



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Midwest Region

## Fisheries & Aquatic Resources Program

# Fish Lines



**Summer Means  
Survey Time**  
for the Mussel Program

**Strapping Cages and  
Fish to Barges?**

**Not Your Everyday Job!**

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# Fish Lines

Fisheries & Aquatic Resources Program - Midwest Region

The Mission of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service: working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

The vision of the Service's Fisheries Program is working with partners to restore and maintain fish and other aquatic resources at self-sustaining levels and to support Federal mitigation programs for the benefit of the American public. Implementing this vision will help the Fisheries Program do more for aquatic resources and the people who value and depend on them through enhanced partnerships, scientific integrity, and a balanced approach to conservation.

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-USFWS/SarahLeis

Missouri Department of Conservation and Neosho National Fish Hatchery staff collect eggs from a Federally endangered pallid sturgeon.

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<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/Fisheries/library/fishlines.htm>

# *Fish Lines*

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-USFWS/Anna Varian

**Underwater photo of a Michigan brook trout.**

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# Summer Means Survey Time for the Mussel Program

BY NATHAN ECKERT, GENOA NFH

As summer heats up, the production side of the mussel program slows down and monitoring surveys become the main focus. One exception

to this is the sheepnose, a newly listed endangered species that broods during June and July as opposed to other more common species which generally brood over winter and into the spring. We

made three trips during July out to the Chippewa River to look for brooding sheepnose. These searches yielded a total of four brooding females, only one of which contained viable larvae. At Genoa National Fish Hatchery (NFH), we were able to produce about 1,700 juveniles from this effort.

In between those trips, we got back to business by participating in monitoring surveys on the Wisconsin and Mississippi Rivers with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), as part of the ongoing recovery project for the endangered Higgins' eye pearly mussel. Genoa NFH has been working with the USACE since 2001 to recovery populations of the Higgins' eye in the Mississippi River and its' tributaries from the Quad Cities to the Twin Cities.

The surveys involved using SCUBA and snorkeling gear to do both quantitative and qualitative assessments of the survey locations. Quadrat sampling was



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Mussels are sorted and examined as part of annual monitoring surveys on the Wisconsin and Mississippi Rivers.

used at each location to determine the density of mussels, and then timed searches were used to determine if any species were present at the sites which hadn't been picked up in the quadrats. We surveyed the Wisconsin River at Orion and the Mississippi River at Prairie du Chien. At Orion, several hundred Higgins' eye were found that had been released as part of previous stocking efforts; this is an encouraging sign that the reintroduced animals will be able to survive and hopefully sustain their own population.

The site at Prairie du Chien is not stocked with hatchery-raised Higgins' eye pearlymussels. Instead, it is a reference site to determine how the population of Higgins' eye will change naturally without any intervention from biologists. Data from this summer's surveys will be added to previous survey data to aid in the decision making process as we continue to strive to recover our rare and endangered mussel fauna.



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Divers follow a line out to quadrats in deep water during quantitative sampling of native mussels.



Higgins' Eye Pearlymussel



Sheepnose Mussel

For further info about the Genoa NFH: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/genoa/>

# Strapping Cages and Fish to Barges? Not Your Everyday Job!

BY BRITTANY ACKERLAND and AARON PARKER, CARTERVILLE FWCO

First off, I want to say thank you to everyone with the Fish and Wildlife Service for doing what you do, and I am happy to be a part of such a great organization. This is the end of my first week working as a student employee at the Carterville Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (FWCO), and I thought it would be fun to write a little article on how it went.

they are pulled through the electrical barrier system that is currently in the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal (CSSC), put in place to block upstream fish migration, particularly invasive Asian carp.

About a year ago, our office learned that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) – Chicago District was going to be performing voltage field mapping of the electrical barriers with multiple electrical probes attached to a barge within the CSSC. The purpose of that study is to observe the effects that a large metal-hulled barge has on the electrical fields of the barrier system.

Because obtaining two barges and a tug vessel with a full crew is no easy task, our office saw this USACE study as a unique opportunity to repeat a caged-fish study that was performed in 2003 on the demonstration barrier. The first study was performed at the demonstration barrier because of concerns that metal barges that traverse the barrier may



-USFWS

Brittany Ackerland gives the thumbs up during her first week in the field, accompanied by Project Leader Rob Simmonds of the Carterville Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office.

