



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service - Midwest Region

Fisheries Program

Fish Lines

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"Spawning Run"**

**Headed that Far West and
No Passport Needed**

**Outreach at
Southern Illinois
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**Annual Eurasian Ruffe
Survey Completed**

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

Conserving America's Fisheries



Oct 22, 2015
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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.



Outreach at 1st Annual "Spawning Run"

It was a crisp 29 degrees in Green Bay, Wisconsin for the first annual Spawning Run. The Spawning Run...[Read More](#)



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Green Bay Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office Outreach at 1st Annual "Spawning Run"

BY ANTHONY RIETH, GREEN BAY FWCO

It was a crisp 29 degrees in Green Bay, Wisconsin for the first annual Spawning Run. The Spawning Run was created by the University of Wisconsin – Green Bay student sub-chapter of the American Fisheries Society as a way to raise funds for fish habitat conservation and awareness.

More than 100 people showed up to run the race on this chilly fall day, and many more were on hand volunteering, cheering on the runners, or just taking in the festivities. Those in attendance included children, college students, concerned citizens, and even a few full time fisheries professionals ranging in age anywhere from five to eighty years old.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employee, Anthony Rieth, saw the Spawning Run as an opportunity to highlight the many different fisheries programs that are housed at the Green Bay Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (FWCO). Information was presented on the Great Lakes Mass Marking program where coded wire tags are used obtain data for analysis of trout and salmon stocking and returns, sea lamprey control efforts, native fish restoration projects, and life history information on lake sturgeon.

Huge crowds were drawn to the fiberglass replicas of Asian Carp (Grass, Silver, Black, and Bighead). Anthony spent quite a bit of time explaining the importance of the Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) program, what environmental DNA sampling is and how it is used to monitor for Asian Carps, how larval fish monitoring is a new and useful tool in AIS surveillance, and other invasive species monitoring efforts taking place in the Lake Michigan basin.

The Spawning Run and the Green Bay FWCO Outreach Booth were successes on the first try and both plan on making a return showing next October.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Biological Science Technician Anthony Rieth shows off educational material. Credit: Amy Cotrell



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Headed that Far West and No Passport Needed

BY SHAWN SANDERS, IRON RIVER NFHH



Artistic interpretation of salmon spawning at Makah NFH reads: "WITH RIVERS, THE WATER THAT YOU TOUCH IS THE LAST OF WHAT PASSED AND THE FIRST OF THAT WHICH COMES; SO WITH PRESENT TIME." -LEONARDO daVINCI (Artist Credit: Randy Rickert) Photo Credit: USFWS

canoes (<http://makah.com/>), used for specific purposes. Today, an all-tribal fleet of commercial boats is allowed an ocean harvest of salmon and other ocean fishes within tribal waters.

I had started my career in Washington, but never traveled this far onto the Olympic Peninsula and did not know what to expect. And what I found were friends, very friendly co-workers, tribal co-managers, and friendly local people.



Vern Tolliver, Maintenance Mechanic at Makah NFH, discusses the installation and

The facility is encompassed by the 27,000 acre reservation and leased from the Makah Nation under a 25-year lease, to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). The hatchery is located on the Tsoo-Yess River and local FWS managers work with the tribal fish managers (who were amazing!) to manage the river resources. This allows the facility to collect brood fish and fishers to harvest fish in-river.

While on detail, two in-river salmon fishing seasons lasting two days were instituted and considered successful. This fishery was allowed in an area of river that was holding "bright" or "fresh" coho salmon, while the upstream portion was closed to fishing and was holding mostly chinook salmon (to be used for spawning). Most harvest was focused on the coho because of the quality of the meat and area for allowable harvest. Harvest of salmon will also take place during a gill-net season, following spawning operations at the facility. Excess fish (fish that have been spawned or that are above needed numbers for spawning) are also given to the

Our agency's management areas stretch across the country (lower 48) and also north, east, and west to Alaska, and South to Hawaii. Not to mention refuges and areas of resource management that expand out to Rose (American Samoa) and Palmyra Atolls which are far removed from the lower 48.

And we often have chances to cross-train or do "details", which are work assignments outside of our normal duties. When a detail was announced to help with management of the Makah National Fish Hatchery (NFH), our leadership here at Iron River NFH, (located in northern Wisconsin) supported me in taking advantage of this three-week training opportunity.

