



Making Waves



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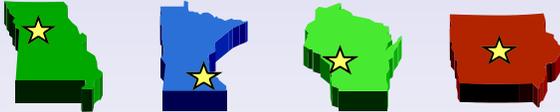
Planning: Key to Stakeholder Engagement



By Heidi Keuler

The Fishers & Farmers Partnership works to create opportunities that enhance the effectiveness of conservation practices in the Upper Mississippi River Basin (UMRB).

Fishers & Farmers received a multi-state conservation grant to host four stakeholder engagement training workshops in 2013 for land/water conservation employees and landowners. The 1 1/2-day training events were held at Sedalia (MO) in June, Rochester (MN) in July, La Crosse (WI) in August, and Ankeny (IA) in September.



The Missouri Department of Conservation generously donated the time of three key employees (Ange Corson, Ron Reitz, Eric Rahm) to convene the workshops. These individuals organized similar training for this agency and developed a conceptual process that is directly applicable to watershed planning.



Sessions also included an exchange of recent information from the International Association for Public Participation, the Institute for Participatory Management & Planning, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The intended outcome of these workshops was not to complete a stakeholder engagement plan, but rather, to understand the stakeholder

engagement *planning process*. This includes knowing who to involve, when to do so, what role they will play, and how to invite their participation.



The strength of this planning effort is in its foresight, its transparency, and its requirement to document decisions as they are made. Such planning is relevant to watersheds throughout the UMRB, as well as many others across the country.



Fishers & Farmers-sponsored events like these reach out to agricultural and natural resource interests across the Midwest

Sixty-four people attended the workshops and represented 23 organizations including: Fillmore County (MN) Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD); Illinois Department of Natural Resources (DNR); Iowa DNR; Iowa Soybean Association; Minnesota Department of Agriculture; Minnesota DNR; Minnesota Forest Resources Council; Minnesota Pollution Control Agency; Missouri

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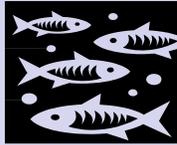


Re-Scheduling a Check-Up

By Mark Steingraeber

Just as health professionals insist on annual check-ups for many patients, fishery managers likewise insist on annual health checks for fish that serve as brood-stock at hatcheries. Therefore the health status of wild populations, such as those inhabiting the Upper Mississippi River (UMR), must be clinically certified before any of these adult fish (or their progeny) can be maintained at facilities like the Genoa National Fish Hatchery (NFH) in western Wisconsin.

This screening process requires coordinated efforts on the part of staff from three Service fishery program offices who must execute their roles in a timely manner for continued hatchery propagation of species like northern pike, walleye, and sauger, which are among the first species to annually spawn here once the river is ice-free.



Given that some of the laboratory tests require several weeks or more to isolate and identify disease pathogens, as well as the challenges posed by obtaining a representative sample (60 or more individuals) of each species during mid-winter from an ice covered river, the health status of these populations is normally surveyed under more favorable conditions in the fall.

However, the fall of 2013 was unlike any other in my 27-year federal career. Due to a lapse in congressional appropriations, all operations at the La Crosse FWCO and most activities at the Genoa NFH and the La Crosse Fish Health Center (FHC) were suspended for 16 consecutive days in October. The corresponding furlough of more than 24 employees at these offices forced postponement of all scheduled field work during this period, with ripple effects that later curtailed or cancelled many planned projects this fall.



Fortunately, collection of northern pike, walleye, and sauger from the UMR for brood stock health assessment was merely postponed, not cancelled. In between other assignments, crews from the La Crosse FWCO and Genoa NFH squeezed in two frosty evenings of electrofishing effort late in October and early in November to collect most of the required fish from UMR Pool 9



These fish were subsequently submitted to the La Crosse FHC which shoe-horned the samples into their own demanding schedule. Pending the outcome of this screening for serious disease pathogens, and absent another untimely furlough, propagation of northern pike, walleye, and sauger from the UMR should continue at Genoa NFH next spring.



