

# Iron River Hatchery Highlights

U . S . F I S H & W I L D L I F E S E R V I C E

## TRAILHEAD IMPROVEMENTS ARE MADE BY SOUTH SHORE SCHOOL BY CAREY EDWARDS



Above: Brandon Keesler shovels dirt into buckets to fill pre-drilled holes for the trees to be planted by the South Shore second grade class. Below: Once the trees are planted, they are lined with landscaping fabric that will be covered with mulch.



Since the Iron River National Fish Hatchery's inception and construction throughout the 1970's and early 80's, the land has of course 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, especially this past 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. The second grade class from South Shore Elementary School spent a morning assisting hatchery staff to address this problem. Approximately 140 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. Students took time out from planting with a tour to gain awareness of the fish hatchery process. The hatchery hopes that this will be an annual project that will occur with the school to improve our trail system.



Below: Second grade students from South Shore Elementary School plant rows of spruce trees by the trailhead of Simpson Trail.



## EARTH TRACKS AT THE LAKE SUPERIOR ZOO BY CAREY EDWARDS

For the past twelve years, the Lake Superior Zoo in Duluth, MN has hosted an Earth Tracks Day. The goal is to inspire students to be more environmentally conscientious and put thought into ways of not leaving their "tracks" on the Earth. Over 1,200 students from area elementary and middle schools visited the zoo on May 9, 2014 to take part in this green event.

Making its sixth appearance was the Iron River National Fish Hatchery (IRNFH). Carey Edwards, fish biologist from IRNFH, set up a booth with fish replicas and an interactive display that students could quiz themselves on fish anatomy. Students also received fish tattoos or hatchery pencils for participation in the booth.

Many local businesses, organizations and government agencies were in attendance. These groups were encouraged to set up hands on displays where children could learn about the environment that surrounds them and explore ways of decreasing their impact on Earth. This fun event is one of several collaborations the Iron River Hatchery has with the Lake Superior Zoo and we hope to continue this partnership in the future.



Over 1000 students visited the Iron River Hatchery booth.

2014 SPRING DISTRIBUTION SEASON  
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.



Above: Fish are piped from tanks on the truck to tanks on the M/V Spencer F. Baird and stocked on reefs in Lakes Michigan and Huron. Below: Fish are marked with a coded wire tag and adipose fin clip before being stocked into the upper Great Lakes.



The Iron River National Fish Hatchery is "Going Green". Starting September 2014, newsletters will only be sent via email. To continue receiving the hatchery newsletter, email [Carey\\_Edwards@fws.gov](mailto:Carey_Edwards@fws.gov).



BUTTERFLIES ABOUND BY CAREY EDWARDS



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 sixth year is the Iron River Elementary School 5<sup>th</sup> grade class. This year's efforts were put forth in rejuvenating the first garden made in 2009. In an effort to put more ownership into the project, the students would not

their own stepping stone. Stones were decorated with an assortment of stamps, stones and shells. Once the students smoothed out their concrete mixtures, it was time to plant. Students spent the remainder of the morning weeding the connecting gardens and re-planting flowers in the old one. After lunch, the students toured the hatchery and decorated their stepping stones. 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 and butterflies as well as gaining awareness of fish hatchery processes. Stay tuned for next year's addition to the Iron River National Fish Hatchery's butterfly garden with the new fifth grade class.



Students were so excited to be planting perennials on a beautiful summer like day instead of being in the classroom. All students made one of a kind stepping stones that will be put in the garden once cured.

only help plant the garden but they would also make



**A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A HATCHERY BIOLOGIST BY CAREY EDWARDS**

Northland College, located in Ashland, WI, is an environmental and liberal arts college that has a strong natural resources and biology program. For many years, Northland College and the Iron River National Fish Hatchery have been working together to provide the program with a hands-on aspect for students interested in fisheries science. The staff at Iron River National Fish Hatchery was contacted this spring by Professor Derek Ogle from Northland College and asked if we could put two groups of college students to work for two days. Professor Ogle felt that although many of his students may have toured our facility, spending a day in the life of a “hatchery biologist” would be a valuable experience.



**Northland College students assist hatchery biologist Carey Edwards with sample counts on fingerling lake trout.**

Each class comprising of ten students took a day assisting employees with everyday fish culture tasks. The students assisted with end of the month sample counts on two year classes of production fish, length/weight and tag/clip checks on yearling production fish and cleaning raceways. With all the extra hands available, the hatchery staff was able to complete projects in several hours that would have otherwise taken days. An in-depth tour was given with a closer look into the biology that takes place at a fish hatchery. The students were also given the chance to talk to biologists about employment opportunities and ask career related questions. 

