



RYBA

Newsletter of the Minnesota Chapter of the American Fisheries Society

**Year 2003 No. 3
September Issue**

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President's Message

by John Hiebert

Bienvenue from Quebec City, site of the 133rd Annual Meeting of the AFS. This was the first parent society meeting I have attended, and I found it well worth my time to attend. You get a broader perspective on what the parent society does as a whole and what other AFS members around the country are up to. Total attendance at the meeting was 1,900 with over 1,300 technical papers presented in 20 concurrent sessions. The theme of the conference was declining wild fish stocks, and seeing the issues facing other biologists around the country and the world gives you a whole new perspective on the fisheries issues you face in your own

job. The 2004 Annual Meeting will be held August 22nd-26th, only 5 hours down I-94 in Madison, Wisconsin. I would encourage you to try and attend this meeting, as it great opportunity to see what the Society is all about and to find out about opportunities to do more in the society itself.

The chapter received more good news at the Annual Meeting. We were honored for the second year in a row with the Most Active Chapter Award (this year shared with the California-Nevada Chapter). It is quite a tribute to win this award once, but to do it twice in a row shows how much people

within the society recognize all of the good work our membership does. From sponsoring Hutton students, to judging at science fairs, from supporting our scholarship programs at our annual raffle, to putting on Continuing Education workshops, from attending political debates, to being active in the Fish and Wildlife Alliance (FWLA), our chapter members truly are involved. At the awards luncheon I attended to represent our chapter, I was seated with then AFS president Fred Harris. He asked a variety of questions about current happenings in our chapter and after discussing all of the hard work our members did, he said he was not surprised that we have won the most active chapter award two years running. Now that we have won it twice, we have to go for the big three-peat in 2004! I would also like to recognize another chapter



John Hiebert accepts the Most Active Chapter Award on behalf of MNAFS (photo B. Borkholder)



Julie Zimmerman receives runner-up for J. Francis Allen Award (photo B. Borkholder)

member that received an award at the Annual Meeting. Julie Zimmerman was the runner up for the J. Francis Allen scholarship award, Congratulations Julie!

RYBA editor: David Anderson
 The Chapter publishes **RYBA** four times yearly (January, May, September, and November). Please direct comments or submissions to:
 david.anderson@dnr.state.mn.us

The views and opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Minnesota Chapter.

In addition, I attended the Annual Business Meeting and watched the installation of one of our chapter members as Parent Society President. Escorted by his wife and former Parent Society President Jack Wingate, Ira Adelman was installed as Society president. I am sure the whole chapter wishes Ira well as he embarks on his year as president. In the latest president's hook column, Ira outlined his work plan titled "Science to Influence Outcomes". It highlights Information Transfer and Outreach, Member Services and



Ira Adelman is installed as President of the AFS Parent Society (photo B. Borkholder)

Aquatic Stewardship as his major goals. As AFS members we can work through the Chapter, Division and Society to, as Ira states in his column, "help get out the message that science can help us to advance the conservation of the fishery resources and aquatic ecosystems and that AFS is a primary source of sound scientific information." Our Chapter's current work in FWLA, providing high quality continuing education classes and co-sponsoring workshops with resource groups and agencies, are all examples of how we are already working on achieving his goals. As we look to the future and begin the process of developing a new long-range plan for the Chapter, we can look at these goals and use them as building blocks in shaping our future plans.

We are beginning the process of developing a new long-range plan for the chapter. The last plan was completed in 1992. To facilitate this process, we are planning on having a session at the next Annual Meeting for the express purpose of discussing the long-range goals of the chapter. At the 1992 session, chapter members brought up topics that they thought the chapter should be working on over the next 5 years. After compiling a list of potential topics, each member was able to vote for the one topic they thought was most important for the

chapter to pursue. The totals were summarized and the 5 topics with the most votes were included in the plan. There are a variety of ways to determine what direction the chapter should be going in, from e-mail surveys to forming committees, but the important thing is to make sure we get an accurate picture of where the members think we should be heading in the future. If you have any additional ideas on how to get input from members or if you are interested in working on developing the long-range plan, please contact me. Otherwise, please plan on attending this session at the next Annual Meeting, and come prepared with some ideas on where you think the Chapter should be heading in the next 5 years.

Speaking of annual meetings, Loren's plans are coming together for our 2004 meeting in mid-March, in St Cloud. Make plans now to attend, and when Loren posts the registration form, please PRE-REGISTER! We are again planning to offer a pre-registration discount. Last year 88 of you took us up on this and I want to thank you for doing this, for not only did it made my job much easier but also it saves you some money. I would get in trouble with our immediate past-president if I didn't implore you to take the money you save and help support the Chapter's efforts through the annual raffle. Let me just say that Tom Burri and Brian Borkholder do a great job organizing our raffle each year. Each year, Brian and Tom scour the world for a variety of excellent raffle prizes. By generously supporting the raffle, you help support the scholarship fund, support student attendance at the meeting by allowing us to offer reduced registration and banquet fees and provide the resources to allow us to do the work that gets us recognized as the best chapter in AFS.

