



2021 Annual Meeting Minutes  
Ictalurid Technical Committee  
North Central Division of the American Fisheries Society  
Virtual Meeting  
2:00 pm, 8 February 2021

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Welcome and call to order by Chris Brooke, Chair at 2:02 pm.

No additions suggested to the agenda.

Motion to accept agenda by Bradd Simms, seconded by Cameron Goble. Unanimous.

Motion to accept January 2020 minutes by Bradd Simms, seconded by Bryan Sowards. Unanimous.

Treasurer's report: The ITC checking account began 2021 with a balance of \$5,751.79. The ITC Investment Portfolio began 2020 at \$20,303 and the year-to-date balance is \$19,690. Catfish 2020 funds will be deposited into the ITC checking account later in the calendar year of 2021.

Chair report: Ben Neely was recognized for their efforts and leadership for serving as the Chair. Plaque and certificate will be provided to Ben Neely for his efforts of serving as Chair. Connor Ossowski will be stepping down as secretary/treasurer.

Micah Waters was nominated to take over as secretary/treasurer. No other nominations were proposed. Motion to approve Micah Waters was made by Bryan Sowards, seconded by Cameron Goble. Unanimous.

NCD Update: Jeff Kopaska provided an update on the recent NCD meeting. He shared details on Bryan Murphy, current AFS President, provided an AFS update on initiatives, such as the Diversity and Inclusion. He also stated that Doug Austen provided an update on AFWA grants, grey literature database, standard sampling protocols, instream flow requirements, R3 initiatives, and a job board being available on the NCD website.

Old Business:

Catfish 2020 was a huge success with 200 total participants. Proceedings will be held through a special issue of North American Journal of Fisheries Management; 50 manuscripts submitted, 10 rejected, 40 remain with 17 being accepted online and ready for early view and 21 still being worked on. Jim Lamar successfully received \$40,000 in sponsorships, so a big thank you is owed to Jim for securing funding for Catfish 2020. Discussion was held on the finances of Catfish 2020 with finances being held within the Southern Division Catfish Technical Committee. When the expenses are finalized for the proceedings, a deposit will be made to the ITC checking account. We discussed providing NCD with profits from Catfish 2020 a donation back to NCD for their contributions towards Catfish 2020.

## State Report Summaries

### Dakotas – Cameron Goble reporting

- South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) staff attended the Scotland Days Catfish Tournament for the fourth consecutive year to collect information from angler-caught fish. Catfish studies in the lower James River continue.
- Pierre GFP captured Channel Catfish in the Missouri River and Bad Rivers and stocked them in area waters in June 2020. Objectives were to evaluate whether or not stocking of Channel Catfish would have an impact on populations of abundant, small Black Bullheads and to provide community fishing opportunity.
- North Dakota continues to utilize channel catfish to stock various lakes around the state.
- North Dakota plans to survey the Red River were postponed until 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions.
- Both Dakotas were impacted by Covid-19 restrictions.

### Illinois – Nathan Lederman reporting

- Illinois Department of Natural Resources have continued to evaluate impacts of newly implemented catfish regulations on the Fox River.
- Catfish in the Upper Mississippi River have been assessed using population demographics, genetic structure and large scale movement patterns via otolith microchemistry in the Upper Mississippi River and La Grange pool of the Illinois River.
- Artificial nesting structures were placed within a section of the Rock River in 2015 and a telemetry project was started. 225 Flathead Catfish were tagged in October and plan to tag about 40 more in the spring. The radio telemetry project is being funded from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.
- Commercial Fishing was summarized for ictalurids in the Mississippi, Illinois, Kaskaskia, Wabash, Ohio, Sangamon, Embarrass, Big Muddy and Little Wabash River watersheds. Nearly 600,000 pounds of Ictalurids were harvested during 2019 in Illinois.
- Illinois has a hatchery system consisting of 3 facilities dedicated to enhancing fish populations in Illinois waters. 82,898 Blue Catfish and 775,580 Channel Catfish were stocked in 8 lakes throughout 8 Illinois counties during May and October.

### Indiana –Craig Jansen reporting

- Catfish survey was conducted on the Wabash River with effort consisting of 160 overnight hoop net lifts (20 per site) and 8 hours of electrofishing (1 hour per site; split between low and high pulse DC) across 8 sites. In total, 557 catfish were collected, including 256 Flathead Catfish, 261 Channel Catfish, and 40 Blue Catfish.
- Assisted KDFWR with sampling J.T. Myers Pool of the Ohio River with trotlines.
- 75,000 catchable size (8-12”) channel catfish were stocked at 147 locations around the state. Many urban parks are stocked multiple times throughout the summer months.
- A statewide catfish strategic plan is currently being written. This plan summarizes all previous management history, current status information, and will provide guidance for future catfish management in the state.

