

MISSISSIPPI INTERSTATE COOPERATIVE RESOURCE ASSOCIATION

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

February 6-7, 2013

Nashville, TN

Decisions and Action Items

1. Jeff Quinn will inform Dr. Rob Wood at St. Louis University to invoice MICRA directly for the genetics work that he is doing as part of the Arkansas led shovelnose sturgeon project.
2. The Executive Board will develop an initial charge/vision via email to be provided to the new Habitat Committee.
3. Benjamin will send an email to the Fish Chiefs to inform them that MICRA is moving forward with the formation of a Habitat Committee, state reps are needed, and a chair person will be needed.
4. Habitat Committee members will need to begin discussing goals, objectives, priorities, and Standard Operating Procedures.
5. The Executive Board will identify a future board meeting for the Habitat Committee to hold its first meeting.
6. Jeff Quinn will provide Arkansas/Red/White River projects that were removed from the LMRCC Native Species Aquatic Habitat data template to Chris Racey for inclusion in the Arkansas/Red data template.
7. Jeff Quinn will provide the LMRCC data template to the LMRCC fish tech section for their review at their meeting in Little Rock, AR, in September 2013.
8. Conover will provide Travnichek with the most recent version of the data template.
9. Travnichek will be asked to provide the Missouri River sub-basin information on the same data template as the other sub-basins.
10. Chris Racey will send the Arkansas Red River data template to the Executive Board members following this meeting.
11. The Executive Board will finalize the Aquatic Habitat Action Plan and then discuss whether or not to identify additional priority focus areas and develop additional Action Plan components for the MICRA goal of creating 'healthy, sustainable fisheries and aquatic resources.'
12. Executive Board members will send Conover their recommendations for lumping the 'Restoration Objectives' into 5 or 6 'Priority Recommendations' under the two goals for the Aquatic Habitat Action Plan.

13. Conover will revise the MICRA priorities document based on discussions during the meeting and send the revised document to the Executive Board members for their review.
14. Conover will send the revised priorities document to the committee chairs with a request for them to update the document with relevant accomplishments and on-going needs.
15. Conover will talk with recommended contacts to get recommendations for tax attorneys and request cost estimates for MICRA to get legal advice on 501(c)3 tax status.
16. Quinn will look for a copy of old MICRA videos on dam removal and paddlefish and sturgeon life histories and provide them to Conover.
17. MICRA will request the FWS Division of Economics for two things: 1) an economic value report for the Mississippi River Basin, and 2) economic data in the national fishing, hunting, and recreational use survey to be broken out for the Mississippi River Basin in future 5-year reports similar to how the data is currently broken out for the Great Lakes.
18. The Executive Board will discuss the development of a MICRA communications plan at a future board meeting.
19. Turner will talk with an FWS Region 3 outreach specialist to get a better understanding of time and financial costs for outreach.
20. Conover was asked to fit the "Remaining Needs" under the seven new objectives in the MICRA priorities document and then send the revised document to the Executive Board members for their review.
21. Executive Board members will review and finalize the revised MICRA priorities document for distribution to the fish chiefs by August 2013.
22. Conover will invite the FWS economist to the Executive Board's summer meeting to initiate discussions on an economic analysis of recreational fishing and boating in the Mississippi River Basin.
23. Executive Board members will develop a well thought out idea of what they would like included in the economic analysis of recreational fishing and boating in the Mississippi River Basin in preparation for discussions on this topic at the summer Executive Board meeting.
24. Conover will send a copy of the LMRCC 2002 economic value report to Executive Board members for their review.
25. Conover will confirm the Fisheries Administrator Section fall meeting date and location with Doug Nygren and work with him to coordinate the MICRA Delegate meeting.

26. Chris Racey will talk with AGFC staff to make sure they are aware that MICRA would like to hold a social at the conclusion of the Fisheries Administrator Section meeting.
27. The Executive Board approved final changes to the MICRA brochure and \$885 to print 3,000 copies.
28. Conover will add an announcement to the MICRA home page that the 2013 Young Professionals Travel Stipend remains available.
29. Executive Board members will check with their respective agencies to see if they have a Public Affairs specialist that can participate on a committee to assist MICRA in developing a communications plan.
30. Executive Board members will request their Public Affairs specialists for a list of questions that Executive Board members should consider prior to a meeting to discuss a communications plan.
31. Executive Board members were asked to begin thinking about who MICRA's different audiences are, the messages we want to send to these different audiences, and how much effort should be directed to each audience.
32. Benjamin and Conover will talk to Rasmussen about costs for publishing a shorter, but more frequent *River Crossings* newsletter.
33. The Executive Board voted and approved changing *River Crossings* to a single column layout beginning with the first issue in 2013.
34. Benjamin will work with Travnichek and Schoenung to search for a Fish Chief from the Missouri and Ohio sub-basins to fill the upcoming Chair-Elect vacancy beginning January 1, 2014.
35. The Executive Board will send Conover recommended topics for presentations for the joint meeting session with the MRBP on commercial harvest of Asian carp.
36. The Executive Board members agreed to the interpretation that 1) a minimum of 17 delegates must submit a vote for it to be an official vote, 2) for resolutions, policy, or position statements a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority of the 17 or more voting delegates is required, and 3) only for amendments to the MICRA Constitution and By-laws is a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority of all MICRA members is required.
37. The Executive Committee decided to continue work on the Aquatic Habitat Action Plan and tabled further discussion on a Healthy Fisheries Action Plan to the board's summer meeting.
38. MICRA will request the MRBP to provide \$3,600 each year, beginning in 2013, to cover a portion of MICRA's additional administrative costs for hosting the panel.
39. The MRBP will also be requested to reimburse MICRA a one-time \$3,000 to cover a portion of MICRA's 2012 administrative costs for hosting the panel.

Outstanding Action Items from July 2012 Meeting

8. Conover will add a link from the MICRA website to the LMRCC on-line 'Interactive Lower Mississippi River Fishing Guide'.
21. Conover will send DVDs with the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration documents out to the Executive Board members.
30. Conover will send an email providing information about the frozen shovelnose sturgeon that were used in the MICRA study prior to the SOA listing to see if they are wanted for another research project in the Basin.

Outstanding Action Items from January 2012 Meeting

11. Travnichek will provide Conover with the link for the MRNRC website when it is up and running.
12. Bobby Reed will work with Chris Racey to develop a 1-page write-up on the Arkansas/Red River Sub-basin for the MICRA web page.
19. Benjamin will send the final approved AIS Action Plan and brochure to the MICRA delegates, along with an explanation of the Executive Board's strategy for marketing the action plan.
20. Benjamin will request each state to provide a list that identifies their priority constituent groups that they would like the Executive Board to provide with information on the AIS Action Plan and a copy of the brochure.
21. Benjamin will provide the MICRA delegates with a draft letter of support for each state to adapt, request their governors to sign, and send to MICRA.
22. Benjamin will work to identify who copies of the signed letter of support should be sent to.
27. Benjamin will develop a letter to be sent to the MICRA delegates with the 2012 briefing packets. The letter will inform them about MICRA's efforts the last two years to raise awareness about AIS issues in the Mississippi River Basin, and the Congressional Offices' recommendation that each fish chief contact their federal members' local congressional office.
28. Travnichek will follow-up with Nelson-Stastny regarding the Executive Board's request for the Missouri River Sub-basin to provide a draft position paper on floodplain management for consideration by the MICRA delegates.

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EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

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Nashville, TN

AGENDA

Wednesday, February 6, 2013 - Executive Board Room

8:00 – 9:00

Call to Order

- 1) Call to Order (Benjamin)
 - o Roll Call
 - o Introductions
- 2) Chairman's Report (Benjamin)
- 3) Review of July 2012 Action Items (Benjamin)
- 4) Financial Report (Conover)

9:00 – 10:00

Basin Reports

- 5) Arkansas/Red River (Racey)
- 6) LMRCC (Quinn)
- 7) MRNRC (Travnichek)
- 8) ORFMT (Schoenung)
- 9) Tennessee River (Wilson)
- 10) UMRCC (Sallee)

10:00 – 11:00

Committee Updates

- 11) AIS Committee / MRBP (Shults)
- 12) Native Mussel Committee (Hubbs)
- 13) Paddlefish & Sturgeon Committee (Quinn)

11:00 – 5:00

Old Business

- 14)** MICRA Habitat Committee (Benjamin)
- 15)** Native Species Action Plan (Sub-basin Representatives)
- 16)** MICRA Priorities Document Review and Update (Benjamin)
- 17)** Socio-economic Value Information for Mississippi River Basin (Turner)
- 18)** MICRA Delegate Meeting (Benjamin)
- 19)** MICRA Brochure (Conover)

Thursday February 7 - Executive Board Room

8:00 – 12:00

New Business

- 20)** Young Professionals Travel Stipend (Benjamin)
- 21)** MICRA 2013 Hill Visits (Benjamin)
- 22)** New River Crossings Layout (Conover)
- 23)** MICRA Chair-Elect for 2014-2015 (Conover)
- 24)** FWS National Asian Carp Surveillance Plan (Benjamin)
- 25)** Symposium on Commercial Harvest of Asian Carp (Benjamin)
- 26)** Other New Business (Benjamin)
- 27)** 2013 Budget (Benjamin)
- 28)** Schedule Summer Executive Board Meeting (Benjamin)
 - 2013 AFS meeting, September 9-12, Little Rock, AR

12:00

Adjourn

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Meeting Notes

1) Call to Order

Roll Call

Arkansas/Red River	Chris Racey	present
LMRCC	Jeff Quinn	present
MRNRC	Vince Travnichek	absent
ORFMT	Brian Schoenung	present
Tennessee River	Bobby Wilson	present
UMRCC	Dan Sallee (Ron Benjamin, proxy)	present
USFWS	Todd Turner	present
USGS	Mike Jawson	present

A quorum (6) of Executive Board members was present.

Introductions

Ron Benjamin, WI DNR, MICRA Chairperson
Greg Conover, USFWS, MICRA Coordinator
Jeff Quinn, AGFC, Paddlefish-Sturgeon Committee Chair
Steve Shults, IL DNR, MRBP Co-Chair
Jeffrey Herod, USFWS, Region 4
Todd Turner, USFWS, Region 3
Chris Racey, AGFC
Brian Schoenung, IN DNR
Bobby Wilson, TWRA, MICRA Chairperson-Elect

2) Chairman's Report

Major activities since July 2012 meeting:

- Continue working with federal legislature and others on putting together authorization for national Asian carp management and control plan implementation. Bills have been introduced in both the Senate and House that authorize the USFWS to be the lead in implementation of the national Asian carp plan. Doesn't appear that there will be large sums of money made available for national implementation.

- A draft letter was sent to the MICRA delegates for review and a request for approval on December 5, 2012. Seventeen states replied in favor of sending the letter to members of Congress, ten states did not respond to the e-mail or follow-up requests for their vote. Because of the non-responses, the letter fell four votes short of the necessary $\frac{3}{4}$ majority necessary for approval. This is not the first time that we have failed to receive at least a 75% response rate on a business item.

Benjamin recommended that the By-laws be changed to consider non-responses as abstentions and the $\frac{3}{4}$ minimum then be based on the total number of responses rather than the entire membership. This is an issue that needs to be dealt with so that business is stopped because of non-responses. This topic was added to agenda item under #26 - Other New Business for further discussion later in the meeting.

The Paddlefish Sturgeon Committee is having a similar problem.

- MICRA received funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to complete a review of diploid and triploid grass carp use in the U.S. MICRA has sub-contracted HDR, Inc. to complete the review as outlined in the scope of work developed by the MRBP.
- Much of the focus since Thanksgiving has been in preparation for MICRA's upcoming trip to Washington, D.C. during National Invasive Species Awareness Week. This will be MICRA's third trip to DC as a group and it feels as though MICRA is getting some traction and recognition on the Hill.
- Ron attended the Fisheries Administrator's section meeting at the AFS meeting in Minneapolis, MN, and met with several of the Fish Chiefs.
- We are planning a meeting with all MICRA Delegates at the AFS meeting in Little Rock, AR, in 2013. Ron would like to figure out how the Executive Board can get more face time with the Fish Chiefs to make the organization more relevant and effective.