The money we raise at the raffle is the single largest source of income for the chapter. Our current assets are \$26,700 in our money market account and \$1,600 in our checking account. While these balances look healthy, we need to remember that \$20,000 dollars of this is tied up as an endowment for the scholarships we award. The original idea was to put \$20,000 away in a money market account at 4% interest and use the \$800 we receive each year to pay for the scholarships. Unfortunately, interest rates are currently at 0.91%.

While Donna is looking for some new alternatives to improve on this interest rate, there are currently not a lot of low risk funds offering 4% interest. So at the current 0.91% interest rate, we are taking in \$182 for the year. In addition, we now also provide the scholarship winners and any qualified runner-ups a trip to the annual meeting, including registration, lodging and the banquet. Last year that added up to an additional \$550. So we are paying out \$1,350 and taking in \$182 from our endowment. I am in favor of continuing to award scholarship winners a trip to the Annual Meeting and I would like to offer trips to the Annual Meeting to any interested Science Fair winners as well, but this does cost more money. One way to alleviate this loss of revenue is to increase our Chapter Dues. Our dues are currently \$7 for non-students. I looked at the cost of dues for other North Central Division Chapters and they fell out as follows: Michigan and Missouri Chapter dues are \$5. Wisconsin, Illinois, Dakota, Ohio, Indiana, Nebraska and Kansas are all \$10. For reference, The Minnesota Chapter of the Wildlife Society Chapter Dues are \$15. An increase in dues to \$10 would bring in an additional \$600 to the chapter. An increase in dues to \$15 dollars would bring in an additional \$1,600 a year. My proposal is to increase chapter dues to \$10 per year. This increase is modest and is in line with what many other NCD chapters charge. I would then earmark this added revenue to support the scholarship fund and to help alleviate the cost for students to attend. I would like to know what the chapter member's opinions are on this proposal, so please call or e-mail me and let me know your thoughts or if you have other fund raising ideas.

I mentioned the topic of raising chapter dues in my last presidents message and asked for people to send me comments but I have only heard from one person so far. Either this means I have a mandate to change the chapter dues to \$300, thereby funding my crucial month-long training in Hawaii or no one reads anything I write. I think it is the former, so unless I hear otherwise I guess its Aloha! I hope you all had a good summer and I look forward to hearing from you soon. Enjoy this nice warm weather -- before you know it we'll be buried in snow.

(Also, see John's report on changes in our Chapter's procedures manual on page 5. Please follow his instructions for voting on the proposed changes.)

Officer Reports

President Elect
By Loren Miller

37th Annual Meeting of the Minnesota Chapter - Plans for the 2004 meeting are beginning to take shape. The meeting will be held March 15-17 at the Kelly Inn in St. Cloud, the site of past successful annual meetings. This central location should make it accessible to many members. The Kelly Inn has space for all meeting activities plus many hotel rooms without needing to head outdoors. Other hotels are within walking distance or short drives.

We will be joined by the newly formed Minnesota Chapter of the Society for Conservation Biology. I expect that the meeting will follow our typical format: Monday evening registration and social, Tuesday plenary, presentations, business meeting, and banquet, and Wednesday half-day of presentations. I hope to have some joint sessions with MNSCB and some independent sessions. We will likely develop a session or two that will highlight the connections between our respective disciplines. I also plan to have one extended session for our chapter to begin developing an updated long-range plan.

First Call For Papers And Posters - The program is open to contributed papers and posters related to fisheries and aquatic resources. If you wish to present a paper or poster, please submit a short abstract as an

attachment to Imm@umn.edu, or mail the abstract on disk or paper to Loren Miller at Dept. Fisheries, Wildlife and Conservation Biology, 200 Hodson Hall, 1980 Folwell Ave., St. Paul, MN 55108. Include the title, author(s), institution, mailing address, phone number, e-mail address, presenter and classification (open or student). Also please indicate if you choose oral presentation only, poster only, or oral presentation preferred but willing to bring poster. I have not set a deadline for abstracts yet, but please e-mail me soon if you intend to submit a paper so I get a sense of how many to expect.

Please contact Loren Miller by email or at 612-624-3019 for more details about the meeting.

Past President

By Brian Borkholder

Hutton Scholarship Program - Right now is the time for prospective mentors to be identifying, rounding up, & hog tying future Hutton Students. Students interested in participating in the MN Science Fair need to begin thinking up potential projects soon. I've been asked by a few science teachers at the Cloquet High School to present examples of science and research in the real world, and to get the students thinking about developing ideas into science fair projects. Since I will have the undivided attention of over 100 students in 4 different classes, what better time than to push Hutton? It might be a good time to begin encouraging other MN AFS'rs to seek similar opportunities to influence the next generation of fishheads.

