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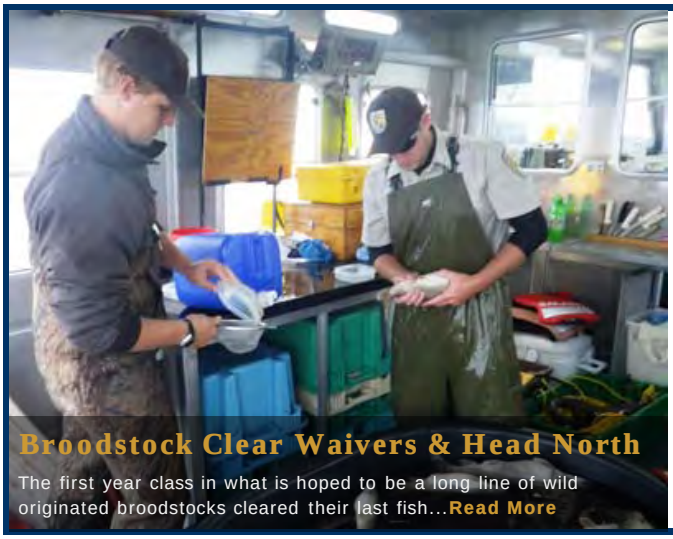

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Fish Tails

"Fish Tails" refers to articles that are submitted by field staff that do not appear as a feature in the current edition of Fish Lines. These articles provide examples of the diverse work that the Service's Midwest Fisheries Program and partners perform on behalf of our aquatic resources and for the benefit of the American public.

Field Notes

"Field Notes" is an online searchable database that showcases hundreds of employee-written summaries of field activities and accomplishments of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service from across the nation.

Lake Trout Broodstock Clear Waivers and Head North

BY DOUG ALOISI, GENOA NFH

Genoa staff collecting eggs from Klondike reef lake trout.
Credit: USFWS

The first year class in what is hoped to be a long line of wild originated broodstocks cleared their last fish health exam in the newly renovated quarantine facility at the Genoa National Fish Hatchery (NFH). The Genoa hatchery runs a wild fish quarantine facility, which brings the eggs of wild fish into the hatchery and quarantines them from the general fish populations housed at the hatchery. The fish are then tested for diseases that affect both hatchery and wild fish to determine if they are "clean" from those communicable diseases. This process takes a total of 18 months, and three fish health examinations.

Collecting the broodstock to develop a new brood line of fish that genetically represents the wild population is no easy task. Over 100 fish are collected at a time, usually over the range of the fish's spawning season, which can be as long as two months. Then the eggs are kept separately by parental matings until just before hatching. At this point, mortality is roughly equal between pairs, and the numbers of eggs are equalized by mating to ensure equal genetic contribution. Then they are combined into tanks.

After eighteen months of careful culturing and a clean bill of health the brood “lot” is moved to one of the Fish and Wildlife Service’s captive broodstock facilities such as Iron River NFH in Iron River Wisconsin. Here they will hopefully produce many years and many millions of eggs to restore native populations of lake trout and coaster brook trout in the Great Lakes watershed. This spring a Klondike Reef strain of lake trout was successfully cleared from the quarantine facility and has been transferred to the Iron River hatchery. Recent improvements to the quarantine facility include filtering and sterilizing systems to ensure that no fish diseases that may have been brought into the quarantine facility will leave the facility inadvertently through hatchery drain water. Drain or “effluent” water is filtered and sterilized with ultraviolet light to kill microbes that may be present in the hatchery water before it leaves the building. Soon the facility may be expanded yet again to make way for other imperiled species such as lake sturgeon and Great Lakes herring species. The new renovations were made possible by the recent passage of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, legislation enacted by Congress for the restoration of native species and their habitats in the Great Lakes basin.

