

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

September 23, 2010

Fountain Boardroom
Spring Hill Suites Downtown Conference Center
Memphis, TN

Decisions and Action Items

1. The January 2010 Executive Board meeting minutes were approved.
2. Benjamin will send Reed a copy of a letter to be prepared by the UMRCC to consider if it is appropriate for MICRA to sign on to the letter. The letter will be in regards to the dual purpose authority for the Upper Mississippi River and the need for USACE to fund and complete environmental projects in conjunction with navigation system improvements.
3. MICRA will send the Triploid Grass Carp Program Review SOW developed by the MRBP to potential contractors with a request for proposals to determine the estimated cost of completing the review.
4. Conover will finalize the revised By-Laws as approved by the MICRA delegates. All 28 states will remain on the updated signatory page.
5. Conover will provide the list of 5 states that did not vote on the revised By-Laws and their respective delegate's contact information to Reed.
6. Reed will contact the five states that did not vote on the revised By-Laws to see how they want to be listed on the signatory page.
7. Sub-basin representatives were asked to gauge interest within their respective basins for a MICRA habitat committee.
8. Conover will work on the home page of the new MICRA website and make the website available to the public as soon as possible.
9. Reed will include an announcement about the new web site in his Chairman's remarks in the next issue of *River Crossings*.
10. The Executive Board approved the revised AIS Action Plan as final.
11. Conover will finalize the AIS Action Plan and send it to Reed and Brooks.
12. Conover will send the final AIS Action Plan to the MRBP members.
13. Benjamin will check with Tom Boland to see if he is interested in developing the AIS Action Plan brochure for MICRA, and if so, at what cost.
14. Hoff and Conover will develop the 1-page color brochure if Boland is not interested.
15. Conover will provide the draft brochure to the Executive Board for review.

16. Reed will develop a draft a letter of support to be sent with the AIS Action Plan brochure to the 28 governors requesting them to sign. The draft letter will be sent to the Executive Board members for review.
17. Reed will develop a draft letter of support to be sent to the state delegates that can be used as a template by sportsman's groups and other ngo's. The draft letter will be sent to the Executive Board members for review.
18. Reed will send the final plan to the MICRA delegates with a letter to reiterate that the plan was reviewed by the MRBP and MICRA delegates, revised based on the comments received, and the revised plan approved as final by the MICRA Executive Board. The letter will also outline the Executive Board's next steps and request the delegates' assistance in marketing the plan. The two draft letters of support will be included in the information provided to the delegates.
19. Reed will develop included a write up on the AIS Action Plan in his Chairman's remarks in the next issue of *River Crossings*.
20. Conover will add the AIS Action Plan and brochure to the new MICRA website.
21. Brooks will provide key Asian carp marketing summit participants with a copy of the MICRA AIS Action Plan and talk to them about pulling the Asian carp letter into the fold with the AIS Action Plan.
22. Hoff will review the Native Species Action Plan data template, revise as necessary, and provide to Conover.
23. Conover will send the revised Native Species Action Plan data template to the MICRA Executive Board sub-basin representatives.
24. Sub-basin representatives will work with their respective sub-basins to populate the spreadsheet, write the narrative, and generate an estimate of the economic value of the sport and commercial fisheries within the sub-basin.
25. Sub-basins representatives will be prepared to discuss progress on the Native Species Action Plan data template at the next MICRA Executive Board meeting.
26. Sub-basins representative will consider presenting a summary of the habitat needs identified for the Native Species Action Plan or an overview of their sub-basins needs, accomplishments, and future direction at the next MICRA Executive Board meeting.
27. Conover will revise the general selection criteria for the Young Professional's Travel Stipend and send to Reed.
28. Reed will send a letter and the application form for the Young Professional's Travel Stipend to the Fish Chiefs as soon as possible. The letter should include a recommendation that applicants provide a letter of support from their agency with their application.
29. Reed will include a follow-up announcement for the Young Professional's Travel Stipend in his Chairman's remarks in the next issue of *River Crossings*.
30. Conover will add an announcement and the application for the Young Professional's

Travel Stipend to the new MICRA web site.

31. Conover will add the abstract, paper, or presentation from last year's Young Professional's Travel Stipend recipient to the new MICRA website.
32. Executive Board members will send suggestions for new ranking criteria for the Young Professional's Travel Stipend, including AFS student paper scoring criteria (or other examples), to Conover by October 15.
33. Conover will compile the recommended scoring criteria for the Young Professional's Travel Stipend and provide back to the Executive Board for consideration.
34. Executive Board members will schedule a conference call to discuss and select additional scoring criteria for the Young Professional's Travel Stipend. Selection criteria should be finalized by the end of 2010.
35. Conover will work with Natural Resources Management Associates to develop an MOU for the preparation of 6 quarterly issues of *River Crossings* from January 2011 through June 2012.
36. Reed will send a letter to Paul Zajicek to inform him of the Executive Board's decision regarding his request to publish a submitted article in the next issue of *River Crossings*.
37. Reed will call the 5 state delegates that did not vote on the revised MICRA By-Laws and any other new MICRA delegates to discuss MICRA with them. The objective will be to let them know that they are an important part of MICRA, MICRA's purpose and potential to assist them, and their role as MICRA delegates whether or not their state pays dues, or if they consider themselves more of an observer than an active participant.
38. Schoenung will look into Indiana's MICRA dues payment for 2010.
39. Schoenung will contact Chris O'Bara regarding West Virginia's 2010 MICRA dues.
40. Reed will contact the CO delegate regarding their 2010 MICRA dues.
41. The Executive Board obligated \$5,000 for the Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee for a January 2011 meeting, member travel expenses, and other operational needs for the committee.
42. The Executive Board obligated \$18,000 for the preparation of 6 quarterly issues of *River Crossings* from January 2011 through June 2012.
43. The Executive Board's next meeting will be held January 27, 2011, in Memphis, TN, in conjunction with the MICRA Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee.
44. Bobby Wilson will look into potential options for meeting locations other than hotels in the Memphis area on January 25-27.

