



Briefing Book

Executive Board Meeting

February 7-9, 2023

Engineer Research and Development Center
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
3909 Halls Ferry Road
Vicksburg, MS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Executive Board Meeting Agenda](#)..... i

Agenda Topics	Number
Call to Order	1
Chairman's Report	2
Coordinator's Report	3
MRBP Update	4
MICRA AIS Committee Update	5
Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee Update	6
Freshwater Mollusk Conservation Society Update	7
Aquatic Habitat Action Plan – Updating MICRA's List of the Basin's Interjurisdictional Rivers	8
Approval of August 2022 Meeting Notes	9
Review of Action Items	10
Sub-basin Updates	11
Federal Entity Updates	12
Invasive Carp Advisory Committee Update	13
Sub-basin Invasive Carp Partnership Coordination	14
2023 DC Fly-in Planning	15
Fishery Commission/Coalition Next Steps	16
2023 Congressional Field Visit / Informational Briefing	17
MICRA Delegate Webinar Preparation	18
2019-2023 Priorities Accomplishment Tracking	19
2024-2028 Priorities Document Development	20
MICRA Communications Plan	21
All Delegate Meeting Planning	22
Mississippi River Basin Partnership Initiative	23
Large Rivers Habitat Symposium Update	24

<u>2022 Invasive Carp Monitoring and Response Plan</u>	25
<u>USGS Mississippi River Science Forum and MICRA AIS Presentation</u>	26
<u>Young Professionals Travel Stipend</u>	27
<u>Schedule Spring Conference Call and Summer Executive Board Meeting</u>	28
<u>Other New Business / Parking Lot</u>	29

Supporting Documents

- 1) [Paddlefish Commercial Harvest States Workgroup Summary Report](#)
- 2) [Revised meeting notes from Executive Board's August 2022 meeting](#)
- 3) [2022 Monitoring and Response Plan for Invasive Carp in the Mississippi River Basin](#)
- 4) [A Joint Strategic Plan for Management of Mississippi River Basin Fisheries](#)



Executive Board Meeting

February 7-9, 2023

Engineer Research and Development Center
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
3909 Halls Ferry Road
Vicksburg, MS

Remote Participation

[Join Zoom Meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 897 4083 2957

Passcode: 004109

Phone: 312-626-6799

AGENDA

(All times are Central)

Tuesday, February 7, 7:45-8:30 (CST), Environmental Lab Main Entrance

Credentials

Meeting attendees will need to arrive at approximately 7:45 am to be issued an access pass and gain admittance to the meeting facility. Driver's license will be needed at the main gate. Drive to Visitors Center to get credentials. Dave Smith will meet our group at the Visitors Center and lead us to the Environmental Lab.

Tuesday, February 7, 8:30-12:00 (CST), Environmental Lab Conference Room

Welcome

Dr. David Smith, US Army Corps of Engineers, Engineer Research and Development Center, Environmental Laboratory

Call to Order

- 1) Call to Order (Brad Parsons)

Chairman and Coordinator Reports

- 2) Chairman's Report (Parsons)
- 3) Coordinator's Report (Greg Conover)

Committee Updates

- 4) MRBP Update (Andrew Stump – remote)
- 5) MICRA AIS Committee (Conover and Rob Bourgeois)
- 6) Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee Update (Ryan Hupfeld – remote)
- 7) Freshwater Mussel Conservation Society Update (Stephen McMurray) – *tentative*

Old Business

- 8) Aquatic Habitat Action Plan – Interjurisdictional Rivers Update (Angela Erves)
- 9) Approval of September 2022 Meeting Notes (Parsons)
- 10) Review of Action Items (Conover)

[Lunch Break]

Tuesday, February 7, 1:00-5:00 (CST)

Tour ERDC Facilities

No remote option

Wednesday, February 8, 8:30-12:30 (CST), Environmental Lab Conference Room

Member Updates

- 11) Sub-basin Updates (Sub-basin Representatives)
- 12) Federal Entity Updates (Rip Shively and Aaron Woldt)

Committee Updates

- 13) Invasive Carp Advisory Committee (Brian Schoenung and Rob Simmonds)

14) Sub-basin Invasive Carp Partnership Coordination (Partnership Coordinators)

New Business

15) 2023 DC Fly-in Planning (Ashlee Smith)

16) Fishery Commission/Coalition Next Steps (Smith)

17) 2023 Congressional Field Visit / Informational Briefing (Smith)

18) MICRA Delegate Webinar Preparation (Smith)

[Lunch Break]

Wednesday, February 8, 1:30-5:00 (CST), Environmental Lab Conference Room

New Business

19) 2019-2023 Priorities Accomplishment Tracking (Conover)

20) 2024-2028 Priorities Document (All)

21) MICRA Communications Plan (Conover)

22) All Delegate Meeting Planning (All)

Thursday, February 9, 8:30-12:00 (CST), TBD

Tour ERDC Facilities

No remote option; meet at Environmental Lab Conference Room

[Lunch Break]

Thursday, February 9, 1:00-5:00 (CST), Environmental Lab Conference Room

New Business

23) Mississippi River Basin Partnership Initiative (Kim Lutz, Americas Watershed Initiative)

24) Large Rivers Habitat Symposium Update (Neil Rude, MN DNR and Jeff Janvrin, WI DNR)

25) 2022 Invasive Carp Monitoring and Response Plan (Conover)

- 26)** USGS Mississippi River Science Forum and MICRA AIS Presentation (Gaikowski and Conover)
- 27)** Young Professionals Travel Stipend (Conover)
- 28)** Schedule Spring Conference Call and Summer Executive Board Meeting (Parsons)
- 29)** Other New Business / Parking Lot (Parsons)

1) Call to Order

Roll call and introductions

2023 MICRA Executive Board Members

Voting Members

Arkansas/Red/White Rivers	Ken Cunningham	ODWC
Lower Mississippi River	Ben Batten	AGFC
Missouri River	Kasey Whiteman	MDC
Ohio River	Rich Zweifel	OH DNR
Tennessee/Cumberland Rivers	Dave Dreves	KDFWR
Upper Mississippi River	Joe Larscheid	IA DNR
USFWS	Aaron Woldt	USFWS
USGS	Mark Gaikowski	USGS

* Six voting members are needed for a quorum.

Non-voting members

MICRA Chairperson	Brad Parsons	IN DNR
MICRA Chairperson-Elect	Mike McClelland	IL DNR
MICRA Past Chairman	Brian Schoenung	MDC
MICRA Past Chairman	Larry Pugh	MDWFP
MICRA Coordinator	Greg Conover	USFWS

Committee Chairpersons

MRBP	Andrew Stump	KDFWR
AIS Committee	Rob Bourgeois	LDFW
Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee	Ryan Hupfeld	IA DNR

2) Chairman's Report

The chairman will provide a report on his activities since the board's February meeting.



October 24, 2022

Department of the Army
 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Nashville District
 110 9th Avenue South, Room A-405
 Nashville, TN 37203-3817
 Attn.: CELRN-PMP – Invasive Carp

Sent via email to corpslrnplanningpubliccom@usace.army.mil

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the state natural resources management agencies (state agencies; Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries & Parks, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, Georgia Wildlife Resources Division, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries) of the Tennessee and Cumberland River Basins, the Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resource Association (MICRA) supports the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) evaluation of measures and alternatives to manage and prevent the spread of invasive carp in the Tennessee River, Cumberland River, and Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway (TTW), as authorized by Section 509 of the Water Resource Development Act of 2020.

As invasive carp numbers increased in the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers (TNCR), state agencies recognized the potential impact that carp populations could have on river ecosystems and the recreational resources and local economies they support. They also recognized the invasive carp ability to disburse through connected systems (TTW) and expand their negative impacts across the basin. At that time, state agencies started working to understand the scope of the invasive carp problem and called on MICRA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for support.

The state agencies of the TNCR are members of MICRA, a partnership of 28 state agencies with fisheries management jurisdiction in the Mississippi River Basin. Through MICRA, state agencies work closely with federal agencies within invasive carp partnerships in each of the six Mississippi River sub-basins: Arkansas-Red-White, Lower Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Tennessee-Cumberland, and Upper Mississippi.

The TNCR Invasive carp partnership (Partnership) is eager to collaborate with the USACE to study and implement invasive carp deterrent projects in the TNCR and TTW. Through implementation of collaborative projects in support of the Ohio River Basin Asian Carp Control Strategy Framework (http://micrarivers.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/ORFMT_Asian_Carp_Strategy.pdf) annually since 2017, the TNCR state agencies have gathered an understanding of invasive carp populations that should

be considered in the implementation of any management action or research endeavor related to invasive carp in the TNCR. Work plans and annual reports from the Partnership, detailing the projects implemented to date, are available on MICRA's website (<http://micrarivers.org/invasive-carp-plans-and-reports/>).

A recent effort to determine priority locations for invasive carp deterrents on the Tennessee River is a good example of using a scientific approach to make objective decisions anchored in the best information available (<https://pubs.er.usgs.gov/publication/ofr20211068>), and the Partnership recommends this approach as the USACE determines deterrent type and priority locations in the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers and the TTW. The Partnership supports concurrent consideration of the use of invasive carp deterrents both for the purpose of prevention (keeping carp out of carp-free waters) and management (minimizing the migration of carp into the TNCR from source populations, such as the Ohio River). As a result, the Partnership encourages USACE to consider management measures at all locations.

The application of deterrent technology and any management actions should be part of a diverse plan to prevent invasive carp dispersal and reduce their negative impacts. The Partnership supports the use of a collaborative, inclusive, interagency process informed by the best available science and expertise to identify feasible technical options and strategic opportunities to abate the spread and minimize the impacts of invasive carp in the TNCR and the entire Mississippi River Basin. This approach supports the goals and recommendations of the national 'Management and Control Plan for Bighead, Black, Grass and Silver Carps in the United States'(National Plan) (<http://micrarivers.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Final-ANSTF-Approved-Asian-Carp-Plan.November-2007.pdf>), which outlines seven goals in unprioritized order and acknowledges "concurrent actions to prevent introductions and spread, and to reduce or eradicate feral populations are required to successfully manage and control Asian carps". The USACE pilot program is an important part of the Partnership's plan for invasive carp management in the TNCR. Inclusion of the TNCR state agencies in the USACE process to study and implement the pilot program is critical to integrate the program into ongoing invasive carp management, maximize success, and minimize risk.

We look forward to sharing our experience and information to complete your study and implement priority invasive carp deterrent projects in support of our shared management objectives.

Sincerely,

Bradford
Parsons

Brad Parsons

MICRA Chair

 Digitally signed by Bradford
Parsons
Date: 2022.10.24 17:11:16
-05'00'

CC: Chris Greene, Chief of Fisheries, Alabama department of Conservation and Natural Resources
Scott Robinson, Chief of Fisheries, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Resources
Division
Dave Dreves, Fisheries Division Director, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources

Jerry Brown, Fisheries Bureau Director, Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks
Christian Waters, Chief of Division of Inland Fisheries, North Carolina Wildlife Resources
Commission
Frank Fiss, Deputy Director of Business Operations, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency
Mike Bednarski, Chief of Fisheries, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources

3) Coordinator's Report

Financial

- Accountant, bank, and coordinator financial records all reconcile as of 12/31/2022
 - 12/31/2022 balance = \$232,619.89
 - MRBP balance = \$42,910.67
 - MICRA balance = \$189,709.22
- Status of 2022 membership dues (see table below)
 - Budgeted for 22 states and 2 federal agencies (\$43,000)
 - Received dues from 26 states and 2 federal agencies (\$49,000)
 - MDC provided \$5,000 additional dues for policy coordination
 - Only North Carolina and Wyoming did not pay membership dues in 2022
- Status of 2023 membership dues
 - Invoices will be sent out following Executive Board meeting
 - MDC increase support for policy coordination to \$10,000 in 2023
 - MN DNR providing \$5,000 additional for policy coordination in 2023
- MRBP funding
 - FY23 FWS funding
 - No federal budget so no NOFO yet
 - Funding level expected to remain at \$50,000
 - MICRA projected to receive \$4,500 for indirect cost

Executive Board Meeting Notes

What level of detail is desired for future Executive Board meeting notes? Are the detailed meeting notes useful to board members? Should detailed meeting notes be posted on the MICRA website or would it be preferable to simply post a summary of the meeting including information such as the meeting agenda, attendance, and the resulting decision and action items.

USACE UMRR Letter of Support

A letter of support for the USACE, Rock Island District's Upper Mississippi River Restoration Program (UMRR) 2022 Report to Congress was drafted and shared with the five Upper Mississippi River sub-basin MICRA Delegates. The letter was drafted in late November in the hopes of submitting the letter in early December if it was endorsed by all five sub-basin delegates. Four of the five states responded with their concurrence to submit the letter from MICRA. In early January, Parsons reported that the remaining delegate had given verbal approval of the letter. Conover is looking for guidance from the UMR delegates whether the letter should still be submitted to USACE or if it should

be held on to and used as a template for a letter of support for the next Report to Congress.

Watts Barr Ecology and Fisheries Council

MICRA was copied on an email from Dr. Timothy Joseph, Chairman of the Watts Barr Ecology and Fisheries Council, to Angie Box, Chair of the Tennessee Fish and Wildlife Commission. The letter was in response to letter sent by TWRA's Director responding to "numerous requests for information. The letter from Dr. Joseph is 12 pages. There is no action for MICRA related to this correspondence, the partnership was simply copied.

Wildlife Forever / War on Carp

During the Executive Board's August 2022 meeting there was some discussion regarding a Wildlife Forever Commercial Harvest Incentive Program that Congress was being encouraged to fund. Wildlife Forever, President and CEO Pat Conzemius, was invited to call into the board's August 2022 meeting to discuss the proposed harvest incentive program and how Wildlife Forever could best assist the states. The invitation was declined.

Wildlife Forever released the Press Release below on January 27, 2023. Conover was asked to share the Press Release with the Mississippi River Basin Panel (MRBP). Conover again requested Conzemius to call into the board's February 2022 meeting "to discuss the War on Carp campaign and MICRA and Wildlife Forever can work together on the invasive carp issue for the greatest benefit of the state agencies and their anglers." The invitation was not responded to other than a short, repeated request to share the Press Release with the MRBP. Copies of the correspondence are provided below for awareness. The board may wish to consider the lack of engagement from Wildlife Forever during tomorrow's discussions on invasive carp and Congressional outreach.

2022 Membership Dues					
	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
Alabama	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Arkansas	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Colorado	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	
Georgia	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	
Illinois	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Indiana	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Iowa	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	
Kansas	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Kentucky	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Louisiana	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Minnesota	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Mississippi	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Missouri	6,500	6,500	6,500	1,500	1,500
Montana	1,500				1,500
Nebraska	1,500		1,500	1,500	1,500
New York	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
North Carolina					1,500
North Dakota	1,500		1,500	1,500	1,500
Ohio	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Oklahoma	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Pennsylvania	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
South Dakota	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Tennessee	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Texas	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Virginia	1,500	1,500			
West Virginia	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Wisconsin	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	
Wyoming					
TVA	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
USGS	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
USFWS					
Total Dues Collected	54,000	49,500	46,000	46,000	43,000
Number Agencies Paid	28	25	26	26	24
22 states projected		33,000			
2 Federal agencies		10,000			
Project dues		43,000			
New dues contributions					
Did not pay dues					
Historically has not paid dues					



**Wildlife Forever Leads The War on Carp™ campaign
with support from AFTCO**

Immediate Release:

Contact: Zach Burnside, Invasive Species Program Coordinator
ZBurnside@WildlifeForever.org

White Bear Lake, MN - Wildlife Forever is excited to announce new leadership of the *War on Carp* campaign raising awareness of invasive carps and needs for enhanced management and control. Invasive carps such as Silver, Bighead, and Black, are expanding their range and have proven to wreak havoc on lakes, rivers, and local economies. Through renewed conservation marketing and public outreach efforts, Wildlife Forever and AFTCO (American Fishing Tackle Company) plan to expand the War on Carp education campaign, providing new tools and resources to educate the public in support of increased state and federal management.

“We are thrilled to work with AFTCO as we advance this program and efforts to stop the spread of invasive carp,” said Pat Conzemius, President & CEO of Wildlife Forever. “The War on Carp campaign was started through the civic leadership of Mr. Wade White, former Judge Executive of Lyon County, KY, now serving as Board Director for the Tennessee Valley Authority, working for Farmers Bank and Trust. Wade’s visionary efforts inspired federal legislation that resulted in millions of dollars for carp removal and mitigation projects.”





Through partnership with AFTCO, Wildlife Forever will be focused on giving home to a new campaign website, social media presence, and development of educational resources. In addition, sales of the War on Carp t-shirts will continue to support the national program and advocacy efforts.

5350 Hwy 61 N Suite 7

“AFTCO is excited to work with Wildlife Forever on this important conservation program. Invasive species are impacting fisheries across the country, and we are committed to investing in organizations dedicated to educating anglers and protecting the resource,” said Casey Shedd, President of AFTCO.

St Paul, MN 55110
US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Change Subscriber Options](#)

The War on Carp™ is a national campaign to educate the public on threats posed by invasive carps. Coordinated messaging focuses on strategic content, marketing communications, advocacy, and educational tools on how to prevent and help manage. To learn how you can get involved, join the War on Carp mailing list. Info@WildlifeForever.org

About AFTCO: Family owned and operated, the American Fishing Tackle Company (AFTCO) represents unparalleled quality, performance, and reliability when it counts most. Worn across the globe, AFTCO [fishing clothing](#) is designed to handle the harshest elements. AFTCO and the Shedd family contribute at least 10% of company profits towards organizations and causes working to protect our oceans, waterways, fish populations, and access to ensure future generations can enjoy the spaces and sports they love.

About Wildlife Forever: For over 35 years, Wildlife Forever works to conserve America's outdoor heritage through conservation education, preservation of habitat and science-based management of fish and wildlife. Wildlife Forever is a 501c3 non-profit dedicated to investing resources on the ground. Recent audits reveal that 96% of every dollar supports their award-winning conservation programs. **Join Today** and learn more. www.WildlifeForever.org.

Re: War on Carp Press Release

Conover, Greg <greg_conover@fws.gov>

Wed 2/1/2023 11:25 AM

To: pconzemius@wildlifeforever.org <pconzemius@wildlifeforever.org>

Cc: Zach Burnside <zburnside@wildlifeforever.org>; Dane Huinker <dhuinker@Wildlifeforever.org>; Brad Parsons <bradford.parsons@state.mn.us>; Addison Motta <amotta@wildlifeforever.org>; Michele Connelly <MConnelly@wildlifeforever.org>

 1 attachments (439 KB)

War on Carp PR Final.pdf

Hi Pat,

Yes, I can send this on to the MRBP for awareness. More importantly, I'd like to connect you with MICRA to facilitate coordination with the state agencies. As you know, the USFWS is working very closely with MICRA to implement the national invasive carp management and control plan. The two organizations are working together to provide for state and federal collaboration throughout the Mississippi River Basin. It would be beneficial to have Wildlife Forever engaged with this existing collaboration to ensure everyone's efforts align for greatest efficiency and effectiveness.

The MICRA Executive Board will be meeting next week. A portion of the meeting will be focused on the multi-agency invasive carp effort. Another part of the meeting will be preparation for MICRA's DC fly-in in March. They will be discussing the press release and it would be a much better discussion if you could participate in that discussion. Fish chiefs from 9 of the 11 mainstem Mississippi River state will be in attendance at this meeting. It would be great timing if you could find time to call into the MICRA meeting to discuss the War on Carp campaign and how MICRA and Wildlife Forever can work together on the invasive carp issue for the greatest benefit of the state agencies and their anglers. Wednesday would work best with our agenda (that is the day they will be discussing carp and DC), but I may be able to make time on the agenda either Tuesday morning or Thursday afternoon if that works better for you.

I've copied MICRA Chairman, Brad Parsons, on this message. Please let us know if we can accommodate you joining the MICRA Executive Board meeting next week for a discussion. Much appreciated,
Greg

Greg Conover
MICRA Coordinator
Large Rivers Coordination Office
292 San Diego Road
Carbondale, IL 62901
618-889-9600 (cell)
618-997-9185 (fax)

From: Pat Conzemius <pconzemius@wildlifeforever.org>**Sent:** Wednesday, February 1, 2023 9:21 AM**To:** Conover, Greg <greg_conover@fws.gov>**Cc:** Zach Burnside <zburnside@wildlifeforever.org>; Dane Huinker <dhuinker@Wildlifeforever.org>; Addison Motta <amotta@wildlifeforever.org>; Michele Connelly <MConnelly@wildlifeforever.org>**Subject:** War on Carp Press Release

Hi, Greg.

Your help sending this to the MSRBP would be greatly appreciated.
We're here to help and look forward to working with you.

In addition to our press release, you'll also see today's Outdoor Wire feature on the issue.

<https://www.theoutdoorwire.com/features/fefe1ffd-9ef5-47fc-8888-61f3a78c76f4>

Keep up the good work.

Pat Conzemius
President & CEO

Wildlife Forever
5350 Hwy 61 N Suite 7
White Bear Lake, MN 55110
Office: (763) 253-0222

Your membership conserves America's fish & wildlife.

