

SUMMARY OF REPORTED HARVEST AND LICENSE SALES FOR
INDIANA'S OHIO RIVER COMMERCIAL FISHERIES, 2007

Fish Management Report

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2009

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Reported 2007 Ohio River harvest was 111,160 lbs. Paddlefish was the most abundant fish harvested by weight and comprised approximately 85% of the annual harvest. Flathead catfish comprised the second largest portion of total harvest (5%) followed by blue catfish (4%), buffalo (2%), and other fish species (2%).
- The reported number of paddlefish harvested during 2007 was 3,333. Paddlefish egg harvest was 10,287 lbs, slightly lower than the 2006 record of 10,420 lbs. No shovelnose sturgeon harvest was reported.
- The 2007 monetary value of the Ohio River commercial fishery was estimated at \$2,515,136. Paddlefish eggs comprised 90% of the fishery's monetary value.
- Indiana's Ohio River commercial fishing regulations were changed through emergency rule on September 13, 2007. All changes pertained to paddlefish and were due to documentation of significant illegal take.

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INTRODUCTION

Persons using nets to catch fish from Indiana's rivers are regulated and licensed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW). A November 1985 United States Supreme Court settlement between the states of Indiana and Kentucky granted Indiana control over a portion of the Ohio River. An Indiana law mandates that Indiana's Ohio River regulations be tailored after Kentucky's. Indiana's DFW started selling Ohio River commercial fishing licenses in January 1988 from the Sugar Ridge Fish and Wildlife Area office. Ohio River commercial fishermen were required to report their harvest effective January 1, 1999.

Commercial fishing is allowed in the 358-mile segment of the Ohio River which forms the boundary between Indiana and Kentucky (Figure 1). Ohio River fishers may use an unlimited amount of gear. The types of gear which may be used are hoop nets, wing nets, straight lead nets, heart lead nets, gill nets, trammel nets, trotlines, seines, and slat basket traps. An Ohio River commercial fishing license costs \$125 and includes ten gear tags. Additional blocks of 10 gear tags may be purchased for \$15 per block of ten.

Indiana's Ohio River commercial fishing regulations were changed through emergency rule on September 13, 2007. All of the changes pertained to paddlefish and were due to documentation by law enforcement officers and biologists of significant illegal take of paddlefish. These rule changes were: 1) The elimination of paddlefish sport snagging, 2) The establishment of a November 15 to April 15 paddlefish harvest season, 3) The establishment of a 34-in eye-fork length paddlefish minimum size limit, 4) The establishment of a 10 gauge needle as the only legal method to check paddlefish for eggs, and 5) That gill and trammel nets could not be used outside the paddlefish harvest season.

The objective of this report is to identify major patterns in the Ohio River fishery by examining harvest information and license sales data. This report covers the harvest reported for 2007. Earlier reports (Stefanavage 2001, 2007, 2008; Stefanavage and Kowalik 2007) summarize the 1999 to 2006 harvest estimates and license sales.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Only eight Ohio River commercial fishing licenses were sold the first year that the new license was available (1988). In 1989, 118 Ohio River licenses were sold. Sales declined to 63

in 1990 due to the issuance of a fish consumption advisory on Ohio River catfish and carp. License sales have since steadily declined to where they have now ranged from 29 to 42 per year over the last six years (Table 1). Net tag sales declined from a high of 1,700 in 1989 to a low of 520 in 1999. Annual net tag sales ranged from 590 to 660 from 2000 to 2005. During 2007, 41 licenses and 860 net tags were sold.

Ohio River commercial fishers reported a total harvest of 111,160 lbs of fish for 2007 (Appendix). Total harvest increased by 15,000 lbs from 2006 (Table 2). This was due to the 20,000 lb increase in paddlefish harvest.

As in previous years, paddlefish was the most abundant fish harvested by weight comprising 85% of the total. Pounds of paddlefish harvested were at a record high level for 2007. Flathead catfish comprised the second largest portion of the total harvest (5%) followed by blue catfish (4%), buffalo (2%), and other fish species (2%). Harvest of all three catfish species has been quite variable in the eight years that harvest reporting has been required (Figure 2). Channel catfish and blue catfish harvest declined from their record low levels of 2006. Flathead catfish declined significantly from 2006 close to the record low level reported for 2005. Buffalo harvest was also at a new record low level during 2007. The reported harvest of other fish species reached a record high due to the inclusion of 943 lbs of bighead carp.

The number of paddlefish reported harvested during 2007 was 3,333, a slight decline from the 3,528 reported for 2006. It was unusual that the poundage of paddlefish flesh harvested increased from 2006 to 2007 while the number of fish harvested decreased which also occurred from 2005 to 2006. This is due to a number of factors; some fishers provided an average weight of 20 lbs per individual paddlefish, some fishers reported pounds of fillets versus total weight, or the actual average weight per paddlefish may have increased significantly from 2005 to 2006 and from 2006 to 2007, which is unlikely.

