



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service - Midwest Region

Fisheries & Aquatic Resources Program

Fish Lines

**Restoring an Ancient
Legacy**

Lake Sturgeon Restoration

Fisheries Helping Refuges

**Coaster Brook
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Restoring an Ancient Legacy



Lake Sturgeon Restoration



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Coaster Brook Trout Monitoring Stations



That's a Wrap

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.

Last updated: November 26, 2013



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Restoring an Ancient Legacy

BY OREY ECKES, GENOA NFH



Doug Aloisi and Jeff Lockington stocking St. Lawrence River lake sturgeon.
Credit: USFWS

of October. All sturgeon from Genoa NFH were coded wire tagged, which gives them a batch identification number, allowing resource managers to assess future population growth and survival. By mid-October the sturgeon were ready to make their journey back east.

In October 2013 hatchery staff ventured out east with approximately 11,000 tagged lake sturgeon. Upon arrival they were welcomed by local press representatives and staff from Service's New York Field Office, NYSDEC, St. Regis Mohawk Tribe, New York Power Authority and the U.S. Geological Survey. The sturgeon were released into the St. Lawrence River at Ogdensburg and below the New York Power Authority's dam in Massena, as well as several larger tributaries. Due to this cooperative effort among agencies, biologists are hopeful populations of lake sturgeon in the St. Lawrence River may one day return to historic numbers. The Genoa NFH staff is looking forward to working with these partners for years to come in establishing a restored population of lake sturgeon in the St. Lawrence River.

A cooperative effort among the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – New York Field Office, Genoa National Fish Hatchery (NFH), New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe, the New York Power Authority and the U.S. Geological Survey is leading to the restoration of lake sturgeon to the St. Lawrence River and its tributaries.

In June 2013 hatchery staff, Doug Aloisi and Orey Eckes, aided with the collection of lake sturgeon eggs from wild caught spawning fish below the New York Power Authority dam in Massena, New York. After fertilization, eggs were transported to Genoa NFH in Genoa, Wisconsin and NYSDEC Oneida Hatchery. Eggs from Genoa NFH were reared in our newly renovated isolation facility until disease-free certification was obtained by the Service's La Crosse Fish Health Center. Upon disease free clearance, fish were transferred to Genoa's sturgeon rearing building where warmer water temperatures are ideal for final grow out. Sturgeon were fed diets of brine shrimp, bloodworms and krill until they reached six inches long by the beginning



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff with Genoa NFH and New York Field Office fertilizing St. Lawrence River lake sturgeon eggs.
Credit: USFWS



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Lake Sturgeon Restoration: A Sense of Stewardship

BY ANGELA BARAN, GENOA NFH

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has been working with the White Earth Nation in Minnesota for over a decade on lake sturgeon restoration in the Red River of the North Basin. Lake sturgeon were historically harvested for food, but over harvesting, construction of dams throughout the river system and poor water quality resulted in the drastic decline of the species from this watershed. The last adult sturgeon harvested was recorded in 1926.

The partnership between the tribes and the USFWS has led to restoration efforts and stocking recommendations to produce a self-sustaining population. Each year, White Earth purchases lake sturgeon eggs from the Rainy River First Nations Tribe, collected from wild spawned lake sturgeon in the Rainy River. These eggs are then transported to Genoa National Fish Hatchery (NFH) to be hatched out and grown over the summer for fall stocking. Before the eggs are placed into hatching jars inside the Sturgeon Culture building, the wild collected eggs are disinfected in an iodine solution. This process helps to prevent contamination of the hatchery from possible diseases in the source water. From June to October, the sturgeon will grow from approximately a quarter of an inch at hatching to an average size of six inches at stocking.



