

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

January 22, 2010

Holiday Inn Express, Downtown
Nashville, TN

Decisions and Action Items

1. Minutes of the July 2009 MICRA Executive Board meeting were approved.
2. The Executive Board approved selection criteria for the 'Young Professionals' travel grant that was previously approved during the July 2009 meeting.
3. Conover will add the approved Travel Grant Criteria and application to MICRA's web page.
4. Reed will send a letter out to the Fish Chiefs very quickly to inform them of the availability of the Travel Grant for young professionals wanting to attend the Catfish 2010 Symposium June 20-22, 2010 in St. Louis, Missouri. The letter should include the travel grant criteria and application as attachments or include a link to MICRA's existing web page. A timeline for awarding the grant is also needed.
5. Reed will include information on the Board's decision to award an annual travel grant in his Chairman's Remarks in the next issue of *River Crossings*.
6. The Executive Board approved proposed changes to the MICRA Constitution and By-Laws. Reed will forward the recommended changes to the MICRA delegation for review and a vote for approval.
7. The Executive Board approved procedural guidelines for financial assistance to attend MICRA meetings or events. Reed will forward the revised guidelines to the MICRA delegates.
8. The Executive Board agreed to send the draft 'Action Plan to Minimize Ecological Impacts of Aquatic Invasive Species in the Mississippi River Basin' to the Fish Chiefs for review and comment. Reed will draft a letter to the Fish Chiefs; specific contents of the letter are outlined in the meeting notes. The Executive Board will have the opportunity to review the draft letter and meeting notes prior to the distribution of the plan to the Fish Chiefs.
9. The Executive Board will request Mike Hoff to work with the sub-basin representatives to begin development of a draft Mississippi River Basin Action Plan for 'Native Fishes and Habitats'.

10. The Executive Board formed an ad-hoc committee to work with Ron Benjamin and organizers of 'Third International Symposium on Ecology and Biodiversity in Large Rivers of Northeast Asia and North America' to plan a MICRA session during the symposium.
11. Boxrucker will make sure that a report of Oklahoma's completed ANS Boater Survey is submitted to Goeckler.
12. Conover will contact MRBP members to request information for compiling the Model Rapid Response Plan for the Mississippi River Basin funded by NOAA.
13. Conover will work with the MRBP Executive Committee to find a contractor to prepare and edit the Model Rapid Response Plan funded by NOAA.
14. Conover will assist the Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee Chair in seeking external funding to support the basin-wide paddlefish stock assessment database and other committee projects.
15. Reed will follow-up with George Scholten regarding the Executive Board's request for a written report from the Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee on status of the paddlefish stock assessment project and current paddlefish management needs (see letter from Chris O'Bara dated August 3, 2009).
16. Reed will send a letter to the MRNRC conferring MICRA's support of MRNRC delegates/representatives involvement in the Missouri River Authorize Purposes Study (MRAPS) of 1944 Flood Control Act and offering technical assistance where possible.
17. Benjamin will provide Eric Ganus with information on Wisconsin's sturgeon stocking projects, specifically regarding behavioral differences of the Lake Winnebago and Mississippi River strains.
18. Boxrucker will talk with Mike Armstrong regarding a new representative to replace him after he retires as the Arkansas River Conservation Committee on the MICRA Executive Board.
19. Mike Jaswson will replace Mike Mac as the USGS representative on the MICRA Executive Board.
20. The proposed budget for 2010 was approved with amendments.
21. The Executive Board will tentatively hold its next meeting September 22 or 19, 2010 in Memphis, TN, in conjunction with the Third International Symposium on Ecology and Biodiversity in Large Rivers of Northeast Asia and North America.

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Minutes

1) Call to Order (Reed)

Roll Call

MICRA Chairperson	Bobby Reed	present
Chairperson Elect / UMRCC	Ron Benjamin	present
Arkansas/Red River	Jeff Boxrucker	present
LMRCC	Paul Rister	present
MRNRC	Steve Adams	absent
ORFMT	Brian Schoenung	absent
Tennessee River	Bill Reeves (Eric Ganus)	present
USFWS	Mike Weimer (Aaron Woldt)	present
USGS	Michael Mac / Mike Jawson	present

A quorum of Executive Board members was present.

Introductions

Ron Benjamin, WI DNR
Mike Jawson, USGS – UMESC
Mike Mac, USGS - CERC
Paul Rister, KDFW
Eric Ganus, TWRA
Aaron Woldt, USFWS Region 3
Bobby Reed, LDWF
Greg Conover, USFWS/MICRA Coordinator
Mike Hoff, USFWS Region 3
Jeff Boxrucker, OK Department of Wildlife Conservation

2) Chairman's Report (Reed)

Approval of July 2009 Meeting Minutes

Benjamin should be marked as present, not absent, under the Roll Call. Boxrucker made a motion to approve the July 2009 meeting minutes. Mac seconded. The motion passed.

