

Committee Reports

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Midwest Private Lands Working Group Report for the Midwest Directors - 2005

The 14th annual meeting of the Midwest Private Lands Working Group (MPLWG) convened in Huron, Ohio On May 15-18, 2005 to discuss and provide issue statements and recommendations on specific action items that effect habitat on private land across the Midwest and the US. The following states were represented during the meeting: Colorado, Nebraska, Ohio, North Dakota, South Dakota, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Kansas, and Iowa. States not attending included Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan. Below is the list of recommendations and action items to be presented before the Midwest Directors in July:

Recommendation #1: The MPLWG would like to request full, non-federal funding of the IAFWA Farm Bill Liaison, currently held by Jennifer Mock, at \$160,000 annually for three years (\$5,714/state/year from the Midwest and the remaining amount of \$80,000 from the other associations).

Background: The collective action of IAFWA, member states and conservation partners proved that the 2002 Farm Bill is one of the most wildlife friendly bills ever passed. In fact, the funding level for conservation represents the single-largest increase ever authorized (\$17.1 billion) and by the 2007 spending on conservation programs will be double that of the previous decade. Notable wildlife benefits from the 2002 Farm Bill include increasing the acreage cap on the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and continuation of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. USDA implemented new emphasis on wetlands (CP23, 23A, 27, and 31) with continuous CRP, and authorization of new practices like marginal pasture lands and bobwhite quail buffers. Re-authorization and increased funding for WRP, WHIP, and EQIP, as well as new programs like Grassland Reserve Program and the Conservation Security Program.

In FY04 Farm Bill conservation programs spending exceeded \$3 billion dollars, of this amount \$1.5 billion dollars (50%) came to the 14 member states that comprise the MAFWA (see Appendix 1). In FY04 USDA spending varied among states from \$6 million to over \$200 million. Many of these programs require 10 year contracts thus total dollars committed over a decade will exceed billions of dollars - - dwarfing all the state wildlife agency budgets combined!

State Fish and Wildlife Agencies were so effective in shaping conservation elements of the 2002 Farm Bill because IAFWA staffed a full-time position to consolidate state views, keep states informed, advised states regarding need for Congressional contacts, and coordinated with other conservation partners. In addition, it proved invaluable to have a point-person that could spend time in developing the trust and respect of key legislators and staff of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees.

In 1999, the directors of the MAFWA realized this need and supported/encouraged the funding of a full time IAFWA Agricultural Policy Coordinator position dedicated to Farm Bill implementation and policy development. This position was initially funded through contributions from the regional associations. Following the 2002 Farm Bill a USFWS Multi-State Grant was secured to fund the position through December 2005. However, federal Multi-State grants are not appropriate to provide long term funding for this position and, more importantly, cannot be used for advocacy purposes on the Hill.

Proposal: Secure non-federal, long-term funding to ensure the future of the IAFWA Agricultural Policy Coordinator position

Purpose: Coordinate Agricultural Conservation efforts in Washington, D.C. on behalf of the states.

Focus: Indications are that, due to current agricultural economics and the political climate, maintaining wildlife-friendly elements gained in 2002 will be difficult in 2007. The FY05 federal budget deficit is estimated at \$450 billion and over the last 9 months indications from Washington staff and policy experts is USDA agricultural programs will be cut. The only decision that remains is which programs will be cut and by how much?

Fiscal year 2006 federal budget reconciliation is slated for September 16, 2005, and Washington staff suggests that decisions (cuts) made during these deliberations will likely set the stage for the 2007 Farm Bill debate. Programs with unspent funding will likely be top candidates for cuts. Since CRP enrollment is 4.4 million acres below the authorized 39.2 million-acre enrollment cap, a top focus for the position should be full reauthorization of the CRP. Other programs with unspent funding include WRP and CSP and also deserve priority attention.

Proposed Timeframe: On or before September 16, 2005 (FY06 federal budget reconciliation) or December 2005 when multi-state grant funding runs out.

Expected Cost: \$160,000 per year for salary, benefits, and travel was proposed to IAFWA executive committee in 2004 (see Appendix 2), however no decision was made. Permanent commitment is preferred, or at a minimum a 5 year commitment through the 2007 Farm Bill development and implementation.

Cost Considerations: Since the conservation provisions of the Farm Bill have the greatest impact in the Midwest, it is proposed the MAFWA consider the possibility of contributing 50% of the cost of the position with the remaining 50% split evenly between the NE, SE, and Western associations (same as the 2002 Farm Bill). As proposed, assuming a \$160,000 figure, the cost to 14 MAFWA member states would be \$5,714/state/year.

Funding Possibilities:

- 1) Preferred option: annual contribution from each state collected through regional associations, with 50% from MAFWA and remaining 50% split evenly between NE, SE, and Western associations. \$80,000/yr from the Midwest Association and \$26,667/yr from each of the other regional associations for a total of \$160,000/yr.
- 2) \$40,000/year contribution from each regional association.
- 3) Change in national dues structure.

Recommendation #2: Request that the Wildlife Management Institute (WMI) assign a representative to the Midwest.

Background: The WMI is a key contact for state wildlife agencies to provide professional direction and advice for a variety of issues involving wildlife research, hunting, fishing, public and private land management, and federal legislation affecting fish and wildlife resources. WMI has identified five regions of the country to assign field representatives to assist organizations and agencies with many of the issues already mentioned. The Midwest regional field representative position has not been filled since 2003.

Purpose: To provide the MPLWG and other MAFWA committees an additional contact for wildlife related recommendations and publication development.

Recommendation #3: To submit two USFWS Multi-State Conservation Grant proposals through the MAFWA to provide funding for Ray Evans' position to 1) review and revise conservation practice standards for CRP and 2) review wildlife benefits derived from FY2004 and FY2005 of the Conservation Security Program (CSP).

Background: Conservation practice standards are developed by the NRCS to provide direction to field offices regarding construction of specific on-the-ground practices aimed at reducing soil

erosion, improving water quality, and providing wildlife habitats for conservation plans. Some standards are closely associated with CRP (seeding rates and mixtures, wetland construction, mid-contract management, etc.) and must be revised to ensure that quality wildlife habitat is addressed in each practice.

The CSP rewards producers for varying levels of existing resource conservation on their land. The USDA plans to rotate CSP through all the nation's watersheds over the next eight years with funding levels growing from \$41 million to \$13.4 billion. The CSP rule includes only soil and water as significant resource concerns and does not require the producer to meet minimum objectives for wildlife to qualify for program acceptance. USDA anticipates that fish and wildlife benefits will accrue through enhancement payments. A point person (Ray Evans) representing the IAFWA will identify the potential benefits of CSP to fish and wildlife resources and share with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) the State Fish and Wildlife Agencies' objective of securing a prominent place for fish and wildlife resources in program implementation.

Purpose: To ensure that wildlife habitat issues are addressed in the CRP and CSP. We propose adding an amendment to the current proposals submitted by IAFWA to work on CRP and CSP. The amendment would include a statement such as the IAFWA would administer the project(s) on behalf of MAFWA to ease our administrative workloads, and the chairman of the Midwest Private Lands Working Group would work with Ray at the state level to help address local issues and concerns and Jen Mock at the national level to ensure all fish and wildlife conservation concerns are met across the landscape and country.

Action Item #1: Determine if letters developed by the Midwest committees during previous meetings to address specific issues were sent to the directors or by the directors by the host state and if a response was received.

Purpose: To alleviate repetition of issue discussions at the following year's meeting. Copies of the letters sent and responses can be forwarded to the working group chairman of the host state.

Action Item #2: Encourage each state director to assign a member or members of their staff to coordinate a coalition of agribusiness, state agency, and conservation organization representatives to develop a consensus document/report providing program acreage and funding recommendations for the Conservation Title of the 2007 Farm Bill.

Purpose: This document/report would be utilized as a source of information for congressional representatives and their staff during the debate and development of the 2007 Farm Bill. State wildlife agency representatives will be able to use this document when meeting with congressional staff in order to show a consensus between agricultural and wildlife interests relating to Farm Bill conservation programs within their respective states.

Action Item #3: State wildlife agencies are encouraged to show support for an NRCS contribution agreement with the IAFWA in regards to the Conservation Effects Assessment Program (CEAP) by allowing wildlife staff to participate in regional advisory working groups assigned to develop regional work plans.

Purpose: The objective of the Wildlife Component of CEAP is to quantify the benefits that Farm Bill conservation programs and practices provide fish and wildlife conservation on private lands. Outcomes of this effort will enable policy-makers and program managers to more effectively implement existing programs and inform the Congress and the public in the upcoming Farm Bill reauthorization process. Ray Evans has been assigned by the IAFWA to coordinate the CEAP regional groups and provide each groups input for NRCS use. State participation will be used as match toward the contribution agreement.

Appendix 1. USDA FY-2004 Conservation Program Allocations to States.

STATE	CRP ^a	WRP	WHIP	EQIP	FRPP	GRP	STATE TOTAL
Alabama	\$21,904,000	\$433,000	\$520,000	\$13,637,700	\$860,700	\$850,000	\$38,205,400
Alaska	\$995,000	\$0	\$520,000	\$9,087,600	\$1,186,400	\$787,300	\$12,576,300
Arizona	\$0	\$345,000	\$562,000	\$20,017,300	\$855,500	\$925,000	\$22,704,800
Arkansas	\$10,047,000	\$21,700,000	\$800,000	\$20,835,800	\$0	\$857,000	\$54,239,800
California	\$4,633,000	\$16,945,000	\$875,000	\$56,981,700	\$3,230,200	\$2,047,000	\$84,711,900
Colorado	\$71,414,000	\$3,150,000	\$710,000	\$36,931,700	\$2,823,100	\$1,860,000	\$116,888,800
Connecticut	\$21,000	\$38,400	\$628,000	\$8,021,300	\$2,575,700	\$702,100	\$11,986,500
Delaware	\$782,000	\$370,000	\$430,000	\$5,366,500	\$4,212,200	\$135,000	\$11,295,700
Florida	\$3,228,000	\$15,850,000	\$562,000	\$22,392,900	\$2,625,200	\$1,245,000	\$45,903,100
Georgia	\$12,114,000	\$2,125,000	\$520,000	\$16,188,600	\$1,231,800	\$950,000	\$33,129,400
Hawaii	\$0	\$742,700	\$624,000	\$8,060,300	\$1,508,400	\$1,712,800	\$12,648,200
Idaho	\$30,575,000	\$637,000	\$525,000	\$18,994,300	\$964,300	\$690,000	\$52,385,600
Illinois	\$104,483,000	\$20,175,500	\$525,000	\$16,729,200	\$1,668,200	\$1,010,000	\$144,590,900
Indiana	\$25,968,000	\$12,140,000	\$525,000	\$11,599,400	\$860,700	\$1,165,000	\$52,258,100
Iowa	\$199,300,000	\$15,850,000	\$525,000	\$23,399,700	\$237,500	\$1,368,000	\$240,680,200
Kansas	\$111,431,000	\$1,055,000	\$692,000	\$28,144,400	\$860,700	\$3,251,500	\$145,434,600
Kentucky	\$25,097,000	\$4,210,000	\$618,000	\$12,039,300	\$2,466,700	\$1,344,000	\$45,775,000
Louisiana	\$11,351,000	\$16,865,000	\$587,000	\$15,156,500	\$99,000	\$715,000	\$44,773,500
Maine	\$1,163,000	\$218,000	\$555,000	\$9,155,900	\$1,575,500	\$531,400	\$13,198,800
Maryland	\$10,225,000	\$1,320,000	\$450,000	\$6,701,100	\$6,093,800	\$227,000	\$25,016,900
Massachusetts	\$13,000	\$535,000	\$875,000	\$6,453,000	\$3,962,200	\$705,000	\$12,543,200
Michigan	\$18,848,000	\$9,340,000	\$525,000	\$17,463,300	\$2,433,900	\$745,000	\$49,355,200
Minnesota	\$103,789,000	\$14,850,000	\$562,000	\$29,423,700	\$860,600	\$1,175,000	\$150,660,300
Mississippi	\$39,238,000	\$14,780,000	\$825,000	\$19,492,400	\$0	\$1,039,300	\$75,374,700
Missouri	\$102,567,000	\$15,600,000	\$628,000	\$22,394,800	\$612,900	\$4,092,000	\$145,894,700
Montana	\$114,327,000	\$5,005,000	\$562,000	\$28,432,400	\$2,188,900	\$1,780,000	\$152,295,300
Nebraska	\$65,573,000	\$5,810,000	\$698,000	\$29,600,300	\$89,100	\$1,906,400	\$103,676,800
Nevada	\$0	\$0	\$277,000	\$9,452,900	\$855,500	\$678,700	\$11,264,100
New Hampshire	\$10,000	\$535,000	\$525,000	\$2,297,000	\$2,685,200	\$748,300	\$6,800,500
New Jersey	\$114,000	\$5,285,000	\$525,000	\$5,784,000	\$5,144,950	\$476,000	\$17,328,950
New Mexico	\$18,746,000	\$480,000	\$525,000	\$27,889,800	\$589,200	\$1,860,000	\$50,090,000
New York	\$2,973,000	\$6,680,000	\$525,000	\$12,484,700	\$2,863,900	\$970,000	\$26,496,600
North Carolina	\$7,555,000	\$8,487,000	\$435,000	\$16,473,100	\$2,362,700	\$672,000	\$35,984,800
North Dakota	\$110,539,000	\$2,630,000	\$515,000	\$19,181,100	\$461,600	\$1,434,200	\$134,760,900
Ohio	\$23,709,000	\$3,700,000	\$525,000	\$13,412,400	\$2,679,600	\$1,631,500	\$45,657,500
Oklahoma	\$33,401,000	\$4,825,000	\$1,188,000	\$25,378,800	\$1,255,900	\$2,900,000	\$68,948,700
Oregon	\$24,510,000	\$6,860,000	\$608,000	\$21,615,200	\$858,100	\$1,395,000	\$55,846,300
Pennsylvania	\$15,954,000	\$267,000	\$300,000	\$11,853,900	\$4,074,350	\$1,020,000	\$33,469,250
Puerto Rico	\$88,000	\$0	\$0	\$6,660,200	\$0	\$584,800	\$7,333,000
Rhode Island	\$0	\$535,000	\$1,233,000	\$1,026,800	\$2,501,800	\$783,000	\$6,079,600
South Carolina	\$7,493,000	\$7,390,000	\$678,000	\$9,025,800	\$1,336,300	\$762,500	\$26,685,600
South Dakota	\$60,354,000	\$530,000	\$665,000	\$19,076,300	\$0	\$2,892,000	\$83,517,300
Tennessee	\$16,008,000	\$2,635,000	\$291,000	\$11,513,300	\$855,500	\$1,325,500	\$32,628,300
Texas	\$139,307,000	\$6,975,000	\$678,000	\$78,565,800	\$1,447,800	\$9,040,000	\$236,013,600
Utah	\$6,164,000	\$165,000	\$628,000	\$20,976,900	\$1,029,900	\$631,300	\$29,595,100
Vermont	\$124,000	\$165,000	\$562,000	\$7,341,400	\$2,998,200	\$798,300	\$11,988,900
Virginia	\$3,351,000	\$2,110,000	\$718,000	\$12,366,100	\$1,421,900	\$692,900	\$20,659,900
Washington	\$73,338,000	\$7,900,000	\$628,000	\$18,549,900	\$1,581,200	\$810,200	\$102,807,300
West Virginia	\$162,000	\$0	\$418,800	\$8,690,200	\$1,498,100	\$936,500	\$11,705,600
Wisconsin	\$42,872,000	\$6,360,000	\$628,000	\$18,960,500	\$2,088,000	\$1,331,400	\$72,239,900
Wyoming	\$7,727,000	\$165,000	\$417,500	\$16,135,900	\$850,300	\$1,142,600	\$26,438,300
PROGRAM TOTAL	\$1,683,585,000	\$274,768,600	\$29,921,300	\$907,413,100	\$87,523,200	\$69,332,500	\$3,052,543,700
PROGRAM TOTAL FOR MAFWA MEMBER STATES							\$1,459,150,300

Program Acronyms

CRP - Conservation Reserve Program, WRP - Wetland Reserve Program, WHIP - Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program

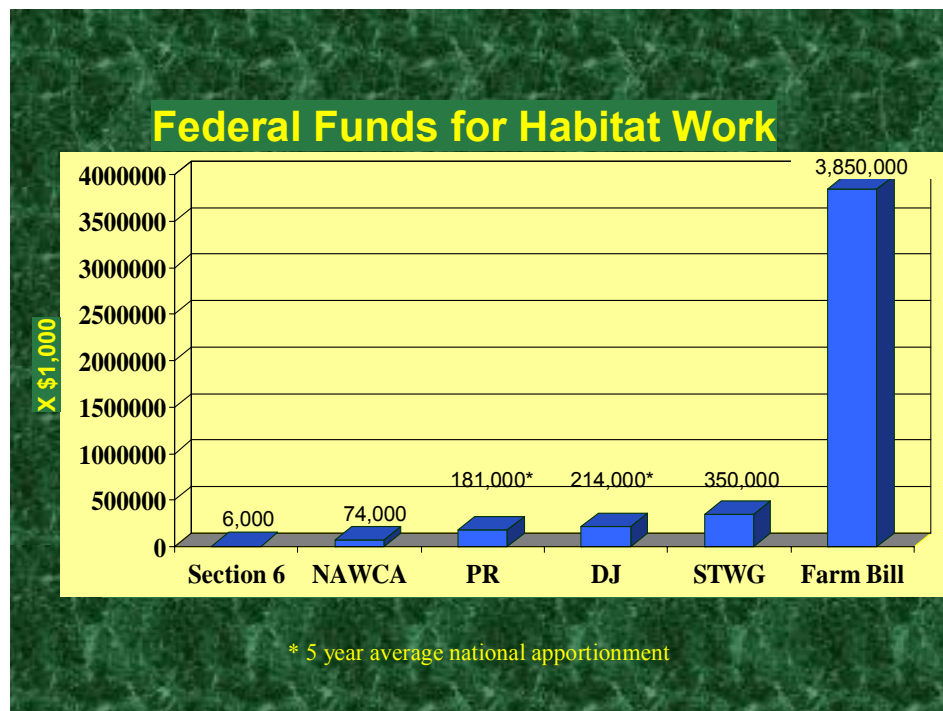
EQIP - Environmental Quality Incentives Program, FRPP - Farm and Rangeland Protection Program,
GRP - Grassland Reserve Program.

A CRP allocation is the estimated annual rental payments based on active contracts thru April 2005.

Appendix 2 :Funding Proposal for Farm Bill Coordinator DRAFT – 9/9/04

Budget Estimate for Farm Bill Coordinator

Expense Item	2005
Professional Personnel Salaries	\$70,000
Support Personnel Salaries	
Fringe Benefits	\$17,500
Materials & Supplies	\$1,500
Equipment	
Travel for Coordinator (transportation, lodging, meals, etc.)	\$20,000
Travel for State Agency Personnel to come to Washington for lobbying days. Attend conferences and workshops	\$20,000
Total direct costs:	\$129,000
Indirect Costs (24%)	\$31,000
Total Expenses and Grant Request	\$160,000



MIDWEST ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES

LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

July 12, 2005

The following report was prepared from various meetings of conservation law enforcement chiefs and representatives from across the United States during 2005.

