



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Currents

Fiscal Year 2009  
Vol. 5 No. 3

## REGION 2 – SOUTHWEST REGION *Fisheries Program Highlights* (April – June 2009) September 2009

*Edited by Jeremy B. Voeltz, Arizona FWCO*



*Service employees helping to “Connect Kids With Nature”*

*Read the complete stories inside*

## YCC Program Returns to Dexter NFHTC



*The 2009 Dexter NFHTC YCC crew*

Following a 20+ year absence, Dexter NFHTC hosted a Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) Program this summer. The 4 local students and one group leader participated in a variety of activities from general maintenance and landscaping, to fish culture and administrative tasks. Weekly environmental education focused on imperiled fishes of the Colorado, San Juan, Rio Grande, Pecos and other western river basins. In addition, field trips to Bitter Lake NWR, Living Desert State Park, and U.S Forest Service-Sitting Bull Falls provided examples of how we work with other federal and state partners to protect and enhance natural resources for future generations.

***Bill Williams, Dexter NFHTC***

---

## Uvalde NFH Employees Students Through the YCC Program

This summer, Uvalde NFH employed three local high school students through the YCC Program. All three students exhibited an interest in the environment and wildlife conservation. In addition to assisting with grass mowing and weed control, the YCC students helped Uvalde NFH staff with fish harvesting/distribution, feeding, necropsy/dissections, pond management, wildlife trail preparation, and various other fish culturing activities. The YCC Program was extremely successful at the Uvalde NFH by providing a wonderful opportunity for today's youth to learn about the benefits of wildlife conservation while helping to achieve the Service's mission.



*The 2009 Uvalde NFH YCC crew*

***Grant Webber, Uvalde NFH***

## Connecting Kids With Nature in Arizona

Jennifer Johnson (Arizona FWCO) assisted U.S. Forest Service staff with the “Kids Gone Wild” summer outdoor education program at the Big Lake Visitor Center in east-central Arizona. Jennifer’s program – “Fashion-A-Fish” – focused on fish anatomy and morphology as well as importance of native fish conservation. After an intense game of “Fish Bingo,” the kids helped in labeling the internal and external parts of a fish on a large poster. Using their newly acquired knowledge participants designed trout prints and created stuffed trout, which many turned into fashionable necklaces. These activities support several Service programs and initiatives, specifically connecting kids with nature.



*Kids showing off “Apache trout” they created using recycled aluminum cans*

USFWS

**Jennifer Johnson, Arizona FWCO**

## Fishing Derby in Arizona Attracts Hundreds of Kids



*White Mountain Apache Tribal members fish for trout at Bog Tank during the annual fishing derby in June*

USFWS

The Alchesay-Williams Creek NFH and Arizona FWCO participated in the National Free Fishing Day activities that are held by the White Mountain Apache Tribe each year. The annual event attracted more than 800 Tribal members to fish for trout in Bog Tank Reservoir on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation. Hatchery staff gave talks to participants about raising and stocking trout, including Arizona’s native Apache trout which are spawned and cultured at Williams Creek NFH. Participants are able to get close enough to nets full of trout to get splashed by the fish before they are stocked. No one seemed to mind getting wet, especially the children who are all smiles while seeing so many trout.

**Phil Hines, Alchesay-Williams Creek NFH**

## Boy Scouts Tour Tishomingo NFH



*Boy Scouts observe a channel catfish feeding frenzy at Tishomingo NFH*

In June, Boy Scout groups took weekly tours of the Tishomingo NFH to earn badges in National Citizenship, Conservation and the Environment, and Federal Facilities. The camp, located within 10 miles of the Hatchery, brought 20-35 Boy Scouts per tour, varying in age from 11 to 15, from hometowns in Texas, Missouri, and Oklahoma. Each scout attended the camp for a one-week session touring the NFH to gain knowledge necessary for their particular badge. It was exciting to see the spark of interest ignited in the boys when they saw and learned about aquatic species, possibly leading to the pursuit of future careers with the USFWS.

