

**MISSISSIPPI INTERSTATE COOPERATIVE RESOURCE ASSOCIATION  
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING**

January 26-27, 2011

Collierville Chamber of Commerce Meeting Room  
Collierville, TN

**Decisions and Action Items**

1. The September 2010 meeting minutes were approved as written.
2. Reed will send a letter to the sub-basin paddlefish stock assessment database coordinators to ask how they are coming with their new responsibilities, are there any problems, and is there anything the MICRA Executive Board can do to support them as far as additional training, materials, etc.
3. The MICRA Executive Board approved the MRBP's request to develop a website with a standalone URL ([www.MRBP.org](http://www.MRBP.org)). The website will be nested within the MICRA website and function as a standalone website. The website will be built on the same template as the new MICRA website to associate the MRBP website with MICRA's. The MRBP website will also have a link back to the MICRA website.
4. Conover was asked to periodically send links to the new MRBP website to the MICRA Executive Board for their review and input as the website is developed.
5. Hubbs will provide Conover with images and text for the mussel committee page on the MICRA website.
6. Conover will update the MICRA website to include background on the history of MICRA's mussel committee and its transition into the FMCS. The page will include a link to the new FMCS website.
7. Reed will send Scholten the guidelines for a 2-year term of office for the Paddlefish-Sturgeon Committee chairman that he proposed to the Executive Board when he was the committee chair.
8. Scholten will work with the Paddlefish-Sturgeon committee to update the proposed guidelines for a 2-year term of office for the Paddlefish-Sturgeon Committee chairman and submit them to the Executive Board for approval.
9. Conover was asked to add links to the sub-basin websites or a 1-page brief for those sub-basins that do not have a website.
10. Representatives from sub-basins that do not have a website will provide Conover with a 1-page write up that will be added to the MICRA website.
11. Executive Board members will send new pictures to Conover to be added throughout the new MICRA website.
12. Conover will add the MICRA AIS Action Plan and brochure to the Aquatic Invasive Species page under Focus Areas.

13. Conover will add a page on Mussel Conservation under Focus Areas.
14. Conover will look for a place on the MICRA website home page to add links to MICRA's lists of interjurisdictional fish and rivers in the basin.
15. Reed will work on identifying who the signed letters of support for the MICRA AIS Action Plan should be sent to.
16. Reed will send an email to the delegates informing them of the Executive Board's efforts to inform congressional members about the MICRA AIS Action Plan and to request a list from each state 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.
17. Conover will add a module with the AIS Action Plan to the MICRA home page so that the document is easily found.
18. Benjamin will provide the draft UMRCC letter to the Executive Board for review and during the next meeting Executive Board will revisit the idea of drafting a letter from MICRA to USACE regarding the need for major navigation improvements to be paired with not just a commitment to environmental projects, but also the follow-through to ensure the environmental projects are funded and completed.
19. Conover will work with Benjamin, Schoenung, and Racey to develop a new template for the sub-basins to complete prior to the next meeting.
20. The sub-basin representatives will work with their respective sub-basins to complete the revised data templates before the summer MICRA Executive Board meeting.
21. Reed or Conover will reach out to the Missouri River sub-basin to bring them up to speed on the Native Species Action Plan and request that they also complete the revised data templates prior to the summer MICRA Executive Board meeting so that there is not a data gap in the basin-wide effort.
22. Reed will send a letter to the state fish chiefs announcing the Executive Board's intention to organize a Habitat Committee and to ask them if there is someone in their agency that would be interested in participating and that they would delegate to represent their state.
23. An announcement regarding the results of the 2011 Young Professionals Travel Stipend and the availability of the stipend in 2012 will be included in the next issue of *River Crossings*. This will give applicants 9 months to prepare and submit an application.
24. The deadline for 2012 applications Young Professionals Travel Stipend will be January 15, 2012.
25. Racey will provide a copy of the Reservoir Committee's travel stipend application to the Executive Board to review.
26. Conover will send the AFS Skinner Award application to the Executive Board members for review.
27. Conover will modify the travel stipend application guidelines to inform applicants of

the main category headings of the selection criteria and change the abstract length limit to 1-page.