3) Review of July 2012 Action Items

Incomplete action items from July 2012 meeting:

8. Conover will add a link from the MICRA website to the LMRCC on-line 'Interactive Lower Mississippi River Fishing Guide'.
21. Conover will send DVDs with the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration documents out to the Executive Board members.
30. Conover will send an email providing information about the frozen shovelnose sturgeon that were used in the MICRA study prior to the SOA listing to see if they are wanted for another research project in the Basin.

Incomplete action items from January 2012 Meeting:

4. Shults will work with the MRBP to provide the Executive Committee with a draft letter to AFWA to inform them of the potential risk of pay lakes as a vector for the spread of Aquatic Nuisance Species and the ANS Task Force's decision regarding this issue. The letter will describe the need for 1) a risk assessment of pay lakes, 2) standardized state regulations to minimize risks associated with pay lakes, and 3) outreach materials for pay lake operators and users.

Status: Pay lakes are identified as a priority need by the MRBP. Shults will raise this issue to the MRBP ExComm and the action item will be deleted.

11. Travnichek will provide Conover with the link for the MRNRC website when it is up and running.

Status: The MRNRC website is not up and running yet.

12. Bobby Reed will work with Chris Racey to develop a 1-page write-up on the Arkansas/Red River Sub-basin for the MICRA web page.

Status: Racey has a draft that he is going to share with Reed.

15. Benjamin will draft a letter, for Executive Board review, from MICRA to the USACE regarding the need for major navigation improvements to be paired with a commitment and follow-through to ensure that environmental projects are funded and completed.

Status: Not completed and will be deleted.

19. Benjamin will send the final approved AIS Action Plan and brochure to the MICRA delegates, along with an explanation of the Executive Board's strategy for marketing the action plan.

Status: This had been on hold waiting for the marketing plan to be developed. Benjamin will provide Conover with a cover letter, and Conover will mail the AIS Action Plan and brochure to the MICRA Delegates.

20. Benjamin will request each state to provide a list that identifies their priority constituent groups that they would like the Executive Board to provide with information on the AIS Action Plan and a copy of the brochure.

Status: Ongoing, part of marketing plan in #19. May want to consider contacting both Fish Chiefs and ANS Coordinators. Some ANS Coordinators are in different agencies than Department of Natural Resources.

21. Benjamin will provide the MICRA delegates with a draft letter of support for each state to adapt, request their governors to sign, and send to MICRA.

Status: Ongoing, part of marketing plan in #19.

22. Benjamin will work to identify who copies of the signed letter of support should be sent to.

Status: Ongoing, part of marketing plan in #19.

27. Benjamin will develop a letter to be sent to the MICRA delegates with the 2012 briefing packets. The letter will inform them about MICRA's efforts the last two years to raise awareness about AIS issues in the Mississippi River Basin, and the Congressional Offices' recommendation that each fish chief contact their federal members' local congressional office.

Status: Ongoing, part of marketing plan in #19.

28. Travnichek will follow-up with Nelson-Stastny regarding the Executive Board's request for the Missouri River Sub-basin to provide a draft position paper on floodplain management for consideration by the MICRA delegates.

Status: Ongoing, no update.

4) Financial Report

The Coordinator's spreadsheet, accountant's report, and MICRA bank statement balances are all in agreement. Copies of the financial reports are included in the briefing book. There are a large number of obligations, primarily belonging to the MRBP, so the projected year-end balance is considerably less than the balance on hand.

Ohio informed MICRA that they intend to pay 2012 dues, which will bring the number of states paying 2012 dues to 23. The number of states paying dues over the last few years has been trending up even though many states are facing tough economic times.

MICRA no longer has active delegates representing TVA, BOR, Chippewa Cree Tribe, or The Chickasaw Nation.

Conover provided a report detailing his expenditures for MICRA and the MRBP. Due to more than \$3,000 in MRBP related travel in 2012, he exceeded his travel budget by over \$1,400. In a typical year, he would have spent approximately another \$1,200 in MRBP related travel. His budget request for 2013 includes a \$3,000 reimbursement from MRBP to MICRA to cover the majority of his 2012 MRBP related travel, and \$3,600 to cover estimated 2013 MRBP related travel costs (i.e., one Panel meeting and two ANS Task Force meetings). Discussion was tabled until the 2013 budget discussion under agenda item 27.

! Jeff Quinn will inform Dr. Rob Wood at St. Louis University to invoice MICRA directly for the genetics work that he is doing as part of the Arkansas led shovelnose sturgeon project. These are the funds obligated under the 'Arkansas State Wildlife Grant Match' line item.

5) Arkansas/Red River Report

Chris Racey provided and reviewed the following amended report.

A bill has been introduced in the Arkansas state legislature to increase state resident fishing license by several dollars and those funds would be dedicated to Asian carp management in Arkansas. They are a month or two away from knowing if the proposal will be placed on the ballot later this fall, but the idea is being discussed by the legislators.

Discussion:

Who will vote on the fishing license increase, the state legislature? No, if approved by the legislature the proposal would be put on a ballot for approval by the citizens of the state.

Do you spend a lot of man hours sampling paddlefish and sturgeon, and how do you pay for that? Yes, typically it is paid for out of state or grant funds. It has varied over time. We have used SWAG funds in the past, but it is more commonly funded by state dollars. We have not used SFR funds for this type of work. We can use these expenditures as a match for other grant opportunities.

Tournament fishermen must be excited about the reduced length limit for largemouth bass. Yes, this has been very well received. Arkansas has an exceptional amount of data to support this regulation change.

Did you provide specific actions to control Asian carp when you submitted the proposal for increasing resident fishing license fees? No, AGFC has not submitted anything. This came about from commercial fishers working with local legislators that have an interest in this. Our understanding is that they intend to earmark the funds as incentives for commercial anglers. Could the funds be put towards a processing plant? At this point the funds would probably not be used for that purpose. It sounds like they are exploring all options. If such a bill were to pass, AGFC will need to have serious conversations regarding how this would be regulated. AGFC is sitting back, watching, and providing information to legislators on request.

The intent is to provide commercial fishers with somewhere between 10-30 cents/pound additional income for Asian carp. At current prices, commercial fishers contend that it is not profitable for them to pay for the gear necessary to target these fish. The additional funds would result in more commercial fishers targeting Asian carp, which is expected to result in a reduction in Asian carp numbers in Arkansas.

Asian carp have been the top thing that commercial fishers have wanted to talk about in Arkansas. It is starting to become a common topic among commercial fishers in Tennessee too.

Arkansas River

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has proposed changes to the current operational policy regarding lock and dams on the Arkansas River. The proposed changes could include a smaller window of time each day that recreational, industrial, and industrial watercraft would be able to utilize the lock systems. The proposed policy is being considered, at least in part, as an effort to increase the life of the lock systems and reduce maintenance costs.

Based on a robust data set collected over the past decade, the largemouth bass minimum length limit has been reduced from 15 inches to 14 inches on the Arkansas portion of Arkansas River.

The USFWS office in Conway, AR recently acquired a gently used Mudcat dredge with the intent to loan the dredge to AGFC for conducting habitat enhancement projects throughout Arkansas. Pending USACOE permit approval, AGFC will begin utilizing the dredge to enhance fish habitat and angler access in the Coal Pile backwater of the lower Arkansas River near Dumas, AR. Local bass clubs have already raised money to help pay for fuel and dredge mechanical repairs to support this project.

Red River

Arkansas Game and Fish Commission biologists have been sampling the Red River for paddlefish and sturgeon to evaluate paddlefish and sturgeon populations. The data will be used to inform management of these commercially important species. Staff are also working with local commercial fishers to identify new techniques to capture alligator gar.

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries is working closely with the LA Dept. of Environmental Quality and LA Dept. Natural Resources to develop in-stream flow guidelines for commercial surface water withdrawals throughout the state. A dramatic increase in water withdrawal permits from the mineral extraction industry for well fracking has agencies concerned about the impacts these practices may have on aquatic environments and their resources statewide, especially following the drought of 2010-11. A large percentage of the applications for surface water withdrawals (for fracking) are occurring in the northwest part of the state within the Red River drainage. Agencies are particularly concerned about withdrawals from the southern one-third of the state where many of the smaller coastal drainages experience no-flow conditions (where flow is below 7Q10 frequently) during the summer and fall months. While the current 7Q10 flow standard is thought to be inadequate by the agencies for areas with observable flow, it is even more inadequate for the numerous low/no flow waters throughout the state.

Beginning in the spring of 2013 LDWF will begin sampling all state waters with ichthyoplankton (drift) nets for the presence /absence of Asian carp larvae. The objectives of ichthyoplankton (larval fish) sampling are to determine the status, relative abundance and distribution of Asian carp which are not effectively sampled with other standard gears. This work will support actions in the LA State ANS Plan Implementation table items: 7.C.20 and 7.C.21. This baseline information could be used to model distributions, understand recruitment and meta-population dynamics, assess impacts and inform management of these aquatic invasive species. The Red River is potentially a pathway for the spread of aquatic invasive species to the northwest into the states of Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas.

I wonder if the sport anglers are aware of this and how they are responding to the proposal. Asian carp are not as abundant throughout the Arkansas River as they are in the Mississippi River. The main complaints in Arkansas are the lower reaches of the White and Arkansas rivers. It is taking time for the populations to build up in the Arkansas River pools and establish above each dam. It is interesting that they have chosen sport fishing licenses as the funding mechanism to subsidize commercial fishers.

How much is your license fee now? It is the second lowest in the nation at \$10.50. So if they add a few dollars, it will be a significant increase in the price. The license fee has not been raised in about 26 years. The proposed fee increase would be an earmark and would not benefit AGFC directly.

A few states have successfully increased fishing license fees with the increased revenue used to manage AIS in general. Wisconsin failed through the process, but now has an option for a voluntary \$1 fee when you purchase your license. Millions of licenses are sold each year and it probably generates less than \$1,000 annually.

Has Illinois shown any reduction in Asian carp populations or improvement in native fish populations as a result of commercial fishing? Not that I am aware of. It is probably divided 50/50 among the researchers whether or not an intensive commercial fishing effort is valuable in keeping Asian carp propagule pressure of the electric barrier in Chicago. There is a point on the Illinois River where commercial fish is allowed downriver, but not upriver. Therefore any harvest occurring above this point in the upper Illinois River is the result of contract fisheries where the state is paying the fishermen. To get away from a bounty type system, a DNR biologist is on-board each contract fishing boat. This is used in an area where there is not a huge population of Asian carp to identify the leading edge. Just downriver where the numbers are beginning to increase, contract fisheries are also being used in attempt to reduce the populations in these pools.

6) LMRCC Report

Angela Rodgers, Assistant LMRCC Coordinator, provided the following update to Jeff Quinn.

- LMRCC completed 4 construction projects in July/August 2012. Projects were completed in the Caruthersville, Missouri area at: Island 15, Caruthersville-Linwood Bar, Island 18, and Island 20. The cooperative effort between the LMRCC, USACE Memphis District River Engineering Branch, and Southeast Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service resulted in notches (or improvements made to existing notches) at 19 dikes, with over 15 miles of secondary channel fish passage restored. Funding for the projects came from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fish Passage Program and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

- LMRCC launched an online Fishing Guide. "Fishing the Lower Mississippi River" can be accessed via <http://www.lmrcc.org>.
- LMRCC and Mississippi River Trust are working with NRCS to reforest up to 40,000 acres of cleared land through 2015 through the Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program.
- LMRCC continues to work with the Corps of Engineers and a group of non-governmental organizations on the Lower Mississippi River Resource Assessment. The first phase, An Assessment of Information Needed for River-Related Management, draft report will be available for review spring 2013. The second phase, An Assessment of Natural Resource Habitat Needs, will begin in spring 2013. The third and final phase will be An Assessment of the Need for River-Related Recreation and Access.
- LMRCC hired an assistant coordinator in February 2012.
- The LMRCC 2013 Annual Meeting will be held during the week of September 8-11 in conjunction with the American Fisheries Society Annual Meeting in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Jeff Quinn submitted and reviewed the following report in addition to the update from Angela Rodgers.

