



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

May 2008 Station Activities

The Alpena National Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (NFWCO) 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

Service Regional Director Visits *M/V Baird*

Submitted by Aaron Woldt
Fishery Biologist

On May 6, 2008 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Region 3 Regional Director Robyn Thorson visited the *M/V Spencer F. Baird* in Charlevoix, Michigan to observe the loading of hatchery lake trout on the vessel. Drivers John Johnston and Wayne Talo of Jordan River National Fish Hatchery (NFH) and James "Bubba" Anderson of Pendills Creek NFH delivered approximately 120,000 yearling lake trout from Jordan River NFH to the vessel. The fish were later planted by the *M/V Baird* and crew members Mike Perry, Bob Bergstrom, David Bohn, and Jordan River NFH fish tender Bob Petersen on Hog Island Reef in northern Lake Michigan. In 2008 the *M/V Baird* will



USFWS Region 3 Director Robyn Thorson and Seaman / Fisherman David Bohn load lake trout onto the *M/V Spencer F. Baird*. Photo by Aaron Woldt, USFWS.

plant approximately 2.4 million hatchery reared, yearling lake trout in Lake Michigan and approximately 1.2 million yearling lake trout in Lake Huron.

Director Thorson visited with the vessel crew and drivers before and during loading, and also participated in the fish loading process. The crew demonstrated the relative ease with which fish are loaded onto the *M/V Baird*, when compared with loading the previous stocking vessel the *M/V Togue*, and explained how the oxygen and chilled water systems on the Baird have helped to reduce stress on the planted fish. Director Thorson was also able to observe the recent upgrades made to the on-deck fish hauling tanks to ease stress on fish and make the tanks safer for Service staff to work with. Director Thorson was pleased with the opportunity to observe the *M/V Baird* in action and thanked all staff involved for their efforts to rehabilitate lake trout stocks in the Great Lakes.



USFWS Region 3 Director Robyn Thorson, Jordan River NFH volunteer Dan Sutherland, and Fishery Biologists Scott Koproski, James "Bubba" Anderson, and John Johnston offload hatchery reared lake trout from the Pendills Creek NFH truck. Photo by Aaron Woldt, USFWS.

Since the 1970's, the Service has contributed to multi-agency lake trout rehabilitation efforts in the Great Lakes by planting hatchery reared lake trout. Rehabilitating native lake trout stocks is consistent with the Service's goal of building and maintaining self-sustaining populations of native fish species under the "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" priority of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

End of an Era: *M/V Togue* Sold at Auction

*Submitted by Aaron Woldt
Fishery Biologist*

On May 6, 2008 the Service's former lake trout stocking and fishery assessment vessel known as the *M/V Togue* was sold at auction. The public auction, which ran from April 22 to May 6 on GSAAuctions.gov, closed with a winning bid of \$54,550 and officially ended the *M/V Togue*'s 18 year history of stocking and fishery assessment in the upper Great Lakes. The *M/V Togue* will be removed from the Alpena National Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (NFWCO) dock by its new owners by May 19. The *M/V Spencer F. Baird*, christened in September 2006, replaced the *M/V Togue* and is currently used by the Service to stock lake trout and conduct fishery assessments in Lakes Michigan, Huron, and Superior.

The *M/V Togue* was acquired by the Service in January 1987 in a U.S. District Court, Southern District of Florida consent judgment. Service crew brought the vessel to its home port of

Cheboygan, Michigan in Spring 1987. The vessel, originally built as a shrimp trawler, was retro-fit in Rogers City, Michigan in Spring 1989. During the retro-fit, eight under deck fish tanks capable of holding 7,500 gallons of water combined were added to the vessel to house hatchery produced fish. From 1989 to 2006, the *M/V Togue* stocked over 60 million lake trout fingerlings and yearlings in the upper Great Lakes in support of agency lake trout rehabilitation efforts.

Prior to sale, Alpena NFWCO staff and *M/V Baird* vessel crew removed over 75 unique items from the *Togue* for historical preservation. Removed items include the vessel steering wheel, pilot house chair, chart desk, compass, life rings, fire axes, fish tank aerator controls, and other instruments. Fishery Biologist Aaron Woldt has been working with staff from NCTC and the Service Heritage Committee to ensure that these artifacts will be preserved and used to create a display at NCTC documenting the *M/V Togue's* historic importance to lake trout restoration efforts in the Great Lakes. Smaller artifacts will also be displayed at regional lake trout production facilities (Iron River National Fish Hatchery (NFH), Jordan River NFH, Pendills Creek NFH). These facilities rear and deliver all lake trout stocked off the *M/V Togue* and *M/V Baird*.