My first week in the field was spent on a side project for ongoing work entitled “Evaluation of Fish Behavior at the Electric Dispersal Barrier in the CSSC,” but luckily at the office we just call it the “Caged-Fish Project.” Aaron Parker has been spearheading this project and tells us all that, “We are going to be doing something that hasn’t been done since 2003; we are putting a cage on a barge.” The purpose of these caged-fish trials, which typically are performed using conventional boats, are to observe fish behavior as

create voids in the electrical fields and potentially allow fish to move upstream. Since that study, more robust and higher voltage barriers have been implemented in the CSSC, so we felt that new caged-fish work was needed. The USACE workers who were leading the voltage field mapping study were kind enough to allow us to work alongside them to observe fish that were in cages strapped to various parts of the barges.



Naturally, I had a hundred questions, but everyone else had the same or similar questions since this was very unconventional fisheries work that isn't taught in fisheries classes. When the day came and I finally saw the contraptions that were made for this project; I won't lie, I thought to myself: "that's it?" But once it was all in action, I realized how extraordinary everything really was! We took a little PVC fish cage and mounted it to the side, back, and "rake" (the sloped front end) of a huge barge. Getting the fish in and out of the cage when it was mounted to the rake was the most challenging part since the caged-fish runs were performed both with fish in the open rake and with another boxed barge lashed to the front of the raked barge. The behavior of the encaged fish was recorded during each run through the barriers. Data are still in review, but we are all very excited to see if the metal barges affect the electrical currents in a way which in turn affects the fish's behaviors.

So, to sum my first week all up....AWESOME. It was an amazing experience and I hope to continue them with the Fish and Wildlife Service for some time to come.

-USFWS

**Aaron Parker (right) of the Carterville Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office attaches a fish cage to a barge with the help of two deckhands, to test fish reaction to an electrical barrier on the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal.**



-USFWS

**The arrow points to the fish cage inside the rake of the barge. The barge will traverse the electrical barrier on the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal to observe how the metal barge hull affects the electrical currents from the barrier.**

For further info about the Carterville FWCO: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/Fisheries/library/StationFactSheets/carterville.pdf>

## Friends of Pendills Creek Hatchery “FPCH” News

BY CURT FRIEZ, PENDILLS CREEK NFH

The *Friends of Pendills Creek Hatchery* have celebrated another fine year of support for the Pendills Creek and Sullivan Creek National Fish Hatcheries (NFH). This past year, they were very busy raising funds in support of our outreach and further development of the Pendills Creek NFH public access site on Lake Superior. Their fund raising activities ranged from selling various types of merchandise for both adults and children, holding a rummage sale and bake sale, and applying for, and receiving, a grant from the local Hudson Trust.

The Friends group used the funds raised in support of the hatchery’s Annual Children’s Fishing Event and development of the public access site by adding an aesthetic trash receptacle and pedestal grill, both next to the picnic pavilion. The current Executive Committee members work extremely well together and are always striving to upgrade the public access site and improve the kids fishing pond event. We were very fortunate when all but one of the members decided to run again and get re-elected

For further info about the Pendills Creek NFH/Sullivan Creek NFH: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/Fisheries/library/StationFactSheets/pendills.pdf>

## Fishers and Farmers Growing Steady and Sure

BY HEIDI KEULER, LA CROSSE FWCO

Although this summer’s drought has been tough on crops, the Fishers & Farmers Partnership (FFP) has really flourished. Several events have kept its members extremely busy in the field, and new partners are waiting to help it “make hay.”

The FFP, one of 17 National Fish Habitat Partnerships, held its biannual steering committee meeting June 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> in Webster City, Iowa. This was one of the best attended FFP meetings to date with 20 people present from 13 organizations (including three new entities) in the five-state focus area. Chris Jones of the Iowa Soybean Association (ISA), Martin Konrad (Iowa Department of Natural Resources), and Eileen Bader (The Nature Conservancy) presented their work to enhance water quality and farm productivity here.

After these presentations, Arlo Van Diest, a local farmer known for the best management practices used at his farm, talked to FFP members and said, “I wouldn’t miss this for any-thing!” Meanwhile, FFP Coordinator Heidi Keuler summed up the event

Partnerships are essential for effective fisheries conservation. Many agencies, organizations, and private individuals are involved in fisheries conservation and management, but no one can do it alone. Together, these stakeholders combine efforts and expertise to tackle challenges facing fisheries conservation. The success of these partnerships will depend on strong, two-way communications and accountability.

to the Executive Committee for another term.

New to the Committee in

the Vice President role is Molly McGrail whom had served previously as past President. The returning Executive Committee members are: Chris McCoy – President, Bobbie Preston – Treasurer, and Phyllis Taylor – Secretary. Based upon what these members accomplished last year, I’m guessing this next year will be very productive too.

