



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office

Conserving The Biological Diversity Of the Great Basin, Eastern Sierra & Mojave Desert

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Connecting Children With Nature— Kids Fishing Derby



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During the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Fishing Week , the Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office (NFWO) joined the communities of Minden and Gardnerville for an annual Kids Fishing Derby. The Nevada communities have sponsored this popular fishing derby for the past 18 years. The fun-filled event teaches children not only how to fish, providing equipment and mentoring, it also provides a heightened opportunity for each child to come away with "the big one".

Since the beginning of the event, the Lahontan National Fish Hatchery (Hatchery), located in Gardnerville, Nevada, has contributed fish to this event. This year, the Hatchery provided approximately 1,000 tagged threatened Lahontan cutthroat trout (LCT) averaging 17 inches in length. To add to the excitement, children lucky enough to

hook one of these big fish were awarded special prizes for catching a tagged fish.

The event has become so popular over the years, organizers had to limit it to 2,600 children between the ages of three and 12 and 300 volunteers. The derby attracts families and children not only from the local community but from other communities in Nevada and California as well.

In addition to providing LCT, NFWO employees helped children bait hooks, perfect fishing techniques, weighed, measured and cleaned fish, and helped with registration and t-shirt sales. The employees took great delight in participating in this worth-while event that has the potential to influence future fishermen in the years to come.

A Valued Part Of The Community

Lahontan National Fish Hatchery (Hatchery) plays a key role connecting local communities to the conservation of Lahontan cutthroat trout (LCT). The Hatchery is involved in many activities with schools and is a sponsor and participant of numerous community events.

The Hatchery has several "Trout in the Classroom" programs at schools around the Lake Tahoe Basin and in Douglas County, Nevada. One of these programs are in coordination with University of Davis's Tahoe Environmental Center. These important programs provide key information and education about native trout and provide an opportunity for students to take part in rearing LCT.

In addition to programs at the schools, the Hatchery provides numerous environmental education tours of the Hatchery and "hands-on" experiences for students during career days. A highlight this year was the experience Douglas High School's Natural Resources Class students received rotating through all the Hatchery duties during spawning season. They were able to assist

biologists with fish culture and spawning LCT.

The Hatchery, along with Marble Bluff Fish Passage Facility, was originally authorized as part of the Washoe Project of 1954 to mitigate the loss of the fishery in Pyramid Lake. It produces LCT as part of a larger restoration and reintroduction program managed by the NFWO's Lahontan NFH Complex in the Tahoe, Walker, and Truckee Basins. The Hatchery houses a captive broodstock of a unique strain of LCT and produces about 400,000 LCT per year. The Hatchery provides all age classes, from eggs to eight-inch "catchables" and produces fish for Pyramid Lake, Walker Lake, Truckee River, Fallen Leaf Lake, and June Lake.

Annual community events the Hatchery sponsors and participates in include: the Kids Fishing Derby, Kokanee Salmon Festival, Washoe Tribe Earth Day, and Environmental Science Day. These events are instrumental in connecting not only children with their environment, but communities as well.



Jay Bigelow accepts a plaque presented to the Lahontan National Fish Hatchery at the 2007 Kids Fishing Derby

Employee In The News

Approximately 2,000 people rose and cheered as Jay Bigelow, Lahontan National Fish Hatchery Supervisor was presented a plaque of appreciation for the Hatchery's participation in this year's Kids Fishing Derby. Being actively involved with community is important to Jay and he places a high value on providing information to the public and schools on native trout.

Jay, a U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service employee for the past 20 years, has been at the Hatchery for seven years. He began supervising Hatchery operations four years ago and manages day-to-day operations of the hatchery with a staff of seven. Jay is involved in the local Big Brother program, and likes to hike during his time off.

Partnerships Conserve A Species And A Way Of Life

Creating partnerships that conserve wildlife as well as economic and social values can be a challenge. Prior to 2002, a partnership between the Duckwater Shoshone Tribe and the Service did not exist. But taking a cooperative approach brought benefits to the NFWO, the Tribe, numerous partners, and a rare fish.

