

## **Minutes of the 7th Annual Mid-Year Meeting of the Centrarchid Technical Committee, North Central Division of the AFS**

The 7th annual meeting of the North Central Division's Centrarchid Committee was held on July 18-19, 2000, at Wyalusing State Park near Prairie-du-Chien, WI. In attendance were representatives from eight states and one university, South Dakota State. Those representatives were: Don Kline and Kay Hill (Iowa); Chair-elect, Randy Schultz (Kansas); Dave Tunink (Nebraska); Mike McInerney and Dan Dieterman (Minnesota); Steve Fischer (Missouri); Scott Hale (Ohio); Craig Paukert and another M.S. student, Bill Mckibbon (SDSU) and Dan Stephenson (Illinois). One note: attendance was extremely low at this meeting. The Mid-summer meeting typically draws 25-35 people but for various reasons, many of those that usually make the meeting were absent. Field commitments, timing of the meeting and failure to notify all of the members on the CTC mailing list were cited as the most common reasons for the sparse crowd. Dan Stephenson chaired the meeting that commenced at 1:00 p. He welcomed those members in attendance and thanked those contributing papers and posters for their effort.

Dan Stephenson gave an overview of new impoundment construction and fishery development in the Jim Edgar Panther Creek State Fish and Wildlife Area located 40 miles northwest of Springfield. This 15,575 acre parcel of ground is the largest ever purchased by the state. Initially the only fishery on the property was found in a few 30+ year old highly degraded ponds. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources, as part of an overall wildlife management strategy, began construction of several small impoundments. They range in size from 19 to 210 acres. All four of those lakes are being managed for high-quality bluegill and redear sunfish. An 8 inch minimum length, 10 fish per day panfish limit in conjunction with a 15" minimum length and 3 fish per day bass limit has been implemented for all water bodies on the site, including the small ponds. Dan has seen excellent initial results from this management strategy.

Dave Tunink presented a summary of Nebraska bluegill management including multiple strategies used to improve bluegill fisheries. Those included 8" minimum length limits, fish feeders, aeration, gizzard shad removal and catch-and-release angling.

Kay Hill described their efforts in southwestern Iowa to remove grass carp that had greatly degraded the panfish fisheries. Grass carp demonstrate remarkable growth rates, high survival and an uncanny ability to avoid capture.

Scott Hale described Ohio's crappie management approach and the fortunate overlay of mechanistic crappie research by Ohio State University and a multi-university watersheds study of the national Science foundation with the Ohio Department of Wildlife monitoring and management at several reservoirs.

Dan Dieterman summarized Minnesota's approach to protecting bluegill in the backwaters of the Mississippi River. They had looked at an initial boon to bluegill fishing that was created by the construction of locks in the 1930's. In the 1960's, however, bluegill population trends began a long slow decline. By 1993 Minnesota began actively monitoring, through population estimates and creel surveys, the bluegill populations on various backwaters. Through this monitoring and through a series of public meetings the Minnesota DNR decided steps should be taken to protect and enhance the bluegill fishery. They modeled several proposed bluegill regulations and decided upon implementation of an 8", 10 fish per day limit. That limit has been

proposed through the legislature. They are waiting to hear if it "flies". There was solid public support.

Mike McNerny looked at the use of electrofishing by Minnesota biologists as an effective method of capture of black bass. Electrofishing proved quite useful and spring, nighttime sampling provided the best results in terms of CPUE and population structure. Results of this study were recently published in the North American Journal of Fisheries Management (NAJFM 2000, 20:328-336).

Craig Paukert and Bill McKibbon presented two posters on work they had done with bluegill management.

### **Old Business**

Members discussed the Black Bass Symposium to be held at the St. Louis National AFS conference to be held in late August. It was nearly ready to go and, as of this printing, is now completed. The symposium was a huge success.

