

# La Crosse FRO Accomplishment Highlights Report

## *Federal Lands Assistance:*

### **Fishery Surveys Conducted at Fox River and Horicon NWR's**

07/14/2004



*This was a first time fishery survey at Fox River which will help managers set goals and write a fishery management plan. At Horicon the data is necessary to adjust stocking recommendations and update recommendations concerning carp control.*

Shawn Papon was quite happy to witness the diversity of fish found on Fox River NWR. Earlier in the year Shawn contacted LaCrosse FRO and requested a fishery survey be conducted on the refuge. Scott Yess (LaCrosse FRO) assisted Shawn, Wendy Woyczik, and John Krapfl on sampling both Fox River and Horicon NWR's. A diversity of habitats including an oxbow lake, backwater, cool water stream and river were all sampled at Fox

River. Twenty eight species were collected by electrofishing and netting. The oxbow lake contained a good population of bluegill, crappie and largemouth bass which should make this a great site for the proposed fishing pier.

Horicon NWR however is dominated by carp and bullhead which increase turbidity and reduce aquatic plant growth. These species are not heavily fished and create a management problem for the refuge. A carp trap is being maintained by the refuge staff and annual stocking of northern pike and panfish is helping however it is still a constant battle to reduce carp and bullhead numbers.

Scott Yess

## *Interjurisdictional Fisheries:*

### **LaCrosse FRO supports White Earth DNR on Fishery Survey**

08/20/2004

*This fishery survey data will be used to make management recommendations regarding the walleye fishery in Tea Cracker Lake.*

Fishery surveys are always exciting and the survey conducted on Tea Cracker Lake was no exception. Tea Cracker is a small lake which borders the White Earth Reservation and Tamarac NWR, two management areas which LaCrosse FRO provides assistance. Randy Zortman, (White Earth DNR) requested assistance from Scott Yess (LaCrosse FRO) on this fishery survey. Randy and his crew have a very active walleye management program on the Reservation and Tea Cracker is one of the lakes currently being stocked with walleye. Tea

Cracker has had some tremendous years providing anglers with many hours of exceptional fishing. However this lake did winterkill in 2003 so it is currently on the rebound. The survey indicated low to moderate numbers of one and two year old fish so it will take a couple more years without a winterkill to provide good fishing. It is worth putting the effort in on Tea Cracker, Zortman explains, because it will have several good years before a major winterkill occurs and they have to start over.

Walleye fingerlings are normally stocked in Tea Cracker from growout ponds that Randy and his crew harvest each fall. This year the lake received hundreds of walleye fingerlings which hopefully will be ready to harvest in two years. The White Earth DNR manages over 40 lakes on the Reservation for walleye which are some of the best walleye producers in Northwest Minnesota.

Scott Yess

### ***Interjurisdictional Fisheries:***



### **Polander Habitat Project is Fish Friendly** 09/24/2004

*This data will help give river resource managers a better idea of what types of habitat restoration are working to improve conditions for fish and wildlife.*

The LaCrosse FRO staff assisted by the Upper Mississippi Wildlife and Fish Refuge (Winona District) staff completed this years third fishery survey on Polander Lake (Pool 5A). The study is designed to determine fish usage in Polander Lake's new island complex. These islands were

constructed as part of the Habitat Rehabilitation and Enhancement Project (HREP) on the Upper Mississippi River. Several HREP's have islands as a feature built into the project. The islands help break up wind fetch which reduces suspended sediments, they also create slack water habitat which promotes vegetation growth and provides food and cover for both fish and wildlife. Nesting habitat for waterfowl and turtles are also benefits of island construction.

Fishery monitoring was conducted on September 23rd and 24th. This information will be compared to the spring and summer data which will help determine seasonal use. Both electrofishing and trap netting were conducted, and fish collected were weighed, measured and released. This project is a great follow up to the paddlefish work which was conducted in Polander two years ago. The information obtained from this project will help resource managers make critical decisions on habitat projects in large river systems.

Scott Yess

### ***Aquatic Nuisance Species:***

### **FWS and NPS Divers Monitor the St. Croix River** 09/30/2004

*Monitoring the zebra mussel populations on the St. Croix River is important aspect for the recovery of two federally endangered species and several state listed mussels. The St. Croix is one of the Nations premier*

*mussel rivers. Monitoring zebra mussel populations provides resource managers the information they need to make sound management decisions.*

Divers from both the National Park Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service searched for zebra mussels during the last week of September. The place was the St. Croix River, the team started approximately ten miles north of St. Croix Falls and worked their way south. The dive team changed their monitoring location in an effort to explore the possibility of a range expansion by zebra mussels. Fortunately no zebra mussels were found and the confirmed range of their population is still near Stillwater, MN.

During the summer two additional monitoring dives were conducted, data from the three dives will be analyzed along with data from the multi-plate monitoring to form recommendations, which will be presented to the St. Croix Zebra Mussel Task Force.



**Scott Yess**

### ***Federal Lands Assistance:***

## **Rydell NWR 2004 Walleye Production Stocking Totals**

10/04/2004



***Rydell National Wildlife Refuge walleye stocking program successfully produced 10,500 6-10 inch fish in Red Lake Indian Reservation and in the DeSoto NWR.***

In early October, Dave Wedan from the La Crosse FRO and Jay Ciucci of the Rydell National Fish Hatchery (NFH) set fyke nets on Clifford Lake, on the Rydell National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), signaling the start of the 2004 walleye harvest and stocking effort. Each spring, newly hatched walleye fry are stocked in Clifford Lake, a small shallow freeze-out lake on the refuge, and are netted in the fall, transported by a Genoa NFH crew, and stocked in tribal and federal waters. After a record harvest in 2003,

the number of walleyes netted and stocked was down this year, but at 10,500, fish were still at or above the long term average. Genoa NFH employees, Dan Kumlin and Jeff Lockington transported the healthy 6 to 10 inch long walleyes to the Red Lake Indian Reservation and to the DeSoto NWR. Thanks to Dave Bennett, Rydel Project Leader, for his help and support in making this walleye production and stocking program a success!

**Dave Wedan**