28. Executive Board members will review the draft selection criteria for the travel stipend and other travel stipend applications, and provide additional recommended changes to Conover.
29. The Executive Board will develop a draft comment letter to be submitted as part of the USACE GLMRIS scoping effort. The draft letter will be sent to the MICRA Delegates as soon as possible for the required 30-day review period prior to calling for a vote of approval to submit the letter as official MICRA comments.
30. Reed will talk with Bobby Wilson to see if he is willing to serve as the incoming MICRA Chair-Elect.
31. Reed will inform Rasmussen of the Board's decision not to post a submitted article regarding separation of the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins on the MICRA website because it has not been peer-reviewed. Reed will also encourage Rasmussen to submit the article to a peer-reviewed forum, after which MICRA would post or provide a link to the article.
32. Conover will add an Archive category under the Resources tab on the MICRA website and move the current articles to the Archive page.
33. Executive Board members will review the articles posted under the Resources tab on the MICRA website and consider how these documents should be handled by MICRA. The issue will be revisited during the next Executive Board meeting.
34. Executive Board members will be prepared to discuss at the next meeting how to best utilize the MICRA website Resources tab for disseminating information.
35. Reed will include an announcement in his Chairman's remarks in the next issue of *River Crossings* to inform readers that *River Crossings* will change to an electronic only format by the end of 2011.
36. Shults will check with the MRBP Executive Committee to see if the MRBP will pay for printing of 2,000 copies of the MICRA AIS Action Plan.
37. The proposed 2012 budget provided in the briefing book was approved as presented.
38. The next Executive Board meeting was tentatively scheduled for July 12-13, 2011.
39. Shults will check to see if the IL DNR Sparta World Shooting Complex is available at no charge to MICRA for the summer meeting. The National Great Rivers Research and Education Center (NGRREC) in Alton, Illinois, and Cabelas in St. Louis, MO, are alternative meeting locations.
40. Jawson will check with John Chick (INHS) to see if NGRREC has free meeting space available for MICRA for the July or future meetings.

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**Meeting Minutes**

**1) Call to Order (Reed)**

Roll Call

Arkansas/Red River	Chris Racey	present
LMRCC	Paul Rister	absent
MRNRC	Dave Fryda	absent
ORFMT	Brian Schoenung	present
Tennessee River	Bobby Wilson (Don Hubbs)	present
UMRCC (Chairman-elect)	Ron Benjamin	present
USFWS	Mike Weimer (Aaron Woldt)	present
USGS	Mike Jawson	present

A quorum of Executive Board members was present.

Introductions

Bobby Reed, MICRA Chairperson, LA DWF  
Greg Conover, MICRA Coordinator, USFWS  
Ron Benjamin, WI DNR  
Chris Racey, AGFC  
Brian Schoenung, IN DNR  
Steve Shults, MRBP Co-Chair, IL DNR  
Don Hubbs, TWRA  
Mike Jawson, USGS  
Aaron Woldt, USFWS

**2) Chairman's Report (Reed)**

Approval of September 2010 Meeting Minutes

✓ Benjamin made a motion to approve the September 2010 meeting minutes as written. Racey seconded. The motion passed.

Review of Chair Activities

Reed provided a summary of his activities as MICRA Chair from September – December 2010.

- Conducted September MICRA Executive Board meeting in Memphis, TN
- Assisted MICRA Executive Board and coordinator in developing a selection process for the “Young Professional Stipend Recipient”
- Routine approval and payments of invoices for services to MICRA and its’ technical committees and approved work projects
- Attended a conference call to begin organizing what has become known as the MICRA Asian Carp Hill Visits
- Assisted MICRA coordinator in getting out final ANS Action Plan to Exec Board
- MICRA chair resigned from paddlefish-sturgeon committee and assisted LDWF Inland Fish Director in selecting a replacement (Martin Plonsky)
- Assisted MICRA coordinator on several action items (briefing booklet)
- Reviewed 4<sup>th</sup> quarter issue of River Crossings (and provided chairman remarks section), AIS brochure, Triploid Grass Carp Program Review SOW, new MICRA website and provided comments to coordinator on those items
- Sent letter to Mr. Paul Zajicek informing him that MICRA would not be printing his paper on grass carp ploidy in “River Crossings”
- Disseminated information related to MICRA activities as per requests
- In receipt of a paper by Rasmussen et al. “ASIAN CARP AND OTHER AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES RISKS TO THE GREAT LAKES AND MISSISSIPPI RIVER BASIN ECOSYSTEMS - A Case for Serious Consideration of Hydrologic Separation” asking for permission to publish on MICRA website – a MICRA new business discussion item
- Email correspondence with paddlefish-sturgeon committee chair George Scholten asking where we were in having a status report on the paddlefish stock assessment -- a MICRA new business discussion item
- Email correspondence with paddlefish-sturgeon committee chair George Scholten who notified me of his desire to step down as chair of the paddlefish-sturgeon committee as he does not work with these species in his new job in Iowa – a MICRA new business discussion item

### **3) Coordinator’s Report (Conover)**

#### Review of Budget

Reports are provided in the briefing book. The coordinator’s, accountant’s and bank’s records all reconcile. The projected year-end balance for 2010 is \$79,917.97.

Twenty-two states paid 2010 membership dues; two states more than paid dues in 2009. Only 6 states did not pay 2010 membership dues.

#### **4) Review of September 2010 Action Items (Conover)**

The status of Action Items from the September 2010 meeting is provided in the briefing book. Several of the items are listed as not started or on-going, most of these are on the agenda for discussion during the meeting.

