

# **UMRCC Fisheries Technical Section**

## **Minutes of the 2008 Spring Meeting**

### **March 18**

### **Collinsville, IL**

The annual spring meeting was held this year in Collinsville, Illinois at the Holiday Inn as part of the 64th Annual Meeting of the UMRCC and 2nd joint meeting with the Lower Mississippi River Conservation Committee (LMRCC). The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by chair Dan Dieterman. A total of 51 people attended the meeting, including 4 retirees. All 5 UMR States, USFWS (Refuges, Ecological Services, Hatchery, and FAO), USACE (Rock Island, St. Louis, and Memphis), and USGS (Onalaska) were represented. In addition were representatives from various NGO's, and the private sector (electrical power producing companies and fish processors). An agenda and attendance list is attached. The Fall 2007 meeting minutes were approved without discussion. The Fall 2008 meeting will be held in Wisconsin at Wyalusing Stat Park during either the 3rd or 4th week of September.

#### **Carp "After Harvest Management"**

Tim Leeds and John Holden, from Heartland Processing in Rockford IL, gave a presentation about their newly formed company. Their patent pending machine has the capability of processing whole fish in bulk, producing fishmeal and fish oil, which are valuable market commodities. The only by-product of the process is steam. The machine was designed to be portable so that the company can travel to where fishermen are fishing. The company hopes to make contact with commercial fishermen throughout the basin to purchase and process Asian carps. Some discussion ensued and contacts were established with IL DNR staff.

#### **Asian Carp Movement in the Illinois River**

Kelly DeGrandchamp, from the Rock Island District COE, presented information about a project looking at Asian carp movement in the Illinois R. Sonic tags were implanted into a small number of both bighead and silver carp and their up and downstream movements were recorded by fixed receivers placed at strategic locations. This information will also be useful in tracking the leading edge of upstream migration, especially as populations approach the electric barrier near Chicago.

Evaluation of 15-inch min. size limit walleye regulation in MN/WI UMR border waters  
1990 - 2007

Dan Dieterman (MNDNR) presented results of a preliminary evaluation of the 15-inch min. size limit. The evaluation utilized over forty years of gillnet data, catch curves, mortality estimates, growth rates and creel survey statistics. Results suggest that an observed increase in population and size structure was most influenced by abiotic variables, specifically, an increase in mean seasonal water temperature and its influence on the length of the growing season.

#### Mid-term Evaluation of Walleye and Sauger Regulations in Iowa/WI and IA/IL border waters

Mike Steuck (IADNR) gave an update on the progress of their evaluation of regulations implemented in 2003 and 2004. The regulations included a winter fishing closure in the tailwaters of pools 11, 12, and 13 along with a 20 – 27 inch protected slot for walleye in pools 12 – 20. The regulations are scheduled to sunset in April 2009. Preliminary results show a decrease in annual mortality of sauger, presumably due to a decrease in angler catch during winter.

#### UMR Fisheries Plan Update and Discussion

Dan Dieterman presented the results of a meeting that occurred at 8:30 am, which included representatives from all 5 UMR States, Upper Miss. Refuge (USFWS), Rock Island and St. Louis Districts (USACE). A discussion ensued and it was agreed that the previous plan's format would continue to work well for this effort, however, it was suggested that an appendix containing specific reports and information referenced in the plan be included. This planning effort should also coincide with and include timelines and outcomes that support other planning efforts taking place (ie. NESP, CCP, CMP, etc). A few recommended additions to the introductory narrative include an update of fish assemblage information and a statement and discussion about the influence and impact of climate change. It was recommended that this effort be a bit more focused on fisheries goals and objectives and that NESP goals and objectives be referenced for chemical and physical outcomes. This plan should also be developed to function as an information/education document for both internal and external use. The plan should include new timelines for updates to useful publications and documents (ie. Fish Distribution Tables, etc.). It was also suggested that it would be very useful if the plan would help develop a strategy to better assess fisheries changes due to NESP and EMP projects. New or newly emphasized goals should include exotic species, fish pathogens and fish passage. It was also recognized that probably the most important aspect of the planning process is the open communication and active participation by all partners. A recommendation was agreed to by the majority of attendees to ask the Coordinator, with the approval of the Executive board, to contract with Tom Boland (IADNR retiree) to coordinate, facilitate and complete the planning process.