Newly completed quarantine building addition. Credit: USFWS

Local Partners Team Up to Restore and Monitor Whittlesey Creek

BY MICHELLE WHEELER, ASHLAND FWCO

Known as a spring-fed, cold water stream, Whittlesey Creek once supported a thriving coaster brook trout fishery that was thought to be "inexhaustible" according to historic accounts. However, changes in land use practices such as logging and agriculture throughout the Whittlesey Creek watershed dating as far back as the late-1800s have accelerated sedimentation, limited instream cover, widened the stream channel and filled in pools. Altogether these changes resulted in an inhospitable environment for coaster brook trout. Since the establishment of the Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in 1999, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) Ashland Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (FWCO) and Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) have been working to restore coaster brook trout and the Whittlesey Creek watershed by implementing several strategies, including reintroducing known coaster brook trout strains and restoring upland, riparian, and instream habitat.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service teams up with Northland College to monitor restoration of Whittlesey Creek. Credit: USFWS

Thanks to the willingness and cooperation of many private landowners, and funding provided by partners including the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Bayfield County Land and Water Conservation Department, USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, Trout Unlimited, and the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, 225 logs have been added to one mile of Whittlesey Creek during the past two years. Funding has been secured from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Sustain Our Great Lakes Program to install additional logs to another mile and a quarter of the stream during 2013 and 2014.

"Returning large wood to Whittlesey Creek not only provides cover for coaster brook trout," says Whittlesey Creek NWR Biologist Mike Mlynarek, "it also helps narrow the channel, exposes gravel, controls bank erosion and increases pool habitat." The Ashland FWCO, along with Mlynarek are especially interested in monitoring how the coaster brook trout population responds to these installations of large logs.

With help from the local Northland College's Fisheries and Wildlife Techniques class led by Professor Derek Ogle, USFWS biologists have conducted fish surveys for the past three years in stretches of Whittlesey Creek where large logs have been installed. For many of these students, field work conducted during this class is the first time that they have walked in a stream in waders, the first time they have sampled fish via electrofishing, and (for some) the first time they have seen a trout. "By involving students in hands-on projects," says Professor Ogle, "we give them valuable, meaningful experiences with employable skills and knowledge. Students are motivated and focused when working on 'real-life' projects."

Michele Wheeler of the Ashland FWCO provided field crew leadership and guidance in conducting the backpack electrofishing for this year's survey on May 13th and 14th, 2013. Together, the crew captured fish, identified species, recorded lengths, and either clipped or identified recaptured fish as part of a mark-recapture population estimate. Follow-up work in the classroom provided students with experience computing population estimates from the data collected.

The USFWS, Northland College students and coaster brook trout all benefit from this work. "Pre- and post-restoration monitoring is essential to better understanding how our conservation delivery projects are performing and help us refine our approach in strategic habitat conservation," says Mlynarek. "Without field assistance from Northland College faculty and students, we would not be able to collect these valuable data."

Invasive Species in the Classroom

BY STEVEN GAMICKI, ALPENA FWCO

Students enjoyed the hands on approach of the presentation. Credit: USFWS

Over the last four years, staff from the Alpena Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (FWCO) in Alpena, Michigan (MI) has been involved in teaching students about environmental science and conservation topics that augment their science curriculum. This school year, Alpena FWCO staff adopted two classes of third grade students at Wilson Elementary School (Alpena Public School System) located in Wilson Township, MI. Interaction with Alpena FWCO's staff provides students with unique hands on science experience, and insights from professionals in the conservation field. Students enjoy the presentations and change of pace from their daily routine. One student, who could have missed a day of school due to a painful dental procedure, made his mom drive him to school so he wouldn't miss the presentation.

This spring, Alpena FWCO biologists Steven Gambicki and Heather Rawlings instructed the third graders about invasive species found in the Great Lakes region. Invasive species have been causing severe environmental and economic losses in the Great Lakes for many years. Over 180 non-native aquatic species from around the world are currently found in the Great Lakes ecosystem. Informing the public about invasive species is important to help stem the spread and introduction of new invasives. Students learned that a species is designated as invasive when it is not native to an ecosystem and its introduction has caused harm to the economy, human health, or environment of that ecosystem. Once established, it is extremely difficult to control the spread of invasive species.

