

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

July 24-25, 2013
Schiermeier Olentangy River Wetland Research Park
Columbus, OH

Decisions and Action Items

1. Conover will summarize the recommendations for MICRA action from the Asian Carp Commercial Harvest Workshop.
2. Benjamin will poll the Asian Carp Commercial Harvest Workshop participants and/or MICRA delegates to determine highest priority items recommended for MICRA to address.
3. Conover will request copies of the Asian Carp Commercial Harvest Workshop speakers' presentations to share with participants and MICRA delegates.
4. The MRBP was requested to update the panel's AIS commercial harvest guidelines based on the concerns and recommendations from the Asian Carp Commercial Harvest Workshop.
5. The Executive Board will discuss the results of the follow-up poll and next steps on a conference call and/or at the Executive Board's winter meeting.
6. Conover will email draft corrections to the February 2013 Executive Board meeting notes to the Executive Board members for review and approval.
7. The Grass Carp Project Managers should request from the contractor an estimate to interview all identified grass carp shippers and distributors. The Project Managers should provide the estimate along with a recommendation on how to proceed back to the MICRA Executive Board.
8. The Grass Carp Project Steering Committee will be requested to review the draft report from the contractor only to verify that the objectives of the project have been fulfilled as outlined in the Scope of Work and agreement.
9. MICRA may request the Grass Carp Project Steering Committee members, MICRA delegates, or other external reviewers to provide comments on the contractor's final report and recommendations after it has been accepted by MICRA.
10. Only the contractor will be allowed to review the raw project data. The Executive Board will request the contractor to aggregate the project data by state, and to submit the aggregated project data to MICRA with the final report. MICRA will

submit the aggregated data to USFWS along with the final project report. Any requests to review the project data will be directed to USFWS.

11. Sub-basin representatives will provide Conover with a list of up to 5 example priority projects for each state in the sub-basin.
12. Conover will look for the justification that was used to develop the funding needs in the ANS Action Plan and send this to the Executive Board members as an example for developing funding needs for the priority needs in the Aquatic Habitat Action Plan.
13. Executive Board members will work via e-mail to develop funding needs the priority needs in the Aquatic Habitat Action Plan.
14. The sub-basin representatives will review the UMRCC example synopsis, and then collectively develop an outline that identifies the major pieces of information that should be included in each sub-basin synopsis. This will provide for consistency among the sub-basin documents.
15. The sub-basin representatives will use the outline to draft a 1-2 page synopsis for their respective sub-basin by the end of the calendar year.
16. Turner and Jawson will identify a representative from their respective agencies to participate on the MICRA Habitat Committee.
17. Conover will send the list of nominations from the Fish Chiefs for the Habitat Committee to Benjamin to be sent with the announcement to the Fish Chiefs (Action Item #3 from February 2013).
18. Benjamin will include a request for a Habitat Committee Chairman to serve an initial term (specific time period) in his announcement to the Fish Chiefs.
19. Benjamin will send the revised priorities document out to the MICRA Delegates for review and comment.
20. Conover and Benjamin will develop an invitation to the MICRA AFS reception to be sent with the revised priorities document.
21. Wilson will contact Ron Brooks to see if he will be able to attend the MICRA reception and represent the MICRA Executive Board.
22. Benjamin will contact Reed and O'Bara to see if they will be able to attend the MICRA reception and represent the MICRA Executive Board.
23. Racey will contact Mike Armstrong to see if he will be able to attend the MICRA reception and represent the MICRA Executive Board.
24. Conover and Benjamin will review the list of past-chairman to see if there are others that should be invited to represent the MICRA Executive Board.

25. Parsons will provide a link for Jim Caudill to the Driftless Area economic impact report of trout fishing.
26. The Executive Board will hold a conference call in August to discuss the report in more detail and develop guidance needed by Jim Caudill to begin working on the economic report.
27. Caudill will inquire about the possibility of breaking out Mississippi River Basin data in the 5-year National Survey completed by USFWS.
28. The Executive Board approved a motion endorsing the proposed workshop on interagency Congressional and stakeholder engagement at the 2014 Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference in Kansas City, MO, and a \$5,000 budget for expenses to host the workshop including lunch, travel assistance, and other workshop related expenses.
29. Conover was asked to send a link to the FWS document 'Vision for restoring a Healthy Gulf of Mexico Watershed' to Executive Board members.
30. Benjamin will send a link to the FWS document 'Vision for restoring a Healthy Gulf of Mexico Watershed' to the MICRA delegates.
31. Turner will check with the Midwest Region's representative to find out where comments on the FWS document 'Vision for restoring a Healthy Gulf of Mexico Watershed' should be sent.
32. The Executive Board approved a motion to organize a MICRA-sponsored delegation to conduct Congressional visits in Washington, DC, in 2014 and to obligate a \$10,000 budget for travel and other related expenses.
33. Conover will contact Jeff Quinn and AFWA to propose holding the Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee and AFWA paddlefish workshop the week of January 26 in conjunction with the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference in Kansas City, MO.

Incomplete Action Items from February 2013 meeting:

3. Benjamin will send an email to the Fish Chiefs to inform them that MICRA is moving forward with the formation of a Habitat Committee, state reps are needed, and a chair person will be needed.

Status: Not started until after the Executive Committee approves the draft charge, vision, and objectives during the July meeting.

4. Habitat Committee members will need to begin discussing goals, objectives, priorities, and Standard Operating Procedures.

Status: Not started until Habitat Committee formed.

7. Jeff Quinn will provide the LMRCC data template to the LMRCC fish tech section for their review at their meeting in Little Rock, AR, in September 2013.

