

**Minutes of CRASC Meeting
November 18, 1999
Conte Anadromous Fish Research Center
Turners Falls, Massachusetts**

Agenda Items

1. Call to Order and Approval of Minutes from the Meeting on April 22, 1999

Chair Duncan McInnes called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m. The agenda was accepted.

A quorum (simple majority) was present though the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Vermont Public Sector representatives were absent. The Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service agency commissioners were represented by designated alternates.

Mr. Charlie Thoits motioned to approve the Minutes from the last meeting, and the Minutes were approved.

2. Report of the Executive Assistant

Ms. Janice Rowan provided a report on coordination activities and Commission administration (attached).

Mr. Steve Gephard pointed out that the CTDEP will be assessing the decline in blueback herring and considering further restrictions. The agency welcomes input from the Commission and member agencies. This year, the CTDEP implemented a partial closure, eliminating the herring fishery in tributaries but permitting a recreational dip net take of 25 fish per person/day. The herring are used as striped bass bait. Enforcement of this fishery is problematic since the anglers move about as they fish.

Mr. Robert Jones reported that the NASCO Secretariat had thanked him for the dinner and tour.

3. Report of the Technical Committee Chair

Mr. Jay McMenemy provided a report on Technical Committee and Subcommittee activities (attached).

Ms. Janice Rowan said that two redds found on the Mill River in Hatfield contained no eggs but a salmon had been observed nearby jumping at the base of the Advocate dam. Ten redds were observed in the Sawmill River. Four redds contained eggs, two were trout and two were salmon redds.

4. Action Plan Discussion

Mr. Joe McKeon presented the draft Action Plan and Summary Table to the Commissioners. He pointed out that the lengthy Action Plan parallels the Strategic Plan and is expected to have a 3-5 year life span. The Summary Table, on the other hand, is a more flexible and dynamic document that can serve as an Annual Work Plan. It does not follow the Strategic Plan as strictly as the Action Plan, but instead groups like projects. The Summary Table provides an over all snap shot of what is planned primarily for the upcoming year. It outlines responsibilities and expectations for CRASC and the member agencies while identifying needed resources.

A lengthy discussion ensued about what an Action Plan/Work Plan should be and how the cooperative should work:

- Mr. Mark Tisa proposed that the document be stepped down into a public work plan that would easily be understood by legislators or the general public. He was also concerned that the document list only what each agency planned to complete in the coming year. For example, he listed MAFW priorities as follows:
 1. Holyoke re-licensing
 2. Fish passage
 3. Fry stocking
- In coming years the document could show accomplishments in relation to these realistic priorities and then lay out the plans for the coming year.
- Mr. Duncan McInnes suggested that this might be a document that the States prepare individually.
- Mr. Charlie Thoits cautioned against reporting accomplishments too discreetly since this is a cooperative effort.
- Mr. Steve Gephard suggested that the document should reflect what we want to achieve. In those instances where we accomplish less than we planned, the obstacles can be identified. Otherwise, we risk doing the same thing without moving forward year after year. There is a generally accepted understanding that each agency contributes what it can to the cooperative effort. He also suggested that a new public document should be developed, rather than constructing a new Summary Table/Work Plan.
- Mr. Tisa agreed saying that the existing Action Plan is going to be useful to guide the Technical Committee and that a public document is needed.
- Mr. Bob Jones said that the document should list what we ought to do, what we are going to do, and what we can't do with an explanation.
- Mr. McInnes suggested that since we are all under the gun to justify what we do, two documents may be needed: a CRASC document that describes overall accomplishments and another document that describes agency specific accomplishments.

Finally, Ms. Sherry Morgan pointed out that there were two issues:

1. The Commissioners owed the Technical Committee a decision about whether they had produced the documents requested by the Commissioners.

She motioned to accept the Action Plan and Summary Table as written. Mr. Jones seconded the motion and all agreed.

2. The Commissioners needed to decide whether another document was needed.

It was agreed that another document was needed. A draft document, produced by the Coordinator's Office, was reviewed favorably though it did not meet all the desires of the Commissioners. The need for two documents, a popular brochure and a brief accomplishment report, was discussed. It was agreed that the Commissioners should meet with the Technical Committee in a working group session to better define the audience and purpose of these publications.

The closed-door working group meeting was scheduled for 10 a.m. at the Conte Anadromous Fish Research Center on January 12, 2000. [This had been the date scheduled for a Technical Committee meeting, now rescheduled for February 2, 2000.]

Mr. Tisa suggested items for the agenda to include: (1) a popular brochure, (2) a progress report, and (3) a condensed work plan [later these items were added to the list: (4) Knightville and a Congressional Act to involve the Corps in upstream passage, (5) Shad management].

5. Other Business

Endangered Salmon - Ms. Morgan described what is happening with respect to salmon listing in Maine. The USFWS and NMFS have jointly proposed to list wild stocks of Atlantic salmon in eight Maine rivers as endangered species. The notice was published in the Federal Register November 17, 1999. A public comment period is open until February 15, 2000. The decision to propose listing is based on a status review that showed the population numbers are very low and facing continuing threats, despite recovery efforts. A final decision on listing will be made next year. If the fish are listed, a recovery plan will be developed. Listing will not directly impact the salmon program in the Connecticut, Pawcatuck or Merrimack Rivers.