(Note: If you'd like any promotional materials for the Hutton - brochures, posters, or a Powerpoint slide show – contact Christine Fletcher, AFS Hutton Program Assistant, at (301) 897-8616 ext. 213)

Secretary-Treasurer

Donna Dustin

Donna provided minutes from the June Executive Committee meeting. They can be found on the chapter website (www.fw.umn.edu/mnafsf/).

ExCom - Open

By Andy Edwards

Seems like I just turned in a report to Dave, and already he has asked for something for the fall RYBA issue. Guess that means summer has just about made the corner into fall. I haven't had a whole lot of time to converse with folks to gather information and have had very little luck tracking down anyone in the office. Expect that they are out and about as much as I have been.

Based on the field activity reports that I receive it looks like northeastern DNR offices have been busy with summer test netting and are trying to wrap those up in preparation for fall assessments and stocking.

Both the Fond du Lac Band and the 1854 Authority finally put the wraps on the field portion of a qualitative assessment of the Pike and Sandy rivers north of Virginia. All of the good stuff like swatting skeeters, finding new leaks in waders, and wading through 6 inches of water and 24 inches of loon dung while carrying a backpack shocker are finished. Next step is to ID all of the invertebrates we collected, figure out the differences in all of the "weeds," and start writing up the report. A few years ago we started doing these qualitative surveys on cool/warm water rivers. With all of the budget cuts over the years, river surveys have kind of taken a back seat. Since that time we've surveyed a large portion of the Cloquet River and now the Pike and Sandy.

Normally we are kicking into high gear for fall young-of-year walleye assessments about this time of year too. However, the warm summer this year has kept lake temperatures pretty high. Headed up to South Fowl lake on the Canadian/US border last week to collect fish for contaminant analysis and shocked in water temps of 78 degrees. Not a whole lot of fish in shallow right now, plenty of bugs swarming the lights though! With the high water temps we won't be starting fall shocking until September 8th at the earliest. When at all possible we like to work in water temps of less than 68 degrees. Busy schedule in the works though.

Seems like every time I write this I spend all of my time on Tribal fisheries news. From one standpoint that suits me, that is who I work for and thus the source of most of my report info. I don't want to alienate folks though, so if you've got something you want passed on to the membership and don't fall under one of the other ExCom categories feel free to let me know.

I suppose I'll wrap this up. Bottom line...things are shifting from summer to fall work and ever closer to the dreaded winter report season. Take care!

ExCom - DNR

By David Anderson

I'm guessing that most of you already get your fill of DNR news, so I'll just highlight a couple of Fisheries Division activities that I had a chance to participate in:

Cumulative Effects Research Planning – In June, the Fisheries Research Unit hosted a two-day meeting to discuss potential research topics related to cumulative impacts on Minnesota lakes. Participants included the MNDNR Fisheries research staff and several outside experts on natural resource management, policy, and research. A lot of good ideas were generated that will help guide future research efforts.

Regulation Tool Boxes – Although statewide bag limits were reduced for several species prior to the 2003 season, many anglers and fisheries managers desired more individual waters management. Small groups of fisheries managers and research biologists met over the past year to develop "tool boxes" of regulations for several game species that could be applied to individual water bodies. The goal was to provide a limited number of options for managers to choose from, along with criteria for their selection. By keeping the number of options low, there should be less confusion for anglers, and it will be easier to evaluate the success of each regulation. Final versions of the tool boxes are currently under review.

Changes to the Procedures Manual

By John Hiebert

At the last Annual Meeting the membership approved the following changes to the procedures manual:

That we change from electing four EXCOM members-at-large positions (DNR, Academic, Federal and Open) each year to having two EXCOM members-at-large positions open for election each year, such that the DNR and Federal positions are open for election in even-numbered years, and the Open and Academic positions are open for election in odd-numbered years, thereby having each member hold their office for a two-year term. We made these changes to alleviate the problems we were having recruiting new members to run for the EXCOM (especially Federal and Academic) each year.

After the changes in the bylaws were approved by the membership, our procedures manual chair (Mike McInerny) noticed some extraneous verbiage in the procedure manual and edited the manual to remove this material. He then forwarded these changes to Dirk Miller (constitutional authority for the parent society) for his approval before he would submit them to the governing board of the parent society. Dirk agreed the extra changes that Mike made were necessary, and for good measure struck out and changed a few other items that were incorrect. He returned the procedures manual to me and said it was now acceptable to him; however, because of the additional changes in the manual, though primarily cosmetic in nature, the entire manual had to be voted on again by the membership. Once this was accomplished, he could take it to the Governing board for their blessing and then the Chapter could enact the changes. Herein lies the problem, the next governing board meeting is in late March of 2004, after our Annual business meeting.

We had hoped that we would have the changes to the EXCOM in place **before** the next meeting; so only two EXCOM positions would have to be filled this year (Academic and Open). To accomplish this goal, Dirk Miller suggested we post the modified bylaws on our chapter website and hold an e-mail ballot on the changes. If greater than 2/3 of the membership who vote agree on the changes, then we can consider the changes approved and submit them to Dirk. He said that if he agrees to the changes that are voted on (and since he has seen them already he should), that the Governing Board will agree with what he presents to them. Because of this, once Dirk agrees to the new approved changes to the procedures manual, we can proceed as if the governing board will approve the changes, even if their business meeting is held after ours. Therefore we can proceed based on the changes we voted on last year and only fill the Academic and Open EXCOM positions at this year's meeting (2004) and have the DNR and Federal EXCOM stay in their positions until the 2005 Annual Meeting.