Students from a local school help stock Lake Sturgeon into White Earth Lake.
Credit: USFWS



Lake sturgeon receiving a coded wire tag prior to release. Credit: USFWS

Genoa NFH has been working with the White Earth Nation since 2001, resulting in over 140,000 lake sturgeon stocked into the lakes and rivers of the Red River Basin. This culturally important species is embraced by the public at annual stocking events, with tribal members holding a stocking ceremony and local schools participating in the release of the fish. On October 22nd, 2013, Genoa NFH delivered lake sturgeon to White Earth, with fish going into White Earth Lake and Round Lake. Two local schools participated in the stocking event, with students releasing a sturgeon into the water. This annual participation has led to a great sense of ownership among the next generation of future stewards of these great natural resources. The public involvement has also led to an open line of communication with the tribal fisheries department. Reports and pictures of lake sturgeon caught while fishing for other species show they are surviving well and are reaching sizes over 48 inches in length.



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Cross Program Training - Fisheries Helping Refuges

BY SAM FINNEY, CARTERVILLE FWCO

When the Middle Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) was established, it was done so in part to aid the recovery of an endangered fish- the pallid sturgeon. I guess then it stands to reason that a fish biologist would make a good pinch hitter as a refuge manager for such a refuge, and that is exactly what I was fortunate enough to do in a recent work detail.

Between the summer months of July and August, I spent 30 days along the middle Mississippi River (the section between Cairo, Illinois and St Louis, Missouri) helping out in any ways I was needed. Being a small refuge (a little over 8,000 acres) and having a small core staff (about 2-3 people), work at the refuge for all staff members can be described as "varied". Traditional roles for biologists, managers, and other personnel at a "typical" refuge go out the window as everyone must chip in to get all things accomplished. For a fellow from the fisheries program that is interested in getting to know life in refuges, this is a good thing. While I was on duty I performed tasks that ran the gamut from replacing damaged refuge signs to banding wood ducks, from approving credit card statements to working on habitat management plans, from budget conference calls to mowing grass. Yes, I got to see it all.



An example of the diverse experiences during Sam's detail, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Illinois Department of Natural Resources employees prepare a wood duck baiting site. Credit: Sam Finney, USFWS

During my detail assignment at Middle Mississippi River NWR I hoped to learn about the day in day out work at a refuge, assist refuge staff with my knowledge of fish and fisheries, learn from refuge staff about terrestrial, plant and wildlife management, and assist the staff in whatever ways I could to help keep them moving while their staff was diminished. Between polishing the fish and aquatic related portions of refuge documents, assisting refuge staff with about every possible thing imaginable, and shadowing refuge staff to learn all that I could about ducks, deer, trees, moist soil plants and the like, I would say that my goals were met. Refuge staff were also appreciative of the extra set of hands to keep things afloat. As a wonderful added bonus, I made life long personal and professional friends and connections at the refuge and elsewhere within the refuge system. My office, Carterville Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office, is also now working with refuge staff more closely on pallid sturgeon management and recovery. I'd say- Mission Accomplished!



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New Coaster Brook Trout Monitoring Stations on Isle Royale

BY ANNA VARIAN, ASHLAND FWCO

Late this summer, Ashland Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (FWCO) fish biologists, Henry Quinlan and Anna Varian, set out across Lake Superior to Isle Royale National Park to construct the second and third coaster brook trout monitoring stations on the Island. Through a partnership between Isle Royale National Park and the Ashland FWCO the materials used to construct the stations were acquired through a National Park Service (NPS) grant. Station design and layout was done by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service fish biologist Glenn Miller and technician Tyler Sikora, and station set-up was completed by Henry and Anna. Station upkeep will be conducted jointly by the Ashland FWCO and NPS.

Historically large coaster brook trout were caught up and down the Lake Superior shoreline, but overfishing and land-use changes have decimated their populations. Isle Royale is one of the few locations in the United States that has been able to support historic coaster brook trout populations.

The Salmon Trout River in Michigan also supports a historic coaster population, as do rivers in Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore and several streams along the north shore of Minnesota. All show evidence of coaster brook trout presence since new regulations and rehabilitation efforts were put into effect.