- LMRCC has developed an online fishing guide.
- Ron Nassar is retiring and Angelina Rodgers is transitioning into his coordinator role.
- Jack Killgore (ERDC) has been working on development of the criteria for decisions to rank LMRCC restoration projects. They have focused mainly on secondary side channels, but may be adapted to be used on other habitat types.
- Dr. Ed Heist (SIU) indicates that sturgeon in the lower Mississippi River are a hybrid swarm based on microsatellite DNA. No individuals strongly assign to 1 group (pallid vs. shovelnose). This is often seen in reservoirs where Florida bass have been stocked with northern bass.
- Bernie Kuhada looked at sturgeon morphometrics and the best character to distinguish pallids from shovelnose is the space between the lateral plate and the ventral plate, based on a sheared PCA. This appears to be based on the fact that pallids have smaller plate height than shovenose, so the space between the lateral plate and the ventral plate is larger in pallids
- Dr. Quinton Phelps has been looking at otolith microchemistry of sturgeons and American eel. It appears that middle Mississippi River pallid sturgeon are almost all spawned in that area. It costs \$12-15 a sample to run.
- Nathan Aycock of Mississippi showed that 2012 trotline catch rates and size distribution for pallid and shovelnose sturgeon were similar to those of Kilgore et al. (2007). They have recaptured 12 shovelnose sturgeon, but only 1 pallid that Kilgore originally tagged.

- Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries has been monitoring in the lower Mississippi River and its tributaries the Red and Atchafalaya Rivers at 69 stations with electrofishing, gill nets, hoop nets, and seine hauls. Ichthyoplankton nets will be used to sample state rivers and coastal marshes for the presence of Asian carp larvae and eggs to determine the current range of the species. Monitor fisheries in the coastal freshwater areas adjacent to the Mississippi River diversion projects and other coastal restoration projects in an effort to measure the response of fisheries resources and related habitats to these coastal protection and enhancement projects. Over 80 sites will be sampled each year over the next two years utilizing several gears including rotenone block-off sets, electrofishing, and lead nets to assess fisheries populations.
- Dave Herzog (MDC) is testing a midwater trawl design to catch paddlefish and Asian carp. Tracy Hill and Wyatt Doyle from USFWS Columbia have been testing a paupier net that catches young paddlefish and Asian carp.
- Jeremy Risley (AGFC) and Diana Andrews finished the paddlefish assessment of the lower Mississippi River. Total mortality was calculated was 28%, and exploitation was estimated to be fairly low at 14%. This report was used to justify increasing the minimum length limit to 35 inches EFL. Mississippi has adopted this regulation on border waters with Arkansas.

7) MRNRC Report

Vince Travnichek was unable to attend the meeting. The following report was submitted for inclusion with the meeting notes.

Montana

Intake Diversion Dam. The new intake structure has required that the diversion dam be raised 0.9 feet in order to get water into the headworks at all flows. Rock was added to the dam for 28 days this year, and appears to render it as a more complete barrier to fish passage than ever. This unfortunate turn of events adds to the already disappointing fact that the rock ramp design (for pallid sturgeon passage) was deemed to be too expensive and while the leading alternative (side channel option) is being evaluated, it is causing more time delays and uncertainty over whether the money is available to build that channel.

Fort Peck Reservoir Dam operations. FWP continues to encourage the Corps to continue to pursue options that will produce a more natural hydrograph below the dam. The fact that a pallid sturgeon fry was found in the Milk River after last year's floods and that adult pallids were in the Milk, points to the potential for this river and even the Missouri mainstem to help with pallid recovery. Increasing water temperatures in the discharge from the dam would not only help sturgeon fry to grow faster and possibly avoid the "death trap" at the head end of Sakakawea, but

it also would improve overall productivity of the river and make it more suitable for pallids. Reservoir levels... Walleye spawn take was only about half of what was desired, due to inconsistent weather patterns. Walleye abundance in the lake was at its highest however, based on gill net monitoring.

Statewide Fisheries Management Plan. First ever plan is scheduled to go public next Monday. About 480 pages long, and includes an Environmental Assessment. Describes FWP policy and programs in general, but also in specifics for 40 drainages in the state, where management prescriptions are provided for individual waterbodies. Prescriptions include things such as stocking rates, harvest goals, fishing regulations, habitat needs and fishing access needs. We will be holding a series of 9 public meetings over the next 3 weeks and will have a 30-day public comment period.

Paddlefish. Earliest ever closure on the Upper Missouri fishery due to early pulses of water bring the fish upstream. This prompted an extended phone survey to scope out anglers preferences for satisfaction with the length of season and lottery vs open tag system. Opposite thing happened on the Yellowstone where only 600-700 fish were harvested all season due to lack of a protracted runoff. Dennis Scarnecchia has produced population estimates for the Yellowstone/lower Missouri population and will attempt to do so for the upper Missouri population within a year or two.

Pallid sturgeon. MOU partners hired Chris Hunter as a facilitator for the Upper Basin Pallid Sturgeon Working Group. He will be working on the 10-year plan, assisting with website design and maintenance, and bringing more transparency to the project proposal process. Significant new projects which were funded by the workgroup include a carrying-capacity study (to assist in determining correct stocking rates), an assessment of instream flow needs for the Yellowstone River. The need for this is based on the increased irrigation in the lower river plus continuing drought conditions. Lastly, a genetics plan is in draft form to assist in prioritizing the fish to use in stocking. This includes fish that have never been collected before, fish that have been collected but for which gamete collection was weak, and fish that are now part of the captive broodstock at Gavins Point Hatchery.

Yellowstone Oil spill. \$3 million given to the State of Montana as compensation/mitigation for impacts of the 2011 oil spill. State DEQ handling project application process. State also involved in a Natural Resource Damage claim against Exxon, involving lost recreational opportunity as well as damage to aquatic and terrestrial resources. Impacts to recreation were hard to assess due to record floods in 2011 during the oil spill.

AIS/bait restrictions. Due to Eurasian water milfoil infestations in the Missouri River beginning in 2009, the State of Montana has enacted laws which allow the Department of Agriculture to designate Management Areas where waters are

contaminated, and gives them the authority to have mandatory watercraft inspection stations. Collection and movement of bait then become illegal unless authorized by FWP. We recently took that first step and made it illegal to collect and transport live bait out of these contaminated areas, including Fort Peck Reservoir and the river downstream as far as the Milk River. This is a prelude to efforts that the Department will take in the next year to control the movement of live bait in the state, to avoid movement of AIS and fish diseases such as VHS. We will explore limiting bait collection to clean sources (both in and out of state), establishing commercial sources in-state.

FWP budget concerns. Director Maurier will not pursue license fee increases at the next legislative session. The result may be forced budget cuts, and staff are currently trying to prioritize and evaluate how to do this and what the consequences will be. Personnel cuts are on the table as well as cuts to operations. Recent cuts have already led to cessation of whirling disease monitoring program, an angler survey position, and two positions devoted to cutthroat trout restoration.

Illegal Fish Introductions. FWP continues to be “dogged” by questions about how aggressive it should be to eradicate fish such as lake trout and walleye. We are involved in one experimental effort on Swan Lake to remove lake trout, but remain at loggerheads with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes over efforts in Flathead Lake. Costs are considerable. Walleye presence west of the Divide has also ignited tensions with Walleyes Unlimited who feels our recent efforts to suppress walleye in Clark Fork River reservoirs is unfair and biased. The statewide plan should help by emphasizing and laying out our programmatic approach to dealing with illegal introductions.

South Dakota

Fisheries Research Helps Management Efforts. Federal aid funded research projects in association with South Dakota State University were again a major part of the aquatics research program in 2012 with 15 research projects in progress or starting during this period. Research topics were diverse, attempting to answer management-driven questions that will help the Division of Wildlife better manage fisheries resources. Current projects include studying catfish populations throughout the state, walleye stocking success, use of the internet to gather angler use and harvest data, smallmouth bass and yellow perch interactions, Asian carp populations in eastern South Dakota Rivers, and trout and pike interactions in Pactola Reservoir.

A recently completed project determined contribution of stocked and wild fish to the Deerfield Reservoir rainbow trout population. Information gained will help maximize the return of trout to anglers while minimizing the cost of maintaining trout fisheries. Biologists also gained important information about the impacts of stocking hatchery trout on top of wild trout populations.

The Wildlife Division also conducted research projects covering a number of different topics in 2012. Projects varied from evaluation of habitat improvements to hatchery rearing methods and methods to reduce western painted turtle mortality in survey nets. One notable project involved the evaluation of trout populations in the stilling basin below Pactola Dam on Rapid Creek. The stilling basin and Rapid Creek fishery is one of the most popular trout fisheries in the state. With stream habitat rehabilitation set to begin in 2013, staff gathered baseline data in 2012 to compare with data that will be collected a few years after habitat improvements. Results indicate a total population of about 940 trout, with the majority being brown trout, and the average size of trout being substantially larger than for other Black Hills fisheries.

Fisheries staff published 10 scientific papers during 2012 on everything from improving yellow perch aging techniques to the replacement of fish meal in fish diets with protein from agricultural plants. Publishing research results allows staff to contribute to the growing knowledge base of the fisheries profession.

Fisheries Habitat and Access Improvements Benefit Anglers. Wildlife and Parks Division staffs were busy improving access for boaters and anglers in 2012. Many projects were completed across the state, ranging in size from the addition of a dock at a boat ramp to major lake renovations. Dredging and repair of Missouri River access sites, due to flood damage in 2011, began in 2012 with more work planned for 2013.

Projects of note in 2012 included:

1. Partnering with the Forest Service and using Pennington County Resource Advisory Council funds to greatly improve shore fishing access along Highway 385 on Sheridan Lake near Rapid City.
2. Partnering with the Forest Service to completely renovate and improve fishing access at Dalton Lake in the Black Hills.
3. Completing construction of fishing ponds at the Rollings Game, Production Area near Hudson.
4. Installing fishing pads and access trails at Lake Traverse.
5. Completing fishing access improvements at the Brookings Nature Park.

Fish Stocking and Surveys Benefit Fisheries Statewide. Major fisheries management efforts include surveying fish populations, stocking fish to enhance populations, and conducting angler surveys. Angler surveys are an evaluation tool used to help determine if management activities are meeting the needs of the public and if current harvest regulations are appropriate for a fishery. Approximately 132 million eggs were collected and 94 million fish and eggs stocked in 265 waters in 2012, to enhance fish populations. A total of 163 fish population surveys were conducted on 145 different waters and angler surveys were conducted for 20 different fisheries to determine fish population status and

appropriateness of management activities.

Aquatic Nuisance Species Regulations Updated. Aquatic Nuisance Species regulations implemented for 2012 were amended by the GFP Commission for 2013 for protection of the state's natural resources. Silver and bighead carp already inhabit three river drainages in eastern South Dakota. To prevent the further spread of Asian carp in South Dakota, all flowing waters in a large portion of the eastern part of the state were closed to commercial and non-commercial bait harvest. This regulation was aimed at preventing hard-to-distinguish juvenile carp from being inadvertently transported away from these waters. Other rule modifications require the removal aquatic vegetation from boats and trailers and allow for more flexibility in decontamination efforts required by Division of Wildlife staff. Lastly, the commission added four species to the ANS list. Western mosquitofish, purple loosestrife, flowering rush, and red-rimmed melania now fall under the same restrictions as the nineteen species previously listed as ANS species by the Commission. In addition, the Division of Wildlife is elevating a public awareness campaign that enlists the cooperation of all citizens, and in particular anglers and boaters, to prevent the spread of these invasive species. The campaign will feature staff presence at events, signage, news releases, social media contacts, and other outreach methods.

