



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Alpena Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office

July 2009 Station Activities

The Alpena Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (FWCO) is located in Alpena, Michigan and works to meet the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Fishery and Ecosystem goals within Lake Huron, Western Lake Erie, and connecting waters of the St. Marys River, St. Clair River, and Detroit River. Activities include Aquatic Species Conservation and Management, Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management, Aquatic Invasive Species, Cooperation with Native Americans, Leadership in Science and Technology, Partnerships and Accountability, Public Use, and Workforce Management – all of which are conducted in alignment with the Service Fisheries Program's Vision for the Future. The station is one of many field offices located within Region 3, the Midwest Region.

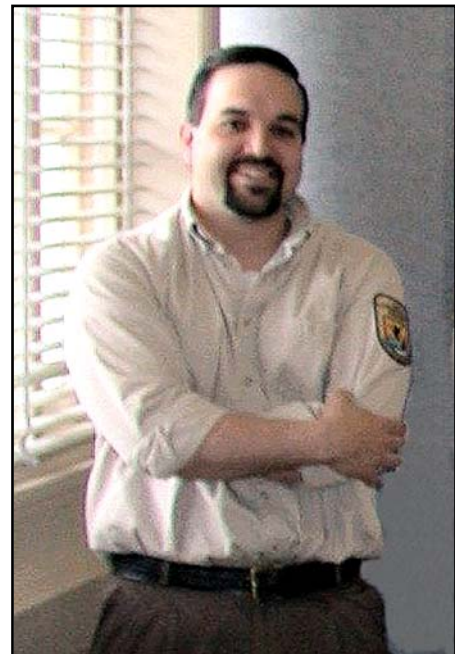
Aquatic Species Conservation and Management

Aaron Woldt Selected as Regional Fishery Program Supervisor

*Submitted by Andrea Ania
Fishery Biologist*

In early December 2008, Aaron Woldt was selected as Fishery Program Supervisor for the Region 3 Fisheries Program. Woldt served as Acting Project Leader for Alpena FWCO from April 2008 to July 2009. During this time he also fulfilled his former responsibilities as Fishery Biologist at the station, which included management of the Service's Great Lakes stocking and research vessel, the *M/V Spencer F. Baird*.

In his new position, Woldt will oversee management and operations of the region's six Fish and Wildlife Conservation Offices. He will also be addressing resource issues such as lake trout, coaster brook trout, aquatic habitat restoration, invasive species management, and pallid sturgeon conservation and recovery efforts. The staff at



Aaron Woldt was selected as Fishery Program Supervisor for the Region 3 Fisheries Program. Photo credit: USFWS

Alpena FWCO wishes Aaron and his family the best as they enter this new chapter of their lives.

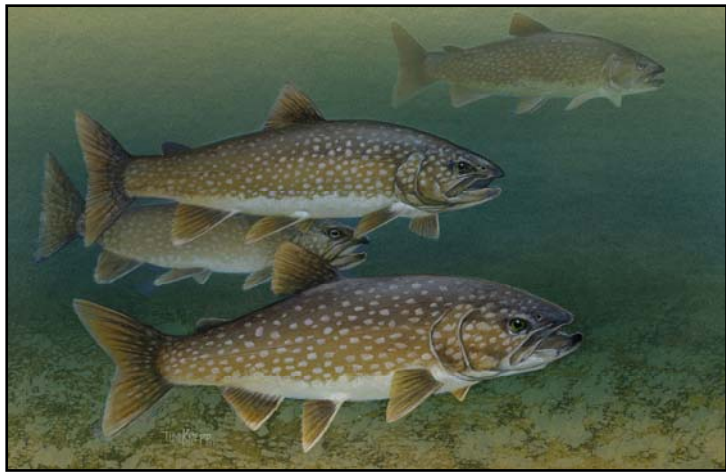
Work accomplished at the Alpena FWCO by Acting Project Leader/Fishery Biologist Woldt directly supported all eight priorities of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future: “Partnerships and Accountability,” “Aquatic Species Conservation and Management,” “Aquatic Invasive Species,” “Public Use,” “Cooperation with Native Americans,” “Leadership in Science and Technology,” “Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management,” and “Workforce Management.”

