

UMRCC Fisheries Technical Section Minutes of the 2007 Fall Meeting

September 18 – 20

WIU Kibbee Biological Station, Warsaw, IL

The 2007 Fall Fisheries Technical Section meeting was held jointly with the Wildlife Technical Section and the Recreation Technical Section. Fish Section Chair, Dan Dieterman (MN), Wildlife Section Chair, Tom Beissel (IL) and Recreation Section Chair, Scot Johnson (MN) welcomed all in attendance and thanked Dan Sallee (IL) and the rest of the IL contingent for setting up the meeting and providing the meals. The agenda (attached) on the first afternoon (Sept. 18) included presentations and discussion directed toward the joint members.

Joint Session

HREP Islands Evaluation – Jeff Janvrin

Jeff presented information about the evolution of island building within EMP and illustrated some cursory comparisons at pre- and post constructed island locations. He also recommended that evaluations could be improved by studying impacts both in and outside the predicted zone of effect, similar to evaluations being conducted on water level management.

UMRCC Position Statement on Climate Change – Tim Schlagenhaft

Tim presented a second draft of a UMRCC position statement based on a report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), that recognizes the impact of human influence on global climate change. The UMRCC statement goes on to recommend: supporting legislation that reduces carbon emissions, conserves energy, and funds natural resource restoration; inclusion of carbon budgets (emissions and sequestration) and energy consumption as criteria for habitat project prioritization; and incorporates climate change indicators into existing monitoring and research programs. Ensuing discussion suggested inclusion of additional recommendations: more effort in outreach and education specific to Miss. River; and more effort at conducting “green” UMRCC

meetings. The Fish Tech section recommended approval of the position statement with the additional recommendations and will request that the Executive Board also approve the statement.

National Fish Habitat Initiative – Ken Lubinski

Ken gave an update and answered some questions. He also mentioned that Iowa DNR has been instrumental in the early stages of development.

Coordinator's Report – Scott Yess

The Coordinator's Report is attached.

EMP Update – Marvin Hubbell

Marvin talked about how SET (System Ecological Team) was developing a repackaged set of goals and objectives for habitat projects ie. HREP's that would better fit with the goals and objectives of NESP if it gets authorized. He described a process that would allow for a relatively seamless transition from one program to another if that becomes necessary.

NESP Update – Mark Cornish

Mark informed the group that there are enough votes in Congress to pass a WDR bill, which contains authorization for NESP, if it makes it to the floor for a vote. It is also believed that even with a promised presidential veto, there would be enough votes to over-ride the veto. If WDR is not passed this session, appropriations for continued planning of NESP range from 2.2 million in the House version to 12.1 million in the Senate version. If the House version prevails, there would be zero anticipated dollars for ecosystem and navigation planning, since all 2.2 million would be needed to continue funding the Economic Re-evaluation Study.

Connectivity Issue – Group Discussion

Both the Fish and Wildlife Technical sections agreed that a UMRCC position statement on connectivity, which has not received full membership support in its many iterations

over the past four years, would probably never get done if a position statement is the desired outcome. It was agreed that the connectivity issue would be best described in a “white paper” format that would allow interpretation and implementation of management practices at different temporal and spatial scales within the UMR. Mike Steuck and Mike Griffin agreed to reformat the existing statement on connectivity into more of an information paper that would be more useful in management applications.

Fish Tech Section Meeting

UMR Fish Distribution and Abundance – Mike Steuck

Mike gave an update on the coordinated effort in which over 600 individual changes were made. The document should be completed and published by the spring 2008 meeting.

Viral Hemorrhagic Disease (VHS) – Ron Benjamin

Ron gave an update on the status of this disease in WI waters. It has been documented in the Great Lakes Superior and Michigan and from the interior Winnebago system. Wisconsin’s policy and emergency rules pertaining to confinement of the disease also apply to its UMR border waters, where they anticipate future outbreaks. A discussion followed with a recommendation to develop a UMRCC protocol for the prevention and spread of exotic species and diseases. Wisconsin (Ron Benjamin) volunteered to draft a policy for executive board review and approval.

