

MICRA AIS Committee Meeting Notes

February 13, 2025
8:30 am – 12:30 pm Central

Courtyard Gulfport
1600 East Beach Boulevard
Gulfport, MS 39501

MICRA AIS Committee Meeting:

The MICRA AIS Committee meeting is a meeting of the AIS coordinators (or equivalent) from the MICRA member agencies.

[Link to Zoom Meeting Recording](#)

Agenda:

- 8:30 Welcome and introductions - Rob Bourgeois
- 8:40 Review of MICRA AIS Committee charge and purpose
- 8:45 AIS Committee Governance Document
- 9:15 MICRA DC fly-in
 - MICRA 2025 briefing document
 - 2025 state fact sheet template
- 9:45 AIS informational videos
- 10:15 Break
- 10:30 MICRA 2024-2028 Priorities Document
 - MICRA Grass Carp report policy recommendations
 - Revising MICRA's AIS Action Plan
- 11:30 Next AIS Virtual Committee meeting
 - State Boating Act update
 - Discussion for Kansas meeting
- 12:00 Review action items
- 12:15 Adjourn

In-Person Attendees:

1. Rob Bourgeois, AIS Committee Chair
2. Greg Conover, MICRA Coordinator
3. Elizabeth Brown, AIS Committee Administrator
4. Kris Stahr
5. Hayley Gambill
6. Joe McMullen
7. Jeff Herod
8. Kim Bogenschutz
9. Chris Steffen
10. Eric Fisher
11. Grace Loppnow
12. Vanessa Salazar
13. Tanner Davis
14. Tom Woolf
15. Josh Leonard
16. Matt Horton
17. Rachel Irby
18. Monica McGarrity
19. Eugene Braig
20. Aubree Szczepanski
21. Amy Kretlow

Virtual Zoom Attendees:

22. Josh Thompkins
23. Clint Jones
24. Ben Holen
25. Robert Walters
26. Amy McGovern

Action Items:

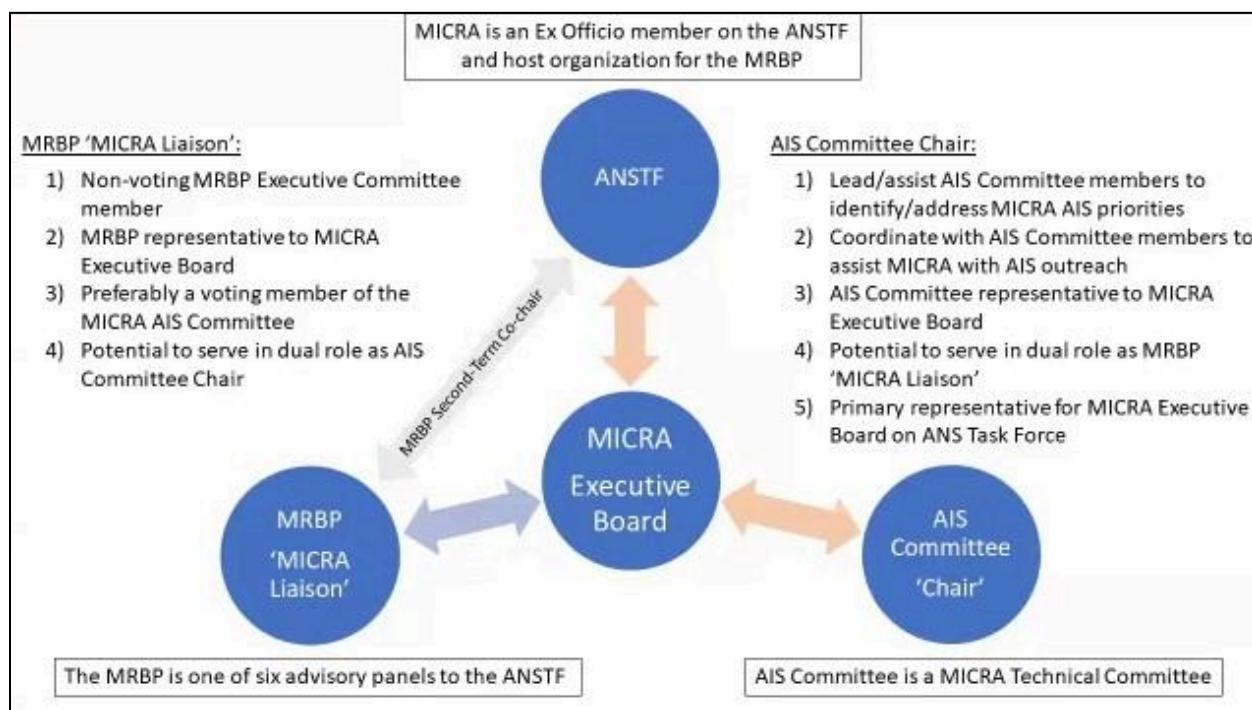
1. Governance Workgroup – Complete the MICRA Governance Document with SOPs
2. Rob and Elizabeth with members - Update all State Fact Sheets for 2026
3. Rob and Elizabeth with members - Develop State Capacity Maps - FTE, Temp Staff, Funding, General Duties, etc.
4. Video Workgroup - Complete a 3-minute video for legislators at NISAW 2026
5. All - MICRA AIS Action Plan Update - once all other action items are completed.