To vote on the changes in the procedures manual go to the Minnesota Chapter website <http://www.fw.umn.edu/mnafs/> and click on the link to procedures manual. This will contain a copy of the procedure manual reflecting all of the changes made. To help determine what changes have been made, additions to the procedure manual are in red, while deletions are struck out. When you vote you need to vote yes or no on the entire manual. If we make any edits to the manual, it would have to be voted on again by the entire chapter.

To vote, indicate your choice (accept new by-laws/do not accept new by-laws) in an e-mail to John Hiebert: john.hiebert@dnr.state.mn.us

We have already approved the use of e-mail ballots and I will keep the sender's vote anonymous. I will determine if the person who sent in the ballot is an active member by consulting the list I have from the membership chair.

Committee Reports

Continuing Education By Phil Talmage

Stream Courses - As planned the Minnesota Chapter of the AFS has two continuing education opportunities covering the assessment, monitoring, and restoration of stream and river resources. The first stream course (Assessment and Monitoring) took place August 25th through the 29th at Whitewater State park. Twenty-nine attendees were pre-registered for the course. The second course is set for the week of September 22nd in Fergus Falls. This workshop will focus on the restoration of streams and rivers. It is recommended that

anyone attending this course should have taken the assessment and monitoring course, or have formal Rosgen training. There are spaces available for the Restoration Course. The cost for the course is \$500. If interested contact Karen Terry at karen.terry@dnr.state.mn.us

(Also, see Ray Valley's announcement of a one-day Geostatistics course in Upcoming Events, on page 8)

Fish and Wildlife Legislative Alliance By Bruce Vondracek

The Fish and Wildlife Legislative Alliance (FWLA) will meet in October to set the issues to pursue in the next legislative session. Don Pereira and I welcome input on the issues that members of the MNAFS would like the FWLA to pursue.

(Note: Although somewhat dated, Gary Botzek's Annual Report from the previous Legislative session can be found on page 11).

Centrarchid Technical Committee

Cindy Tomcko provided minutes from the July CTC meeting. They can be found on page 10.

Of Interest

University of MN e-mail changes

At the end of the year, the Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology Department will discontinue the use of their own server for e-mail. Addresses with the current name@fw.umn.edu structure will be converted. For those of you affected by the change, please send your new address to David Anderson (David.Anderson@dnr.state.mn.us).

As far as we know, our chapter website address will not be affected.

Ray Newman appointed head of Water Resources Science Program

Dr. Ray Newman, professor at the University of Minnesota, is now Director of Graduate Studies for the Water Resources Science program, an interdisciplinary graduate program comprising around 80 faculty and 80 students in 26 academic units within 11 colleges on the Twin Cities and Duluth Campuses. He can be contacted at his new e-mail address: RNewman@umn.edu

New Fisheries Information Tool

The American Fisheries Society (AFS) is pleased to announce its newest service – Fisheries InfoBase. Fisheries InfoBase adds an additional 10 years (1988-1997) of our journal articles to the existing AFS online database (1998-current). AFS Journals Online contains electronic versions of the complete contents of the four AFS journals.

Fisheries InfoBase is available immediately as a separate subscription, running through December 2003. 2003 rates are \$15.00 for individual subscribers, and \$190.00 for libraries and institutions. (2004 rates will be \$25.00 for individuals and \$380.00 for libraries and institutions).

You may search, access, and download all full-text articles from all four AFS journals from the years 1988-1997. You have unlimited access to the database during the term of your subscription.

Please go to http://www.fisheries.org/publications/afs_journal.shtml for additional details and to subscribe.

Otolith Aging Manual Online

The book *Otolith Removal and Preparation for Microstructural Examination: A Users Manual* (1991) by D.H. Secor, et al is now available online at: <http://cbl.umces.edu/~secor/otolith-manual.html>

New Books Available from AFS

Four new titles are available from our parent society, at reduced prices for AFS members. Check out their online bookstore (<http://www.fisheries.org/cgi-bin/hazel-cgi/hazel.cgi>) for more details.

Common and Scientific Names of Aquatic Invertebrates from the United States and Canada: Cnidaria and Ctenophora, Second Edition. Stephen D. Cairns et al.

