

## MICRA AIS Committee Meeting

September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Reelfoot Lake State Park  
2595 Highway 21 East  
Tiptonville, TN 38079

### Agenda

#### MICRA AIS Committee meeting

*The MICRA AIS Committee meeting is a meeting of the AIS coordinators (or equivalent) from the MICRA member agencies.*

**8:00 – 10:00**

Objective:

MICRA is the host organization for the MRBP. As one of the six regional panels to the national ANS Task Force, the MRBP is subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). MICRA recognizes the need for an AIS Committee that can address the partnership's priorities without FACA restrictions. MICRA has decided to reinstate an AIS Committee for this purpose. The 2-hour meeting will be an initial discussion about MICRA's AIS Priorities and the initial steps to stand up this new committee.

Discussion Topics:

- Purpose/need for MICRA AIS Committee
- MICRA AIS priorities
- MICRA Congressional outreach
  - TWRA Pickwick video
- Initial steps to operationalize committee

### Action Items

1. (Greg C.) Request MICRA Chairman email state fish chiefs about the formation of the AIS Committee.
2. (Greg C.) Share MICRA state AIS factsheets with AIS Committee members.
3. (Greg C.) Add MICRA AIS state factsheets to the next AIS Committee meeting and invite Ashlee Smith to discuss with the states.
4. (Greg C.) Send doodle poll to schedule a remote meeting in late November or early December with Ashlee Smith.
5. (Greg C.) Include expectations and workload of AIS Committee Chairperson with meeting notes.
6. (All committee members) Consider serving as AIS Committee Chair and contact Conover with interest or questions.

## Attendance

### In-person Participants

Angela Sokolowski, MDC  
Cole Harty, TWRA  
Eugene Braig, OSU Extension  
Chris Steffen, Kansas DWP  
Amy McGovern, USFWS  
Greg Hitzroth, IL/IN Sea Grant  
Matt Horton, AGFC  
Duane Chapman, USGS  
Kim Bogenschutz, IA DNR  
Matt Dollenbacher, KDFWR  
Josh Tompkins, KDFWR

Rob Simmonds, USFWS  
Eric Fisher, IN DNR  
Patrick Kroboth, USGS  
Amy Kretlow, WI DNR  
Rob Bourgeois, LA DWF  
Mindy Barnett, IL DNR  
Jimmy Barnett, AGFC  
Ben Ewoldt, WI DNR  
Greg Conover, USFWS

### Remote Participant

Christian Waters, NC WRC

## Meeting Notes

### 1. Purpose/need for MICRA AIS Committee

- MICRA previously had an ANS Committee; committee was sunset after MICRA began hosting the MRBP
- The need to reestablish the MICRA AIS Committee came about in 2013
  - ANS Task Force and MRBP were unable to meet due to Administration or Department of Interior guidance
  - Coordinators were able to meet under the umbrella of the MICRA AIS Committee, just couldn't address MRBP/ANS Task Force related business
- Need was further underscored by limitations to discussions at MRBP Coordination meetings due to the regional panels being advisory committees to the ANS Task Force and being subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA).
- Purpose of the committee is for the MICRA member agency AIS coordinators to have a forum for discussing MICRA/Mississippi River Basin AIS priorities outside of the MRBP
- MRBP Executive Committee agreed it would be beneficial to reinstate a MICRA AIS committee to address priorities and topics not able to be addressed through the MRBP and discussed this need with the MICRA Executive Board
- MICRA Executive Board identified standing up a MICRA AIS Committee in the partnerships 2019-2023 priorities.
- Standing up the MICRA AIS Committee was discussed with the MRBP co-chair during the MICRA Executive Board's February 2022 meeting. Braig and Conover were asked to convene an initial meeting of the MICRA AIS Committee to begin addressing this priority.
- The MICRA Executive Board wants to make sure that the MICRA AIS Committee is totally separate from the MRBP. Since the MICRA AIS Committee members are the same as the MRBP state and federal agency members, it makes sense to hold the two meetings in conjunction with each other. But for separation, the MRBP meeting was adjourned yesterday and this meeting is being held separately today.
- Today is the first meeting of MICRA AIS Committee