M/V Togue departing Alpena in May 2008. Photo by Aaron Woldt, USFWS.

Preserving historic, one-of-a-kind artifacts from the *M/V Togue* allows the Service to educate and inform a wide range of agency employees and public regarding the critical role the Service plays in lake trout rehabilitation efforts. This outcome is consistent with the Service's goal of implementing educational and outreach activities to educate public regarding Service activities under the "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" and "Public Use" priorities of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Regional Director Finds Out First Hand What's Happening on the Detroit River

*Submitted by Jim Boase
Fishery Biologist*

On April 18th Regional Director Robyn Thorson joined Jim McFee and James Boase, Fishery Biologists from the Alpena National Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (NFWCO) to assist with lake sturgeon sampling on the Detroit River. Regional Director Thorson met with the Alpena crew at 7:30 a.m. at the Wyandotte Municipal Boat Ramp and by that time the parking lot was already packed with about 80 vehicles with empty boat trailers as the walleye fishing season was well underway in the river. Regional Director Thorson was amazed by the number of boats that were on the river that day, and as a result, navigation to the first sampling sites was a bit slow.

Our goal was to capture and tag lake sturgeon as part of the spring survey work that Alpena and a number of partners in the United States (U.S.) and Canada have been involved with since 1998. Alpena's current efforts were focusing on an area at the northeast corner of Fighting Island where Canadian funds from Environment Canada and U.S. funds from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Challenge Cost Share Program have funded phase one (pre-construction assessment) of a three phase project to build a lake sturgeon spawning reef. News of the joint U.S./Canadian project within the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge was simultaneously released by Congressman John Dingell and Canadian Member of Parliament Jeff Watson.

<http://www.dwfonline.com/PDF%20Files/Fighting%20Island%20Sturgeon%20Reef.pdf>
<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/DetroitRiver/documents/IslandSturgeonReefWatson.pdf>

Six setlines were lifted that day and a lake sturgeon was captured on the last line lifted by Jim McFee near the Wyandotte Boat Ramp. The fish measured almost 70 inches and weighed 72 pounds. Regional Director Thorson said it was "wonderful to see such a beautiful big fish living in the river" and she was also excited that she could go back to the Regional Office and tell Deputy Director Charlie Wolley that "this sturgeon was bigger than the one he captured last year when he came out with the directorate team."

This project is an example of the Alpena NFWCO's commitment to the following Fisheries Vision Priorities: "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" and "Partnerships and Accountability".



Regional Director Robyn Thorson and Biologist Jim McFee hoist a 72 pound lake sturgeon captured in the Detroit River near Fighting Island. Photo by James Boase, USFWS.



Regional Director Robyn Thorson and Fishery Biologist Jim McFee feel the tug of an adult lake sturgeon as a setline is lifted from the Detroit River on April 18, 2008. Photo by James Boase, USFWS.

Partnerships and Accountability

Biologists Work with Wilson School to Develop Nature Acre and Teach Students about Fossils

*Submitted by Andrea Ania
Fishery Biologist*

Alpena NFWCO is currently working with Wilson Elementary School to develop a Children and Nature Program. As part of this effort, Biologists Heather Rawlings and Andrea Ania met with the principal, Jean Kowalski, on May 15th to identify a suitable site on the school grounds to develop a natural area (nature acre). The goal of the nature acre is to provide students access to nature during recess

breaks and allow students the

opportunity to engage in unstructured play outdoors. Based on research findings presented in Richard Louv's

Last Child in the Woods, contact with

nature improves student learning and children who feel connected to nature have better physical, mental, and emotional health. Site design is complete and the project is pending native plant purchase.



Wilson School second graders make impressions in clay with a variety of objects to determine which objects make the best fossil. Photo by Mrs. Jasmone, Wilson School.

On May 21st, Rawlings and Ania visited the school to teach second graders about fossils. They discussed the geologic time scale, how the different types of fossils form, and the petrification process. Rawlings and Ania had students make impressions in clay with a variety of objects to determine which objects make the best fossils, conducted a celery petrification experiment, and had students cast a fossil of their favorite object. The students shared many of their own fossil findings, stories, and asked questions about the types of fossil found in the local area. Alpena is located in an area where fossils are abundant due to the vast sea that once covered the area, including the state's Petoskey stone, a fossilized coral.

