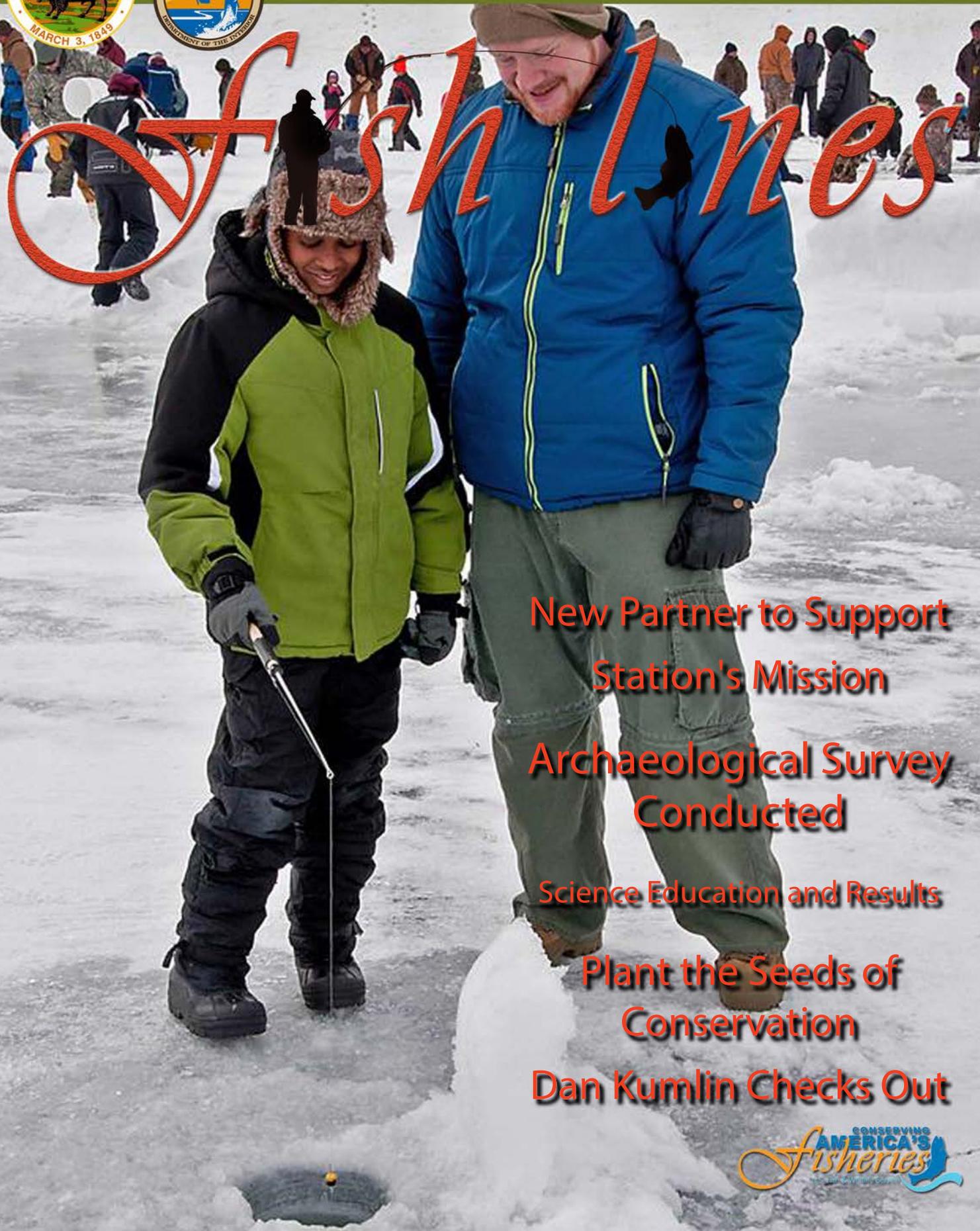




U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service - Midwest Region

Fisheries Program



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In this Issue

Field Focus

[Marquette Biological Station](#)

