

Interjurisdictional Fisheries Management in the Mississippi River Basin



Many of you are aware that the MICRA Executive Board has begun to explore the concept of a Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission to help the Mississippi River Basin states, and our federal agency partners, improve cooperative management of interjurisdictional fishery resources in the basin.

The Executive Board shared their interest in the fishery commission concept with the MICRA delegates at a face-to-face meeting in Kansas City, MO, in August 2016, and again via a webinar in January 2017. The Executive Board has continued to consider the fishery commission concept and has some next steps to present and discuss with you today.

Before today's webinar you were provided with a fact sheet that provides an overview of the Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission concept, and two supporting fact sheets with additional information that we will review with you today.

This short presentation will generally follow the information provided in the Fishery Commission Concept briefing document and the accompanying Great Lakes Fishery Commission model fact sheet. I will keep my presentation brief to provide as much time as possible for your questions and discussion.

A New Approach – Cooperative Management



- Patch work of states
- Managing populations independently within and along borders

- Inland Fishery Commission
- Federal funding
- Cooperative fisheries management and research projects



The Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission briefing paper that you have begins with an introduction to MICRA, and that is where I will begin too.

In the 1980's fishery managers recognized the need for a change in the way interjurisdictional fishery resources were being managed. During discussions about the problems and challenges of river management, members of the American Fisheries Society's Fishery Administration Section developed a concept for a new approach to managing riverine fishery resources.

Rather than attempting to independently manage interjurisdictional fishery resources within and along the border of individual states, the Fisheries Administrators conceived a vision to develop and implement cooperative management programs using shared resources to manage interjurisdictional fish populations at a basin-wide scale.

The early goal for MICRA was for the development of an inland fishery commission, comparable to the coastal fishery commissions, to bring federal funding for the resources necessary for a cooperative larger river fisheries management program.

Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resource Agreement (1989)

28 Mississippi River Basin states:

“agree in principal to the establishment of a Committee which will meet periodically to facilitate the establishment of cooperative projects between the States or between the States and the Entities to provide for the cooperative resource management of the Mississippi River Drainage System.”

After a series of meetings, a strategy began to form, and in 1989 the Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resources Agreement was developed for the states to share resources, facilities, and funding for preparation and implementation of Long-Range Strategic Plans to address the management needs of interjurisdictional fisheries.

By 1990 state fish and wildlife agency directors from 28 Mississippi River Basin states with fishery management jurisdiction in the basin had signed the agreement. Federal agencies and entities with jurisdictional authorities for managing river resources, and Native American tribes in the Basin, were then invited to be signatories to the agreement.

And in 1991 the Association had officially formed and established operational guidelines. Also that year, the Mississippi River Basin fish chiefs developed a comprehensive strategic plan for using shared resources, facilities, and funding to jointly manage interjurisdictional fishery resources in the basin.

[If asked, only NM, SC, and MD did not sign the agreement.]

Successes

- Congressional outreach
- State ANS management plan funding
 - \$1M increase FY2015
- Asian carp control
 - WRRDA 2014
 - Steady funding increases for outside the Great Lakes

USFWS Asian Carp Funding for Outside the Great Lakes

FY	USFWS	ORB*	UMRB*
2015	\$2.4 M	\$400 K	\$400 K
2016	\$2.6 M	\$500 K	\$500 K
2017	\$3.1 M	\$600 K	\$600 K
2018	\$4.8 M	\$1.15 M	\$1.05 M

* USFWS base appropriations passed directly to state partners in the Ohio River Basin and Upper Mississippi River Basin via grant/agreement.

Unfortunately the concept of Inland Fishery Commission did not find strong Congressional support in the early 1990's. Without this federal status and funding, the states have been unable to cooperatively develop, implement, and evaluate basinwide management strategies for interjurisdictional fishery resources in the basin.

Despite a lack of federal funding needed to establish a program for basinwide collaborative fisheries management, MICRA has been an active and successful forum for basinwide communication and coordination to address fisheries resource issues.

I'd like to take the next couple of minutes to discuss one recent example of MICRA's success. Over the past 8 years, the Executive Board has made raising awareness through external communication a priority, particularly with Federal agency leaders and members of Congress. MICRA has sponsored a team of MICRA delegates each year to travel to Washington, DC, organized numerous meetings with Federal agencies and non-governmental organizations, informational briefings on Capitol Hill, and Congressional office visits, all to increase awareness and support for interjurisdictional fishery and aquatic resources management in the Mississippi River Basin.