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

September 23, 2010

Fountain Boardroom
Spring Hill Suites Downtown Conference Center
Memphis, TN

Minutes

1) Call to Order (Reed)

Roll Call

Arkansas/Red River	Chris Racey	present
LMRCC	Paul Rister	present
MRNRC	Steve Adams	absent
ORFMT	Brian Schoenung	present
Tennessee River	Bobby Wilson	present
UMRCC (Chairman-elect)	Ron Benjamin	present
USFWS	Mike Weimer	absent
USGS	Mike Jawson	present

A quorum of Executive Board members was present.

Introductions

Bobby Reed, MICRA Chairperson, LA DWF
Greg Conover, MICRA Coordinator, USFWS
George Scholten, Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee Chairman , IA DNR
Ron Brooks, KY DFW
Mike Hoff, USFWS Region 3
Brian Schoenung, IN DNR
Paul Rister, KY DFW
Ron Benjamin, WI DNR
Bobby Wilson, TWRA
Mike Jawson, USGS
Chris Racey, AGFC

2) Chairman's Report (Reed)

Approval of January 2010 Meeting Minutes

✓ Benjamin made a motion to approve the January 2010 meeting minutes as written.
Schoenung seconded. The motion passed.

Review of Chair Activities

A review of the Chairman's activities since January 2010 is provided in the briefing book and was reviewed.

3) Coordinator's Report (Conover)

Review of Coordinator's Activities

A summary of Conover's activities as MICRA Coordinator is included in the briefing book.

Review of Budget

Reports are provided in the briefing book. The coordinator's, accountant's and bank's records all reconcile. The projected year-end balance for 2010 is \$95,284.

Since the report was prepared, a deposit in MICRA's bank account of \$20,000 from NOAA was confirmed and the grant was officially closed out on October 5, 2010.

Three states (CO, IN, WV) that paid dues in 2009 have not paid dues in 2010.

4) Review of January 2010 Action Items (Conover)

The status of Action Items from the January 2010 meeting is provided in the briefing book. Several of the items are on-going and #14 has not been started yet.

The status of four Action Items from the July 2009 meeting is also provided in the briefing book and was reviewed.

5) UMRCC (Benjamin)

The report provided in the briefing book was reviewed.

Ron Benjamin provided copies of the UMRCC 2010 Fisheries Strategic Plan and a one page color pamphlet highlighting the plan used for outreach. The real benefit of developing the plan is the process that brings together all of the field biologists to agree on goals and objectives for managing the resource, and then getting the buy-in of the administrators so that everyone is on the same page. A long-term idea for MICRA is to encourage the other sub-basins to undertake a similar process to develop Fisheries Plans and MICRA would compile each sub-basin plan as chapters in a comprehensive Fisheries Plan for the entire Mississippi River Basin. Such a document would be very useful when discussing Fisheries Management needs for the basin with Congressional representatives and others.

Congress has mandated a dual purpose for the Upper Mississippi River, therefore it must be managed for both navigation and natural resources. USACE has recently

started completing navigation projects with stimulus monies and is not using any of the funds for environmental projects. USACE is now looking at obtaining special appropriations in Operation and Maintenance to use on navigation improvement projects and again there are no plans for mitigation or environmental projects. The dual purpose is not being honored when there are no improvements to the river other than those that help the navigation industry.

Would it be appropriate for MICRA to send a letter to USACE? UMRCC will be drafting a letter.

! Benjamin will send the UMRCC letter to Reed to review and consider if it is appropriate for MICRA to sign on to.

This has become a pattern within the NESP program. NESP projects often have the environmental components scheduled in the out-years so that navigation improvements are completed and the environmental improvements are scheduled until later years when the funding may well be gone. This pattern happened in the Ohio River also. Navigation improvements have been completed and are planned, but there has been no funding for environmental projects. Major navigation improvements need to be paired with not just a commitment to environmental projects, but also the follow-through to ensure the environmental projects are funded and completed.

6) LMRCC (Rister)

Just over 10 years ago the UMRCC states began to meet to discuss projects that they would like to see completed on the Lower Mississippi River to restore habitat. Notching dikes is one of the types of projects that were identified. Ron Nasser has been very instrumental in working with USACE to secure funding for dike notching. Work on the most recent projects started this week. The projects are briefly described in the update provided in the briefing book. These are relatively easy and inexpensive projects to complete. The states have identified a number of other types of projects they would like to get funded also.

