

Flow and Plains Sucker System Capacity

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Function Updated by mjbayly on Thu, 04/24/2025 - 18:55.

Species Information

Common Name: Plains Sucker

Genus: *Pantosteus jordani*

Stressor Details

Stressor Name: Flow

Units: % MAD

Metric: Mean annual discharge (MAD)

Scale: linear

Function Type: continuous

Vital Rate/Process: Failure velocity

Life Stage & Context

Life Stages: Adults

Geography: Saskatchewan

Activity: All activities

Season: Summer, Autumn

Descriptions

Overview

Flow is represented here as percent mean annual discharge (% MAD). Plains Sucker can persist in relatively high flow (e.g. Milk River during summer augmentation) and low flow environments (e.g. pools with little to no flow). It is expected that the full stressor-response function for flow will be unimodal in shape, where extremely high flow rates will likely negatively impact Plains Sucker. For example, failure velocity experiments on Plains Sucker showed that fish failed to hold their position at flow rates ranging from 0.08-1.05 m•s⁻¹ (MacLeod 2023); however, Plains Sucker have been found in rivers with mean summer or autumn flow rates that range from 0.3-16.1 m³•s⁻¹. In terms of field data, we have biomass (catch-per-unit-effort; CPUE) data for 6 sites within the Milk River drainage, along with water velocities for the site on sampling day (Teillet et al. 2021). If MAD is calculated using the mean of these values (n=6, MAD=0.14 m/s) and % system capacity is scaled such that 100% system capacity is the highest biomass estimate from these data, then % system capacity peaks at ~132% MAD. Without more reliable data on biomass or abundance, MAD, the energy expenditure of swimming or maintaining position under various flow conditions, or the full range of stream flow experienced by Plains Sucker we cannot estimate an upper threshold at this time.

Function Derivation

Expert opinion

Transferability of Function

This stressor-response function is suitable for use on Plains Sucker populations in the Saskatchewan-Nelson and Missouri River drainages in Southern Alberta and Saskatchewan; however, it should be noted that preliminary analyses of experimental data suggest that there may be differences in physiological tolerances to flow between the Milk River populations and other waterbodies because Milk River populations are subject to increased flows annually from April-October and may have adapted accordingly (MacLeod 2023). It may be reasonable to assume the SR function can be applied to Cordilleran Sucker, given the similarity of their physical characteristics (prior to 2023 both species were classified

					LEFT OFF NEEDING TO FIGURE OUT HOW/IF I SHOULD USE THE FIELD/EXPERIMENTAL DATA TO INFORM FINAL SR
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Citations

Jarvis, L. 2022. Flow stressor-response function for Plains Sucker. Department of Fisheries and Oceans CEMPRA model for Plains Sucker.

McLeod M. 2023. Assessing the station holding ability of three benthic fishes exposed to flow augmentation: Implications for a species at risk. M.Sc., Department of Renewable Resources, University of Alberta, Alberta, Canada.

Teillet, M., Watkinson, D.A., Petry, S.F., and Enders, E.C. 2021. Report on Plains Sucker (*Pantosteus jordani*), Rocky Mountain Sculpin (*Cottus* sp.), Western Silvery Minnow (*Hybognathus argyritis*), and Stonecat (*Noturus flavus*) sampling conducted in 2020 in the Milk River drainage, Alberta. Can. Data Rep. Fish. Aquat. Sci. 1330: vi + 13 p.