

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

MEMORANDUM

Date: April 20, 2000

FROM: Kim Graham
TO: Jerry Rasmussen
SUBJECT: MICRA Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee meeting notes

First of all, let me say that I believe this was one of our best-ever meetings, in terms of work accomplished, and in terms of really good talks. We had about 35 folks in attendance, which is pretty good. I think it shows interest.

Greg Conover and Jo Grady provided the group with a copy of the 1998 Annual Report. They reported that nearly 10,000 wild paddlefish have been tagged and that the hatchery tagged fish are beginning to make an appearance in recaptures. There was some talk of where we were with the study and I asked all member states to revisit the project objectives and let me know in a month or so what they would foresee as future plans in their individual states. I believe most folks were in agreement that although our project is beginning the 6th year, we need additional time to meet other objectives such as population estimates, exploitation, etc. We will discuss these issues at the next meeting.

Project Prizes - Since we initially asked Cabela's, Miller Net & Twine, etc. to provide gifts for sport and commercial anglers that return rostrums for a 5-year period, we are desperately in need of prizes for the next drawing. I asked Gerald Mestl to ask Gene Zuerlein to see if Cabela's would consider an additional commitment. Bill Reeves said that he would contact Memphis Net and Twine and see if they would give 5, \$100 gift certificates. If anyone else has ideas or contacts, please let me know ASAP.

Chris Guy (KSU) presented interesting data regarding paddlefish and bighead carp interactions in the middle Missouri River. Preliminary information indicates that bighead carp may out compete paddlefish and seriously impact populations.

Marie Maltese from the Office of Scientific Authority discussed paddlefish and sturgeon caviar issues. She reported that in 1999 and so far in 2000 about 1/5 of all caviar imports (1000 shipments in 1999 and about 700 to date in 2000) were not in compliance with CITES regulations. In both cases, about 30% of the cases involved paddlefish being in shipments labeled Stellate sturgeon from Europe. She said the amount of American paddlefish caviar being imported was more than was being exported. Sounds a little fishy, doesn't it?

We had a really good group of pallid sturgeon talks, including a report by Jo Grady (FWS) on

the MICRA sturgeon project, a talk by Robb Jacobson (USGS) on hydroacoustic sensing of pallid sturgeon habitat, one by Cory Reade (NU) on radio telemetry of pallids in the Platte River, NE, a discussion of pallid sturgeon genetics by Brian Sloss (SIU) and discussions by Joyce Collins (FWS) and Jane Ledwin (FWS) on Section 7 consultation efforts with the COE on the Mississippi and Missouri rivers, respectively.

We are trying to find additional tagging gear to equip Paul Rister (KY) so that he can begin tagging fish in the lower Mississippi River. Hope to have him off and running in the not too distant future.

We still have need for money to continue to project. Jo Grady needs \$3,300 for ArkView Software to advance her technology for analyzing data, we have about \$5,000 worth of tag requests and IL has equipment that requires repair. (The MICRA Executive Board agreed to provide \$10K for our needs).

Greg, Jo, Chuck Surprenant told me that were it not for a volunteer worker, the 1998 report could not have been completed. Chuck is sending me a budget request that he feels is required for his office (and maybe Jo's) to continue to read tags, and analyze data in the future. As always, money continues to hinder progress, but I also know that additional funds are extremely tight. I hope to discuss these issues with you next month.

I have decided to hold our fall MICRA Paddlefish/Sturgeon meeting in St. Louis in August in conjunction with the AFS meeting. I have made arrangement to hold our meeting on Sunday, August 20. Steve Krentz (FWS) is also holding a National Pallid Sturgeon Recovery Team meeting on August 24. During the paddlefish meeting, I plan to devote the entire morning to project discussion so that we can revisit the objectives and make plans for the future. During the afternoon session, I plan to invite State and Federal Hatchery Managers to discuss ways we can improve hatchery operations and tagging operations for the project. I think it's time to revisit and hopefully modify techniques for holding and handling paddlefish fingerings to ultimately improve survival of fish. I expect 75 or more folks to attend.

All in all Jerry, It was a very good meeting. Too bad you couldn't attend more of it.