Strategies for Restoring River Ecosystems: Sources of Variability and Uncertainty in Natural and Managed Systems. Robert C. Wissmar and Peter A. Bisson, editors

A Guide to Sampling Freshwater Mussel Populations. David L. Strayer and David R. Smith

Mysteries from the Yukon: The Adventures of a Junior Biologist. Lawrence S. Buklis

Upcoming Events

MN AFS Continuing Education Course Announcement Course Title: Geostatistics for Fisheries

Instructor: Dr. David Mulla, U of MN Dept. of Soil, Water, and Climate

January 15th 2004 10am – 4pm
U of MN – St. Paul Campus

Today, GPS and GIS serve as valuable tools in natural resource biologists and managers toolboxes. However, many (if not most) fisheries professionals lack the appropriate statistical training to analyze and understand spatial trends in fish populations and communities. This course will introduce basic geostatistical concepts and applications relevant to fisheries and demonstrate the use of available geostatistical software.

Dr. Mulla will lecture on basic geostatistical concepts (e.g., variogram estimation, kriging, cokriging, interpolation, anisotropy, stationarity, binning) and use sample fisheries data to demonstrate these points. In addition, he will lead participants through some analyses with geostatistical software (GS+).

This half-day course will serve as a stepping stone for participants who want to analyze spatially-linked data. Participants will gain enough knowledge of geostatistics to understand concepts described in geostatistical texts and software.

Interested participants should send a check for \$50 to Continuing Education Co-chair Ray Valley, 1200 Warner Road, St. Paul, MN, 55016. Registration deadline is January 8, and is limited to 30 participants. Also, it would be helpful if interested participants could contact me regarding their specific interests in geostatistics and how it may help them explore patterns in their specific data sets. This will help tailor the design of the course and the examples we use.

**The 37th Annual Meeting of the
Minnesota Chapter of the American Fisheries Society**
March 15 -17, 2004 in St. Cloud, Minnesota

Joint Meeting with the
Minnesota Chapter of the Society for Conservation Biology

4th World Fisheries Congress
Vancouver, BC CANADA
May 2 - 6, 2004

The Congress theme, "Reconciling Fisheries with Conservation: The Challenge of Managing Aquatic Ecosystems," will be addressed by a world class list of Keynote speakers, session topics, posters, limited presentations, round table discussions, forums, workshops and debates.

Online Abstract Submittal for the Fourth World Fisheries Congress will open April 2003. Please visit www.worldfisheries2004.org for details

2004 Midcontinent Warm Water Fish Culture Workshop
February 2-4, 2004 in Council Bluffs, Iowa

For over 25 years, the Midcontinent Warmwater Fish Culture Workshop has drawn together state, federal, and academic personnel to discuss the latest in governmental aquaculture activities and the resultant sport fishing it creates. The 2003 Workshop was held in Kansas City, Kansas and attracted some 90 participants from 18 different agencies.

For Details, contact Mike Mason at 515-281-6072 or email mike.mason@dnr.state.ia.us

Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the Centrarchid Technical Committee North Central Division of the American Fisheries Society

Ed Braun, Chair; Cindy Tomcko, Secretary.

Chair Ed Braun opened the 9th CTC mid-year meeting on July 29, 2003.

Five presentations were made: Evaluation of limited aquatic vegetation restoration in two small Iowa lakes upon removal of grass carp, Kay Hill, IA DNR; Update on the development of Minnesota's bluegill regulation toolbox, Cindy Tomcko, MN DNR; IDNR permits for aquatic plant control: summary of more restrictive plant removal regulations, Ed Braun, IN DNR; Bluegill growth indices update – a request for data to develop standard relative growth indices for bluegill, Keith Hurley, NE GPC; and Estimating crappie population size, mortality, exploitation, trap-net catchability and temporal variation of catch, Mike McInerney, MN DNR.

The business meeting was conducted on July 30, 2003 with 10 members in attendance.

Black bass database: Fisheries departments for all 50 states were contacted. Surveys were returned from 42 states, which will be compiled and published by Craig Paukert and Mike McInerney.

Lepomis symposium update: Manuscripts have been reviewed and have return dates in August. The symposium will be published in the North American Journal of Fisheries Management (NAJFM).

CTC webpage: The committee webpage is accessed through the division webpage. Keith Hurley agreed to post CTC reports and other pertinent material on the webpage. Thank you, Keith!

Nominations: Eric Weimer, committee representative of the North/South Dakota student chapter, will chair the committee when Ed Braun steps down at the Midwest meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

Posters: Because of the popularity of the largemouth bass and bluegill posters, committee members will gauge interest in purchasing reprinted posters by aquatic education departments of the states in the North Central division, rather than creating new crappie and smallmouth bass posters.

Midwest Fish and Wildlife conference: The 2004 conference will take place in Kansas City this year. The deadline for paper submission has been extended and committee reps. should encourage people to submit.

Updates on states' centrarchid management/research:

Nebraska – Bluegill grow well in the Sandhill lakes, but do best when shad are absent. Shad are apparently the main beneficiaries of automatic feeding programs, based on surveys using rotenone-laced feed.

Wisconsin – The state is starting to standardize lake surveys. In regard to bluegill regulations, Wisconsin has a 20 bag aggregate limit for bluegill and other sunfish, yellow perch, and crappies.

Dakotas – 45 bluegill > 200mm were tagged. In winter these bluegill were usually tracked in 5-8 ft. water, in heavy vegetation. In summer they were in open water, where zooplankton densities were high.