Why the geography lesson? Well, because I was stationed on the tip of the westernmost point of the contiguous United States (near Cape Alava), but I was also within the boundaries of a sovereign nation, the Makah Indian Reservation, near Neah Bay, Washington. The Makah are an ocean-going people and historically subsisted on ocean and river harvests of fish, seal, and whale. As a tribe, they are known for their canoe building and different types of



Docked commercial vessels in Neah Bay, Washington. Credit: Shawn Sanders, USFWS

operation of an experimental incubation unit for salmon eggs with Tod Jones of Redd-Zone. Credit: Shawn Sanders, USFWS

Makah tribe and are distributed to the residents through different programs.

Makah NFH spawns and rears chinook, coho, and Winter steelhead and incubates endangered Lake Ozette Sockeye salmon

http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/salmon/sockeye/ozette_lake.html). I thoroughly enjoyed the complexity of the operation and the willingness of the staff to share their amazing experiences. It was also a chance to begin to learn about a culture and the traditions that the tribe holds sacred.

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Fisheries, Midwest Region

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Carterville Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office **Outreach at Southern Illinois Hunting and Fishing Days**

BY IAN KENNEDY, CARTERVILLE FWCO

During the annual Southern Illinois Hunting and Fishing Days held on the 26th of September at John A. Logan College in Carterville, Illinois, fisheries personnel from the Carterville office took the opportunity to introduce the public to the tasty flesh of exotic invasive Asian carp. Southern Illinois Hunting and Fishing Days is a huge event every fall attracting tens of thousands of outdoors folks from around the region. It is billed as the largest celebration of Hunting and Fishing Day in the country and judging by the amount of camouflage clothing present that may be right. The event includes numerous activities and demonstrations from an archery contest to a youth goose calling contest (which seems to last the entire two days).

At the 2015 Hunting and Fishing Days Carterville staff fried pounds of bighead and silver carp "wings". We traveled to Grafton, Illinois and picked up 250 pounds of fresh bighead and silver carp fillets which were brought back to the Carterville office and processed into carp "wings". Carp "wings" are simply taking the filets and ribbing them so you are left with a tasty piece of carp meat that is easy to cook and remove the bones. Bighead and silver carp flesh is firm, white, flakey, and has a very mild and tasty flavor.

Throughout the day on Saturday biological technicians Ian Kennedy, Lucas Shea, Olivea Mendenhall and Biologists Brad Rogers, Jeff Stewart, Donovan Henry, Tammy Knecht, Brian Bartos, and Kjetil Henderson cooked and interacted with the public. Most people were eager to try the carp, a few took a little arm twisting but everyone who tried it loved it! Many people couldn't believe the fish was from a carp and compared it with crappie and walleye. Several visitors stated "I don't even like fish and this is delicious". In the end, despite intermittent rain during the day, the attendance was excellent and the public's response to eating Asian carp was overwhelmingly positive. We were happy with the results and hope that they will translate into more folks consuming Asian carp on a regular basis.



Carterville FWCO Biologist Jeff Stewart frying-up Asian carp at Southern Illinois Hunting and Fishing Days. Credit: Carterville FWCO, USFWS



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

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Annual Eurasian Ruffe Survey Completed on Lake Huron, Michigan

BY ANJANETTE BOWEN, ALPENA FWCO

During fall 2015, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Alpena Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (FWCO) conducted an annual survey to detect populations of Eurasian ruffe (ruffe) in Lake Huron. Bottom trawling gear was used to target nine nearshore port and river mouth locations in U.S. waters of Lake Huron. Locations included Port Dolomite, Cheboygan River, Port of Calcite, Stoneport, False Presque Isle Harbor, Thunder Bay River, Thunder Bay, Au Gres River, and Saginaw River - all within Michigan. Ruffe were not captured following sampling at all but three locations by late September. Sampling at all locations will be completed by late October. This effort is part of a coordinated search for new ruffe populations on the periphery of their range in lakes Huron, Erie, and Ontario. Sampling in lakes Erie and Ontario is conducted by the USFWS Lower Great Lakes FWCO.

Ruffe are thought to compete with native species for habitat and food resources. They have been found in Lake Superior (Thunder Bay, Ontario south and east along the south shore to Whitefish Bay), Lake Michigan (Green Bay), and Lake Huron (Cheboygan River, Trout River in Rogers City, and Thunder Bay area).



