

# MISSISSIPPI INTERSTATE COOPERATIVE RESOURCE ASSOCIATION

## EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

July 11-12, 2012

Memphis, TN

### Decisions and Action Items

1. The January 2012 meeting minutes were approved. Conover will post the final minutes on MICRA's website.
2. The Executive Board will approve minutes of future meetings via email and disseminate the meeting notes as early as possible after the draft meeting notes have been prepared and reviewed by the Executive Board members.
3. Benjamin will send an e-mail announcement to the Fish Chiefs to announce a call for applications for the 2013 Young Professionals Travel Grant.
4. Benjamin will include a call for applications for the 2013 Young Professionals Travel Grant in his Chairman's remarks in an upcoming issue of *River Crossings* to announce.
5. New pictures of big river habitat, fishes, sampling, and recreational or commercial fishing will be a standing request for the MICRA website. Pictures should be sent to Conover. Let him know if there is a specific location where you would like a specific picture added to the website.
6. Conover will send the MICRA position statement on commercial harvest of Asian carps to Jeff Quinn for distribution to the LMRCC members.
7. Conover will check with Teeg Stouffer on availability and forward on to Chris Racey.
8. Conover will add a link from the MICRA website to the LMRCC on-line 'Interactive Lower Mississippi River Fishing Guide'.
9. Conover will send the pay lakes presentation that Duane Chapman developed for the MRBP a couple of years ago to the Executive Board members for review.
10. Conover will send a revised Native Species Aquatic Habitat Action Plan data template (i.e., fifth and sixth columns removed) to the sub-basin representatives with clear instructions on how the sub-basins should complete the template this fall.
11. Sub-basin representatives will work with their respective sub-basin groups to complete the Native Species Aquatic Habitat Action Plan data template this fall. Completed data templates should be provided back to Conover by 1 December for discussion at the Executive Board's winter meeting.
12. Conover will look modify or change the picture on the front cover of the MICRA brochure to include fish, people, and habitat.
13. Conover will change the wording under 'About MICRA' on the MICRA brochure to match the wording used on the MICRA web page.

14. Conover will send a second draft of the MICRA brochure to the Executive Board members to review.
15. Conover will get an estimate on printing the MICRA brochures.
16. The Executive Board approved organizing a MICRA delegation to conduct another round of Congressional visits during National Invasive Species Awareness Week in 2013.
17. The Executive Board approved looking for opportunities to organize another Congressional briefing as part of the 2013 Congressional visits.
18. The Executive Board members will check with their fish chiefs to see if they are willing to participate in the 2013 Congressional visits.
19. The Executive Board approved looking for opportunities to hold an Asian carp fish fry as part of the 2013 Congressional visits.
20. Conover will work with Jerry Rasmussen to finalize a draft single column layout for *River Crossings*. The Executive Board will review the draft layout and hold a vote of approval at the Executive Board's 2012-13 winter meeting.
21. Conover will send DVDs with the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration documents out to the Executive Board members.
22. Conover will forward to Ron Benjamin the request from Chris O'Bara for MICRA to organize a forum for the states to discuss aspects of commercial harvest for Asian carps.
23. Benjamin will follow-up with O'Bara regarding his request for MICRA to organize a forum for the states to discuss aspects of commercial harvest for Asian carps to let him know that MICRA is interested in exploring the idea in more detail.
24. Conover will follow-up with Tim Schaeffer to find out what actions, if any, may be occurring as follow-up to the Ohio River Basin state's summit this past June to organize a forum for the states to discuss aspects of commercial harvest for Asian carps.
25. Conover will provide the draft 2012 MICRA Activity Prioritization document to the Committee Chairs.
26. Committee Chairs will update the accomplishments and remaining needs in the draft 2012 MICRA Activity Prioritization document and return to Conover by December 1, 2012.
27. Conover will provide a revised version of the draft 2012 MICRA Activity Prioritization document for the Executive Board members to review and discuss at the Executive Board's 2012-13 winter meeting. The Executive Board will decide if the draft document is ready to be sent to the MICRA Delegates for review and approval.
28. Conover will tabulate the "remaining needs" identified in the draft 2012 MICRA Activity Prioritization document and prepare a draft survey for the Fish Chiefs that will be reviewed and discussed by the Executive Board during the 2012-13 winter meeting.

29. Turner will check with the USFWS Division of Economics about the cost to develop socio-economic value information for fishery resources and related recreation in the Basin and its sub basins units (i.e. Upper Mississippi, Lower Mississippi, Ohio, Missouri, Tennessee, and Arkansas/Red river basins) by extracting information from the FWS 5-year national survey of fishing, hunting and recreational use.
30. Conover will send an email providing information about the frozen shovelnose sturgeon that were used in the MICRA study prior to the SOA listing to see if they are wanted for another research project in the Basin.
31. Benjamin will attend the AFS Fisheries Administrators Section meeting in August and make an announcement that MICRA is planning a full delegate meeting in conjunction with the AFS Fisheries Administrators section meeting in Little Rock, AR, in August 2013.
32. The Executive Board will revisit planning for a full delegate meeting in conjunction with the 2013 AFS Fisheries Administrators Section meeting in Little Rock, AR, at the 2012-13 Executive Board winter meeting.
33. The date and location for the 2012-2013 Executive Board winter meeting will be determined via e-mail after the meeting.

