

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

January 26, 2012

Powder Valley Nature Center

Kirkwood, MO

Decisions and Action Items

1. Benjamin will provide the Executive Board with a draft letter from MICRA to the director of the FWS explaining the importance of state ANS management plan funding to the states and request that he reconsider eliminating funding for the state plans.
2. Shults will provide the Executive Board with a draft letter from MICRA to the USGS regarding the importance of the NAS database to state ANS management programs.
3. Shults will provide the Executive Board with a draft letter from MICRA to the states fish chiefs (in at least the Great Lakes states) regarding support and funding for MICRA's diploid/triploid grass carp review.
4. Shults will work with the MRBP to provide the Executive Committee with a draft letter to AFWA to inform them of the potential risk of paylakes as a vector for the spread of Aquatic Nuisance Species and the ANS Task Force's decision regarding this issue. The letter will describe the need for 1) a risk assessment of paylakes, 2) standardized state regulations to minimize risks associated with paylakes, and 3) outreach materials for paylake operators and users.
5. The Executive Board approved the Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee's revised Paddlefish Stocking Protocols as final.
6. Conover will add the final approved Paddlefish Stocking Protocols to the MICRA website.
7. Scholten will send the final approved Paddlefish Stocking Protocols to the Paddlefish/Sturgeon committee members.
8. Reed will send the final approved Paddlefish Stocking Protocols to the MICRA Delegates and include in his cover letter a commitment by MICRA to continue to budget some level of funding each year to provide coded-wire tags to states that require assistance.
9. Reed will contact Doug Nygren (KS) and Chris Vitello (MO) to inform that their concerns were addressed as best as possible, the committee's discussions on these topics, and the Executive Board's decision to approve the document as final.
10. Conover will update the resources section of the MICRA website.
11. Travnichek will provide Conover with the link for the MRNRC website when it is up and running.
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.

13. Bobby Wilson will develop a 1-page write-up on the Tennessee-Cumberland Sub-basin for the MICRA web page.
14. All Executive Board members were asked to send high-resolution pictures to Conover to be used on the MICRA website and in MICRA publications.
15. Benjamin will draft a letter, for Executive Board review, from MICRA to the USACE regarding the need for major navigation improvements to be paired with a commitment and follow-through to ensure that environmental projects are funded and completed.
16. Reed will send a letter to the state fish chiefs announcing the Executive Board's intention to organize a Habitat Committee and to ask them if there is someone in their agency that would be interested in participating and that they would delegate to represent their state.
17. Sub-basin reps will have a conference call in April to discuss progress on the native species action plan templates.
18. Reed will touch base with Chris Racey to discuss completion of a data template for the Arkansas-Red river basin.
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.
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.
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.
22. Benjamin will work to identify who copies of the signed letter of support should be sent to.
23. Benjamin will contact both applicants to thank them for their applications and to inform Sandra Clark-Kolaks that she was awarded the travel stipend.
24. Conover will add the selection to the MICRA web page and work with Sandra to get her abstract on the web page.
25. Benjamin and Wilson will split the list of offices to be contacted and begin requesting visits for the MICRA delegation.
26. Reed and Benjamin will prepare an email to the fish chiefs to inform them that NISAW is coming up at the end of February and that MICRA will again be sending a delegation to DC to make congressional visits. MICRA would appreciate any assistance the fish chiefs can provide in the way of participating in the delegation or notifying their congress members' offices that MICRA will be visiting their offices.
27. Benjamin will develop a letter to be sent to the MICRA delegates with the 2012 briefing packets. The letter will inform them about MICRA's efforts the last two years to raise awareness about AIS issues in the Mississippi River Basin, and the Congressional Offices' recommendation that each fish chief contact their federal

members' local congressional office.

- 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.
- 29.** Conover will work on a draft MICRA brochure for Executive Board review.
- 30.** Conover, Reed, and Benjamin will develop a draft survey for the MICRA delegates to update the MICRA priorities document and to determine the preferred method to engage the fish chiefs.
- 31.** The survey regarding MICRA's goals will be sent to the delegates shortly after National Invasive Species Awareness Week and the responses discussed during the Executive Board's summer meeting.
- 32.** Conover will work with Benjamin to search for a documented economic value to include in the position paper.
- 33.** Benjamin will send the commercial harvest position paper, with the recommended amendments, to the Fish Chiefs. Objections to the amendments will be requested within 30 days, otherwise the document will be considered final.
- 34.** The Executive Board will review the bulleted fact sheet (based on the commercial harvest position paper) provided in the briefing book and provide comments to Conover by February 3.
- 35.** The Executive Board approved the proposed 2012 budget, as amended with the \$3,000 contingency for the 2012 Capitol Hill visits.
- 36.** The time and location for the summer meeting will be confirmed at a later time.

