



## FISHERIES STREAMS AND RIVERS NEWSLETTER

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### July, August, September 2008

*The Stream Fisheries Program provides high-quality fisheries information for management purposes and applies the results of research to improve fish populations, habitat, and fishing.*

In July, I developed a detailed Catfish Exploitation Study proposal. The project will evaluate angler returns of stocked catfish in three types of waters: large U.S. Corps of Engineers lakes, AGFC lakes greater than 125 acres, and rivers. Catchable channel catfish (400-500 fish) will be stocked with Carlin dangler tags that have AGFC phone numbers on them, and anglers can call in the tag numbers for a reward. In Corps lakes, we will evaluate differences in angler returns from yearling vs. catchable stockings. This type of information will enable fisheries managers to decide how to optimally stock catfish.

I served as Chairperson of the Warmwater Streams Committee at the summer meeting in Corbin, Kentucky. This committee is part of the Southern Division of the American Fisheries Society. David Long, from AGFC Wildlife Management Division, did a great job of presenting Farm Bill programs.



Falls at Cumberland State Park (Kentucky)

Activity has continued on evaluation of the age structure of catfish from the Arkansas River. I worked with the Urban Fishing Program and Arkansas Tech University (ATU) graduate student, Chris Verba, to collect catfish for age and growth in the Little Rock Pool.

This quarter, I worked with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to help them avoid fisheries impacts of emergency dredging operations. We moved the location of dredge disposal areas to prevent large impacts to the fishery of Lake Dardanelle.

For the past two years high water has forced me to scale back sampling plans for pallid sturgeon on the Mississippi River. All the hurricanes did not help! But, it's really great for the fishery, and it gives me time to publish some studies.

Publishing the results of our management studies has been a major focus of the *Streams and Rivers* fisheries program, and I feel it's been successful. I reviewed the page proofs of a paper Bob Limbird and I wrote on the Arkansas River fisheries trends. This paper will soon be published in the American Fisheries Society Reservoir Symposium book. Two chapters were accepted to the American Fisheries Society Paddlefish book. These chapters deal with the paddlefish telemetry project on Ozark Lake, and an evaluation of special commercial fishing seasons for paddlefish. In addition, a chapter reviewing harvest of paddlefish in North America is in revision, and I anticipate it being accepted by the end of the year.

The Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resource Agreement (MICRA) held a meeting concerning the proposed listing under the Endangered Species Act of shovelnose sturgeon, due to its similarity of appearance with the endangered pallid sturgeon. The issue is that the two species are difficult to tell apart, especially smaller fish. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) asked for MICRA's advice on the listing, which they described as forthcoming. Mark Oliver and I attended the meeting, and we requested that any listing should not impact fishing for other species.

I worked with biologists from Mississippi and Tennessee to develop a joint Mississippi River paddlefish management plan. This plan was agreed upon by the Fisheries Chiefs, but Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) decided to remove all length limits and seasons for commercial paddlefish, thus the plan is unlikely to be enacted. TWRA Commissioners announced they were currently taking leave of paddlefish management in order to concentrate on sportfishing.

I analyzed paddlefish angler diary data provided by commercial fisher Kim Campbell and submitted that data to the Little Rock Fisheries Division. Based on the review, Fisheries decided to reduce the minimum length limit for paddlefish on the Mississippi River by one inch - from 34 to 35 inches EFL.

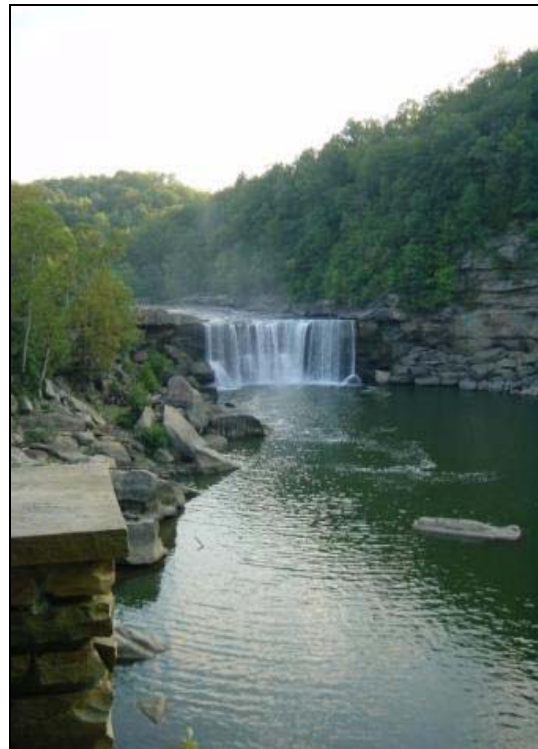
Fisheries Assistant Chief, Steve Filipek, and I attended a Lower Mississippi River Conservation Committee meeting in Vicksburg. At this meeting we discussed the prioritizing of habitat restoration projects.

#### **Other Stuff...**

**I...**

- ...spent two weeks on vacation in Michigan, and went to the National Cherry Festival with my family.
- ...attended a meeting with the Arkansas Fishermen and Shelltaker's Association to discuss paddlefish regulations.
- ...presented a sturgeon genetics project at the Arkansas Wildlife Action Plan meeting.
- ...filled out a sturgeon management survey for Iowa State University.
- ...ordered tags for the Catfish Exploitation Study.

- ...worked on Freedom of Information Act requests concerning the Fayetteville Shale.
- ...purchased paddlefish snagging equipment for an upcoming study.
- ...attended retirement parties for Carl Perrin and Berry Beavers. (Fisheries lost about 75 years work experience in one day from retirements.)
- ...attended the staff meeting concerning Northern Snakehead fish in Brinkley.
- ...worked with Dr. John Jackson from Arkansas Tech University to develop a poster to present at the upcoming *FLOW 2008* meeting concerning the Ouachita River fishery.
- ...reviewed a manuscript for the journal *Reviews in Fisheries Science*.
- ...created a 'power-point' presentation for the October Commission briefing concerning paddlefish data collection and management.
- ...attended a Farm Bill workshop.



Hope to see you on the river.