## **Outstanding Action Items from January 2012 Meeting Notes**

4. Shults will work with the MRBP to provide the Executive Committee with a draft letter to AFWA to inform them of the potential risk of pay lakes as a vector for the spread of Aquatic Nuisance Species and the ANS Task Force's decision regarding this issue. The letter will describe the need for 1) a risk assessment of pay lakes, 2) standardized state regulations to minimize risks associated with pay lakes, and 3) outreach materials for pay lake operators and users.
11. Travnichek will provide Conover with the link for the MRNRC website when it is up and running.
12. Bobby Reed will work with Chris Racey to develop a 1-page write-up on the Arkansas/Red River Sub-basin for the MICRA web page.
15. Benjamin will draft a letter, for Executive Board review, from MICRA to the USACE regarding the need for major navigation improvements to be paired with a commitment and follow-through to ensure that environmental projects are funded and completed.
19. Benjamin will send the final approved AIS Action Plan and brochure to the MICRA delegates, along with an explanation of the Executive Board's strategy for marketing the action plan.
20. Benjamin will request each state to provide a list that identifies their priority constituent groups that they would like the Executive Board to provide with information on the AIS Action Plan and a copy of the brochure.
21. Benjamin will provide the MICRA delegates with a draft letter of support for each state to adapt, request their governors to sign, and send to MICRA.
22. Benjamin will work to identify who copies of the signed letter of support should be sent to.
27. Benjamin will develop a letter to be sent to the MICRA delegates with the 2012 briefing packets. The letter will inform them about MICRA's efforts the last two years to raise awareness about AIS issues in the Mississippi River Basin, and the Congressional Offices' recommendation that each fish chief contact their federal members' local congressional office.
28. Travnichek will follow-up with Nelson-Stastny regarding the Executive Board's request for the Missouri River Sub-basin to provide a draft position paper on floodplain management for consideration by the MICRA delegates.

**MISSISSIPPI INTERSTATE COOPERATIVE RESOURCE ASSOCIATION**

**EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING**

July 11-12, 2012

Memphis, TN

**Meeting Notes**

**1) Call to Order**

Roll Call

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

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

Introductions

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

Review Agenda

No changes were made to the draft agenda.

Approval of January 2012 Meeting Minutes

Travnichek motioned to accept the January 2012 draft meeting minutes as final. Racey seconded. No further discussion. The motion passed.

! The January 2012 meeting minutes were approved. Conover will post the final minutes on MICRA's website.

Conover proposed that the Executive Board approve minutes of future meeting via e-mail as early as possible after the draft meeting notes are reviewed by the Executive Board. This would allow final minutes to be provided to the MICRA delegates and posted on the web site much sooner. The Executive Board also found it favorable so that they do not have to review the minutes multiple times.

! The Executive Board will approve minutes of future meetings via email and disseminate the meeting notes as early as possible after the draft meeting notes have been prepared and reviewed by the Executive Board members.

## **2) LMRCC Overview and Cooperator Activities**

The Executive Board attended the morning session of the LMRCC meeting. Cooperators and partners spent two hours sharing information and discussing activities in the Lower Mississippi River.

## **3) Chairman's Report**

Ron Benjamin assumed the Chairmanship at the January 2012 meeting. Immediately following the meeting, Benjamin worked with the MRBP to draft letters regarding funding for state ANS management plans and support for the USGS NAS database. Benjamin spent a considerable amount of time in his first two months preparing and planning for the MICRA delegation's Congressional visits and an informational briefing in Washington, DC during National Invasive Species Awareness Week (NISAW). Benjamin provided the following summary:

- MICRA Chairman, Fish Chiefs from Louisiana and Kentucky, and ANS Coordinators from Kansas and Iowa participated in visits
- MICRA visited 14 Senator's and 14 Representative's offices
- MICRA also met with House Appropriations Committee staff, White House's Council on Environmental Quality Asian Carp Director John Goss, and USFWS Director Dan Ashe
- MICRA hosted a Congressional Briefing with the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission on Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) in the Capitol Visitor's Center
- Discussion points for office visits included:
  1. MICRA partnership / mission
  2. National AIS needs
    - Reauthorization of NANPCA/NISA
    - Restore and fully appropriate funding for state ANS management plans

- Federal agency base funds for ANS should be used to address national issues rather than targeting specific geographic regions alone (i.e., specifically addressing 2013 Greenbook proposal for agency base funding for Asian carp in the Great Lakes)
3. AIS issues in the Mississippi River Basin
    - General overview of magnitude of ANS issues
    - Focused in on Asian carp and how are affecting the whole basin whether prevention, containment, control, or a combination of all
    - Need for a national approach to prevent and control Asian carps– ANS Task Force approved a national plan in 2007
    - Successfully preventing establishment in the Great Lakes will ultimately be dependent upon national pathway management, and control and containment in the Mississippi River Basin
    - Requested authorization for implementation of the national Asian carp management and control plan
  4. Discussed local issues with each office
    - Provided state specific fact sheet (when provided to MICRA as requested prior to the visits)

Benjamin was busy for a couple months after the trip to Washington, DC working on follow-up action items and communicating with offices that requested additional information. Several offices were interested in the idea of legislation to authorize implementation of the national Asian carp management and control plan and requested draft language from MICRA for the proposed bill. A number of offices were also alarmed by the proposal in the President's budget to eliminate funding for implementation of state ANS management plans.

Benjamin has had multiple discussions with FWS leadership regarding funding opportunities in FY13, FY14, and beyond for implementation of the national Asian carp management and control plan. So far there have been several discussions but no signs that FWS is making implementation of the national plan an agency priority. He has another call with the FWS scheduled for next week.

Benjamin plans to represent MICRA at the first Lower Mississippi River Resource Assessment public meeting (scheduled for this evening at Mud Island) to support large river habitat restoration. He requested that the LMRCC inform him if there are any key points that the member states would like MICRA to help support.

#### Discussion:

If the Executive Board decides to organize this trip again next year, it may be worthwhile to organize an Asian carp fish fry. There are a number of buildings around the Capitol that may provide options for holding such an event. It is common to have events in these buildings and they are usually fairly well attended, at least by staffers. Lion fish was served at a social in the National Aquarium as

part of NISAW in 2011.

