

Saskatchewan River Sturgeon Management Board

6 September 2012, 9:00 AM – 4:30 PM

Kikiwak Inn, The Pas, Manitoba

Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Marilynn Kullman (Co-chair), Manitoba Hydro
Lennard Morin (Co-chair), Cumberland House Fishermen's Coop
Raymond Lathlin, Opaskwayak Cree Nation
Diane Ballantyne, Opaskwayak Cree Nation Resource Council
Don Macdonald, Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship
Rob Wallace, Saskatchewan Environment
Ron Campbell, Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship
Cheryl Klassen, Manitoba Hydro
Marcy Bast, SaskPower

1. **Opening prayer** - Raymond Lathlin

2. **Introductions**

3. **Review Agenda**

-added in a discussion of the provincial Lake Sturgeon Management Strategy and a presentation on the Nelson River Sturgeon Board activities (D. Macdonald) prior to discussion of the new ten year management plan

4. **Report on spring meeting and community meeting (April 19) and approval of past minutes (Feb 23, 2011, Nov 17, 2011, April 19, 2012)**

Report on April 19 meetings in Cumberland House

M. Kullman: there were only a few representatives at the April 19 board meeting in Cumberland House, so we were unable to make much progress. We talked about the ten year management plan review, and discussed having a new ten year management plan to guide activities for the next ten years. The community meeting was well attended, particularly by the fishermen. Marilyn gave a presentation on the SRSMB, and Rob gave a presentation on the population of Lake Sturgeon in the Saskatchewan River (within the geographical scope of the SRSMB, and only within SK).

Unfortunately, many of the questions that were asked by the fishermen could have been answered more thoroughly by representatives that weren't able to make it to the meeting.

L. Morin: there was poor turnout by the board representatives, and we didn't have quorum. The meeting didn't turn out too bad, and the fishermen appreciated the meeting.

ACTION: Rob will send presentation from April 19 meeting to Marilyn to post on the website

Discussion of participation in past and future meetings

M. Kullman: it seems like we have had an ongoing problem with participation

R. Wallace: DFO is no longer involved, and will need to figure out which organizations are interested in committing to the SRSMB prior to preparing a new ten year management plan

There was consensus by all representatives present to send a letter to all existing member organizations of the SRSMB to determine the level of commitment (participation, and funding) of each organization.

R. Campbell: we should look at inviting other members as well, including Moose Lake and Chemawawin

L. Morin: we should also invite the Partners for the Saskatchewan River Basin

R. Wallace: we should start with the members that have already been involved, and after establishing their level of commitment, we can look to invite other organizations

M. Bast: we need to be cautious about inviting the Partners for the Saskatchewan River Basin, we need to keep the group small, and if we invite them, they would need to come to the table with funding

ACTION: Marilynn and Lennard will prepare a letter and send to all current member organizations of the SRSMB

Approval of past meeting notes/minutes

L. Morin: are the minutes from all meetings official, even if we didn't have quorum?

M. Kullman: in the meetings where we had low participation, notes were still taken, and although they wouldn't be considered official 'meeting minutes', we should still approve them and post them on our website, so that people that may visit the website will know that the board is still active

L. Morin: I can fill in the missing information on the April 19 community meeting notes

After incorporating Lennard's additional information into the April 19, consensus was reached to approve the meeting notes/minutes from April 19, 2012 (community meeting), April 19, 2012 (board meeting), February 23, 2011, and from November 17, 2011

ACTION: Marilynn will incorporate Lennard's comments, and will then post the meeting notes/minutes on the SRSMB website

5. Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship's Lake Sturgeon Management Strategy

D. Macdonald: shared copies of the Lake Sturgeon Management Strategy, explaining that it was an internal document intended to guide internal activities, and does not impose or suggest activities that should be followed or completed by other organizations. Don provided an overview of the strategy.

D. Macdonald: the purpose of the strategy was to demonstrate to the branch (and to the public) what the priorities for sturgeon are. The strategy was first drafted in 1994, then redrafted in 1997. In 1997, the populations were trending down. Now, the populations appear to be stable, and some are trending up, and we are seeing smaller fish in the population.