Alpena FWCO Assists with Lake Trout Distribution

*Submitted by Scott Koproski
Fishery Biologist*

On April 23rd and 24th Fishery Biologist Scott Koproski traveled to Charlevoix, Michigan, to assist the crew of the *M/V Spencer F. Baird* with lake trout distribution. Each year the *Baird* stocks over 3.5 million yearling lake trout raised at the Service’s National Fish Hatcheries into lakes Huron and Michigan. Over 29 distribution trips are made between the two lakes and the vessel is capable of transporting over 100,000 yearling lake trout per trip.

The vessel has certain crew requirements necessary to operate safely as defined by the U.S. Coast Guard. For this reason, Koproski needed to assist the *Baird* crew and function as a crew member. The *Baird* departed the dock at Charlevoix en route to two off-shore reefs in Lake Michigan: Big Reef and Middle Ground. Approximately 170,000 yearling lake trout were delivered and loaded on the *Baird* from Iron River National Fish Hatchery. All fish were delivered to the appropriate reef during this cruise.



Biologist Scott Koproski traveled to Charlevoix, Michigan, to assist the crew of the M/V Spencer F. Baird with lake trout distribution. Each year the Baird stocks over 3.5 million yearling lake trout raised at the Service’s National Fish Hatcheries into lakes Huron and Michigan. Image credit: USFWS

This work exemplifies Alpena FWCO’s commitment to the Service’s Fisheries Program Vision for the Future priorities of: “Aquatic Species Conservation and Management,” “Partnerships and Accountability,” “Public Use,” and “Leadership in Science and Technology.”

Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management

River Survey on the Thunder Bay River

*Submitted by Heather Rawlings
Fish & Wildlife Biologist*

Service Biologists Andrea Ania and Heather Rawlings, and Natural Resource Conservation Service Engineer Andrea Paladino surveyed a reach of the Thunder Bay River the week of July 6, 2009. The survey was conducted in order to collect data on an ungaged (by a USGS gaging station) reach of river that is considered stable by resource professionals. The data will be added to a dataset held by the Michigan Stream Team to determine regional curves for the State of Michigan.



Service Biologist Rawlings takes a survey point along a riffle cross-section. Photo credit: USFWS, A. Ania

The site surveyed was located upstream of the McMurphy Road bridge on the Main Branch of the Thunder Bay River, east of the village of Atlanta, Michigan. Approximately 1,300 ft. of the river was surveyed with a longitudinal profile. Two cross-sections were conducted in two of the riffles within the surveyed reach. Pebble counts were taken at both of the riffles, and one pebble count was taken to encompass the entire reach. Surveying was completed with a robotic total station (NRCS) and a laser level (USFWS). The entire survey took three days to complete. The data will be compiled and entered into RIVERMorph before sending it to Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and U.S. Geological Survey Stream Team members for incorporation into the larger database. More information can be found on the Michigan Stream Team website: http://www.michigan.gov/deq/0,1607,7-135-3313_3684_41228---,00.html.

A second survey is planned on an ungaged site in the Sturgeon River (Cheboygan River Watershed) during the month of September.

Data was collected on an ungaged reference reach of the Thunder Bay River. This data will be incorporated into a larger database housed by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, and will be used to determine regional curves for the State of Michigan. Regional reference curve development is important to all natural resource professionals concerned with proper river restoration. This critical data will take the guesswork out of river restoration in Michigan, and provide restoration professionals with the information to develop successful and stable project outcomes. Gathering data for future habitat restoration projects contributes toward

the “Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management” priority of the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Aquatic Invasive Species

Alpena FWCO Raises Public Awareness About Aquatic Invasive Species

*Submitted by Anjanette Bowen
Fishery Biologist*

In early summer 2009, the Alpena Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (FWCO) made efforts to raise public awareness about aquatic invasive species along the coast of Lake Huron and the St. Marys River through the distribution of WATCH identification cards for Eurasian ruffe and round goby. Both Eurasian ruffe and round goby have been found in Lake Huron. They are considered nuisance species because they are thought to compete with native species for food and habitat resources.



Alpena FWCO made efforts to raise public awareness about AIS along the coast of Lake Huron in early summer 2009. Photo credit: G. Cholwek

Alpena FWCO Biologist Bowen distributed aquatic invasive species WATCH identification cards to over 25 bait and fishing license vendors along the coast of Lake Huron and the St. Marys River from Sault Ste. Marie to Bay City, Michigan during April, June, and July. Cooperation with bait and tackle dealers is key to getting the word out to the public who frequent these shops for fishing and boating supplies. Approximately 4,500 aquatic invasive species educational materials were distributed.

