

Proposal for a Travelling, Life-Size Sturgeon Interpretive Display For Educational Events and Free Loan



Submitted by:

New York Sturgeon For Tomorrow

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<http://www.nysturgeonfortomorrow.org/index.html>

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/NY-Sturgeon-For-Tomorrow/221935594534480>

Proposal Submitted to:

North American Native Fish Association

The Gerald C. Corcoran Education Grant

<http://nanfa.org/corcoran.shtml>

Summary of Proposed Project

A keystone native species, sturgeon (family **Acipenseridae**) were once abundant in New York and throughout the Great Lakes, but are now listed as Threatened or Endangered in most areas. New York Sturgeon For Tomorrow was formed to promote the restoration of sturgeon in New York through public education and participation. Here we propose the addition of a life-size, 6 foot replica sturgeon mount for use in educational displays to capture the awe-inspiring prestige of these magnificent fish. Use of a borrowed replica sturgeon mount has proven to be an invaluable attraction at previous public displays. Unfortunately, this mount is housed 3.4 hours and 211 miles from our location, which severely restricts frequent usage. In addition to use at our own educational displays, we estimate that a replica sturgeon mount housed in Syracuse, NY could be freely loaned to more than 25 agencies and institutions located within a 1 hour radius of Syracuse, NY, and potentially reach an audience of many thousands of people. We believe promotion and education regarding this keystone native species would fully enhance NANFA's goals of native species education at many public events, and for students, teachers, and researchers in educational settings.

Educational Objectives

The New York Chapter of Sturgeon For Tomorrow was formed to promote the re-establishment of sturgeon throughout New York, to levels such that all species of sturgeon found in New York are able to be removed from the Threatened or Endangered Species listing, and ultimately produce self-sustaining populations capable of supporting well-managed sport fisheries. Public education and support play an integral role in aiding state and federal management agencies to allocate ever-shrinking resources towards re-establishment of sturgeon. A life-size replica sturgeon mount would substantially enhance our educational appeal.

Detailed Description of Proposed Project

Sturgeon are the keystone species of native, fresh water fish. Once abundant throughout New York and the Great Lakes drainage, numbers have been reduced or extirpated from many watersheds. Most species of sturgeon are now listed as Threatened or Endangered throughout much of their historical range. The New York Chapter of Sturgeon For Tomorrow was formed to promote the re-establishment of sturgeon throughout New York, to levels such that all species of sturgeon found in New York are able to be removed from the Threatened or Endangered Species listing, and ultimately produce self-sustaining populations capable of supporting sport fisheries. Sturgeon have been listed as a species of primary restoration concern by the USGS Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, The Great Lakes Fisheries Commission, and most states surrounding the Great Lakes basin.

Public education and support will play an integral role in encouraging state and federal management agencies to commit ever-shrinking resources towards re-establishment of sturgeon. NY Sturgeon For Tomorrow has been doing educational interpretive displays at public events for the past 2 years. In cooperation with the Cornell University Biological Field Station (<http://www.cbfs.dnr.cornell.edu/index.html>), we have developed posters and other interpretive materials for display at public events. Cornell University's Oneida Lake Education Initiative (<http://www.oneidalakeinfo.org/>) has produced a mini-documentary video on Surveying Sturgeon (<http://www.seagrant.sunysb.edu/oli/videos/Sturgeon%20Compressed.wmv>) which has been very popular for the public.

While posters and videos are wonderful education tools, they can't possibly capture the awe-inspiring magnitude of a real-life, swimming fish that can surpass 7 feet in length and weigh over 230 lbs in freshwater lakes and rivers. Recently, we encountered a life-size, authentic taxidermy replica of a sturgeon, used by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Hudson River Estuary Program

(<http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4920.html>)

in cooperation with the New York State Water Resources Institute, Cornell University (<http://wri.eas.cornell.edu/staff.html>). Through their generosity, this life-size replica was borrowed for 3 public display events over the last few years, and was found to be an absolute magnet for the public at our educational displays. The value of having this educational asset at our display was abundantly obvious.



Unfortunately, this sturgeon replica is housed at that agency's headquarters in New Paltz, NY which is a 3.4 hour, 211 mile drive one-way from our location in Syracuse, NY. In order to use the replica at one of our display events, it necessitates nearly an entire day to go pick up the mount, a day or more for display, and nearly an entire day to return the mount, not to mention gas, mileage, time, and coordination of activities. In summary, this has severely limited our ability to use the display for

educational functions in the past and in the future.

We have contacted American Fish Taxidermy (<http://americanfishtaxidermy.com>, 931-526-3474) who specializes in ultra life-like taxidermy mounts for museums and nature centers.

They have provided us a price quote for production of a museum quality, life-size, lake sturgeon replica mount.

