



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service - Midwest Region

Fisheries Program

fish lines



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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Fisheries, Midwest Region

Conserving America's Fisheries

Volunteers Provide Much Needed Support

BY JOSEPH GERBYSHAK, ALPENA FWCO



Members of Alpena FWCO Friends Group – Friends of the Lake Huron Watershed, assist during an assessment of lake trout spawn activity on artificial reefs on Lake Huron's Thunder Bay. Credit: USFWS

Volunteers played a key role in helping the Alpena Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (FWCO) accomplish mission critical field work throughout the past year. While in the field, volunteers routinely functioned as a member of the crew and were able to obtain insight into Alpena FWCO's work as it relates to natural resource conservation, management, and environmental education. Without the help of these individuals, staff from Alpena FWCO would not have been able to complete field work as efficiently, or in some cases it would not have been completed at all.

In tight fiscal times conducting work short staffed is a commonality and assistance from volunteers can be an essential part of completing the job, especially during the busy field season. Throughout the past fiscal year 33 volunteers contributed 562 hours of their time. Their time was spent assisting staff in field operations and outreach activities, which saved the Alpena FWCO approximately \$11,594 (Independent Sector's Value of Volunteer Time, 2013).

Many of the volunteers who supported the office are members of Alpena FWCO's Friends Group – Friends of the Lake Huron Watershed. Friends Group members helped the office by participating in a variety of projects, mainly aquatic invasive species (AIS) education and assisting in local field activities.



A volunteer from Alpena FWCO's substation in Waterford shows off the "fruits of her labor" during a juvenile lake sturgeon assessment on the Huron-Erie Corridor. Credit: USFWS

"Volunteers from within and outside of our Friends Group have been valuable resources to the AIS surveillance program on northern Lake Huron. The volunteers are eager to assist with field activities, allowing them to get out on the water or in the field with biologists. They are a pleasure to work with and it is a win-win situation all around" said fish biologist, Anjanette Bowen, who leads the AIS Program for the office.

Given the variety and complexity of the work conducted by Alpena FWCO staff, utilizing volunteers without any training or experience can be challenging. Fish biologist Justin Chiotti, stationed at Alpena FWCO's substation in Waterford, has been fortunate enough to have reoccurring volunteers throughout the field season.

Many of these volunteers assisted the Waterford staff in conducting lake sturgeon assessments on the Huron-Erie Corridor. Justin said, "They become part of the crew and we don't even need to tell them what to do anymore, they just do it. We are gaining another staff member on the boat, and they are gaining valuable experience in the field."

The Treaty Fisheries Unit has utilized Friends Group members and interested community members for a variety of activities such as conducting gill net surveys, assisting in artificial reef assessments, cleaning gear, and processing fish for donation to the needy. "Volunteers fill an important role in fulfilling the station's goals by making themselves available when staff is short," explained Fish Biologist Adam Kowalski.



Friends of the Lake Huron Watershed member, Gerry Kraft, assists the Alpena Fish & Wildlife Conservation Office at an outreach event by educating the public about aquatic invaders. Credit: Jim Anderson



Fisheries work peaks the interest of a young volunteer as he proudly displays a beautiful walleye, by-catch from a juvenile lake sturgeon assessment on the Huron-Erie



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Fishers Farmers Partnership Missouri Department of Conservation Provide Stakeholder Engagement Training with AFWA Multistate Conservation Grant

BY HEIDI KEULER, LA CROSSE FWCO

Fishers & Farmers Partnership for the Upper Mississippi River Basin has been working with Missouri Department of Conservation and other partners to create stakeholder engagement opportunities in the Upper Mississippi River Basin, to enhance the effectiveness of conservation. Fishers & Farmers was able to secure a 2013 Multistate Conservation Grant from the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies to put on training workshops for land/water conservation employees and landowners. Missouri Department of Conservation donated the time of three employees to hold four 1½-day training workshops at Sedalia, Missouri, Rochester, Minnesota, La Crosse, Wisconsin, and Ankeny, Iowa. Prior to this grant the instructors held five of these workshops for their Fisheries and other Division Staff in Missouri. Instructors of the class included Ange Corson, Stream Program Coordinator, Ron Reitz, Survey Coordinator, and Eric Rahm, Stream Biologist. The instructors took what they learned from their prior training and developed a process that was directly applicable to their watershed planning process. Training included information from the International Association for Public Participation, Institute for Participatory Management & Planning, and the Environment Protection Agency.