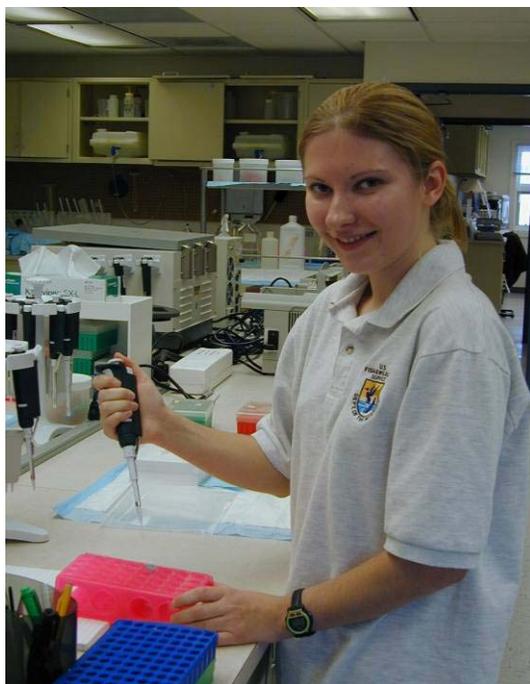
**Mary Davis, Tishomingo NFH**

---

## Student-In-Training at Dexter NFHTC

My Student Conservation Association (SCA), Internship in molecular ecology at the Dexter NFHTC has been an outstanding experience for me. Not only am I gaining first hand knowledge pertaining to conservation genetics, but I also get to explore the West while helping to protect endangered wildlife – something that I would never be exposed to from my small hometown in northeastern Pennsylvania! I have attended a multitude of trainings, meetings, and conferences in many different places and have been fortunate to be able to work with, assist, and be mentored by the magnificent people who work at the Dexter NFHTC. From all of these new experiences my professional career goals in conservation have grown substantially. The most rewarding part about my Internship is that I am both directly and indirectly helping with the conservation of wildlife.

**Rene Martin, Dexter NFHTC**



*SCA Student Rene Martin prepares genetic samples at Dexter NFHTC*

## Willow Beach NFH Over-Run with Boy Scouts

Willow Beach NFH is a favorite stop on river rafting and canoeing tours from various Boy Scout troops during the summer months. 15 scouts and parents from Las Vegas were given a full walking tour of the hatchery in May and after seeing all the fish on station, a few new fishermen were born! The next group, 20 scouts and four adults from California, toured the outside raceways, learning about why the hatchery raises fish and where the fish are stocked. And finally in June a troop of 14 scouts, from Las Vegas, that had never been to a hatchery before, kept staff busy with many questions.

**Angela Baran, Willow Beach NFH**



*Boy Scouts learn about the operations at Willow Beach NFH*

USFWS

## Annual Kids Fishing Derby at Tishomingo NFH



*A native Oklahoman hoists a huge catfish at the annual fishing derby at Tishomingo NFH*

In June, the Tishomingo NFH hosted the 15th Annual Fishing Derby for children ages 6-12. Kids were given the opportunity to fish for two hours in two hatchery ponds stocked with channel catfish. The maximum catch and keep limit was five fish, and most of the kids caught more than one or two fish with many smiles to prove it. All of the children were entered into a random drawing for prizes handed out near the end of the fishing derby.

In addition, each child was given a bag filled with fishing equipment and educational information. A host of partners were involved to make this year's fishing derby a success. The Chickasaw Nation contributed healthy snacks and refreshments for the event while local businesses, individuals, and the Tishomingo NFH Friends group contributed donations, prizes and their valuable help.

**Rebecca Fillmore, Tishomingo NFH**

USFWS

## Desert Pupfish and Gila Topminnow Return to Arizona



USFWS

*Desert pupfish are maintained at Dexter NFHTC for reestablishment and recovery efforts throughout its native range*

In July, Gila topminnow and desert pupfish were collected from the refuge ponds at Dexter NFHTC in preparation for transportation and stocking into several locations in Arizona by the Arizona Game and Fish Department. Gila topminnow were released into Fossil Creek to augment the genetic diversity of the existing population while desert pupfish were provided to the Bubbling Ponds State Fish Hatchery to be used in a population interaction study before being released into several recovery sites within their historical range. The refuge populations at Dexter NFHTC continue to thrive after 25+ years of captive management.