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

January 26, 2012

Powder Valley Nature Center
Kirkwood, MO

Meeting Notes

1) Call to Order

Roll Call

| | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|---------|
| Arkansas/Red River | Chris Racey (Bobby Reed, proxy) | present |
| LMRCC | Paul Rister | absent |
| MRNRC | Vince Travnichek | present |
| ORFMT | Brian Schoenung | absent |
| Tennessee River | Bobby Wilson | present |
| UMRCC | Dan Sallee (Ron Benjamin, proxy) | present |
| USFWS | Todd Turner (Aaron Woldt, proxy) | present |
| USGS | Mike Jawson | present |

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

Introductions

Bobby Reed, LA DWF, MICRA Chairperson
Ron Benjamin, WI DNR, MICRA Chairperson-Elect
Greg Conover, USFWS, MICRA Coordinator
Vince Travnichek, MDC
Steve Shults, IL DNR, MRBP Co-Chair
Bobby Wilson, TWRA
Mike Jawson, USGS
Aaron Woldt, USFWS
George Scholten, IA DNR, Paddlefish-Sturgeon Committee Chair

2) Chairman's Report

Review of Chairnan's Activities

Reed provided the following summary of his activities as MICRA Chair during 2011.

- Conducted winter (Jan. 2011) meeting in Memphis, TN
- Assisted MICRA Coordinator in setting up and planning MICRA 2011 DC Hill visits

- Traveled to Washington, DC with fish chiefs from KS, KY, LA, MN, TN to visit congressional offices during NISAW (Feb. 28 – Mar. 4). Trip purpose – awareness on Asian carp issues, funding for National Carp Control Plan, State ANS Plans, awareness of MICRA’s ANS Action Plan; touch base with USFWS ANS folks and meet with CEQ Carp director on implementation and funding the national plan
- Conducted summer MICRA meeting via conference call July 18, 2011.
- Routine approval and payments of invoices for services to MICRA and its’ technical committees (member travel reimbursements, etc...) and approved work projects
- Assisted MICRA coordinator and Exec Board on several action items including MICRA Asian Carp Processing Facility Position Paper
- Reviewed and provided chairman remarks for four issues of River Crossings, AIS brochure, Triploid Grass Carp Program Review SOW, new MICRA website and provided comments to coordinator on those items.
- Assisted MICRA coordinator with several items which required voting and review measures of the MICRA delegates – Asian Carp position paper, Paddlefish Tagging Protocol
- Disseminated information related to MICRA activities as per requests
- Email correspondence with P-S chair George Scholten regarding the development of Standardized Operating Procedures (SOP) for officer terms, operation of meetings, duties of members.
- Assisted and participated in conference calls planning for 2012 DC Hill visits

Review of Incomplete Action Items

The Executive Board reviewed the incomplete action items presented in the briefing book. Several had been completed or were outdated and deleted. The majority were on the agenda to be addressed later in this meeting. Any action items that were not completed during the current meeting are now captured as action items resulting from this meeting. Therefore, all action items requiring Executive Board member attention are accounted for in the January 2012 action items.

3) Coordinator’s Report (Conover)

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 2011 is \$70,343.88.

Seventeen states have paid 2011 membership dues. Four states that paid 2010 dues in 2010 have not paid 2011 dues, however only one of those states indicated that they would be unable to be 2011 membership dues.

4) Arkansas/Red River (Racey)

The Arkansas/Red River report provided in the briefing book stands.

5) LMRCC (Rister)

An LMRCC report was provided in the briefing book.

Reed reported that the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) conducted extensive water quality monitoring during the 2011 flood. Water quality is usually handled by the state's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), but LDWF assisted in the intensive monitoring effort as a partner to the Atchafalaya Basin Program. LDWF, USACE, USGS, LSU, and DEQ coordinated to develop a monitoring plan to evaluate impacts as the flood pulse entered and moved through the basin. LDWF prepared a flood recovery plan. The agency will be conducting water quality and fisheries sampling over the next 3 years as part of that plan.

