

# Missouri River FWCO

## Bismarck, ND

### January, 2020 MONTHLY ACTIVITIES

#### Pallid Sturgeon Population Assessment Program summary

January has been a very busy analyzing the 2019 Pallid Sturgeon Population Assessment data. In addition to the data that our office collected, over 700 pallid sturgeon records collected from across the country by various state and Federal agencies were entered into the National Pallid Sturgeon Database that is maintained in the our office. This data has to undergo a thorough review to ensure quality control prior to entry. In addition, a significant switch to a new telemetry system for the Upper Missouri / Yellowstone pallid sturgeon work. We are collaborating with the partners involved to ensure a smooth transition.

#### Native Species Restoration

Resulting from the Bridger Oil Spill on the Yellowstone River in Montana, a joint collaborative project will take place in 2020 to look at the decomposition rate of oiled migratory birds in situ to assist with damage assessments. Wade King has been coordinating with David Rouse (Montana ES field office) in Montana for the Yellowstone Scavenger Study in late March.

#### Sikes Act

Trail camera work continued on Minot Air Force Base as part of a baseline mammalian survey. Species observed in December included mink, fox, raccoons, coyotes, a domestic cat, tree squirrels, and white tailed jack rabbits. Cameras were set up again to try and target other potential species on Base. The results of these camera surveys will be paired with the results of small mammal trapping, which was completed in the fall, to help guide future management decisions regarding mammal species on Base.



Winter bird surveys were conducted on both Minot and Grand Forks Air Force Bases in early January. With temperatures hovering around 0° Fahrenheit, five species were observed in Minot and fourteen were seen in Grand Forks. This wraps up surveys for the year with a total of 72 species seen in Minot while Grand Forks had 101.

## **Aquatic Invasive Species**

Bighead carps have spread through a portion of the Missouri River watershed. This invasive species directly competes with native juvenile fishes and some adult fishes through dietary overlap. The Columbia Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office and Missouri River Conservation Office have started a modeling exercise to identify bighead carp spawning and larval drift habitat for the Missouri River Watershed. Results from this modeling exercise will help inform future conservation decisions.

## **Fish Passage**

Met with the Elm River Water Resource District to discuss three potential dams they are considering removing or modifying. The structures are experiencing higher than normal water levels and water is affecting upstream landowners. The group was interested in modifying the structures to pass water more effectively and improve connectivity for fish; especially if that added another funding partner. The Elm River is a tributary of the Red River of the North.

The Sheyenne River Watershed Fish Passage Survey Report was completed. The completed fish passage survey report serves as a guide for the Missouri River Fish and Wildlife Service to strategically work with stakeholders on implementing aquatic conservation through reconnecting fragmented aquatic habitat.

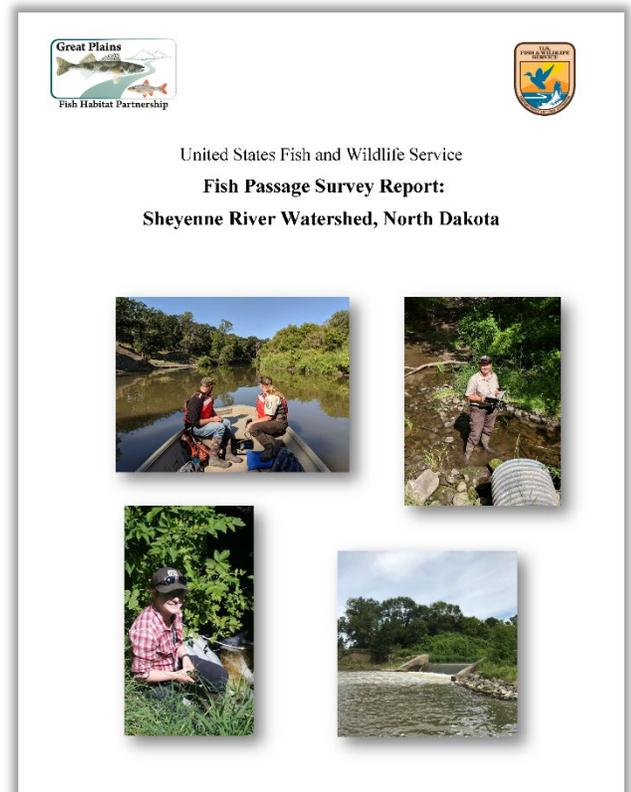
## **Great Plains FHP**

Projects proposals for FY20 funding have been received and have been reviewed and summarized. Discussions and prioritization to come.