The mount is constructed of a molded fiberglass shell, 72" long, about 2 feet wide and about 18" feet in height.

The fiberglass shell is then hand-painted and sealed with clear acrylic, and glass eyes installed to give a true life-like appearance (see picture).

Lifespan of the sturgeon replica mount would in theory be unlimited, provided that general minor damage from transport to and from shows is expected, etc. It is anticipated that minor repair costs will be absorbed by New York Sturgeon For Tomorrow.



This replica mount would be owned by New York Sturgeon For Tomorrow for use at public education displays, and would be made freely available whenever not in use, for short-term loan to other environmental groups, angler associations, universities, researchers, fish hatcheries, state and federal agencies, public and private schools, local zoos, and any other pertinent reputable parties who express interest. The replica mount would be housed at the Cornell University Biological Field Station in Syracuse, NY, and loans coordinated by the author, who is also employed at that location as a Fisheries Research Support Specialist.

Target Audience

The target audience for New York Sturgeon For Tomorrow educational displays includes the general public, the angling public, and school educational settings from elementary to college level. In order to reach these audiences, we plan to do our own displays at appropriate environmental events, and make the display freely available for short term loan to many other state and federal agencies, educational institutions, and user groups. NANFA members would certainly be encouraged to use the display, and would be a great vector for networking to other user groups. For target purposes, we conservatively estimate our audience and user groups to be the following groups within a 1 hour driving time of Syracuse, NY.

In addition to New York Sturgeon For Tomorrow, the following have already expressed interest in borrowing the sturgeon replica mount for use in their ongoing educational programs:

- The Oneida Lake Education Initiative – Joanne Getchonis, Cornell University Biological Field Station, 900 Shackelton Point Road, Bridgeport, NY 13030, (315) 633-9243. Jgg4@cornell.edu. This group provides materials support for loan to local primary and secondary schools for use in the classroom, including a Travelling Trunk of preserved aquatic organisms. In 2011, six school districts participated in this program with presentations to well over 1,000 students.
- New York State Sea Grant – Dave White, SUNY College at Oswego, 62 Mackin Hall, Oswego, NY 13126. (315) 312-3042. Dgw9@cornell.edu. New York Sea Grant's Marine and Great Lakes educators work with K-12 classroom teachers and partner with nature centers, museums and aquaria to deliver science-based information to students and the general public in order to create the informed citizenry needed for wise coastal resource decision-making.
- NYSDEC Oneida Fish Hatchery – Mark Babenzien, 3 Hatchery Rd, Constantia, NY 13044. (315) 623-7311. mjbabenz@gw.dec.state.ny.us. Fish hatchery for sturgeon and walleye on Oneida Lake, NY. Has an open house every spring which is attended by 500-1,000 anglers, along with multiple school groups ranging from elementary to college level (>150 children).
- US Geological Survey – Dawn Dittman, USGS Tunison Laboratory of Aquatic Science, 3075 Gracie Road, Cortland, NY 13045. 607-753-0259x7523. ddittman@usgs.gov. The Tunison Lab has a fishing education festival the third Saturday of April that is attended by 300-500 children and parents, and is the site of high school BOCES classes of 30-60 students / year).

Plans for 2012-13 include:

- The Oneida Lake Association, an angler association with over 2,000 members located near Syracuse, NY. Sturgeon For Tomorrow has twice provided educational displays at this group's annual meeting, with 300-500 anglers in attendance at each.
- The New York State Fair is held annually in Syracuse, NY. Sturgeon For Tomorrow hopes to secure an exhibit at this fair beginning in August 2012, if the replica mount can be obtained by that time. This 12 day event has an average draw of over 900,000 people annually and is a great way to gain exposure with the more general, non-environmental public.
- The Rosamond Gifford Zoo in Syracuse, NY holds multiple promotional events each year which we plan to explore in 2012. Zoo attendance was not readily available but is likely to be substantial.

- Beaver Lake Nature Center (20 mins from Syracuse) holds many environmental events, including a Golden Harvest Festival in the fall drawing >3,000 people, which we intend to secure display space at in 2012.