The third graders examined preserved samples of select invasive species including purple loosestrife, round goby, rusty crayfish, zebra mussels and sea lamprey. The biologists informed the students about the harm these species can do to native plants and animals, taught them how invasive species are spread, and made them aware of some actions that they can employ to help stop that spread.

Steven Gambicki, Alpena FWCO, demonstrates how a sea lamprey attaches to its prey. Credit: USFWS

The highlight of the afternoon involved showing students live sea lampreys at each stage of their life cycle - ammocoete (larval stage), transformer and adult. Students were able to touch and have an up-close view of the live sea lampreys. Andrea Miehls, Hammond Bay Biological Station, provided the live lampreys for the presentation. Students were given a quiz to reinforce what they had learned during the presentation, they were then asked to name the adult sea lamprey. Some of the more creative names submitted by the students were Big Bad Bill and Big Mama.

Michigan Stream Team Tours Boardman River Dam Removal Projects

BY ANDREA ANIA, ALPENA FWCO and RICK WESTERHOF, GREEN BAY FWCO

The Michigan Stream Team (Mist) held its spring meeting in Traverse City (Michigan) this May. The meeting highlighted dam removal and stream restoration work that is occurring on the Boardman River, which flows through downtown Traverse City. Several members of the Mist are directly involved with the removals of Brown Bridge, Boardman and Sabin dams (Grand Traverse County).

There were presentations given on the Brown Bridge Dam, which was removed in the fall of 2012, and on Boardman and Sabin dams, which are currently in the design and engineering phase. The presentation covering the Brown Bridge Dam removal process included an overview of the events surrounding the October 6, 2012 incident where there was an accidental release of water and sediment downstream.

Passive channel restoration above the old Brown Bridge Pond. No work has been done on this reach of the stream and the channel was allowed to find its own path. Credit: USFWS

The Boardman River Dam Removal project has been stated to be one of the biggest dam removals in Michigan's history and one of the largest wetland restorations in the Great Lakes. The removal of Brown Bridge Dam restored 1.5 miles of cold water trout stream, 13 acres of wetlands, 25 acres of upland habitat, and provided fish access to 145 miles of stream above the dam for the first time in nearly 100 years. All three dam removals will restore more than 3 miles of quality trout water and 250 acres of wetlands, and reconnect 160 miles of stream habitat.

Active channel restoration. This portion of the stream was restored to its historic channel (note the tree stumps along the bank) prior to the dams existence in the watershed. Stream banks were sloped, native vegetation planted, and banks stabilized with large woody debris. Credit: Steve Largent, Grand Traverse Conservation District

The morning after the meeting, the group paddled from Grasshopper Ranch through the former delta and impoundment to observe the mixture of passive and active stream restoration techniques used in the Brown Bridge Dam removal project. Then the group continued padding downstream of the former Brown Bridge Dam to observe the impacts of the October 6 incident and to discuss hydrologic and sediment issues. This meeting provided a great opportunity to discuss lessons learned uncertainty, the rivers response to the dam removal, and the removal of Boardman and Sabin dams.

Hank Bailey, a tribal member of the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa & Chippewa Indians and works for their Natural Resources Department, spoke with the group after the river tour. He shared the Native American perspective of the dam removal and how this change will improve the health of Mother Earth. "The dam is like a blocked artery that we are removing, so that Mother Earth can heal."

The Mist is comprised of county, state, federal, tribal, and university personnel that are involved in various aspects of stream and aquatic habitat restoration, including dam removal projects. More information can be found at: www.mi.gov/streamteam

A Mussel Delivery Three Years in the Making

BY NATHAN ECKERT, GENOA NFH

Tagged mussels for USGS study. Credit: USFWS

When I arrived at Genoa National Fish Hatchery (NFH) in August 2010, the first project I was handed was to provide mussels of three different life stages (larval, juvenile, sub-adult) to the USGS lab in La Crosse for testing to determine if a biocide capable of killing the exotic zebra mussel was also toxic to native freshwater mussels. The project called for seven different species ranging from common to Federally Endangered.