Ange Corson with Missouri Department of Conservation, leads a discussion during the Iowa Stakeholder Engagement Workshop. Credit: USFWS

The final product of attending this course was not to have completed stakeholder engagement plans, but rather to have learned the Stakeholder Engagement Planning process. This plan includes understanding who needs to be involved, when to involve them, what level to involve them, and how to involve them. The strength of this planning effort is in its foresight, its transparency, and in providing documentation to support decisions being made along the way. This planning process is germane to watersheds across the Upper Mississippi River Basin and potentially watersheds across the country.



Attendees of the Fishers & Farmers Stakeholder Engagement Workshop in Rochester, MN take part in the "World Cafe". Credit: USFWS

Fishers & Farmers was really able to reach out to agricultural and natural resource groups across the Midwest. A total of 64 people representing 23 organizations attended the workshops including: Fillmore Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD), Illinois Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Iowa DNR, Iowa Soybean Association, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Minnesota DNR, Minnesota Forest Resources Council, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Missouri DNR, Mower SWCD, Nicollet SWCD, Trout Unlimited, UM & UW-Extensions, Whitewater Watershed, Winona County, Wisconsin DNR and several others. Most of these folks work directly with farmers and other landowners and are essential to advance aquatic habitat and water quality projects and agricultural best management practices. Attendees of the workshops were either at field level or lower management and said that this type of training was also needed for upper management.

Fishers & Farmers Partnership learned that this training was relevant to people across disciplines. Attendees were in fisheries, forestry, business, agriculture, education, and watershed management and they all said that this training applied to their job. We also learned about new active projects that have been engaging landowners for several years that we didn't know about. Finally, this workshop not only gave attendees some tools to use in their watershed, but most importantly it also gave them an opportunity to share with others lessons they've learned from working with farmers and other stakeholders.

Two landowner/stakeholder engagement activities, including a Missouri demonstration project (November/December 2013) and a Minnesota workshop for landowners (March 2014), were also funded through the Multistate Conservation Grant. Stay

tuned for a future report on those accomplishments.

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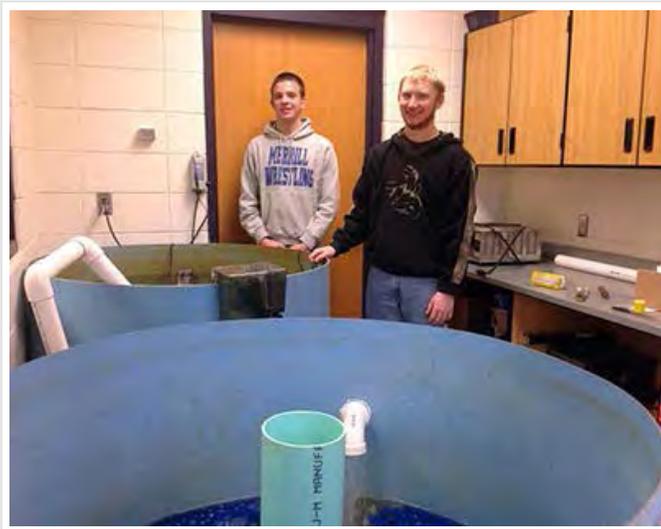
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Sturgeon in the Classroom 2.0 (Perch in the Classroom)