- Biologists are working with catfish tournament organizers to gather available historic catfish tournament data from around the state. Plans to collaborate with them more in the future and develop a standardized tournament reporting form that organizers to submit to the Division to better track tournament trends and catch rates throughout time.

#### Iowa – Tyler Stubbs reporting

- Flathead catfish were collected from Lake Red Rock and Rathbun Lake to better understand lentic populations of flathead catfish and to inform future management decisions.
- Three-Mile Lake was renovated in 2016 due to declining water quality and sportfish community. Catfish anglers in Iowa have expressed interest in having a Blue Catfish fishery somewhere in Iowa. The Mount Ayr Fish Hatchery stocked 35,390 Blue Catfish fingerlings and advanced fingerlings in Three-Mile Lake from 2016-2019. In 2020, the Mount Ayr Fish Hatchery stocked 18,432 advanced fingerling Blue Catfish. In 2020, Mount Ayr Fisheries staff caught four Blue Catfish ranging from 23-26 inches during a spring gillnetting survey. 7,900 advanced fingerling Blue Catfish were stocked in Lake Icaria in 2020.
- A total of 94,574 8-inch Channel Catfish were produced at Rathbun Fish Hatchery for stocking into public lakes, urban ponds, and reservoirs of Iowa.
- In 2020, the Iowa DNR started coordinating an effort to develop a statewide catfish management plan for Channel Catfish, Flathead Catfish, and Blue Catfish based on management, production, and research history. The plan is separated into various sections of natural lakes, interior rivers and streams, large rivers, large reservoirs, small impoundments, and urban ponds Staff from around the state are working on developing a plan that can be used in the future to better manage catfish in the state. A first full draft is expected by the end of 2021.

#### Kansas – Bryan Sowards reporting

- A rise in catfish tournaments led to a livewell stress evaluation study, due to no regulations pertaining to tournaments and how Blue Catfish are handled. A survey was sent to avid tournament anglers to gather information on average livewell dimension and type of accessories used to help guide the livewell trials in 2021. This information will be used to guide KDWP in implementing regulations to ensure Blue Catfish survival during tournaments.
- Floatlines have been used in recent years as a supplemental gear to sample Blue Catfish in Kansas. Different bait types were evaluated and common carp side pieces caught significantly more fish than any cut of shad and retention was much higher. There was no difference in mean length of fish caught using any of the different baits. Hook size will be evaluated to evaluate eye wounds and fresh vs. frozen bait to determine if there are any differences in catch rates.
- El Dorado Reservoir Blue Catfish were evaluated through mark-recapture analyses.
- Transmitters were implanted in 11 Blue Catfish at Glen Elder Reservoir to evaluate spawning habits in 2020. An additional 10-15 fish will have transmitters implanted in 2021.

- Blue Catfish age to maturity has been estimated throughout their range at 3 to 7 or more years, depending on growth, latitude, and other factors. Blue Catfish in Kansas reservoirs were initially stocked from 1990 to 2016 and, therefore, mature individuals should be common. Natural recruitment has been documented in 12 of 21 impoundments (57%). The number of years from first stocking to detection of natural recruitment range from 3 to 14 years with a mean of  $10 \pm 2.4$  years. Age to maturity has not been estimated for these populations but it is likely that natural recruitment isn't being realized as soon as maturity is being reached. Blue Catfish have typically been stocked at low rates (1-2 per acre per year) although some recent stockings have been denser. It is likely that low stocking rates and low densities have delayed recruitment in most Kansas reservoirs. However, future research should attempt to determine recruitment bottlenecks of Blue Catfish.

Michigan - Jay Wesley submitted report via email

- Covid-19 restricted Michigan DNR sampling and stocking efforts.

