

Saskatchewan River Sturgeon Management Board

November 1, 2016 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

McIntosh Building – Prince Albert, SK

Meeting Minutes – Day 1

Attendees:

Lennard Morin, Cumberland House Fishermen's Co-Op

Ron Hlasny, Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment

Marcy Bast, SaskPower

Diane Ballantyne, Opaskwayak Cree Nation Resource Council

Ron Campbell, Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship (by phone)

Stephanie Backhouse, Manitoba Hydro

Meeting Notes

- 1. Lennard opened the meeting with a prayer**
- 2. Introductions of members**
- 3. Invasive aquatic species – zebra mussel update**

Saskatchewan - Ron H. provided an SK update, 35 waterbodies were tested for veligers, and 40 waterbodies tested/observed for adults.

- Sampling completed by partners including the Sask Association of Watersheds, Parks, resource users, irrigation etc.
- Adult monitoring completed by observing substrates and infrastructure like docks and buoys
- Conservation officers have been trained in inspection and decontamination. 33 sites by the MB border were inspected including 27 decontaminated boats, 2 contained mussels
- A partnership between the western provinces and Yukon will work with Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) to coordinate border inspections
- A Saskatchewan provincial rapid response plan will be finalized and then discussions with stakeholders will be held in cooperation with the SK Water Security Agency

Manitoba – Ron. C provided an update, as of September 15, 2016 the analyzed samples show no mussels (results report attached to minutes)

- Cedar Lake (east side) was 'negative' for larval veliger mussels
- Some samples are still being analyzed including Athapapuskow, Iskwasim and others

- 4. Adult index fishing results 2016**

Manitoba – sampling was completed between June 7-21 using the standard sampling methods as in the past (standard net sizes used by 4 fishers on separate reaches of river). Results summary attached to minutes.

- 383 lake sturgeon were captured, new fish were marked with PIT tags
- There were 5 mortalities
- 22 were recaptures from MB
- 2 were recaptures from SK
- 30 additional sturgeon were caught as bycatch from walleye fishing
- A lot of juveniles were being caught in MB by index fishers and public anglers
- Lennard noted also that lots of new fish are being caught in the past several years, and it would be good to know if those were any of the previously stocked fish from Cumberland House. There were not suitable marking techniques available to allow tracking.
- The MB population is showing a lot of recruitment which is positive, and people believe they are coming from Cedar Lake
- Diane discussed the need for youth to be involved in this and other programs to communicate and educate knowledge. The information learned through index fishing needs to be passed on to younger fishers and the community, and there was an opportunity to have a second boat come out last year but it didn't happen because of lack of funds. Ron C. noted that his fishers take some youth out to index fish but often their own family because of liability issues.

ACTION – SaskPower and Manitoba Hydro will look at ways to provide fuel for a boat this next coming field season to ensure that students and youth can be involved

Saskatchewan – sampling continued through the summer at various locations on the river and Cumberland Lake using nets and hooks

- 177 lake sturgeon were captured, new fish were marked with PIT tags
- 57 were recaptures and 8 were 'unknown'
- Most fish are smaller (2-3 ft fork length)

5. Management plan discussion

Started review and discussion of the existing 10-year management plan by going through the board's short and long-term goals, objectives and strategies for protecting sturgeon. Some areas require an increased focus moving forward, this discussion was continued to day 2.

Saskatchewan River Sturgeon Management Board

November 2, 2016 9:00 AM – 11:30 AM

McIntosh Building – Prince Albert, SK

Meeting Minutes – Day 2

Attendees:

Gary Carriere, Cumberland House Fishermen's Co-Op

Ron Hlasny, Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment

Marcy Bast, SaskPower

Diane Ballantyne, Opaskwayak Cree Nation Resource Council

Ron Campbell, Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship (by phone)

Stephanie Backhouse, Manitoba Hydro

Marilynn Kullman, Manitoba Hydro (by phone)

Meeting Notes

Gary opened the meeting with a prayer.

Ron H. asked Gary to indicate on a map the locations where they fish for LKST (done at the conclusion of the meeting).

6. Continuation of discussion on Management Plan

Recap of yesterday's discussion - monitoring juveniles and adults (alternating years), whether efforts to decrease harvest were required based on current harvest levels observed in the communities, and left off at education, recognizing the importance of involving youth in committee work.

ACTION – SB to ensure mgmt plan is on the website – update – it is posted under the 'Resource Materials' Link

Strategy 3 - Education

Are there opportunities to put information about the committee and committee activities in a newsletter? Either a separate sturgeon one, or include articles in existing newsletters/newspapers/etc?

- Existing newsletter put out by resource council in OCN (put out weekly)
- CH – Gary isn't sure if there is an existing newsletter, but there is a radio station in the community
- CH school might have a newsletter?
- Include an 'ad' to run weekly?
- A reminder for when spawning occurs, and suggestion for people to avoid harvesting spawning sturgeon (recommendations similar to those put out by the Nelson River Sturgeon Board)? Gary suggested making sure information was put out in May/June/July, because that is the period when people start thinking about harvesting LKST
- Submit annual article summarizing SRSMB activities
- Start with an initial summary of the committee, then potentially have a more specific message to do with LKST harvest that is planned at the spring meeting

ACTION – Diane to look into putting an ad in the OCN newsletter that is run continuously, then specific messaging in the spring, Gary to talk to CH school to find a way to get info out into CH community

ACTION – Diane and Gary to look into getting radio space

ACTION – Marcy and Marilyn to develop posters to be put up in all the communities (update existing 4 pager and develop a 1 page large font one)

ACTION – Marilyn to get the pamphlets to OCN and CH for distribution

Discussion on the importance of ensuring youth involvement

- important to find opportunities to engage youth in all field work
- Colouring contest for kids in school (with prizes either \$ or t-shirts or hats)
- MB and fish futures runs a colouring contest for the youth angling card, 2016 picture was a sturgeon

ACTION – Ron will send committee information about the Fish Futures Colouring Contest – complete!