In the future, the group is looking into ways to acquire funding to place a pedestrian foot bridge across Pendills Creek to allow easy access from one side of the kids fishing pond to the other. This will be a major funding project but the *Friends of Pendills Creek Hatchery* seems up for the task.



-USFWS

Chris Jones of the Iowa Soybean Association speaks to local landowners about the Fishers and Farmers Partnership project on the Boone Watershed near Webster City, Iowa.

saying, “It’s not every day you see conservation folks and farmers in the same room, not only talking about, but agreeing on, landscape issues.”

The next day, participants toured three local sites including: a FFP-funded habitat project to restore a stream oxbow; a roadway culvert project to remove a fish passage barrier; and a bio-reactor project to reduce nitrate levels in subsurface (tiled) drainage systems. Based on input from workshops held during 2011 in Minnesota, Missouri and Iowa, the FFP recently released its project monitoring plan. Chris Jones (ISA) led this effort and was assisted by the FFP Science Team. Finally, FFP members also presented three talks at the recent annual meeting of the American Fisheries Society in St. Paul. The Fishers and Farmers Partnership has really grown this summer; without the collaboration of its partners, we wouldn’t see the great success we do!

For more information, contact:

[Heidi\\_Keuler@fws.gov](mailto:Heidi_Keuler@fws.gov).



-USFWS

**Jake Peterson talks to Fishers & Farmers Partnership (FFP) members about how an FFP project impacted his family.**

For further info about the La Crosse FWC: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/lacrossefisheries/>

## La Crosse Fish Health Center Supports Professional and Technical Development

BY SARAH LEIS, LA CROSSE FHC

Over the past year, staff from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and La Crosse Fish Health Center (FHC) organized the annual American Fisheries Society Fish Health Section meeting. The meeting was held Tuesday, July 31<sup>st</sup> through Thursday, August 2<sup>nd</sup>, with a continuing education class on Friday, August 3<sup>rd</sup>. The meeting was two full days of oral presentations and one poster session. The oral presentations included the following topics: aquaculture and drug research, bacteriology, parasitology, virology, emerging fish pathogens, diagnostic cases, and introduced pathogens and their

ecological consequences. The meeting was held at the Radisson Hotel in downtown La Crosse, Wisconsin.

There were over 100 participants in attendance and it was concluded with a backwater cruise on the Mississippi River. On Friday, August 2<sup>nd</sup>, the “Molecular Diagnostic Tests for Aquatic Animal Pathogens” continuing education course took place. The course was organized by Maureen Purcell, a research microbiologist from the U.S. Geological Survey - Western Fisheries Research Center. The course lasted all day and there were many educational and enlightening presentations on molecular tools and their applications in fish health.

For further info about the La Crosse FHC: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/LaCrosseFishHealthCenter/>

## Coded-wire Tagging Completed at Pendills Creek NFH

BY CRYSTAL LEGAULT-ANDERSON, PENDILLS CREEK NFH

For the third year in a row, all the lake trout are coded-wire tagged (CWT) and adipose fin clipped at the Pendills Creek National Fish Hatchery (NFH). Each CWT contains a code which enables fishery managers to determine the age, strain, stocking location, producing fish hatchery and stocking event for the fish. All fish with CWTs are adipose clipped, and when caught and the heads returned, the CWT can be removed and read for the vital biological information.



-USFWS

**A building covers the culture raceways at the Pendills Creek National Fish Hatchery, providing lake trout with protection from predators and maximizing fish quality.**

Two AutoFish System trailers arrived at the Pendills Creek NFH during the early summer months of 2012. The project is managed by Elliot Hoffman and Kevin Pankow from the Green Bay Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office, and also utilized six animal caretakers in total: three from Pendills Creek NFH; two from Iron River NFH; and one from Jordan River NFH. The trailers started operating late in the afternoon on August 7<sup>th</sup> and finished with over 1.0 million lake trout processed by August 15<sup>th</sup>, less than nine full working days!

For further info about the Pendills Creek NFH/Sullivan Creek NFH: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/Fisheries/library/StationFactSheets/pendills.pdf>

The Fisheries Program maintains and implements a comprehensive set of tools and activities to conserve and manage self-sustaining populations of native fish and other aquatic resources. These tools and activities are linked to management and recovery plans that help achieve restoration and recovery goals, provide recreational benefits, and address Federal trust responsibilities. Sound science, effective partnerships, and careful planning and evaluation are integral to conservation and management efforts.

The AutoFish System trailers use advanced technology to sort and process lake trout, and is a cost effective way to handle fish rapidly without the use of anesthetic. The AutoFish trailers were set up at Pendills Creek NFH to put CWTs in the snouts and also clip off the adipose fin of every yearling fish on station. The AutoFish System replaces the old way of fish marking at Pendills Creek NFH, which was to clip a different set of fins for each year class by hand, and not have any CWT implanted. Much more valuable information will now be available with this marking method than what fin clips provided in the past.