6) MRNRC (Travnichek)

Travnichek reported that the biggest issue in the Missouri River Basin over the last year was the historic flood that started in late April. The reservoirs are dropped to a certain level each winter to capture the spring snow melt. The reservoirs were at the desired levels, but historic snows in Montana from late March into May and heavy rains in the upper plains led to flooding in the Missouri River Basin. Minot, North Dakota, which is not on the Missouri River proper, flooded for the first time in 100 years. Even though no Missouri River water level management for endangered species occurred during 2011, people still blamed the endangered species conservation programs for the flooding.

Garrison Dam impounds Lake Sakakawea in North Dakota. The dam was completed in 1955 and has a hydropower unit associated with it. This was the first year since construction that the spill gates went into operation causing flooding down river in Bismarck, North Dakota.

Historic high discharge out of Gavin's Point Dam, the lowest dam on the Missouri River, occurred just a few years ago at 90,000 cfs. For two months during 2011, 160,000 cfs was pumped out of the reservoir. Massive flooding occurred downstream. Omaha, Nebraska, airport was closed for several weeks. Several interstates were damaged around the city.

The Missouri River is called the "Big Muddy", but the waters were clear due to all of the water coming through the reservoirs. Secchi disk readings in the main channel are often as little as 1", this year the readings were as much as 2-3' deep.

Massive flooding from Kansas City north, below Kansas City there was not much flooding. The Midwest is in a drought during 2011, so there was not a lot of tributary inflow that would have caused more flooding problems.

Missouri has a long-term monitoring project related to pallid sturgeon, but the associated fish community is also sampled. In 2011, sampling was conducted out on the floodplain. High reproduction of sunfish, shovelnose sturgeon, paddlefish, and other fishes was documented out on the floodplain. Many northern species that are not collected during normal years were collected during the 2011 flood, species such as northern pike and rainbow smelt.

Continue to collect broodstock for pallid sturgeon in the spring. The fish are raised at several hatcheries throughout the basin. Approximately 20,000 – 30,000 pallid sturgeon are stocked each year from Montana down to St. Louis.

The funding for the Missouri River Authorized Purposes Study was de-authorized this year. The study was making some good progress and could have really impacted how the river is operated in the future. The same legislation also de-authorized funding for the Missouri River Ecosystem Restoration Plan, a 5-year planning project with the USACE, USFWS, and states agencies throughout the basin. The plan was to be completed by 2014, but has now been put on hold.

Discussion:

You reported tremendous recruitment of native fishes on the floodplain. Was there similar evidence of recruitment of Asian carps? I don't recall anyone reporting on Asian carp, but it is likely they would have been very successful as well.

7) ORFMT (Schoenung)

The following ORFMT report was handed out at the meeting.

Personnel-Doug Henley has retired as KY Ohio River biologist. Sara Tripp has been hired to fill that role. Sara worked as an assistant biologist in Indiana's Big Rivers program before returning to work at SIU where she had graduated. Ray Petering has retired as Fish Chief with Ohio DNR. The agency is in the process of refilling that position.

Paddlefish/Sturgeon-Indiana was successful in getting legislation passed to institute roe harvesters and roe buyers licensing. Emergency rules were passed to implement the new licenses and processes. A roe harvester's license fee was set at \$1,000 and the roe buyer license fee is \$3,000. There is a cap on the number of harvester licenses available for both inland (shovelnose) and Ohio River.

Trophy Catfish-KY and WV are using trotlines while IN is using electrofishing for assessments. Chiefs want the Tech Team to develop assessment methodology. IN

failed to pass new regulations to protect trophy catfish. Significant opposition came from out of state pay lakes.

Surveys-OH is interested in conducting a river-wide human dimensions survey out of Ohio State University. All states were interested. The tech team will work out the details.

Asian Carp-A lot is happening on the Asian Carp front. Indiana is contracting with Purdue University to track movements of Asian Carp in the Wabash and White Rivers. Rueben Goforth is the lead investigator. Movement is strongly tied to flow pulses.

8) Tennessee River (Wilson)

The Tennessee River report provided in the briefing book stands.

Discussion:

Will the processing facility be up and running by February? The group is still looking for some of the finance to get the project started, so it is not a sure thing at this point.

9) UMRCC (Benjamin)

The UMRCC report provided in the briefing book stands.

10) AIS Committee / MRBP (Shults)

Shults provided the following updates to the committee report provided in the briefing book.

MICRA visits to Washington, D.C.

State representatives of the Invasive Species Committee have discussed that several member states suffer from inadequate funding, especially in regards to implementing rapid response measures to eliminate or control aggressive species. State members urge MICRA to promote actions on two items: (1) establishment of a dedicated federal rapid response fund, and (2) provide for a stockpile of common chemicals used in eradication efforts. These have been accomplished in the Great Lakes region, and members urge federal funding to provide similar resources for the Mississippi basin.