Review of Chair Activities

Reed was not able to attend the summer 2009 MICRA Executive Board meeting and did not assume the Chair position until October 1, 2009. A summary of Reed's activities as MICRA Chair is included in the briefing book.

3) Coordinator's Report (Conover)

Review of Coordinator's Activities

A summary of Conover's activities as MICRA Coordinator is included in the briefing book.

Since the report was submitted, the domain 'MICRArivers' has been purchased by MICRA for the next 5 years. The extensions .org, .net, .com, .info, .us, and .mobi have all been acquired. Karla Bartelt with the USFWS Region 3 is going to work with Conover to design a new website for MICRA.

Review of Budget/Finances

Financial reports are provided in the briefing book. The primary change since the July 2009 meeting was the transfer of MICRA's funds from the Quad Cities bank to a new bank in Marion, IL, which resulted in a small amount of interest income. Dues were lower than projected and expenses were higher than projected for 2009.

The previous accountant in the Quad Cities did not provide requested bank statements or monthly reports during 2009. The check from the Quad Cities bank was the first time that MICRA's financial records for 2009 could be rectified. The projected balance after reconciliation and remaining 2009 obligations are accounted for is just over \$79,000.

4) Review of July 2009 Action Items (Conover)

Conover requested Executive Board input on a process for reviewing the previous meeting's action items. Is there a need to walk through each action item during the meeting to review status? Providing the review prior to the meeting should be sufficient. If there are any questions or points that need additional clarification then these can be discussed during the meeting.

Item #23 should be updated from on-going to complete. Item #27 is the only point that there has been no update on.

5) Early Professional Travel Stipend (Boxrucker / Reed)

Draft criteria and an application for the travel grant were provided in the briefing book. The selection criteria are proposed as procedural guidelines for the MICRA Executive Board to prioritize applicants for a selection rather than as a policy. The criteria are intended to give preference to applicants from a MICRA dues paying member state,

attending a MICRA sponsored event, and reporting results rather than simply attending the meeting. The proposed criteria are prioritized but are not weighted. The criteria could easily be modified into a 100 point scale or other system if desired.

“Will reward” in the first sentence should be changed to “may award.” This change would provide the Executive Board with more latitude with a decision whether or not to award the grant each year.

Benjamin motioned that the Executive Board adopt the proposed selection criteria and application, as amended, as procedural guidelines for awarding an early professional travel grant to attend an annual professional meeting selected by the Executive Board each year. Mac seconded the motion. The motion passed.

The Executive Board agreed at the July 2009 meeting to award a travel grant for Catfish 2010 (June 20-22), but recognized the need to have criteria in place prior to announcing the grant. Now that an application and criteria for selection have been established, the Executive Board will have to quickly notify Fish Chiefs of the travel grant for young professionals. There are a couple of pending action items from the July 2009 meeting regarding announcement of the travel award. The Executive Board will be on a compressed time line for application submission and selection for an award for Catfish 2010. This year’s selection will be made by email and/or conference call so that the winner can be notified as soon as possible.

An announcement should be included in the next issue of *River Crossings*. The announcement will likely be too late for requesting applications for Catfish 2010, but the travel grant can still be introduced to the MICRA membership. Reed may want to include the announcement in his Chairman’s Remarks column.

Conover will post an announcement and the application on the existing MICRA web site asap and forward to Reed.

Reed will send a letter out to fish chiefs very quickly with attachments and/or a link to the MICRA web page. An attachment can be forwarded on to staff very easily.

6) Proposed By-Law Changes (Conover)

Constitution:

Strike Article V, 2), c. – Chairs of active technical committees will not serve as Executive Board members. This could create a potential conflict for technical committee chairs when the Executive Board is making decision regarding funding for projects.

Article VI – Add ‘voting’ to quorum. A quorum should be 6 voting members of the Executive Board.

The Coordinator should be a non-voting member of the Executive Committee. As long as the Coordinator is a non-voting member, there should be no problems with potential

conflict of interest. To avoid any potential conflict of interest, the Coordinator will not be allowed to represent or vote for the FWS.

There needs to be a mechanism for assigning a proxy for voting members. This is addressed under Article VI, 6).

Article V, 7) – change new sentence to read “Chairperson will terminate the sub-committee upon completion of the assigned task.”

By-laws:

1.a. – Add wording to indicate that sitting technical committee chairs can be re-appointed to serve concurrent terms.

2.c. - Add a sentence stating that Technical Committee Chairs may be requested to attend periodic Executive Board meetings. Unless a committee is presenting an issue or requesting funding, a timely report for inclusion in the briefing book should suffice.