Status: Meeting not until September 2013.

10. Chris Racey will send the Arkansas Red River data template to the Executive Board members following this meeting.

Status: Chris will send after the meeting.

11. The Executive Board will finalize the Aquatic Habitat Action Plan and then discuss whether or not to identify additional priority focus areas and develop additional Action Plan components for the MICRA goal of creating 'healthy, sustainable fisheries and aquatic resources.'

Status: Aquatic Habitat Action Plan development on-going; next steps will not be started until Aquatic Habitat Action Plan complete.

15. Conover will talk with recommended contacts to get recommendations for tax attorneys and request cost estimates for MICRA to get legal advice on 501(c)3 tax status.

Status: Not started; delayed to winter meeting.

18. The Executive Board will discuss the development of a MICRA communications plan at a future board meeting.

Status: Not started; delayed to winter meeting.

19. Turner will talk with an FWS Region 3 outreach specialist to get a better understanding of time and financial costs for outreach.

Status: Ongoing; outreach specialist just returned from maternity leave and Todd will revisit with her before winter meeting.

29. Executive Board members will check with their respective agencies to see if they have a Public Affairs specialist that can participate on a committee to assist MICRA in developing a communications plan.

Status: Ongoing; Racey has identified a potential person to participate. Conover will follow-up with Executive Board members regarding outreach or public affairs specialists to participate on a committee.

30. Executive Board members will request their Public Affairs specialists for a list of questions that Executive Board members should consider prior to a meeting to discuss a communications plan.

Status: Not started; delayed to winter meeting.

31. Executive Board members were asked to begin thinking about who MICRA's different audiences are, the messages we want to send to these different audiences, and how much effort should be directed to each audience.

Status: *Not started; delayed to winter meeting.*

32. Benjamin and Conover will talk to Rasmussen about costs for publishing a shorter, but more frequent *River Crossings* newsletter.

Status: *Not started.*

37. The Executive Committee decided to continue work on the Aquatic Habitat Action Plan and tabled further discussion on a Healthy Fisheries Action Plan to the board's summer meeting.

Status: *Not started; delayed to winter meeting.*

Outstanding Action Items from January 2012 meeting:

12. Bobby Reed will work with Chris Racey to develop a 1-page write-up on the Arkansas/Red River Sub-basin for the MICRA web page.

Status: *Ongoing.*

19. Benjamin will send the final approved AIS Action Plan and brochure to the MICRA delegates, along with an explanation of the Executive Board's strategy for marketing the action plan.

Status: *Not started; delayed until Aquatic Habitat Action Plan is complete.*

20. Benjamin will request each state to provide a list that identifies their priority constituent groups that they would like the Executive Board to provide with information on the AIS Action Plan and a copy of the brochure.

Status: *Not started; delayed until Aquatic Habitat Action Plan is complete.*

21. Benjamin will provide the MICRA delegates with a draft letter of support for each state to adapt, request their governors to sign, and send to MICRA.

Status: *Not started; delayed until Aquatic Habitat Action Plan is complete.*

22. Benjamin will work to identify who copies of the signed letter of support should be sent to.

Status: *Not started; delayed until Aquatic Habitat Action Plan is complete.*

28. Travnichek will follow-up with Nelson-Stastny regarding the Executive Board's request for the Missouri River Sub-basin to provide a draft position paper on floodplain management for consideration by the MICRA delegates.

Status: *Not started. Benjamin will talk with Travnichek and Nelson-Stastny.*

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July 24-25, 2013
Schiermeier Olentangy River Wetland Research Park
Columbus, OH

AGENDA

Wednesday, July 24

11:00 – 5:00

Joint Session with MRBP

- 1) Tour Schiermeier Olentangy River Wetland Research Park
- 2) Asian Carp Commercial Harvest Workshop

Thursday, July 25

8:00 – 9:00

Call to Order

- 3) Call to Order (Benjamin)
- 4) Chairman's Report (Benjamin)
- 5) Review of February 2013 Action Items (Benjamin)
- 6) Coordinator's Report (Conover)

9:00 – 10:00

Basin Reports

- 7) Arkansas/Red River (Racey)
- 8) LMRCC (Rister)
- 9) MRNRC (Travnichek)
- 10) ORFMT (Schoenung)
- 11) Tennessee River (Wilson)
- 12) UMRCC (Parsons)

10:15 – 11:00

Committee Updates

- 13) AIS Committee / MRBP (Shults)
- 14) Native Mussel Committee (Hubbs)
- 15) Paddlefish & Sturgeon Committee (Quinn)

11:00 – 12:00

Old Business

- 16) MICRA Chair-Elect for 2014-2015 (Benjamin)
- 17) MICRA Habitat Committee Update (Benjamin)
- 18) Aquatic Habitat Action Plan (Sub-basin Representatives)

12:00 – 1:00

Lunch

1:00 – 2:30

Old Business (cont)

- 19) MICRA Priorities Document Review and Update (Benjamin)
- 20) MICRA Delegate Meeting (Benjamin)

2:30 – 5:00

New Business

- 21) Mississippi River Basin Economic Value Report (Jim Caudill, USFWS)
- 22) MICRA Workshop at 2014 Midwest Fish & Wildlife Conference (Benjamin)
- 23) USFWS Surrogate Species (Turner)
- 24) Other New Business (Benjamin)
- 25) Schedule Winter Executive Board Meeting (Benjamin)

5:00

Adjourn

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Meeting Notes

1) Tour Schiermeier Olentangy River Wetland Research Park

Staff of the Wilma H. Schiermeier Olentangy River Wetland Research Park provided a guide tour of the Ohio State University facility.

