

**Final Minutes of the  
MICRA PADDLEFISH/STURGEON COMMITTEE SPRING MEETING  
Sheraton Westport Chalet Hotel, St. Louis, MO  
March 22 & 23, 2006**

**Wednesday, March 22 Meeting Convened at 8 AM**

**Attendance: 26 participants over a two day period (list attached)**

**Agenda (complete agenda attached)**

- ▶ Overview of 2005 activities (report of the chairman)
- ▶ Project update: paddlefish stock assessment report
- ▶ Committee budget development
- ▶ Finalize Committee operating protocol
- ▶ Upcoming paddlefish symposium in conjunction with Midwest in Omaha
- ▶ CITES update on caviar imports/exports
- ▶ Regional Paddlefish Management Plan Updates
- ▶ Technical Presentations

**Call to Order, Introductions and Procedural Issue**

The spring 2006 meeting of the MICRA Paddlefish/sturgeon Committee was called to order by Chairman Bobby Reed at 8 AM on March 22 at the Sheraton Westport Chalet Hotel, St. Louis, MO. Introductions followed with a sign-in sheet passed around the room.

Procedural issue – Last year we agreed that participating states were to take turns recording the minutes as per the adopted standard operating procedures of the committee. Going alphabetically – Arkansas was present and Jeff Quinn (AGFC) agreed to record the minutes.

**Bobby Reed – Report of the Chairman**

He did not attend the executive committee due to numerous uncontrollable events and priorities (e.g., hurricanes, reorganization and extra duties, reduced staff, son in Iraq). Thus, no new funding was obtained. Also, the MICRA Executive Committee voted not to fund more work until the sub-basin reports are complete. Bobby emphasized that MICRA is not really a funding mechanism for the technical committees. The 1995-2004 final stock assessment report by the Columbia Fisheries Resource Office (FRO) was sent out by Jo Grady and was accepted. Gerald Mestl et al. completed the lower Missouri River basin plan.

Casey Berthold of USFWS has done tag processing but will graduate in fall. The CWT database was moved from Carterville, IL to Columbia, FRO (USFWS) in the spring of 2005. This moved all paddlefish stock assessment activities to one place. Casey reviewed common mistakes. He showed a new chart for tag processing. Please, avoid changing project numbers on the data sheets, fill in all spaces, do not use English units, fill in the substrate column, you need to note the UTM Zone, use consistent site names, use military time, use PC code 5 for snagged fish, only code CWT recap if a tag is removed from the rostrum. Only code CWT marked “yes” if new tag is inserted in the fish. There was debate on CWT recapture meaning removed tag – NEED to note if the tag is removed in column. There is also a problem with states not using an identifier on jaw tags. We need to remember to start and stop CWTS on stock ID sheet.

Nick Utrup (FRO Columbia USFWS) data analysis for paddlefish with GIS. So far a total of 2,160 fish were recaptured with CWT since 1995. Catch was in proportion to effort. 1.8 million hatchery fish have

been CW tagged. CPUE was highest for 3-4" nets and trammel nets. Gill nets were 85% of effort. Snagging used in Iowa, IL, and TN.

A major discussion of the recommendations from USFW. Several points came up including:

1. University of Nebraska at Lincoln will fund ½ the cost to analyze the database and do modeling (Dr. Mark Pegg). Most familiar with the database thought there was not enough there to work with. Lars Mobrand had already talked to us about such issues.
2. **The states still wanted USFWS to continue reading tags and managing the database.**
3. Each state should do its own survival and population modeling—take ownership of the data.
4. The MIRCA paddlefish tagging project was never really a basin-wide project since many states did not participate. Major centers of tagging activity were below Gavin's Point Dam and the Ohio River basin.
5. There was discussion that we could use an online database entry program, but data ownership and access issues are problematic.
6. A standardized annual report is needed detailing committee progress and deliverables. The Ohio Basin format will be modified by Gerald Mestl (NE). Each state should fill out the standard report.
7. Most states have already moved to using a #16 size monel leg band, although Ohio Basin uses aluminum leg bands.
8. **A resolution passed to stop coded wire tagging wild caught fish.** Instead we will move to jaw tags. We need to use a state code in front of jaw tag numbers. Jo Grady's office will continue to read hatchery CW tags. They will stop reading the reference tags. This should cut their work by about 1/3.
9. Jo Grady will send out a standardized data entry format excel or access template that matches the datasheets and database.
10. There is a major backlog of CW tags to be read (about 6 months of full time work).
11. **Columbia (FRO) needs financial resources to clear the backlog of CW tags to be read. They have been working for free. They need a GS5 for \$25-30k to read the tags.**
12. With 1.8 million hatchery tags out there, there will continue to be a need for CW tags to be read.
13. Need funding for \$3,000 annually for meeting, some funds for CW tags, repair of taggers.
14. Missouri has funds for CWT's for Hatchery production. West Virginia needs some CWT's for hatchery fish.
15. We will sell that this committee is not just a database but instead a group that deals with paddlefish and sturgeon issues.

