



Manager's Corner By: Karen Kilpatrick

Seeing the tornados over the last several weeks can leave one weak at the knees. The pictures are devastating, not just from a personal viewpoint but also from the standpoint of natural resources. But on the brighter side, one thing that brings me great encouragement is the number of volunteers that poured into the areas to bring hope to the tired and discouraged. As I watched the news unfold I was reminded of the thousands of great men, women, and children who donate countless hours for the Fish and Wildlife Service. They come in all shapes and sizes, all ethnic combinations, all ages...but they come!

The estimated dollar value of volunteer time for 2010 is \$21.36 per-hour. The Federal gov-

ernment uses the number from Independent Sector: http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time. The estimate helps acknowledge the millions of individuals who dedicate their time, talents, and energy to making a difference. Charitable organizations can use this estimate to quantify the enormous value volunteers provide. According to the Corporation for National and Community Service, about 63.4 million Americans, or 26.8 percent of the adult population, gave 8.1 billion hours of volunteer service worth \$169 billion in 2009. For the latest information, please see www.volunteeringinamerica.gov

At Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery in 2010 volunteers dedicated 2253 hours of time to help us produce fish, maintain our aquarium, implement an educational grant, conduct outreach events, help in the office, and maintain the facility. It takes about \$10K of staff time to supervise the volunteers, but, using the figures above, the return is a whopping \$48K! In addition, the number of hours represent over one full time employee! We can't do it without them and they have a major impact on hatchery operations. So my thanks go out to any of you reading this newsletter who have ever donated any time to any cause! Take care and keep up the good work!



Hatchery Manager with volunteers from St. Mary Junior High School. Credit: Juanita Murphy

Open House and Kids Fishing Derby Planned for June 4th at Natchitoches NFH

By : Tony Brady

It is almost that time of year again when, as a nation, we stop to honor our fishing and boating heritage with National Fishing and Boating Week, which is June 4th - 12th. To celebrate, the Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery (NNFH) and the Friends In Support of the Hatchery (F.I.S.H.) will be hosting the annual open house and kids fishing derby from 8:00 am until 11:30 am at the Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery. Kids will be allowed to fish for Channel catfish from 8:00 am until 10:00 am in two of the hatchery ponds. Prizes will be awarded for the three heaviest stringers of

fish for each age group as well as for biggest and smallest fish for each age group. In addition to the fishing derby there will be a load of activities such as face painting,



This young lady explores items in the "What am I Box?"

Gyotaku fish prints, the Alexandria Zoo will be here as well as a Birds of Prey presentation by Walter B. Jacobs Memorial Nature Park. The Humane Society will be holding an Adoption Day during the event and the Cane River Waterway Commission will be talking about boating safety. The Provencal Bass Club will be here hosting the Flip, Pitch, and Cast contest, where kids test their rod and reel handling skills to earn points and prizes. For additional information about the open house and fishing derby please contact the hatchery at 318-352-5324.

Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery Adds New Member to the Region 4 SCUBA Dive Team.

By: Tony Brady

Any mechanic will tell you that you can never have too many tools in your tool box. At Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery (NNFH), our conservation/research tool box

gained a new tool in April. During the first week of April, the hatchery's Mussel Biologist, Tony Brady, attended the annual Region 4 SCUBA Dive team workshop in Destin, FL. his attendance at the workshop cleared him to participate in approved research and conservation activities requiring SCUBA diving. Brady was a member of the Region 3 dive team for 7 years where he logged 273 dives for a total of 244 hour under water conducting various

mussel surveys and propagation activities. With this new tool in our box NNFH hopes to provide dive assistance to other US Fish and Wildlife Service offices and to the surrounding states in addition to advancing the mussel program at the hatchery. The dive workshop was also attended by SCUBA divers from Region 6. While hosted by Region 4, Regional Dive Officer Glen Cullingford welcomes all Regions to attend the workshop. To inquire about how NNFH can assist you with your program, please contact the hatchery at 318-352-5324, and, for additional information about the Region 4 dive team or dive workshop, you can contact Glen Cullingford at 321-431-9352 or at Glen_cullingford@fws.gov.



Brady and Region 6 diver Larry Lockard pose for this picture while conducting training at Vortex Spring, FL.

Florida Bass Harvest and Distribution Activities at NNFH By: Jan Dean

April can be a busy time at a warm-water fish hatchery in the Southeast. One activity is management and harvest of Florida largemouth bass ponds. Most of our recreational fish production, including largemouth bass, is for the State of Louisiana through a Memorandum of Understanding between the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF). In April, we harvested several Florida bass ponds at Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery, obtained our counts (number per pound) and total weights in our holding house and then transferred most of the fish back to the LDWF for distribution

to public waters within Louisiana. A total of 236,511 bass fingerlings weighing 319 pounds – for an overall average of 741 per pound – were distributed from the hatchery in April. Many of the fish went to Toledo Bend Reservoir, which borders Louisiana and Texas, and to a couple of pools of the Red River. Some bass were transferred to the LDWF Lacombe Fish Hatchery, and a few ponds designed by personnel of the Natural Resource Conservation Service were stocked. Ponds associated with the Bonnet Carre Spillway – operated by the New Orleans District of the U.S.



