

USFWS UPPER COLORADO AND MISSOURI  
BASIN FAC

# FISHERIES

# FOR THE FUTURE



STURGEON BY SAM STUKEL

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING IN THE REGIONAL OFFICE

FEB 2020



A bad day can be made better with some fishing time.....

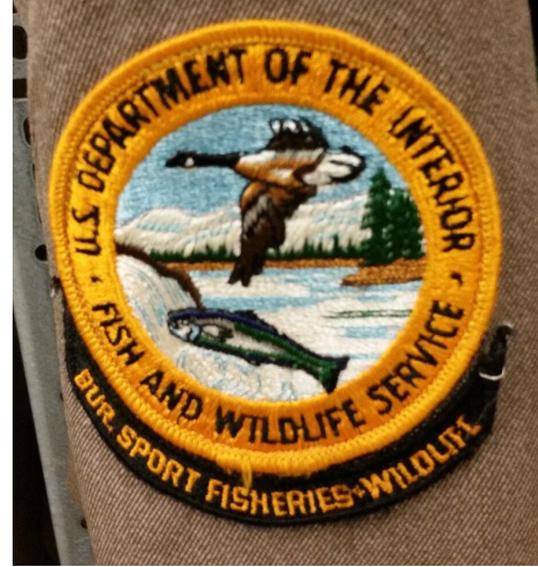
### ARD'S CORNER

February turned out to be quite the busy month for the RO and RDT. The RDT prioritized two ecosystems to concentrate staff and funding resources to “move the needle” on conservation and management in FYs 20 and 21. They are the Sagebrush and Grasslands ecosystems that extend across large portions of our Interior Regions 5 and 7. Science based field teams were organized by Matt Wheeler, acting ARD for Migratory Birds and Science Applications, to identify and prioritize projects in these areas. Noreen Walsh committed to use her Director’s deferred funding base to help move these projects toward completion. Pam Sponholtz and Yvette Converse were our Fish and Aquatic program representatives on the Sagebrush and Grassland teams respectively. Thanks to both of them and others who provided insight and development of these documents!

I participated in discussions regarding the status assessment of the Colorado Pikeminnow. The Upper Colorado and San Juan River Recovery Programs personnel were included and Tom Chart and his staff led the presentation and discussion of the analysis. The group consensus is that downlisting the Pikeminnow is not recommended at this time.



# FMT UPDATES



The Fisheries Management Team (FAC ARDs and HQ Staff) (FMT) met at NCTC in conjunction with the Fisheries Academy class the last week of February. It was a great opportunity for us to interact with FAC staff from across the nation and to encourage and support them as they work to develop their careers. HQ released funding allocations and we are working on the distribution tables for our field offices. Some other highlights include: Our regional funding came out pretty flat again but at least it did not decrease significantly.. Unexpectedly, we learned while at the meeting that Aurelia Skipwith mandated a 10% contribution from all programs FY 19 carryover funding based on what remained at the end of the first quarter of FY 20. So, we are also working to incorporate that into our regional field office funding calculations. The FMT reviewed a number of system wide project proposals sent in by the Fish Technology and Health Centers. This funding is the \$1 million that HQ sets aside annually from 1311 to fund projects that address solving research and management projects that have a national level impact. Several were funded but there is a significant portion of the funding remaining for the next round of projects scheduled for review in July. We are going to let the FTC/FHC Directors know that they should also be working with the hatcheries for potential projects as that has not been apparent from the project proposals received to date.

The FMT also discussed an approach for getting positions ready for the HR batch hires continuing this year. We prioritized these position vacancies in the following order – Fish Bio Techs (404) for 5/6/7 Perms, then Terms (one at 5 and one at 7); next Fish Bios (482) 7/9/11 Perms, then Terms (one at 9 and one at 11); then Fish and Wildlife Bios (401) 7/9/11 Perms, then Terms (one at 9 and one at 11). However, we recently found out that the next Batch announcement coming out of HQ HR will be 401s at 7/9/11 targeted for mid-April. We may be able to jump on that one too.

We also suffered the loss of Kelly Baldini who resigned in February. I know this was a great disappointment for our field stations and it's a blow to our RO as well. Any of you are welcome to call me if you would like to discuss further. Meanwhile, we're very grateful for those administrative, RO and other program's staff who have stepped up to help us fill the void while we work toward a permanent solution for that position. I will close by saying it's great to work for all of you each day and exciting to know the critical roles you all accomplish to complete our mission. Looking forward to spring, as I am sure you all are too. Thanks!

