

Natchitoches News

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

Annual Fish Production Meeting with Louisiana – Jan Dean

Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery hosted the annual fish production meeting with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries January 12.

Kristi Butler, Robert Gough, Paul Whitehead and Bobby Reed represented the LDWF, and FWS folks present included Allan Brown, Deborah Burger, Roger Schulz, Jan Dean and Tony Brady. We reviewed the production and stocking records from last year, discussed phase II bass production and the fish requests for 2012 which totaled 1 million Florida Largemouth bass fry that will result in 17 hatchery ponds being used for bass. The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries also ask for 15 ponds of Bluegill production and three to five ponds of Redear sunfish. New for this year's meeting was a revision to our Memorandum of Understanding between the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. It has been reviewed by both parties and signed by the FWS for final review and approval by the LDWF.

More may be said about it after final approval, so only a few remarks will be made here. The earlier version put much emphasis on the culture of striped bass, so it was time to make a change to reflect current priorities here at Natchitoches and needs for the LDWF. Specifically mentioned in this version are "threatened and endangered freshwater mussels, alligator snapping turtles, alligator gar, and other aquatic species as identified between the two parties." It also includes "landscape level planning to develop management, restoration, and recovery objectives for aquatic species in Louisiana." This MOU is a general enough guideline to "continue the excellent partnership in addressing needs of aquatic species of recreational interest to

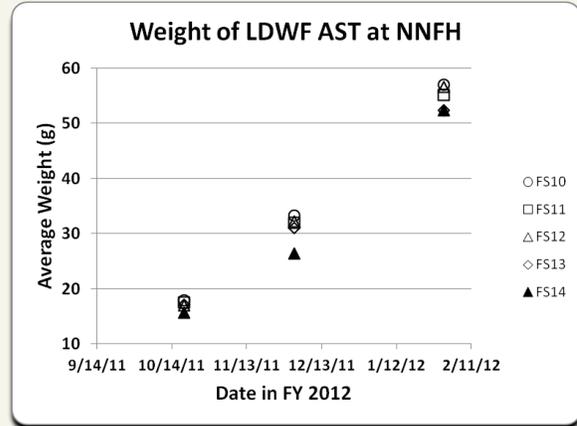
Louisiana." Many thanks go to former Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery manager Karen Kilpatrick for drafting this document and to Allan Brown and others for any changes which may have been recommended. The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries is our close partner in fish production and fish conservation here in Louisiana.



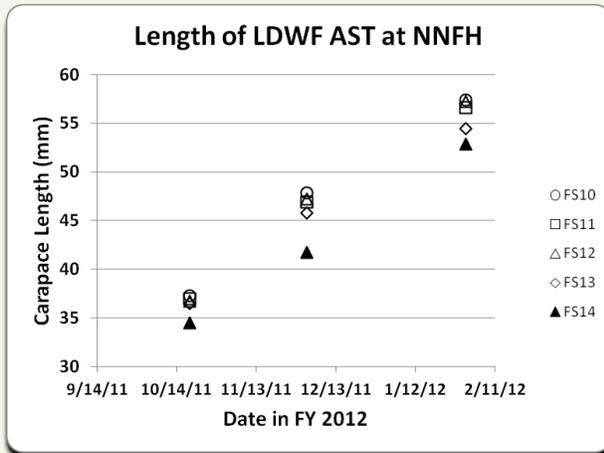
Assistant Hatchery Manager, Jan Dean, nets out the remaining bass from one of the hatchery ponds.

LDWF Alligator Snapping Turtle Update — Jan Dean

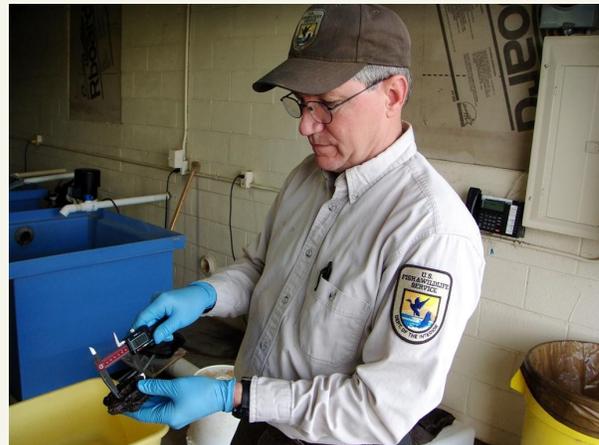
The Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery is overwintering alligator snapping turtles for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. The plan is to return them to the LDWF as they continue to “headstart” these turtles for about three years before stocking into sites identified by ongoing surveys as prime places for release. The turtles are being reared at about 80° F and are being fed Purina Aquamax feed daily. We weigh and measure them periodically, and they seem to be eating and growing well. On January 31, the turtles averaged 56 mm carapace length and 55 grams each. Over the last 60 days, their carapace length increased 0.3% per day, and their weight gain averaged 0.9% per day.



