



Arizona Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office

Accomplishment Report

August 2016



AZ FWCO Barrier Surveys



Photo Credit: UWFWS AZ FWCO

AZFWCO Staff

Flagstaff

Jess Newton, Project Leader
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Pinetop

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Jennifer Johnson, Fish Biologist
Tim Grosch, Partners for Fish and Wildlife Biologist
Stephanie Vail-Muse, Fish and Wildlife Biologist
Louis Eastwood, Apache Trout Crew
Jake Washburn, Apache Trout Crew

Parker

Chase Ehlo, Fish Biologist
Mitch Thorson, Fish Biologist
Brad Buechel, Fish Biologist
John Naugle, Biological Technician
Sean O'Kray, Pest Control Worker



AZFWCO Mission: Working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish and other aquatic organisms and their habitat in Arizona and the Southwest.

Conserving Aquatic Species

Kirk Young hosted the Lake Mohave Native Fish Work Group meeting. The latest findings and future stocking, sampling and research needs were discussed. Important outcomes included increasing larval Razorback Sucker contribution from the “river reach”, and ceasing trammel netting effort in spring once the minimum statistically meaningful numbers of recaptures have been obtained to minimize stress to fish. Chase Ehlo and Brad Buechel attended the meeting.

Chase deployed six remote PIT scanners into Cibola High Levee Pond. These were test deployments to determine if two different antennae orientations (i.e. laying down or standing up the antennas) are more effective than the other at detecting Bonytail in this backwater. This will be valuable information in determining the best way to maximize contacts and subsequent survival and population estimates for Bonytail. Currently, the antennas are still deployed and data will be included in the next activity report.

Brad and Mitch Thorson deployed and retrieved PIT scanning antennas at Topock Marsh to see how Razorback Sucker were utilizing (a) the firebreak canal and (b) other areas of flow. Overall there were 244 unique Razorbacks scanned in these two deployments. Of these, 193 Razorback were not contacted during previous scanning or netting efforts conducted this year on Topock Marsh. The year-to-date total is 551 unique Razorback. In a separate study Brad and Mitch deployed and retrieved PIT scanning antennas on Moovalya Marsh and Three Fingers Lake: no tagged fish were contacted at Moovalya Marsh and 5 unique Razorback were contacted at Three Fingers Lake.

Jennifer Johnson, Louis Eastwood, and Jake Washburn; with assistance from Alchesay – Williams Creek NFH and White Mountain Apache Game and Fish Department, collected trout for a wild fish health assessment. Trout were collected from three locations. Staff from the Southwestern Native Aquatic Resources and Recovery Center was on site to perform the fish health sampling. Genetic



The Apache Trout crew collecting Apache Trout from the East Fork of the White River

Photo Credit: USFWS Jennifer Johnson

samples were also collected from Apache Trout from the East Fork White River.

Jennifer, Louis, and Jake completed a population estimate for Apache Trout in Flash Creek; removed nonnative trout from Thompson Creek, and surveyed Peasoup and Hurricane Creeks.

Randy Van Haverbeke developed and delivered presentations to the Protocol Evaluation Panel sponsored by the Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center (GCMRC). This was a panel of experts tasked with reviewing the merits, strengths, and weaknesses of fisheries projects that fall under the purview of the GCMRC. The presentations covered monitoring and translocations of Humpback Chub in the Little Colorado River. While there Randy participated in an overnight camp out at Lees Ferry with members of the Protocol Evaluation Panel.

Randy continued analyzing data from the 2016 spring monitoring trips in the Little Colorado River (LCR) and incorporating into the 2016 annual report. Population estimates have now shown a decline in numbers of adult Humpback Chub for the

past two years. This decline appears to be in part, or wholly the result of a decrease in recruitment (i.e., lower recent annual abundances within the smaller size classes). Also, Randy continued working on a manuscript about Chute Falls translocation of Humpback Chub.