A tuner box is connected to the antenna (coming out on the right) to allow us to tune the antenna to maximize the range in which it can read a tag, each antenna tunes differently based on size and shape. Credit: Anna Varian, USFWS



Mid-construction of the station at the Siskiwit River. Solar panels positioned vertically may receive less sun than those slightly angled toward the sun, but a vertical position prevents snow from accumulating during the long winter months when the island is uninhabited and blocking out the sun altogether. Credit: Anna Varian, USFWS

yet six different species of fish were sampled in the stream. The Siskiwit River flows a short distance from Siskiwit Lake to Lake Superior and five species of fish were sampled. Brook trout have

Monitoring stations are designed to detect movement of passive integrated transponder (PIT) tagged fish in and out of a stream, and help biologists learn more about the habits of coaster brook trout. In 2008, the first station was set up on Washington Creek on the southwest end of the island. Since then, over 300 brook trout, both stream dwelling and coasters, have been tagged and released, and more than half of the tagged fish have been detected moving upstream or downstream past the antenna.

Each station consists of two solar panels for power, a bank of batteries, two looped wire antennas, antenna tuners, and a small computer that records the date, time, and tag number of each tagged fish as it swims past the antenna set up across the width of the stream. Two antennas are set-up near the mouth of the river at each station to allow biologists to determine the direction of fish movement (based on which antenna the fish passes first).

The new stations were set up on Benson creek near Daisy Farm campground, and on the Siskiwit River near Malone Bay campground. After set-up was complete both streams were sampled using backpack electrofishing units. Benson creek is a small creek that can dry up during drought years,



Fish Biologist Henry Quinlan electrofishing the Siskiwit River.

fishery management among the state, provincial, tribal, and federal management agencies in the Great Lakes. The Service delivers an integrated Sea Lamprey Control Program which works in partnership with the GLFC to restore and protect the Great Lakes ecosystem and a fishery with an estimated annual economic impact of seven billion dollars.

Last updated: November 26, 2013

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That's a Wrap – Lake Superior Basin Brook Trout Status and Distribution Field Work Completed

BY ANNA VARIAN, ASHLAND FWCO



Pathways student Angelena Koosmann with a brook trout captured during sampling in the Lake Superior Basin. Credit: USFWS

The end of August marked the end of three summers of hard work, bushwhacking into streams of the Lake Superior basin in Minnesota, Michigan, and Wisconsin that haven't been sampled for fish in the last ten years, if ever. The work was funded in part by a Bring Back the Natives grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and is being used to describe the status and distribution of brook trout in Lake Superior Basin streams.

This project is modeled on efforts of the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture (EBTJV), a 17-State partnership formed to assess the status of brook trout in the eastern United States. The EBTJV determined brook trout status across 70 percent of the brook trout's historic U.S. range. The Midwest portion of the brook trout range remains unclassified. We've been working with the EBTJV coordinators to complete a comprehensive brook trout status and distribution map covering the entire historic range of brook trout in the country.

Over 100 sites were sampled across the three states in 2013, bringing the total number to nearly 600 sites! All of this work has been combined with data from universities, state and federal agencies to produce a map of brook trout status across the Lake Superior Basin. Using GIS spatial analysis tools we will determine which landscape variables affect brook trout status, and use this information to model status in areas with little to no data. When complete we will provide information on status and threats to brook trout to researchers, managers, and conservation organizations to help prioritize and pinpoint areas for brook trout restoration, protection, and reintroduction.

Project progress has been reported to partner agencies, natural resource organizations and the general public at several venues this year. These include the Western Upper Peninsula fishery agency coordination meeting, the Wisconsin chapter American Fisheries Society annual meeting, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission lake committee meeting, and the Oak Brook (Illinois) chapter of Trout Unlimited meeting.



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Battling a Common Enemy: Service Works with Canadian Researchers to Improve Techniques for Controlling Sea Lampreys in the Great Lakes

BY AARON JUBAR, LUDINGTON BIOLOGICAL STATION

For the past few summers, personnel from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), Ludington Biological Station, have assisted researchers from Canada's Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario, in an ongoing research project. The objective of this project is to determine if the ability of larval sea lamprey to resist lampricide varies by season. The lampricide (3-trifluoromethyl-4-nitrophenol, abbreviated TFM) is a selective pesticide that has been used since the 1960's to control sea lamprey, an invasive species in the Great Lakes.