-USFWS

**The AutoFish coded-wire tagging and marking trailer can be placed inside the Pendills Creek NFH raceway building, maximizing the efficiency of the marking process and minimizing stress to the fish.**

## Not Shocking: Carterville FWCO Staff helps with Barrier Outage Fish Clearing

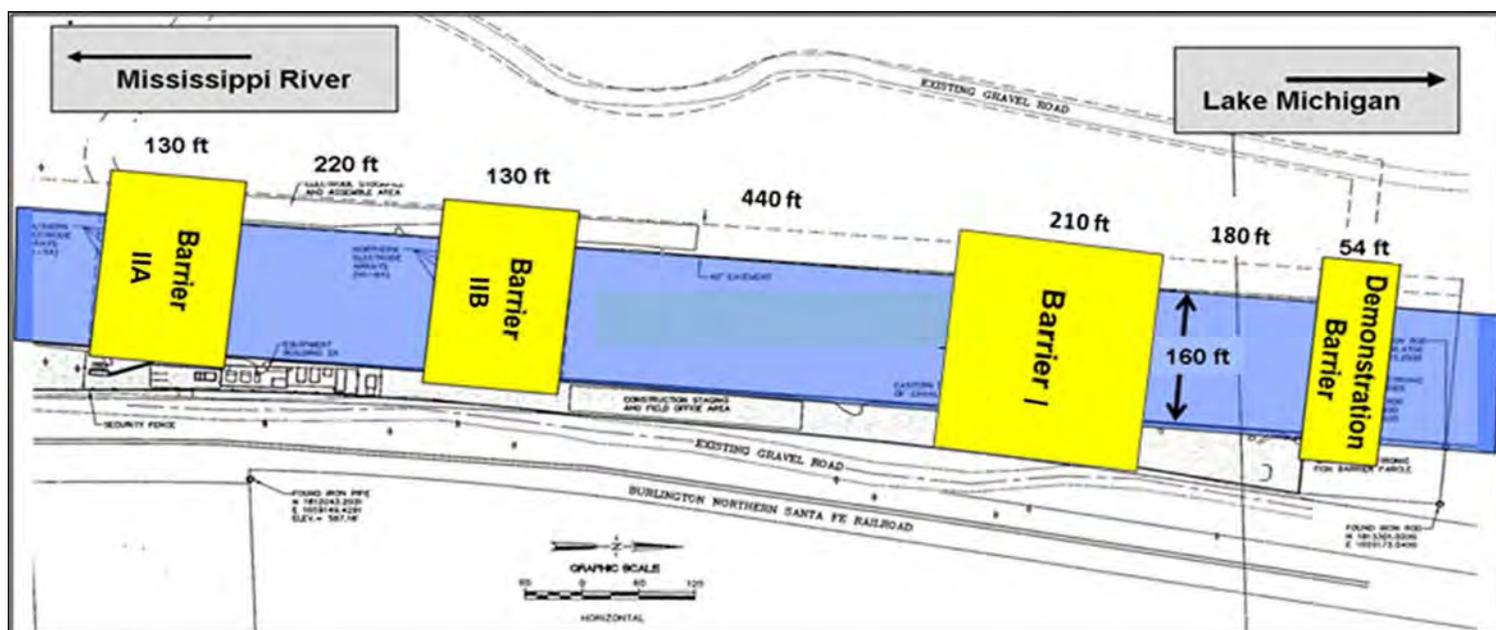
BY JOSE RIVERA, CARTERVILLE FWCO

Normally involved in the fight against invasive Asian carp, the Carterville Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (FWCO) assisted in an emergency effort to clear any fish out of the Electric Dispersal Barrier on Thursday June 21<sup>st</sup>. The Chicago Shipping and Sanitary Canal (CSSC) links the Mississippi River basin system to Lake Michigan (and by default, the entire Great lakes system). Designed to prevent Asian carp from becoming established in Lake Michigan via the CSSC, the Electric Dispersal Barrier is situated in the canal southwest of Chicago

On the third Thursday of June, staff from the Carterville FWCO joined a multi-organization response team assembled to clear fish from between the Demo barrier and Barrier IIB. Joining forces for

### Aquatic Invasive Species

Aquatic invasive species are one of the most significant threats to fish and wildlife and their habitats. Local and regional economies are severely affected with control costs exceeding \$123 billion annually. The Fisheries Program has focused its efforts on preventing introductions of new aquatic invasive species, detecting and monitoring new and established invasives, controlling established invasives, providing coordination and technical assistance to organizations that respond to invasive species problems, and developing comprehensive, integrated plans to fight aquatic invasive species.