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FW: War on Carp Press Release

Pat Conzemius <pconzemius@wildlifeforever.org>

Fri 2/3/2023 11:33 AM

To: Conover, Greg <greg_conover@fws.gov>

Cc: Zach Burnside <zburnside@wildlifeforever.org>

Greg,

Hi. I hope you are well. I would greatly appreciate it if you would distribute our news to the panel. We look forward to working with you and others on the carp issue.

Thanks,

Pat Conzemius
President & CEO

Wildlife Forever
5350 Hwy 61 N Suite 7
White Bear Lake, MN 55110
Office: (763) 253-0222

[Your membership conserves America's fish & wildlife.](#)

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From: Pat Conzemius
Sent: Wednesday, February 1, 2023 9:22 AM
To: Conover, Greg <greg_conover@fws.gov>
Cc: Zach Burnside <zburnside@wildlifeforever.org>; Dane Huinker <dhuinker@wildlifeforever.org>; Addison Motta <amotta@wildlifeforever.org>; Michele Connelly <MConnelly@wildlifeforever.org>
Subject: War on Carp Press Release

Hi, Greg.

Your help sending this to the MSRBP would be greatly appreciated. We're here to help and look forward to working with you.

In addition to our press release, you'll also see today's Outdoor Wire feature on the issue.

<https://www.theoutdoorwire.com/features/fefe1ffd-9ef5-47fc-8888-61f3a78c76f4>

Keep up the good work.

Pat Conzemius
President & CEO

Wildlife Forever
5350 Hwy 61 N Suite 7
White Bear Lake, MN 55110
Office: (763) 253-0222

[Your membership conserves America's fish & wildlife.](#)

4) MRBP Update

Discussion:

Mississippi River Basin Panel on Aquatic Invasive Species (MRBP) second-term co-chair Andrew Stump will join the Executive Board remotely to provide an update on MRBP activities. The MRBP has provided a nomination for MICRA's River Champion Award for the board's consideration (see below).

Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resource Association
RIVER CHAMPION
Nomination Form

The Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resource Association **RIVER CHAMPION AWARD** is presented to a Delegate or Committee member who makes an exemplary and/or outstanding long-term contribution to the Mississippi River basin.

Duane Chapman

Nominee's Name

Narrative justification (please limit to 2 pages):

I would like my nominee to receive the **MICRA RIVER CHAMPION AWARD** because...

Throughout his nearly 40-year career, Duane has served as one of the highest standards in collaborative research and his basin-wide efforts exemplify the goals and priorities of federal, state, university, and local partners throughout the Mississippi River drainage and in bordering states. Duane was an active member of the Mississippi River Basin Panel (MRBP) since it was formed in 2003, serving as the USGS voting representative to the MRBP from 2007 until his retirement in 2022. In the spirit of service, partnership, and collaboration, Duane served the panel membership in the role of the Research and Risk Assessment Committee Chair, an Executive Committee position, for 18 years. His work within the USGS and the MRBP has included the coordination and implementation of many interjurisdictional projects focused on aquatic invasive species prevention, management, and control. This includes his own extensive work with invasive carp population control and research as well as his technical expertise in both project design and field implementation. He has also aided or influenced countless efforts laboring over other basin priorities within his own lab or within technical committee. Generous with his time and findings, he has always been willing to travel as a guest speaker at diverse regional events. Lastly, many admire Duane for his problem-solving skills. He is a model for out-of-the-box inquiry and an expert at thinking out loud, showing others that countless ideas are worth more in development rather than criticism. His talent for thoughtful consideration and inclusive discussion have encouraged many (including myself) to engage in productive debate to develop concepts that push the boundaries of traditional management and prevention practices.

 MRBP Executive Committee

Signature

 February 3, 2023

Date

Please return all nominations to MICRA Executive Board at MICRA@micrarivers.org.

5) MICRA AIS Committee Update

Discussion:

New MICRA AIS Committee Chair, Rob Bourgeois (LDWF), will provide an update on AIS Committee activities. The Executive Board will be asked to consider the same person serving as the MRBP's MICRA Liaison and MICRA's AIS Committee Chair. See additional information provided below.

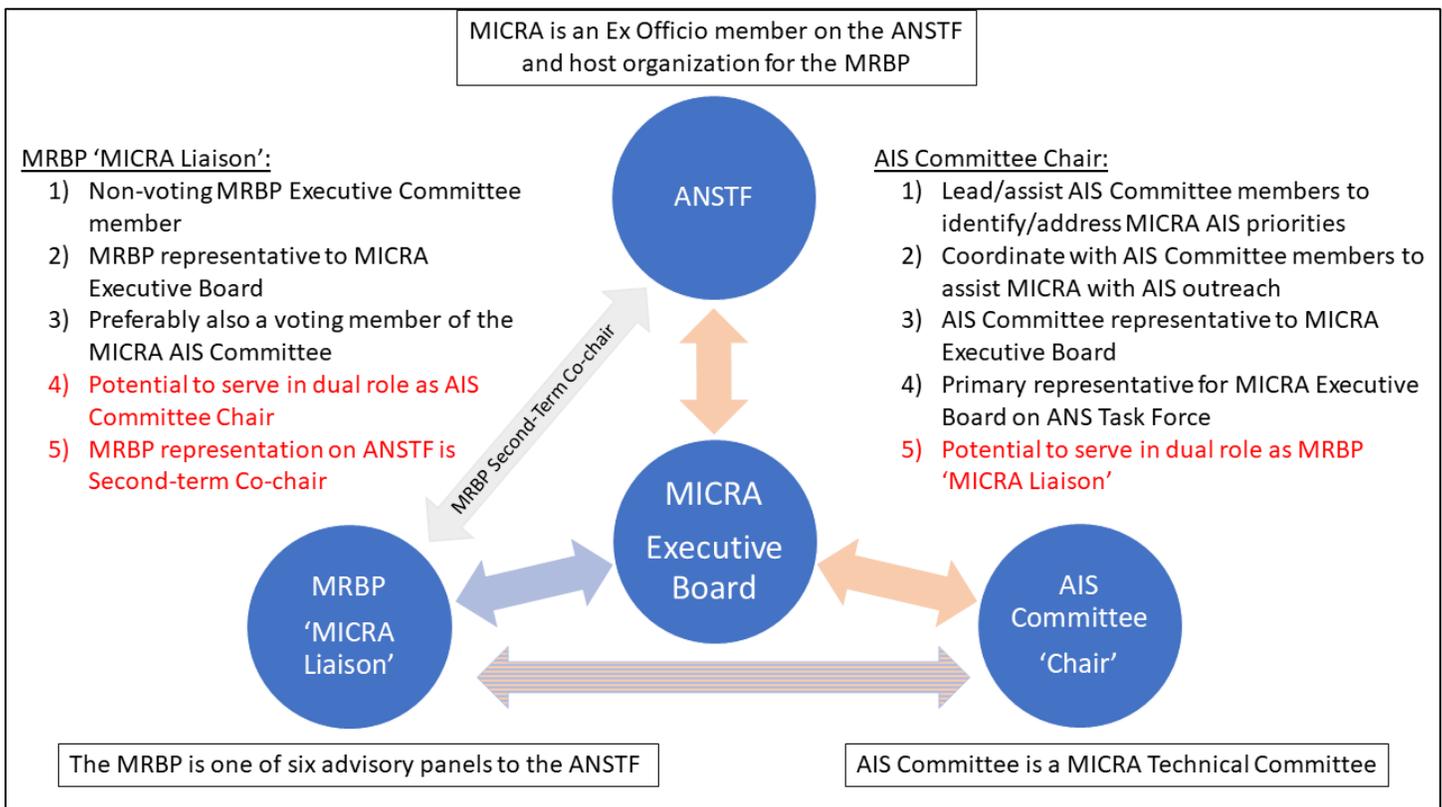
MRBP 'MICRA Liaison'

1. Serves as a non-voting member on the MRBP Executive Committee
 - MRBP Executive Committee meets remotely quarterly, more frequently as needed
2. Represents MRBP to MICRA Executive Board
 - MICRA Executive Board meets in-person twice per year
 - Preference for in-person attendance at least one meeting per year
 - Committee chairs requested to provide committee updates at least once/year
 - Serves as Liaison between MICRA Executive Board and MRBP
 - Provides more consistency with MICRA Executive Board than the rotating MRBP co-chair position
 - Relays direction from MICRA Executive Board to MRBP Executive Committee
3. Preferably a voting member of the MICRA AIS Committee
 - Serve as liaison between MICRA AIS Committee and MRBP Executive Committee
 - Potential to serve in dual role as MICRA AIS Committee Chair
 - **Question for MICRA Executive Board: Is there adequate separation between the two groups if the MICRA AIS Committee Chair serves as the MRBP's MICRA Liaison and represents the MRBP at MICRA meetings?**

MICRA 'AIS Committee Chair'

1. Coordinate with the AIS Committee members to schedule in-person and virtual meetings, develop meeting agenda, and disseminate meeting notes
 - In-person meetings held in conjunction with MRBP coordination meetings approximately every 9 months
 - Additional in-person or remote meetings may be scheduled as needed
2. Coordinate with the AIS Committee members to identify and implement MICRA AIS related priorities

- MICRA priorities (work plan) developed every 5 years; next plan will be for 2024-2028
- MICRA priorities will drive the majority of MICRA AIS Committee agenda topics
- 3. Coordinate with AIS Committee members to assist MICRA with AIS outreach
 - Assist with identifying, developing, and/or reviewing MICRA’s priority AIS talking points and supporting information
 - Assist with coordinating the development of, or updates to, MICRA state AIS fact sheets
- 4. Represents AIS Committee to MICRA Executive Board
 - Executive Board meets in-person twice per year
 - Preference for in-person attendance at least one meeting per year
 - Committee chairs requested to provide committee updates at least once/year
- 5. Serves as MICRA’s primary representative to the national ANS Task Force
 - ANS Task Force meets in-person twice per year
 - Preference for in-person attendance at least one meeting per year
 - Provides updates on ANS Task Force to MICRA Executive Board
- 6. **Potentially serves in a dual role as the MRBP’s MICRA Liaison to provide greatest coordination among the MRBP, MICRA AIS Committee, and MICRA Executive Board.**



6) Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee Update

Discussion:

Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee chair, Ryan Hupfeld, will review and discuss the written update provided below on the Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee's activities and progress addressing relevant MICRA Priorities. [The Paddlefish Commercial States Workgroup Report can be accessed here.](#)

MICRA Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee Executive Board Update- 2/7/2023

Paddlefish Commercial Workgroup Report-

- A final report has been completed with everyone in agreement with the final document
- Report provides:
 - Background of the information need, workgroup development, and reasoning behind the entire project
 - Step by step description of workgroup's progress, methodology, and tasks
 - Results of those tasks and uncertainties with the data
 - Information/Research Needs
 - Recommendations
- Results:
 - Wilberg results: "under the base model assumptions a minimum size limit of 36 (inches) may be appropriate to achieve F_{30%} and to increase caviar yield over the long term"
 - The workgroup agreed that a consistent management approach in the Mississippi and Ohio rivers is needed among the commercial harvest states and **that a suite of regulations would likely be needed to achieve F_{30%} rather than relying solely on the 36" minimum length limit** recommended
- Alternative Management Actions Discussed:
 - Lower minimum length limits
 - 32-34"
 - Season Length and Dates
 - Agreed to align season dates based on 58F water temperature to reduce bycatch mortality
 - Number of Permits, Fishers, and Roe Buyers

- Investigated, but more data and discussion are needed before considering a recommended standard before limiting
- Gear Restrictions
 - Agreed that a standardized effort is needed to understand catch and selectivity of nets.
 - Updated the state regulations table with all gear restrictions each state currently has
- Reporting Requirements
 - Reporting requirements are varied among the states and consistency would be difficult to achieve. No minimum reporting standards were considered.
- Model Uncertainties:
 - Growth parameter uncertainties
 - Refit the von Bertalanffy growth function using L_{inf} as a constant and solving for k and t_0 . These are highly correlated parameters and changes to L_{inf} by using an average length of fish age-15+ should result in changes to K and t_0
 - Maturity data uncertainties
 - Incorporate all existing data to estimate length at maturity to ensure estimate is more reflective of total range (MO, IN, etc.). Did not use Missouri and Indiana's maturity data. Only Arkansas data and data from Sharov report (largely southern states and reservoir populations) were used.
 - Age estimate uncertainties
 - Data used in this analysis was built upon existing models and included samples from throughout the Mississippi and Ohio River commercial fishing states, however there were still many questions.
 - States involved agreed it was a good starting point
 - But there were many questions regarding the parameters used in the analysis that could greatly affect the results and recommendations
- Information/Research Needs:
 - Sensitivity Analysis
 - Examines the uncertainty in a stock assessment
 - Refits the assessment model with different values for the assumed parameters to examine how much, if any, the outputs change

- Helps understand which input data have the most impact on the model results
 - Helps managers understand which input variables are the most important to know accurately and which variables introduce the most uncertainty in results (identify what data we need to refine in next steps)
 - Spatially Explicit Population Modeling (Accounting for Heterogeneity)
 - Wilberg analysis assumed paddlefish to be a single population
 - Some evidence (i.e., maturity) suggests some population heterogeneity and could influence model
 - Age Validation
 - Bomb radiocarbon analysis
 - M-R Techniques
 - Conservation and Management: abiotic and biotic causes of fluctuating harvest rates and stocks
 - Gain a better understanding of all sources of mortality besides harvest
- Recommendations:
 - 1. Development of a basinwide Paddlefish management framework
 - Intended to inform the updating, or development of, interstate management plans for both commercial and recreational Paddlefish fisheries.
 - 2. Cooperatively manage for $F_{30\%}$
 - Consider regulation changes as needed to achieve/maintain $F_{30\%}$
 - 3. All states managing commercial or recreational Paddlefish fisheries participate in the development of the basinwide framework
 - 4. Update/develop sub-basin or waterbody specific Paddlefish management plans as needed
 - 5. Each state managing a commercial Paddlefish fishery aligns their season dates with those recommended in this report to limit harvest within a 58° F water temperature threshold
 - 6. Regularly engage Law Enforcement personnel in interjurisdictional Paddlefish management discussions with agency biologists, including coordination meetings with neighboring states (as needed) and the MICRA Paddlefish and Sturgeon Committee
 - 7. Identify Paddlefish harvest information needs and standardize methods for documenting and reporting commercial Paddlefish harvest data

- Standardize commercial Paddlefish harvest reporting to ensure comparable/meaningful metrics are collected by state management agencies.
 - Annually submit Paddlefish harvest data to MICRA with agency reports.
 - 8. Collaboratively address priority research needs identified in this report
 - 9. Annually request a summary report from CITES that includes all information provided by state agencies
- Next Steps:
 - Going to discuss next steps at our committee meeting March 29-30, 2023 in Sedalia, MO
 - Any feedback, recommendations, thoughts on next steps for the committee?
- CITES Information Request:
 - USFWS/CITES requests paddlefish population status and harvest information from the states annually
 - Requested information last year
 - Information we received back was very minimal
 - Will request a letter signed by executive board on behalf of the PDFH/Sturgeon committee following our annual meeting
 - At the annual meeting we are planning to discuss what exactly we want to ask for from CITES

Annual Committee Meeting- March 29-30, 2023

- Meet at Lost Valley Hatchery/Sedalia, MO
 - Have a tour of Blind Pony Hatchery on March 30
 - Will have Paddlefish in the hatchery so will provide for a good tour and discussion
 - Potential discussion items: Hatchery protocols for paddlefish, locations stocked, genetics, etc.
 - Ed Heist will give a presentation on paddlefish genetics
- Initial Plan/Main Topics Discussed:
 - **Goal of the meeting- Develop a list of potential priorities for the Executive Board to consider**
 - Review current priorities and the status of those

- Review potential new priorities and emerging issues discussed at last meeting
- Using that discussion develop a preliminary list of potential new priorities for the 2024-2028 Priorities Document
 - Go over paddlefish mgt. framework
 - Commercial Fishing WG meeting to determine next steps
- Is this what the Executive Board wants from the Committee at this point?
- Any other goals/objectives we should shoot for, for this meeting?

Paddlefish Management Framework Development

- Have met multiple times and have a good start
- Currently working through some consensus statements among all workgroup states to get everyone on the same page and determine what needs to be included and what needs more discussion/expansion
 - Draft text is beginning to be developed for these
- Next Meeting is Feb 17th, 2023

7) Freshwater Mollusk Conservation Society Update

Discussion:

Freshwater Mollusk Conservation Society President, Stephen McMurray (MDC), provided the following update.

If there's a possibility of funding assistance, our Biennial Symposium will be held this April in Portland, Oregon (https://molluskconservation.org/EVENTS/2023SYMPOSIUM/2023_FMCS-SYMPOSIUM.html). While the meeting is outside of the MS River basin, we would still appreciate any support MICRA was willing to provide. Our meeting in 2024 will be a workshop, details are still in progress, but it will be in the MS River basin.

We are currently fleshing out the details, but an initiative we started this year was an Early Career Travel Award (https://molluskconservation.org/Mservices_awards.html) to attend our meetings. An initiative we are piloting is an internship program for young students, although we are still working on the finer points of that.

8) Aquatic Habitat Action Plan – Updating MICRA’s List of the Basin’s Interjurisdictional River

Decision:

At the board’s February 2022 meeting, board members discussed multiple problems with the existing MICRA list of interjurisdictional rivers included in the near final Aquatic Habitat Action Plan. Several action items resulted from that discussion.

- 1) Rodgers will work with her GIS specialist to develop a few lists of interjurisdictional rivers in the Mississippi River Basin using different criteria for the board to consider.
- 2) The Executive Board will consider proposed new GIS-based lists of interjurisdictional rivers in the Mississippi River Basin and make a decision on the preferred criteria and list to use as an updated list for MICRA.
- 3) Conover will work with Janvrin to finalize the draft action plan once the Executive Board approves a new MICRA list of interjurisdictional rivers in the Mississippi River Basin.

Angela Erves, USFWS, has been working on a GIS project for MICRA to create an updated list of interjurisdictional rivers in the Mississippi River Basin. Erves will be presenting the results of her work and providing the board with options to consider for updating MICRA’s list of the basin’s interjurisdictional rivers. Board members will consider the information presented by Erves and make a decision on the preferred criteria to use for creating an updated list of interjurisdictional rivers.

9) Approval of August 2022 Meeting Notes

Decision:

Executive Board members will be asked to approve the August 2022 Executive Board meeting notes as final. Draft notes were provided to the board members on January 9, 2023, for review. No requested edits or comments were received. Conover made needed corrections to reconcile the Decisions and Action Items with the meeting notes. [The revised draft meeting notes can be accessed here.](#)

10) Review of Action Items

Decision Item:

Executive Board members will review the status of Decisions and Action Items from the board's August 2022 meeting and discuss completion of outstanding action items. Outstanding Action Items from previous meetings are also included for consideration. Status of each action item was noted in the briefing book ahead of the Executive Board meeting in **green** font if complete and **red** font if not completed.

August 2022 Meeting

Decisions

1. The Executive Board members agreed that a single state should not serve as the representative more than one sub-basin on the Invasive Carp Advisory Committee.
2. It was agreed that the Executive Board does not need to formally approve the sub-basin partnerships' nominations for the Invasive Carp Advisory Committee.
3. The February 2022 Executive Board meeting notes were approved as final.
4. The Executive Board awarded the Young Professionals Travel Stipend to Sam Schaick with the Illinois Natural History Survey.
5. The Executive Board agreed to provide \$1,000 sponsorship for the Mississippi-Yangtze River Interbasin Symposium at the 152nd Annual Meeting of the American Fisheries Society.
6. The Executive Board will target March 6-10, 2023, for agency and Congressional visits in Washington, DC.
7. The Executive Board will target the week of February 6-10, 2023, for a Winter meeting in Mississippi, Alabama, or Louisiana.
8. The Executive Board will target December 6-7, 2022, for a Congressional briefing.
9. The Executive Board will hold a fall conference call from 1:00-3:00 pm (Central) on November 1.

Action Items

1. The Invasive Carp Advisory Committee (ICAC) co-chairs will keep the MICRA Executive Board informed on progress of populating the ICAC and technical workgroups.

Complete: An update will be provided during the board's February 2023 meeting.

2. The Executive Board sub-basin representatives will inform their respective delegates of the ICAC and technical workgroup representatives that have been identified for their respective sub-basins.

Unknown (new addition to revised notes): This action item should be further discussed during the board's February 2023 meeting.

3. The Executive Board sub-basin representatives will work to identify state agency co-chairs for the Sampling Approach Workgroup and the Data and Analysis Workgroup by the end of August.

Complete:

4. Conover will provide Simmonds with contact information for the MICRA Executive Board members.

Complete

5. Simmonds will provide the Executive Board with an overview of the ICAC and technical workgroup members that have been confirmed and which positions are still needed from the different sub-basins.

Complete: An update will be provided during the board's February 2023 meeting.

6. Smith requested distribution/abundance maps for the different sub-basins.

Unknown (new addition to revised notes): This action item should be further discussed during the board's February 2023 meeting.

7. Conover will share the communications planning notes from the board's July 2014 meeting with the Executive Board members.

Complete: July 2014 notes are included as supplemental materials for the board's February 2023 meeting.

8. Conover will add a discussion of a MICRA Communications Plan to the agenda for the board's Winter meeting.

Complete: On the agenda for the February 2023 meeting.