Largemouth bass fingerling ready to be stocked.

Army Corps of Engineers – received some of these bass. Largemouth bass rearing ponds at the hatchery are managed to produce zooplankton for larval (fry) and young bass. The ponds are boarded and flooded a few days before stocking, then cottonseed meal and alfalfa meal are added to provide nutrients for the zooplankton and microbes in the bass ponds. Larval bass eat the zooplankton which may in turn feed upon microbes consuming the or-

ganic meals, or the zooplankton may consume some of the organic meals directly. Ponds with extremely clear water may receive a dose of inorganic fertilizer to stimulate a phytoplankton bloom. It is an ecosystem approach to bass pond management. The bass fingerlings harvested in April were stocked as larvae from the LDWF Booker-Fowler Fish Hatchery in late March to early April, so they were reared at Natchitoches for three to four weeks before harvest. The fingerlings were about two inches in total length. April 26 was an interesting day for bass activity at the hatchery. Seven ponds were harvested, and eight ponds were stocked. We generally double crop, and sometimes triple crop ponds here, though there must be a time lag between restocking ponds. Those on April 26 were separate ponds. More bass larvae are expected soon from Booker-Fowler fish hatchery. Spring months are busy at the hatchery. As warmwater hatchery folks say, “It is what we live for.”



Assistant Manager Jan Dean readies to seine a bass pond.

Transfer of Alligator Snapping Turtles, or The Oklahoma Connection

By: Jan Dean

Assistant hatchery manager Jan Dean met Tishomingo OK National Fish Hatchery biologist Brian Fillmore in North Texas April 11 for an alligator snapping turtle transfer between the hatcheries. The same arrangement was used to transfer the hatchlings to Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery November 3, 2010. We received 202 hatchlings in November and returned 193 “headstarted” turtles in April. Some of the Tishomingo hatchlings had abnormal development in that their tails were coiled and their backs (carapaces) were indented; some even had incompletely developed rear legs. These deformed turtles were not expected to live through the winter though most did. Two of the coiled-tail turtles were given, by permission from personnel at Tishomingo NFH, to Dr. Maggie Hodge of the Louisiana School of the Math, Science and Arts, a special residential high school in Natchitoches for gifted and tal-

ented students from throughout Louisiana. Initially, the students were juniors and seniors, and then a few sophomores were allowed to attend.

Tishomingo NFH has been involved with alligator snapping turtle spawning, rearing and release for several years. The in-

tingo in April will be reared there indoors throughout the summer and winter before being stocked into ponds for about another year before release. During that time, decisions will be made regarding their release sites in the wild. Preliminary turtle surveys are to be con-



Alligator Snapping Turtles Being boxed by for transport back to Tishomingo NFH.

ducted in the Verdigris River area in Nowata County of Northern Oklahoma near the Kansas border. The recently returned turtles could be released in that area or perhaps they will be reintroduced into the Caney

River area in Osage County of Northern Oklahoma. Another possibility is that they will be released into an area of Southern Illinois. There is time to decide just how these alligator snapping turtles will be used to contribute to conservation of this interesting species.

tent is to restore historical populations of the turtles in Oklahoma based upon information from old trapping records there. Turtle decline in Oklahoma has been attributed primarily to overharvest and secondarily to the damming of rivers. The young turtles returned to Tisho-



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*Saving the world one species
at a time..*



Local Home School Group poses for a picture with hatchery staff.

<http://www.fws.gov/natchitoches>

www.facebook.com/natchitochesNFH

April is the Month for Outreach and Education for the Young and Young at Heart.

By: Tony Brady

As the weather warms in April, folks are looking for more and more outdoor activities in which to participate. Schools are looking for educational field trips to help satisfy the desires of their students to be out of the classroom as the end of the school year approaches. Finally, April is the month in which we celebrate Earth Day. So, what does all this have to do with Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery (NNFH)? The answer is simple; April is the month in which NNFH hosts more school groups and participates in more outdoor educational activities than any other. In the month of April, NNFH has hosted a total of 115 students from two public schools and the local home school

coop. During these field trips, the students learn about the history of the hatchery, about the current hatchery programs, and, given the student's ages and time allowed for the visit, a focused presentation on freshwater mussels can be given. The hatchery staff welcomed the opportunity to present the freshwater mussel presentation to the Natchitoches Rotary Club. Finally, to celebrate Earth Day, NNFH hosted a booth at the Alexandria Zoo's Party for the Planet event that took place on April 16th. While at the zoo, hatchery staff and assistants from the Challenger Program helped kids do Gyotaku fish prints and had fun trying to figure out what was hiding in the "What am I box?".

The "What am I box?" is a box the kids stick their hands into without seeing what they are about to touch. Most are nervous at first, but quickly learn there is nothing that can hurt them, and they enjoy the experience. A total of 2,600 folks visited the zoo and participated at some level in the Party for the Planet. On top of all this, the hatchery's aquarium hosted 529 visitors in April. Just because April is over, doesn't mean that our outreach efforts are, we are still expecting a few more school groups before the end of the school year, and we have our upcoming open house and fishing derby in June. For additional information about the open house see page 2.