Minnesota –Tony Sindt reporting

- Four Minnesota DNR staff attended the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Catfish Symposium.
- Minnesota DNR staff continue to monitor movement patterns of Flathead Catfish implanted with acoustic transmitters in the Mississippi River, St. Croix River, and Minnesota River.
- Minnesota DNR Catfish Technical Committee is developing a synopsis of catfish fisheries and catfish management in Minnesota.
- The possession limit for catfish (Flathead Catfish and Channel Catfish combined) on the border water portion of the Mississippi River was changed from 10 (of any size) to 10 with only 1 over 30 inches.
- Red River of the North population and creel surveys have been deferred to the summer of 2022, due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Missouri – Chris Brooke reporting

- Vital rates (i.e., exploitation, size structure, age and growth, total annual mortality) were assessed to evaluate the current harvest regulations for Blue Catfish and Flathead Catfish in the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers.
- Missouri Department of Conservation warm-water hatcheries produced 221,231 Channel Catfish (8-12") and stocked in over 300 public lakes.
- Documented commercial fish harvest for 2019 and summarized harvest trends since 1945. Blue catfish accounted for the largest proportion (70%) of the total catfish harvest and increased from 75,083 lbs. in 2018 to 104,951 lbs. in 2019. Flathead catfish accounted for 25% of the total catfish harvest, increasing from 19,638 lbs. in 2018 (the lowest recorded harvest since 1966) to 37,102 lbs. in 2019. Channel catfish accounted for 5% of the total catfish harvest, increasing from 4,791 lbs. in 2018 (the lowest harvest ever recorded) to 7,456 lbs. in 2019.
- Ford et al determined electrofishing response thresholds of Blue Catfish and Flathead Catfish. A detailed summary of final recommendations can be found in Thomas (2020).

- Flathead Catfish populations will be assessed in several of Missouri's large reservoirs and small impoundments. Initial pilot sampling was conducted in 2020 with spring, summer, and fall sampling to continue through 2023.
- MDC recently completed a seven-year assessment of blue catfish and flathead catfish in Mark Twain Lake. MDC planned two open houses at Mark Twain Lake, but Covid-19 restrictions caused these events to cancel. Comments and surveys were collected online and by mail. A 26-inch minimum length limit was recommended, due to providing the best combination of increasing the number of large catfish while limiting a reduction in yield.
- Paul Michaletz recently retired from MDC and his contributions to fisheries research and management was recognized.
- Diets were analyzed of Blue Catfish and Channel Catfish during different seasons in the Lower Missouri River.

#### Nebraska – Tony Barada reporting

- Pawnee Reservoir was stocked with Blue Catfish the fall of 2015 and evaluation continued in 2020. Relative abundance of Blue Catfish had steadily increased from 2016-2019, but dropped off sharply during 2020, which was likely due to fish moving to different habitats within the reservoir rather than mortality. Growth is fast and comparable to more southern populations.
- UNL study on the Kansas River in Kansas investigating Blue Catfish recently finished.
- A Denil fishway was completed in 2015 on the Cedar River. Plans to continue monitoring fish passage through the fishway and assess both populations upstream and downstream of Spalding Dam, once it becomes operational again.

#### Ohio – Ethan Simmons reporting

- Assessed importance of single-versus chase-boat configurations when developing a low-frequency electrofishing standard population assessment for Blue Catfish and Flathead Catfish.
- Evaluated the performance of tandem hoop nets as a gear to sample Channel Catfish populations in Ohio reservoirs. Summary of significant results was slow growth if CPUE was greater than 50 fish per net set, reservoirs less than 102 hectares favor slow growth, fastest growth in largest reservoirs at low densities, unable to explain variation in Channel Catfish density among reservoirs, fast growth favors high PSD, tandem baited hoop net method CPUE indexes Channel Catfish density in reservoirs, Channel Catfish less than 300 mm had lowest catchability, peak catchability is at 450 mm total length often at age seven or older, and low total annual mortality in all study reservoirs.
- Channel Catfish population characteristics were evaluated in Ohio Reservoirs.
- Otolith aging precision of Channel Catfish was investigated. Management recommendations were implied due to this investigation.
- Channel Catfish sampling assessment and stocking evaluation by Becher et al came to the consensus that Largemouth Bass may not have as great of influence on survival as once thought, especially when alternative prey is abundant.
- Otolith microchemistry was utilized to quantify contributions of stocked Channel Catfish in reservoir populations.

- Ohio Division of Wildlife began stocking blue catfish in 2011 in Hoover Reservoir. Hoover was successful and has expanded to four reservoirs in recent years. Inventory of fish hatchery blue catfish was collected in 2020 with around 85 pounds of eggs collected that produced 200,000 advanced yearlings as well as surplus fry.
- Blue catfish began stocking Hoover Reservoir (2,900 acres) in 2011 and is a water supply for the city of Columbus. Fishery is doing very well with the average size fish from 2019 survey around 18.5 inches with a range of 5.5-31 inches. Covid restrictions caused sampling to be delayed in 2020.

