

NCD Ictalurid Technical Committee
Annual Business Meeting
74th Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference
Kansas City, MO
Meeting Minutes, January 26, 2014

Welcome and call to order by Jeremy Tiemann.

Review and approval of agenda: Motion made to approve agenda, motion approved.

Review and approval of 2012 NCD-ITC business meeting minutes: Motion made to approve minutes, motion approved.

Treasurer's report (from NCD files): We now have \$20,307.50 after a Catfish 2012 deposit of \$238.60 and the annual interest of \$91.83 was added to the account December 31, 2013. Motion made to approve report, motion approved.

Old Business: none

New Business:

State Report Summaries (full reports will be uploaded to the NCD-ITC webpage)

Illinois

- EIU studying channel catfish demographics on the Sangamon River, below Lake Decatur, which is lightly exploited, and on the Embarras River, below Lake Charleston, which is moderately exploited.
- EIU studying the demographics of a commercially exploited population of flathead catfish in the Wabash River. Project will assess the current status of flathead catfish in the Wabash River to inform potential management options for the state of Illinois.
- Year five of Fox River flathead catfish study was completed in 2013. continued to evaluate populations. Proportion stock density indices for the Fox were similar to the Wabash in IL and to several other rivers (MI, GA, NC) reported in the literature. EF results and tag and recapture studies indicate a limited number of larger fish in the Fox River compared to larger systems like the Rock and Wabash in IL. Harvest regulations are being considered to protect larger sized fish

Indiana

- IDNR Big Rivers Unit collaborated with the Kentucky Division of Fish and Wildlife Resources in a trotlining survey to evaluate large catfish within the Ohio River. Preliminary results indicate there are more and larger size catfish in the non-commercially fished Hovey Lake than the Ohio, even though there is routine water exchange between them. However, further analysis is needed before direct comparisons are made between a lotic and lentic system.

- IDNR southern fisheries crew is currently using baited hoop nets in impoundments for the first time to evaluate catch rates of channel catfish. Management biologist's currently use gill nets set during their general surveys to evaluate catfish populations. Also working with a graduate student at Ball State to look at age and size structure of channel catfish in large reservoirs throughout Indiana.
- Southern research also used baited hoop nets in 9 small urban impoundments to sample channel catfish during June and July 2013. This is the first year of Indiana's new urban fishing program, and 5,000 large (12-16") catfish were stocked in these 9 lakes multiple times throughout the spring. A creel survey was also conducted at these nine sites. Found that when harvest rates of catfish were high, they caught little or no catfish in the hoop nets. When fishing pressure and harvest was low, they caught almost all of the stocked fish in our hoop nets. Concluded that they can save money by not conducting expensive creel surveys all summer long and just set hoop nets to evaluate if anglers are harvesting catfish in these urban program lakes.

Iowa

- A bill was proposed within the 2014 session of the Iowa Legislature that would require the Iowa Natural Resource Commission to allow catfish to be taken by hand fishing. Reports indicate that the proposal is unlikely to proceed out of committee.
- The Iowa DNR Research Section (Interior Rivers) is finalizing a completion report titled "Evaluation of the Importance of Specific In-Stream Habitats of Fish Populations and the Potential for Protecting or Enhancing Iowa's Interior River Resources". This report includes channel catfish movement and habitat use information from radio-telemetry studies on the Wapsipinicon and Turkey Rivers. It also includes descriptions of overwintering habitats used by channel catfish.
- The Interior Rivers team is also studying the impacts of dam modification or removal projects on fish habitat—two projects included in the study are expected to have positive impact on channel catfish populations by reconnecting upstream habitats with overwintering areas downstream of dams.
- The Iowa DNR Research Section (Reservoirs) has been collecting age structures from flathead catfish at Red Rock Reservoir and Lake Rathbun each year. These data will be used to assess population dynamics of flathead catfish in these reservoir fisheries — specifically for modeling relationships between environmental variables and year class strength.
- The Spirit Lake management district is assessing the impacts of reducing the density of catfish in lakes through direct removal (hoop-netting) and reductions in stocking rates. This density reduction initiative is in response to reduced interest in catfish angling and concerns about the impacts of high density channel catfish upon recreationally important panfish populations. Spirit Lake management is monitoring population metrics (relative abundance, condition, size structure) to assess the success of these catfish management actions.
- The Iowa DNR Research Section (Constructed Lakes) completed a report titled "Study 7031. Evaluation of Channel Catfish Populations in Iowa's Small Constructed Lakes" during 2012. This study investigated aspects of channel catfish stocking, factors influencing population density, gears for population monitoring, and channel catfish anglers using Iowa constructed lakes.