At a March meeting of the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA) Law Enforcement Committee (held in conjunction with the North American Conference), nine (9) state agencies, including four (4) from the Midwest (SD, MO, MI, KS and FL, RI, PA, WY, GA) and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) covered the following topics:

- Dennis Steward of Missouri Department of Conservation reported that 19 states are currently enrolled in the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact (IWVC), with several additional states seeking statutory approval. The Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) support changing the venue of the IWVC to the International (IAFWA) in order to broaden interest across the continent. The IWVC committee is in need of a new chairperson. The threat of license revocation in multiple states resulting from a serious violation of a state regulation is considered to be a significant deterrent to such offenses.
- Kevin Adams (USFWS) discussed the development of the Service's Strategic Law Enforcement Plan. He stressed that the plan development does not reflect a significant change in focus, but will emphasize efficiency and planning in its law enforcement efforts.
- The USFWS entered into an MOU with Michigan and provided training in 2004 to 50 Michigan conservation officers for the purposes of dual credentialing to facilitate enforcement efforts in joint operations, task force operations and border enforcement. This was a first for Michigan in over 25 years.
- Several member states reported that they are facing significant challenges in court to the lawful authority for conservation officers to enter private property. Legislative attempts in South Dakota to limit entry onto private property have been defeated. Pennsylvania has two cases that may be considered by its Supreme Court on this issue. All attendees agreed that uncertainty on this issue poses a significant potential threat to officer safety and erodes landowner/agency relationships.
- WAFWA is conducting a retirement and recruitment survey in an attempt to identify issues that affect both current and future personnel.
- Kevin Adams reports that the Service continues its efforts to implement the electronic sale of the migratory waterfowl stamp.

Nine (9) states from MAFWA were in attendance at the March meeting of the Law Enforcement Committee of the Mississippi Flyway Council. The committee covered the following topics:

- State reports all reflected poor to mediocre duck hunting across the Flyway.
- Several states reported an increasing shift to big-water hunting to capitalize on diving duck populations. This activity requires additional training for conservation officers and poses a potential safety concern for hunters and enforcement personnel alike.
- The use of spinning wing decoys for waterfowl hunting was outlawed effective this season in Arkansas and Minnesota has restrictions on their use. Committee members believe there is a need for additional research on the effectiveness of spinning wing decoys in order to address the issue from a resource protection position.
- Conservation officer training continued across the Flyway in most states using the 40 hour model developed by the LED committee. This model stresses in-hand and in-flight identification of waterfowl species, the prioritization of offenses that pose the greatest threat to the resource, and tactical training to address those priority violations. Priority violations include the use of toxic shot, over bagging, the use of bait, shooting during closed hours and taking waterfowl during the closed season.
- A sub-committee was created to develop a lesson plan in advanced techniques and skills in waterfowl enforcement for conservation officers.
- The LE committee responded to a charge from the Council to provide input on increasing the possession limit on migratory waterfowl from 2 days lawful limit to 4 days lawful limit. "Destination" states (MN, AR, i.e.) strongly oppose a change in the possession limit. Two "non-destination" states were neutral on the proposal. All other members represented were against changing possession limits.

The Association of Midwest Fish and Game Law Enforcement Officers (AMFGLEO) is meeting in conjunction with the WAFWA next week in Alberta, Canada.

Members of the LE committee are hoping to ensure that the LE committee of the Midwest improves its response to charges from the Directors and in providing timely information on issues involving enforcement, education and safety.

**2005 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
MIDWEST PUBLIC LANDS' WORKING GROUP**
**Based on the Midwest Public Lands' Working Group Meeting,
May 16-18th, 2005 in Huron, Ohio**

- ▶ The recent May meeting had representatives from 7 states: Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, North Dakota, Ohio, and South Dakota. This represents more states than were able to attend last year, but the group is still struggling with poor attendance. We would greatly benefit if all states were represented.
- ▶ Topics of discussion included state reports, competing land uses, use of cooperators for land management, prescribed fire, land acquisition priorities, hunter retention and recruitment, and invasive species.
- ▶ **Action items the group would like to pursue:**
 1. Development of a subcommittee to draft guidelines for the use of **prescribed fire** as a management tool on Midwest public lands. Some states already have Certified Prescribed Fire Manager programs and training requirements, while others do not and receive pressure from federal agencies to follow their guidelines. Consistent guidelines for using prescribed fire on Midwest public lands would be very helpful.
 2. Support the evaluation of **hunter retention and recruitment** by all Midwest states. Sharing information regarding what each state has been doing in this area will be helpful in the development of effective marketing techniques to both retain and recruit hunters/fishermen in the future.
 3. Support the **control of invasive species** on public lands and search for more effective funding opportunities, particularly for terrestrial invasive species. This management issue is an increasingly large use of public lands' management resources and is a major threat to fish and wildlife habitats.
 4. Support **evaluation and prioritization methods for land acquisition and land management** to address the regional concern that we continue to purchase more land with stable or decreasing staff levels. All states agree that we need to prioritize and develop credible processes for land acquisition and management.
 5. We would like each Director to **appoint a representative from the states** that were not present at this year's meeting (Indiana, Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Wisconsin, and Colorado) and encourage them to attend next year's meeting.



Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies



October 18, 2004

MAFWA State Fish & Wildlife Director

Dear Director:

Currently, interim rules or final rules are in place for most conservation programs authorized by the 2002 Farm Bill. While some Farm Bill programs target only croplands, others also target private rangeland and forestland. For example, the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) pays landowners a cost-share and annual rental payments to plant permanent cover on highly erodible croplands and marginal pasturelands. The Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) pays landowners for permanent 30-year or 10-year restorations on drained wetlands. The Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) pays landowners a cost-share for establishing wildlife habitat on private lands. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides cost-share for producers to install environmentally-friendly practices on private land. The Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) pays landowners an easement payment or annual rental payments not to convert grazing lands to other uses. The Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) pays landowners an easement payment not to convert agricultural land to non-agricultural purposes. The newly reorganized Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP) provides cost-share for management of privately-owned forestlands. The newly formed Conservation Security Program (CSP) will reward producers for good stewardship in 18 watersheds. As you can see, there are numerous beneficial programs available to address many of the resource management concerns found throughout the Midwest.

Despite these gains made in the 2002 Farm Bill, the next Farm Bill might not have as much funding for wildlife conservation. The budget situation is tighter than last time and as such, it might be harder to keep the present levels of funding for conservation programs. Basically, we are going to have to work hard just to keep the programs we have and even harder if we are going to expand these popular programs to be more useful to everyone. For that reason, I am asking you to allocate one full time employee (FTE) dedicated solely to Farm Bill coordination and implementation. The Farm Bill is a very complex topic and needs full-time attention, especially since there is far more money

available for wildlife conservation in the Farm Bill programs than in our state wildlife programs.

Very few states have full-time staff working solely on Farm Bill issues. Many states Farm Bill specialists also have research, management or hunting access program duties, which are full time positions too. As a result, Farm Bill related work often has to take a lower priority when it conflicts with other duties. If we are to keep the Farm Bill wildlife conservation programs well funded, then a major effort is ahead of us and we need staff within each state working on the issue full-time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Dean Hildebrand", with a stylized, cursive script.

Dean Hildebrand
President, Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
North Dakota Game & Fish Department
100 North Bismarck Expressway
Bismarck, ND 58501

cc: Sheila Kemmis



Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies



October 18, 2004

MAFWA State Fish & Wildlife Director

Dear Director :

The 2002 Farm Bill has brought great success to the conservation community. The Wetlands Reserve Program, Conservation Reserve Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, and Environmental Quality Incentive Program have all received increased funding to address natural resource protection and needs across the United States. Additionally, new programs like the Grasslands Reserve Program and the Conservation Security Program hold great promises. Each of these programs brings great opportunity but also has required increased time and attention to make sure wildlife values remain co-equal to other natural resource benefits. This work must start in Washington.

In 1999, the directors of the MAFWA realized this need and encouraged and supported the funding of a full-time position dedicated to this effort through IAFWA. This position is currently held by Dave Walker who has fulfilled these duties in a very capable and professional manner. Recently, a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant was secured to fund this position for an additional two years. However, NFWF grants are not appropriate to provide long-term funding for this position. We encourage the Directors to begin and consider a more permanent funding solution to keep this important position in place as reauthorization on the next Farm Bill approaches.

Additionally, the IAFWA has provided funding to contract long time farm bill lobbyist Ray Evans. Ray has provided immeasurable direction and advice to the states concerning all issues surrounding federal farm legislation since the inception of the CRP in the 1985 Farm Bill. He is also recognized in Washington as someone who can bring his experiences to the table during negotiations involving Farm Bill programs now and in the future.

We would like to thank both Ray Evans and Dave Walker for their continued efforts and success working on our behalf. We recommend the continued financial support of both individuals by the Directors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dean Hildebrand". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and address.

Dean Hildebrand
President, Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
North Dakota Game & Fish Department
100 North Bismarck Expressway
Bismarck, ND 58501

cc: Sheila Kemmis



Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies



October 18, 2004

MAFWA State Fish & Wildlife Director

Dear Director,

Providing quality hunting access and outdoor recreation opportunities to our constituents throughout the United States should be of utmost importance to state agencies. These opportunities, especially on private land, are shrinking annually due to population growth, development of open spaces, and loss of farmland on the landscape. Hunters must travel further for a day in the field and public wildlife areas grow more crowded, thus making the outdoor experience less enjoyable. We are also seeing trends where landowners increasingly deny access or turn to leasing arrangements in order to meet financial demands. Landowners are requiring more options for alternate sources of income at a time when markets are tough.

In 2003, Republicans and Democratic members of Congress introduced a bill that would provide \$50 million to states to encourage private landowners to voluntarily make their land accessible to the public for hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreation activities. This legislation is called the "Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program of 2003" or "Open Fields" initiative. Officially titled S. 1840/H.R. 3482, it could, if fully realized, open up as much as 10 million new acres of private land to the public each year, greatly enhancing the experiences of all involved.

The majority of all private land access programs is found in the Midwest and Western states. This funding could be used to expand and improve upon these programs, but would free up additional state funds for other habitat projects within these states. States considering new access program would be given a "leg-up" to commence funding and explore the possibilities of opening more land for outdoor use.

It is for these reasons that the representatives of the Midwest Private Lands Working Group encourage your support of the "Open Field" legislation. We were honored that this bill's sponsor, Sen. Kent Conrad, came to this group's meeting in Bismarck in May to provide us with an update on this legislation. Attached is a copy of his speech.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dean Hildebrand".

Dean Hildebrand
President, Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
North Dakota Game & Fish Department
100 North Bismarck Expressway
Bismarck, ND 58501

cc: Shelia Kemmis

Attachment: Senator Conrad's speech

**Remarks of U.S. Senator Kent Conrad Before the Private Land Management Group
Midwest Game and Fish Conference
Bismarck, North Dakota
May 27, 2004**

Thank you, Keith (Trego), for that introduction, and thanks for all that you do on behalf of natural resource issues in North Dakota. You're a tremendous leader for our state. My thanks as well to John Schulz of the North Dakota Game and Fish Department for the invitation to speak to you today.

One thing that unites us all is growing population pressure. I find people hunger for open spaces and the opportunity to experience nature.

Let me begin by reading an excerpt from a Letter to the Editor published just a couple of weeks ago in the Dickinson (North Dakota) Press newspaper:

As a lifelong resident and avid sportsman, I have witnessed many changes in hunting access in my state, some good, some bad.

The Conservation Reserve Program has been one of the good changes I have witnessed. The PLOTS [Private Land Open to Sportsmen] program is another...Even with all the above going for us, small town Main Street is not thriving. Why?

I can only give one hunter's opinion, and that is land access.

And he goes on to describe his great frustration as increasing amounts of land are purchased and closed off because of commercial hunting operations and other trends, leaving the casual, weekend hunter - the dad and son, for example - with fewer opportunities to engage in a cherished pastime.

In a similar vein, for much of last year, newspaper headlines across North Dakota confirmed that one issue has emerged as among the most controversial that we have seen in the state in some time. That issue has to do with who can hunt in this state, and under what conditions.

As one state senator said during the 2003 session of the North Dakota legislature: "In all my years in the legislature, I haven't gotten so many calls as [on] this one."

One article in a North Dakota paper last year began with the declaration that, "No bill has stirred more passion in people than Senate Bill 2048, which deals with capping the number of out-of-state hunters." One state legislator termed the debate over the bill, "civil war between residents of North Dakota fighting over hunting ground." And all this is occurring right here in North Dakota, a state known for its endless horizons.

In response to this growing problem, I have been working with a number of my colleagues in the United States Congress - as well as farm, conservation, and sportsmen's groups - to develop a voluntary and incentive-based approach to addressing the "supply side" of this issue.

Our proposal is a voluntary landowner incentive program. I call it the "Open Fields" legislation. Under the bill, USDA would provide \$50 million per year to state programs that offer incentive payments to farmers and ranchers who agree to allow public access on their land, under terms established by each state.

In designing the "Open Fields" program, our aim has been to build on what works - to grease the wheel, rather than re-invent it. For example, as many of you know firsthand, several states already have programs designed to increase the amount of private land

available to the public. Unfortunately, these programs are generally modest in scope and suffer from limited funding. Our legislation is designed to give these struggling state programs a needed shot in the arm and to encourage other states to start their own program.

Make no mistake about it, wildlife-related recreation is a major force in shaping our economy. In 2001, 82 million Americans participated in wildlife-related recreation, and they spent an estimated \$108 billion in the process. That's big business by any definition, and it's a slice of the national economy that is increasingly important to our rural communities and small businesses.

This program will be good for farm income, good for conservation, good for our struggling rural communities, and a positive force in strengthening the bond between producers and the general public.

Finally, there are broader policy reasons to move in this direction. For example, it is likely that future world trade agreements are increasingly going to limit the ability of the United States and other major agricultural producing countries to support our farmers in a way that is considered to be trade, or market, "distorting." In other words, U.S. policymakers are likely to find it more and more difficult to provide government farm support in a way that is tied either to production or to prices. Instead, we will have to find so-called "green box" means of supporting farm income - payments that are not based on bushels produced or current commodity prices. That's clearly the direction that the European Union is heading, and we had better take notice. "Open Fields" would fit neatly in the current green box definition, and should be one of the many tools available to support farm income well into the future, even as the WTO limits our farm policy options.

I'm especially pleased that our legislation has already received the support of a large cross-section of farm, sporting, and conservation organizations, as reflected on this chart [SEE CHART]. Just two weeks ago, I got a call from the Sierra Club, informing me that they were also endorsing the bill. It's rare in Washington to see a list of supporters that is so diverse, which I think reflects both the depth of concern for the problem, as well as appreciation for our incentive-based approach to addressing it.

I'm also pleased to report that we're now up to 17 sponsors in the United States Senate, and 13 in the House. And again, note the bipartisan nature of the cosponsors.

Anything that you can do to help us add to these lists would be greatly appreciated.

Again, thanks for the invitation to be here, and I'd be happy to take any questions you might have.



Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies



October 26, 2004

The Honorable Ann Veneman
United States Department of Agriculture
Whitten Building, rm200-A
1400 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Veneman:

I write to express the sincere appreciation of the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (MAFWA) for your continued support for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). The CRP is a key element of achieving sustainable fish and wildlife resources in the fourteen states with membership in the MAFWA.

On April 8, 2004, President Bush reaffirmed his administration's commitment to CRP with conservation leaders at his Texas ranch, and he recognized the need for action in support of CRP within the next 3-6 months. Following the 26th general CRP sign-up, indications from USDA and the administration suggested there would be another general sign-up before the 2007 Farm bill. A sign-up was expected this spring. In fact, many state wildlife staff along with state USDA staff participated in FSA training for a sign-up this spring, but no sign-up was announced.

The MAFWA believes it is very important USDA moves forward with a commitment to CRP by having another general CRP sign-up in 2004. There are several reasons USDA should move forward with another sign-up in 2004 including to:

- demonstrate to producers USDA's commitment to CRP,
- test EBI changes contained in the CRP final rule in a smaller sign-up before 2007,
- provide producers with tree plantings that expired in 2001 an opportunity to re-enroll,
- fully use the acres allocated under the law.

Full use of allocated acres is the most compelling reason for USDA to hold a 2004 sign-up. USDA could have enrolled 4.0 million acres during the 26th sign-up and received offers totaling 4.1 million acres, but only 2.0 million acres were accepted. This "reserve" of unobligated acres could suggest to some a lack of producer interest and that the program could be cut, especially in light of tight federal budgets. The 26th sign-up clearly

shows there is a strong demand for CRP by producers. A 2004 sign-up would demonstrate USDA's commitment to CRP as well as make full use of CRP acres authorized by statute.

The CRP is the most successful agricultural/natural resource program ever implemented by USDA. Wildlife and fisheries staffs in our member states are committed to assisting your staff with continuing this legacy of success. I look forward to your response and thank you for your time and attention regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Dean Hildebrand". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dean" being more legible than the last name "Hildebrand".

Dean Hildebrand
President, Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
North Dakota Game & Fish Department
100 North Bismarck Expressway
Bismarck, ND 58501

cc: James Little, FSA Administrator
MAFWA State Fish and Wildlife Directors
Sheila Kemmis



Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies



October 18, 2004

Wildlife Management Institute Board
1101 14th St., NW
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Board Members:

The Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies would like to voice our strong support for the Wildlife Management Institute. Over the years, the association has enjoyed considerable support and assistance from the institute.

The guidance of Rollie Sparrow and the local leadership of Keith Harmon, Terry Riley and Rob Manes have all been critically important to wildlife management in the Midwest. Some of the key issues and efforts that have seen significant contributions from the institute in the Midwest include the Conservation Titles of the last four Farm Bills, support of the many Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Units, and implementation of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, to name a few.

As you know, for the first time in many years, the Midwest region is without a field representative from WMI. This is a tremendous loss for wildlife management in our region. It is our sincere hope and request that the Institute will act expeditiously to fill this vacancy.

It would be hard to overstate the value we place on the Institute and the quality field representation we have enjoyed. Our wildlife and our people are counting on you.

Sincerely,

Dean Hildebrand
President, Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
North Dakota Game & Fish Department
100 North Bismarck Expressway
Bismarck, ND 58501

cc: Sheila Kemmis

MAFWA NATIONAL CONSERVATION NEEDS COMMITTEE OPERATING PROCEDURES

National Conservation Needs (NCN) Committee Report – 2005

Background: The NCN Committee was created in January 2004 by then President Dean Hildebrand (ND). The charge to the committee was to: become intimately familiar with the NCN and multi-state grant (MSG) processes and annually advise the (Regional) Association on a recommended course of action for submitting NCNs. Members of the committee include: Dave Risley (OH), Dan Zekor (MO) and Tom Niebauer (WI), Chair.

Progress: In 2004, the Committee worked directly with the four regional associations and prepared an NCN titled: To Enhance Regional Associations of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. This NCN was approved by MAFWA and submitted to the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Committee on National Grants. The Committee on National Grants did not recommend approval of this NCN at their meeting in September 2004.

In 2005, the Committee recommended and MAFWA approved an NCN from Mr. Doug Hansen (SD), on behalf of the Fisheries/Water Resources Policy Committee of the IAFWA titled: Complete the Approval Requirements for AQUI-S®, the Candidate Zero Withdrawal Anesthetic, and Oral and Waterborne Antibacterials to Control Columnaris Disease. This NCN was subsequently approved by the IAFWA in March 2005.

Future Plans:

Work with MAFWA Committee chairs, state directors and others to enhance understanding of and involvement in the identification of potential NCNs.

Work closely with Regional Coordinator Ollie Torgerson to identify and develop potential NCNs.

Stay closely involved and familiar with the evolving NCN process.

Respectfully Submitted: Tom Niebauer, Chair

No Legal Committee Report, meeting scheduled for later this year. John Hoskins, Missouri is the Midwest Liaison to the committee.

Notes taken from presentation (minutes)

Ollie Torgerson – The legal committee just met last week and we need to make sure you are sending your people to these meetings. This could save a considerable amount of money by not duplicating things already done and research available. State vs. state disputes was discussed, revolves around case Minnesota brought against North Dakota. IAFWA asked for Legal Committee analysis on legal issue, not a process issue. Process should be resolved by the states involved not the Legal Committee. Mediation might be helpful rather than litigation, but mediation is difficult after a lawsuit has been brought because of attorney/client position. Directors are difficult to reach in some states and in many states the legal representative is in the Attorney General's office. Should recognize potential for delay. Minnesota has filed an appeal in the North Dakota case. On Big Rivers, North Dakota filed because Corps of Engineers wants to transfer lands to tribes. Paul Lenzini, IAFWA, retired but prepared an index of files that are available to the Legal Committee. They have asked for copies of those and Carol Bamberg is looking for a grant to do that. Trying to meet every year and trying to involve attorneys from other Associations as well.