The Water Quality Technical Committee has been primarily looking at issues involving gulf hypoxia. The Habitat Technical Committee is looking at the secondary channel improvements (i.e., dike notching) that have been completed. The Fish Technical Committee is undertaking a paddlefish study in the lower basin funded by the FWS and in partnership with Southern Illinois University (SIU). The LMRCC states with commercial fisheries for paddlefish are riding along with commercial fishers to collect data from 300 harvested paddlefish. The data are all being sent to SIU for analysis. Kentucky has provided data, but not sure if the other states have yet or not. We need to make sure that data provided to SIU are also provided to the MICRA database manager in the LMRCC. The only data to provide would be the total number of rostrums wanded, the number of recaptures, and the recaptured coded-wire tag. Age data should be provided for any coded-wire tag recaptures. Gary Lucas is the Fish Tech Committee Chair and would be the point of contact regarding the data for this project.

Kentucky has been working with commercial fishermen to obtain fish and data on length, weight, eggs, age, and growth. Kentucky has aged over 500 paddlefish jawbones. A portion of the jawbones were sent to biologist in Idaho and Arkansas to read, and the results were not very consistent. It would have been very helpful to have some known age fish, especially young fish, but all of the samples came from harvested fish. Paddlefish in the lower basin are known to produce summer time check marks that complicate aging jawbones. We need a database of known age fish from all latitudes throughout the basin. The tagged hatchery fish can provide known age fish, but we need to make sure that jawbones are being collected along with the recaptured tag.

7) MRNRC (Adams)

An MRNRC representative was not in attendance at the meeting. The Board reviewed the update provided in the briefing book.

8) ORFMT (Schoenung)

The report provided in the briefing book was reviewed.

9) Tennessee River (Wilson)

Bobby Wilson is the new Fish Chief in Tennessee and will be replacing Bill Reeves as the Tennessee delegate and Tennessee/Cumberland River representative to the Executive Board.

Tennessee is working on developing an Aquatic Nuisance Species fish id book.

Tennessee is working with commercial fishermen to collect data from paddlefish in Kentucky Lake and the Tennessee River system.

10) Arkansas/Red River (Racey)

The update provided in the briefing book was reviewed.

Is Arkansas working on any of the life history aspects of the snakeheads, for example spawning locations, feeding habits, age and growth? Yes, the University of Central Arkansas and the University of Arkansas Pine Bluff are both working on aspects of life history.

It is not legal to fish for or possess snakeheads in Arkansas.

11) Committee Updates (Committee Chairs)

Native Mussel Committee

A written report is provided in the briefing book, but the committee chair is in the field and unable to attend the meeting.

MRBP

A written report is provided in the briefing book, and neither co-chair was able to attend the meeting.

The MRBP has postponed its meeting scheduled for January until May 2011. The MRBP will be hosting the ANS Task Force's spring meeting in Little Rock, Arkansas, on May 4-5. The MRBP will now hold its next meeting on May 3 in conjunction with the ANS Task Force meeting. This may be a meeting of interest to the state delegates to bring attention to their AIS issues and needs.

The MRBP hopes to use the opportunity to bring attention to the Mississippi River Basin states' struggles with Asian carp issues. They want to remind the Federal Agency Task Force members that Asian carp are a national issue not just a Great Lakes region issue, and that there are four species of concern not just the bighead and silver carp that are threatening to invade the Great Lakes.

Does the triploid grass carp certification program still go through the USFWS? Yes, the USFWS Regions 3 and 4 conduct inspections and certify shipments. Other states such as Oklahoma and Kansas have changed regulations to require triploid certification so there is a need for the program to be implemented as a national program with inspectors available in each USFWS region. Tennessee requires triploid grass carp, but does not require USFWS certified triploid grass carp.

Are there still states that allow diploid stockings? Seven Mississippi River Basin states allow stocking of diploid grass carp Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Iowa, Mississippi, Missouri, and Nebraska. The MRBP is concerned that until we have uniform regulations throughout the basin prohibiting diploid grass carp there will continue to be intentional and unintentional sales of diploid fish as triploids. This is discussed in the Asian carp management and control plan. There are recommendations in the management plan for consistent regulations throughout the basin and for an independent review of the triploid grass carp inspection and certification program.

MICRA requested the MRBP to work on an SOW for an independent review of the triploid grass carp program. The MRBP has worked with the USFWS and triploid grass carp producers to form a steering committee and to develop a scope of work for the review. An SOW is ready to be sent out to potential contractors along with a request for proposals (RFP) to determine the estimated costs to complete the review. The MRBP has requested a decision from the Executive Board regarding this SOW. Does the Executive Board want the RFP to be sent from MICRA or the MRBP?

MICRA should send out a request for proposal to determine the cost of completing the review. MICRA should then send a letter to the USFWS encouraging them to fund the review of this program that has been utilized for so many years without having any form of review for QA/QC. The MRBP has also discussed as an additional follow-up step, providing a letter to MICRA to send to the fish chiefs encouraging them to manage grass carp on a regional basis. This would mean prohibiting diploid stockings. Removing diploids from the market would alleviate many of the potential problems with the system and help with law enforcement.

- ✓ Benjamin made a motion that MICRA send the SOW out to potential contractors with a request for proposals to determine the estimated cost of completing the review. Wilson seconded. The motion passed.

Louisiana had an incident 2 years ago with an order of Florida largemouth bass that were purchased from a fish farm in Arkansas. The shipment was contaminated with diploid grass carp fingerlings. The shipment was refused, but unfortunately one take had already been released into the Red River. States that purchase sport fish fingerlings from producers that also produce grass carp may want to make some onsite inspections of shipments before the fish are stocked. This is another pathway that triploid or diploid grass carp may be unintentionally stocked into new locations.

Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee

A brief update is provided in the briefing book.

Scholten has not been able to focus on committee issues much over the last 6 months, but has recently started work again on the MICRA paddlefish stocking protocols. He has had a hard time getting participation of committee members in the development of the document. He hopes to have something drafted before the committee meets again in January.

A major change within the committee is the transfer of the paddlefish stock assessment database management responsibilities from the USFWS Columbia office to the individual sub-basins. Brian Elkington has taken a new job and is leaving the Columbia office. Before leaving he provided some training for the sub-basin representatives who are going to take over the tag extraction, reading, and database management responsibilities. There may be some equipment costs associated with shifting these responsibilities from a single office to each of the sub-basins. For example, the jig for reading coded-wire tags costs approximately \$200 and we will need one for each sub-basin. Someone within MICRA will be needed to help pull together the sub-basin reports each year.

Is compiling the annual sub-basin updates something that each person in charge of the sub-basins can put together with a minimal amount of effort? We need to see how this first year goes with the states providing their data to their respective sub-basin

representatives. It will be important to have some available to assist the regional representatives with the database management and annual merge each year. The committee requested MICRA provide Columbia with \$5,000 funding each of the next two years to provide this kind of technical assistance with the database. Losing Brian will make the transition all the more difficult. We may be able to have data entry for the database added to the new MICRA website.

12) Shovelnose Sturgeon SOA Update (Scholten / All)

Tennessee is closing both recreational and commercial fishing for shovelnose sturgeon as a result of the SOA. Because the SOA did not close down shovelnose sturgeon fishing throughout their range, there is still a potential for laundering eggs through states that maintain commercial fisheries. Many states outside of the geographic range of the SOA have expressed concern about increased pressure on their shovelnose stocks.

Closing the fishery may not be effective when two states share a river border and one closes the fishery and the other continues to manage a commercial fishery. There is also sensitivity within the states about affecting small business owners.

States are not likely to see an increase in license sales to warn them of increased pressure. This is another reason why the states all need to have timely reporting mechanisms for commercial fishing. Illinois has a 3 year lag in their reporting. Can somebody assist them with data entry or funding be provided for them to hire the data entry? The UMRCC has tried to assist Illinois with their data entry in the past, but there are legal restrictions that have to be considered. Web entry may be an option in the future. If it is a high enough priority to MICRA and the commercial harvest states, would it make sense to offer the coordinator as an option for data entry? It is a high priority to the neighboring states. Should MICRA facilitate a meeting of the commercial fishing state Fish Chiefs to discuss how to collectively move forward with shovelnose sturgeon management now that the SOA is official?

Kentucky would like any data on pallid sturgeon or shovelnose x pallid hybrids that have been collected in the lower Ohio River below Smithland Dam. The Cartersville Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office did extensive sampling below Smithland, 52, and 53 several years back. No pallid sturgeon were collected, but 1 hybrid was documented.

13) MRBP Model Rapid Response Plan (Conover)

The NOAA grant was for the development of a Model Rapid Response Plan for Invasive Fish. The plan has been finalized and submitted to NOAA in fulfillment of the grant, but remains to be printed and distributed to the states. The MRBP would like to develop modules for aquatic invasive plants and invertebrates as next steps. The plan will also be added to the MRBP website. It would be nice to have a short concise brochure to provide to state administrators and other interested parties.

14) Revised By-Laws Election Results (Conover)

When the proposed revisions to the By-Laws were sent out to the MICRA delegates for approval, we had requested 100% response. After several attempts, the revisions were approved by the required 2/3 majority but there were 5 states that did not cast a vote. How should this be addressed on the signatory page for the updated Constitution and By-laws?

Were the states that did not cast their vote states that do not pay dues, on the edge of the basin, or states that have new Fish Chiefs that might not understand their role with MICRA? There has been considerable turnover since the original document was signed. MICRA may need to reach out to some of these new delegates to inform them about MICRA and their roles as delegates in MICRA. We do want to have all 28 states represented on the signatory page.

We may want to consider organizing an all delegate meeting sometime over the next year to discuss MICRA's priorities with the Fish Chiefs. The Fish Chiefs may not be very engaged until there is a major issue that affects them directly. We may need to follow-up with the chiefs and make sure they realize that as the voting members we will periodically need their involvement in the mundane business aspects. We may want to call the new fish chiefs and have some personal discussions about MICRA to let them know who we are, what we can do for them, and what some of the major issues are that MICRA has been dealing with.

- ! Conover will finalize the revised By-Laws and all 28 states will remain on the updated signatory page. Conover will provide a list of the 5 states and their respective delegate's contact information to Reed.
- ! Reed will contact the five states that did not vote to see how they want to be listed on the page.

15) Habitat Symposium Update (Benjamin)

MICRA's participation in the Large Rivers Conference came at relatively little expense, especially compared to the thousands of dollars it costs to participate in AFS meetings. MICRA gained some very good exposure among some upper level federal agency administrators from EPA, FWS, and the COE.

The COE is interested in MICRA participating in the next Inner Coast Summit and the development of the 200 year vision for the Mississippi River Basin. Has there been any follow-up documentation from this year's meeting? Some of the discussion at the meeting was about getting the attention focused on the Mississippi River Basin similar to what the Great Lakes did.

