



Southwest Region

Fish and Aquatic Conservation

Fourth Year of the Native Fish In the Classroom Program Successfully Completed

Cool! This was the general consensus of the students I talked with about releasing the fish they raised in their classrooms back into their native environment of the Rio Grande.

The Native Fish in the Classroom (NFIC) Program administered by U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) Fish Biologist, Angela James, of the New Mexico Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (NMFWCO) has concluded its fourth successful year. The schools received delivery of the fish in January and finished the program in early May. With some schools raising cold water species and the others raising warm water species, two Releasing the Natives Field Days were planned so the fish could be released back into their respective environments.

The Releasing the Natives Field Day for the cold water species was held on the Orilla Verde Recreation Area near Pilar, New Mexico. Because this trip takes approximately two hours of travel from Albuquerque, New Mexico, this event is planned on a Saturday with many parents and other siblings attending. Approximately 54 students representing Emerson and Monte Vista Elementary schools participated in this event to release 65 Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout back into their native environment. After students wished their fish good luck and said their farewells, they participated in learning stations led by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, U.S. Forest Service (USFS) – Rocky Mountain Research Station, and NMFWCO.



USFWS Fish Biologist, Angela James, leads students, teachers, parents and siblings in reading a good-bye poem after releasing the Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout raised in Albuquerque, New Mexico schools to the Rio Grande at the Orilla Verde Recreation Area. Credit: USFWS.



Students participate in the aquatic bugs activity at the Orilla Verde Recreation Area. Credit: USFWS.



A younger sibling releases a fish at the Orilla Verde Recreation Area. Credit: USFWS.



Students release fish they raised in their classrooms into the Rio Grande in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Credit: USFWS.



USFWS staff dip fish into buckets for the students to release into the Rio Grande. Credit: USFWS.

The Releasing the Natives Field Day for warm water species was held in Albuquerque, New Mexico and hosted by the Bosque School. Approximately 175 students representing Governor Bent Elementary, Monte Vista Elementary, Valle Vista Elementary and Albuquerque Sign Language Academy participated in the event. The students released 197 various fish species of the Middle Rio Grande. Again, after students wished their fish good luck and said their farewells, they participated in multiple environmental learning stations. These stations were staffed by the Bosque School and Bosque Ecology Monitoring Program (BEMP), NMFWCO, USFWS – Water Resources, Pueblo of Sandia, USFS Rocky Mountain Research Station, USFWS Partners for Wildlife, and Valle del Oro National Wildlife Refuge.



USFWS Water Resources staff lead a water cycle activity. Credit: USFWS.



USFWS Fisheries staff lead an aquatic bugs activity. Credit: USFWS.

Time to Say Good-bye Writing Contest

This writing contest was a component of the NFIC program. The students were challenged to incorporate native species words and phrases, one or more species names, ideas and concepts learned during their time with the fish, and demonstrate stewardship, guardianship, or concern for the well-being of native fish within a poem.

Congratulations to the finalists Kaya Perce and Naomi Padilla of Monte Vista Elementary, Mackenzie McInturff and Caleb Hansen of Governor Bent Elementary, Amariz Garcia of Valle Vista Elementary, Jocelyn Fuentes Sotelo and ShaiAnn Sanchez of Albuquerque Sign Language Academy, and Madolynn Jaramillo, Suman Rai, and Andy Miranda of Emerson Elementary. The Finalists participated in a behind-the-scenes tour of the Albuquerque Aquarium and its Rio Grande Silvery Minnow facilities in mid-May. The tour provided an opportunity for the students to compare their in-class systems to the large-scale aquariums and re-circulation systems of a professional establishment.

Time to Say Good-bye Top Poem

Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow

By Kaya Perce

Monte Vista Elementary School

Yesterday you were in our classrooms
Safe and sound and swimming.
Yesterday you were in our classrooms
Not worrying about Rainbow Trout too.

Today you are free in the river
Without any tank around you.
Today you are free in the river
Eating lots of mayflies as well.

Tomorrow we'll continue to protect you
We won't let you become extirpated.
Tomorrow we'll continue to protect you
You won't be extinct on our watch.

Yesterday we learned about you
Your anatomy, your predators, your prey.
Yesterday we learned about you.
Round tail? Maybe not. What a surprise!

Today, we watch you go freely
As we wonder what the water levels are.
Today we watch you go freely
Missing you as you leave.

Tomorrow we will miss you even more
When we'll have no need for a siphon.
Tomorrow we'll miss you even more
As you swim forever in our hearts.



Writing contest winners enjoying a behind the scenes tour at the Albuquerque Aquarium. Credit: USFWS.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to all the Teachers, Students, and Station Presenters who helped make our NFIC Project a success! ♦ By Jessie Jobs and Angela James



U.S. Department of the Interior
 U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
 Southwest Region
 Fish and Aquatic Conservation
 500 Gold Ave SW
 Albuquerque, NM 87102

<http://www.fws.gov/southwest/fisheries/index.html>

June 2015