A recent bill has been introduced that addresses AIS funding. The State Management Plan funding is being discussed as a way to finance the additional needs. However, the Asian Carp money that is mentioned is exclusively for the Great Lakes. Most of the research into control methods, and the control actions,

are occurring in the Mississippi Basin. We request that the MICRA delegation urge congress to make this funding available to all basin states during the upcoming visits during NISAW.

Triploid / Diploid Grass Carp Program Review

Currently, there has been only one response to MICRA's Request For Proposals to undertake this project. Another proposal is expected from a university in the near future, though indirect rates may prove to be problematic. It is expected that just over \$100K will be necessary to accomplish this work. MRBP ExComm has authorized an additional \$50K (up to \$60K total) to begin this work. Additional support will be sought from such places as National Fish and Wildlife Federation (NFWF), Great Lakes Protection Fund (GLPF), Great Lakes Fishery Trust (GLFT), North Central and Southern regional aquaculture centers (NCRAC and SRAC), individual states of the Great Lakes, etc.

The Invasive Species Committee requests a letter be sent from MICRA to the fisheries chiefs in the Great Lakes states to (1) encourage their support of the program review, and (2) request a small amount of financial support to complete this project. The Great Lakes states are each receiving \$1M through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to implement Asian carp priorities identified in their state ANS management plans. If each of the eight Great Lakes states will dedicate \$5,000 to this project, we will have the required funding to begin the project.

USGS - Nonindigenous Aquatic Species Website

Recent communication indicates that the USGS - NAS database will have funding significantly cut this year. MRBP requests MICRA to provide a statement of need to USGS to keep funding at current levels. No back-up or equivalent database and mapping information are available by the individual states, or exist within those states. Second, this program provides a valuable service to resource managers and fills an important need for tracking and recording information.

Discussion:

The establishment of a revolving federal rapid response funds is a good idea.

What is the shelf life of rotenone? The label shelf life is 1 year. If it is stored in the right conditions (i.e., light and temperature), it can last for 10 years or more. Illinois had an assay performed on some old rotenone that was donated for their first Asian carp rapid response project in 2009. Everything that was stored above freezing in original, sealed containers was still good. The most important thing is to keep the chemical from freezing.

There is a supply issue with rotenone for rapid response efforts. The amount of chemical needed for a rapid response project is not always available, and collection of the raw materials can require months.

It doesn't make sense to have several different stockpiles dedicated for specific geographic regions. It would make more sense to have a single large stockpile dedicated to rapid response need anywhere in the country.

The following incomplete action item has not been acted on because the MRBP has not provided the draft letter to the Executive Board.

“The Executive Board will send a letter to AFWA to inform them of the potential risk of paylakes as a vector for the spread of Aquatic Nuisance Species and the ANS Task Force's decision regarding this issue. The letter will describe the need for 1) a risk assessment of paylakes, 2) standardized state regulations to minimize risks associated with paylakes, and 3) outreach materials for paylake operators and users. Jason Goeckler (MRBP Co-Chair) will provide a draft letter for the Executive Board to review.”

Action Items:

- ! Benjamin will provide the Executive Board with a draft letter from MICRA to the director of the FWS explaining the importance of state ANS management plan funding to the states and request that he reconsider eliminating funding for the state plans.
- ! Shults will provide the Executive Board with a draft letter from MICRA to the USGS regarding the importance of the NAS database to state ANS management programs.
- ! Shults will provide the Executive Board with a draft letter from MICRA to the states fish chiefs (in at least the Great Lakes states) regarding support and funding for MICRA's diploid/triploid grass carp review.
- ! Shults will work with the MRBP to provide the Executive Committee with a draft letter to AFWA to inform them of the potential risk of paylakes as a vector for the spread of Aquatic Nuisance Species and the ANS Task Force's decision regarding this issue. The letter will describe the need for 1) a risk assessment of paylakes, 2) standardized state regulations to minimize risks associated with paylakes, and 3) outreach materials for paylake operators and users.

11) Native Mussel Committee (Hubbs)

The committee report provided in the briefing book stands.

Conover informed the Executive Board that MICRA was not invoiced for sponsorship of the 7th Biennial Symposium of the Freshwater Mollusk Conservation Society.

12) Paddlefish & Sturgeon Committee (Scholten)

Scholten presented the revised Paddlefish Stocking Protocols and requested the Executive Board to approve the document as final.