Oahe Survey Results Lead to Additional Opportunity for Anglers. Missouri River fisheries staff spent much of 2012 determining the lingering effects of high releases from Lake Oahe during 2011. A high number of rainbow smelt, the primary food source in Oahe, were lost in record releases through Oahe Dam in 2011 and smelt reproduction during 2012 was low. In addition, surveys of production of other fish which serve as food for game fish, such as shiners, minnows, white bass and drum indicated low reproduction as well.

In an attempt to increase localized food resources for walleye, a major gizzard shad stocking effort took place in the spring of 2012. Approximately 1800 adult gizzard shad were collected from Lake Sharpe and relocated to seven bays throughout Lake Oahe. Female gizzard shad are capable of producing large numbers of eggs, making this species a prime candidate to provide additional food resources. Shad were abundant in Oahe during previous years; however, recent severe winters decreased the abundance of this cold-sensitive species. Although some newly-hatched shad were detected in shoreline prey fish surveys, the abundance of shad was low. Nonetheless, many anglers reported shad in the stomachs of harvested walleye and reported seeing large schools of shad. Overall, the shad stocking initiative was considered a success and will be repeated in 2013.

Low body condition and slow growth of walleye resulted from a lack of available food in 2012. In addition, walleye less than 15 inches are near record abundance. Therefore, to provide anglers the opportunity to harvest more of these fish before they are lost from the system, an increase to the daily bag and possession limits to 8 fish daily and 24 in possession went into place on December 3, 2012. Fisheries

staff will monitor the Lake Oahe fishery in 2013 and regulation recommendations for 2014 will be based on results of 2013 surveys.

Drought Effects Studied on Marginal Waters. Many waters in eastern South Dakota are classified as “marginal” fisheries because they are shallow and prone to fish kills (summer and winter) even when completely full of water. In the southeast region alone, approximately 30 waters totaling 26,000 acres are at high risk of losing their fisheries if drought conditions experienced in 2012 continue into 2013 or if a significant period of ice and snow cover occurs during the winter of 2012-2013. The 2012 drought has also had a negative impact on natural reproduction and stocking success, especially for walleye and yellow perch. Fall surveys showed that walleye and yellow perch production in stocked and unstocked waters was generally low across eastern SD. Several drought-related factors were likely involved. An early and prolonged spring caused sporadic spawning over a long period of time, declining water levels reduced the amount of available spawning habitat, and lack of nutrient inputs from runoff may have reduced available food resources for young fish. A research project designed to determine why fish stocking has been unsuccessful on some marginal lakes was also conducted. Continuous temperature loggers were placed in four marginal waters where stocking has consistently failed and a fifth was placed in a natural rearing pond with consistently good stocking success, to serve as a control. All the waters were surveyed to determine the abundance of adult and juvenile fish before and after the summer period. In July, water temperatures were often above 80 degrees and briefly exceeded 90 degrees in two of the five waters. Despite these apparently severe conditions, no substantial fish kills occurred on any of the five lakes. It was concluded that summer water temperature and dissolved oxygen levels may not be a major limiting factor for stocking success.

Coolwater Hatchery Heating System Updated. A new water heating system has been installed at Blue Dog State Fish Hatchery, the only cool and warm water state fish hatchery in South Dakota. Previous production capabilities were primarily limited to extensive pond culture of walleye, yellow perch, black bass and musky from spring to fall. The addition of this system will provide the ability to heat up to 800 GPM of well water from 50 to 80 degrees, allowing winter production of warm-water fish. First year plans are to produce 10,000 catchable channel catfish and 8,000 largemouth bass to ten inches. Rotation production plans will provide catchable-size fish for several urban fisheries in the state, as well as stocking selected waters with larger fish for improved post-stocking survival and enhanced fisheries for the anglers of South Dakota.

Iowa

Missouri River Recovery Program Participation. In relation to Missouri River Recovery Program, Iowa DNR staffs meet bi-monthly with representatives from the Omaha USACE district to discuss various land acquisition sites, habitat projects, and biological monitoring of sites that are within the Iowa border. Some of the current issues discussed include:

- Iowa DNR staff completed an assessment of the damages and benefits of the 2011 flood impacts on state owned property.
- Priority land purchases in 2012 were prioritized towards areas where levee set-backs were proposed.
- Actively searching for sites that would allow widening the top width (benefits of flood control)
 - A very large channel widening project at Deer Island (rml 672, near Little Sioux IA) is underway. The project will be completed in phases (2-3) depending on funding. At completion the project would widen the top width of the river by approximately 450 feet for 2 miles.
- Numerous projects are underway to repair BSNP and MRRP projects that were damaged by the 2011 flood.
 - One BSNP repair project at Lower Decatur Bend required consultation between USFWS, State of IA & NE fisheries & wildlife agencies, and USACE.

Report from Carl Priebe, Riverton Unit Wildlife Biologist on the lower Missouri in Iowa. A very positive result from the flood of 2011 came from the sand and sediment deposited within the floodway of the Missouri River. Many parts of the flood plain now have topography. That should prove to be a positive in many ways, especially in diversifying the flood plain. The ridges will most likely be vegetated differently than the low areas. The ridges will most likely be drier than the low areas which I would expect will remain cooler and wetter. The new "high spots" may remain high and dry during low to moderate flooding in the future when previous flooding would have inundated everything.

Unfortunately, on much of the land that the Corps of Engineers has acquired, most of the new topography within the floodway has been leveled. The sand was removed for either levee rehabilitation or levee construction.

Levee rehabilitation and levee construction has required extensive amounts of sand and cohesive material. As a result many acres of excavated wet areas have been created. Within a year or two, as wetland vegetation becomes established associated with the excavated areas, habitat for wetland birds and amphibians will have been greatly improved. In addition, decisions to construct setback levees at Copeland Bend and Auldon Bar will allow large scour holes to remain in the floodway. Many species of wildlife, amphibians and reptiles will benefit.

Report from Doug Chafa, Missouri Unit Wildlife Biologist on the upper Missouri in Iowa.

- 1) Deer Island Revetment Lowering Project started.
- 2) Flood created numerous sand bars and off-channel aquatic habitat.
- 3) Flood damaged project sites by bend: Winnebago, Tieville, Middle Decatur, Louisville

- 4) Tree mortality expected to be 50-75% within 5 years postflood.
- 5) 2 sites in Iowa enrolled in permanent WREP easements.

Missouri River Fish Monitoring Team Report. Targeted PDFH netting went into late May this year. Started off slow but finished strong. We are continuing tagging as stumble across PDFH during some of our other sampling efforts. Not including the Snyder Bend fish we tagged about 75 this year. Found some awesome new sites. Deep low velocity scours on the channel margins created by last year's flood.

Had a meeting with Nebraska and South Dakota biologists to discuss a possible paddlefish snagging season on the Missouri River. They had no opposition. Had another meeting with local COs and they had some good suggestions. I distributed a written proposal for the season in late June. No major opposition from the leadership (see proposal below).

A public meeting was held 6/30 in Sergeant Bluff to hear comments on the proposed snagging season. I was a little disappointed with the turn out. Only 14 people showed up. We had some good questions and discussions. None were opposed. I believe Mart has received ~6 positive email/mail comments.

There have been a lot of negotiations with the corps concerning the flood created habitat and their intentions to return the channel to pre-flood conditions. It is my position that the flood created more and better habitat in a single event than they have created in 10 years of recovery spending 100's of millions of dollars. It's not going well. They will spend millions to repair the channel and then spend millions more to create highly engineered, low diversity habitat projects with very little natural river function.

Six sites were selected to evaluate artificial and natural off channel habitats, connected versus unconnected and pre-flood and post-flood differences. Each site is being sampled with 3X6 and mini fyke nets, bow trawl and timed experimental gill nets each month. Early in the summer good numbers of young of the year walleye and sauger were being sampled but have been absent in recent samples. Very few minnows and shiners were being collected early in the year but are becoming more abundant as the summer progresses. Large predator species like northern pike and blue catfish have been sampled with much more frequency since the 2011 flood. Adult and age one paddlefish have also been sampled in large numbers at several off channel sites.

Proposed paddlefish snagging season. Van Sterner & Royce Bowman (Missouri River Monitoring crew) continued a monitoring effort started in 2010 evaluating population assessment & status of paddlefish in the upper reaches of the channelized Missouri River. The proposed paddlefish snagging season would begin in 2014. This snagging season would need legislative approval since we are proposing a license fee.

**Proposed Experimental Paddlefish Snagging Season on the Missouri River
POC: Van Sterner, Iowa DNR, 712-249-1997, van.sterner@dnr.iowa.gov**

Iowa is currently the only state on the Missouri River that does not allow some type of recreational paddlefish harvest. Missouri River Fisheries staffs continually receive numerous angler comments requesting a paddlefish snagging season. Of the lower basin states Nebraska and South Dakota manage a joint snag fishery on the 77 mile segment from Gavins Point Dam to the Big Sioux River. Each state issues 1600 tags (they usually receive twice as many applications for available tags). The season is the month of October and they have a 35 to 45 inch protected slot limit. They issue an additional 550 tags for a July archery season. The state of Missouri has a 2 month spring season (3/15 to 5/15) and a 3 month fall season (9/15 to 12/15) on the Missouri River and a spring season (3/15 to 4/30) on the Mississippi River. They observe a 2 fish bag and a 24 inch minimum length. Additionally the states of Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri and Tennessee allow commercial harvest within the Mississippi Basin.

Elements of the proposed season

- 1) Season dates: March 1 to March 31

Rationale: Our sampling suggests that we have our highest densities during pre-spawn migration periods. Literature reports that increasing discharge and turbidity are necessary to initiate pre spawn migration. The COE increases discharge from Gavin Point Dam in early March to achieve full-service discharge at Sioux City by April 1.

- 2) Season location: Big Sioux River south of the I-29 Bridge to the confluence with the Missouri River (about 2 miles). Missouri River from the NE/SD border south to the Hwy 30 Bridge near Blair, NE. All tributaries, backwaters and sloughs north of Hwy 30 and west of I-29.

Rationale: This segment is where most of our sampling has occurred and we are somewhat confident of the density of fish in this segment. It also gives us a manageable segment for an experimental season. It would expand to include the entire Iowa segment if the experimental season is successful. Would like to discuss the merit of permanently closing paddlefish harvest east of I-29 for all Missouri River tributaries to minimize enforcement problems.

- 3) Size restrictions: 35 to 45 inch protected slot

Rationale: The same protected slot restriction used by NE and SD. They indicate it has been successful protecting brood fish and it will also discourage black market caviar sales. Thirty eight percent of the fish we sampled in the main channel (2011-2012) were in the protected slot. We have only sampled a handful of fish above the slot.

4) Harvest restriction: Issued harvest tag with mandatory reporting

Rationale: An issued harvest tag would allow more control over harvest and the reporting system would provide invaluable information on total harvest, harvest rates, size structure and tag returns for movement studies and possibly population/exploitation estimates. South Dakota and Nebraska use a lottery system and applications exceed available tags. They apparently expect a 50% success rate as their stated quota is 1600 fish and they issue 3200 tags. I do not know what to expect for harvest rates. I suggest offering 1000 tags on a first come basis. I'm unsure how popular the program would be. A harvest of 500 with the average weight of our fish would equate to an exploitation rate of approximately 1.1 pounds per acre. While I don't have the data yet to back this up, 1.1 lbs/acre seems sustainable.

