



Making Waves



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Asian Carp Monitoring in the Illinois Waterway System

By Nick Bloomfield

Ann Runstrom, Kyle Mosel, and I were recently on the search for Asian carp ... and this was the moment I had long awaited.

The La Crosse FWCO had collectively put in nearly 100 hours of electrofishing effort and a few miles worth of nets into the Chicago Area Waterway System and upper Des Plaines River over the last two plus years with nothing to show ... not one bighead or silver carp, either sighted or captured.



But in an instant, reality came crashing back and with a quick stab of the net, a silver carp was on board

Nuisance Species Dispersal Barrier in Romeoville, IL



Four silver carp were also caught in Peacock Slough, located in the Marseilles Pool of the Illinois River, about 30 miles below the electrical barrier

Fortunately, today we were working downstream of the electrical fish barrier.

Asian Carp have been found here for a number of years, so it came as no surprise. We also came up with one more in the lower end of the pool during our trip. The previous day, May 1, we had searched throughout the Dresden Island Pool, one pool upstream, without detecting any Asian carp.

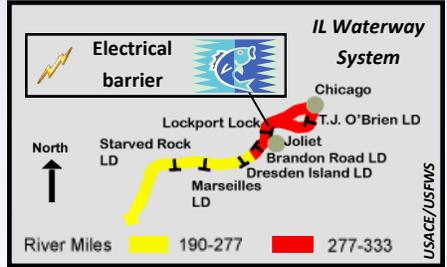


This trip reminded us of what we are looking for and why we are looking. These fish are just a couple days swim and a little "dam" luck from reaching the barriers. It was also a refreshing change of pace and scenery from the canals we are accustomed to working in. We will return here May 28, to complete another round, when this saga will resume.



The electrofishing crew leaders' view of the shocking in action

That in itself is a good thing, but at some point it makes you wonder what it is you're looking for and if there really is such a thing as an Asian carp problem.



This surveillance project has been ongoing for several years now, but a portion of it is newly assigned to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in order to assist the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The goal is to monitor and detect changes in abundance downstream from the Aquatic

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Lake Sturgeon Recovery Update: Red River of the North



By Louise Mauldin

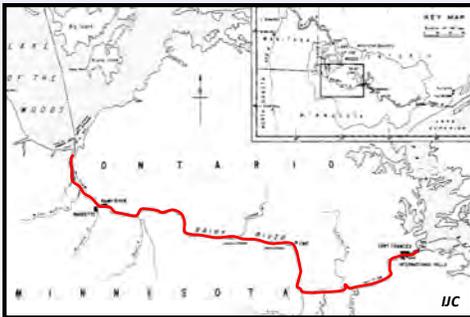


Lake sturgeon are one of the country's longest-lived fish (maturing at about 25 years of age) and one of the largest freshwater fishes in North America.

This species was once abundant and moved freely throughout the Red River of the North, from its headwaters in western Minnesota to Lake Winnipeg in Canada



In the early 1900s, lake sturgeon were extirpated from the Red River basin due to overexploitation, poor water quality, habitat degradation, and construction of barriers. But major strides have recently been made to restore this species to the Red River system due to cooperative efforts from the White Earth Band of Ojibwa, the Red Lake Band of Chippewa, the Rainy River First Nations, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's La Crosse Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office, Genoa National Fish Hatchery (NFH), and La Crosse Fish Health Center (FHC).



The 90-mile long Rainy River (red) forms part of the U.S.-Canadian border in northern Minnesota, is inhabited by a healthy lake sturgeon population, and is the source of lake sturgeon being used to restore the adjacent Red River basin population

Yearling lake sturgeon are stocked annually on the White Earth and Red Lake Indian Reservations by the Genoa NFH and Minnesota DNR. To do so, adult Rainy River lake sturgeon are collected each spring by Joe Hunter of Rainy River First Nations and spawned at their fish hatchery in Emo, Ontario, Canada.

Before bringing Rainy River lake sturgeon into the hatchery however, fish must first be tested for iridovirus, a disease pathogen known to afflict several sturgeon species. Lake sturgeon must test negative to be brought into the Emo hatchery and for their eggs to be transported later to the Genoa NFH in Wisconsin.

Therefore, I recently spent a day (April 29) with Tom Heindrick of the Minnesota DNR (Baudette field office) on the Rainy River collecting lake sturgeon fin clips. Here we worked with willing anglers who reeled in lake sturgeon from the river and allowed us to take a tissue sample for disease analysis.



Tom Heindrick (Minnesota DNR) with a yearling, Red River lake sturgeon

The tissue sample was obtained by cutting a small portion of the pectoral fin, no larger than the size of a finger nail, with a scissors. Fish were then measured, marked with a Carlin tag, and released back into the river. A total of thirty fin clips were collected and brought to the La Crosse FHC for viral testing. Test results came back one week later and were negative.

Habitat restoration activities are also being carried out in conjunction with stocking efforts to help meet the long-range goal of establishing a self-sustaining lake sturgeon population within the Red River basin. These efforts consist of removing and modifying barriers such as dams to help restore natural flows and connectivity to floodplain habitats so that maturing lake sturgeon in the basin can access historic spawning areas and reproduce naturally.