Wisconsin –Brad Simms reporting

- Wisconsin’s catfish species team submitted the first catfish species regulation toolbox for approval by their Fisheries Management Policy Team. The toolbox contains reference regulations for biologist when proposing a new regulation or change in existing regulation. The toolbox contains 4 categories (Consumptive, Quality, Memorable, and Trophy/Bio-manipulation) with separate regulations for channel catfish and flathead catfish. Bullhead species have two categories (Consumptive and Quality).
- Wisconsin doesn’t have a propagation system for catfish, instead they utilize fish farm purchases or in-state field transfers.
- COVID-19 brought many restrictions to sampling protocol in 2020, however large river catfish sampling continued. Fisheries staff completed 9 hoop net surveys and 1 low pulse electrofishing survey on 9 river systems located throughout the state.
- Work continues throughout the Winnebago system evaluating the effects of a flathead catfish regulation change that went into effect in 2009.

New Business: Kris Bodine, Chair for the SDAFS Catfish Committee, joined the call. He suggested to a format for ITC to think about is having a “Hot Topic” format to discuss for multiple meetings in a year. Some of the hot topics that have been discussed in the SDAFS Catfish Committee have been trophy regulations with Bill Dance’s influence on implementing these regulations. He emphasized using creel data across states to push for protection of faster growing, younger year classes with an emphasis on creel limits.

Discussed the donation of \$5,000 back to NCD, once Catfish 2020 profits are generated and exceeds \$5,000. Motion to approve this donation with the exception of profits exceeding \$5,000 was Bryan Sowards. Seconded by Tony Sindt. Unanimous.

Scholarships for students and young professionals were discussed for ITC funds to be utilized for this effort. A subcommittee will be formed by Chris Brooke and volunteers are welcomed. Rebecca Krogman emphasized importance of having clear objectives of this effort to be finalized before implementation.

Motion to adjourn at 4:32 by Chris Brooke, seconded by Cameron Goble. Unanimous.

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NCD Ictalurid Technical Committee State Chapter Representatives

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Chapter	Name	Email
Dakota	Dave Lucchesi	dave.lucchesi@state.sd.us
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Chair	Ben Neely	ben.neely@ks.gov
Past chair	Tony Barada	tony.barada@nebraska.gov
Secretary/Treasurer	Connor Ossowski	connor.ossowski@ks.gov

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Attendees:

Name	Organization	State	Role (e.g.rep, attendee)	Email
Chris Brooke	MO Department of Conservation	MO	Missouri Rep, Chair	chris.brooke@mdc.mo.gov
Connor Chance-Ossowski	Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism	KS	Kansas attendee, Secretary/Treasurer	connor.ossowski@ks.gov
Bryan Sowards	Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism	KS	Kansas Rep	bryan.sowards@ks.gov
Nathan Lederman	Illinois Department of Natural Resources	IL	Illinois Rep	nathan.lederman@illinois.gov
Jeremy Tieman	Illinois Natural History Survey	IL	Catfish 2020	jtiemann@illinois.edu
Jake Willard	MO Department of Conservation	MO	Attendee	Jake.Willard@mdc.mo.gov
Jeff Kopaska	Iowa DNR/ NCD Division rep	IA	NCD representative	jeff.kopaska@dnr.iowa.gov
Tony Sindt	Minnesota DNR	MN	State Rep	anthony.sindt@state.mn.us
Ethan Simmons	Ohio DNR	OH	State Rep	ethan.simmons@ohio.gov
Samantha Holcomb	Missouri Department of Conservation	MO	Attendee	Samantha.Holcomb@mdc.mo.gov
Rebecca Krogman	Iowa DNR	IA	Attendee	rebecca.krogman@dnr.iowa.gov
Savannah Muhlbauer	Iowa DNR	IA	Attendee	savannah.fernholz@dnr.iowa.gov
Spencer Phillips	Illinois Natural History Survey	IL	Attendee	spencerp@illinois.edu
Tyler Stubbs	Iowa DNR	IA	State Rep	tyler.stubbs@dnr.iowa.gov
Cameron Goble	South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks	SD	Dakota Chapter Rep	Cameron.Goble@state.sd.us
Tony Barada	Nebraska Game and Parks Commission	NE	Nebraska Chapter Rep	tony.barada@nebraska.gov
Ben Neely	Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism	KS	Attendee	ben.neely@ks.gov
Amy Gebhard		SD		
Bradd Simms		WI	WI Rep	
Craig Jansen		IN	IN Rep	
Kris Bodine		TX	SDAFS Catfish Committee Chair	
Micah Waters	Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism	KS	New Secretary/Treasurer	micah.waters@ks.gov
Thomas Boersig		MO	Attendee	

Submitted by Connor Ossowski, ITC secretary/treasurer  
February 10, 2021