BY JORGE BUENING, GENOA NFH

As Sturgeon in the Classroom continues to teach elementary and middle school students about the wonders and importance of lake sturgeon a void is left for high school students. The program lacks the ability to teach this next generation of fish biologists the true art behind aquaculture. Therefore the Genoa National Fish Hatchery (NFH) has decided to implement a program geared toward high school students that will teach them the trade of fish culture and possibly inspire future career paths. This program allows high school classes to setup and oversee the growth and development of yellow perch in a recirculating aquaculture system in their classroom. We call it Perch in the Classroom and initiated it with our first guinea pigs; I mean school, this fall. Brigid Reimann from Merrill High School in Merrill, Wisconsin (WI) expressed an interest in implementing such a program. Brigid had previously worked with us while student teaching in Tomah, WI and landed a teaching position in Merrill.



Tanner and Ben showing off their work for Perch in the Classroom. Credit: Brigid Reimann

Genoa NFH supplied two culture tanks, fish, food, and fish culture knowledge, while Brigid supplied a heater, pumps, and pipes. She also enlisted the help of two of her students for the construction of the aquaculture system, Ben Sosnovski and Tanner Pettit. By November the system was up and running and stocked with yellow perch.



Look closely and you can see some of the juvenile yellow perch. Credit: Brigid Reimann

The latest report from Brigid is that the perch are growing and doing well. This is good news for Genoa NFH as we continue to try to connect with our nation's youth and develop techniques that convey the importance of fish culture as both a commercial industry and a tool for environmental management.



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Sullivan Creek NFH Supplies Eggs to Lake Trout Restoration Program

BY CRYSTAL LEGAULT ANDERSON, PENDILLS CREEK NFH

Sullivan Creek National Fish Hatchery (NFH) ships eyed lake trout eggs to other federal, state, tribal, and educational facilities every November through January; this year Sullivan Creek will be shipping over 5.9 million eggs in total. Most of the eyed eggs are going to Jordan River NFH, Iron River NFH, and Michigan Department of Natural Resources Marquette State Fish Hatchery for the purpose of lake trout restoration of the Great Lakes. Sullivan Creek NFH is one of only three lake trout brood fish stations in the US Fish and Wildlife Service for the entire country.

The whole egg process begins with spawning season, which usually starts by the middle of September and runs until the middle of November each year. The adult lake trout are anesthetized so the eggs and milt can be collected and mixed together for fertilization. This allows the staff to handle the adults without harming them, and the fish will come out of the anesthetic and "wake up" in about twenty minutes.



Spawning lake trout at Sullivan Creek NFH. Credit: USFWS



"Shocking" eggs prior to the picking process. Credit: USFWS

a good egg and goes in one bucket; if the light cannot go through the egg, it is a bad egg and goes into a different bucket. We run all our eggs through two mechanical pickers and hand pick them with tweezers or suction bulbs at least once. The good eyed eggs are again measured and put back in their incubators until shipments can be set up.

Eyed eggs are carefully packed into Styrofoam coolers and either shipped via FedEx, UPS, or transferred between facilities by hatchery staff. The little fish inside the eggs are looking at you the entire time, 5.9 million sets of eyes!

Once the eggs are fertilized, disinfected with iodine, and water harden, or pull enough water inside their shells for the eggs to become "hard"; they are measured and counted into vertical stack incubators. The eggs will slowly develop inside the incubators for one to two months depending on how cold the water temperatures are, and will become "eyed eggs". Yes, you can see the little fish eyes thru the outer shells of the eggs. At this point, the eggs are "shocked" or bounced fairly hard to get the "bad" eggs, the ones that didn't fertilize, to turn opaque white when the yolk is broken inside the egg. This process does not harm the good eggs at all.