**Pages 180a – 180g is the complete report from Jimmy Christenson
on the 2005 Meeting of MAFWA Legal Committee
and is attached in Exhibits of the written proceedings**

MIDWEST FURBEARER GROUP

Annual Report July 2005

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department, USDA/APHIS Wildlife Services, and USGS, Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center hosted the 2005 Joint Furbearer Workshop and Midwest Furbearer Workshop in Bismarck, May 9-12, 2005. The meeting was a tremendous success in bringing together more than 80 resource professionals from 39 agencies, representing 28 states/provinces, and graduate students from several universities. Contributors included the Midwest Furbearer Group, North Dakota Chapter of the Wildlife Society and The Wildlife Damage Working Group of The Wildlife Society. Topics centered on felids, legislative issues, techniques, aquatic and semi-aquatic furbearers, surveys and monitoring, and outreach/education programs. Proceedings of the workshop will be printed, and will include abstracts, submitted papers, state reports and contact information of workshop attendees.

Following the workshop, the Midwest Furbearer Group held a business meeting to discuss issues of regional importance, exchange ideas and develop recommendations for future research, conservation and management efforts. In addition, Randy Kreil attended the meeting on behalf of Ollie Torgerson, and provided information about the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (MAFWA). In particular, Randy identified opportunities for the group to inform MAFWA Directors of our progress, developments, programs of regional interest, and a mechanism in which to seek guidance or direction on future issues.

Action Items:

Reporting to MAFWA Directors

An invitation was extended to the Midwest Furbearer Group to increase formal communication with MAFWA Directors, and work more closely to support the Association's objectives relative to resource management, legislation, research, law enforcement, public education and maintaining partnerships with conservation organizations. In addition, this opportunity would allow the Midwest Furbearer Group to maintain closer ties with MAFWA Directors, and provide an excellent opportunity to raise issues and/or concerns to a higher level.

A motion was passed stating the annual Chair of the Midwest Furbearer Group will correspond with the current MAFWA President, and report to the Directors on progress and activities at their annual meeting.

Action Item: The Midwest Furbearer Group would like to request that a Director be assigned to serve as a liaison to our committee.

Interstate Movement of Large Carnivores

Several papers were presented and discussed relative to large carnivore (mountain lion & timber wolf) population growth, management, dispersal and the corresponding increase in movements throughout the Midwest. Recent events of radio-marked mountain lions and timber wolves dispersing into (and sometimes through) adjacent states and provinces highlights the need to share information and provide assistance (where feasible) in monitoring these animals. Interagency communication and assistance may allow sufficient time to plan, develop and deliver a more informed response to questions and/or concerns of the public (should they arise), and provide MAFWA Directors a greater understanding and awareness of such movements when they occur.

Action Item: The Midwest Furbearer Group would like to request that MAFWA Directors consider an agreement that would promote information sharing among states and provinces relative to large carnivore movements, and provide ad hoc support (where feasible) for monitoring large carnivores that disperse into adjacent states or provinces.

Fox and Coyote Running Enclosures

A potential problem/issue facing MAFWA states was discussed based on the growing number of fox/coyote running enclosures in the southeast. A presentation on the history of running enclosures in SC was made during the meeting, highlighting their growth in numbers, size and interest among hound owners. Corresponding to this increase has been the concern over illegal activities that have extended outward to many other states and provinces during the past 20 years. The growth in this activity continues to make it extremely difficult for the state agency to regulate and defend the actions of fox/coyote enclosure owners in SC. With land use changes, increasing human populations and hound ownership in the southeast, it is possible that an interest in this activity may expand into MAFWA states.

While there are many concerns over fox/coyote running enclosures, there may also be benefits if regulations are carefully considered and adopted proactively, rather than waiting for a specific problem to occur. Agencies that currently regulate fox/coyote enclosures may see the benefits of redirecting that interest away from “free-casting” dogs over large areas of private land.

Action Item: The Midwest Furbearer Group would like to obtain guidance and direction from MAFWA Directors on whether to proceed with evaluating the pros and cons of fox/coyote running enclosures, and developing recommendations to MAFWA Directors on regulating this activity in collaboration with the Association of Midwest Fish & Game Law Enforcement Officers.

Disease Issues

An update on the status of raccoon-strain rabies in Ohio and the USDA Oral Rabies Vaccine (ORV) program was presented, including information about a recent breach in the 20-mile wide vaccine barrier in 2004. This vaccine barrier was established in 1997 along the Ohio-Pennsylvania border to stop the westward spread of raccoon-strain rabies,

and was later extended through PA, WV, VA, TN, GA, AL, and FL. The raccoon-strain rabies ORV program is also conducted in 6 other states (ME, MA, VT, NH, NY, and MD).

This program appears to be the most reasonable and responsible approach for preventing the westward spread of raccoon-strain rabies, with the ultimate goal of protecting human health and safety. However, many wildlife-related questions and concerns have, and continue to be raised by state wildlife agency personnel about various aspects of the program, requiring a more effective means of communication.

Action Item: The Midwest Furbearer Group would like to request guidance from MAFWA Directors in developing formal representation, in collaboration with the Wildlife and Fish Health Committee, in promoting interagency cooperation between member states and the USDA Wildlife Services relative to the ORV program.

Recommendations:

Support for Midwest Furbearer Biologists

With increasing demands relative to fur resource management, conservation, conflict resolution, disease, legislative issues and public education throughout the Midwest, it is evident that furbearer biologists continue to play an extremely important role in accomplishing the Mission of each MAFWA state. The loss of any furbearer-related position not only affects that particular state, but the entire region as we continue to collaborate on issues and concerns that affect multiple resources and publics.

The Midwest Furbearer Group would like to acknowledge the great efforts of MAFWA Directors in retaining furbearer biologist positions, refilling those which have recently been vacated, and continuing to promote interagency cooperation of their furbearer biologists on regional and national issues. In addition, budget restrictions have made it necessary for MAFWA Directors to be more selective in granting out-of-state travel approval for staff to attend meetings, which may prevent full representation and participation among MAFWA states at annual furbearer workshops.

Recommendation: The Midwest Furbearer Group encourages each MAFWA Director to support at least one FTE dedicated to fur resource management, research and conservation programs, and continue to support interagency participation and travel to Midwest and National Furbearer Meetings.

Information Items:

Multi-State Conservation Grant Program

The Group discussed furbearer-related items that could potentially be addressed through the Multi-State Conservation Grant Program, and identified the need to learn more about the process of submitting ideas/topics to the **MAFWA National Conservation Needs Committee**.

One particular topic is the need to determine the status and conservation of large felids in the U.S., particularly the genetic composition and source(s) of mountain lions recovered in states outside of their known distribution. With a dramatic increase in the number of “mountain lion” observation reports and confirmed cases in the Midwest, such events have the potential of receiving tremendous public interest and media attention. Therefore, determining whether these animals were originally from captive sources (South America) or wild animals that may have dispersed from other regions of the U.S. is an important need for MAFWA states. Most importantly, there is a regional commitment to learn more about the status of large felids in the Midwest, and throughout the U.S.

The Midwest Furbearer Group will seek information from the **MAFWA National Conservation Needs Committee** on how to proceed with developing this idea further.

Cooperative Disease Monitoring

The Group identified many different interests and needs for monitoring wildlife diseases that directly affect, or are transmitted by furbearers in the Midwest. The Group recognizes that while extensive interest in furbearer disease monitoring exists, the expertise among state furbearer biologists and available resources may be lacking.

The Midwest Furbearer Group will seek information and assistance from the **MAFWA Wildlife and Fish Health Committee** on developing recommendations for monitoring furbearer diseases throughout the Midwest.

Training Opportunities

The Wisconsin DNR currently offers a 1-week course (Fur School) for agency staff, and has extended an invitation to other state agency biologists and law enforcement personnel to attend. Topics include a combination of lecture and hands on programs involving: population modeling, furbearer ecology, law enforcement, diseases, fur handling, furbearer damage management, and trap handling/setting while promoting interaction with other state and federal personnel. The Wisconsin DNR collaborates with conservation and trapping organizations such as the Wisconsin Trappers Association and FurBearers Unlimited to deliver this course to agency staff, university students, and representatives from other state and federal wildlife agencies. The next course is tentatively planned for mid-December 2005, and costs are typically associated with travel and lodging.

2006 Midwest Furbearer Workshop Planning

At this time, discussions are still underway to determine the specific host, location and dates for the 2006 Midwest Furbearer Workshop. Candidate states that have not hosted a workshop during the past 10 years include: South Dakota, Indiana and Nebraska.

Respectfully submitted,
Chris Dwyer, Chair, Midwest Furbearer Group
ODNR, Division of Wildlife, chris.dwyer@dnr.state.oh.us

No Deer and Turkey Committee Report, meeting scheduled for later this year. Dale Garner, Iowa is the Midwest Liaison to the committee.

Notes from presentation (minutes)

Deer and Wild Turkey Group: Liaison: Dale Garner, Iowa. *Dale Garner, Iowa* – Our meeting is scheduled for August in Minnesota. **No report.** Ollie Torgerson – Please send in the report in a timely fashion after that meeting.

Prairie Grouse Technical Council Report

Notes from presentation (minutes)

Prairie Grouse Technical Council - Liaison: Jeff Vonk, Iowa. Jim Mosher was unable to come at the last minute. Kirk Nelson handed out report on North American Grouse Partnership. Jim will be at Western Association meeting. **(Report can be found in the proceedings under Committee Reports.)**

**Pages 187a – 187d is the complete report from Jim Mosher
on the “North American Grouse Partnership Prairie Grouse Planning Project
Status Report and Update Presented to MAFWA”
and is attached in Exhibits of the written proceedings**

**MIDWEST ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES
WILDLIFE AND FISH HEALTH COMMITTEE ANNUAL MEETING
MAY 11 AND 12, 2005
EAST LANSING, MICHIGAN**

The Midwest Wildlife and Fish Health Committee met for the third time on May 11 and 12, 2005 at the Michigan DNR Wildlife Disease Laboratory in East Lansing, Michigan. There were 12 individuals in attendance, representing 7 states and 1 federal agency. A copy of the agenda and written reports from the states attending are attached to these minutes.

Director Rebecca Humphries, who is also the MAFWA liaison to this committee, welcomed the Committee. She stressed the importance of exchanging information between states and assisting each other in addressing the disease issues as they appear in the Midwest states. She urged the committee to think about our actions and how management practices may be conducive to wildlife disease emergence and reemergence. Her parting quote should be remembered by all entities working with wildlife disease issues: "Some of our management practices to enhance wildlife populations create good breeding grounds for wildlife disease emergence."

After several reports from the individual states represented (copies attached), the committee discussed feral pigs and how to address the problems they cause. Tom Hutton of USDA-APHIS gave a report on the actions being taken in Missouri, which include hunter and landowner education, assignment of teams from several agencies to respond to reports, eradication attempts, and restoration of destroyed habitat. The main disease concerns from feral swine are pseudotuberculosis and brucellosis. The three classes of swine used in Missouri are 1) commercial – highly monitored herds, 2) transitional – backyard herds, and 3) feral – domestic swine gone wild. The National Geographic Society conducted some monitoring of feral swine and their efforts indicated that, without control, they would be a worldwide problem within 20 years, with Antarctica the only place they will not occur. The committee approved a proposed resolution on feral swine that had been forwarded to the MAFWA coordinator previously. An action item adopted was the development of a white paper on disease issues of concern as related to feral swine. Tom Hutton, Scott Syska, and Tom DeLiberto agreed to develop this white paper.

Dr. Julie Langenberg of the Wisconsin DNR led the discussion on disease databases. The need for shared regional databases was recognized but there is still concerns reference the proprietary rights of the data submitted to the database. Several states are not satisfied with the proposed CWD database, mainly due to the time required to input historical data. The NBII is developing a wildlife disease database as an offshoot to the National CWD database. Additional discussion and research into this issue is warranted.

Minnesota's Disease Status Report to the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Health Committee, May 2005.

Michelle Carstensen Powell, MN DNR

Chronic Wasting Disease Surveillance Program 2004

In response to the discovery of CWD in wild Wisconsin deer and a Minnesota captive elk herd in 2002, MN DNR developed a comprehensive wild deer CWD monitoring program that includes surveillance of targeted animals (e.g., suspect or potentially sick deer exhibiting clinical signs or symptoms consistent with CWD), opportunistic surveillance (e.g., vehicle-killed deer), and hunter-killed deer surveillance.

The 2004 firearms season marked the third and final year for hunter-killed deer surveillance, and concluded a statewide effort to determine if CWD was present in Minnesota's deer population. During 2002 and 2003, approximately 4,500 and 10,000 samples were collected, respectively; all samples were negative for CWD. During the 2004 Minnesota deer hunting seasons, 13,038 usable samples were collected from the selected sampling areas. All samples were negative for CWD. The percentage of unusable samples (0.7%) marked a vast improvement in sample quality compared to the previous collection years (4.8 and 2.8% unusable samples in 2002 and 2003).

Using power analysis, sample sizes for each Deer Permit Area (DPA) in the state were determined to ensure a $\geq 95\%$ probability of detecting the disease, given a 1% infection rate (assuming a random distribution of the disease among individuals within each sampling area). Approximately 300 deer were needed in each sampling area. The confidence levels associated with the probability of detecting the presence CWD in deer sampled by DPA from 2002-2004 is presented in Figure 1.

The Costs of CWD Surveillance

The MN DNR conducted CWD surveillance for three deer seasons. Over that time, the protocol was changed to reflect new information about CWD (e.g., extraction of the obex versus MRPLN) and an overall desire to increase efficiency and decrease costs. In 2002, obexes were removed at centralized extraction stations. In total (including diagnostic fees), \$857,592 was expended to collect 4,533 samples (\$189/sample). However, there were startup costs in 2002 that were not incurred in any other year (e.g., \$75,000 incinerator).

In 2003, MRPLN were removed (again at centralized extraction stations) and \$1.14 million was expended to collect 10,054 samples (\$113/sample). In 2004, the protocol was changed to collect MRPLN at the registration stations, which eliminated the need to remove deer heads and transport them to centralized extraction stations. Ultimately, we expended \$1.046 million and collected 13,038 samples (\$80.50/sample). Diefenbach et al. (2004) reported spending \$56/sample to remove heads and transport them to a centralized location in Pennsylvania for CWD testing. In Minnesota, excluding the

diagnostic fees (\$25/sample) and the veterinary student contract (\$7.70/sample), it cost an estimated \$48/sample to collect the sample.

Future CWD Surveillance Efforts

The MN DNR's effort to sample hunter-killed deer for the presence of CWD was highly successful, with the collection of nearly 28,000 samples statewide from 2002–2004. As the disease has not been detected in wild deer, there is no immediate need to continue the surveillance of hunter-killed deer. However, the sampling of suspect animals will continue throughout the state. If CWD is detected in wild or captive deer in the future, the MN DNR may revisit the need to sample hunter-killed or opportunistic deer.

EHD/BT Surveillance

Approximately 200 serum samples from hunter-killed deer were submitted to SCWDS for EHD/BT screening in 2004. Minnesota DNR submitted these samples as part of the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Health Committee's study on EHD and West Nile, proposed by Bruce Trindle. All samples from 2004 were negative for EHD/BT.

West Nile Virus

Minnesota Department of Health documented 216 cases of WNV in 2004. These cases included 34 humans (including 2 deaths), 2 human blood donors, 11 horses, 1 asymptomatic horse, 9 mosquito pool, and 150 birds (Fig. 2).

Rabies

There were 94 cases of rabies reported by the Minnesota Department of Health in 2004. These included 58 skunks, 19 bats, 6 dogs, 8 cows, 1 horse, 1 cat and 1 goat (Fig. 3).

Fish Diseases (reported by Joe Marcino, MN DNR)

There is no active disease occurring at this time in state fish hatcheries. Hatchery disease classifications are as follows:

Crystal Springs SFH	A-1
French River SFH	B-BK
Lanesboro SFH	A-1
Peterson SFH	A-1
Spire Valley SFH	A-1

Renibacterium salmoninarum

During the past year we contracted with a human diagnostic test company to work on an ELISA test for Renibacterium salmoninarum. This was initiated due to recent problems of monoclonal kits produced by DiagXotics. It was found that the antibodies produced by KPL, Microtek and DiagXotics do not work well together. The kit produced uses

KPL antibodies and appears to work very well with inland trout stocks. We continue to have inconsistency with Lake Superior stocks. More testing will continue with the Spring run. We will run replicate samples with DiagXotics kits, our kit and PCR.

Vaccination

We've developed a plan for vaccinating all our salmonid captive broodstock. The plan was developed to help prevent the outbreak of certifiable pathogens and is based on the health history of the facility.

Heterosporis

During the Fall of 2004 over 900 walleye fingerlings were screened for the presence of *Heterosporis*. No positive fish were detected. There was one new lake added to the positive list in 2004, Basswood Lake in the Northeastern part of the state.

Sturgeon iridovirus

Several runs of sturgeon were screened for sturgeon iridovirus. No histological signs of iridovirus were detected. This sampling was done in cooperation with the USFWS and the LaCrosse Fish Health Center.

Largemouth Bass Virus

Several new bass waters have been screened for the presence of Largemouth bass virus. All samples were tissue culture and PCR negative.

Koi Herpesvirus

In 2004, Koi Herpesvirus was confirmed in Koi at a private facility in Missouri. The origin of these fish was a private facility in Minnesota. Minnesota DNR worked with USDA to get the site depopulated and disinfected. The facility was isolated and had no outflow to public water. We were successful in getting indemnity for the fish lost. It was a rather small fish farm. The DNR was considering paying for the depopulation and disinfection if an agreement with USDA could not be reached.

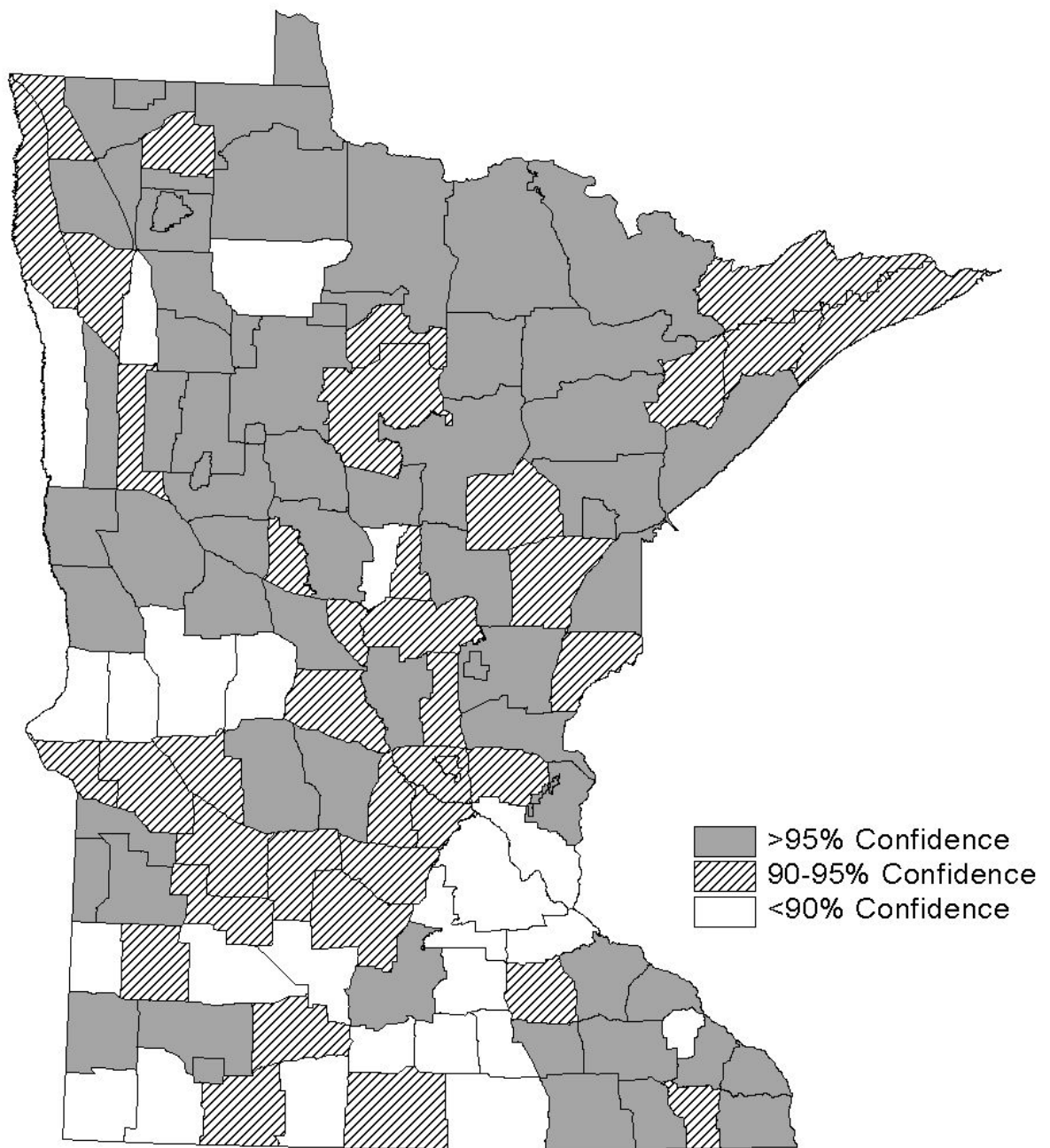


Figure 1. Probability of detecting the presence of chronic wasting disease (CWD), given a 1% infection rate, in white-tailed deer sampled in Deer Permit Areas in Minnesota, 2002–2004. Confidence level was based on the assumption of a random distribution of CWD among individuals within each sampling area.

