

# White Sulphur Springs National Fish Hatchery Newsletter

Issue 18: Fall 2009



## Connecting People with Nature

### Congressman Nick J. Rahall, II Dedicates Phase 1 of the National Pilot Outdoor Classroom during 5th Annual Freshwater Folk Festival



*Congressman Nick J. Rahall, II and Dr. Catherine Gatenby, Hatchery Manager, unveil the new Anniversary Amphitheater.*

Springs National Fish Hatchery was one of only two facilities in the country chosen for the honor, bringing national attention to the hatchery, the town of White Sulphur Springs and the state of West Virginia. The Pilot Outdoor Classroom, a vast expansion and improvement project, will increase the hatchery's educational and outreach potential and serve as a model for other hatcheries across the country. The hope is to turn the hatchery



*Cutting the cake for White Sulphur Springs 100th birthday. From left to right: Larry Davis, President of the Friends of the WSSNFH; Thomas Taylor, City Recorder; Dr. Catherine Gatenby, Hatchery Manager; Delegate Tom Campbell; Congressman Nick J. Rahall II; Dr. Stuart Leon, Division Chief for Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Conservation; and Ruth Miller, 100th Anniversary Committee member.*

Alexa Marcighiano, USFWS

West Virginia Daily News

Over 3,000 visitors from across the state of West Virginia and beyond packed into White Sulphur Springs National Fish Hatchery to enjoy a full day of hands-on environmental education, hand-made Appalachian arts and hand-picked Appalachian music at the 5th Annual Freshwater Folk Festival on October 3rd, 2009. As part of the festivities, Congressman Nick J. Rahall, II joined the staff of WSSNFH in dedicating the brand new Anniversary Amphitheater to the town of White Sulphur Springs for their 100th birthday. The Anniversary Amphitheater, Phase 1 of the National Pilot Outdoor Classroom Project, will provide a permanent, outdoor venue for festival activities, seminars and community events. The National Fish Hatchery System Volunteer Act of 2006 called for the creation of pilot outdoor classrooms at national fish hatcheries and White Sulphur Springs National Fish Hatchery was one of only two facilities in the country chosen for the honor, bringing national attention to the hatchery, the town of White Sulphur Springs and the state of West Virginia. The Pilot Outdoor Classroom, a vast expansion and improvement project, will increase the hatchery's educational and outreach potential and serve as a model for other hatcheries across the country. The hope is to turn the hatchery into a "living" outdoor nature center to help reconnect children and their families to nature. Scientific studies show that when children go outside and connect with nature, the incidence of health problems like ADD, ADHD and childhood obesity decline significantly. During the dedication ceremony Congressman Rahall said "I am so happy as Chairman of the House Natural Resource Committee to play a small part in furthering the work that is done here at the National Fish Hatchery. This hatchery was the very first in the nation to be selected to participate in the National Outdoor Classroom Pilot Program. That classroom program aims to help children, their families and local communities, reconnect with nature. And by bringing back nature into our lives, this type of effort stimulates student's interest in science and motivates all of us to get up, get out and get exercise." Governor Joe Manchin, III, in a letter read by regional representative Steve Pilato said "I am proud that Greenbrier County has been selected as just one of two locations in the entire country to participate in this project."

## Aquatic Species Conservation

### On Father's Day Local Children and Dads Unite to Release Endangered James River Spynymussels into the Chesapeake Bay Watershed



Matthew Patterson, USFWS

The James River spynymussel is disappearing from much of its historic range in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed but this Father's Day local kids brought dad out to the river to help stem the tide. The Cowpasture River near Millboro, VA was the site for the 3rd Annual James River spynymussel Fest which included a full day of fish collection, mussel hunting and creek stomping. In the end, kids from the Cowpasture River watershed took turns releasing fish with attached spynymussels into the river. In order to complete metamorphosis and become an adult, baby spynymussels have to hitch a ride on a fish. Unfortunately, as the numbers of fish and mussels continue to decline, the baby mussels find it more and more difficult to catch a ride. So U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologists with WSSNFH and the Virginia Field Office joined forces with the U.S. Forest Service, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District, Virginia Tech, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, the Nature Conservancy, the Cowpasture River Preservation Association and local residents to do something about it. In addition to saving an endangered species, the children are helping clean up a stream that drains to the Chesapeake Bay. Freshwater mussels like the James River spynymussel are excellent filter feeders that help remove algae, sediment and pollutants from the water. So by restoring mussel beds to the river, the children are also providing a cleaner environment for all the critters and people that like to call the Chesapeake Bay watershed home.

