



# IRON RIVER NATIONAL FISH HATCHERY



April — June NEWSLETTER

## Iron River Elementary School helps pollinators with new garden plantings by Carey Edwards



**Top left:** The Iron River Elementary School poses around the new garden. **Above:** Any day outside is better than a day in the classroom. **Below:** Fruiting trees were planted around the main hatchery building with the aid of 5th grade students and hatchery staff.

It seems like the new buzzword these days is pollinator and rightly so. They are an integral part of the world's life cycle. Efforts to cultivate areas where pollinators can reproduce, feed and grow are in effect across the country. The Iron River National Fish Hatchery is also doing its part to provide safe harbor for pollinators.

Coming back for the seventh year to assist with pollinator projects is the Iron River Elementary School 5<sup>th</sup> grade class. This year's efforts were put forth in beautifying the main hatchery building entrance with ornamental butterfly gardens and fruiting trees and seeding a freshly tilled area with native grasses and milkweed. Two small raised flower beds were planted with butterfly loving plants like salvia and phlox and ten fruiting trees (crabapple, pear and cherry) were planted to beautify the area as well as provide areas where pollinators can feed and rest.

A neighboring farmer prepared the land in which we wanted the native seeds sown. The grass seed was donated by a member of the Friends of the Iron River Hatchery. Milkweed seeds were collected in the fall and stored in the refrigerator until ready to cast in the loose soil by the students. Before heading back to school, the students were able to tour the hatchery and cool off after a hot morning in the sun.

With a little bit of elbow grease and a lot of teamwork, a very successful and rewarding project was accomplished. The students were able to learn about gardening, butterflies and native plants as well as gain awareness of fish hatchery processes. Stay tuned to see how well the native plantings grew and for future pollinator projects at the Iron River National Fish Hatchery.



# Distribution Season 2015 Comes to a Close *by Carey Edwards*



Growing and stocking lake trout is a vastly complicated process that starts years in advance before the fish are even created. It doesn't just happen at the local Department of Natural Resources or Fish and Wildlife Office, it encompasses a plethora of state, federal, and tribal agencies as well as conservation clubs and other organizations. Managing inter-jurisdictional fisheries can be tricky. A federal court order, called the 2000 Consent Decree, was negotiated between the state of Michigan and five Chippewa and Ottawa tribes to set forth standards in managing the fishery in 1836 Treaty waters of Lake Superior, Lake Michigan and Lake Huron with the Fish and Wildlife Service being

the United States representative for implementation of the Decree. All of these groups work together to evaluate the fisheries, assess the status of fish stocks, establish harvest limits, stock fish and control parasitic sea lamprey which is all part of restoring lake trout in the Great Lakes.

From a hatchery standpoint, decisions are made years in advance on how many brood fish are needed to meet future goals for egg production and how often gametes are to be collected from the wild to keep hatchery stock genetically sound. Decisions are also made as to what strain of lake trout will be raised and where it will be stocked and often times, studies are conducted with multiple strains of lake trout at a given site to determine what type of lake trout survives better. These studies could not be completed without the mass marking program which began in 2010. It is a coordinated effort between all jurisdictions to mark (tag or clip) all trout and salmon stocked in the Great Lakes to evaluate whether a fish caught in an assessment is a native or hatchery fish. Information gathered from tagged fish could impact the type of lake trout and how many are being stocked from each hatchery.

Putting aside all the planning and technology that takes place at each hatchery to make and grow a healthy lake trout to stocking size, whether it leaves as a shore stocked fall fingerling or as a yearling or is stocked off of the M/V Spencer F. Baird as part of the main distribution season, the planning and collaborative processes that takes place is commendable. Nearly a dozen Fish and Wildlife, Coast Guard and Department of Natural Resource offices work together in what is nearly a three month operation to stock fish on reefs in Lake Michigan and Lake Huron. The ending result is this: approximately 4.4 million lake trout were stocked and we are in the process of making it happen all over again next year.



## Trailhead Improvements made by South Shore School *by Carey Edwards*

Since the Iron River National Fish Hatchery's inception and construction throughout the 1970's and early 80's, the land has changed in appearance with buildings, hatchery residences, water intake structures and service roads. The hatchery sits on 1,200 acres of land that encompasses and protects the headwaters of the hatchery's water supply. A not well known change is the addition of a three mile trail system that can be accessed anytime of the year and was dedicated to the Simpson family in the summer of 2012. There are two loops; red and blue, with trailheads located in the hatchery parking lot and on Weidenhaar Road. The trails are maintained all year long and can be used for just about anything done on foot, including hunting, hiking, snowshoeing and cross country skiing. Keeping the trails groomed in the winter can be challenging. In open areas, snow blows and drifts over the path making it nearly impossible for users to find their way on the trail. For the second year in a row, the second grade class from South Shore Elementary School spent a morning assisting hatchery staff to address this problem. Approximately 50 evergreen trees were planted along the trailhead located at the hatchery parking lot. Students planted spruce trees in already prepared holes in hopes that in a few years, these trees will provide enough of a wind break to allow for proper winter time trail maintenance. They were also able to pot their own tree to take home. Students took time out from planting for a hike and a tour to gain awareness of the fish hatchery process and view a portion of the 1.5 million lake trout and coaster brook trout that are raised annually. The hatchery hopes that this will continue to be an annual project with the school to improve our trail system.



## Tower Renovations *by Brandon Keesler*

This winter at the Iron River National Fish Hatchery we renovated one of our fish towers. The fish tower uses a pump to move fish from the raceways into the tanks on the truck. Fish leave the dewatering tower via a short or long pipe and gently slide into the tanks. We measure the amount of fish we are loading by using volumetric displacement. We currently raise about 1.3 million lake trout which are stocked into Lake Huron and Lake Michigan. The purpose of the renovation was to make fish loading safer, quicker and easier, and to reduce the stress on the fish.