Figure 2. Cases of WNV reported in Minnesota during 2004.

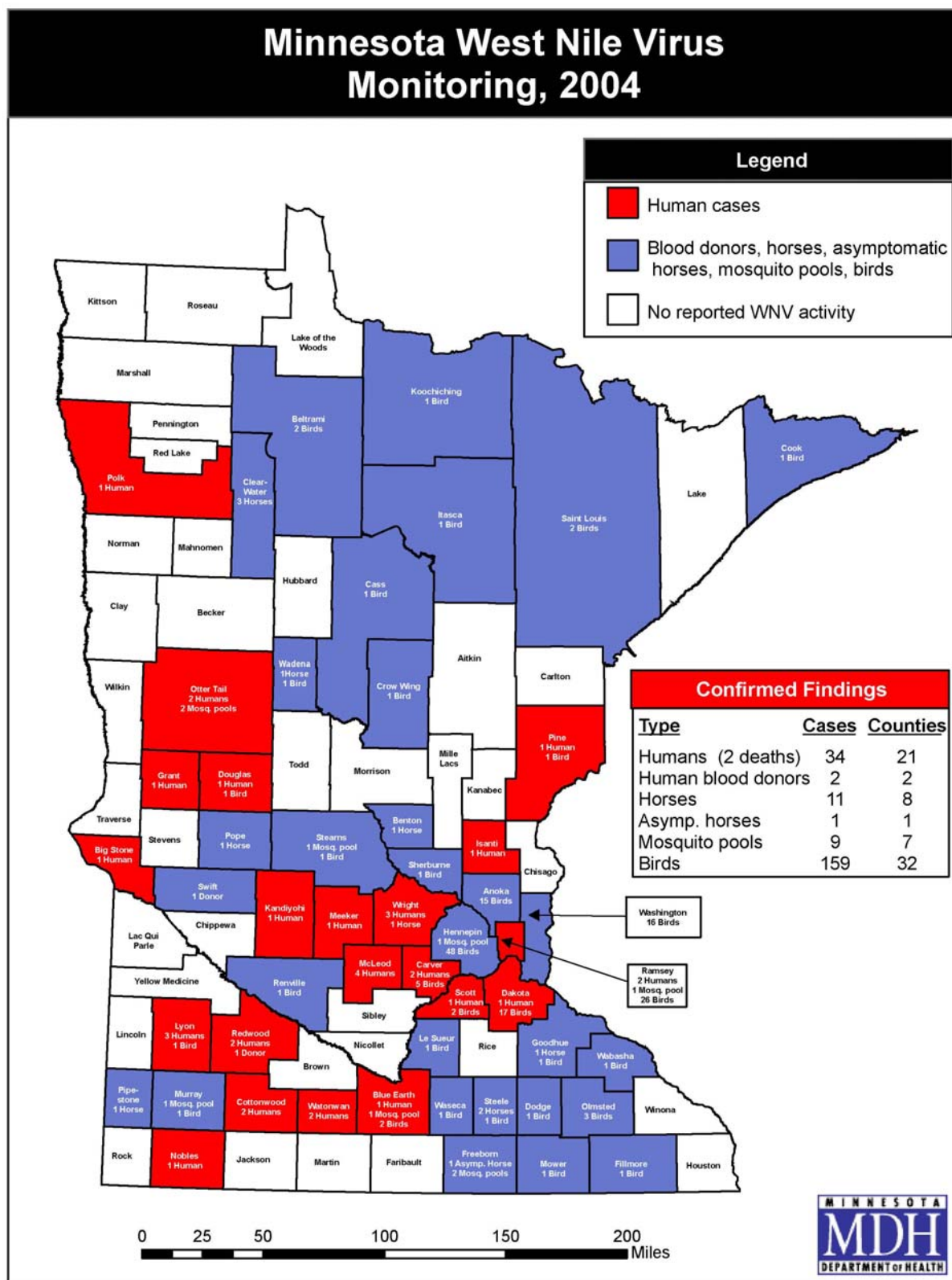
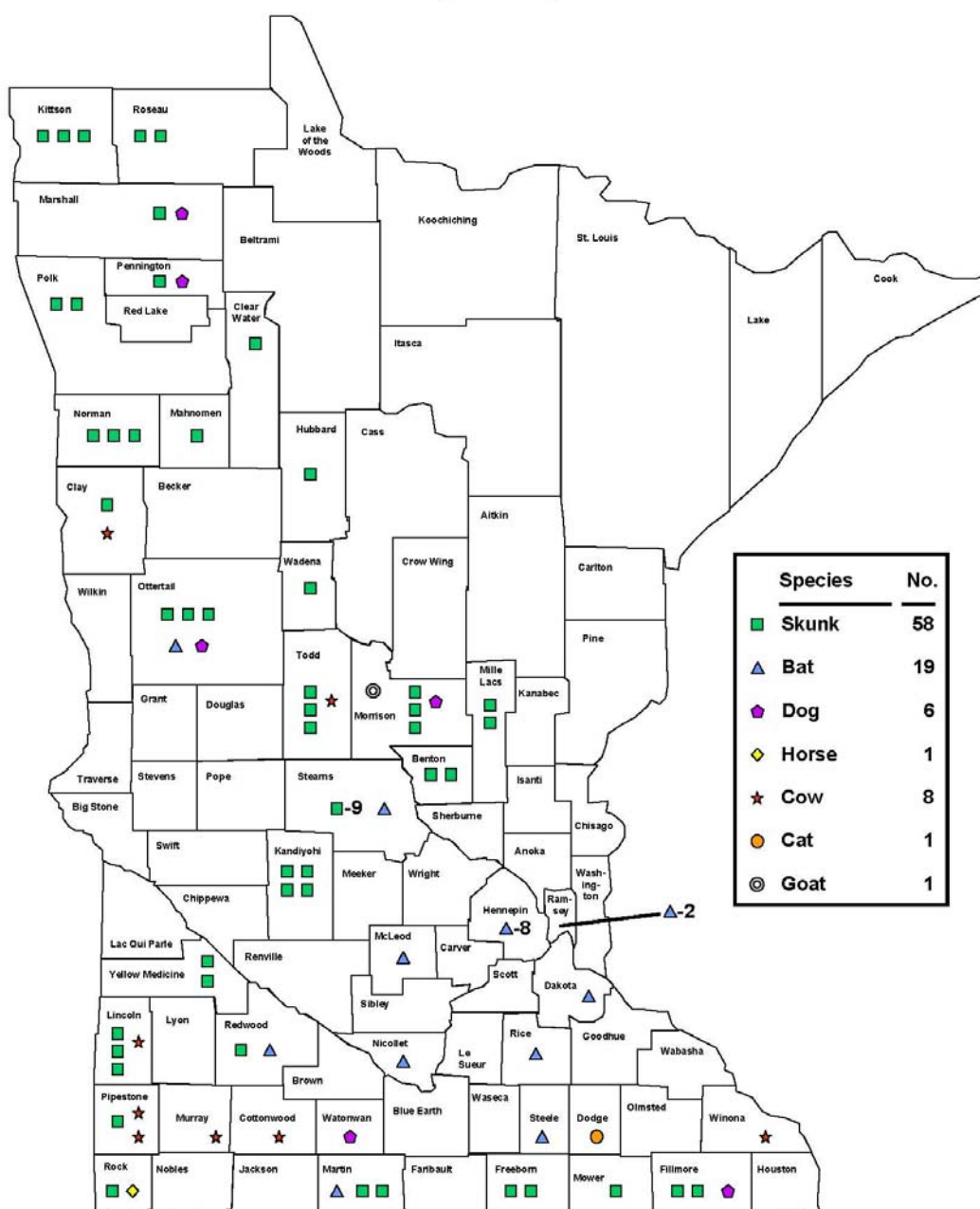


Figure 3. Cases of rabies reported in Minnesota during 2004.

Rabid Animals by County Minnesota, 2004 (n=94)



WILDLIFE HEALTH STATUS REPORT, KANSAS 2004

Midwest Fish and Wildlife Health Committee
Presented by, Lloyd B. Fox
May 11-12, 2005
East Lansing MI

General Wildlife Health

No unusually significant mortality events occurred in wildlife in Kansas during 2004. KDWP made 8 shipments of samples to SCWDS.

Chronic Wasting Disease

A collection of 2,473 animals was made during 2004 for CWD monitoring. Fawns were not routinely submitted for testing but were included in the deer head collections. While the majority of the samples were collected by KDWP personnel, we used field contracts with check station operators, taxidermists and other people to assist in the collection of specimens. Retropharyngeal lymph nodes and obex samples were collected from 2,172 deer and elk during the 2004-05 seasons (i.e., n = 1,826 white-tailed deer, n = 323 mule deer, n = 16 elk, and n = 5 unknown). An ELISA test was used on lymph nodes whereas an immunohistochemical test was completed on obex samples. Test results were completed on all of the samples and CWD was not detected from 2,170 of them. Inconclusive results were obtained from tissue samples on 2 animals collected from an improper location.

KDWP has collected 4,760 samples for CWD testing since 1996. The only known positive case of CWD in Kansas occurred in November 2001 at a captive elk facility. That elk came from a private elk farm in Colorado and was tested as part of a trace-out conducted by USDA and KAHD.

Plans are being made to continue our monitoring program during the 2005-06 seasons. Six of the 19 deer management units will have mandatory deer checking stations. The check units are in western Kansas and the intent is to improve our ability to collect CWD samples. We will continue to use an ELISA screening process to speed the time for notification.

The number of samples per county is shown in Figure 1 for the 2004 CWD monitoring effort. Most of the samples were collected in a random manner from hunters and at locker plants (n = 1,740). Animals killed by hunters but taken to a taxidermist comprised 272 additional specimens (these were generally older male animals). Animals killed in vehicle accidents accounted for 56 of the animals tested. Fifty six animals that exhibited symptoms similar to animals in the later stages of CWD were collected and tested. Five elk from the Maxwell Game Refuge were culled and tested. There were samples from 74 animals in

our collection where the method of survey was not recorded on their field data records.

A breakdown of the age and sex structure of the deer and elk tested for CWD is shown below.

WHITE-TAILED DEER

AGE	MALES		FEMALES		TOTAL*	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
(0.5)	9	0.8	9	1.4	19	1.0
(1.5)	326	28.7	230	34.6	563	31.1
(2.5)	394	34.8	235	35.3	633	34.9
> (3.5)	405	35.7	191	28.7	598	33.0
Total	1134	100.0	665	100.0	1813	100.0

* 14 deer in Total not classified by sex ; n = 13 where age was not recorded

MULE DEER

AGE	MALES		FEMALES		TOTAL*	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
(0.5)	2	0.7	1	2.2	3	0.9
(1.5)	92	33.2	13	28.9	105	32.6
(2.5)	86	31.1	13	28.9	99	30.8
> (3.5)	97	35.0	18	40.0	115	35.7
Total	277	100.0	45	100.0	322	100.0

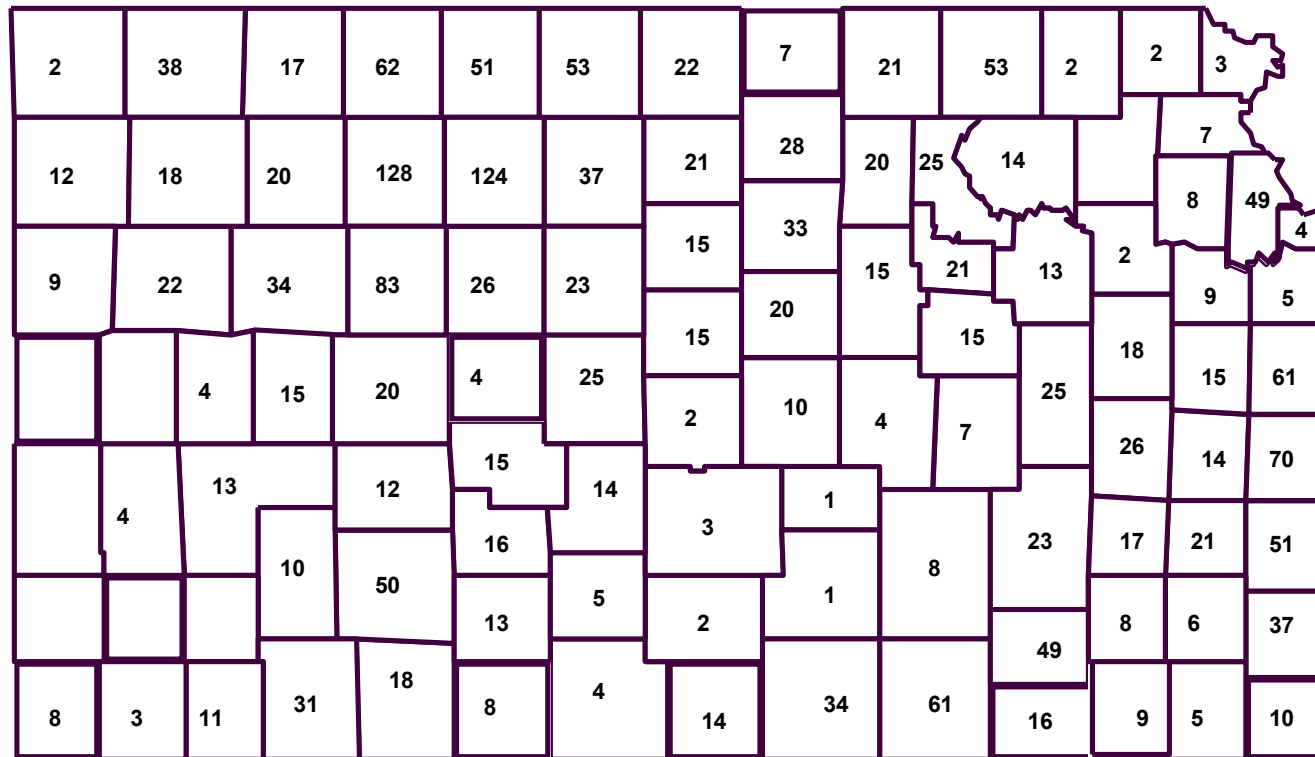
* N = 1 where age or sex was not recorded

ELK

AGE	MALES		FEMALES		TOTAL*	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
(1.5)						
(2.5)			1	33.3	1	11.1
> (3.5)	6	100.0	2	66.7	8	88.9
Total	6	100.0	3	100.0	9	100.0

* N = 7 where age or sex were not recorded

Figure 1. Distribution Of Deer and Elk Tested for CWD, 2004.



n = 2,170 tested, 28 missing data on county, 3 outside of Kansas.

Hemorrhagic Disease

Samples from one of the three deer submitted for HD testing last year were confirmed with isolation of EHDV-2. The deer was submitted from Crawford County, Kansas.

Bovine Tuberculosis

No new cases of bovine tuberculosis were detected in captive elk and no cases of bovine tuberculosis were detected from wildlife in Kansas during 2004.

West Nile Virus

West Nile Virus was found for the first time in Kansas on August 8, 2002 in a horse from Cowley County. Confirmation of the disease rapidly spread across the state and had been documented in 102 of the 105 counties in Kansas by January 16, 2003. Below is a breakdown of the positive test results.

	Kansas WNV 2002	Kansas WNV 2003	Kansas WNV 2004
Case Type	Positive Cases	Positive Cases	Positive Cases
Avian	171	142	58
Human	22	90	43
Mosquito Pool	21	45	36
Equine	793	81	9
Rocky Mountain Goat*	1		
Squirrel	1	1	
Canine	1?		
	1009	359	146

Hanta Virus

No new cases of Hantavirus were recorded in Kansas during 2004.

Data on WNV and Hantavirus provided by Dr. Gail Hansen, State Epidemiologist, KDH&E

Rabies

The Diagnostic Lab at KSU tested 1,224 samples during 2004 and detected 99 positive animals. Their results are shown below.

Kansas Animal Rabies Testing Results

2004 Kansas Animal Rabies Testing Results to date: 1224 Last Updated: 30 Dec				
SPECIES	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE	UNTESTABLE SAMPLE	TOTAL
Badger	0	1	0	1
Bats				
Big Brown	2	131	15	148
Hoary	1	1	0	2
Red	1	16	0	17
Beaver	0	1	0	1
Bobcat	0	2	0	2
Cat	13	421	4	438
Cow	7	46	5	58
Coyote	0	4	0	4
Dog	2	284	4	290
Ferret	0	4	0	4
Fox	2	3	0	5
Genet	0	1	0	1
Goat	0	2	0	2
Horse	2	20	1	23

Lamb	0	1	0	1
Llama	0	1	0	1
Mink	0	1	0	1
Mole	0	1	0	1
Mouse	0	2	0	2
Mule	0	1	0	1
Muskrat	0	1	0	1
Opossum	0	11	1	12
Rabbit	0	1	0	1
Raccoon	0	50	1	51
Rodent	0	7	0	7
Sheep	0	2	0	2
Skunk	69	51	3	123
Squirrel	0	25	0	25
Total***	99	990	34	1224

One indeterminate cat from Wichita in Sedgwick Co

Data from:

<http://www.vet.ksu.edu/depts/rabies/2004/kansas04.htm>

Midwest Wildlife and Fish Health Committee May 11-12, 2005.

Report for Missouri by Scott Syska DVM

MDC Specific Report:

CWD: Fall of 2004 was the third and final year for random sampling of hunter killed deer. 6,000 samples were taken per year during the first two years and 10,000 samples taken this year to finish out the sampling. Results for the first two years are negative with no CWD detected. 2004 results are still pending and will hopefully be done soon. Unless CWD is found or if it is detected near the border, biologists plan on doing targeted sampling in the near future.

Wildlife Biologists report they did not receive any reports of Hemorrhagic disease or anything else significant in 2004.

Spring Viremia of Carp was detected on 6/29/04 during a disease investigation in a privately owned fish farm in Curryville Missouri (north of St. Louis). Koi that were recently received from Autumn Reflections Koi Farm in Minnesota developed the disease upon arrival. The USDA eradication has been completed with sentinel fish (carp) being currently observed in the ponds to insure the eradication was successful. Spring Viremia of Carp has not yet been detected anywhere else in Missouri. It is believed the disease was brought in with the koi from Minnesota. MDC, MODNR, MDA and the USDA APHIS cooperated in developing the eradication plan.

