

Flatwater Examiner

Newsletter for the Nebraska Chapter
of the American Fisheries Society

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President's Report (Bob Thomas)

Greetings to all of you Nebraska AFS Chapter members

I am writing to you from my home office here in Lincoln, as your Current President. I'm really concerned about doing something presidential, which is going to be difficult, since I have no personal agenda. I want to continue the Chapters efforts to be an information source in responding to local, state and national issues that involve fisheries resources. We all must continue to be vigilant and supportive in these regards. Please feel free to bring such things to my attention so that an appropriate letter may be sent, or appropriate testimony may be presented. I do want all of you to be aware it is my opinion that you have a responsibility to let me know what you want out of the Nebraska Chapter and the National AFS organization. It is your professional organization and it exists to serve you in an honest and scientific manner. So I ask each of you to review your historical perspective in regard to the Nebraska Chapter and the mother AFS. Put this perspective down on paper and send it to my attention, with suggestions. My initial activity as President Elect was to work with Bob Summerfelt of the Iowa Chapter about a joint meeting between our two Chapters for the famous year 2000. Dr. Summerfelt has made such arrangements and they are included, by Becky, in this Newsletter. I want to commend the good Dr for his efforts. He initially made arrangements to hold the meeting at the Lied Center at Nebraska City, but after considerable delays in trying to accommodate member expenses, had to cancel. Needless to say I was kept busy trying to communicate these failed

developments to our Executive Committee members, which ain't easy from a home office, as my wife Marilyn refuses to act as my office executive. Keep in mind the call for papers for the famous 2000 meeting. Keep in mind that I'm a status quo President unless you put me to work with your new ideas for change. Looking forward to the new Millennium.
Bob

CHAPTER NOTES

New Officers as of September 1, 1999

September is the "changing of the guard" at NAFS, so please welcome new officers Bob Thomas (president), Gerald Mestl (president-elect), and Keith Hurley (secretary/treasurer). Mike Gutzmer, as past-president, will remain a member of the ExCom for the year. All incoming officers have one-year assignments, with the exception of Keith who has a two-year assignment.

Update - Joint Nebraska/Iowa Meeting in 2000

The meeting location for the January 2000 joint meeting has been moved from the Nebraska City location to Council Bluffs. The Nebraska City site was too expensive. The Jan 18-20 meeting will now be held at the Holiday Inn at Ameristar Casino (see "Upcoming Meetings" for details on address, etc). The meeting will begin with a reception and registration on Tuesday, January 18. We will meet from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Wednesday, and 8 a.m. to noon on Thursday. We will not have a luncheon, but are planning a banquet for Wednesday evening. The room rate will be \$75 plus 1% sales and occupancy tax (total \$83.25), but up to four people can stay in one room. The room price includes a very complete continental breakfast. More details on the agenda will follow in the next newsletter.

Call for Speakers - Joint Nebraska/Iowa Meeting!

If you are interested in presenting a summary of your research at the January 2000 meetings, please send a title and abstract to president-elect Gerald Mestl by December 1. Plan on 15 minutes for the talk, and 5 minutes for questions. The abstract should be one-page maximum, in 12 pt Times Roman font, single spaced, with 1" margins. Students - consider showcasing your thesis or other research. Gerald's e-mail is gmestl@ngpc.state.ne.us, or mail / FAX to him using the info in the box at the right.

Looking Ahead - Save Those Auction Items!

One of our chapter's main fundraisers is the auction held at annual meetings. Start collecting / soliciting donated auction items now for the January meeting! The auction is always a good time.

NAFS Website is Online!

Although still rudimentary, the Website for the Nebraska Chapter is available for viewing at www.4w.com/nebraskaAFS. Thanks to Gerald Mestl and Donna Waller for spearheading this effort! For now, information on the website is essentially the same as what's in our brochure. However, as time goes on (and the field season winds down) more information will be available. Some day, the newsletter will also be posted electronically. If you have comments or suggestions, they can be sent to Donna Waller, dwall@ngpc.state.ne.us.

NAFS EX-COM Meeting (Teleconference Call) September 24, 1999

By Keith Hurley, Secretary/Treasurer

The Executive Committee (EX-COM) met via a teleconference call Friday, September 24, 1999 at approximately 9:00 am to discuss various current topics and ongoing issues. Those members in attendance on the line were President Bob Thomas, President-Elect Gerald Mestl, Secretary/Treasurer Keith Hurley, Current Affairs and Legislative Committee Member Larry Hutchinson, Membership and Budget Committee Member Rick Holland, Past President Mike Gutzmer, Past President/Newsletter Editor-in-Chief Becky Latka, and past Secretary/Treasurer Steve Satra.