9. The sub-basin partnership coordinators and ICAC co-chairs will provide examples of communications needs and barriers to the Executive Board.

Not started (new addition to revised notes): This action item should be further discussed during the board's February 2023 meeting.

10. The Executive Board will hold a conference call specifically focused on resuming this discussion about internal and external communication needs, particularly the following considerations (see details in August 2022 meeting notes page 25).

Not started (new addition to revised notes): This action item should be further discussed during the board's February 2023 meeting.

11. The Executive Board will work with the sub-basin partnership coordinators to develop a request and guidance regarding sub-basin scale objectives for invasive carp management and control.

On-going: This action item should be further discussed during the board's February 2023 meeting.

12. The sub-basin partnership coordinators will work with their respective sub-basin partnerships to identify sub-basin scale objectives to assist the ICAC and MICRA Executive Board with basinwide planning and communications.

Not started (new addition to revised notes): This action item should be further discussed during the board's February 2023 meeting.

13. The sub-basin partnership coordinators and the ICAC co-chairs will continue to discuss how the sub-basin scale objectives should be consistently developed and will report back to the Executive Board when they have reached consensus.

Not started (new addition to revised notes): This action item should be further discussed during the board's February 2023 meeting.

14. Smith will review the Wildlife Forever Commercial Harvest Incentive Program proposal and follow-up with recommendations for the MICRA Executive Board.

Complete: Smith will provide an update on 2022 field visits and discuss plans for 2023 field visits during the board's February 2023 meeting.

15. Gaikowski will work with USGS staff to provide the Executive Board and Invasive Carp Advisory Committee with a factsheet on FishTracks and the potential to expand the database to include telemetry data from other sub-basins and species.

On-going: Mark Gaikowski will provide an update at the board's February 2023 meeting.

16. Sub-basin partnership coordinators will share the FishTracks factsheet with their partners once it is updated and provided by USGS.

Not started: Pending completion of Action Item 15.

17. Sub-basin partnership coordinators will discuss the Executive Boards interest in basinwide platforms for data management and analysis with the sub-basin partnerships.

On-going: This action item should be further discussed during the board's February 2023 meeting.

18. Sub-basin partnership coordinators will work with USGS to schedule a webinar on FishTracks for the sub-basin partnerships.

Not started: Pending completion of Action Item 15.

19. Sub-basin partnership coordinators follow-up with their partners to determine interest and concerns in a basinwide approach to collecting and storing telemetry data.

On-going: This action item should be further discussed during the board's February 2023 meeting.

20. Woldt and Gaikowski will have internal discussions about briefing up within their respective agencies to raise awareness about MICRA's Fishery Commission initiative and draft legislation.

On-going: Woldt and Gaikowski will provide updates at the board's February 2023 meeting.

21. The Executive Board will work with Ashlee Smith to schedule a few Zoom meetings for the MICRA Delegates to be briefed on MICRA's fishery commission outreach effort.

On-going: February 14 and 16 (9:00 am Central) have been tentatively identified as dates to update the MICRA delegates. The updates are on the agenda to be further discussed during the board's February 2023 meeting.

22. The MICRA AIS Committee will be asked to work with Ashlee Smith to develop standardized state fact sheets for MICRA's 2023 Congressional visits.

Complete: The MICRA AIS Committee members were requested to provide updated state AIS fact sheets for MICRA's 2023 DC Fly-in by February 3rd. An update on progress will be provided during the AIS Committee update at the board's February 2023 meeting.

23. Executive Board members were requested to provide Smith with additional recommendations for regional and local organizations that she might want to contact regarding the coalition.

On-going: Is this a continued need?

24. Smith will begin working with the existing coalition members to begin working on a charter that addresses how to become a coalition member, Pledge of Support, dues, etc.

On-going: Smith will provide an update during the board's February 2023 meeting.

25. Smith will reach out to MICRA delegates regarding potential field visits for Congressional staff during the August recess.

Status unknown: time specific need, delete

26. Sub-basin representatives will email Smith with a few days of availability in August to go in the field with Congressional staff.

Status unknown: time specific need, delete

27. Parsons will email delegates to ask about local level partners, for example Friends of the Mississippi River, that should be informed about and asked to support the Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission initiative and partnership coalition.

Complete?

28. Parsons will ask MICRA Delegates to brief new agency directors on the MICRA Fishery Commission initiative and to keep existing agency directors informed of progress and status of the commission.

Complete?

29. Parsons will contact Dirk Miller, Deputy Chief of Fisheries, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, regarding the MICRA Joint Strategic Plan.

On-going

30. Parsons will follow-up with Montana, Nebraska, and Colorado regarding status of their director's signing the MICRA Joint Strategic Plan Memorandum of Agreement.

On-going

31. Executive Board members should review the Joint Strategic Plan ahead of the board's next meeting and discussions about the 2024-2028 priorities document.

Complete: The 2024-2028 priorities document will be discussed during the February 2023 meeting.

32. Marybeth Brey will be invited to provide an overview of the FishTracks database at the next Paddlefish Sturgeon Committee meeting.

On-going: Agenda currently being developed

33. Conover will follow-up with Stephen McMurray about the Freshwater Mollusk Conservation Society referring to MICRA in their guidance documents and providing an annual update to the Executive Board.

Not started.

34. Conover will follow-up with Stephen McMurray to discuss incorporating Freshwater Mollusk Conservation Society priorities into the next MICRA priorities document.

On-going: McMurray was requested for input. Conover to follow-up with McMurray.

35. Conover will add the final February 2022 Executive Board meeting notes to the MICRA website.

Incomplete: A discussion about posting meeting notes will be brought up during the Coordinator's report at the board's February 2023 meeting.

36. Conover will inform Jeff Janvrin that Neil Rude, MN DNR, has been asked to lead the planning of the MICRA large rivers habitat symposium at the 2023 AFS meeting in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and that Rude will be reaching out to him to begin planning.

Complete

37. Conover will update the 2019-2023 MICRA Priorities document with initial accomplishments and provide the draft to the sub-basin representatives.

Complete: Annotated document was provided with the briefing book for the board's February 2023 meeting.

38. Sub-basin representatives will provide the annotated 2019-2023 MICRA Priorities document to their respective sub-basin delegates to request initial input on 2024-2028 priorities by the end of the calendar year.

Not started: Document not provided until February 2023.

39. Conover will notify the Young Professionals Travel Stipend applicants of the board's decision regarding the 2022 award.

Complete: All applicants were notified in August 2022.

40. Conover will notify Hae Kim of the board's decision that MICRA will provide \$1,000 sponsorship for the Mississippi-Yangtze River Symposium at the 152nd Annual Meeting of the American Fisheries Society.

Complete: A check was provided to AFS in August 2022.

41. Conover will follow-up with MICRA delegates in Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana, and Ashlee Smith, to identify a meeting location and options for an Executive Board meeting the week of February 6-10, 2023.

Complete

42. Smith will work with the Executive Board to organize a Congressional briefing December 6-7, 2022. Briefing should include an overview of USFWS and USGS work in support of the sub-basin partnerships.

Complete: The decision was made to postpone a Congressional briefing until 2023. Rescheduling the briefing will be discussed during the board's February 2023 meeting.

43. Conover will follow-up with Gaikowski and a few USFWS field offices regarding Innovasea discount pricing of telemetry equipment.

Not started

44. Aldridge will send Conover notes regarding his discussion with Innovasea.

Complete

45. Aldridge will organize a call with Innovasea to introduce Conover to discuss potential discount pricing for MICRA member agencies.

Complete

February 2022 Meeting

Action Items

10. Conover will send a note to the Tennessee River delegates prior to the 2022 quarterly TWF coordination calls, reminding them to announce opportunities for staffers to get out in the field with staff to observe invasive carp field work.

On-going: *Is this an on-going need? Doodle poll to schedule a winter call.*

11. Parsons will put the new MN habitat biologist in touch with Conover to start coordinating with Janvrin to plan for the Habitat Symposium.

Complete: Update is on the agenda for the board's February 2023 meeting.

12. Rodgers will work with her GIS specialist to develop a few lists of interjurisdictional rivers in the Mississippi River Basin using different criteria for the board to consider.

Complete: Update is on the agenda for the board's February 2023 meeting.

13. The Executive Board will consider proposed new GIS-based lists of interjurisdictional rivers in the Mississippi River Basin and make a decision on the preferred criteria and list to use as an updated list for MICRA.

On-going: *Discussion is on the agenda for the board's February 2023 meeting.*

14. Conover will work with Janvrin to finalize the draft action plan once the Executive Board approves a new MICRA list of interjurisdictional rivers in the Mississippi River Basin.

On-going: *Pending completion of action item #13*

15. Braig was asked to communicate the relevant priorities back to the MRBP and AIS Committee with the charge to begin addressing the priorities and report back to the MICRA Executive Board on progress or obstacles.

Complete

16. Braig was requested to seek recommended updates to the MICRA website from the MRBP and AIS Committee members.

Complete: No updates or revisions requested to date.

17. The MRBP Executive Committee was asked to consider the recommendation that the MICRA AIS Committee Chair serve as MICRA's primary representative to the ANS Task Force.

Complete: More discussion is planned during the AIS Committee update during the board's February 2023 meeting.

18. The paddlefish commercial states workgroup was tasked with developing a summary report on the age and growth project including data collection, analysis, workgroup discussions, recommended next steps, and differing perspectives.

Complete: The report was provided to the Executive Committee in January 2023 and will be discussed during the board's February 2023 meeting.

19. The paddlefish commercial states workgroup will present a recommendation to the Executive Board at their summer meeting based on the available data and analysis, along with the different views within the workgroup.

Complete: The workgroup's summary report includes recommendations that will be reviewed and discussed during the board's February 2023 meeting.

23. Parsons will email delegates to ask about local level partners, for example Friends of the Mississippi River, that should be informed about and asked to support the Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission initiative and coalition.

Complete? Delete, duplicate action item with #27 above

24. Parsons, Schoenung, Fiss, and possibly Conover will represent MICRA on the coalition calls.

On-going: All four participated on the first coalition call. No additional calls scheduled to date.

25. Conover will inquire internally with USFWS to determine his ability to participate in the coalition in his role as MICRA Coordinator.

On-going: Inquiry sent no guidance received to date.

26. Smith will keep all board members informed of coalition calls so they can participate if available and interested.

On-going: No additional calls have been scheduled to date.

30. Braig and Conover will share the TWRA video from the Congressional field visit at Pickwick Dam, along with the appropriate context, with the MRBP membership during the September coordination meeting to initiate a discussion of the potential to develop similar videos to address specific information and outreach needs.

On-going: This was on the agenda for the AIS Committee's September 2022 meeting agenda, but the meeting ended before getting through the complete agenda.

Outstanding Action Items

August 2021

30. Conover will add a discussion about an interjurisdictional fisheries symposium to the agenda for the next MICRA Executive Board meeting.

Incomplete: Postpone until Summer 2023 meeting?

37. Conover will reach out to Bruce Reid to inform him about the Executive Board's interest in improving the MICRA's website and gauge his interest in discussing the website with the MICRA Executive Board.

Incomplete: Website action items not addressed yet.

11) Sub-basin Updates

Discussion:

The board decided in August 2021 that sub-basin representatives will contact their respective delegates prior to future Executive Board meetings to ask if they have any interjurisdictional fishery management concerns or emerging issues that they would like to discuss with the board or request the board to address. This time will be used for sub-basin representatives to discuss items brought forward from their respective sub-basins.

MICRA Lower Mississippi River Sub-Basin Report – *Compiled by Ben Batten and Angie Rodgers*

Hatchie-Loosahatchie Mississippi River Ecosystem Restoration Study

The Lower Mississippi River Conservation Committee (LMRCC) continues to work on the Lower Mississippi River Feasibility Study for Conservation Reach 2 – Hatchie River to Loosahatchie River. Weekly Project Development Team planning meetings are held each week with LMRCC and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to discuss project progress and next steps. LMRCC hosted three National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Scoping meetings in fall 2022: Fort Pillow State Park (Henning, TN), Meeman-Shelby State Park (Millington, TN), and Marion City Hall (Marion, AR). The Tentatively Selected Plan was approved by USACE leadership in November 2022. The Integrated Draft Feasibility Report and Draft Environmental Assessment will be released to the public on 10 February 2023 for a 30-day comment period. The final report to Congress is anticipated in May 2024. Additional information on the project can be found [here](#).

Habitat Restoration

LMRCC completed four secondary channel restoration projects in fall 2022 that opened approximately 12-15 miles of habitat: Densford Dike Field (RM 757) (Figure 1), Lower Cracraft (RM 510) (Figure 2), Spithead Towhead (RM 385), and Opposite Warnicott (RM 351).



Figure 1: Drone view of Densford Dike Field. Figure 2: Lower Cracraft dike notching.

A pilot project was completed in January 2023 to install woody debris traps (total of 3) in the secondary channel at Prairie Point (RM 665) (Figure 3). Prairie Point dikes were notched in 2015 to establish more permanent flow. The pilot project will assess the efficacy of traps for large woody debris in secondary channels. USACE Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC) conducted a three-year research program to assess the ability of woody debris and other substrates to increase macroinvertebrate populations needed by many fish and other aquatic organisms to survive. Because of various engineering practices and land use changes in the Lower Mississippi River system, the amount of woody debris in the river has decreased. Research has shown that woody debris in large river systems is beneficial for many reasons – to provide structural diversity, to create complexity in flow regimes, to provide inputs of organic carbon and to increase habitat for macroinvertebrates, which provide food for many aquatic organisms. This pilot effort will be conducted to provide baseline data needed to expand this restoration activity to augment enhancement of secondary channels beyond the restoration of flows.

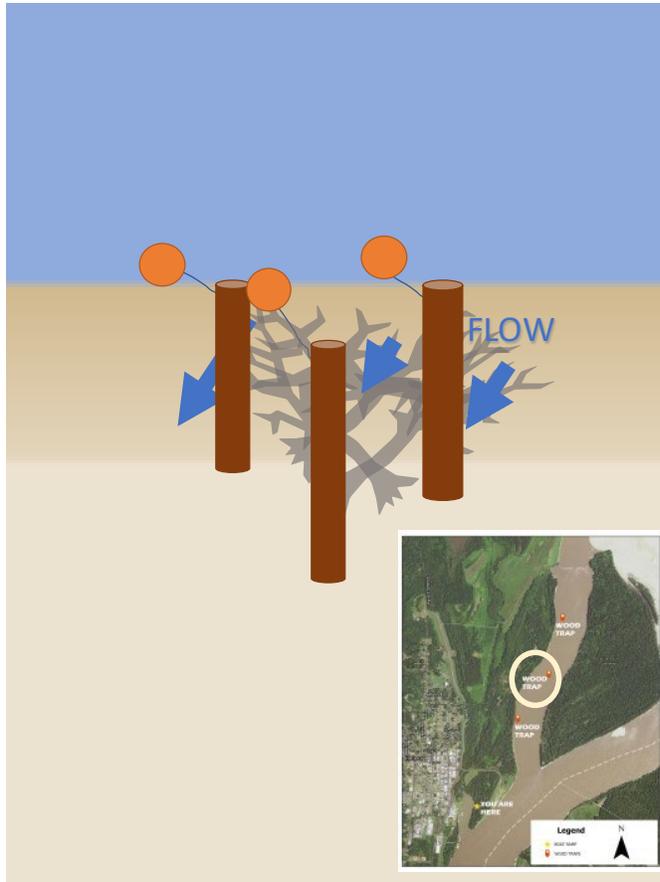


Figure 3: Schematic of woody debris trap.

Annual Meeting

The LMRCC plans to hold its annual meeting in summer 2023 in Memphis, TN. A Save the Date will be coming out shortly.

MICRA Arkansas-Red-White River Sub-Basin Report – Compiled by Ken Cunningham

ARKANSAS – Submitted by Ben Batten

ANS

The Invasive Carp Removal Program started in mid-October 2021, so 2022 was the first full year for the program. In 2022, removal crews worked 144 days, and removed 103,814 pounds of invasive carp; >90% were Silver Carp. Only one boat crew fished 30% of that time.

Giant Salvinia distributions remained the same in 2022; only being established in lakes Erling and Columbia. Management drawdowns, herbicide applications, and the booming of public access areas were used to contain and control salvinia densities. In September, Giant Salvinia was introduced, most likely by boat, into Mercer Bayou, but was detected early, contained near the boat access, and successfully eradicated. To aid with early detection, signs designed to increase public awareness, to help identify, and to report Giant Salvinia were created for 100 public access areas in south AR. A mobile CD3 watercraft cleaning station was installed at the most used public boat access on Lake Erling to help boaters prevent the spread of Giant Salvinia to new waterbodies. Two high-pressure herbicide spray rigs and 2,500 ft. of fence boom were acquired to aid future rapid response efforts.

Fisheries staff initiated a cooperative project with the USFWS to develop a sampling protocol for monitoring Northern Snakeheads using eDNA. The field validation study was completed in October. Future work includes occupancy modeling and protocol development.

Commercial Fishing

The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission has mandatory reporting of catch and effort for commercial fishers, and this new system has been in operation for one year. The online portal and associated database are operational, but we are still working on getting reporting tools added to the database. We are still receiving 400-500 paper forms per month that need manual entry. A major challenge is getting fishers to comply with the new reporting requirements, especially those who primarily fish commercial tackle for subsistence and only fish one month per year. Jamie Kindschuh, Rivers/Commercial Biologist, has taken over commercial fishing duties as of January 1, 2023.

Stream Habitat Work

Barrier Removal: The Stream Habitat Program continues to work with multiple partners to inventory, prioritize, and remove barriers in Arkansas with multiple barriers removed in the past year, including one barrier on the Saline River in SW Arkansas, two on Cave Creek in the Buffalo River watershed, and one in the Arkansas River watershed. Additionally, the city of Harrison and ARDOT recently completed an agreement that will allow for the removal of the Lake Harrison dam and a restoration project on Crooked Creek. The USFWS Fish Passage Program has agreed to visit Arkansas this summer to remove three barriers in the War Eagle Creek watershed that will open up over 200 miles of this stream, and staff is currently working to secure funding for both the design and implementation phases of this project that has the interest and commitment of multiple partners. The program continues to work with The Nature Conservancy to remove two large barriers in the upper Little Red River watershed at Arlberg and Lydalisk. Letters of intent were submitted to the USFWS for Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding to remove a barrier in the upper Saline River watershed and five barriers in the Lower Little River watershed. The program is currently working with Weyerhaeuser to inventory, prioritize, and remove barriers in the Lower Little River watershed. This project is funded by USEPA 319 in partnership with the Natural Resources Division and has the potential to produce benefits across the SE United States.

Streambank Restoration: The Stream Habitat Program completed 11 streambank stabilization projects last year, totaling almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile. Projects were completed on the Caddo River, Cove Creek, Gold Creek, Board Camp Creek, Clifty Creek, Rocky Bayou, and two tributaries to Brushy creek, London Creek and Dry Branch. Program staff completed 166 site visits on 24.3 miles of stream and wrote 59 plans covering 10 miles of stream.

Rivers Work

The Alligator Gar Species Management Team studied the hooking mortality of Alligator Gar in the Red River system using AGFC standard sampling gear. A recent study suggested high post-capture delayed mortality using a similar gear type. Population estimates suggest a large population size, and few individuals have been recaptured. Hooking mortality was evaluated by transferring captured Alligator Gar to a nearby hatchery pond and visually inspecting for signs of post-capture delayed mortality. Results from this study concluded that hooking mortality was low.

The American Eel Telemetry Project is ongoing in the Ouachita-Black-Red-Atchafalya river corridor. This project has been ongoing for five years, and over 120 eels have been tagged. New for 2022, we implanted fish with pressure (depth) or temperature sensing tags. We also established new stations above and below Columbia Dam in Louisiana with new project partners of Ryan Daniel and Brantly McPherson. Christian

Walker at LSU will work on the analysis of the eel migration data as part of his doctoral dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Mike Dance.

Alabama Shad spring sampling captured only a single juvenile in the Ouachita River during 2022, and we sampled with both gill nets and boat electrofishing. However, fall boat electrofishing sampling for our eel project led to the capture of 13 juvenile Alabama Shad during September at three sites. We are starting to see a pattern that the juveniles are susceptible to capture during fall electrofishing sampling in the deeper run habitat. We do not capture them in pools without current.

The Paddlefish and Sturgeon Species Management Team will be conducting a mark-recapture population study on Paddlefish in Pool 13 of the Arkansas River in February 2023. Permissions have been granted to conduct sampling in both the Arkansas and Oklahoma portions. This section of the Arkansas River is closed to commercial fish harvest and population estimates will generally serve as a baseline state for pre-channel deepening efforts, which may begin as early as summer/fall 2023.

The Arkansas River Task Force continues to expend substantial effort in evaluating Arkansas River fisheries annually. Black bass population samples are conducted on four to five pools per year in the spring, and fish community assemblages evaluations are completed during the summer. The Task Force has also placed emphasis on improving habitats along the river through annual aquatic vegetation plantings and supplementing wild Largemouth Bass populations through annual stocking allocations.