The status of a few Action Items from the January 2010 and July 2009 meeting is also provided in the briefing book and was reviewed.

This is a critical time to with the Paddlefish-Sturgeon Committee with new sub-basin database coordinators and George stepping down as the chairman. It will be important to make sure the transitions are as seamless as possible to prevent anything from falling through the cracks.

! Reed will send a letter to the sub-basin database coordinators to ask how they are coming with their new responsibilities, are there any problems, and is there anything the MICRA Executive Board can do to support them as far as additional training, materials, etc.

States will need to manage for transition of sub-basin managers in the future to make sure that the database knowledge is not lost as people move on to new responsibilities. It may be possible to develop YouTube videos or Pod Casts to archive this information.

#### **5) Arkansas/Red River (Racey)**

Racey reviewed the basin update provided in the briefing book.

Lab results provided to the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission confirm that the large fish kill below the Ozark-Jetta Lock and Dam in Arkansas in late December 2010 was not the result of a bacteria, parasite, or virus. Environmental quality department tested fish, water, and sediment samples for a number of toxins, pesticides, and heavy metals. All results were within the normal ranges. There was a similar kill on the Ohio River 1999 that was the result of chromium, however chromium tests have also come back negative. As of now, the cause of the fish kill is unknown.

Reed reported that there has been a lot of mineral exploration in the Haynesville Shale area in northwest Louisiana and northeast Texas. There have been several applications for water withdrawals to support the fracking process. As a result the Louisiana state legislature passed a new law that any new water withdrawals for mineral purposes would now go through the Department of Natural Resources. The agency continues to be involved in the consultation process for the permitting process. The agency has not been involved with water withdrawals for other uses. The state is starting to look at river systems and allocating water rights.

Louisiana has also been providing comments to USACE regarding permits to add small hydro-electric generating plants in their lock and dam structures along the Red River.

This has provided an opportunity for the state to have USACE address pallid sturgeon issues associated with the locks and dams.

## **6) LMRCC (Rister)**

LMRCC representative Rister had planned to attend the meeting and provide an update but was unable to attend due to inclement weather and bad road conditions.

Reed provided information regarding Louisiana's activities on the far lower reaches of the Mississippi River. Louisiana received a small amount of money from APHIS to begin some VHS work. The state will sample 26 water bodies this year, with the bulk of them being either hydraulic connected or geographically separated by only a small distance from the mainstem river.

Reed and Dr. Jan Dean (FWS) held a series of training sessions at Old River Control to teach the fisheries staff how to handle sturgeon encountered during sampling, including morphometric measurements, meristic counts, fin clips, genetic tissue samples, and handling protocols.

Reed and Dean are officially ending a 14-year sturgeon research program at Old River Control. The FWS has allowed the researchers just in this last year to begin collecting fin clips. Reed is in the process of sectioning and preparing pectoral fin spines from approximately 63 pallid sturgeon.

Dr. Hal Schramm, Mississippi State University, is continuing to conduct radio telemetry of pallid sturgeon near Old River Control. The researchers set trot-lines upstream on the Red River the week before Christmas and captured 2 tagged sturgeon from the 2004 stockings. Pectoral fin spines from the two fish were aged; one was clearly a 6-year old fish, the growth marks on the other fish were not clear. One of the 6-year old fish was only 520 mm FL, suggesting that fish 1-meter in length are very old fish.

Entrainment is a growing issue of concern on the lower river. There are several USACE structures that are entraining sturgeon. Mississippi Department of Game Fish and Parks and a couple of universities in Mississippi have started conducting research on sturgeon.

## **7) MRNRC (Fryda)**

Dave Fryda, North Dakota Game and Fish Department, is the new MRNRC chair. Fryda was unable to attend the meeting due to a family emergency.

## **8) ORFMT (Schoenung)**

The ORFMT held a meeting shortly after the September MICRA Executive Board meeting. Notes from that meeting were provided in the briefing book and reviewed by Schoenung.

## **9) Tennessee River (Wilson)**

Don Hubbs, TWRA, attended as proxy for the Tennessee River.

Hubbs reported that a new species of crayfish has been identified in Tennessee. Two specimens were collected in a small creek on the Tennessee-Alabama border. The giant crayfish is classified as belonging to the genus *Barbicambarus*, which was previously a monotypic genus.

TWRA has entered into a 3-year agreement with the Tennessee Aquarium to build an aquatic nuisance species display.

## **10) UMRCC (Benjamin)**

Benjamin discussed the MICRA Native Species Action Plan data template with the UMRCC Fish Technical section. The group was favorable and agreed to provide the requested information.

Aside from the Fish Tech Section meeting, there has not been a lot of action within the UMRCC this fall because of the recent mid-term elections and the related changes in administration in several of the upper basin states. The group is preparing for the next UMRCC meeting which will be held in Hannibal, Missouri, March 15-17, 2011.