Educational activities like this help connect children with nature by helping students understand the importance of the fossil record, fossil formation and the abundance of fossils in their local area.

This outcome is consistent with the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future priorities of "Partnerships and Accountability" and "Public Use".

Lake Sturgeon Spawning Reef Announcement Held at Fighting Island Lodge

*Submitted by Jim Boase
Fishery Biologist*

Both United States (U.S.) and Canadian partners met at Fighting Island on April 19th to announce Phase 2, Construction, of a new lake sturgeon spawning reef at Fighting Island in LaSalle, Ontario. Approximately 80 researchers, media representatives, VIPs, and interested citizens from both the U.S. and Canada came to the Fighting Island Lodge to celebrate the announcement of the lake



Greg Kennedy from the Great Lakes Science Center and James Boase and Jim McFee from the Alpena NFWCO lift a lake sturgeon captured in front of the Fighting Island Lodge in the Detroit River on April 19, 2008. Photo by Karen Boase.

sturgeon spawning reef at Fighting Island. Fishery Biologist Dr. Bruce Manny from the USGS Great Lakes Science Center (USGS) and Fishery Biologist James Boase from the Alpena National Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (NFWCO) presented information regarding the history of the site and the specifics about the proposed reef construction. John Hartig, Manager of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (Refuge), presented information about funding for the project stating that “both the U.S. and Canada have pooled resources to create a lake sturgeon spawning reef located at Fighting Island in the Detroit River, and to date \$178,000 dollars have been raised for construction of the reef.” Members from the Essex Region Conservation Authority, Michigan Wildlife Conservancy, and BASF presented information about the project. This effort is truly international in scope and is the first such environmental project jointly funded by both U.S. and Canadian funds and is aptly located within the Refuge. Corporate sponsorship for this project includes both BASF and DTE Energy and both have committed in-kind support for construction and materials. As this project develops we continue to seek additional funding to increase the size of the reef and funds to conduct post-construction assessment. The reef will be located near the international boundary at the northeast corner of Fighting and when completed should provide spawning habitat for lake sturgeon, walleye, lake whitefish and number of other native species of fish.

Funding for reef construction has been provided by the following agencies:

- Canada-Ontario Agreement – Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (\$65,000)
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation – Bring Back the Natives Program (\$45,000)
- Michigan Wildlife Conservancy (\$30,000)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Coastal and Challenge Cost Share Grants (\$23,000)
- Environment Canada’s Great Lakes Sustainability Fund (\$15,000)

Phase 1 of this project, Pre-Construction Assessment, began in the fall of 2005 and was completed in the fall 2007 with \$34,500 from Environment Canada's Great Lakes Sustainability Fund and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Challenge Cost Share Grant Program and Coastal Grant Program. Phase 1 work involved researchers from Alpena, USGS and Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). Phase 2, Reef Construction, will be undertaken in 2008-2009. Following reef construction, Post-Construction Assessment will be undertaken in 2009-2010, including a public education and outreach component. "This is the first time both Canadian and U.S. money is being pooled for a common fish habitat rehabilitation project in the Great Lakes," stated U.S. Congressman John Dingell. "This sturgeon reef construction project is precedent setting and shows the strength of our U.S.-Canada partnership for the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge." "We are proud to be contributing to the first-ever fish habitat rehabilitation project in the Great Lakes," said Canadian Member of Parliament Jeff Watson. "Canada's government is committed to restoring the health of our lakes and waterways. Today's announcement builds upon the significant financial commitment we have already made to help restore this important water system, and demonstrates our commitment to the residents who rely on the watersheds of Lake St. Clair, Lake Erie and the connecting Detroit River."

The highlight of the event took place in front of the lodge as an adult lake sturgeon that was captured on a setline the night before, was netted and lifted onto the Service boat the *Sentinel* to the surprise and excitement of the guests. The fish was 70 inches long and weight 72 pounds. By the time the *Sentinel* pulled up to the Fighting Island Dock the crowd of guests, including Congressman John Dingell and Member of Canadian Parliament Jeff Watson, were waiting to ask questions. For the next hour guests had an opportunity to jump on board the *Sentinel* and view the captured lake sturgeon up close. Jim McFee and James Boase from Alpena, and Greg Kennedy, Dr. Bruce Manny and Dr. Ed Roseman from USGS were present to answer questions from the guests.