2) Asian Carp Commercial Harvest Workshop

The Executive Board hosted the Mississippi River Basin Panel for an in-depth discussion on the potential for commercial harvest to be an effective tool to reduce Asian carp populations in the Mississippi River Basin. The workshop was well attended, with 42 people in attendance and at least 16 additional WebEx participants. The discussion identified a number of concerns, ideas, and recommendations for MICRA to consider tackling. Following is a list of the general topics that were proposed for MICRA consideration:

- concern of not wanting to initiate interest and demand in a long-term sustainable fishery for Asian carps
- concern about the movement of Asian carp to new waters to create new fisheries and opportunities for commercial harvest
- promote establishment of an Asian Carp (or AIS) Fishery Council, with technical and policy workgroups, to develop a basin-wide vision/goal for the issue and to provide coordinated, basin-wide management strategies
- focus on cooperation / collaboration
- cooperative efforts to secure funding
- synthesize and identify the sideboards for a commercial Asian carp fishery
- develop a Mississippi River Basin compact for Asian carp or AIS
- highest priority should be to protect the uninvaded portions of the basin

The Executive Board reviewed and discussed the notes from the workshop.

Discussion:

It was hard to gage how important each of these items were to the audience as a whole. It would be useful to poll the attendees and/or the MICRA delegates to find out what their three highest concerns are.

MICRA does not have the authority to do most of what is on this list. About all MICRA would be able to do is provide basic policy language for the states to use in management plans or business plans. Volunteer policies or guidelines can be developed. MICRA does not need to have authority to work towards some of these items if the fish chiefs are interested in moving in that direction.

The following next steps were identified by the Executive Board:

- ! *Conover will summarize the recommendations for MICRA action from the Asian Carp Commercial Harvest Workshop.*
- ! *Benjamin will poll the Asian Carp Commercial Harvest Workshop participants and/or MICRA delegates to determine highest priority items recommended for MICRA to address.*
- ! *Conover will request copies of the Asian Carp Commercial Harvest Workshop speakers' presentations to share with participants and MICRA delegates.*
- ! *The MRBP was requested to update the panel's AIS commercial harvest guidelines based on the concerns and recommendations from the Asian Carp Commercial Harvest Workshop.*
- ! *The Executive Board will discuss the results of the follow-up poll and next steps on a conference call and/or at the Executive Board's winter meeting.*

3) Call to Order

Roll Call

Arkansas/Red River	Chris Racey	present
LMRCC	Jeff Quinn (Angie Rodgers, proxy)	present
MRNRC	Vince Travnichek	absent
ORFMT	Brian Schoenung	present
Tennessee River	Bobby Wilson	present
UMRCC	Brad Parsons	present
USFWS	Todd Turner	present
USGS	Mike Jawson	present

A quorum (6) of Executive Board members was present.

Introductions

Bobby Wilson, TWRA, MICRA Chairman-elect

Angie Rodgers, USFWS

Mike Jawson, USGS

Chris Racey, AGFC

Brian Schoenung, IN DNR

Rich Carter, OH DNR

Jim Caudill, USFWS Division of Economics

Eugene Braig, OSU Aquatic Ecosystem Extension

Steve Shults, IL DNR, MRBP/AIS Committee

Brad Parsons, MN DNR

Ron Benjamin, WI DNR, MICRA Chairperson

Greg Conover, USFWS, MICRA Coordinator

Todd Turner, USFWS, Midwest Region

4) Chairman's Report

Benjamin reported on his major activities as MICRA Chairman since the January 2013 meeting.

- Most of Benjamin's time for MICRA went to planning, attending, and following-up on action items for the MICRA meetings in Washington, DC, in early March. Participants this year included Chris Vitello (MO), Mark Oliver (AR), Chris O'Bara (WV), Ron Brooks (KY), Tim Schaeffer (PA), Jason Goeckler (KS), and Ron Benjamin (WI). The delegation visited with CEQ Asian Carp Director - John Goss, USFWS Deputy Director of Operations - Rowan Gould, USACE Chief of Planning and Policy Division - Tab Brown, 14 Senator's offices, 13 Representative's offices, and one member of the House Appropriations staff. MICRA hosted a well-attended Congressional Briefing with participation from two members of Congress, and an evening reception at the National Aquarium. MICRA has improved each year and the meetings this year were very successful.
- A new Chair-elect for 2014-2015 and a new UMRCC representative were identified.
- Benjamin attempted to develop a letter of support from MICRA for legislation to modernize and expand existing federal laws regarding the import, movement, and release of invasive species.

Discussion:

MICRA is not organized in a way to allow for a timely response on behalf of the organization. The by-laws require a 30-day review prior to a vote. Benjamin attempted to speed up the process by calling for a vote when the draft letter was sent out for the 30-day review. This created some uncertainty because it was sent out as a draft letter and at least one fish chief did not vote because he was not sure if there would be changes made to the letter after he voted in favor of the draft. There was also a question of what an abstention would mean. For example, if you support what is in the letter but politically you are unable to support it, would an abstention be interpreted as opposition to the content of the letter? This could be clarified in a response accompanying the vote. For example a message or phone call to the Chairman indicating that the fish chief personally agrees with the intent of the letter, but from an agency standpoint he must abstain from the vote, would provide a needed vote and let the Chairman know that the content of the letter is not off base. The large number of non-responses left the Chairman uncertain about the letter.