The Sea Lamprey Control Program (SLCP) regularly takes steps to minimize the effects of program operations on non-target species...[Read More](#)

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Archive

[2014](#) [2013](#) [2012](#) [2011](#) [2010](#) [2009](#)

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Walking in a Winter Wonderland

In the midst of a seemingly boring and cold Wisconsin winter the students involved in the Genoa National Fish...[Read More](#)



Walking in a Winter Wonderland



Projects Benefit Native Brook trout



Friends Host Kids Ice Fishing Event



Assisting with Recovery of Tagged Fish



Winter is the Time to Plan

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: March 13, 2014



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Fisheries, Midwest Region

Conserving America's Fisheries

Walking in a Winter Wonderland

BY JORGE BUENING, GENOA NFH



Students learn about fur trapping in Wisconsin. Credit: USFWS

heavy tail might conceal their own tracks. With all of their tracking knowledge the students learned how to predict animal movements leading them to learning a tradition rich in Wisconsin's culture-Trapping.

During a session dedicated to fur trapping the students learned about Wisconsin's furbearers and the important role that fur trading played in Wisconsin's history. They then learned about and the financial and ecological implications of trapping in our modern era. Next, the students learned about some of the laws that trappers follow to ensure that the appropriate animals are harvested and that trapped animals are treated humanely. Special tools used by trappers and some of the tricks that they use when trapping were also discussed. Students then learned how pelts are prepared for market and the current value of various pelts. Lastly, they were able to see and feel the pelts from almost all of Wisconsin's furbearers. I think the bobcat was a class favorite.

As winter looms it is exciting to see children engaging with the outdoors, learning about the life that exists under our snowy blanket. Seeing children learn a new trade and interact with our natural world develops lasting relationships. Genoa NFH is dedicated to maintaining and creating these relationships for children, even in the cold stillness of winter. With our Outdoor Classroom we hope to facilitate the transformation of winter worlds into winter wonderlands. We also hope to cauterize newly formed relationships so that they become unbreakable bonds forever linking America's youth to their natural world.

In the midst of a seemingly boring and cold Wisconsin winter the students involved in the Genoa National Fish Hatchery (NFH) Outdoor Classroom are busy learning that there is much more to do during winter than sitting inside and playing video games. Students from Summit Environmental School and Southern Bluffs Elementary School made their winter visits to the hatchery and in doing so experienced a winter wonderland.

The students learned that a seemingly quiet snow-covered prairie is bustling with activity; you just have to know where to look for it. By learning the art of tracking the students tracked field mice as they scurried from their den to a food cache. They also saw what happens if a mouse lingers in an open space. The students walked on ice and explored the outside of a muskrat lodge and saw the push-up that is serving as a winter pantry. They learned to consider the animal that they were tracking (weight, body shape, and how it moves) all of which will alter its tracks. For instance running animals will have deeper more spread out tracks and animals with a



Students experiencing the Outdoor Classroom at Genoa NFH. Credit: USFWS



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Fisheries, Midwest Region

Conserving America's Fisheries

Huron River Watershed, Michigan-Fish Passage Projects Benefit Native Brook trout

BY TED KOEHLER, ASHLAND FWCO

Three road crossings of Lake Superior tributaries in the Huron River watershed restricted flow and blocked passage for native fish such as brook trout and other aquatic life. Culverts at these crossings were perched and undersized, causing overtopping of the road and sedimentation to the stream during high water events.

The restoration sites are in the Huron River watershed, which drains 61,000 acres (95 square miles) in the Lake Superior basin in northern Baraga and Marquette counties, Michigan. The Huron River supports 37 species of fish and is one of the principal contributors of sport and forage fish to the Keweenaw and Marquette waters of Lake Superior. The watershed is a traditional hunting and fishing area for members of the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community and a popular destination for public recreation.