LOUISIANA – *Submitted by Kristi Butler*

- Giant Salvinia continues to be problematic on most of the Red River raft lakes and associated backwaters. The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries is taking an aggressive integrated pest management strategy to control giant salvinia in state waters. The strategy involves a three-pronged approach including chemical, mechanical, and biological methods to manage continued growth of the invasive plant. LDWF continues to work with and fund research through other state and federal agencies to explore biological control.
- LDWF continues to monitor the spread of bighead and black carps northward along the Red River.
- LDWF, in partnership with Nicholls St. University, has concluded sampling for larval invasive carp species to monitor range expansion and reproduction in the Red River Basin. Samples have been collected in 2013, 2014, 2019, 2021, and 2022.

- LDWF, partnering with LSU, will be looking at dietary overlap and impacts of invasive carp on native fish in the Red River starting in 2022/23.
- LDWF is a member agency in the Louisiana Watershed Initiative (LWI), which is tasked with reducing flood risk to people and property throughout the state. As part of the Initiative, hydrological models are being constructed across the state to aid in decision making and risk reduction. To bolster datasets, nearly 20 new stream flow gages are being placed in the Red River basin. LDWF is represented on multiple Technical Advisory Groups including Projects, Policy, Outreach, Data/Modeling, and Nature Based Solutions, and is advocating for fish and wildlife resource protection. Ideally, green infrastructure and “nature based solutions” will be implemented, where possible.
- LDWF continues to monitor potential hydropower projects at the locks and dams on the Red River and discuss potential fisheries impacts. Currently, no construction is scheduled, but hydropower permits are in place for all structures. We are monitoring the proposed locks and dams above Shreveport.
- LDWF is anticipating working with USACE on the upcoming Ouachita Basin Study that is in WRDA and awaiting the President’s signature.

OKLAHOMA - Submitted by Ken Cunningham

- ODWC recently hired a new ANS technician, Morgan Winstead. The filling of this position will increase our capacity to better monitor and manage ANS fish populations in Oklahoma.
- ODWC sampled 28 lakes in 2022 for zebra mussel veligers. We had one new positive.
- ODWC continues to collaborate on a research project to monitor Bighead and Silver Carp populations in the lower Red River and assess their population demographics and impacts on native species, including fish species of greatest conservation need.
- ODWC will initiate two new research projects in 2023. The first will evaluate the presence of invasive Carp eDNA in the Arkansas River, below WD Mayo Dam to Arkansas border. The second will monitor Bighead Carp populations in the the Grand/Neosho River system in Oklahoma.
- ODWC continues to monitor reservoir and steams fisheries throughout the basin in Oklahoma.

TEXAS – Submitted by *Tim Bister*

Invasive Carp Population Assessment – The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) continues to collaborate with Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Auburn University, and Texas Tech University to conduct a baseline population assessment for invasive bigheaded carps and native fish assemblage in the lower Red River basin across the tri-state area. Two years of population assessment have been completed, with over 350 bigheaded carp, primarily Silver Carp, captured in the study area. In Texas, Bighead and Silver carp have been caught in all major tributaries of the Red River along the Texas/Oklahoma Border, but only one individual has been captured in the Sulphur River near the confluence with the Red River in Arkansas and none to date in this river in Texas. In 2022, based on these findings, the TPW Commission extended regulations to prevent transfer of live nongame fish, and thereby spread of invasive carp, to include the Red River tributaries. The population assessment is continuing into its third year, and a two-year acoustic telemetry project is being initiated to evaluate movements, including those that may relate to spawning, and habitat use to inform sampling as well as future potential control efforts.

Paddlefish Restoration – TPWD continues to work with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to restore Paddlefish in Big Cypress Bayou/Caddo Lake. We are currently in year 6 of a 10-year restocking plan. Fish have primarily been produced at the Tishomingo National Fish Hatchery in Oklahoma. However, additional fish were produced in 2022 at the Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery in Louisiana. The project is led by Mike Montagne from the USFWS TX Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office. We are getting close to the point in the project where there should be enough mature fish in the system to hopefully identify natural reproduction this year or next.

12) Federal Entity Updates

Discussion:

The USFWS and USGS representatives will provide updates for their respective agencies.

13) Invasive Carp Advisory Committee Update

Discussion:

Invasive Carp Advisory Committee (ICAC) co-chairs Rob Simmonds, USFWS, and Brian Schoenung, IL DNR, will discuss ICAC and workgroup membership, progress, and next steps with the Executive Board. The Principals of Operation for the revised ICAC, updated in August 2022, are provided below. ICAC related action items from the board's August 2022 meeting include:

1. The Invasive Carp Advisory Committee (ICAC) co-chairs will keep the MICRA Executive Board informed on progress of populating the ICAC and technical workgroups.
2. Simmonds will provide the Executive Board with an overview of the ICAC and technical workgroup members that have been confirmed and which positions are still needed from the different sub-basins.
3. The sub-basin partnership coordinators and the ICAC co-chairs will continue to discuss how the sub-basin scale objectives should be consistently developed and will report back to the Executive Board when they have reached consensus.

Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resource Association (MICRA)**Invasive Carp Advisory Committee (ICAC)****Principles of Operation****Revised August 2022**

- I. **PURPOSE:** The Invasive Carp Advisory Committee (ICAC) is a collaborative team of State and Federal agency representatives established to provide basinwide coordination in support of multijurisdictional actions to prevent, contain, and control bighead, black, grass, and silver carp (i.e., invasive carp) populations in the Mississippi River Basin through the implementation of four regional Invasive Carp Control Strategy Frameworks (Frameworks) that stepdown implementation of the national *'Management and Control Plan for Bighead, Black, Grass, and Silver Carps in the United States'* throughout the Mississippi River Basin. Six inter-agency sub-basin invasive carp partnerships collaboratively address priorities identified in the four regional Frameworks. Under the direction of the MICRA Executive Board, the ICAC's purpose is to provide basinwide coordination for the development of collaborative advice and recommendations on the development, implementation, and assessment of management and control actions across the six sub-basin partnerships to promote a unified, collaborative strategy for the Mississippi River Basin.

- II. **OBJECTIVES:** To accomplish its Purpose, ICAC members will work collaboratively within their respective agency's authorities, policies, and available resources to:
 - (A) Develop advice and recommendations that promote a unified, basinwide strategy in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of invasive carp management and control measures across the six sub-basin partnerships sufficient to inform future management actions at appropriate scales.
 - (B) Guide the design and development of a cohesive invasive carp population assessment across all sub-basin partnerships for consistent data collection, management, and analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of on-going management actions and inform future management actions at appropriate scales.
 - (C) Provide basinwide perspective, advice, and recommendations on sub-basin partnerships' annual work plans to maximize collaboration on a basinwide strategy through the development of project proposals that address highest priority needs.
 - (D) Recommend an annual suite of collaborative project proposals for the Mississippi River Basin for submittal by MICRA to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for funding consideration.

- (E) Coordinate the development of an annual Monitoring and Response Plan for the Mississippi River Basin that documents USFWS funded projects as part of an overall basinwide strategy to manage and control invasive carps.
- (F) Identify additional research, technology, and data needs to effectively inform and support basinwide invasive carp management strategies.
- (G) Support the development of technologies and methods that will result in the control and management of invasive carps, and the transferability of these new tools for use in all sub-basins as applicable.
- (H) Inform the MICRA Executive Board of progress and seek guidance on overall direction, challenges, and identified needs for advancing collaborative basinwide strategies to manage and control invasive carp in the Mississippi River Basin.

III. **GUIDELINES:** Consistent with their authorities, policies, and available resources, ICAC members will:

- (A) Promote an environment of maximum collaboration, openness, and honesty in the consideration of needs, priorities, and approaches in the development of coordinated basinwide strategies.
- (B) Attend ICAC meetings and/or technical workgroup meetings, as appropriate. It is acknowledged that members' in-person participation may be restricted at times due to agency travel budgets and workload.
- (C) Work cooperatively to develop and promote science-based recommendations to achieve the Purpose and Objectives of the ICAC.
- (D) Foster and encourage collaboration and inter-basin coordination to achieve the Purpose and Objectives.
- (E) Report progress, challenges, and identified needs to the MICRA Executive Board and incorporate Executive Board guidance into overall direction for coordinated basinwide invasive carp management and control.

IV. **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE:**

The ICAC is a standing technical committee within MICRA that reports to the MICRA Executive Board. The ICAC's structure is based on the MICRA Executive Board structure but is expanded to include representation from additional Federal agencies identified in the Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA) of 2014, Section 1039. Each sub-basin will be represented by a MICRA member State agency within the respective sub-basin. Agency representatives to the ICAC are intended to be senior level biologists with a combination of high-level agency perspective, scientific expertise, and

technical proficiency sufficient to accomplish the committee's Purpose and Objectives, develop basinwide guidance for sub-basin partnerships and technical workgroups, and apply direction provided by the MICRA Executive Board. The ICAC may use ad hoc technical workgroups as needed to address specific needs. The ICAC and any technical workgroups formed under the committee will attempt to utilize a State and Federal agency co-chair structure. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service sub-basin invasive carp partnership coordinators and technical workgroup co-chairs will participate as non-voting members of the ICAC. Additional agency representatives or technical experts whose participation supports the Purpose and Objectives may be invited to participate in ICAC meetings and discussions to provide needed expertise but will not serve as ICAC members.

The ICAC is structured as follows:

Voting members

- State Agency Sub-Basin Representatives (one of which will serve as co-chair)
 - Arkansas-Red-White Rivers
 - Lower Mississippi River
 - Missouri River
 - Ohio River
 - Tennessee-Cumberland Rivers
 - Upper Mississippi River
- Federal Agency Representatives: (one of which will serve as co-chair)
 - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
 - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 - U.S. Geological Survey
 - National Park Service

Non-voting members

- Sub-Basin Invasive Carp Partnership Coordinators
 - Arkansas-Red-White Rivers Sub-Basin Invasive Carp Partnership
 - Lower Mississippi River Sub-Basin Invasive Carp Partnership
 - Missouri River Sub-Basin Invasive Carp Partnership
 - Ohio River Sub-Basin Invasive Carp Partnership
 - Tennessee-Cumberland Rivers Sub-Basin Invasive Carp Partnership
 - Upper Mississippi River Sub-Basin Invasive Carp Partnership
- Technical Workgroup State/Federal Agency Co-Leads (as needed)

- V. **METHODS:** ICAC members will meet as needed for the purpose of guiding efforts, reviewing progress, and developing strategies and direction for future partnership efforts to support the Purpose and Objectives. The ICAC will attempt to conduct business and meetings via e-mail, teleconference, and webinar to the extent possible. In-person meetings will be convened in locations within the Mississippi River Basin. ICAC co-chairs will provide regular updates to the MICRA Executive Board and seek guidance on overall direction, challenges, and identified needs for advancing the Purpose and Objectives. ICAC co-chairs and sub-basin partnership coordinators will work with the ICAC members and sub-basin partnerships to utilize collaborative basinwide strategies to achieve the Purpose and Objectives.

- VI. **AUTHORITIES:** To achieve its Purpose, the ICAC relies on member participation under existing missions and authorities of their respective agencies. Nothing in this document shall be interpreted to alter existing agency missions or authorities.

- VII. **FUNDING:** ICAC members are funded through their respective agency budgeting processes, subject to any legislative direction provided as part of appropriations. The mention of activities in this document should not be interpreted to be a commitment to future funding nor any specific funding level. Discussions of the ICAC will help inform, but will not direct, agency decisions on how they allocate their respective funding or resources.

- VIII. **AGREEMENT:** The ICAC members will respect the role of each agency in terms of providing resources and assistance for invasive carp prevention and control efforts. The provision of such resources and assistance will depend upon relevant authorities and available appropriations of each member agency.

- IX. **TERMS AND REVISIONS OF AGREEMENT:** This Principles of Operation is a living document and can therefore be updated as needed.

14) Sub-basin Invasive Carp Partnership Coordination

Discussion:

Sub-basin invasive carp partnership coordinators Neal Jackson (ORB and TNCR) and Caleb Aldridge (LMR and ARW) will discuss partnership coordination with the Executive Board. Jackson will review and discuss the update provided below on invasive carp deterrence projects in the Tennessee-Cumberland Rivers Sub-basin and the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway. In addition, several action items from the board's August 2022 meeting will be revisited.

1. Executive Board members will work with the sub-basin partnership coordinators to develop a request and guidance regarding sub-basin scale objectives for invasive carp management and control.
2. The sub-basin partnership coordinators will work with their respective sub-basin partnerships to identify sub-basin scale objectives to assist the ICAC and MICRA Executive Board with basinwide planning and communications.
3. The sub-basin partnership coordinators and the ICAC co-chairs will continue to discuss how the sub-basin scale objectives should be consistently developed and will report back to the Executive Board when they have reached consensus.
4. Sub-basin partnership coordinators will discuss the Executive Boards interest in basinwide platforms for data management and analysis with the sub-basin partnerships.
5. Sub-basin partnership coordinators follow-up with their partners to determine interest and concerns in a basinwide approach to collecting and storing telemetry data.
6. The sub-basin partnership coordinators and ICAC co-chairs will provide examples of communications needs and barriers to the Executive Board.

Tennessee-Cumberland River Sub-basin Invasive Carp Deterrents Update – Provided by Neal Jackson

On the heels of recent calls with the USACE Nashville District regarding their process to plan for invasive carp deterrence projects in the TNCR and TTW, I'd like to clarify how the USACE and TNCR partnership efforts intersect and provide updates on each effort.

1. USACE pilot program planning often referred to as WRDA section 509 planning (referencing the legislative authority that the USACE is working under).

The USACE Nashville District is developing a program management plan and an environmental assessment for a pilot program (up to 10 projects, \$25M) to deter invasive carp in the TNCR and TTW. USACE leads an interagency group (USACE, USFWS, TVA) in the planning process. USACE reached out to the state agencies of the TNCR before the new year to offer updates and request input.

2. TNCR Invasive Carp Decision Analysis Project. This project is a TNCR invasive carp partnership priority for funding with FY23 funds. The outcome of this decision analysis project will be a shared list of priority deterrence locations including the Cumberland, the Tennessee, and the TTW. This list is critical for inclusion in the USACE planning for their pilot program (see 1. above) and will also inform future invasive carp priorities and decisions within the sub basin partnership.

The facilitators for this effort, Mike Colvin (USGS Columbia Environmental Research Center), Max Post Van der Berg (USGS Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center), and Caleb Aldridge (USFWS Lower Mississippi River Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office) lead a core team in setting up the decision analysis process. The early steps in that process are framing the problem, understanding constraints, defining the deliverables, understanding information needs, defining the stakeholders and setting a schedule for meetings.

The facilitators shared a crude schedule last week. The goal is to provide a deliverable in late summer (August). The facilitators are working on a more detailed schedule now. The state reps (stakeholders) will be invited into the process in the near future.

15) 2023 DC Fly-in Planning**Discussion:**

Ashlee Smith has been working with Brad Parsons to plan MICRA's 2023 DC Fly-in. The fly-in has been scheduled for March 6-10. The team of MICRA delegates includes Brad Parsons, Brian Schoenung, Ben Batten, Dave Dreves, Mark Thurman, and John Lott. Draft briefing documents will be shared and discussed with the MICRA Executive Board. In addition to meeting with Congressional offices, the team will meet with AFWA's Government Affairs coordinator. Additional meetings with NGO's and partner organizations may be requested. MICRA has requested a meeting with USFWS leadership and is interested in meeting with USACE leadership.

16) Fishery Commission and Coalition Next Steps

Discussion:

Ashlee Smith will lead the Executive Board in a discussion about the next steps for advancing the Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission initiative. Smith will also provide an update on formation of a coalition to support the initiative, including the following action item from the board's August 2022 meeting.

- ! Smith will begin working with the existing coalition members to begin working on a charter that addresses how to become a coalition member, Pledge of Support, dues, etc.

Board members will consider discussing initial steps to stand up the commission should it be authorized.

17) 2023 Congressional Field Visit / Informational Briefing

Discussion:

The Executive Board will discuss additional Congressional outreach needs in 2023.

Topics of discussion will include:

1. Rescheduling the informational briefing that was cancelled in December 2022
2. Plans for a possible Congressional field visit to Lock and Dam 19 on the Mississippi River the week of May 15th, 2023
3. Additional needs and opportunities for Congressional field visits
4. Additional needs for Congressional communications

18) MICRA Delegate Webinar Preparation

Discussion Item:

During the board's August 2022 meeting, an action item was created to schedule a few Zoom meetings for the MICRA Delegates to be briefed on MICRA's fishery commission outreach effort. Parsons and Smith have tentatively identified February 14th and 16th as target dates for two Zoom meetings. The timing of the Zoom meetings is intended to provide the Executive Board with the opportunity to brief the delegates on the March 2023 Fly-in and talking points, as well as the board's plans for making a push for the Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission in 2023 and how the MICRA delegates are being asked to support. Notes from the August 2022 discussion are provided below.

Most of the Congressional offices that MICRA has been working with over the past several years are familiar with the fishery commission concept and are expecting this draft language. The first step will be to secure 2-4 bipartisan initial bill co-sponsors from both the House (Natural Resources Committee) and Senate (Environment and Public Works Committee). After that, Ashlee will work to get additional co-sponsors from both chambers. At this point, she will likely need assistance from the sub-basin representatives to recruit delegates from within the sub-basin to participate on calls with Congressional staff. She would like the sub-basin representatives to assist her in setting up calls with the delegates to prep them for the calls with Congressional staff. She will not bring people into calls with Congressional staff without first talking with and preparing them for the discussion. This step will likely happen after January. It is unlikely that there will be a big conservation package that is introduced this calendar year that MICRA can try to tack the fishery commission language on to.

Ashlee was asked about meeting with the new delegates ahead of time to brief them on the fishery commission outreach effort. She proposed meeting with all the delegates since MICRA will be starting to push this initiative. It will be difficult to get all the delegates together at one time, even within the different sub-basins. It might work well to hold a few Zoom meetings to provide the delegates with multiple opportunities to get the information. The basic message to the delegates would be 'this is what's going to happen, we have all the materials, we've got you for these discussions, we just need you to talk about local information and how this will help you and your state'.

- ! The Executive Board will work with Ashlee Smith to schedule a few Zoom meetings for the MICRA Delegates to be briefed on MICRA's fishery commission outreach effort.

Related to the proposed Fishery Commission and the interaction with the legislative people in DC, is there any need for the sub-basin representatives to raise awareness with their delegates that there maybe questions coming back to the states from the legislative offices? There's a chance that members might call and ask agency directors about the commission. Most states have signed the Joint Strategic Plan, but a reminder to let them know that the Executive Board is working on the Commission from the DC side would be prudent. Calls could also be made to the Governor's office and not the Directors. Smith suggested that briefing agency directors should be adequate at this time. The biggest concern is that agency administrators and state administrations are not blind-sided by calls from Congressional staff.

- ! Parsons will ask MICRA Delegates to brief new agency directors on the MICRA Fishery Commission initiative and to keep existing agency directors informed of progress and status of the commission.

19) 2019-2023 Priorities Accomplishment Tracking

Discussion:

During the August 2022 meeting, Conover was requested to update MICRA's 2019-2023 Priorities document with initial accomplishments and to provide the draft to the sub-basin representatives. The updated priorities document is provided below. The board members will review the draft accomplishments and discuss the priorities that have not been addressed.

MICRA

Goals, Objectives, and Priorities

2019 - 2023

MICRA works to preserve, protect, restore, and enhance interjurisdictional fishery resources and aquatic habitats in the Mississippi River Basin through cooperative assessment and management of the basin's aquatic resources. MICRA's member agencies developed a comprehensive Strategic Plan in 1991 and completed an Activity Prioritization of the Plan's 10 goals and 133 tasks in 1992.

The MICRA Executive Board established an Operational Plan for the 5-year period 2014-2018 to focus on a much smaller subset of priorities for the partnership to accomplish during the operational period through the work of member agency delegates, the Executive Board, and committees. This Operational Plan, which is updated every five years, is intended to be a guiding document that is timely and responsive to the current biological, social, and political issues that influence fishery resource management. As such, the Operational Plan is an adaptive document that will be updated as needed to remain relevant and provide for the most effective cooperative management of the fishery and aquatic resources in the basin.

MICRA's priorities and accomplishments for the operational period 2014-2018 are reported in Appendix 1.

Goals and Objectives

GOALS

- I. Coordinate basin-wide management of interjurisdictional fishery resources and aquatic habitats among the responsible management entities. *[INTERNAL COMMUNICATION]*
- II. Increase awareness, support, and funding for basin-wide management of interjurisdictional fishery resources and aquatic habitats. *[EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION]*

OBJECTIVES

1. Coordinate implementation of interjurisdictional fishery and aquatic resource management programs throughout the basin. *[IJ FISH]*
2. Identify priority habitat restoration needs for the Mississippi River Basin, coordinate with national and regional aquatic habitat initiatives, and provide a forum for information and technical exchange. *[AQUATIC HABITAT]*
3. Coordinate prevention and control measures for Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) to ensure sustainable native aquatic ecosystems within the basin. *[AIS]*
4. Develop and implement a communication plan for disseminating information to target audiences. *[COMMUNICATION]*
5. Secure funding for long-term operational needs and implementation of basin-wide programs. *[FUNDING]*

Priorities

OBJECTIVE 1: Coordinate implementation of interjurisdictional fishery and aquatic resource management programs.