### State by State Information

1. Trish Yasger, Missouri: Uses CW tags for all hatchery fish. They use creel surveys to get tag returns from select fisheries (Truman, Lake of the Ozarks, Osage River below Bagnell Dam. Missouri does not CW tag wild fish in general. The only open commercial paddlefish fishery is on the Mississippi River. They use the Columbia FRO to read the CW tags and maintain stocking records.
2. Fred Ryckman, North Dakota and Montana: They did not choose to participate in the CW tagging study because they did not like the sampling protocol of using CW tags for wild fish. They use CW tags for wild and hatchery YOY fish and monel leg bands for jaw tagging adult fish.
3. Chris O'Bara, West Virginia: Use CWT and elastomer tags on hatchery fish from 2002-2005. They jaw tag wild fish. They use florescent-type elastomer tags because flesh hides other types as the fish grow.
4. Brent Bristow, OK and USFWS: use CWT on juveniles and jaw tag wild fish. He thinks that the database is needed to keep track of what is going on in the basin.
5. Jason Sorenson, SD: catch 1-400 fish/year for jaw tags. Use CWT for hatchery fish.
6. Gerald Mestl, NE: Still uses CWT on wild fish but could stop and use jaw tags instead. Wants the CWT database maintained because the huge investment made in it. Emphasized it never was a basin-wide evaluation in terms of implementation due to non-participation.
7. Tom Stephanavage, IN: Emphasized states need to take ownership in data.
8. Bobby, LA: Wants to maintain database. Noted large number of TX coded wire tags.
9. Ann Runstrom, MN and WI and USFWS: Noted value in maintaining tag database. Emphasized the group is lot more than the tagging study and should not go away. Paddlefish are an interjurisdictional fish that need coordination among basins and states.

10. George Scholten, TN – They have not done a lot of tagging but would like the database maintained.
11. Mike Steuck, IA – Tagged 2,500 fish/15 years by snagging. CWT all fish captured and do not stock. Continue tag reading and database.
12. Jeff Quinn, AR – Continue CFRO functions but need to focus group on management issues like commercial harvest that are more pressing. Would like to see discussion of tagging database minimized if possible instead of it being the main theme at every meeting.

Bobby Reed – Discussion of draft operating procedures – no comments were sent in, and he assumes we are all okay with it.

Strategic plan update – Past meetings did check-off of benchmarks. Bobby forgot a copy of the plan. So we are not going to do that this year. Jason Sorenson (SD) remembered. Due to time we need to skip strategic plan. We moved onto Regional Management Plan Report.

### **BASIN REPORTS**

Bobby (LA) – Lower Basin Report – The hurricane's kept us from getting together and finishing a lower basin report. Need to get AR, OK, TN, MS, LA together to get the report done. We discussed how Mississippi had considered opening a commercial egg harvest. We will not be able to talk about Alabama and Texas in a lower Basin Report since they do not participate.

UMRCC report – Mike Steuck (IA) – We did not prepare to provide an update. IA is the only state sampling and they do so with snagging in pools 13 and 14. Rob (IL) does still fish nets in pool 26. What can be done to generate some more interest to do sampling and fill in the data gaps? There is not very much interest in paddlefish sampling in the UMRCC. WI and MN do not attend.