Springtime walleye egg collection

Academia Meets Action

By Mark Steingraeber



Fourteen students from Viterbo University in La Crosse who are currently enrolled in Biology 321 – Conservation Biology - paid a visit to the Fish and Wildlife Resource

Center in Onalaska on November 7. They came at the request of their instructor, Dr. Michael Alfieri, to learn about the broad range of conservation issues and efforts routinely undertaken by Service fishery program employees who work here to protect aquatic bio-diversity throughout the Midwest.

Fish Health Center laboratories were the first stop on a walking tour where students learned the significance of aquatic animal health and procedures used to diagnose aquatic diseases. Next was a virtual tour of the Whitney Genetics Laboratory (made possible by viewing the Service-produced YouTube video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xXwply6ahO8&feature=youtu.be>), where students were briefed on its mission to detect genetic evidence of Asian carp and other aquatic nuisance species from environmental (water) samples. Finally, the class learned about the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office and its partnership efforts to conserve, protect, and enhance diverse fishery resources and aquatic habitats of the Midwest.



In addition to Viterbo University's challenging academic environment, students who attend this Catholic Franciscan school are encouraged to participate in volunteer activities to instill a lifelong desire to provide service to others. Based on the genuine interest these students showed for the mission and diverse work performed by our fishery program offices, a new cohort of young and eager volunteers may be on their way to help us and the creatures who we serve in the new year!



Planning is Key

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DNR; Mower County (MN) SWCD; Nicollet County (MN) SWCD; Trout Unlimited; University of Minnesota-Extension; University of Wisconsin-Extension; Whitewater Watershed; Winona County (MN); Wisconsin DNR; and others.



Folks like Nicollet County (MN) SWCD manager Kevin Ostermann (left) work directly with farmers and other landowners, making them key advocates to help implement agricultural best management practices that also improve water quality and aquatic habitats

Workshop attendees were generally field-level personnel or lower-level managers who stated this type of training is also needed for upper-level managers.

The Fishers & Farmers Partnership has learned that this type of training is relevant to professionals from a variety of disciplines including fisheries, forestry, business, agriculture, education, and watershed management. We also learned about active projects new to us that have been engaging landowners for several years. The workshop series not only gave participants some new tools to use in their watershed, but more importantly, it gave them an opportunity to share information and lessons they've learned from working with farmers and other stakeholders.



Additional landowner/stakeholder engagement activities in Missouri and Minnesota were also funded by the multi-state conservation grant. Stay tuned for a future report on those accomplishments.

Asian Carp Team Meeting

By Ann Runstrom



The La Crosse FWCO has initiated an effort to work with our partner agencies in states that border the Upper Mississippi River (UMR) to draft an Asian carp management plan.

The UMR interagency Asian carp management team consists of seven members: one representative from the U.S. Geological Survey, one from academia, and one from each of the five UMR states.



The team had a conference call on November 25th for each representative to discuss the view of their agency on the purpose and goals of an Asian carp management plan for the UMR. Because there are similar plans for other bodies of water, perhaps with slightly different objectives, the team's first assignment is to review these existing plans and identify what might be appropriate for the proposed UMR plan.



The team will meet again in mid-December.



Tribal Sturgeon Census

By Kyle Mosel



Lake sturgeon sampling recently concluded for 2013 on Legend Lake, within the Menominee Indian Reservation near Keshena, Wisconsin.

After 7 days of netting effort, a total of 342 lake sturgeon were captured, measured, weighed, tagged (as necessary), and released.



Fish were marked, as needed, with an external Floy tag (left) and an internal passive integrated transponder (PIT) tag (right)

These tags indicate a fish was captured, measured, weighed, and released (one or more times) before. The largest fish captured this year measured 65 inches in total length and weighed 61 pounds. To date, this is the 3rd largest lake sturgeon caught in Legend Lake since the Genoa National Fish Hatchery began stocking this species here in 1994.

Nearly 45% of the fish caught in 2013 were captured and tagged in previous years. Based on these findings, the lake sturgeon population of Legend Lake is currently estimated at 1,197 fish age 7 years and older. From the lengths and weights of the fish we observed this fall, the population here is in superb physical condition.