Other potential audiences or institutions for which the sturgeon replica mount will be made freely available for use, within approximately a 1 hour radius of Syracuse include:

- Other events held at the Syracuse Fairgrounds, i.e. Sportmans Expo, Wildlife exhibits
- Cornell University Biological Field Station – research and college field trips
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation – multiple locations
- US Fish and Wildlife Service – NY Field Office, Cortland, NY
- US Geological Survey – Tunnison Fisheries Laboratory, Cortland, NY
- US Geological Survey – Lake Ontario Great Lakes Science Center, Oswego, NY
- Carpenters Brook Fish Hatchery, Elbridge, NY
- Onondaga County Office of Parks and Recreation, Syracuse, NY
- New York State Parks – at least 5 state parks near Syracuse, NY
- SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry – Syracuse, NY
- Syracuse University, LeMoyne College, and 5 SUNY colleges near Syracuse, NY
- Undergraduate classes, graduate students, and university researchers
- Elementary and high school classes
- Other local, state, and federal agencies
- Other environmental groups
- Local anglers groups
- Any other pertinent, reputable parties

Timeline

Ken at American Fish Taxidermy has indicated to us he could produce a finished product in 60 days.

Educational displays would commence almost immediately, with a minimum goal of being ready by the New York State Fair beginning August 23, 2012.

Itemized Budget

The price for the 72” sturgeon replica mount from American Fish Taxidermy is \$972, plus \$72 shipping for a total of \$1,044. All other items used for the displays have already been produced and used in previous displays, and volunteers from New York Sturgeon For Tomorrow and other cooperating agencies will be used to staff display booths.

Cooperators

- The Oneida Lake Education Initiative – Joanne Getchonis, Cornell University Biological Field Station, 900 Shackelton Point Road, Bridgeport, NY 13030, (315) 633-9243. Jgg4@cornell.edu. This group provides materials support for loan to local primary and secondary schools for use in the classroom, including a Travelling Trunk of preserved aquatic organisms.
- New York State Sea Grant – Dave White, SUNY College at Oswego, 62 Mackin Hall, Oswego, NY 13126. (315) 312-3042. Dgw9@cornell.edu. New York Sea Grant's Marine and Great Lakes educators work with K-12 classroom teachers and partner with nature centers, museums and aquaria to deliver science-based information to students and the general public in order to create the informed citizenry needed for wise coastal resource decision-making.
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- US Geological Survey – Dawn Dittman, USGS Tunison Laboratory of Aquatic Science, 3075 Gracie Road, Cortland, NY 13045. 607-753-0259x7523. ddittman@usgs.gov. The mission of the Laboratory is to provide resource managers the scientific information needed to preserve, protect, and restore biological resources throughout the Great Lakes basin. Current projects include examining the feasibility of restoring lake sturgeon in Lake Ontario, the St. Lawrence River, and the Oswego River watershed.

Summary

We sincerely appreciate the consideration of our proposal by The Gerald C. Corcoran Education Grant Committee. The New York Chapter of Sturgeon For Tomorrow is committed to furthering the ideals and activities of the North American Native Fish Association through this proposal and any other activities that we may be of assistance with.

Sincerely,

Thomas E. Brooking

New York Sturgeon For Tomorrow

March 15, 2012

SCOTT SCHLUETER
NORTH AMERICAN NATIVE FISHES ASSOCIATION
THE GERALD C CORCORAN EDUCATION GRANT

Dear Scott,

It is my pleasure to endorse the Sturgeon Display Proposal of “New York Sturgeon For Tomorrow” submitted by Thomas E Brooking for consideration for a Gerald C. Corcoran Education Grant.

While sturgeons in NY are listed as Threatened or Endangered they are making and will continue making a comeback due in no small part to the public education and awareness such as is done by New York Sturgeon For Tomorrow.

A 6 foot replica of the majestic Lake sturgeon would surely draw attention facilitating public awareness of the plight of all of NY’s sturgeons and create a memory that would last well beyond any one event.

An ambitious schedule of events, central location and availability for cooperative use guarantee it would be a great investment both for Sturgeon in NY and NANFA.

Sincerely,

Michael J Lucas

NANFA

Regional Representative



United States Department of the Interior
U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



Tunison Laboratory of Aquatic Science
3075 Gracie Rd.
Cortland NY 13045-9357

November 2, 2012

Dear Gerald C. Corcoran Education Grant Selection Committee,

The mission of the USGS Tunison Laboratory of Aquatic Science is to provide resource managers the scientific information needed to preserve, protect, and restore biological resources throughout the Great Lakes basin, and provide support for educational outreach about those resources. Tunison has a fishing education festival the third Saturday of April that is attended by 300-500 children and parents, and is the site of high school New Vision Animal & Environmental Science BOCES classes of 30-60 students / year). In the past at the fishing festival I have presented an educational station that has included information on lake sturgeon and lake sturgeon restoration. The presence of a large model of a lake sturgeon will get a lot of attention and be very memorable for the people attending the festival. Thus access to a shared model of a lake sturgeon would be a great addition to the environmental science, fishing education, and environmental outreach effort of TLAS.

Sincerely,

Dawn Dittman

Dawn E. Dittman, Ph.D. Ecologist

(607)-753-753-9391 x7523

ddittman@usgs.gov