FY 2016

TXFWCO Activity Report: January

Removal of Ottine Dam

Texas Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Texas Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (TXFWCO)

Monthly Report

Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office Activities

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Ottine Dam Removal

On 18-23 January 2016, the USFWS's Southeast Region's Habitat Team (Hal Jones, Ronnie Schutkesting, and Chad Shirey) removed the Ottine Dam, on the San Marcos River. The dam was built in 1911to produce power for a mill and provide power to the town in the evenings. The dam was badly damaged during flooding in 2008, and created a safety hazard. The Team specializes in removing dams all around the country and their expertise was apparent during the demolition. A special thanks to the Team for finally getting that dam out!

Ottine Dam had failed in 2008.

Figure 1The dam removal was complete on January 23.

Now that the demolition is complete, The TXFWCO, The San Marcos Aquatic Resources and Recovery Center (SMARC), and volunteers will replant the disturbed areas with native plants and trees to stabilize the banks and discourage invasive species from colonizing the areas.

The TXFWCO is working with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) on the possibility to make this stretch of the San Marcos River part of the Texas Paddling Trails System.

Dolan Springs Mapping

11-14 January 2016, The TXFWCO, with help from TPWD (Inland Fisheries) and the SMARC, mapped the spring complexes at Dolan Creek, Finnegan springs, and at Blue Hole at the Devils River. This effort is part of the Baseline Assessment of the Aquatic Invertebrate Community and Spring Associated Organisms within Dolan Creek and the Devils River Project, funded by the Nature Conservancy. Spring sampling for invertebrates, salamanders, mussels, and riffle beetles will begin in February.

Mapping the Finnegan Spring Complex

Salado Salamander

The TXFWCO distributed the final report on the 2015 Salado Salamander Monitoring to its partners in Bell County, TX. The TXFWCO conducted 17 surveys of the springs over the course of 2015 to monitor the salamander population, resulting in the capture of seven Salado salamanders. Six of the seven salamanders were juveniles ranging in length from 14-17 mm. One adult salamander was collected at the Robertson springs, measuring 50 mm in length. In total seven salamanders were detected, including a new locality within the downtown spring complex.

Staff from the SMARC searching for salamanders.

On 29 January 2016, The TXFWCO conducted the first monitoring trip of 2016 to look for salamanders at Robinson Springs. In addition, the crew removed the remains of the beaver dam that had caused the Robertson Spring site to be inundated with water. Over time, the springs were covered in silt, which is poor salamander habitat. The removal of the beaver dam dropped the water level, exposed many additional springs and cleaned out

some of the silt that had covered the area. The remainder of the silt will likely be flushed out by the next flash event, enhancing the habitat further.

Area where the beaver dam was removed from to restore salamander habitat at Robinson Springs.

Outreach

Camp Mabry Fishing Event

On 16 January 2016, The TXFWCO participated in a community fishing event hosted by Camp Mabry. Diego Araujo manned the USFWS booth, teaching the children how to collect basic water quality parameters. Macroinvertebrate sampling techniques were demonstrated using various methods, and samples viewed by the children and they were shown how to identify the species by using keys.

Bowie Elementary Science Fair

Diego Araujo and Leah Murray (SMARC) manned a station at the Bowie Elementary Science Fair, displaying local T/E species found within the Edwards Aquifer. Brief presentations were given as classes rotated among the stations.

Diego Araujo at the Bowie Elementary Science Fair

San Jacinto Intermediate School

On 16 January 2016, Chris Chapa (TXFWCO) participated in a community fishing event for disadvantaged students from San Jacinto Intermediate School in Pasadena Texas. Chris, Brandi Bradford (the Houston Urban Education Coordinator USFWS), as well as multiple TPWD representatives met the students at Burke Crenshaw Park to teach them how to fish, as many of them had never fished before.

Community fishing event in Pasadena Texas.

February Schedule of Activities:

2 February 2016: World Wetlands Day Community Meeting for the Big Cypress Bayou

9-10 February 2016: Re-vegetating Ottine Dam removal work site

8-12 February 2016: Dolan Falls Monitoring

16-19 February 2016: Sampling at Lake Tombigbee (Alabama Coushatta Tribe)