-USACE

Diagram of the Electric Dispersal Barrier within the Chicago Shipping and Sanitary Canal

in Romeoville, Ill., 37 miles from Lake Michigan. Consisting of a series of electric arrays, the barrier emits pulses to scare and jolt fish. Multiple electric barriers are maintained to provide redundancy. The Electric Dispersal Barrier is a crucial element in the strategy for preventing Asian carp from invading the Great Lakes.

Fish may have entered the area between Barrier IIB and the Demo barrier during a brief power outage in May. The day following the power outage, several large fish were found in this area using hydro-acoustics and sonar scanning gear. It's possible these fish swam upstream into this area during the power outage, and became isolated between the electrified Barrier IIB and the Demo barrier once power was restored.

this emergency clearing procedure were the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE, project lead and electrofishing), Illinois Department of Natural Resources (DNR, netting), and Southern Illinois University (SIU, sonar). The U.S. Coast Guard (waterway safety) and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (canal flow manipulation) were also involved. Representing the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Carterville FWCO staff was responsible for surveying using DIDSON (Dual Frequency Identification Sonar) equipment and operating a deep-water electrofishing unit.

Southern Illinois University began the day using hydro-acoustics and side scan sonar to survey the area between the Demo barrier and Barrier IIB prior to any clearing efforts. Staff from the Illinois

DNR set a surface-to-bottom gill net (100-yards long x 30-feet deep) approximately 300 yards south from the Demo Barrier. To herd fish into the net, noise was created by pounding on boats and revving trimmed outboard motors. Meanwhile, the electrofishing boats - a deep-water rig operated by the Carterville FWCO and a standard rig operated by the USACE - targeted fish in the area that were located using DIDSON sonar equipment and helped to harass fish into the gill net. Power to the barriers was maintained during the clearing procedure in order to prevent new fish from entering the area.

While there is an inherent danger working in the canal within the Electric Dispersal Barrier, particularly with several boats operating in such a confined space, plenty was done to maintain a standard level of safety. The canal flow was decreased, safety spotters

were positioned on the east and west banks of the canal, and a safety boat equipped with an AED (Automatic External Defibrillator) device was positioned just outside the electrified zone.

In summary, the emergency clearing procedure was a success; nearly all of the fish targets identified by Sonar and DIDSON were removed from the area between the Demo barrier and Barrier IIB. All the fish removed were large common carp, consistent with what biologists find when the area is sampled with nets and electrofishing. No injuries were sustained by participating staff, further qualifying the day as a success. The Carterville FWCO has ongoing studies based out of the Chicago Sanitary and Shipping Canal, and will continue to survey the areas and fish around the Electric Dispersal Barrier with DIDSON sonar equipment.



-IDNR/KevinIrons

**Carterville Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office staff monitor the Chicago Shipping and Sanitary Canal for invasive Asian carp (deep-water electrofishing boat in foreground; DIDSON (Dual Frequency Identification Sonar) sonar boat in background).**

For further info about the Carterville FWCO: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/Fisheries/library/StationFactSheets/carterville.pdf>

## Youth Outdoor Fest Sets Records for Attendance and FUN!

BY HEIDI KEULER, LA CROSSE FWCO

Since 2009, the La Crosse Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (FWCO) has partnered with the *Friends of the Upper Mississippi Fishery Services* (FUMFS) and La Crosse Park & Recreation Department to host Youth Outdoor Fest, a free, hands-on event for kids of all ages. This year, a record setting crowd of about 2,500 attended the July 14<sup>th</sup> event and visited 30 different activity booths.

Many local offices of government agencies, as well as community organizations, clubs and private businesses contributed activities including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Geological Survey, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge – Winona District, Genoa National Fish Hatchery, Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge, La Crosse Fish Health

Center, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Chaseburg Rod/Gun Club, Bluff Country Tale Spinners, La Crosse Camera Club, Trout Unlimited, Coulee Hunting Dogs, Bikes Limited, Coulee Region Adventures and Naturally Avian.

As the population in the United States continues to grow, the potential for adverse impacts on aquatic resources, including habitat will increase. At the same time, demands for responsible, quality recreational fishing experiences will also increase. The Service has a long tradition of providing opportunities for public enjoyment of aquatic resources through recreational fishing, habitat restoration, and education programs and through mitigating impacts of Federal water projects. The Service also recognizes that some aquatic habitats have been irreversibly altered by human activity (i.e. - dam building). To compensate for these significant changes in habitat and lost fishing opportunities, managers often introduce non-native species when native species can no longer survive in the altered habitat.



