

Saskatchewan River Sturgeon Management Board
March 15, 2006
Prince Albert, SK

Board members in attendance:

Marcy Bast - SaskPower (mbast@saskpower.com)
Ron Campbell - Manitoba Water Stewardship (Ronampbel@gov.mb.ca)
Shelley Matkowski - Manitoba Hydro (smatkowski@hydro.mb.ca)
Lennard Morin - Cumberland House Fishermen's Co-operative
Murray Koob - Sask Environment (mkoob@serm.gov.sk.ca)
Vincent Harper - Fisheries & Oceans (harperv@dfo-mpo.gc.ca)

Advisors / observers:

John Carriere - Cumberland House
William Chaboyer - Cumberland House
Grant McVittie - Manitoba Water Stewardship (alternate, replacing Rod Drummond)
Barry Carriere - Cumberland House Cree Nation
Rob Wallace - Sask Environment (rwallace@serm.gov.sk.ca)

1. Opening prayer by Lennard.

2. Introductions - New members & any observers introduced themselves.

3. Minutes from November 2005 meeting in Nipawin, SK were only available to members today and there were two corrections:

- page 3 SK index fishing: both Lennard and John said that fishers were happy with payments of \$5/pound but unhappy at high costs of gas and other items;
- page 4 Other 2006: Shelley notes that the Ten Year Plan's first goal due in 2007 is to stabilize the "spawning" population;

Minutes with changes were accepted by consensus after a motion by Lennard and Vincent.

4. Action items:

- page 2 action: Andries Blouw passed along a message that he had trouble getting the spreadsheet showing various funding sources, but he would ask the consultant again;
- page 3 action: Rob says that the effects of gear on fish sizes in SK has not been analyzed;
- page 5 action: Lennard talked to Minister of SNA (Hon Buckley Belanger) and his ADM (Glen McKenzie) and SNA is concerned about its decade-long funding so 2006-07 is uncertain.

5. Membership:

- Ron is staying as a Member (with Grant as alternate), due to changes since his announcement at the November 2005 meeting;
- Ron will check if Omar Constant found two members for OCFC (Opaskwayak Cree Fishermens Co-op) and OCN (Opaskwayak Cree Nation);
- some discussion of community membership: John noted that MB communities (Moose Lake and others) do not have reps; Rob noted that each community had 3 reps before it changed to 2 (for First Nations and Fishermen); Marcy confirmed two reps are shown in the Terms of

Reference; Ron prefers more communities on Board, rather than more members for each.

DECISION: Ron Campbell should approach MB communities about their interest in the Board and encourage active membership.

6. Member updates for 2006:

— DFO: Species-at-risk Workshop was held in March 2006 in Winnipeg, MB; Andries Blouw and Fred Hnytka could not be here today to discuss it;

Rob provided a handout of his presentation on behalf of the Board; Grant wants to know the effects of gear on fish sizes; John and Lennard have concerns with 5-1/2 inch mesh (needs frequent checking, too many beavers caught, etc); lots of discussion about gear, standardization & compatibility, and similar technical issues;

Lennard heard about many Boards and First Nations doing similar work to SRSMB; one Quebec biologist built spawning grounds below dam (like EBCampbell) for only \$60,000 and it should be tried here; federal SARA objectives are all about recovery, but the legal status of sturgeon is still unknown;

Shelley and Grant said that any COSEWIC assessment in March 2006 would go to the federal Minister in April 2006, then 90 days plus several months for groups & public comments, so maybe any Cabinet decision by fall 2008; Lennard noted that FSIN (Federation of SK Indian Nations) and Metis Society in SK should be helping our Board;

Marcy met lots of groups from USA, Quebec, and others; she wants to hear from Fred / Andries about how Recovery Teams work & how SARA boards are composed; Grant says DFO prefers to use existing boards rather than create new ones; John says that funding goes only to aboriginal groups so requests by commercial fishing groups were “thrown out”, and that FSIN may lead any federal Habitat Stewardship work.

DECISION: Board asks Fred Hnytka and/or Andries Blouw to report on the SARA Workshop and progress at our fall 2006 meeting.

