

FLEUR DE LIS FISHERIES

US Fish and Wildlife Service



Ricky Campbell is the new Complex Manager over Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery and Private John Allen National Fish Hatchery.

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A New Year and New Management for Natchitoches NFH

By: Tony Brady

Many of our readers know Natchitoches NFH's former manager Karen Kilpatrick. For those who do not know Ms. Kilpatrick, she worked at Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery for over 30 years working her way to the top position of Project Leader. Ms. Kilpatrick retired three years ago and left some (figuratively speaking) very big shoes to fill. Since Ms. Kilpatrick's retirement, Natchitoches NFH has been able to maintain our fish production levels and contribute to the conservation of freshwater mussels in several states with the remaining staff of four employees. The question most commonly asked around the town of Natchitoches these days is, "When will a new Project Leader be hired?" In today's political climate of uncertain budgets, new strategies are being employed to strengthen hatchery operations not only at Natchitoches NFH but throughout the Southeast Region. One of these strategies resulted in the complexing of Natchitoches NFH with Private John Allen NFH which is located in Tupelo, MS. Private

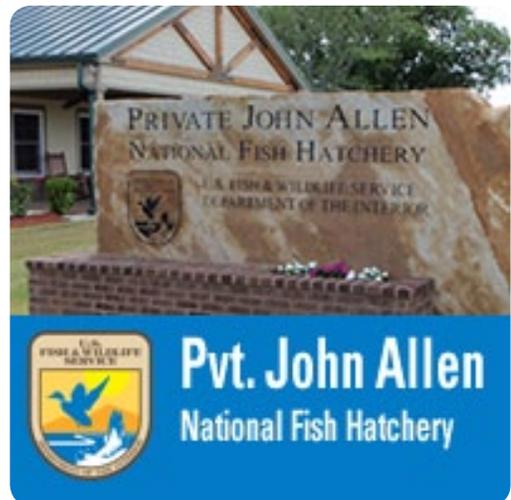


Ricky Campbell oversees a fish passage improvement project.



Ricky Campbell tending to paddlefish eggs at Private John Allen National Fish Hatchery.

leadership, Private John Allen NFH currently produces nine species of warm water fish for restoration and recovery efforts in a number of surrounding states and has helped preform habitat rehabilitation and fish passage improvements that have benefitted several endangered species. Natchitoches NFH hopes, with Campbell's tutelage, to soon increase our number of aquatic species being produced thus strengthening the hatchery's purpose and presence in the Southeast. To learn more about Private John Allen NFH please check out <http://www.fws.gov/pvtjohnallen/aboutus.html#about>.



John Allen and Natchitoches NFH have a strong working relationship with each other, and now Ricky Campbell, Project Leader at Private John Allen NFH serves as Project Leader over both hatcheries. Under Campbell's

A New Recovery Program Gets Underway

By: Tony Brady

Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery (NNFH), Orangeburg National Fish Hatchery (ONFH) and the South Carolina Ecological Services Field Office (SCESFO) kicked off the New Year by opening up the Orangeburg Mussel Conservation Center (OMCC) located at the ONFH. The OMCC is the first freshwater mussel conservation center in South Carolina, and its first priority species is the Carolina Heelsplitter, one of, if not the most endangered species in South Carolina. The work that will take place at the OMCC is the first step to reverse the bleak status of this unique mussel species. Orangeburg NFH is located within an easy drive from all of the known populations of the Carolina Heelsplitter, thus making the hatchery the perfect choice to house the OMCC. Thanks to funds from the SCESFO, ONFH was able to construct a building that includes propagation and culture space, a laboratory, and much of the needed equipment for this work. Natchitoches NFH is assisting the program by providing mussel culture expertise which has helped in the design and construction of the OMCC's transformation and culture system as well as designed the first phase of recovery for the Carolina Heelsplitter that is set to begin in March 2015.

Staff members at ONFH and SCESFO attended the first Freshwater Mussel Propagation and Restoration course offered at the National Conservation Training Center, but they wanted some additional hands-on training for themselves and other staff members who will be working on this recovery program. To provide this training, NNFH began in December 2014 by infesting several Redear Sunfish with larval mussels, called glochidia, from a common mussel species called the Little Spectaclecase. The Redear Sunfish were held at NNFH on heated water for three weeks before being transported to ONFH where the glochidia completed their metamorphosis. As these newly metamorphosed microscopic mussels dropped off the fish, NNFH was able to demonstrate how to collect the mussels, how to search for them under a microscope and how to determine if they were viable by looking for internal movement inside the shell. Looking at live animals under the microscope is critical for developing a search

image to use in the future.