Iowa – There is an ongoing study of the relationship of bluegill and largemouth bass to lake characteristics and water quality. In regard to renovations, most had a poor cost/benefit ratio and were not used in Iowa's lakes.

Missouri – A study of bluegill management documented that only 1/3 of Missouri's lakes produced 8" bluegills. These lakes were characterized by a lack of shad and carp, abundant largemouth bass (>120 LMB/electrofishing hr.), a watershed ratio of < 20:1, and abundant aquatic vegetation, i.e., vegetation had not been decimated by grass or common carp. Most of the high quality lakes had a surprisingly high biomass of bluegill, going against the commonly accepted idea that only low density bluegill populations were of high quality. Lakes with 8" bluegills present were the only lakes where regulations (5 bag, 9" limit; 5 bag, 8" limit, C&R) could be used. It would be difficult to tell if regulations were effective, as regulations were only applied to high quality bluegill populations. Bluegill regulations were evaluated by sampling large bluegill, best done at night by electroshocking during the first peak of spawning; sampling later spawnings did not produce large bluegill. C&R lakes had high fishing pressures, > 200 hrs/acre and tended to attract fly fisherman and older anglers. Missouri has tried to restore aquatic vegetation by killing grass carp and replacing curly-leaf pondweed and southern naiad with water lily and spatterdock.

Indiana – has used an 18", 2 largemouth bass bag to manage bluegill populations. In 1 lake where fishing pressure increased from 20 to 200 hrs/acre when a public access was added, only C&R fishing was allowed. Fellow anglers forced compliance in this lake, a quality LMB population had developed, and bluegill size structure was improving.

Reports

2003 Legislative Report
By: Gary Botzek
Executive Director
Fish & Wildlife Legislative Alliance

The 2003 legislative session came and went. It took a 10-day special legislative session to finish the work begun in January. With a \$4.2 billion shortfall in the projected budget and a new governor that had pledged not to raise taxes, it took overtime to get all the "ducks in a row" and pass budget and tax bills that balance—at least on paper. However, no one knows for sure the impact on local property tax charged for schools, cities, counties, or the increases in license fees and other fees that just about everyone will be paying for goods and service in the state. The Fish and Wildlife Legislative Alliance was involved directly or indirectly in a number of natural resources, conservation, and environmental issues.

Conservation Budget

One thing that proved to be true at the State Capitol this session was that dedicated funds are better protected, and therefore, more difficult for the legislature to cut, as compared to general funds. The 377-page Omnibus Agriculture, Environment, and Jobs Finance Bill (S.F. 905/Chapter 128) provides program and staffing funding for the next two years for the Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Board of Water and Soil Resources, Office of Environmental Awareness, Legislative Commission on Minnesota's Resources, the Department of Trade and Economic Development, and others. It was the only budget bill that passed in regular session! The new law provides \$449 million in general funds and \$165 million from the Game and Fish Fund for the next two years for the DNR. The Fisheries Division budget is around \$29 million per year, while the wildlife division will be working with about \$24 million each year. Ecological Services will have a budget of around \$8 million per year, while Enforcement will work with about \$27 million per year. The DNR's general fund was cut by 17.93% from the previous two years. This compares to a 20.71% cut for the MPCA, a 9.73% cut at the OEA, and a 10.28% cut to BOWSR. Employee layoffs are expected beginning on July 1 in most state agencies.

LCMR Funding

The Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources is one example of "dedicated" funds that was hit hard.

The new law appropriates \$32 million from the Environmental and Natural Resources Trust fund (lottery money). Included in the spending is \$4.8 million for phase 2 of a multi-sponsored Wildlife Corridors Project.

In previous years the LCMR had an additional \$12-\$15 million from the Future Resources Fund to spend on natural resources projects. These dollars came from a two cent per pack tax on cigarettes. However, this year this cigarette tax money was permanently transferred to the General Fund. This is a big hit to the conservation and environmental community! Work will have to be undertaken to restore these dollars in the future, or more likely, to “modify” the lottery formula to better reflect what people voted for and believe is happening with the lottery dollars.

License Fee Increases

A number of hunting, angling, parks, and other natural resource user fees will be increased. The small game surcharge will be raised from its current \$4 to \$6.50. The entire surcharge is used for wildlife management area acquisition or management. The pheasant and waterfowl stamps will be raised from \$5 to \$7.50. The trout and salmon stamp will be raised from \$8.50 to \$10.

A new youth license will be set up to allow kids between 12 and 16 years of age to hunt deer with a gun or by archery for \$13 including a tag. In addition, a new small game youth license will be established for kids for \$12.50 (\$6 for the license and \$6.50 for the small game surcharge). In order to make these changes revenue neutral, small game licenses will be going up 50 cents and deer licenses will be going up \$1. The adult small game license will cost \$19 (\$12.50 for the license and \$6.50 for the surcharge).