— SE update by Murray: budgets for 2006 are unknown but \$15,000 for Index Fishing is expected; egg collection is planned but Greg Mitchell of Fort Qu’Appelle had surgery & now recovering so staffing may be a problem; decision on eggs is expected shortly;

— SP update by Marcy: budget for 2006 will be \$20,000 for Board (including costs of website, display, and \$5,000 towards SK index fishing); work on habitat studies at EBCampbell with DFO researchers and during any spills at dam are separate budgets;

— SWA update by Murray (speaking for absent member Al Young): some funds are known for 2006, but some are still unknown;

— MWS update by Ron: MWS needs a review of goals & objectives in Ten Year Plan before applying for future budgets; 2006 plans are Index Fishing, display for Board, diving at Sturgeon Landing (advice on dates is needed from Andries, Lennard, and Rod Morin); budget remaining

from 2005 was about \$4,000;

— MH update by Shelley: three items for 2006 are the website and hatchery and budget:

(1) Shelley presented a draft of the content for a proposed website for SRSMB and activities; there were several comments, such as, add comments on steamboats, get photos from Kenora Museum, add SE and OCN, include water management; contributions are needed and more comments are welcome;

(2) Grand rapids Hatchery transfer from Province to Manitoba Hydro was not done — UCN (University College of the North, formerly KCC) students are re-doing displays for hatchery;

(3) budget has always been \$20,000 for SRSMB but now Nelson River Sturgeon Board wants some of it and other boards are starting and need travel funding;

— CHCN update by Barry Carriere: CHCN councillors sent him & William Chaboyer to observe & contribute to this meeting; Barry is now the President of Fishermen's Cooperative; William notes many local people have been fishing a long time and that sturgeon are always important;

— CHFC update by Lennard: index fishing is worthwhile and fishers are happy with \$5/pound, but costs of fishing keep going up every year; fishers also want to see work done on the habitat; commercial fishermen lost money (hooks, nets, wages) during high-water and asked for "Natural Disaster ..." payments but were rejected (fishing camps are not "principal residences").

ACTION: Lennard will talk to new Minister Joan Beatty of SNA for continued funding of index fishing.

— John handed in a letter from Mayor of Cumberland House recommending he continue on Board; SK index fishing needs more funding; any floods that affect commercial fishing need payments or modifications to water operations.

DECISION: Board requests each agency to carry out their 2006 plans as budgets allow.

7. Ten Year Plan:

— Shelley noted Goal 1 of Plan is to stabilize spawning populations and asked if we had data; Rob said that trends from index fishing are done for fish over-18 pounds and fish mature at 25 or 30 pounds but an analysis of mature fish could be done with available data; Rob has concluded that the abundance of over-18s is steady but not increasing since 1996, while Walt Lysack in 2003 said abundance was declining although estimates were not precise; John and others agree that index-fishing gear is suitable for medium & large sturgeon (not juveniles) and think data could be re-calculated for trends of mature sizes;

DECISION: Board requests a review of index-fishing data for SK & MB and trends in abundance for different sizes (including mature fish) by Walt Lysack, Dr. Neil Arnason, or other suitable experts;

ACTION: Rob will provide recent data to Walt and request analyses by others that they know.

Lennard noted that DFO wants to know all spawning sites so egg collection at Nipawin (Francois - Findlay dam) should occur earlier; Murray says work cannot interfere with walleye egg collection & hatching due to limits on staff & hatchery;

— Shelley noted that Goal 4 is to set population targets, also due by Dec 2007; Marcy noted SARA process has firm deadlines for any listed species; Ron reminded members that our Steering Committee started in 1992, SRSMB in 1998, and the Ten Year Plan in 2002 so there has been progress;

Shelley noted that our goal also includes population abundance, habitat capacity, aboriginal harvests, size & age & sex composition of populations, and genetic traits;

Marcy and others listed possible targets & routes for consultant work towards this goal:

- (1) aim for 1960 abundance & sizes & ages,
- (2) use recommendations from Great Lakes Fishery Trust (report by Holey and others),
- (3) aim to double population in 10 or 20 years,
- (4) provide for aboriginal harvests of 300 or 600 (up to 2 times present estimate of North/South).

John and Grant noted the Nelson River Board recommends one sturgeon / family.

ACTION: Marcy will draft an outline of these ideas & explore funding for consultants.

8. Other:

— The name of the board was discussed, and the present SRSMB was found acceptable.

— SARA Workshop follow-up: Grant noted that “Allowable Harm” is important and DFO wants comments; Canada has 6 areas (Designated Units) for sturgeon and Sask River is DU #2, including MB & SK & AB; members were asked to take handouts and reply to Marcy or Doug Watkinson at DFO; Marcy asked about definitions and William asked about “threats” in SARA; Grant and Shelley agreed many terms were uncertain even for Recovery Team members.

9. Next meeting:

The Pas, MB on October 19, 2006 (9 a.m. to 4 p.m. MB time)

10. Closing prayer by John.

11. Meeting adjourned at 3:25 p.m.

*** Minutes by Rob Wallace ***