During 2011 and 2012 we provided mussel larvae and juvenile mussels from each of the seven species and the first two phases of the project were completed. Also during that time we placed mussel culture cages at multiple locations holding fish inoculated with our target species. Each year we would collect and set aside the species that had been successfully cultured, waiting for the lab to be ready to conduct the test. Any species that was not successfully cultured was attempted the following year.

When trials were scheduled for May 2013 we had to wait for the ice to thaw from the river before venturing out to see how our test subjects had held up. Turns out we were successful in growing an appropriate number of four of our target species (hickorynut, fatmucket, plain pocketbook, Higgins' eye). We were able to acquire a fifth species, the washboard, from the mussel propagation lab at Missouri State University in Springfield, Missouri. It was decided that the final two species could be collected from the wild and so Genoa NFH divers spent a sunny Friday afternoon in May submerged in the dark deep waters of the Mississippi River. At the end of the day they arose from the water victorious with enough mussels to conduct the experiment. All seven species were tagged by USGS biologists so individuals could be monitored throughout the study.

On May 28 they all left Genoa NFH and headed for test chambers at the USGS mobile lab. The chemical was exposed to the mussels and they were then placed in a Genoa NFH style mussel cage to monitor post test survival for 30 days. At the end of that time the cages will be retrieved and all the living and dead mussels will be counted. Lots of live mussels will mean that the chemical is safe for native mussels, while dead mussels mean the opposite. It is expected that they will survive the experiment, after which they will be returned to Genoa NFH and incorporated into other restoration projects. Either way we were able to accept the responsibility of the large mussel order and deliver every species and life stage at the appropriate time.

Clockwise from top: threeridge, Wabash pigtoe, hickorynut, washboard, Higgins' eye, plain pocketbook, fatmucket, Credit: USFWS

New York's Orwell Brook Barrier Newest Sea Lamprey Control Tool

MARQUETTE BIOLOGICAL STATION

New sea lamprey barrier and trap on Orwell Brook, New York. Credit: USFWS

Barrier dedication celebrates continued effort to protect Lake Ontario fishery from sea lamprey destruction.

A new weapon was added to the sea lamprey control program arsenal: a sea lamprey barrier and trap on New York's Orwell Brook. The new structure was dedicated on June 4th. Installation of the barrier will eliminate annual lampricide treatments that have been conducted on the brook since 2007, thereby saving hundreds of thousands of dollars in treatment costs. Orwell and Pekin brooks, tributaries to Lake Ontario's Salmon River, produce tens of thousands of sea lamprey larvae annually that contribute to the Lake Ontario sea lamprey population and to the destruction that sea lampreys bring to the fishery. A single adult lamprey can kill up to 40 pounds of fish in one year.

Sea lamprey control is essential to the Great Lakes fishery and contributes to a healthy environment, robust economy, and more than $7 billion in economic return annually to the people of Canada and the United States. The first recorded observation of the invasive, noxious sea lamprey in Lake Ontario was in 1830. By the late 1930s sea lamprey were in all five of the Great Lakes and had decimated the once thriving fisheries, causing the region's economy and hundreds of thousands of people that relied on the fishery for jobs to suffer tremendously. Established by the Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries of 1954, a treaty between Canada and the United States, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission is charged with delivering the sea lamprey control program in partnership with other agencies like the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Fishery agencies, like the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, depend on the sea lamprey control program to support activities such as fish stocking, habitat recovery, and species restoration.

Lampricides, pesticides specific to lamprey, are the primary tool to control sea lampreys in the Great Lakes. However, other tools like sea lamprey barriers are critical as well. Sea lampreys need access to spawning habitat; barriers prevent access. Once a barrier is installed in a stream, lampricide treatments are needed only infrequently upstream of the barrier.