Chase received internal comments for the 2014 CRIT sonic telemetry report. Comments were addressed and the report was sent to the Multi Species Conservation Program (MSCP) partners for final review, prior to finalization.

Kirk, Randy and Michael Pillow organized and packed for the 2016 Humpback Chub aggregation survey. The hoopnet, trammel net and PIT antenna survey is intended to assess the status and distribution of Humpback Chub and associated native and nonnative fish assemblage at known aggregation sites in the Grand Canyon.

Jeremy Voeltz submitted a proposal to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to fund Apache Trout recovery actions in 2017 and 2018. The existing grant with NFWF expires in December.

Conserving, Restoring, and Enhancing Aquatic Habitats

Kirk, Jeremy, Jess Newton and Dave Smith (Arizona Ecological Services Field Office-AESO) established stream cross sections and sediment measurements at four Apache Trout barrier sites (Stinky Creek, Hayground Creek, and upper and lower Home Creek). The sites have been identified for fish passage restoration via their removal once the new mainstem West Fork Black River barrier has been proven effective and its intervening reaches have been renovated to remove nonnative salmonids.

Kirk and Chase attended a Three Fingers Lake (Cibola National Wildlife Refuge) planning meeting. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) presented conceptual plans for expanding the lake. The lake was originally dredged for native fish and wetland birds, but quickly became a popular and productive fishing area connected to the Colorado River. In the 1990's USBR placed berms across the openings and installed pumps to supply water. However, after the berms and pumps were installed it was determined that the site lacked water rights to support the lake. Since then the lake has maintained adult Razorback Sucker and various sport fish but water quality has been poor due to a lack of connectivity. USBR; through MSCP has proposed to open ½ of the current lake to the river, expand the closed portion nearly 4-fold, and provide water rights to manage water quantity and quality.

Jeremy and Stephanie Vail-Muse completed fish passage evaluations at several stream/road crossings on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation. The results of these evaluations will be used to identify future fish passage projects that will benefit Apache Trout and other native fish species.

Mitch and Brad completed monthly water quality monitoring on Alamo Lake through an agreement with the Army Corps of Engineers. Brad and Sean O'Kray performed off-channel habitat water quality surveys on Emerald Canyon

Golf Course Ponds, High Levee Pond, Office Cove, Parker Dam, Three Fingers Lake, Three Mile Lake, and Topock Marsh.

AZFWCO continued to pump out and monitor Office Cove Pond for our water exchange study. Initial results indicate that water quality is improving for Razorback Sucker as groundwater from the adjacent Colorado River refreshes the pond.



Workers laying out the center line for a future recirculating living stream. Photo Credit: USFWS Tim Grosch

Tim Grosch conducted a site visit in Tucson, Arizona at a non-profit community garden and educational center. The purpose of this center is to educate the public on sustainable living the way it was done centuries ago through the use of native vegetation along with fruits and vegetables that were brought to the area by different cultures who worked the land to survive. The organization plans on developing a living stream as well as a pollinator garden to aid in public outreach for Arizona's unique native wildlife.

Tim, Arizona Game and Fish Depart-

ment Landowner Relations Program (AGFD) (LRP), and a representative from Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) met with a landowner in Lakeside, AZ to discuss cleaning out a dirt stock tank and improving the irrigation system that is used to water nearby fields. More details are necessary to move forward with this project.

Tim continued to coordinate efforts on Battle Tank Grassland restoration project. This project is ongoing to enhance local

grassland communities. Cultural surveys had been completed and we are waiting for the selected brush management company to finish up at another project. Summer monsoons have postponed the work however we are gearing up to begin the on the ground work late this month or shortly thereafter.

Stephanie submitted the revised Multi-State Grant (MSG) proposal to the National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP) coordinator for next year's MSG funding cycle. The revised proposal took into account the significantly reduced MSG funding that will be available for FY17.

