



# The Story of Lake Michigan Sturgeon The Menominee River



*The Menominee River*

Photo Credit: USFWS



*The Partnership is a collaborative effort between state, federal, and private organizations*

Photo Credit: USFWS



*The Partnership hopes to improve Lake Michigan's sturgeon population through fish passage*

Photo Credit: USFWS

## The River Before Dams

The Menominee River, a major tributary to Lake Michigan, forms the border between Wisconsin and Michigan. This picturesque river once featured several waterfalls which made good sites for hydroelectric dams. Those same cascades had been ideal habitat for lake sturgeon, which migrated upstream from Lake Michigan to spawn there.

## The River Today

Today, five hydro dams prevent all lake sturgeon from migrating up the river from Lake Michigan to get to their prime spawning and rearing habitat. This loss of habitat, along with pollution and overfishing, has caused a drastic decline in the number of lake sturgeon in Lake Michigan, from an estimated two million at their peak to about 3,000 sturgeon today – more than a 99% decline.

These days, lake sturgeon feeling the urge to migrate upstream can only get as far as the last dam on the Menominee, at the cities of Marinette and Menominee. This area is poor sturgeon habitat, and most young sturgeon cannot survive there.

## The Menominee River Fish Passage Partnership

The Menominee Fish Passage Partnership, comprised of state and federal agencies, nonprofit conservation organizations and a private energy company, is developing safe and effective ways for lake sturgeon to move around the dams.

## The Fish Passage Project

The initial focus of this project is the two hydro dams found at Menominee, Michigan and Marinette, Wisconsin. There, the Partnership will build a bypass to enable downstream-moving fish to get through the upper dam, and will build an elevator (fish lift) at the lower dam to help move lake sturgeon upstream. Several hundred sturgeon will be moved around the dams by the time these structures are completed. By the year 2020, the partnership expects that tens of thousands of new lake sturgeon will be produced, aided by their being able to get to ancient spawning territory.

## Project Funding

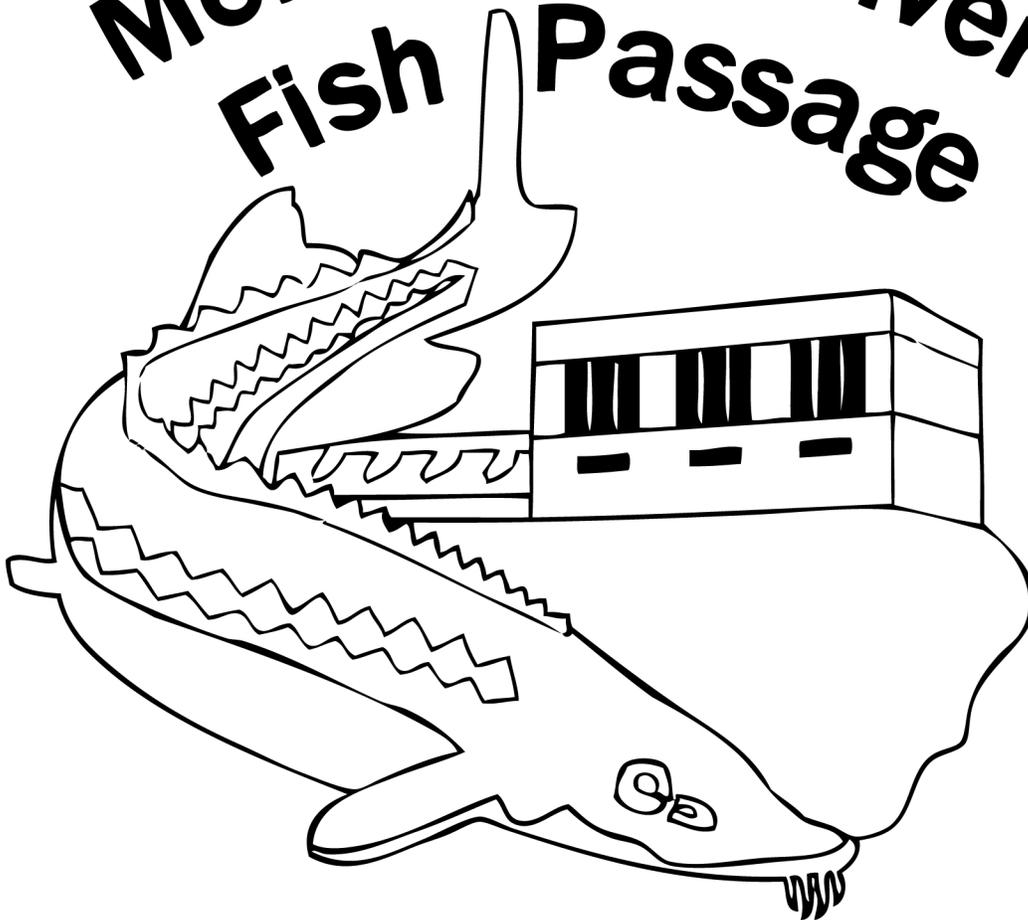
\$3 million in funding for fish passage around the lower two dams on the Menominee River is from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. The dams' owner, North American Hydro, will contribute nearly \$1.4 million to complete the initial work. In addition, North American Hydro will operate the fish passage as part of their normal hydropower operations, with assistance from state and federal wildlife agencies.