Alpena FWCO aquatic invasive species education efforts are focused on increasing public recognition of invasive species and providing information on what precautions should be taken to prevent the spread of these species. The ultimate goal is to prevent or slow the spread of aquatic invasive species to inland waters and new areas. Citizens can prevent the spread of unwanted invasive fish by learning to recognize them, reporting any unusual fish to your local conservation office, disposing of unwanted live bait in the trash, and never releasing fish from one body of water into another. For more information on aquatic invasive species visit the Protect Your Waters website at <http://www.protectyourwaters.net/>.

This effort is consistent with the “Aquatic Invasive Species” and “Partnerships and Accountability” priorities of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Alpena FWCO Provides Overview of Lake Huron Aquatic Invasive Species for COSEE Great Lakes Teachers

*Submitted by Anjanette Bowen
Fishery Biologist*

Biologist Anjanette Bowen provided an overview of aquatic invasive species found in Lake Huron for teachers participating in the Centers for Ocean Sciences Education Excellence (COSEE) program on July 28 in Alpena, Michigan. The teachers were studying applied science on Lake Huron aboard the Lake Guardian, a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency research vessel. They visited a number of ports in Lake Huron and ended their trip in Lake Michigan.



During July 2009, Alpena FWCO Biologist Bowen provided an overview of aquatic invasive species found in Lake Huron for teachers participating in the COSEE program. Image credit: USFWS

Bowen provided a PowerPoint presentation covering dispersal vectors and problems associated with aquatic invasive species, general species information, Asian carp as a new threat to the Great Lakes, useful websites to find more information, and efforts underway within Lake Huron to research, manage, control, and prevent the spread of invasive species. Fifteen teachers attended the presentation and asked many questions about invasive species.

The workshop was supported by the National Science Foundation, Great Lakes Sea Grant Network, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. For more information on COSEE Great Lakes programs, visit their website at: <http://coseegreatlakes.net/>.

Public education regarding invasive species is an important means of preventing their spread and helps promote healthy native species populations. This effort is consistent with the Fisheries Program's Vision for the Future Priorities for "Aquatic Invasive Species," "Public Use," "Partnerships and Accountability," and "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management."

Partnerships and Accountability

Students Learn about Wetlands at Camp Wilderness

*Submitted by Andrea Ania
Fishery Biologist*

Alpena FWCO Biologists Heather Rawlings and Andrea Ania taught Camp Wilderness participants about wetlands on July 21 and 28, 2009 at Sprinkler Lake Education Center in

Glennie, Michigan. Rawlings and Ania each taught approximately 45 students during their half day session. Students were broken into three age groups (2nd-3rd, 4th-5th, and 6th-7th graders) and introduced to the following wetland concepts: types, functions, plants, and animals. The students then participated in a wetland scavenger hunt, made their own mammal track casting, and explored the area, which consisted of natural and enhanced wetlands. The children observed a variety of wildlife including baby snapping turtles, a school of juvenile catfish, a water snake, and an assortment of birds and insects.

Educational activities like this help connect children with nature by teaching students about the importance of wetland habitat and providing unstructured time in nature. This outcome is consistent with the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future priorities of "Partnerships and Accountability" and "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management."

Fourth Annual Benefit Dinner Held at Lake Erie Metropark in Brownstown, Michigan

*Submitted by Jim Boase
Fishery Biologist*

The International Wildlife Refuge Alliance held its 4th annual Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Alliance benefit dinner on Friday evening, June 27, 2009, which included a silent and live auction. This year's benefit dinner was an outdoor barbeque held on the grounds of Lake Erie Metropark on the shores of Lake Erie. The dinner was attended by approximately 300 people. The



Photo of Congressman John Dingell and Member of Parliament Jeff Watson sharing a moment at the 2009 Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Alliance Dinner. Photo credit: DTE Energy, D. Mitchell

Alliance is a non-profit group of organizations that build the capacity of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) to deliver its mission for the Detroit River

International Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). This yearly benefit dinner celebrated the accomplishments and progress of the Refuge, which has an international reputation for public-private partnerships.