***William Knight, Dexter NFHTC***

---

## Alligator Gar Grown Out at Tishomingo NFH

In June, the Tishomingo NFH provided 280 five-inch alligator gar to the Missouri Department of Conservation as part of a continuing effort to reestablish the gar to their native waters on the Mingo NWR located in southeastern Missouri. Once a sustainable population is reached on the refuge, alligator gar from this population will be used for donor stock for other waters in Missouri.

The project is a cooperative effort between the Tishomingo NFH, Mingo NWR, Missouri Department of Conservation, and Private John Allen NFH in Mississippi.

***Rebecca Fillmore, Tishomingo NFH***



USFWS

*Juvenile alligator gar, prior to transport to Mingo NWR in Missouri*

## YCC Students Provide a Boost at Tishomingo NFH

With fish culture in full swing during the summer, the Tishomingo NFH was fortunate to employ four youth to assist with projects at the hatchery. Two of the boys worked with the hatchery through the YCC program, with their primary focus to repair the hatchery nature trail and assist with various fish culture tasks. The other two young men were college students and participated in the Workforce Oklahoma Youth Employment Program funded by the Department of Labor through the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009.

**Mary Davis, Tishomingo NFH**



*The 2009 Tishomingo NFH youth crew*

USFWS

## YCC Students Help Raise Trout in Arizona



*A YCC student stocks Apache trout on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation*

This summer the Alchesay-Williams Creek NFH hired two high school students through the YCC program to work at the hatcheries. Both students are White Mountain Apache Tribal members, and assisted with the feeding and stocking of trout on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation. Their other duties included cleaning raceways, maintaining facilities, and most importantly selecting juvenile Apache trout that will be used for future brood stock at the hatchery. Both students enjoyed their summer, and have already asked about opportunities for next summer.

**Phil Hines, Alchesay-Williams Creek NFH**

USFWS

## Tishomingo NFH Provides Fish for Youth Fishing Days



USFWS

*Channel catfish are slowly acclimated to their new environment*

Tishomingo NFH provided fish for several youth fishing derbies held in June. The hatchery provided fish to the Justice Alma Wilson Seeworth Academy in Edmond and the Broken Arrow Optimist Club for youth fishing derbies in the state of Oklahoma. Upon request from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the hatchery provided fish for the YMCA fishing derby in Allen, TX. Fish were also provided to the Kickapoo Tribe in McLoud, OK for their first ever fishing derby. All four fishing derbies received over one thousand 10-15 inch channel catfish, while the Slippery Falls Boy Scout Camp in Tishomingo, OK received 2,100 largemouth bass fingerlings and 5,000 channel catfish fingerlings from the hatchery to provide continued fishing opportunities for campers from all over the United States during their summer camp experience.

***Ralph Simmons, Tishomingo NFH***

---

## Dexter NFHTC YCC Crew Assists with National Fishing Week

Dexter NFHTC kicked off this year's National Fishing and Boating Week its YCC crew work with partners to run kids fishing clinics and derbies across New Mexico. "Awesome!" exclaimed an excited YCC member as we stood along the grassy banks of Lake Van, in Southeastern NM. Three weeks ago, the teenager had never handled a fish and now was assisting in marking fish by removing the adipose fin from a 24-inch channel catfish before it was released. The student helpers assisted with all aspects of the project by sorting, loading, transporting, fin clipping and releasing the fish into the local lake. Field biologists explained that the fish were marked to accurately conduct creel surveys and determine resource utilization and stocking success.