PRIORITIES:

1. Identify and prioritize basin-wide resource management issues of concern in the Mississippi River Basin.
 - a) MICRA delegates meet every 3-5 years to review priorities and discuss emerging issues of concern within the basin.
 - An in-person All Delegate meeting planned for January 2020 was postponed. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the board was not able to schedule another in-person meeting.
 - A virtual all delegate meeting was held in October 2020. The focus of the meeting was the draft Joint Strategic Plan, Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission Proposal, and Congressional outreach.
 - b) Standing committees review priorities and discuss emerging issues of concern within the basin every 3-5 years. Committees will report to the Executive Board at least once annually on progress of priorities identified in this document.
 - This did not occur until 2022 due to the board's focus on the JSP and fishery commission initiative.
 - Executive Board reviewed the priorities with the committee chairs in August 2022. Committee chairs were charged with addressing the current priorities and reporting back on progress and new priorities.
 - c) Executive Board updates MICRA's priorities document every 5 years.
 - **On-going:** Executive Board has initiated work on a new priorities document for 2024-2028, seeking input from MICRA delegates. Will be able to mark this as complete by the end of 2023.
2. Use standing technical committees and temporary working groups as needed to provide for the development of coordinated strategies to address priority issues and identify basin-wide research needs to

support conservation, management, and utilization of native interjurisdictional fishes and aquatic resources.

- The Executive Committee considered the status of all standing committees, and their alignment with the Joint Strategic Plan and Priorities Document. The Gamefish and Native Mussel committees were sunset in May 2021. The Habitat committee was sunset in August 2021.
 - The Invasive Carp Advisory Committee was revised in 2021 and is now a standing committee that reports to the Executive Committee.
- a) Support continued efforts for coordinated basin-wide management of paddlefish and sturgeon species.
- Paddlefish Sturgeon Committee meets annually.
 - Supported a Paddlefish Commercial Harvest States Workgroup. The workgroup provided a report to the Executive Board in 2023 that includes a suite of recommendations for advancing cooperative interagency management of Paddlefish in the Mississippi and Ohio rivers.
- b) The Paddlefish and Sturgeon Committee will develop a basin-wide management plan for paddlefish.
- Funded a project to facilitate the development of a basinwide Paddlefish management framework. A workgroup was formed and began working on this project in late 2022. The Framework is expected to be completed in 2 years.
- c) The Paddlefish and Sturgeon Committee will continue to coordinate and manage (e.g., regional tag coordinators) a basin-wide coded-wire tag database for paddlefish.
- The committee continues to maintain the database. The committee will address this charge once the basinwide framework document is complete.
- d) The Paddlefish and Sturgeon Committee will provide recommendations to the Executive Board for standardized methods for documenting and reporting harvest data for paddlefish.
- The committee will address this charge once the basinwide

framework document is complete.

- e) The Paddlefish and Sturgeon Committee will provide recommendations to the Executive Board for basin-wide commercial harvest databases for paddlefish and sturgeon, including roe harvest and roe buyers.
 - The committee will address this charge once the basinwide framework document is complete.
- f) Conserve native freshwater mussels through continued support of the Freshwater Mollusk Conservation Society (FMCS).
 - MICRA provided \$1,000 to sponsor the FMCS's 2019 Symposium.
 - MICRA was not requested for financial assistance in 2020-2022.
 - The MICRA Executive Board met with the President of the FMCS in August 2022. The FMCS and MICRA will continue to support each other's native mussel conservation needs.
 - On-going: The Board and FMCS President agreed that formal recognition that explicitly identifies the partnership between the two organizations in their governance documents would be beneficial. For example, language to clarify that the FMCS will function in the place of a Native Mussel Committee for MICRA and provide recommendations to the Executive Board as needed. Similarly, the FMCS should refer to MICRA in their guidance documents and providing an annual update to the Executive Board.
- g) Native Mussel Committee will provide recommendations to the Executive Board for standardized methods for documenting conservation strategies employed in mussel conservation.
 - This priority was discussed with the FMCS President in August 2022. The board was informed that this priority is being addressed in other ways. It was recommended that MICRA defer to the FMCS to identify native mussel conservation priorities and then support the society as needed.
- h) Native Mussel Committee will develop and maintain a Basin wide list of propagation facilities and species that are being

produced at each location.

- This priority was discussed with the FMCS President in August 2022. The FMCS has a committee that has been working to develop and maintain a list of mussel propagation facilities in the U.S., including information on the species and production numbers. The list is available on request of the Conservation and Restoration Technical Committee chair.
3. Build consensus for compatible regulations and policies for priority interjurisdictional fishery and aquatic resources issues.
 - a) Executive Board will work with the MICRA delegates to develop a Joint Strategic Plan for Management of Mississippi River Basin fisheries.
 - The Joint Strategic Plan was finalized in February 2021.
 - Agency directors from 24 of 28 MICRA member states have signed on to the Joint Strategic Plan through a Memorandum of Agreement. (No Colorado, Montana, Nebraska, or Wyoming)
 4. Determine the socio-economic value of fishery resources and related recreation in the Mississippi River Basin.
 - a) Work with USFWS to provide a written economic value report for the Mississippi River Basin, including an analysis by MICRA sub-basin boundaries, using 2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife Associated Recreation data.
 - The Executive Board met with USFWS in February 2022 to discuss the possibility of developing a new report. USFWS informed MICRA that it would not be possible to use the 2016 data and that there would be limitations with the 2021 data due to limited participation by the states.
 - USFWS agreed to work with MICRA to complete a new report once the information from the most survey is received in 2023.
 - b) Work with USFWS to develop a report that includes an estimated return on dollars invested to manage fishery resources in the Mississippi River Basin based on 2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife Associated Recreation data. (Report similar to the USFWS 2011 publication 'Net

Worth: The Economic Value of Fisheries Conservation' that focuses on contributions to the U.S. economy in terms of jobs created and conservation stimulated commerce.)

- This was not addressed due to limited participation by the states in the surveys in 2016 and 2021.

c) Work with USFWS to develop methods of extracting use and socio-economic value information for fishery resources and related recreation for the MICRA sub-basin units (reported for the basin as a whole) from the USFWS 5-year national survey of fishing, hunting, and recreational use. (Similar to how information for the Great Lakes is broken out and reported now.)

- This was not addressed due to limited participation by the states in the surveys in 2016 and 2021.

OBJECTIVE 2: Identify priority habitat restoration needs for the Mississippi River Basin, coordinate with national and regional aquatic habitat initiatives, and provide a forum for information and technical exchange.

PRIORITIES:

1. The Executive Board will finalize the draft MICRA Aquatic Habitat Action Plan prepared by the Aquatic Habitat Committee.
 - **Ongoing:** Work continues to develop a list of interjurisdictional rivers in the basin. The Action Plan should be finalized by the end of 2023.
2. Support Aquatic Habitat Committee efforts to establish regular information exchange, communication, and coordination between entities responsible for aquatic habitat management in the basin.
 - Aquatic Habitat Committee was sunset in August 2021 following development of the Aquatic Habitat Action Plan.
 - **On-going:** MICRA will host a large rivers habitat symposium at the 2023 AFS meeting in Grand Rapids, MI. Will be able to mark this as complete by the end of 2023.
3. The Aquatic Habitat Committee will identify and make recommendations to the Executive Board for engaging with the National Fish Habitat Partnerships and coordinating priorities in the MICRA Aquatic Habitat Action Plan.

- Aquatic Habitat Committee was sunset in August 2021 following development of the Aquatic Habitat Action Plan. No action planned for this priority.
4. Create awareness of the needs and opportunities to increase and direct funding to implement priority habitat projects identified in the MICRA Aquatic Habitat Action Plan.
 - *The Joint Strategic Plan for Management of Mississippi River Basin Fisheries* completed in February 2021 identifies and discusses 'Habitat Loss and Degradation' as one of four key problem areas that must be addressed to comprehensively manage self-sustaining interjurisdictional fishery resources in the basin.
 - **On-going:** Aquatic Habitat Action Plan will be posted on the MICRA website after it is finalized in 2023.
 - **2023?** MICRA can include talking points about basinwide needs and opportunities for large river habitat restoration in the Mississippi River Basin when meeting with Congressional staff and discussing the proposed Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission.

OBJECTIVE 3: Coordinate prevention and control measures for Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) to ensure sustainable aquatic ecosystems within the basin.

PRIORITIES:

1. Host the Mississippi River Basin Panel (MRBP) on Aquatic Nuisance Species for coordination of basin-wide efforts to prevent introductions of AIS and manage introduced AIS populations.
 - MICRA continued to host the MRBP from 2019-2023.
2. Prevent, manage, and control AIS in the Mississippi River Basin by supporting the Aquatic Invasive Species Committee.
 - The MICRA AIS Committee was reformed to address MICRA priorities that the MRBP is not able to address as a FACA-regulated advisory panel to the ANS Task Force.
 - The AIS Committee held its first meeting in September 2022.
3. Promote strengthening of Injurious Wildlife provisions of the Lacey Act.
 - **On-going:** discussed with AFWA on multiple occasions.

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.
 - **On-going:** these needs are being discussed by the AIS Committee.
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.
 - There has been no discussion with this group during 2019 to present.
 - Arkansas, Colorado, and Missouri now require triploid grass carp to be stocked. Only Alabama, Iowa, Mississippi, and Nebraska continue to allow stocking of diploid grass carp (continental US).
 - b) Aquatic Invasive Species Committee will coordinate efforts to implement recommendations in the February 2015 MICRA Grass Carp Report.
 - This is on the MRBP Prevention and Control Committee's work plan.
 - This is on the AIS Committee work plan. Will need to coordinate with the MRBP Prevention and Control Committee.
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.
 - This is on the AIS Committee work plan.
7. Support efforts to prevent the exchange of AIS between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins.
 - Submitted a comment letter in February 2019 to "support USACE's efforts to prevent the transfer of ANS from the Mississippi River Basin to the Great Lakes River Basin when designed and implemented as a part of a comprehensive alternative of control

actions and technologies to achieve the overall GLMRIS goal of preventing the transfer of ANS in both directions between the two basins”.

- MICRA participated as a member of the Chicago Area Waterway System Aquatic Invasive Species Stakeholder Group until it was dissolved in 2022. This diverse stakeholder group worked to reach consensus on a set of recommendations to elected and appointed local, state, and federal officials and to the public on short and long-term measures to prevent Asian carp and other aquatic invasive species (AIS) from moving between the Mississippi River and Great Lakes basins through the Chicago Area Waterway System.
 - DC Fly-in talking points (2019-2023) included a recommendation to “direct and fund USACE (\$500k), through appropriations and WRDA, to complete a feasibility study to prevent two-way transfer of ANS, initiated with the Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study (GLMRIS)”. Specifically, to initiate the scoping phase for a Feasibility Study to prevent downstream transfer of ANS.
 - DC Fly-in February 2020 included a meeting with USACE leadership to discuss (among other topics) the Mississippi River Basin states’ concern with the continued lack of action to prevent the downstream transfer of ANS from the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River Basin as directed by Congress through the GLMRIS authorization.
8. Coordinate efforts to prevent introductions, stop the continued spread, and control established populations of Asian carp in the basin.
- MICRA and the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors and Premiers held an Invasive Carp Summit in January 2020 to discuss regional coordination of regulatory, management, and research programs regarding invasive carp.
 - 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’.
 - This topic was included as a discussion topic with Federal

agencies and Congressional offices during MICRA's 2019 Fly-in.

- In coordination with Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith, MICRA hosted a Congressional staff briefing in May 2019 to discuss invasive carp management and control in the Mississippi River Basin.
 - All six sub-basins were specified in the 2020 WRDA bill and all six sub-basins have been specified in appropriations bills since FY2020.
- b) Coordinate basinwide efforts to develop sub-basin Asian Carp Control Strategy Frameworks, including Action Plans for implementation.
- Asian Carp Control Strategy Frameworks have been developed for all six sub-basins and are posted on the MICRA website.
 - Sub-basin partnerships have not developed action plans for implementing their respective sub-basin frameworks. This need will be further assessed by the revised ICAC.
- 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.
- MICRA works with the USFWS sub-basin coordinators each year to develop an annual Monitoring and Response Plan for the Mississippi River Basin and posts the document on the MICRA website.
- 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.
- MICRA works with the USFWS sub-basin coordinators each year to compile project proposals from all sub-basin partnerships.
 - Compiled projects are reviewed by the MICRA Invasive Carp Advisory Committee and a basinwide recommendation is submitted to the USFWS by the MICRA Chairman each year

for funding consideration.

- 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.
 - The AIS Committee was not asked to address this priority as it will be considered by the revised ICAC.
- f) Aquatic Invasive Species Committee will provide recommendations to the Executive Board for documenting and reporting harvest data for Asian carp species.
 - The AIS Committee was not asked to address this priority as it will be considered by the revised ICAC.
- g) Promote consistent outreach materials and messages throughout the Mississippi River Basin.
 - MICRA works with the USFWS sub-basin coordinator to develop similar documents each year for the MRP and reporting for basinwide consistency.
 - Annual summary reports for projects implemented under the Monitoring and Response Plan are compiled and posted on the MICRA website.
 - Documents are posted on the MICRA website to provide basinwide and national information on implementation of the national management and control plan.
 - This priority is on the MRBP Education and Outreach Committee's work plan.

OBJECTIVE 4: Develop and implement a communication plan for disseminating information to target audiences.

PRIORITIES:

1. Work with outreach specialists from member and entity agencies to draft, finalize, and implement a MICRA communications plan.
 - This has been tabled while MICRA worked on the Joint Strategic Plan and Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission initiative.
 - **On-going:** The Executive Board began to discuss the MICRA

communications plan again during their February 2023 meeting.

2. Executive Board and committees will maintain current content on the MICRA website.
 - MICRA continues to maintain the MICRArivers.org website.
 - The Executive Board requested all standing committees to review their respective pages on the website and develop content as needed.

3. Engage in efforts to increase awareness and action of Congressional members to improve management of fishery and aquatic resources in the Mississippi River Basin.
 - MICRA contracted for Policy and Government Affairs service annually from 2019-2023.
 - MICRA organized a Fly-in to Capitol Hill annually from 2019-2023. The 2021 Fly-in was conducted remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic
 - In coordination with Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith, MICRA hosted a Congressional staff briefing on Invasive Carp Management and Control in the Mississippi River Basin in May 2019, in Washington DC.
 - MICRA participated in a Congressional staff briefing July 22, 2019, hosted by the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) and the Congressional Boating Caucus to examine the environmental and economic problems created by aquatic invasive species.
 - MICRA hosted a Congressional field August 25-26, 2021, at Pickwick Dam on the Tennessee River.
 - MICRA partnered with the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) and the Upper Mississippi River Basin Association (UMRBA) to host a Congressional field visit in conjunction with a USACE Science Team Open House at Lock and Dam 22 on the Mississippi River October 12, 2022, to discuss the significance of large-scale habitat restoration and connectivity projects; project monitoring and evaluation; and collaborative, multi-agency approaches to interjurisdictional fisheries management.
 - **On-going:** MICRA will host a Congressional staff briefing in Washington, DC, in 2023.

4. Develop outreach materials, information brochures and short publications on issues of concern to fishery resource management in the Mississippi River Basin as needed.
 - **On-going:** MICRA continues to work on finalizing the MICRA Aquatic Habitat Action Plan.
5. Develop a 5-year report of activities, accomplishments, and remaining resource needs identified in the MICRA priorities document.
 - **Not started:** What is this? To be developed in 2023? Can we use this document with accomplishments noted?
6. Host workshops and networking opportunities at national and regional professional meeting (e.g., Midwest Fish & Wildlife Conference, SEAFWA, AFS Parent Society meetings) for MICRA member agency delegates, committee members, and partners.
 - An informal mixer was hosted in conjunction with a joint MICRA and Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors and Premiers Invasive Carp Summit and MICRA Executive Board meeting in January 2020.
 - COVID-19 has limited opportunities for additional workshop and networking opportunities since March 2020.
 - **On-going:** 2023 opportunities?

OBJECTIVE 5: Secure funding for long-term operational needs and implementation of basin-wide programs.

PRIORITIES:

1. Pursue reliable, long-term funding sources and mechanisms for MICRA.
 - MICRA's Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission initiative is intended to result in an authorization and appropriation of Federal funding to support the states' effort to collaboratively manage sustainable interjurisdictional fishery resources.
 - MICRA's sustained Congressional outreach efforts resulted in
 - Increases in U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) grant funding for implementation of ANS Task Force approved state/interstate AIS management plans from \$2,000,000 in FY18 to greater than \$4,000,000 in FY23.

- Invasive carp funding increases to the USFWS to support states' collaborative efforts to manage and control invasive carp populations in the Mississippi River Basin. Funding to states increased from approximately \$1,000,000 in FY18 to approximately \$18,000,000 in FY23.
 - WRDA 2020 language directing an expansion of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service led multi-agency effort from the "Upper Mississippi and Ohio River basins and tributaries" to the "Mississippi River and tributaries, including the 6 sub-basins of the River."
 - WRDA 2020 authorizations for \$25,000,000 for a pilot invasive carp deterrence program in the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers Sub-basin. WRDA 2022 included direction for at least one deterrence project in the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway.
 - WRDA 2020 language authorizing of \$4,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2021 through 2025 for a USFWS invasive carp eradication program to provide financial assistance to states to implement measures necessary to eradicate invasive carp. No funding for this program has been appropriated through FY23.
2. Work with MICRA member agencies to pursue formation of a congressionally funded Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission to coordinate fisheries research, control aquatic invasive species (e.g., Asian carps), and facilitate cooperative management of interjurisdictional fishery and aquatic resources among the state, tribal, and federal management agencies.
- MICRA completed the collaborative development of '*A Joint Strategic Plan for Management of Mississippi River Basin Fisheries*' in February 2021.
 - Agency Directors from 24 of MICRA's 28 member states have signed a Memorandum of Acceptance of the Joint Strategic Plan.
 - MICRA briefed the AFWA Fisheries and Water Resources Policy Committee and the AFWA Invasive Species Committees on the MICRA Joint Strategic Plan and Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission in September 2019.
 - MICRA has contracted for policy and government affairs services to

assist MICRA with the Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission.

- Ashlee activities and additions...

20) 2024-2028 Priorities Document Development

Discussion:

The board members decided during the August 2022 Executive Board meeting to begin developing a 2024-2028 MICRA Priorities document. An excerpt from the August 2022 meeting notes from this discussion is provided below. There was some additional discussion about a 2024-2028 Priorities document during the August 2022 meeting discussion about Joint Strategic Plan implementation. An excerpt from the notes on this discussion are also provided below. Because the draft 2019-2023 accomplishments were not provided to the sub-basin representatives until February 2023, the annotated 2019-2023 Priorities document has not been shared with the MICRA Delegates for their input on MICRA's 2024-2028 priorities. Board members will consider what progress can be made during the meeting in the absence of initial input from the MICRA delegates.

[The Joint Strategic Plan can be accessed here.](#)

2024-2028 Priorities Document Development discussion notes - August 2022

Gathering input from the delegates would likely be the first step. Priorities for the next 5-year period could be an agenda topic if the board moves forward with an all-delegate meeting. Conover asked the board members if they have a preference on how to gather input from all MICRA delegates.

We should share the 2019-2023 document with the delegates so they know what we are talking about when we request input for the next 5-year period. MICRA's first priorities document was for 2014-2018. At the end of that 5-year period, the board added accomplishments under each identified priority to track progress. The annotated 2014-2018 priorities document with accomplishments is included as an appendix at the end of the 2019-2023 document. Does the board want to similarly track progress towards the 2019-2023 priorities? We could develop an initial draft of accomplishments for the current priorities document, although we will not be able to finalize it until the end of 2023.

Will the development of a 2024-2028 priorities document be a complete rebuild of a new document or more of a revision of the current document? A review of the existing document should be a reasonable starting point for developing the next 5-year planning document. Unless the board determines that it would like to start from scratch, we are likely just looking at updating with any new priorities and deleting priorities that have been accomplished or are no longer relevant. Reminding the delegates what the current priorities are would be a great place to start.

What is the timeline for providing the delegates with the current MICRA priorities document and requesting input on the new priorities document? It would be nice to have some initial input from the delegates ahead of the board's winter meeting. A potential timeline would be:

- Request delegate input prior to the end of 2022
- Discuss delegate input and develop an initial draft during the board's February meeting
- Provide delegates with a draft document for 2024-2029 and request input prior to the board's summer meeting
- Review delegate comments and finalize the new document during the board's summer meeting
- Review and finalize 2019-2023 accomplishments at the board's 2024 winter meeting

A sub-basin meeting format similar to the call Batten held with his delegates ahead of this meeting may be a good alternative to holding an all-delegate meeting. I'm more likely to get feedback from the other sub-basin delegates if I have a call and talk through things with them rather than counting on them to open an email and get engaged. Its hard for the delegates to find time to really dig into an email that has several action items and/or attachments. Batten thought his sub-basin pre-call was useful and plans to repeat them in the future.

The ORFMT is meeting this fall. A review and discussion of the MICRA Priorities document could be added to the agenda. Walking through this document with the ORFMT members will likely result in better input than just an email.

This document and the commission could be the basis for an all-delegate meeting. The sub-basin meetings would be a quick way to gather input and then schedule an all-delegate meeting later in the year. We could also include a discussion about implementation of the Joint Strategic Plan, with or without a commission.