The next step is to run all the eyed eggs through mechanical egg pickers which have a light sensitive photo-eye. The pickers shoot a ray of light through each egg, and if the light goes through the egg, it is



Boxing lake trout eggs for shipment. Credit: USFWS



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The Cause For The CAWS Part I: The Illinois & Michigan Canal

BY HEATHER GARRISON, COLUMBIA FWCO



The Illinois & Michigan Canal as it looks today in Morris, Illinois. Though no longer used for moving supplies, the canal and its corridor provide recreational opportunities for Illinois residents. The paved trail seen on the left was created in the path worn by mule teams pulling cargo on the canal. Credit: Jordan Fox, USFWS

for portage, which inspired Jolliet's idea of a canal connecting Lake Michigan to the Illinois River- in effect linking the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River and ultimately the Atlantic Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico. It wasn't until more than 150 years later that his vision came to fruition. Ground was broken on the Illinois & Michigan Canal in 1836 and despite the financial crisis in the nation, the feat was accomplished and flowing with water by 1848. This was made possible by the Irish immigrants that hand dug the 96 mile long, 60 feet wide and 6 foot deep channel through Illinois between LaSalle and Chicago. Fifteen locks were built to accommodate the 141 foot descent at the divide of the two basins. At one point rock was found only a foot beneath the surface of where the canal was to be dug. Luckily the stone was layered and workers were able to excavate it and used it to build the locks. Five aqueducts and four hydraulic power basins were also constructed within the canal.

It took merely months for about 70 canal boats to be in operation with as many as 288 at its peak. Initially these boats were mule-drawn, but eventually the I & M became the first inland canal to shift to steam-driven vessels in the 1870's. In the first few years it was a popular means of travel until the mid-1850's, when the railroad proved a quicker means for passengers. However, the I&M Canal remained useful for another 40 or so years in transporting lumber from the Great Lakes, merchandise from the East, grain from the Midwest and tropical fruit from the South; moving over a million tons in 1882. By the 1900's, commercial use of the canal had all but ceased. The flood of the immigrant workers and the success of the I&M Canal contributed to a population boom of more than 400% in the first five years, with 600% growth in a decade. With the massive population expansion, it didn't take long for waste disposal problems to arise in the city.

The influx of people wreaked havoc on the sanitation system and human waste began leaching into the canal and even into the city's source for drinking water- Lake Michigan. The canal became a "greasy sludge, thick as pea soup and red with blood." This rancid slurry even caught aflame during the Great Fire of 1871. Knowing something must be done, the city hired Ellis Sylvester

Our office has been working in the Chicago Area Waterway System or CAWS for quite a while now. We make monthly trips, give or take, to the Chicagoland area looking for Asian carp and their DNA in the watery labyrinth that makes up the CAWS. The CAWS is made-up of a network of canals, rivers, locks and dams, barge slips and shallow lakes. It's all in a name...the Chicago Sanitation and Shipping Canal explains the two main reasons for the creation of the waterway system - commerce and sanitation.

Long days on the boat and the associated idle conversations lead to questions and speculation about the history of the canals. My curiosity was peaked. I began my research by "Google™-ing" the CAWS. My search results led me to an interesting story that starts with a canal, not the Chicago Sanitary and Shipping Canal that we are so fondly acquainted with but the Illinois & Michigan Canal (I&M Canal).

The story of the CAWS actually starts in the late 1600's, with a gentleman named Louis Jolliet. He was the first to realize, (or at least that's known) the great potential the Chicago area held with its location on a continental divide. It was a busy area



Historical map of The Illinois and Michigan Canal. Credit: Map Courtesy of the Illinois State Archives. From The Illinois and Michigan Canal, 1827-1911: A Selection of Documents from the Illinois State Archives (Springfield: Illinois State Archives, 1998)



A historical picture of a man standing on a pile of sewage sludge in Bubbly Creek, part of the Chicago Area Waterway System. Credit: Courtesy of Chicago History Museum, Photographer Chicago Daily News