Summary

- Method of take is snagging only
- Iowa water only
- Issue 1000 harvest tags (one tag per person)
 - Available in Jan.? (Re-open for 2nd tag mid Feb. if tags leftover?)
 - First come first served
- License fee (\$21 – resident & \$41 non-resident)
 - Issued electronic licensing system
- Must land and tag your own fish
- Tag would be mailed with accompanying regulations, maps, snagging tips, etc.
- Voluntary reporting
- Must possess valid open (unused/unlocked) tag
- Tags are non-transferable (cannot possess anyone else's tag)+
- Size restrictions: 35 to 45 inch protected slot
- Can not possess raw eggs (eggs outside of the fishes body) on the water
- Can not possess game fish while snagging
- Valid fishing license required
- 5/0 hook or smaller, 2 hooks per line
- Illegal to gaffe fish
- Age requirement? 12yo?
- Season dates: March 1 to March 31
- Season location: Big Sioux River south of the I-29 Bridge to the confluence with the Missouri River (about 2 miles). Missouri River from the NE/SD border south to the Hwy 30 Bridge near Blair, NE. All tributaries, backwaters and sloughs north of Hwy 30 and west of I-29. (Discuss southern boundary

& closing paddlefish snagging in all Missouri River tributaries – issues at Little Sioux Sill #4)

Missouri River Fish Monitoring Iowa DNR 2011 Completion Reports

Project: Rotenone Sampling On Disconnected Waters of the Missouri River Floodplain, 2011

Project Leader: Van Sterner and DJ Vogeler

Location: Missouri River, Monona and Woodbury Counties, Iowa

Period of Research: September 2011 through October 2011

Abstract

The Missouri River Flood of 2011 provided floodplain inundation and connectivity that has been rare if not non-existent on the upper channelized segment of the river for almost 60 years. The timing and duration of the event was similar to discharges experienced before construction of the Missouri River Reservoir System. The expected ecological benefits of flooding in large floodplain river systems include increased reproduction of fish. After flood water subsided we sampled five isolated floodplain water bodies with the fish toxicant rotenone to assess reproductive success, biomass and species richness. Samples were composed entirely of young of the year fish. Biomass ranged from 30.8 kg/h to 97.3kg/h. Richness ranged from 18 to 30 species. Inundation on the scale of the Missouri River Flood of 2011 would not be desirable with current social and economic implications, however flow events with the magnitude to flood low lying riparian areas with the timing and duration of historic high flow events could provide numerous ecological benefits.

Project: Missouri River Channel Catfish Assessment

Project Leader: Van Sterner and Royce Bowman

Location: Missouri River; Woodbury, Monona, Harrison, Pottawattamie, Mills and Fremont Counties.

Period of Research: July 2009 through June 2010

Abstract

Baited hoop nets were used to evaluate the status of channel catfish in the Missouri River along the western Iowa border. Ninety samples were collected yielding 555 fish. The study segment was divided longitudinally into three segments. Catch per net night was significantly higher in the upstream segment between the Big Sioux River and Little Sioux River confluences than below the Platte River confluence to the Missouri Border. Proportional stock density increased going downstream as CPUE decreased. Fish in the memorable size category were rare and no trophy size fish were sampled. The status of channel catfish populations in this stretch of the Missouri River is impaired due to anthropogenic river

development. Ecosystem restoration that recognizes hydrologic and geomorphic processes is essential to the wellbeing of all river fishes, including channel catfish.

Nebraska

Weather and water conditions consisted of a rather cool wet spring and early summer, followed by a very hot summer with temperatures above 100 degree F during July and August on numerous days. The result was that many of the 123,514 high capacity irrigation wells throughout the state were used extensively during the growing season. This made for poor water conditions for our reservoirs, streams and rivers. The Platte River per se is dry from Grand Island east as of this date except for a small quantity (less 300cfs) below Columbus, Nebraska. Lincoln has imposed mandatory water use restrictions.

State Government Efficiency and Effectiveness Study. The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission conducted an internal look at itself with help from members of the Board of Commissioners during 2011. Although an arduous task, the agency managed to tweak itself and save 10% of its budget by consolidation, maximizing electronic technology, streamlining and elimination of 26 positions. The agency was the first in state government to complete this endeavor prompted by legislation applicable to all agencies. During 2012, alignment of select positions took place and budgets formulated and slated to go into effect during FY13-14.

Surface Water Regulatory Actions on the Niobrara River. Nebraska is a prior appropriation state:

- The Director of the Nebraska Department Natural Resources (NDNR) issued a Final Order dated January 25th, 2008 stating the lower Niobrara River Basin (Box Butte Dam downstream to Spencer Dam) was fully appropriated. The criteria for fully appropriated determination is set in rule and regulation. Four Natural Resource Districts and one person contested this ruling.
- Subsequently, after due process the Director of NDNR issued another Final Order dated December 17th, 2009 which stated the 2008 Order was not arbitrary or capricious. This ruling was appealed to the Nebraska Supreme Court.
- On June 3, 2011 the Nebraska Supreme Court reversed and vacated the Nebraska Department Natural Resources (NDNR) 2008 fully appropriated determination and nullified the 2008 Order. Consequently, the lower Niobrara River reverted back to not being fully appropriated and thus opened the way for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission to file for instream flow appropriations in the future, hopefully in 2012 or early 2013.
- August 17, 2012. The NPS objected to NDNR issuing surface water A-18938 on the North Branch Verdigre Creek, a tributary to Verdigrée Creek, which is a segment of the Missouri National Recreational River (MNRR). The North Branch Verdigre Creek is a state assigned Coldwater Class B

Aquatic Life beneficial use, where the waters support natural reproduction of non-trout cold water populations year around. In addition, the MNRR includes areas of known presence of federally endangered pallid sturgeon and the state-listed blacknose dace and plains top minnow. Flow records on Verdigre Creek indicate existing appropriations to divert represent more than half the average daily flow of the river. A-18938, in combination with existing appropriations, poses a threat to the inchoate (to begin) federal reserved water rights, free flow, water quality and the outstanding remarkable values of the congressionally designated segments on Verdigre Creek and the Niobrara River in MNRR. Reductions in flow that affect those values for which the river was set aside are not in the public interest.

Hope on the Horizon for the Niobrara River. During June 2012, the MesoHABSIM study was completed and activities to complete instream flow recommendations are being formulated for presentation to the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission for approval to file for instream flows. Upon approval and after conducting public meetings, formal instream flow applications for fish and wildlife and recreation will be made to the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources to initiate the formal administrative process under Nebraska instream flow laws. If the applications are contested, the process will be longer than if no one challenged them. To date, there have been three efforts to obtain instream flow appropriations in Nebraska. In all cases, a contested hearing process had to be conducted where the rules of evidence apply.

Drought. The extreme drought gripping the Midwest is having detrimental effects on crops and consequently full scale irrigation is going on. The Platte River dried up from Grand Island downstream to Columbus and the lower 100 miles below the latter city is teetering on going dry in spite of the Loup and Elkhorn tributaries emptying into them. Jerry Obrist with the City of Lincoln Water Department has stated that he has not seen conditions like this since 1953.

Missouri

Jameson Island Side-channel Reconstruction. In November, the Missouri Clean Water Commission provided the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) with a favorable ruling on the proposed Jameson Island Unit Shallow Water Habitat Restoration Project.

The Commission unanimously rescinded the commission's orders as issued Sept. 12, 2007 and modified March 12, 2008 and directed Missouri Department of Natural Resources staff to move forward with drafting of the 401 water quality certification for this project. However, DNR has decided they will take no action in drafting a 401 certification for the project, leaving the issue up in the air at the moment.

Issuance of the certification is needed by the Corps to complete their National Environmental Policy Act review of the proposed project. With over 543 miles of

the river located in Missouri, the Commission's favorable decision will allow the Corps to resume its efforts in Missouri to meet the shallow water habitat metrics for the Federally listed endangered pallid sturgeon included in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's 2003 amended Biological Opinion and to mitigate for the losses to fish and wildlife habitat which resulted from the Corps' Missouri River Bank Stabilization and Navigation Project.

There has been substantial public interest in the project. More than 400 public comment letters were received and hours of public testimony were heard at a public hearing and an information meeting. While the majority of Missouri River stakeholders supported the habitat restoration effort, there was substantial discussion about whether the alluvial sediment excavated to construct the habitat would be reintroduced to the active Missouri River bedload by hydraulic dredging. The Corps' Project Implementation Report identified sediment as an important physical and biological component of the Missouri River and that sediment had greatly been reduced from historic levels by Corps dams and river structures. The PIR also provided an analysis of potential water quality impacts and clearly demonstrated that the project was in compliance with the Clean Water Act.

Opponents of the Corps' position contended that sediment was a pollutant and must be prevented from entering the Missouri River. The Corps determined that the plan to mechanically excavate and permanently stabilize the material would not be in compliance with the Clean Water Act Section 404(b)(1) guidelines, would not be the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative, would have the highest project cost, and provide the least benefit to the water quality of the Missouri River.

A key turning point for the project was an independent and unbiased evaluation which was released by the National Academies of Science in 2011. The study, titled "Missouri River Planning: Recognizing and Incorporating Sediment Management," evaluated and reported on the role of sediment management in the Missouri River. In response to that study, four Federal agencies (Corps, Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service) signed a position statement related to creation of SWH downstream of Gavins Point Dam. In that position statement, the agencies stated their support for moving forward with creation of shallow water habitat in accordance with their respective statutory responsibilities. The Federal agencies also recognized the importance of receiving-water characteristics (i.e., the natural, chemical and physical condition of each specific waterbody and the associated water quality requirements of its resident aquatic life) in relation to the Clean Water Act.

The Jameson Island Unit Shallow Water Habitat Restoration Project is a small part of the Corps' overall Missouri River Recovery Program. The project is located on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Big Muddy National Fish and Wildlife Refuge - Jameson Island Unit, on the right descending bank of the Missouri River, near river miles 210.5 to 211.7, near the town of Arrow Rock, Saline County, Missouri. The

project will restore 30 acres of shallow water habitat (27-acre chute and 3-acre backwater) and the dynamic river processes which maintain it for the benefit of native fish and wildlife species, including the endangered pallid sturgeon.

Blue Catfish Regulations. Many catfish anglers and Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) staff have concerns about the declining quality of blue catfish at Truman Reservoir and Lake Ozark. In the 2002 Statewide Catfish Angler Survey, the majority of the respondents indicated the quality of catfishing at Truman Reservoir had declined over the last 10 years. In 2003 MDC (with public input) finalized the Statewide Catfish Management Plan. One objective outlined in the plan is: *Implement new regulations, based on sampling and creel data to protect large catfishes in Truman Reservoir and Lake of the Ozarks.* MDC documented high harvest and slow growth of blue catfish at Truman Reservoir during the Reservoir Catfish Evaluation (2003-08). Slow growth has also been documented at Lake of the Ozarks. MDC convened a working group in 2009 to summarize past catfish management at Truman Reservoir and Lake of the Ozarks and to develop future management objectives. Three open houses were conducted in May of 2010 to present information and to gather public input pertaining to the management of blue catfish in Truman and Lake of the Ozarks. The majority of attendees favored implementing regulations that would protect blue catfish from overharvest and increase the number of larger fish.

Input received during the 2010 open houses was considered and modifications were made to MDC's management recommendations. Updated information, including two years of preliminary baseline sampling data, and modified recommendations were presented again at three open houses which were conducted in August 2012. Additional public input was collected at these events, along with collection of online comments. A total of 190 people participated in the 2012 open houses that were held in Camdenton, Clinton and Warsaw, MO. Eighty-three (83) comments were received at the open houses and 241 comments have been received online. There is strong support for the proposed regulation from the comments that have been received. Common themes heard at the open houses include:

- The proposed regulation is too liberal; comments included keeping 5 under and 1 over the slot limit and would like the regulation to be statewide.
- People were very concerned about jug lines, limb lines, stainless steel hooks, trophy fishing and moving large fish to pay lakes.
- Several comments were against the slot limit itself feeling that was the size fish they catch, people will stop fishing because it will cost too much in bait and fuel, people did not want to measure fish and the perception that slot limits are difficult for Conservation Agents to enforce.
- Enforcement comments included not being able to enforce laws we have now, the proposed regulation will not work if it cannot be enforced, there is a strong need for additional Conservation Agents on the water

- The status quo group does not want any changes to the regulation because they do not believe there is a problem with a declining population or quality in the fishery.