Round Gobies: Gobies were abundant at sampling locations in the Cheboygan River and Thunder Bay, Michigan. Credit: USFWS



Alpena FWCO staff sort the trawl catch at Thunder Bay, Michigan. No Eurasian Ruffe were captured during the 2015 surveillance efforts. Credit: USFWS

Within Lake Huron, ruffe were captured from the Thunder Bay area in Alpena, Michigan starting in 1995 and were abundant in bottom trawls by fall 1999. Their catch rates declined from 1999 to 2003 and ruffe have not been captured from the area since spring 2003. Anecdotal sightings of ruffe have been reported from the Trout River in Rogers City, Michigan during spring 2008 and the Cheboygan River in Cheboygan, Michigan during spring 2011 and 2012. Alpena FWCO conducts additional sampling using electrofishing gear and trap nets in Alpena, Rogers City, and Cheboygan targeting areas where ruffe were reported.

Information collected as a result of targeted ruffe surveys across the Great Lakes is compiled into an annual report titled "Surveillance for Ruffe in the Great Lakes".



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

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Reconnecting River Roads of the Great Lakes

BY JOANNA GILKESON AND KATIE STEIGER-MEISTER REGIONAL OFFICE - EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

The once free-flowing waterways of the Great Lakes Basin are today constrained by 275,000 barriers, many of which are structures like dams and culverts. Though intended for hydropower or flood control, the presence of these barriers has had unintended consequences to humans, fish and wildlife. Due to these obstructions, thousands of waterways in the Great Lakes Basin are impassable to fish and animals trying to reach important habitat. Blocked waterways also limit use by boaters, kayakers and anglers.

The need for many river barriers no longer exists, creating the opportunity for barrier removal. When removal is not an option, the technology exists to upgrade structures to allow for fish to pass around them. Reconnecting river roads improves habitat for fish and wildlife and enhances outdoor recreation experiences. With 275,000 barriers identified for potential removal, the question is where to begin?

Rallied together by the Upper Midwest and Great Lakes Landscape Conservation Cooperative, a mosaic of tribal, federal, state, academic and nonprofit groups is working together to determine which rivers and streams are priorities for restoration. The intent of the collaborative is to use a



The Harpersfield Covered Bridge and barrier in the Grand River, Ohio is positioned within the Great Lakes Basin near Lake Erie. This barrier blocks invasive sea lamprey from traveling through the Grand River to Lake Erie. The Collaborative will work to reconnect river roads and healthy native species populations while controlling invasives through strategic and collaborative planning. Credit: Joanna Gilkeson, USFWS



Lake sturgeon are the only sturgeon species native to the Great Lakes Basin. By the 1990s, lake sturgeon were listed as either threatened or endangered by 19 of the 20 states within its original range. This was a result of overfishing, habitat loss, the construction of dams and pollution. Credit: Joanna Gilkeson, USFWS

holistic approach to reconnecting river roads that takes into account the restoration opportunities and needs of the entire Great Lakes Basin. A lot hangs in the balance.

For more than a century obstructed waterways have impeded the survival of iconic native fish species, such as the lake sturgeon and brook trout. Unable to reach historic spawning grounds or food sources, their populations have rapidly declined. Ripple effects include negative repercussions to local economies that depend on outdoor tourism.

The vastness of the Great Lakes Basin, in which people, fish and wildlife are interconnected, underscores that no single entity can tackle the issue alone. With support from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, the members of the Upper Midwest and Great Lakes Landscape Conservation Cooperative are bringing their unique expertise and resources to the collaborative. Together, they will create a plan for how to best start reconnecting the river roads of the Great Lakes Basin.



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Genoa National Fish Hatchery Hines Emerald Dragonfly Recovery Program

BY ANGELA BARAN, GENOA NFH



Hines Emerald Dragonfly larva in the cage. Credit: USFWS

This summer, Genoa National Fish Hatchery (NFH) became the first federal fish hatchery to house and propagate a federally endangered insect, the Hine's Emerald Dragonfly (HED). HED larvae arrived on station at Genoa NFH on June 2, 2015. This marked the beginning of a collaborative effort, funded through the Cooperative Recovery Initiative, between Genoa NFH, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Chicago Ecological Services Office, Upper Mississippi National Wildlife and Fish Refuge and University of South Dakota (USD). USD has been working with the dragonfly for several years and has studied their growth, tracked their genetics, and has developed the first captive rearing techniques for the species.

