

UMR CAC Meeting (Zoom) – Winter 2020 (Dec. 16th; 9AM-3PM)

FWP – Eileen Ryce, Eric Roberts, Travis Horton, Ron Spoon, Jason Rhoten, Adam Strainer, Troy Humphrey

CAC Members – Jim Gillespie, Mike Agee, Bart Bratlien, Pete Cardinal, Dale Gilbert

FWP F&W Commission – Richard Stuker

Meeting Introduction

Rhoten – Introductions, meeting agenda, CAC role, meeting goals and action items

Ryce – Welcomed and thanked CAC members for assisting FWP past and present. Special thanks to Commissioner Stuker for his devotion to this management plan and fisheries in general during his appointment

Roberts – Described FWP's proposed UMR CAC Member appointment process currently scheduled for the Feb. 2021 FWP F&W Commission meeting. Suggested current members could simply agree to another 1-year term and FWP could propose the same action to the FWP F&W Commission in Feb. 2021.

Rhoten – Asked current UMR CAC members if they were interested in continuing for a second term. Each member individually confirmed interest in a 2nd term. FWP agreed to propose each current member for a 2nd term.

UMR CAC Member Updates/Reports

Agee – Witnessed more weeds than ever on Holter Reservoir and the Missouri River upstream to Hauser Dam. Recent reduced rainbow stocking rates did not seem to affect trout fishing in the same area.

Bratlien – Huge year selling tackle at Capital Sports due to the pandemic. Heard some angler complaints from around the area: 1. Perch fishing, in general, was poor throughout the reservoirs. 2. Fishing at Holter seemed to be poor in general in 2020. 3. Canyon Ferry – did hear some good fishing reports, especially in the fall.

Cardinal – He and other folks observed “weeds” (e.g., macrophytes) at an “all-time record high” in 2020.

Gilbert – 1. Holter – Fishing was not good, witnessed and heard about incredible angling pressure in 2020, found some perch this past year. 2. Canyon Ferry – Reports to him were not positive, large # of small fish. 3. Missouri River (Toston to Canyon Ferry) – heard concerns about larger fish getting hit hard.

Gillespie – Pressure in 2020 was up noticeably, both hunters and anglers. Water quality issues – large volumes of magnesium chloride are just one concern.

Waterbody Updates

Spoon – Missouri River to Canyon Ferry. Suggests a creel in the short-term.

CAC questions/concerns – Weeds in the river? Spoon provided information about floating algae as nuisance.

Strainer – Missouri River, Hauser Dam Tailrace. Provided creel and pressure data.

CAC questions/concerns – Discussed understanding angling pressure, commercial use, Beaver Creek restoration efforts, hydrograph influences on fish assemblage, use carrying capacity. Stuker suggested starting now on understanding the effects of all use on the resource.

Humphrey – Canyon Ferry Reservoir. Provided population trends for rainbows, perch, and walleye.

CAC questions/concerns – Wanted more detailed information about walleye and the creel. Information came later in the discussion.

Strainer – Hauser and Holter Reservoirs; Pressure and Report Card; Potential Management Considerations. Suggested potential management changes for CFR and Hauser walleye and Hauser kokanee.

CAC questions/concerns – General questions about walleye. Very interested in seeing the kokanee population recruit in Hauser. Like to see the improvements in Holter related to perch and walleye.

Rhoten – Presented fisheries management tools. Generally discussed how regulations are applied. Provided current FWP district-wide and statewide walleye regulations. UMR has the bulk of walleye, and perch, restrictions compared to the rest of the state.

Lunch Break (12:00-12:30)

Strainer – Detailed analysis of available walleye data for CFR and Hauser and kokanee data for Hauser. Provided FWP's preferred alternatives for potential regulation and stocking plan changes:

1. Change current walleye regulations for Canyon Ferry and Hauser Reservoir to:
 - a. 10 fish daily, 20 in possession; 1 over 15 inches
2. Add kokanee salmon plants back to the 6-year stocking plan.

CAC questions/concerns:

Cardinal – lots of small walleye, supports proposed 1 over 15-inch regulation change (short-term) for both Canyon Ferry and Hauser, need to consider northern pike education and outreach (discussed mandatory kill regulation). Supports adding kokanee plants in Hauser.

Gilbert – impressed and supports proposed 1 over 15-inch regulation change (short-term) for both Canyon Ferry and Hauser, suggested FWP might consider something like 2 over 15-inches if public process indicates proposed change is too restricted. Concerned with bridge-as-the-boundary issue in the Missouri River upstream of Canyon Ferry if a separate reg is in place for the river. Further evaluation needed. Concerned about forage issue in general. Supports adding kokanee plants in Hauser.

Gillespie – supports proposed 1 over 15-inch regulation change for walleye in both Canyon Ferry and Hauser. "I love it", he said. Also concerned about 1. General bird predation on area waters. 2. Boating/recreation (e.g., wake boats causing erosion) conflicts in the Causeway Arm of Hauser; posed question about how to approach the issue to Stuker (Stuker outlined FWP Commission petition process). Supports adding kokanee plants in Hauser.

Agee – supports proposed 1 over 15-inch regulation change for walleye in both Canyon Ferry and Hauser. Suggested regulations should remain the same for the Missouri River upstream of Canyon Ferry and Canyon Ferry proper. Supports adding kokanee plants to Hauser.

Bratlien – supports proposed 1 over 15-inch change for walleye in both Canyon Ferry and Hauser. Concerned it could reduce effort initially but could help in the long run. Not convinced any walleye regulation will positively affect the Hauser walleye population, but the proposed regulations make sense in the short-term. Fully supports adding kokanee plants to Hauser.

All – Great appreciation shared by all parties related to the UMR CAC process. CAC members and Stuker underscored the importance of FWP remaining responsive to changes in each fishery over time. Will be well received by the public. CAC members agreed to report FWP's proposed changes to their constituents and report back to FWP by Jan 5th. FWP agreed to draft proposed changes in January for the February 2021 FWP F&W Commission meeting.

Missouri River upstream of Canyon Ferry – FWP agreed to further evaluate the best approach to possible proposed regulation changes in that reach. FWP agreed that different regulations may be necessary, but further evaluation (e.g., boundary, actual limit, etc.) is necessary.