Concern was also expressed by people who believe the fish in the slot are the ones they are catching and they will not be able to feed their family and supply fish for family and church fish fries. If a regulation is proposed, it will go to the MDC Regulations Committee for review in February 2013. With the approval of the Regulations Committee and Director, the proposed regulation changes would then be presented to the Conservation Commission for approval. If approved by the Commission, the regulation changes would then be filed with the Secretary of State's Office and posted for public comment. Pending comments, the new regulation would then take effect the following March 1.

A three-year baseline population monitoring project was completed by MDC staff on both reservoirs in the fall of 2012. Provisional results on both waters indicate blue catfish populations with high numbers of smaller fish, few fish within the proposed protected slot-length limit and very few fish above the proposed slot-length limit.

Proposed Regulation Options:

- Daily Limit - 10 blue catfish daily
- The 3 protected slot-length limit options being considered are:
 - 24-32 inches (about 5-13 lbs.)
 - 25-33 inches (about 6-15 lbs.)
 - 26-34 inches (about 7-16 lbs.)
- 1 or 2 blue catfish in the daily limit above the protected slot
- Possession Limit (10) – Twice the Statewide Daily Limit

At this time, the MDC preferred option is 10 blue catfish daily, a 26 – 34 inch protected slotlength limit, and 2 blue catfish in the daily limit above the protected slot. This regulation would affect Truman Lake and Lake of the Ozarks, and their tributaries, including the No-boating zone below Truman Dam in Lake of the Ozarks.

The No-Boating Zone is presently managed under a special regulation which limits harvest to four catfish in the aggregate daily with only one fish over 24 inches. Should the proposed regulation be enacted, flathead and channel catfish regulations in the no-boating zone will revert to current Statewide Regulations for daily and possession limits of five (5) flathead catfish daily, ten (10) channel catfish daily, a possession limit of twice the statewide daily limit.

Regulation Proposal Objectives:

- 1) Protect medium-size blue catfish and increase the number of larger blue catfish.

- 2) Increase harvest of smaller blue catfish below the protected slot with the goal of improving growth across the population.
- 3) Retain catfish angler base on all waters affected.
- 4) Maintain good relations with all stakeholders, while continuing to promote local catfish-based economy.
- 5) Provide a sustainable, quality, blue catfish fishery for present and future generations to enjoy.

8) ORFMT Report

Brian Schoenung reviewed the written report provided in the briefing book.

Discussion:

Ohio, Kentucky, and to a lesser extent Indiana are the major players with respect to paylakes. There are a variety of regulations used by the states. Illinois has the most restrictive regulations.

Are Illinois regulations addressed towards catfishing or paylakes? Towards paylakes; in order to operate a paylake you must have a license. If a state fishing license is not required, then paylake must charge a daily fee that is then paid to the state. This is the same in Arkansas and Tennessee.

Illinois also has guidelines for stocking paylakes and a site inspection is required prior to approval of a permit. It is not daunting, but getting into the permit is more difficult than just submitting an application. Renewals are easier, than obtaining the initial permit.

It does not sound like Illinois is a major destination for the commercially harvested catfish. Illinois VHS regulations prohibit the movement of any commercial fish off the water alive.

Some of these paylakes, particularly in Ohio are stocking 4,000 – 5,000 pounds of large flathead and blue catfish at a time. Sport anglers are reporting that they are not seeing the quality of catfish that they had been. As a basin, we do not have a lot of data and may not ever have much data as it is difficult to collect. Long-term studies are needed to really understand what is happening with the population.

Indiana was unsuccessful in passing catfish regulations similar to those in Ohio and West Virginia:

- 1 fish > 35" for flathead and blue catfish
- 1 fish > 28" (?) for channel catfish

More intensive sampling with trotlines and electrofishing is planned. The states will also be working with tournament fishermen to collect additional data.

9) Tennessee/Cumberland Report

Bobby Wilson reviewed the written report provided in the briefing book.

Discussion:

Tennessee has a 34" maximum size limit for sport and commercial fishers with a daily limit of 1 catfish larger than 34". Commercial fishing industry is lobbying hard to get this regulation changed to 42" maximum size limit with no harvest over the length limit. The commercial fishermen are reporting a meat market for bigger catfish. However, it appears that these large catfish are being kept alive and shipped north to fee fishing lakes.

Alabama has a regulation that does not allow catfish to leave the state alive. Tennessee sport fishermen are pushing for a similar regulation. Tennessee is conducting a survey of sportfish anglers to determine if there is still interest in the way the state manages catfish as sportfish, if it has increased or decreased over the last few years, and how they feel about increasing the maximum size limit.

Commercial fishing advisory committee requested the Commission to consider regulation changes regarding Asian carp. One request was to increase the mesh size limit from 4" to 4.5". Currently, mesh sizes from 4" – 6" are not allowed. The 4.5" mesh will reportedly allow them to fish a stronger net for capturing Asian carps. Another requested change is to expand access to tributaries in Kentucky and Barkley lakes. Access is currently limited to minimize conflicts with recreational fisherman.

10) UMRCC Report

Ron Benjamin reviewed the written report provided in the briefing book.

Discussion:

What are the annual operating and maintenance costs for the barrier in Minnesota expected to run? Construction is estimated between \$16 and \$20 million dollars, but so far the contractor has not been able to provide a good estimate for operation and maintenance costs. There are still a number of uncertainties related to construction which will affect annual costs. There are several reasons why electricity is not a feasible option at this location: width, fluctuation in discharge, water clarity, and high public use.

Ash make up 25-30% of the floodplain forest in the Upper Mississippi River. Emerald ash borers are wiping out ash trees and creating open areas in the

canopy. Reed canary grass, another invasive, is taking over in these open areas and not allowing other forest species to fill in where the ash trees have been eliminated. This is threatening the largescale conversion of the forested floodplain to a grassland floodplain. This change could result in a shift from upland species to marsh species, in addition to having direct changes on fish species that have evolved to use the flooded forest floodplain. This is a very complex problem.

11) AIS Committee / MRBP

Steve Shults reviewed the written report provided in the briefing book.

Steve also provided an update on the Grass Carp Review Project. MICRA received funding from the USFWS, Region 3, to complete the review. MICRA has signed an Agreement with HDR, Inc. to complete most of the work outlined in the project scope of work. Ron Benjamin has contacted the states to inform that the review has been funded and asking them for their assistance when contacted by HDR.

The MRBP is assisting with project management and is chairing a steering committee for the project that includes triploid grass carp producers and inspectors from the USFWS Triploid Grass Carp Inspection and Certification Program to make sure that the review meets expectations of the multiple stakeholders involved. Working with the steering committee has taken more time and created more work for everyone involved, but it has been critical to ensure buy-in of the final product. The main concern at this point is the additional time that this has required of HDR and the potential for a cost overrun.

An additional objective was added to the original Scope of Work and funded by the USFWS to evaluate the extent of legal use of diploid grass carp. Documentation requirements of the triploid grass carp program allow for the reporting of annual summaries of the numbers of fish shipped and the states to which the fish were shipped. Similar data are not available for diploid grass carp. The purpose of this added objective is to develop a similar accounting of the numbers of diploid grass carp shipped/stocked and in what states.

12) Native Mussel Committee

The Native Mussel Committee report provided in the briefing book stands as submitted.

Discussion:

The committee did not use the funding that was obligated in 2012 for a workshop. However, the 2012 funding has been used to sponsor the FMCS's 8th biennial symposium scheduled for March 10-14, 2013, in Guntersville, Alabama.

13) Paddlefish & Sturgeon Committee

Jeff Quinn provided and reviewed the following committee report.

1. The committee met at the River Heritage Museum, Paducah, Kentucky, on January 29-30, 2013. We did not have a quorum (11 present; 15 needed) to do official business for the second year in a row. However, the Ohio River basin was well represented by Ohio, West Virginia, and Kentucky this year.
2. Jason Sorenson (SD) will become chairperson January 1, 2014. Email voting is needed to elect Kirk Hansen (Iowa), who was nominated as the assistant chair, term beginning January 1, 2014.
3. The tagging protocols document will be revised by an ad hoc committee of Gerald Mestl, Mark Boone, Jason Sorenson, and Jason Schooley.
4. Alexi Sharov and Michael Wilberg provided an update on the AFWA stock assessment project.
5. The committee would like to revise the SOP to make a quorum of 7-8 delegates.
6. Anthony Sindt – Ohio has not done any paddlefish work since 2008.
7. Chris O'Bara - West Virginia wants advice for developing a snag fishery.
8. Kirk Hansen (IADNR) - They have observed increases in size structure and recruitment of shovelnose sturgeon since harvest regulations went into effect. The 2011 year class was enormous – 30% of total catch and it is still not fully recruited. This year trawling catches were almost double. Iowa is pursuing a paddlefish snagging season on the Missouri River. Iowa is currently the only state on the Missouri River without recreational harvest. They want to implement a harvest tag system, a March season, 1000 tags issued, same protected slot as on Gavins Point (protects 38% of fish).
9. Dr. Brenda Prachiel has published a paper using data from the MICRA paddlefish database, including one in Fisheries. Her final paper is on movement through dams.
10. Tennessee is still under lawsuit from commercial fishers.
11. Roe harvest appears way down this year due to low market demand. Garry Lucas (Mississippi) reported that harvest this year is 1/3 that of last year.
12. Jay Herrela –Kentucky. Asian carp and catfish are big issues, paddlefish sampling is a lower priority in the Ohio River basin.
13. Jason Schooley (ODWC) – 2012. 4,000 fish were harvested from Grand Lake. Short term trend is for larger fish.
14. TWRA will have a new electronic commercial reporting system soon. They are willing to share their IT system.
15. Dr. Scarnecchia gave a report on use of Virtual Population Analysis with the upper Missouri River paddlefish fishery.

16. Wyatt Doyle and Tracy Hill provided a field demonstration of the paupier net for catching paddlefish. We captured about a dozen below Smithland Dam on the Ohio River. These were all small fish difficult to capture with gill nets. (See pictures below.)

Discussion:

Was there a timeline given for completion of the AFWA stock assessment project? They plan to stop gathering data within the next two months and to begin in-depth analysis of the data. They then want to have a meeting about the report by October 2013.

Does anyone know what is driving roe prices down? Indiana fishermen are not fishing because roe prices are so low. Market demand is down. There has been speculation that some supplies on the East Coast may have been lost as a result of the hurricane and may cause demand to rise. Oklahoma and North Dakota have been putting out large quantities of high quality caviar for several years. It's unclear what affects this may be having on the market. Although it is a perishable product, there does seem to be considerable product carryover from year to year.





14) MICRA Habitat Committee

The Executive Board discussed the delegates' responses to an inquiry from the board regarding interest in MICRA forming a Habitat Committee. Of the 28 states, 18 responded favorable. One state declined participation and 9 states did not respond. Since nearly 2/3 of the delegates responded in favor of forming the committee, the board decided to move forward with forming the committee and discussed next steps.

Discussion:

One of the first needs will be to identify a chair-person to do much of the initial work to get the committee up and running. Fifteen states provided names for a representative, but no one recommended a representative to serve as the new committee's chair-person.

How do you see this committee interfacing with the larger regional and national efforts like the National Fish Habitat Action Plan partnerships? In part this will be up to the committee to determine how to best do this. What we have talked about so far is that the MICRA committee can pull together the multiple priorities identified within the different sub-basins, fish habitat partnerships, and other efforts to present the basin-wide need and highest priorities.

We have also discussed this committee as a forum for sharing on-the-ground experiences of what has worked and not worked in different parts of the basin. Once the MICRA Native Species Aquatic Habitat Action Plan is complete, the committee would also be tasked with identifying the committee's role in implementing the action plan.

The Executive Board will need to develop a charge for the committee and share SOP's from existing committees to help the committee begin to develop its own operational guidance.

The MICRA Chair and Coordinator could attend the committee's first meeting, but it might be better to hold an initial meeting in conjunction with an upcoming Executive Board meeting (after the AFS meeting in September). There are a number of projects in Wisconsin that could be incorporated in to site visits for a meeting.