## Connectivity Paper

This issue/informational paper jointly developed by the Fisheries and Wildlife Technical Sections was approved. The paper will be submitted to the Executive Board for their review and approval.

## Coordinator's Report

Scott Yess (UMRCC Coordinator) gave his report and a copy was submitted and is included in the annual proceedings.

## Mussel Ad Hoc Committee Update

Gary Wege (USFWS) gave a brief update of the Mussel ad hoc committee meeting that was conducted at 10:00 AM. Of particular interest from last summer's propagation work was the occurrence of a very strong year-class of zebra mussels. He also showed a short power-point presentation featuring a February drawdown of 13 feet in Pool 1 (St Anthony Falls in Minneapolis). Separate minutes from their meeting have been submitted to the Coordinator.

## Publication Committee Update

Mike Steuck reported that the recently updated "Distribution and Abundance of UMR Fishes" will be published sometime this summer. He also reported that the Fifty-Year Summary of Commercial Fishing on the UMR Summary Report is also close to completion.

## Agency Updates

MN – Kevin Stauffer reported that 2 of his staff will be retiring within the next 2 months (Dale Sogla – 30+ year technician and Bonnie Dohrn – 25+ year Administrative Assistant). He also reported that the MN Legislature passed a bill that puts a 3/8 of a

percent tax increase for Natural Resources on the Nov. ballot, in which a 2/3rds in favor is needed to make the bill law.

WI – Ron Benjamin reported:

Mississippi River fishery sampling predominantly is conducted out of three stations.

Alma Brian Brecka and Michelle Marron

Lacrosse Dave Heath, Jeff Janvrin and Ken Von Ruden

Prairie du Chien Pat Short

Shovelnose Sturgeon Sampling

Sampled shovelnose to continue the regulation assessment.

Summer Sampling for Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Catfish sampling in pools 5, 8, and 10.

Fall Sampling for Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Lakes Sampling – Lakes Assessment protocol as established state wide

\* New as of this year, WDNR will be sampling a number of backwater lakes as outlined by statewide fisheries protocol.

\* The river was divided in to segments. The segments were classified High, medium and low. The goal is to sample the high priority areas once every 4 years, medium priority once every 10 years low priority once every 20 years.

\* An example this year of lacrosse's high priority areas were a pool 9 unit being sampled including Cold Springs, Ronkoski slough, Blackhawk Park, and a pool 8 unit of Goose Island complex.

\* Sites were sampled in pools 4, 5, 5a and 6. out of the Alma office

- \* Sites were in 9,10 and 11 from the PDC office
- \* We expect to be back to those areas in four years cycle of assessment so these areas are sampled on a repetitive basis.
- \* The target sample season is from September 15 until November 1. Weather and equipment issues can widen this window.
- \* Each Lake area is sampled with 40 Fyke nets nights and 30 /10 minute electrofishing runs are conducted as a part of this protocol for lake assessment.
- \* The Fisheries crew tries to complete sampling as early as possible so we don't get caught by freeze up but due to weather and wind conditions fish movement as well the extensive sampling work load this is not always possible.
- \* Pettibone sampling will occur this fall and subsequent falls.

#### Pre and post HREP sampling;

- Wisconsin samples HREP projects pre and post construction to better ascertain the effectiveness of the project or the technique of restoration. Because of gear effectiveness and species sampling in fall is the optimum time.
- Several projects are in various stages of design in lower pool 9 (Harper's Slough Islands, Winneshiek Islands, and Capoli slough). Therefore, we initiated a lower pool 9 HREP assessment by electrofishing 66 random sites and 13 fixed sites between Lock and Dam 9 to Lansing to begin establishing a pre-project baseline of all of the projects combined. The 66 random sites were stratified based on whether they were shoreline vs. open water within direct or indirect project influence areas (i.e. completed HREPs or area with no HREP proposed were classified as indirect influence areas to serve more or less as a control.) Therefore, pool 9 HREP post project sampling was done at Pool 9 Islands and Cold Springs with pre-project sampling done at the 3 previously mentioned sites.

