

Monthly Pile Driving Summary and Underwater Noise Monitoring Results

Pile Driving Period: June 14, 2015 – July 11, 2015

DOC Reference: TA_FHWA_03107_RPT_ENV



Summary:

No sturgeon were observed to have been severely injured or killed as a result of underwater noise from pile driving during this reporting period. This conclusion was reached based on the results of sturgeon monitoring by observers on the barge and vessel-based sturgeon monitoring conducted downstream of the piles being driven.

Based on an analysis using both empirical and modeled data, recoverable injuries caused by exposure to sub-lethal levels of underwater noise could not have been sustained by more than one sturgeon during this reporting period. This conclusion was reached by considering:

- the time required to drive each pile;
- the underwater area that experienced noise levels higher than a level that could potentially result in recoverable injury to the sturgeon (206 dB re 1 μ Pa peak sound pressure level); and
- the possible number of sturgeon that could have been in that area (number of gill nets x sturgeon encounter rate).

The potential number of sturgeon likely to have experienced recoverable injuries (described as “sturgeon take”) is reported as the probability of a fish being affected by exposure to underwater noise from pile driving, as shown in the table below. If the sturgeon take is listed as 1, then 1 sturgeon was potentially exposed to recoverable noise levels. If sturgeon take is less than 1, then it is less likely that 1 sturgeon was affected. As shown at the bottom right of the table below, the sturgeon take for this reporting period was 0.001 sturgeon (that is, less than 1 sturgeon), which is less than the 0.014 sturgeon that was anticipated based on the NMFS Biological Opinion (NMFS BO).

Introduction:

As required under the NMFS BO, dated September 23, 2014, Reasonable & Prudent Measures #4 and #5 and Term & Condition #9, underwater noise resulting from pile installation must be monitored. The following is a summary of the installation and underwater noise monitoring of permanent piles for the time period from June 14 through July 11, 2015.

As required under this condition, an estimate of sturgeon take for piles driven during the most recent monthly monitoring period is included. The sturgeon take estimate has been calculated using the times required to drive each pile (impact hammer only) and an estimate of the diameter of the 206 dB peak SPL isopleth, which has been conservatively assumed to be equivalent to the largest isopleth measured for piles driven at the same pier (or other representative piles at nearby piers). The take estimate has been compared to that listed for the same piles in Table 12 of the NMFS BO to ensure that sturgeon take is not being exceeded. Sturgeon take summarized in Table 12 applies to both shortnose and Atlantic sturgeon (i.e., it is

anticipated that 37 of each species will be exposed to underwater noise equal to 206 dB re 1 μ Pa SPL_{peak} during pile driving).

This monthly report summarizes pile-driving activities for the 3-foot falsework piles driven in late June as part of the steel subassembly erection at the Rockland approach. This monthly summary will allow the continued tracking of sturgeon take associated with those piles.

Pile Installation and Underwater Noise Monitoring:

During the monthly period from June 14 through July 11, 2015, 2 piles were driven. These were [REDACTED] piles driven as part of the falsework associated with the erection of the first steel girder. Falsework piles are not included in Table 12 but will be considered by the Thruway Authority as part of the [REDACTED] piles that were evaluated for the Rockland South temporary trestle (week 38 of 2015); which is no longer planned for construction.

Anticipated Sturgeon Take from Table 12 of the NMFS BO

For the purposes of tracking take associated with the subset of piles from the groups of piles shown in Table 12¹ (i.e., Anticipated Sturgeon Take), total take for each time period was divided by the number of piles scheduled to be driven during the time period. To calculate anticipated sturgeon take per pile from Table 12 for the [REDACTED] piles driven during this reporting period, the anticipated take of 1 sturgeon for the group containing piles at the Rockland South temporary trestle was divided by the [REDACTED] piles for this group. The result was an estimate of 0.007 sturgeon per pile for the falsework piles.