There is a small focus group meeting being organized in the Twin Cities and St. Louis to discuss how to get federal agencies to work better with the states and ngo's. This may be another effort that MICRA may want to consider being involved with.

Is there interest in organizing a true habitat symposium to bring together experts to discuss what represents the ideal habitat for large riverine systems? The Mississippi River Research group may be a potential venue, but this would be a few years out. Holding these kinds of meetings in conjunction with conferences that have registration fees limits some state biologists ability to attend.

Has there ever been any discussion of forming a habitat committee within MICRA? Should we explore this through the sub-basins or the Fish Chiefs to gauge interest? Let's find out if there is interest at the field level first. The gamefish committee lost momentum because of the lack of interjurisdictional concerns that span the whole basin, but habitat is something that is sport fish oriented and affects all parts of the basin. The LMRCC committee has a habitat technical committee.

! The sub-basin representatives were asked to gauge interest within their respective basins for a MICRA habitat committee.

A GIS workshop may also be something of value to the states.

The discussion was tabled until agenda item #19.

16) A Look at the New MICRA Web Site (Conover)

The Executive Board reviewed the new MICRA web site that is under construction and provided comments and ideas.

- Can we add a password protected section to the website? Yes we can.
- Can we use the empty spaces on the sides to highlight certain products and activities? This would have to be updated regularly. We may be able to use one of the picture boxes on the home page for this instead of pictures.
- We should update the original logo so that people recognize it when they get to the new web site. The lettering can be curved and softened, but kept the same. Eliminate paddlefish and cut off below the waves. Don't need to keep the sun or snow.
- Eliminate email address from the website and use links to email dialogue box.
- Are there links for the sub-basins? Planned to link through the basin map on the home page.
- New pictures are needed for the website: habitat, paddlefish, sturgeon, AIS, mussels, game fish, anglers, etc.

The incomplete website is better than an outdated website. It just needs some brushing up and it is good enough to make public.

! Conover was asked to make the website live as soon as possible.

! Reed will include an announcement about the new web site in his Chairman's remarks in the next issue of *River Crossings*.

17) AIS Action Plan – Next Steps (Reed)

Conover provided revised copies of the AIS Action Plan and letters received from the state delegates regarding the Plan. In addition to the letters, emails were received from TN, TX, and IL in support of the Plan. Comments were provided on the draft plan, but no direction was provided from the delegates regarding marketing of the plan. The most significant revision was the addition of a new bullet under Recommendation 3 – “Develop a list of species that are approved for import (i.e., ‘clean list’) within the Basin and provide to states as an alternative to the restricted species approach.”

We need consider how we market the final plan and to whom. Who are the most receptive governors, congressional representatives, and senators that would be leaders in getting the action plan funded? We need to find advocates and leadership for environmental interests within the Mississippi River Basin.

We have an immediate need to get help with Asian carp control in the Mississippi River Basin. Tying these two issues together (i.e., Asian carp control and AIS Action Plan) may be very beneficial. Asian carp are an immediate crisis, but are only one part of the whole AIS picture addressed by the Action Plan. Sportsmen's groups could be an important partner in vocalizing the need for funding and action to address AIS, especially Asian carp. Asian carp are the emotional part of the AIS issue.

Once the Action Plan is finalized we need to develop a 1-page or two-sided color summary to provide to congressional representatives, senators, and governors offices. The Action Plan is comprehensive and basin-wide. NGO's may be an important means of communicating and elevating this issue among governors. Each person/state that chooses to advocate the Action Plan will do so differently, but having a marketing strategy for the plan would be prudent.

The Great Lakes states' governors are working with their legislators to develop Asian carp funding needs and communicate these needs to OMB. The Mississippi River Basin needs to have representation and involvement in these discussions.

Who handled the Asian carp funds that Illinois received this year? Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) was a part of USEPA appropriations. There was an appropriations transfer from USEPA to USFWS that included funding for ANS work. USFWS had requested \$8 million for the eight Great Lakes states to implement their ANS management plans. USFWS then managed the grant agreements with the states. Is there an advantage going through the USFWS for something like the AIS Action Plan? It makes sense. The USFWS administers all of the state ANS management plans. This is one way that the money can be moved out to the states through existing grant agreements. The AIS Action Plan includes a request for \$28 million for the 28 states.

We need a unified letter of support for each of the basin's governors to sign; the signed letter would be sent to the congressional representatives and senators in the basin. A single document with multiple signatures is preferable to multiple documents with a single signature on each. Because of the upcoming elections, the timing of this letter would be better after the first of the year. We can start working on this letter now and provide it to the MICRA delegates with a copy of the final action plan so that they are aware of the Executive Board's planned actions.

When we send the finalized plan out to the delegates, we need to outline a series of steps outlining what the Executive Board intends to do. This information needs to be provided to the Delegates before any steps are taken.