The goal for the resource agencies and nonprofits involved in this project is to raise enough public and private funding to provide passage for sturgeon at five hydro dams on the Menominee River, by 2020.

### Partners:

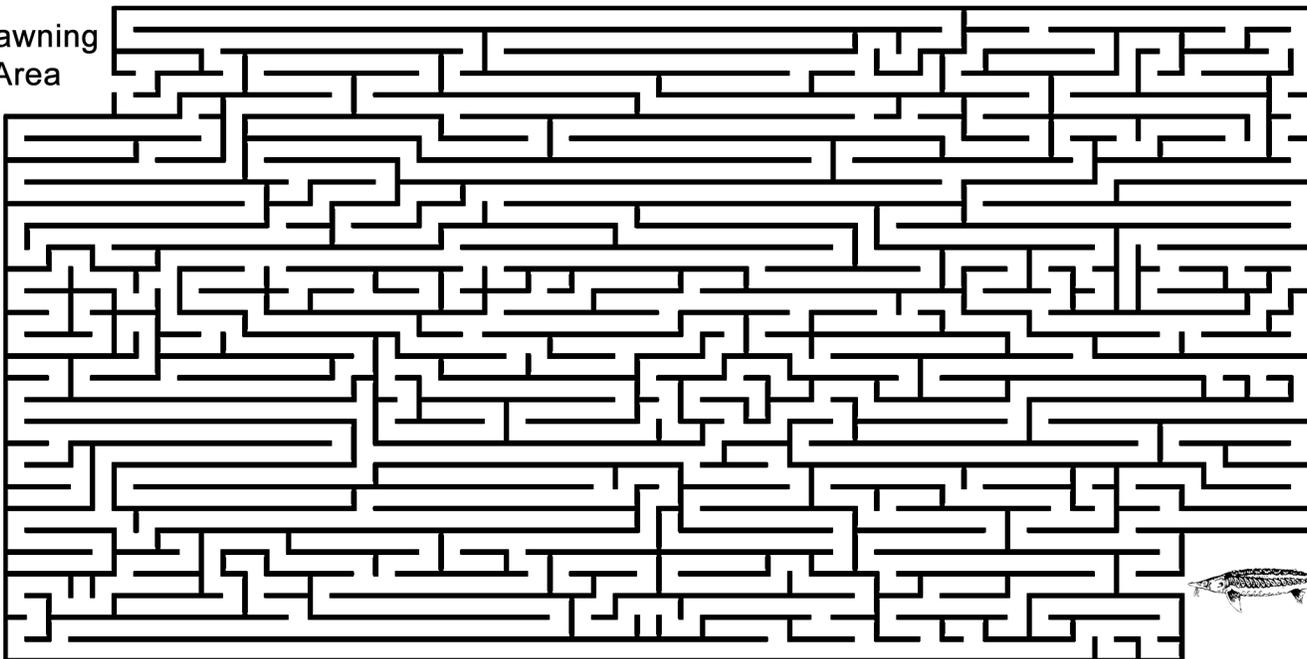
- River Alliance of Wisconsin
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the Environment
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- North American Hydro

# Menominee River Fish Passage



Color the sturgeon!

Spawning  
Area



Help the sturgeon make it up river to the spawning area