Chesbrough to create a sewage disposal plan. To allow drainage into the canal, pipes were built above street level. The canal was re-dredged and the soil used as fill to raise the streets to the level of the new sewage pipes. This system worked very well, too well in fact, allowing the city to grow even more and once again causing sanitation problems. Issues arose with the intake system as well. Small fish near the warm shallows were sucked up through the water intake from the lake and reportedly transported through the pipes and out the faucets of Chicago residents. To solve this, water intake pipes were moved two miles out into the lake. It took until spring for floods to push the polluted water far enough in the lake to once again be transferred to the water intake system. It was at this time that Chesbrough decided to reverse

the flow of the Chicago River, sending the city's waste down to the Mississippi River. The intake had to be dug an additional four miles out in the lake to ensure clean drinking water and communities downstream were complaining about the foul odors from the waterway. In a year, flows had already slowed, filling the canal with 'silt' and finally halting completely- leaving a stagnant mess. It was then that official's realized a new, deeper canal must be built to dispose of the city's sewage. And so in the late 1880's, the Chicago Sanitary and Shipping Canal (CSSC) was conceived and ultimately the beginning of the CAWS...

Most of the Illinois & Michigan Canal still exists today. It no longer serves its historical purpose, but was transformed into the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor in 1984. President Reagan signed a bill preserving the canal, creating the first heritage corridor in the nation. The idea was to preserve and highlight the canal's paramount role in Chicago's (and the state of Illinois itself) growth and success. The corridor covers 862 square miles in five counties, extends through 57 municipalities and is associated with four state parks. Mule paths paralleling the canal were converted to trails now popular for biking, hiking and snowmobiling. The canal itself is often utilized by fishermen and kayakers when conditions are favorable. The corridor boasts a unique blend of heritage, conservation and recreation.

Stay tuned for Part II: The Chicago Sanitary and Shipping Canal!

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Iron River NFH Hormone Study “Produces” Results

BY CAREY EDWARDS, IRON RIVER NFH

The Klondike strain of lake trout entered the hatchery system in 1995 and originated from wild gametes collected from lake trout captured on Klondike Reef in northeastern Lake Superior. They are considered a “humper” strain as they live in water greater than 600 feet and come up to the reef to spawn. Hatchery stockings of this strain have been documented to perform well in deep water areas of Lake Erie. Currently, Iron River National Fish Hatchery (NFH) has two mature captive lines that were created in 2003. These fish were spawned for the first time in 2008 and producing viable eggs proved to be problematic and unsuccessful. For the last six years, these fish and their eggs have been studied tirelessly and spawning techniques, incubation methods and diet formulations have been honed and then honed again, with minimal success in improving survivability. Compared to other lake trout strains with greater than 70 percent eye up, Klondikes don't measure up, averaging between 3-35 percent. This equates to a lot of work and little to show for it. As the fish aged and fecundity increased, although still only averaging 35 percent eye-up, Iron River NFH has had some small successes along the way. Two brood lines were created in 2010; the eggs were successfully turned into production fish and stocked into waters of Lakes Erie and Michigan.



Klondike Reef strain lake trout being air spawned. Credit: USFWS



A pan of lake trout eggs ready for fertilization. Credit: USFWS

In 2012, a study was conducted on 84 females using a chemical called luteinizing hormone releasing hormone analog (LHRHa). LHRHa is a synthetic compound similar in structure to the natural LHRH hormone in mammals. Through a sequence of events involving the pituitary gland and ovaries/testis, an end result occurs that can hasten the maturation of eggs during the final stages of egg production. The results produced an amazing increase in percent eye-up to 69 percent. This was the first time in Iron River NFH history enough eggs were produced to meet our goals and all egg requests for Klondike Reef strain lake trout.