Michigan DNR Biologist Gary Towns and Service Biologist James Boase discuss habitat issues in the Detroit River with Congressman John Dingell at the Fighting Island Lodge on April 19, 2008. Photo by Karen Boase

The lake sturgeon is a remnant of the dinosaur age and can grow to over eight feet in length and weigh over 200 pounds. It is listed as either threatened or endangered in 19 of 20 states within its original range in the U.S. In Canada, it was identified as threatened by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife. Lake sturgeon is endemic to the Great Lakes, and historically, the Huron-Erie Corridor was one of the most productive waters for lake sturgeon in North America. In 2001, lake sturgeon spawning was documented in the Detroit River for the first time in over 30 years, but their numbers are estimated to be only one percent of their original population. Scientists have now determined that lack of spawning habitat is one of the factors limiting lake sturgeon population growth. Over the past six years, lake sturgeon spawning habitat has been constructed off Belle Isle

in Detroit, off McKee Park in Windsor, and off Fort Malden in Amherstburg to increase available spawning habitat for lake sturgeon and other native fish. Historically, the area surrounding Fighting Island was well known as an important spawning and nursery area for lake sturgeon and thus was targeted as a potential habitat construction site. Recent research by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USGS, and MDNR has shown that water velocity and depth characteristics off the northeast corner of Fighting Island are ideal for spawning, and the river bed can support a constructed reef. In addition, scientists have caught juvenile lake sturgeon just downstream of the proposed Fighting Island reef site, providing further justification for building the reef in this location. Current partners in the project include: Environment Canada, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Essex Region Conservation Authority, U.S. Geological Survey Great Lakes Science Center, Michigan Wildlife Conservancy, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Detroit River Canadian Cleanup, BASF Corporation, DTE Energy, Landmark Engineers Inc., International Wildlife Refuge Alliance, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Michigan Sea Grant, and Wildlife Habitat Council.



Service Biologist Jim McFee, Dennis Fijalkowski (Michigan Wildlife Conservancy), Refuge Manager Dr. John Hartig, Jeff Watson (Canadian Member of Parliament), Ed Nuermberg (BASF Corporation), and Service Biologist James Boase hoist a lake sturgeon captured in front of the BASF Fighting Island Lodge in the Detroit River on April 19, 2008. Photo by Karen Boase.

The Detroit River has the distinction of being the only International Wildlife Refuge in North America and the only river system in North America to hold both American Heritage River and Canadian Heritage River designations. This project is being undertaken in direct response to the sturgeon spawning habitat restoration objective in the Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge.

For more information please go to the following links:

<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/DetroitRiver/documents/FightingIslandSturgeonReef.pdf>

http://huron-erie.org/sturgeon_restoration.html

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p6xR9czENWM>

<http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080428/OPINION02/804280360/1070/OPINION02>

<http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/fish/InNews/ancient2008.html>

This project is an example of the Alpena NFWCO's commitment to the following Fisheries Vision Priorities: "Partnerships and Accountability" and "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management".

Third Annual Benefit Dinner Held at the Renaissance Center in Detroit, Michigan

Submitted by Jim Boase
Fishery Biologist

The International Wildlife Refuge Alliance held its 3rd annual Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Alliance benefit dinner “*Springtime in the Refuge*” on Friday evening, April 18, 2008, that included a silent and live auction. The benefit dinner was held in the General Motors’ Wintergarden in the Renaissance Center overlooking the Detroit River in Detroit, Michigan and was attended by approximately 400 people. The 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 celebrates the accomplishments and progress of the Refuge, which has an international reputation for public-private partnerships. Each year the benefit dinner raises over \$100,000 for the Refuge.



Refuge Manager Dr. John Hartig, Member of Canadian Parliament Jeff Watson, Congressman John Dingell, and Regional Director Robyn Thorson at the April 18, 2008 Benefit Dinner for the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. Photo by Mark Houston DTE Energy.

The highlight of the evening was the VIP reception which was held in the GM Next showroom where Beth Lowery, GM’s Vice President for the Environment, Energy and Safety Policy exclaimed “GM’s partnership with the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge supports our commitment to actions to restore and preserve the environment.” Additional presentations and speeches were given by Congressman John D. Dingell, Congressman John Conyers, Member of Canadian Parliament Jeff Watson, and keynote speaker Helen Taylor, State Director for the Nature Conservancy in Michigan. Ms. Taylor highlighted the tremendous value and benefits of building North America’s only International Wildlife Refuge stating “people often forget how important this part of the world is to our global environment, particularly to freshwater ecosystems and species like migratory birds. Protecting places through partnerships like the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge helps to preserve nature and sustain the health of our ecology for plants, animals and people.”