## **11) AIS Committee / MRBP (Shults)**

Shults reviewed the committee report provided in the briefing book.

✓ The MICRA Executive Board approved the MRBP's request to develop a website with a standalone URL ([www.MRBP.org](http://www.MRBP.org)). The website will be nested within the MICRA website and function as a standalone website. The website will be built on the same template as the new MICRA website to associate the MRBP website with MICRA's. The MRBP website will also have a link back to the MICRA website.

! Conover was asked to periodically send links to the new MRBP website to the MICRA Executive Board for their review and input as the website is developed.

## **12) Freshwater Mussel Committee (Hubbs)**

Hubbs reviewed the committee report provided in the briefing book.

- ! Hubbs will provide Conover with images and text for the mussel committee page on the MICRA website.
- ! Conover will update the MICRA website to include background on the history of MICRA's mussel committee and its transition into the FMCS. The page will include a link to the new FMCS website.

## **13) Paddlefish & Sturgeon Committee (Scholten)**

Committee Chair Scholten was unable to attend the meeting. Conover provided the following information from the committee meeting held January 19-20, 2011, in St. Louis, MO.

The committee talked about the transition of the basin-wide stock assessment database from Columbia Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (CFWCO) to each of the sub-basins. The sub-basin reps were not ready to merge the databases and the group forged a plan for merging the databases later this year and each January thereafter. The committee agreed that technical assistance from CFWCO will still be needed in 2011.

Last January (2010), the committee requested the Executive Board to provide \$5,000 funding for the Columbia FWCO each of the next two years for continued coordination and technical assistance with the basin-wide database as management is transitioned to the sub-basins. The Executive Board approved the funding for 2010. The committee requests approval of the additional \$5,000 funding for 2011.

The sub-basin database managers still need equipment to set up tag reading stations in their offices (e.g., coded-wire tag jigs and pencils, etc.). The committee will also need an operational budget to purchase coded-wire tags for hatchery releases and for meeting expenses. The committee may hold a second meeting this year and they may also hold a workgroup meeting to complete the paddlefish tagging protocol document. A specific budget request was not received from the committee, but Conover has included a \$5,000 budget request in the proposed 2011 budget. The committee will have approximately \$1,000 of unspent funds that were obligated for the meeting that will be available for 2011 operational expenses in addition to the requested \$5,000.

Scholten recently informed Reed of his intention to resign as Chair of the committee. The committee currently does not have operational guidelines and has only had 3 chairmen since it was organized. The committee agreed on a proposal to establish a 2-year term of office for the Chair that would overlap with the MICRA Chairman's term of office. Scholten agreed to serve as committee Chair for the remainder of 2011. If the

proposal is approved by the Executive Board, the committee will need to establish a rotation for the position.

- ! Reed will send Scholten the guidelines for a 2-year term of office for the Paddlefish-Sturgeon Committee that he proposed to the Executive Board when he was the committee chairman.
- ! Scholten will work with the committee to update the proposed guidelines and submit them to the Executive Board for approval.

What is the status of the shovelnose sturgeon SOA? The final rule was published on September 1, 2010 and became effective October 1, 2010. The Illinois Commercial Fishing Association has filed a law suit, but that did not prevent the rule from taking effect on October 1.

Where is sturgeon harvest legal now that the SOA is in effect? Illinois (excluding the Middle Mississippi River), Iowa, Indiana, and Wisconsin (residents only).

There was considerable discussion during the Paddlefish-Sturgeon Committee meeting regarding the need to keep an eye on sturgeon populations outside the range of the SOA. The states discussed the need for more standardized sturgeon sampling protocols so that the data collected would be comparable throughout the basin.

Have any of the states taken actions to protect commercially harvested shovelnose sturgeon stocks since the SOA took effect? No known changes.

There is a considerable amount of sturgeon monitoring and research on-going in the basin. The network of VR2 receivers is expanding throughout the basin. Receivers have been added in the Ohio and Wabash rivers. MICRA may want to consider housing a map that identifies the location and owner of all VR2 receivers deployed in the basin. This would be an informational item for the public under IJ fish and could be of utility to researchers throughout the basin.

#### **14) MICRA Website (Conover)**

The Executive Board reviewed and discussed the new MICRA website.

- ! Conover will add links from the MICRA website to the sub-basin websites or a 1-page brief for those sub-basins that do not have a website.
- ! Representatives from sub-basins that do not have a website will provide Conover with a 1-page brief to be added to the MICRA website.
- ! Executive Board members will send new pictures to Conover to be added throughout the new website.

- ! Conover will add the MICRA AIS Action Plan and brochure to the Aquatic Invasive Species page under Focus Areas.
- ! Conover will add a page on Mussel Conservation under Focus Areas.
- ! Conover will look for a place to add links to MICRA's lists of interjurisdictional fish and rivers in the basin.