Fish passage restoration construction was completed in 2013 and consisted of replacing undersized and perched culverts at all three sites with bottomless culverts. The new bottomless



Fish passage barrier in the Huron River watershed. Credit: Superior Watershed Partnership



Bottomless arch restoring fish passage. Credit: Ted Koehler, USFWS

and Wildlife Conservation Office. Funding in the amount of \$102,500 from the Service was provided by the National Fish Passage Program which was used to purchase construction materials and hire local contractors to perform the installation and restoration work. Other partners included members of the Huron River Watershed Partnership, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Trout Unlimited, Baraga and Marquette County Conservation Districts, Lake Superior's Huron River Restoration Inc., Forestland Group LLC, Plum Creek Forest Company, Keweenaw Land Trust, and the Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve.

Locally the projects have built off previous collaborative efforts by the Huron River Watershed Partnership (HRWP) including a physical assessment of 23 stream sites, an inventory of 243 road crossings and prioritization of 41 problem sites, and ongoing annual water quality monitoring at 10 sites by trained HRWP volunteers. On a larger scale the work implemented key recommendations of several basin-wide plans/initiatives including the Lake Superior Lake-wide Management Plan; Fish Community Objectives for Lake Superior, and the Brook Trout Rehabilitation Plan for Lake Superior, by restoring fish passage and reducing sources of sediment that degrade habitat for native fish including brook trout. These projects represent the true spirit of "Acting Locally but Thinking Globally".

culverts span the stream width. They allow for a natural stream channel and restore passage for native fish. The work also controls erosion and sedimentation to the stream from the road surface and restores passage to over eight miles of brook trout habitat.

The Superior Watershed Partnership and Land Trust in Marquette, Michigan led the projects and worked closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Ashland Fish



Fish passage restoration in the Huron River watershed. Credit: Ted Koehler, USFWS



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Fisheries, Midwest Region

Conserving America's Fisheries

Friends Host Kids Ice Fishing Event at the Genoa National Fish Hatchery

BY DOUG ALOISI, GENOA NFH

The 2014 Annual Kids Ice Fishing Day was a success in spite of this year's arctic weather blast in the upper Midwest. The Service's three La Crosse area fisheries offices again hosted a Kids Ice Fishing event with the support of our Friends Group, the Friends of the Upper Mississippi.

The event, which had humble beginnings back when it was held at Goose Island Park just south of La Crosse Wisconsin, is now a highly anticipated winter event. Over 450 people arrived at the station on the February 15th to learn more about ice fishing, and to have an opportunity to fish a stocked pond for rainbow trout at the Genoa National Fish Hatchery (NFH).



Overview of Kids Fishing Day. Credit: USFWS



Waiting for a bite. Credit: Jerry Weigel

Eric Leis, (fish biologist and ice fishing expert from the

La Crosse Fish Health Center) provided a short primer on ice fishing and ice safety to 225 kids and their families. For some of these participants it was their first experience with ice fishing. The rest of the morning was spent trying out their new found skills on Pond 11 at Genoa NFH.

The children and their parents were then fed a light lunch provided by our Friends Group and sent home happy. Some children even caught their first fish through the ice. Many thanks go to our volunteers, the Friends Group, and the staff at the three La Crosse area fisheries offices for helping to get kids and their parents outside to enjoy all nature has to offer-even in the midst of winter.



Staff member assists child with her catch. Credit: USFWS



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Fisheries, Midwest Region

Conserving America's Fisheries

Great Lakes Fish Tag and Recovery Laboratory Assists States with Recovery of Tagged Fish

BY ALLEN LANE, GREEN BAY FWCO

The Great Lakes Fish Tag and Recovery Laboratory, located at the Green Bay Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (FWCO), was created in 2010 to provide fish tagging and data recovery services to state and tribal agencies around the Great Lakes. From 2010 to 2013 the lab coded wire tagged (CWT) approximately 36 million chinook salmon and lake trout that were released from federal and state hatcheries into the Great Lakes. The CWT is a 1.1 millimeter long stainless steel wire that is inserted into the snout of salmon and trout prior to release into the lakes. On the tag is a six-digit code that identifies the fish as to its hatchery, stocking location, strain, and year class. Each fish that has a CWT also receives an adipose fin-clip that identifies the fish to anglers and biologists that the fish has a CWT. The tags, when removed from a large sample of fish, allow biologists to determine relative survival and rates of reproduction, lake wide movements, and contributions to fisheries by specific groups of fish, and evaluate the overall effectiveness of state and federal stocking programs.