- ✓ Benjamin motioned that the Executive Board approve the revised AIS Action Plan as final. Rister seconded. The motion was approved.
- ! Conover will finalize the AIS Action Plan and send it to Reed and Brooks.
- ! Conover will send the final AIS Action Plan to the MRBP members.
- ! Benjamin will check with Tom Boland to see if he is interested in developing the AIS Action Plan brochure for MICRA, and if so, at what cost. Boland developed the UMRCC Fisheries Plan brochure that Benjamin provided earlier in the meeting.
- ! Hoff and Conover will develop the 1-page color brochure if Boland is not interested.
- ! Conover will provide the draft brochure to the Executive Board for review.
- ! Reed will develop a draft a letter of support to be sent with the AIS Action Plan brochure to the 28 governors requesting them to sign. The draft letter will be sent to the Executive Board members for review.
- ! Reed will develop a draft letter of support to be sent to the state delegates that can be used as a template by sportsman's groups and other ngo's. The draft letter will be sent to the Executive Board members for review.
- ! Reed will send the final plan to the MICRA delegates with a letter to reiterate that the plan was reviewed by the MRBP and MICRA delegates, revised based on the comments received, and the final plan was approved by the MICRA Executive Board. The letter will also outline the Executive Board's next steps and request the delegates' assistance in marketing the plan. The two draft letters of support will be included in the information provided to the delegates.
- ! Reed will develop an outline of MICRA's next steps to be included in his Chairman's remarks in the next issue of *River Crossings*.
- ! Conover will add the AIS Action Plan and brochure to the new MICRA website.

18) Asian Carp Control and Management (Brooks)

Brooks had just attended an Asian carp marketing summit in Illinois and he provided the Executive Board with an overview of his comments during the workshop and the results of the summit.

Marketing is already occurring. Processors have been working with other countries for several years to develop markets and there are contracts already in place for millions of pounds of Asian carps. The bottle neck is not trying to find markets, but is in the number of processing plants that are equipped to handle Asian carps. Large storage facilities and flash freezers are two critical needs. Fishermen need a way to get fish from the river to the processors in good condition. Infrastructure is the biggest problem. Funding is needed to get processors equipped.

There are several steps we should be looking at to get Asian carp harvested in large numbers from the river.

1. Develop international markets:

Work has already been initiated. Private entrepreneurs can handle this with a small amount of funding and logistics assistance from government agencies.

2. Develop domestic markets:

More help is needed with domestic markets. People are starting to eat these fish, but demand would be much higher if the fish could be made available on large-scale in chain grocery stores as an inexpensive alternative to higher priced fish. It will be important to develop the domestic market to keep demand high when the numbers of fish harvested decreases and large scale exporting is no longer cost effective.

Mega-processing facilities are in development in Illinois and Kentucky. Kentucky needs approximately \$700,000 for their processing plant to come on-line. More plants will be needed in other parts of the Basin. It may be possible to convert existing catfish facilities that have gone out of business into Asian carp facilities. Funding is needed to nudge these facilities along.

3. Getting the fishermen to the fish:

Most established commercial fishermen do not require financial assistance to equip them to target Asian carp, with the exception that some fishermen may need larger boats to handle the poundage of fish that will be harvested. New fishermen may need assistance getting the necessary equipment. Kentucky fishermen have indicated that for \$0.10/pound they would reluctantly start targeting Asian carp. The expectation is that the price will go up as the domestic demand increases. \$0.10/pound will work for Asian markets.

There are a lot of rules and regulations that separate sport fishermen from commercial fishermen. However, we may need to look at creative ways of using structured regulations to allow more access for commercial fishers. Outreach to

sport fishing groups is needed to generate support and understanding among the sport fishing community.

The free market system will drive the price. We only need to make sure that the initial price is high enough for all parties to profit and create a demand. States can provide assistance with marketing campaigns to help generate the initial demand to get the system started.

What about an exit strategy? Supply and demand may take care of this; price will increase as the supply decreases. The high price will continue to make fishing for Asian carp profitable for some fishermen. Export markets will dissolve, but a high-end domestic market will keep demand and fishing pressure on a reduced population. Alternate species such as common carp are also acceptable to Asian markets; market demand is for “wild caught” fish.

What is needed?

1. Funding to develop processing infrastructure throughout the basin.
2. Marketing
3. Congressional support

Next steps:

There was general agreement that a letter about the needs for developing markets to increase the harvest of Asian carps should be developed and sent to congressional contacts. The identified needs were funding for research, processing facilities, and infrastructure for commercial fishermen. The summit participants hope to have governors sign off on the letters. Lewis and Clark Community College volunteered to draft a letter within 2-4 weeks.

Discussion:

There was no ownership of the action items by any one agency/organization. There was general agreement on the need for a letter. The letter from the Asian carp marketing summit fits nicely with MICRA's AIS Action Plan and the letter we will send to congressional interests. We may want to see if there is interest in expanding the Asian carp marketing summit letter to include information on the AIS Action Plan. We will want the message to come from others as well. A similar letter from sportsmen's groups to governors will help governors to sign on to these letters.

Many of the participants should be aware of MICRA's AIS Action Plan, but not aware of the plan's status. The AIS Action Plan should be provided to the folks at Lewis and Clark College that volunteered to draft the follow-up letter and to some of the other key summit participants.

! Brooks will provide key summit participants with a copy of the MICRA AIS Action Plan and talk to them about pulling the Asian carp letter into the fold with the AIS Action Plan.

There is some concern about the long-term expectation of a sustainable fishery, especially with commercial fishing becoming the center piece of a control program.

By-catch will be a concern in parts of the basin where there are high quality recreational fisheries. Commercial nets will need to be attended because the fish have to be provided to processors fresh and in good condition. Attended nets will be less of a concern to sport fish.

USGS lab recently discovered that Asian carp lack the same enzyme that sea lamprey lack and they may well be susceptible to the same controls that are used for sea lampreys because they may not be able to break down TFM. If this is the case, this would greatly speed up the pesticide registration process. This is just a possibility and several years out if it works.