Growth in weight of LDWF alligator snapping turtles at Natchitoches NFH. Data are average weights of turtles in the five tanks. Tank FS14 includes the “runts” which had developmental problems.



Growth in length of LDWF alligator snapping turtles at Natchitoches NFH. Data are average lengths of turtles in the five tanks. Tank FS14 includes the “runts” which had developmental problems.



Assistant manager Jan Dean measuring an LDWF alligator snapping turtle at Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery.

Saying Farewell to Karen Kilpatrick

By Tony Brady

The month of January always starts off with a party to celebrate the New Year. At Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery, we were partying in January for another reason: to celebrate the end of a wonderful career for Karen Kilpatrick. Having retired in December, Karen was honored on January 12 by a gathering of family, friends, and colleagues. After a Cajun dinner of gumbo and Catfish St. Denis (which included crawfish etoufee), Karen was showered with presentations and gifts that included a plaque from the Fish and Wildlife Service presented by Allan Brown.



Karen is still smiling after Tony Mayeux finished telling his "Karen Stories".



Karen enjoys the evening with her family.

Also there to honor Karen was Tari Bradford from Senator Mary Landrieu's office, who read a beautiful letter to Karen from the Senator. Karen was then honored by the City of Natchitoches, and by her Alma Mater, Georgia Tech University. After the formal presentations were made, the story telling began. Former hatchery manager Tony Mayeux treated everyone with stories that highlighted 13 years of managing Karen. Following Mr. Mayeux, the floor was open for

anyone to come and share with Karen how much they enjoyed working with her and how much she would be missed. To end the night, Karen took center stage and shared her gratitude for everyone attending, and then she presented parting gifts to the remaining staff at hatchery. Karen will be missed at the hatchery but never forgotten. Karen, from the staff and all your friends and colleagues, "We wish you all the best in retirement".



The meeting hall was packed for Karen's party

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Saving the world, one species at a time



Greer's Ferry NFH as seen on Goggle Earth.



Goggle Earth image of Mammoth Springs NFH.

Arkansas Meet and Greet

By Tony Brady

The People who work for the US Fish and Wildlife Service help make the Service the premier conservation agency in the world. Having come from the Mid-west Region (Region 3), I enjoy the opportunities to get out and meet with folks in the Southeast Region (Region 4) and see what wonderful things they are doing. January was full of these opportunities to meet and greet some of the finest people that Region 4 has to offer. The first of these opportunities came on January 12 when colleagues came to Natchitoches to give former manager Karen Kilpatrick a warm send off into retirement. On January 24, I had the pleasure of finally meeting Regional Director Cindy Dohner and the rest of the regional directorate at a listening session in Little Rock, AR. After Little Rock, I was invited to Greer's Ferry NFH to share with them what we are doing at Natchitoches NFH and how we are tying into the Gulf Coastal Plain and Ozarks Landscape Conservation Cooperative. Having previously seen this presentation, and learning about my upcoming visit to Greer's Ferry National Fish Hatchery, coldwater hatcheries program supervisor Deborah Burger encouraged a visit to the Norfolk NFH to meet with the staff and share with them the same information. After spending the morning with the folks at Norfolk NFH, I made the short drive over the Mammoth Springs NFH to complete the tour of National Fish Hatcheries in Arkansas. Mammoth Springs NFH has conducted

some freshwater mussel work in the past and now, with Sarah Seagraves on staff, they are looking to ramp up their efforts in freshwater mussel conservation. It is my goal to help coordinate and facilitate projects between the Arkansas National Fish Hatcheries and Natchitoches NFH as we work with the Arkansas Ecological Services Field Office to develop recovery actions for one of the most threatened faunal groups on the Endangered Species List. It is through these connections and having face-to-face meetings with other offices and hatcheries that the US Fish and Wildlife Service will truly become ONE SERVICE.



Aerial View of Norfolk NFH