Mike Lancewicz and Melvin Haas process lake trout and salmon snouts containing CWT at the Green Bay FWCO. Credit: Chuck Bronte, USFWS

To recover the tagged fish and the associated data,

State of Landing	Chinook Salmon	Lake Trout	Steelhead/Rainbow	Coho Salmon	Atlantic Salmon	Brown Trout	Totals
Wisconsin	3,403	997	1,463	1,907	0	385	8,155
Michigan	3,006	950	418	32	4	14	4,435
Illinois	838	159	8	21	0	1	1,027
Indiana	359	1,072	342	1,488	0	34	3,295
Total fish examined	7,606	3,178	2,231	3,448	4	434	16,901
Number with CWT	2,207	246	70	34	0	0	2,557

Table 1. Number of fish by species and state examined by USFWS staff for CWTs from sport fisheries in Lake Michigan and Lake Huron during 2013. Credit: Allen Lane, USFWS

the Great Lakes Fish Tag and Recovery Laboratory hired eleven technicians who worked at fishing derbies, boat launches, and fish cleaning stations in Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin on lakes Michigan and Huron, from late April to early November. They worked alone or with state technicians, creel clerks, and biologists collecting biological data such as length, weight, sex, fin clips, lamprey wounds, and aging structures nearly 17,000 sport caught salmon and trout. Of these fish (Table 1), 2,500 had a CWT in their snout, and these were sent to the Great Lakes Fish Tag and Recovery Laboratory to be extracted and read.

An additional 13,000 snouts with CWTs were sent to the lab from assessment surveys, fall weir returns, and voluntary angler returns conducted by Illinois, Indiana, Michigan,



Biologist Kevin Pankow and assistant recording biological data such as length, weight, sex, and lamprey wounds on a salmon at a boat launch. Credit: Elliot Hoffman, USFWS

and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, New York Department of Environmental Conservation, Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, Intertribal Fisheries Assessment, Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and the Service.

Biologists Kevin Pankow, Jim Webster, and Allen Lane led a team of eight technicians in processing 16,308 salmon and trout snouts containing 15,613 CWTs from mid-October to late December. The lab will continue to process more coded wire tagged salmon and trout from all Great Lakes each year as the number of cohorts of fish stocked with CWT's increases in the Great Lakes.

The Great Lakes Fish Tag and Recovery Laboratory annually tags and clips between 2.5 to 5 million chinook salmon at six state hatcheries in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin along with about six million lake trout at four federal hatcheries in Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin that are then stocked into Lake Michigan, Huron, Erie, and Ontario.



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Fisheries, Midwest Region

Conserving America's Fisheries

Winter is the Time to Plan for a Successful Mussel Production Year

BY NATHAN ECKERT, GENOA NFH



A clean pan of Higgins' eye waiting for their new home this summer. Credit : USFWS

While it doesn't look like much on paper the mussel program is busy this month planning actions and gathering materials for the coming production season. Speaking of paper, January is the month that we record all of our mussel collections from the previous year and report them to the surrounding state authorities and the endangered species coordinators where appropriate. This simple chore is made easier by keeping detailed records year round for quick reference come report time.

We have laid out a plan which calls for propagation of around 12 species and the placement of up to 150 mussel cages of various configurations this summer. Material has been purchased, and next month a group of volunteers will help with cage repair to get us completely ready for next season. Another aspect of planning for the coming season is the acquisition of host fish for new mussels on our production list. Species such as fresh-water drum, golden shiners and flathead catfish are used for mussel production at Genoa NFH, but are not propagated here. Advanced planning is necessary because we are required to certify all lots of fish as

healthy prior to bringing them on-station. The fish health certification process takes 4-6 weeks so it can't wait until the last minute in the Spring when it is propagation time. Currently a lot of golden shiners are being tested for use this summer, and plans are being made to test a lot of freshwater drum next month as well. If we are lucky a lot of flathead catfish will be available in the next month or two just ahead of our production deadline.

