

Saskatchewan River Sturgeon Management Board

April 25, 2017 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Victoria Inn, Flin Flon, MB

Attendees:

Marcy Bast, SaskPower

Ron Campbell, Manitoba Sustainable Development

Marilynn Kullman, Manitoba Hydro

Diane Ballantyne, Opaskwayak Cree Nation

Gary Carriere, Cumberland House Fishermen's Coop

William Chaboyer, Cumberland House

Alphie Cook – Misipawistik Cree Nation/Grand Rapids Fishermen's Coop

Devon Ballantyne –Misipawistik Cree Nation

Ian Kitch (by phone) –Manitoba Sustainable Development

1. Opening Prayer –Gary Carriere

2. Introductions of members and guests

- Devon explained that her and Alphie are attending the meeting to find out more information on the board and to see if there's a role for Misipawistik Cree Nation on the board. They are interested to see what can be done for the sturgeon. They will gather information, take it back to their community and ask for direction.

3. Discussion of proposed sturgeon work for 2017

- Marcy suggested completing a juvenile inventory again this year, and that we would probably still need some assistance from North/South Consultants.
- Both Gary and Diane emphasized that it was important to reach out to the younger generation and involve them in these projects.
- Gary suggested a project that would involve clearing the river mouths, as they are clogged with debris.
- Marilyn asked if there was interest in having more community engagement/education initiatives in schools or at community events. People were interested, and Gary and Diane had two events that are coming up that they will be participating in where they could share information on the board.
- The board will plan to proceed with a juvenile inventory in 2017.

4. Invasive aquatic species – zebra mussel updates

M. Bast on behalf of R. Hlasny

- a strategy document is in development by a task group that includes government representatives, non government representatives, and stakeholders
- a science group advises the task force, and is working toward improving early detection, examining different ways of sampling water (eg. eDNA), and coordinating incident command protocols
- two summer staff were hired to do monitoring this summer and training is being provided to conservation officers
- decontamination units will be brought to events like fishing derbies
- signage is being increased around the province to educate people on cleaning boats and observing zebra mussels

Laureen Janusz (Manitoba Sustainable Development) joined by phone to give an update on Zebra Mussel monitoring in Manitoba

- in the south basin of Lake Winnipeg zebra mussels are becoming very well established, with a 16 fold increase in veligers, reports of zebra mussels attached to native clams, and an observed increase in water clarity
- in the Lake Winnipeg narrows, 7/11 stations had veligers, and zebra mussels were observed on buoys
- in the north basin of Lake Winnipeg, 1 veliger found at 1 station, no zebra mussels were observed on buoys
- in the Nelson River down to the Ferry Crossing, and in Playgreen and Little Playgreen Lake, 0 veligers found in 18 samples collected, no observations of zebra mussels settled on docks that were examined
- Cedar Lake was sampled at 29 sites and no veligers were detected (but were previously detected in the fall of 2015), and no adult settlement was observed
- Diane would like to have OCN members included in the field work that is being done.
- Laureen noted that although sampling has been opportunistic, they have had at least one community group help in sampling (eg. set out substrate samplers).
- Saskatchewan River at The Pas was sampled weekly for veligers, and additional sites downstream were also sampled but no veligers were detected; substrate samplers set in the Saskatchewan River near The Pas, Kelsey, and Elbow areas but no zebra mussels were detected
- Laureen noted that it is quite expensive for Manitoba to have samples analyzed, so it would be cost prohibitive to do something similar for OCN or other communities.
- Marcy noted that it may be possible to have OCN sample for presence of zebra mussels as well (and send samples for analysis through Saskatchewan River), since although it seems unlikely, there are studies that have shown that zebra mussels can move upstream.
- Manitoba Sustainable Development also sampled non invaded water bodies to detect the presence of zebra mussels early, and after looking at 65 water bodies, there have not been any detections of veligers or settled zebra mussels

- Manitoba Sustainable Development had samples that were collected for the presence of veligers analyzed for the presence of Spiny Waterflea (another invasive species); there were none detected in the south basin in 2015 (but were present in previous years), but present at 22/28 stations in the north basin,
- There have been amendments to the AIS regulations with respect to control zones; Saskatchewan River/Cedar Lake is now it's own control zone. Between zones, boats (and other equipment used in the water) need to be decontaminated at a designated location or follow the protocols in the regulations.
- There is a decontamination unit near The Pas that operates from Thursday to Monday.