Conserving, Restoring, and Enhancing Aquatic Habitats *(continued)*

Stephanie and Jeremy lead a Desert Fish Habitat Partnership (DFHP) conference call discussing the DFHP annual reports and the DFHP annual meeting that will be taking place in Albuquerque, NM on November 15th at the New Mexico Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office. This call included DFHP Executive committee members U.S. Forest Service Cynthia Tait and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department biologist Megan Bean. Additional subjects discussed were the current and past DFHP funded projects and the potential for a DFHP networking event.

Managing Aquatic Invasive Species

Dennis Stone began writing the final study plan for a new AZFWCO surveillance and rapid response project for nonnative invasive fishes in the Little Colorado River (LCR) basin.

Fulfilling Tribal Trust Responsibilities

Jess, Kirk, Stephanie, Randy, and Dennis attended the 30th Annual Southwest Regional Native American Fish and Wildlife Society Conference in Flagstaff, AZ. Stephanie staffed the DFHP booth, provided DFHP and USFWS education and outreach materials, and spread the word about the DFHP's Request for Project Proposals. Randy gave a presentation titled "The Humpback Chub of the Little Colorado River." Dennis Stone gave a presentation titled "Floods, Suspended Sediment, and Dissolved CO₂ - Abiotic Controls of Nonnative Fishes in the Little Colorado River, Arizona".

Jennifer submitted trip reports for several fisheries surveys conducted this year on Tribal lands. Trip reports included Wheatfield's Lake wild fish health survey, Seneca Lake fishery survey, Talkalai Lake fish-



Jake removing tissue for genetic analysis

Photo Credit: USFWS Jennifer Johnson

ery survey, and Fort Apache Indian Reservation wild fish health survey.

AZFWCO staff participated in the monthly Fishery Coordination meeting among AZFWCO, A-WC NFH (Alchey-Williams Creek National Fish Hatchery), & WMAT-WORD (White Mountain Apache Tribe-Wildlife & Outdoor Recreation Division).

Enhancing Recreation Fishing and Public Use of Aquatic Resources

AZFWCO (Jess, Jeremy, Jennifer, Louis, and Jake) coordinated the stocking of ~26,000 Channel Catfish into 25 tanks and lakes on the Fort Apache and San Carlos Indian Reservations. Inks Dam NFH raised and transported the catfish to Arizona. Alchey-Williams Creek NFH, White Mountain Game and Fish Department, and San Carlos Recreation and Wildlife Department assisted with the stocking.

The Parker staff organized a river clean-up effort and teamed up with staff and



Brad from the Parker FWCO helping remove trash and debris from the Lake Havasu Refuge Complex.

Photo Credit: USFWS Parker FWCO

volunteers from the Lake Havasu National Wildlife Refuge Complex to gather trash in the Colorado River upstream of the delta in Lake Havasu. This stretch of the river is characterized by numerous backwaters and is valuable habitat utilized by many species of wildlife including the endangered Razorback Sucker.

This cleanup was initiated due to concerns expressed by refuge staff and the public of trash and refuse accumulating in refuge waters from the Annual River Regatta in Laughlin, NV. A total of fifteen 55-gallon bags of trash were collected in less than a 1/4 mile stretch of river.

Needless to say, trash removal efforts need to continue in the river to protect this habitat and to continue to shape a positive image of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to the public.

Workforce Management, Training, and Scientific

Kevin Dunlap joined the AZFWCO team this month as our Administrative Support Assistant. Kevin is located in our Flag-staff office.

Tim Grosch went on a two week training opportunity in Region 2 traveling and meeting with Partners for Fish and Wildlife employees in Texas and Oklahoma. The job shadowing was intended to teach him the different techniques other programs use and bring these ideas back to the Arizona program. The trip was very successful and Tim could not thank these Partners programs enough for taking the time out of their busy schedule and showing him around on various projects.

Jess and Jennifer attended Collateral Duty Safety Officer training (OSHA 6000). Jennifer received a medallion and jacket in appreciation for serving for almost nine years as collateral duty safety officer for AZFWCO. Mitch Thorson completed the online electrofishing certification course. Tim Grosch attended Basic Financial Assistance Training.