Families attending Youth Outdoor Fest receive their admission, a light lunch, and raffle tickets to win a children's fishing rod/reel, all free of charge. On top of that, there are many activities for families to participate in such as trout fishing, geocaching, electrofishing demonstrations, motor boating, minnow races, identification of live fish, archery, soil science,

storytelling, invertebrate investigations, fish cleaning and dissection, canoeing/ kayaking, casting games, furs and turtles, mountain biking and much more.

If you have yet to attend Youth Outdoor Fest, make sure to mark your calendar for next year's event (July 13, 2013) and bring your family. For more information contact: [Heidi\\_Keuler@fws.gov](mailto:Heidi_Keuler@fws.gov).

For further info about the La Crosse FWC: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/lacrossefisheries/>

## USSA Summerfest: Dreams Can Come True!

BY OREY ECKES, GENOA NFH

Staff from the Genoa National Fish Hatchery (NFH) participated in the United Special Sportsman Alliance (USSA) annual Summerfest event held in Pittsville, Wisconsin. USSA is a non-profit "dream-wish granting charity that specializes in sending

stocked in these ponds to provide an unforgettable fishing experience with memories that last a lifetime. Student intern Orey Eckes provided a display of fish and freshwater mussels to educate our future aquatic stewards on the importance of aquatic conservation. Children and their parents were taught how to identify different species of fish and mussels and were able to enrich learning through hands on experience.



-USFWS

**Summerfest participants learn about the variety of fish and mussels reared at the Genoa National Fish Hatchery,**

children and veterans with life threatening illnesses and disabilities on the outdoor adventure of their dreams." This Summerfest event provides a week of free fun for children and their families from across the United States, to enjoy the great outdoors with activities of camping, fishing, swimming, archery and more.

The event has multiple fishing ponds stocked with bass, bluegill, walleye and catfish. In past years, excess retired brood fish from Genoa NFH have been



-USFWS

**A Summerfest participant gets to "Connect" with a lake sturgeon.**

Summerfest is an event that directly correlates to the Fish and Wildlife Service's mission of protecting and enhancing our aquatic resources and Connecting Children with Nature Initiative that Genoa NFH proudly supports and is looking forward to participating in for many years to come.

For further info about the Genoa NFH: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/genoa/>

## Crab Orchard NWR Kid's Fishing Derby is Free Fun for All

BY JENNIFER L. JOHNSON, CARTERVILLE FWCO

"I caught a whale!" yelled one boy at the annual Kid's Fishing Derby at Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). While this boy did not exactly catch a whale, he along with several other children did catch their fair share of fish. An estimated 200 children participated in this morning of free fishing fun where prizes were awarded of the most fish caught along with the smallest and biggest fish. An electrofishing demonstration and a family picnic were also held towards the end of the event.

As in years past, the Carterville Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (FWCO) was in charge of running the "Toddler Tank." The toddler tank provides little ones, who are not ready for the real hooks and line, a chance to fish like their big brothers and sisters. Toddlers were given small wooden dowels with large metal washers as their fishing poles and hook, and a

large tank held fake magnetic fish for the kids to catch. To add to the excitement and interest of fishing in the tank, real fish were placed in the tank too. The Carterville FWCO crew rose bright and early to electrofish Crab Orchard Lake in order to collect fish for the day. The kids enjoyed watching and pretending to catch the largemouth bass, common carp, gizzard shad and bluegill; however, the real crowd pleasers this year were a couple of trophy sized crappie. They not only impressed the little ones, but also got their older siblings and parents talking.

Overall, it was a great day with the fun and excitement of the event summed up by one little boy running up to his parents with a huge smile shouting, "I got a fish! I got a fish!" Maybe if we are lucky, we will have a future fisherman or fish biologist in the making.



-USFWS/JenniferJohnson

**Student employee Kenson Kanczuzewski of the Carterville Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office demonstrates how to fish in the toddler tank at Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge's Kid's Fishing Derby.**

For further info about the Carterville FWCO: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/Fisheries/library/StationFactSheets/carterville.pdf>

## SENIOR CITIZENS FISHING DERBY



### MORE THAN 200 TURN OUT FOR DERBY

By Whitney Saporito, Neosho Daily News

Some couples celebrate a milestone anniversary with a nice dinner. Others even have a party. However, Neosho residents John and Elizabeth Willson did neither when they reached 60 years of marriage on Friday. Instead, they went fishing. “It was our anniversary and we wanted to do something fun,” Elizabeth said. “Neither of us has fished since we were teenagers”.