- **Action: (Greg C.) Request MICRA Chairman email state fish chiefs about the formation of the AIS Committee.**

#### Discussion

- Will anyone from the MICRA Executive Board be participating in today's meeting?
  - No. The Executive Board requested this group be convened, but they were not notified about the meeting itself.
- The MICRA Executive board is aware today's meeting is taking place?
  - Yes, the Executive Board requested this meeting to be convened.
- How do the MICRA AIS Committee and the MICRA Invasive Carp Advisory Committee (ICAC) relate?
  - The ICAC is focused solely on invasive carp and basinwide coordination of invasive carp management and control actions in support of the national plan.
  - The AIS Committee will address other AIS priorities within the basin. We'll review MICRA's AIS Priorities for 2019-2023 next. This committee will be asked to inform the development of the next 5-year priorities for 2024-2028.
- The MRBP is a great group for discussing AIS priorities and getting some projects accomplished, but the MICRA AIS Committee will be a group that can get a lot accomplished from more of a policy perspective. Working with MICRA and AFWA to help inform policy discussions.

#### 2. MICRA AIS priorities

- Conover reviewed the [MICRA's 2019-2023 Priorities Document](#) and discussed the following MICRA AIS objective and priorities from that document.

Objective: Coordinate prevention and control measures for Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) to ensure sustainable native aquatic ecosystems within the basin.

#### Priorities:

1. Host the Mississippi River Basin Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species for coordination of basin-wide efforts to prevent introductions of AIS and manage introduced AIS populations.
2. Prevent, manage, and control AIS in the Mississippi River Basin by supporting the Aquatic Invasive Species Committee.
3. Promote strengthening of Injurious Wildlife provisions of the Lacey Act.
4. Aquatic Invasive Species committee will identify needs and provide recommendations to the Executive Board for promoting streamlining of the Lacey Act Injurious Wildlife Listing process and for establishing a federal screening process to evaluate risk of non-native species prior to importation.
5. Promote development of consistent basin-wide regulatory approaches for the management of AIS.
  - a. Executive Board will facilitate meetings and discussions with the diploid grass carp states, as needed, to establish regulatory consistency for grass carp as recommended in the February 2015 MICRA Grass Carp Report.
  - b. Aquatic Invasive Species Committee will coordinate efforts to implement recommendations in the February 2015 MICRA Grass Carp Report.

6. MICRA Aquatic Invasive Species Committee will review and make recommendations for revising the [MICRA AIS Action Plan](#) so that it remains a relevant outreach tool.
7. Support efforts to prevent the exchange of AIS between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins.
8. Coordinate efforts to prevent introductions, stop the continued spread, and control established populations of Asian carp in the basin.
  - a. Promote the need to expand the scope of federal agencies' Asian carp activities to include the entire Mississippi River Basin and the need for federal funding to facilitate implementation of the Mississippi River Basin Asian Carp Control Strategy Frameworks in support of the national 'Management and Control Plan for Bighead, Black, Grass, and Silver Carps in the United States'
  - b. Coordinate basinwide efforts to develop sub-basin Asian Carp Control Strategy Frameworks, including Action Plans for implementation.
  - c. In partnership with USFWS, coordinate the collaborative development of an annual Monitoring and Response Plan to identify highest priority management actions for Asian Carp in the Mississippi River Basin each year.
  - d. Coordinate the collaborative development, prioritization, and submission of annual recommendations to USFWS for federal funding assistance to implement sub-basin Asian Carp Control Strategy Frameworks.
  - e. Aquatic Invasive Species Committee will provide recommendations to the Executive Board for standardized methods for collecting and reporting population data for Asian carp species.
  - f. Aquatic Invasive Species Committee will provide recommendations to the Executive Board for documenting and reporting harvest data for Asian carp species.
  - g. Promote consistent outreach materials and messages throughout the Mississippi River Basin.