There has been considerable talk about research and research needs, but the reality is that there has not been very limited money or effort directed towards research for control of Asian carps. The Asian carp management plan identifies many research and funding needs, however the plan has never been funded and research has not progressed far. We need funding for control and research. The management plan needs funded on a national scale.

It would be helpful to change the name of Asian carp for marketing periods. USFDA is not on board because the fish are raised and sold around the world in such high volume. If you are making a product you can call it whatever you want. The species only has to be identified in the product ingredients.

19) Native Fish/Habitat Action Plan (Hoff)

The Executive Board had previously discussed developing an Action Plan for the Mississippi River Basin addressing AIS and Native Species/Habitat issues. Mike Hoff, USFWS, provided a template (see briefing book) and recommended next steps for developing the Native Species/Habitat action plan.

The Native Species/Habitat action plan development will require input from each of the sub-basins. As proposed, the sub-basin representatives would provide the templates to the sub-basins and work with them to complete a spreadsheet and 1-2 page narrative summarizing highest priority needs (e.g., 20-30 projects). The sub-basin documents would be compiled into a single action plan for the basin as a whole. The sub-basins will have to populate the spreadsheet and write a short summary for this to work.

This is very different from NFHAP efforts. There are as many as 6 different partnerships within the Mississippi River Basin. The action plan is a comprehensive plan for native species conservation and restoration for the entire basin. Some projects will be habitat related, but not necessarily all.

It seems that you would want to tell each state to prioritize no more than two projects per year to prevent having an astronomical funding need and competition among the states. We may not get the highest priority needs if we do not limit the number of projects. Limiting projects to a few per state is a reasonable approach. We will want the sub-basins to be as specific as possible when populating the spreadsheet.

It is most important to be able to establish accomplishments. Projects should be prioritized by their ability to be accomplished. We do not want to start with projects that would take 3-years of start-up before they could be implemented. Should the priority lists be a consensus among the states within each sub-basin? The sub-basin leads should determine that.

The concept is to populate a spreadsheet, write a short summary, and then compile information from each basin into a comprehensive plan. What happens after that? Marketing; you probably would use a similar if not the same approach as what was just discussed for the AIS Action Plan.

Each state needs to determine the economic value of their sport and commercial fisheries. These numbers can then be compiled to give a single basin-wide value. The Great Lakes uses the figure \$7 billion. One number for the Mississippi River Basin as a whole would be best. We need to have a value for the resource when we are asking for millions of dollars to control AIS and conserve native species. Perhaps we can get these numbers from each of the sub-basins with the spreadsheet and narrative. Are we talking about the main stem river only or tributaries also? We should include all waters within the basin.

The discussion from Agenda Item 15 regarding follow-up to the Large Rivers Conference was revisited. A suggestion had been made during the earlier discussion about having the sub-basins give presentations about habitat work and needs at the next MICRA Executive Board meeting. Perhaps we can have each of the sub-basins provide a summary of the priority needs identified for the Native Species/Habitat Action Plan presented at the Executive Board meeting. Let's move forward and have the sub-basin prepare a summary of work completed, results, and future direction.

This is going to be hard to sell in the Ohio River Basin because of the Ohio River Fish Habitat Partnership (ORFHP). The best option may be to dust off the projects from the Ohio River Main Stem Studies Project. That is the Ohio sub-basin prerogative to limit projects to the main stem river, and may be very justifiable due to the ORFHP efforts elsewhere in the basin.

We are trying to come up with a good list of priorities for the entire basin without creating a lot of work. Having these basin-wide documents prepared and available will be beneficial but we do not want to invest a great deal of time or effort.

We do not want to compete with other on-going initiatives, but rather we want to present a comprehensive look at unmet needs for the basin as a whole.

- ! Hoff will review the template again before it is sent out to the sub-basin leads.
- ! Conover will send the revised template to sub-basin representatives.
- ! Sub-basin representatives will work with their respective sub-basins to populate the spreadsheet, write the narrative, and generate an estimate of the economic value of the sport and commercial fisheries within the sub-basin.
- ! Sub-basins representatives will be prepared to discuss progress at the next MICRA Executive Board meeting.
- ! Sub-basins representative will consider presenting a summary of the habitat needs identified for the Native Species Action Plan or an overview of their sub-basins needs, accomplishments, and future direction at the next MICRA Executive Board meeting.

20) Early Professional Travel Stipend - 2011 Meeting Selection (Reed)

Do we need to select a specific meeting for the travel stipend each year? The meeting for which travel support is requested can be part of the revised selection criteria.

Should we put a call for applications in the next issue of *River Crossings*? The deadline for submissions is January 1, so we don't want to use an announcement in the December issue of *River Crossings* as the first call for applications.

The January 1 deadline will require some applications to be submitted before there has been a call for papers for some 2011 meetings. The applicants will probably want to know if they will have travel support before they submit an abstract for consideration.

The 2011 meeting will not be specified by MICRA but will be left open to the applicant's choice.

- ! Conover will revise the general selection criteria to Reed.
- ! Reed will send a letter and the application form to the Fish Chiefs following the Executive Board meeting. The letter should include a recommendation that applicants provide a letter of support from their agency with their application.