Yersinia ruckeri, the cause of Enteric Redmouth Disease (ERM) and Bacterial Redmouth Disease (BRM), was detected during a routine trout certification at MDC's Shepherd of the Hills Hatchery in Branson, Missouri (sampled on 10/26/04). Subsequently Yersinia ruckeri was found at all the other MDC trout hatcheries. Yersinia ruckeri has been found historically for decades scattered throughout Missouri including watersheds where the state hatcheries are located. Yersinia ruckeri can persist in mud for a few months; it can be carried by mammals, birds, other species of fish, and invertebrates (crayfish). It is not a surprise to finally detect it at a state hatchery, but this is the first time it was confirmed at a MDC trout hatchery.

I attended an Entomology Lecture Series on West Nile Virus and found there is new information to further support the West Nile Virus fact sheet I wrote for committee. So the old facts are still good facts.

Other Missouri Agencies and Missouri Activities of Federal Agencies:

Missouri Department of Agriculture: MDA has started testing feral swine for classical swine fever, pseudorabies, and swine brucellosis.

Department of Health and Senior Services: During 2004 rabies incidence at highest since 1989 with 59 cases in 2004. The 59 cases can be broken down as 2 domestic animals (a dog and a goat); 38 bats; 19 skunks. Howell County, in south-central Missouri, is still on a rabies alert.

APHIS – Wildlife Services: APHIS-WS has ceased wild bird surveillance for West Nile Virus for 2005 since it is now considered endemic. Whether more wild bird surveillance will take place is unknown. APHIS is conducting a study of Tularemia in Missouri by testing a variety of animals. Missouri is considered the “epicenter” for Tularemia because Missouri statistically has more cases of Tularemia than any other state.

State of Michigan/DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Report to the Wildlife and Fish Health Committee
Association of Midwest Fish and Wildlife Agencies

Summary of Selected Michigan Wildlife Health Issues May 11, 2005

MANAGEMENT OF BOVINE TUBERCULOSIS IN MICHIGAN DEER

Since 1994, the state of Michigan has recognized a problem with *Mycobacterium bovis* in wild white-tailed deer from a thirteen county area in northeastern Lower Michigan. In 2004, surveillance activities for M. bovis continued statewide, with an emphasis on the northern half of Lower Peninsula. In white-tailed deer, 28 animals cultured positive from 15,127 deer submitted for testing.

Since the index cases were first identified, 138,394 free-ranging deer have been tested for bovine tuberculosis; 509 infected animals have been found. Increasingly, the spatial epidemiology of the disease is revealing a highly focal, clustered pattern. Approximately 97% percent of all positive deer identified to date originated from a five county area. Moreover, within that area, the vast majority of positive deer were from Deer Management Unit (DMU) 452. Even within DMU 452, the spatial arrangement of cases is highly clustered, in spite of the fact that sampling effort has been relatively uniform geographically.

Strategies for eradication of TB from Michigan wildlife continue to focus on 1) reducing deer population densities to biological carrying capacity and 2) reducing artificial congregation of deer by restriction or elimination of baiting and feeding. These strategies have been implemented through provision of extra rifle seasons and unlimited antlerless deer permits and by prohibition or restriction of deer baiting and feeding. In the five county area most affected by TB, deer numbers have declined approximately 38% since 1995. The achievement of this substantial population reduction highlights the critical role that hunters have played in the control of TB in Michigan. Nonetheless, persistent focal areas of high density on private land remain problematic. Since 2002, baiting and feeding have been prohibited in the seven counties from which ~98% of all TB positive deer have originated. Policy makers have committed to keeping these regulations consistent for a five-year period in order to improve compliance and enforcement. The overall scope of baiting and feeding has declined dramatically since 1997,

with large scale feeding largely a thing of the past. While some illegal baiting and feeding continues to occur, the size of these sites is substantially reduced, and heightened enforcement is expected to reduce the practice further over the next several years.

While much work remains, substantial progress has been made towards eradication of TB from Michigan wildlife. Apparent prevalence in the core area of the outbreak, DMU 452, was 1.7% in 2004, a decrease of 64% since 1995. Trend analysis of prevalence data from 1995 to 2004 indicate a statistically significant decreasing trend. And two methods of estimating TB transmission rate in the deer herd in DMU 452 are showing statistically significant decreasing trends.

Michigan's TB intervention strategies are working; however, it is too early to claim victory in eradicating the disease. The need to stay the course is important, but will be difficult, due to ever increasing pressure from a variety of sources to lessen these intervention strategies.

With that in mind, the State of Michigan is evaluating a new intervention strategy that may be more acceptable to many hunters and landowners. The new strategy is based on live-trapping and TB-testing of wild deer, and removal of positive animals. This strategy is not intended to replace initial strategies, but may assist them in eliminating TB from the deer herd.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources pilot-trialed the new strategy in a township with relatively high TB prevalence within DMU 452 during the winter of 2003. The results of the pilot are cause for optimism on a number of fronts. The project was well received and supported by the public. Appreciable numbers of deer were captured with reasonable efficiency and low mortality. Tracking and removal techniques worked well. The one facet of the project that failed was the blood test. The Cervigam blood test proved not to be accurate in detecting TB positive deer. While the blood test did not perform as expected, the capture, handling and tracking techniques nevertheless provided us with a field-tested protocol for obtaining deer for other diagnostic tests and future control projects. For example, should a suitable TB vaccine ever be developed, it could be delivered by this protocol.

An effort to develop a more accurate blood testing procedure was the focus of the pilot during the 2004 hunting season. Hunters were asked to collect blood from deer harvested in DMU 452, and to submit the blood and deer head to a deer check station. The lymph nodes from the deer heads were cultured for TB and culture results compared with results from four TB blood

tests. One blood test (Rapid Test) that can be done in 10-15 minutes in the field with whole blood looks promising.

Further trials with the Rapid Test (RT) may show it to be acceptably accurate for the purposes of the new strategy. If so, the RT's ability to use small quantities of whole blood and provide near instant results (which could obviate the need to collar, release and track down suspect deer, resulting in substantial cost and labor savings), would justify a more rigorous evaluation of its potential application in a test-and-cull strategy.

Chronic Wasting Disease

Michigan's success in preventing and responding to the threat of Chronic Wasting Disease is underpinned by rigorous surveillance, strong public education efforts, responsive scientific laboratory support, a ban on the importation of captive cervids, a CWD contingency plan and restrictions on the importation of cervid carcasses from CWD areas. MDNR's surveillance efforts are twofold: "Targeted" (identifying and testing free-ranging cervids statewide that show symptoms consistent with CWD), and "Active" (testing of outwardly healthy cervids harvested by hunters). Testing priority is established by considering factors such as: the number of privately owned cervid facilities in a county; the presence of cervid research facilities; and geographic location.

To date, 17,444 free-ranging white-tailed deer, 332 free-ranging elk and 21 free-ranging moose have been tested for CWD and all have been found to be negative. CWD testing of free-ranging cervids will continue at the rate of 1,000 a year. Michigan uses Biorad's ELISA test as a screening test for CWD and IHC (immunohisto chemistry) for confirmation on retropharyngeal lymph node samples. MDA has tested 3,059 captive cervids and all were negative for CWD.

So, does this mean Michigan does not have CWD and we can stop testing? No, we believe that it indicates that Michigan does not have a large outbreak of the disease like Colorado, Wyoming or even Wisconsin. However, there could easily be a small pocket of CWD most anywhere in the state. Michigan will be shifting more of its surveillance effort from active to targeted surveillance. It is felt that targeted surveillance will be more effective in detecting a small pocket of disease.

Since April of 2002, there has been a complete ban on the importation of captive cervids into Michigan. It is likely that this ban will be in place until a

reliable live animal CWD test is developed. Preventing CWD from entering Michigan is the basis for the Michigan Department of Agriculture's ban on the importation of live captive cervids into Michigan. The importation of a CWD infected live deer or elk is the most likely way that CWD would enter the state. However, the possibility that a Michigan hunter hunting in a CWD infected state might harvest an infected animal and return to Michigan with the carcass is very real. Indeed, new research reports that CWD can be transmitted to susceptible cervids indirectly, from environments contaminated by decomposed CWD infected carcasses. A June 2003 Wildlife Conservation Order prohibits the importation of free-ranging deer and elk carcasses from states or provinces where CWD has been found. Exceptions to the carcass ban include deboned meat, antlers, capes, and upper canine teeth.

West Nile Virus

Since 2001, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in cooperation with the Michigan Department of Agriculture, the Michigan Department of Community Health, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, and Michigan State University have conducted dead bird surveillance for West Nile virus throughout the state. Due to their sensitivity to the virus, members of the Corvid family (American Crows, Blue Jays, and Common Ravens) have been the primary species surveyed. In 2001 West Nile Virus was first detected in Michigan in 65 Corvids (63 of 142 American Crows and 2 of 79 Blue Jays) in 10 counties, all in the southern portion of the state. There were no human or equine cases.

In 2002 West Nile virus was detected and caused the death of 333 Corvids (219 American Crows, 108 Blue Jays, 3 Common Ravens, and 3 unknown Corvids) in 73 of the state's 83 counties. Mortality of other species of birds were being detected, so additional species were examined for West Nile virus. West Nile virus was attributed to be the cause of death in seven non-Corvid avian and mammalian species: House Finch (3), Canada Goose (1), Northern Goshawk (2), Sharp shinned Hawk (2), Great Horned Owl (5), Cedar Waxwing (1), and the Eastern Fox Squirrel (1). Additional animals were either probably positives or suspected positives but due to the condition of the carcass, inconclusive results, or financial constraints, a positive result could not be confirmed. In total, 82 animals were examined, 21 were positive for West Nile virus and 30 were probably or suspect positives. There were 644 human cases and 51 deaths attributed to West Nile virus in 28 counties in the state. There were 341 equine cases in 48 counties.

In 2003, West Nile virus was detected and caused the death of 89 Corvids (56 American Crows, 32 Blue Jays, and 1 unknown Corvid) in 32 counties. Mortality in non-Corvid avian species attributable to West Nile virus was detected in six non-Corvid avian species: House Finch (1), Evening Grosbeak (1), Cooper's Hawk (1), Red-tailed Hawk (3), Sharp shinned Hawk (1), and Merlin (1). There were no cases in mammals. There were 19 human cases and 2 deaths attributed to West Nile virus in five counties in the state. There were 10 equine cases in nine counties.

In 2004, West Nile virus was detected and caused the death of 245 Corvids (191 American Crows, 53 Blue Jays, and 1 Common Raven) in 57 counties. Mortality in non-Corvid avian species attributable to West Nile virus was detected in seven non-Corvid avian species: Cedar Waxwing (2), Common Grackle (2), Cooper's Hawk (1), Northern Cardinal (1), Red-shouldered Hawk (1), Red-tailed Hawk (1), and Sandhill Crane (1). There were no cases in mammals. There were 16 human cases and no deaths attributed to West Nile virus in six counties in the state. There were 21 equine cases in 14 counties.

In Michigan, beginning in 2001 and continuing through 2002, surveillance for West Nile virus in Corvid species utilized Immunohistochemistry (IHC) as the technique to identify the presence of the virus. In 2003, surveillance for West Nile virus still utilized IHC but a new technique, the Vec Test, which used oral swabs from the bird, was also performed. A good correlation was found between the two techniques, so in 2004 the Vec Test technique was used. Additional testing was also done in 2004 comparing IHC, the Vec Test technique, and a feather pulp (blood feather) technique in both Corvid and non-Corvid species. A good correlation was found between the three techniques, so the 2005 surveillance for West Nile virus will utilize the feather pulp technique.

Rabies

The primary strain of rabies seen in Michigan is the bat-strain. Skunk - and Fox-strain rabies have also been reported in the state with the thumb area historically being an area where the skunk-strain commonly occurred. Fox-strain rabies has occurred in the past and has been detected primarily in the Upper Peninsula, the result of spill-over from Canada. Rabid red foxes have been identified throughout the state but the strain they had was bat-strain. There have been a small number of raccoons positive for rabies in the state but these were bat-strain as well.

Big Brown Bats are the species most commonly identified with rabies and involved with human exposures. This is a colony species that is commonly observed in building structures in the southern portion of the Lower Peninsula. In 2001 species positive for rabies in the state were: Bats-41, Red Foxes-2, Horses-2, Cows-1, and Cats-1. In 2002 species positive for rabies were: Bats-43, Striped Skunks-2, and Horses-1. In 2003 species positive for rabies were: Bats-48, Striped Skunks-3, and Cats-1. In 2004 species positive for rabies were: Bats-36, Striped Skunks-3, Red Foxes-1, and Dogs-1.

Over the past six years, due to concerns of raccoon-strain rabies entering the state, a cooperative surveillance project with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, the Michigan Department of Community Health, and the Michigan Department of Agriculture has resulted in neurologically abnormal raccoons being collected and submitted for rabies testing and necropsy. County or City Animal Control agencies and DNR personnel have been involved in these collections. To date, none of the raccoons submitted have been positive for rabies and Canine Distemper has been suspected or proven to be the cause of the animal's abnormal behavior.

For more information

On Wildlife Disease in Michigan, visit our website at:
<http://www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases>

Michigan Wildlife Diseases Manual is found at:
<http://www.michigan.gov/wdm>

Submitted by:
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NEBRASKA GAME AND PARKS COMMISSION
MAFWA FISH AND WILDLIFE HEALTH COMMITTEE
2005 REPORT

CWD: During the 2004 hunting season, Nebraska sampled 6,735 mule and white tailed deer and 29 elk. All elk were negative and we detected 22 positive mule deer and 7 positive white tailed deer. The total for positives in the state since the discovery of CWD in 2000 is now 80 (51 mule deer and 29 white tailed). New locations for positives this year were Hall County (approximately 200 miles from nearest prior positive), Cherry County (approximately 50 miles), and Arthur County (25 miles). All three new locations are outside of the Nebraska Panhandle and represent a significant movement of the disease. During the 2005 hunting season, we will be concentrating our testing in the central part of the state to determine the extent of this movement and rates of infection. It is estimated that we will sample around 6,500 deer this year.

NEBRASKA FISH AND WILDLIFE HEALTH COUNCIL: The Commission has formed a Nebraska Fish and Wildlife Health Council to facilitate the exchange of information on wildlife disease issues in our state. Members of the Council include the Commission, Nebraska Department of Agriculture, USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services, USDA-APHIS-Veterinary Services, USDA-APHIS-Animal Care, University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service, University of Nebraska Veterinary Diagnostic Center, Nebraska Health and Human Services Agency, Folsom Zoo, Henry Doorly Zoo, and the Nebraska Veterinary Medical Association. The Council meets twice a year and develops recommendations for possible zoonotic disease surveillance, monitoring, and research. Additionally, the Council will be making recommendations for possible regulations and statutes related to animal disease control. The Council has established a web site at <http://nefwhealth.unl.edu/index.htm> to provide for information exchange and give the public a resource for wildlife disease information.

EHD/BLUETONGUE: An EHD survey looking for the presence of hemorrhagic antibodies in deer serum was conducted during the firearm deer season. Blood was collected, by dipping it from the body cavity of deer presented at check stations, and the serum separated. A total of 241 samples were obtained from across the state. Both white-tailed and mule deer were sampled. Serum was sent to the Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study for analysis. Additionally, a total of 88 dead deer were reported as potential EHD mortalities from 28 counties. The counties with the highest reporting rate were Boone (11), Rock (10), Holt (8), and Nance (8). The deer management units most likely affected by EHD are Calamus West, Calamus East, Keya Paha, and Loup East. The high antibody prevalence in the deer of District 4 and a decreasing prevalence heading east, suggests that conditions for EHD and BT are favorable in southwestern Nebraska. A hypothesis can be made that these favorable conditions can spread due to changing environmental conditions, due to draught, etc., allowing the vector to pioneer into areas of vulnerable deer leading to increased mortality. Reported EHD mortality in central Nebraska would tend to support this hypothesis.

TURKEY POX: During the spring 2005 turkey season, a hunter harvested a male eastern turkey with several growths around the head. The bird was harvested in Thayer County, just north of

the Kansas state line. Samples were submitted to the National Wildlife Health Center in Madison, Wisconsin and the diagnosis was turkey pox. Commission staff has been observing turkeys in the area since this finding without seeing additional infected birds.

MENINGEAL WORM: During the collection of samples for CWD testing, approximately 75 mule deer from western Nebraska were inspected for the presence of meningeal worm. Three male deer had the parasite present.

ELAEOPHORA SCHNEIDERI: Two mule deer were found with *Elaeophora schneideri*, an arterial worm that does not impact mule deer but can cause necrosis of soft tissue and antler deformities in whitetail deer and elk. It also may cause blindness in elk. This is the third year this parasite has been found in Nebraska deer.

(Draft)

RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT THE CONTROL OF FERAL SWINE IN THE
UNITED STATES

Whereas feral swine are present in numerous states within the United States, and

Whereas feral swine damage fences, forest stands, natural communities, row and forage crops, parks, cemeteries, and lawns and gardens, and

Whereas feral swine harbor diseases that affect people, pets, livestock and wildlife, and

Whereas feral swine kill young lambs, goats, calves and deer, harass adult cattle and horses, and destroy birds nests and other wildlife, and

Whereas feral swine cause an estimated \$800 million of damage in the United States annually, and

Whereas there is a standing Presidential Directive to control the spread of invasive species, and

Whereas the National Governor's Association has called for joint federal/state programs to help prevent the spread of invasive species, and adequate federal financial support to enable states to control or eradicate invasive species, and

Whereas the distribution and number of feral swine are increasing in the Midwest, and

Whereas the undersigned agencies are responsible for protecting their state's natural resources from invasive species:

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that MAFWA agree to 1) cooperate in the control of feral swine populations in the Midwest 2) urge the IAFWA to adopt a similar resolution and 3) urge the United States Secretary of Agriculture, appropriate Congressional Representatives and the President of the United States to adequately fund coordinated feral hog control efforts in the United States.