Many of the fish chief may not have been able to vote on the letter because it referenced a specific piece of legislation. This raises the question of whether or not the MICRA Chairman should invest his time trying to develop letters of support on legislation or other Congressional issues. This particular issue is complex and may not be the best case history for deciding whether or not to attempt a similar letter in the future. Communication with the fish chiefs needs to be more clear in future attempts to streamline the 30-day delegate review and voting process.

Federal agencies must abstain from issue dealing with draft legislation. Abstentions are not a problem and are appreciated because we at least have an official response.

MICRA was requested to send a representative to Washington, DC, as part of a large delegation providing Congressional briefings on HR 996. Chris O'Bara (WV) attended on behalf of MICRA.

5) Review of February 2013 Action Items

Incomplete Action Items from February 2013 meeting:

5. Benjamin will send an email to the Fish Chiefs to inform them that MICRA is moving forward with the formation of a Habitat Committee, state reps are needed, and a chair person will be needed.

Status: Not started until after the Executive Committee approves the draft charge, vision, and objectives during the July meeting.

6. Habitat Committee members will need to begin discussing goals, objectives, priorities, and Standard Operating Procedures.

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Status: Ongoing; outreach specialist just returned from maternity leave and Todd will revisit with her before winter meeting.

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23. Benjamin will provide the MICRA delegates with a draft letter of support for each state to adapt, request their governors to sign, and send to MICRA.

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24. Benjamin will work to identify who copies of the signed letter of support should be sent to.

Status: Not started; delayed until Aquatic Habitat Action Plan is complete.

29. Travnichek will follow-up with Nelson-Stastny regarding the Executive Board's request for the Missouri River Sub-basin to provide a draft position paper on floodplain management for consideration by the MICRA delegates.

Status: Not started. Benjamin will talk with Travnichek and Nelson-Stastny.

Discussion:

The MICRA communications plan was recommended as a major topic for the winter meeting, pending other major items that come forward during the July meeting.

6) Coordinator's Report

Conover brought a needed correction to the February 2013 meeting notes to the Executive Board's attention. The board requested Conover to email the proposed corrections out after the meeting. If approved, Conover will revise the February 2013 meeting notes to reflect the approved corrections.

! *Conover will email draft corrections to the February 2013 Executive Board meeting notes to the Executive Board members for review and approval.*

Conover reviewed the financial report provided in the briefing book. The Coordinator's spreadsheet, accountant's report, and MICRA bank statement balances are all in agreement. Ohio's 2012 membership dues were received in 2013, bringing the total number of states paying 2012 dues up to 23.

MICRA received notice from the USFWS that funding support for the MRBP would be reduced from \$50,000 to \$40,000 in FY2013. FY2013 funding from USFWS is outstanding, but anticipated.

Conover provided copies of the MICRA brochures that were printed following approval at the February 2013 meeting. The brochures were used in the briefing packets in March. 5,000 brochures were printed and are available for any delegates that would like copies.

Conover received a copy of a MICRA paddlefish video (VHS) from Jeff Quinn and converted it to DVD. He is still looking for copies of other MICRA funded videos (e.g. sturgeon and dam removal).

7) Arkansas/Red River Report

Racey provided an update to the written report provided in the briefing book. National Blueways are a big topic of discussion in Arkansas. Former Secretary of the Department of Interior, Ken Salazar, designated the White River and White River watershed as a National Blueway last year. This was only the second National Blueway designation in the country. It was an opportunity to acknowledge and enhance the partnerships that already exist and are working on the watershed. It was hoped that this would provide an opportunity to bring some funding for conservation projects in the watershed.

There were some groups that came out in force in opposition to the National Blueway designation and persuaded existing Secretary of the Interior, Sue Jewel, to rescind the National Blueway designation. The Department of Interior is now reviewing the entire National Blueway program.

8) LMRCC Report

Rodgers provided some additional information to the report provided in the briefing book. The Lower Mississippi River Resource Assessment was authorized in WRDA 2000. The assessment, which has three phases, was just begun in 2012. There is an opportunity to comment on a recreational assessment and a habitat needs assessment. This is an Army Corps of Engineers project, TNC is the primary cost-share partner and there is a team of other partners including the LMRCC.

9) MRNRC Report

The MRNRC report stands as provided in the briefing book.

10) ORFMT Report

Schoenung reviewed the written report provided in the briefing book. Two big issues the Ohio River Basin has been dealing with are trophy catfish and the related issues of commercial fishing and paylake conflicts with recreational anglers. The states are doing a number of things to get a handle on exploitation and populations in anticipation of possible regulation changes later this fall. Kentucky is the major player, but the other states are assisting.

The Ohio River Basin states have been working on an Asian Carp Action Plan. Kentucky is leading an effort to use contract fisheries to fish down the leading edge of the population in the Ohio River. The states are also working on a telemetry project in the upper Ohio River.

Discussion:

Ohio does not have commercial fishing in inland waters, only in Lake Erie.

Ron Brooks (KY) presented an overview of the Ohio River Basin Asian Carp Action Plan, and the Ohio River monitoring and assessment work that was started this year. The presentation sparked a lot of discussion and interest among other sub-basins to develop similar plans.

11) Tennessee/Cumberland Report

The Tennessee/Cumberland report stands as provided in the briefing book.

12) UMRCC Report

The UMRCC report stands as provided in the briefing book.

13) AIS Committee / MRBP Update

Shults provided some additional information to the report provided in the briefing book. The contractor is about half way through the funding for the national analysis of grass carp project. The project has been broken into three sections: 1) they have contacted all of the state agencies and are working through the regulation information they have received; 2) they have contacted all of the producers – most were cooperative, but a few were not; and 3) they have identified nearly 400 entities as grass carp distributors and shippers.