Utilizing the facilities at the U.S. Geological Survey's Hammond Bay Biological Station, graduate students Benjamin Hlina and Alexandra Muhametsafina conducted laboratory trials in 2013. Service staff assisted with the on-going project by identifying streams with an abundance of larval sea lampreys and leading the collection effort, which provided thousands of larvae for the study.

"We have observed increases in TFM tolerance as stream water temperatures increase. We believe the trends that we are observing are being caused by increases in larval sea lampreys' capability to detoxify TFM. Larger energy stores and increased metabolic rates could be contributing factors to seasonal changes in TFM tolerances", said Hlina.

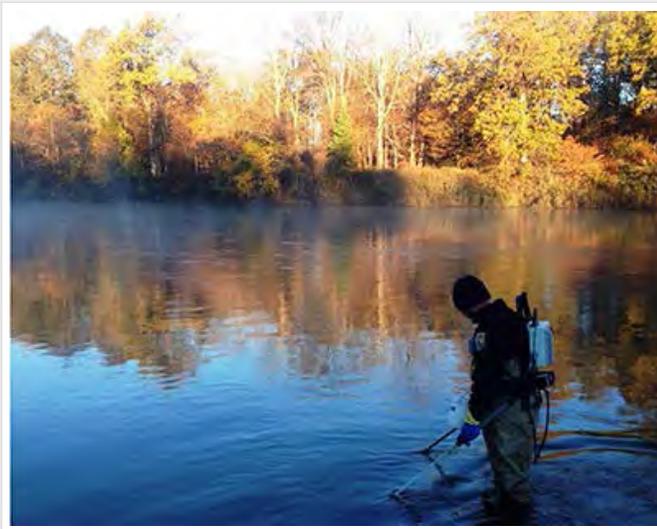


Alex Muhametsafina, Wilfrid Laurier University, examining an adult sea lamprey. Credit: Alexandra Muhametsafina

were placed in aquariums containing water that was the same temperature as their natal stream. After acclimating to the aquarium for a few days, the laboratory trials were conducted.

The research, which is funded by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC), may have implications for TFM applications and sea lamprey management throughout the Great Lakes. "We hope our findings assist the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada in applying TFM during the most optimal times depending on seasonal differences," said Hlina. "By understanding when the optimal application periods are, financial costs associated with TFM applications will potentially be reduced, local abundance of larval sea lamprey will be reduced resulting in adult sea lamprey population reduction, and the potential affects to non-target aquatic organisms will be reduced."

Established in 1955, the GLFC coordinates fisheries research, controls the invasive sea lamprey, and facilitates cooperative



Jason Krebill, USFWS employee, collects sea lamprey larvae on the Au Sable River, near Oscoda, MI, in late October. Credit: Aaron Jubar, USFWS

"We are currently assessing if (larval sea lamprey) metabolism and the detoxification of TFM does increase with increases in water temperature," continued Hlina. Muhametsafina's research builds upon this theme, examining both how TFM sensitivity varies seasonally and how larval sea lampreys recover following lampricide exposure at a wide range of water temperatures. "There is evidence to show that recovery after exposure to low concentrations of TFM is faster in warmer water," said Muhametsafina.

Larval sea lampreys burrow into the stream bottom where they filter feed for 3-7 years before they metamorphose into a fish-eating parasite and migrate downstream to the Great Lakes. Similar to other fish species, sea lampreys are called poikilotherms ("cold-blooded"), and their activity level and metabolism are linked to water temperature.