MIDWEST PHEASANT STUDY GROUP 8TH MEETING

Hosted by Michigan Department of Natural Resources



**Fish Pointe State Wildlife Area
Unionville, Michigan
October 3-6, 2004**

AGENDA
8th Midwest Pheasant Study Group
Pheasant Research and Management Partnerships
October 3 - 6, 2004
Fish Pointe State Wildlife Area and Fish Pointe Lodge
Unionville, Michigan

Sunday, October 3rd

5:00 PM - 9:00 PM	Check-in - <i>Fish Pointe Lodge</i>
7:00 PM - 9:00 PM	Social, Libations, and Appetizers - <i>Fish Pointe Lodge</i>

Monday, October 4th

7:00 AM - 7:45 AM	Breakfast - <i>Fish Pointe Lodge</i>
8:00 AM - 8:30 AM	Welcome and Housekeeping - <i>Fish Pointe State Wildlife Area</i>
8:30 AM - 9:00 AM	Michigan- A Changing Landscape (John Paskus)
9:00 AM - 9:15 AM	Pheasants in Michigan – Past and Present (Al Stewart)
9:15 AM – 9:40 AM	Impact of Land Use on Wildlife (John Paskus)
9:40 AM - 10:00 AM	Michigan’s Grassland Model – A Key to the Future (Mike Donovan)
10:00 AM – 10:15 AM	Break
10:15 AM - 10:45 AM	National Farm Bill Perspective (Todd Bogenschutz)
10:45 AM – 11:15 AM	Michigan Farm Bill (Mark Sargent)
11:15 AM – 12:00 PM	Landowner Incentive Program (Susan Tangora)
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM	Lunch – <i>Fish Pointe Lodge</i>
1:00 PM - 2:00 PM	CREP (Steve Shine, Shannon Zeezula and Dale Allen)
2:00 PM – 2:30 PM	USFWS Partners for Wildlife Program (Jim Hudgins)
2:30 PM - 3:00 PM	Break
3:00 PM - 4:00 PM	Midwest Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (Kurt Haroldson, Mark Sargent, Todd Bogenschutz)
5:00 PM – 6:00 PM	Birding at Fish Pointe
6:00 PM – 7:00 PM	Dinner – <i>Fish Pointe Lodge</i>

Tuesday, October 5th

7:00 AM - 7:50 AM	Breakfast - <i>Fish Pointe Lodge</i>
8:00 AM - 8:30 AM	Pheasants and North American Waterfowl Management (Chuck Nelson) <i>Fish Pointe State Wildlife Area</i>
8:30 AM - 9:00 AM	Saginaw Bay WIN (Arnie Karr)
9:00 AM - 9:30 AM	Public Lands Program in the Thumb (Arnie Karr)
9:30 AM - 10:00 AM	Verona State Game Area – A Case Example (Don Bonnette)
10:00AM - 10:15 AM	Break
10:15AM – 10:45 AM	Pheasant Range Map Update (Larry David/Dick Warner)
10:45AM – 12:00 PM	Pheasant Population Model (Haroldson/Clark/Bogenschutz) with Panel Discussion
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM	Lunch – <i>Rooster Ranch, Courtesy Pheasants Forever</i>
1:00 PM - 5:00 PM	Field Trip – CREP, Private and Public Partnerships
5:00 PM - 6:30 PM	Dinner - <i>Fish Pointe Lodge</i>
7:00 PM – 9:00 PM	Panel Discussion on Research Needs

Wednesday, October 6th

7:00 AM - 7:45 AM	Breakfast - <i>Fish Pointe Lodge</i>
8:00 AM - 9:00 AM	Group Business Meeting/Evaluation/Next Host <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Group Sanction by Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.
9:00 AM - 10:00 AM	Open Discussion
10:00 AM - 10:15 AM	Break
10:15 AM - 12:00 PM	Wrap up/Adjourn

Program sponsored by Michigan Departments of Natural Resources and Agriculture, Pheasants Forever, Fish Point Lodge ,Jays Sporting Goods, Zenders, USDA,U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, River Wild Winery, and Michigan State University

***Note: Dinner on Sunday, October 3^d will be on your own. All other meals are included in the registration cost.**

MIDWEST PHEASANT STUDY GROUP

ANNUAL REPORT

OCTOBER 3-6, 2004

The group held their 8th annual meeting at Fish Point Lodge in Unionville, Michigan. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources hosted this year's meeting. The lodge provided a comfortable atmosphere with plenty of wildlife viewing opportunities on Saginaw Bay. States in attendance included Kansas, Illinois, Minnesota, South Dakota, Iowa, Indiana, Nebraska, and Michigan. Representatives from U.S.D.A., Michigan Department of Agriculture, Michigan State University, and Pheasants Forever were also present.

Meeting began with the arrival of visiting biologists Sunday evening with guests arriving at the lodge to partake in appetizers and the great lodge atmosphere.

Monday morning, October 4th, the meeting officially began with a welcome to Michigan by Michael Bailey, Acting Chief for Michigan DNR's Wildlife Division. The theme for this year was "Pheasant Research and Management Partnerships". After individual introductions, John Paskus, Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) started the meeting out with a discussion on "Michigan -A Changing Landscape. Al Stewart followed him with a discussion on "Pheasants in Michigan – Past and Present" where he informed the group the first pheasants were released in Holland in 1883, and the first pheasant hunting season was in 1925. He also discussed the changes in hunting practices due to farming becoming more industrial and the reduction of pheasant populations due to farmland being "broken up" and sold off. Similar topics - "Impact of Land Use on Wildlife", and "Michigan's Grassland Model – A Key to the Future", presented by John Paskus and Mike Donovan, both from Michigan, followed. Todd Bogenschutz then discussed the National Farm Bill including a summary of what's happening with land programs in several Midwest states. He informed the group that there is a three trillion deficit in the federal budget, and that budget reconciliation might open Farm Bill in 2005. The morning was wrapped up with Mark Sargent sharing information regarding the Michigan Farm Bill.

After lunch Mark Sargent presented information regarding the Land Incentive Program (LIP), explaining that Michigan received 1.5 million to fund four positions to maintain this program, and additional monies to fund Sue Tangora's position, who is Michigan's coordinator. He also explained that a landowner has to have at least 12 acres if inside an established "priority area" or have threatened or endangered species to qualify for the program. If the landowner is outside a priority area, they are required to have 50 acres.

Next Steve Shine of Michigan's Department of Agriculture and Shannon Zeezula and Dale Allen of USDA provided information about the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). Mr. Zeezula, who had worked in Indiana and Missouri, stated that he was impressed with Michigan's requirement that grasslands be planted as part of the program. Dale Allen followed with additional information regarding CREP at the federal level.

Jim Hudgins from U.S. Fish & Wildlife then spoke about “Partners for Wildlife Program” stating that the strength of their service is that they work together with local, state, and federal agencies, conservation organizations, foundations, businesses, and landowners. He gave additional information about the federal program “Partners for Fish & Wildlife (PWF)” which is a habitat improvement program providing direct assistance to landowners and technical and/or financial assistance to influence other programs (Farm Bill conservation programs, LIP, etc). They are using technical assistance, easements, incentive payments, and cost sharing on a voluntary basis with landowners.

The next agenda item was titled “Midwest Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies”, and was presented by Kurt Haroldson, Mark Sargent, and Todd Bogenschutz. Kurt informed group that the Director of Minnesota DNR had approached him to ask how land issues can be “moved forward”, explaining that the Midwest directors who meet every year, want a more formal relationship with working committees, special user groups, etc.

Tuesday morning began with a presentation by Chuck Nelson of MSU regarding “Pheasants and North American Waterfowl Management”. Arnie Karr of Michigan DNR followed with a presentation about Saginaw Bay WIN program, explaining where we are and where we want to go. He noted that it is possible to “overprotect an area to death”, and informed the group that there is a Saginaw Bay birding website on-line. Arnie also spoke about “Public Lands Program in the Thumb”, giving an overview of activities in the area of Michigan located near Saginaw Bay including a presentation from Don Bonette of his staff who showed slides of Michigan’s Verona State Game Area. Larry David, who is working for Dick Warner at the University of Illinois, followed with an update on the Pheasant Range map. The final presentation for the day - the Pheasant Population Model – was given by Kurt Haroldson and Todd Bogenschutz.

Tuesday afternoon was a field trip to view upland wildlife management practices on public lands, including CREP sites, in Michigan. Lunch was provided by the local chapter of Pheasants Forever. Pheasants Forever members asked the biologists many pheasant and pheasant habitat-related questions.

The evening wrapped up with a discussion about pheasant research and business meeting where the group unanimously approved being sanctioned by Midwest Association of Fish Wildlife Agencies (MAFWA). In addition, the Minutes from 2002 were approved, evaluations were completed, and Scott Taylor of Nebraska was chosen to host the next meeting. He asked the group to send him any ideas for a location for that meeting in 2006.

The group departed on Wednesday morning.

Note: “Michigan’s Wild Pheasants”, an article written by Tom Lounsbury, who was a guest at this meeting, is attached. This article was published in several Michigan newspapers including Woods-n-Water News, Huron Daily Tribune, and Tuscola County Advisor.

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2004 Chair, Midwest Pheasant Study Group
Lou Ann Shaw, Michigan DNR
2004 Secretary, Midwest Pheasant Study Group

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**Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resource Association
Executive Board Meeting Minutes**

Kansas City, KS

April 6-7, 2005

Assignments/Action Items Summary

- MICRA will send a letter to the Director of the FWS describing the importance of the river coordinators and stating that we support continued funding of the MICRA Coordinator as well as that of the Sub Basin groups (UMRCC, LMRCC and MRNRC). Copies will be sent to the 5 FWS regions in the Mississippi River Basin.
- The MICRA chairman will be given the option of providing "Views of the Chairman" for each issue of *River Crossings*. It will be up to the Chairman to have these views to the Coordinator by January 15, March 15, May 15, July 15, September 15, and November 15 in order to meet publication schedules.
- O'Bara agreed to provide input to Rasmussen for an article on Ohio River issues by May 15 for inclusion in the May/June issue of *River Crossings*.
- It was suggested that the Chairman call Doug Austen, Pennsylvania, to see about getting someone from MICRA on the National Habitat Initiative planning team.
- MICRA will support a portion of Armstrong's travel to the sub basin group meetings.
- The Chairman will advise the Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee that it will receive no additional funding for the paddlefish project beyond 2005 until a report is prepared and submitted that documents current: paddlefish population status, summarizes harvest information, summarizes movement information, summarizes findings, and makes recommendations for the future.
- Benjamin will return the shovelnose sturgeon proposal to the UMRCC requesting specific goals and objective statements, time frames, and deliverables; and that they make contact with the other sub basin units regarding involvement in this project.
- Austin will request that South Dakota State University review the sauger proposal and come up with a refined budget estimate.
- MICRA will contribute \$100 to the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies to help cosponsor their October 2005 meeting in St. Louis.
- MICRA will subsidize Armstrong's trip (airfare) to the AFS meeting in Alaska to participate in the AFS/Sea Grant symposium on partnership groups, Armstrong will request complimentary registration for his participation, Arkansas will pay his per diem, Armstrong will prepare a Power Point presentation for all Board members to review, and Rasmussen will send him a past presentation to work from.

- MICRA will avoid "piggy backing" onto the meetings of others to avoid time and travel conflicts.
- Armstrong will talk to Reed about a winter meeting in the south, perhaps New Orleans to reduce airfare costs. Agenda items will include: detailed sub basin discussions, discussions regarding moving MICRA to commission status, the NHI, the Asian carp work group product, and the paddlefish project. In this case, it may be beneficial for us to tie into the Paddlefish/Sturgeon Committee meeting time and place.

**Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resource Association
Executive Board**

**Meeting Minutes
Kansas City, KS
April 6-7, 2005**

Chairman Doug Nygren (KS) called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

After brief introductory remarks, Nygren called the roll. Members present represented the UMRCC (Upper Mississippi), LMRCC (Lower Mississippi), MRNRC (Missouri River), ORFMT (Ohio River), USGS and USFWS. An attendance list is attached. Representatives from the Tennessee River and Arkansas/Red River were not present.

Nygren summarized some of the activities during his term as chairman. He said that the Paddlefish Stock Assessment continues, the Gamefish Committee is preparing scopes of work for potential projects, and the Freshwater Mollusk Committee continues to work cooperatively with the Freshwater Mussel Conservation Society. He said that we cosponsored a regional habitat workshop with the Fish and Wildlife Service and others at the 2003 Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies meeting, and that we became an affiliate member of Midwest Fish and Wildlife Association (MFWFA). He said that the latter helped to elevate the Asian carp problem after Rasmussen made a presentation on the issue at the Summer 2004 MFWFA meeting. He said that as a direct result of Rasmussen's talk the MFWFA submitted a resolution for establishment of a species screening process to the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA). He said the MFWFA was able to get IAFWA action on the issue (copy attached) while MICRA had not. He said that we began hosting the Mississippi River Basin Panel (MRBP) on Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS), and that the MICRA chair represents MICRA on that Panel. He said that MICRA has lead the way on providing information on Asian carp, and that we helped promote the ANS barrier project in Chicago. He also said that with Jerry Rasmussen back on board as Coordinator we have been able to get our newsletter, *River Crossings*, back in circulation. He said that later in the agenda we will be looking at Chairman Elect Mike Armstrong's (AR/LMRCC) agenda (copy attached) for his tenure as chairman beginning on July 1, but for now MICRA is alive and well!

Coordinator Rasmussen (FWS) then circulated copies of his budget tracking document and the February 2005 Accountant's report (copies attached). He said that we have continued to spend down our reserves and that we need to look for outside funding sources if we hope to take on any new larger projects. He said that we have lost some of our dues payers to tight budgetary times and to other competing activities (copy of AL letter attached). He also circulated copies of response letters (copies attached) from our letter to Congress regarding federal funding for the Asian carp barrier in the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal and for a study to find ways to biologically separate the Great Lakes and Mississippi River Basin ecosystems. He also circulated copies of requests for support from the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the National Watershed Coalition.

Nygren then turned the agenda over to Armstrong to discuss his Plan of Work for 2005-2007 (copy attached). Armstrong said that we have been through the growth process, and that most of us are dedicated to the process of MICRA. He said he feels that MICRA is the best thing going for the interior U.S. and for the Mississippi River Basin. He said that we have taken some lumps, but that we have survived. He said he feels we are uniquely poised now to take some action, to engage the Executive Board as to where we want to go from here. He said he went through our Strategic Plan (which is posted on our Web Site), and marked off what we've done and what we haven't done, and then laid out some ideas in a draft plan of work. He said that he would like for the Board to leave this meeting with a pretty

good sense of direction for the next two years for himself and our coordinator -- where should we spend our time and money? He said his vision for MICRA is in asserting our position for the Mississippi River Basin, providing a common theme for basinwide issues. He said the original document that we developed in 1991 laid out common threads that flow through the Basin. He said we need to refocus on the common threads that we can all work together to solve, and to strengthen the bonds between the sub basin groups. He said that the sub basin groups are where the rubber meets the road, doing common things for a group of states, with MICRA serving as an umbrella group to strengthen the bonds between the sub basins. He said that MICRA needs to be that forum. He said that he went to the UMRCC meeting in March, and learned quite a bit that he could use on the Arkansas River. He said he learned that there are hundreds of millions of dollars being spent on the Upper Mississippi River (UMR), and that he'd like to go to each of the sub basin meetings to see what each of them means to MICRA and how we can identify and strengthen bonds between them and MICRA.

He said we also need to get on the train that is coming regarding the habitat initiative. He said that he sees this as an opportunity for MICRA to advance a good leadership role for the rivers of the Basin and to provide a forum for the exchange of information on the project level. He said we may need to have a habitat conference or symposia annually to share ideas and what we have learned. He said we need to support the UMRCC in the Long Term UMR Environmental Management Program, and to support the LMRCC in their resource assessment project. Rasmussen said that we had attempted several years ago to get involved with the LMRCC habitat assessment process to make it a template for the Basin, but that we had been politely asked to "butt out", so he wasn't sure how MICRA could best work with that process. Armstrong said that we need to elevate MICRA's visibility among state fish managers, and even elevate MICRA to the level of a fishery commission. Rasmussen said that the latter would be a good way to enhance MICRA's position and to get it into the federal budget process. A short discussion followed on the mechanics of a fishery commission and the pros and cons of such an organization. It was agreed that we need to focus a future meeting on that subject.

Nygren said that we are on board now with the Midwest through our membership on the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Association, but that we are not that far along with the Southeast yet. Armstrong said we need to be on the agenda at the Southeast, we need to become a household word with the states, and we need your input on this. He also said that with the consent of the Executive Board he would like to revise our newsletter and our budget to incorporate a more formal budget process. He said that we have done a lot of good things in the past, but that we are at a crossroads now -- we've done a lot with ANS issues, but are poised now to look at what else we can focus on.

Chris O'Bara (WV/ORFMT) said that mussels should be included in any vision statement for MICRA. Ron Benjamin (WI/UMRCC) said that the UMRCC went through this process, and in the end rather than focusing on species went toward a focus on ecosystem restoration. He said that when you talk to the publics around the country they know about the everglades, but not necessarily about the Mississippi River, so we need to capture a sense of place for the Mississippi River Basin. We have the political clout, he said. For example, he said some \$150-190 million a year is spent on Operation & Maintenance of the UMR navigation system, and more people come to the UMR than go to Yellowstone National Park. Rasmussen said that the original focus of MICRA was on fishery management, but the long term vision included the possibility of expanding to a larger vision.

O'Bara expressed concern that we didn't want to lose our direction. Armstrong agreed that for now we should stay in our comfort zone. He said he is less comfortable talking about water quality issues, and said that he feels we should stay focused on fisheries and perhaps even consider moving toward the status of a fishery commission as mentioned before. Rasmussen said that we had considered this before, but didn't pursue it. Gerry Jackson (FWS) said that commissions are driven by an issue, that's how they are formed. In the case of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC) the issue was the infestation of the

sea lamprey, and in the case of the Atlantic States Marine Fishery Commission the issue was concern for the striped bass. Nygren said we do need an issue, and Michael Mac (USGS) said he thinks that we have one in the Asian carp. O'Bara said that if that's the way we want to go, we need to follow a model. He said he likes the idea of MICRA being more of a clearing house for work. He said the Ohio River group could gain a lot from talking to the UMRCC folks. He said organizations die by projects, but live by concepts. Jackson said the GLFC is a good model. Decisions are made through technical committees and commissioners are appointed by the President. He said that designation as a Commission gives an organization a lot of status, but they come with Administration constraints and political dynamics. But technical committees inform all of the decisions, and in the case of the GLFC decisions are made on the science, not the politics. Mac said there have been times when different states have disagreed on issues. Jackson agreed that you will not get into "lock sink" on issues, and there is room for dissent, but a lot of that gets worked out at the technical levels. Nygren wondered if the GLFC had solutions to the sea lamprey problem or were they in need of a solution. Jackson said that lake trout populations were decimated, there were contaminants issues, and a good bit of research was done through the GLFC. He said that the sea lamprey pheromone work evolved over fifty years, the science just gets better and better and better. That was the key to putting that fishery back on a healthy footing. Healthy populations of lake trout now occur in Lake Superior and the fishery is worth about \$16 million a year. The GLFC is also very active in Great Lakes ANS issues.

O'Bara wondered how the UMR works. Benjamin said it is very similar to a Commission. He said the Fish and Wildlife Work Group is very similar to a Great Lakes technical committee. He said there can be 50 people in the room, and sometimes these meetings are very productive, sometimes not. This is where it's all worked out. He said there are still fishery contingents and wildlife contingents, but the differences get blended as it goes up. He said he has no problem with MICRA continuing to focus on fisheries. He said the UMRCC has been in place for about 60 years. As far as the UMR Environmental Management Program goes, its history lies in a Wisconsin lawsuit against the Corps of Engineers. O'Bara said we need to move MICRA to the next level, but we need a model. Benjamin said that the UMR Basin Association is a model, but Jackson said the Basin Association deals with a whole different set of issues. Steve Adams (KS/MRNRC) said that a proposal had been put forward to merge the MRNRC with Missouri River Association, but that the MRNRC members didn't think that would be appropriate because of the threat that the natural resource interests would get too diluted. Rasmussen agreed that the MRNRC needs to be careful that it not lose its focus. Mac said there is nothing to keep you from doing other things if you are a fishery commission. Jackson said that just about every group like this is generated from a crisis, and that Asian carp clearly is an attention getter that could threaten the life blood of the MR. He said he knew that there are few in Congress who have not heard of the Asian carp issue. That's not the only issue, but may be the foil that causes fishery commission discussions to occur. Greg Conover (FWS) said we need to think broadly on habitat issues as well. Jackson said that funding is starting to flow on habitat projects, especially to the brook trout, and some to the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership. He said that a good case could be made to frame up habitat issues around a charismatic species in the Mississippi River Basin (MRB). He said that the MRB forms the heart of America, and that large rivers and tributaries form the life blood of the lower 48 states. The question is how to organize all of the issues. Certainly, he said, we should be able to put together some joint ventures in the MRB.

Adams wondered how commissioners are appointed and how many there are. Jackson said that they are all presidential appointments, and 6-8 would probably be appointed for an area the size of the MRB. He said that by-laws scope out where the commissioners would come from, and that perhaps the MICRA states could help define where that would be. Rasmussen said that Stan Moberly had expressed interest in working with MICRA to pursue commission status, and that when we are ready for that we should contact him. Benjamin said that with the GLFC most of the nuts and bolts management issues are solved before they reach the Presidential appointees. Jackson agreed and said that the GLFC Fish Health Committee advises the FWS on what to do if we have a disease at a hatchery, so the states would need to

be aware that this is the sort of thing you buy into with commission status. Mac agreed that we have certain issues for example with stocking, and that may be a tough sell for all the states if some of their decision making powers were taken away. Jackson said that if a commission were formed it would likely start out with a much narrower focus than it may have in the future. Armstrong said he didn't think we were at the point of securing a fishery commission, but we are at the scoping level. He suggested that maybe at our next meeting we could have someone talk about the commission process. Perhaps someone from the GLFC or even Moberly could put some thoughts down on what authorities would remain with the states and what authorities wouldn't. Jackson said that getting everybody pulling together would certainly create some political clout. He said the GLFC has only 8 states and a \$4-5 billion dollar fishery, where there would be multiples of that in the MRB.