Discussion Items:

New NAFS officers President Bob Thomas, President-Elect Gerald Mestl, Secretary / Treasurer Keith Hurley were welcomed into office.

The next NAFS meeting will be held in conjunction with and hosted by the Iowa AFS chapter at the Ameristar Casino and Hotel in Council Bluffs January 19-21, 2000. Titles and abstracts for Nebraska papers should be to Gerald Mestl by December 1.

The NAFS webpage is operational and can be found at www.4w.com/nebraskaAFS. At this time the webpage contains basic information about the NAFS chapter. Additional material and improvements will be added after the fall sampling season is completed. The idea of a downloadable electronic version of the NAFS newsletter was discussed. It was decided to post a trial electronic version of the January newsletter on the NAFS webpage and raise the issue of an optional electronic newsletter with the membership in January.

Steve Satra gave his final treasury report including a recent payment of \$100 dollars to Information Analytics Inc. for hosting our website. Current balance of the checking account is 34.63. Current balance of the savings account is 5193.37. Rick Holland reminded the committee that a \$1000 check would need to be cut soon for presentation to Nathan Van Winkle, the 1999 winner of our annual scholarship award.

A request to the NAFS by the River and Streams Technical Committee for a donation to help fund speakers at their Fish Passage and Dam Removal Symposium at the 1999 Midwest AFS meeting was discussed. ACTION: Voted to approve a donation of \$200 to the River and Streams Technical Committee for this purpose.

Gerald Mestl recommended the Niobrara State Park as a possible site for the 2001 NAFS meeting. The suggestion was well accepted and will be discussed at a future date.

The EX-COM meeting adjourned at approximately 9:40 a.m.

New Members

We have two new members that signed up this summer! Please add their info to your Member's Directory.

Betty Peake

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, CENWO-PM-AE

Megan Horton

University of Nebraska - Omaha

COMMITTEE NOTES

Scholarship Committee Awards Scholarship (Rick Holland)

The scholarship committee reviewed the applications for the Nebraska Chapter AFS and NWA scholarship and recommended Nathan A. Van Meter to receive the award. I have contacted Nathan and he has accepted the scholarship. Nathan is a senior at UNL and is majoring in Fisheries and Wildlife. He has showed consistently good and improving grades throughout his college time while taking a number of natural resource related courses both in the wildlife and fisheries areas. He has taken employment opportunities with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and a private consultant where he has worked in resource management areas such as pond management. The committee believes that Nathan Van Meter shows excellent promise in his desire to be a natural resources management professional and we are pleased to be a part of his development with this scholarship award. I will set up a time where we can formally award him the scholarship and arrange for his memberships in AFS and NWA. I think that due to the timing of this award we should give him the option of having the memberships for the year 2000. I would like to award him the scholarship at a fall meeting of the UNL Wildlife Club....I think this would be an excellent way to advertise the scholarship as well as giving him some acknowledgement in front of his peers.

The mid summer 1999 meeting of the NorthCentral Division of AFS - Centrarchid technical Committee was held at the Aksarben Aquarium in Gretna, Nebraska. The Nebraska hosts provided excellent meeting facilities and fellowship. The committee was complimentary of the hospitality.

Dave Tunink, committee chair, opened the meeting by welcoming the attendees to the aquarium which hosts 65,000 visitors per year. The aquarium had an impressive display of native and exotic Nebraska fish. The reproductions of state record fish were eye-catching and visitors were seen spending long periods of time studying these impressive mounts.

Don Gabelhouse presented information on Nebraska Centrarchid populations. The fishery consists of 11 species, eight of which are native. The three introduced species were stocked as early as the 1800's. Bluegill rank fifth on the sought after list, but more bluegill are caught than any other species. Crappie are the most harvested species with bluegill ranking second. Winter fisheries for bluegill and crappie are very important. Most Master Angler-sized bluegill are caught from December to March.

States Round table

Centrarchid regulations were presented by the attending states' representatives or in a few cases by mail. A plethora of regulations of bass length limits and daily limits are used by member states. Crappie also are being managed by length and daily limits. In the past 4 years an increasing number of states are using restrictive limits on bluegill as well. Eight and nine-inch length limits are being used as well as reduced bag limits. Results have been encouraging in the short term. A complete synopsis of the length limits used on Centrarchids is available by mail for those interested.