These efforts have not only helped to secure the limited federal funding states receive to implement state ANS management plans each year, but were instrumental in obtaining a 100% increase in federal appropriations (from \$1 million to \$2 million) for state ANS management plan implementation beginning in fiscal year 2017.

Another tangible benefit from MICRA's efforts to raise awareness has been the shifting of federal discussions and increases in federal funding for Asian carp work outside the Great Lakes. In the Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA) of 2014, Congress directed the USFWS to lead collaborative efforts to stop the spread of Asian carp

populations in the Upper Mississippi River and Ohio River basins. Prior to this piece of legislation, the Administration's and Congress's focus had been limited to keeping Asian carp out of the Great Lakes.

Following the passage of WRRDA 2014, Congress appropriated \$2.4 million to the US Fish and Wildlife Service for Asian carp prevention and control in the Upper Mississippi and Ohio River basins in 2015. This was the first substantial federal funding to address Asian carp prevention and control outside of the Great Lakes. Appropriations to USFWS have increased annually, totaling \$4.8 million for the Upper Mississippi and Ohio river basins in Fiscal Year 2018. The USFWS provides a portion of this funding directly to the states to support implementation of sub-basin Asian Carp Control Strategy Frameworks in the Upper Mississippi River and Ohio River basins each year.

MICRA has made good progress on ANS issues, especially Asian carp. The Executive Board has been discussing how to make similar progress on other priority issues – and believes that the Asian carp experience provides a good model to work from.

Why Is A Commission Needed?

- Provide for long-term sustainable fishery resources and fishing opportunities
 - Collaborative interagency planning, implementation, and evaluation of fishery research and management (natives and AIS)
 - Increased support and commitment of state agency directors and administrations, and the Federal government, for cooperative management of shared fishery resources
 - Long-term, stable funding mechanism

While the partnership has produced many meaningful accomplishments, the need for coordinated research, management, data sharing, and communication has not been addressed and has only increased since the 1990s.

To provide for long-term sustainable fishery resources and fishing opportunities in the basin, resource management agencies need to collaborate on planning, implementing, and evaluating inter-agency fishery research and management activities and objectives. Implementing cooperative research and management programs for shared fishery resources will require increased support and commitment of agency directors and administrators, and the Federal government, for cooperative management of shared fishery resources, AND, a substantial, long-term, sustainable funding source. None of which has been realized as a result of the MICRA partnership.

To enable our partnership to implement basinwide, collaborative, interagency fisheries management, these are the challenges that will need to be addressed. The Executive Board believes that our predecessors that formed the MICRA partnership were on the right track, and that the best solution is for Congress to establish a Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission.

Great Lakes Fishery Commission Model




<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sea lamprey control • IJ fisheries management • Cooperative research • Management Units <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 individual lakes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AIS (Asian carp) control • IJ fisheries management • Cooperative research • Management Units <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 sub-basins
---	--

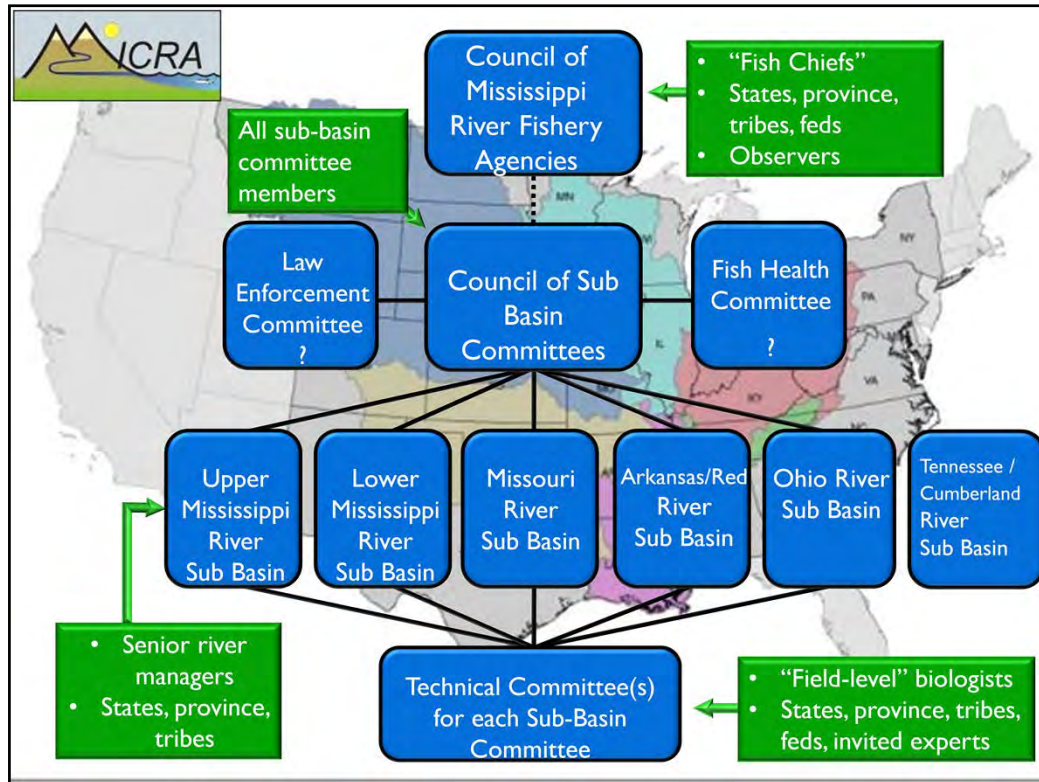
Let's shift now to the supplemental fact sheet that discusses the Great Lakes Fishery Commission as a model for a Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission.