Nygren said that the Asian carp issue is out there, but we also have the problem of aging of the federal reservoir systems. That may be another issue that we may want to take up. Rasmussen said that is certainly a habitat issue. It was agreed that we need to scope out the different models for a commission, and to talk with Moberly about what steps we would have to go through, and maybe we could be ready to support something like that within the next two years. In the meantime, we need to discuss this issue with the various NGOs, the IAFWA and other organizations, including the Mississippi River Congressional Task Force. It was generally agreed that we need a lot of additional discussion on this issue. We need a much stronger sense of the range of possibilities and what the road map would look like to get to fishery commission status, or something of that nature.

Armstrong said that we also need to bring MICRA into a closer association with the sub basins. He said he plans to attend each sub basin committee meeting and discuss the long range future of MICRA, including scoping out the possibility of a more secure funding source. He said we need to assert a leadership role for MICRA in the National Habitat Initiative (NHI), promoting discussions with the sub basin units. O'Bara said that when talking to the sub basin groups we need to identify and articulate our shared resource issues, and if we do that well we will see more support from some of the sub basin states.

Armstrong said that our newsletter is our window to the world of how people looking at MICRA see us. What they read in newsletter is MICRA. He said he was very impressed with the breadth of readership that we have as shown by our "2003 and 2004 Reader's Surveys", and that several of the responses were from folks that didn't affiliate with any agency, including a U.S. District Attorney -- who would have thought that. He said we have a lot of people reading the newsletter and it is a part of their job. He said the newsletter needs to be informative to members of MICRA, who are our principle audience. But if it is useful to others we can't leave those readers behind. He said that going all the way down to the guy pulling the nets it has to be accurate. He said that our credibility has been challenged on how accurate we portray information in it. Our information has to be factual. He said that he had some ideas on what we might do to move it towards a change in format. He said that we should use *River Crossings* as a vehicle to get a routine message out -- what is important to us in 2005. He said we need to include a chairman's message in it. He said we need to use it as a way that the sub basins can elevate work items to other sub basins. Rasmussen said that in the past he had asked for input from the sub basins, but nothing ever comes in. Armstrong said there is value in knowing what the Ohio River is doing to us on the lower river. He also suggested that there would be value in seeking guest opinion articles. He said he was pleased that Hugh Warren, *Catfish Farmers of America*, had returned a copy of our Reader's Survey. He said we need to carefully define what is factual and what is not for the newsletter. Rasmussen said that we have an excellent record with the newsletter's accuracy because in 14 years of publication we have only received one concern and that one concern was regarding a small part of an article that discussed the history of development of triploidy in catfish. When the error was pointed out, he said, a correction was printed immediately in the next newsletter.

Armstrong said that some catfish farmers questioned the use of the word "voracious" with reference to describing the Asian carp's feeding habits. Marion Conover (IA) said of course they feel that way, but if something grows to 80 lbs in two years they may or may not be voracious. He said in the Reader's Survey he saw one negative comment from a reader in Ohio, but 99% of the input encouraged us to keep up the good work. Rasmussen said that he has conducted Reader's Surveys every two years since we began publishing the newsletter, and they have all come in with similar results. Also, he said that he has constantly used suggestions to improve both its format and content, and that if use of the word "voracious" is used by someone in a cited article we can't just change it to fit someone else's comfort level. He also said that inclusion of "guest opinion" articles could quickly get out of hand. Conover said that he has seen a change in the newsletter since the black carp issue. O'Bara said that much of the newsletter is taken out of other published sources, and it is not our problem if we quote someone else. Conover said that not all ideas are good ideas, and everyone can have an opinion, so he would be opposed to guest editorials. He said he'd rather see some factual information from the catfish industry about how large the industry is, or something from them about their beliefs on various subjects. Adams asked if the catfish industry has ever asked to submit an article to *River Crossings*. Rasmussen said no they have not. Adams said that every newspaper is going to reflect the opinions of the editor, but that the editorial page goes way beyond that, and he would not support opening *River Crossings* up to becoming a "he said, she said" kind of document.

Armstrong said he would like to see *River Crossings* published more along the model of what the American Fisheries Society does with its publication, *Fisheries*, where there is an open debate between professionals. He said that Arkansas took exception to how MICRA handled the black carp issue. Adams said he has heard no complaints from the Missouri River sub basin. He said there's a retired barge captain in Sioux City, Iowa who shows up at every meeting, and he will tell you that he represents the barge industry. But the barge people deny it, so those kinds of people are out there, and how do we weed out who represents what.

Nygren suggested that we look at some sort of discussion forum on the MICRA web site. He suggested that we may want to capture the first few sentences from various newsletter articles on the web site to get more exposure. He said that the search engines look for changes on web sites, and the more they change the more the search engine focuses on them. Rasmussen suggested that a discussion forum among members could also be handled over a List Server, or we could redesign the Web Site to allow for Nygren's suggestion. Armstrong said what he is really talking about is repackaging the newsletter. He said the newsletter should reflect MICRA positions, we as natural resource managers have a role to be informative, but also have a role of advancing what that policy ought to be. Facts are not advocacy. Rasmussen said that if the newsletter only reflected MICRA positions or activities, there wouldn't be much to include. He said what he has tried to do is to provide news from across the Basin so that readers could see the issues that are out there in the press. Some are not MICRA issues, but in some cases maybe they should be, and some readers have expressed appreciation for that.

O'Bara said that maybe each newsletter could have a sub basin theme, but we would need to put together a schedule for newsletter input. Rasmussen said that that would be easy enough to do. He said he needs input by the 15th of the month before the newsletter goes to the printer, so in other words he would need input by the 15th of the month in January, March, May, July, September and November. Armstrong said he likes the sub basin theme. Benjamin said that the UMRCC sends the whole newsletter out to the whole executive board, but probably only a couple of members have time to look at it. Conover suggested that just the chairman review it. Benjamin said that the UMRCC is erring on the side of conservancy. O'Bara said he wouldn't have to review the whole newsletter. He said he thinks we have all been misquoted from time to time in the press, so doesn't see that as such a big deal. Armstrong said we do need to engage the sub basins, but that we probably shouldn't pursue the guest opinions. He said we could also dedicate the newsletter to various themes, for example habitat or ANS, inviting particular

articles. He said he would like to have Carole Engle write about her role in bighead carp. O'Bara agreed to provide input from the Ohio River for the May/June newsletter. Rasmussen said he would need that input by May 15.

Armstrong said one thing that we really need to do is to engage MICRA in the NHI. Nygren wondered about the status of the NHI. Jackson said that Doug Austen in Pennsylvania is chairing it, and that we need to be there right away standing in line. He said that a smattering of money came in last year, and about \$160,000 of that was from the FWS. He said the FWS is putting the 2007 budget together right now, trying to get the money in place so the NHI plan can catch up to it. Conover said that he could see the USEPA involved as well, and that MICRA can become a member of that group. O'Bara wondered if anyone involved is focusing on big rivers. Conover said that Don Bonneau in Iowa has been involved. Jackson said that the FWS is the lead federal agency on this, and that the money will come in under joint ventures. The key for MICRA is how we might want to organize it. He suggested that we call Doug and get somebody on that team.

Nygren then turned the conversation over to a discussion of issues related to funding for the river coordinators (UMRCC, LMRCC, MRNRC and MICRA). Benjamin brought copies of a letter from FWS Region 3 Regional Director Robyn Thorson to the UMRCC on their coordinator situation (copy attached). He said that the UMRCC was organized in 1943, and that the FWS has provided a coordinator for about 45 years. He said that the UMRCC coordinates and integrates UMR natural resource management. He said that technical committees develop the issues and forward them to the Executive Board for action. He said that about 4-5 years ago the FWS became very worried about advocacy and coordination, and gradually drew time away from the coordination effort. He said that the FWS also had some personnel issues. He said that they rewrote the position description (PD) so that the coordinator wouldn't write letters to Congress. He said that either the states or the FWS can eliminate the Coordinator with 30 days notice, and that now the FWS has said that they wish to withdraw from the agreement, and that all of the UMRCC states are concerned.

Conover said that the day this letter was faxed to the states, he had talked with Region Director Thorson, one on one, about UMRCC and MRNRC positions, and that she said she didn't know where the rumor was coming from that the FWS wants to pull out of the agreements. He said that apparently she wasn't telling the truth and that the five state directors in the UMRCC need to talk with her about this. He said we shouldn't have to jump this high over this issue. Benjamin said that there is no advocacy in the PD, and we need to recognize that Region 3 is dealing with several of the Coordinators. Conover said that Thorson should feel embarrassed about the letter. Benjamin said that he brought this up to MICRA because he wanted everyone to know right where we are on this, so that maybe we could defend against it happening to the other river coordinators. Armstrong said that another issue is that even though the PD says you will get 50% of the person's time, you're really only getting about 5%. He said further that we're not getting what we need, and we need to be aware of it. Benjamin said that he was under the impression that Assistant Regional Director Charlie Wooley was going to be handling this. Adams said we need a letter from MICRA in support of the MRNRC position, so that the FWS doesn't pull out of that agreement too. Conover said that he would support such a letter for both the MRNRC and the UMRCC. Adams said that the FWS is getting decimated by the Corps on the Missouri River, and Conover said that FWS has thanked Iowa for what we've done to save the DeSoto Bend National Wildlife Refuge. He said that he wouldn't want to be a FWS employee working on the Missouri River right now. It was agreed that MICRA would send a letter to the FWS expressing our concern regarding this issue and our support for the river coordinator functions for MICRA and for the Upper Mississippi, Lower Mississippi, and Missouri rivers. This letter will be directed to Washington, D.C. praising regions 3 and 4 for their past support, but expressing concern for the future and encouraging involvement of other regions in supporting this function.

Chairman Nygren then directed discussions to a marketing effort proposed by Benjamin for the MRB. Benjamin said that with the NHI underway MICRA needs to begin marketing the MRB as a unit. He said that a UMR document entitled, "*A Working River and A River That Works*" has been very useful in marketing the UMR. He said that the UMRCC has worked with the Audubon Society to develop ten objectives for use on the UMR. He said that the Corps of Engineers took that document and used it as have others. He said that five people wrote this document and that it is driving a lot of things that are going on out there. He said that this is something that we could do on a larger scale for the Basin. He said that the McKnight Foundation is working on a grant for developing such a document. Issues such as concerns for the Mississippi River delta, floodplain management, ANS etc. all need attention. If we could do this for the Basin, he said, we could do ourselves a big favor. These issues are way bigger than the UMRCC or any other sub basin group can handle. This is really a MICRA issue. He said that he just wanted to plant the seed for MICRA to do this. He said that the McKnight Foundation started when the McKnight family sold the 3M company and set a big chunk of money aside to fund these kinds of things. Armstrong agreed that we need to identify and articulate common threads or principles that stretch throughout the Basin for inclusion in such a document. He said that he liked the idea. Benjamin said that on the UMR we took out some of the controversial items and went with the motherhood and apple pie approach. Armstrong said that he would talk to Ron Nasser, LMRCC Coordinator, about what was used on the LMR. Benjamin said that he felt that the ground is fertile for this, and he said we need to use simple, easy to understand language that a 6th grader can read. Armstrong agreed that we need more pictures and less text. This forces us to boil down our issues and to get the sub basins involved.

Armstrong said that another issue he would like to raise regarding the MICRA budget is his travel. He said that he would like to attend all of the sub basin group meetings, and that in so doing MICRA could support that travel or Arkansas could increase its dues contribution to \$2500 to help cover some of those expenses. He said that it is difficult to get travel approval otherwise. He said that it would be much easier for him to travel under the MICRA umbrella than under the Arkansas system. Benjamin said that he was o.k. with either option. He said that it was important to the UMRCC that Armstrong came to their meeting. Conover said that he attended sub basin meetings during his term as chairman, and in some cases didn't feel that welcomed. All agreed that MICRA would support a portion of Armstrong's travel to the sub basin group meetings.

The meeting adjourned for the day at 5:30 p.m.

April 7, 2005

Chairman Nygren began the meeting with a discussion of the status of the Asian Carp Management Plan. Greg Conover (FWS), Asian Carp Working Group Chairman, said that there was not a whole lot of new information to provide. He said that the goals and objectives of the plan were the same as in the fall. He said that in January the Working Group started to focus on the plan and that the timeline is on schedule. He said that work will continue on the draft plan through April and May when he expects the six drafting teams to finish their individual work. He said that in June the Working Group will then compile the drafting team sections, introduction, and appendices into a single document and edit the compiled draft. He said that he plans to have the draft plan out to the Working Group for review July 1. In August, the drafting teams will address comments from the Working Group and revise the document as needed. Once the necessary revisions are made, the plan will be submitted to the ANS Task Force (ANSTF) in Sept for consideration at their fall meeting, probably in October. Conover said that his understanding is that when the plan is presented to the ANSTF for consideration at the next ANSTF meeting, the plan will also be put on the ANSTF web site. Conover said he would let us know when that happens. He said that MICRA will want to review the document as soon as it hits the web site so that the MICRA Chairman can carry our concerns forward to the ANSTF at the fall meeting

He said that he knows of no additional information available on the listing of Asian carp on the FWS list of injurious species. He said that he has heard that one listing may be just around the corner from various sources since last fall, so who knows what that really means. Conover said that he inquired about the economic impact data that was being collected as part of the listing process because that information is also needed for the management and control plan. Conover said he was informed that an economic analysis for bighead carp had been contracted externally and that economic analyses for injurious species listing only consider the economic impact of the listing. He said he didn't know if that meant that only the economic impacts from the point of listing would be considered or if the analysis also considers impacts that occurred from the point of invasion to the point of listing. Benjamin expressed concern about any economic analysis that only looks at the economics impact from the point of an injurious species listing. He further pointed out how much economic damage may have already occurred and that this should be considered in the economic analysis. O'Bara said that if that's so, the economic analysis would be totally opposed to listing. Rasmussen expressed concern for uninfected watersheds. He said that as long as live haul of Asian carp is legal, every watershed in the country is at risk. He said further that if the economic analysis only looks at the impact of listing on the fish farming industry, the issue could be thrown into another cycle of document preparation in order to look at all of the economic impacts. This, of course, would lead to another delay in listing which only plays into the hands of those wishing more time to sell and distribute more Asian carp. Conover reminded the group that he could not speak to the injurious species listings, but wanted to point out the need for economic impact information for the management and control plan.

Conover said that he cannot provide copies of the management plan to MICRA before it goes to the ANSTF, but reminded the group that the plan should be available to the public from the ANSTF website prior to the fall ANSTF meeting. Conover said that Working Group members could ask for input from their constituents, but that copies of the plan are only to be provided to Working Group members before it is submitted to the ANSTF. Conover said that the fall ANSTF meeting will likely be in Washington, D.C. and that he anticipates a comment period to begin in December or January, based on the current timeline that the Working Group has proposed. Armstrong said that he would need MICRA input before the ANSTF meeting. O'Bara said that one way to get around any problems with getting an advanced copy would be for Nygren to formally request at the May ANSTF meeting that MICRA be allowed to review the plan when it is provided out to the Working Group for comment. It seems reasonable that we should get a copy of the draft plan since several of the Working Group members are also MICRA members, so MICRA should be allowed to funnel comments back through our members to the Working Group. Conover stated that because he cannot provide the document outside of the Working Group that if MICRA wanted to have the opportunity to view the plan before it becomes available on the website, that this is exactly how MICRA should proceed, i.e. MICRA chairman should petition the Task Force with this request at the Spring meeting. Conover said that because the management plan is a collaborative effort through the Working Group that it shouldn't include any real surprises to anyone. Conover stated that the management plan is different from the risk assessments process. The risk assessments are part of the injurious species listing process and Washington is keeping them close until any rulings are proposed. This will not be the case with the management plan. At the time the plan is submitted to the ANSTF for consideration during the Fall meeting, the plan should be made available to the public at the ANSTF website. Armstrong said that a leak of the risk assessment to Canadians was an issue with catfish industry personnel. Mac said that the Risk Assessment will be handled like a scientific report under a different peer review process.

Conover said that the Management Plan should be looked at as a dynamic document. He said that as chair he will transition from developing the plan to coordinating its implementation. He said that Gerry Jackson has already asked for some 2007 budget estimates for the plan implementation measures. Benjamin said that we need to aim high on funding needs. Conover said that although the draft plan will be available in July, the Working Group remains open for discussion and ideas on how to develop the

implementation section. He said we need to develop and execute funding agreements, develop tools for coordination, develop need statements, and develop measurable objectives that are prioritized. He said that he sees the need for an integrated pest control plan comparable to the sea lamprey control program. Conover stated that we should focus on containment and prevention first and then look to controlling populations. He said we may end up with measures to contain their spread and then knock populations back beginning at the edges. Mac wondered if we have an information network out there yet. Conover said that we have nothing formalized across the basin. He said that bait bucket transfer is a big concern as is wild harvest and spread by commercial bait dealers. O'Bara said that the containment issue will likely first be addressed with cooperation from the bait industry. Conover said that with regard to the live haul issue one of the most effective things that states can do if they wish to prevent live haul is to follow the Illinois lead and list them as injurious species within the state. If states are interested in seeing the Service list Asian carp as Injurious Wildlife, Conover suggested that the states should take action to list the species at the state level and not wait to see what happens with the proposed Federal listings. O'Bara said that the problem with that is that they can still transport them through your state even though they are listed as injurious in your state. Conover said that if there are no live markets that can be distributed to, then there will not be a need to haul live fish through states without them. He said that live haul is going to be the stickler, and that the plan can't be innocuous and still have any value. The long term solution is to work with the aquaculture industry to develop alternative species.

Rasmussen said that the plan needs to contain an institutional arrangements section, and this may be a place where a Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission could come into play. As far as funding goes he said that since the Department of Agriculture (USDA) is the agency responsible for the fish culture industry, they should be responsible for funding the recovery from fish culture industry actions. He said this is very similar to navigation, where the Corps funds the recovery or mitigation, in part, through transfer funding to the U.S. Department of the Interior FWS and the states. He said that while much of the Asian carp problem came out of work conducted at the Stuttgart Fish Farming Station, which used to be a FWS function, that function has been with the USDA for at least 25 years, so that agency should bear the burden of funding the solution. Mac said that so far USDA has ducked this issue. Benjamin said we need these arrangements spelled out. Armstrong wondered if since he is on the implementation drafting team will he be able to share drafts of the plan with other MICRA members. Mac said you can solicit input, but soliciting a formal review is an entirely different thing. Benjamin said that there are institutional arrangements sections in the "Working River" document and the navigation study that might give you some ideas for development of the plan. Conover said that the plan can identify the need to develop an institutional arrangements agreement, but it may be that the specifics of an institutional arrangements plan come later.

Conover said that use of diploid grass carp is still allowed in IA, MO, KS, OK, AR, MS, AL, HI, and eastern CO; and that grass carp are completely banned in MT, ND, MN, WI, MI, ME, MD, VT, NH, AK. The other states allow only triploid grass carp. He said it would be good leadership and responsible stewardship for natural resources management agencies to require the use of triploids where diploids are currently authorized -- we need to encourage the best available technology everywhere that grass carp are stocked. Grass carp are widely available and heavily utilized. He suspects that some private pond owners may be purchasing diploid fish from neighboring states and importing them back into states that require triploids or completely ban grass carp. He suggested that we should be ensuring that any grass carp stocked in the U.S. is sterile, or effectively sterile, and that even if triploidy is not 100% successful we should be stocking a less fertile option if it is available. Conover also said that if we ever hope to control or eliminate wild reproducing populations we must first stop stocking diploid fish. We should not throw our hands in the air and continue to allow the stocking of diploids because they are everywhere. Benjamin agreed because clearly the grass carp aren't everywhere yet. Conover added that triploid technology also needs to be better understood, some people don't believe in it, and little is published in the peer reviewed literature on its effectiveness. Mac said that his lab is looking at the effectiveness of

triploidy in bighead carp right now. Conover said that a FWS program for triploid grass carp allows the FWS to collect fees for an inspection service. Nygren said that Kansas has been giving serious consideration toward going with triploidy. However, he said that there are some political problems with producers in our state. He said further that Kansas gets all of its grass carp from Arkansas. Armstrong said that the cost is roughly \$3.00 for triploid vs. \$1.00 for diploid grass carp. He said further that the FWS inspection program has some holes in it because it is not designed to be 100% effective since a sampling protocol is used instead of checking every fish for its ploidy. Conover said that he was brought in as an inspector in 1997, and he feels that the Program would benefit from an independent scientific review from a group such as the American Fisheries Society. Such a review should help to strengthen the program and to provide confidence to the states and others that the program is effective.