The first problem we sought to overcome was the need for a long loading pipe which can cause stress on the fish and is heavy for the staff to lift onto the trucks. Due to space limitations, the tower needed to be located between the raceways. In this position, the trucks can only back up to the tower instead of pulling up alongside it. We remedied this by creating a platform that bolts onto the tower. The tower can be lifted with a forklift and placed on top of the raceway, clearing space for a truck to park alongside it. This will eliminate the need for moving trucks during loading, and get trucks on the road faster.

Second, we wanted to make attaching/detaching hoses easier to speed up moving from one location to another. This was accomplished by making the water discharge tube permanent and free moving so when the tower is raised and lowered the hose does not need to be moved or detached. The loading tube was modified by attaching a permanent section of tube to the tower, creating a lower more manageable connection point for the pump hose. This eliminated the need to have a 30 foot stiff hose to move from raceway to raceway. It will also increase safety because the old hose was heavy and uncooperative, and when bent could straighten and push people off raceway walls. These two renovations will make fish loading smoother, faster, and safer. All of this will lead to happier and healthier fish upon arrival at their stocking locations.



**Above:** The renovation included placing the tower on a palletized frame that could be moved with a forklift and placed over the raceway walls for easy loading of distribution trucks and moving the equipment in the hatchery.

## Kelsey and Zeba *by Jorge Buening*



Above: Biologist Jorge Buening loads brookies into buckets for the walk down to the creek. Below: Newly released brook trout.



Part of our coaster brook trout production program is for implementing stocking plans on tribal lands. The reason for these plans is due to treaties and mitigation plans that the tribes have established with the United States government. This process has resulted in the stocking of Kelsey and Little Silver Creek. Both of these creeks flow into the Keweenaw Bay of Lake Superior and are located in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. This location is home to the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, a band of Ojibwa Native Americans.

The purpose of these stockings is to help reestablish coaster brook trout to Keweenaw Bay. The creeks are stocked in the hopes that the fish will imprint on their stocking location and return there to spawn. This year 4800 fish that were about 5 inches long were split between the two locations.

Recently, Iron River National Fish Hatchery incorporated the use of well water and manipulated the water temperature that the brook trout were raised in. This resulted in them hatching sooner and growing faster. Ultimately, larger fish were able to be stocked and larger fish are less susceptible to predation. Hopefully this will allow for a greater opportunity for stocked fish to return and spawn.

A big thank you also goes out to the Ashland Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (FWCO) who serve a tribal liaison and help to establish the management plans in coordination with the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community. Together we will continue to work towards maintaining/restoring fisheries in and around Lake Superior.

## The Hatchery, out and about...*by Carey Edwards*

The Iron River National Fish Hatchery hosts many events for all ages and is open to the public every day from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. for viewing and self-guided tours. We also participate in many outreach events throughout the year that are off station. These events forge new ties with partners and make old ones even stronger. They also allow us to advertise the hatchery's mission to a huge audience that we can't reach normally. We'll see you around!

**Science Night at UWS:** Hosted by University of Wisconsin at Superior, this evening was geared toward targeting area schools and showcased organizations with science related work. Biologist Shawn Sanders representing the hatchery with an informative booth and live fish.

**Earth Tracks:** Hosted by the Lake Superior Zoo; this event targets elementary school students in the area with a focus on being environmentally friendly and reducing our footprint on the earth. Biologist Carey Edwards and Admin. Technician Mallory Mackey represented the hatchery with an informative booth and live fish.

**Trout Unlimited Expo:** An annual event hosted by Wild Rivers Chapter of Trout Unlimited in which area residents can come learn about the projects TU has worked on and showcases local agencies and their efforts to improve and restore trout habitat and populations. Bio-tech Brandon Keesler represented the hatchery with an informative booth and live fish.



# Staff Updates and Hatchery Happenings...



### August 2015

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### September 2015

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27	28	29	30			

The 3 mile trail system is open year round for visitors to enjoy. It is groomed for classic cross country skiing and snowshoeing all winter long. Check out our **Facebook page** for the latest updates on trail conditions.

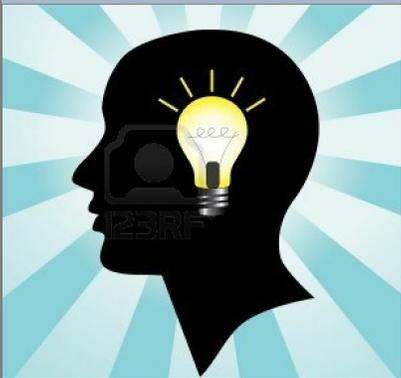
- ★ Check us out at the Bayfield Co. Fair Aug 6
- ★ Lake trout spawning to begin in Late Aug
- ★ Look for the Open House Sept 26th, 10-2



Friends of the Iron River Hatchery

This could be you!! Join the Friends of the Iron River National Fish Hatchery today. Come share your ideas and thoughts and help promote the hatchery and its resource.

The Friend's of the Iron River National Fish Hatchery have been working behind the scenes with hatchery staff to obtain grants for future hatchery outreach projects. Currently a grant was awarded to purchase snowshoes that can be borrowed at the hatchery for use on hatchery trails. Check out the next newsletter for more updates. Why wait? Come join the fun now!! Check out the Friends merchandise at the hatchery.



Not a member? Membership information can be found at the Friend's website: <http://ironriverhatcheryfriends.org>, through Facebook, by emailing the Friends at something-fishy@ironriverhatcheryfriends.org or by contacting the hatchery office 715-372-8510. New members are always welcome. Come join the fun.