The La Crosse FWCO has provided fishery management assistance to the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin since the 1970s.



Upcoming Event



Mark Your Calendars Now!

Feb 1 - Kids Ice Fishing Clinic
9 am - 12 pm
Genoa National Fish Hatchery



Hope to See You!



What Others Say ...

— New Zealand Mud Snails Discovered in Black Earth Creek, WI —

★ First Occurrence in Inland Midwest ★

By The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources



The invasive New Zealand mud snail that has been a problem in western U.S. streams has been detected in Black Earth Creek, a renowned trout stream in Dane County.

The New Zealand mud snail, the size of a grain of sand, has a black and brown shell and is capable of reaching high densities – up to 500,000 per square meter. The snails outcompete native aquatic insects that are food for fish and other aquatic life but are not good food sources themselves.

The discovery, the first in an inland Midwestern stream, is spurring the state to begin rapid response procedures to try to contain the snail, and to call on waterfowl hunters, trappers anglers and hikers to take precautions to avoid accidentally spreading the species.

The snails are listed as a prohibited species in Wisconsin, meaning it's illegal to buy, sell, possess or transfer them without a permit.

"This is a significant and disappointing find in Wisconsin," says Bob Wakeman, who coordinates the Department of Natural Resources aquatic invasive species efforts. "The New Zealand mud snail can be extremely prolific, has altered the food chain and may be having an impact on fish populations in Western streams."



Magnified images of New Zealand mud snails. This tiny invasive species was first discovered in the United States in Idaho during the 1980s and was recently found in a popular trout stream in the un-glaciated Driftless area of southwest Wisconsin. Public cooperation is needed to help limit its spread.

Although trout season on the creek has closed for winter, hunters, hikers and trappers visiting the Driftless area should take care to review gear disinfection protocols – particularly for waders, where the tiny snails can cling to rubber or mud.

"We don't know what the impact will be in Wisconsin, but we do know that there is no good way to eradicate the snails so we are focusing on containing them as quickly as we can and ask for citizens' help in doing that as well."

"This is why it's so important to clean your equipment before leaving a lake or stream – and ask your friends and guests to do the same," Wakeman says. "We need everyone's vigilance to help contain this invasive species."

Wakeman says DNR has notified partners of the discovery, and will work with citizens, the River Alliance of Wisconsin, Trout Unlimited, University of Wisconsin-Extension, Wisconsin Sea Grant and Dane County to contain the species through increasing awareness of prevention steps among those who might inadvertently help spread the snail: hunters, anglers, trappers and hikers.

Take these prevention steps after leaving the water to keep Wisconsin streams healthy:



Signage and wash stations along the area where the invasive species has been detected are among the educational efforts likely to be used, Wakeman says.

The department discovered the snails during routine stream monitoring. The snails were first identified by the Aquatic Biomonitoring Lab at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point and then confirmed earlier this month by Dr. Kathryn Perez from UW-La Crosse, who identified all individuals in the samples as belonging to the "Clone 1" population, previously found only in the western states as far east as Colorado. A "Clone 2" population also exists in the Great Lakes, which arrived by ballast water.

Inspect and remove all mud and debris that might harbor snails from your boots, waders, boats and other gear with a stiff brush. If possible, rinse with tap water before leaving the water.

If possible, let your gear freeze for 6-8 hours or completely dry for five days as the mud snails can live out of water in a damp environment for five days.

Drain water from boat, motor, bilge, decoys and other water containing devices before leaving water access (before launching, after loading and before transporting on a public highway).

Consider having a second pair of waders or boots if it may not be practical to clean your waders when moving from one stream to another.

Editor's notes: (1) This article was originally published 29 Oct 2013 as a Weekly News article by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources; this release was updated 7 Nov 2013 to clarify prevention guidelines.; (2) reprinted here by permission.; (3) more information is available at: <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/invasives/fact/newzmsnail2012.html>