To round out the mussel propagation training, we wanted to inoculate some fish with glochidia from a surrogate species called the Savannah Lilliput. In order to do the inoculation, gravid females needed to be collected from the Savannah River. Bears Bluff NHF assisted in the attempt to collect gravid females by providing a boat and driver to get the crew to the collection site. Using modified clam rakes, the crew dug in the mud of an oxbow where a dozen or more males were collected, but no gravid females could be found. If gravid females could have been collected, then the mussels produced from this infestation would have been used to develop a grow-out system for the OMCC. Luckily, the Redear Sunfish produced plenty of mussels that will be used instead.

Finally, to complete this training, day trips were taken to the mussel culture facilities in Marion, NC and in Raleigh, NC to see different culture systems and techniques used at each facility. Both of these locations have worked with the Carolina Heelsplitter and had plenty of information that will be modified and used to fit the work space at the OMCC.



The aquarium system at the OMCC that will be used to propagate and culture the Endangered Carolina Heelsplitter.

Annual LDWF – USFWS Fish Production Meeting in January

By: Jan Dean

The annual fish needs planning meeting was held January 21 at Booker-Fowler Fish Hatchery. Our host was Booker-Fowler Manager Kristi Butler, and this year's meeting included multiple topics. Representatives of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) included Scott Longman, Fisheries Administrator; Jason Duet, Danica Williams, Kristi Butler, Chase Chatelain and Ed Sylvester of Fisheries Extension; Mike Wood, Melissa Kaintz, Bobby Reed and Sean Kinney of Inland Fisheries; and Amity Bass and Beau Gregory of Natural Heritage. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) representatives included Ricky Campbell of Private John Allen National Fish Hatchery; Jan Dean and Tony Brady of Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery.

After introductions, Ricky Campbell informed the group as to the status of the federal hatchery system including the federal hatchery review and the current USFWS hatchery priorities and needs. He mentioned a shift to base and competitive funding, and other items discussed were some species of frogs and salamanders of concern to the LDWF, barrier removals, alligator snapping turtles and the federally threatened Louisiana Pearlshell Mussel (LPM); other species were mentioned later. I should mention that Tony Brady conducted a host fish study of the LPM at Booker-Fowler Fish Hatchery last year and intends to conduct another one there this year.

Next on the agenda were the 2014 Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery fish production report and the anticipated needs for 2015. That was followed by Kristi's 2014 LDWF fish stocking report, the anticipated needs for 2015 and a summary of the LDWF/FWS cooperative production plans. We cooperate during the year on the production of sport fish, alligator gar, alligator snapping turtles, the Louisiana Pearlshell Mussel and other species of mutual interest.

Amity, Beau and Ricky discussed Louisiana's threatened and endangered species needs including a few species of crayfish. Let me say here that it is a struggle for a Louisiana fellow like me to spell and pronounce them crayfish. We in Louisiana are known for producing and consuming crawfish – spelled with a "w" and

of the Red Swamp or White River species. Ricky also mentioned the Pearl Darter and possible work with Gulf Striped Bass. Mike Wood will check on the needs for Gulf Striped Bass.

The last discussion of the meeting was the possible move of the LDWF District 10 Fisheries Office, currently at Toledo Bend, to the Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery. Such a move is a large commitment and involves six LDWF personnel, 10 boats, a pesticide storage area and the construction of buildings on federal property. Such a move would require state legislature approval as well as approval at the FWS regional level. Nothing was decided at this meeting about the district move, but it generated lively discussion.

Let me say that we communicate daily with Kristi, Chase and other LDWF folks during fish production season, and Chase comes to Natchitoches once or twice a week during pond fish production. Several other LDWF hatchery personnel come to Natchitoches at harvest time to assist with pond harvest and with fish distribution. We consider them our closest partners and our friends.



Natchitoches NFH staff works with LWDF staff to net fish to be placed onto hauling trucks.