



# Educating and Engaging Stakeholders: Outreach Activities in Southwest Michigan



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## Abstract

Michigan Sea Grant organized an educational public meeting to raise awareness of sturgeon rehabilitation opportunities in southwest Michigan. Subsequently, the newly-formed Kalamazoo River Sturgeon for Tomorrow, New Richmond Chapter was provided with materials and expertise necessary to participate in sampling for sturgeon eggs. Efforts in 2008 did not result in the capture of sturgeon eggs from the Kalamazoo River, but did serve the purpose of engaging and energizing an emerging stakeholder group.



Figure 2. Volunteers constructed tube-style egg sampling devices (Firehammer et al. 2006) to minimize risk of egg predation and sediment deposition.

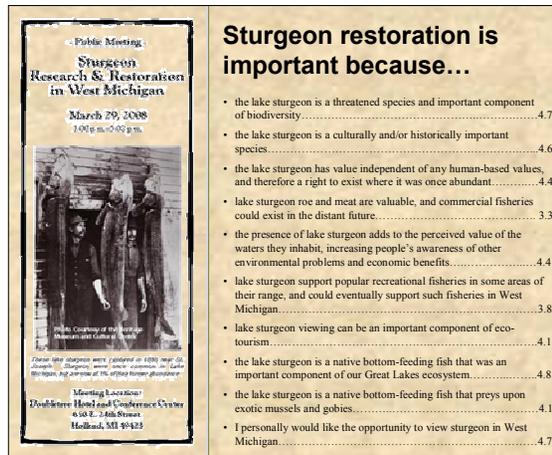


Figure 1. As a component of program evaluation, attendees (N=79) at a public meeting were asked to rate justifications for sturgeon restoration projects on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) following presentations on sturgeon population status, non-profit organization contributions to sturgeon research and restoration, operation of a streamside rearing facility, and the significance of lake sturgeon to indigenous peoples, Great Lakes ecology, and local economies. Mean response values for 41 survey respondents are presented above. Respondents also reported that their knowledge of lake sturgeon ecology and restoration activities increased from 2.5 to 4.0 on a scale of 1 (very low) to 5 (very high).

## Current and Future Activities

Michigan Sea Grant continues to work with Kalamazoo River Sturgeon for Tomorrow and other partner groups on projects including:

- Bank Stabilization Planning
- Educational Display Design
- Brochure Development
- Egg and Habitat Sampling 2009

## Conclusion

Although targeted sturgeon fisheries do not exist in southwest Michigan, outreach efforts successfully identified, educated, and engaged local residents interested in contributing to sturgeon rehabilitation.

## Acknowledgments

Kregg Smith (Michigan Department of Natural Resources), Brenda Archambo (Sturgeon for Tomorrow, Black Lake Chapter), Marty Holtgren and Jimmie Mitchell (Little River Band of Ottawa Indians) generously offered their time and expertise to present at the public meeting. Lynda Krupansky (Michigan Department of Environmental Quality) served as a Coastal Management project partner. Funding was provided through the Michigan Partnership for Coastal Communities.

## Literature Cited

Firehammer, J. A., D. L. Scarnecchia, and S. R. Fain. 2006. Modification of a passive gear to sample paddlefish eggs in sandbed spawning reaches of the lower Yellowstone River. *North American Journal of Fisheries Management* 26(1):63-72.

## Kalamazoo River Egg Sampling

Providing volunteers with the opportunity to contribute to sampling efforts enabled them to use their knowledge of the river to locate potential sturgeon spawning sites and contribute to research efforts. Three sites were identified by local charter boat captain Tony Wolte, who offered the use of his vessel for sampling efforts beginning on 11 May and ending on 21 May 2008. No sturgeon eggs were collected in 118 sampling days of effort, although several thousand eggs of non-target species (mostly catostomids) were captured.

## Non-profit Organization

Volunteers who participated in the public meeting and/or egg sampling organized with the assistance of Michigan Sea Grant to form the Kalamazoo River Sturgeon for Tomorrow, New Richmond Chapter.