The longtime lovebirds joined the crowd of approximately 200 people at the Neosho National Fish Hatchery Friday morning for the hatchery’s annual Senior Citizens Fishing Derby. The derby, open to participants 65 years and older and those of all ages with physical disabilities, drew another record crowd for the hatchery, surpassing the event’s attendance in previous years.

“It’s wonderful because that’s how we’re giving back to our community,” said hatchery manager Dave Hendrix. “Without the community this hatchery would not be here. It doesn’t matter how many wonderful fish we produce, it doesn’t matter that we’ve got the great water quality, without the public support, we would not be here. This is a small way we can give back to our community.”

The Willsons picked a good day to make their return to fishing, as the hatchery staff and volunteers were on hand Friday to assist those who aren’t avid anglers.

Hendrix said the event was also a way to educate the community about fishing and all that the hatchery has to offer. “We’re trying to educate the community about what we do, why we do it and how it benefits them,” Hendrix said. “Just allowing people to come out and enjoy, and get exposed to the fun of fishing again. Getting people out of the house, expose them to nature again.”

The participants were allowed to catch up to four fish per person, and had the chance to catch rainbow trout and even some good-sized brood fish. Volunteers were also on hand Friday to help clean the fish after they were caught. The fishing lasted from 9 a.m. until noon, and was followed by a cookout lunch. “It’s great fellowship,” Hendrix said.



## Lots to Learn

BY HEATHER RODRIGUEZ, LA CROSSE FWCO

It's been a busy summer, with a variety of projects and many outreach events going on! In particular, I've learned a lot about freshwater mussels and



-USFWS

**Heather Rodriguez has received a wide variety of fisheries experience as part of the staff at the La Crosse Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office.**

aquatic vegetation, two topics I knew absolutely nothing about prior to working at the La Crosse Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (FWCO).

In July, I traveled with others from the La Crosse FWCO to sample the Wisconsin River mussel community near Orion. Here I learned of several methods to

search for these elusive, buried animals. One calls for simply digging up anything that lays within a one-square meter area at random sites.

I found the simplest method was to just wade in the water and feel in the gravel and sand for hidden mussels. But if the water is clear enough, you can don a mask and snorkel to look for small clues (e.g., water siphons) that reveal them.

Later I traveled to the Upper Mississippi River Pool 14 where I learned about sampling aquatic vegetation. Thus, I am well prepared to assist back home with wild celery sampling in Pool 7.

As with mussels, there are also many ways to sample vegetation. One calls for a diver to remove every rooted plant in a one-square meter area at random sites. Another uses a special rake to collect vegetation at six points around the boat.

During these sampling days, I quickly learned how to identify a variety of the most common mussels and plants found in the area. I still have a long way to go, as there is an incredible diversity to be found, but I can't wait to learn more.

The Fisheries Program relies on a broad range of professionals to accomplish its mission: biologists, managers, administrators, clerks, animal caretakers, and maintenance workers. Without their skills and dedication, the Fisheries Program cannot succeed. Employees must be trained, equipped and supported in order to perform their jobs safely, often under demanding environmental conditions, and to keep current with the constantly expanding science of fish and aquatic resource management and conservation.



-USFWS

**Heather Rodriguez has performed a variety of duties this summer from sampling aquatic vegetation in Pool 14 of the Upper Mississippi River to sampling freshwater mussels in the Mississippi River and its tributaries.**



For further info about the La Crosse FWCO: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/lacrossefisheries/>

# Midwest Region Fisheries Divisions

## National Fish Hatcheries

The Region's National Fish Hatcheries primarily focus on native fish restoration/rehabilitation by stocking fish and eggs, such as pallid and lake sturgeon and by developing and maintaining brood stocks of selected fish strains, such as lake trout and brook trout.

Hatcheries also provide technical assistance to other agencies, provide fish and eggs for research, stock rainbow trout in fulfillment of federal mitigation obligations and assist with recovery of native mussels and other native aquatic species.

