



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Alpena Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office

March/April 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

Alpena FWCO Presents Lake Trout Data at GLFC-Lake Huron Committee Meeting

*Submitted by Scott Koproski
Fishery Biologist*

During the month of March, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC) held their annual Lake Committee Meeting in Ypsilanti, Michigan. The Lake Committee meetings bring together state, tribal, provincial, and federal researchers and managers who have a vested interest in the Great Lakes. The week long meeting began on March 23 and started with a Joint Common Session followed by break out sessions of the individual lakes for the remainder of the week.

Fishery Biologist Scott Koproski attended and presented at the Lake Huron Committee Session, which began on March 26. Koproski presented data from Alpena FWCO's lake trout spawning surveys conducted at two offshore reefs in Lake Huron: Yankee Reef and Six Fathom Bank Refuge. Alpena FWCO has attempted to conduct annual spawning surveys at these two mid-lake reefs since 1993. However, both reefs have not been sampled each year due to gale force winds and high seas that are characteristic of Lake Huron during late October and early November when sampling occurs.

Recently, survey data has revealed an increase in catch rates of wild lake trout utilizing these two reef complexes for reproduction. Catch per effort (CPE) of wild lake trout has been slowly rising since 2002 at both Six Fathom Bank and Yankee Reef. The most recent surveys of each reef resulted in the highest CPE of wild lake trout since the surveys inception, nearly doubling previous highs. CPE of wild lake trout caught at Six Fathom Bank in 2007 was 38.3 fish/1000' and Yankee Reef in 2008 was 27.5 fish/1000'. Alpena FWCO will continue to conduct spawning surveys at these two offshore reefs and the staff is hopeful that the promising upward trends in wild fish CPE will continue. The increase in wild fish CPE encourages staff and further justifies the Services efforts to rehabilitate and restore lake trout in Lake Huron.

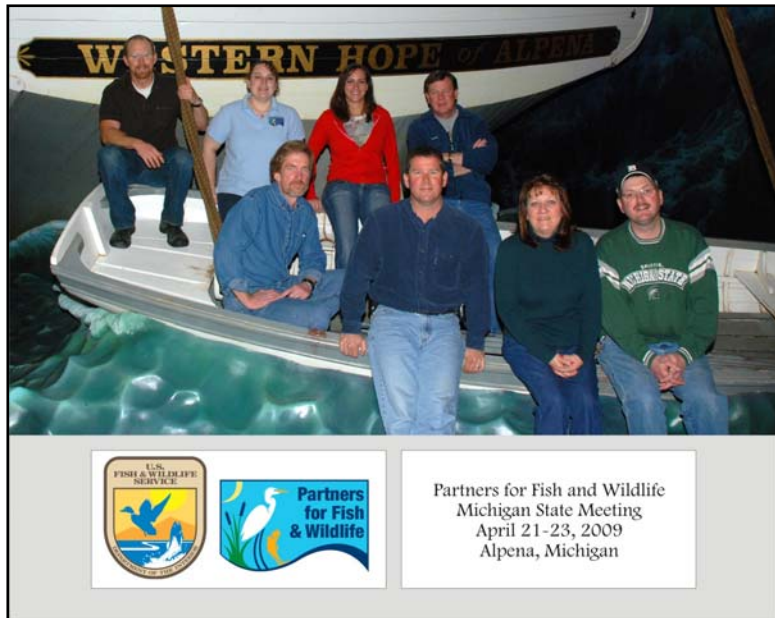
Fall lake trout spawning surveys are another example of the Alpena FWCO's commitment to the following Fisheries Program Vision Priorities: "Partnerships and Accountability", "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management", and "Public Use."

Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management

Partners for Fish and Wildlife State Meeting (Michigan)

*Submitted by Heather Rawlings
Fish and Wildlife Biologist*

Michigan Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) Coordinators and the Regional Coordinator, Greg Brown, met in Alpena at NOAA's Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center April 21-23. Biologist Heather Rawlings from Alpena FWCO hosted the meeting and organized a series of speakers, tours, and extracurricular activities. The meeting focused on changes to PFW protocol, budgets, the 2008 Farm Bill, and proper permit submission to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. Wednesday afternoon (April 22), Matt Kleitch from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) led a tour of TNC property south



The Michigan Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) Coordinators and the Regional Coordinator, Greg Brown, met in Alpena at NOAA's Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center April 21-23, 2009. Pictured above – Back Row: Gib King, Heather Rawlings, Michelle Vander Haar, Greg Brown – Front Row: Jim Hudgins, Tom Eitnhear, Jeanette Bowles, and Jim Hazelman.

of Alpena at Squaw Bay. Matt discussed invasive plant species and a cooperative initiative to control three species in Northeast Michigan: phragmites (*Phragmites australis*), common and glossy buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica* and *Frangula alnus*), and purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria L.*). Later that afternoon, Brad Jensen from Huron Pines led a lively discussion on the prioritization of stream restoration sites in Northeast Michigan, and Pat Labadie from NOAA led the group on an excellent tour of the maritime museum.

Completion of aquatic habitat restoration projects is the focus of Alpena FWCO's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, which contributes toward the "Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management" priority of the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Thunder Bay Power Annual Working Committee Meeting

*Submitted by Andrea Ania
Fishery Biologist*

This spring Fishery Biologists Andrea Ania participated in the annual Thunder Bay Power Working Committee meeting for the Thunder Bay Project License Implementation. The Working Committee was created to assist Thunder Bay Power (TBP) and its parent company, North American Hydro (NAH), in meeting the requirements of its Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) license. This year's meeting was held via Webcast and conference call, which eliminated the need for participants to travel from Wisconsin and within Michigan to the TBP office in Alpena. The Webcast was efficient and the group decided future meetings will be conducted similarly to reduce travel time, travel costs, and carbon emissions.

The primary focus of the meeting was to review results of NAH's 2008 stream bank erosion sites, purple loosestrife, and Eurasian Water Milfoil monitoring activities. A new invasive, Curly Leaf Pondweed, was also reported to be found while monitoring the system. In addition, the Working Committee discussed recent charges to the project escrow account, NAH's website changes, and an update on the public easement issue at the Hubbard Lake site.

The meeting was attended by member representatives from Michigan DNR, NAH, TBP, and the Service. In addition, representatives from the Hubbard Lake Sportsmen & Improvement Association and Michigan Hydro Relicensing Coalition participated.

Service involvement in the TBP Working Committee provides opportunities to minimize or mitigate the impacts of habitat alteration on fish and other aquatic species caused by hydropower facilities in the Thunder Bay River system. This outcome is consistent with the "Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management" priority of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Partnerships and Accountability

Wilson Elementary School 2nd Graders Learn to ID Native Plants

*Submitted by Heather Rawlings
Fish and Wildlife Biologist*

Biologists Andrea Ania and Heather Rawlings from Alpena FWCO traveled to Wilson Elementary School on April 9th to give a presentation on native plants to the 2nd grade class. Last October (2008) students planted a native butterfly garden on their playground, utilizing Partners for Fish and Wildlife funding. The butterfly garden was planted to allow the entire school to play in it, watch it grow, and observe fauna that use the garden. All of the classes (K-6) will use this site as a part of their school curriculum, but the second grade has specific assignments involving the garden.



Biologist Rawlings discusses native plants with the 2nd grade class. Photo credit: Andrea Ania, USFWS, 4/09/2009.

Alpena FWCO has “adopted” this second grade class and is making an effort to be in the classroom once a month to assist the teacher, and incorporate more nature experiences while emphasizing the current State of Michigan mandated school curriculum. The presentation Ania and Rawlings gave assisted the children in identification of the 14 species of native plants in the garden, and made them aware of what types of animals would be attracted to the garden. The class was broken into four groups and “tested” at the end of the presentation on identification of the plants, and did a fantastic job. Mrs. Lisa Syma, the 2nd grade teacher, was given laminated pictures of all of the plants in the butterfly garden and information about each plant to display in the classroom.