- ! Reed will include a follow-up announcement in his Chairman's remarks in the next issue of *River Crossings*.
- ! Conover will add an announcement and the application for the Young Professional's Travel Stipend to the new MICRA web site.
- ! Conover will add the abstract, paper, or presentation from last year's winner to the new MICRA website.

21) Early Professional Travel Stipend – Selection Criteria (Reed / Conover)

Presentations in the basin should get a higher ranking than presentations outside of the basin. A basin related presentation should be part of the criteria. Why would the talk have to be given in the basin if the topic is on the basin? Usefulness to the audience is the consideration. It would be better to support a talk that is providing relevant information to other biologists in the basin. There is also some benefit in presenting what we are doing to others outside of the basin.

We will need several criteria with a weighted scale to provide some separation. Criteria used for AFS student papers may provide some good ideas for the travel stipend.

Letters of recommendation from Agency should be part of the ranking criteria.

Executive Board members should recuse themselves from scoring applications from their own state.

We can use the general criteria in the announcement, but continue to refine the weighted scoring system before the end of the year.

- ! Executive Board members will send suggestions for new ranking criteria, including AFS student paper scoring criteria (or other examples), to Conover by October 15.
- ! Conover will compile the recommended scoring criteria and send it to the Executive Board for consideration.
- ! Executive Board members will schedule a conference call to discuss and select scoring criteria for the travel stipend. Selection criteria should be finalized by the end of 2010.

22) *River Crossings* Article Submission (Conover)

Two items were discussed.

1. *River Crossings* preparation during 2011

- ✓ Benjamin motioned that MICRA renew the MOU with Jerry Rasmussen to continue preparing River Crossings during 2011. Wilson seconded the motion. The motion passed.

2. Article submissions to River Crossings

MICRA received a request to print an unsolicited article in the next issue of *River Crossings* (see briefing book). MICRA does not have any policy or guidelines regarding article submissions. The Board discussed the submission in the context of how any and all submissions should be considered in the future.

Board members discussed the need to solicit contributions to the newsletter. Whatever articles are printed in *River Crossings* will be associated with MICRA regardless of a disclaimer. MICRA would need to adopt some form of peer review process. *River Crossings* is a newsletter not a forum for peer-reviewed manuscripts. Information in *River Crossings* is summarized from other publication sources, but does not publish new articles.

MICRA should be willing to consider submissions from the member sub-basin groups, but should not start soliciting contributions or begin printing unsolicited submissions, especially items that would require a peer review. The Board agreed that no written policy or guidance is necessary at this time.

MICRA should respond to the author of this particular submission that this is an article of interest to MICRA, however MICRA does not have a mechanism for peer-review and therefore does not publish contributed manuscripts in *River Crossings*. We encourage you to publish this manuscript in a peer-reviewed venue and we can share it with our membership at that time.

What if the authors reply that they are just trying to get this information to the MICRA membership and request that we put the article on our website or send it out to our mail list? Again, we should recommend that the authors seek to publish the manuscript in a peer-reviewed forum. Once it has been published in a peer-reviewed forum, the board would entertain a request to forward the information on to MICRA's membership.

- ! Reed will send a letter to Paul Zajicek regarding the Executive Board's decision.

23) Other New Business (Reed)

Do we need to do something to reach out to the new MICRA delegates? Reed could draft a letter to each of the Fish Chiefs and make it as personal as possible.

- ! Conover will provide Reed with the contact information for the 5 states that did not vote on the revised by-laws.

- ! Reed will call the 5 state delegates and any other new MICRA delegates to discuss MICRA with them. The objective will be to let them know who MICRA is, what MICRA can do for them, and their role in MICRA as delegates whether or not their state pays dues, or if they consider themselves more of an observer than an active participant.
- ! Schoenung will look into Indiana's MICRA dues payment for 2010.
- ! Schoenung will contact Chris O'Bara regarding West Virginia's 2010 MICRA dues.
- ! Reed will contact the CO delegate regarding their 2010 MICRA dues.

24) Budget Requests

- ✓ Benjamin motioned that \$5,000 be obligated for the Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee for a January 2011 meeting, member travel expenses, and other operational needs for the committee. Schoenung seconded the motion. The motion passed.
- ✓ Schoenung motioned \$18,000 be obligated for the preparation of 6 quarterly issues of *River Crossings* with an amendment to extend the new MOU with Rasmussen through June 2012. The extension to an 18 month cycle will allow the Executive Board to consider a new agreement at the January meeting each year before the existing agreement expires. Benjamin seconded. The motion passed.

25) Schedule Winter Executive Board Meeting (Reed)

Memphis, Vicksburg, and Baton Rouge were proposed as meeting locations. The group settled on Memphis. Vicksburg meeting space is free, but the location was least preferred because of the need for a rental car from Jackson, MS for those that are flying to the meeting.

The Executive Board can save about \$500 by holding the meeting at a facility with free meeting space and the option to bring in our own food and beverage

The Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee will meet January 25-26, 2011. The committee had planned to meet in St. Louis in 2010, but moved the meeting to Nashville to help AFS with left over lodging room obligations from the 2009 AFS meeting. The committee did not settle on a meeting location for the 2011 meeting but was leaning towards St. Louis. The committee could meet in Memphis to meet in conjunction with the Executive Board.

- ! The Executive Board will meet January 27 in Memphis, TN, in conjunction with the Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee.

! Bobby Wilson will look into potential options for meeting locations other than hotels in the Memphis area on January 25-27.