There are a number of license fee increases for hunting, angling, commercial dealers, nonresident licenses, and fishing guides. Most of the hunting fee increases will go into effect yet this fall, with the fishing license and fee increases scheduled for next year.

Chronic Wasting Disease Funding

New legislation bans the importation of deer or elk into Minnesota unless the animals are quartered and the spine and head are left behind. The legislation encourages cutting and wrapping meat brought in from other states.

The job of monitoring deer and elk farms will become the responsibility of the Board of Animal Health instead of DNR. To pay for the program, \$400,000 is taken from the lottery-in-lieu funds yearly. The board will be charging cervidae elk farmers \$60,000 annually, at a rate of \$10 per head with a maximum of \$100 per farm.

The current 50 cents that a deer hunter pays for the emergency deer feeding account can now be used for DNR work on wild cervidae health management. The fund at DNR will be allowed to grow to \$2.5 million (if not used) before it is canceled back to the Game and Fish Fund.

The new law places not new restrictions on feeding of deer, but does provide the DNR with new powers to take actions necessary to prevent and control a wildlife disease.

Wetlands Protection

A number of anti-wetlands bills were introduced early in the session, mainly for local road projects and to undo court decisions regarding the current state law. FWLA and many other conservation and environmental groups worked hard to modify or derail these bills. The compromise requires the metro seven counties to continue to adhere to the 2 to 1 replacement of wetlands due to road construction projects. However, in certain cases, a public transportation authority in metro counties are allowed more flexibility by replacing at least one acre in the same county, and another acre in one of the major watersheds that is wholly or partially within the seven-county metro area. In addition, \$2.7 million in new bonding is being made available to local governments in their quest to build roads and still protect wetlands.

In a related matter, the legislature chose not to compensate the Bode family of Nicollet County for costs associated with their drainage of a protected wetland over 10 years ago. The legislature first gave them \$26,000, along with language indicating that the state/DNR was wrong and that the wetland should remain drained. However, the Governor, with a little help from the conservation and environmental community, vetoed the first bill. On the last day of the special session, a second “claims” bill was passed—this time without the Bode money or bad language. Special thanks to representatives of the Nicollet Conservation Club and others who are passionate about wetland protection, for “bird-dogging” this one! See what a little grassroots lobbying can do!

ATV'S

Under new legislation, the DNR will review each state forest individually and designate and post all trails and roads within the forest. ATV riders will only be allowed on trails and road designated and posted as open. A new property damage account will be set up with users contributing to the account. This money would be used to repair damage to the trails on state land. Registration fees for ATV's will be raised from \$18 for the three-year license to \$23 through 2004 and \$30 starting in 2005. Additional user fees are to be used for increased DNR enforcement of the trails. The legislation also provides an additional \$1 million for the Virginia-Gilbert Park and calls for the construction of a 70-mile or more trail loop on state or county land to be built somewhere closer to the Twin Cities. There were no changes in current law and application for usage of ATV's by deer hunters or trappers.

Conservation & Environment Bonding

The Legislature did pass a \$220 million bonding bill in special session. Most of the bonding dollars were re-committed to projects vetoed by Governor Ventura last year. DNR will receive \$10.775 million, with most of it going to parks, trails, and flood projects. The BOWSR will receive \$6.4 million, including \$2.7 million for wetland road mitigation and \$1 million for RIM. FWLA lobbied to have WMA acquisition money included, but was unsuccessful.

Legislation That Did Not Pass:

Because this was the first year of the biennium, the bills that did not pass was still alive for next session. Some make have to be re-introduced, but many will get a second chance to become law.

Omnibus Game & Fish Policy Bill

The 2003 DNR omnibus game and fish policy bill did not pass. The bill contained language for a dove season, taking of bear with dogs, a change in the fish length limit for walleyes and northern pike, stronger educational efforts by DNR and OEA promoting non-lead sinkers and jigs, and a 9 AM opener for the first day of duck season. This bill got to the floors of the House and Senate easily, but was never voted on due to concern that amendments would be offered regarding the "conceal and carry" legislation that had already passed the legislature and had been signed into law. Another DNR Omnibus Housekeeping bill had earlier in the session become the "vehicle" through amendment that provided the language for "conceal and carry." Due to the fact that both bills contained "title" language relating to firearms, they were and would be germane for "conceal and carry" modifications and repeal amendments. Therefore, neither body was willing to pass their bill first out of fear to possibly start the fireworks all over again! This bill can be brought back next year for passage.

Dove Season

There has not been a dove season in Minnesota since the end of WWII. No conservation issue was tougher this year. Proponents, including FWLA, MOHA, the Dove Society, and DNR supported the legislation based on the history of youth recruitment of new hunters through its application, the use of stamp funds for habitat that would be helpful to other game and non-game birds and animals, and the fact of the that mortality rate of doves is 62% annually. However, the opposition countered with the arguments that Minnesotans don't need another bird to shot, the dove is a symbol of Peace, they are so pretty, and they make a nice cooing sound!