### Discussion

- The Lacey Act is a priority that has been identified for the AIS Committee.
  - MICRA has included talking points about the need to fix the Lacey Act during Congressional visits over the last several years.
  - In the past, MICRA has coordinated with AFWA on Lacey Act recommendations.
  - Kerry Wixted, AFWA Invasive Species Committee, updated the MRBP on Lacey Act related legislation earlier this week. It doesn't sound like there is anything moving right now that would fix the Lacey Act.
  - This would be an agenda topic for the AIS Committee moving forward.
- The priorities document identifies the AIS Committee as the group to coordinate efforts to implement recommendations in the February 2015 MICRA Grass Carp Report.
  - This has been on the MRBP Prevention and Control Committee's workplan for years. Unless that group recommends this be shifted to the AIS Committee, this would likely stay within the Prevention and Control Committee.
- Revising the MICRA AIS Action Plan is a priority for this committee.
  - The AIS Action Plan was developed 12 or more years ago and needs to be revised.
  - It was developed as a communication tool for MICRA to use during Congressional visits.

- After the AIS Action Plan was developed, MICRA began working on a complimentary native species action plan. This plan evolved over time into an aquatic habitat action plan. That action plan is still being finalized.
  - Want to make sure that MICRA remains and is viewed as more than an AIS or invasive carp group.
- Preventing the exchange of AIS between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins is an issue that this committee could assist the MICRA Executive Board with.
  - MICRA has participated in the Chicago Area Waterways Advisory Panel representing Mississippi River Basin interests for the past 10+ years.
    - It was recently announced that this group would no longer be convened because all but one of its priorities are being actively addressed.
    - The one priority that is not being addressed is preventing downstream transfer of AIS from the Great Lakes into the Mississippi River Basin.
    - This is a topic that needs action and attention if it is a priority to the Mississippi River Basin states.
- Coordinating efforts to prevent introductions, stop the continued spread, and control established populations of Asian carp in the basin will likely be handled by the revised ICAC and not the AIS Committee.
  - Priorities 8.e. and 8.f. specifically identify the AIS Committee. These priorities have since been deleted as priorities for the AIS Committee. The MICRA ICAC is expected to address these priorities.
  - The MICRA ICAC has been revised to improve interbasin coordination among the sub-basin invasive carp partnerships in the basin, particularly related to monitoring and population assessment, but this group will address other basinwide invasive carp coordination needs.
  - It is possible the AIS Committee could also address invasive carp related needs, but these would likely be more related to policy than implementation of management and control actions in support of the national plan.
  - Priority 8.g. – outreach – may be addressed by multiple groups including the MRBP and MICRA AIS committee.

### 3. MICRA Congressional outreach

- MICRA has a Congressional Affairs specialist, Ashlee Smith, on contract for the past 3 years.
- MICRA has been sending a delegation to DC for 12 or more years to conduct visits with Congressional offices and Federal agencies.
  - MICRA delegation typically includes the MICRA Policy and Congressional Affairs contractor, the MICRA Chairman, and a few MICRA delegates (i.e., fish chiefs)
    - Attempt to have a representative from each sub-basin
    - A state AIS coordinator has participated several times in the past but not every year - fish chiefs have valued having a technical expert participate
  - First 2-3 meetings centered around who MICRA is and what they do, but since then they have been very successful discussing issues of importance to the basin
  - MICRA's talking points have generally been focused on AIS issues including topics such as the Lacey Act, state ANS management plan funding, and invasive carp

- MICRA has held a few Congressional briefings in conjunction with the annual DC visits
- MICRA member agency AIS coordinators developed state AIS fact sheets nearly 10 years ago that were used during the early MICRA DC visits
  - MICRA provided a standardized template for the state fact sheets and developed a complimentary generic MICRA fact sheet
  - Not all states provided a fact sheet
  - No state AIS factsheets have been updated since 2017
  - The MICRA contractor has expressed a need for MICRA to update the state AIS fact sheets and would like to use them again during MICRA's 2023 DC visits
- Another aspect of Congressional outreach is facilitating field visits for Congressional staff with MICRA member states
  - MICRA organized an event at Pickwick Lake on the Tennessee River in August 2021 in conjunction with a MICRA Executive Board meeting
    - There is video from the outreach event that was created by TWRA that the Executive Board would like to be shared with the AIS Committee – will play this video over break (note: the video did not get shared)
  - TWRA planned a similar event for August 2022, but it was cancelled
  - MICRA contractor has requested states let her know about invasive carp and other AIS field work that Congressional staff could participate in
    - These don't need to be big events or specifically organized for Congressional staff
    - Looking for opportunities to get staff in the field to discuss on the ground efforts and challenges
    - Getting staff in the field can be a big opportunity to show how funding is being used and discuss what additional work could be done with more funding
    - MICRA AIS Committee can help identify opportunities for field visits