Dedication and ribbon cutting at new sea lamprey barrier and trap on Orwell Brook, New York. Credit: USFWS

The new barrier at Orwell Brook is an adjustable crest, low-head barrier fitted with aluminum stop logs that can be removed outside the period of the sea lamprey migration to facilitate passage of other migratory fish species. During the sea lamprey migration in spring, the stop logs will be employed to prevent sea lamprey from reaching prime spawning habitat in Orwell and Pekin Brooks upstream of the barrier. The vertical drop of the barrier is sufficient to block adult sea lampreys, while permitting passage of jumping species, such as steelhead and Atlantic salmon. Migrating sea lampreys are captured in a built-in trap, which will be monitored and operated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Marquette Biological Station and will be used to provide data for estimating the sea lamprey population in Lake Ontario.

At least one final lampricide treatment will be conducted upstream of the barrier this year (2013) to remove any remnant larvae. In subsequent years, the portion of Orwell Brook from the barrier downstream to the junction with the main Salmon River will be treated every three years. This will eliminate any larvae spawned in this short section of stream.

"Since sea lampreys first entered the Great Lakes in the late 1800s, they have caused tremendous destruction to the fishery," said Michael Hansen, chair of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. "Fortunately, we have a number of tools to control sea lamprey. The commission and its partners have slashed sea lamprey populations by 90%. The Great Lakes fishery depends on effective sea lamprey control through projects such as the Orwell Brook Sea Lamprey Barrier."

Paul Sullivan, Division Manager of the Sea Lamprey Control Centre for Fisheries and Oceans Canada added: "A single

female lamprey can produce more than 100,000 eggs so they have extremely high reproductive potential. Removing lamprey from the system before they spawn is a key element of the successful control program. This barrier will block access to spawning lamprey which will, in turn, reduce sea lamprey production, save hundreds of thousands of dollars otherwise required for lampricide treatment, and protect fish from sea lamprey predation."

Construction of the Orwell Brook Sea Lamprey Barrier and trap was completed through a successful collaboration among the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, the New York Department of Environmental Conservation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada. This is the first purpose-built sea lamprey barrier to be constructed in the State of New York. It was designed by Miller Engineers of Syracuse, New York, and was constructed by Procon Contracting of Vestal, New York.

"The State of New York is a proud partner in this effort," said Joe Martens, Commissioner of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. "We have some of the finest fishing in the country right here in our backyard and the Department of Environmental Conservation is committed to protecting it. Sea lamprey control is a critical part of the effort to keep the lakes great, improve the health of the ecosystem, and maintain a $117 million dollar industry that is so important to the communities in this region."

Kasia Mullett of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, who serves as the Sea Lamprey Control Program Field Supervisor in Marquette, Michigan, concluded: "Sea lamprey barriers throughout the Great Lakes basin prevent sea lampreys from accessing tens of thousands of miles of Great Lakes streams for spawning. By denying sea lampreys access to their spawning grounds, we save millions of dollars in treatment costs and save millions of Great Lakes fish from an early death by sea lamprey predation."

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Fish Tails

Articles submitted by field staff that do not appear as a feature within Fish Lines. These articles provide examples of the diverse work that is performed on behalf of aquatic resources.

Great Lakes Fish Tag and Recovery Lab Completes 2013 Chinook salmon Tagging Season

BY JAMES WEBSTER, GREEN BAY FWCO

On May 13th, the Great Lakes Fish Tag and Recovery Lab concluded the third season of a five-year Chinook salmon mass marking project. During March 12th – May 13th, lab staff traveled to seven state-operated hatcheries in Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois and Indiana to coded wire tag and adipose fin clip 2.5 million Chinook salmon destined to be stocked into lakes Michigan and Huron. An additional 360,000 Chinook salmon were marked with the adipose fin clip only and stocked into Lake Superior.

The Chinook salmon mass marking project is a cooperative effort involving Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois and Indiana Departments of Natural Resources and the Service. Each year, biologists from the lab use automated equipment to implant a coded wire tag in the snouts of all hatchery-reared Chinook salmon and simultaneously clip the adipose fin. The tiny coded wire tag is etched with a unique code that provides identification of the discrete hatchery group, and the adipose fin clip positively indicates that the fish has been tagged and is of hatchery origin. When an adipose fin clipped fish is recovered from the fishery during agency assessment surveys or from angler interactions, the snout is collected and sent to the lab at the Green Bay Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (FWCO) for tag extraction and reading. Since 2010, over 12.9 million Chinook salmon have been tagged and released in lakes Huron and Michigan. In addition, during the same period more than 15,000 tags have been recovered, extracted and read at the lab.