Presented Papers

Mike McInerney presented information on crappie growth patterns in Minnesota. The study was designed to determine growth patterns and factors effecting black crappie in Minnesota. Forty-two lakes were trapnetted in the fall and 38 were sampled with gillnets in June, July, and August. Fish were aged by scales to determine the age when crappie exceeded 200mm (Qage). Growth patterns were categorized as sigmoid or non-sigmoid and tied to climate warming days, mean depth and chlorophyll *a* concentrations. The study lakes in the southern half of Minnesota had a wide variety of conditions with climatic warming days of 21-44, depths of 0.9 to 9.0 m and chlorophyll *a* values of 4.5 to 176 $\mu\text{g/L}$. First year was less as mean depth increased, was not related to growing season and was related to chlorophyll *a*. Qage was not related to first year growth or environmental conditions. Qage & growth patterns were most linked with black crappie densities.

Lynn Davignon presented information on the results of a 10-inch crappie limit at Cedar Bluff Reservoir, Kansas. Cedarbluff is a 6900 acre lake built in 1951 for flood control & recreation. Fishing was down in the late 1980's and early 1990's due to decline in lake area during the drought. The lake was reduced to as little as 990 acres. Crappie harvest was mostly of fish less than nine inches. On June 1, 1995 a 10" crappie limit was imposed in an attempt to increase catch rates, PSD and RSD. Improved quality did not occur after 3 years and the regulation was removed. It's possible the large 1993 and 1994 year classes were overprotected in during this time period. One year after length limit was removed, harvest and desired quality was achieved.

Keith Hurley discussed the effects of a 10" minimum length limit on 5 lakes in southeast Nebraska. Keith focused on two of the five lakes. Prior to the length limit the lakes had low density crappie populations that were fast growing and overharvested. After the length limit, crappie densities were high, with fish becoming stunted and high natural mortality and little harvest occurred. They are trying to remove 50% of the crappie with a one month long, no length limit season with a bag limit of 10. The length limit will then revert back to 10 inches.

Jake Allman presented some results of aquatic vegetation plantings. Jake is using water willow (*Justicia americana*) to vegetate eroding banks. The plants can be planted a number of ways, but the most promising is creating a long roll using hay bale wrap to contain the plants. These rolls can then be anchored along the shoreline, even in high energy areas, and a solid band of water willow is established in a few months. The water willow has been drought and flood resistant.

Randy Winter gave an overview of the Nebraska's Aquatic Habitat Rehabilitation program that is funded using an aquatic Habitat Stamp. This program was created through a series of public meetings and legislative action that can be used for healing raw banks in Nebraska lakes. Methods are being developed using hard and soft engineering. Hard engineering includes jetties, breakwaters, etc. While soft engineering includes planting vegetation. Lake renovations are also being done with these funds.

Jeff Jackson's paper dealt with the catch differences between 13 and 15 mm mesh trap nets. In 1996 testing of the differences in mesh sizes yielded significant differences between the gears. The 13 mm nets caught more smaller white crappie and bluegill. Larger black crappie and bluegill were not caught as often in the smaller mesh. Significant differences in PSD and RSD were positively correlated to mesh size. There was no significant difference in the catch per unit of effort for white crappie.

Craig Paukert's research involves investigating why the Sandhill lakes can produce such good bluegill populations. The 21 study lakes are high profile lakes that receive moderate winter fishing pressure. The lakes are typically shallow (mean depth = 1.2 m) and have heavy vegetative cover (49%). Many variables are being looked at. Preliminary results indicate largemouth bass and vegetative cover play big roles. As bass numbers increase so does bluegill PSD. Also bluegill PSD increases in the presence of moderate emergent vegetation levels (usually rushes). Lower submerged vegetation levels are also associated with quality bluegill fisheries.

Travis Hurton (KS) presented some telemetry work on spotted bass in Kansas streams. Surprisingly the bass don't move much. Most movement occurs between 5:30 AM and 8:30 PM. Very little movement at night. Travis presented some information on how frequency of tracking can greatly increase the amount of movement detected. Spotted bass spent all summer in one pool and were found in the same place after a big flood event.

Dan Stephenson gave an update on an Illinois research project. A study on 32 lakes is evaluating bluegill regulations and the occurrence of bluegill 'sneakers.' There are 8 control lakes, 8 lakes where the bluegill are managed with an 8-inch minimum length limit and 10 bag limit, 8 lakes where largemouth bass are stocked and 8 lakes where stocking and the bluegill restrictive limits are imposed. Compliance has been good, especially since initial public response was not good. The study is one year old. Factors being monitored are prey, diet and hooking mortality. Mortality to date has been low.