The Panel is discussing a few emerging issues, fracking being perhaps the most concerning of these. The panel's Research and Risk Assessment Committee is developing a letter regarding the potential for water hauling associated with fracking to be a vector for the spread of AIS. The letter will be submitted to the panel's Executive Committee with a request for the panel to forward the letter to the ANS Task Force.

The panel has been discussing a bait review similar to the grass carp review as a future project once the grass carp review is complete. This stems from one of the

recommendations in the national Asian carp management and control plan that the panel is interested in tackling.

The panel had a well-attended and productive meeting the last two days. MICRA support allows the panel to provide travel assistance to help keep participation high. The reduced funding from FWS and the additional cost-sharing with MICRA will certainly impact the panel's ability to complete projects, particularly large projects like the grass carp review, and/or provide travel assistance in the future.

The AIS Committee Executive Committee discussed a couple of issues related to the national grass carp analysis to bring to the MICRA Executive Board's attention:

- 1) The 400 shippers and distributors are more than was anticipated and budgeted for in the project. There are a couple of options that have been discussed: either subsample this group or interview all of the businesses at an additional cost above and beyond that in the agreement with the contractor. The panel Executive Committee recommends that MICRA request the contractor for a quote to interview all 400 businesses to get a handle on the potential additional cost.
- 2) There have been some questions from the project steering committee regarding their involvement throughout the remainder of the project. Specifically we have received requests from steering committee members to review the raw data collected by the contractor and the opportunity to review and comment on the draft report. The Executive Committee's recommendation to MICRA is that the data not be shared with the Steering Committee members. Since the contractor was requesting business information from the producers, they were told that the data would be kept confidential.

The steering committee's role to this point has been to assist MICRA in developing the objectives in Scope of Work and assisting the contractor to develop questionnaires that would help them acquire the necessary information to complete the project objectives. We do not want the Steering Committee to influence the contractor's independent review and recommendations. Therefore the Executive Committee is recommending to MICRA that the Steering Committee be asked to review the draft report for QA/QC to verify that the objectives of the project as outlined in the agreement have been fulfilled, but the Steering Committee not be allowed the opportunity to comment on the contents and recommendations in the draft report. MICRA may choose to have the contractor's final report reviewed once it has been finished and submitted to MICRA, but that is

something for MICRA to decide. MICRA would submit the contractor's final report to USFWS and MICRA's own report with comments and recommendations regarding the contractor's report; but not to merge the two.

Discussion:

Once the contractor's final plan is submitted to MICRA, the Executive Board will determine if and to whom the report will be provided for an opportunity to provide comments back to MICRA. MICRA could consider putting the report out for a public comment period. MICRA may send the final report to the delegates and steering committee members for an opportunity to review and provide comments.

MICRA should not make the raw data available internally or externally prior to submission of the final report. Aggregating the data by state should protect the individual businesses that were interviewed as a part of the study. The contractor will be requested to provide the project data, aggregated by state, with the final report to MICRA. The aggregated data will be submitted to the USFWS along with the final project report submitted by MICRA. Requests for the aggregate data will have to be submitted to the USFWS.

The 400 distributors and shippers in the grass carp review are assumed to be a weak link in both the grass carp program and bait. There is a lot of concern with mixing of certified and uncertified fish. If we are going to do this study correctly we need to determine how to accurately assess what is going on.

- ! *The Grass Carp Project Managers should request from the contractor an estimate to interview all identified grass carp shippers and distributors. The Project Managers should provide the estimate along with a recommendation on how to proceed back to the MICRA Executive Board.*
- ! *The Grass Carp Project Steering Committee will be requested to review the draft report from the contractor only to verify that the objectives of the project have been fulfilled as outlined in the Scope of Work and agreement.*
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final project report. Any requests to review the project data will be directed to USFWS.

14) Native Mussel Committee Update

The Native Mussel Committee update stands as provided in the briefing book.

15) Paddlefish and Sturgeon Committee Update

The Paddlefish and Sturgeon Committee update stands as provided in the briefing book.

16) MICRA Chair-elect for 2014-2015

Ron Brooks will serve as ORFMT's incoming MICRA chair-elect beginning in 2014.

17) Aquatic Habitat Action Plan

The Executive Board reviewed the draft Aquatic Habitat Action Plan outline developed based on the discussion at the February 2013 Executive Board meeting.

Discussion:

We need to indicate in the narrative that the priority needs and management strategies are examples, and should not be considered an all-inclusive list.

The Executive Board reviewed and agreed to the proposed outline, and then began discussing the proposed next steps.

Each sub-basin needs to generate a list (five maximum) of priority aquatic habitat restoration projects for each member state, preferably from existing sub-basin level planning documents. We are attempting to summarize from existing planning efforts in the sub-basins to present a basin-wide picture of aquatic habitat needs. We do not want people to go back and develop project needs and estimated costs. Each sub-basin may not have an example project for each of the priority needs. The column heading needs to be clarified that these are example projects.

! *Sub-basin representatives will provide Conover with a list of up to 5 example priority projects for each state in the sub-basin.*

We need a to be able to communicate a funding need when we are talking to decision makers about the Aquatic Habitat Action Plan and the need for increased habitat restoration. It would also be good to know what programs funding should be directed to and why current funding to the various habitat programs is not adequate at current levels. This information should come from each of the sub-basins and be included in the individual sub-basin 2-page narratives.

We need to identify a funding need for each of the priority needs (A-E). Having estimated costs on the example projects would help to justify these numbers when discussing funding needs. The appendix of example needs would allow someone to flip to the back and say, for example, "here is an example project identified in your state for this particular priority need that is estimated to cost \$xx to complete." The UMRCC has a couple of documents that estimate the costs associated with different types of habitat restoration activities. The funding need should be tied to the numbers we get in the economic report to show that for each dollar invested, there is a larger return.