Paddlefish egg harvest was 10,287 lbs during 2007, slightly below the record high of 10,420 lbs reported for 2006. The weight of paddlefish eggs reported harvested is thought to be much more accurate than the reported weight of the whole fish as the fishers generally report egg harvest to the "0.01" lb. No shovelnose sturgeon harvest was reported for 2007.

Retail values used to determine monetary estimates were \$3.00/lb for catfish, \$2.18/lb for other fish, and \$220/lb for paddlefish eggs. The monetary value of the Ohio River commercial fishery was estimated at \$2,515,136 for 2007. Paddlefish eggs comprised 90% of the fishery's

economic value.

LITERATURE CITED

Stefanavage, T.C. 2001. Summary of harvest estimates and license sales for Indiana's inland and Ohio River commercial fisheries, 1999. Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Indianapolis.

Stefanavage, T.C. 2007. Summary of harvest estimates and license sales for Indiana's inland and Ohio River commercial fisheries, 2003-2005. Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Indianapolis.

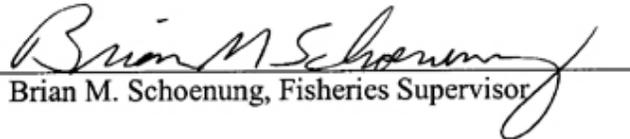
Stefanavage, T.C. 2008. Summary of reported harvest and license sales for Indiana's Ohio River commercial fisheries, 2006. Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Indianapolis.

Stefanavage, T.C. and C.R. Kowalik 2007. Summary of harvest estimates and license sales for Indiana's inland and Ohio River commercial fisheries, 2000-2002. Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Indianapolis.

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Date: March 2, 2009

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Date: June 22, 2009

Table 1. Number of Ohio River commercial fishing licenses and net tags sold per year, 1988 to 2007.

Year	Licenses Sold	Net Tags Sold
1988	8	80
1989	118	1,700
1990	63	not available
1991	62	890
1992	66	910
1993	59	830
1994	56	790
1995	47	660
1996	47	660
1997	49	680
1998	46	720
1999	40	520
2000	34	600
2001	42	660
2002	30	590
2003	29	630
2004	32	630
2005	31	620
2006	37	760
2007	41	860

Table 2. Reported pounds of fish, number of paddlefish and shovelnose sturgeon, and pounds of paddlefish and shovelnose sturgeon eggs harvested from Indiana's Ohio River commercial fishery, 1999-2007.

