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Currents

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REGION 2 – SOUTHWEST REGION *Fisheries Program Highlights* (July – September 2009) December 2009

Edited by Jeremy B. Voeltz, Arizona FWCO



A biologist from the Arizona FWCO hoists a gigantic flathead catfish from San Carlos Lake

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Turtles Thriving at Tishomingo NFH



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A one-day old snapping turtles explores its new habitat at the Tishomingo NFH

Sixty-one alligator snapping turtle juveniles hatched during September after three months of incubation at the Tishomingo NFH. After one or two years in rearing tanks the turtles will be moved to an earthen pond where they will forage for themselves for another year before being stocked into the wild. A total of 156 juvenile alligator snapping turtles were stocked into native waters in 2009. To further aid in the conservation of the snapping turtle, 30 juvenile turtles were transferred to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources for restoration efforts in Illinois and 60 juvenile turtles were released into the Caney River upstream of Hulah Lake to supplement the population in Oklahoma. Lastly, 66 juvenile turtles were released into six different water bodies located on the Tishomingo National Wildlife refuge.

Rebecca Fillmore, Tishomingo NFH

Arizona FWCO Assists with Tribal Sportfish Management

During August and September, biologists from the Arizona FWCO assisted our Tribal partners with lake electrofishing surveys on the San Carlos Apache Indian Reservation and Navajo Nation. The surveys are conducted every spring and summer to analyze the sportfishing communities at several lakes in Arizona. In addition, Arizona FWCO loaned our electrofishing boat for use in similar surveys in New Mexico, and both offices follow existing protocols to ensure that aquatic organisms are not transported between lakes in the two states.

Jeremy Voeltz, Arizona FWCO



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A biologist from the Navajo Nation's Department of Fish and Wildlife measures a large rainbow trout from a lake on the Navajo Nation.

Alchesay NFH Main Pipeline Damaged

In the summer of 2009, Alchesay NFH experienced a severe reduction in incoming water due to several leaks in the 47-year old steel waterline. Because of the reduced water flow there will be a reduction in the number of trout that can be produced in 2010 at Alchesay. To meet the stocking requests of the Tribes, Nations, and Pueblos in Arizona and New Mexico, the Service is working with the Navajo Nation, Mescalero Apache Tribal Hatchery and Inks Dam NFH to raise a portion of the trout for the upcoming stocking season. In the meantime, the Service, White Mountain Apache Tribe, and other partners are working to secure funding to replace the pipeline.



One of the leaks in the pipeline at the Alchesay NFH

Phil Hines, Alchesay-Williams Creek NFH

Tishomingo NFH Aids in Tribal Sportfishing



Staff from Tishomingo NFH stock channel catfish for a kids fishing derby on the Seminole Nation

In 2009, Tishomingo NFH supplied more than 10,350 fish to Native American Tribes to provide recreational fishing opportunities for tribal members and their families. Channel catfish and largemouth bass were stocked into several tribal ponds for the Kickapoo Tribe in Oklahoma and Kansas earlier this year. In September, tribal members from the Kickapoo tribe of Kansas picked up approximately 9,500 juvenile channel catfish and stocked them into tribal waters in Kansas. Later, Tishomingo NFH also stocked 165 adult channel catfish at the Seminole Nation's Mekusukey Mission pond in September for their annual children's fishing derby.

Rebecca Fillmore, Tishomingo NFH

Record Number of Paddlefish Grown at Tishomingo NFH



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A juvenile paddlefish ready for release into its native habitat.

In 2009, Tishomingo NFH stocked more than 43,000 12-inch paddlefish into waters in Oklahoma and Kansas which is a new record number of paddlefish stocked since the first year of production in 1991! This was the result of the construction of a new egg hatching building and water recirculation system in February of 2009 that allowed for the hatchery to have 21 egg jars in use at one time. The paddlefish were coded-wire tagged (so biologists can track the age classes of fish over time) and then released primarily into Lake Eufaula in Oklahoma to reestablish a population above Eufaula dam. In addition, 5,000 paddlefish were also stocked into John Redmond Reservoir in Kansas while an additional 2,000 paddlefish were released into Grand Lake O' the Cherokees.

Rebecca Fillmore, Tishomingo NFH

Inks Dam NFH Produces Fish for Multiple Partners

During this quarter, Inks Dam NFH stocked about 140,000 channel catfish for tribal fishery management programs in Region 2, the Texas Urban Fishing Program (in partnership with Texas Parks and Wildlife), recreational fishing on Fort Hood, recreational fishing in the Highland Lakes area of Texas, and kid fishing derbies. Additionally, as part of the continued hurricane recovery efforts in east Texas, Inks Dam NFH supplied fingerling channel catfish to the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Prisons for restoring waters within the hurricane damaged National Forests. Finally, over 2,300 paddlefish were sent to Tishomingo NFH for tagging and then subsequent release into the Arkansas River.