The impetus for the formation of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC) was the need to control the invasive Sea Lamprey that was impacting fishery resources in all five Great Lakes. In addition to controlling Sea Lamprey the resource management agencies recognized the need for improved science to inform fishery management and a stronger commitment among the partner agencies to cooperative management of interjurisdictional resources. Sea Lamprey was the singular issue from which the partnership was able to unify and build the political will needed to form a Commission. The state agencies were then able to build in cooperative research and interjurisdictional fisheries management as additional needs to protect commercial and recreational important fisheries. Through the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, the fishery management agencies in the Great Lakes collaboratively develop shared management objectives, plans to meet those objectives, collect and disseminate data, and coordinate law enforcement for improved management of priority species.

MICRA has lacked a large-scale, basin-wide issue with sufficient political interest and support that could compel state and Federal legislators to agree on the need for a Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission. At least until now. The Executive Board believes that the mounting political interest in Asian carp/AIS makes this the right time for MICRA to again pursue the concept for a Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission.

Similar to the GLFC, a Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission could be focused on Asian carp (or broader ANS) control, improved science to support fishery management, and collaborative interagency partnerships for management and regulation of interjurisdictional resources.

The management structure of the Great Lakes Basin provides a parallel to the Mississippi River Basin. There are five Great Lakes and MICRA includes 6 sub-basin management units.



Because of the similarity in management structure between the two basins and MICRA's current organizational structure, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's lake committee based organizational structure provides a good starting point when considering an organizational structure for a Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission. In this graphic we have replaced the five lake committees with MICRA's six sub-basin management units. Much of this structure already exists at some level with the fish chiefs serving as the MICRA delegates, an Executive Board, the six sub-basin groups, and MICRA's technical committees.

There would be some changes needed to move from MICRA's current operational structure to an effective organizational structure for a Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission. However, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission structure resembles MICRA's organizational structure enough that it suggests a larger commitment of personnel resources may not be needed with a change to a fishery commission.

Joint Strategic Plan

- Formal commitment for cooperative management
- Framework for working together
- Institutionalize an on-going planning process
- Non-binding
- Non-regulatory
- Consensus-based
- For collective action
- Common goal
- Issues that need addressed for success
- Broad strategies for addressing the issues
 - Consensus making
 - Ecosystem management
- Strategic procedures for implementing each strategy

The members of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission developed and adopted a *Joint Strategic Plan For Management of Great Lakes Fisheries*. This plan is considered fundamental to the success of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission and is recommended as an initial step for the organization of a fishery commission for the Mississippi River Basin.

The Great Lakes joint strategic plan represented the first formal commitment to a set of procedures to ensure the actions of one agency do not jeopardize the interests of another basin agency and featured a goal statement that provided collective direction for fishery management. The joint strategic plan became a non-binding agreement through which fishery agencies committed to cooperation, consensus, strategic planning, and ecosystem-based management.

The joint strategic plan is a framework for how the fishery jurisdictions work together, in the absence of an overarching authority. It allows agencies to leverage resources, avoid duplication of effort, develop shared objectives, and exchange valuable data.

The strategic scope of the plan serves as an umbrella under which operational plans are established for each sub-basin management unit.

As identified in the right column of this slide, the proposed joint strategic plan would identify a common goal for management of interjurisdictional fishery resources in the basin, the issues that must be addressed to achieve that goal, broad strategies for addressing the identified issues, and strategic procedures for implementing each strategy.

What Would Change?