MRNRC Report – Gerald Mestl – completed the Missouri sub-basin report. They got a report done with some sections comparable to the Ohio Basin report. Gerald reviewed the report. They did a brief amount of exploitation stuff. Gavin's Point to Souix City about 40,000 paddlefish was the population estimate. An Otter trawl study was performed on Lewis and Clark Lake. Each state did a status summary for each river basin. They gave some recommendations. There is an annotated bibliography appendix with grey literature for paddlefish. Their next step is a basin management plan. Telemetry Network – set of 27 receivers over 800 miles of Missouri River over 3 years will be used to look at movement. Not a cheap project, but the stationary network is a unique approach. All a real time to uplink the data. Receivers will go in in May or June 2006. Should be coordinated with Mississippi Basin. March – June 8 tracking boat weekly each covering 100 miles – 3 fixes per week expected. Not going to be very many pallids out there to start since they are hard to find to tag with a transmitter.

### **MARIE MALTESE and LAURA NOGUCHI– OFFICE OF SCIENTIFIC AUTHORITY – USFWS**

Tennessee is the leader in roe harvest again, and 2006 is proving to be a banner year for caviar exports. 2004 - 52 paddlefish permit and 10 were aquaculture; 2005 - 128 permits in 2005 or over 3x more permits. Some permits have been very disorganized, almost like nobody knew what to do when applying. They are trying to reuse invoices that they used previously. Did not review a single application that she did not have to get additional information for at least twice. Shovelnose sturgeon - no applications this year yet. Last year did have a 2,100 lbs permit application. They are not coming back for reconsideration. They just sold the roe on domestic market. USFWS denied 15 permit applications for paddlefish and had 2 permits for 2 aquaculture companies. Have 2 dealers leading the pack including Great Atlantic Caviar in NC and Optomist in Miami Florida. TN and AR lead the caviar exports way out in front of everyone else. Some exports were from Illinois and Kentucky. Most of the applications come in are for large amounts 600 – 1,500 lbs of roe. Right now she has 15 applications on the desk and is looking for more information. Good news is they are working on a new application form to make it more clear for the applicants. They will try to make it less complicated. Old CITES applications were not specific to caviar.

Information: location of harvest, mile and town, gear used, license copy and permit, copy of invoice, date of harvest. They may require a monthly harvest report copy as documentation. She wants copy of monthly harvest report to check against the states records. They get stacks of papers in a file with no organization

so typically she lines up and organizes them and it can take all day to work 1 permit. They now must be in a specific order. Will work on an invoice tracking system to prevent them from reusing invoices.

**Marie would like standardization of monthly report forms.**

### **DISCUSSION OF HAVING A STANDARDIZED REPORT MEETING!!!! THIS SHOULD BE A STAND ALONE MEETING OF THE COMMERCIAL STATES.**

Osage farms and now Aquaculture of Kentucky – Dr. Mims. Lots came from restricted zone on the Ohio River. Live egg and fingerling permits. Laura Noguchi wrote the suspension documents for beluga sturgeon from Caspian or Black Sea. No quotas have been declared for 2006 for any sturgeon for the Black Sea or Caspian Sea. The U.S. is not importing caviar from anywhere. Dr. Dennis Scarnecchia is on sturgeon scientific group. The scientific data were very weak in the Caspian Sea. How they can come up with a biological quota is not scientific. No funding base to get key stock assessment folks together. Appears 100% political in nature in the Caspian Sea.

LISTING: recently listed alligator snapping turtles and map turtles in Appendix 3 of cities – now need an export permit. Least restrictive appendix. Species has to be determined to be legally acquired and a non detriment finding does not have to be acquired. There is a different process for turtle farmers and there is information on the web site.

Egg prices with the dealers are \$100/lb in TN; \$110/lb in Arkansas. George got a \$125/lb in TN. Dennis discussed up to \$140/lb for processed roe from MT and ND.

UPDATING 1977 CITES regulations. One section is caviar trade. They asked us to read the comments to the labeling requirements. “Cradle to grave labeling” of domestic product desired. Now it will be a condition of export. If there is a cradle to grave labeling for domestic products they want comments. CITIES resolution calls for a processor registration. Now they say make your own number. If a more centralized control is desired they need comments. Cradle to grave labeling = how much value would that have? Is it wasted effort? It may provide the perception of legality, and that false perception may be a downside. Former USSR did have strict control of exports and labeling. The U.S. does not. Japan gets Montana caviar from ND snag harvest.