Would there be a better time of year for MICRA to plan the Congressional visits? The delegation discussed this during the trip this year. Although there are many groups making visits this time of year, the timing is desirable as it is shortly after the President's Budget is released and it is an opportunity to quickly provide feedback to members of Congress. This is the best time of year for MICRA to visit, if MICRA is only going to organize one trip to Washington, DC each year.

We need to make the Fish Chiefs aware that the delegation is repeatedly asked if MICRA's members are visiting their Congressional members' state offices. The trip to DC is valuable, but the overall effort would be much more productive if the Fish Chiefs would directly, or work with whomever in their agency is authorized to visit with the state offices once or twice each year. It would be ideal if they would meet with their local offices during NISAW, while the MICRA delegation is making similar visits to offices in Washington, DC. But it is more important that they visit with the state offices, than the time of year that they make the visit.

It was very helpful when the Fish Chiefs called their member's office in Washington, DC a week or so in advance of the MICRA delegation's visits this year. Several offices mentioned that they were contacted about the upcoming MICRA visit, and in some cases it may have resulted in the group meeting with a higher level aid. We definitely want to get more Fish Chiefs to make these calls again next year.

MICRA met with the FWS Director in 2012, perhaps in 2013 MICRA should try to schedule a meeting with the Secretary of Interior's office.

#### **4) Review of January 2012 Action Items**

Notes on incomplete action items provided in the briefing book follow:

3. Shults is working with other MRBP members to develop a draft letter to the fish chiefs regarding support and funding for MICRA's triploid grass carp review.

##### Discussion:

The MRBP has discussed the need to add a new objective to the review. Adding a quantitative assessment of legal diploid grass carp use would likely make the review much more attractive to the Great Lakes states. There is no system in place to assess the extent of diploid grass carp production, distribution, and stocking.

Todd Turner informed the board members that the FWS Region 3 Program has identified funding and decided to fund the review. The FWS will develop an



Agreement (August timeframe) with MICRA and provide MICRA with funding for completion of this project. MICRA will be able to subcontract the review.

What is the time frame for the project? The sub-contractor's Scope-of-Work (SOW) is for about 18 months. The money will have to be spent by September 30, 2014, so there is some additional time beyond the 18 months.

MICRA needs to find out if the contractor will be able to execute the SOW if it is funded this fall. We also need to determine the additional cost for adding a new objective to assess the legal use of diploid grass carp.

Illinois just issued the very last permit for live hauling diploid grass carp for food fish markets. Once this permit is expired, all live grass carp transported in Illinois will have to be certified triploids.

4. The MRBP recently begun working on developing a draft letter to AFWA regarding pay lakes as a vector for the spread of AIS.
13. MRNRC website is not up and running yet.
14. Chris Racey provided Bobby Reed with a draft and is waiting for comments or concurrence.
23. Benjamin has not started on this action item, but will work on it after this meeting.
19. – 22. This group of action items has not been completed. We will discuss this in more detail later in the meeting when we discuss the Action Plans. Part of this is covered in a draft letter that will also address action item #27.
29. A letter has been drafted, but has not been sent out yet. The letter will be mailed hard copy along with a copy of the briefing packets that were used during the Congressional office visits this year.
30. The MRNRC proposed that MICRA develop an issue paper on floodplain management. Benjamin subsequently requested the MRNRC to develop a draft of the recommended letter. Travnichek will work with Wayne Nelson-Stastny to get a draft to the Executive Board.

#### Discussion:

Now would be a good time to get an announcement out to the Fish Chiefs to remind them about the January 15 deadline for the Young Professionals Travel Stipend. An announcement has been added to the MICRA home page, and Benjamin could include a reminder in his Chairman's remarks in an upcoming issue of *River Crossings*. We should use multiple methods to distribute the information.

- ! Benjamin will send an e-mail announcement to the Fish Chiefs to announce a call for applications for the 2013 Young Professionals Travel Grant.
- ! Benjamin will include a call for applications for the 2013 Young Professionals Travel Grant in his Chairman's remarks in an upcoming issue of *River Crossings* to announce.

The website is fairly well developed at this point. Conover needs to further develop the committee sections and add pictures throughout to liven it up.

- ! New pictures of big river habitat, fishes, sampling, and recreational or commercial fishing will be a standing request for the MICRA website. Pictures should be sent to Conover. Let him know if there is a specific location where you would like a specific picture added to the website.

There was considerable discussion during the LMRCC meeting regarding commercial harvest of Asian carps. MICRA's final position statement may be of some benefit to the lower basin states as they are hashing through this issue.

- ! Conover will send the MICRA position statement on commercial harvest of Asian carps to Jeff Quinn for distribution to the LMRCC members.

How much money did MICRA end up spending on the Congressional visits and briefing in 2012? The board budgeted \$10,000 and approved an additional \$3,000 after deciding to do the breakfast briefing. One less delegate than was budgeted for participated and the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission and Lake Tahoe group both reimbursed MICRA for some of the expenses for the briefing. The numbers are included in the coordinators report in the next section, but the total expenditure was a little more than \$8,000. MICRA got a lot of exposure for that amount of money.

## 5) Coordinator's Report

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

Three states and USGS paid 2011 membership dues in 2012. Two states that paid 2010 membership dues did not pay 2011 membership dues; both states have paid 2012 membership dues. Invoices for 2012 membership dues were mailed at the end of May. Fourteen states have paid 2012 membership dues.

Discussion:

Which states have paid 2012 dues? As of July 6: Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Minnesota, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. *UPDATE:* As of July 30: Arkansas, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Montana, Nebraska, and USGS have also paid 2012 membership dues. Only two states that paid dues in 2010 and 2011 have not paid 2012 membership dues to date.

