

Saskatchewan River Sturgeon Management Board
Fall Meeting Minutes

October 10, 2007

Kikiwak Inn, The Pas

Board Members in Attendance

Marcy Bast, SaskPower (Co-chair)

Brady Pollock, Saskatchewan Watershed Authority

Ron Campbell, Manitoba Water Stewardship

Vince Harper, DFO, Habitat

Murray Koob, Saskatchewan Environment

Shelley Matkowski, Manitoba Hydro

Peter Young, Opaskweyak Cree Nation, Resource Council

Observers/Advisors

Fred Hnytka, DFO, Species at Risk

Rosemary Hanlon, DFO, Aboriginal Affairs Coordinator for Species At Risk

Grant McVittie, Manitoba Water Stewardship

Derek Leask, Manitoba Water Stewardship

Richard Bourassa, Swampy Cree Tribal Council

1. Opening Prayer

2. Introductions

3. February 21, 2007 Meeting Minutes

-minutes reviewed, minor corrections suggested

- motion to accept minutes -Vince, seconded – Murray

4. Record of Decisions from February 21, 2007 meeting.

-Marcy passed around record of decisions for review and signatures

5. Agenda

- The agenda was reviewed and approved.

6. Membership updates

- Marcy indicated that representatives from Cumberland House had confirmed their intention to attend this meeting. Not certain why they have not arrived.

- Ron indicated that this meeting has conflicted with the commercial fishing season on Cedar Lake which is why there are no representatives from Chemawawin or Moose Lake.

7. Presentation by Richard Bourassa – Swampy Cree Tribal Council

-Richard handed out copies of a proposal for a Regional Study on Lake Sturgeon Catches. This proposal was sent to Manitoba Hydro in January or February of 2007. Hydro directed SCTC to work through the SRSMB for funding and thus the presentation today.

-Rationale of the proposal: There is a common story regardless of community and area: previous abundance of lake sturgeon, little information on depletion. SCTC wants to interview elders and fishermen to determine where lake sturgeon were caught in '50s and perhaps '40s, and where they are being caught today. This project will provide knowledge/resource material for use by anyone interested.

Fred - The project might be eligible for funding through the DFO Aboriginal Funds for Species At Risk.

Rosemary- SCTC will be receiving an application along with other First Nations and Tribal Councils this winter. Funding for such studies could be ongoing for a number of years.

Fred suggests trying to tie habitat factors into the proposal, which would make it eligible for broader funds.

Grant asked about who would actually do the interviews. Richard indicated that it would depend partially on when it is done. There are various options such as hiring a student or tendering out within communities. SCTC would like to do the study in spring.

Shelley – The amount of funding requested in the proposal that was sent to Manitoba Hydro in winter was more than is generally available each year for the SRSMB, but Manitoba Hydro could co-fund the project along with DFO.

8. Member overviews for 2007

OCN, Peter

- Not many sturgeon have been caught recently by anglers or gill netters. OCN is very interested in the SCTC proposal. The community has been notified of the open house tomorrow.

DFO ,Vincent

- The November, 2006 COSEWIC recommendation was forwarded to the Minister of Environment in August, 2007. The ME has 90 days to respond on how the process will proceed (DFO will be the responsible authority and will consult and provide advice by a certain date). DFO will begin consultations shortly after the ME response. DFO anticipates an extended consultation period of 1.5-2.0 years due to the significance of the species. A federal election call might delay things further.

- The E.B. Campbell study report is currently being prepared, including flow recommendations to protect species at various times of year.

DFO, Fred

- The bibliographic data base was completed in spring and was distributed to SRSMB by Shelley at the February, 2007 meeting.
- Proceedings of the DFO recovery potential workshop in February 2007 have been finalized and should be available very shortly on the DFO web site.

DFO, Rosemary

- Aboriginal Funds for Species At Risk (two previous funds combined) are available. If anyone knows of any activities within First Nations or Metis communities that would be suitable for AFSAR funding please let them know it is available. There is a broad range of eligible activities such as habitat improvement, biological data collection, traditional knowledge collection, etc. Funding programs also include support for capacity building.

MWS, Ron Campbell

- Provided a draft of his presentation on SRSMB and MWS index fishing program for the open house tomorrow. Those in attendance provided feedback.