A Lepomis Symposium sponsored by the CTC is being planned for the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference in Iowa, 2001. The current title is "Ecology, Genetics and Management of Bluegill (Lepomis?)". The CTC needs 12-18 oral presentations and several poster presentations. Presenters will be solicited through the Mainstream, web pages, in the AFS list serve and by word of mouth. Each state representative will attempt to recruit from his/her state. Since there is so much work being done throughout the United States with bluegill management, the committee believes that there will be no trouble getting the number of papers needed to fill a symposium. CTC state representatives are to have a list of those interested in presenting a paper with a working title to the Chair by Nov. 15. The CTC will submit the formal request for a Lepomis symposium to Iowa in early 2001. In addition, check for flyers at the St. Paul Midwest in December. We plan a strong symposium on Lepomis, primarily bluegill ecology and management. The mid-year meeting of the CTC, to be held next July near Kansas City, will be a warm-up for the Iowa Midwest with presenters given a chance to practice on that group. For more information contact Randy Schultz, Steve Fischer, Dave Tunink or Dan Stephenson.

### **New Business**

The CTC had discussed creating two new posters, one on black and one on white crappie. Members have quite a few "irons in the fire" right now and there were distribution problems with the largemouth bass and bluegill posters, so the idea was tabled for now.

The CTC requested that the Chair draft a letter to Pam Heverland (NCD President) requesting better maintenance or at least a status update on the NCD web site. It was discussed whether the CTC web site should be continued or not. Maintenance of the CTC web site is contingent upon the NCD response. Steve Fischer drafted that letter but as of this writing there has been no response.

There is a current working CTC directory and is available on ACCESS database. The directory will be distributed electronically after a quick update.

The Chair led a discussion of the problem of low turnout at this meeting. After much discussion it was generally agreed that the CTC has, and continues, to serve its

function by supporting technical symposia, holding annual meetings of interested delegates from member state, by creating the largemouth bass and bluegill posters and assembling materials such as the Centrarchid Gray Literature Index (December 1997). Although there was low attendance this year it is believed that there is great interest in Centrarchid management and ecology throughout not only the NCD but throughout the rest of the country. It was obvious from the tone of the conversation that those representatives present are still extremely enthused about centrarchids.

After some discussion on black bass management efforts through the NCD, Scott Hale (Ohio) suggested the possibility of developing a black bass database the might include summarized creel survey, electrofishing and trophy award program data. This database could be used to: 1) share summary information among various states. 2) track long-term trends in bass fisheries and populations. Changes in attitudes of anglers, management responses on state agencies and shifts in bass populations. Committee members will discuss this further at AFS 2000 where the Bass Symposium may provide good contact and insights into the potential of such an effort. The CTC objective of such an effort is to develop a FISHERIES manuscript that would describe shifts that agencies have observed in bass fisheries in the past three decades.

### **Roundtable discussion**

In Illinois biologists have the flexibility to manage on a lake-by-lake basis. Dan Stephenson distributed a current list of bass, bluegill and crappie regulations. Thirty-four public lakes have regulations for bluegill/redear sunfish, usually an 8", 10 fish per day limit. Thirty-six lakes have regulations for crappie, typically a 9" or 10", 10 or 25 per day limit. Two hundred and ten lakes have regulations for black bass, in most cases a 14" or 15" with a 3 or 6 fish per day bag limit. It was apparent to the committee that in some cases more general regulations would suffice. The Illinois fishing digest is 55 pages long so before going fishing in Illinois the angler must be aware of the regulations on that particular lake.

Dave Tunink describes an adjustment in a 10" minimum length limit in two Nebraska lakes that will allow anglers to harvest crappie without regulation during one month each spring. The idea is to reduce stockpiling caused by the length limit. If, after evaluation, one month is not enough they may increase that to two.

Randy Schultz distributed a final report by Tom Mosher indicating crappie length limits improved fishing at only one of three study lakes. Slow growth rates appears to be the primary reason that the regulations did not work.

Both Iowa and Nebraska have gone to stocking adults (breeder) bass and bluegill in new lakes and ponds. Most states stock a given number of fingerling fish per acre of water, as do Iowa and Nebraska to some extent, but they have found that they get good long-term population structure and stability with adult stocking. Iowa stocks 5 bass adults and 10 bluegill adults per acre.

The CTC meeting then adjourned. Again, the crowd was relatively small but highly motivated. We look forward to getting together again in Minneapolis.