### **15) AIS Action Plan (Reed / Conover)**

The AIS Action Plan has been finalized. The final plan has not been provided to the MICRA delegates pending the completion of a number of action items from the last Executive Board meeting. The follow-up action items have been put on hold until the Asian Carp Hill Visits (Agenda Item 20) are completed in March 2011.

- ! The Asian Carp Hill Visit briefing materials should be provided with the other materials to be sent to the states along with the final AIS Action Plan.

Part of the marketing plan for the Action Plan is to request letters of support from the governors in the basin. MICRA will provide a template letter of support that we ask each state to alter for their own state, request their governor to sign, and then instruct them where to submit the letter with a cc to MICRA. The Executive Board needs to identify where the signed letters of support are to be sent (e.g., John Goss, Asian Carp Director, CEQ; the state's congressional delegation; who in D.C.?).

MICRA should follow-up with a letter that states how many of the states support the AIS Action Plan based on the signed letters of support. It will be important that MICRA receive a cc of each letter for archives and validation of the number of states that support the plan.

- ! Reed will work on identifying who the signed letters of support for the MICRA AIS Action Plan should be sent to.

A copy of the AIS Action Plan brochure should be provided in the packet sent to each state when we request the governors' support. A copy should also be sent to each congressional office in the Mississippi River Basin. Do we ask the states to send the brochures to their congressional offices or should MICRA send them to?

The Executive Board should inform the delegates of the Asian Carp Hill Visits and that copies of the brochure were mailed to all congressional offices in the Basin. The Executive Board may also want to request each state to provide a list of the major constituents (e.g., sportsmen and environmental groups) that they would like the brochure mailed to. This may help the states as it would be easier to provide MICRA with a list of priority contacts rather than to modify a template letter and contact the groups on their own. The states would then have the option of using MICRA's assistance or contacting their constituents themselves.

- ! Reed will send an email to the delegates informing them of the Executive Board's efforts to inform congressional members about the MICRA AIS Action Plan and to request a list from each state that identifies their priority constituent groups that they would like to receive information on the AIS Action Plan and a copy of the pamphlet.

The brochure directs readers to the MICRA website for a full copy of the AIS Action Plan. We need to make sure that the brochure is prominent on the home page.

- ! Conover will add a module with the AIS Action Plan to the MICRA home page so that the document is easily found.

How many copies of the Action Plan pamphlet do we have printed? It would be nice to have these available at the spring boating and fishing shows. It may be better to provide the brochures in conjunction with talks at sportsmen's group meetings. A copy of the AIS pamphlet could be included with the letter to the constituents that states something to the effect ...if you would like more information on the AIS Action Plan or how you can become involved in helping combat Asian carp and other AIS please contact your local Department of Natural Resources at... Additional brochures can be provided to these groups that have requested additional information.

We need to make sure that MICRA is marketing the brochure at both the upper levels within the states and agencies, and also at the grass roots level with our user groups and supporters.

#### **16) Letter to USACE Regarding Environmental Projects (Reed)**

The UMRCC did not reach consensus on their letter to USACE regarding the need for major navigation improvements to be paired with not just a commitment to environmental projects, but also the follow-through to ensure the environmental projects are funded and completed. Benjamin was unable to provide a final version of the letter to the Executive Board since it was never approved.

- ! Benjamin will provide the draft UMRCC letter to the Executive Board for review and the Executive Board will revisit the idea of drafting a letter from MICRA to USACE at the next meeting.

#### **17) Native Species Action Plan (Sub-basin Representatives)**

The goal is to have the Native Species Action Plan completed in time to include it in MICRA's message during Hill visits in 2012.

A long-term goal is to have each basin develop a fisheries management plan that identified their highest priority needs. Each basin plan would be a chapter of a comprehensive Mississippi River Basin fisheries management plan. This would be a useful tool when talking to congressional.

The sub-basin representatives each discussed progress on the Habitat Action Plan data templates. The template is too specific, but input so far has been good. It will be helpful to provide a list of sub-basin needs and then ask the biologists to prioritize the list of identified needs. It will be easier to get consensus on types of actions that are priorities rather than specific projects across each sub-basin.

Having a prioritized list is important for communicating to congressional that the states are working and planning together to recover native species. The importance is showing that the states are communicating and are ready to act on priorities.

It will be necessary to have some examples of the types of projects that will be completed, more than to have a prioritized list of specific projects. We need to communicate the types of actions that are important, what the priority actions over the next 5 years would be, and an estimated cost to implement the priority needs.

Conover showed the group the LMRCC's *Aquatic Habitat Resources Plan* (<http://www.lmrcc.org/MRCI.htm>) that is an example of a long-term goal that MICRA could establish for each of the sub-basins and the basin as a whole. The LMRCC projects are prioritized by state. Not certain if the projects are prioritized among states. It would be a fantastic tool to come up with a similar map of projects for the entire basin.