- ! Conover will update the 2019-2023 MICRA Priorities document with initial accomplishments and provide the draft to the sub-basin representatives.
- ! Sub-basin representatives will provide the annotated 2019-2023 MICRA Priorities document to their respective sub-basin delegates to request initial input on 2024-2028 priorities by the end of the calendar year.

Joint Strategic Plan Implementation discussion notes - August 2022

We should consider Joint Strategic Plan implementation in conjunction with the next 5-year priorities document. The board should start putting together some examples of things that MICRA is currently working on and additional things that MICRA would like to work on. We are currently working on a basinwide Paddlefish management framework. Should we also consider a basinwide management framework for Lake Sturgeon and other interjurisdictional species? Identifying some concrete steps would be helpful. Another example is expanding FishTracks for invasive carp in the Illinois River to the remainder of the basin and possibly other interjurisdictional fish.

Part of the communication out to the MICRA Delegates along with the Priorities Document could be that the Executive Board is considering Joint Strategic Plan implementation and will be building that into the 2024-2028 priorities document. Some communication with the delegates regarding the Joint Strategic Plan would be useful so that they know the board is working on implementation.

Fiss stated that he expected implementation to come once MICRA received funding for the commission. He doesn't see MICRA implementing those things other than how the MICRA members would anyway within our own agencies. Agencies could adopt philosophies from the Joint Strategic Plan, but the MICRA Delegates would not be implementing on a project basis until there is funding. Until the commission is authorized, we can only look at how the Joint Strategic Plan can be implemented in the absence of additional funding.

21) MICRA Communications Plan

Discussion:

The Executive Board members had a lengthy discussion about communications and communications needs during the board's August 2022 meeting. Notes from that discussion are provided below. Conover was asked to share the communications planning notes from the board's July 2014 meeting with the Executive Board members and to add a discussion about a MICRA communications plan to the agenda for the board's February 2023 meeting. Board members will consider the August 2022 discussion notes and previous notes regarding a MICRA Communications Plan and discuss a path forward.

MICRA Communications discussion notes - August 2022

Communications

A dynamic hub for active communication within and among the sub-basin partnerships would improve efficiency. The coordinators mentioned the idea of developing common sub-basin partnership fact sheets but also identified capacity for communications as a challenge.

There is a substantial amount of resources directed towards communications within the Great Lakes Invasive Carp Regional Coordinating Committee (ICRCC). The invasivecarp.us platform does not seem conducive to hosting a bunch of information from the rest of the nation. It's unclear how much funding goes to support that group's collaborative communications and how the decision was made to provide that level of support. It may be time to consider funding communication needs in the Mississippi River Basin and making information readily available through the MICRA website or another location. There are good alternatives to hosting our own information hub. Research Gates are a potential way to allow collaboration outside the MICRA member agencies.

From a policy perspective, this information has been incredibly helpful. Congressional offices frequently ask specifically how the funding is being used. It would help tremendously to bring some additional specificity to how the USFWS is supporting the states' efforts in the basin, and how they state and federal agencies are collaborating. A coalition could help with some of these invasive carp communication needs in addition to supporting a Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission. Prior to COVID, MICRA organized informational briefings in DC where state and federal agencies would talk about their collaborative efforts.

Federal agencies are not restricted from discussing what they are doing and how they are supporting this effort.

There is likely 25% of a full-time position for someone to focus on the variety of communications needs to support the partnerships and MICRA. There have been discussions within the sub-basin partnerships about communications for years, but these have not developed into anything tangible.

Is there any interest on the Service's part to allocate some base funding to address the communications needs in the Mississippi River Basin? If not, is there any appetite among the states for using a portion of the \$14 million provided by the Service to address basinwide communication needs? This is something that the Service can consider and talk through. Does it make sense to continue to use the existing MICRA structure or should this be developed as a common project? If the states prefer that this type of support comes from the Service, then this is something that would need to be considered internally. All options are on the table. The first step would be to identify specifically what type of support is needed and then developing this into a request. We'll be able to better consider options once we get the need clearly identified. What we want to consider is 'Is the need strong enough to warrant potentially allocating resources towards that effort'?

You might consider working with someone to rough out a communications plan. The first thing they will ask is who are you trying to reach and what information are you trying to communicate. Having a rough communications plan will help identify the amount of resources needed. Similar to the discussion that we have been having about the sub-basin learning from the other experience and not duplicating effort, it would be helpful to start by reviewing the ICRCC's communication plan and adapting it to the Mississippi River Basin's needs.

The ICRCC has a communications workgroup. Perhaps we should consider a communications workgroup under the ICAC. Do the agencies have communications staff that could participate on a communications workgroup and not add to the capacity constraints of the biologists? It is important to get that collaborative messaging piece at that broader scale. Most states and agencies are good at communicating about specific projects, but very few people have a good understanding of what is going on nationally and how one project ties in with or supports other projects in different parts of the basin.

We have had discussions about a rough communications plan with Service External Affairs staff in the past. This discussion has been started a couple of

times but continues to stall out. The ICRCC communications workgroup may be able to provide some perspective on what it took to get their workgroup members active.

So far, we have been talking about one-way communication but there are also needs for two-way communications between the sub-basin partnership members or the sub-basin coordinators and the partnership members. For example, providing a workspace for collaborative documents, locating SOPs, or a single location for all things carp. IL DNR has grant supported funding that goes to a subcontractor to do a lot of the heavy lifting within the ICRCC Monitoring and Response Workgroup. Tasks like assembling an annual Action Plan and getting information assembled and posted on the website. These types of tasks are not being handled by the ICRCC's communication workgroup members. There are multiple models depending on need.

A communications workgroup could also help with keeping information current. The state fact sheets that MICRA has used for Capitol Hill briefings were very effective, however, some of the information now dates back to 2014. There was also no information about USFWS projects occurring in the different states. Those projects should be pointed out.

Is MICRA's communications plan still active? MICRA does not have a communications plan. The Executive Board had an initial discussion about audiences and messages in 2014 but delayed developing a communications plan while focusing on the fishery commission initiative.

Is there interest in any action related to a communications workgroup? Do people think there is a deficit in the public's understanding of what the agencies are doing to address invasive carps? Is the general public your main target audience? You might want to focus on elected officials and agency or regulatory officials, then the general public to bolster grassroots support. You want to make sure your directors are fully aware of the importance of the collaborative effort and how all the different pieces fit together. Many people support one particular element but do not have a grasp of the bigger picture.

The revised ICAC could be asked to evaluate the different communications needs for the basin and come up with a plan. Would it save a step to form a workgroup now with the agencies' outreach and communications people and ask them to connect with the ICRCC communications workgroup? We have tried to get the agency people engaged a few times in the Ohio River Basin, but it never seemed

to go anywhere. The state agency communications folks are geared more towards getting information on platforms to the general public. A lot of the needs we've discussed this morning are between sub-basins and different audiences than the general public. This may be a deeper dive than asking the state agency communications people to take this on. Would it make sense to put a communications workgroup in place underneath the ICAC rather than requesting the ICAC to take this on directly? We could try to identify co-chairs to get the ICAC and committee started. Do those same needs exist within MICRA itself? Is this larger than invasive carp? Yes, but invasive carp is the paramount need and the likely issue where funding might be available to move this forward. The other layers could be added on if you get a good launch on the invasive carp communications. Two co-chairs for a communications workgroup would be a good way to start.

What is needed to prevent the group from stalling out as it has in the past? It needs to be one of the top priorities for someone to make sure that it has a champion and it is being working on. Communications people generally are not in the fisheries program in some agencies, so they don't have to do the work when they are asked. It may not be a priority for them even if it is a priority to the fisheries program. It would be interesting to get perspective from the ICRCC communications workgroup about how they are able to get the agencies to regularly participate. It may just come down to money and funding to do the work. The communications workgroup should be tasked with identifying the communication needs and not the communications themselves. We may need to contract the communications work itself out. There will still be a need for people beyond the workgroup to provide the information that needs to be communicated. This will require time and commitment on their part to support communications.

Would there be value in having a core team within the ICAC that consists of members of the ICAC, the technical workgroups, and communications experts to provide communication and coordination of the overall effort? It appears that there is a need to have people responsible for reaching out to the sub-basins and states to pull information back, coordinate and facilitate connections between the sub-basins on projects, provide connections on expertise, and provide tools for outreach to different target audience to help facilitate the overall effort. There is a nexus among those three groups to provide communication and coordination. It may be possible to contract external support or staff time so that all the work isn't falling on those core members. Would MICRA want to recommend that a small portion of the total USFWS funding that is allocated to the individual sub-basins be allocated to the basin as a whole to support basinwide initiatives like this? It's

likely there will be more and more of these types of needs. Ideally new funds could be used in this way rather than carving out of the existing funding. This is similar to how USFWS grants are administered in the Great Lakes.

There seems to be competition among some Congressional offices for the individual sub-basins. It would be really helpful to have a basinwide summary of what is needed over the next five years to present a holistic need rather than a sub-basin by sub-basin approach. Even within the sub-basin we don't have an outward looking forecast of where we'd like to be in five years.

Who should comprise a communications workgroup? If the state agency communications people aren't the right group, are we tasking our biologists with this? We could contract for this support. Hired experts are still going to have to ask a lot of questions and require a considerable amount of time from the biologists. It might be worth contracting for additional support and to make sure the information is delivered correctly.

If MICRA had a place at AFWA, then the Directors would have an interest in this which would then require that the IT people care about this. The Invasive Species Committee at AFWA seems mostly focused on terrestrial issues and there is very little discussion of invasive carp despite how big of an issue this is. We are missing out on that AFWA level director buy-in that could result in more agency support outside of fisheries. Brian Canaday gave a presentation on MICRA and the fishery commission concept at the AFWA meeting in St. Paul, MN, several years back. We might want to consider getting on the agenda for an upcoming AFWA meeting. What about starting with some of the regional AFWA groups – MAFWA, SEAFWA, WAFWA? We could also continue to work with the Invasive Species Committee and the Government Affairs staff. There may not be an opportunity to have time in front of the Directors at SEAFWA.

Does the USFWS contribute monetarily to MICRA more than supporting the coordinator position? Not specifically to MICRA, but they do provide the sub-basin coordinators for invasive carp partnerships. An education, outreach, and policy committee might be an approach that would open funding from outside entities.

Rather than forming a communications workgroup, do we task the ICAC with discussing and defining communications needs and the board will continue to discuss how address those needs? Bandwidth may be a concern for the ICAC. If the ICAC is tasked with this, then they will likely not be able to work on removal or another priority beyond population assessment. If this is broader than invasive

carp, is it something that the Executive Board should handle? This is the group that works directly with Ashlee, not the ICAC. MICRA's messaging continues to emphasize the MICRA is more than just invasive carp or AIS. The communications needs are much broader than invasive carp. You might consider a communications committee under the Executive Board rather than the ICAC. This inter-basin coordination need has been brought forward through a discussion about invasive carp, but that doesn't mean it should be addressed within the invasive carp structure. It would be helpful to see the ICRCC communications plan. They have a communications workgroup, but they do not have a communications plan. Concrete examples of barriers from the sub-basin partnerships that the MICRA Executive Board could address would be helpful. We also need to review the notes from the Executive Board's initial discussion about a communications plan.

- ! Conover will share the communications planning notes from the board's July 2014 meeting with the Executive Board members.
- ! Conover will add a discussion of a MICRA Communications Plan to the agenda for the board's Winter meeting.
- ! The sub-basin partnership coordinators and ICAC co-chairs will provide examples of communications needs and barriers to the Executive Board.
- ! The Executive Board will hold a conference call specifically focused on resuming this discussion about internal and external communication needs, particularly the following considerations.
 - o A dynamic hub for active communication within and among the sub-basin partnerships would improve efficiency e.g., a workspace for collaborative documents, housing SOPs, basically a single location for all things carp.
 - o Focus communications on elected officials and agency or regulatory officials, then the general public to bolster grassroots support.
 - o Make sure your directors are fully aware of the importance of the collaborative effort and how all the different pieces fit together.
 - o Is there any interest on the Service's part to allocate some base funding to address the communications needs in the Mississippi River Basin? The first step would be to identify specifically what type of support is needed and then developing this into a request.
 - o Would MICRA want to recommend that a small portion of the total USFWS funding that is allocated to the individual sub-basins be

allocated to the basin as a whole to support basinwide initiatives like this?

- It would be helpful to have a basinwide summary of what is needed over the next five years to present a holistic need rather than a sub-basin by sub-basin approach.
- It might be worth contracting for additional support and to make sure the information is delivered correctly.
- We might want to consider getting on the agenda for an upcoming AFWA meeting. What about starting with some of the regional AFWA groups – MAFWA, SEAFWA, WAFWA?
- Consider a communications committee under the Executive Board rather than the ICAC.

MICRA Communications Plan discussion notes - July 2014

Notes:

Executive Board discussion over the last couple years regarding the website, River Crossing, Action Plans, the annual trips to DC, and most recently the revisions to MICRA Priorities Document have brought to light MICRA's central focus of communication and the need for a communications plan.

Executive Board members invited communications experts from their respective agencies to participate in a conference call to help the board determine how to move forward with developing a communications plan. Whiteman provided a copy of an MDC Strategic Communications Template (see below discussion notes).

Katie Steiger-Meister, Public Affairs Specialist with USFWS Region 3, joined the Executive Board via webinar and presented a sequence of recommended steps to move from planning into action when it comes to communications (see below MDC Strategic Communications Template). The primary elements that MICRA needs to clearly define are:

1. Objectives
2. Audiences
3. Messages
4. Tools and activities
5. Resources

6. Implementation

7. Evaluation

MICRA's Priorities document does a nice job of defining MICRA's objectives. The document repeatedly mentions "target audience" but does not define who that audience is. It will be important for MICRA to define its target audiences before moving on with communications planning. Katie's presentation included recommendations for potentially moving forward with a stakeholder analysis and the remaining steps to complete the communications plan. The final product would be a strategic communications plan that matches your goals with the interests and concerns with MICRA's clearly defined target audience; clear and consistent messaging that is timely, appropriate, and of interest to the people you are trying to talk to; and you will effectively and efficiently use your financial resources.

Discussion:

Are you aware of the current communications effort that MICRA is undertaking – the forms of communication MICRA has used to communicate in the past, their audience, and the content? Only those things included in the MICRA Priorities Document. There is a list under Objective 4 that summarizes the different communications tools that MICRA has used. Are there other major tools that are not included here? No.

Is MICRA's principle focus internal or external customers? Are our current communications tools reaching the intended audiences? It is hard to know if you are using the right tools if you don't know exactly who your target audiences are.

Following a discussion about the proposed path forward and MICRA's next steps, then spent about an hour completing a stakeholder analysis for internal and external audiences facilitated by Katie Steiger-Meister.

Internal Target Audiences -

- Fish Chiefs (state level)
 - Senior Fisheries leadership/staff
- Federal Delegates
- Tribal Delegates

- Sub-Basin Groups
 - UMRCC
 - MRNRC
 - ORFMT
 - TN-Cumberland
 - Arkansas Red
 - LMRCC
- Biologists
 - Fish (tribal, state and federal)
 - Wildlife (tribal, state and federal)
- Foresters (tribal, state and federal)
- Hydrologist (tribal, state and federal)
- State/federal agency directors
 - Senior agency leadership/staff
- MICRA Committees
 - Aquatic Habitat
 - Game fish
 - AIS
 - Mussels
 - Paddlefish/Sturgeon

External Target Audiences -

- Congressional (state and federal)
- Other Basin Associations
 - UMRBA
 - MRRIC
 - Orsanco
 - Great Lakes Fishery Commission
 - Great Lakes Commission

- Mississippi River Commission
- Journalism Societies/Media Outlets
- Natural Resource NGOs
 - TNC
 - Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation
 - American Sportfishing Association
 - America Rivers
 - Audubon
 - Wildlife Forever
- Natural Resource Professional Societies
 - Wildlife Society
 - America Fisheries Society
 - Freshwater Mollusk Conservation Society
 - Southeastern Fisheries Council
 - Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
 - MAFWA
 - SEFWA
 - WAFWA
 - NEFWA
- Fish Habitat Council
- Fish Habitat Partnerships
- LCCs
- Corporate Partners
- Anglers
- Non-Member Federal and State and Tribal Partners
 - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
 - Tennessee Valley Authority
 - NRCS
 - U.S. Forest Service

- U.S. EPA and state equivalents
 - GLIFWC
- Colleges and Universities w/ Natural Resource Programs
- Sea Grant
- Industry Partners
 - American Waterway Council
 - Aquaculture
 - PIJAC
 - Commercial Fishers and Musselers
- ANS Task Force
 - Regional panels

Next Steps

The next steps for using these internal and external audience lists are to organize the lists and then prioritize who the primary audience really is. Once you have determined exactly who you want to target for communications, you then match the key messages of MICRA with the key interests and concerns of your defined target audiences.

At the Stakeholder Engagement and Congressional Outreach workshop that MICRA held in Kansas City in January 2014, Ange Corson (MDC) discussed using a communications continuum of people you want to keep informed all the way to people you want engaged in decision making. That may be a very useful exercise for MICRA as a lot of the audiences on this list would only be on the informational end of that continuum. We could create a matrix with the different parts of the continuum and start fitting our audiences into the matrix.

MICRA needs to truly target who the priority audiences are and focus an effective message to those audiences that are engaged and responsive to MICRA already. This will help ensure wins early on. This is an iterative process, so MICRA can always go back and expand on your initial focus to include additional audiences. Tackle the more challenging communications obstacles down the road.

Would we have different plans for different tiers of priority stakeholders? That could work well for MICRA given the sweeping geography and complexity of audiences.

Do we still want to develop a communications committee or do we intend to move forward? That is a good idea if you want to leave the task to a small group of volunteers rather than tasking all of the Executive Board members or delegates. As we get to the other steps, it is likely the Executive Board that will need to answer the more specific and tougher questions regarding priorities, audiences and appropriate messages. Do you have someone you would delegate this to or is the Executive Board going to tackle this ourselves?

Once we put the audiences into the matrix, we can decide if we want to develop tiers for MICRA's communications planning. Two tiers that identify the key audiences that we need to immediately target and lower priority audiences that we come back to may be a way to proceed.

- ! Conover will obtain the notes from the communications stakeholder analysis from Katie Steiger-Meister and draft a matrix for fitting the identified audiences onto a continuum from informed to engaged in decision making (based on the presentation by Ange Corson at the MICRA Stakeholder Engagement and Congressional Outreach workshop in January 2014) and provide both the notes and the matrix to the Executive Board members.
- ! Executive Board members will continue working on the 7 steps proposed by Katie Steiger-Meister to complete a Strategic Communications Plan for MICRA via email and conference calls.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS TEMPLATE: (TOPIC)

DRAFT: (DATE)

ISSUE SUMMARY

What is the issue? What is the action? Why is it needed? How will it benefit audiences?
What are the opportunities and challenges? What is our role?

PRIMARY COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

Who are the primary contacts from various divisions?

TOPIC EXPERTS

Who will be identified as topic experts for additional information?

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION GOALS

What are the communication efforts trying to achieve?

TARGET AUDIENCES

- INTERNAL AUDIENCES
- EXTERNAL AUDIENCES

MDC KEY MESSAGES

Which of our five key messages apply to this project?

TOPIC KEY MESSAGES

What are the main points you want audiences and communicators to know and remember?

Include benefits to target audiences.

TALKING POINTS

What are the important points of the information?

COMMUNICATION TOOLS

- **EXISTING TOOLS** – What is already available?
- **ADDITIONAL TOOLS NEEDED** – What needs to be developed?

PROJECT TACTICS AND TIMELINE

What communication tools and tactics will be used and developed? Who, how and when?

Continue TIMELINE as needed.

- **JANUARY 2014**
 - Tool and use
 - Tool and use

- **FEBRUARY 2014**
 - Tool and use
 - Tool and use

BUDGET AND FUNDING

What \$ is needed and from what account and WPI?

PROJECT EVALUATION

How will communications be evaluated for success?

MICRA

Proposed Strategic Communications Planning

Presented by Katie Steger-Meister and Greg Conover
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
July 8, 2024

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

Need to clearly define:

1. Objectives
2. Audiences
3. Messages
4. Tools and activities
5. Resources
6. Implementation
7. Evaluation

2

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

Need to clearly define:

1. Objectives → Communication objectives should be aligned with organizational objectives.
2. Audiences
3. Messages
4. Tools and activities
5. Resources
6. Implementation
7. Evaluation

3

✓ DEFINE OBJECTIVES: COMPLETE

MICRA works to preserve, protect and restore interjurisdictional fishery resources and aquatic habitats in the Mississippi River Basin.