REDs Turns Ten

By Heidi Keuler



May 14-15 marked the 10th anniversary of River Education Days (REDs) at the Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge.

For the past 10 years, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Geological Survey, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and many others presenting to almost 1000 people per year including students, teachers, and chaperones from the Coulee Region.

Each class rotates through four of twenty stations during the day that target themes including prairies, forests, wetlands, and rivers. Specific topics included information and hands-on activities about birds, mammals, fish, invertebrates, freshwater mussels, amphibians and reptiles, and vegetation.



The La Crosse Fish & Wildlife Conservation Office provided hands-on learning with

Our office hopes to keep assisting the Refuge with this important event that helps spark the interest of kids to get outside and enjoy our natural resources.



Let's keep building the flock for the next decade!

Upcoming Events



Mark Your Calendars Now!

SEE PAGE 4

UMR Pool 8 Clean-Up
June 1, 8:30 am – 12:00 pm
Wildcat Landing - Brownsville, MN

Coon Creek Trout Fest
June 15, 10 am - 11 pm
Coon Valley, WI

SEE PAGE 5

Willow Creek Pasture Walk
June 26, 2:00 pm – 3:30 pm
Coon Valley, WI

Hope to See You!



Stakeholder Engagement 101 - The Key to Conservation

By Heidi Keuler

The Fishers & Farmers Fish Habitat Partnership (FFP) for the Upper Mississippi River Basin is a self-directed group of individuals representing organizations and agencies working "... to support locally-led projects that add value to farms while restoring aquatic habitat and native fish populations." FFP was initiated in 2009 by biologists and visionaries from federal, state, and non-governmental organizations in both agricultural and natural resource fields. FFP exists to support landowner-led, voluntary conservation projects that complement farm profitability while restoring aquatic habitat and native fish populations in the Upper Mississippi River Watershed. FFP is unique because it: puts landowners in the lead; funds only collaborative, watershed-based projects; and works for more flexibility from conservation agencies than the norm.



One of these conservation agencies, the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC), has developed a Stakeholder Engagement Planning Workshop geared specifically to watershed planning. To facilitate FFP participation, the 2-day workshop will be offered in :



Sedalia, Missouri

June 18-19



Rochester, Minnesota

July 17-18



La Crosse, Wisconsin

August 13-14



Ankeny, Iowa

September 18-19

MDC Streams Unit staff will instruct attendees through developing a well thought out and documented stakeholder involvement plan that still allows room for adaptation along the way. This plan includes understanding who needs to be involved, when, at what level, and how to involve them. The strength of this planning effort is in its foresight, its transparency, and in providing documentation to support decisions made along the way. Many of these decisions may result in landowner or farmer-led conservation projects.

Setting the stage to bring stakeholders into a project requires careful foresight and planning for success. Too often stakeholder engagement is done as an afterthought, or without completely understanding the repercussions of a failed stakeholder process. The outcome of these failed attempts can dramatically slow or stop all progress on a project, and may even create animosities that last for generations. The stakeholder involvement planning process laid out in this class can be used as a guide to help create meaningful and successful stakeholder interactions that can make a better and more sustainable project than attempting to go at it alone.



The final product of attending this Fishers & Farmers/MDC workshop is not to have completed stakeholder engagement plans, but rather to have learned the Stakeholder Engagement Planning process. A well thought out plan takes time; the implementation of it takes even more time. By learning the process, it allows participants to lead their partners through the process, who may need to be involved in the development of certain parts of the plan. The workshops will be very intense, concentrated, and participatory. As a consequence, enrollment will be limited (<= 20) and will be on a first RSVP (to Heidi_Keuler@fws.gov) basis.



Tomah VA Fishing Day

By Heather Rodriguez



The annual Veteran's Administration (VA) Fishing Day was held at the Tomah (WI) VA Center May 15. The weather cooperated nicely, providing everyone with a beautiful Wisconsin day, perfect for fishing!

The morning started with a few eager veterans arriving early to claim choice locations at the pond here, but the action really picked up when Tomah Middle School students arrived to help the disabled vets.

Fishing started at 9 o'clock, and it wasn't very long before the students came running up to our tent

with rainbow trout, bluegill, yellow perch, black crappie, pumpkinseed and largemouth bass to have the veterans' fish weighed and measured for the Largest Fish Contest. After two hours, everyone was called to the head tent to announce the contest winners.



Meanwhile the fine folks from Genoa NFH fried a delicious mess of catfish for everyone to enjoy

As a veteran myself, I appreciate the hard work and genuine pleasure I saw on the volunteers' faces at this annual event.