Benjamin made a motion to accept the proposed changes to the Constitution and By-laws, as amended, for recommendation to the MICRA delegates to review and subsequent approval. Mac seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Adoption of changes to the Constitution and By-laws must be approved by the MICRA delegates. Executive Board members should be copied when the proposed changes are sent to the delegates. Delegates must be provided at least a 30 day review period prior to a vote. Voting can be conducted via email. A ¾ majority is required to amend the MICRA Constitution and By-Laws. Update By-laws #5, with current names prior to submitting the proposed changes to the delegates for review and approval.

7) Travel Reimbursement Policy (Conover)

Change from a policy to operational guidelines for the Executive Board.

In addition to Executive Board member travel to attend annual meetings, the Chair represents MICRA at two ANS Task Force meetings each year.

Benjamin made a motion to accept the proposed travel reimbursement, as amended, as operational guidelines for the Executive Committee. Rister seconded the motion. The motion passed.

8) Draft Action Plan for Mississippi River Basin (Hoff)

Mike Hoff gave a presentation to provide Executive Board members with background and an overview of the draft action plan for the Mississippi River Basin. The draft action plan is included in the briefing book.

The draft plan for Aquatic Invasive Species was presented to the Mississippi River Basin Panel (MRBP) at their last meeting and was submitted to MRBP members for written comments. There were no comments from MRBP states. Those who spoke with Hoff about the draft plan supported the large scale and specific approach.

If the Executive Board decides to move forward with development of an action plan, it will be very important for MICRA to develop a marketing plan to promote the plan to decision makers. The Executive Board may also want to consider additional action plans to accompany the AIS plan, for example a native species and habitat action plan (combined or separate) could be developed in conjunction with the MICRA sub-basin groups. AIS and habitat are two of the biggest threats to native species.

Executive Board members looked favorably on the draft action plan and decided that the AIS plan should be moved forward immediately and not wait for the development of other action plan components. AIS issues are garnering a large amount of congressional interest right now and MICRA should act quickly to finalize and market this plan for the Mississippi River Basin. The plan is not only good for the environment, but could also benefit the national economy.

The Great Lakes plan benefited from Council of Lake Committees that championed the Regional Collaboration Plan. There was support both at the Administrative and grassroots levels. Politics and structure are much different in the Mississippi River Basin than in the Great Lakes. Is it possible for MICRA to be unified on the issue of AIS and to champion an AIS action plan?

What are the next steps? A critical next step is to have a discussion on how we move the action plan, once finalized, in front of the appropriate decision makers. First we need to refine what needs refined, add some pictures to dress it up, and send it to the Delegates for their input.

There are a number of fish and habitat plans so it may be more difficult to develop the proposed action plan on native species and habitat. It may not be necessary to meld the numerous plans, but rather the action plan may be useful to identify what is needed within the individual sub-basins. An action plan on native fish and habitats could provide a mechanism for working with the Fish Habitat Action Plan Partnerships. We would need to be careful to avoid redundancy with existing plans, especially with regards to federal funding. The action plan could provide immediate details within each of the sub-basins by identifying 1) priority native species, 2) limiting factors, and 3) funding needs. Such a document could also be useful to the partnerships.

The Executive Board should request the Fish Chiefs to provide a letter of support signed by the Agency Director. We should first give the Fish Chiefs the opportunity to review and comment on the draft plan before requesting a letter of support. We can provide language for a letter of support that each of the states can modify.

We need to have a draft marketing strategy or alternate strategies to include with the draft plan. Fish Chiefs may support the plan, but they will want to know if it is implementable. The plan should be sent out as draft so that states have the opportunity to provide input and create a sense of buy-in. The Executive Board may also want to request the states to identify a point-of-contact for devising a full marketing plan to bring the plan to the attention of decision makers. For example, states may want to work through their AG offices to develop appropriate language. The Executive Board may also want to ask Fish Chiefs how they would like to see the Board finalize the document and move the plan in front of decision makers.

We need to get the plan out for review quickly and are not in a position to develop an outreach or marketing plan to provide to the Fish Chiefs. Perhaps a few bulleted points should be included along with a request for ideas.

The letter should include an introductory paragraph about what the Great Lakes state have been able to do. MICRA has a draft plan enclosed that is intended to be used for the same purpose. Here is how we intend to proceed. We are requesting a letter of support and suggestions as to how best to market it.

Agency Administrators are likely to want to see dollar amounts. We want people to focus on content rather than focusing on the dollar amounts to soon. Perhaps we should remove the dollar amounts from the plan and include them as an attachment.

We could make recommendations to the reviewers. Do we want to request specific staff to review the letter (i.e., AIS Coordinators or legislative affairs)? Do we want to ask for specific input regarding the amount of regulatory actions recommended, budgetary amounts, etc? Perhaps we specify that AIS Coordinators have already reviewed the plan and we are requesting a review and input at a higher level. We want states to review and get energized in the plan. We may want to follow-up with states that do not reply with comments. Perhaps we should be targeting Governors for review and endorsement of the plan. AIS are on many of the Governors' radar screens.