Goals:

- Coordinate basin-wide management of interjurisdictional fishery resources and aquatic habitats among the responsible management entities (INTERNAL)
- Increase awareness, support and funding for basin-wide management of interjurisdictional fishery resources and aquatic habitats (EXTERNAL)

4

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

Need to clearly define:

1. Objectives
2. Audiences → Who *exactly* comprises your target audience?
3. Messages
4. Tools and activities
5. Resources
6. Implementation
7. Evaluation

5

☐ DEFINE AUDIENCE: STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

6

DEFINE AUDIENCE: STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

1. Brainstorm all possible stakeholders for communication
2. Prioritize what group(s) you want to target
3. Identify the concerns/areas of interest for each target stakeholder group

7

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

Need to clearly define:

1. Objectives
2. Audiences
3. Messages → Match key messages to the interest/concerns of defined target audience.
4. Tools and activities
5. Resources
6. Implementation
7. Evaluation

8

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

Need to clearly define:

1. Objectives
2. Audiences
3. Messages
4. Tools and activities → Match the way key messages are disseminated to the target audience with their preferred form(s) of communication.
5. Resources
6. Implementation
7. Evaluation

9

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

Need to clearly define:

1. Objectives
2. Audiences
3. Messages
4. Tools and activities
5. Resources → Match tools and proposed actions with human and financial resources.
6. Implementation
7. Evaluation

10

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

Need to clearly define:

1. Objectives
2. Audiences
3. Messages
4. Tools and activities
5. Resources
6. Implementation → Set expectations and timetables.
7. Evaluation

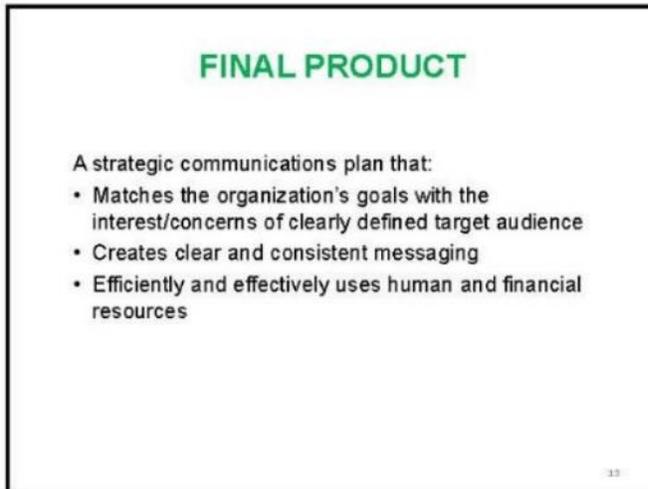
11

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

Need to clearly define:

1. Objectives
2. Audiences
3. Messages
4. Tools and activities
5. Resources
6. Implementation
7. Evaluation → Take stock of what's working, update or amend as needed.

12



MICRA Communications Plan discussion notes - January 2015

MICRA Communications Plan – Next Steps

Decision Item:

Executive Board members will review notes from the July 2014 meeting and discuss how to proceed with completion of the MICRA Communications Plan.

Notes:

Conover reviewed the notes from the discussion with Katie Steiger-meister during the July 2014 meeting. Conover was unable to work on the action items and move this project forward between the July and January meetings. Most of Conover's available time is going towards MICRA's administrative needs, but he has not had time to dedicate to moving projects and action items forward since April 2014. Turner informed the Executive Board in July 2014 that the USFWS would look at ways to get staff support to the MICRA Coordinator since he has been tasked with other USFWS related duties. Conover reported that USFWS was close to providing a part-time position to assist the MICRA Coordinator, but that path forward fell through around December and USFWS is back to looking for ways to provide staff support. Turner added that USFWS is looking at available options, including Conover looking for existing staff in other office with time available to assist with individual tasks. If needed, USFWS will consider hiring a new term appointment if needed. A permanent position is not likely as that would require base funds. USFWS is aware that Conover is being pulled in many different directions, but remains committed to MICRA and want to find a solution. Turner thought he had a solution that would have already had a person

in place to provide assistance, but unfortunately it fell through here at the last minute and we are back to square one.

Discussion:

Is there anything the Executive Board can do between now and the summer meeting to move this forward? We should use our communications of the grass carp project results as a test run to evaluate what we did and how we could have done better.

Is there anything the Executive Board can do to assist Turner and Conover with regard to securing staff assistance for MICRA? No, this is something internal that Turner and Conover will work to find a solution. Conover added that if the Executive Board members are aware of any state staff that would have time to work on the Communications Plan or other MICRA Action Items, he would be happy to work with them to keep things moving forward. Conover was asked to provide the Action Items from this meeting to Executive Board members as soon as possible.

Conover's short-term priorities for MICRA following this meeting will be planning for and follow-up from MICRA's trip to DC in February and organizing for the diploid grass carp state fish chiefs meeting.

22) All Delegate Meeting Planning

Decision:

The first priority identified in MICRA's 2019-2023 Priorities document is for the MICRA delegates to meet every 3-5 years to review priorities and discuss emerging issues of concern within the basin. The most recent All-Delegate meeting was a 2-hour remote meeting in October 2020.

During the board's August 2022 meeting, board members considered organizing an All-Delegate meeting in conjunction with the board's Winter (February 2023) meeting. It was decided that Summer 2023 may be better timing for an All-Delegate meeting to allow the board to meet again prior to an All-Delegate meeting. Proposed agenda topics for a Summer 2023 All-Delegate meeting included:

1. Report out on MICRA's March 2023 DC Fly-in
2. Progress on the Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission initiative and coalition
3. Draft 2024-2028 MICRA's Priorities document

Board members may also want to consider a second priority "to host workshops and networking opportunities at national and regional professional meeting (e.g., Midwest Fish & Wildlife Conference, SEAFWA, AFS Parent Society meetings) for MICRA member agency delegates, committee members, and partners. The Executive Board met in Springfield, Illinois, in January 2020, in conjunction with the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference, and hosted a social to provide a networking opportunity for MICRA delegates.

Board members will decide if and when to schedule an All-Delegate meeting. If there is a decision to schedule an All-Delegate meeting in 2023, board members will need to decide on tentative dates, the preferred meeting format (i.e., in-person, remote, or hybrid), and potentially the location for an in-person meeting.

23) Mississippi River Basin Partnership Initiative

Discussion:

Formed in 2010, America's Watershed Initiative (AWI) is a collaboration working with hundreds of business, government, academic, and civic organizations to find solutions for the challenges of managing the Mississippi River and the more than 250 rivers that flow into it (<https://americaswatershed.org/>). Kim Lutz, Executive Director of AWI, will be joining the Executive Board to discuss a new initiative for the Mississippi River Basin that is being led by AWI and The Nature Conservancy. Executive Board members will have the opportunity to discuss the initiative with Lutz and consider opportunities for collaboration.

THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER

Creating a Sustainable Watershed



Importance of the Mississippi River Watershed to the Nation

The Mississippi River Watershed is an unparalleled economic engine and ecological treasure; it is vital to our national security and global competitiveness. Spanning 31 states and two Canadian provinces the watershed provides:

- » \$70 billion in food, goods, and services
- » Clean drinking water for 20 million people
- » 589 million tons of shipped goods per year through the Louisiana Ports, along with 175 million tons of freight moved through the Mississippi River watershed barge port system
- » \$4 billion in revenue from the recreation-based economy supporting 1.5 million jobs
- » Globally significant ecosystems providing habitat for more than 400 species of fish and wildlife





Call to Action

The Mississippi River Watershed is the only large watershed in the United States without dedicated funding spanning across its sub-basins, and it lacks an integrated, watershed-based approach to address its many urgent and interrelated challenges.

Currently, actions in the watershed are divided among many agencies and governments—often without alignment or coordination. To achieve meaningful improvements, we must build a diverse and robust collaboration of different sectors, public and private, looking at the whole system in an integrated way. This approach would consider ecological, social, and economic factors and lead to the development of shared priorities and amplification of on-the-ground action across the entire watershed.

Key Challenges and Opportunities

Nutrient reduction and soil health strategies leading to improved water quality: The federally mandated Gulf Hypoxia Task force has a goal to reduce the five-year average areal extent of the Gulf of Mexico hypoxic zone to less than 5,000 square kilometers by the year 2035. An interim target of a 20% reduction of nitrogen and phosphorus loading in just three years (2025) is a milestone for immediate planning and implementation actions that will require a significant commitment of resources to accelerate implementation of actions to reduce nutrient loading from all major sources of nitrogen and phosphorus in the watershed.

Investments in Structural and Nature-Based Solutions to mitigate impacts of climate change: The increasing frequency of heavy rain in the Mississippi River Watershed is among the clearest climate change impacts. Recent storms along the Mississippi River have been supercharged and the resultant rain and flood related disasters in the watershed have become persistent and systemic, with seven major flood events occurring between 2000–2019. Average temperatures are also increasing in states along both the upper and lower Mississippi at varying rates. Increasing heat has

costly implications for agricultural yields, public health, energy costs, and infrastructure throughout the corridor. Sea level rise, coastal subsidence and erosion are additional impacts being exacerbated by climate change.

Investments in maintaining existing infrastructure that have proven effective and adopting new nature-based solutions can help mitigate impacts of a changing climate. Additionally, better flood risk assessments and forecasting capabilities will help to reduce damages and loss of life associated with increasingly frequent and extreme flood events.

Improvements in inland transportation and infrastructure: Well-maintained, inland navigation infrastructure that is integrated with rail and highway transport is critical to support the cost effective, safe, and environmentally friendly waterborne movement of goods and materials, including millions of bushels of agricultural products for export. The Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program on the Upper Mississippi is an example of an integrated management approach, charting the course for improved infrastructure and ecological restoration.

Actionable information to drive decision making: To protect the health of the river, and our communities, we must have timely, integrated, and actionable information to drive sound decision making and grey and green infrastructure investments throughout the Mississippi River Basin. Deploying a comprehensive monitoring system that will be a “sentinel for the basin” would provide the standardized information on present and future flooding and flood risk, water quality and sediments, ecosystem health, coastal restoration, and navigation safety to inform land use and infrastructure investments across the basin.

Engage environmental justice communities: Vulnerable communities often endure the brunt of weather and climate impacts. It is critical that we provide climate information, services, and opportunities to contribute to designing a more resilient future for communities that have long been left out of these decision-making processes.

Existing Partnerships

Numerous state, tribal, and local programs, along with dozens of federal programs help fund and implement environmental restoration and management activities, structural, non-structural, and nature-based solutions to flooding and inland transportation and infrastructure throughout the Mississippi River Watershed.

In addition, several intergovernmental bodies (see Attachment A) are providing leadership in the region to address these issues in the Mississippi River Basin.

These activities, however, would benefit substantially from more systematic collaboration and better integration of efforts. This would ensure that their programs are funding effective strategies and are reaching Mississippi River Watershed shared goals for flood risk mitigation, climate preparedness, improved water quality and inland navigation.

Enabling conditions, based on studies from other watershed-wide programs are also in place which makes timing right for such an initiative (Attachment B).



PROPOSED MISSISSIPPI RIVER PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

A policy framework establishing this partnership should include these key aspects:

PHASE 1 | 12-months

- » Analyze key federal and state programs and their sufficiency to address watershed-wide issues (in part completed by the EPA).
- » Examine existing intergovernmental organizations, such as Upper Mississippi River Basin Association, that could serve as models on which to design additional institutions in each of the sub-basins in the Mississippi River Watershed.
- » Consider organizational frameworks that best support the unique needs and social, environmental, and economic challenges and opportunities in each of the five major sub watersheds (Upper Mississippi, Lower Mississippi, Missouri, Arkansas-Red, and Ohio Rivers).
- » In collaboration with existing Mississippi River Basin alliances, develop outcome-based goals for the Mississippi River Watershed system relying upon, among other things, existing data, and science-based indicators for key goal areas. Goals area include: improved water quality, flood risk reduction, and transportation infrastructure.

PHASE 2 | 12 months

- » Develop a DRAFT action plan for addressing the goal areas identified by stakeholders including prioritization of resources
- » Identify high impact funding priorities such as sufficient funding to ensure adequate and comprehensive monitoring and real-time data collection can be used to inform management and investment decisions.
- » Assess need for legislation and potential vehicles to achieve shared goals.

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

- » Develop a process for exchange of information regarding policies, strategies, projects, and activities of the federal agencies related to Mississippi River Watershed.
- » Ensure coordinated federal scientific and other research associated with the Mississippi River Watershed.

Attachment A | **EXISTING PARTNERSHIPS**

MULTISTATE ALLIANCES

America’s Watershed Initiative (31 states, participation from navigation, agriculture, industry, conservation)

Lower Mississippi River Conservation Committee (5 states)

Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Task Force (12 states, multiple federal agencies, EPA led)

Mississippi River Network (10 states, 58 NGO’s)

Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative (10 states, 100 municipalities)

Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee (7 states)

Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (5 states, USACE, USGS, USFWS, UMRBA)

Ohio River Basin Association (14 states)

Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission (8 states)

Red River Valley Association (4 states)

Sentinel Landscape Partnership (5 states, multiple federal agencies (USGS led), multiple NGO’s TNC-led, academic Institutions, Tulane Led)

Upper Mississippi River Basin Association (5 states)

Upper Mississippi River Conservation Committee (5 states)

Upper Mississippi River Restoration Program (5 states, plus USACE, USGS, USFWS and EPA)

INDUSTRY AND TRADE GROUPS

Agricultural Coalitions: National Corn Growers Association, Soy Transportation Coalition

Engineering Firms: Including Stantec and HDR

Inland Navigation: Leaders in the navigation industry including Ingram Barge, Marquette Transportation, Waterways Council, Corn Belt Ports

ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

University of Iowa

University of Maryland

St. Louis University

Tulane University

Attachment B | **ENABLING CONDITIONS**

Having studied the Great Lakes example and others from the Chesapeake Bay, Puget Sound and Danube River, we have identified key enabling conditions that are currently in place in the Mississippi River Basin. One factor is the strong relationships America’s Watershed Initiative (AWI) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) have with the three entities that have historically been the drivers in the watershed—agriculture, navigation, and flood control. While these entities remain critical to success, we also recognize that when only they are engaged the environment and often communities (especially stressed or disadvantaged communities) lose, which in turn sets up this zero-sum game. In addition to strong working relationships with the traditional stakeholder groups, AWI and TNC have a strong history of bringing together unlikely allies in pursuit of greater collaborative breakthroughs and could offer support for efforts across the Mississippi River Basin.

Additional enabling conditions include:

- » Key coalitions are in place—not only does AWI have a network of hundreds of partners developed through the Mississippi River Report Card Process, but there are also well-developed partnership organizations in the Upper Mississippi River Basin (UMRCC, UMRBA, UMRR), in the Lower Mississippi River Basin (LMRCC), Arkansas- Red Basin (AR River Compact), and Ohio River (ORBA, ORSCANCO, TVA, Cumberland River Compact). AWI and TNC have robust relationships with the aforementioned sub-basin groups.
- » A clear desire to move beyond the sub-basins, and consider basinwide opportunities:

The 2015 and 2020 Mississippi River Report Cards engaged more than 600 individuals representing 400 organization who were committed to defining the economic and environmental health of the basin as well as development of shared goals for the basin.

Likewise, TNC recently formed a partnership to address the critical information needs in the basin, bringing together, state, federal agencies, NGOs, and the navigation community to find shared solutions to inform decision-making
- » Key relationships with academia and the engineering industry make it possible to define the goals and metrics around green infrastructure.
- » We have galvanizing issues, water quality, flooding, and inland navigation that all parties can gather around.



For more information, please contact:
 Kim Lutz, Executive Director, America’s Watershed Initiative
Kim.lutz@americaswatershed.org // americaswatershed.org

24) Large Rivers Habitat Symposium Update

Discussion:

Jeff Janvrin (WI) and Neil Rude (MN) will join the Executive Board to provide an update on progress and discuss planning for the MICRA sponsored Large Rivers Habitat Symposium at the AFS 2023 annual meeting August 20-24, 2023, in Grand Rapids, MI. Jeff and Neil prepared a symposium proposal (see below) that was shared with the Executive Board members for review and input. They also requested each sub-basin identify a representative to participate on a basinwide planning committee to assist with organizing the symposium.

Title: Mississippi River Basin Habitat Management for Interjurisdictional Fishes:
Ecosystem Rehabilitation begins with a Single Project.

Short Abstract:

The waters of the Mississippi River Basin (Basin) annually provide more than \$19 billion of recreational fishing value. This economic value derives in part from species that require Basin habitats managed by two or more government agencies, including tribal governments. These “interjurisdictional fishes” require cooperation at multiple levels of government to sustain resilient populations and the habitat critical to key life stages. The Mississippi River Interstate Cooperative Resource Association (MICRA) identified implementation of aquatic habitat enhancement or rehabilitation projects in the Basin as a critical component of agency habitat rehabilitation programs to meet the life history needs of interjurisdictional species. Numerous completed projects within the Basin demonstrate the feasibility of implementing large scale habitat improvement. This symposium will use examples to share insights from Basin-wide project implementation and completion and describe progress of projects soon to be completed for the benefit of interjurisdictional fishes and other species.

Long Desc.:

The waters of the Mississippi River Basin (Basin) annually provide more than \$19 billion of recreational fishing value. This economic value derives in part from species that require Basin habitats managed by two or more government agencies, including tribal governments. These “interjurisdictional fishes” require cooperation at multiple levels of government to sustain resilient populations and the habitat critical to key life stages.

Twenty-eight Mississippi River Basin state fishery agencies and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) ratified the Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resource Agreement in 1990 and formed the Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resource Association (MICRA) in 1991. The MICRA member agencies recognized the need for basin-wide, inter-agency collaboration in the establishment of shared management objectives, and the collaborative planning, implementation, and evaluation of management actions for the successful long-term biological and economic sustainability of interjurisdictional fisheries in the basin. The MICRA has identified implementation of aquatic habitat enhancement or restoration projects as a critical component to address life history needs of inter-jurisdictional fishes of the Basin.

Achievement of rehabilitating habitat for interjurisdictional species will require a variety of approaches to address stressors unique to river reaches across the Mississippi River basin. MICRA published A Joint Strategic Plan for Management of the Mississippi River Basin Fisheries in 2021 "...to provide a more coordinated and structured approach for joint management of interjurisdictional fishery resources in the basin..." This strategic plan summarized stressors in need of addressing (invasive species, sedimentation, navigation, land use, impoundment, etc.) influencing fishery habitats and populations. No single program exists for implementation of projects throughout the Basin, but inter-jurisdictional partnerships, representing different spatial scales, have successfully completed projects on site specific and regional scales.

This symposium will use examples to share insights from Basin-wide project implementation and completion and describe progress of projects soon to be completed for the benefit of interjurisdictional fishes and other species.

25) 2022 Invasive Carp Monitoring and Response Plan

Decision:

The 2022 Invasive Carp Monitoring and Response Plan (MRP) was provided to the Executive Board members for review on January 9, 2023. Future versions of the MRP will be reviewed by the revised ICAC and not the Executive Board; however, since the revised ICAC is still getting up and running, the board is being asked to review the 2022 MRP before it is posted on the MICRA website.

The majority of the MRP is informational (i.e., the project work plans are final), but board members were asked to review of the introduction, the brief sub-basin partnership overviews leading off each partnership's section of project work plans, and the overall format/structure of the MRP. A discussion of the MRP will be included as part of the ICAC/sub-basin partnership coordinators discussion during the upcoming Executive Board meeting.

Executive Board members were asked to specifically consider:

1. If you have any comments or suggested revisions to the introduction or partnership overviews that should be addressed before the MRP is posted on the MICRA website.
2. Do you have suggestions for additional content or revisions to the content or structure of future MRPs?
3. If you are able to read through the projects work plans, do you have any recommendations or requests to provide the ICAC regarding future MRPs?

Executive Board members will discuss the MRP and decide if it is ready to be posted on the MICRA website and shared with the revised ICAC. [The 2022 MRP can be accessed here.](#)

26) USGS Mississippi River Science Forum and MICRA AIS Presentation

Discussion:

Gaikowski and Conover will brief the board members on the USGS hosted Mississippi River Science Forum scheduled for February 15 and 16, 2023. An invitation and agenda for the forum are provided below, along with language from the FY21 and FY22 Federal appropriations bills directing Federal agencies to work on a Mississippi River Restoration and Resiliency Strategy (MRRRS) and for the USGS to host an associated Mississippi River Science Forum.

MICRA received an invitation from USGS on December 15, 2022, to give a 15-minute presentation on “Mississippi River aquatic invasive species with a focus on current state of the science, data gaps and areas of concern, and priority next steps/resources needed.” All presentations and discussion from the Forum will be summarized in a report to Congress following the Forum. Parsons requested Conover to inform USGS that MICRA would provide the requested presentation. Conover was listed as the tentative speaker pending discussion with the Executive Board.

Board members will discuss desired content for the presentation and identify the speaker for the event.

Board members may also want to discuss the MRRRS and associated draft legislation to establish a Mississippi River Restoration and Resiliency Initiative. The draft legislation was introduced in the last Congress by Representative Betty McCollum (MN-D) and is expected to be introduced again early in the current Congress. A fact sheet on the MRRRI is provided below.

EPA FY21 Appropriations

Mississippi River Restoration and Resiliency Strategy.—The Committee recognizes that the Mississippi River basin from Minnesota to Louisiana is a vital American waterway. From funds within the Water: Ecosystems program area, the Committee directs the Agency to establish a Mississippi River Restoration and Resiliency Strategy, in coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of the Interior, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, as well as state, local, and tribal governments, and business and non-profit stakeholders. The strategy will inventory existing federal and state investments in the Mississippi River basin, identify gaps, and make recommendations for policy actions focused on improving water quality, restoring habitat and natural systems, improving navigation, eliminating aquatic invasive species, and building local resilience to natural disasters. The Committee directs the Agency to report the findings, strategy, and recommendations not later than 270 days after enactment of this Act. The Committee provides \$2,000,000 to develop this strategy.