**6) AIS Committee / MRBP**

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

Discussion:

Who is the point of contact to request the Whac-A-Mussel game? Teeg Stouffer with Recycled Fish is coordinating the schedule. Requests can be sent to Conover and he will forward on to Stouffer. Rental cost is currently shipping from the current location.

Is there a place where states can buy one of these games? Yes, the company that made Whac-A-Mole developed Whac-A-Mussel and additional games can be made for approximately \$5,000. Conover can provide more information to anyone that is interested.

Arkansas is hosting SEAFWA and this would be really good to have on hand with invasive species brochures.

! Conover will check with Teeg Stouffer on availability and forward on to Chris Racey.

**7) Native Mussel Committee**

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

Discussion:

The committee did not request the funding that was obligated for the Freshwater Mussel Conservation Society's (FMCS) 2012 workshop. Committee Chairman Don Hubbs requested the 2012 funding be obligated for the FMCS's 2013 conference.

## 8) Paddlefish & Sturgeon Committee

Jeff Quinn reviewed the written report provided in the briefing book.

### Discussion:

Is the Tennessee on-line commercial harvest reporting system for sturgeon and paddlefish only or is it all commercial fish? It can be used for all commercial fish.

Jeff Quinn has done some research into the standards for marine reporting systems and the data that are being collected. The Atlantic states have a cooperative and multi-million dollar agency that collects all the data. Gulf Coast states like Louisiana and Mississippi are using a corporation called 'Blue Fin Data'. The committee would like financial support from MICRA to develop an on-line commercial harvest reporting system that all the Basin states could use. The goal is to develop a daily reporting system that is built on a trip ticket foundation like what is being used for marine fisheries. There are models where this type of system is being used by states for marine fisheries. Quinn spoke with Blue Fin Data at length. The representative estimated that they could develop an on-line reporting system for MICRA for \$40,000 - \$80,000, depending on the variables. Annual maintenance costs including enhancement and refinements to the database, training commercial fishermen how to use the reporting system, and answering questions from commercial fishermen would run from \$18,000 - \$30,000 annually.

The states do need some kind of database like this, but we do not want to get MICRA tied into an arrangement with a specific company to develop and maintain a specialized database that will have a high maintenance cost every year. We have had experience this with an agency database, and we are essentially stuck paying a high maintenance fee to this company every year.

We have talked about this for years and we need to start looking at what models are out there. The Tennessee system would allow fishermen from other states to enter their data and provide a regional database. Tennessee would maintain the database.

There are options for PC based database that can be uploaded. It may not be realistic to expect small time commercial fishermen to enter the data on-line. Even if daily reporting were mandated, it is not likely that our commercial fishermen would enter daily reports.

We need to have a system that collects data from commercial fisherman and roe buyers so that the data can be cross-referenced.

This has been done for Great Lakes fishermen, but this is a much higher value and a limited entry commercial fishery. In Wisconsin, the database is paid for by license fees. Again these are very valuable fisheries and fishermen pay a large

license fee. There are two biologists that work full-time on the database and modeling.

Looking at the MICRA financial reports, MICRA does not have the money to pay for the database to be developed and does not have money on an annual basis to pay for database maintenance. Maybe it would be possible for MICRA to cost-share with the participating states for database development.

Tennessee's system uses voluntary on-line reporting. Commercial fishermen can submit written reports and the agency will enter the data. This might be a good option to consider. The data could be a month or so behind because the agency has not entered the data yet, but this is much better if we have all of the commercial harvest states participating.

At a minimum, our state would like to have mandatory on-line reporting requirements for roe buyers. This does not seem out of the question and would provide much better real time data to respond to requests from the FWS CITES. The Tennessee system was built to include reports from roe buyers.

The other big thing that we are dealing with is the different standards and reporting requirements in the different states. This was tried for Tennessee, Kentucky, Illinois, and Missouri and it was very difficult. Hopefully there will be recommendations made in Alexei Sharov's report for AFWA.

The committee will be working on an assessment of these databases and developing recommendations.

Is there no commercial paddlefish harvest in Kentucky Lake or just no export of paddlefish harvested from Kentucky Lake? Exports have been closed from the Tennessee portion of Kentucky Lake. Is that because there is not a 38-inch minimum length limit? Tennessee commercial fishermen sued TWRA for over-regulating the fishery. TWRA then dropped all regulations from paddlefish. FWS then said that they could not determine a non-detriment finding for the Tennessee portion of Kentucky Lake required for CITES exports. The Tennessee legislature has intervened and requires reasonable plan and regulations to promote commercial fishing including season dates and a 36-inch minimum length limit among other requirements. The FWS is requiring a 40-inch length limit, based on the Betolli study, to allow CITES exports. Tennessee commercial fishermen are allowed to remove and screen roe on the water.

## **9) Arkansas/Red River**

Chris Racey provided and reviewed the following written report.

## Arkansas River

Northern snakeheads have been confirmed at a location in St. Francis County that expands the known snakehead zone in Arkansas. The snakeheads exhibited nest guarding behavior and were identified by an Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) biologist from a ditch approximately 5 miles north of Goodwin and a quarter mile east of Big Creek. Big Creek is a tributary of the White River in eastern Arkansas. AGFC continues to monitor snakehead distribution and will begin a competition study in the near future.