Based on these values:

- the anticipated take from Table 12 for the [REDACTED] piles driven from June 14 through July 11, 2015 was 0.014 sturgeon, which was calculated as:
0.007 sturgeon per pile multiplied by [REDACTED] piles.
- the cumulative take associated with the [REDACTED] piles driven to date (which includes trestle piles, test piles, and production piles as anticipated in Table 12 of the NMFS BO) is the sum of the anticipated take values for all 1,558 piles, or 27.66 sturgeon.

Calculated Sturgeon Take for this reporting period

Following the same method used to estimate incidental sturgeon take for Table 12, the product of pile driving time, number of gill nets to span the width of the 206 dB isopleth, and sturgeon encounter rate of 0.033 sturgeon per net per hour was used to calculate sturgeon take for the piles driven during this reporting period (i.e., Calculated Sturgeon Take). For previous piles that have been monitored for underwater noise, the diameter of the 206 dB peak SPL isopleth was measured based on the maximum peak SPL recorded during pile driving. For the unmonitored piles, the maximum recorded isopleth diameter was assigned based on noise monitoring from the test pile program or from noise monitoring of piles at each pier. Actual pile driving times for each of the piles were used in the calculations.

¹ Anticipated take was calculated in Table 12 of the NMFS BO as the product of the number of piles, number of hours to drive a pile, number of gill nets to span the 206 dB peak SPL isopleth, and the sturgeon encounter rate of 0.033 sturgeon per net per hour.

Impact pile driving has been completed for [REDACTED] piles; none were driven during this reporting period.

For the [REDACTED] piles driven for the falsework, pile-driving times ranged from 0.02 to 0.05 hours to install and averaged 0.04 hours, which was less than the anticipated duration of 0.17 hours reported in Table 12 of the NMFS BO.

Based on the recorded pile-driving times and isopleth widths:

- the incidental sturgeon take for the [REDACTED] piles driven during the monthly period from June 14 through July 11, 2015 was calculated as 0.001 sturgeon, which is less than the estimate of 0.014 sturgeon for the same [REDACTED] piles listed in Table 12,
- the cumulative incidental take for the [REDACTED] piles driven to date (which includes trestle piles, test piles, and production piles as anticipated in Table 12 of the NMFS BO) was calculated as 7.52 sturgeon, which is less than the anticipated take of 27.66 sturgeon for the same 1,558 piles in Table 12.

Fewer than 5 minutes of impact pile driving occurred during this reporting period and the size of the 206 dB SPL_{peak} isopleth was likely smaller than that anticipated in Table 12 of the NMFS BO based on underwater noise monitoring conducted by the Thruway Authority for representative piles at Piers 39 and 40. In addition, the conservatism applied to estimating sturgeon take in the NMFS BO (i.e., rounding up from 0.05 to the nearest 1 sturgeon) resulted in a total observed sturgeon take for all piles that was less than the anticipated take for piles driven during the current reporting period. Therefore, incidental take for sturgeon was not exceeded during the most recent monthly reporting period for pile driving, nor has the cumulative sturgeon take been exceeded for all piles driven to date.

Report Period: 6/14/2015 to 7/11/2015

Date	Year	Week		Pier-Pile Number	Net Impact Pile Driving Duration (hrs/pile)	Pile driving time from Table 12 of the NMFS BO (hrs/pile)	Average width of isopleth for 206-dB peak SPL (feet)	Maximum width of isopleth for 206-dB peak SPL (feet)	Number of gill nets to span the 206-dB peak SPL isopleth	Sturgeon encounter rate (fish/net/hour)	Sturgeon take
6/25/2015	2015	23		Falsework	0.05	0.17	Not measured	77	0.62	0.033	0.001
6/25/2015	2015	23		Falsework	0.02	0.17	Not measured	77	0.62	0.033	0.0004
Monthly sturgeon take (Calculated based on pile-driving data/Anticipated from Table 12 of the September 2014 NMFS BO)											0.001/0.014
Cumulative sturgeon take to date (Calculated based on pile-driving data/Anticipated from Table 12 of the September 2014 NMFS BO)											7.52/27.66