Benjamin made a motion that the Executive Board send the draft plan with a letter to the Fish Chiefs. Rister seconded the motion. The Executive Board requested the opportunity to review the letter and meeting notes prior to the letter be sent to MICRA delegates. The motion passed. Reed will work with Conover to develop the letter.

Boxrucker made a motion that the Executive Board request Mike Hoff to work with the sub-basin representatives to begin development of a draft action plan on native fishes and habitat. Benjamin seconded the motion. The motion passed.

9) Large Rivers Habitat Symposium at 2010 AFS (Benjamin)

Benjamin requested the Executive Board to make a decision regarding MICRA participation in the Third International Symposium and/or the Annual AFS meeting.

Conover suggested that representative from many of the sub-basin are likely to be invited to participate in the Third International Symposium and therefore may want to use this opportunity to plan an organized MICRA session to highlight each of the sub-basins. MICRA can potentially have as small or large of a role as desired in the Third International Symposium. At a minimum, MICRA should have at least one speaker from each of the sub-basins provide an overview of issues and restoration efforts as part of a MICRA session. Speakers can highlight commonalities and differences between the sub-basins. The session should start with an overview of MICRA. If the Executive Board decides to organize a session as part of the Third International Symposium, the Executive Board should form an ad-hoc working group with a representative from each sub-basin to work with Benjamin and Conover. We should attempt to have a common theme for the sub-basin presentations. Sub-basins can submit additional papers as part of the concurrent sessions.

To raise MICRA's visibility, the Executive Board may want to consider hosting a MICRA sponsored large rivers symposium at each annual AFS meeting beginning next year. The Executive Board could identify a list of topics for future AFS symposia. With a little work, a keynote speaker and 10 presentations could be organized into a symposium. One presentation from each sub-basin would go a long way towards having a session organized. MICRA may also need to provide funds for travel assistance. The Executive Board may want to identify a topic and have a draft symposium proposal prepared to discuss during each summer meeting for the following year's AFS meeting. This approach would provide approximately 6 months to plan the session and identify speakers prior to the deadline for symposium proposals which is typically near the first of the year.

Benjamin made a motion to form an ad-hoc committee to organize a MICRA session at the Third International Symposium. Woldt seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Representatives on the committee are:

- UMRCC – Ron Benjamin
- Tennessee/Cumberland – Eric Ganus
- LMRCC – Ron Nasser
- MRNRC – Tracy Hill
- ORFMT – TBD
- Arkansas/Red – TBD
- MICRA – Reed and Conover

Conover will inform the symposium organizers of MICRA decision and interest in having a MICRA session as part of the Third International Symposium.

10) Gamefish Committee (Reed)

The Gamefish Committee remains inactive.

11) Native Freshwater Mussel Committee (Hubbs)

A committee report is provided in the briefing book.

There are only a few states left with commercial shell harvest. There is a small amount in Arkansas, Alabama, Tennessee, and even less in Kentucky.

Hubbs was unable to demonstrate TWRA new on-line mussel and commercial fish harvest/purchase reporting and receipt system. Tennessee has been working on this system for nearly 10 years, since Tennessee began using automated licensing, but the commercial system has been a low priority. System development was going well, but crashed last week when data was uploaded to the system. The system should be up and running soon and may be something that other states can use.

12) Aquatic Nuisance Species Committee / MRBP (Shults)

A balance sheet for the committee is provided in the briefing book and lists the status of the committee's 2008 and 2009 projects.

The following report was submitted by MRBP Co-Chair Jason Goeckler prior to the meeting.

Hosted 2 coordination meetings. The first meeting was hosted by Texas in San Antonio in February. The second was hosted by Pennsylvania in Pittsburg in September. Attendance at Panel meetings remains reasonably good despite travel restrictions by state agencies throughout the basin. An increasing number of MRBP members are requesting travel assistance to attend panel meetings and functions, citing that travel would not be possible without MRBP assistance. The spring 2010 meeting is scheduled for April 20-21 in Nashville, TN.

Development of a Model Rapid Response Plan for Aquatic Invasive Species in the Mississippi River Basin. A project proposal was submitted to and approved by NOAA, Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research, Aquatic Invasive Species Program. The panel hopes to present their Model Rapid Response Plan for the Mississippi River Basin at the spring 2010 ANSTF meeting.

A Review of the Regulation, Production, Triploid Certification, Shipping, and Stocking of Grass Carp. The purpose of the review is to ensure that all parties involved with the production, certification, shipping, stocking, and regulation of grass carp are employing effective and integrated actions to safeguard aquatic resources by preventing introductions of diploid grass carp, and where prohibited, triploid grass carp. A fact sheet and draft scope of work have been developed. The MRBP has requested a representative from each Regional Panel to participate on the project steering committee.