States:

- Formalize the states' commitment - at the highest levels - to cooperative management of shared fishery resources
- Institutionalize a cooperative, inter-agency process for planning, implementing, and evaluating management and research

Federal recognition:

- Economic and social value of the basin's fishery resources
- Need for intensive management of sustainable fisheries
- States' commitment to cooperative management

Federal support:

- Congressional caucus for Mississippi River Basin
- Funding for Commission priorities

What would change if Congress established a Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission?

At the state level, we anticipate two major changes:

- Establishing a commission is intended to formalize the member states' commitment - at the highest levels within the agencies - to cooperative management of shared fishery resources.
- The most direct change for management of fishery resources would be the state agencies Institutionalizing a cooperative, inter-agency process for planning, implementing, and evaluating management and research.

At the federal level, the formation of a Commission is expected to create federal recognition of:

- The economic and social value of the basin's fishery resources;
- The need for intensive management programs to provide for sustainable fisheries; and
- The states' commitment to cooperative management.

This Federal recognition is anticipated to have two primary benefits:

- The commitment of Congress to establish a Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission would make it easier for the individual members of the Mississippi River Basin Congressional caucus to work together and support legislation benefitting the Mississippi River Basin and the fishery commission's priorities; and
- Ultimately we hope that Federal support would translate into appropriations for fisheries management, research, and aquatic nuisance species control in the basin.

Next Steps

- Fish Chiefs present and discuss the Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission concept with their agency directors.
 - Assess their interest and concerns.
 - Determine what will be needed to gain their support.
 - Provide feedback to your MICRA sub-basin rep
- Executive Board will develop a draft *Joint Strategic Plan for Management of Mississippi River Basin Fisheries*
 - Questionnaires will be provided to MICRA delegates
 - Agencies will be invited to work with Executive Board

Stepping back to the Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission Concept briefing paper, let's me conclude by talking about next steps.

We have two next steps that we would like to engage you in. First, we are asking each fish chief to meet and discuss the Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission concept with your agency director. We ask that you assess their interest and concerns. We do not intend for you to ask for their support at this point, but rather to ask them what would be needed to gain their support as we continue to develop this concept and proposal. Once you are able to discuss this concept with your directors, we ask that you share their interest and concerns with your respective sub-basin representatives. If you do not know who your sub-basin representative is on the Executive Board, myself or Greg Conover would be happy to provide you their contact information.

Second, the Executive Board plans to begin developing a Joint Strategic Plan for Management of Mississippi River Basin Fisheries in 2019. We will be contacting you to gather your input and perspective prior to the development of the plan by sending questionnaires to all MICRA delegates. We ask that you review and complete the questionnaires that you will be receiving later this year.

We also invite your agency to participate in the development of the draft plan. Rather than requesting each agency provide a representative to participate in the development of the draft plan, we are inviting each agency to participate. We would like to hear from you regarding your agencies participation in developing the draft plan, or waiting to comment on the draft when it is provided for review. We intend to hold a meeting early next year with representatives from all agencies that are interested in being directly involved in the development of the draft plan.

Draft Timeline

- Initial feedback to sub-basin reps by (or near) September 15
- Sub-basin reps report at Executive Board meeting September 25-27
- Questionnaire to delegates in October with 30 days for responses
 - Agency representatives for drafting team identified by end of October.
- Executive Board and agency reps meet in January 2019 to begin drafting joint strategic plan

The MICRA Executive Board will be meeting September 25-27 and the Fishery Commission will be a significant agenda topic at that meeting. We hope that you will be able to provide initial feedback to your sub-basin reps prior to the Executive Board meeting, so sometime around mid-September. However we realize that date is rapidly approaching and it may be difficult to meet.

The Executive Board will be sending questionnaires to you in October and allowing 30-days for your responses. The information you provide to the questionnaires will be compiled and used to initiate development of the joint strategic plan. (We will ask for you to identify a representative, if desired, as part of the questionnaires distributed in October).

We are currently planning to hold an initial meeting with agency representatives in conjunction with the 2019 Winter Executive Board meeting (tentatively January 2019) to begin drafting the joint strategic plan.

Questions...

- MICRA partnership
- Fishery Commission Concept
- Fact Sheets
- Joint Strategic Plan
- Next Steps
- Other...

Our goal today is to familiarize you with the briefing documents and to make sure that you are comfortable with the information that we have provided. We also want to hear your thoughts, concerns, or questions regarding the Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission concept. The remainder of the hour is yours to ask us questions and discuss the information that I've presented to you today. Thank you.