#### Pre-Cpoli sampling

Mussel sampling of proposed feature (island, access channels, borrow, etc.) footprints last fall.

Fixed and random site pre-project electrofishing runs.

#### Post Spring lake sampling.

- \* This sampling was established to monitor current fisheries use in around the Spring lake project Pool 5.
- \* There were a variety of 10 minute shocking runs.
- \* There were 8 nets set for 4 nights for a total 32 net nights
- \* Sampling ability is limited by staff time and equipment. This fall fisheries crews have been out all week, every week, since September 1.

#### Post Ambro slough sampling

- \* This sampling was established to monitor current fisheries use in around the Ambro slough project Pool 10.
- \* There were a variety of 10 minute shocking runs.
- \* There were 8 nets set for 4 nights for a total 32 net nights
- \* Sampling ability is limited by staff time and equipment. This fall fisheries crews have been out all week, every week, since September 1.

#### Post Sunfish lake sampling

- \* This sampling was established to monitor current fisheries use in around the Sunfish \mud lake project Pool 11.
- \* This project was done with IA DNR
- \* There were a variety of 10 minute shocking runs.
- \* There were 8 nets set for 4 nights for a total 32 net nights
- \* Sampling ability is limited by staff time and equipment.

#### Pre Pool 8 - Phase III habitat sampling:

- \* This sampling was established to monitor current fisheries use in around the Pool 8 Phase III, Stage 3-5 area.
- \* There were 45 – 10 minute shocking runs.
- \* There were 7 nets set for 4 nights for a total 28 net nights
- \* Sampling ability is limited by staff time and equipment. This fall fisheries crews have been out all week, every week, since September 1.
- \* Fisheries staff does their best to proceed at slow speeds and avoid waterfowl and electrofishing is always done at slow no wake speeds due to crew efficiency.

#### Jack oak slough habitat monitoring

- \* This sampling was established to monitor current fisheries use in around the Jack oak slough Pool 11.
- \* This project was done with Iowa DNR there were a variety of 10 minute shocking runs.

#### Backwater wintering habitat monitoring:

This project is being finished this fall. We have over the past 5 years sampled around 600 sites in the UMR to assess and inventory the winter habitat of lack there of in the UMR. This data is helping us:

1. Finish a publication on the importance of this habitat to the ecosystem and the public.
2. Finish a model to graphically show where the habitat is missing in the system and identify solutions.

#### Walleye sauger monitoring:

- \* Walleye\sauger monitoring occurs in various pools to keep a breast of the populations of these important sport species.
- \* This sampling includes population sampling, experimental regulation evaluation sampling and Young of the year index sampling.

#### Nelson Dewey power plant monitoring:

We are beginning to collect data at the proposed new coal generation station in Cassville, WI

VHS sampling as needed and required by Wisconsin.

Contaminant fish sampling as identified by the interagency team.

Wisconsin by statute is required to investigate fish kills. If fish kills occur on the UMR we will follow American Fishery Society investigation guidelines.

IA (Bellevue Management) - Kirk Hansen reported:

Bowfin: We have seen increased interest and pressure on bowfin for their roe. Commercial fishers are receiving \$25/lb for roe and we have heard of reports as high as \$43/lb. Therefore, we are conducting studies on bowfin population dynamics and aging in conjunction with Mike Quist at Iowa State University. Unlike sturgeon and paddlefish, bowfin spawn annually, mature at a young age, and grow rapidly. This would presumably make them less susceptible to overharvest. We are currently working up the data and preparing manuscripts for publication.

Shovelnose Sturgeon: Evaluation of our regulations is ongoing in Pool 13. We tagged an additional 600 fish with PIT tags last summer. We continue to monitor the commercial catch both through our harvest reports and by checks of fishers as they come off the water. Once I receive Illinois harvest totals for Pool 13 from 2006 and 2007, I will be able to complete exploitation estimates for the last two harvest seasons. We are also conducting a study on the Cedar River to determine spawning periodicity of female sturgeon.