ANS boater surveys. Surveys are used to determine boater and angler awareness of ANS, their sources of information on ANS, and their efforts to prevent the spread of ANS. The surveys will provide a baseline of information to evaluate the effectiveness of outreach efforts to modify boater and angler behaviors with respect to ANS. A survey in Illinois was completed and Wisconsin and Missouri have initiated surveys to be completed by December 2009. Final reports are expected in advance of the spring 2010 meeting.

Proceedings of the International Asian Carp Symposium. MRBP has nearly completed work to publish the proceedings of the International Asian Carp Symposium hosted by the panel in Peoria, IL during August 2006. Thirteen chapters have completed the peer-review process and been submitted to the American Fisheries Society. The few remaining chapters are in review or modification after review. All chapters are expected to be finalized early 2010, with printing and publication to immediately follow.

River Barges as Vectors. At the June 2008 meeting the committee identified a data gap in regard to barge traffic (including tows) bilge and ballast water on the Mississippi River. Member(s) of barge association (American Waterways Operators) and Coast Guard personnel were invited to talk at 2009 MRBP meetings, to share knowledge about barges and tows and the potential for transport of ANS. The U.S. Coast Guard has provided three speakers on this topic, two at the Feb 2009 meeting and one at the Sept. 2009 meeting. River barges do seem to have substantial probability to be a vector of ANS, both through external hull fouling and through waters transported in void spaces. MRBP has plans to elevate the issue in 2010 by hosting a symposium on the topic at the American Fisheries Society 2010 annual meeting in Pittsburgh, PA. The committee has also requested that the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) act with high priority to disallow the upstream movement of damaged barges through the electric dispersal barrier in the Chicago Ship and Sanitary Canal, because of the risk that young Asian carp might be moved through the barrier by this vector.

Experts Database. In mid-2008, efforts were made to update the database. At the Sept. 2009 meeting we determined that it is time again to repeat the process. Because this annual activity is time-consuming and it is difficult to account for non-responses, the MRBP determined that it would be valuable to investigate the possibility of automated updates to the database.

Risk Assessment Framework/Screening Tool. At the June 2008 meeting, a joint GLP MRBP subcommittee for development of a Risk Assessment Framework was formed. The framework has been completed and may be found on the MRBP website.

Wild-caught Bait, Live Food, Pay Lakes. The panel has identified these three vectors as warranting investigation and potential action to reduce risk. The panel's Research and Risk Assessment Committee Chair researched the paylake issue and provided a report to MRBP. The report was also presented to the ANSTF and MICRA, and will be presented to the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Paylakes were identified as

a significant potential vector for ANS. The panel is investigating the potential cost for a private contractor to conduct a risk assessment.

ANS Field Guide. MRBP members provided final comments on the ANS field guide. The field guide is expected to be printed by the end of 2009.

Brazilian Elodea and Hydrilla WATCH Cards. MRBP assisted in the design of a Brazilian Elodea and Hydrilla WATCH Card. The panel purchased a supply of the cards for MRBP members to distribute.

Mock Rapid Response Exercise. The MRBP hosted a mock rapid response exercise for ANS in the Mississippi River Basin. A contractor was hired to develop a table top exercise and provide training on the Incident Command System. An After-Action Report was developed and the MRBP has identified additional needs for Rapid Response preparedness.

2010 Co-Chair Update. Steve Shults with Illinois DNR was elected Co-chair.

Boxrucker will make sure that a report of Oklahoma's completed ANS Boater Survey is submitted to Goeckler.

Conover informed the Executive Board that he has not begun work on the model rapid response plan for AIS in the Mississippi River Basin, primarily due to his involvement with the Asian carp rotenone project in the CSSC in October of last year. The 5-6 weeks that he spent on that project have put him behind. The final report is due to NOAA in June 2010, so this will need to be a focus of his activities for MICRA over the next few months.

The committee has developed an outline for the plan. The next step is for MRBP members to submit materials for Conover to compile into a first draft for the committee to review. Conover's time commitment to this project will be dependent upon how well committee members respond to the request for information.

Conover was requested to get a call for materials out to the MRBP members asap. The Executive Board discussed a number of other MICRA issues that require Conover's immediate attention and the availability of the NOAA funding as an alternative for completing the plan. Conover was requested to look for a contractor that can compile and edit the draft rapid response plan for the MRBP.

13) Paddlefish / Sturgeon Committee (Scholten)

Reports from George Scholten and Brian Elkington are included in the briefing book. The committee held its annual meeting earlier in the week (January 20-21, 2010), however Scholten became a father the week prior and was unable to attend the

meeting. Conover chaired the committee meeting and was asked to provide an overview and highlights from the meeting.

