



Arizona Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office

Accomplishment Report

July 2015



Jess Newton poses with an Apache Trout during a day in the field with the Apache Trout Crew.

AZFWCO Staff

Flagstaff

Jess Newton, Project Leader
Kirk Young, Project Coordinator
Randy Van Haverbeke, Senior Fish Biologist
Dennis Stone, Fish Biologist
Mike Pillow, Fish Biologist
Jim Walters, Biological Technician
Rick Deshler, Biological Technician
Vic Scott, Administrative Officer

Pinetop

Vacant, Assistant Project Leader
Jeremy Voeltz, Project Coordinator
Vacant, Partners for Fish and Wildlife Biologist
Jennifer Johnson, Fish Biologist
Vacant, Fish and Wildlife Biologist
Vacant, Office Assistant
Brianna Thorson, Apache Trout Crew
Kevin Castillo, Apache Trout Crew
Barney Gregg, Apache Trout Crew

Parker

Mitch Thorson, 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.

Aquatic Species Conservation and Management

Jeremy Voeltz coordinated with staff from the Arizona Ecological Services Field Office and Regional Office to continue compiling information for the Species Status Assessment for Roundtail and Headwater Chubs. Jeremy also worked with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Arizona Game and Fish Department, and Trout Unlimited to work on a full proposal to help develop/refine the monitoring plan for Apache trout.

Kirk Young and Randy Van Haverbeke continued to work on new action triggers for management responses to various conditions that could drive a decline in the Little Colorado River (LCR) Humpback Chub population. Trigger concepts continue to be refined via meetings and discussions with

biologists from USGS, NPS, USBR, and AZGFD. The conceptual approach appears to be viable for reducing the likelihood of mechanical removal of trout, an action of considerable interest to several Southwest Indian tribes.

Randy continued to analyze the spring 2015 LCR data for incorporation into an annual report due next January. This included running closed Chapman Petersen abundance estimates of Humpback Chub as well as running abundance estimates within a robust design framework in Program MARK. Michael Pillow assisted in this effort by calculating spring chub and sucker CPUEs and also building a capture history database, including

data from spring 2015, for all chubs captured in the LCR since 2001.

Randy continued development and refinement of a proposal to augment mainstem Colorado River aggregations of Humpback Chub in Grand Canyon.

Kirk Young, Randy Van Haverbeke, and Michael Pillow met with Mike Dodrill (USGS) to discuss issues related to the upcoming Colorado River Humpback Chub aggregation monitoring trip. The trip will take place in September and utilize hoop nets, trammel nets, seine nets, and electrofishing to capture and collect data on chubs in aggregations along the Colorado River in Grand Canyon.

Spring trip reports were finalized by Michael Pillow and Dennis Stone and submitted to Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center (GCMRC). The reports are titled "Spring 2015 Monitoring of Humpback Chub (*Gila cypha*) and other fishes above Lower Atomizer Falls in the Little Colorado River, Arizona" and "Spring 2015 Monitoring of Humpback Chub (*Gila cypha*) and other Fishes in the Lower 13.57 km of the Little Colorado River, Arizona."

The Apache Trout Crew completed first and second passes of nonnative trout removal efforts on four Apache Trout streams on the FAIR (Fort Apache Indian Reservation). A total of 175 nonnative trout were removed and 1,222 Apache trout were counted in the streams. Jess Newton was able to get out from behind his desk and spend a day working with The Crew removing nonnative Brook Trout from the West Fork Black River.



Apache Trout Crew member, Barney Gregg shows off an Apache Trout captured during sampling and nonnative trout removal efforts.

Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management

Jess Newton drafted the award letter for an AZFWCO grant agreement to

the Hopi Tribe for the removal of nonnative invasive fish from Pasture

Canyon Lake.

Partnerships and Accountability

AZFWCO staff participated in the monthly Fishery Coordination meeting among AZFWCO, A-WC NFH

(Alchesay-Williams Creek National Fish Hatchery), & WMAT-WORD (White Mountain Apache Tribe-

Wildlife & Outdoor Recreation Division).

Partnerships and Accountability (continued)

A new Inter-governmental Agreement (IA) with USBR Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Plan (MSCP) was finalized and forwarded to the Regional Office. The IA will provide \$550k over five years to AZFWCO and will facilitate greater involvement by AZFWCO in achieving mutual conservation

priorities on the Lower Colorado River.

Dennis Stone compiled all data sheets, Access and Excel files, and the two trip reports affiliated with the spring 2015 monitoring efforts in the LCR and delivered them to GCMRC, in partial fulfillment of our contractual obligations.

The Desert Fish Habitat Partnership (DFHP) announced their FY16 Request for Proposals (RFP), due September 30, 2015. Jess Newton reviewed and commented on the draft RFP. The 2016 RFP is located on DFHP's website at

<http://www.desertfhp.org/>

Cooperation with Native Americans

Jess Newton and Arizona Ecological Services Field Office staff met with San Carlos (Apache Tribe) Recreation and Wildlife Department's director, biologist, and attorney. Among many topics discussed was our mutual desire for increasing native and recreational

fish surveys and cross training of fisheries staff. We look forward to new collaborative work in FY16!

The Regional Director for Region 8 is the keynote speaker at the upcoming Southwest Native American Fish and Wildlife Society's

annual meeting in Reno, NV. Jess Newton, Michael Pillow, and Jennifer Johnson provided photographs and content for the RD's presentation. Jess will be attending the conference for AZFWCO and DFHP.