Developing a list of projects will not be difficult. The difficulty is getting all of the states to agree on a priority for the projects. The Ohio River Fish Habitat Partnership is struggling with prioritizing projects that have been identified. It is necessary to establish some sort of criteria for prioritizing projects. That is not necessary until there is funding available.

If funding were to be realized, it is likely that the money will be divided among the states. It would be up to the sub-basin to decide on how to fund projects; whether to rank all projects across states or to divide the money evenly among the states. This is much more detail than we currently need to be concerned with. We need to start by identify general types of actions and examples of the types of projects that have been identified for conserving and restoring native fish in big rivers.

We need each sub-basin to develop a list of needs and projects. In some cases, like the Ohio River Sub-basin and LMRCC, these priorities and projects lists have already been identified through different efforts such as the Ohio River Mainstem Studies and the Mississippi River Conservation Initiative.

- ! Reed or Conover will reach out to the Missouri River sub-basin to bring them up to speed on the Native Species Action Plan and request that they provide their information prior to the summer MICRA Executive Board meeting so that there is not a gaping hole in the basin-wide effort.
- ! Conover will work with Benjamin, Schoenung, and Racey to develop a new template for the sub-basins to complete prior to the next meeting.

! The sub-basins representatives will work with the sub-basins to complete the revised data templates before the summer MICRA Executive Board meeting.

### **18) Habitat Committee (Reed)**

The Upper Mississippi, Arkansas-Red, and Ohio River sub-basins expressed interest in a MICRA habitat committee. It would be valuable as a mechanism for exchanging on-the-ground experience in the different states. This type of forum would be good for sharing lessons learned - both what works and what has failed. Such a committee would facilitate adaptive management throughout the basin. It may be difficult to get people involved with current budgets and staff being spread very thin.

Based on the responses of the different sub-basins, MICRA may want to consider hosting a MICRA-oriented habitat workshop to bring the biologists together for an initial meeting and to initiate the formation of a committee.

Engaging the Fish Chiefs would be a logical next step. The Executive Board should send a letter to the state delegates announcing its intention to organize a Habitat Committee and ask them if there is someone in their agency that would be interested in participating and that they would delegate to represent their state. A meeting could be held in conjunction with an upcoming Executive Board or Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee meeting.

There is a new USGS center opening in the La Crosse area this fall. The USGS has discussed possibly holding some form of science workshop in addition to a public open house sometime around October 2011. It might be possible to host a workshop on habitat restoration and adaptive management at the center.

The Board may want to consider making an announcement on the MICRA website or in the Chairman's remarks in an upcoming issue of *River Crossings*. The best option is likely a letter to the Fish Chiefs requesting they e-mail a response to the Board.

! Reed will send a letter to the state delegates announcing the Executive Board's intention to organize a Habitat Committee and to ask them if there is someone in their agency that would be interested in participating and that they would delegate to represent their state.

### **19) Early Professionals Travel Stipend (Reed / Conover)**

The deadline for 2011 applications was extended from January 1 to January 30, 2011. There are three more days until the deadline and no applications have been received. Three applications were received for the 2010 stipend.

Is the lack of applications because states are traveling less in general? Is the application timeline/deadline problematic? Last year the stipend was announced for a

specific symposium. Maybe it is not clear that applicants can pick the meeting that wish to attend with support from MICRA.

The abstract deadline for contributed posters or papers at the annual meeting in September 2011 is February 25, 2011. Southern Division AFS met last week. The deadline for the SEAFWA meeting is sometime in May. There is no abstract deadline announcement for the 2011 Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference.

Some states have out-of-state travel restrictions even when it is fully funded. There are probably a lot of people who don't want to go through the trouble of developing an abstract and applying for travel assistance when they don't know that they will be allowed to travel.

Should the stipend be made available beyond the deadline, or should we just inform the delegates that no applications were received and therefore no stipend was awarded this year? Probably not a good precedent to set a deadline and then continue to extend it or award the stipend for an application that was received after the deadline. If we let folks know that no one applied for the stipend this year, that may encourage people to apply next year.

! Reed will include an announcement regarding the results of the 2011 travel stipend and the availability of the 2012 stipend will be included in his Chairman's remarks for the next issue of *River Crossings*. This will give applicants 9 months to prepare and submit an application.

✓ The deadline for 2012 applications will be January 15, 2012.

Draft selection criteria were developed based on the student presentation criteria provided by Executive Board members. The criteria will be difficult to use for a 200 word abstract. AFS has a Skinner Award for student papers. Applications for the award are available on-line and may be helpful for refining MICRA's criteria. The Reservoir Committee also has a travel award that Executive Board members may want to review. The link to the on-line application is not working.