Shovelnose/Pallid Sturgeon – Group Discussion

Interest in shovelnose/pallid sturgeon management and protection and population concerns continue to elevate this topic to priority status. A recent paper by Colombo et. al. and a proposal by Tennessee’s Wildlife Agency to eliminate commercial harvest of shovelnose sturgeon to protect pallid sturgeon initiated the discussion. Missouri is in the seventh year of a ten-year evaluation of their sturgeon populations and commercial harvest regulations. Recent changes to commercial harvest regulations for shovelnose sturgeon in Illinois, Iowa and Wisconsin need to be evaluated before any further action is taken. Iowa and Wisconsin will be evaluating their regulation changes, however, a potential problem surfaced when Illinois suggested that they would probably not be able to conduct an adequate evaluation and would likely not be able to accept the other State’s evaluation results. Another potential problem for Missouri was the change in non-resident license fees in IL, which jumped to \$3,500.00 compared to the \$700.00 fee in Missouri.

Following is an abbreviated summary of current commercial harvest regulations in each UMR state:

MN – closed season (MN/WI border waters)

WI – closed season (WI/MN border waters)

WI – 27”-34” harvest slot (WI/IA border waters)

IA – 27”- 34” harvest slot (IA/WI border waters)

IA – 27” minimum (Oct. 15 – May 15) (IA/IL border waters)

IL – 24” – 34” harvest slot (Oct. 15 – May 15)

MO - 24” – 34” harvest slot (Oct. 15 – May 15) (Mississippi R.)

UMR Fisheries Plan – Dan Dieterman/Ron Benjamin

The executive board asked that the Fisheries Technical section discuss the success of the 10 –Year Fisheries Plan that was developed by the section in 1993. Dan and Ron gave a brief history of what precipitated that plan and why it would be wise to consider updating the plan. All in attendance were encouraged to conduct preliminary discussions at each of their respective field stations concerning what elements of the 1993 plan had been achieved, what was still relevant and what was not, and then to consider what new issues might be included in an updated plan. An initial scoping meeting utilizing summaries from these preliminary discussions will be held sometime in early 2008. A tentative list of agency contacts and/or participants in this planning process include:

Dan Dieterman – MN, Ron Benjamin – WI, Kirk Hanson – IA, Butch Atwood – IL, Travis Moore – MO, Chuck Theiling – COE, Pam Thiel – FWS, Brian Ickes – UMESC, John Chick – University/ Research, Bob Hrabik – MO (open river), and Don Hultman – UMRFWR.

VR2 Receiver Project – Ron Brooks, SIU

Ron presented information about the coordinated effort to track fish movement in the UMR and made a pitch for additional involvement by the more northerly States and Federal Districts. Numerous fish from multiple species guilds have been implanted with sonic transmitters by State, Federal and Academic Institutions along the lower portion of the UMR and movements of these fish are recorded using VR2 receivers, which have

been deployed along the main channel in numerous locations from the mouth of the Ohio River at Cairo, IL upstream into the lower portion of Pool 19. Our field trip on Wednesday afternoon included a demonstration on how to retrieve and download the “hits” recorded by the VR2 receivers.

Asian Carp Update – Group Discussion

Bighead carp are currently present in large numbers as far north as Pool 16, but silver carp are still mostly restricted to waters below LD 19 at Keokuk. Both species are abundant in the Illinois R. and bigheads have been documented as far north on the Rock R. as Rockford, IL.

Kelly DeGrandchamp reported that a cooperative study between the COE, FWS, and SIU looking at asian carp movement is currently underway on the Illinois R. A total of 30 asian carp will be implanted with sonic transmitters and will be monitored by a series of 12 VR2 receivers stationed within a 60 mile stretch below the barrier in Chicago. The project’s goal is to better understand the large and fine scale movement patterns of asian carp in the upper Illinois R.