- ✓ Travnichek made a motion for the Executive Board to approve the revised stocking protocols. Benjamin seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Scholten gave a summary of the Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee meeting held the previous two days. Twenty-five people attended the meeting and nine states were represented. The committee did not have a quorum, so all decisions will have to be voted on via email before they are official.

The committee will be voting on:

- revised operating procedures that establishes a 2-year term for the chair position, and an assistant-chair position that automatically accedes to the position of chair
- Jeff Quinn as the new incoming committee chair
- Jason Sorensen as the new incoming committee assistant-chair

The committee members discussed the paddlefish database. Three of the four sub-basins have been maintaining sub-basin databases and merging their data. The Ohio River Sub-basin has identified a database coordinator, but so far the sub-basin has not been engaged. The participating sub-basins will meet in June to merge the 2011 data. Jeff Quinn is going to contact Chris O'Bara, the Ohio River Sub-basin's database coordinator's supervisor, to find out if there is a problem. A potential alternate has been identified.

The committee formed an ad-hoc committee to work on revising the committee's Paddlefish Tagging Protocols. A draft will be developed and sent out to the committee for review. The goal is to have a final document ready for approval at next year's annual meeting.

The committee spent a couple hours discussing the AFWA paddlefish project to be funded by the U.S.FWS's Division of Scientific Authority. The project was proposed by AFWA to compile all of the information that we have on paddlefish in the basin and make some recommendations for a consistent management strategy and potentially standardized regulations. The committee will be voting to approve use of the MICRA database for this project.

CITES indicated in their report that requests for roe exports were up this year. It was one of the highest years on record.

Four different ad-hoc committees were formed for projects:

- Revised paddlefish tagging protocols
- On-line harvest reporting systems

- Lake sturgeon management
- Sub-basin database coordinators will be meeting to merge 2011 data

The committee discussed the website and came up with some good suggestions for updating it. Jeff Quinn will be working with Greg Conover to get this done.

The committee requests an operating budget of \$3,000 for 2012 to cover coded-wire tag orders, annual meeting expenses, and travel assistance to get people to meetings.

Discussion:

If the end result of the AFWA paddlefish project will be recommendations for standardized regulations, are these something that the FWS will then suggest to the states? Ideally the FWS is hoping the project will result in standardized regulations or at least a consistent management strategy that will protect a percentage of the spawning stock. The FWS could then use these recommendations as requirements for states that want to export paddlefish roe. This will provide some consistency in how the FWS issues export permits.

Do you think they will want to meet with the fish chiefs to discuss the recommendations prior to implementing them? Yes, possibly at next year's committee meeting but I don't know for sure what the timeline will be.

At a minimum, the FWS would like to get to a more regional or watershed approach, possibly a sub-basin level, rather than a state by state approach.

Action Items:

- ! Conover will add the final approved Paddlefish Stocking Protocols to the MICRA website.
- ! Scholten will send the final approved Paddlefish Stocking Protocols to the Paddlefish/Sturgeon committee members.
- ! Reed will send the final approved Paddlefish Stocking Protocols to the MICRA Delegates and include in his cover letter a commitment by MICRA to continue to budget some level of funding each year to provide coded-wire tags to states that require assistance.
- ! Reed will contact Doug Nygren (KS) and Chris Vitello (MO) to inform that their concerns were addressed as best as possible, the committee's discussions on these topics, and the Executive Board's decision to approve the document as final.

13) MICRA Website (Conover / All)

The Executive Board discussed how the documents from the old MICRA website and future documents should be handled on the new website. The group agreed

that the documents should be clearly labeled as MICRA, member agency, or peer-reviewed publications. The webpage should include a disclaimer that the documents presented are for dissemination purposes and do not necessarily represent the position of MICRA or its individual member agencies.

Action Items:

- ! Conover will update the resources section of the MICRA website.
- ! Travnichek will provide Conover with the link for the MRNRC website when it is up and running.
- ! 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.
- ! Bobby Wilson will develop a 1-page write-up on the Tennessee-Cumberland Sub-basin for the MICRA web page.
- ! All Executive Board members were asked to send high-resolution pictures to Conover to be used on the MICRA website and in MICRA publications.

14) Letter to USACE Regarding Environmental Projects (Benjamin) 48:50

Benjamin updated the Executive Board on the UMRCC's on-going process to address this issue. The UMRCC has not developed a letter that Benjamin can provide to the Executive Board for review and consideration.

Action Items:

- ! Benjamin will draft a letter, for Executive Board review, from MICRA to the USACE regarding the need for major navigation improvements to be paired with a commitment and follow-through to ensure that environmental projects are funded and completed.