Mille Lacs Update

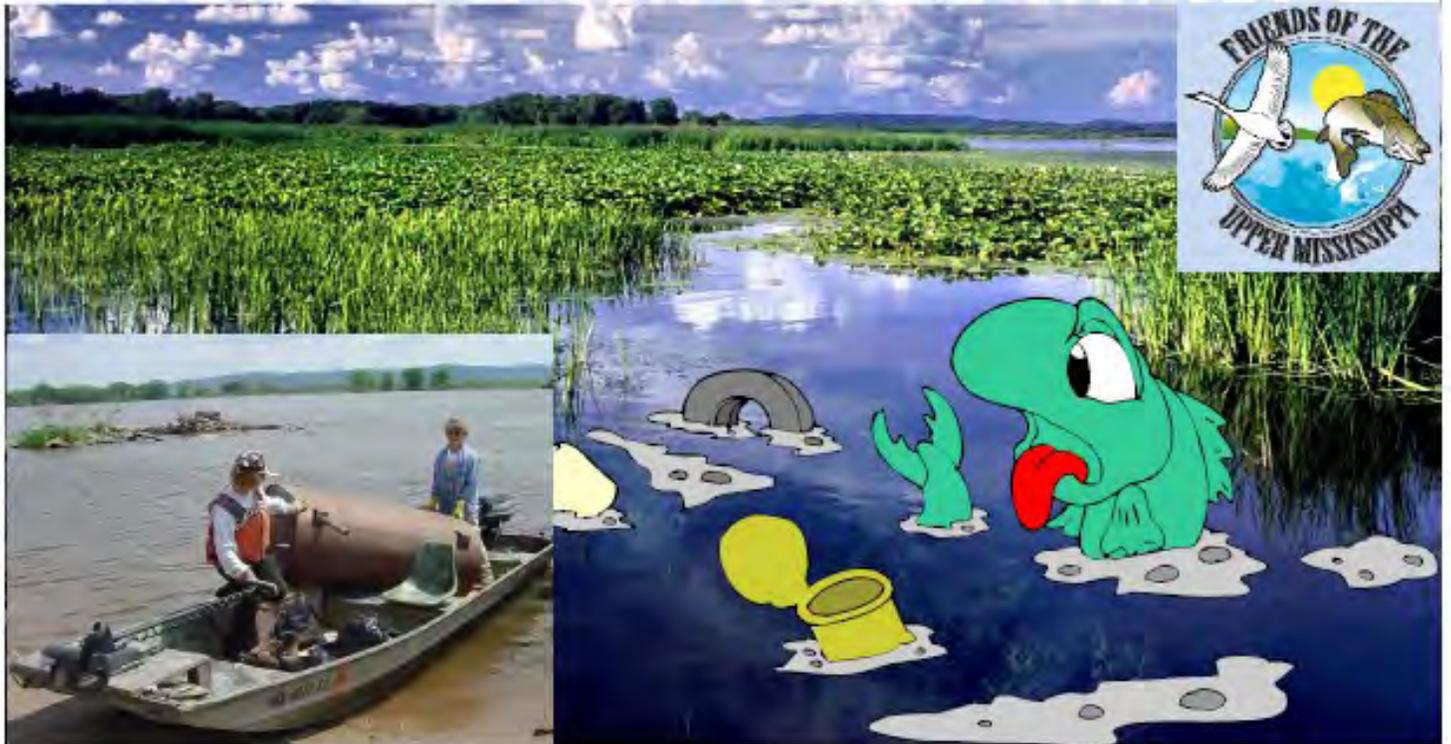
By Kyle Mosel

In mid-May I had the pleasure of helping the MN DNR and the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission mark walleyes on Lake Mille Lacs, the second largest lake (207 square miles) in the state. The lake made news recently for wind blown ice crashing into resorts and blocking roads. This was an unusual spring, since the ice persisted so late into May and past opening day for game fish angling.



Over 4 nights, 4300 walleyes ranging 7 to 27 inches in length were checked for previous marks, measured, floy-tagged, and had a fin hole-punched based on sex. This was all part of an angler selectivity study and population estimate used to set target levels and creel limits for walleye. Some of these fish will later be recaptured using short term gill net sets to provide data for the selectivity and population models of this popular fishery.

MISSISSIPPI RIVER POOL 8 RIVER CLEANUP



Saturday June 1, 2013



**8:30am-12:00pm
Wild Cat Landing
Brownsville, MN**



Friends of the Upper Mississippi will work with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service,
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, & Boathouse owners (CARP).

Your help is greatly appreciated!

Please wear old clothes, a long-sleeved shirt, work gloves, boots/chest waders (if available), life jacket, bring a boat (optional), lunch, water, sunscreen/bug spray.

Sponsored by Friends of the Upper Mississippi - Questions? 507-894-4022

WILLOW CREEK PASTURE WALK

Wednesday June 26, 2013 (2:00-3:30 PM)

Willow Creek Ranch

E5702 Spring Coulee Rd, Coon Valley, WI



Dave Vetrano (retired WI DNR), Matt Mitro (WI DNR), Jeff Hastings (Trout Unlimited), & Rod Ofte, (Willow Creek Ranch Owner), will discuss how beneficial cattle are to stream enhancement.

Contact Heidi Keuler, Fishers & Farmers Partnership for more information
608-783-8417



Rod Ofte Willow Creek Ranch