We are also maintaining sub-adult mussels from both 2012 and 2013 in the mussel building until they can be placed at various locations for grow-out and, ultimately, stocking this fall. The good culture years we've had recently have us holding over 1,300 Higgins' eye from 2012 and nearly 5,000 Higgins' eye from 2013 as well as a dozen fawnsfoot from our first attempt at that species last year. These mussels are being held in circular pans which need to be cleaned on a weekly basis to avoid issues with mussels being smothered by excess sediment.

All of this planning is necessary to make sure we are ready to go without any glitches when Spring arrives. Last year Spring got here late and this year looks to be no different. We will be anxious to get in the water as soon as the ice leaves and this long winter finally says goodbye.



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Fisheries, Midwest Region

Conserving America's Fisheries

Sea Lamprey Control Program Minimizes Risk to Non-target Species

BY CHERYL KAYE, MARQUETTE BIOLOGICAL STATION

The Sea Lamprey Control Program (SLCP) regularly takes steps to minimize the effects of program operations on non-target species. The primary method used to control sea lampreys in the Great Lakes is the applications of the lampricide TFM to streams to target the larval stage of the life cycle. Often, TFM treatments are augmented with a 70% wettable powder or 20% emulsifiable concentrate of Bayluscide, which increases the toxicity of TFM to lampreys, and allows control agents to use less TFM. Treatments with TFM and TFM/Bayluscide mixtures are estimated to eliminate about 95% of sea lamprey larvae in treated areas. Alternative methods used to control populations include barriers to block and traps to capture spawning adults. These operations have the potential to affect non-target organisms and the SLCP takes care to minimize such effects and implements special procedures where state and federally protected species and species of concern may be encountered. Cold Creek, a tributary of the Millecoquins River (Mackinac County, Michigan) is an example of the SLCP ensuring that lampricide treatments do not impact a species of concern.



Gastric lavage performed on a brook trout. Credit: USFWS



Stomach contents from gastric lavage sampling of a brook trout. Credit: USFWS

During 2009, the Hiawatha Sportsman's Club (Club) contacted the SLCP with their concern that lampricide treatments were killing aquatic invertebrates in their streams, specifically burrowing mayflies in Cold Creek, and as a consequence, causing a reduction of fishes in the creek. Unless studies were implemented to address these concerns, the Club was not willing to grant access permission to treat Cold Creek, which was scheduled for treatment during that same year.

The Millecoquins system is a major contributor of sea lampreys to Lake Michigan and stream treatments are critical to fisheries management in the lake. The Club owns 35,000 acres of land and a large portion of the Millecoquins River system flows through

their property. Access permission is required to treat the upper and lower Millecoquins and Cold Creek.

To address the Clubs concerns, the SLCP conducted:

- 1.) A survey of Cold Creek to determine whether burrowing mayflies and their habitat were present,
- 2.) A quantitative study that sampled aquatic invertebrates before, during, and after the stream treatment to determine whether exposure to the lampricide TFM had a negative effect on the populations, and;
- 3.) A diet analysis using gastric lavage technique to determine diet composition of brook trout and rainbow trout before, during, and after the treatment and whether exposure to TFM had an effect on their ability to forage.



Hester-Dendy multi-plate samplers. Credit: USFWS

No burrowing mayflies were found in the mainstream of Cold Creek. The substrate in Cold Creek consists mostly of sand bottom with woody debris which is not preferred habitat of burrowing mayflies.