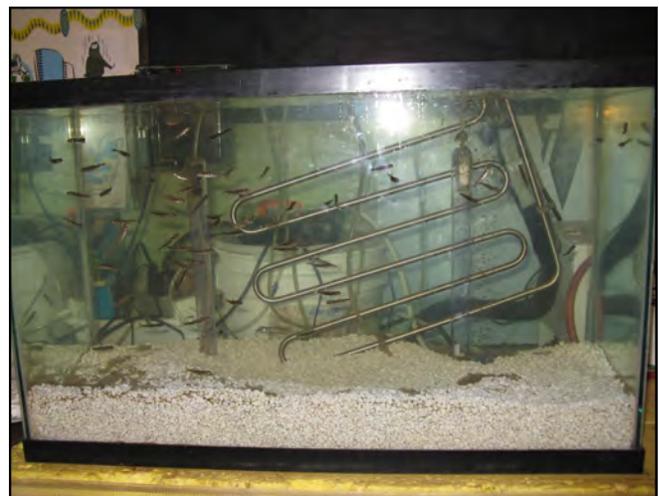


**From left to right: Students are all smiles even while walking through the late spring blizzard. Students get a sample of various activities at the hatchery including raceway cleaning. Northland students help collect valuable length/weight, coded-wire tag/clip check data.**

**AN EGG-CITING STORY BY CAREY EDWARDS**

For the past twelve years, raising trout and salmon in the classroom has been common place in the Northwood’s of Wisconsin. The program started at the Superior Middle School and has since spread to Northwestern, and Ashland Middle schools. What better way would there be to teach students about the life history of trout and salmon then to have them raise fish in the classroom? All it takes is a 30 gallon aquarium, chiller unit and trout or salmon eggs. The equipment is quite costly, but with the help of two local sportsman’s group donating the funds for chillers and aquariums, the schools were up and running. The last ingredient for the program was eggs and Iron River National Fish Hatchery agreed to provide lake trout eggs for the program with the stipulation that the fish would be humanly euthanized at the projects end. (This is due to stringent regulations and permitting in the transportation of fish due to disease concerns.) Nearly 900 students spread out in three schools, welcomed 500 eggs into the aquarium mid-October. They monitored water temperature daily and made sure the conditions were perfect for the developing fish. Excitement abounded when the eggs hatched, followed by surprise and disappointment that the newly hatched fry sought shelter in the gravel. After over 30 days of waiting, the eager students began feeding the fish as they swam-up. Some aquariums have better success than others with anywhere from 12 to 200 fish surviving the duration of the project. As part of the program, the hatchery agreed to come to the classroom and continue the learning process. Fish biologist Carey Edwards

brought the hatchery to life with a power point presentation, emphasizing math’s everyday occurrence at the fish hatchery. This helped to strike home how important and frequently math is used in everyday life. This program is very rewarding for all involved. The school, sportsman’s club and hatchery are looking forward to this fall, when the next group of students gets to learn about the life history of lake trout.





U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
 Iron River National Fish Hatchery  
 10325 Fairview Rd.  
 Iron River, WI 54847  
 715/372 8510 Fax 715/372 8410  
<http://midwest.fws.gov/IronRiver/>

TO:

STAFF UPDATES



**Staff photo:** From left to right, YCC Lexus Gary, biologist Paul Larson, administrative tech Mallory Maki, bio-tech Brandon Keesler, acting assistant manager Carey Edwards, animal caretaker Deb Frostman, biologist Shawn Sanders, acting manager Nick Starzl.



Yes, it's true. Dale Bast has retired. After 22 years at Iron River National Fish Hatchery and over 39 years with the Fish and Wildlife Service, Dale has headed down the road to the leisurely life of retirement. Dale has left his mark on the FWS and is instrumental in the restoration of lake trout in Lake Superior and implementing the coaster brook trout program. Dale spends his time hunting and fishing (possibly a nap or two in there somewhere) and spending time with his grandson.



Also true is the retirement of Laurie Gucinski, administrative technician. Laurie had twenty years with the service and claims that FBMS is responsible for some loss of vision (note the magnifying glass used to read FBMS spreadsheet). Laurie has been retired for over a year and is involved in many charitable groups such as Lion's Club and Ladies Auxillary and is very busy fishing, hunting, crafting and spending time with her grandchildren.



Filling Laurie's position is our new admin-tech, Mallory Mackey. Mallory hails from Highbridge, WI and her past includes serving with the Army National Guard as a heavy equipment operator for 6 years. She is a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom. She has an associates degree as an office support specialist from WITC and is a welcome addition to the staff at Iron River. Before coming to Iron River, Mallory was an administrative technician at the Ashland, WI courthouse. Mallory has been married for three years and has twin 21/2 year old daughters. In her spare time, she enjoys hunting, 4-wheeling, and most outside activities.



We are on Facebook! Check out what's going on at the hatchery

[https://www.facebook.com/pages/Iron-River-National-Fish-Hatchery/298911700286246?ref\\_type=bookmark](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Iron-River-National-Fish-Hatchery/298911700286246?ref_type=bookmark)

**Calendar of Events:**

- August: lake trout spawning begins
- September: Open house, mass marking
- October: Fall fingerling distribution
- November: brook trout spawning begins