

Joint RO - USA Action at the Expert Committee Meeting on the protection of wild sturgeon species in the Lower Danube

The National Institute of Research and Development for Environmental Protection Bucharest (INCDPM Bucharest), organized under the aegis of the Ministry of Research and Innovation, in 11-16 July 2018, the Expert Committee Meeting for validating the database collected by INCDPM Bucharest regarding the monitoring of sturgeon species on the Danube River, patented monitoring technologies and the wild sturgeons tagging procedure.

At the Expert Committee Meeting, **PhD. Dewayne Allen Fox** from Delaware State University, was a special guest invited as an expert on ultrasonic telemetry monitoring of sturgeons to validate the above actions.

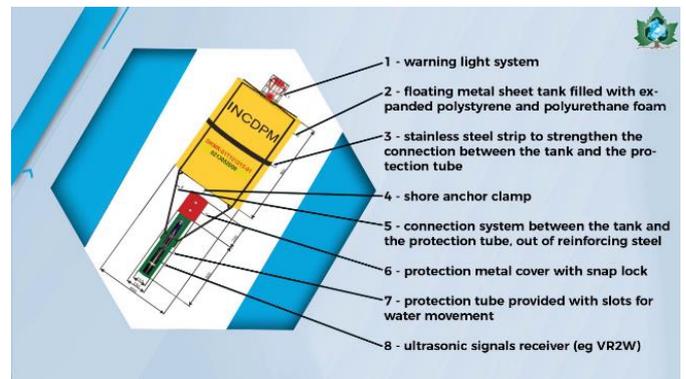
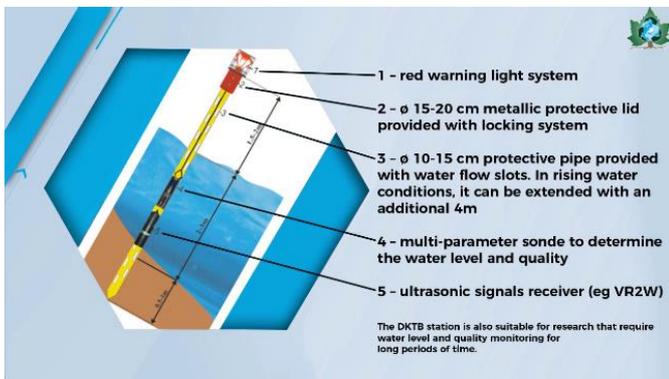


During the meeting, the experts were presented as follows:

1. Ultrasonic tagging procedure of wild sturgeons from the Danube River, used by INCDPM Bucharest;
2. Monitoring techniques through DKTB and DKMR-01T stations, patented by INCDPM Bucharest and how they work;
3. Achievements of INCDPM Bucharest both in the scientific field (RDI projects, scientific articles, participation in scientific events, etc.), as well as the plan for the practical application of the research results in regional and international development projects with potential impact on the environment;
4. Results obtained from the monitoring activities of ultrasonically tagged sturgeons on the Danube River and the existence of a database

The opening of the event took place on 11 July 2018 at the National Institute of Research and Development for Environmental Protection Bucharest (INCDPM Bucharest), based on presenting the monitoring activity of the ultrasonically tagged sturgeons from the Danube River carried out by the team of experts from INCDPM Bucharest, including the unique database owned.

In the first part of the day was the presentation of the ultrasonic tagging procedure of sturgeons, monitoring techniques and implicitly of the patented stations by INCDPM Bucharest (DKTB and DKMR-01T respectively). Several discussions were held during the presentations on the current status of wild sturgeons on the Danube River, as well as on the problems encountered by the INCDPM Bucharest team of experts such as poaching and short fishing periods for scientific purposes.



These two presentations raised a great deal of interest among the participants and attracted the attention of Dewayne Allen Fox PhD., ultrasonic telemetry expert, who described the methodology for monitoring the ultrasonic tagged sturgeons used by the Institute's experts to be the most suitable for the Danube River. Also, the US expert praised the tagging procedure as being minimally invasive, suitable for the target species, with a low risk stress factor for the specimens subject to marking and is that this procedure is used worldwide (as well as in the US).

At the same time, the results obtained from the monitoring activities of ultrasonically marked sturgeons on the Danube River were presented, unique worldwide results in monitoring their migration. During the meeting it was presented the database collected by INCDPM Bucharest during the 2011 – 2018 period, which was thoroughly analysed by the experts who participated in this meeting, in order to certify the conformity of the results presented by INCDPM Bucharest.



In the following days, the team of experts carried out field visits at the INCDPM - Fetești Work Point, a sturgeon farm, Borcea locality and the Danube Delta, in order to collect data from the monitoring stations located on the Chilia Branch in the vicinity of the Băstroe Channel.

The visit to the INCDPM - Fetești Work Point coincided with the tagging of six sturgeon specimens like stellate sturgeon (*Acipenser stellatus*) and starlet sturgeon (*Acipenser ruthenus*), giving the experts the opportunity to observe the practical development of the tagging procedure and data downloading from the monitoring stations on the Borcea Branch, presented theoretically in the first part of the meeting.





The Committee has also been presented with the technique of catching wild sturgeons, actively participating in scientific fishing activities on the Borcea Branch, and the releasing of ultrasonically tagged sturgeons done under the authority's supervision.



Another activity of the Expert Committee Meeting was a visit to the sturgeon farm, where it was presented the process of growing sturgeon in a super intensive system.

During the last part of the meeting, the experts went to the Danube Delta to observe the wetland of international importance under the patrimony of UNESCO, being a RAMSAR site of importance due to the bird species passing through this area as well as being part of the monitoring area of researched ultrasonic sturgeon by the INCDPM Bucharest team. Thus, experts had travelled to the Chilia Branch to download data from the stations that are monitoring the ultrasonically tagged sturgeon migration, located near the Băstroe Channel, a channel that poses a risk to the migration routes of the sturgeon when it will be turned into a navigable sea channel.



Specialists of the Expert Committee Meeting appreciated the efforts of the INCDPM Bucharest research team to monitor ultrasonically tagged sturgeon specimens from the lower Danube course, achieving unique modular results with the main purpose of proposing and developing improvement measures for the conservation of wild sturgeon populations in the Danube River. Experts appreciated that the methods used are in line with internationally used standards, and the collected database is real, complex and in full compliance with the results presented by INCDPM Bucharest so far.

During the information exchange, the Delaware expert proposed, among others, the extension of the monitoring area of ultrasonically marked sturgeons in the Black Sea, based on US experience. Thus, a Danube-Black Sea route was carried out to assess the potential for starting such a project in the future.



Following this meeting, a close collaboration was established with Delaware State University expert, **Dewayne Allen Fox PhD.**, for future projects and an exchange of experience between the two institutions involved in the monitoring of wild sturgeon species in order to preserve this important resources for the world's biodiversity.