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Following harvest, the ponds at Inks Dam NFH are cleared out to prepare for a new season of fish production

Marc Jackson, Inks Dam NFH

Outreach Efforts Continue at Inks Dam NFH

Inks Dam NFH continues to conduct multiple outreach and aquatic education events for a variety of audiences, including the 4H Sport Fish Camp, Camp Longhorn, Boys and Girls Club, and the Boy Scouts of America. Additionally, Inks Dam NFH hosted the Burnet Science Camp for 4th through 8th graders in the local area. With the help of the Friends of Inks Dam NFH, the campers received instruction on the importance of protecting aquatic species, preventing invasive species, fish and plant identification, life history of red-tail hawks, and the importance of protecting our water resources. Hatchery staff also discussed education requirements and career opportunities in the scientific and outdoor education fields.

Marc Jackson, Inks Dam NFH



Students from the Burnet Science Camp learn about the importance of natural resources

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Oklahoma Expo a Big Hit with Kids and Adults



Staff from Tishomingo NFH answer questions about what fish and turtles the hatchery produces, and why.

Tishomingo NFH staff participated in the annual Oklahoma Wildlife Expo hosted by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation in September. Hatchery staff set up an educational booth and provided information to visitors about the hatchery and the role federal fish hatcheries play in conservation. Adults and children alike enjoyed the live turtles on display and were excited to see alligator snapping turtle eggs for the first time. Staff also displayed a fish egg hatching jar and slide show depicting all species that the Tishomingo NFH currently raises. Approximately 42,000 people attended the three day event; with more than 16,000 of those visitors attending on the first day set aside just for school aged children.

Rebecca Fillmore, Tishomingo NFH

Rare Clear Creek Gambusia Given a boost

In a collaborative effort among the Service's Austin Ecological Services Office, Dexter NFHTC, and San Marcos NFHTC, staff from Inks Dam NFH have completed phase one and two of a Clear Creek gambusia recovery project. The Clear Creek gambusia is a critically endangered fish located in one isolated pool where the Clear Creek head springs emerge from the ground. All of the partners recently met with the landowner of the head springs to evaluate the extent of the deterioration of the dam that creates the upper pool where the gambusia is located. The next step will be to secure a funding source to adequately repair the dam to prevent migration of the common mosquito fish, which could hybridize with the Clear Creek gambusia, into the upper pool.

Marc Jackson, Inks Dam NFH



Courtesy Robert Edwards

The upper pool at Clear Creek spring provides habitat for the Clear Creek gambusia

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.

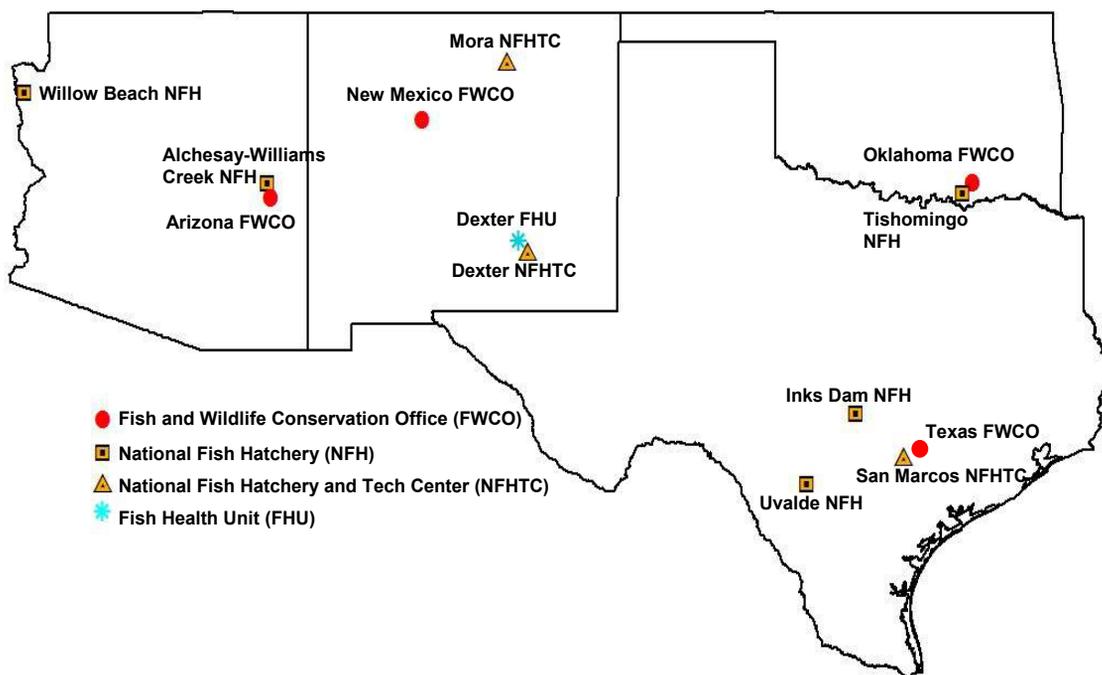
Fish Technology Centers

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.



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