Refer to www.manitobayouthangler.blogspot.ca and www.fishfutures.net/yac/

Importance of having visual components to education/outreach activities – make more of a lasting impression on people

Strategy 4 – Increase Recruitment

- This is a difficult strategy to tackle in the short term

Strategy 5 – Habitat Assessment

- TK indicates areas where LKST are caught, has never been documented (sensitivities around documenting)
- May be additional habitat that exists, but has never been found – may be more fish than are currently being caught?

Strategy 6 – habitat Improvement/Restoration/Protection

- Brainstorming (each person at the meeting suggested work that could be completed under this strategy)

- Gary – extreme low waters during 2016 LKST fishing season, impact LKST spawning habitat, still want to spawn in same location, despite the low water. Feels flows need to be managed to ensure appropriate water levels during spawning periods
 - Feels the board needs to be more active if any changes are going to occur, monitoring isn't enough, need to work on habitat as well
 - Important for the board to work together, stop pointing fingers, and work towards a common goal
 - Concerns with reallocating existing money, because we get push back from fisherman who rely on the income
 - Need to try to source money from other funding sources (HSP or AFSAR funding), and collaborate with other groups (like University of Saskatchewan)
 - There is a need for a review of existing literature to compile all the information that has already been collected, as well as analyzing existing data
 - There is a documentary being produced on the Delta area, feels that it should include the SRSMB (interviews, information).
 - Marcy expressed concern with getting permission from SaskPower to participate, depending on the angle of the documentary
 - Still important to include the SRSMB
- Diane – also feels SRSMB needs to look at habitat as well
- Steph – revisit previous habitat surveys to see if any require updating or if there were any gaps
 - Interested in hearing what Tim has to say, see if there are any innovative ideas that the board can tackle
- Ron C. – forwarded emails from Delaine Tome (sp?), similar to what Gary was talking about with the HSP
 - Feels like the reach of the SRSMB should expand to include Cedar Lake, people say that it is a source of LKST
 - Gary suggested Tobin Lake be included as well, Marcy indicated that no tagged LKST from Tobin have been found DS, but SaskPower is doing some genetics work to determine where young LKST are being recruited from, and if any are moving DS.
 - Easterville fishes in Cedar Lake, maybe also Moose Lake
 - If we expand the area, need to also expand the membership of the SRSMB
 - How would this be funded? Need to source more funding
 - Should be looking at data more, need to stay up to date on the analysis.
- Ron H.
 - Acoustic telemetry studies may be useful
- Marilyn – interested to hear what ideas Tim has, and see what overlaps with the objectives laid out in the management plan

ACTION – Steph to send draft manuscript from Keeyask Juvenile Acoustic study

Tim Jardine (University of Saskatchewan, school of environment and sustainability) – forwarded info on funding opportunities available to communities wrt to fisheries and populations (research program), Tim is willing to assist CH/OCN in applying for the funding

- Opportunities to work with U of S and Ducks Unlimited to apply for DFO funding and do some projects

- AFSAR funding (prevention stream)
 - Application deadlines are soon
 - Needs to be submitted by a single FN, on behalf of the SRSMB

ACTION – Gary will follow up with Tim re. getting a meeting set up ASAP for board to discuss research opportunities

7. Husky Oil Spill

- Diane provided an excerpt from Risk Assessment (attached to minutes)
- Ron H – in assessment process, tasked by government to Husky
- Diane asked if the binding of the oil to silt will impact LKST populations – Husky will have to consider that in their assessment
- Gary – FN group (Onion Lake) from North Battleford has an independent consultant doing an assessment
- Husky webpage has a lot of information on the oil spill on their website

8. Discussion of interest from other groups to join or observe the SRSMB (Grand Rapids etc.)

- MH would need to find additional participation funding, expanding the study area would require additional monitoring funding
- If we don't expand our study area then we don't need to expand membership
- Invite Grand Rapids to observe next meeting, if they express interest in joining, board will need to have discussions
- Need to manage expectations, so they don't expect studies in their area, also need to understand the intent of GR before allowing them to attend
- How are GR influenced by the Saskatchewan River?

ACTION – Diane to invite Heidi Cook or other GR representation to attend the next meeting in MB

ACTION – MH to put out feelers to see about likelihood of getting additional funding if another group from MH joins the board

9. Other business

- Tim Jardine mentioned mercury testing that was done on LKST around CH
 - Take non-lethal samples, looks promising and monitoring will continue
 - Results indicate low concentrations across all size ranges of fish
 - Looking at collaborating with Iain Phillips to use other isotopes to track movement
- Diane pointed out that SK representation from CH is low, asked Gary why, and what SRSMB could do to increase attendance/participation.
 - Gary will bring it up with the local Fisherman's committee
- Meeting locations
 - To address issues with out of province travel, can we have meetings in Flin Flon, so people in SK can drive across the border?

Next Meeting – tentative date April 25th

Gary closed the meeting with a prayer at 11:30.