Nygren said that Bobby Reed could not attend the meeting because his son was home on leave from the marines, but he did send along a report from the committee (copy attached). He said that as for action items the report proposes relocation of the paddlefish national tagging data base center from the FWS Carterville Fisheries Resources Office (CFRO) to the Columbia Fisheries Resources Office. O'Bara said it would be nice to have the paddlefish database online on an FTP site as an updated Excel spreadsheet. He said that an SQL database allows for this and for several people to be working on line at once, and that it's easy to shift the database over from Microsoft Access to SQL. Nygren agreed that an SQL engine is built into Access. Conover said that Joanne Grady will be back from maternity leave in 4-6 weeks, and that when she gets back all data and tag reading responsibilities will be transferred to Columbia. Conover said that we need clarification on future budget needs from the Committee because 10k of the budget is for CFRO to read Coded Wire Tags (CWTs) in 2005, funds that his office will not be requesting in 2006. He is not sure if Columbia FRO intends to request those funds in 2006.

Benjamin said that the UMR sturgeon project came about as a result of the increase in shovelnose sturgeon harvest that we're seeing because of the caviar market. He said that the project is proposed as a 5-year study using PIT tags. He said that Wisconsin will tag thousands of fish this year, and that Iowa, Illinois and Missouri will be involved as well. He said that the UMRCC has put \$5,000.00 into the project. O'Bara said that it would be worthwhile for MICRA to pursue a PIT tag data base. Benjamin said that Wisconsin is getting zero CWT returns from commercial fishermen, so they prefer PIT tags where you can go right to the fish market and scan for the tags. Armstrong said that his state is about to start a sturgeon study on the White River, and that he would like to see the databases compared. Conover said that his office has a sturgeon tag database for the Ohio River basin and recently met with Missouri to expand the database to incorporate the UMRCC sturgeon study. Conover said that it would likely be possible for the sturgeon tag database to be easily modified so that it would serve the entire Mississippi River Basin.

O'Bara said that we need to continue using CWTs for paddlefish stocking, but jaw tags may prove more useful for tagging adults. He also said that there may be a problem with retention of the CWTs. He said that there is a real need for the other sub basins to take a hard look at their data. Conover said that Grady recently provided an updated copy of the database that includes all paddlefish data collected from 1995 – 2004. Conover said that the sub-basins are working to develop sub basin reports and that once the sub-basins have worked with their data the committee will want to take a hard look at the study to determine if the project is providing the data necessary to answer the questions the study was intended to answer, if the study objectives have been accomplished or changed, and does the protocol need updated. He said that the Service will deliver an annual report again in 2005, but this would be a summary report similar to those developed several years ago and will contain little data analysis. O'Bara said that he thinks Grady's final report will be the database. Benjamin said we need a report which summarizes the data. Conover said that the sub basin reports were intended to be brought together into a compilation report, but at this point only the Ohio River sub-basin report has been completed. Benjamin said that the UMRCC wanted Ann Runstrom (FWS) to do the UMR report, but then she went on maternity leave. The question arose as

to whether or not we should continue to fund the study without a completed data analysis. Benjamin said that the money has always been there, but if the message is sent that the money may be in jeopardy, a report will come. O'Bara made and Mac seconded a motion that the paddlefish/sturgeon committee receive no additional funding for the paddlefish project until a report is prepared and submitted that documents: current paddlefish population status, summarizes harvest information, summarizes movement information, summarizes findings, and makes recommendations for the future. Such a report should be completed by the end of calendar year 2005. O'Bara said that the ORFMT has made arguments to the Committee for the need for such a report, so until we see that report, we should tell them not to ask for any more money. The motion passed unanimously. Mac said that we need actual data analysis, not just a summary of what we did for ten years. Benjamin said that the report needs to come from both Bobby and the Sub Basin members. Conover reminded the group that Grady is out on maternity leave until mid May.

With regard to the proposed sturgeon study (copy attached), Benjamin recommended that we send the proposal back requesting specific goal and objective statements, time frames, and deliverables. O'Bara said that they also need to talk to the other the sub basins. Armstrong said that Missouri just had a discussion with Arkansas regarding a Middle Mississippi River sturgeon project. Rasmussen said that with our current budget situation and fact that we have lost some dues payers, MICRA shouldn't be viewed as a funding agency. We need to more aggressively look for outside funding sources. Others agreed. Mac said that we should encourage the sturgeon biologists to get together and develop a real good proposal to go forward. O'Bara said that at the next MICRA meeting we could put some time together on what each sub basin is doing. That could be a major focus of the next meeting. He said that it is possible to fund some of this work through joint federal aid project, but that it is often too much of an administrative hassle to do. Nygren said that we did this for the aquaculture drug project, each state drew on a \$20k budget. Benjamin said that MICRA could provide a central facility for a data base. Mac said that there are other sources of funding that could be had, and it could involve two regions within the USGS. A contact for that would be Doug Beard with the USGS National Biological Information Structure. O'Bara said MICRA really doesn't have the capability to fund research. Mac said that just bringing the different basins together is important. Armstrong suggested that we might also collaborate with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Benjamin said that he would get back to the UMRCC on this project.

Austin provided a summary of the Gamefish Committee activities (copy attached). He said that a meeting was held at the Midwest in December, but that only he and Rasmussen attended. He said that the Committee has a list of eight projects, but that we didn't have enough people at the meeting for a review, so he came back and did it by email. He said that he got 13 surveys back, and that the top ranking project was the sauger management project. He said that most reviewers thought we should proceed with the work. He said that another project would identify and assess sport fishery nursery habitat on large rivers. As for the Sauger Management Investigation, it has been tweaked a little, but is basically the same as was presented in Little Rock (copy attached). He said that Scott Gritters (IA) is really fired up about this. He said that we do have a proposal and if we don't do this then what can we do? O'Bara said that a good socio-economic study would be very useful. He said maybe we need to go to a funding group for this. If we could show how valuable these sport fish are, then more support should be made valuable. Nygren said that it might be good to bounce this off of the American Sportfishing Association (ASA). He said that they have been working on trends, equipment sales, etc., and that a call to Rob Southwick on this might be in order. Austin said that he would look into the top two or three projects for a future meeting. He said we are looking at \$20,000 for the sauger project, and the project would involve a graduate student at some college or university. He said the project would be put out for a bid, and that South Dakota State University (SDSU), Tennessee Technological University and Southern Illinois University are potential contractors. Armstrong said that the Coop Units may not be able to compete in a bidding process. Nygren said we could put it out on an RFP to universities we identify and also in an email and on the web

site. O'Bara said that this is pretty much a paper exercise that maybe we should just send it to SDSU since they are already doing some of this. He said he didn't see a graduate student doing the work, and that he doesn't see \$20k worth of work here. Benjamin suggested that competition may reduce the budget. O'Bara said that he'd like to see us fund this at a lesser amount and then see what else we need to do. A lot of what we've done on the Ohio River is already here in this proposal. He said he thinks that \$3-5k would fund this as a pilot project. Armstrong suggested that maybe Austin should go to SDSU and see what we can get done for our money. Austin said that Chuck Berry at SDSU has already done some of this work. O'Bara said we could then develop a proposal from the SDSU work. Armstrong moved that Austin go to SDSU to review the proposal and come up with a budget estimate. Benjamin second and all agreed.

Nygren said that Freshwater Mussel Committee chairman Hubbs could not attend the meeting and did not forward a report for Board review.

Nygren then shifted discussions to the sub basin reports. Benjamin said that he will send in a written report of UMRCC activities for the file (copy attached). Adams said that an MRNRC report had already been submitted by email (copy attached). O'Bara also said that he would send in a written report for the ORFMT. Armstrong also agreed to submit a written report for the LMRCC. Bobby Reed (LA/Arkansas-Red River) was not in attendance so an oral report was not given. Also Bill Reeves (TN/Tennessee River) was not in attendance and did not submit a report. Others reviewed their respective reports. Armstrong said that Paul Riser will come to the next MICRA meeting to represent the LMRCC.

Nygren then discussed the request for funding assistance from the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Armstrong moved that we contribute \$100 to the Southeastern in order to stay on their radar screen. Benjamin second. All supported.

Nygren then turned the discussion to the National Watershed Coalition call for support for NRCS funding. Nygren said this that he was not familiar with the organization and that this looked like a call for support for the P.L. 566 program. Armstrong said that he would prefer MICRA just kind of stay out of this issue. Mac wondered if MICRA should get into advocacy. He said he thinks it is something we need to talk about. Should we have a formal process for supporting federal funding? He said that MICRA support for the USGS Asian carp work did have meaning and that these letters would likely have meaning to others as well. Armstrong said we run the risk of diluting our effectiveness if we jump on every band wagon that comes along. Mac said that if we want to do this we should have a more formalized process. Benjamin said that he didn't feel qualified to jump on this issue right now. It was agreed that no action should be taken at this time.

Nygren then asked for discussion on the issue of support for our river coordinators. Adams moved that a MICRA letter be sent to the FWS saying that we support continued funding of the Coordinators for the Sub Basin groups as well as for MICRA. He said that we need to target the Director of the FWS with copies to the 5 regions. Mac agreed that we need to share the burden between all of the regions. Benjamin seconded the motion. All supported it.

Nygren then turned discussion to the request for MICRA's participation in the American Fisheries Society/Sea Grant Symposium on cooperative programs to be held at the annual AFS meeting in Anchorage, AK. Nygren said that Norm Stucky has asked that his name be removed from consideration for such a presentation since he has been gone from MICRA for some time. Rasmussen said that he had been asked to fill out a questionnaire for the project online, which he had done, and that he had recommended that several of the present and past chairmen also be contacted. Apparently, no one else had been contacted on the issue. Rasmussen read the contents of a letter from Carlos Fetterolf describing the requested participation (copy attached). Armstrong volunteered to make the presentation unless

Nygren wanted to. He said that MICRA has grown and that while we don't always agree we have found ways to operate. Nygren agreed that we need to do this, but didn't know whether he was going to attend the meeting or not. He said it is a little more difficult to get state funding, and that he had already alerted his administration of this, but said, "If Armstrong wanted to take the lead on this, be my guest". Armstrong suggested that we have a backup plan for funding. Mac said it will probably take \$2,000 to do this. He then moved that MICRA subsidize the trip. Benjamin second, and all agreed. Armstrong agreed that Arkansas would pay his per diem and MICRA would pay his airfare, and that because of his participation he would request a comp on the registration. Armstrong will prepare a Power Point presentation for all to review. Rasmussen agreed to send him a past presentation to work from.

Armstrong then presented Nygren with a plaque in appreciation of his service as chairman. Nygren's term will not end until June 30, but the plaque was presented anyway since the Board would not meet again before that time.

The discussion then led to a time and place for the next meeting. It was agreed that it is best for MICRA to not try to "piggy back" on other meetings. This often leads to time and travel conflicts. Armstrong suggested Shreveport, LA as a location, but others suggested a more accessible location such as New Orleans to reduce air travel. Armstrong agreed to talk to Reed about a winter meeting in the south. Agenda items will include: detailed sub basin discussions, discussions regarding moving MICRA to commission status, the NHI, the Asian carp work group product, and the paddlefish project. It was agreed that it may be beneficial for us to tie into the paddlefish/sturgeon committee meeting time and place.

Conover brought to the group's attention and requested assistance regarding the need for field biologist to provide distribution information on all Asian carps to Valerie Barko (MDC) who is developing a distribution model this year. Conover also informed the group that he has requested Barko and her co-collaborators that once the distribution model is completed, to then further develop the distribution database/model into a Decision Support System (DSS) for the maintenance, removal, and construction of barriers in the UMR to prevent the continued upstream distribution of Asian carps. Barko and Conover are working to identify a source of funding to develop the DSS.

The meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

**MICRA Executive Board Meeting
April 6-7, 2005
Kansas City, KS**

Attendance List

<u>Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>Email</u>
Kyle Austin	Kansas Dept. of Wildlife & Parks	kylee@wp.state.ks.us
Ron Benjamin	WI/UMRCC	ron.benjamin@dnr.state.wi.us
Chris O'Bara	WV/ORFMT	cobara@dnr.state.wv.us
Michael Mac	U.S. Geological Survey/BRD	dchapman@usgs.gov
Greg Conover	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	greg_conover@fws.gov
Michael Armstrong	LMRCC/Arkansas Red River Committee	marmstron@state.ar.us
Gerry Jackson	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	gerry_jackson@fws.gov
Mike Oetker	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	mike_oetker@fws.gov
Doug Nygren	Kansas Dept. of Wildlife & Parks	dougn@wp.state.ks.us
Steve Adams	MRNRC	stevea@wp.state.ks.us
Marion Conover	Iowa Department of Natural Resources	marion.conover@state.ia.us
Tonya Urban	Kansas Dept. of Wildlife & Parks	tonyau@wp.state.ks.us
Jerry Rasmussen	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service/MICRA	jjrivers@aol.com

CITES UPDATE

Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora & Fauna

Midwest Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies

July 12, 2005
Huron, Ohio

Issues of Importance to the MAFWA

Progress on Removing *Lynx rufus* from Appendix II of CITES

At the conclusion of Conference of the Parties (COP) 12 our team targeted COP 13 as a venue for proposing to remove bobcats from Appendix II. At the COP 13 in October 2004, the proposal to remove the bobcat from Appendix II met with mixed reaction and opposition from many European and Asian Parties. After much behind the scenes negotiating by our team with delegates from Canada and Mexico, several countries from the south African continent, an influential delegate from southeast Asia, as well as delegates from Iceland, Russia, and several NGOs (e.g., Safari Club International), it was suggested that the U.S. might offer to withdraw the proposal for an alternative Decision of the Parties (Decision 13.93) directing the Animals Committee to oversee inter-sessionally a review of spotted cats listed by CITES with a priority on the bobcat and look-alike Lynx species. The alternative Decision was adopted by consensus and approved by consensus in the Plenary by the COP and is a positive step toward removing this look-alike species listed unnecessarily on Appendix II for nearly three decades.

It should be noted that the U.S., during the presentation of the proposal in this international arena, recognized the role the state wildlife agencies play in regulating this furbearer. "The United States is represented here at CITES by the national government; however, it is the Governments of our 50 individual States which have the legal jurisdiction over and responsibility for the management of most species of wildlife in the United States. In addition, the individual State governments share important responsibility with the federal government for the management of federal trust species such as migratory birds and listed endangered species. In the instance of the bobcat, it is the individual state wildlife agencies who so professionally and capably manage this species."

At the Animals Committee meeting in May 2005, the team continued to support the review of the bobcat and look-alike Lynx species. Progress was made as the US delegation reiterated the importance of including the *Felidae* in the Review of the Appendices and emphasized the need to establish a working group to consider guidelines and develop a strategy on this issue. A work group formed and resulted in the Animals Committee agreeing to: conduct the review through an intersessional e-mail working group coordinated by the US and include range States and other relevant bodies; and note that funding would be required to perform field studies.

Our team is working closely with the Mexican delegation who opposed the delisting of the bobcat at COP13 because they didn't feel they knew the status of their wild population. Cal DuBrock and Buddy Baker are leading efforts to ensure the survey design will result in meaningful, scientifically rigorous results.

Alligator Snapping & Map Turtles to be Listed in Appendix III

The U.S.F.W.S. will list the alligator snapping turtle (*Macrochelys temminckii*) and all species of map turtle (*Graptemys spp.*) in CITES Appendix III. Listing these native turtles in Appendix III is necessary to allow the U.S.F.W.S. to adequately monitor international trade in the taxa; to determine whether exports are occurring legally, with respect to State law; and to determine whether further measures under CITES or other laws are required to conserve these species. Appen-

dix III listings will lend additional support to State wildlife agencies in their efforts to regulate and manage these species, improve data gathering to increase our knowledge of trade in these species, and strengthen State and Federal wildlife enforcement activities to prevent poaching and illegal trade. The final rule should be published in the Federal Register by early July and will be effective 120 days after the publication date.

Work Group on CITES Implementation—Furbearers

The Work Group on CITES Implementation formed in 2003 to improve the implementation of CITES obligations relating to furbearers (river otter, bobcat, Canada lynx, and wolf). Law enforcement and wildlife management representatives from state agencies and the USFWS participated. The charge of the Work Group was to examine all elements of the CITES program related to Appendix II furbearers, and to issue an action plan containing reforms to streamline and improve the program.

Consultations between the states and the USFWS have been productive. Several actions have already been implemented. These include: (1) A uniform date and format for state agency reports to the USFWS Management and Scientific Authorities. Additionally USFWS will now request only new information on changes to each jurisdiction's program, not a reiteration of existing programs. (2) Clarification that CITES tags are only needed for specimens actually leaving the U.S. (3) State and tribal authorities have the option of using tags without the year (to enable using tags in subsequent years).

Future actions include: (1) Prepare a "no detriment" finding for bobcat on a range wide/national basis (instead of the current state-by-state finding) during the summer of 2005. (2) Begin the work of developing a range wide/national "no detriment" finding for river otter. (3) Implement a process for future "no detriment" findings—instead of an annual report, state and tribal authorities will report every 5 years following the initial finding with a "notice of variance" describing any changes in species status. (4) States or tribal authorities seeking export authority would benefit from the range wide/national finding because individual state/tribal population assessments would not be needed. (5) Proposed amendments to the federal regulations would accommodate a legal acquisition finding made at the national level. This will allow the individual states to choose the mechanisms for verifying legal acquisition, including the continuing use of tags, or other systems. The final recommendations will be issued at the 2005 annual meeting of IAFWA.

CITES Permit More Readily Available for MI Tagged Sturgeon

All sturgeon are CITES listed and require CITES documents for international transport. While the USFWS consider a sport-caught lake sturgeon to be a "personal effect", and therefore exempt from CITES permit requirements. Canada does not recognize a personal effects exemption for sport-caught fish and therefore issues CITES export permits to authorize transport of lake sturgeon from Canada to the US. Canada understands that the USFWS consider these fish to be "personal effects" and has agreed to accept a personal effects exemption letter, in lieu of a more extensive CITES document. The USFWS and Michigan have drafted a letter that can be completed by the angler and presented to Canadian Customs, along with his or her Michigan fishing license, upon import into Canada which will satisfy Canada's permit requirement. The letter will be available at Michigan's sturgeon tag locations and on the USFWS website later this summer.

CITES Team: Roles & Responsibilities

- Ensuring State's Authority is Maintained
- Keeping the State Wildlife Directors Informed
- Serving as a Liaison Between the States & USFWS
- Providing Objective Input on CITES Issues
- Identifying & Recommending Ways to Improve CITES and its Implementation

Meetings Attended on Behalf of the MAFWA

- * 94th IAFWA Annual Meeting, September 2004; Atlantic City, New Jersey
- * 13th Conference of the Parties, October, 2004; Bangkok, Thailand
- * 70th North American Wildlife & Natural Resource Conference, March 2004; Washington D.C.
- * 15th Plants Committee Meeting & Joint Session with the 21st Animals Committee, May 2005; Geneva, Switzerland

It is an honor and a privilege to represent the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies in CITES matters. Respectfully submitted,

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