## Fish and Wildlife Conservation Offices

Fish and Wildlife Conservation Offices conduct assessments of fish populations to guide management decisions, perform key monitoring and control activities related to invasive, aquatic species; survey and evaluate aquatic habitats to identify restoration/rehabilitation opportunities; play a key role in targeting and implementing native fish and habitat restoration programs; work with private land owners, states, local governments and watershed organizations to complete aquatic habitat restoration projects under the Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife and the Great Lakes Coastal Programs; provide coordination and technical assistance toward the management of interjurisdictional fisheries; maintain and operate several key interagency fisheries databases; provide

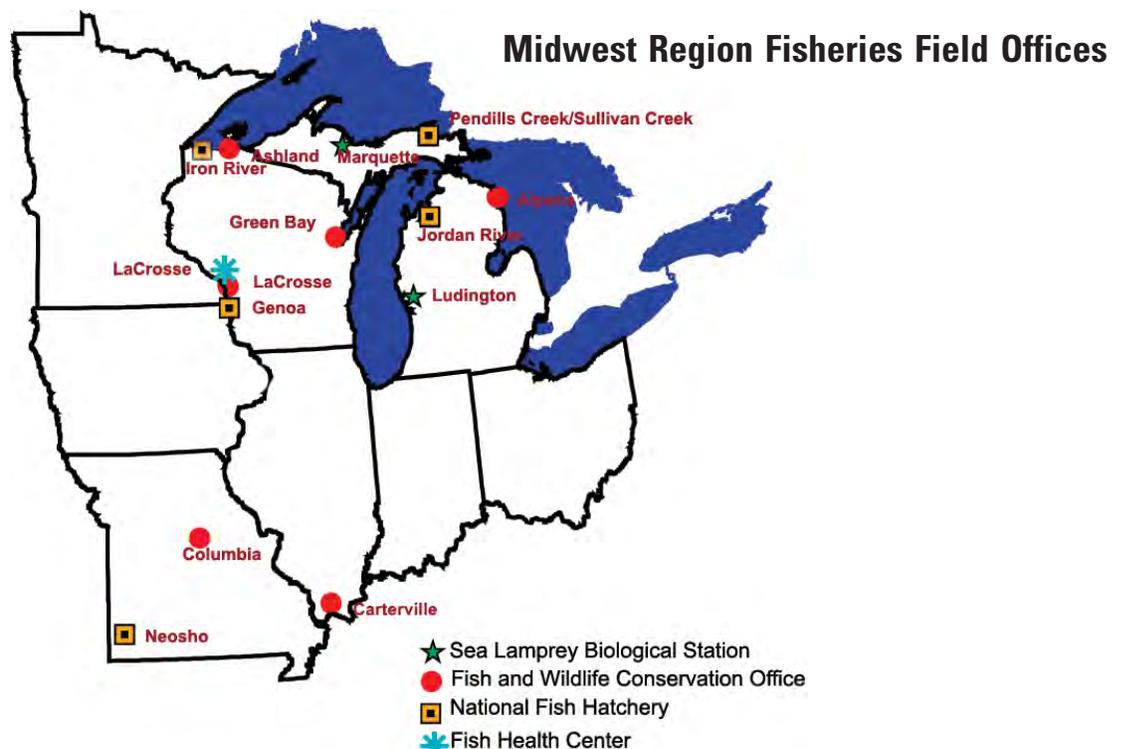
technical expertise to other Service programs addressing contaminants, endangered species, federal project review and hydro-power operation and relicensing; evaluate and manage fisheries on Service lands; and, provide technical support to 38 Native American tribal governments and treaty authorities.

## Sea Lamprey Biological Stations

The Fish and Wildlife Service is the United States Agent for sea lamprey control, with two Biological Stations assessing and managing sea lamprey populations throughout the Great Lakes. The Great Lakes Fishery Commission administers the Sea Lamprey Management Program, with funding provided through the U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of the Interior, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

## Fish Health Center

The Fish Health Center provides specialized fish health evaluation and diagnostic services to federal, state and tribal hatcheries in the region; conducts extensive monitoring and evaluation of wild fish health; examines and certifies the health of captive hatchery stocks; and, performs a wide range of special services helping to coordinate fishery program offices and partner organizations.



# Midwest Region Fisheries Contacts

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# Fish Tails

“Fish Tails” includes articles that are included in field station reports that are not published in the “Conservation Briefs.” These articles are categorized by focus area and includes the article title, author and field station. The website link, where the full article can be viewed, is highlighted in blue type.

## 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

### Workforce Management

## A FRIEND IN NEED IS A FRIEND INDEED



What do you need to serve lunch to 1,000 people? Provide poles, bait and tackle for 391 junior fishers? Give safety and instructional classes? Put on the best fishing derbies around? ... You just need friends. And friends we got 'em'. The Friends of the Neosho National Fish Hatchery support group makes it happen with finesse. Whatever the endeavor, they get it done like poetry in motion. And what do they get in return for all their time and hard work? Simply knowing that because of them, a child discovered fishing; a handicapped child caught a huge fish and we caught the child's huge smile; a senior citizen said "I haven't had this much fun in a long time;" a veteran said "Thanks for a great day". We love our "Friends" and volunteers and appreciate ALL they do to make us shine!