- ! *Conover will look for the justification that was used to develop the funding needs in the ANS Action Plan and send this to the Executive Board members as an example for developing funding needs for the priority needs in the Aquatic Habitat Action Plan.*
- ! *Executive Board members will work via e-mail to develop funding needs the priority needs in the Aquatic Habitat Action Plan.*

Each sub-basin needs to develop a 1-2 page synopsis of aquatic habitat needs and priorities. The sub-basin narratives will be compiled to create the draft Aquatic Habitat Action Plan.

- ! *The sub-basin representatives will review the UMRCC example synopsis, and then collectively develop an outline that identifies the major pieces of information that should be included in each sub-basin synopsis. This will provide for consistency among the sub-basin documents.*
- ! *The sub-basin representatives will use the outline to draft a 1-2 page synopsis for their respective sub-basin by the end of the calendar year.*

18) MICRA Habitat Committee

The Executive Board reviewed and discussed the draft vision, goals, and charges for the new MICRA Habitat Committee.

Should the USFWS and USGS representatives identify agency representatives or is this something that the committee should do as part of 'Charge A'. Yes, USFWS and USGS representatives should be identified now. The committee's charge would be to identify federal and non-governmental participants beyond the MICRA membership.

- ! *Turner and Jawson will identify a representative from their respective agencies to participate on the MICRA Habitat Committee.*

The Executive Board approved the document and approved to move forward with the remainder of the action items from the February 2013 meeting related to the formation of the Habitat Committee.

- ! *Conover will send the list of nominations from the Fish Chiefs for the Habitat Committee to Benjamin to be sent with the announcement to the Fish Chiefs (Action Item #3 from February 2013).*
- ! *Benjamin will include a request for a Habitat Committee Chairman to serve an initial term (specific time period) in his announcement to the Fish Chiefs.*

19) MICRA Priorities Document Review and Update

The Executive Board reviewed and discussed the revised priorities document. The new format has two goals, one addressing internal coordination and one addressing external communication. There are now five objectives that focus on interjurisdictional fisheries, aquatic habitat, aquatic invasive species, communication, and funding. Priority needs have been identified for each objective.

In order to keep all of the information in the old priorities document, there are a couple different levels of detail under the priorities in the different objectives. Do we need consistency among the objectives? Some of the sub-priorities are very specific and could be called 'Tasks'. Some of the Priorities could also be called tasks. The entire document would need reviewed for this purpose. Let's leave the detail in the draft and get comments from the members. This is a much more readable document than the previous versions from 1991 and 2002.

Related to Objective 5, were we expecting federal funding and how did we expect to receive that funding? The priorities were pulled directly from the original strategic plan developed in 1990. The strategic plan included a goal to develop a formal framework and secure funding. That need for a reliable long-term funding source for MICRA to be a viable and active organization still remains. That part of

the original goal is carried over to this revised document, but we have not had detailed discussion on the source or mechanisms for receiving that funding.

The Executive Board approved the revised priorities document to be sent to the MICRA delegates for review.

- ! *Benjamin will send the revised priorities document out to the MICRA Delegates for review and comment.*

20) MICRA Delegate Meeting

The Executive Board would like to receive input on the revised priorities document from the Fish Chiefs in attendance at the MICRA reception at the AFS meeting in Little Rock, AR, on September 8. We could send an invitation to the Fish Chiefs to attend the MICRA reception and provide feedback on the priorities document when the revised priorities document is sent to them.

Benjamin has had a conflict come up and will not be able to attend the meeting in Little Rock, AR. Wilson will be at the AFWA meeting in Portland, OR, and will not be available to give the presentation either. Ron Brooks, in-coming Chair-elect was proposed as an option. Past Chairman Bobby Reed, Chris O'Bara, and Mike Armstrong were also suggested as options. Preferably a member of the current Executive Board that is familiar with the discussions and general direction of the board over the last couple of years would be able to give the presentation.

The purpose of the reception is to provide an opportunity for discussion about MICRA between the Executive Board members and delegates. A number of Executive Board members will not be able to attend. It would be nice to have the past-chairs in attendance to interact with the delegates in attendance. Having the Coordinator and a few people representing the Executive Board will be sufficient.

- ! *Conover and Benjamin will develop an invitation to the MICRA AFS reception to be sent with the revised priorities document.*
- ! *Wilson will contact Ron Brooks to see if he will be able to attend the MICRA reception and represent the MICRA Executive Board.*
- ! *Benjamin will contact Reed and O'Bara to see if they will be able to attend the MICRA reception and represent the MICRA Executive Board.*
- ! *Racey will contact Mike Armstrong to see if he will be able to attend the MICRA reception and represent the MICRA Executive Board.*

! *Conover and Benjamin will review the list of past-chairman to see if there are others that should be invited to represent the MICRA Executive Board.*

The Executive Board decided not to attempt hosting a second reception at the AFWA meeting in Portland, OR.

Conover is working with the hotel to take care of catering and other arrangements. The Executive Board decided to pursue the option of serving Asian carp during the reception in place of a food item purchased from the hotel caterer.

Conover was asked to prepare posters to hang around the meeting room including:

- the revised priorities document
- maps of the Mississippi River Basin and sub-basins
- “selected” accomplishments

Sharpies should be available for people to write comments directly on the posters (or use post-it notes). Handouts should also be available in case anyone wants one to take with them. Pictures from MICRA projects should be put on the posters.