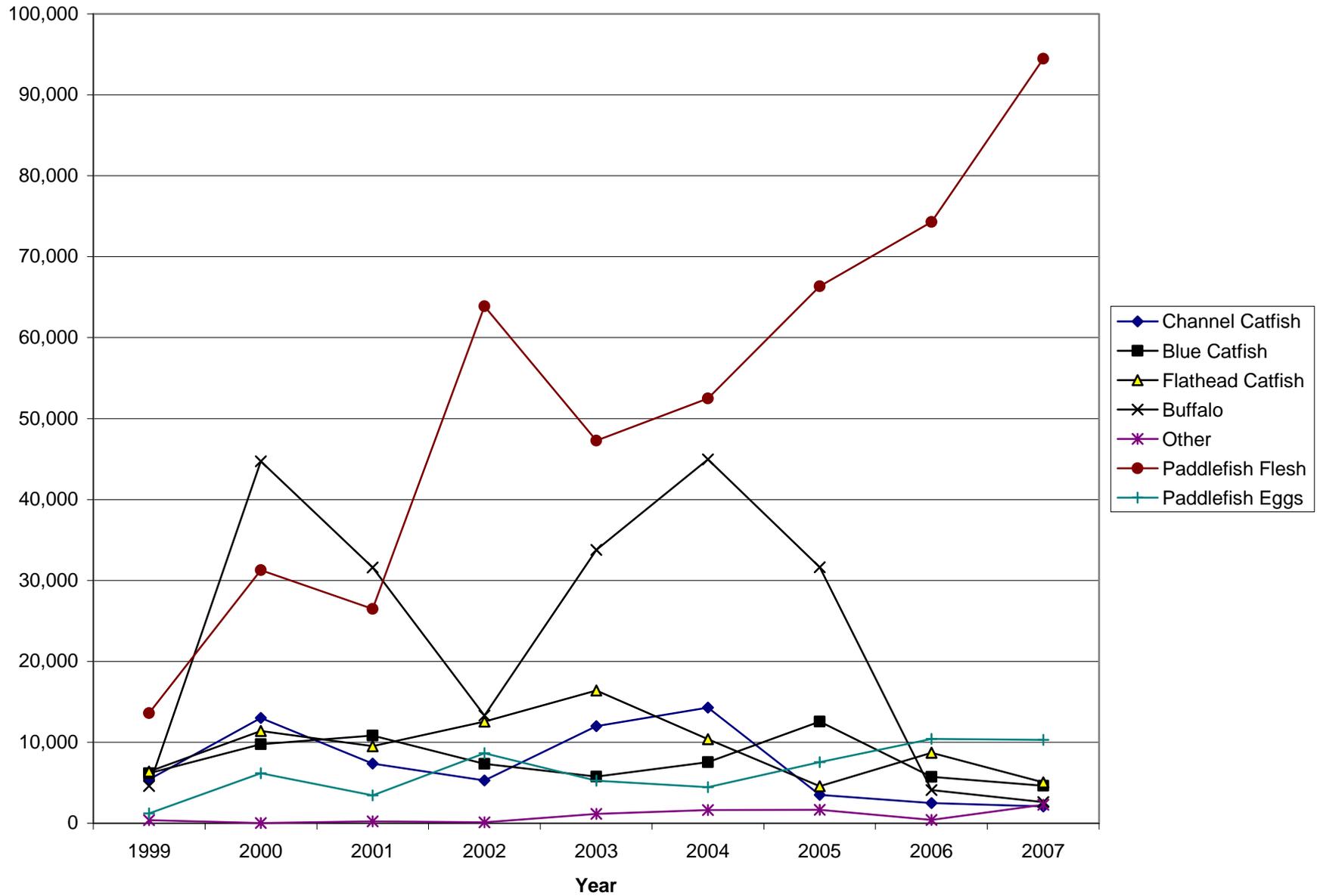
Year	Channel Catfish	Blue Catfish	Flathead Catfish	Flesh Harvest (pounds)			Egg Harvest (pounds)		Number Harvested		
				Buffalo	Other	Paddlefish	Total	Paddlefish	Shovelnose Sturgeon	Paddlefish	Shovelnose Sturgeon
1999	5,426	6,187	6,407	4,598	389	13,587	36,594	1,225		1,388	
2000	12,992	9,763	11,402	44,729	43	31,280	110,209	6,203		2,439	
2001	7,385	10,834	9,529	31,597	246	26,484	86,075	3,442		2,007	
2002	5,308	7,345	12,553	13,289	106	63,881	102,482	8,659		4,116	
2003	11,996	5,774	16,385	33,781	1,169	47,286	116,391	5,275		2,205	
2004	14,295	7,572	10,385	44,966	1,650	52,471	131,339	4,471		2,481	
2005	3,522	12,561	4,579	31,616	1,652	66,350	120,280	7,553		3,631	
2006	2,506	5,732	8,717	4,120	406	74,290	95,771	10,420	1	3,528	3
2007	2,096	4,643	5,050	2,611	2,305	94,455	111,160	10,287		3,333	
Totals	65,526	70,411	85,007	211,307	7,966	470,084		57,535		25,128	

Other* - includes common carp, Asian carp, carpsuckers, suckers, drum, and shovelnose sturgeon.



Figure 1. River reaches where commercial fishing is legal (indicated by heavy lines).

Figure 2. Ohio River commercial fish flesh and egg harvest, 1999 to 2007.



Appendix. Reported pounds of fish, number of paddlefish and shovelnose sturgeon, and pounds of paddlefish and shovelnose sturgeon eggs harvested from Indiana's Ohio River commercial fishery, 2007.

REPORTED HARVEST (POUNDS) PER MONTH

Species	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Species Total
Blue Catfish			497	191	133	1,255	545	730	165	67	1,060		4,643
Buffalo			341	1,241	24			240	400		340	25	2,611
Carp*				119	29	83						943	1,174
Channel catfish			202	435	205	668	34	34	35	483			2,096
Drum			170	909	52								1,131
Flathead catfish		205	415	604	1,233	1,918	22	408		25	90	130	5,050
Other**													0
Paddlefish	5,486	10,477	18,312	42,649	5,192					182	7,382	4,775	94,455
Shovelnose sturgeon													0
Sucker & Redhorse***													0
TOTALS	5,486	10,682	19,937	46,148	6,868	3,924	601	1,412	600	757	8,872	5,873	111,160

REPORTED HARVEST (NUMBER) PER MONTH

Species	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Species Total
Paddlefish	243	419	643	1,412	183					8	256	169	3,333
Shovelnose sturgeon													

REPORTED HARVEST (POUNDS OF EGGS) PER MONTH

Species	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Species Total
Paddlefish	637.07	961.55	2,162.56	4,784.98	517.29					23.27	592.41	607.92	10,287
Shovelnose sturgeon													

* - Includes bighead, silver, grass, and common carp.

** - Includes gar, bowfin, and eel.

*** - Includes white, spotted, and all redhorses.