The information recovered from coded wire tag returns provides fisheries managers with the ability to accurately estimate levels of natural reproduction as well as identify fish movement within and among the lakes and the resultant contributions to regional fisheries. In addition, the tag recoveries allow biologists to evaluate the health of the fishery by providing data on growth rates, age of the fish at the time of capture, and the evaluation of hatchery rearing and stocking practices. The information provided by this project will allow Great Lakes fishery managers to inform management decisions on stocking levels to insure the continued viability of the multibillion sport fishery.

Thousands "Flock" to River Education Days - Trempealeau NWR for 10 Years!

BY HEIDI KEULER, LA CROSSE FWCO

May 14th and 15th, 2013 marked the 10th anniversary of the River Education Days at Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge. For the past decade, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has been working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Geological Survey, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and many other organizations to reach almost 1,000 people each year, including students, teachers, and chaperones from the Coulee Region.

Classes rotated through four stations out of 20 that target themes including prairies and forests, wetlands, and rivers. Specific topics included information and hands-on activities about birds, mammals, fish, inverts, freshwater mussels, amphibians and reptiles, as well as vegetation. La Crosse Fish & Wildlife Conservation Office provided hands-on learning with aquatic invertebrates and fish identification. Our office hopes to keep assisting the refuge with this important event that helps spark the interest of kids to get outside and enjoy our natural resources. Let's keep building the flock for the next ten!

eDNA Trailer was a hit at the Whitney Genetics Lab Ribbon Cutting Ceremony!

BY CHRIS OLDS, ALPENA FWCO

On April 5, 2013 the La Crosse Fish Health Center (FHC) held a dedication and grand opening for the Whitney Genetics Lab. Upon request from FHC staff, fish biologists Chris Olds and Steve Gambicki transported the eDNA Trailer designed by Alpena Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office staff to La Crosse so that it could be present at the ceremony. The trailer was a real hit for visitors attending the ceremony because it tied together the entire process of eDNA collection, sample processing, and PCR analysis. Chris and Steve gave an overview of their respective roles in the eDNA monitoring program and described how the trailer was used in processing water samples for subsequent PCR analysis at the lab. Visitors of the eDNA Trailer were very interested in the amount of time it takes to complete the collection and filtration process on a given river and how the idea of a mobile trailer came about. Visitors left with a better understanding of how eDNA samples are collected and processed. Thanks to La Crosse FHC staff for allowing the eDNA Trailer to be part of your special day.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Fisheries, Midwest Region

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Midwest Region Fisheries Divisions

National Fish Hatcheries

The Region's National Fish Hatcheries (NFH) focus on native species recovery and restoration. Primary species include: lake trout, endangered pallid sturgeon, and endangered, threatened, and native mussels. Other major programs include coaster brook trout and lake sturgeon restoration, fulfilling tribal trust responsibilities for native aquatic species, and cost reimbursed rainbow trout production for recreational fishing. Hatcheries also provide technical assistance to other agencies, provide fish and eggs for research, and develop and maintain brood stocks of various species and strains.

Fish and Wildlife Conservation Offices

Fish and Wildlife Conservation Offices (FWCO) conduct assessments of fish populations to guide management decisions, play a key role in targeting and implementing native fish and habitat restoration programs; perform key monitoring and control activities related to aquatic invasive species; survey and evaluate aquatic habitats to identify restoration/rehabilitation opportunities; work with private land owners, states, local governments and watershed organizations to complete aquatic habitat restoration projects under the Service's National Fish Passage Program, National Fish Habitat Partnerships, 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. The Whitney Genetics Lab serves as a leading edge genetics laboratory and conducts environmental DNA (eDNA) sample processing for early detection of invasive species.

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