USGS FY22 Appropriations

Within one year of enactment of this Act, the U.S. Geological Survey shall host a Mississippi River Science Forum with relevant federal agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; state, local and tribal governments located in states that border the Mississippi River; academia, and other interested stakeholders. The forum may utilize a virtual format, modeled on the March 25, 2021 Department of the Interior Public Forum on the Federal Oil and Gas Program. The purpose of the forum shall be to share current science, identify data gaps and areas of concern, and to prioritize next steps and identify resources needed to advance the goals of improving water quality, restoring habitat and natural systems, improving navigation, eliminating aquatic invasive species, and building local resilience to natural disasters. The Survey shall incorporate lessons learned on stakeholder engagement from their previous work on the Great Lakes science needs assessment, and shall brief the Committee on the findings from this forum, and make the findings publicly available in a report of the proceedings within 270 days of the conclusion of the forum.



United States Department of the Interior
U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
Region 3: Great Lakes; Region 5: Missouri Basin
Office of the Regional Director
5957 Lakeside Boulevard
Indianapolis, IN 46278

December 15, 2022

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Carbondale, Illinois 62901

Greg Conover

We are writing to request Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resource Association (MICRA) participation in a Mississippi River Science Forum as a subject matter expert speaker. As part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2022 (H.R. 2471), the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) was asked to host a Mississippi River Science Forum in 2023. The forum will utilize a virtual format, and take place on February 15 and 16, 2023. The purpose of the forum is to share current science, identify data gaps and areas of concern, and to prioritize next steps and identify resources needed to advance the goals of improving water quality, restoring habitat and natural systems, improving navigation, eliminating aquatic invasive species, and building local resilience to natural disasters. Our agenda highlights several speaker opportunities for select stakeholders. We would be honored if you would be willing to be a speaker in our eliminating aquatic invasive species session on Day 2. We are looking for about 15 minutes on Mississippi River aquatic invasive species with a focus on current state of the science, data gaps and areas of concern, and priority next steps/resources needed. You will also have an opportunity to contribute to the Forum via a pre- and post-Forum survey. All of the presentations and discussion from the Forum will be summarized in a report to Congress following the Forum.

As mentioned above, the goal is to keep the discussions focused on the collective state of the science, present science gaps, and to present possible next steps. Speakers should address all science they are aware of, not just their or their office/agency's work. All of the information presented during the Forum, and comments captured before, during and after the Forum will be used in a report to Congress. The report USGS delivers will strive to capture the true voice of the collective stakeholder community and be free from any bias or pre-conceived notions.

The USGS hopes you or someone from MICRA will agree to be a speaker and stakeholder in this endeavor. We would be happy to meet with you at your convenience to discuss the Forum and this invitation to speak. If you agree to speak at the Forum, we would like to schedule a 30 minute, or longer, meeting with you to go over the format. Please contact JC Nelson, USGS Forum co-chair, at jenelson@usgs.gov, and Richard Rebich, USGS Forum co-chair, at rarebich@usgs.gov. If you could respond by January 6, 2023, we would be most grateful.

Invitation to the U.S. Geological Survey Mississippi River Science Forum, February 15-16, 2023

Rebich, Richard A <rarebich@usgs.gov>

Tue 1/31/2023 1:32 PM

To: Rebich, Richard A <rarebich@usgs.gov>



You are cordially invited to the Mississippi River Science Forum, February 15-16, 2023, hosted by the U.S. Geological Survey! You are encouraged to send this invitation to other personnel in your organization that may be interested.

The Mississippi River is a multi-faceted, complex resource in the United States that needs a comprehensive and coordinated plan to address science and management needs. As part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2022 (H.R. 2471), the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) was asked to host a Mississippi River Science Forum in 2023. We hope to share current science, identify data gaps and areas of concern, and to prioritize next steps related to goals of improving water quality, restoring habitat and natural systems, improving navigation, eliminating aquatic invasive species, and building local resilience to natural disasters.

Please see the attached agenda for a listing of the great group of speakers that have agreed to address Mississippi River science from their agency's perspective.

Because the Forum is a Microsoft Teams Live event, there will be no formal registration. Here are the links to each day's venues:

[Day 1 - February 15, noon to 5pm, central time](#)

[Day 2 - February 16, 9am to 5pm, central time](#)

We plan to record the Forum and make each speaker's presentation available afterwards. You will also be able to submit questions through the chat, which will either be answered during the Forum or shortly thereafter.

When we sent the Save-the-Date announcement in December, we requested that participants fill out a [pre-meeting survey](#). We plan



Day 1 (Feb 15) all times Central

12:00 US Department of the Interior Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, Tanya Trujillo

12:10 US Geological Survey Director, David Applegate

12:40 Prairie Island Indian Community President, Johnny Johnson

13:10 US Army Corps of Engineers Mississippi Valley Division, Andy Ashley

13:40 Break

13:50 USGS - Layout afternoon topics

13:55 Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Task Force, Katie Flahive

14:15 Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative, Hon. Errick Simmons, Hon. Jim Strickland, and TBD

14:45 Ducks Unlimited, Karen Waldrop

15:15 The Nature Conservancy, Bryan Piazza

15:45 Upper Mississippi River Conservation Committee, Brian Nerbonne

16:15 Lower Mississippi River Conservation Committee, Angie Rodgers

16:45 USGS - Wrap-up and Day 2 agenda

17:00 Adjourn for day

**MISSISSIPPI
RIVER
SCIENCE
FORUM**

WELCOME!

**FEB 15 & 16
2023**

**JOIN ONLINE FOR THIS
MICROSOFT TEAMS
LIVE EVENT!**

**LINKS TO THE
MEETING WILL
BE PROVIDED**

**PLEASE COMPLETE MISSISSIPPI RIVER SCIENCE FORUM SURVEY:
[HTTPS://FORMS.OFFICE.COM/G/GY3TYUJ0X](https://forms.office.com/G/GY3TYUJ0X)**

Day 2 (Feb 16) all times Central

9:00 USGS Welcome back and agenda for the day

9:10 Water Quality

Lauren Salvato, Upper Mississippi River Basin Association
Jennifer Graham, US Geological Survey
Barb Kleiss & Mead Allison, Tulane University
Brief Q&A

10:05 Restoring Habitat and Natural Systems

Jim Pahl, Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority
Jeff Houser, Upper Mississippi River Restoration Program
Sara Schmuecker, US Fish & Wildlife Service
Brief Q&A

10:55 Break

11:05 Aquatic Invasive Species

Greg Conover, Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resource Association
Gray Turnage, Mississippi State University
Kim Bogenschutz, Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Brief Q&A

11:55 Lunch break

12:35 Welcome back

12:40 Improving Navigation

Sean Duffy, Big River Coalition
Lynn Muench, The American Waterways Operators
TBD
Brief Q&A

13:35 Local Resilience to Natural Disasters

Steve Buan, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Molly Woloszyn, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
John "Bud" Plisich, Federal Emergency Management Agency
Brief Q&A

14:25 Break

14:35 Major Influences

Richard Harrison, Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission
John Bullough, US Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Peter Nimrod, Mississippi Levee Board
Brief Q&A

15:25 Climate Science Along the Mississippi River

Olivia Dorothy, American Rivers
Renee McPherson, South Central Climate Adaptation Science Center
Brief Q&A

16:05 Discussion Points, Next Steps, Final thoughts, and Wrap-up

17:00 Adjourn



PLEASE COMPLETE MISSISSIPPI RIVER SCIENCE FORUM SURVEY:
[HTTPS://FORMS.OFFICE.COM/G/GY3TYUJ0X](https://forms.office.com/g/GY3TYUJ0X)

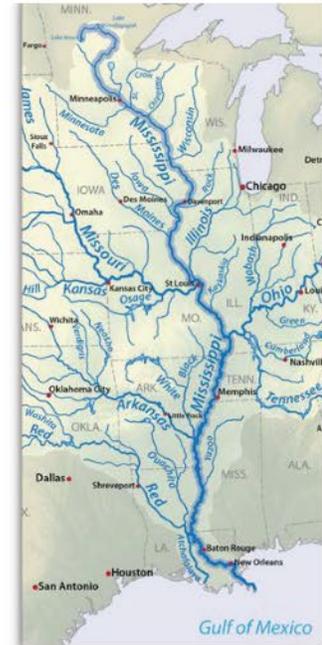


THE MIGHTY MISSISSIPPI

Our Mississippi River is vital to our nation's health:

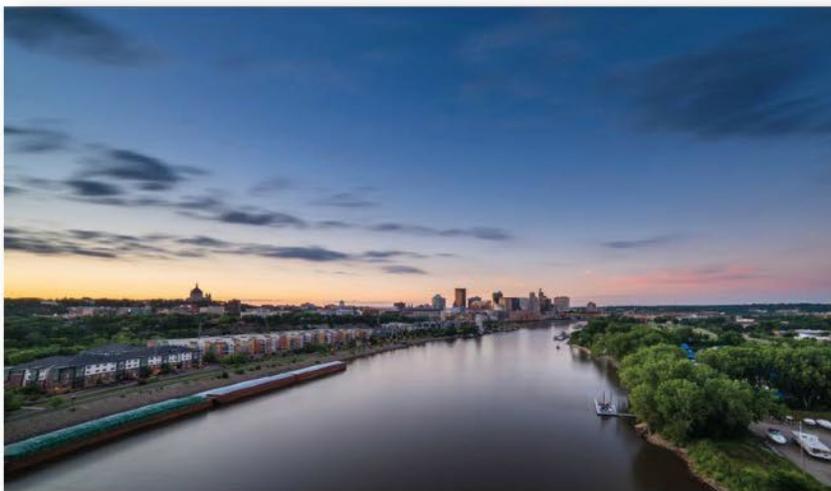
- It's the heart of a \$500 billion-a-year natural resource- and recreation-based economy, employing more than 1.5 million Americans, and is an important shipping corridor.
- More than 20 million people rely on it for drinking water.
- It supports serves as a migration corridor for 60% of North American birds.
- And it speaks to our cultural heritage, the inspiration for countless stories and songs that weave through the fabric of America.

But it is also a river at risk on many fronts, facing severe ecological decline.



RESTORING AMERICA'S RIVER

We need a federal Mississippi River initiative.



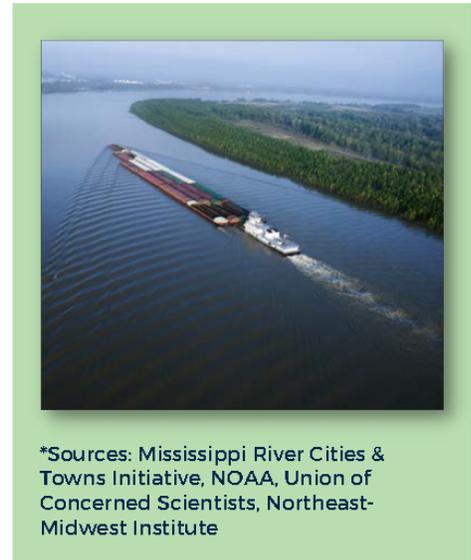
As we have with other treasured, critical waterways—the Great Lakes, Chesapeake Bay, and the Everglades—it's time to establish a national coordination effort and direct federal funding to support local initiatives that will restore America's River and build resilience for the communities that depend on it.

A CRITICAL INVESTMENT

Modeled on the successful Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, the Mississippi River Restoration & Resilience Initiative (MRRRI) would provide the framework, funding, and focus to protect America's River.

MRRRI directs the Environmental Protection Agency to consult and collaborate with other agencies, states, tribal nations, and local governments as well as non-governmental organizations to develop and coordinate the initiative. A regularly updated action plan, developed with public input, will guide the implementation of MRRRI and the use of federal funds in order to:

- Protect our drinking water, wildlife, and river-dependent industries by **reducing runoff pollution**
- Reduce flood and storm risks and **increase community resilience** through ecologically sound management
- Protect and **restore wildlife habitat**, including by preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species



MRRRI will provide grants for restoration projects in mainstem river states, cities, townships, and tribal nations while prioritizing our most at-risk communities. The projects and activities funded by MRRRI would complement and build upon existing federal and state programs to ensure the Mississippi is a healthy working river for generations to come.

For our communities, wildlife, and economy, we need to fill this clear gap in our nation's regional waterway restoration programs. It's time to create a federal Mississippi River Restoration & Resilience Initiative (MRRRI).

THE COST OF INACTION

Without MRRRI's investments, so much would remain at risk: our economy, wildlife, recreational opportunities, and ever-rising costs to keep our communities safe and our drinking water clean.

- Unable to absorb floodwaters or build wetlands, today's Mississippi makes riverfront communities more vulnerable to floods, hurricanes and other storms. Damages to main-stem states from the historic 2019 floods alone cost **\$6.2 billion***.
- Excess nitrates flow into the river and its tributaries creating a dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico, costing our seafood and tourism industries at least **\$82 million** a year.
- Habitat loss and invasive aquatic species threaten the river and gulf's wildlife, fisheries and recreational opportunities — and the nearly **700,000 jobs** that these natural resources support.
- Water utilities up and down the river face substantially increasing financial burdens. Just one mid-sized plant to reduce nitrate pollution costs around **\$10-15 million**.

Communities of color, Indigenous, rural and low-income communities along the river disproportionately bear these costs. Existing federal programs lack sufficient coordination and partnerships to address these challenges and shared responsibility.



mccollum.house.gov/MRRRI



27) Young Professionals Travel Stipend

Decision:

The 2022 Young Professionals Travel Stipend was awarded to Sam Schaick, Large River Fisheries Ecologist with the Illinois Natural History Survey. Schaick sent a thank you note and provided a brief write-up (provided below) on his experience attending the American Fisheries Society annual meeting in August 2022.

I am greatly appreciative of the Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resource Association (MICRA)'s travel grant, which I was recently awarded. This travel grant allowed me to travel to the National American Fisheries Society (AFS) conference in Spokane, Washington where I presented on differences in Illinois River buffalo (*Ictiobus* spp.) and catfish (*Ictaluridae*) populations between upper and lower river pools.

After completion of my presentation, I received constructive feedback from other conference attendees. Among other things, I was informed that otolith microchemistry may be a valuable tool to examine if smallmouth buffalo, channel catfish, and flathead catfish may be using different pools of the Illinois River during different parts of their life history. Ultimately, it was valuable and reassuring to see others take an interest and ask questions about this work; especially since my study species, although commercially and recreationally valuable, are often not of high management or research concern.

Additionally, I was fortunate to meet other researchers and discuss how some of my findings may help with their research objectives. For example, I conversed with a research biologist from Oklahoma who felt persuaded to try hoop nets for a black buffalo and smallmouth buffalo project for which he was having a hard time adequately sampling using electrofishing and gill nets. Further, I was able to discuss with a biologist from North Dakota how my findings might help him to better sample riverine channel catfish populations in the district he manages. Attending and presenting at this conference was overall a highly beneficial experience and I am grateful for MICRA's assistance.

One application has been received for the 2023 Young Professionals Travel Stipend and is provided below. The Executive Board members will consider the application and decide if they would like to award the applicant the 2023 travel stipend. The selection criteria developed by the Executive Board is provided below the application.

MICRA'S YOUNG PROFESSIONALS TRAVEL GRANT

The Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resource Association (MICRA) may award an annual travel grant (reimbursement of actual expenses up to \$1,000.00) to a professional staff member of one of MICRA's member state or federal agencies. The grant is intended to provide individuals who have recently begun their professional career (≤ 5 years) with travel funds to attend a professional meeting or conference that they would not otherwise be able to attend.

Announcements for the travel grant will be made through *River Crossings* and direct mailings to agency administrators. Applications may be submitted beginning July 1 and **the deadline for submissions will be January 15th, annually**. Applications should be completed on the attached form and include a detailed abstract (not to exceed 1-page). A letter requesting support from the appropriate agency administrator accompanying the application is strongly recommended. The MICRA Executive Board will rank applications using a weighted scoring system. Applications will be evaluated based on the following:

- Abstract
- Scientific Value
- Relevance to large river fisheries and aquatic resource management
- Importance to MICRA
- Applicant's reason for attending meeting (e.g., poster or oral presentation, training or workshop, active role in technical committee or another working group meeting)
- Administrator or supervisor's written recommendation

The MICRA Chair will notify the successful candidate and the respective agency administrator in writing within 30-days of the application deadline. In the event the annual travel grant is not awarded, the MICRA Executive Board will consider applications for the travel grant on an individual basis throughout the remainder of the calendar year.

Completed applications should be submitted to MICRA@MICRArivers.org, or mail to: MICRA, 292 San Diego Road, Carbondale, Illinois 62901.

APPLICATION FOR MICRA TRAVEL GRANT

NAME: Patrick W. Padilla AGENCY: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

ADMINISTRATOR / CONTACT: Mike Thomas (618)-201-1191

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN EMPLOYED IN YOUR PROFESSIONAL CAREER? < 1 year

WHAT MEETING ARE YOU PLANNING TO ATTEND? AFS Annual Meeting 2023

WILL THE INFORMATION PRESENTED AT THE MEETING BE PUBLISHED IN A PEER-REVIEWED MANUSCRIPT BASED ON YOUR PRESENTATION AT THE CONFERENCE? Yes

IF YES, EXPLAIN: The data for my research has been collected and is being prepared for publication.

IS A WRITTEN RECOMMENDATION FROM YOUR AGENCY ADMINISTRATOR ENCLOSED? _____, OR BEING PROVIDED SEPERATELY? Yes

REASON FOR ATTENDING MEETING:

To present my research to a wide audience and inform them on the dam passage capabilities of invasive Black Carp.

TITLE OF PRESENTATION:

Determining Dam Passage and Inter-River Movement of Black Carp (*Mylopharyngodon piceus*) via Otolith Microchemistry.

ABSTRACT: ATTACH ON A SEPARATE PAGE (NOT TO EXCEED 1-PAGE)

Patrick W. Padilla

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Cartersville Fish & Wildlife Conservation Office

292 San Diego Road

Carbondale, IL 62901

Application for MICRA Travel Grant: Abstract

Black Carp (*Mylopharyngodon piceus*) is a large benthic invertivore that is native to eastern Asia that has become established within portions of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. Studies have shown that Black Carp consume native bivalves and show potential to compete with native fishes for resources. Recent captures upstream of rivers and tributaries where Black Carp were not previously observed have elicited a need to understand the movement capability of this species. Lock and dam structures were thought to impede fish movement and prevent the spread of invasive carp species and determining the ability of Black Carp to pass through these structures may bring insight as to how we may implement management strategies and future research regarding the inter-river movement of Black Carp. 127 Black Carp were collected from nine study locations throughout the Mississippi and Ohio watershed, with most Black Carp being collected at areas above lock and dam structures. A microchemical analysis of the otoliths from each Black Carp was conducted through a Laser Ablation Inductively Coupled Plasma Mass Spectrometer (LA-ICPMS) and was paired with previously collected water data from each river to infer movement between rivers. A total 109 Black Carp were inferred to have been downstream of a lock and dam structure at one time before their upstream captures. These results suggest that inter-river movement is common among Black Carp within our study area and that fish passage is possible through both spillway and lock structures of dams.

Travel Stipend Selection Criteria

Abstract: (up to 4 pts; select one)

- 1. Abstract originality and quality:
 - Excellent/good (4 pts) or
 - Fair (2 pts) or
 - Poor (0 pts).....

Scientific Value: (up to 6 pts; select one for each numbered bullet)

- 2. Potential for impact to science, management, or society:
 - High (4 pts) or
 - Moderate (2 pts) or
 - Low (0 pts).....
- 3. Peer-reviewed manuscript will be published based on presentation at Conference:
 - Yes (2 pts) or No (0 pts).....

Relevance to Large Rivers: (up to 4 pts; select one)

- 4. Applicant reporting results of:
 - Large river fisheries/aquatic management issues (4 pts) or
 - Other research on large river management issues (2 pts) or.....
 - Other (0 pts).....

Importance to MICRA (up to 6 pts; select one for each numbered bullet)

- 5. Applicant reporting results of MICRA-sponsored research:
 - Yes (2 pts) or No (0 pts)
- 6. Applicant from member agency active in MICRA affairs:
 - Yes (2 pts) or No (0 pts)
- 7. Travel stipend award history in applicant’s state:
 - Not awarded to another applicant from state previously (2 pts) or.....
 - Not awarded to another applicant from state within the last 5 years (1 pts) or..
 - Awarded to another applicant from state within the last 5 years (0 pts)

Reason for Attending (up to 6 pts; award all that apply)

- 8. Applicant giving oral presentation at meeting (2 pts).....
- Applicant giving poster presentation at meeting (1 pts).....
- Attending technical training/workshop at Conference (1 pt).....
- Active responsibility in Conference (e.g., moderator) or technical meeting (1 pt).....
- Other active role in Conference (1 pt).....

Agency Letter of Support (up to 4 pts; select one)

- 9. Agency letter of support submitted with application:
 - Excellent/good (4 pts) or
 - Fair/poor (2 pts)
 - No letter (0 pts).....

Total Points (add points for bullets 1-9; 30 points possible)

28) Schedule Spring Conference Call and Summer Executive Board Meeting

Discussion:

Executive Board members will schedule a Spring conference call and Summer Executive Board meeting.

29) Other New Business / Parking Lot

Discussion:

Executive Board members will address topics put in the parking lot during the meeting and additional business items not on the agenda that board members would like to bring up for discussion.