Would it just be states that we are inviting to participate? There are number of Corps Districts that have experience with habitat projects on the mainstem river. Other MICRA committees include membership beyond the states both as full members and as interested parties. It could be worthwhile having the Corps present to create awareness about where habitat work could be most beneficial. The Executive Board and committee members will need to decide how wide participation should be expanded.

Is there a potential end game for this committee? There are a number of large-scale efforts underway – NESP, America's Greatest Watershed Initiative, SARP, etc. Is there a connection between the MICRA committee and these groups to make sure that fisheries habitat is front and center if any of these large initiatives were to take off? Absolutely.

MICRA may want to consider someone like Scott Robinson with SARP who is representing a large group that is already coordinating on habitat restoration.

- ! The Executive Board will develop an initial charge/vision via email to be provided to the new Habitat Committee.
- ! Benjamin will send an email to the Fish Chiefs to inform them that MICRA is moving forward with the formation of a Habitat Committee, state reps are needed, and a chair person will be needed.
- ! Committee members will need to begin discussing goals, objectives, priorities, and Standard Operating Procedures.
- ! The Executive Board will identify a future board meeting for the Habitat Committee to hold its first meeting.

It would be good to include in the charge a review of fish passage at older Corps dams. It will be necessary to make sure that fish passage projects are evaluated from a perspective of doing more good than harm, i.e., native species vs. AIS benefits. Wisconsin has decided to open as much waters as possible to passage within tributary systems, but the lowest permanent barrier in each system will be maintained to prevent unwanted passage of invasives from the mainstem river.

15) Native Species Aquatic Habitat Action Plans

The sub-basins each reviewed their data templates, the group discussed similarities and differences between the sub-basin results, and then discussed next steps to keep moving forward.

Discussion:

LMRCC document includes all mainstem projects, nothing for tributaries. We should include the White River with the Arkansas/Red River data template, rather than including with the LMRCC.

- ! Jeff Quinn will provide Arkansas/Red/White River projects that were removed from the LMRCC data template to Chris Racey for inclusion in the Arkansas/Red data template.
- ! LMRCC fish tech section should review this document during their meeting in Little Rock in September 2013.

The data templates are living documents that can be updated as needed. The data templates are not intended to be part of the written plan. They will help us form the structure of the plan and provide some additional detail if we are asked for additional information.

- ! Conover will provide Travnichek with the most recent version of the data template.
- ! Travnichek will be asked to provide the Missouri River sub-basin information on the same data template as the other sub-basins.

The USACE initiated a lock chamber expansion project on the Ohio River in the mid-1990s and conducted an Ohio River Mainstem System Study. As part of that study, the Ohio River states identified several hundred environmental restoration projects. Eighteen of those projects were highlighted as priority projects and the USACE developed cost estimates. These eighteen priority projects were used to populate the Ohio River sub-basin aquatic habitat data template.

- ! Chris Racey will send the Arkansas Red River template to the MICRA Executive Board members following the meeting.

The template is working well and the sub-basin's information for 'Native Species Benefits' seems consistent with what the other sub-basins have. One possible difference is that the Arkansas Red River template has recommendations for restoring native mussels. Chris will update the 'Sub-basin Specific Priority Projects' with the information to be provided by Jeff Quinn as discussed earlier.

The first three columns in the data template are where we are looking for consistency among the sub-basins. Once we see consistent information in the first

three columns from each of the sub-basins, then we will be able to take the next step of having each sub-basin draft a 1-2 page synopsis of aquatic habitat needs and priorities. These sub-basin documents will be compiled into the draft Aquatic Habitat Action Plan. The sub-basins will be able to reference the fourth column in their specific data templates to provide specific examples of the types of projects that have been identified as priority needs for each restoration objective. MICRA will need to put a cost estimate on the identified needs.

How specific do we need to be on the priority projects? One advantage to identifying specific projects is for decision makers to identify with projects identified in their districts. The LMRCC projects are not prioritized, however each state has identified several needs. A list of each state's top-5 priority projects would provide example projects in each state.

After a lengthy discussion, the board decided to limit the focus of the current action plan to habitat needs. The vision is an overall MICRA goal of creating 'healthy, sustainable fisheries and aquatic resources.' MICRA has identified two priority focus areas to date: aquatic habitat and AIS.

- ! The Executive Board will finalize the Aquatic Habitat Action Plan and then discuss whether or not to identify additional priority focus areas and develop additional Action Plan components for the MICRA goal of creating 'healthy, sustainable fisheries and aquatic resources.'

In keeping with the structure used for the AIS Action Plan, the Aquatic Habitat Action Plan should identify one or two primary goals and a handful of priority recommendations. The board identified the following two primary goals: 1) conserve and protect high quality habitats, and 2) restore and create aquatic habitats and system functions. The 'Restoration Objectives' will be used to develop the priority recommendations.

- ! Executive Board members will send Conover their recommendations for lumping 'Restoration Objectives' into 5 or 6 'Priority Recommendations' under the two goals for the Aquatic Habitat Action Plan.

The 'Potential Management Actions' could be used to provide a couple examples under each 'Priority Recommendation.' Similar to the layout of the AIS Action Plan brochure, the 'Native Species Benefits' column could be used as the content for an inlay on the inside left page of a brochure that addresses the question '*why do this?*'

16) MICRA Priorities Document Review and Update

The Executive Board members walked through the priorities document and edited the objectives and remaining needs listed under each of the goals.

- ! Conover will send the revised priorities document to the Executive Board members to review the changes made based on discussions during the meeting.
- ! Conover will send the revised priorities document to the committee chairs with a request for them to update the document with relevant accomplishments and on-going needs.

The Executive Board may not want to delete 501c3 status as a remaining need as previously decided. Before making a final decision, the board may want to seek legal guidance regarding 501c3 status and lobbying restrictions rather than basing the decision on an internet search. We should also ask a tax attorney about the benefits and restrictions of 501c3 status.

- ! Conover will talk with the MICRA accountant, DOI attorney, and the LMRCC to get recommendations for tax attorneys and cost estimates for MICRA to get legal advice on this topic.
- ! Quinn will look for a copy of old MICRA videos on dam removal and paddlefish and sturgeon life histories and provide them to Conover.
- ! MICRA will request the FWS Division of Economics for two things: 1) an economic value report for the Mississippi River Basin, and 2) economic data in the national fishing, hunting, and recreational use survey to be broken out for the Mississippi River Basin in future 5-year reports similar to how the data is currently broken out for the Great Lakes.

The board had a lengthy discussion on the purposes and types of MICRA's outreach and the need to be more strategic in targeting messages to different audiences. It would help to bring in outreach specialists from a state or federal agency to help MICRA develop a communications plan. MICRA is not organized in a way to move quickly to respond to legislative issues.

- ! The Executive Board will discuss the development of a MICRA communications plan at a future board meeting.
- ! Turner will talk with FWS Region 3 outreach specialist to get a better understanding of time and financial costs for outreach.

After a lengthy conversation about the 10 goals in the 1992 and 2002 priorities documents, MICRA's mission statement, and the organization's purpose and capabilities, the Executive Board agreed that MICRA has two primary goals:

- internal coordination, and
- external communication.

The ten goals were revised and reworked into seven objectives.

- ! Conover was asked to fit the “Remaining Needs” under the seven new objectives in the MICRA priorities document and then to send the revised document to the Executive Board members for their review.
- ! Executive Board members will review and finalize the revised priority document for distribution to the fish chiefs by August 2013.

17) Socio-economic Value Information for Mississippi River Basin

Todd Turner and Greg Conover spoke with an FWS economist who is responsible for producing the national survey of fishing, hunting, and recreational use every 5 years. This is the same group that developed the USFWS Fisheries Economic Analysis (that showed a 28:1 payback on every dollar appropriated) and the Economic Effects of Rainbow Trout Production by the National Fish Hatchery System report. The group does good work and is well versed in fisheries issues

They informed him that MICRA would like to know if it is possible to develop methods for extracting use and socio-economic value information for fishery resources and related recreation in the Mississippi River Basin and its sub-basin units from the national surveys. The FWS economist thought that a report could be put together with no cost to MICRA. The group discussed estimating economic values in each of the sub-basin areas and then tying them together into a single value for the entire basin.

The FWS economist said that the LMRCC completed an economic value report for the Lower Mississippi River in 2002 and they are looking to update that report. Depending on how in-depth of an analysis MICRA is looking for, he would anticipate this to be about a 2-year process. He talked about several things for MICRA to consider and is supposed to be sending a list for Todd to share with the Executive Board. The list included things like: would the report include both sport and commercial fishing, navigation, hydropower, and other types of river uses? These are the types of things we will need to consider and decide. The economist has agreed to attend the MICRA summer meeting and talk to the board in more detail. Todd suggested that the board consider forming a sub-group to work with the economist.

Discussion:

When do they need a decision? We need to invite him to the summer meeting and we can kick discussions off at that point. The economist may send a list of things for the board members to consider prior to the summer meeting. Board members can prepare for the discussion by developing a well thought out idea of what they would like included in the economic analysis.

- ! Conover will invite the FWS economist to the Executive Board's summer meeting to initiate discussions on an economic analysis of recreational fishing and boating in the Mississippi River Basin.
- ! Executive Board members will develop a well thought out idea of what they would like included in the economic analysis of recreational fishing and boating in the Mississippi River Basin in preparation for discussions on this topic at the summer Executive Board meeting.
- ! Conover will send a copy of the LMRCC 2002 report to Executive Board members for their review.

18) MICRA Delegate Meeting

The AFS annual meeting in Little Rock, AR, will be September 7-11, 2013. Are we sure there will be a Fisheries Administrators Section (FAS) meeting at the AFS meeting? The AFWA annual meeting is scheduled for September 8-12, 2013, in Portland, OR. FAS has not requested meeting space at the AFS annual meeting yet. FAS President Doug Nygren was conferenced into the meeting for a discussion. Nygren said that the FAS will hold its spring meeting in Kansas City, KS, May 16. He has not scheduled a fall meeting and said it would be discussed at the section's spring meeting. Nygren said he would be interested in working with MICRA to hold a delegate meeting in association with an FAS meeting. The Executive Board will continue with tentative plans for a meeting in Little Rock, AR.

- ! Conover will confirm the FAS fall meeting date and location with Doug Nygren and work with him to coordinate the MICRA Delegate meeting.

FAS meeting has been in the morning followed by the Fish Management Section in the afternoon the last couple of years. It would be nice to get those reversed this year so that MICRA can hold a social at the end of the FAS meeting. There will likely be an AFS social later that evening. We will want to end the MICRA meeting well before the AFS evening social begins.

The Executive Board needs to prepare a formal presentation to show some slides, talk about what MICRA has been doing, and get MICRA's name out there. We might want to get a draft of the revised priorities document out to the fish chiefs for their review prior to the FAS meeting and then use the MICRA Delegate meeting to get their input and buy-in. We could make posters for each goal that highlight MICRA's accomplishments and hang them around the room for the fish chiefs to read at their leisure during the social. We would want to keep the formal presentation short and focuses on just a couple of points, perhaps the desire to increase fish chief involvement in MICRA and the revised priorities document. We should target the end of July for sending out the revised priorities document for their review.

The fish chiefs have already had a chance to review and comment on the goals. We should focus more on the priority needs and actions for the next 5-years and look to get their input and buy-in. If we get the fish chiefs to concur to the priorities, then we have something to guide the Executive Board's business and actions at their meetings. Future delegate meetings can be held to discuss accomplishments and new priorities.

There have been a lot of new fish chiefs hired in the last 5 years, many are not aware of MICRA or what it is about. We should have a nice brochure or fact sheet on MICRA's major accomplishments (e.g., Habitat Action Plan, AIS Action Plan, Congressional outreach) and committees.