Public Use and Outreach

Jess and Jeremy participated in a conference call with Alchey-Williams Creek National Fish Hatchery Complex and regional office leadership to discuss how to address required decreases in recreational trout production, a consequence of long term drought and decreasing spring flows supplying the hatchery. Tribes have been informed of the situation and discussions are ongoing.

Jennifer Johnson spent a morning with 20 youth from the Apache Behavioral Health Youth Wellness Program at Williams Creek NFH. The group learned about Apache Trout and hatchery operations. The highlight for the youth was getting to feed the large Rainbow Trout in the settling pond.

Did you know AZFWCO had a Facebook page? We post

information on our staff, upcoming projects, educational events, and volunteer opportunities across the state. We currently have 604 "likes" from 20 countries. Check us out at www.facebook.com/AZFWCO.

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Kirk Young and Mitch Thorson met with Havasu NWR and MSCP staff to discuss future management of Beal Lake. The lake has not performed well with low native fish survival and has been compromised by nonnative fish. Future work will look at baseline water quality and experimental actions to improve water quality.

Kirk Young also met with Cibola NWR and MSCP staff to provide input to proposed infrastructure improvements at Three Fingers Lake. The lake was isolated from the Colorado River side channel in the 1990s; however, lack of water rights prevented full management of water quality. Despite poor water quality and nonnative fish intrusion,

the lake supports a small number of Razorback Sucker. California Fish and Wildlife and anglers were vocal critics of the actions in the 1990s due to loss of angler access. MSCP is proposing to provide water rights for management of the lake, reconnecting ½ of the lake to the Colorado River side channel, maintaining ½ of the lake for native fish with improved water delivery and water quality, and re-vegetating the area. AZFWCO made recommendations aimed at providing the best possible habitat quality for native fish and marsh species with the least risk of nonnative fish intrusion.

Dennis Stone had a phone conversation with Dr. Claude Boyd

(Auburn University, Alabama) concerning the estimation of dissolved carbon dioxide (CO₂) levels of LCR waters by titration methods versus a new OxyGuard CO₂ analyzer probe. Dr. Boyd believes that titration method results in the best CO₂ approximations, which is what the USFWS and other agencies have traditionally used since the early 1990s. Dennis also analyzed more USFWS data on CO₂ levels and the fish assemblage in the LCR and began incorporating his findings into a draft manuscript.

Michael Pillow and Randy Van Haverbeke met with Mike Dodrill (USGS) at GCMRC to discuss and see a demonstration of new paperless PIT tag and biological

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data entry technology. We will be utilizing this technology for part of the mainstem chub aggregation monitoring trip. The new system involves an electronic tablet

programmed for data entry and a PIT tag reader that will automatically upload PIT tag numbers from scanned fish into the appropriate field within the tablet's

data entry program. This new system will take practice, but it has potential to streamline data collection and entry and perhaps eliminate some errors in the field.

Workforce Management

Jess Newton participated on the Region 2 selection committee for the Service's FY16 Stepping Up To Leadership program. Four individuals and two alternates were selected from a highly qualified applicant pool.

Jeremy Voeltz and Jess Newton reviewed resume packages from applicants for the Desert Fish Habitat Partnership coordinator position and the Partners for Fish and Wildlife biologist position. Interviews will be conducted in August.

Kirk Young and Randy Van Haverbeke interviewed several strong candidates for the term GS-

11 position in Parker. The preferred candidate will complement existing staff with strong technical and interpersonal attributes.

Michael Pillow has been in contact with volunteers for our fall Little Colorado River monitoring trips and our mainstem aggregation monitoring trip, answering questions, organizing trip and personal info, and getting information packets to them in the mail.

Randy returned from Fort Bragg in Colorado Springs to pick up a surplus army trailer that Kirk found online. This should improve a safety factor on our Little Colorado River

monitoring trips, since we will be able to substantially reduce the weight carried in the trucks.

Training: Jeremy Voeltz completed Basic Financial Assistance Management training in Denver, Colorado. Randy Van Haverbeke and Jess Newton completed all required EEO and Diversity training requirements for 2015 and notified appropriate personnel in Albuquerque of this accomplishment. Michael Pillow completed the online electrofishing safety training course through DOI Learn.

The AZFWCO all-employee conference call took place on June 15.

Upcoming Events

-The Desert Fish Habitat Partnership is accepting FY16 habitat project proposals through September 30. For more information, the 2016 Request for Proposals can be found at <http://www.desertfhp.org/>

August 11-13: Southwest Native American Fish and Wildlife Society meeting, Reno, NV. Jess Newton will be representing DFHP at or exhibitors table

August 16-21: American Fisheries Society annual meeting. Portland, OR.

August 27-September 14: Colorado River Humpback Chub Aggregation Sampling Trip

September 22-October 2: Little Colorado River Humpback Chub stock assessment I

October 22-November 2: Little Colorado River Humpback Chub stock assessment II

November 19-22: Desert Fishes Council meeting, Death Valley



Apache Trout Crew members Kevin Castillo, Barney Gregg, and Briana Thorson pose with Jess Newton in eastern Arizona. Jess spent the day in the field with the crew, sampling an Apache Trout stream and removing non-native trout.