USFWS

*YCC crew members tag channel catfish before stocking*

***Jason Nachtmann, Dexter NFHTC***

## Arizona FWCO Hires Tribal Youth for Apache Trout Recovery

During the summer of 2009, the Arizona FWCO hired 13 employees (9 STEPs and 4 seasonal appointments) through a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Grant to work on Apache trout recovery and other fisheries projects in Arizona. The 13 employees included six Arizona Tribal members and 10 were under the age of 25. Not only was their contribution to Apache trout recovery important, but it also aided in achieving Region 2's outreach, recruitment, and retention goals by hiring high school and college students through the STEP Program.



*Crews survey for Apache trout in Arizona*

**Jeremy Voeltz, Arizona FWCO**

## Environmental Education at San Marcos NFHTC



*Students learn about aquatic resources at the San Marcos NFHTC*

The San Marcos NFHTC is establishing an outreach curriculum for local area school-children to deliver the message of aquatic conservation while meeting Texas teaching requirements. The program is collaborative effort with private, state, federal, and city organizations and will teach about endangered species, invasive species, and taking care of our aquatic resources. This project will not only teach children (many of whom have never been in a river) about protecting aquatic resources, but will give them first-hand experiences with their area aquatic habitats and the organisms that reside there. This will benefit the environment directly by preventing future aquarium releases of invasive species and pollution in a habitat that currently suffers from high-impact recreational use.

**Mara Alexander and Catherine Phillips, San Marcos NFHTC**

## Dexter NFHTC Provides Safe-Haven for Pecos Bluntnose Shiner



USFWS

*Pecos bluntnose shiner are held at Dexter NFHTC*

Five hundred Pecos bluntnose shiner now call Dexter NFHTC home after the fish were collected from the Pecos River in Southeastern New Mexico by the New Mexico FWCO. The threatened shiner's abundance has experienced dramatic declines over the past 4 years primarily due to surface flow intermittence during irrigation season. The fish have adapted well to their new temporary environment and will be returned to the river in November of 2009 after threat of surface flow intermittence has ended. This was a cooperative among the NMFWCO, NM Ecological Services Field Office, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, NM Department of Game and Fish, and Dexter NFHTC.

**Manuel Ulibarri, Dexter NFHTC**

## Willow Beach NFH Back to Full Staff

Willow Beach National Fish Hatchery is finally fully staffed again! After retirements and departures of nearly 100% of the staff in the last couple years, operations at the hatchery were kept afloat through emergency hires, seasonal help, volunteers, and some donated labor from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.

The staffing revival began in September 2008 with the selection of Geri Mexicano, Administrative Assistant. Angela Baran, was promoted from Fish Biologist to Assistant Project Leader in November 2008, and Scott Peterson was hired as the new Maintenance Worker in February 2009. Josh Smith arrived as the new Bioscience Technician in March 2009 and Kurt Eversman followed as the Fish Biologist in April 2009. Finally, Giovanni Cappelli, Animal Caretaker started in May 2009. Now the new hatchery staff has started the fun of cleaning up, catching up, and lots of training.



USFWS

*Staff at Willow Beach NFH work in the lab*

**Angela Baran, Willow Beach NFH**

## Summer “Vacation” at Willow Beach NFH

Willow Beach NFH was fortunate to have a summer volunteer from May through July. Shane Smith came up to stay with his uncle, Josh Smith, Bioscience Technician, for the summer and was subsequently drafted into helping out at the hatchery! He volunteered for a total of 352 hours, doing everything from fish culture to light hatchery maintenance. The activities were fun for him in the beginning, but towards the end of the summer, he began looking forward to school starting again! He worked full days without complaint and was a huge help to the staff at the hatchery.

**Angela Baran, Willow Beach NFH**



*Shane Smith spent his summer at Willow Beach NFH*

USFWS

## My Summer Experience at Dexter NFHTC



*Tagging channel catfish prior to a fishing derby*

USFWS

My experience this summer at the Dexter NFHTC was very different than what I initially expected. There were four YCC members and I was the only girl. I was treated the same as the boys, and this aspect I respected. I remember the second day, I had to touch fish. I was not so happy about that but my boss' encouraged me to give it a try. I started off slow, and by the end of the day I loved touching fish.