21) Mississippi River Basin Economic Value Report

Jim Caudill is Chief of Economics for USFWS in Washington, DC. Jim has worked with the LMRCC several times in the past. He has done several reports for fisheries, though most have been based on hatchery based angling. He worked with the USFWS Fisheries Program a couple years ago to do a general valuation of the Program, determining the economic return for each dollar invested into the Fisheries Program. The department has considerable experience determining economic value of recreational angling.

Jim reviewed the draft objectives, general report outline, and preliminary assessment of information needs provided in the briefing book for a Mississippi River Basin economic report. The proposed study would not cost MICRA anything other than time to provide data and review drafts. Jim estimates the report would take 9 – 12 months to complete. Jim requested input from the Executive Board members on the proposed outline.

Discussion:

We need to decide on the geographic scope of the study. Should the economics study be limited to mainstem rivers only, to a specific stream order up into the watershed, or should it be inclusive of the entire Mississippi River watershed? We might want to start with the major rivers first and then see what information is available for the smaller rivers. It could require an inordinate amount of time trying to get data for smaller tributary rivers. Including major Corps reservoirs will have a huge impact on the economics. We would have to include some reservoirs, Kentucky and Barkley lakes and the mainstem Missouri River reservoirs for example.

Estimating economic impact was first identified as a need in MICRA's original strategic plan. The wording from the 1991 priorities document is "basin-wide value of fishery resources and related recreation."

The LMRCC economics report includes data from 113 counties in the alluvial floodplain of the mainstem river and delta area. But it includes a lot more categories of outdoor recreation and economic impact so it may not be a good model for the MICRA report.

One of the first things we need to decide is how MICRA intends to use the information in the report. If we want to be able to present the economic information for the entire Mississippi River Basin as a whole, then we will need consistent data from the sub-basins.

We can start gathering data for the major rivers that will obviously be included in the report. We're certain to find gaps in the available information. In order to come up with a quantitative estimate we'll have to use reasonable assumptions based on best professional judgment. We do not plan to do any data collection or surveys, but to use currently available information. We will be developing realistically broad estimates. This level of information is useful; you just need to be up front about the accuracy of the information. We may identify some data gaps that the agencies determine are important to work on addressing. This could be just an initial step of a multi-phase study; it doesn't have to be a one shot deal.

There is a section in the outline that looks at value of the fishery beyond the fisheries they support. For example, maintaining habitat for fisheries is beneficial for migratory birds, which then support whole other recreational activities. Birding has become more popular than hunting in some areas of the basin. It will be tough

to draw some boundaries yet draw the connection to these other economic benefits.

The USFWS Fisheries Program analysis took more into account than just recreational fisheries. It included endangered species, birds, habitat, and things that benefited other users. Since this is something that has already been done, you wouldn't be starting from scratch for this report.

How do you parse out a river user from an inland lake user? The first thing we will do is look at the type of information the state agencies have. If the state simply has one number for all fishing, then we will have to start talking with people in those states to get an idea of the percentages. Based on existing data first, and then shifts to professional judgment.

The Executive Board members agreed that the report should include recreational and commercial fishing. The board discussed recreational boating but did not reach a decision. It depends on what perception you to drive at with the public. The bigger the number the better it is for demonstrating the economic impact of fisheries to our nation.

If you look at boating, then are you looking at the economic impact of reservoirs and dams? How many agencies will have good numbers on recreational boating? If you look at the national survey, which is where the bulk of our information is going to come from, it is recreational fishing, hunting, and wildlife watching. It does not include boating.

We can start with recreational and commercial fishing. The data for commercial fishing should be readily available. When you look at commercial fishing do you want to include the value of invasive species that are commercially harvested? If so, then you probably want to make the argument that the commercial fishery for invasive species is protecting waters in other locations for native species. In those places like the Upper Mississippi River where the commercial fishery is still dominated by natives, this would give us the opportunity to evaluate change over time if Asian carp become established and become more abundant in the commercial harvest.

Would it easier to do some initial data gathering to see what information is out there before determining the scope for the project? As an agency we do creel surveys on our Corps reservoirs all the time, but there are pools on the river that we have never done that on. We need to figure out very early on what is included

and what is excluded. If we say anything not connected to the Great Lakes, then it would be easy to do since the national survey already breaks out the data for the Great Lakes. That would get to a basin-wide look and provide a larger number than just limiting to the mainstem river and major tributaries.

In Asian carp discussions, this \$7.9 billion number for the Great Lakes is continually used. It apparently accounts for much more than fishermen, including boat manufacturing, hotels used by fishermen, etc. It might be useful to get hold of these reports to see what is considered in the development of that number.

Is this something that could be accomplished using the 5 year national survey? Information for the Great Lakes is broken out in that report. Is this something that could also be done for the Mississippi River Basin? Caudill will inquire about this possibility.

There was a report on the economic impact of trout fishing in the Driftless Area recently completed through the National Fish Habitat Partnership. It has been a useful document. Parsons will provide a link for Caudill.

The Executive Board will address the following issues on a conference call in August to provide some guidance back to Caudill:

- What is the intended use of the information provided in the report?
- What is the geographic scope of the report?
- What information does your state have available and how does that affect the geographic scope?
- What should be included in the report? Commercial and recreational fishing? Tribal use?