Are we planning on holding the MICRA meeting as part of the FAS meeting or just in conjunction with? We will need to talk to Doug about this, but the idea is to take advantage of the fish chiefs already being together for the FAS meeting and not trying to get them together at another time and place for the MICRA meeting.

! Chris Racey will talk with AGFC staff to make sure they are aware that MICRA would like to hold a social at the conclusion of the FAS meeting.

How much time do we want for the presentation before the social? Let's shoot for a 30-minute presentation at the end of the FAS meeting followed by an hour social during which the chiefs can walk around and read the information posted around the room and informally talk with the Executive Board members. The presentation would primarily be an introduction and background about MICRA, but would also include an overview of major recent activities (e.g., Congressional visits).

In addition to MICRA's accomplishments, we should have posters for each goal and its priority recommendations. We are likely to get more input during the 1-hour social informal conversations than asking for input during a presentation on the goals and priorities. We could also have a brief handout on the goals and objectives so that they can make notes and provide input by email following the meeting.

Will there be a formal MICRA meeting with the delegates? No. Will there be an Executive Board meeting held in conjunction with this delegate meeting? Not as part of the delegate meeting, but if most Executive Board members are able to attend we could have an Executive Board the following day. If fish chiefs are going to both AFWA and AFS, we could have the same presentation at both meetings. Benjamin could present at AFS and Wilson could present at AFWA. We need to keep in touch with Nygren to determine where he plans to hold the FAS meeting and anticipated attendance.

19) MICRA Brochure

Executive Board members reviewed a revised MICRA brochure based on discussions at the previous meeting. Conover provided a few options for the cover photo for the board members to consider.

- ! The Executive Board approved final changes to the MICRA brochure and \$885 to print 3,000 copies.

20) Young Professionals Travel Stipend

No applications for the 2013 travel stipend have been received.

- ! Conover will add an announcement to the MICRA home page that the 2013 travel stipend remains available.

21) 2013 Asian Carp Hill Visits

Ron Benjamin reported on the status of planning for the 2013 Hill visits. MICRA delegates from Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and the Wisconsin will be participating in the visits this year. Benjamin and Wilson will be contacting Congressional offices soon to request visits. A Congressional briefing is being planned for Tuesday. Meetings have also been requested with CEQ, DOI, USFWS, and USACE. MICRA is co-sponsoring and has provided Asian carp for an evening social themed 'Invasives on the Menu' at the National Aquarium.

Some of the Congressional members that were visited in the past will be visited again in 2013. There is more of a focus on visiting members from the same states as the MICRA delegates that will be making the visits, particularly those on Appropriations, House Natural Resources, and Senate Environment and Public Works committees. However a number of visits will likely be scheduled with committee members from states not represented by the MICRA delegates in DC.

22) New River Crossings Layout

MICRA spends \$12,000/year to publish four quarterly issues of *River Crossings* each year. The newsletter is emailed to about 500 readers (mostly agency personnel). The last issue was downloaded about 100 times from the MICRA website. There was considerable discussion on how much value the newsletter provides for that investment. There was consensus that the newsletter format is outdated, even as an electronic only publication. The Executive Board discussed possible changes to format, length, content, and frequency of the publication. The

Executive Board agreed that they are more interested in the frequency that *River Crossings* is published than the length of the newsletter.

Who is the target audience and what is the purpose of *River Crossings*? Is it an outreach tool or an inreach tool? We really need to consider developing a communications strategy. Who are our various audiences and what are the various media outlets we are going to use to reach those different audiences?

- ! Executive Board members will check with their respective agencies to see if they have a Public Affairs specialist that can participate on a committee to assist MICRA in developing a communications plan.
- ! Executive Board members will request their Public Affairs specialists for a list of questions that Executive Board members should consider prior to a meeting to discuss a communications plan.
- ! Executive Board members were asked to begin thinking about who MICRA's different audiences are, the messages we want to send to these different audiences, and how much effort should be directed to each audience.
- ! Benjamin and Conover will talk to Rasmussen about costs for publishing a more frequent and shorter newsletter.
- ! The Executive Board voted and approved changing *River Crossings* to a single column layout beginning with the first issue in 2013.

23) MICRA Chair-Elect for 2014

The Missouri River Basin is the next in the rotation. The Ohio Basin is next after the Missouri in the rotation and has had the fewest representatives serve as MICRA Chair. Indiana, Ohio, and Kentucky have not served as MICRA Chair.

The commitment is for four years – two as Chair-Elect and two as Chair. The Chair-Elect is not a very demanding position. It is primarily a way to get the incoming Chair familiar with the operations and issues the Executive Board is dealing with leading into their term as Chair.

- ! Benjamin will work with Travnichek and Schoenung to search for a Fish Chief from the Missouri and Ohio sub-basins to fill the upcoming Chair-Elect vacancy beginning January 1, 2014.

24) FWS National Asian Carp Surveillance Plan

Ron Benjamin was asked to be one of a few state members to participate on team organized by the FWS to draft a National Asian Carp Surveillance Plan. The team has been meeting once/week since December to develop this plan which is targeted to be finished by the end of March. The FWS says they have funding to implement the surveillance plan in FY13, although the amount of funding has shifted and appears uncertain. The team has been looking at eDNA, traditional sampling, and other tools. There are biometricians, statisticians, and geneticists working with the biologist and FWS AIS Regional Coordinators to develop details of the surveillance plan. eDNA will likely be used in some capacity, but the plan may rely more heavily on traditional or novel sampling techniques.

The Ohio River Basin states kicked this around recently. Presence/absence information is not very valuable. The states really want to know more details like how many are out there, what the numbers are, where they are going, what they are doing, how is expansion taking place, and what are the areas at risk. Commercial fishermen in the Upper Mississippi River, north of Dubuque, IA, fish approximately 2 million feet of net/year and typically they catch 3-5 Asian carp/year. But eDNA sampling would give you a positive result that could not relate their abundance. It can be very hard to interpret eDNA data. There is a lot of research being conducted on eDNA and we are likely to learn a lot about this tool in the next few years.

25) Symposium on Commercial Harvest of Asian Carp

MICRA will see if the MRBP would be interested in holding a joint session with MICRA on commercial harvest of Asian carp the afternoon of July 23 in Columbus, OH. We will also need to see if potential speakers are available for a meeting on July 23. Dr. Jim Garvey (SIU), Duane Chapman, and Kevin Irons were recommended as potential speakers.

The proposed format for the meeting would be a few longer presentations and considerable time for discussion. We might want to consider a perspective from those trying to commercialize Asian carp (e.g., commercial fisherman or processor) as well as perspectives from research.

- ! The Executive Board will send Conover recommended topics for presentations for the joint meeting session with the MRBP on commercial harvest of Asian carp.

26) Other New Business

Two topics from early discussions were added to the agenda for further discussion:

a) By-laws – reaching $\frac{3}{4}$ majority when needed to conduct business

The MICRA By-laws require $\frac{3}{4}$ majority on resolutions, policy or position statements. The response rate is frequently less than $\frac{3}{4}$ of all MICRA delegates. It was recommended that non-responses not be counted against the $\frac{3}{4}$ majority so that non-responses do not stop MICRA business from moving forward. Not all issues are of interest to all delegates, so it is likely that non-responses do not infer negative votes. This is how Congress and many AFS committees operate so this would not be unusual. Do we need to set a minimum number of votes so that business isn't approved if only three votes are received and two are in favor of the proposed action?

The board review of the following language from the MICRA By-laws and discussed whether or not the existing language is adequate.

- “The presence of seventeen Delegates shall constitute a quorum at the MICRA meetings.”
- “Seventeen actively voting members will constitute a quorum for conducting MICRA business through mail ballot, e-mail, or teleconference.”
- “A simple majority is required for approval of general business matters.”
- “A supporting $\frac{3}{4}$ majority of the voting members is required on resolutions, policy or position statements.” (emphasis added)
- “The MICRA Constitution and By-Laws may be amended by a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority vote of all MICRA members.” (emphasis added)

! The Executive Board members agreed to the interpretation that 1) a minimum of 17 delegates must submit a vote for it to be an official vote, 2) for resolutions, policy, or position statements a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority of the 17 or more voting delegates is required, and 3) only for amendments to the MICRA Constitution and By-laws is a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority of all MICRA members is required.

b) Healthy Fisheries Action Plan

! The Executive Committee decided to continue work on the Aquatic Habitat Action Plan and tabled further discussion on a Healthy Fisheries Action Plan to the board's summer meeting.

27) 2013 Budget

Projected income is estimated conservatively with only 20 states paying MICRA dues in 2013. Twenty-three states paid dues in 2012. Projected expenses are estimated to exceed projected income by a few thousand dollars, but are much closer than they have been in several years.

The Greenwire subscription is a restricted license that is used for preparation of *River Crossings*. The annual subscription increases at 7-7.5% each year. Conover was unsuccessful in getting the subscription fee reduced.

If MICRA decides to seek legal advice regarding 501(c)3 status, are there sufficient funds in the legal and professional fees line item to cover these expenses? No, the \$3,000 that is budgeted is the annual fee for MICRA's accountant services. MICRA will have to budget additional funds for that expense.

Is there a way that the Board can balance the annual budget so that MICRA is not spending more than it is taking in an annual basis? We have been working on this for several years and it is close now, but we still have some work to do. MICRA only has a couple of options: 1) increase income and 2) decrease expenses. Although MICRA has not increased membership dues since the organization formed in 1990, this is not the time to propose an increase in membership dues give economic and state budget climates. Therefore we need to carefully review MICRA's expenses.

MICRA's deficit spending is down to a few thousand dollars per year and the organization has approximately \$80,000 in savings. At current spending that would cover nearly 20 years of deficit spending. Should MICRA carry a large bank role from year to year? What happens if the organization were ever to dissolve? Part of this discussion needs to be determining how much of balance MICRA should keep on the books from year to year.

The River Crossings newsletter and Congressional visits are MICRA's two largest expenses. We have greatly reduced expenses for River Crossings the last few years. The Executive Board made a conscious decision to invest in the Congressional meetings each spring and there seems to be broad agreement that this has been a good investment. We might want to look for ways to reduce these costs in a few years, but we might not want to reduce this effort now.

MICRA receives 10% of the MRBP's funding each year for expenses related to hosting the panel, but this is inadequate to cover MICRA's expenses. MICRA provides staff time for a coordinator, accountant fees, travel for the MICRA Chairman to attend ANS Task Force meetings, and travel for the MICRA Coordinator to attend MRBP and ANS Task Force meetings on the panel's behalf. MICRA has been covering a substantial portion of the Panel's expenses in excess of \$5,000 each year.

It was recommended that MICRA should request the MRBP to contribute an additional \$3,600 each year to help cover a portion of MICRA's additional panel related expenses. Will doing this reduce MICRA's expenses by \$3,600 each year and bring us closer to a balanced budget? No, the expenses will remain the same because MRBP's expenses are paid out of MICRA's bank accounts and are included in the MICRA financial reports. The MRBP would be covering an increased portion of their expenses each year and expenses would be reflected more accurately, but not reduced. MICRA's total expenses for hosting the panel greatly exceed the 10% funding received each year, even with the \$3,600 shifted to the panel's budget.

- ! Jeff Quinn made a motion that the Executive Board request the MRBP to provide \$3,600 each year, beginning in 2013, to cover a portion of MICRA's additional administrative costs for hosting the panel. The MRBP will also be requested to reimburse MICRA a one-time \$3,000 to cover a portion of MICRA's additional administrative costs for hosting the panel in 2012. The motion was seconded by Chris Racey. The motion passed.

As a result of the motion, the following changes were made to the proposed budget:

- The amount of funding provided to the panel in 2013 will be reduced by \$6,600.
- The amount of contributed funds from MICRA to the FWS will be increased by \$6,600 to \$13,600.

No other changes to the proposed budget were made.

28) Schedule Summer Executive Board Meeting

The Executive Board decided to meet in conjunction with the MRBP meeting scheduled for July 23-24 in Columbus, OH. MICRA will meet in the afternoon July 24 and all day July 25.