Highlights of the evening were presentations and speeches given by Congressman John D. Dingell, Member of Canadian Parliament Jeff Watson, and Refuge Manager John Hartig.

Fishery Biologist James Boase from the Alpena Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (FWCO) was an invited guest due to his fisheries work within the Refuge and related work on the Detroit

River for the past 7 years. Since working with the Service in 2002, James Boase has worked with Refuge Manager John Hartig to identify fishery assessment needs within the Refuge boundaries. Working with partners, biologists from Alpena FWCO have conducted numerous fishery surveys along the 48 miles of the Detroit River and the western Lake Erie shoreline. This research partnership was instrumental in the protection or acquisition of coastal wetlands within the Refuge. Since 2001, the Refuge has grown from 304 acres to over 5,200 acres. This area of the Great Lakes forms a unique link between the upper and lower Great Lakes. Within the Refuge boundaries there are a unique group of islands, coastal wetlands, shoal, and upland habitats. As part of the Service's Challenge Cost Share Grant Program, Science Support Program, plus funds from Environment Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, biologists from Alpena FWCO, DRIW Refuge, Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Lake Erie Management Unit, Michigan DNR Lake St. Clair Research Station, United States Geological Survey Great Lakes Science Center, and Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources continue to identify important near shore nursery areas and fish spawning areas in the Detroit River and western Lake Erie with the hopes of preserving the last remaining habitats.

The benefit dinner provided an excellent opportunity to interact with federal, state, and local governing officials along with interest groups working with the Refuge. This gathering provided an opportunity to explain the Service's mission and efforts to manage fisheries resources within the Refuge. This outreach event supports the "Partnerships and Accountability" and "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" priorities of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Lake Sturgeon Research Presented at Cranbrook Institute of Science

*Submitted by Jim Boase
Fishery Biologist*

Fishery Biologist James Boase traveled to Bloomfield Hills, Michigan on June 25, 2009 to present information at an education workshop sponsored by the Cranbrook Institute of Science.

Fifteen educators attended the 45 minute presentation, which focused on research efforts taking place in the Huron-Erie Corridor.

This informal presentation allowed the educators an opportunity to participate throughout the talk by asking questions and sharing their teaching experiences from Southeast Michigan. Questions focused on lake sturgeon and how rehabilitation efforts would enhance the abundance of other species, exotic species, and fish health. The forum was an excellent opportunity to



*Photo of Cranbrook Institute of Science.
Photo credit: Woodward Avenue Action
Association.*

explain how Alpena FWCO has a commitment to assist educators teaching young people about fisheries and environmental issues throughout the Great lakes.

Each year more than 200,000 visitors flock to Cranbrook Institute of Science, making it one of the region's best known museums of natural history. The institute was founded in 1904 and has been serving area schoolchildren and families since its creation in 1930. Cranbrook staff member, Lisa Appel has worked with Service biologists to conduct a number of assessment projects on the Detroit River and continues to be a valuable partner for Alpena FWCO.

This presentation provided an excellent opportunity to explain to the public the Service's mission and efforts to restore native fish and control exotic species. Specifically, the presentation focused on efforts to rehabilitate lake sturgeon populations in the Huron-Erie Corridor. The benefits of native species restoration and the detriments of exotic species were clearly defined and explained. This project is consistent with the "Partnerships and Accountability," "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management," and "Leadership in Science and Technology" priorities of the Fisheries Program's Vision for the Future.

Cooperation with Native Americans

Alpena FWCO Conducts 2009 Fishery Independent Lake Whitefish Survey in Northern Lake Huron

*Submitted by Adam Kowalski
Fishery Biologist*

During July and August, staff from the Alpena FWCO and volunteers conducted a fishery independent lake whitefish survey in 1836 Treaty waters of northern Lake Huron. Staff involved included Fishery Biologists Adam Kowalski and Anjanette Bowen, Acting Project Leader Scott Koproski, and Biological Science Aid Kyle Krajniak. Volunteers included Jerry McClain, Jerry Kowalski, and Brittney Miller. The purpose of this survey is to collect fishery independent abundance and biological data on lake whitefish stocks in treaty waters for use in statistical-catch-at-age population models that are updated annually to determine harvest regulations for tribal commercial fishers in 1836 Treaty waters.