Genoa NFH began employing these rearing techniques and working with USD to adapt them to a larger scale production and to our site specific variables. It was decided that we would begin work developing culture methods for this new species on-station using larvae from the more stable HED population along the Wisconsin River. Once the

methods are tested and proven, Genoa NFH will employ the best of those methods to begin raising the more imperiled population from Chicago, Illinois.

Genoa NFH staff worked with USD to develop an initial rearing plan for the hatchery. In accordance with the plan, HED larvae were placed in cages and have been checked each week to ensure that the cages were free of debris and remained undamaged. Then the larvae were spot checked, by opening one cage per grouping. Each month, the cages were removed from the water and the larvae placed in a holding container overnight to allow them to empty of food. The next day the larvae were weighed and measured before being returned to the water. To determine the best conditions for the larvae, cages were placed in both deep and shallow water at two locations, a wetland area and a hatchery pond.



Pathways Student Liz Hackner checking cages. Credit: USFWS

The first cage assessment was completed on June 30th, with staff from USD demonstrating proper handling techniques for the larvae, ensuring correct identification of the larvae and evaluating the food available in the cages. This first assessment exhibited news of two extremes; the great news was excellent growth of the larvae in the hatchery pond system, some growing 400% in just one month! At the wetland site the news was not as good. During the last week before the cage check, a large number of the larvae were lost. While it was initially thought the wetland site would be the most ideal location for the larvae, heavy rains led to prolonged flooding conditions and deeper than normal water levels with temperature and dissolved oxygen levels that could not be controlled as well as at the hatchery pond location. Temperatures in the pond ranged between 70 - 87 degrees Fahrenheit (F) throughout the month, with daily temperatures only varying by 3 - 4 degrees F. Temperatures in the wetland however, ranged between 65 - 92 degrees F with daily

temperatures varying by 10 - 15 degrees F. The final check at some of the wetland sites, prior the first assessment, revealed low dissolved oxygen levels, with some levels as low as 1.2 milligrams per liter. After the first assessment, it was decided to transfer the remaining larvae from the wetland to the pond location, shelving the wetland as a possible rearing location.

USD has completed studies showing larvae can be reared together without cannibalism as long as they are approximately the same size, which was the logic behind attempting to raise two newly hatched fry together in one cage. During the assessment, it was found that both larvae survived in only a few cages, most cages only had one surviving larva. The theory is that the growth of the smallest larvae was so great in the first month; one grew faster than the other and consumed the other. After these adjustments to the rearing practices at the hatchery, the larvae continue to grow well and survival is on par or slightly better than

the field locations. The larvae will remain in the pond until late fall, when a portion of them will be brought into a newly constructed trailer, where the colder winter pond water will allow them to go dormant for the winter. For the 2016 growing season, modifications will be made to the cages and newly hatched larvae will be kept individually in the cages. Genoa NFH is also looking forward to receiving their first batch of HED eggs to hatch and grow on station to be placed in next summer's cages.



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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.

High Water Surprises on the Missouri River

BY PATRICIA HERMAN, COLUMBIA FWCO

One never knows what might be found in the Missouri River after a high water event. Missouri River flood waters bring with them food, nutrients, sediment and trash. Hidden in the murky waters are treasures just waiting to be discovered – even new species! Okay, well not new species but new to us species. In 2012, after record water releases from Gavin's Point Dam, Columbia FWCO crews captured some unusual species in the lower 250 miles of the Missouri River. A Rainbow Trout and a Muskellunge represented new species records for our segments of the river as part of Pallid Sturgeon Population and Monitoring in 2012. With river levels at action stage or above from May through July, crews wondered what might be discovered this year.

One such treasure was discovered in a mini-fyke net near river mile 219. Sarah Ettinger-Dietzel was removing small fish from the net and noticed one that looked different from the other silvery minnows.

"A Sauger?...no, not a Sauger. What is this thing?" said Sarah as she showed the fish to Cal Yonce. "Looks like a stickleback," Cal said casually." I responded incredulously without looking up from the field computer. "Nope, we don't have sticklebacks here..."

Then I looked up – and sure enough. The tiny, spiny fish was a stickleback measuring in at just under an inch; a Brook Stickleback, to be exact. Cal graciously accepted my humble apology for being doubtful and hasty to judge.