The annual Work Plan Accomplishment report for the FHP was submitted to the national coordinator for discussion amongst the regional coordinators and the National Board. This report is used to gauge progress and accomplishment of the FHP's for funding allocation decisions.

## **Uniform Coordination**

Wade King has been serving as the Acting National Uniform Coordinator since January 2019; working on a daily basis with the uniform vendor, employee requests, and ensuring website function for Region 6 employees. Wade conducted the 2020 annual uniform meeting with Regional Coordinators and will be attending the Interagency Uniform Contracting meeting in late February.



## **Bio-monitoring Populations on Great Plains National Wildlife Refuges**

Finishing data analysis and working on fish survey summaries for the ND/MT refuge recreational fisheries on Medicine Lake, Upper Souris, Lake Ilo, and Tewaukon NWR's. Coordination between North Dakota Game and Fish Department on updating regulations and ensuring consistency on NWR fishing opportunities.

### **Outreach Activities**

The Afterschool Place in Bismarck, North Dakota aims to "Provide positive out of school time activities through youth and community development" as a parental solution to balance the scheduling conflicts related to work and afterschool needs of children. This year students in the program from kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade

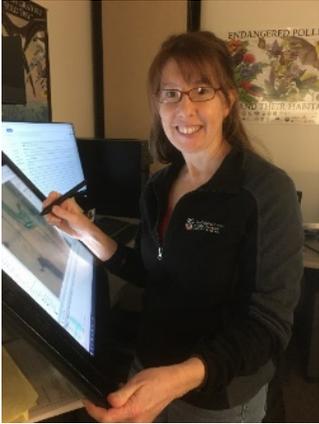
are exploring gray wolf conservation through the seven principles of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. As part of their learning experience, 14 children visited the USFWS to learn more about the gray wolf from Fish & Wildlife Biologists Beth Davies (left) and Lauren Toivonen (right). Beth captured and studied coyotes in Ohio as a graduate student and later captured wolves in Minnesota for Voyageurs National Park. Lauren worked at a captive breeding, research, and education facility, the Endangered Wolf Center, in Missouri. As a graduate student, she developed habitat models for the red wolf. At the outset, the children set the stage for a very engaging and thought provoking conversation about wolf conservation under the multiple land use systems with increasing human populations. The comprehensive insight of our future wildlife decision makers was inspiring!



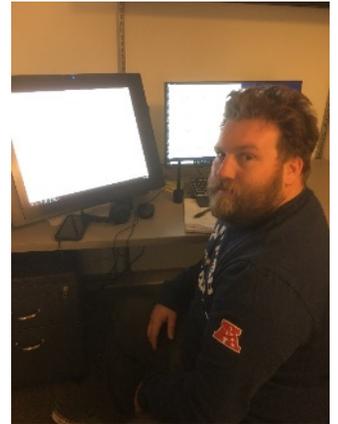
### **Staffing**

Stephanie Hauge joined the Bismarck office to serve as Administrative Assistant in the Dakota Field Office. Stephanie graduated from University of Mary in 2018 with her B.A. in Science with a concentration in Business and Human Resources. She previously worked with The State of North Dakota in both the Medicaid Unit and then with the Governor's Office. Stephanie also served as a Cryptologist in the United States Navy. Stephanie likes to spend time with her two daughters, three dogs, and husband and enjoys hunting, fishing, generally spending times outdoors (when it's nice outside) and co-leading her daughters girl scout troop. Stephanie will be serving as the Administrative Assistant for both Ecological Services and Fisheries as well.

Melissa Martin and Bobby Weiland got a chance to travel from across opposite ends of the country (Georgia & California) back to North Dakota in January to gain some additional training and experience. They were given and accepted the opportunity to identify and delineate wetlands for waterfowl habitat preservation within the Prairie Pothole region. They are tasked to review easement files, interpret aerial photos, review Farm Services digital photos, and delineate wetlands



on maps with the Habitat and Population Evaluation Team (HAPET) Division of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in Bismarck, ND. These wetland basins are located on USFWS Waterfowl Production Area easement tracts under contract with private landowners. Once spring begins, and if they are still available, they'll begin work for the FWCO.



**HAPPY  
NEW YEAR**