The next step was to expand the study in 2013 to include all females in both lines. Each female was treated with a 10ug/Kg LHRHa injection. The chemical again aided in producing similar results as 2012. The A line= 73 percent and the B line= 61 percent. Iron River NFH was able to once again meet production goals and increased egg requests for Klondike Reef lake trout, plus have surplus eggs. Another benefit of using LHRHa is a compressed spawning season. What usually takes six to seven weeks to accomplish occurred in less than three weeks. This has a huge impact on spawning operations, spawning fish are able to return to feed much sooner, biologists only have to handle the 20 pound fish three times instead of seven and production fish swim up and start on feed at the same time. With continued success using LHRHa, brood stock numbers could be tailored to open up resources for other Great Lakes restoration activities.



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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.

MARS Trailer Gets a Face-Lift

BY NATHAN ECKERT, GENOA NFH

The Mobile Aquatic Rearing Station (MARS) is a streamside rearing trailer utilized by the Genoa NFH to propagate rare and endangered freshwater mussels in the Upper Mississippi River watershed. This summer the MARS trailer was home to over 1,000 Federally Endangered Higgins' eye pearly mussel along with a handful of other locally common freshwater mussels. Survival and growth was excellent over the duration of the summer. After another successful year of mussel production and culture in the MARS trailer, staff at Genoa NFH decided to give the trailer some much needed cleaning, repair and improvements.

First we started by thoroughly cleaning and sterilizing the trailer using a heated pressure washer and aquatic disinfection chemicals. The next step was to remove the existing tanks to provide ease of access and a space to work. We then took the opportunity to paint the existing walls with a fresh coat of white paint. Then we had a linoleum floor installed to protect the sub-floor and to make cleaning easier. The final step is to add new white ceiling material for insulation and to prevent condensation from forming on the roof and running down the trailer sides.

These improvements will help preserve the MARS over an extended period of time. It is our hope that a little maintenance along the way will help us to continue raising juvenile freshwater mussels for release across the region for the foreseeable future.

Re-Scheduling a Check-Up

BY MARK STEINGRAEBER, LA CROSSE FWCO

Just as health professionals insist on annual check-ups for many patients, fishery managers likewise insist on annual health checks for fish that serve as brood stock at hatcheries. Brood stock are the adult fish that the hatchery uses for breeding. Therefore the health status of wild populations, such as those inhabiting the Upper Mississippi River, must be clinically certified before any of these adult fish (or their progeny) can be maintained at facilities like the Genoa National Fish Hatchery in western Wisconsin.

The screening process requires coordinated efforts on the part of staff from three Service fishery program offices who must execute their roles in a timely manner for continued hatchery propagation of species like northern pike, walleye, and sauger, which are among the first species to annually spawn here once the river is free of winter ice.

The health status of wild populations is normally surveyed in the fall. It is the best time of year given that some of the laboratory tests require several weeks or more to isolate and identify disease pathogens, as well as the challenges posed by obtaining a representative sample of 60 or more individuals of each species.

However, the fall of 2013 was unlike any other in my 27-year federal career. Due to a lapse in congressional appropriations, all operations at the La Crosse Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office and most activities at the Genoa National Fish Hatchery (NFH) and the La Crosse Fish Health Center (FHC) were suspended for 16 consecutive days in October. The corresponding furlough of more than 24 employees at these offices forced postponement of all scheduled field work during this period, with ripple effects that later curtailed or cancelled many planned projects this fall.

Fortunately, collection of northern pike, walleye, and sauger from the Upper Mississippi River for brood stock health assessment was merely postponed, not cancelled. In between other assignments, crews from the La Crosse FWCO and Genoa NFH squeezed in two frosty evenings of electrofishing effort late in October and early in November to collect most of the required fish from UMR Pool 9. These fish were subsequently submitted to the La Crosse FHC which shoe-horned the samples into their own demanding schedule.

Pending the outcome of this screening for serious disease pathogens, and absent another untimely furlough, propagation of northern pike, walleye, and sauger from the UMR is anticipated to continue at the Genoa NFH in spring 2014.

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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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