



Southwest Region

Fish and Aquatic Conservation

Southwest Region Seasonal Hire Success Story

Rebecca Cook joined the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (Service) Southwest Region's New Mexico Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (NMFWCO) in June 2014 as a seasonal hire for the Rio Grande silvery minnow team. Although it was far from her home in Alabama, she took the opportunity to get experience and hopefully start a career in the Service. Thanks to her outstanding efforts, relentless applications, and willingness to be flexible she has been hired on as a full time employee where she can further develop her skills as a permanent member of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Fish and Aquatic Conservation team.

While working with the NMFWCO here in the Southwest, Cook has been most proud of her work to help restore the endangered silvery minnow. The efforts being made to make the silvery minnow a more viable species also has a positive effect on the life of the whole river, which includes other aquatic species, native plants, and humans. "It's more than just helping the fish," said Cook. "Our work has a great impact on the whole ecosystem that the silvery minnow depends on."

Her work with the NMFWCO included not only the silvery minnow salvage team but she also helped with the Bio Park, non-native fish removal on the San Juan River, and even a fish passage project. She even did a one week detail at the Southwestern Native



Seasonal hires Rebecca Cook and Kjetil Henderson work side by side on a fish passage project. Credit: USFWS/Jessie Jobs

Cook found herself working for the Service straight out of grad school because a Service job was the highest on her list of agencies she was hoping to work for!

Aquatic Resource and Recovery Center assisting with a fish health inspection to further delve into fish health as a career path in the Service.

Cook knew that she had an interest in aquatic life from a very early age. That interest turned to a passion for conservation, specifically fish biology and fish health. With a degree in fish nutrition the easy road would have been to work for private organizations developing better fish feed, but her heart was in conservation, making her decision

to accept a position with the Service a perfect choice.

After her six month stint with the NMFWCO, Cook is excited to be starting her new life at the Warm Springs Fish Health Center in Warm Springs, GA. Cook is grateful for the knowledge that she learned here in the Southwest, and takes that knowledge with her as she embarks on her next adventure within the Fish and Aquatic Conservation team. ♦ ***Southwest Region Fisheries Communication Team***