Meeting Notes:

Rob Bourgeois provided an overview of the MICRA AIS Committee, which provides a mechanism to discuss and promote policy. The MRBP is a subcommittee of the ANS Task Force and is subject to FACA rules. As such, they are not able to lobby. On the other hand, MICRA is an independent organization that can lobby and has a direct line of membership to state agency fish chiefs and directors to promote initiatives from within.

MRBP recommendations are provided to the ANS Task Force for federal agency consideration. The MICRA AIS Committee recommendations are provided to the MICRA Executive Board that may choose to take action either through their own agencies, by utilizing their lobbyist, or by another mechanism.

The graphic below shows how the Committee Chair / MICRA Liaison position works.



Governance Structure for the MICRA AIS Committee

The absence of a formal governance structure for the AIS Committee was highlighted and a proposed steering committee was discussed to enhance collaboration. It was suggested that a chair and co-chair be elected from a group of six representatives, with a two-year term for the chair. This structure aims to streamline the process of gathering comments and advancing policy

recommendations. There are currently no term limits for committee chairs or members. This model would allow a vice chair to serve as a fallback if the chair is unavailable, allowing for a smoother transition and on-the-job training. This approach aims to reduce the learning curve for new chairs and ensure experienced leadership.

There is a lack of published information regarding the history of the MICRA AIS committee and its members. The importance of establishing a governance structure and the possibility for agencies to appoint representatives who may not be the primary members. The challenge is ensuring adequate participation from various states.

The group discussed the steering committee proposal and decided to have an ad hoc Governance Committee meet to work out the details and present a draft set of bylaws with operating procedures for the full committee to review at a later date.

The MICRA AIS Liaison Role and Task Force Representation

The role of the MICRA Liaison to the MRBP ExComm was also discussed. This is a non-voting position. MICRA also has a position on the ANS Task Force that is filled by the AIS Committee Chair. Rob is currently serving in both of these roles. However, this does not have to be the same person. These duties could be discussed and potentially re-assigned so they don't all fall to the Committee Chair to fill. For example, the Chair and Vice-Chair could divide up the duties to attend MICRA Board, MRBP ExComm, and ANS Task Force meetings or other members could be delegated to specific representative roles.

Administrative Support Contract

The MICRA Board approved a \$4000 contract for Elizabeth Brown to provide Admin Support Services for the AIS Committee in 2025. This work will include task and meeting management, the video, plus other things that may come up to help Rob and Greg with AIS Committee work.