! Racey will try to get a copy of the Reservoir Committee travel stipend application and will provide that to the Executive Board to review.

! Conover will send the AFS Skinner Award application to the Executive Board members.

! Executive Board members will review the draft selection criteria for the travel stipend.

The application guidelines can be modified to let applicants know that their abstracts will be reviewed based on more specific pieces of information to encourage them to include information on methods or results if desired. Should we lengthen or eliminate the

maximum length of abstracts? Limiting abstracts to 1-page will give people more flexibility to include additional information. It is not necessary to define font, margins, page size, etc.

! Conover will modify the application guidelines to include the main category headings and the 1-page abstract limit.

## **20) Asian Carp Hill Visits (Conover)**

Reed and several of the MICRA delegates are planning a trip to Washington, D.C. in March 2011 to visit with a number of Senators and Congressmen to discuss Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) issues, especially Asian carp, in the Mississippi River Basin. Briefing packets will be put together for the upcoming 'Asian Carp Hill Visits'.

The MICRA visits are scheduled for the same week as National Invasive Species Awareness Week, Teaming with Wildlife Fly-In, and Great Lakes Days. There has been some coordination with others to make sure that all groups are carrying a similar message to DC. That message is that basin separation between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basin is desirable and necessary from an AIS perspective, but much additional work is needed to address prevention and control of AIS, including the reduction of Asian carp populations in the Mississippi River Basin.

Kentucky, Tennessee, Kansas, Louisiana, and Minnesota delegates along with MICRA Chairman Bobby Reed will be traveling to Washington, D.C. Conover will not be participating in the briefings with MICRA, but will be participating in FWS Region 3 briefings and discussing MICRA and Asian carp management and control needs in the Mississippi River Basin. Prevention has been added to the talking points in the briefing book.

MICRA is funding travel costs for the delegates to participate. MICRA travel assistance was critical for state participation.

Usually the groups that have success are the groups that continually drive their message. This is expensive but it is a good use of MICRA funds. We may want to consider this in budget planning so that this effort can be repeated year after year. We need to keep pushing the Native Species and Habitat Action Plan forward so that we can add that to the MICRA message next year. We need to continue delivering the AIS message, but it would be nice to package it next year with the Native Species Action Plan.

## **21) USACE Inter-basin Separation Study (Reed)**

Should MICRA submit comments on the USACE Great Lakes Mississippi River Interbasin Study (GLMRIS) investigating separation of the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins? MICRA has previously gone on record in support of basin separation

(letter submitted to Senator DeWine dated February 26, 2005).

MICRA should reiterate its position on the issue by submitting comments on GLMRIS. MICRA By-Laws require approval of position statements by  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the delegates. The Executive Board should draft a letter and send it to the delegates for review and a vote.

MICRA should clearly state in the letter that basin separation does not solve the Asian carp (and larger AIS) problem in the Mississippi River Basin. We do not want decision makers to walk away from the AIS issue once basin separation is accomplished. A strong statement should be included to make clear that while MICRA supports separation of the Basins, we need to continue to address the existing problems with the same level of resources that is being directed at basin separation.

The letter should also state that anything done to separate the basins must address all of the AIS issues in both directions, not just Asian carp and not just to protect the Great Lakes. The transfer of all AIS by all vectors between these two basins needs to be addressed. Illinois AFS recently put out a position statement on this very issue and it was supported by Illinois DNR.

The timeline for submitting comments is very short, especially given the required 30-day review period for the MICRA Delegates prior to calling for a vote to approve the letter. Based on the short turnaround time, the call for a vote to approve the comment letter should perhaps include language informing the delegates that a non-response will be considered a favorable vote. In other words, if you are opposed to the letter we need to know within a week or 10 days. We simply will not have the time to extend the deadline for votes and to follow-up with the delegates until we have the necessary number of positive responses.

! The Executive Board will develop a draft comment letter to be submitted as part of the USACE GLMRIS scoping effort. The draft letter will be sent to the MICRA Delegates as soon as possible for the required 30-day review period prior to calling for a vote of approval to submit the letter as official MICRA comments.

## **22) Nominations for Next Chairman-Elect: 2012-2014 (Reed)**

The Tennessee River Basin is the next sub-basin in line to serve as Chair for MICRA; the Missouri sub-basin is second in line.

Until the current Chairman and Chairman-elect, the MICRA Chair has always been held by a fish chief. Do the Board members feel that it is important to have the Chair position filled by a state fish chief? Yes, it is important so that the Board isn't operating completely separate from the delegates.

The Tennessee River representative on the Executive Board is currently held by Tennessee fish chief Bobby Wilson. It would make sense to approach Bobby Wilson as the first option. Ron Brooks with Kentucky would be a second option if Wilson declines. If neither state is able to assume the Chair, then the Executive Board will need to

approach the Missouri River Basin.