The native range for Brook Stickleback includes sections of the upper Missouri River and large tributaries, like the Niobrara River, in the middle Missouri River. Though small bodied, sticklebacks are recognized as aggressive; known to eat eggs and larvae of other native species. It is unclear if this diminutive predator drifted hundreds of miles downstream or if spawning occurred locally. It will be interesting to see if more are captured in future. Reports have been made of sticklebacks being introduced outside of their native ranges, mostly incidences of bait bucket introductions. Given the location of this capture and little likelihood that small bait fish were used recreationally, there is low probability that our Brook Stickleback was an accidental introduction. Though literature has referred to the Brook Stickleback as "pugnacious," it was exciting to catch one in our part of the Missouri River and to add a new species record to our database.

As a fun post script, we also catch some weird trash in our mini-fyke nets. The day before catching the Brook Stickleback, we "caught" G.I. Joe's backside in one of our nets. Curiously, in researching the registered trademark, websites dedicated to "The Many Butts of G.I. Joe." were discovered (used for determining a manufacturing date for the doll). Ah, curiosities of the Big Muddy...the treasure hunt never gets old.

Green Bay FWCO Technicians Lead Aging Workshop at Summer Lake Michigan Management Meeting

BY PARKER KILSDONK, GREEN BAY FWCO

During the summer of 2015, staff at the Green Bay Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (FWCO) replicated a study focusing on the greatest keystone predator to ever wander the depths of the Great Lakes, the lake trout. The original study, conducted by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), examined the accuracy of aging structures of Lake Huron lake trout and the staff of the Green Bay FWCO wanted to test the validity of the results on Lake Michigan lake trout. Each year Lake Michigan management staff interpret ages on thousands of lake trout otoliths, or ear bones, by counting "rings" or annuli that are laid down annually, analogous to rings on a tree, but the annuli are much harder to interpret. Subjectivity in annuli interpretation and the lethality of this aging method have led management agencies to explore reliable alternative to otolith aging. Thoughts turned to the maxilla, the lake trout's upper jaw bone, as a possible alternative?

The objectives of the replicated study were to compare maxillae and otoliths as reliable aging structures for lake trout and present the findings at the summer session of the Lake Michigan technical committee (LMTC). The original study of this type conducted by the MDNR used 89 lake trout from Lake Huron. For the replication study, aging structures from Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin angler caught Lake Michigan lake trout were collected by staff working with the mass marking program at the Green Bay FWCO. All 45 lake trout used in the replicated study were stocked fish and ages were known at recovery.

Thin cross-sections of both the maxillae and otoliths were obtained using a low speed jeweler's saw. Thin-sections were then mounted on glass slides and illuminated under a microscope to bring out the annuli and make them easier to read. Images of the otoliths obtained during microscopy were cataloged using image analysis software. A macro application within the software created microscopy images under known magnification and used a system calibration created by the user to accurately measure the distance of each annuli from the center of the structure to aid in age estimation.

Three technicians took on the task of preparing and independently aging the 90 structures (two from each fish) collected for the study. Once completed, the technicians compared their age estimates of each structure with the known age of each fish. The goal of this comparison is to calculate the average percent error (APE) for each ager thus evaluating the effectiveness and reliability of the maxillae and otoliths, with a lower APE representing more accurate age estimates. Another consideration is that random error is more acceptable than systematic error which would indicate a tendency to either over age or under age. Of the 45 lake trout examined, 32 were between four and eight years old. Thirteen fish represented ages nine to 23 and this distribution created strong definition within the study for younger fish and lack thereof for older. The first ager's results showed a higher accuracy with otoliths whereas; the other two agers had a much more negligible outcome but were still slightly more accurate aging otoliths as seen in the calculated accuracy table. The staff concluded that maxillae provide more consistent visualizations leading to lower standard deviations when compared to less than amiable otoliths but are vulnerable to under aging. With the information generated from the study there was not enough evidence to justify the conversion to the use maxillae rather than otoliths, which are the more commonly used structure in fish aging. Results were presented at the LMTC committee meeting in July. Technicians followed up the presentation with a hands-on workshop explaining the process of preparing and analyzing otoliths and maxillae and techniques to coax better definition out of aging structures. The presentation was a success that generated some great conversation about aging techniques between offices.



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.

Whitney Genetics Lab

The Whitney Genetics lab provides environmental DNA (eDNA) surveillance for the early detection of invasive Silver and Bighead carp as part of the Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee's plans to detect, monitor, and respond to the threat of invasive carp in the Great Lakes. The lab also provides analysis for determining the ploidy of wild-caught Black and Grass carp, two more invasive carp species.



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