HREP Evaluations: We are working with the Bellevue LTRM station to study the effects of backwater dredging HREP projects on centrarchid populations. We are studying the Pool 12 Overwintering HREP project. This project includes dredging and increasing topographic diversity in and around six backwater areas. We now have two years of pre-construction data. We will collect four years of pre- and post-construction samples. We will be examining changes in catch rates, abundance, growth, and condition at pool wide to individual backwater scales.

IA (Pool 13 LTRMP) - Mel Bowler reported:

Another action-packed highlight reel for LTRMP sampling in Pool 13, UMR, 2007:

Aside from getting a huge 3-week bump in water levels in mid to late fall, all 300 samples were completed on time. The total number of fish collected was 28,197, excluding 25 age-0 suckers (most likely shorthead redhorse) and 1 greensunfish x orangespotted sunfish hybrid. Number of species observed in 2007 – 60. One new species of record to report this year – 1 tailwater collection of a western mosquitofish. This puts the number of species collected to date up to 87. The five most numerically abundant species collected in 2007 were: mimic shiner, gizzard shad, bluegill, channel catfish, and emerald shiner. Species collected that have special status in Iowa included 172 weed shiners, 8 pugnose minnows, and 5 western sand darters. Still no Asian carp species observed or collected.

We had another banner year for channel cat in our small hoop nets. Catch rates averaged 23.2 fish/net in main channel borders, and we really nailed them on wingdams and in side channels (43.5 and 34.4 fish/net, respectively). The majority of these catfish were between 8-11 inches, with good numbers of 11-15 inchers. I spoke with a couple of older commercial boys from Sabula and Clinton, and they expressed that they couldn't remember a better catfishing season on the river. However, channel catfish had a relatively poor spawning season in 2007. Trawling in Pool 13 tailwaters for age-0 channel catfish yielded a mere 2.0 fish/haul. The 2007 catch rate was about half the 16-year mean of 4.3 fish/haul, and was 11-fold down from the peak catch rate of 2006. Tailwater trawling for shovelnose in 2007 was about what it was last year. Trawl yields for shovelnose sturgeon averaged 1.0 fish/haul, and this was well below the 16-year mean of 2.3 fish/haul. All sturgeon collected were between the lengths of 17" and 24" in 2007. All sturgeon collected were between the lengths of 17" and 24" in 2007. What was somewhat disturbing this year is we didn't collect any age 0-2 sturgeon. We have rationalized if there is overharvest of sturgeon females in Pools 12 or 13 and it indeed affects reproduction, we should be able to detect abundance changes in fishes < 20 inches relatively quickly. So, it looks like an age-2 fish is about 14 inches, and we trawled no sturgeon smaller than 17 inches in 2007. I think Geno and Kirk picked-up only 1 or 2 age-2 fish in their trammel drifts last season. This marks the first occasion that we've never collected any age 0-2's, looking back over our L/F histograms since 1991. Fall water levels in the tailwater were a little higher than normal this year, but conditions were still conducive for trawling. We caught gobs of age-0 drum in just about every trawl run, which is typical when the trawl is running correctly. A bit strange. Whether or not the lack of these sub-adult fish in this year's trawls may be from some sampling bias or perhaps from just a non-favorable spawning year, these results certainly have my attention.

The general abundance and condition of largemouth bass populations in Pool 13 were very good in 2007, with no apparent ill effects of LMBV. Length/weight relations of largemouth bass this year were no different than any other year since 2000, and an analysis of historic Brown's Lake largemouth bass revealed no statistical differences in mean Wr when compared to other Pool 13 largemouth.

IA (Bellevue Research) – Mike Steuck reported:

Walleye/Sauger Work: Evaluation of Regulations – Walleye, 15 in minimum, 20-27 in release slot in pools 12 through 22 to increase or stabilize recruitment. Sauger, roughly a 1 mile closed area in the tailwaters of Dams 12, 13 and 14, Dec 1 through March 15 to decrease mortality rates. Telemetry on walleye to evaluate changes to channel training structures in mid to lower Pool 13 and to evaluate use of backwater habitat in spring prior to spawning.

