

Saskatchewan River Sturgeon Management Board
February 21, 2007
Evergreen Centre, Nipawin SK

Board Members in attendance:

Marcy Bast.....Sask Power (Chair)
Shelley Matkowski.....Manitoba Hydro
Al Young.....Sask Watershed Authority
Murray Koob..... Sask Environment
Ron Campbell..... Manitoba Water Stewardship, Fisheries
Lennard Morin.....Cumberland House Fisherman's Co-op
John Carriere.....Cumberland House Fisherman's Co-op
Vince Harper.....Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Advisors/Observers:

Rob Wallace..... Sask Environment
Isaac Cook.....Resource Council, The Pas
Peter Young.....O.C.N.R.C.
Lloyd Lavallee..... Resource Member, Chemawain, Manitoba
Floyd George Resource Councillor, Chemawain, Manitoba

1. Opening Prayer
2. Introductions
3. Minutes of October 19, 2006 meeting at The Pas
 - Reviewed ; no corrections
 - Motion to accept minutes by Marcy, seconded by Murray.
 - Marcy will mail (pdf) of signed Decisions for our personal files.
 - Marcy mentioned Cumberland House Membership on the Board and members talked about new members being welcome to the Board
4. Ron and Lloyd started discussion on the current status of sturgeon in Manitoba
 - More sturgeon captured on Cedar Lake, and all over the lake in 05-06
 - Lloyd suggested setting earlier in May on the Sask River.
 - Open discussion about why sturgeon numbers appear to show an increase.
 - Shelley commented that 2+ year sturgeon were found in the Winnipeg River.
 - Isaac reported that last year more small sturgeon were captured at 'Big Eddy' west of The Pas.

5. Vince and Shelley provided a review of 2006 status of activities in listing lake sturgeon federally:
 - Nov 2006 COSOWIC recommended sturgeon be listed as Endangered
 - DFO held a workshop in Winnipeg to get all sturgeon people together. They created an annotated bibliography (all available lake sturgeon papers). Ten hard copies were provided to the Board.
 - DFO will next work at developing a recovery target.
 - DFO will then determine the 'allowable harm'; can the species be harvested or harmed by research activities i.e. index fishing, domestic fishing etc.
 - Likely to be an official listing by 2009/10.
 - A Recovery Plan would include all stakeholders. Lennard is concerned over what local fisherman will do for a living if they can't fish.
6. Shelly reviewed some of the activities of the Nelson River Sturgeon Board:
 - The foundation for their Board started out with community members. They then decided to hire a secretariat which also didn't work so they went back again to just the community members. Recently they have hired a person as 'Fund Raiser'. They have applied to HSP, Environment Canada to try to better protect young-of-the-year sturgeon and they have established an 'Aboriginal Critical Habitat Protection Fund'. They will continue with their spawn taking but feel they need to rejuvenate their Board.
7. Shelly updated progress on the web site:
 - Maps of the areas now complete. DFO will host the site. She needs habitat photos and watershed information. **Al will talk with Partners for the River.....and get there watershed info for the whole SK River and send to Shelly.**
 - Need to develop a logo and or crest to be used on the web site. There was much discussion between members over options, with most everyone wanting both a crest and a logo.
 - **Marcy will create some mock-ups for logo and crest and send to all members for suggestions.**
8. Murray showed the recently produced APTN sturgeon videos to everyone:
 - Members all agreed the videos were well done and should be part of our web site. Murray said he will obtain permission to use the footage.
9. Al provided a power point covering SWA's work on the Torch River (06-07) and planned work on the Saskatchewan, north and south branches (07-08). SWA will continue work on the Torch River and complete the in-stream flow study this year. Work will concentrate on low flow habitat requirements. Worked planned on the Sask River for the summer will concentrate on mapping habitat and sampling/tagging all sizes of sturgeon. Several types of gear will be used to try to locate juvenile fish as well.

10. Member Overviews:

- **John will develop a plan to have Cumberland residents working to study and or improve sturgeon habitat.** Rob questioned if there should be is a general plan defining sturgeon habitat needs for our region?
- John commented that the existing mileage coverage is not adequate for members.
- Lennard would like to see the sturgeon listed asap so that federal funding could be used to support their efforts i.e. the Index Fishing Program.
- Vince commented that in-stream flow work below E.B. Campbell Dam is continuing with the assessment of downstream habitat.
- **Peter requested more information on past sturgeon tagging which Ron will provide.**
- Ron said that in Manitoba, they have applied for funding to include Easterville and Moose Lake. They are also looking at funding options with Fish Futures. They will first identify the areas where sturgeon are spawning and then contract a consultant to do the habitat assessment in those reaches. Manitoba will also continue the Index Monitoring with the same people collecting fish and the same rate of pay. **Manitoba Hydro will finish their web site and then work on a display with Ron.**
- Murray said that S.E. will continue with funding for Index Fishing funding ,15 K for 2007. Egg collection will continue for the 5th year. They have found that the middle of June works best. The fingerling will be allocated: 10% to Tobin Lake and 90% to Cumberland House.
- **Rob will review the tagging data collected to date with staff in Winnipeg to try to determine any trends.** Murray said that with the high water of 2005 there were 5 Manitoba tagged fish captured in on the Sask side.
- Ron said that in Manitoba they are paying their Index Fishermen by the day and not the pounds of fish captured. In this way they are able to collect population data on the whole river and not just selected hot spots.
- Marcy said that SK Power has allocated 5K to the up-coming Index Fishery and are still flexible with their funding options. They will put funds toward the display and fund raiser as needed. She said at E.B.Campbell the aquatic assessment work will look at other species as well as sturgeon. DFO will run hydraulic and habitat models as water releases fluctuate throughout the year. Once DFO has the information on discharges and habitat they will look to all downstream users prior to changing dam operations. Currently, the dam is operated as a peaking station with a min ave. discharge of 75 cms. After consultation the operation procedure may change.
- Murray said that a consultant should be hired to work on the status of juvenile sturgeon and determine if natural recruitment is building the population. He questioned if sufficient rearing habitat is available and is stocking required?

- General group discussions centered on how the Nelson River Board pays their Fund Raiser and how their board coordinates the contracts. The Nelson River group is now looking more at critical sturgeon habitat and in areas that have not been studied previously. Everyone agreed that much more funding would be required to now begin assessing sturgeon habitat both in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

11. Closing prayer by Lennard

A public meeting with the Board and the people of Cumberland House is planned for tomorrow. Board members will provide presentations, and look to the locals for options to revitalize our lake sturgeon stocks.

Next meeting of Sturgeon Board planned for October 10 and 11th at The Pas, Man.

Minutes by Al Young