The Duckwater Shoshone Reservation is an isolated rural reservation that contains the largest thermal spring in Nevada. This

3,850 acre reservation is home to 150 residents whose principle land use is agriculture. The reservation has a unique hydro-geologic system that is not typical of most arid climates. Geothermal activity carries warm groundwater upward, forming numerous hot springs. The 94° water of Big Warm Spring is considered the most important habitat for the Railroad Valley springfish (*Crenichthys nevadae*).

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"Improving health in the land and water for the preservation of the unique and ancient springfish is part of the Duckwater Peoples legacy for our future generation"

Partnerships Conserve A Species And A Way Of Life (continued)

In 2002, the Tribe granted the NFWO's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program access to the Reservation, and the result was one of the Service's most successful Tribal partnerships. In early 2003, the NFWO signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Tribe to begin recovery actions for the springfish while preserving the Tribe's economic, social, agricultural, and cultural way of life.

In 2004, the Tribe received not only funding from the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, but from a Tribal Wildlife Grant, and a grant from the Tribal Land Owner Incentive Program as well. This funding to restore the spring totaled \$650,000.

In late 2004, negotiations to decommission a catfish farm and remove all aquaculture facilities that were negatively affecting the springfish were complete. Restoration of the spring system was designed not only to restore the stream channels and 68 acres of wetland habitat next to the spring, but also to improve delivery of Tribal irrigation water by constructing a new irrigation intake and pipeline delivery system. The project improved water transport along the main channel and restored the main spring source to accommodate appropriate flow rates. In addition to fencing the newly restored spring and wetland habitat, the partners also restored 45 acres of upland habitat.

A Safe Harbor Agreement, only the second agreement of this type with a Tribal Government, was signed September 26, 2007, allowing the reintroduction of the fish while use of the irrigation system and cattle grazing continues. All of the partners including the Nevada Department of Wildlife, Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Geological Survey's Biological Resources Water Resources Divisions, the NFWO and the Tribe were all on hand to celebrate when the Railroad Valley springfish were reintroduced back into their historic habitat that same date.

This strong partnership will assist in the recovery of one of Nevada's threatened species and, at the same time, conserve the Tribe's traditional way of life. A quote from Tribal Manager Jerry Millet earlier this year

sums up the species recovery and the partnership this way:

"There is a great sense of joy and fulfillment in my heart seeing the restored spring with the stream channel flowing in the location the Great Spirit intended it to go rather than the man-made direction. Our goal as a Tribe is to continue into the future. Improving health in the land and water for the preservation of the unique and ancient springfish is part of the Duckwater Peoples legacy for our future generations. The success of the Big Warm Spring Restoration projects is founded in the collaborative process and persistent communication



Bob Williams, NFWO Field Supervisor, Jerry Millet, Duckwater Shoshone Tribal Manager and Ruby Sam, Duckwater Shoshone Tribal Chairperson, Sign A Railroad Valley Springfish Safe Harbor Agreement



Above- Jerry Millet Poses With Bridget Nielsen, The Service's Partners For Fish And Wildlife Coordinator



Left- Jerry Millet and Ruby Sam Release Railroad Valley Springfish Into Big Warm Spring

Below- Duckwater Nye County School Children Release Railroad Valley Springfish Into Big Warm Spring



involving the Tribe, the individual tribal business owner, the Service, Nevada Department of Wildlife, Bureau of Land Management, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs and the State Water Engineer's Office."



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A Message From The Field Supervisor

Being an integral part of the communities we serve has always been important to the Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office and opportunities to connect children with nature is a high priority for us. Our office is involved in many community events and we are always looking for ways to educate and involve children in activities about fish and wildlife and natural resource conservation in their communities. This issue of our newsletter highlights some of the events we participated in this year.

We were fortunate to be a partner this year in a memorable event with the Duckwater Shoshone when the Tribe and children participated in reintroducing Railroad Valley springfish back into Big Warm Spring. We look forward to developing additional successful partnerships with Tribal Governments that will conserve Nevada's species and be beneficial to the Tribes as well.

As we move into the new year, we will also be looking for more opportunities to increase various other partnerships and additional programs and events to work with children and our local communities. Together, we will help ensure conservation of a healthy and diverse Nevada ecosystem in the future.

Sincerely,

Robert D. Williams