The job we did the most this summer was paint. Although, it wasn't entertaining every day, we still managed to find the fun in it; well maybe sometimes. I learned fascinating facts, and processes that happen at the Hatchery. Over all, I loved working here and I'm going to miss everyone.

**Kylene Cane, Dexter NFHTC**

## Outreach and Education at Inks Dam NFH



USFWS

*Cindy Fronk presents environmental education to kids at Inks Dam NFH*

Outreach and education activities at Inks Dam NFH are much improved primarily because of the hard work and dedication of Cindy Fronk. Cindy has unselfishly given her time and talents to develop the educational activities at Inks Dam NFH into something special. From forging a strong and active Friends Group to developing a new trail system with outdoor classrooms, Cindy has been consistent and focused on completing the mission of building a better Inks Dam NFH. Children and Adults visiting Inks Dam NFH will soon have access to a wide variety of outdoor activities and facilities thanks to the work of Cindy Fronk.

***Marc Jackson, Inks Dam NFH***

## Connecting Kids with Nature at Inks Dam NFH



USFWS

# Southwest Region Fisheries Division

## National Fish Hatcheries

The National Fish Hatcheries (NFH), at Willow Beach, Alchesay-Williams Creek, Uvalde, Tishomingo, and Inks Dam; develop and maintain brood stocks of important fish species, both sport fishes and critically imperiled non-game fishes. The hatcheries are the source of fish and eggs distributed to partners with similar aquatic conservation missions, such as native fish restoration or fulfilling federal mitigation responsibilities. Hatcheries are often called upon to provide a place of refuge for imperiled aquatic organisms, such as aquatic plants and amphibians.

## Fish and Wildlife Conservation Offices

The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Offices (FWCO) in Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas evaluate wild native fish stocks and their habitats, and work with partners and other Service programs to restore habitats and fish populations.

These offices provide technical fish and wildlife management assistance to tribes and other partners with a primary focus on native aquatic species.