During the survey we set 24 overnight, variable mesh gill nets at randomly selected sites in lake whitefish management unit WFH 04 (Hammond



Biologist Kowalski weighs a lake trout captured during the fishery independent lake whitefish survey in northern Lake Huron. Photo credit: USFWS, A. Bowen

Bay to Presque Isle) and lake whitefish management unit WFH 05 (Presque Isle to Alpena). All whitefish collected were measured, weighed, sexed, assessed for maturity and visceral fat content, and checked for lamprey wounds, fin clips, and tags. We took scales and otoliths for age determination and removed stomachs whole for diet analysis. Non-target species were worked up in a similar manner.

Twelve additional overnight, small mesh gill nets were set along the selected lake whitefish sites to capture juvenile lake trout. All juvenile lake trout collected were measured, weighed, checked for lamprey wounds and fin clips, sexed, and assessed for visceral fat content, maturity, and stomach contents. Scales and otoliths were taken from coded-wire-tagged and no-clip (presumed wild) lake trout for age determination.

Data collected in this survey will improve the accuracy of population models used to set lake whitefish harvest guidelines in 1836 Treaty waters of northern Lake Huron. Harvest limits allow fisheries to be executed while still protecting the biological integrity of the stocks. This outcome is consistent with the Service's goal of maintaining self-sustaining populations of native fish species while meeting the needs of tribal communities under the "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" and "Cooperation with Native Americans" priorities of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Public Use

Harrisville Event

*Submitted by Adam Kowalski
Fishery Biologist*

Fisheries Biologist Adam Kowalski and Biological Science Aid Kyle Krajniak attended Harrisville State Park's Explorer Weekend and 90th Anniversary Celebration in Harrisville, Michigan on June 27, 2009. Alpena FWCO presented information about invasive species, a mammal skull collection, and a fish migration game at the event. Kowalski talked to visitors about the office's invasive species program. Krajniak talked to visitors about wildlife and let them handle the skulls. A 4-H volunteer took children through the fish migration game.

Approximately 100 children and parents visited with Kowalski and Krajniak. There were many other stations at the event for children, including boat safety, fish identification, a trout fishing pond, and life saving techniques (buoy throw).

Participation in this event is consistent with the Service's goal of implementing educational and outreach activities to educate the public about Service activities and is consistent with and supportive of the "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" and "Public Use" priorities of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Workforce Management

Baird Safety Course

*Submitted by Adam Kowalski
Fishery Biologist*

Motorboat Operator Certification Course (MOCC) instructors Adam Kowalski (Alpena FWCO), Aaron Woldt (Regional Office), Dave Wedan (LaCross FWCO), Scott Koproski (Alpena FWCO), Jeff Lucas (Litchfield WMD), Mike Perry (Cheboygan Vessel Base), Dave Bohn (Cheboygan Vessel Base), and Bob Bergstrom (Cheboygan Vessel Base) organized the first three day MOCC M/V Baird Safety Module course in Cheboygan, Michigan from July 14 to 16, 2009. This module was created by the above instructors to provide safety training to individuals before working on the M/V Baird.



A MOCC M/V Baird Safety Module course was held in Cheboygan, Michigan during mid-July 2009. In-water survival was one of many topics covered during the course. Photo credit: USFWS

Safety and emergency response were the main focus of the course. The students went through several demonstrations and practical exercises such as: fire suppression, shooting visual distress signals and bird deterrents, emergency egress, deploying a life raft, man overboard, vessel evacuation, and in-water survival. The following list of topics were covered during the course: Vessel Orientation, Required and Recommended Equipment, Emergency Procedures, Communication Systems, Emergency Responsibilities, Anchor Watch, Vessel Emergency Egress, Docking and Line Handling, Cargo Handling, Fire Suppression, Visual Distress Signals, Bird Deterrents, Radio Use, Man Overboard, Emergency Vessel Operation, Waves, Tides, Weather, and Vessel SOP's.

Overall this course was a success, and all 10 students from hatcheries and FWCO offices successfully completed the training. Students reported that they learned a great deal and felt the course gave them the confidence to handle an emergency situation should one arise.

MOCC training is a valuable course designed to make Service personnel competent and safe boaters. Teaching MOCC courses is consistent with the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future priority of "Workforce Management" to maintain and support an adequately-sized, strategically positioned workforce with state-of-art training, equipment, and technologies in their career fields.

For more information about Alpena FWCO programs and activities contact us at:

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