Larval sea lamprey collection efforts in 2013 focused on the Au Sable River, near Oscoda, Michigan. Service staff worked alongside researchers to collect larvae with backpack electrofishing units. The captured larvae were held in aerated tanks and transported to Hammond Bay Biological Station where they

been captured in each stream in prior years during fish surveys conducted by Ashland FWCO biologists. Credit: Anna Varian, USFWS

While the Washington Creek station is well off any maintained trail and out of sight of most visitors, the new stations are both near campgrounds. The Benson Creek station in particular is near a campground that sees many visitors; this more prominent site provides us a great opportunity for public outreach. Next summer outreach materials will be posted at the station giving visitors information on how the station works, the number of fish tagged in the stream, the species that inhabit the stream, and coaster brook trout life history information.

Last updated: November 26, 2013



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Fish Tails

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Accomplishing Our Mission – With a Little Help from our Friends

BY COLBY WRASSE, COLUMBIA FWCO

In October, Columbia Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (FWCO) wrapped up another successful season of Pallid Sturgeon Monitoring on the Missouri River - due in part to the contributions of our wonderful volunteers. In total, 39 volunteers donated a combined 478 hours of their time to assist us with monitoring and recovery of the Federally Endangered Pallid Sturgeon. We would especially like to thank Chris Egbert, Kevin Renfro, and Martin Schaffer, all of whom volunteered more than 60 hours last year. Having seasoned volunteers such as Chris, Kevin, and Martin makes it easier for us to accomplish our mission. In return, we hope our volunteers' lives are enriched by the experiences they have with us. Many of our volunteers have parlayed the knowledge and skills they acquired with us into employment opportunities within the natural resources field. Our volunteers also do a great job of spreading the word about our mission and therefore represent an important outreach avenue.

In Time for Deer Season, Fawnsfoot Arrive at Genoa NFH

BY NATHAN ECKERT, GENOA NFH

With apologies to the deer hunters out there, this article is about freshwater mussels. At Genoa National Fish Hatchery (NFH) we were able to raise a new species of mussel this year with the help of our streamside mussel rearing trailer. Our first ever fawnsfoot, a declining species regionally, were recovered from one of the rearing tanks in the trailer this fall. The trailer has proved to be a valuable tool for rearing yearling mussels to a size suitable for stocking. This year nearly 2,000 yearling mussels reached stocking size after spending the summer in the trailer. Over the last two years we've found that it can also be effective in rearing young of the year mussels past their sensitive early life stages. We recovered nearly 700 young of the year Higgins' eye from our culture trials in the trailer along with 18 fawnsfoot this year. While 18 isn't a staggering number it was a welcome site considering that we only started with a total of 364 individuals in the tank. Restoration efforts often start with small steps and for these individuals the next step is to spend the winter at Genoa NFH and then they will go back in the trailer next summer to grow to a size suitable for stocking. At that point they will be placed in the Mississippi River in Pool 15 as part of an ongoing restoration project. Next year we plan to make another attempt at raising fawnsfoot, with what we learned this year we hope for more success next time around.

Uihlein Marsh Restoration and Enhancement Project

BY TED KOEHLER, ASHLAND FWCO

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) Leopold Wetland Management District and Coastal Program – Great Lakes worked in partnership with Ducks Unlimited to restore and enhance 321 acres of the Uihlein Waterfowl Production Area (WPA). This WPA consisting of 13 tracts comprising over 2,000 acres of habitat is located within one of the premier migratory bird areas of the Lake Michigan watershed and is managed by the National Wildlife Refuge system. It is part of the Winnebago System Focus Area of the Upper Mississippi River and Great Lakes Region Joint Venture (UMR&GLR) and the Rush Lake Complex Initiative identified in the Wisconsin Plan. The Winnebago System Focus Area was designated as a high priority in the UMR&GLR Joint Venture Implementation Plan and the entire project area has been classified as Priority I habitat in the Wisconsin Plan.