Fishery Biologist James Boase from the Alpena National Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (NFWCO) was an invited guest due to his fisheries work within the Refuge and related work on the Detroit River for the past six years. Since working with the Service in 2002, Boase has worked with Refuge Manager John Hartig to identify fishery assessment needs within the Refuge boundaries. Working with partners, biologists from Alpena NFWCO 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 5,100 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 wetland, shoals 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 NFWCO, 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 those 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.

Service Biologist Addresses League of Women Voters

*Submitted by Aaron Woldt
Fishery Biologist*

Fishery Biologist Aaron Woldt of the Alpena National Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office was invited to speak at the May meeting of the League of Women Voters of Alpena County on May 12. The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization established to encourage citizen participation in government activities. Woldt gave a 40 minute long PowerPoint presentation titled "Exotic Species in the Alpena Area—What You Can Do To Help" that included descriptions and suspected origins of the numerous exotic species in the Alpena area (zebra and quagga mussels, purple loosestrife, Eurasian watermilfoil, round goby, Eurasian ruffe, spiny waterflea, rusty crayfish, VHS) and descriptions of potential new invaders (Asian carp, snakehead, fishhook water flea) on the horizon. Woldt also discussed current regulatory, legislative, and community based efforts (e.g. voluntary codes of conduct) to control the introduction and spread of exotic species in Michigan and the Great Lakes.

Approximately 30-35 local community members attended the presentation. Woldt fielded questions from the floor regarding exotic species and Service and federal legislative efforts to limit the introduction and spread of exotic invaders. Woldt's presentation was well received, and many League members expressed thanks for the high quality of information provided.

Giving presentations to civic groups like the League of Women Voters allows Alpena NFWCO staff to quickly spread information regarding natural resource issues to a large number of community members. This outcome is consistent with the Service's goal of implementing educational and outreach activities to educate public regarding Service activities under the "Partnerships and Accountability" and "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" priorities of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Aquatic Invasive Species

Alpena NFWCO Staff Conduct Annual Spring Ruffe Surveillance in Thunder Bay Area of Lake Huron

*Submitted by Anjanette Bowen
Fishery Biologist*

The Alpena NFWCO conducted annual spring surveillance and monitoring to detect the presence of adult spawning Eurasian ruffe (ruffe) in the Thunder Bay River in Alpena, Michigan during the month of April.

Small mesh (1.3cm) gill nets (33 x 1.6m) were used during the survey. Nets were set overnight for two nights a week during the week of April 14 through the week of April 28, and were fished at three to four index locations per set. Sampling targeted water temperatures and timing corresponding to when ruffe were captured in past years. No ruffe were captured following a total of 21 nights of sampling effort.

All bycatch were measured and released. Tissue samples were collected from yellow perch and walleye for a genetic study conducted by The University of Toledo - Great Lakes Genetic Laboratory to determine unique DNA markers for spawning populations of these native species. Alpena NFWCO staff that participated in this project included the following: Heather Rawlings, Scott Koproski, Adam Kowalski, and Anjanette Bowen.

Ruffe are an aquatic invasive species native to north central Europe that were accidentally introduced into the Great Lakes via ballast water from an ocean-going vessel. They resemble and are related to yellow perch but do not attain a size that is desirable for sportfishing harvest and consumption and are thought to compete with native species for food and habitat resources. Ruffe were designated an aquatic nuisance species in 1992 by the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force.

Ruffe were first found in the Thunder Bay area (Thunder Bay River) during monitoring efforts in 1995 and by 1999 they had become the most abundant bottom dwelling fish species captured from the Thunder Bay River. In 2002 the Alpena NFWCO initiated this effort to remove spawning adults prior to egg release. Spawning phase ruffe were captured in 2002 and 2003, but have not been captured since. This survey has continued in an effort to detect the presence of ruffe that may persist in the area.



Biologist Bowen removes small fish from a gill net used to survey for the presence of spawning phase Eurasian ruffe. Photo by Scott Koproski, USFWS.