Shooting Range Protection

This bill would have made it more difficult for local governments to close a shooting range. Shooting ranges, especially in the metro area, have been under attack in terms of hours of operation, noise, and other local zoning issues. Local government continues to be concerned about this legislation and was able to kill it again.

Shooting Preserves/Cervidae farms expansion

This bill would have provided for a fixed number of farm cervidae hunting on licensed shooting preserves. The CWD concerns were enough to keep this bill from going anywhere.

3/16 Dedication of Sales Tax Revenue to Natural Resources

Three different bills were introduced: for 1/8th, 3/16th, and 1/4th cent of sales tax. If we keep going we may be able to get to a whole penny! With the budget deficit and the no new tax pledge still warm, no hearings were held on any of these three bills.

Future Plans:

Due to the budget and the large deficit, the 2003 legislative session was not one in which to be expecting new or expanded programs. While the DNR is playing a part in the deficit recovery plan, due to the game and fish fund and the continued efforts of hunters, trappers, and anglers their licenses and stamps (as well as, sales tax, lodging, gas, and excise taxes) the programs and projects that are so dear to the outdoor community will survive! We will be back next session, asking for a constitutional amendment for dedicated funding for our natural resources. We will be back asking for changes to the LCMR funding process. We will be back asking for a dove season and stamp for habitat, as well. We will be back asking to be a fair part of the bonding bill, especially for Wildlife Management Areas acquisition.

FWLA encourages users of the great outdoors to talk to your Representative and Senator over the summer and fall. Thank them for the job they did in this tough, tough session. Encourage them to remember the importance of investment in the environment and natural resources in terms of quality of life for our residents and for the tourism value, as well. With a little grassroots work—i.e., the Nicollet Conservation Club model—we can be much more successful at the State Capitol in 2004!

Have a great summer!

Chapter Officers

President	John Hiebert	mottled_sculpin@hotmail.com	763-675-3301; fax 763-675-3147
President-elect	Loren Miller	lmm@umn.edu	612-624-3019
Past President	Brian Borkholder	brianborkholder@fdlrez.com	218-878-8004; fax 218-879-4854
Secretary-Treasurer	Donna Dustin	donna.dustin@dnr.state.mn.us	218-847-1579; fax 218-847-1588

Excom Members

Minnesota DNR	David Anderson	david.Anderson@dnr.state.mn.us	763-675-3301
Federal	David Fulton	dcf@fw.umn.edu	612-625-5256
Academic	Julie Zimmerman	henry041@umn.edu	612-624-7495
Open	Andy Edwards	aedwards@1854authority.org	218-722-8907

Committee Chairs*Standing Committees*

Awards	Melissa Drake	melissa.drake@dnr.state.mn.us	651-772-7966
Issues	Brian Borkholder	brianborkholder@fdlrez.com	218-878-8004
Long Range Planning	Open		
Membership	Calub Shavlik		
Nominations	Greg Busacker	greg.busacker@dot.state.mn.us	651-284-3759
Public Education	Eric Altena	eric.altena@dnr.state.mn.us	763-675-3301
Resolutions	Jeff Weiss	Jeffrey.weiss@dnr.state.mn.us	507-467-2442
Students	Anne Cooper		

Special or Ad Hoc Committees

Fishing Round Table	Mark Hove	mark.hove@fw.umn.edu	612-624-3019
Fund Raising	Tom Burri	tom.burri@dnr.state.mn.us	218-286-5220
	Brian Borkholder	brianborkholder@fdlrez.com	218-878-8004
FWLA Delegates	Bruce Vondracek	bvondrac@umn.edu	612-624-3421
	Don Pereira	don.pereira@dnr.state.mn.us	651-772-7962
Historian	Jeff Sluiter	jsluiter@yahoo.com	952-432-6992
Continuing Education	Mike Duval	michael.duval@dnr.state.mn.us	218-828-2271
	Ray Valley	ray.valley@dnr.state.mn.us	651-793-6539
	Phil Talmage	philip.talmage@dnr.state.mn.us	651-284-3587
MN TWS Representative	Mike North	michael.north@dnr.state.mn.us	218-828-2433
Procedure Manual	Mike McInerny	mike.mcinerny@dnr.state.mn.us	320-234-2562
MN Science Fair	Shannon Fisher	shannon.fisher@dnr.state.mn.us	507-831-2919
Webmaster/Ryba Editor	David Anderson	david.anderson@dnr.state.mn.us	763-675-3301

NCD Technical Committee Representatives

Centrarchid	Cindy Tomcko	cindy.tomcko@dnr.state.mn.us	218-327-4456
Esocid	Rod Peirce	rod.pierce@dnr.state.mn.us	218-327-4452
Rivers and Streams	Karl Koller	karl.koller@dnr.state.mn.us	218-327-4124
Salmonid	Pat Rivers	pat.rivers@dnr.state.mn.us	218-547-1683
Walleye	Jeff Reed	jeff.reed@dnr.state.mn.us	320-634-4573
Ictalurid	Dennis Topp	ourfish@means.net	218-634-2522