15) Habitat Committee (Reed)

There has been no progress on this topic since the previous meeting, but interest remains in moving this action item forward.

Action Items:

- ! Reed will send a letter to the state fish chiefs announcing the Executive Board's intention to organize a Habitat Committee and to ask them if there is someone in their agency that would be interested in participating and that they would delegate to represent their state.

16) Native Species Action Plan (Sub-basin Representatives)

Since only half of the sub-basin representatives were able to attend the meeting, we were unable to have an in-depth discussion regarding progress on the data templates within each sub-basin or the UMRCC example.

The UMRCC completed the data template in such a way that it aligns with the goals and objectives of the recently completed fisheries plan for the Upper Mississippi River.

The data template has been provided to the Missouri River delegates and Wayne Nelson-Stastny is also working on the data template. The Missouri River data templates will hopefully be completed by the end of February.

There is no group that meets for the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers. Louisiana and Arkansas meet informally to discuss Arkansas and Red river sub-basin issues; there is not a formal sub-basin group. States have done a considerable amount of planning already for the lower Mississippi, upper Mississippi, Ohio, and Missouri rivers. Although there may not be specific examples from the Tennessee-Cumberland or Arkansas-Red, the type of habitat restoration needs in these two sub-basins are likely to be the same as those needed in the other four sub-basins. We may want to have only the four sub-basins that have already completed habitat restoration planning exercises for other purposes complete the native species data templates.

Action Items:

- ! Sub-basin reps will have a conference call in April to discuss progress on the native species action plan templates.
- ! Reed will touch base with Chris Racey to discuss completion of a data template for the Arkansas-Red river basin.

17) AIS Action Plan (Reed)

The Executive Board reviewed the previously identified steps for marketing the AIS Action Plan.

We need to find a way to work with the rod and gun clubs on these issues.

A template letter will be sent to each state, along with a request for them to draft their own letter of support for their governor to sign. The signed letters of support will be sent to MICRA and MICRA will keep track of how many states of provided letters of support. MICRA would then draft a letter that states how many governors provided letters of support rather than trying to get 28 governors to all sign on to the same letter. The idea is to have the fish chiefs work within their divisions to start the process and work it up through their individual agencies. We still need to figure out who the MICRA letter that references the letters of support will be sent

to.

Has the final AIS Action Plan ever been sent to the fish chiefs? The fish chiefs have seen the action plan and approved, but it has not been sent to the delegates as a final document. The Executive Board wanted to provide the marketing plan and draft letter templates at the same time that they sent the delegates the final version of the AIS Action Plan.

Action Items:

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

18) Passing of the Gavel (Reed)

Ron Benjamin officially began his 2-year term as MICRA Chairman. Bobby Reed was presented with a meritorious service award for his 2-year term as MICRA Chairman.

19) Young Professionals Travel Stipend (Benjamin)

The Executive Board reviewed and discussed the applications received for the 2012 Young Professional Travel Stipend. The board members discussed the results of their application rankings and agreed to award the travel stipend to Sandra Clark-Kolaks.

The board discussed the selection criteria that were used to rank the applications and agreed to use the same selection criteria next year.

Action Items:

- ! Benjamin will contact both applicants to thank them for their applications and to inform Sandra Clark-Kolaks that she was awarded the travel stipend.
- ! Conover will add the selection to the MICRA web page and work with Sandra to get her abstract on the web page.

20) Asian Carp Hill Visits (Benjamin)

Meetings have been confirmed with FWS Director Dan Ashe, and CEQ Asian Carp Director John Goss. Arrangements are underway for MICRA to co-host a congressional breakfast briefing on AIS with the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC). The Executive Board previously approved \$500 to pay for food for the briefing. The PSMFC will likely be able to cover \$500 for catering as well. Rep. Ron Kind (WI) has agreed to sponsor the meeting and his staff is working on reserving a room for the briefing in the Capitol Visitors Center. The PSMFC has requested Sen. Feinstein (CA) to co-sponsor the briefing. Speakers need to be confirmed before invitations are sent to the congressional offices. Mike Wood, MICRA's LA Delegate, has agreed to be the speaker on Asian carp for MICRA's portion of the briefing. MICRA will also be bringing a fishing guide from Kentucky Lake to the briefing to discuss the impacts that Asian carp have had in the waters that he fishes and their impacts to his business.