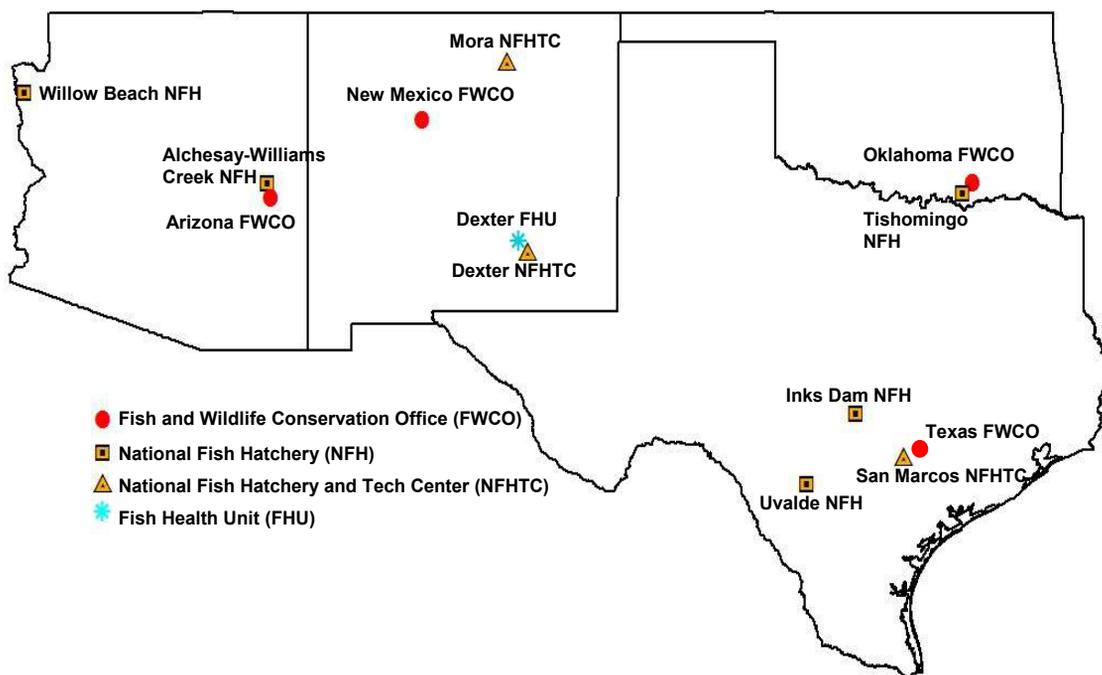
## Fish Technology Centers

The Fish Technology Centers (NFHTC), at Dexter, Mora, and San Marcos; develop leading-edge technology for use by tribal, state, and federal fish hatcheries and fishery biologists to make fish culture more productive, cost-effective, and scientifically sound.

Technology improves hatchery efficiency; helps assure the genetic integrity of fishes, at the same time minimizing the effects of hatchery fish on wild fish stocks.

## Fish Health Unit at Dexter

The Fish Health Unit (FHU) at Dexter assesses the well-being of fish that live in the wild or are raised at hatcheries. Fish health biologists are highly trained in various scientific disciplines, like immunology, epidemiology, toxicology, and genetics. They apply that knowledge in fish health assessments that might lead to early detection of potentially devastating diseases, prescribing preemptive measures.



# SOUTHWEST REGIONAL FISHERIES OFFICES

Regional Office, Division of Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Conservation

PO Box 1306, Albuquerque, NM 87103

Mike Oetker, Assistant Regional Director (Mike\_Oetker@fws.gov)

## Arizona

### Alchesay-Williams Creek National Fish Hatchery

PO Box 2430  
Pinetop, AZ 85935  
Phil Hines (Phil\_Hines@fws.gov)  
928-338-4901

### Arizona Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office

PO Box 39  
Pinetop, AZ 85935  
Stewart Jacks (Stewart\_Jacks@fws.gov)  
928-338-4288

### Willow Beach National Fish Hatchery

25804 N. Willow Beach Road  
HC 37, Box 17  
Willow Beach, AZ 86445  
Mark Olson (Mark\_Olson@fws.gov)  
928-767-3456

## New Mexico

### Dexter National Fish Hatchery and Tech Center

PO Box 219  
Dexter, NM 88230  
Manuel Ulibarri (Manuel\_Ulibarri@fws.gov)  
505-734-5910

### Mora National Fish Hatchery and Tech Center

P.O. Box 689  
Mora, NM 87732  
John Seals (John\_Seals@fws.gov)  
505-387-6022

### New Mexico Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office

3800 Commons NE  
Albuquerque, NM 87109  
Jim Brooks (Jim\_Brooks@fws.gov)  
505-342-9900

## Oklahoma

### Oklahoma Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office

5701 W. Highway 7  
Tishomingo, OK 73460  
Brent Bristow (Brent\_Bristow@fws.gov)  
580-384-5710

### Tishomingo National Fish Hatchery

5503 W. Highway 7  
Tishomingo, OK 73460  
Kerry Graves (Kerry\_Graves@fws.gov)  
580-384-5463

## Texas

### Inks Dam National Fish Hatchery

Route 2, Box 32-B  
Burnet, TX 78611  
Marc Jackson (Marc\_Jackson@fws.gov)  
512-793-2474

### San Marcos National Fish Hatchery and Tech Center

500 E. McCarty Lane  
San Marcos, TX 78666  
Tom Brandt (Tom\_Brandt@fws.gov)  
512-353-0011

### Texas Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office

500 E. McCarty Lane  
San Marcos, TX 78666  
Vacant

### Uvalde National Fish Hatchery

754 Country Road 203  
Uvalde, TX 78801  
Grant Webber (Grant\_Webber@fws.gov)  
830-278-2419

Questions or comments regarding *Currents* can be addressed to  
Jeremy Voeltz, Arizona Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office;  
PO Box 39 Pinetop, AZ 85935; 928-338-4288;  
Jeremy\_Voeltz@fws.gov