The Committee decided to reconvene an Ad-hoc committee composed of the commercial paddlefish harvest states. The ad-hoc committee was formed about 5 years ago but did not complete all of the intended work. There is still a need to develop consistent reporting requirements among the states for egg sellers and buyers. Consistent reporting requirements will help states, CITES, and Law Enforcement to share information and track the shipment of eggs between states. It was also brought to the committee's attention that the difference between the total number of eggs harvested and total CITES export permits by state each year indicates that domestic trade of paddlefish caviar may be much larger than the international trade. The ad-hoc committee was requested to draft a letter explaining the problems and proposing solutions that will be forwarded, through the Committee, to the Executive Board for consideration.

A large part of the Committee meeting was spent discussing the on-going paddlefish stock assessment work, the coded-wire tag database, and the Executive Board's decisions last July regarding funding for the database and the subsequent request for information received from Past-Chairman O'Bara in his letter dated August 3, 2009.

Sub-basins each identified their current needs for paddlefish management. The committee then identified the highest priority needs for paddlefish management basin-wide:

- a. standardized demographics data from biologists sampling and commercially harvested fish,
- b. age and growth data,
- c. age validation from hatchery recaptures,
- d. inter- and intra-basin movement data,
- e. harvest data,
- f. standardized regulations and penalties,
- g. a shared reporting system for roe harvesters and buyers.

The committee agreed that basic information on paddlefish demographics is needed throughout the basin and that a basin-wide database for information sharing is important to continue. Committee members committed to collecting age and growth data and adding it to the database. The committee members decided that the paddlefish database and coded-wire tag reading would be completed at the sub-basin level, and once a year the sub-basin databases will be merged to update the basin-wide database. The committee recognized the need for technical assistance from the Columbia office to assist with providing a common template for the sub-basin databases, periodically modifying database fields (e.g., age and growth data), reading problematic coded-wire tags, database management and the annual database merge. The committee requests the Executive Board to provide \$5,000 funding for the Columbia FWCO each of the next two years for continued coordination and technical assistance with the basin-wide database as management is transitioned to the sub-basins.

Committee members agreed that any hatchery paddlefish or sturgeon released in the Mississippi River Basin should be tagged as part of the state's commitment to evaluate hatchery programs, and as to not limit the ability of any other basin state to evaluate natural reproduction and recruitment. If this concern is not addressed in the tagging protocol currently under development, then a recommendation will be developed and submitted to the Executive Board with a request that it be provided to Fish Chiefs.

The committee requests the Executive Board to assign the MICRA Coordinator to work with the Committee Chair to look for external sources of funding sources for paddlefish database management and other paddlefish and sturgeon management projects.

The committee discussed the potential for incorporating various sturgeon databases into the MICRA paddlefish database to create a single basin-wide database for paddlefish and sturgeon.

The committee passed a motion to request the Executive Board to forward the priority data needs identified by the committee to the Fish Chiefs and request the states with commercial fisheries to commit to collecting paddlefish population data via biologist sampling and commercially harvested paddlefish data by working with commercial fish houses/markets.

The Executive Board agreed that the Coordinator can work with the committee chair and others, as time allows, to seek external funding to support the paddlefish database and other paddlefish and sturgeon management projects. The Executive Board discussed the need for resource generated revenues to fund paddlefish and sturgeon management (e.g., caviar programs in North Dakota, Montana, and Oklahoma). It will be difficult to find an outside source of funds willing to provide funding for long-term technical assistance with database management.

There is renewed interest in the Missouri River Sub-basin regarding sturgeon populations in the Lower Mississippi River. Dave Herzog is making a presentation at the next Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee (MRRIC) meeting to talk about the issue. Missouri River stakeholders are hearing about a lot of pallid sturgeon in the lower river and this is sparking questions about the difficulty of recovering pallid sturgeon in the Missouri River. The Missouri River stakeholders are starting an information gathering session. There is also recent evidence that a number of adult fish spawning in the Missouri River appear to be moving down into the Mississippi River. There is increasing uncertainty about the continuity of the population in the Missouri River. Similar data exist which documents paddlefish spawning in the Osage River and then moving downriver to the Middle Mississippi River.

The Executive Board will await written requests from the Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee regarding the motions and requests that were brought forward from the committee.

Past-Chair O'Bara sent a letter to the Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee Chair dated August 3, 2009 requesting several pieces of information regarding the status of the paddlefish stock-assessment project and future needs of the coded-wire tag database. The Executive Board agreed that the request is still valid and would like a reply from the committee. Reed will follow-up with Scholten regarding the Executive Board's request for a report on the paddlefish stock assessment project.

14) UMRCC (Benjamin)

The following report was submitted by UMRCC Chairman Ron Benjamin.