### **CRAIG PAUKERT – Paddlefish Symposium**

A paddlefish symposium is scheduled for the Midwest in December 2007. They will have overview chapters. Most people want to publish it as a separate book (similar to 1986 book) not as a module, which has double page charges. If we go through AFS is they take all the funds but foot the bill. Need at least 12-15 chapters or will be a module in a journal. No page charges for a book but AFS encourages us to fund raise, and cost is typically \$10-30,000 to publish. Peer-review and editing is up to us or the organizers. Other route is a private publishers, and then we would have to come up with the funding. Craig wants any book to be management based so they want to get that information. The North-Central special publication symposium series is somewhat disbanded. AFS sends chapters to all indexing surveys. Double page charges for modules. Donors get their names in the book as contributors. Catfish 2000 did get a kick back, so you can negotiate with AFS to some degree.

### **DEADLINE – GET IDEAS TO CRAIG PAUKERT WITHIN 1 MONTH!**

#### **GENETICS ISSUES**

Gerald filling in for Rob Klumb and Brian Sloss – upper Missouri river paddlers. They looked at effective number of spawners needed.

Ed Heist- Microsatellite DNA in Paddlefish - Neighbor joining tree show most unique populations on Tombigbee and Grand Lake. Have 12 basins represented in study. Still most basins show patterns that suggest populations do mix sometimes. Grand Lake has fewer alleles and less genetic diversity. This population may have the founder effect. The Tombigbee River has a separate drainage so that is why it

probably stands out. Coastal LA population may have connected during high Mississippi River levels. Wants Mitochondrial DNA funding. Texas did stock from the Sulphur River from ND Gavins Point broodstock. There is very little geographical pattern in the genetics of paddlefish. KS stocked John Redmond reservoir very early on in the Grand Lake drainage. This may explain something. What is useful for management? We could figure out isolation by geographic distance or is it sampling effect? Thus, there are implications for brood collection. We would like to store samples and if the species decline, we want to be able to know what original genetic diversity. Paddlefish have a tetraploid ancestry. Only the diploid type1 are useful. Need to develop more loci.

**Thursday 8:00 AM**

**Technical Presentations –**

*Ohio River Paddlefish stocks assessment – Chris O’Bara, ORFMT*

*Population Characteristics of Paddlefish in the Arkansas River – Frank Leone, AGFC*

*Reproduction and Seasonal Habitat Use of Paddlefish in Ozark Lake, Arkansas River, Arkansas. – Steve Donabauer, AR Tech Uni.*

*Delayed Mortality of Paddlefish Released as Bycatch – Janice Kerns, TN Tech Uni.*

*Montana-North Dakota Paddlefish Management – Fred Ryckman, NDGF*

*Life history and the costs of reproduction – Dennis Scarnecchia & Fred Ryckman*

*Age determination and validation of paddlefish in the upper Missouri River – Dennis Scarnecchia, Uni. ID*

**APPENDIX**

***MICRA Paddlefish/sturgeon Committee Meeting  
March 22 & 23, 2006 Sheraton Westport Chalet Hotel, St. Louis, MO  
Attendance List***

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Phone</b>
Brent Bristow	USFWS/Tishomingo, OK	580-384-5710
Chris O’ Bara	WV DNR	304-420-4550
Tom Stefanavage	IN DNR	812-789-2724
Marie Maltese	USFWS/DSA	410-788-5372
Laura Noguchi	USFWS/DMA	703-358-2104
Jo Grady	FRO Columbia USFWS	573-876-1911
Nick Utrop	FRO Columbia USFWS	573-876-1911
Casey Bergthold	FRO Columbia USFWS	573-876-1911

Tracy Hill	FRO Columbia USFWS	573-876-1911
Greg Conover	FRO Cartersville USFWS	618-997-6869
Jeff Quinn	ARGFC – Conway, AR	501-470-3309
Frank Leone	ARGFC – Conway, AR	501-470-3309
Gerald Mestl	NGPC Lincoln, NE	402-471-1512
George Scholten	TWRA – Nashville	615-781-6575
Bobby Reed	LDWF- Lake Charles	337-491-2577
Ed Heist	SIU- Carbondale, IL	618-453-4131
Janice Kerns	TTU Fish Unit	931-372-3701
Fred Ryckman	NDGFC - Williston, ND	701-774-4305
Steve Donabauer,	AR Tech Uni.	
Dennis Scarnecchia	Uni. Idaho – Moscow	208-885-5981
Ann Runstrom	USFWS – Lacrosse, WI	
Craig Paukert	Uni. Kansas Coop Unit	785-532-6522
Trish Yasger	MODOC – Sedalia, MO	660-530-5500
Joshua Lallaman	University Of Missouri	
Casey Berthold	FRO Columbia USFWS	573-876-1911
Nick Utrup	FRO Columbia USFWS	573-876-1911
Jason Sorenson	SDGFP – Chamberlain, SD	605-734-4547
Mike Steuck	IOWA-DNR, Bellevue, IA	563-872-4976
Kirk Hansen	IOWA-DNR, Bellevue, IA	563-872-4976

