



Manager's Corner By: Karen Kilpatrick

If April showers bring May flowers, what do May flowers bring? The age old rhyme brings up visions of brave men and women coming over to establish the freedoms we enjoy today. But before the European settlers arrived there were many Native Americans who stewarded this great land of ours. Also often referred to as First Na-

tions peoples, the Native Americans were, and are, great conservationists. It is with great sorrow that I share that one of the great First Nations pillars passed away on Friday, May 20, 2011. Her name is LaRue Parker. LaRue was a remarkable woman who served the Caddo people her entire life. She was a past Caddo Nation Chairperson.

Her love for her people was extraordinary and was evidenced by the passion she exhibited during the eight years we worked together to repatriate four partial sets of remains removed from hatchery grounds in the early 1930's. The remains were taken by archeologists during the hatchery's construction days and "stored" at the Smith-



Caddo Nation Chairperson LaRue Parker signing the Memorandum of Agreement between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Caddo Indian National establishing a Keep Safe Cemetery on hatchery grounds.

Credit: Gary Hardison

sonian for over 75 years before being returned to the Caddo people and reburied here at the hatchery in the grounds from which they were so long removed. My journey with LaRue began when she came to the hatchery to begin a reconciliation process between the U.S. Government and the Caddo Indian Nation. A prayer team came in from Baton Rouge, we walked the land and prayed over it, I repented on behalf of the U.S. Government and she repented on behalf of the Caddo Indian Nation. I presented her with a Chief's blanket, chosen for us by an apostolic Native American leader in Oklahoma. Those reconciliatory beginnings led to a great friendship and a governmental



The Caddo Memorial Plaza is located on the south side of the hatchery's aquarium



The plaque that honors the hatchery grounds as land sacred to the Caddo Indian Nation

partnership that brought healing to all. It also resulted in a formal agreement between the two governments and a commitment by this hatchery to continually honor the presence of the Caddo people. Exhibits were placed in our aquarium and a Memorial Plaza was constructed adjacent to our aquarium. All efforts are reminders of the fact that the very land we use today to steward this nation's great resources was also stewarded long ago by an advanced culture that still thrives today. I will never be the same due to my interactions with Chairwoman Parker. My heart will miss her forever.

River Monsters Arrive at Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery

By: Jan Dean and Tony Brady

Tupelo, Mississippi is known as the birth place of Elvis Presley, the King of Rock and Roll, and is also the birth place of conservation for the King of Large River Systems, the Alligator gar. Private John Allen National Fish Hatchery (PJANFH) is the center for restoration of this top river predator. Alligator gar have been featured on Animal Planet's River Monsters with Jeremy Wade. You can check out what they had to say about them at

<http://animal.discovery.com/fish/river-monsters/alligator-gar/>.

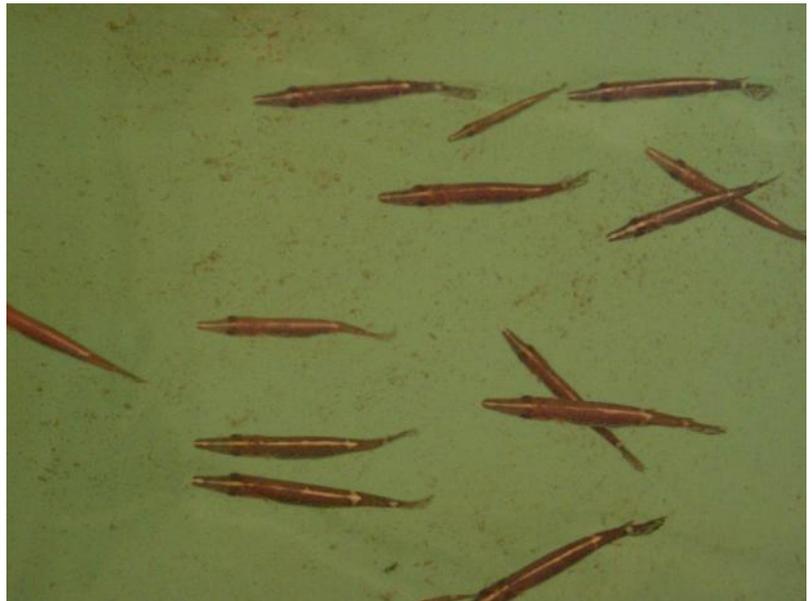
You may be asking if these fish are monsters then why are we raising them? The Alligator gar really isn't a monster to people, but they do have a monster sized appetite for fish. Seeing that the Alligator gar can grow up to 10 feet in length and weigh close to 300 lbs, restoring this gar to historic population levels may help combat the explosion of Asian carp that are taking over the Mississippi River and its tributaries. Because of their potential size there is a renewed interest among anglers who want to catch a trophy river monster. Recreational fishing for Alligator gar was very popular in the 1950's. Arkansas was national known for its recreational fishing of trophy Alligator gar, until the populations were overharvested.