Request for Support - Mr. Dan Call, Westfield River Watershed Association, said that his Association was preparing a grant proposal for the MAEOEA Massachusetts Watershed Initiative Watershed Stewardship Program. The funding would enable them to continue DSI Monitoring, classroom educational programs, and special events like the DSI Open House and the Westfield River Symposium. He asked for a letter of support from the Commission. The Commissioners agreed to supply an endorsement for the proposal through the Coordinator.

Knightville Fish Passage - Mr. Bruce Williams, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, informed the Commissioners of the feasibility for downstream passage at the Knightville Dam on the Westfield River. The changes in operations can be accommodated without difficulty given willingness by the Westfield River Canoe Club to adjust the date of their annual canoe races. He went on to say that upstream passage is also feasible though further action will require either a private sponsor through a Continuing Authority Section 1135 project or through an act of Congress. The Knightville project preliminary cost estimate is \$1.4 million. Mr. Williams said that the Townshend Dam project was authorized through an act of Congress. This legally authorized the Corps to expend funds on fish passage. In that case, Senator Leahy's office requested proposed draft legislation for the Corp's to expand its mission at the site and a directed study, construction and operations package to do the job.

Mr. Call proposed that he speak to Congressman Olver about the need for passage and the possibility of utilizing the Corps to address this need. Mr. Tisa agreed to work with Mr. Call and the MAEOEA Westfield River Team.

Townshend Fish Passage - Mr. Williams added that the Corps has just about completed design of the electric barrier for the Townshend Dam and that barrier should be in place and operating next spring. He requested 50 smolts to evaluate the barrier. He also requested assistance from the Technical Committee in designing an appropriate study. The Coordinator will Contact Mr. John Warner, the Chair of the Fish Passage Subcommittee, and inform him of this request.

Shad Management - Mr. Gephard reported that the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission had just completed an amendment to the Shad and Herring Management Plan. The Fisheries Commission noted that the shad returns in the Connecticut River are below the restoration goal of two million shad back to the river. Consequently, the issue will likely be referred to Committee and they will likely ask for action or regulations to achieve the established goal. Such actions may have a negative impact on the recreational fishery. Mr. Gephard commented that the amendment also established CTDEP and MAMF as the agencies responsible for monitoring the recreational fishery. Mr. Gephard asked the Commission how they would like to address this issue.

Mr. Jones indicated that the goal of two million shad was not scientifically based. He suggested that the Shad Studies Subcommittee review the goal and the revise the Plan as needed. Mr. Steve Rideout suggested that the Subcommittee also consider monitoring and reporting compliance issues and needs. The Coordinator was asked to inform Mr. Ken Sprankle, Chair of the Shad Studies Subcommittee, of this assignment.

Spawning and Funding - Mr. Gephard explained the complicated nature of spawning using the new genetic protocol and made a pitch for the USFWS to hire a geneticist at the White River NFH. Ms. Morgan informed the Commission that no geneticist would be considered in 2000 because of the budget.

Mr. Gephard requested permission from the Commission to seek and endorse funding proposals to conduct the DNA study. The Commission agreed to continue endorsing proposals.

Connecticut River Salmon Association - Mr. Jim Carroll, Jr., CRSA, said that his Association will be taking salmon to 46 schools this year. Additionally, they have recently served a new Website and are interested in feedback (ctriversalmon.org).

6. Selection of Next CRASC Meeting Date

A closed-door CRASC/Technical Committee working group meeting was scheduled for 10 a.m. at the Conte Anadromous Fish Research Center on January 12, 2000. [This had been the date scheduled for a Technical Committee meeting, now rescheduled for February 2, 2000.]

The proposed agenda to include discussion of:

1. popular brochure, what should be in it and who it's for
2. progress report, what should be in it and who it's for
3. condensed work plan, is it needed, what should be in it and who it's for
4. Knightville and a Congressional Act to involve the Corps in upstream passage
5. Shad management, goal and monitoring compliance

Mr. Charlie Thoits motioned to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Mark Tisa seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

CRASC Meeting Attendance

Janice Rowan	USFWS
Steve Gephard	CTDEP/Fisheries
Jay McMenemy	VTFW
Duncan McInnes	NHFG
Steve Rideout	USFWS
Caleb Slater	MAFW
Michelle Babione	USFWS
Joe McKeon	USFWS
Sherry Morgan	USFWS
Robert A. Jones	CT Public Representative
Charles Thoits III	NH Public Representative
Dick Bell	CT River Salmon Association
Jim Carroll	CT River Salmon Association
Bob Stira	Northeast Utilities Service Co.
Adam Goncalves	USFWS
Dan Call	Westfield River Watershed Association
Bruce Williams	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Joseph Faloretti	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Ron Howey	USFWS