Uihlein WPA offers exceptional waterfowl breeding, nesting, and migration habitat that is open to the public for a variety of outdoor recreation. Service staff conducting annual waterfowl surveys at the WPA have documented use by a host of waterfowl species including mallards, blue-winged teal, green-winged teal, American wigeon, redhead, scaup, northern shoveler, northern pintail, wood duck, Canada geese, and American black ducks. The WPA is also home to a large population of the federally threatened and state endangered eastern prairie white-fringed orchid. USFWS management of the area has resulted in a steady annual increase in the number of plants. Additional wildlife benefiting from the project include Forester's, common, and black terns, great egrets, black-crowned night herons, American bittern, least bittern, yellow headed blackbird, bald eagles and osprey, several species of shorebirds, reptiles, amphibians, mammals (including river otter), and grassland

songbirds.

On the ground work started in 2010 with survey and design work. Over the next few years planning, coordination and construction took place to restore the 321 acres of habitat within the Uihlein WPA. Construction activities included levee coring and grading, water control structure installation, and hunter/public access improvements. All the partners are proud to be part of this successful partnership that has conserved wetlands and wildlife in the Great Lakes watershed.

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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.



Midwest Region Fisheries Contacts

Todd Turner, Assistant Regional Director, Fisheries
todd_turner@fws.gov

Alpena Fish & Wildlife Conservation Office

480 West Fletcher St.
 Alpena, MI 49707
 Scott Koproski (scott_koproski@fws.gov)
 989/356-3052
 Area of Responsibility (MI, OH)

Ashland Fish & Wildlife Conservation Office

2800 Lake Shore Drive East
 Ashland, WI 54806
 Mark Brouder (mark_brouder@fws.gov)
 715/682-6185
 Area of Responsibility (MI, MN, WI)

Carterville Fish & Wildlife Conservation Office

9053 Route 148, Suite A
 Marion, Illinois 62959
 Rob Simmonds (rob_simmonds@fws.gov)
 618/997-6869
 Area of Responsibility (IL, IN, OH)

Columbia Fish & Wildlife Conservation Office

101 Park Deville Drive; Suite A
 Columbia, MO 65203
 Tracy Hill (tracy_hill@fws.gov)
 573/234-2132
 Area of Responsibility (IA, MO)

Genoa National Fish Hatchery

S5689 State Road 35
 Genoa, WI 54632-8836
 Doug Aloisi (doug_aloisi@fws.gov)
 608/689-2605

Green Bay Fish & Wildlife Conservation Office

2661 Scott Tower Drive
 New Franken, WI 54229
 Mark Holey (mark_holey@fws.gov)
 920/866-1717
 Area of Responsibility (IN, MI, WI)

Iron River National Fish Hatchery

10325 Fairview Road
 Iron River, WI 54847
 Dale Bast (dale_bast@fws.gov)
 715/372-8510

Jordan River National Fish Hatchery

6623 Turner Road
 Elmira, MI 49730
 Roger Gordon (roger_gordon@fws.gov)
 231/584-2461

LaCrosse Fish Health Center

555 Lester Avenue
 Onalaska, WI 54650
 Acting Terry Ott (terrance_ott@fws.gov)
 608/783-8441

LaCrosse Fish & Wildlife Conservation Office

555 Lester Avenue
 Onalaska, WI 54650
 Acting Scott Yess(scott_yess@fws.gov)
 608/783-8432
 Area of Responsibility (IA, IL, MO, MN, WI)

Ludington Biological Station

229 South Jebavy Drive
 Ludington, MI 49431
 Jeff Slade (jeff_slade@fws.gov)
 231/845-6205

Marquette Biological Station

3090 Wright Street
 Marquette, MI 49855-9649
 Kasia Mullett (katherine_mullett@fws.gov)
 906/226-1235

Neosho National Fish Hatchery

East Park Street
 Neosho, MO 64850
 David Hendrix (david_hendrix@fws.gov)
 417/451-0554

Pendills Creek National Fish Hatchery

National Fish Hatchery
 21990 West Trout Lane
 Brimley, MI 49715
 Curt Friez (curt_friez@fws.gov)
 906/437-5231

Sullivan Creek National Fish Hatchery

21200 West Hatchery Road
 Brimley, MI 49715
 Curt Friez (curt_friez@fws.gov)
 906/437-5231