AZFWCO completed our official accomplishments reporting to Headquarters and



Parker FWCO helping to clean up AZ lakes to enhance recreational fishing areas

Photo Credit: USFWS Parker FWCO



CDSO's who have served their duty stations for multiple years have received a medallion and jacket for their commitment to safety . Photo Credit: USFWS Jessie Jobs

the Regional Office. Annual fiscal year reporting is done through the online Fisheries Information System (FIS) database.

Dennis Stone submitted a manuscript on abiotic controls of nonnative fishes in the Little Colorado River for possible publication by Transactions of the American Fisheries Society. Dennis' coauthors include Kirk Young, Bill Mattes, and Mark Cantrell.

Public Education and Engagement

Stephanie Vail-Muse completed the DFHP September Newsletter and has

updated the DFHP website. Come check it out at <http://www.desertfhp.org/>

Stephanie and the Western Native Trout Initiative (WNTI) Coordinator worked with Sage Lion Media videographer Nick Hoover in editing the Blueheads and Bonneville campaign video.

Stephanie also sent Sage Lion Media previously recorded footage of the DFHP Executive and Steering committee interviews. This footage was recorded by Mike Pillow and the DFHP Committee members and will be used to help convey the mission and goals of the DFHP on its social media accounts and on the DFHP website.

Public Education and Engagement (*continued*)

Did you know AZFWCO has a Facebook page? We post information on our staff, upcoming projects, educational events, and volunteer opportunities across the state. We currently have 1,048 “likes” from over 20 countries.

Check us out at

www.facebook.com/AZFWCO.

RFP Announcement: If you are interested in submitting a DFHP proposal for FY17 funding please contact the DFHP Coordinator Stephanie-Vail-Muse at Stephanie_vail-muse@fws.gov or follow the link directly to this year’s DFHP Request For Proposals.

http://media.wix.com/ugd/834bd0_30e1f24

Stephanie Vail-Muse continued to highlight native desert fish for #DesertFishFriday on DFHP’s Facebook page.

Check it out at

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Desert-Fish-Habitat-Partnership/193053497376208?ref=hl>

Stephanie Vail-Muse posted the third monthly DFHP E-News Shout Out. Sign up to be on our Newsletter subscription list and get monthly Shout Outs where we share with you what the DFHP is up to that month.

Join now at <http://www.desertfhp.org/>

Stephanie Vail-Muse invites you to follow the DFHP on their Social Media Accounts as they promote their mission and goals to conserve native desert fish by protecting, restoring, and enhancing their habitats in cooperation with state and tribal fish and wildlife agencies, federal resource agencies, research and private organizations, and engaged individuals.

Instagram

<https://www.instagram.com/desertfhp/>

Twitter

https://twitter.com/desert_fhp/

Upcoming Events

- ◆ **August 27- September 13:** Mainstem Grand Canyon Humpback Chub study trip
- ◆ **September 6 – 8:** Survey Kingman Golf Course Ponds
- ◆ **September 12-13:** Alamo Lake Water Quality Survey
- ◆ **September 19:** Lake Havasu Technical Meeting at Partners Point
- ◆ **September 20-October 5:** Mainstem Grand Canyon juvenile Humpback Chub seining trip
- ◆ **September 24:** National Public Lands Day
- ◆ **September 20-30:** Little Colorado River Humpback Chub Monitoring Trip III
- ◆ **October 11-14:** Cibola High Levee Pond Sampling
- ◆ **October 18-19:** Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program Technical Work Group, location TBD,
- ◆ **October 18-28:** Little Colorado River Humpback Chub Monitoring Trip IV
- ◆ **October 24-28:** NFHP Workshops in Panama City, FL
- ◆ **November 1-4:** Park Moabi Fall Razorback Roundup
- ◆ **November 15-18:** DFC Conference & DFHP Annual Meeting

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DESERT FISH HABITAT
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