An abundance of Arkansas River bass population data that have been collected over the past decade by staff from AGFC and the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB). This information has been instrumental in helping biologists understand the complex fish population dynamics that occur on the river and selecting the most appropriate regulation. A 15-inch minimum length limit was placed on largemouth bass in 1998 in an effort to increase abundance of harvestable sized bass. Since 1998, numerous largemouth bass stock assessments have been conducted by both AGFC and UAPB to evaluate and monitor age and size structure, growth, condition, and exploitation. In addition, angler creel surveys were conducted on several pools of the river. Most recently, relationships between river hydrology and bass population characteristics were examined. Study results indicate there are fewer harvestable-size bass in the Arkansas River and they are growing slower. Hydrology (high water flows) during 2007-09 appears to have negatively affected both abundance and growth of the bass population. Furthermore, age and growth analysis indicates it taking an additional year for bass to reach the 15- inch minimum length limit. Tag-reward and creel surveys indicate the Arkansas River is largely a catch-and-release bass fishery. As a result of these data, biologists are recommending that the current 15-inch minimum length limit for largemouth bass be reduced to a 14-inch minimum length limit on the entire Arkansas River in Arkansas.

AGFC is executing a contract to identify morphological and genetic differences of Shovelnose Sturgeon (*Scaphirhynchus platyrhynchus*) from sympatric and allopatric waters of the Pallid Sturgeon (*Scaphirhynchus albus*) within the Mississippi River Basin. The objectives of the study are to compare White River shovelnose sturgeon with those from other drainages in Arkansas and throughout the Mississippi River basin. Staff will acquire 30 specimens from the Cedar River, Red River, Wabash River, Arkansas River, Lower Mississippi River, and the Upper Mississippi River for morphometric comparisons, age and growth studies, and genetic analyses. AGFC biologists will conduct the morphometric and age and growth studies, while researchers at St. Louis University will assist with the genetic analyses.

## Red River

### RED – ATCHAFALAYA RIVER SAMPLING

Inland Fish Section staff of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) in Districts 1, 3, 6, and 9 will continue the long-term monitoring of the Red and Atchafalaya rivers during the summer and fall of 2012. Electrofishing will be done at 25 stations (900 seconds each) established from Shreveport to the lower Atchafalaya river. Gill net and seine samples will also be taken. River sampling in District 2 focuses on the Ouachita River a tributary of the Red and will include electrofishing at 2 stations and seining at 6 stations.

### SPECIAL PROJECTS

LDWF is preparing to sample state rivers and coastal marshes for the presence of Asian carp. Since most conventional sampling gears are not effective on the sub-adult and adult life forms of Asian carp, field crews will begin looking for the presence of early life stages (eggs & larvae) to document reproductive success or lack thereof. Sampling will be done with ichthyoplankton or “drift” nets during optimum seasonal water temperatures previously established by other researchers. Most sampling will occur in what is believed to be the existing peripheral distribution of the fish in order to try and establish the leading edge of their expansion. It will also occur in areas that are thought to be free of carp, in order to confirm presence/absence.

### GENERAL NEWS

Louisiana received and commented on an application for a hydroelectric project at Lock & Dam # 3 on the lower Red River and will be closely monitoring the FERC process for this proposed project including potential impacts to aquatic resources in the area. The USACOE out of the Vicksburg District will be sampling below the structure, around the structure and above the structure in pool 3 for the presence of the endangered pallid sturgeon.

The 2012 Bass master’s Classic was held at Shreveport Louisiana February 24-26. Classic anglers pursued their quarry in the developing bass fishery of the Red River waterway. The tournament was a huge success and most anglers weighed good stringers of fish each day. LDWF crews worked the tournament each day to return the fish alive to the river. Fin clips were taken from 62 bass to determine what percentage of the fish might be Florida, Florida hybrids, or the northern strain of largemouth bass. Fifty-six percent of the samples were found to be the northern largemouth bass while 44% were Florida x northern crosses or some Fx hybrid containing the Florida genome. The results suggest significant success in LDWF’s and the Red River Waterway Commission’s Florida bass stocking program on the river.

LDWF met recently with Red River Waterway Commission officials in Baton Rouge to discuss invasive species management. The meeting focus was control efforts geared towards aquatic invasive plants, in particular giant salvinia which has infested Louisiana in the last 10 years. Control options include a cooperative effort of chemical (herbicidal) and biological (salvinia weevils) treatments. Asian carp were also discussed and it was agreed to contact the Corps of Engineers with respect to the navigation structures along the waterway. It is believed steps can be taken at the five lock & dam structures to reduce or eliminate the passage of Asian carp upstream.

## **10) LMRCC**

The LMRCC report provided in the briefing book stands as submitted.

### Discussion:

The Executive Board reviewed and discussed the LMRCC's on-line 'Interactive Lower Mississippi River Fishing Guide'. Conover was asked to put a link to the fishing guide on the MICRA website.

! Conover will add a link from the MICRA website to the LMRCC on-line 'Interactive Lower Mississippi River Fishing Guide'.

The group agreed that participating in the LMRCC meeting earlier in the day was valuable for Executive Board members.

## **11) MRNRC**

Vince Travnichek informed the Executive Board that there was not much substantial since the winter meeting to report.

Warm spring weather hampered pallid sturgeon broodstock collection efforts this April. An insufficient number of males were collected, so for the first time the hatcheries used cryopreserved milt from previous years' collections. The technique was successful.

Levees damaged or destroyed by flooding last year are being rapidly repaired.

## **12) ORFMT**

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



### Discussion:

There is growing contention between catfish anglers and pay lakes. There are a number of videos on YouTube that show truckloads of trophy catfish being unloaded at pay lakes.

Are pay lakes trying to get flatheads? Yes, they like the large flatheads and blue catfish. They are particularly interested in large 50-80 pound fish. We are talking thousands of pounds of fish harvested and sold to pay lakes every week. Are they charging customers by the pound for fish they catch? There are several different business models, but what really seems to be driving this is gambling. They have lotteries for big fish for the day, week, etc. that pay out large jackpots.

Does anyone know if they have very many pay lakes in their state? It seems like there are a large number of these in Ohio and Kentucky. When Indiana had a hearing on their proposed rule in Indianapolis, there were pay lake owners from both Ohio and Kentucky that came and testified against the proposed rule.