Aquatic nuisance species monitoring and control is essential to promoting healthy native species populations. This project is consistent with the “Aquatic Invasive Species” and “Aquatic Species Conservation and Management” priorities of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management

Pre-Construction Monitoring at Houghton Creek Road-Stream Crossing

Submitted by Andrea Ania
Fishery Biologist

Stream geometry and sediment data was gathered by Alpena NFWCO biologists Heather Rawlings and Andrea Ania for the Houghton Creek Road stream crossing on Wilkins Creek. Wilkins Creek is a high quality, cold water tributary to the Rifle River. Currently, this stream crossing consists of an undersized, perched culvert that is a barrier to native brook trout accessing upstream habitat. The current culvert has altered upstream and downstream geomorphology, and is a source of non-point source pollution (sediment). The survey was conducted within the impacted area both up and downstream of the culvert, including a longitudinal profile, cross-sections, riffle pebble counts, and velocity measurements.



The undersized culvert on Wilkins Creek blocks water, creating a backwater upstream of the culvert and causing smaller particles (silt) to settle out. As a result, there is an abundance of silt and emergent aquatic vegetation, and the creek channel is poorly defined. Upper Right: Downstream view of the existing perched culvert and plunge pool. Photos by Andrea Ania, USFWS.

Data collected from this site will be used to monitor changes in riffle substrate, channel shape, and water velocities post-construction. The Ogemaw County Road Commission is scheduled to address this road-stream crossing later this summer.

Habitat assessment and stream survey efforts are consistent with the Service’s “Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management” priority of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Public Use

Onaway and Rogers City Public Schools 5th Grade Conservation Day

*Submitted by Heather Rawlings
Fish and Wildlife Biologist*

Alpena NFWCO Biologists Andrea Ania and Heather Rawlings participated in “Conservation Day” on May 30, 2008. Conservation Day wrapped up a year of learning about conservation in the Ocqueoc River Watershed for the 5th graders of Onaway and Rogers City Public Schools. The event was held at the Ocqueoc Outdoor Center near Millersburg, Michigan, and was sponsored by the Ocqueoc River Commission. Students had been conducting water quality studies in the watershed since the fall of 2007, and this event highlighted the student presentations with results from their monitoring efforts. Natural resource agency personnel and NGO’s were present at the Conservation Fair to show students other aspects of monitoring that could be conducted in the watershed, and what other agencies and organizations have to offer through their varied programs.



Biologist Heather Rawlings explains how a boat electrofisher works to a group of 5th graders braving the rain. Photo by Andea Ania, USFWS.

Ania and Rawlings brought the Alpena NFWCO boat electrofisher and a fyke net to show active and passive means of sampling fish populations. Frozen northern pike, yellow perch, walleye and a rock bass were brought on ice for display. Other presenters included Michigan State University (MSU) Extension and MSU Project Fish, Trout Unlimited, Presque Isle Gas & Electric, Michigan State Police Dive Team, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, NOAA Thunder Bay Marine Sanctuary, Presque Isle County Marine Officer, and the Service’s Hammond Bay Biological Station.

Approximately 150 fifth graders braved the rain to rotate through a series of presentations. Outreach events such as these contribute toward the “Public Use” component of the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Alpena NFWCO Assists with Educational Outdoor Camp

*Submitted by Adam Kowalski
Fishery Biologist*

Fishery Biologist Adam Kowalski was invited to attend an outdoor educational camp from May 29-30 as an adult chaperone and as a guest speaker about fisheries for the 5th and 6th graders from Alpena Lincoln Elementary where his 11yr old son attends. The camp was structured as an educational experience of the outdoors along with periods of unstructured play time for the students. Since the focus of the camp was education Kowalski talked about the educational requirements to obtain a Fish Biologist position with the Service and other agencies.



Biologist Adam Kowalski (lower right) shows 5th and 6th graders from Lincoln Elementary School how to use a beach seine to capture fish. They also learned to set and use a trap net (on left). Photo by Adam Kowalski, USFWS.

Kowalski visited the classes the day before to go over some simple predator prey relationship calculation and a diversity index. Trap nets were set the night before to catch larger predator species. The students helped with seining to count and identify the prey species within the lake. After the trap nets were emptied and sorted, the seining complete the students worked through the predator prey relation calculation and the diversity index. Kowalski also talked about the many different methods for collecting the same data. Kowalski also helped out in other area playing capture the flag, baiting hooks and untangling fishing line.

Kowalski's presentation 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 "Public Use", "Partnerships and Accountability" and "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" priorities of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

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

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Alpena National Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office
145 Water Street, Federal Building Rm. 204
Alpena, MI 49707
Phone: 989-356-5102
Web site: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/alpena/>