A total of 58 taxa, with representation in 13 orders, were collected and identified from the 36 Hester-Dendy sampling units used to quantitatively sample invertebrates. The treatment of Cold Creek did not result in the reduction of any invertebrate taxa. However, there was a significant difference following the treatment in two taxa, *Baetis* spp. and *Neophylax* spp. In both cases, the density of



Hester-Dendy multi-plate samplers placed in the stream. Credit: USFWS

the taxon decreased in the untreated area (control), while they either increased (*Baetis*) or stayed the same (*Neophylax*) in the treated area.

The gastric lavage study showed that a TFM treatment can affect the feeding behavior of opportunistic brook and rainbow trout. Comparison of stomach contents showed that the number of aquatic invertebrates consumed by the fish during the treatment increased by 40% (96% aquatic, 5% terrestrial) compared to pre-treatment (74% aquatic, 26% terrestrial). The fish temporarily abandoned their normal food items in favor of drifting a fingernet caddisfly that spins fine-meshed nets on the underside of rocks where they are usually unavailable as food for fish. One week following the treatment, stomach contents of fish in Cold Creek were similar (72% aquatic, 28% terrestrial) to the pre-treatment period.



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Fisheries, Midwest Region

Conserving America's Fisheries



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.

Crab Orchard Lake Sport Fish Habitat Enhancement Project

BY IAN KENNEDY, CARTERVILLE FWCO

Christmas trees are usually the center piece of most families Christmas holiday. Most people use the tree, take off their ornaments, and then discard it. To most people this is a sad event because there will be no more presents and good food. Sport fish, however, love the end of holidays because this means habitat enhancement, which provides them with cover and feeding areas for much longer than a week!

On February 22nd, 2014 personnel from the Carterville Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, and multiple volunteers congregated at the Wolf Creek Road Boat Ramp located in the Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge. The purpose of this work day was to wire used Christmas trees to cinder blocks and sink the "fish attractors" into key locations. Most of the chosen locations are within casting distance of shore anglers and the remaining spots would provide boat anglers with prime spots to try and catch some of Crab Orchards exciting and abundant sport fish.

Most people will agree that Christmas trees are a little cumbersome to move around. With cinder blocks attached to them they become a formidable opponent! In order to move the "fish attractors" federal and state personnel used large pontoon boats and small modified Jon boats to load the trees and cinder blocks and then maneuvered the floating brush piles to the desired locations. Once at the pre-determined spots the trees and attached cinder blocks were carefully pushed off the boats and allowed to sink to the bottom. The completion of this project provides sport fish excellent habitat and provides anglers ideal locations to try and catch some of their favorite species which is a good compromise in the natural resources management world. Both the fish and the anglers will be able to enjoy this project for years to come which is a great present no matter what time of the year it is!

Brookies Back in the House!

BY ANGELA BARAN, GENOA NFH

Genoa National Fish Hatchery (NFH) has received their annual shipment of coaster brook trout eggs from the Iron River National Fish Hatchery once again. The eggs arrived on station January 28th, 2014 and started hatching on February 9th, 2014. Genoa received 200,000 eggs to ensure enough fish for 67,000 spring fingerlings and 10,000 yearlings for restoration efforts in Lake Superior and native waters around Grand Portage, Minnesota. Iron River NFH and Genoa NFH have been working with the Grand Portage Tribe for several years now trying to preserve the population and bring it back to historic levels. The hatchery has traditionally requested larger numbers of eggs to ensure the needed stocking amounts, with the high iron content and retrofitted systems, initial losses at the egg and fry stage were common. Over the last three years maintenance staff at Genoa NFH has installed new tanks, improved plumbing and added monitoring and alarm systems. These improvements have increased survival dramatically at the early stages, causing a new issue of over-crowding which is easily remedied at Genoa NFH by using the fish as a forage base for mussel host catfish infested with endangered winged mapleleaf mussels. This clean, high energy food source helps to keep the fish well fed and reduces their chances of diseases from other forage sources. At each stage of development, once the needed numbers of fish are obtained, the lot of fish will be reduced to prevent overcrowding and the catfish will have a great lunch!



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Fisheries, Midwest Region

Conserving America's Fisheries

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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