*Kids crowd around the fish bucket and take turns releasing fish attached with the endangered James River spynymussel.*

## Connecting People with Nature

### WSSNFH Awarded \$64,000 Grant to Build a Fully-Accessible Walking Trail



Governor Manchin's Office

On August 11th, 2009, Governor Joe Manchin III presented White Sulphur Springs National Fish Hatchery with \$64,000 in federal grant money to begin work on a one mile, fully-accessible walking trail on hatchery property. The trail will complete Phase 2 of the hatchery's National Pilot Outdoor Classroom and will provide local residents and tourists a safe place to get out and enjoy the great outdoors. Hatchery staff hope to have the trail complete and open to the public by the Fall of 2010. Interpretive signs along the trail will provide information on a wide array of topics including wetland restoration, river ecology, renewable energy, forest ecology and habitat restoration. Funding for the trail was provided by the Federal Highway Administration's Recreational Trails Program.

*Governor Manchin presents Matthew Patterson, Fisheries Biologist with WSSNFH, with a Recreational Trails Grant at the Cultural Center in Charleston. Left to right: West Virginia State Senator Jesse O. Guills, Jr.; Matthew Patterson, WSSNFH; Governor Joe Manchin III, State Delegates Ray Canterbury and Thomas Campbell.*

## Public Use

### Rainbow Trout Program Produces Eggs for Trout in the Classroom Project



Mike King, Trout Unlimited

*Brent Best and his two sons Will and Ryan help release rainbow trout fingerlings as part of the Trout in the Classroom Project.*

White Sulphur Springs National Fish Hatchery provided over 6,000 rainbow trout eggs to 22 elementary, middle and senior high schools across the state of West Virginia in support of the Trout in the Classroom Project. Trout in the Classroom (TIC) is an environmental education program sponsored by Trout Unlimited in which students in grades K-12 raise trout from eggs to fry in their classroom and release the trout in state-approved streams near the school or within a nearby watershed. While the eggs and fish are held in the classroom, children feed the fish, monitor tank water quality and engage in stream habitat studies which foster a conservation ethic and help the children better understand ecosystems and appreciate water resources. Trout in the Classroom has interdisciplinary applications in science, social studies, mathematics, language arts, fine arts, and physical education. For more information on possible activities and lessons, visit their website at [www.troutintheclassroom.org](http://www.troutintheclassroom.org).

## Climate Change

### WSSNFH Installs New Solar Panels to Reduce Impact on Climate Change

In an effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and energy costs, WSSNFH began installation of solar panels on the hatchery raceway buildings this fall. The solar panels will tie into the rainbow trout power grid to help offset the cost of keeping the cold water flowing and fully oxygenated. In the future, the hatchery plans to expand their efforts to include additional solar panels, small windmills and micro-hydro turbines. Hatchery staff hope to eventually produce all of the hatchery's electrical needs from alternative sources and take the hatchery completely off-the-grid. The alternative energy project is also Phase 4 of the National Pilot Outdoor Classroom Project. Informational kiosks providing information on the benefits of each type of alternative energy technology will be installed along the fully-accessible walking trail. Toward this effort, the hatchery recently received \$45,000 in Visitor Facility Enhancement Funds from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to install additional solar panels and an informational kiosk that will track the energy savings associated with the solar panels and provide visitors with information about solar technology.



Matthew Patterson, USFWS

*Steve Smith, WSSNFH, inspects the new solar panels.*

## Connecting People with Nature

### WSSNFH, Girl Scouts and Ohio River Islands NWR Complete Woodland Hiking Trail

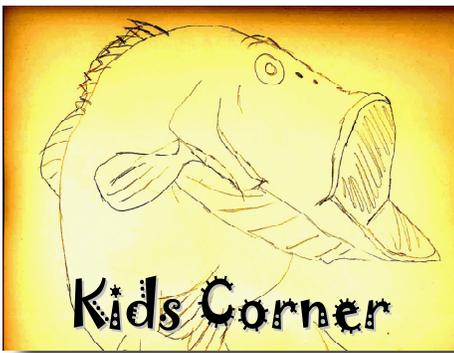
WSSNFH partnered with a local Girl Scout troop and a trail building expert from Ohio River Islands National Wildlife Refuge to complete Phase 3 of the National Pilot Outdoor Classroom, the Woodland Hiking Trail. Meandering along the mountainside behind the hatchery, the woodland trail is a moderately-strenuous, one-mile



*The Overlook along the woodland nature trail features an excellent view of Kate's Mountain.*

Matthew Patterson, USFWS

loop that climbs up to the ridgeline and a beautiful view of Kate's Mountain. The trail will connect to the fully-accessible walking trail and hatchery staff hope to have the trail open to the public by the Fall of 2010. Future plans include connecting the trail to walking trails in downtown White Sulphur Springs as well as hiking trails in the Monongahela National Forest.