UMRCC Executive Board

Ron Benjamin Chairperson
Martin Konrad Chairperson-elect
Janet Sternburg
Kevin Stauffer
Dan Sallee

(March 2009-2010)

Wisconsin Delegate
Iowa Delegate IA DNR
Missouri Delegate MO DOC
Minnesota Delegate MN DNR
Illinois Delegate IL DNR

Ron.benjamin@wisconsin.gov
Martin.Konrad@dnr.iowa.gov
Janet.Sternberg@mdc.mo.gov
Kevin.stauffer@dnr.state.mn.us
Dan.Sallee@illinois.gov

The UMRCC will meet for its 66th annual meeting in Dubuque IA. March 16-18, 2010

Our hope is to finalize UMRCC Fisheries Strategic Plan. This plan will help set state priorities for research and management of the Upper Mississippi River.

We are also revising the publication "Habits and Habitats of UMR Fish" a popular publication for teachers and interested publics. It was last published in 1985 and will be brought up to date with current information and research.

We are also developing a UMR watershed poster with EPA to help people understand the watershed and enhance their sense of place in the system.

More detailed information can be found on <http://mississippi-river.com/umrcc/>

15) LMRCC (Rister)

A committee report was provided in the briefing book. The LMRCC's next meeting will be held June 7, 2010, in Memphis, TN.

16) MRNRC (Adams)

The following report was submitted by MRNRC Chair Steve Adams along with a recommendation that MICRA consider taking action to become engaged in the MRAPS restudy of the 1944 Flood Control Act.

The Missouri River Natural Resources Committee (MRNRC) has a mission to promote and facilitate the preservation, conservation, and enhancement of the natural resources of the Missouri River System.

MRNRC Executive Board

Steve Adams, Chair, Kansas Wildlife and Parks
Don Skaar, Treasurer, Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks
Dave Fryda, North Dakota Game and Fish Department
Jim Riis, South Dakota Department of Game Fish & Parks
Gene Zuerlein, Nebraska Game & Parks Commission
Chris Larson, Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Vince Travnichek, Missouri Department of Conservation
Wayne Nelson-Stastny, MRNRC Coordinator- USFWS

Annual MRNC Conference and BiOP Forum

The Missouri River Natural Resources Committee, US Army Corps of Engineers and US Fish and Wildlife Service invite you to attend and present at the 2010 MRNRC Conference and BiOP Forum: "A Climate for Change" March 17-19, 2010 Lied Conference Center, Nebraska City, NE <http://mrnrc2010.com/>.

Missouri River Authorized Purposes Study (MRAPS)

The Army Corps of Engineers has been directed by Congress to review the original project purposes established by the 1944 Flood Control Act. MRAPS is the first-ever review of the legislation that created the system of dams and reservoirs on the Missouri River and major tributaries. The study will determine if changes in these purposes and the existing federal water resource infrastructure managed by the Corps and Bureau of Reclamation may be warranted.

New river management issues and challenges have surfaced in the last 65 years associated with sediment transport, tribal water rights, ecosystem restoration, global climate change, municipal rural and industrial water development, energy development, and endangered species that were not considered in the 1944 by Pick and Sloan. A restudy of the contemporary uses of the system is expected to result in a new set of

purposes for the operation of the river that better reflects societal needs in 2010 and the next several decades

Missouri River Recovery Program (MRRP)

Activities to restore some of the Missouri River ecosystem's natural form and function are under way and will continue for decades. Although the river will never be brought back to the wild, untamed form encountered by Lewis and Clark, its ecosystem can be revitalized for the benefit of all the basin's inhabitants.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), in partnership with Tribal nations, states and other agencies, continue working together to develop and implement recovery actions. Here are two examples of how the Corps works collaboratively for river recovery:

The USFWS developed a Biological Opinion to protect the three threatened and endangered species that depend on the Missouri River.

The Corps developed a substantial Mitigation Project to acquire the land needed to develop fish and wildlife habitat from Sioux City, Iowa, to St. Louis, Mo.

The foundation of the recovery program stands on four pillars:

- Habitat Creation
- Flow Modifications
- Science
- Public Involvement

Missouri River Ecosystem Restoration Plan (MRERP)

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is conducting a collaborative long-term study authorized by the Water Resources Development Act of 2007. The study, known as the *Missouri River Ecosystem Restoration Plan and Environmental Impact Statement* will identify the actions required to:

- mitigate losses of aquatic and terrestrial habitat;
- recover federally listed species under the Endangered Species Act; and
- restore the ecosystem to prevent further declines among other native species.

The study will result in a plan that guides the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' mitigation, restoration, and recovery efforts for the Missouri River for the next 30 to 50 years. Additionally, the study will provide a blueprint for cooperating agencies from other federal agencies, Tribes, state governments and communities throughout the basin to pull from as they desire.

