

Concept: Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission

Introduction

- The Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resource Association (MICRA) is a partnership of 28 state fish and game agencies with fishery management jurisdiction in the Mississippi River Basin (Basin) whose mission is to improve the conservation, management, development, and utilization of interjurisdictional fishery resources (both recreational and commercial) in the Basin through improved coordination and communication among the responsible management entities.
- State agency Fish Chiefs, with the assistance of the American Fisheries Society and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, originally formed the MICRA partnership with the goal that it would become an inland fishery commission and secure a stable funding source to support research and management of interjurisdictional large river fishery resources.
- Twenty-eight state agency fish and wildlife Directors signed the *Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resource Agreement* in 1990 forming the interstate partnership.
- Despite an initial absence of political support for commission status, MICRA has been an active and successful forum for interagency coordination and collaboration to address fisheries issues in the Basin with the support of annual membership dues and USFWS coordination support.
- Today's challenges demand stable, long-term funding for MICRA to be successful.
- A recent MICRA success is the partnership's efforts to raise aquatic nuisance species (ANS) awareness at the Congressional level, resulting in Federal funding for Asian carp work in the Basin.

Need

- Collaborative interagency planning, implementation and evaluation of fishery research and management to restore aquatic habitat, control ANS, conserve imperiled native aquatic species, and provide sustainable recreational and commercial fishing opportunities in the Basin.
- Increased support and commitment of each agency's Director and higher levels of government for cooperative management of inter-jurisdictional fishery resources in the Basin.
- Secure stable funding sources to support research necessary to inform management activities and provide for improved management of interjurisdictional fishery resources.

Next Steps

- Fish Chiefs present and discuss the Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission concept with their agency directors to assess their initial interest and concerns. What is needed for their support?
- MICRA Executive Board develops a draft *Joint Strategic Plan for Management of Mississippi River Basin Fisheries* to share with the MICRA member agency Fish Chiefs.

If support for further pursuit:

- Fish Chiefs continue regular communication with their Agency Directors.
- Executive Board works with interested agencies to develop a final draft Joint Strategic Plan to be shared with Agency Directors.
- Executive Board develops a communications plan and tools to educate agency administrators, Commissions/Cabinets, Governors' offices, and state and federal legislators.
- Executive Board identifies major steps and a proposed timeline for continued progress.