## Climate Change

### The Polar Bear

If the Earth's average temperature continues to increase, it will begin to affect a lot of different animals but the polar bear seems to be one of the most vulnerable. Warmer temperatures melt ice and polar bears depend on ice to get food. Polar bears are the most

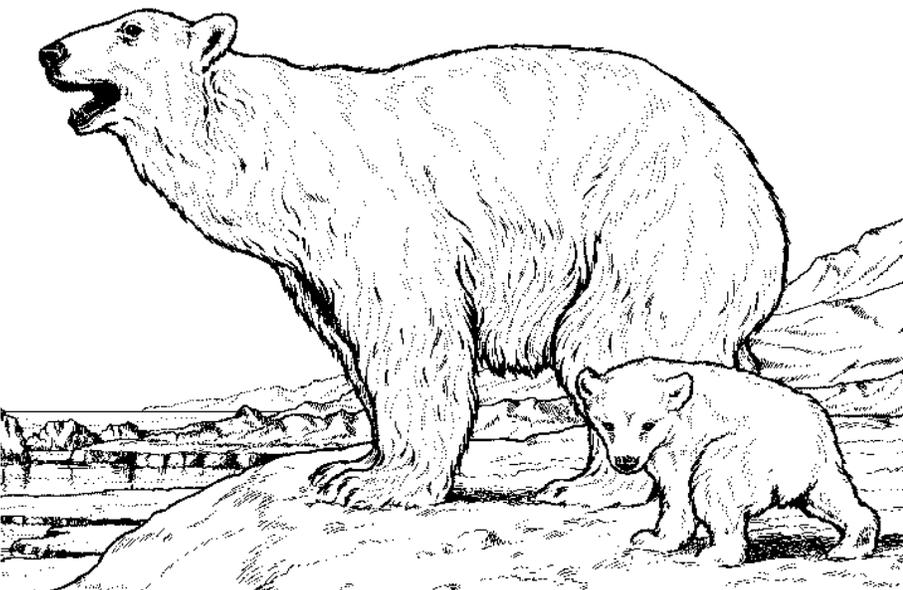
carnivorous (meat eating) of all the bears and two kinds of seals make up a large part of their daily diet. The ringed seal, the most common seal in the Arctic, is their favorite food but they also have been known



Animal Picture Gallery

to eat the larger bearded seal. Unfortunately, neither of these seals is found where the ice has melted because they both need sea ice to reproduce. The most dramatic effect of climate change on polar bears has been seen in western Hudson Bay (**can you find the Hudson Bay on a map?**). Declines in the bear's body condition, reproductive rate and survival resulted in a 22% loss in the Hudson Bay population between 1987 and 2004. Scientists believe melting sea ice in is the major cause for the decline. WSSNFH is installing solar panels to try and reduce the effects of climate change and help to polar bear. Here are

a few suggestions of what you can do to help the polar bear. Turn off lights to save electricity, recycle, buy recycled products, plant trees, walk instead of driving, talk to your friends, family and neighbors about the polar bear and climate change. Think about some other ways you can help as you color this polar bear and her cub.



## Hatchery Mission

Our mission is working with the community of White Sulphur Springs and our partners to be good stewards of both the environment and the historical significance of White Sulphur Springs National Fish Hatchery by 1) providing recreational fishing opportunities, 2) recovering fish, mussels and other wildlife and their habitats and 3) promoting awareness and appreciation of our cultural and natural resources, for the benefit of all people.

## Hatchery Information



Matthew Patterson, USFWS

*Rainbow trout eggs ready for shipment.*

Established in 1900 to produce fish for the American Public, WSSNFH became part of the National Broodstock Program in 1976. Since then we have shipped millions of disease-free rainbow trout eggs to hatcheries across the country. In 1995, the hatchery added a new program, freshwater mussel conservation. Today, we provide shelter for mussels threatened by pollution and raise baby mussels to improve wild populations.



Rachel Mair, USFWS

*1.5 year-old northern riffleshell (a federally endangered mussel) raised at WSSNFH.*

## Hatchery Tours

Tours are available free to the public M- F, 8AM to 3 PM. Call (304) 536-1361 one week in advance to schedule a tour.

### For more information:

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**To receive this bi-monthly newsletter via e-mail send your request to: [matthew\\_patterson@fws.gov](mailto:matthew_patterson@fws.gov).**

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