Publication Committee – Mike Steuck

Mike reported that the updated “Disitribution and Abundance of UMR Fishes” should be completed and published by the spring 2008 meeting. He also said that the 50-year (1953-2003) summary of commercial fishing was near completion, with only the last couple of years missing from IL.

Education Committee – Jeff Janvrin

Another teacher workshop was held at Wyalusing S.P. this past summer and Jeff was hoping to conduct 1 or 2 workshops next summer at some new locations. The Committee is also interested in additional outreach opportunities, and will likely work more closely with the Recreational Technical section which is considering moving more into outreach and education.

Agency Reports

Mississippi River Activities performed by the La Crosse National Fish & Wildlife Conservation Office (formerly Lacrosse FRO)

Provided the UMRCC coordinator position. Conducted monitoring on round goby and Asian carp on the Illinois Waterway/Illinois River during the Annual Goby Roundup. Assisted the Fish Health Lab on sampling for VHS, Largemouth Bass Virus and SVC V on the UMR. Also worked with the Fish Health Lab on wild fish health surveys. Assisted on Higgins Eye and Winged Maple leaf mussel projects on both the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers. Attended several coordination meetings (e.g. EMP, NESP, FWIC, FWVG and RRAT).

Initiated a new program to dispose of unused medications. Working with La Crosse County, Skemp Clinic and Gunderson Lutheran Health System and Mayo Health Systems had over 2,100 pounds of unused medications turned in for safe disposal. Worked with pet retailers on the Habitattitude Project educating the public releasing unwanted pets or plants. Assisted on the vegetation monitoring in pools 6 and 18.

Minnesota – Jon Meerbeek

River monitoring and large lake sampling

Dan Dieterman continued his annual habitat and fish monitoring on Pools 3-9

Jon Meerbeek continued annual monitoring of the Lake Pepin fish community

New sampling techniques for 2007

Flathead and channel catfish monitoring Commercial fisherman Bud Ramer passed away and he has been providing the MN DNR with catfish data for many years

The MN DNR has not targeted FCF and CCF in the past and we felt that targeted sampling was necessary to obtain basic population data.

The objective was to standardize sampling so we could compare annual data and maintain a catfish database Used low frequency DC electrofishing in June (mid sixty water temps).

Randomly selected ½ mile main channel and side channel habitats and collected both CCF and FC F

Sample pools 3-9 every other year (Pools 3,5,6,8 one year then Pools 4,5A,7, 9 the next year).

First years observations We were able to effectively collect FCF and to some degree CCF.

About 35-40 FCF per mile, all size ranges up to 43" were collected

Shovelnose and Lake Sturgeon sampling Frequency of LKS caught below LD3 has been increasing

MN DNR officials observed several caught during winter and have heard reports of good catches of LKS during spring and fall

Felt we should obtain baseline data of population size and age structure. Lake sturgeon angling Used same methods as biologists on the St. Croix River, TL, FL, weight, disk tag

15 caught and tagged in June below LD3

Shovelnose sturgeon sampling Collaborated with IA state univ. graduate student Jeff Kock to obtain length and age frequency data and estimate natural mortality so comparison could be made to populations that were open to commercial angling.

Trammel nets were used in early August to collect 155 SNS below LD 6 and 122 below LD 3.

Mean FL in pool 4 was 26.9", whereas mean FL in pool 7 was 25.2".

Long-term Resource Monitoring Program Update

Steve DeLain reported that LTRMP continued their routine monitoring and also conducted their Emapping.

Wisconsin – Jeff Janvrin (report not provided yet)

Iowa (Guttenburg) – Scott Gritters (report not provided yet)

Iowa (Bellevue Mgmt.) – Kirk Hanson (report not provided yet)

Iowa (Bellevue Research) – Mike Steuck (report not provided yet)

Iowa (Muscatine) – Bernie Schonhoff (report not provided yet)

Illinois – Butch Atwood (report not provided yet)

Missouri – Travis Moore (report not provided yet)