

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

MEMORANDUM

Date: April 19, 1999

FROM: Kim Graham, Chairman-MICRA Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee

TO: MICRA Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee members and friends

SUBJECT: Spring Committee Meeting

We held our spring MICRA Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, on April 13/14, 1999. Twenty four folks from 12 states and U.S.F.W.S. attended. Greg and Jo provided up-to-date information on the database and asked that anyone needing data sheets for field work contact them. There was discussion about creating a spreadsheet for historical tagging information that many of us have in our files. The mood of the conversation was generally positive, so you might start thinking about the best way to retrieve old tagging data (at least tags that were placed in paddlefish before the MICRA study began and still have a chance at being captured) and calling Greg or Jo.

Budget continues to be a problem. Jerry indicated that our study has about \$13,600 remaining and most of that will be used to buy tags for individual states. Gerald Mestl reported that a Nebraska legislator was presented the Budweiser Award which also comes with a gift of \$75,000. The legislator contacted Don Gabelhouse and asked him if there were any conservation projects that would like \$5,000. Don mentioned the MICRA paddlefish tagging study and since that date, the legislator has asked several other conservation-minded entities to think about providing funds for us. To date, Don reports that the \$5,000 gift has grown to \$30,000. Don sent a letter to us asking for a barebones study budget so that they could talk about what the project needs over the next several years. Jerry and I will soon be developing the budget and sending it to Nebraska. Since money is so tight, this is one way to create funding for needed projects. You might think of ways to be similarly creative.

Our tagging study is officially set to end late this fall. As you all know, the information from our five years tagging effort is just now beginning to come in. We all anticipated this. It was a general consensus that the study be continued another 5-10 years so that we can begin to answer the questions we originally asked in the study proposal. I don't think there was anyone in the group that favored terminating the study after the first five years. We will be, however, charged with the responsibility of creating new ways of funding the study. We discussed prizes for the study, and I mentioned that I will be conducting the drawing for 1998 within the month. Thanks for several of you, we have the following prizes to

distribute: gift certificates from Cabela's and Miller Net and Twine, 200 insulated water jugs from Coleman, something (probably caps) from SeaArk Boats, and MICRA caps. We asked Jerry to consider ordering several hundred more MICRA caps because supplies are low. We really need help in securing prizes for the coming next years. I would appreciate it if you would attempt to locate something that we can use next year. As a means to encourage sponsorship to the study and provide prizes, the MICRA Executive Board gave us permission to allow major sponsors to have their logo placed on the MICRA homepage. One can click on their logo and immediately get into their companies homepage. This should make it easier for us to solicit prizes.

If any of you have names of sport and commercial fishermen who provided rostrums during 1998, please send them to me, so that I can conduct the drawing next month. I know that I am missing information from Indiana and Kentucky, but I might have the numbers of fishermen from about everyone else. Please check.

The highlight of the meeting was the presentation by Lars Mobrand, from Mobrand Biometrics in Washington. Lars provided a great perspective on large tagging studies. His suggestion to us was to begin identifying major corps areas where paddlefish are found within the Basin. I think we already know enough to begin this process. Jo and Greg will soon mail Mississippi River Basin maps to everyone and ask that you mark on the map where key populations are located. Ann Runstrom will coordinate map-building for states along the upper Mississippi River, Bobby Reed will have the middle and lower Mississippi River and associated Gulf drainages, Tom Stefanavage will take the Ohio River, and Gerald Mestl will handle the Missouri River. Jo and Greg will provide information as to what's needed. Once we identify these key paddlefish corps areas, we can refine the tagging study (hopefully at our fall meeting). If nothing else, I envision we will revisit the study objectives this fall and finetune the study. Lars said that he would like to come back this fall and help guide us in project revision.

Some Potentially Important News: Marion Conover, Bill Reeves, Greg Conover, and Jo Grady will meet with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Director and selected staff on May 20 in Washington D.C. to discuss the commitment to MICRA and particularly our paddlefish tagging study. Expect to hear something soon after that.

Bob Sheehan (SIU) presented some very interesting information about microsatellite genetic analysis regarding pallid sturgeon. Bob reports that they have identified over 75 markers that will enable them to once and for all identify pallids vs shovelnose and probably allow them to identify hybrids. If the process works and every indication is that it will, the same technique will probably allow us to identify sub-populations of paddlefish. Bob reported that they should have answers by late this fall.

There was general consensus that our fall meeting should be held in St. Louis again. It's a pretty easy place for the folks who fly and centrally located. If any of you have other suggestions, I would like to hear about it. To those of you who attended the meeting, THANKS for coming, and to those of who couldn't be there, see you this fall.