Michigan

- Michigan stocks approximately 50,000 channel catfish in inland lakes to introduce predators and produce unique fishing opportunities.
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources is evaluating the use stocking adult flathead catfish in inland lakes to control stunted bluegill populations.
- U.S. Geological Survey recently conducted a study on northern madtom and has the following paper in press: Occurrence, habitat, and movements of the endangered Northern Madtom (*Noturus stigmosus*) in the Detroit River, 2003-2011. Authors: B. A. Manny, B. A. Daley, J. C. Boase, A. N. Horned, and J.A. Chiotti

Missouri

- MDC project looking at responses of fish communities to predator introductions in small Missouri impoundments. Propose to introduce hybrid Striped Bass and Flathead Catfish into some lakes to determine if predation by these species can reduce the abundances of Gizzard Shad and Common Carp.
- MDC population assessment and angler exploitation of Flathead Catfish and Blue Catfish in Mark Twain Lake. Objectives are to 1) provide baseline data on Blue Catfish and Flathead Catfish population characteristics and 2) estimate current angler exploitation rates for both species.
- MDC project using angler diaries to assess catch and harvest trends for Blue Catfish and Flathead Catfish in a Missouri reservoir. A volunteer catfish angler creel was conducted during 2003-2005 to assess catch, harvest trends and the proportional contribution of the two catfish species to the overall catfish fishery by reservoir catfish anglers. Results published in the 2013 SEAFWA Proceedings.
- MDC is providing enhanced protection for Blue Catfish at Harry S. Truman Reservoir and Lake of the Ozarks. Evaluating differences in the length distribution and age structure of reservoir Blue Catfish populations in response to a protected slot-length limit.
- MDC is conducting research field testing of Smith-Root VVP-15B electrofisher output within a boat electrofishing fleet: efforts to improve standardization. Results will provide quality assurance of field equipment and aid development of a standardized electrofishing protocol for sampling catfish populations in large rivers.
- MDC assessment of vital rates (exploitation, size structure, age and growth and total annual mortality) to evaluate the current harvest regulations for Blue Catfish (*Ictalurus furcatus*) and Flathead Catfish (*Pylodictis olivaris*) in the Missouri and Mississippi rivers. A pilot study to determine feasibility and refine sampling techniques is currently underway; the full project is under internal review; but is anticipated to commence in the spring of 2015.
- MDC Commercial Fisheries Program - *Missouri Commercial Fish Harvest 2000-2012*. Summary of Missouri's commercial fishery data from 2000 to 2012 and a synthesis of harvest trends from 1945 to 2012.

Nebraska

- Nebraska Fish and Wildlife Cooperative Research Unit conducted a study assessing exploitation of channel catfish in Nebraska flood control reservoirs project. Objectives were to estimate the exploitation rates of channel catfish populations, identify the length bias of angling for channel catfish, and identify the self-imposed length limits for channel catfish at flood-control reservoirs of Nebraska.

- University of Nebraska-Lincoln continues to conduct Missouri River catfish research, including a flathead catfish diet comparison between the flood (2011) and “normal” water year (2012), and using flow and growing season data to model age-0 channel catfish growth.
- Nebraska Game and Parks Commission is conducting a tagging study on the flathead catfish in Branched Oak Reservoir. The goal of this study is to evaluate the population dynamics of flathead catfish in the reservoir since little is known about the population. Radio tracking of several flatheads took place in 2012-2013 to look at movement patterns and to identify other habitat use (areas that can't be electrofish effectively, winter holes, etc.).
- University of Nebraska-Lincoln is also conducting research on channel catfish ecology and population dynamics across spatial and temporal scales in large-river environments. Goals of the study are to 1) Determine channel catfish growth response to annual variability in flow pattern and the extent to which growth is related to distinct hydrological zones along the Platte River, NE; 2) Determine if environmental history, including natal origins, of channel catfish can be determined from spatial heterogeneity of chemical and isotopic gradients along the Platte River, its tributaries, and within the Missouri River; and to 3) Describe the abundance, survival, and movement of channel catfish in perceived source areas along the lower portions of the Platte River.
- Nebraska Game and Parks Commission is conducting a study to assess southeast Nebraska's rivers and streams potential for sportfish fisheries. Specifically looking to 1) collect baseline fisheries data for the management of the Little Nemaha, Big Nemaha, Little Blue and Big Blue Rivers; 2) determine channel catfish movement patterns and population connectivity; and 3) determine impact of dams on sportfish populations (Big Blue River)
- University of Nebraska-Lincoln is collaborating with Canada biologists to assess population dynamics and movement of channel catfish in the Red River of the North. The objective of this study is to quantify abundance, age structure, mortality rates, growth rates, and movement patterns of these catfish.

Ohio

- Held a catfish summit with many of the tournament and avid catfish anglers in the state. Summit was held to explain current management strategies for catfish in general and to field questions and concerns from the anglers. Many of the anglers are concerned about commercial harvest of Ohio River trophy catfishes for use in pay lakes. (Illegal in Ohio water, but legal in Kentucky)
- Finished research project on stocking blue catfish to create a trophy fishery in inland reservoirs. Two reservoirs were stocked with yearling fish. One very low water retention rate, the other high retention. Acoustic pingers were implanted in 50 fish in each reservoir. The fish in the low retention reservoir migrated out after the first heavy rain event post stocking. Fish remained in the high retention reservoir and migrated throughout the reservoir. Fish tended to relate to the deepest water possible and migrations were associated with water level fluctuations not migration of prey fish. Expansion of blue catfish stocking within the native range (Ohio River watershed) is being discussed.
- Future research project planned to assess trophy blue and flathead movement within the Ohio River near Cincinnati. Use acoustic pingers to look at migration through dams and identify triggers for movement. Project will likely be 3 year assessment.

- Statewide fish assessment. There is an ongoing effort to identify fish distributions throughout the state including the 11 species of catfish and madtoms. This work will result in an update of the Fishes of Ohio book written by Milt Trautman in 1981.

Submitted by Tony Barada