State Fact Sheets

It was a much smoother process of document handling this year for the NISAW fact sheets. It would be good to get feedback from those that went to DC to make adjustments as needed. Overall, Greg heard positive feedback from Ashley and those that attended. Those in attendance commented that the template was working well and was easy to update.

Elizabeth will provide support for states that haven't updated in a long time over the summer. Rob will send out a call for annual updates this fall.

NISAW

MICRA is attending NISAW later this month. 2020 was the last big in person year, and while MICRA has still been attending annually to promote the new commission, the larger AIS community has not been going in person. There is great benefit for AIS coordinators to engage in meetings to improve their understanding of policy and funding. There are obvious challenges of gaining approval for in-person attendance. It was suggested that a joint meeting for state AIS coordinators in DC during NISAW could help get people there. Currently, the impact of administrative changes on participation and decision-making make this not an ideal time.

If there was interest among members, the AIS Committee could host a meeting during NISAW. We could put together a package of materials (e.g. meeting agenda, travel plans, talking points, training, information for supervisors approval, etc.) that could be used to support member travel to NISAW and then facilitate a positive experience while in DC.

Keep in mind that AFWA is the state fish and wildlife agency's representative in DC for all things, including invasive species. They have over 70 committees. Kim is the Co-Chair of the Invasive Species Committee and represents them on ANS Task Force. If we need to elevate things to that level, we can always engage and work with AFWA also. They are already there and have relationships on the hill. The challenge is getting our issues to the top of AFWA's list of priorities and competing with all the other committee and agency needs for lobbying.

It was shared that the WISCE group did a **capacity survey** a few years ago to document state ANS program resources and compare across the region. The result was a set of maps that helped with educating leadership to support staffing and budget requests. This was highly successful for garnering internal resources by showcasing the inequities across states that are being tasked with similar work loads. Some states in MRBP still don't have a dedicated full time ANS Coordinator, while others have 10 FTEs. This also helps to support federal appropriations and grant requests. This was also discussed in Little Rock, AR, last year. We could include some of this information on the fact sheets, if appropriate.

Those present are in favor of conducting the capacity survey jointly (since 10 states crossover) and sharing it when we are together in Kansas. Elizabeth will follow up with Rob and Josh.

Video Development for Basin Awareness

The group discussed the one to three minute video aimed at raising awareness about the basin by showcasing the Mississippi River's cultural and ecological significance. He stressed the necessity of compelling imagery to engage viewers and mentioned the challenges of obtaining permissions for using photos.

The group discussed the need for a more meaningful approach to discussing the Mississippi River by focusing on local priorities and community stories; and the significance of illustrating not just fisheries but the broader cultural and environmental aspects of the river. Engaging people through relatable content will foster a greater sense of care and responsibility.

Some members have already sent in photos/videos. Thank you! A script for a shorter video had been drafted by Elizabeth. Once reviewed and approved by the subcommittee, it will be turned into a storyboard and a video. We plan to make a 3-minute video and then cut it down to shorter soundbites for hill visits and other promotional opportunities.

All MICRA members are encouraged to contribute their field photos and videos for the project by emailing them to Elizabeth. The video subcommittee will begin meeting again after the governance document is completed.

MICRA AIS Workplan

The group spent a full hour reviewing and discussing the current AIS Committee workplan. Discussion focused on the following topics: grass carp report, Lacey Act, bait regulations/pathway, OIT, and outreach. Per discussions earlier in the week, the MRBP will create an ad hoc committee to discuss bait and another for grass carp.

Once this year's action items are completed, we will need to update the MICRA AIS Committee's workplan. Input from all members is needed for this update toward the end of the year.

Meeting Adjourned

Note: There will not be an in-person MICRA AIS Committee meeting in Kansas due to it being held jointly with WRP. We will instead have a virtual zoom meeting this fall.