Action Items:

- ! *Parsons will provide a link for Jim Caudill to the Driftless Area economic impact report of trout fishing.*
- ! *The Executive Board will hold a conference call in August to discuss the report in more detail and develop guidance needed by Jim Caudill to begin working on the economic report.*
- ! *Caudill will inquire about the possibility of breaking out Mississippi River Basin data in the 5-year National Survey completed by USFWS.*

22) MICRA Workshop at 2014 Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference

The Executive Board discussed the MICRA workshop proposal presented to the Executive Board. The fish chiefs that participated in the trip to Washington, DC in 2013 found the trip to be very worthwhile and proposed the idea of the workshop. The purpose of the workshop is to help prepare fish chiefs, assistant fish chiefs, and their senior staff for transitioning from technical fisheries work to engaging stakeholders in fisheries policy issues. The goal is to prepare MICRA members (and their up and coming staff members) to become more active in communicating with their local congressional offices, and to increase participation in the annual MICRA sponsored Congressional visits in Washington, DC. An agenda has been developed for the first workshop. Meeting space has been reserved in conjunction with the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference in Kansas City, MO, January 2014.

Parsons made a motion to endorse the proposed workshop and to provide a \$5,000 budget for expenses to host the workshop including lunch, travel assistance, and other workshop related expenses. Racey seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

! The Executive Board approved a motion endorsing the proposed workshop on interagency Congressional and stakeholder engagement at the 2014 Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference in Kansas City, MO, and a \$5,000 budget for expenses to host the workshop including lunch, travel assistance, and other workshop related expenses.

23) USFWS Surrogate Species Update

Turner informed the Executive Board that the FWS Regions are moving forward with figuring out how to select surrogate species. The premise behind this initiative is the understanding that we do not have enough funding to do everything and we must prioritize and focus our limited resources to be most effective. By picking surrogate species that represent particular landscapes and focusing on that species, we will benefit a host of other species in the same landscape.

The Midwest Region held a stakeholder meeting with the states focusing on the Great Lakes LCC to identify a path forward. The hope is to have a suite of species identified for that geographic area sometime before the end of this year. The Region is moving forward and field testing the process. Fisheries and aquatic resource managers were encourage to participate in the process if they have the opportunity.

24) Other New Business

A. Vision for a Healthy Gulf of Mexico Watershed

The FWS recently released this document and the MICRA members were encouraged to become familiar with the document. Most of the BP settlement money for the oil spill a couple of years ago will go to the Gulf Coast states, but there is now discussion that a portion of the funding could be used further up in the Mississippi River Basin to support gulf restoration efforts. There are a number of partners referenced in the plan, however MICRA is not listed. There are a number of priorities focused on prairie and upland habitat restoration.

Discussion:

MICRA's habitat action plan is something that we would hope would be considered in the FWS's 'Vision for Restoring a Healthy Gulf of Mexico Watershed.' How would MICRA members go about providing comments on the document? This is a final document, but Turner will look into this.

- ! *Conover was asked to send a link to the FWS document 'Vision for restoring a Healthy Gulf of Mexico Watershed' to Executive Board members.*
- ! *Benjamin will send a link to the FWS document 'Vision for restoring a Healthy Gulf of Mexico Watershed' to the MICRA delegates.*
- ! *Turner will check with the Midwest Region's representative to find out where comments on the FWS document 'Vision for restoring a Healthy Gulf of Mexico Watershed' should be sent.*

B. 2014 Congressional Visits

The Executive Board discussed organizing MICRA-sponsored Congressional Visits in 2014. Racey made a motion to sponsor a MICRA delegation to conduct Congressional visits in Washington, DC, in 2014 and for the Executive Board to obligate a \$10,000 budget for travel and other related expenses. Schoenung seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- ! *The Executive Board approved a motion to organize a MICRA-sponsored delegation to conduct Congressional visits in Washington, DC, in 2014 and to obligate a \$10,000 budget for travel and other related expenses.*

25) Schedule Winter Executive Board Meeting

AFWA and USFWS would like to hold a 1-day paddlefish workshop in conjunction with the winter MICRA Executive Board and Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee winter meetings. The week of January 6, 2014, at the Missouri Department of Conservation's Powder Valley Nature Center in St. Louis, MO, has been proposed for the joint meetings. The dates have been proposed to the Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee members and we need to discuss here to see if these dates would work for the Executive Board members.

Discussion:

AFWA has requested to hold the workshop in conjunction with the MICRA Executive Board and Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee to help increase participation by fish chiefs and biologists. The Executive Committee is not the appropriate target for AFWA if they want to increase fish chief participation at the workshop. To increase fish chief participation it might be better to hold the workshop in conjunction with the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference the week of January 26. Hopefully there will be a number of fish chiefs in attendance at the MICRA workshop on Sunday, January 26.

Executive Board members would have to travel twice in January if the Executive Board meeting and paddlefish workshop are held the week of January 6. The Arkansas Chapter of AFS is meeting the week of January 6. Holding the MICRA meetings and paddlefish workshop in conjunction with the Midwest Conference could make it more difficult for people to get travel approval. The MICRA meetings could be held at different location, but near the Midwest Conference, to alleviate that potential problem.

AFWA sent a letter to the fish chiefs informing them about the meeting and informing them that they would provide travel assistance for one employee from each state to attend. Holding the MICRA workshop and AFWA workshops both at the Midwest may help increase attendance at both meetings. The week of January 26 was the preferred date for the Executive Board members. The proposed schedule would be as follows:

- Sunday, January 26 – MICRA workshop

- Monday, January 27 – Executive Board meeting
- Tuesday, January 28 – AFWA workshop
- Wednesday, January 29 – Paddlefish Sturgeon Committee meeting

! *Conover will contact Jeff Quinn and AFWA to propose holding the Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee and AFWA paddlefish workshop the week of January 26 in conjunction with the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference in Kansas City, MO.*