## **MICRA PADDLEFISH/STURGEON COMMITTEE MEETING**

### ***AGENDA***

**Sheraton Westport Chalet Hotel, St. Louis, Missouri**  
**March 22-23, 2006**

#### **Wednesday March 22<sup>nd</sup>**

- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| 8:00 AM | Welcome / Introductions / Opening Remarks – Bobby Reed, Chairman   |
| 8:10 AM | Report of Chairman / Committee Activities for 2005 – approval of January 2005 meeting minutes – Bobby Reed   |
| 8:20 AM | Paddlefish Stock Assessment Project Report - Jo Grady & Com membership<br>- report presentation/update<br>- 10 years of data - where do we go from here? |
| 9:10 AM | Paddlefish committee budget – any ideas?<br>MICRA board – no \$\$ till finish basin plans – executive summary to board                                   |
| 9:30 AM | Paddlefish/sturgeon committee operating procedures & protocol – Reed & membership  |

- review of draft operating procedures document (handout)
- membership: member state/entity roles & responsibilities, ad hoc committees, duty assignments
- annual meetings: development, components, structure, attendance

- 10:00 AM      **Break**
- 10:15 AM      Paddlefish Strategic Plan Implementation Update – Committee membership
- 11:00 AM      Strategic Plan Development for shovelnose sturgeon – Committee membership,
- 12:00 PM      Lunch (on your own)
- 1:15 PM      Regional Paddlefish Management Plan Reports/Updates  
                  - ORFMT – Ohio River – Chris O’Bara, ORFMT  
                  - LMRCC – Bobby Reed, Lower Basin Reps  
                  - UMRCC – ?  
                  - MRNRC – Gerald Mestl, Missouri River Group
- 2:45 PM      CITES Update, listing of beluga sturgeon, ban on exports– Marie Maltese & Laura Noguchi (USFWS – Scientific & Mgmt. Auth.)
- 3:15 PM Break
- 3:30 PM      Upcoming paddlefish symposium – Craig Paukert, Dan O’Keefe, Gerald Mestl, George Scholten, Dennis Scarnecchia, & group
- 3:50 PM      Paddlefish Genetics – Robert Klumb, FWS
- 4:10 PM      Proposed & Completed Research Projects, Other Discussion  
                  - updated paddlefish bibliography CD – Gerald Mestl  
                  - development of a MICRA tutorial CD – Ageing techniques, obtaining known age fish – Quinn, Scholten & group  
                  - *Age determination and validation of paddlefish in the upper Missouri River – Dennis Scarnecchia, Uni. ID*
- 4:50 PM      2006 Task assignments
- 5:00 PM      Adjourn!

**Thursday March 23<sup>rd</sup>**

- 8:00 AM      Regional Paddlefish Mgmt Plans – group  
 Overview of Paddlefish status – summarizing/combining all basin plans for Exec Board

**Technical Session**

- 8:30 AM      *Status of blue sucker genetics in the United States – Mike Bessert, Uni. Nebraska*

- 8:50 AM *Ohio River Paddlefish stocks assessment – Chris O’Bara, ORFMT*
- 9:10 AM *Are your paddlefish fatter than ours? – Richard Condrey, LSU*
- 9:30 AM *Population Characteristics of Paddlefish in the Arkansas River – Frank Leone, AGFC*
- 9:50 AM *Reproduction and Seasonal Habitat Use of Paddlefish in Ozark Lake, Arkansas River, Arkansas. – Steve Donabauer, AR Tech Uni.*
- 10:10 AM Break
- 10:30 AM *Delayed Mortality of Paddlefish Released as Bycatch – Janice Kerns, TN Tech Uni.*
- 10:50 AM *Montana-North Dakota Paddlefish Management – Fred Ryckman, NDGF*
- 11:10 AM *Life history and the costs of reproduction – Dennis Scarnecchia & Fred Ryckman*
- 11:30 AM Wrap-up and adjourn!