Jake Allman ended the paper presentations with information on Tobacco Hills Lake in Missouri. This 17 acre lake was built in 1978 and purchased by MDC in October 1994. Since the spring of 1995, the lake has been managed with an 8-inch minimum length limit and 8 fish bag limit on bluegill. Compliance has been excellent and numbers of large bluegill (> 8") are as good in 1999 as they were prior to public fishing in 1995. The lake receives an average of 400 hours/A of fishing pressure and bluegill are the most sought species. Effort on bluegill has been as high as 200 hours/A and harvest as high as 49 fish/A and 28 lbs/A. Past experience with heavily fished bluegill populations leaves little doubt that without the restrictive regulations, the large bluegill would have been removed in a year or two after opening the lake.

Lake tour

A tour of Walnut Creek Lake showed some of the aquatic habitat and watershed protection work in Nebraska. This site was particularly interesting since Omaha was literally over the next hill.

Business Meeting

The group decided to wait a year before pursuing a crappie poster and to get orders in advance before printing. The committee decided to assist with the Black Bass Symposium at the 2000 AFS meeting and will contact Dave Philipp to see the level of help needed. It was announced that Jeff Boxrucker is heading a crappie symposium as well and has 20 papers -but needs 5-6 more. The proceedings will be published in NAJFM. The Directory of Centrarchid Workers is in rough draft and will be completed soon. It's not too late to get listed. Our Web page has not been updated in a while. We will appoint a chair by the December meeting. Randy Shultz, KS was elected Chair elect. He will be Chair in 2001, following Dan Stephenson's tenure in 2000. The group decided to host a Lepomis Symposium at the 2001 Midwest. This should give states with new regulations time to present at least some early results. We will do a lot of advertising well in advance to give researchers plenty of time to prepare papers. Craig Paukert, SDSU, was elected Secretary. The next meeting will be held at the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference in December.

AGENCY HIGHLIGHTS

NEBRASKA PUBLIC POWER DISTRICT

Gothenburg Canal (Justin King)

This fall, staff from NPPD's environmental and water resources groups and the local Carp and Crow Club seined and electrofished gamefish from the canal as it dried up. The 817 gamefish, which were put into Lake Helen (Gothenburg) included over 250 crappie, over 400 bluegill, and 40 largemouth bass.

Missouri River (Justin King)

NPPD collects fish for radiological testing near its Cooper Nuclear Station twice a year. In summer 1999, gar appeared to be quite abundant while catfish were not easily captured (electroshocking).

Sutherland Reservoir (Justin King)

Annual sampling events for the Sutherland Memorandum Of Understanding (with NGPC & NDEQ) include 2-panel gillnets in May, otter trawls in August, 2-panel gillnets in September, and a 6-panel gillnets in October. The annual MOU report will be out by June 1. Spencer Hydro (Justin King) Environmental staff monitored water quality before and during sluice events. Data was collected on the fishery downstream of the hydro in the August before the sluice and in September after the sluice. A summary of the results will be sent to the NDEQ and NGPC this winter.

Lake Babcock (Mike Gutzmer)

Mike Gutzmer continues to study the lotus population at Lake Babcock with temperature and biomass studies. Thoughts are to extend distribution studies and vegetation mapping during summer 2000. Any thoughts or comments please call 402/563-5742.

Cooper Nuclear Thermal Study (Mike Gutzmer)

NPPD will be evaluating the thermal plume on the mixing zone in the Missouri River this next year to obtain relief in the current NPDES permit. Temperatures in mid-summer appear to be approaching 90 degrees ambient which appears higher than historical even at higher flows.

Rock Weir Study (Mike Gutzmer)

This next year the District will be investigating flow effects on the fish population in the rock weir area below the Keystone Diversion Dam. NPPD will also be looking at the effects of aquatic vegetation in the area.

COLLEGE CORNER

University of Nebraska - Lincoln (Ed Peters)

The Platte River has been busy again this year with Vaughn Snook and Jason Olnes following radio tagged pallid sturgeon around. The sturgeon were released late in April and promptly spread out along several mile of the river. One fish was caught by an angler near Louisville. The radio was returned, but the fish was killed in the process. Education is evidently an ongoing need. Starting in August Vaughn has been flying the river from Fremont to the mouth and is currently tracking the movements of six sturgeon. Five of these have reversed their downstream drift and are now moving upstream! One fish is currently upstream from the Two Rivers stocking site. Vaughn plans to finish his MS in 2000.

