

## Saskatchewan River Sturgeon Management Board Fall Meeting

The Pas, MB – Super 8 Hotel

November 19, 2008 9.30 – 4.00

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### Attendees:

Grant McVittie – Manitoba Water Stewardship

Ron Campbell – Manitoba Water Stewardship

Rob Wallace (*science advisor*) – Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment

Brady Pollock – Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Marcy Bast – SaskPower

Shelley Matkowski – Manitoba Hydro

Murray Koob – Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment

Lennard Morin – Cumberland House Fisherman's Co-op

Peter Young – OCN Resource Council

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1. Opening Prayer – Lennard
2. Introductions
3. Reviewed agenda – additions: duty to consult, CIER workshop in the Pas, promotional items
4. Reviewed minutes from February 27, 2008 meeting in Prince Albert – Action Item Completed – Lennard spoke with Ministry of First Nations and Metis Relations to see if they are going to participate in the SRSMB in future. Not sure what the outcome will be.

**ACTION ITEM** – Lennard and Shelley to draft a letter to MFN to see if they are going to send representation in future.

Action Item Completed – signage on the river is being worked on this year and into the spring 2009, pricing and wording will be forwarded to the board once information is gathered, would also want 2 for the Pas at the landings.

Action Item Completed - Man Hydro to have a consultant to scope out a recovery target. This was done by N/S Consultants Ltd. out of Winnipeg – for discussion

Action Item Completed - Lennard asked Rob and Murray to do a presentation for the Fish Advisory Committee. Murray presented in January 2008 with information on the SRSMB. Discussion on how Manitoba may be forming a similar type of group.

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Action Item Completed - Lennard and Shelley were to draft a letter for the SARA listing process to comment on behalf of the board. It summarized the activities being done by the board

Action Item Completed - subsequent meeting organized, dates selected for spawn camp and index fishing. Spawn camp did not occur in 2008 due to hiring restriction provincially. Murray noted that the program may not continue for a few years so that aging work can be done to see if the stocking is working.

Minutes were reviewed and accepted with no changes made.

5. Record of decisions from February 27, 2008 in Prince Albert, SK. These decisions were reviewed and accepted. There was some discussion regarding the sturgeon education and not having them available to the public / schools. There is interest with schools, but without the education component it is not appropriate. Peter noted that it is important for schools to still have sturgeon for education, and that the involvement with the OCN is making information and knowledge more available to the MB side. Some concern that the decision item regarding sturgeon in the schools should be changed or removed. The item will be left in the minutes and any changes will be adopted into the current decision items from this meeting.
6. Membership updates – C. House has reps from the fishermen's co-op (Lennard), village (Robert McAuley), first nation rep (Raymond Dussion). Lennard spoke with Robert and he was unable to attend, and Ray was also unable to attend. Joe Fiddler (field worker), and Howard McKenzie (other field worker). Ron had discussed membership with Easterville and Moose Lake. Some involvement in the past but nothing consistent. Cumberland House will have 3 reps.

OCN – fishermen's association (Isaac Cook, Simon Bignell), OCN first nation (Peter Young)

Easterville – 1 rep, and 1 observer

Saskatchewan Watershed Authority – Al Young is trying to find a replacement for his role.

**ACTION ITEM (noted above)** – letter from the board to see if there is going to be representation from Ministry of First Nations and Metis Relations

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## 7. Member overviews from 2008 season –

**Cumberland House** – discussed how the SK payment method of by the pound gets more fishermen involved and better success than MB with daily payments. There were 11 fishermen (8 metis and 3 treaty), that took part in the index fishing during 2008. Lennard caught a 60lb sturgeon on the Torch R. Joe Fiddler took over as the project leader from Lennard. Nets were getting clogged with debris, and fishing ended in August. Discussed the mortality that must be associated with the net and hook fishing. Asked about the status of potential listing for sturgeon. Mentioned the dam and its impact on infilling of Cumberland lake. John Carriere went to Toronto for a SARA meeting. Mentioned his responsibilities are increasing in the village – may give up representation on the SRSMB to someone else because of time.

**Ministry of Environment** – spawn camp did not occur in 2008 due to 5 year review of the program and also hiring restrictions for summer field staff to take care of fingerlings at the hatchery. Index fishing allocation was 15K which was the same as last year, with 11K from SaskPower. MOE also added another 3K. Fishing started earlier because it is better earlier on – start of June. Fishing was poor because the water was higher and dirty. Nets were fouling and baited hooks were not as successful. Carried until end of August. Total of 252 sturgeon captured in 2008 (285 in shorter period during 2007). Number of recaptures were similar to 2007. Small fish were down during 2008. In 2007, half of the fish were under 18 lbs, and this year down roughly 40%. MOE undergoing a review, but expected that money allocations for 2009 will be the same for this fishing program. The Saskatchewan program pays by the pound (5\$ / lb). During 2008 the effort was spread out a bit further from Cumberland House. Project workers were also paid to go and see areas not getting fished during the normal season. Most work being done within 30 km from C. House. In 2008, 9 fishermen participated. In 2008, about half are recaptures in the over 18lb category. Smaller fish recapture is around roughly 20%. Some discussion on accuracy of recapture and error associated with it.

Handout provided on population estimate numbers from Rob. Provided data analyzed for 1994 – 2006. Analysis shows similar trends as with analysis by Dr. Neil Arnason of U of Manitoba. The trend suggested that numbers started low and has been increasing from a decline. Rob will be doing the same analysis for the 2008 data and forward it to the board prior

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to the next meeting. The current estimate of abundance is around 1000 medium / large fish (18lbs and over).