So far Ron Benjamin (MICRA Chairman), Jason Goeckler (KS ANS Coordinator), and Mike Wood (LA delegate) are confirmed participants. The Executive Board approved a budget to send up to three fish chiefs. Bobby Reed has contacted the IL and OH fish chiefs about participating. Ray Petering, OH's fish chief, retired at the end of 2011. Scott Hale declined as he is in the position on an "acting" basis. Reed has not heard back yet from Debbie Bruce (IL Delegate). Bobby Wilson (TN delegate) and Ron Brooks (KY delegate) both participated in the visits last year and have offered to participate again this year if other fish chiefs are not available.

Now that the congressional briefing and meetings with CEQ and FWS have been confirmed, we will begin scheduling visits with the congressional members. We need to contact the fish chiefs in the states that MICRA gets congressional visits scheduled, so that Ron Benjamin can request them to contact the member's office in advance of MICRA's meeting. Briefing packets will be provided to each delegate.

The MICRA AIS Committee recently discussed the need for states to visit their local congressional offices to raise awareness about AIS issues. This was recommended by many of the offices visited by the MICRA delegation last year. NISAW would be an excellent time to schedule local visits to help make NISAW a more national event, but the important thing is to ask all of the states to make those local visits at least once each year. The committee also discussed the need for fish chiefs to contact DC offices the week before the MICRA delegation's visits. A draft letter or template could be provided to the states. Contacting the states prior to MICRA's visits will hopefully help increase the offices' interest in the MICRA delegation's message, especially for those offices that will not have a state delegate attending the visit.

Action Items

- ! Benjamin and Wilson will split the list of offices to be contacted and begin requesting visits for the MICRA delegation.
- ! Reed and Benjamin will prepare an email to the fish chiefs to inform them that NISAW is coming up at the end of February and that MICRA will again be sending a delegation to DC to make congressional visits. MICRA would appreciate any assistance the fish chiefs can provide in the way of participating in the delegation or notifying their congress members' offices that MICRA will be visiting their offices.
- ! Benjamin will develop a letter to be sent to the MICRA delegates with the 2012 briefing packets. The letter will inform them about MICRA's efforts the last two years to raise awareness about AIS issues in the Mississippi River Basin, and the Congressional Offices' recommendation that each fish chief contact their federal members' local congressional office.

21) Floodplain Management Position Paper (Conover)

The Executive Board discussed a recommendation from the board's summer conference call regarding the development of a position paper on the value of floodplains from a fisheries management point of view. There has been no progress on the development of a draft since it was discussed during the summer conference call. Benjamin would like to have a draft provided to the Executive Board by the Missouri River Sub-basin since this is where the recommendation originated.

The Corps of Engineers has a group that is looking at floodplain management. There have been innovative ideas proposed for managing floodplains such as installing gates in levees that would be opened at certain river levels. Agreements could be put in place to allow operation of the gates and compensation of farmers whose crops get flooded out as a result of these actions. The gates would also allow the waters to drain back off of the flooded lands more quickly, rather than be left stranded behind overtopped levees. It would be good to find out what ideas are out there and if it would be necessary to introduce new ideas or just to reinforce ideas that are already being considered.

The first task should be to develop a position that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the fish chiefs support. From there we can determine when, where, and to whom letters should be sent based on the content of the position paper.

Are there any draft letters that have been developed by constituents along the Missouri River following this year's flooding event? Wayne Nelson-Stastny had Gene Zuerlien provide some information on floodplain management from Nebraska. MICRA does not have an older document that can be used to develop such a position paper. Benjamin requested Travnichek to follow-up with Nelson-

Stastny to provide the Executive Board with a draft position paper.

Action Items:

! Travnichек 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.

22) MICRA Brochure (Conover)

Conover provided the Executive Board with a copy of the MICRA fact sheet that was used in the briefing packets handed out during last year's congressional visits. He requested Executive Board input on the development of a brochure based on the fact sheet.

The brochure would be very useful for raising awareness about MICRA. There are number of people who just don't know that MICRA exists or what MICRA is about. It would even be very useful within agencies.

If we make a tri-fold brochure, there are six panels for content, or a bi-fold brochure would provide four panels. The board would like to see a larger font than was used on the AIS Action Plan brochure. All of the necessary information is included in the fact sheet and would likely fill at least 5 panels. High resolution photos of the Mississippi River would be nice for the background or just as images in the brochure. We need to have pictures of people holding up fish, standing in bass boats, and bank fishermen. Dave Radloff can direct Conover to FWS sharepoint site with high resolution pictures. Benjamin will send DVD with picture library for UMRCC. USGS has an intranet site that would likely include images of people fishing.