6. Report on SRSMB activities

R. Campbell handed out a brief summary of the 2012 field work. There was a total of 184 sturgeon caught, with 12 recaptures from previous years, and 1 recapture from Saskatchewan. This year there were 5 mortalities, more than in any other year, and not sure why.

R. Wallace: R. Hlasny would have the data from this year's field work, so unfortunately we don't have anything to report right now.

L. Morin: this year, SaskPower approved \$11,000 for index fishing. Quite a few fishermen (20) fished during phase 1 (end of June), and a good turnout of fishermen fished for phase 2 (July). Over the past three years, they've caught more small ones than big ones. Most of the fishermen stay close to Cumberland House, but Lennard went to the Torch River and caught 3 sturgeon (56 pounds). The water was high so the spillway had to be opened, and 20 sturgeon were salvaged (total, from 2 spills), 1 of the sturgeon had been tagged near the MB/SK border.

M. Kullman: Manitoba Hydro provided funding to Manitoba Conservation & Water Stewardship for 2012 index fishing. The review of the ten year management plan was completed (March 2012) and was funded by Manitoba Hydro and SaskPower. Marilyn and Lennard sent a letter to Chris Dunn of Saskatchewan Environment in early August 2012 to request their participation in the SRSMB and at this meeting. Independent from the SRSMB, but of interest to SRSMB, Manitoba Hydro has started funding a study to develop a tagging technique for very young sturgeon, that could be used in the future to differentiate hatchery reared from wild spawned sturgeon.

7. Presentation on the activities of the Nelson River Sturgeon Board

D. Macdonald: there are 3 study areas of the upper Nelson River that the NRSB has focused on, and completed monitoring/tagging studies on. Population trend is increasing, and harvest has declined. The average lake sturgeon size is smaller now; very few large fish, but a number of smaller fish in the population. The NRSB tags all fish, and takes aging structures (pectoral fin ray). There were concerns about cutting this part of the fish out for a sample, but the people doing the field work understand the value of this sampling method to the data, and have seen that it heals well (by seeing fish that were sampled the year before).

8. Discussion of new ten year management plan

M. Kullman: we have completed a review of our last 10 y management plan, and we will now need to develop another 10 y management plan to guide our activities for the next 10 years. To guide our discussion, I have distributed copies of an outline of a potential 10 y management plan. There is no new information in this document, it is all taken from the last 10 y management plan, and I have provided it as a way of guiding our discussion.

M. Kullman: there are four sections that we will need to develop; objectives, goals, strategies, and implementation. So we can start by reviewing the objectives, which can probably stay as-is.

M. Bast: we may want to consider defining 'traditional use'

L. Morin: we use sturgeon for traditional use anyway, and treaty rights override legislation. You can't impose any restrictions on sturgeon harvest, and you can't do anything if people want to catch them.

M. Bast: this statement is not stating whether or not traditional use of Lake Sturgeon by First Nations should or can continue, it is simply recognizing that First Nations harvest sturgeon, and we need to set our population goals accordingly. Maybe it is a matter of wording the statement differently.

M. Kullman: what about using this wording:

Vision (instead of Objective): In the Saskatchewan River between EB Campbell dam and Grand Rapids Generating Station, 1. continue to prevent further decline of Lake Sturgeon, 2. Increase the population of Lake Sturgeon through recovery efforts, 3. To provide for subsistence and cultural needs, and Aboriginal and Treaty Rights.

-everyone was in agreement with this wording of the Vision for the new ten year management plan
-the group started to discuss goal number 1 of the last ten year management plan, and determine if it would be appropriate to include as is, or change for the new ten year management plan. Lennard expressed to the group that Aboriginal input was not being included, and left the meeting.
-the group did not want to continue the discussion without any representation from Cumberland House, so the meeting was adjourned.

Summary of Action Items:

- Rob will send presentation from April 19 meeting to Marilyn to post on the website
- Marilyn and Lennard will prepare a letter and send to all current member organizations of the SRSMB
- Marilyn will incorporate Lennard's comments, and will then post the meeting notes/minutes on the SRSMB website