The MRBP is developing a draft letter for MICRA regarding pay lakes as AIS vectors. Duane Chapman has done a lot of legwork looking into the number and distribution of pay lakes within the basin.

! Conover will send the pay lakes presentation that Duane Chapman developed for the MRBP a couple of years ago to the Executive Board members for review.

Last year Indiana passed emergency rules, modeled on Tennessee regulations, requiring roe harvester and roe buyer licenses. The agency had to go in this spring and tweak the license requirements based on problems that came up.

### **13) Tennessee River**

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

Commercial fishermen report schools of large and small Asian carp in both Kentucky and Barkley Lakes. Tennessee has not documented reproduction, but they are certain that it is happening. There are reports that bighead and silver carp are reproducing in Reelfoot Lake, but this has not been documented either. There is growing uncertainty and concern about the spawning requirements for these fish.

Like Louisiana and Arkansas both reported, it is hard to sample these fish even when they are present in large numbers.

Pickwick Lake is in Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee. The three states have reciprocal agreements on fishing licenses and have been working on consistent

regulations for the anglers' benefit. Each state has a different size limit for smallmouth bass (Tennessee has an 18-inch limit, Alabama has a 14-inch limit, and Mississippi had no length limit), but it looks like all three states are going to agree to a 15-inch size limit.

Zebra mussels have been found in Norris Lake which is a tributary impoundment, so there is no way that they were introduced by barge traffic. There is no lock, only a high head dam.

#### **14) UMRCC**

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

##### Discussion:

Does someone from UMRCC meet the classes that bring students to the river for outdoor education, or is it up to the teachers to develop and provide the lesson plan? The UMRCC holds a teachers workshop every year. The 3-day course can accommodate up to 30 teachers and participants can earn college credits. Is this for teachers from a particular state? No it's for anybody that signs up through Drake University. The people that complete this curriculum are the same people that we encourage to apply for the travel grant to take students to the river so that they can then use their training to teach students. Missouri does something similar where the agency provides teacher workshops for big river education.

Who actually puts on the UMRCC workshop? One staff person with WI DNR that has training in outdoor education has a huge interest in the workshop. He organizes the event each year, but several UMRCC state and federal agencies send trainers to participate in teaching the workshop.

#### **15) Native Species Action Plan**

The Executive Board discussed the modified data template with UMRCC data provided in the briefing book. The sub-basin groups were tasked with agreeing to and populating the common data fields. The sub-basins representatives will then work with their respective groups over the fall to populate the sub-basin specific column with sub-basin specific priority projects. The goal is to have a draft from each sub-basin for discussion at the Executive Board's winter meeting, and if possible to then develop something that would be ready for use during the next round of Congressional visits in 2013.

##### Discussion:

The Executive Board's decided to make sure that the first two columns are complete and ready to be sent to the sub-basins (i.e., 'Restoration Objectives' and 'Potential Management Actions'). The sub-basins will be asked to complete the

third and fourth columns (i.e., 'Native Species Benefits' and 'Sub-basin Specific Priority Projects'). When the data template is provided to the sub-basins, the fifth and sixth columns (i.e., references to sub-basin habitat restoration plans and specific objectives) should be left off to prevent any confusion.

Will the sub-basins be able to add new data to the first two columns? Absolutely, this is simply a starting point to help make sure that we receive similar products back from each sub-basin. Is there a limit to the number of restoration objectives or priority projects that the sub-basins should provide for the target audience? No, this template will be the basis for developing our report and other documents. No one outside MICRA will see all the detail in these templates. The sub-basins should develop as fully as possible regardless of size.

What kind of information are we requesting for the 'Native Species Benefits?' The first draft included very detailed information. Is that still the level of detail that we are looking for? Benefits such as increased juvenile abundance, increased spawning habitat, and increased over-winter habitat should be sufficient. The sub-basins may want to further specify species or groups of species that the identified actions will benefit. Are we also including mussels? Yes.

- ! Conover will send a revised Native Species Aquatic Habitat Action Plan data template (i.e., fifth and sixth columns removed) to the sub-basin representatives with clear instructions on how the sub-basins should complete the template this fall.
- ! Sub-basin representatives will work with their respective sub-basin groups to complete the Native Species Aquatic Habitat Action Plan data template this fall. Completed data templates should be provided back to Conover by 1 December for discussion at the Executive Board's winter meeting.

## 16) MICRA Brochure

The Executive Board reviewed the draft MICRA brochure that was provided in the briefing book.

### Discussion:

This is a nice picture of the river on the cover, but there really isn't anything about the picture that connects the cover to fisheries. It is nice picture of habitat, but the people and fish components are missing. We should try to find a new picture or a way to incorporate people and fish onto the cover.

- ! Conover will look modify or change the picture on the front cover of the MICRA brochure to include fish, people, and habitat.

Why do we use the phrase 'natural resource agencies' in the first sentence under 'About MICRA'? In many states, the fish and wildlife management agencies are not referred to as departments of natural resources. There is no reference to fisheries anywhere in the sentence. This is similar, but not the same wording as the MICRA web page. The web page reads "MICRA is an organization of 28 state natural resource departments organized in 1991 as a partnership to improve management of interjurisdictional fish and other aquatic resources in the Mississippi River Basin." This adds the connection to fisheries, but does not address the concern about natural resource agencies. Keeping the wording consistent and using natural resource agencies is not going to be a problem if we use the "fish and aquatic resources" wording from the web page.

- ! Conover will change the wording under 'About MICRA' on the MICRA brochure to match the wording used on the MICRA web page.
- ! Conover will send a second draft of the MICRA brochure to the Executive Board members to review.
- ! Conover will get an estimate on printing the MICRA brochures.