! Reed will talk with Bobby Wilson to see if he is willing to serve as the incoming MICRA Chair-Elect.

### **23) Other New Business (Reed)**

#### Rasmussen request to post paper on website

Rasmussen and three other authors have developed a paper on separation of the Great Lakes and Mississippi River Basins and they have requested that MICRA post the paper on the website.

Just last year MICRA was requested by Paul Zajicek to print an article on triploid grass carp in *River Crossings*. The Board decided during the September 2010 meeting that MICRA is not a group that will do peer review of papers and publish them in *River Crossings*. This is a similar case where we are being asked to publish an article.

The information is timely and important, but it has not been peer reviewed. If MICRA were to review the article it would need to go to each of the delegates for review. It would be a lengthy process. If MICRA were to do this for Rasmussen et al., then we would need to go back and give equal consideration to the previous request from Mr. Zajicek.

Is there a problem posting the article as link or resource? Is there any process for the documents that are posted on the MICRA website now? If not, MICRA runs the risk of becoming an outlet for editorial or opinion pieces. *River Crossings* cites information that has been published in other forums. We need to have some consistency in what we print in the newsletter or post on the website. If the paper had been through a peer-review process, then we would have no hesitation in citing the publication on the website. Any article posted on the website should go through some level of peer-review, if MICRA cannot do it themselves then the review needs to be conducted somewhere else. MICRA should encourage Rasmussen et al. to submit the paper for publication.

The website currently has a number of articles posted under the resources tab. The majority of these are articles that Jerry wrote while he was the MICRA Coordinator. These have been a useful resource over the years, but they are not peer-reviewed as we have been discussing. From a credibility standpoint, MICRA should not post on its website articles that have not been through some form of a review. Peer-reviewed articles can be provided as resources on the website, but should include the caveat that the paper represents the views of the author and not necessarily MICRA.

The articles that are on the website now could perhaps be turned into fact sheets and posted on the website that way. We also should post position statements and formal comments on the website. These can be included in separate tabs under resources. Until the Board develops a standard or guidelines for posting articles on the website, the

resources link should be deactivated.

- ! Reed will inform Rasmussen of the Board's decision regarding his request.
- ! Executive Board members will review the articles posted under the Resources tab on the MICRA website. The issue will be revisited during the next Executive Board meeting. Executive Board members will be prepared to discuss how to best utilize the resources tab for disseminating information.
- ! Conover will add an Archive category under resources and move the current articles to the Archive link.

There is no recommendation that MICRA provide links to articles that have not been through some form of review process. Potential categories could include MICRA reports, member agency reports, peer-reviewed articles, etc.

#### **24) Budget Requests (Reed)**

A draft budget for 2012 was provided in the briefing book. The projected expenses for 2012 exceed projected income. This has been the case for at least the last few years. The Executive Board will need to consider future priorities for the use of MICRA funds and how to adjust future annual expenses so they do not exceed annual income.

Is the projected 2012 year-end balance trending down from previous years? Yes, MICRA's available funds are decreasing every year.

MICRA's largest expense is *River Crossings*. MICRA pays \$3,000 for each issue to be developed and another \$1,500 per issue to have it printed and mailed. Printing and postage costs are approximately \$6,000 each year. This expense could be eliminated by going strictly to an electronic newsletter.

We can prepare the readers for a change to electronic format by putting an announcement in a future issue of *River Crossings*.

- ! Reed will include an announcement in his Chairman's remarks in the next issue of *River Crossings* to inform readers that *River Crossings* will change to an electronic only format by the end of 2011.
- ! Shults will check with the MRBP Executive Committee to see if the panel will pay for printing of 2,000 copies of the MICRA AIS Action Plan.
- ! Benjamin motioned to approve the proposed 2012 budget. Schoenung seconded the motion. The motion passed.

## **25) Schedule Next MICRA Executive Board Meeting (Reed)**

The summer meeting should be scheduled far enough out to allow the sub-basins adequate time to make progress on the native species Action Plan templates. The Board typically has met in late July or early August. So long as it is after July 1, when many states start a new fiscal year.

Is there somewhere in or near St. Louis that we can meet inexpensively? Meeting at hotel rooms has been expensive in the past. Neosho NFH has a new visitor's center. There is a new great rivers research facility in Alton. Cabela's in St. Louis has meeting space for \$75 per day and no catering requirements.

✓ The next Executive Board meeting was tentatively scheduled for July 12-13, 2011.

! Shults will check to see if the IL DNR Sparta World Shooting Complex is available for no charge to MICRA. The National Great Rivers Research and Education Center (NGRREC) in Alton, Illinois, and Cabelas in St. Louis, MO, are alternative meeting locations.

! Jawson will check with John Chick to see if NGRREC has free meeting space available for MICRA for the July or future meetings.

The meeting was adjourned.