This spring, Alpena FWCO, utilizing Partners for Fish and Wildlife Funds and volunteers from Wilson School’s Parent Advisory Council, will build a bird blind and several types of bird feeders that the children will have access to during recess hours. This birding area will promote an environmental curriculum for the children, emphasizing bird migration, land use, and habitat requirements of the birding community. Each year Alpena FWCO is planning to add another component to the playground, eventually creating a natural area on Wilson School’s property to allow nature to be more tangible to the kids, and to encourage

imagination, unstructured play, and a relationship with nature that the children may not be receiving at home.

Outreach events such as these contribute toward the “Public Use” component of the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future. This project also directly contributes to the Service’s “Let’s Go Outside!” children in nature initiative.

Earth Day Celebration at Constitution Hall, Lansing

*Submitted by Anjanette Bowen
Fishery Biologist*

On April 22, Michigan’s Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), and Department of Agriculture (MDA) co-hosted an annual Earth Day Celebration at Constitution Hall in Lansing, Michigan. The celebration brought together organizations and agencies, staffing up to 60 educational displays to help teach children about the Earth and issues impacting the Earth. Approximately 1,700 children from 35 classrooms across the state attended this event.

Service Biologists Barbara Hosler (East Lansing Field Office) and Anjanette Bowen (Alpena Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office) staffed a display on Great Lakes Aquatic Invasive Species. The display included live sea lamprey, hands on invasive species specimens, and fish games. Sea lampreys were provided by the U.S. Geological Survey Hammond Bay Biological Station located in Millersburg, Michigan.

For more information on the Earth Day Celebration, visit MDEQ's website at <http://www.michigan.gov/deq>.

Educating the public about aquatic invasive species helps to prevent or slow their spread to new areas. The Earth Day Celebration provided a great opportunity to partner with state conservation programs for a unified approach on aquatic invasive species issues. This activity supports the “Aquatic Invasive Species,” “Public Use,” and “Partnerships and Accountability” priorities of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

St. Marys River Fishery Task Group Meeting

*Submitted by Anjanette Bowen
Fishery Biologist*

The St. Marys River Fishery Task Group (SMRFTG) met on April 6, 2009 to discuss upcoming activities and issues of concern, regarding fisheries of the St. Marys River. Alpena FWCO Fishery Biologist Bowen co-chaired the meeting with new task group chair, Neal Godby. The meeting was hosted by Sue Greenwood of the Ontario Ministry of Natural

Resources (OMNR) and held at the Ontario Forest Research Institute in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario.

The following information was provided and/or discussed at the meeting: the announcement that Neal Godby (Michigan DNR) was approved as the new task group chair; an overview of creel data available for the St. Marys River was provided by Tracy Kolb (Michigan DNR); information on Lake Superior State University (LSSU) research on perch and walleye genetics in the St. Marys River was provided by Barb Evans (LSSU); planning for the fall walleye evaluation survey and the 2009 fish community survey; Neal Godby and Mike Ripley (Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority) provided updates on St. Marys River project proposals; and Sue Greenwood (OMNR) provided an update on dewatering associated with the compensating gates repair scheduled for 2010. It was also noted that the Lake Huron Committee will conduct a final review of the St. Marys River Walleye Stocking and Evaluation Plan, and they will be reviewing an initial background document on Fish Community Objectives for the St. Marys River.

The SMRFTG is comprised of a number of agencies with management authority or other interests in the St. Marys River. Membership includes the OMNR, Michigan DNR, LSSU, Bay Mills Indian Community, Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority, Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Sault College of Applied Arts and Technology, Algoma University, U.S. Geological Survey, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The task group was established under the authority of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's Lake Huron Committee in 1997 to achieve a meaningful understanding of the fishery resources of the St. Marys River, and to develop a joint strategy for enhancing and maximizing that fishery. Publications produced by the SMRFTG may be found on the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's website at <http://www.glfc.org/lakecom/lhc/lhchome.php> under 'Publications and Products'.

Efforts of the SMRFTG fulfill a multi-agency partnership approach to fishery conservation and management on the St. Marys River. These activities support the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future priorities for "Partnerships and Accountability" and "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management."

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

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