**Manitoba Water Stewardship** – methodology used in 2008 the same, 4 fishermen and the area was split into units for each. Fuel and materials paid for, and the daily pay was increased by \$25. Fishing lasted from June 1-17 with 14 days of index netting. Results attached in handout. Total 184 captures, 1 mortality, and 10 recaptures (6 MB, 4 SK). Largest caught was 22kg. Also summarized number of fish caught per each net size (5.5 inch is the most successful). Few fish were caught with larger size mesh. Stock sizes were calculated at 95% confidence (all fish) – 1715 fish in 2007. There were many fish caught, not certain if it was the increase in daily rate, or changes to staffing and rotation. Extra funding has been given to look at Cedar Lake and Summerberry areas. Not a lot of success in scoping in these areas. Ron is doing some comparisons on numbers between years and looking for an alternate measurement for length and weight. If the measures are valid for interorbital distances then the data could include data from heads of fish caught in domestic fishing.

**Opaskwayak Creek Nation** – no update at this time.

**SaskPower** – contributed the \$11,000 to fishing, some to travel for members to meetings, and some is going towards funding signage that can be placed at locations on the river (both SK and MB sides). The same funds will be allocated next year unless the board determines that more should be used to extend the fishing season.

**Manitoba Hydro** – administering the web site and updated a few times with information and reports. Contracted N/S Consultants for draft a discussion paper on establishing a recovery target for sturgeon on the Saskatchewan River.

### 8. Other items -

Recovery target – DFO has started some work on numbers for estimations. Most of the work to date is for the St. Lawrence River, but based on population data from wherever they could get it including Saskatchewan River. They have done some modeling for the St. Lawrence R. designatable unit (DU 8), and have identified some threats and what they would do to decrease those threats and help with recovery. The result was that in order for the population to survive 40 generations

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(with 99% certainty), they would need 1188 adult spawning females each year in the DU. If they assume that the fish spawn every five years and the sex ratio is 50:50 then the recovery target would be 11,880 sexually mature adults. They have met with regional experts and first nations to determine whether there is missed or new data, and also to identify threats and mitigations. This resulted in creation a recovery potential assessment document for DU 8. Recovery potential assessments for the other DUs will be done moving from east to west. There was discussion regarding the accuracy of taking these numbers which were taken from the modeling and directly applied. In areas where populations are separated from other populations, these numbers are assumed to be needed based on stand-alone populations. Some discussion as to whether it is valuable to wait until the recovery target work is done by DFO, or if we could come up with some targets based on the information we have collected. Ron noted that including TK would be useful in this process of determining a reasonable recovery target. The 10 year management plan for the SRSMB notes that by year 5 we should have established a target. It may not be only the number that is required, but specific uses or conditions of the targets. It may be worth waiting until DFO determines a recovery target, and then review it or have input on the value and how it was derived. Not much concern over finding a number, more important to determine if the Saskatchewan R population is maintained or increasing.

**ACTION ITEM** – Rob will contact DFO regarding the number and data work from the assessment process. Shelley will go back to N/S Consulting Ltd and see if they can flesh out some more information helping move towards a number. Peter Young (OCN) to get some TK from local elders to provide that information to feed into N/S Consulting review.

Aboriginal funds for species at risk – Information was provided during the CIER workshop in the Pas. They provided some assistance and information on how to apply for funds / resources for the aboriginal funds for species at risk. The board received the call for application for the DFO funds. It is anticipated that the OCN could get some money from this fund to do the TK information collection for the assessment process noted above.

**ACTION ITEM** – Peter will take application and get assistance from Ron and Shelley and DFO to complete for money to do the TK data collection. Lennard will look and see if something can be done on the SK side (index fishing or other).

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BC White Sturgeon education kit – Shelley brought information along to show the board what can be done to educate teachers and schools on sturgeon and SARA.

Review of lake sturgeon under SARA – Shelley provided a presentation. In general, at the earliest, there could be a decision on listing during 2010.  
**ACTION ITEM** – Shelley will forward presentation to everyone.

Web site – is the board alright with the minutes and records of decision on the web site? The board is fine with putting the information on the site.

Promotional items – Ron showed a couple hats that will be used as gifts and promo items. Some light colored hats may be better with logo.

Nelson River Board – The 500 Nelson River yearlings (2007 egg collection) that had been reared on warm recirculated water in Grand Rapids Hatchery over last winter reached a size of over 30cm by spring and were marked before stocking in the Nelson River in summer of 2008. The NRSB took eggs from a couple fish at the Landing River in spring of 2008, however the temperature got too high during transport to the Grand Rapids hatchery, so only about 450 hatched. These fish will be reared over winter on recirculated water for stocking in 2009.

Sturgeon eggs were also taken by researchers on the Winnipeg River and were sent to Grand Rapids Hatchery. Hatch rate was very high and 20,000 fingerlings were reared. Of these 11,000 were stocked in the Winnipeg River for future research projects, 1,000 will be kept over the winter at Grand Rapids Hatchery for a rearing trial on recirculated water and the remaining 8,000 were stocked in the Assiniboine River as part of the population re-establishment program.

Duty to consult / dam project – off the record discussion.

9. Next meeting (spring 2009 SK) – Prince Albert, late February (TBD)  
**ACTION ITEM** – Shelley will contact Vincent (DFO) to see if the meeting can be held at the DFO office in the boardroom.
10. Closing prayer - Peter
11. Adjourned ~ 3.45