The Executive Board discussed the recommendation from the MRNRC regarding the MRAPS restudy. The USACE has been funded to study the purposes of the 1944 Flood Control Act Bill which the USACE manages. MRAPS gives the USACE the authority to look beyond the Missouri River and consider the effects of flows from the Missouri River on the Mississippi River (e.g., navigation). The USACE has set up a

series of calls and focus groups, but is mostly a small invited group of participants. MICRA's participation should occur through member representation in MRNRC until requested for specific technical assistance or support (e.g., letter to Fish Chiefs from MICRA). Reed will send a letter to the MRNRC Chair to communicate MICRA's support of MRNRC delegates/representatives involvement in the Missouri River Authorize Purposes Study (MRAPS) of 1944 Flood Control Act and offering technical assistance where possible.

17) ORFMT (Schoenung)

A committee report was provided in the briefing book.

18) Tennessee River (Reeves)

Eric Ganus provided an update on the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers. Tennessee is evaluating their management plan for sturgeon stocking in the upper Tennessee River. Approximately 17,000 sturgeon have been stocked, but they are not sure if they are meeting the management unit objective for Ft. Loudon Reservoir. They are also considering whether other reservoirs should be considered as separate management units, or if those reservoirs are essentially being stocked due to movement of Ft. Loudon fish through the lock and dam system. Tennessee is working with the USFWS to evaluate approaches for tagging a percentage of the hatchery releases. Inadequate funds are available to tag all hatchery releases; their goal is to tag 10% of the releases.

Tennessee will be attempting to sample juvenile paddlefish on Kentucky Lake during 2010.

Tennessee has stocked over 6,000 sturgeon in the Cumberland River since 2006. They plan to PIT tag 1,000 hatchery released fish each of the next five years.

Ganus was asked about the source of the brood fish used for sturgeon production in Tennessee. The USFWS gets sturgeon broodstock from Wisconsin. Benjamin stated that Wisconsin has had considerable experience with using Lake Winnebago and Mississippi River strain broodstock. Their experience has shown that the two different strains behave differently and recommended that Tennessee consider using Mississippi River strains for future production. Some of the fish have been provided by Genoa NFH. Benjamin will provide Eric Ganus with information on Wisconsin's sturgeon stocking projects, specifically regarding behavioral differences of the Lake Winnebago and Mississippi River strains.

19) Arkansas/Red River (Boxrucker)

A report is provided in the briefing book.

The Red River project in LA went operational in 1986 and pooled a long stretch of the river creating ideal sport fishery habitat. Unfortunately it also created excellent habitat for Giant Salvinia. The Red River Waterway Commission is now being asked as many questions as the Department of Fish and Wildlife regarding the problems that are now occurring on the project.

The USACE completed a demographic and angler opinion survey of the Red River chloride project. The USACE surveyed anglers in Texas of their opinions about the project in Oklahoma, but failed to include Oklahoma anglers in the survey. Oklahoma angler data was not included in the final report

20) Upcoming Executive Board vacancies (Reed)

USGS representative Mike Mac will retire in 2010. Mike Jawson (USGS - UMESC) attended the meeting with Mike Mac and agreed to assume Mike Mac's position on the Executive Board until the next election of federal agency delegates. A change to the election of federal representation has been proposed to the MICRA delegates. Once the proposed change is approved or rejected, the Executive Board will hold an election to renew the federal delegates.

Arkansas/Red River representative Jeff Boxrucker will retire during 2010. Bobby Reed (LA) represented the basin prior to Boxrucker. Arkansas would be next in line to provide a sub-basin representative on the MICRA Executive Board. Boxrucker will talk with Mike Armstrong regarding a representative from Arkansas to replace him after his retirement.

21) Budget Requests (Reed)

The Executive Board discussed the draft 2010 budget included in the Coordinator's report in the briefing book (p. 19). The only additional budget request proposed during the meeting was a \$5,000 request from the Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee. Additional funding will be needed for hosting the MICRA web site and technical support for building the new web site.

Benjamin made a motion to accept the proposed budget with the addition of \$5,000 for the Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee for database management and \$500 for hosting and development of the new MICRA web page. Boxrucker seconded the motion. The motion passed.

22) Other New Business

No additional new business was discussed.

23) Schedule Summer Executive Board Meeting (Reed)

The Executive Board will tentatively hold its next meeting in September 2010 in Memphis, TN, in conjunction with the Third International Symposium on Ecology and Biodiversity in Large Rivers of Northeast Asia and North America. The Executive Board's preference would be to meet on Wednesday (9/22), rather than to participate in the scheduled field trip. The Executive Board agreed to meet on Sunday (9/19) if the meeting could not be scheduled for Wednesday. Conover will talk with the symposium organizers about scheduling the meeting in conjunction with the symposium, and will follow-up with the Executive Board.

Boxrucker made a motion that the meeting be adjourned. Mac seconded the motion. The motion passed and the meeting adjourned.