ACTION: Ron C. will look into whether Manitoba Sustainable Development could have OCN members come along to observe and help with sampling (whether on Cedar Lake, or on the bridge)

ACTION: Marcy will put together a sampling kit for Cumberland House, and make arrangements to meet up to train people to sample for presence of zebra mussels. Sampling should be completed once in early summer and in the fall.

5. Research topics – Tim Jardine (Professor at the University of Saskatchewan)

- There are a number of funding sources that could make it possible to undertake mitigation projects in the Saskatchewan River, and AFSAR is the most promising option.
- Tim outlined three options (further details provided in attached document)
 - Construct artificial spawning reefs in the Delta
 - Marilynn noted that we would first need to consider the conditions at existing sites to make sure that it is substrate that is limiting, and that velocity and depth are suitable.
 - Complete small scale initiatives to improve habitat connectivity
 - There may be areas with shallow water and lower velocities (side channels, backwater areas in the Delta) that are no longer accessible, that could perhaps be made available to young-of-the-year
 - Marilynn noted that the juveniles tend to congregate in deep holes, but that there may be other advantages to small scale initiatives.
 - This is likely the most economical and feasible option, and there could be other benefits, but it would be very difficult to determine whether it would achieve anything for sturgeon.
 - Connect Tobin Lake with the Torch River
 - Marcy noted that sturgeon do spawn downstream of EB Campbell, and that there are sturgeon in the Tobin Reservoir, they spawn at the base of the Nipawin facility; there isn't a big population but sturgeon are being recruited to the population. This option needs to be carefully considered, and it may not necessarily be a good thing to connect Tobin

Lake with the Torch River since the population in Tobin Lake is sustaining itself and we don't want to send up more Lake Sturgeon when the habitat may be limiting.

- Gary noted that there was a known spawning location in the Torch River.
- Reshape EB Campbell tailrace
 - Reshape the tailrace to minimize the amount of stranding that occurs, and it has been identified as a priority issue.
 - Marcy clarified that the primary concern is whitefish in the fall, but there are some walleye, pike, and minnow species that get stranded. This is something that SaskPower is planning on doing, and some mapping has been completed to figure out what areas were most susceptible to stranding, and how best to connect pools to allow fish to escape. This work has been postponed due to re-licensing.
- The board agreed that we would like to proceed with a project proposal to clean up areas of the river mouths that are clogged with debris. Tim will look into timelines for the application deadline, so that we can plan the timing of our meeting in case a decision is required for the application.

ACTION: Tim will draft an AFSAR proposal, and will have CHCN or the Fishermen's Coop as the applicant.

6. Other business

- Selection of two people to act as co-chairs for next two years
 - Gary Carriere will commit to one year of the co-chair role
 - Ron Campbell will be co-chair for Manitoba
- Other initiatives
 - Gary reported that there are 35 people that are coming to do a tour of the Delta on May 12 because they are looking at establishing a park to help protect Woodland Caribou. There is also a group from the University of Saskatchewan coming to the lodge from May 17-21, to produce a documentary on the Delta from a science perspective (including people from Tim Jardine's lab).
 - Diane mentioned that there's a water festival, and she was hoping to have a information on sturgeon and the SRSMB for the event.

ACTION: Ron will send SRSMB hats and pamphlets to Gary and Diane for use at the events.

- Additions to the agenda
 - Kischi Sipi Namao update

Marilynn provided an overview of the Kischi Sipi Namao Committee and the activities and initiatives it has been undertaking. The committee liked the hats

that the KSNC has for giveaway at community events, and would like to have hats from the SRSMB to give away at events.

ACTION: Marilyn will order camouflage hats with the SRSMB logo.

- Involvement of Misipawistik Cree Nation in SRSMB
Devon B. asked what the next steps would be if MCN wants to become involved, and the committee discussed that we would have to increase the funding for meeting participation. M. Bast explained that we have two groups to fund the work, that there is no shortage of work that needs to be done, and we don't have the resources we'd like to have to get done what we want to do.
- Ron C. noted that we understand Misipawistik used to be one of the best spawning areas, so it makes sense for MCN to be part of the board.
- Our next meeting will be in the fall and we can include it on the agenda to talk about our capacity to extend the invitation to MCN; we want to make sure that we can not only support participation but also that we can expand into that geographic area before involving MCN in the board.

7. Closing prayer

8. Adjourn ~ 1:30 PM

9. The next meeting will be in Prince Albert in the fall, but the date will be determined at a later time, after Tim looks into timing of the AFSAR application.