Action Items:

! Conover will work on a draft MICRA brochure for Executive Board review.

23) MICRA Priorities Document Review and Update (Benjamin)

Conover provided the Executive Board members with a copy of MICRA's 1992 Activity Prioritization document and directed them to the updated 2002 version included in the briefing book (see p. 46).

There is an existing action item for Conover, Reed, and Benjamin to develop a draft survey for the MICRA delegates to update the MICRA priorities document and to determine the preferred method to engage the fish chiefs.

The Executive Board reviewed the activity prioritization documents and discussed the need for a 2012 update. Reed was involved with the 2002 revision and said

that a group met somewhere and completed the revision over a 3-day period. That process could be repeated, or the group could try to do it via conference calls and email.

It would be very valuable to get input from the chiefs and to assess progress. As many as half the fish chiefs are new since the previous revision in 2002. The first step should be to familiarize the fish chiefs with MICRA and MICRA's goals, and then ask them for feedback on the goals and MICRA's general direction. We may want to do this shortly after the Hill visits are complete so that we can try to have responses prior to the board's summer meeting.

Action Items:

- ! Conover, Reed, and Benjamin will develop a draft survey for the MICRA delegates to update the MICRA priorities document and to determine the preferred method to engage the fish chiefs.
- ! The survey regarding MICRA's goals will be sent to the delegates shortly after National Invasive Species Awareness Week and the responses discussed during the Executive Board's summer meeting.

24) MICRA Asian Carp Commercial Harvest Position Paper (Conover)

The MICRA delegates reviewed and approved the position paper in November 2011. However, during the vote some additional text was recommended to clarify key text in the document. The Executive Board reviewed, discussed, and approved the recommended text. The board also agreed with the recommendation to include an economic value of the fishing and recreational boating industries in the Mississippi River Basin and discussed how this number might be obtained. It was decided that the board should try to find a documented economic value to include in the final version.

It was proposed to send the position paper, with the addition of the recommended text, to the fish chiefs as final and to point out the friendly amendments that were included. If there are no objections to the amendments by an established date, then the document will stand as final.

Action Item:

- ! Conover will work with Benjamin to search for a documented economic value to include in the position paper.
- ! Benjamin will send the commercial harvest position paper, with the recommended amendments, to the Fish Chiefs. Objections to the amendments will be requested within 30 days, otherwise the document will be considered final.
- ! The Executive Board will review the bulleted fact sheet (based on the

commercial harvest position paper) provided in the briefing book and provide comments to Conover by February 3.

25) Other New Business (Benjamin)

No new business was brought forward.

26) 2012 Budget (Benjamin)

The Executive Board reviewed the proposed budget provided in the briefing book. The board added \$3,000 contingency to the \$10,000 budget for Hill visits to cover additional costs for catering at the Congressional briefing and for travel for the fishing guide to participate in the breakfast briefing.

Over the past 5 years, the Executive Board has been able to reduce spending. However expenses still exceed income from annual membership dues by about \$5,000 in the proposed budget for 2012. The board discussed the coordinator's travel expenses related to the MRBP. MICRA keeps 10% or \$5,000 of the MRBP's annual funding to help offset costs for hosting the panel and providing a coordinator. The MICRA coordinator spends a considerable amount of time working on MRBP items through the course of the year, but in addition MICRA has been covering the coordinator's travel to a panel meeting every 9 months and two ANSTF meetings every year. MICRA is an Ex Officio member of the ANSTF and sometimes covers the cost for the MICRA Chairman to attend at least one ANSTF meeting each year. The Executive Board discussed the possibility of having the MRBP pay for the coordinator's panel related travel.

- ✓ The Executive Board approved the proposed 2012 budget, as amended with the \$3,000 contingency for the 2012 Capitol Hill visits.

27) Schedule Summer Executive Board Meeting (Benjamin)

The Executive Board discussed the timing and location of the summer meeting. Different ideas were proposed for holding the meeting in conjunction with another meeting (e.g., AFWA or AFS Annual meeting) in an attempt to draw in some of the basin fish chiefs for part of the meeting. The meeting will need to be scheduled late enough in the summer to allow the sub-basins to complete their native species action plan data templates and for the coordinator to compile the responses from the fish chiefs on the MICRA goals. These will be two of the primary agenda topics for the summer meeting.

The board identified July 17, 18, or 19 as potential dates for a stand-alone Executive Board meeting. Benjamin will continue to explore options with the Executive Board via email.

- ✓ The time and location for the summer meeting will be confirmed at a later time.