Bluegill/Crappie Work: Telemetry work with bluegill, black and white crappie and largemouth bass less than 14 inches to describe the characteristics of fall and winter habitat preferences utilized by these species and describe the physical and chemical nature of the fall and winter habitat selected by these species to develop recommendations to maintain and improve these habitats. Have worked in backwaters in several different pools and are currently working in the lower Pool 11 Islands HREP area to evaluate the use and function of the recently completed habitat project.

Flathead Catfish Work: Evaluate the status, distribution and habitats of the flathead catfish population and the flathead catfish sport fishery in Pool 13 as a part of a statewide study in conjunction with our interior river research biologist.

Paddlefish Work: Capture roughly 200 to 300 paddlefish mainly by snagging annually as a part of the basin wide MICRA paddlefish assessment project. Capture gear in the past has been snagging. Now using 5 inch gill nets so data is comparable to other basins. Have been assisting Ann Runstrom (FWS LaCrosse) with the writing of the Upper Miss Basin Paddlefish Report.

UMRCC Fish Tech Section Publications: Continue work on the Distribution and Abundance paper and the Commercial Fish Harvest 50 year summary (1953-2003).

Bernie Schonhoff at our Fairport Fish Management Station has a new Fisheries Technician, Adam Theise. We have a new Fisheries Management District Biologist stationed at the Lake Darling, Chad Dolan. The Bellevue LTRMP Field Station has a new

Team Leader, Dave Bierman, a new Water Quality Specialist, Travis Kueter, and a new vegetation specialist, Josh Peterson. Dave Bierman was formerly the Water Quality Specialist at the Bellevue LTRMP Field Station.

IL – No one from Illinois reported.

INHS – Kevin Irons reported, but report was not submitted.

MO – Submitted by Travis Moore, Northeast Region

There is a lot of activity in the pooled reach of the Upper Mississippi River. There are two ongoing projects (walleye/sauger tagging and catfish harvest evaluation) and an extension of past projects (lake and shovelnose sturgeon).

Walleye and sauger tagging have been conducted for a couple of years now. One more fall sampling season will occur in 2008 and evaluation of the project will not come before Summer, 2009.

The catfish harvest evaluation is being conducted on a number of other interior streams as well as the Upper Mississippi. One more sampling and tagging season is planned for this spring and early summer. Data crunching and reports will follow.

We continue to conduct statewide shovel and lake sturgeon sampling on the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. Higher water and poor weather hampered shovelnose sampling efforts this winter but most of the work has been completed. Statewide lake sturgeon sampling on these two streams will be conducted this spring. The focus of this effort is to see whether we can effectively capture adult, pre-spawn fish for future propagation work.

Along with that effort, and coinciding with Blind Pony Hatchery coming back on-line, we have been collecting broodstock lake sturgeon to test and perfect our handling and propagation techniques at the hatchery. Because we are still debating the genetics issue in

Missouri (Do we want to propagate and release Winnebago strain fish?), the plan is to spawn the fish, raise the eggs to eye stage, then destroy them.

Work on lake sturgeon habitat use continues as well. Nick Bloomfield, Western Illinois University (WIU) graduate student, has been implanting juvenile lake sturgeon with ultrasonic transmitters. The project is targeting fish between one and eight pounds and will compliment a project completed by former WIU graduate student Greg Snellen, last year. Greg's project looked at movement and habitat use of sub-adult and adult lake sturgeon in the pooled portion.

A proposal was submitted for a follow up project to Nick's work. Under this project, fingerling fish would be implanted with transmitters and followed to see how quickly they disperse from a stocking site, how and where they travel, and what habitats do they eventually settle in to. The project was approved through the first two levels but we are still awaiting final approval.

Other river related work continues on the proposed fish passage structure, new lock, and hydropower plant, all proposed for Lock and Dam 22 at Saverton and the EMP/HREP project on the Ted Shanks Conservation Area adjacent to Pool 24.