Cory Reade has about 200 gallon jars filled with drift samples which he and Ryan (Norm) Ruskamp collected over the summer. With help from a team of undergraduate assistants he is getting this year's samples picked and is analysing the results from 1998. Several presumptive sturgeon larvae and some unusual early spring larvae are being sent to Ft Collins for verification. Cory plans to finish his MS in the summer of 2000.

Cara Ewell is working on the Branched Oak Lake project and really doesn't want to see any more white perch. Her MS project is focusing on the food selectivity of white perch. Larry Vrtiska is working as a technician on the Branched Oak project where he is heading the creel survey and benthic invertebrate analysis.

On Lake Ogallala Tyler Pearson is wrapping up a second year of trout feeding selectivity studies which will comprise a major proportion of his MS thesis. Midges and snails are high on the list of food items for trout in Lake O. Tyler plans to complete his thesis in the summer of 2000.

Corey Huxoll started tracking rainbow and brown trout in Lake Ogallala as part of his MS project this past spring. Changes in plant abundance, water temperature and the addition of a second aeration system are making for some interesting comparisons to previous telemetry work.

The fisheries science class is almost done with field work on streams around Lincoln during lab periods and out to Lake Ogallala on the weekends. Now its down to pressing scales, sectioning spines and number crunching to get those final reports finished up.

The future looks interesting with continued work on the Platte River taking shape to continue Cory and Vughn's studies. The Branched Oak project will be continuing for several more seasons and the Lake Ogallala project is winding down with a final report due in 2001.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

Student Writing Contest

The American Fisheries Society (AFS) is holding its annual writing contest to recognize students who do an excellent job communicating the value of fisheries research to the general public. Undergraduate and graduate students are asked to submit a 500- to 700-word article explaining their own research or a research project in their lab or school. The article must be written in language understandable to the general public (i.e., journalistic style). Students may write about research that has been completed, is in progress, or is in the planning stages. Most important is that students write their articles in a manner that the general public can understand so people can appreciate why the research is important and how it could help society and the fisheries resource. The top three winners will be invited to the AFS annual meeting (at winner's expense), where their articles will be prominently displayed at the poster session; they also will be given a plaque recognizing their achievements. The winning articles will be published in FISHERIES. **Deadline for articles is January 15, 2000.** Please mail five copies of the articles to Laura Hutchcroft, AFS; 5410 Grosvenor Lane, Suite 110; Bethesda, MD 20814. If you have any questions, please contact Hutchcroft at 301/897-8616, ext. 201.

The Physics of Fly-Fishing

Check out the September issue of Discover Magazine for an enlightening article by Curtis Rist and his "quest for a unified theory of fly casting." The article is only two pages long, including photos, and a good read. I have the article; if you want to read it I can FAX to you. - Becky

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Fourth Microcomputer Applications in Fish and Wildlife Conference

October 24 - 27, 1999

Caesars Tahoe Hotel

Stateline, Nevada

POC Doug Beard (608) 267-9427; beardt@dnr.state.wi.us

American Rivers Missouri River "Voyage of Recovery" Conference

November 8 - 9, 1999

St. Charles, Missouri

Registration fee \$95 before Oct 15; \$125 after Oct 15

Phone registration: 1-877-4-Rivers

Mail registration : American Rivers Voyage of Recovery Conference

1025 Vermont Ave., NW, Suite 720

Washington D.C. 20005

1999 Congress on Recreation and Resource Capacity

November 29 - December 3, 1999

Snowmass Village

Aspen, Colorado

"Are Americans Loving our Public Lands and Waters to Death?"

POC Susan Scott Lundquist (970) 491-48865; susanlun@lamar.colostate.edu

NCD Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference

December 5 - 8, 1999

Sheraton Hotel and Towers

Chicago, Illinois

POC Doug Austen (217)785-5935; dausten@dnrmail.state.il.us

Joint Nebraska / Iowa Chapter Meeting

January 19 - 21, 2000

Holiday Inn / Ameristar Casino

Council Bluffs, Iowa

Fourth Annual Missouri River Natural Resources Conference

May 21 - 24, 2000

Radisson Inn

Bismarck, North Dakota

Registration fee \$95 after March 1 (not yet available)

News items can be sent to

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2509 S. 34th St.

Omaha NE 68105.

**You may also phone (402) 221-4602 or FAX (402) 221-4886, or e-mail your news items
Rebecca.J.Latka@nwo02.usace.army.mil**

Items for the next newsletter should be received by December 15, 1999.