Discussion:

- Conover was asked to show an example of the MICRA state AIS fact sheets
  - There was discussion about the value of the standard state AIS fact sheets for MICRA's Congressional visits
  - Action: (Greg C.) Share MICRA state AIS factsheets with AIS Committee members.
  - Action: (Greg C.) Add MICRA state AIS factsheets to the next AIS Committee meeting and invite Ashlee Smith to discuss with the states.
- MICRA's talking points from 2022 DC visits were shared and discussed
  - MICRA tries to limit talking points to three priorities each year
    - MICRA used two different sets of talking points in 2022 for use with different committee members
    - MICRA used a set of talking points specifically related to reauthorization of WRDA in 2022
  - MICRA Executive Board will look to the AIS Committee to help inform priority AIS talking points for 2023
  - MICRA shares information and talking points with other conservation groups and meets with AFWA Government Affairs staff before their annual visits

- MICRA prioritizes visits with Congressional members in the basin that are on relevant committees and sub-committees related to MICRA’s talking points
    - Congressional staff wants to talk to representatives from their state
    - The list of priority members is how MICRA identifies which states to request to participate in the office visits each year
    - The state fact sheets can be very helpful when there is not a representative from the state present for an office visit
4. Initial Steps to operationalize committee
- First and foremost, we need to identify a chairperson
    - Chair of AIS Committee also serves as MICRA Liaison for MRBP
      - Non-voting MRBP Executive Committee member to maintain separation from MRBP business decisions
      - Participates in MICRA Executive Board meeting
    - MICRA Executive Board would like this person to serve as the primary MICRA representative to the ANS Task Force
  - Work with committee members to determine if committee operational guidance or another governance-type document is needed
    - Can pull from other MICRA committee documents
    - Can work with MICRA Coordinator for assistance
  - Future MICRA AIS meetings
    - Participants agreed that there is value in standing up the MICRA AIS Committee and this group continuing to meet in the future.
    - What format is preferred?
      - In-person is useful, keep format where MICRA AIS committee meets in conjunction with MRBP in-person meetings
        - Three days is okay, but need a field aspect to break-up the days
      - Can meet remotely as needed between in-person meetings
    - What timing is feasible for members?
      - Need to meet early enough to prepare state AIS fact sheets and inform MICRA DC talking points for February 2023 visits
      - Late November-Early December with Ashlee Smith leading discussion
      - **Action: (Greg C.) Send doodle poll to schedule a remote meeting in late November or early December with Ashlee Smith.**

Discussion:

- AIS Committee Chairperson
  - It would be helpful if you could provide an overview of the expectations and workload for this role
    - 4 quarterly MRBP Executive Committee meetings
    - 4 quarterly MICRA Executive Board meetings
      - 2 in-person and 2 remote meetings
      - AIS Committee chair does not need to attend full meetings or in-person, but helpful as time allows

- Can call in when necessary to provide updates to the Executive Board
  - Communications between committee and MICRA Executive Board, MRBP, and ANS Task Force
  - Committee workload is primarily informing and addressing MICRA AIS priorities
    - Coordinating state AIS fact sheets with Ashlee Smith
    - Reviewing and informing AIS talking points for MICRA DC visits
- Kim B offered to assist someone that is interested in becoming chairperson, but she cannot take on the chair role herself
- Action: (Greg C) Include expectations and workload of AIS Committee Chair with meeting notes.
- Action: (All committee members) Consider serving as AIS Committee Chair and contact Conover with interest or questions.