#### **17) MICRA Hill Visits 2012**

Benjamin deferred to the report on MICRA's 2012 Congressional visits he provided during his Chairman's report. Notes are captured under agenda item 3) above.

#### **18) MICRA Hill Visits 2013**

- ! The Executive Board approved organizing a MICRA delegation to conduct another round of Congressional visits during National Invasive Species Awareness Week in 2013.
- ! The Executive Board approved looking for opportunities to organize another Congressional briefing as part of the 2013 Congressional visits.

#### Discussion:

We will try to get at least three fish chiefs, in addition to the MICRA Chairman and an ANS Coordinator, to participate in 2013.

We will want to try to schedule visits with key Congressional members such as Rep. Kaptur (OH), Rep. Simpson (ID), Rep. McCollum (MN), and Sen. Blunt (MO). We will need to pay attention to changes that occur in this year's election and any changes to committee assignments. MICRA may want to reach out to Johnny Morris (BassPro) or another big name to participate in the office visits.

- ! The Executive Board members will check with their fish chiefs to see if they are

willing to participate in the 2013 Congressional visits.

- ! The Executive Board approved looking for opportunities to hold an Asian carp fish fry as part of the 2013 Congressional visits.

## 19) River Crossings Electronic Layout

Conover provided a single column layout for the Executive Board to consider adopting for the 2013 issue. The Executive Board agreed with the proposed change and requested Conover to continue to work with Jerry Rasmussen to develop a new single column format for use beginning in 2013.

- ! Conover will work with Jerry Rasmussen to finalize a draft single column layout for *River Crossings*. The Executive Board will review the draft layout and hold a vote of approval at the Executive Board's 2012-13 winter meeting.

## 20) Other New Business

### *Mississippi River Basin Regional Collaboration*

Turner provided some background on the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration and the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. The Executive Board discussed the idea of initiating a similar effort to develop a Mississippi River Basin Regional Collaboration to bring much needed attention to fisheries and aquatic resource issues. A collaboration effort in the Basin would need to be much larger than MICRA, but MICRA is a great place for such an effort to begin. The Great Lakes Regional Collaboration brought in a wide array of stakeholders and that was a key part of its success. The same would likely need to be done for a Mississippi River Basin effort. The Great Lakes Governors all signed on to an agreement and that is what really gave the effort its legs.

### Discussion:

Who started the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration? It actually began back when President Bush (George W.) signed Executive Order establishing the collaboration.

What is the next step to get started? The first step would be to present this idea to the Fish Chiefs and get their support. The Fish Chiefs can then start working the idea up through their agencies. The proposed all delegate meeting in 2013 might be the target for kicking this idea off with the Fish Chiefs. We can present the two action plans and then lead into a big picture discussion of initiating a Mississippi River Basin Collaboration.

- ! Conover will send DVDs with the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration documents out to the Executive Board members.

### *Ohio River Basin Asian Carp Summit*

The Ohio River Basin states held an Asian carp summit in late June. There was a considerable amount of discussion about stopping the dispersal of Asian carp and controlling established populations. The conversation repeatedly circled back to commercial harvest. The states decided that a two pronged strategy is needed for the Basin: 1) lower basin states need to reduce standing stock and propagule pressure through harvest, and 2) upper basin states are interested in using harvest as a means to fish down the 'leading edge' to prevent establishment of Asian carp in upper portions of the river. The upper basin states do not allow commercial fishing so using harvest as a management tool will be challenging. There was some discussion and interest in what Illinois is doing in the upper Illinois River with contract fisheries in portions of the river that are closed to commercial fishing.

Chris O'Bara submitted a request to MICRA to consider organizing a forum for a discussion on all aspects of commercial fishing for Asian carp. This is something that is needed within the Ohio Basin, but it would likely be useful on a basin-wide level also. The states need to discuss this issue amongst themselves before holding a broader discussion with commercial fishermen and others to discuss market development and small business development.

The states need to keep in mind the Lacey Act listings and not put their fishermen in situation where they would be violating federal law by transporting fish between state lines when they are fishing boundary waters and moving fish to processing facilities.

MICRA could organize a conference call with a few fish chiefs to discuss the issue and the idea of organizing a broader meeting, possibly to include other stakeholders.

- ! Conover will forward the request to Ron Benjamin the request from O'Bara for MICRA to organize a forum for the states to discuss aspects of commercial harvest for Asian carps.
- ! Benjamin will follow-up with O'Bara regarding his request for MICRA to organize a forum for the states to discuss aspects of commercial harvest for Asian carps to let him know that MICRA is interested in exploring the idea in more detail.
- ! Conover will follow-up with Tim Schaeffer to find out what actions, if any, may be occurring as follow-up to the Ohio River Basin state's summit this past June to organize a forum for the states to discuss aspects of commercial harvest for Asian carps.

### *Funding to Implement the National Asian Carp Management and Control Plan*

Benjamin updated the Executive Board on an effort to develop a funding proposal for implementation of the National Asian Carp Management and Control Plan. This was part of the follow-up from MICRA's Congressional and agency visits in March

2012. The budget proposal is something that is intended to be used in the briefing packets for the 2013 Congressional visits.

Benjamin recently sent a draft budget proposal out to the Fish Chiefs for their review and input. Benjamin received several questions, but the document had widespread support among the Fish Chiefs. The document is general enough that it provides some flexibility for implementation if it were to be funded.

## **21) MICRA Priorities Document Review and Update**

The Executive Board reviewed the comments provided by the MICRA Delegates and worked on updating the 2002 MICRA Activity Prioritization document.