Manitoba Hydro, Shelley

- Presented sample pages from the draft SRSMB web site. Neither DFO nor Manitoba Hydro can physically host this web page on their servers, so Hydro is looking into using MTS Alstream as a residence for the site. Materials for the site are 90% complete as presented at the last meeting. Primarily photos and population estimates need to be added. To get final SRSMB member review of the site we will try to set it up with member access only, for the first few months. There may be a limitation to possible changes because of time commitments of Manitoba Hydro's pre-press and information technology staff.

- Update on Nelson River Sturgeon Board spawn collection & rearing activities. Landing River spawn camp was run again in spring. Eggs were collected from one female only; snow precluded further spawn taking. Hatch and survival at Grand Rapids Hatchery was poor with only about 1,000 fingerlings produced. However, these fingerlings were very robust and grew very quickly. Five hundred were transferred to the NRSB grow out facility at Jenpeg Generating Station in September. They will be stocked in the Nelson River very soon. The remaining 500 fingerlings will be held over winter in GRH in an experimental recirculation system. The purpose will be to gain size so they can be PIT tagged in spring and released in the Nelson River.

Saskatchewan Environment, Murray

- Spawn collection at Tobin Lake: 163,000 eggs from 3 females, 63% hatch, 41,000 fingerlings stocked to Saskatchewan River near Cumberland House, 45,000 replacement stocking to Tobin Lake. Mid June spawn collection has worked well in getting good quality eggs. SE will now do a 5 year review of the program; unfortunately they have little idea of effectiveness (survival) and the program is expensive. One possible change would be to conduct spawn collection every second year.

- Index fishing program began June 20th and ran until mid August. High flows in the river were an issue which focused effort into Cumberland Lake and on use of baited

hooks because netting was difficult. Use of baited hooks resulted in a lot of smaller fish. A total 285 fish were captured, of which 152 were over 18 pounds. The number of recaptures was high, 90, likely because of the restricted fishing area. The data has not yet been analyzed, but the population estimate will continue to be stable or declining. Estimates are around 950 18 pound fish or 2200 fish of all sizes.

SaskPower, Marcy

- SaskPower contributed funding to index fishing as usual. Also contributed funding to web site development. Planning on putting funds towards a portable display once the logo is selected. Still considering whether SRSMB should hire someone to fund raise.

SWA, Brady

- Presentation on research activities in 2007. SWA continued surveying habitat in the Torch River system including invertebrates and instream flows. Plan to develop a strategy for using the dam and fishway to emulate a natural flow regime. In 2007 investigations began on the Saskatchewan River habitat and sturgeon populations. One kilometer study reaches were established on the N, S & main Saskatchewan River system. Study sites were based primarily on gradient. Habitat was characterized, invertebrate samplers deployed, sturgeon collection and tagging conducted. Future work may include more intensive invertebrate studies, identification of habitats that are key to early life stages, bathymetry of sample sites, etc.

9. Other items.

Sturgeon in schools program in Saskatchewan.

- Marcy indicated that the program has been discontinued because it has served its purpose and schools are no longer interested. However, Ft. Qu'Appelle hatchery gives sturgeon out to private individuals and institutions with little or no tracking. This poses potential problems with genetics, diseases, etc. and should be controlled.

Logos.

- Marcy presented options for the logo, which were discussed and refined. The refined options will be emailed to members for a final decision.

Co-chairs.

- Marcy has completed her two year term as co-chair. According to the TOR, the next co-chairs should be a person from a Manitoba organization and a Saskatchewan community. Since Ron has recently been co-chair it is Shelley's turn. The community co-chair should be from Cumberland House. Marcy will check with Cumberland House to determine who would be appropriate.

Open-house tomorrow.

– The agenda will be similar to that of the Cumberland House meeting last February. Ron will do his presentation on SRSMB & index fishing. DFO will do a presentation on SARA and listing of sturgeon.

10. Next meeting

– Spring 2008 in Prince Albert. Marcy will check with Cumberland House and determine whether to schedule the meeting for the end of February or early March. SRSMB TOR indicates that we are to have community meetings each year, but there does not seem to be a need, so perhaps every second year is more appropriate.

- Murray suggested that we need review the 10 year plan and goals. Members should review the plan before the next meeting and come prepared for discussion on reviewing the priorities.

8. Adjourned