The Danube River is one of the most important habitats for sturgeon preservation, bearing in mind that six of the existing twenty-seven species are found there.

THE NEED FOR BETTER INFORMATION TRANSFER

There is a need for better availability of information related to sturgeons. Consequently, a team of fish biologists from Center for Multidisciplinary studies at Belgrade University, Serbia, developed an internet presentation as a means of tackling this problem. The internet presentation “Sturgeons in Serbia” (Figure 1) represents the first complete electronic information database related to endangered sturgeon populations and their protection on territory of Republic Serbia. The web presentation is a part of anticipated activities of a project “Standardization and harmonization of techniques for sturgeon fish population studies development and artificial reproduction”, funded by the Ministry of Science and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Serbia.

Figure 2. Pressure on natural populations may be alleviated if a large enough number of individuals can be produced in Serbia via aquaculture.
A NEW WEBSITE

The presentation consists of four main parts. The first part deals with general subjects, including basic information on sturgeons in Serbia, basic biology and ecology of all present species and an overview of endangering factors. The second part, known as “information base”, comprises three main segments:

1) Literature (a list of all relevant publications and associated links),
2) Legislation (an overview of national and international legislation) and
3) Stakeholders (a list of all relevant organizations and institutions from Serbia and the region, with descriptions of their activities and contact information).

News on sturgeon protection issues represents the third part of the presentation, while the last segment deals with the team responsible for development of the website, with information pertaining to main activities and contacts.

The website development was finalized in March 2007 and can be accessed via http://www.sturgeons.info - it is available in both Serbian and English language versions.

An example of information contained on the website is Aquaculture, as a means of perhaps the greatest potential for sturgeon protection, is an issue that needs special attention. It provides recovery of natural populations through restocking programs. Also, by supplying the market with specimens from aquaculture, fishing pressure on natural populations is significantly alleviated (Figure 2). On the other hand, reckless aquaculture management can lead to introduction of exotic species, which can pose serious threats to sturgeons and their habitat. An example of this is last year’s release of the North American paddlefish into the Danube River (Figure 3) – this is one of the issues dealt with on the website.

Everybody is welcome to visit “Sturgeons in Serbia”; feedback on general impressions, suggestions and comments will be most welcome.