- ! Conover will provide the draft 2012 MICRA Activity Prioritization document to the Committee Chairs.
- ! Committee Chairs will update the accomplishments and remaining needs in the draft 2012 MICRA Activity Prioritization document and return to Conover by December 1, 2012.
- ! Conover will provide a revised version of the draft 2012 MICRA Activity Prioritization document for the Executive Board members to review and discuss at the Executive Board's 2012-13 winter meeting. The Executive Board will decide if the draft document is ready to be sent to the MICRA Delegates for review and approval.

### Discussion:

Potential next steps will be to provide the updated document back to the Fish Chiefs for approval and then ask them to identify the highest priority needs that they would like to see the Executive Board focus on. We may want to create a table of remaining needs and ask the Fish Chiefs to rate each as high, medium, or low priority. We want to make this as simple as possible for the Fish Chiefs to complete. We could even do the survey on-line through a service like SurveyMonkey.com. We could also ask the committee members to complete the survey if we want to collect that additional information. This would let us know if the committees are in step with what the delegates identify as highest priority needs.

- ! Conover will tabulate the "remaining needs" identified in the draft 2012 MICRA Activity Prioritization document and prepare a draft survey for the Fish Chiefs that will be reviewed and discussed by the Executive Board during the 2012-13 winter meeting.

The UMRCC is very interested in Goal D: 'Determine and document the socio-economic value of fishery resources and related recreation'. This has been a long-standing unmet need that there is a lot of interest in getting completed. The Great

Lakes states have gotten a lot of use out of similar data for the Great Lakes. It may be possible to get the USFWS Division of Economics to assist with this. The Division completed something similar for the Service's Fisheries Program a few years ago. That could be an opportunity for a multi-state grant through AFWA. The FWS's 5-year national survey of fishing, hunting, and recreational use does not break down the data by county or watershed so we currently cannot use the survey data to determine value within the basin.

One of the key pieces of information that was developed in the report developed for the FWS's Fisheries Program is value for the return on dollars invested. The reports concluded that for every \$1 invested into the Fisheries Program, there is \$28 economic returned. This is the kind of information that really sticks with decision makers. The FWS would need to work with the states to quantify commercial value also. MICRA will want to consider whether they want to develop numbers on basin-wide or sub-basin level. It might be best to develop the information at the sub-basin level even if we decide to report the information at a basin-wide level. We will also need to consider if these values should be developed for all uses or broken out by types of use. We will probably want to have separate values for fishing (sport and commercial) and other uses.

- ! Turner will check with the USFWS Division of Economics about the cost to develop methods of extracting use and socio-economic value information for fishery resources and related recreation in the Basin and its sub basins units (i.e. Upper Mississippi, Lower Mississippi, Ohio, Missouri, Tennessee, and Arkansas/Red river basins) from the FWS 5-year national survey of fishing, hunting and recreational use.

#### *Shovelnose Sturgeon Specimens*

Now that the SOA lawsuit has been settled, do we need to keep the sturgeon that were used for the MICRA study and are still be stored in freezers? There should be no need for MICRA to continue storing these fish. We should send out a few email enquiries to see if they could be used for additional research.

- ! Conover will send an email providing information about the frozen shovelnose sturgeon that were used in the MICRA study prior to the SOA listing to see if they are wanted for another research project in the Basin.

#### *MICRA Delegate Meetings*

How often do the MICRA Delegates meet? The By-Laws say that the MICRA Delegates will meet at least once per year and the Executive Board will meet as needed. Since Conover began as Coordinator in 2008, the Executive Board has met at least once annually and there has not been a meeting of all MICRA Delegates. The last full delegate meeting was held several years ago in Des Moines, Iowa, to discuss the shovelnose sturgeon *Similarity of Appearance (SOA)* issue when it was emerging.



MICRA Delegates used to meet annually, but it was often difficult to get a quorum at meetings. Several years back it was decided to create a smaller group that would prepare items for action for all the delegates. This led to the formation of the Executive Board and the transition away from regular full delegate meetings.

Many Fish Chiefs attend national meetings such as the AFS Fisheries Administrators Section and AFWA Fisheries and Water Resources Policy Committee. It might be advantageous to hold a brief 2-hour MICRA delegate meeting in conjunction with the AFS or AFWA section meetings if most of the delegates are in attendance at these meetings. There are very few Fish Chiefs that were around when MICRA was formed and it would be good to bring them together to discuss MICRA. We could provide some history and background to familiarize them with MICRA, give them some highlights of MICRA accomplishments over the last few years. We could also present the results of the priorities survey that will be sent out to the Fish Chiefs in early 2013. A presentation on the Congressional visits the last two years would be a good topic that the Fish Chiefs would likely find very interesting. We need some discussion with the Fish Chiefs to make sure they understand that this is their organization, and to make sure that MICRA is providing them what they need.

- ! Benjamin will attend the AFS Fisheries Administrators Section meeting in August and make an announcement that MICRA is planning a full delegate meeting in conjunction with the AFS Fisheries Administrators section meeting at the annual meeting in Little Rock, AR, in August 2013.

There will be Fish Chiefs in attendance at the AFS Fisheries Administrators Section meeting that are from outside the Mississippi River Basin and they may be interested in hearing the information about MICRA too. Will the meeting be open to all of the Fish Chiefs or limited to just the MICRA Fish Chiefs? We should make it open to any that want to attend. We may get some good ideas from outside of the basin.

The section typically meets for a couple of hours in the afternoon. We could consider hosting a lunch prior to the section meeting or a social after the section meeting and prior to the larger AFS conference social.

- ! The Executive Board will revisit planning for a full delegate meeting in conjunction with the 2013 AFS Fisheries Administrators Section meeting in Little Rock, AR, at the Executive Board's 2012-13 winter meeting.

## **22) Schedule Winter Executive Board Meeting**

- ! The date and location for the 2012-2013 Executive Board winter meeting will be determined via e-mail after the meeting.