-Greg

BONYTAIL, OURAY NFH

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# AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES

JOANNE GRADY

It was a slow month at my desk as I took quite a bit of leave. I fell down the stairs at my home near the beginning of the month and fractured my right tibia at the ankle. In a nutshell, I spent my time primarily on grants related work. Most of my grants had December reporting deadlines and I've worked with FASO to close several grants. Finally had our last FY19 grants awarded to our grantees. Continued to work on a couple of DOI committees related to quagga/zebra mussels. In one we've developed an MOU for federal agencies for an Incident Command Structure to rapidly respond to a quagga/zebra mussel report. In the other committee, we are working across bureaus to jointly fund QZM work in the west. As part of that committee I sit on the scoring team for Bureau of Reclamation funds. They've just announced their first batch of selected grants. We've also been busy within the Branch of AIS preparing for our annual meeting at the end of the month. This will be a working group style meeting with two committees to develop frameworks for FWS AIS early detection and rapid response strike teams similar to the Refuge system strike teams. There is an extensive amount of pre-work that none of us had on our calendars! I'm on the strike team group for that meeting, but will be participating remotely due to my leg.



DAVE BRITTON

Many thanks to Nate Wiese, Steve Krentz and Dan James for picking up the ball on Asian carp. As the allocation tables have been distributed, you may have seen that we FINALLY are receiving some Asian carp funding in our region to work in the Missouri River system. This has been long awaited. The expansion of Asian carps into the TN and OH systems brought home their threat to Senator Mitch McConnell. This threat has expanded the thoughts of Congress to protect other basins and not limit focus to the Great Lakes. Here's hoping that funding continues into subsequent years as it will be a benefit to our FWCOs

-Joanne

**KEEP THE  
MOUNTAIN-  
PRAIRIE  
INVASIVE  
FREE**

# SUPERVISOR UPDATES



There are 26 vacancies within FAC in the Region that we are working to get through the JAO's hiring structure. That structure centers around 4 bins: 1) positions that can be batched and advertised nationally (e.g., GS-0401-7/9/11 permanent F&W Biologist, or GS-0404-5/6/7 Permanent Bio Science Tech). HQ is indicating the next national batch advertisement will be GS-0401-7/9/11. We have two vacancies in this Series and grade that could be advertised here; 2) seasonal positions; 3) top 5 priorities from each Region; and 4) non-competitive direct hire actions (e.g., lateral transfers, Veteran Hiring Programs, Schedule A, etc.). Most of the FAC vacancies fall into bin #3. Every two/three weeks the DRD requests each Program provide a list of their top 3 hiring needs; using those lists the DRD identifies the top 5 Regional priorities for HR to address. When a Regional priority reaches issuance of certificates, that priority falls off the list and another one can be added. As you can imagine, competition is high among programs to get just one of their top 3 onto the Region's top 5 list.

Since being notified in January of the capability to extend seasonal 1039 positions to a total of 1730 hours Ellen and the Geographic Supervisors have been coordinating with HR on how to make the extensions happen. The notice of extensions came from the DOI and was handed down to the FWS. The FWS JAO is working out a process to extend the seasonal appointments as there are some legal and policy obstacles, as well as differences among Regions pertaining to seasonal Not-to-Exceed periods. Although not occurring in February (1st week of March), we have been successful in obtaining consistent advice and direction from HR on how to move forward with extending 1039 positions to 1730 hours. Field stations that have been given authority by DOI to extend their seasonal positions have been provided the necessary information to make it happen. Please note, that only certain locations across the country were identified by DOI as being eligible for the 1730 extensions; we do not know the reasoning behind location selections.



LAKE STURGEON

# DM, CONSTRUCTION, EQUIPMENT



The Geographic Supervisors assisted in development of the 5-yr DM Plan. We emphasized projects that address safety, asset longevity, fish production capability, and facility upgrades. The final 5-yr plan will be submitted in March. As a result of discussions at the Project Leader Meeting, Kris Johnson developed a spreadsheet of all FAC vehicles in the Region, their age, mileage and trade-in values. From this spreadsheet we'll need to develop a Vehicle Replacement Strategy. The Geographic Supervisors have reviewed the vehicle data and put a strawman replacement strategy together and we'll be sending it out to the field for their review and input. We continue to meet bi-weekly with Regional Engineering and Contracting staff to review progress on respective services for projects in the que.

## Jones Hole NFH

The legislation authorizing establishment of Jones Hole NFH also provides for the hatchery to be transferred or operated by another federal or state entity if it is in the public interest. UT has made requests to have the hatchery transferred to the UT Division of Wildlife Resources. This past month we spent considerable time responding to Department, FWS, and Congressional requests for information and data pertaining to the hatchery (e.g., fish production, tribal support, maintenance backlog, etc.). HQ is non-committal to UT's request.

## Odds and ends

- Assisted Hotchkiss NFH with a new 5-yr agreement for BOR funds to raise and stock fish for mitigation purposes.
- Reviewed and provided comments to the COFWCO for an MOU between the U.S. Army Pueblo Chemical Depot, FWS, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife. The MOU establishes the organizational relationships, responsibilities, and activities by which the FWS and CPW provide support to the Chemical Depot
- Thank you April Gregory, Rob Holm, and Sam Stukel for your Flickr contributions to this report!

