

*Great Lakes Ecosystem Team
Lake Sturgeon Committee Accomplishments-2004*

Great Lakes Lake Sturgeon Coordination Meeting

The Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem Team Lake Sturgeon Committee, with assistance from a steering committee of several partner representatives, held a second Great Lakes Lake Sturgeon Coordination meeting, November 10-11, 2004 in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. The purpose for these meetings is to provide a forum to foster communication and exchange of information relating to the study, management, and restoration of lake sturgeon in the Great Lakes basin, to address priority research and assessment needs, and to address selected emerging issues.

The focus of the 2004 meeting was to address three priority emerging issues identified by participants at the 2002 meeting: habitat classification (spawning, nursery, and juvenile), habitat restoration and enhancement, and fish passage. Several presentations on each topic were given by participants including a panel discussion that focused on sturgeon passage issues. There also were follow-up presentations on the two emerging issues covered at the 2002 meeting (use of stocking and genetic considerations to rehabilitate populations, and development of standardized assessment techniques). Facilitated small group discussions also were convened on several topics and an evening potluck social gathering featured poster presentations that described a wide range of sturgeon work.

One hundred individuals attend the meeting from 30 different entities (states, tribal/First Nation, federal, provincial, academic, private, and an NGO. Amazing! Evaluation forms completed by participants were extremely positive and supportive of the meeting and indicated that attendees were very pleased with the presentations and opportunities for interpersonal interaction. There were a few suggestions for us to consider for the next meeting, primarily related to the breakout sessions. This was the second of 3 such meetings that will occur under this grant. Funding for these meetings is being provided by the Great Lakes Fishery Trust (GLFT), along with a good bit of FWS and other agency in-kind match in the form of our time in planning and holding these meetings. Proceedings from the 2002 meeting are available now on the Great Lakes Lake Sturgeon Website and the 2004 proceedings will be available soon.

Great Lakes Lake Sturgeon Web Site

Biologist Anjie Bowen revised the Great Lakes Lake Sturgeon Web Site (<http://midwest.fws.gov/sturgeon>) in April, 2003. Cooperators were contacted to provide updated information. The page coordinates international, federal, state, and university lake sturgeon activities in the Great Lakes basin and serves as the primary site for disseminating lake sturgeon information. Funding to update and maintain the page was provided through Flex Funds.

Lake Sturgeon Tributary Inventory Database, GIS and Web Site

The Lake Sturgeon Committee continued to make progress on the web-based lake sturgeon database and GIS map. This project has created a unified, interactive web-based GIS map and meta-database of Great Lakes lake sturgeon information important to researchers and managers.

The database enhances the existing map and database developed for the 2000 GLFT Lake Sturgeon Workshop. The long-term objective of the project is to compile available lake sturgeon data sources to help focus restoration and research activities on priority lake sturgeon waters. Additional funding has been secured through the GLFT to expand and upgrade the project and the project will be available online by December 31, 2004.

Lake Sturgeon Tagging Database

The Alpena FRO was successful in obtaining funding through the GLFT for a web accessible database where researchers can go and look up contact information on a recaptured lake sturgeon. This database will contain all tag types used, tag #, and contact information for the original tagger. The intent of the database is to facilitate communication between people who tag and those that encounter tagged lake sturgeon throughout the Great Lakes. The database will be posted on either the Great Lakes Lake Sturgeon Web Site or the Great Lakes Fisheries Commissions web site with links provided through several other sites.

Commercial Fishers Monitoring

The Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem Team Lake Sturgeon Committee received FY 2002 and 2003 flex funding from Regions 3 & 5 to expand their lake sturgeon work to include the collection of information on sturgeon captured by commercial fishers in the Great Lakes. Funding for this project has provided the commercial fishers with training and equipment to gather data from lake sturgeon that will assist biologists in determining the number and distribution of sturgeon, determine sturgeon movement patterns in the Great Lakes, and compile critical data on sturgeon growth and reproduction. This project is an opportunity for biologists to work cooperatively with an important stakeholder group -- commercial fishers from four of the Great Lakes.

Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem Team Furthers Great Lakes Lake Sturgeon Genetics Standardization, Research and Planning

Through the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem Team, members of the Lake Sturgeon Committee continue to be involved in efforts to coordinate, standardize, and better implement lake sturgeon genetics analysis in the Great Lakes Basin. In order to better guide lake sturgeon restoration and enhancement efforts in the Great Lakes, resource managers need a better understanding of the genetic structure among populations. The Service is leading a cooperative effort of basin-wide research where some funding has been secured from the GLFT and the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission. Additional funds continue to be needed for additional sample collection and stock structure analysis in some lake basins. Comprehensive project proposal remains a collaborative effort among and between natural resource agencies and geneticists.

SOLEC indicator #125: Status of Lake Sturgeon in the Great Lakes

The Lake Sturgeon Committee made substantial additions and updated the State of the Lake Ecosystem Indicator proposed at the 2002 conference. The draft was available for the 2004 conference and will be published in final form in the 2005 State of the Great Lakes Report.

Lake Sturgeon Brochures

The Lake Sturgeon Committee chair worked with Fish and Wildlife Service Offices in Regions 3 and 5 to coordinate ordering of lake sturgeon brochures (about 12,000), which have been distributed. Region 3 is now working to get the lake sturgeon brochure added to the Washington order list, for greater distribution and availability.