Zebra mussels continue to be found in inland waters. While they have been identified in Lake of the Ozarks for a little over a year now, sightings in Lake Taneycomo (southwest Missouri) were confirmed this past year. Education efforts continue, but we can do little more than wait to see where the next sighting will be. With the amount of boat traffic present on these two large reservoirs, the risk of spread increases exponentially.

MO - Submitted by Robert Hrabik, ORWFS, Cape Girardeau

The Open Rivers and Wetlands Field Station (ORWFS) has enjoyed a productive long-term partnership with Southeast Missouri State University (SEMO) for the last 17 years. Recently, the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) and SEMO entered into a Master Memorandum of Understanding that will enable ORWFS and other MDC staff to rapidly engage SEMO professors and their staff in conducting research and monitoring projects in the future. Perhaps the pinnacle of this long-term relationship will be ORWFS involvement in the creation of the Southeast Missouri Technological Park (now under construction) along Interstate Highway 55, just north of Cape

Girardeau. Plans have been drafted that will create a unique partnership between the ORWFS and the Biology Department, including a new start-of-the-art laboratory (22,000 square feet) that will house the field station and provide working space for scientists and students from both the ORWFS and SEMO. The emphasis of the Tech Park will be large river and floodplain ecology, and the ORWFS will anchor scientific development of the complex. SEMO expects the laboratory will be constructed in 2009.

USFWS (NFWCO in LaCrosse) – Pam Thiel reported:

Provided Scott Yess as the UMRCC Coordinator and Heidi Keuler to assist him.

The Driftless Area Restoration Effort (DARE) became a full partnership in the National Fish and Habitat Restoration Plan (NFHAP).

The Fishes and Farmers Partnership of the Upper Mississippi River Basin became a Candidate Partnership of the NFHAP.

Conducted our annual Carp Corral/Goby Round Up on nearly 180 miles of the Illinois River Waterway.

Participated in the Mussel Coordination Team and their activities, including fish infection with Higgins eye, thermal life requisites for winged mapleleaf, and collection and stockpiling of Higgins eye and winged mapleleaf.

Conducted zebra mussel monitoring on the St. Croix River and Pool 4 of the Mississippi River as part of the St. Croix River Interstate Aquatic Nuisance Species Plan.

Worked on fish passage at the first upstream dam from The Mississippi River at Prairie du Sac on the Wisconsin River. Fish of special concern are blue sucker, paddlefish, lake and shovelnose sturgeons.

Worked on a medication turn-in and disposal program with La Crosse County that prevented 3 tons of prescription drugs from entering the Mississippi River in the first 7 months of operation.

Educated the public and local pet store owners about the impacts of releasing pet fish into waterways. We have prevented pet fish, especially red pacu, from disposal into the Mississippi River Basin.

Conducted and assisted on several kids fishing days which help get kids back into nature.

Respectively Submitted by,  
Dan Dieterman, Chairman

# Agenda

1:00 – 1:10 Welcome/Housekeeping –Fish Tech Chair, Dan Dieterman (MN DNR)

1:10 – 1:30 “Carp – After-harvest Management” - Tim Leeds

1:30 – 1:50 Asian Carp Movement in the Illinois River – Kelly DeGrandchamp (COE)

1:50 – 2:10 Evaluation of 15” minimum size limit walleye regulation in MN/WI waters  
(1990 – 2007) – Dan Dieterman (MN DNR)

2:10 – 2:30 Evaluation of walleye/sauger regs. in IA/WI waters – Mike Steuck (IA DNR)

2:30 – 3:00 UMR Fisheries Plan Update and Discussion

3:00 – 3:15 Break

3:15 – 3:30 Coordinator’s Report – Scott Yess (UMRCC Coordinator)

3:30 – 3:40 Mussel Ad Hoc Committee Update – Gary Wege (USFWS)

3:40 – 3:50 Education and Publication Committee Updates

3:50 – 4:30 Agency Reports (Please submit an electronic or written copy to Chair)

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