The staff from PJANFH and staff from the Baton Rouge Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office collected adult Alligator gar

in April using gill nets at St. Catherine Creek National Wildlife Refuge just off the Mississippi River south of Natchez, MS. The adults were taken to PJANFH where they were injected with hormones and spawned on 27 April, and the fry hatched on 2 May. Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery (NNFH) received Alligator gar fry from PJANFH on 6 May that were placed in tanks set up in our holding house and offered a diet of brine shrimp, aka *Artemia*. At about a week old, we began adding a commercial starter feed with the brine shrimp for the Alligator gar fry eat. At two weeks of age, the fish were weaned off of brine shrimp and fed only the commercial fish food.

We then moved the fry from the holding house tanks to stock eight tanks at density of 400 fish per tank in our four-

stall fish culture building for a total of 3200 fry. As the fish in the tanks have grown, which they do very quickly, the commercial food fed to them is increased in size. In addition to the fish being reared in the four-stall building, 1536 fry were stocked into two fish rearing ponds containing forage fish for the Alligator gar to eat. This will help to determine if pond culture is a viable option for producing stockable fish. The Alligator gar will stay at NNFH until they reach a size of about 8 inches, then they will be transferred to PJANFH where they will be tagged and released into the wilds of Tennessee.



Alligator gar fingerling being reared at Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery

The Public Wants to Know about Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery

By: Tony Brady

You have heard the brain teaser, “If a tree falls in the woods and no one is around to hear it does it make a sound?” Well, the same can be asked, if a hatchery raises 1 million fish for release and no one knows about it, did the hatchery make a difference? While this may not be worded the best, the point is how can we expect public support for our programs, if the public doesn’t even know what we are doing? In order to spread the word about the different hatchery programs at the Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery (NNFH), the hatchery staff had the opportunity in May to speak to the local Rotary Club in Natchitoches, LA as well as to the Piney Woods Chapter of the Society of American Foresters. In Natchitoches, there are two types of people, one type that remembers coming to the hatchery as a kid and are now bringing their kids and grandkids, or

the second type that says, “I have lived here my whole life and have always wondered what ya’ll did at the hatchery, but I have never been there to visit”. By reaching out to the local business men and women in our community we are able to expose these adults to the workings of the hatchery and how the programs have changed since they were kids or to enlighten them about the hatchery that they grew up driving past, but for whatever reason never stopped to learn about. From these two outreach opportunities, over 50 people were exposed to the current operations that are ongoing at NNFH. After giving a presentation the boss always asks, “How did it go today?” We have learned that a good presentation isn’t followed by a round of applause, but by a lot of thoughtful questions. The two presentations were indeed followed by lots of thoughtful

questions meaning that the presentation were well received and sparked interest in the hatchery. This interest thus helps us gain support for our programs in the community.



From left to right, Frank Kinberger, Tony Brady and Lewis McBryde

Government Efficiency? We’re Trying!

By: Karen Kilpatrick

Two exciting construction projects are on the horizon at the hatchery. Like the new pole shed, for which a contract has already been awarded, these two projects are also long overdue and needed. They will help greatly with energy efficiency. The first project replaces all the lighting on the hatchery with energy efficient lighting. The lighting project will correct some safety issues and hopefully help save electricity.



Metal framed window in the crew room

The second project is replacement of most of the hatchery windows and remodeling of the hatchery crew room. The majority of the hatchery buildings were built in the late ‘50’s/early 60’s and the windows are single pane with aluminum or metal frames. The new windows will bump the efficiency up greatly and should reduce electricity costs tremendously. Additionally, the crew room will get new flooring, ceiling, and doors... all designed to increase energy efficiency.

In 2010 the hatchery also implemented the use of Variable Frequency Drives (VFDs) on the hatchery’s pumps. This too was done to help drop electrical costs. The hatchery’s average annual electrical bill is \$45-50,000. By combining the VFDs from 2010 with the lighting and windows from 2011 the hatchery hopes to cut energy costs by at least 20%...a savings of roughly \$8-10,000 per year! The lighting and win-

dow contracts should be awarded sometime in June.



Old lights still in use at the Aquarium



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at a time..*



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<http://www.fws.gov/natchitoches>

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Not Running Out of Room Anymore!

By: Karen Kilpatrick

One of the more exciting things that happened at the hatchery in the month of May was the award of a contract to build a pole shed at the hatchery. Long awaited and much needed, the pole shed will be built near the hatchery shop and will be 70 feet long and 35 feet wide. For years the hatchery had stored equipment outside of its main shop building because the shop area was transformed to house intensive culture systems for sturgeon and mussels. The pole shed will bring some respite from the elements for the larger pieces of equipment that the hatchery utilizes. The award included a three-sided, gable-roofed metal building on a concrete slab and will also have electricity throughout. There were 18 bids on the project and the winning bid came in under budget at \$66,694.00. The award went to Carter Construction in Tennessee and a preconstruction conference is scheduled for June 2, 2011.



The future location of the pole shed at Natchitoches NFH