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Currents

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Edited by Jeremy Voeltz, Arizona FWCO



Two young anglers show off Gila trout they caught at the third annual Aldo Leopold Kids Fishing Derby in New Mexico in June

Read the complete story on page one

Third Annual Aldo Leopold Kids Fishing Derby in New Mexico



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More than 80 kids participated in the Derby and Festival

Aldo Leopold, the father of wildlife management and a pioneer in land ethics and wilderness conservation, accredited his profound admiration for nature and ecology to spending countless hours in the woods, prairies, and rivers of Iowa as a youth. Following Aldo's paradigm, the U.S. Forest Service in collaboration with the New Mexico FWCO, Mora NFH, and New Mexico Department of Game and Fish held its third annual Kid's Fishing Derby and Festival at Lake Roberts in June. More than 80 kids participated in the event and took part in angling, fly-tying, aquatic insect identification, and casting competitions. As an extra bonus this year, the Service stocked 230 Gila trout (ranging from one to four pounds) that were retired from the Gila Trout Recovery Breeding Program.

Dustin Myers, New Mexico FWCO

Fishing Derby Hosted by Uvalde NFH in June

The Uvalde NFH Annual Fishing Derby is similar to the Fourth of July or Christmas. It's a time for having fun and expecting a big surprise! A few weeks before June, plans were in the works to get one of the ponds ready for kids to come enjoy a few hours at the facility. With them brought hopes of catching the biggest fish ever. The amazement in a child's eyes when they saw their catch at the end of their pole, the smiles, laughter and excitement made it all worthwhile. The importance of protecting our natural resources was emphasized by fishery staff in hopes that the kids fishing today will one day return with their kids and do the same.



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A young girl waiting for the big fish to bite

Sandra Castaneda, Uvalde NFH

Tishomingo NFH Participates in Several Fishing Derbies

In addition to hosting their 17th annual fishing derby in June, the Tishomingo NFH also transported channel catfish for kids fishing derbies to the Fort Sill Military Base and the Broken Arrow Optimist Club in Oklahoma; the first fishing clinic at the Tishomingo NWR; and the inaugural fishing derby in Lubbock, Texas, which was sponsored by the 100 Black Men of West Texas and the Texas Game Wardens' Association. Fishing derbies provide a free fishing experience that teaches children about recreational fishing and why healthy aquatic ecosystems are important to people and the environment. The Tishomingo NFH is proud to work with partners sponsoring a growing number of outdoor events that provide America's youth the chance to connect with nature in such a positive way.

Ralph Simmons, Tishomingo NFH



A proud daughter shows her father catfish she caught at the annual Tishomingo NFH Fishing Derby

Trout Fishing is Hot in the Desert



Anglers line up at Lake Mohave's fishing piers to catch rainbow trout stocked by Willow Beach NFH

Willow Beach NFH stocks 12" rainbow trout into Lake Mohave 52 weeks a year. The trout provide outdoor recreational opportunity for the local and surrounding community, drawing anglers from up to 100 miles away. There has been a significant increase in angling, particularly from families with children, since completion of the Willow Beach Marina Renovation and the Hoover Dam Bypass. Providing an avenue for the public to connect with nature is paramount to supporting conservation and the mission of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

Kurt Eversman, Willow Beach NFH

Dexter NFHTC Assists Local Schools



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Staff at Dexter NFHTC provide equipment and technical assistance for use in environmental education

Dexter NFHTC research staff routinely assists local educators with environmental education and science based curriculums. Educational outreach targeting school-age children is important to help raise awareness about the threatened and endangered species and their habitats. These students learn about what is done at the Center and what they can do now and in the future to help protect our natural resources. To aide in peeking the youth's interest, Dexter NFHTC is able to provide direct support with supplies needed for specific classroom activities. For example, a 45 gallon salt-water aquarium complete with live sand, fish and invertebrates was purchased for the Dexter High School Science Classes. Dexter NFHTC staff completed the set up and the high school science teacher now uses this aquarium as a teaching aide to help motivate and excite her students about topics such as aquatic ecosystems and water quality.

Renne Martin, Dexter NFHTC

Hatchery Tours on the Rise at Tishomingo NFH

The Tishomingo NFH conducts about 50 scheduled hatchery tours per year, but this year it saw a 40% increase in visitation by academic/civic groups during the busy quarter. Besides welcoming many unscheduled visits during this period, the hatchery conducted first time tours for the Ichthyology Department of Fort Hays State University, the Herpetology class of Southeastern Oklahoma State University, the Trinity Lutheran Senior Citizens group, and a local Girl Scout troop. The Tishomingo NFH uses these tours to speak about the role that the Service and the hatchery play in species conservation and environmental stewardship.



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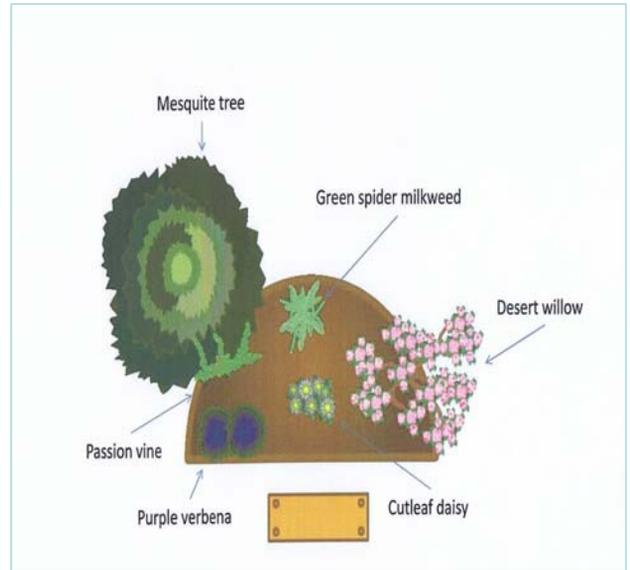
Local girl scouts check out the fish rearing raceways at Tishomingo NFH

Ralph Simmons, Tishomingo NFH

Pollinator Habitat in Development at Inks Dam NFH

Inks Dam NFH's 2011 YCC crew completed the plans for a pollinator habitat at the hatchery. The habitat plan includes a total of five pollinator beds that will contain native drought resistant plants, two short trails, hummingbird feeders, bee boxes, two benches and interpretive markers. Sign boards will be constructed to highlight important pollinator species such as the Rufous hummingbird.

The Intermediate Sanction Facility helped with clearing the immediate area of Ashe Juniper trees, prickly pear cacti, and mesquite trees. Plants are scheduled to be donated by the Highland Lakes master naturalists and master gardeners and the Texas Native Plant Society, and the project should be completed this fall.



A drawing of the pollinator habitat to be installed at Inks Dam NFH

Paul Dorman, Inks Dam NFH

YCC Crew Helps Out at Dexter NFHTC

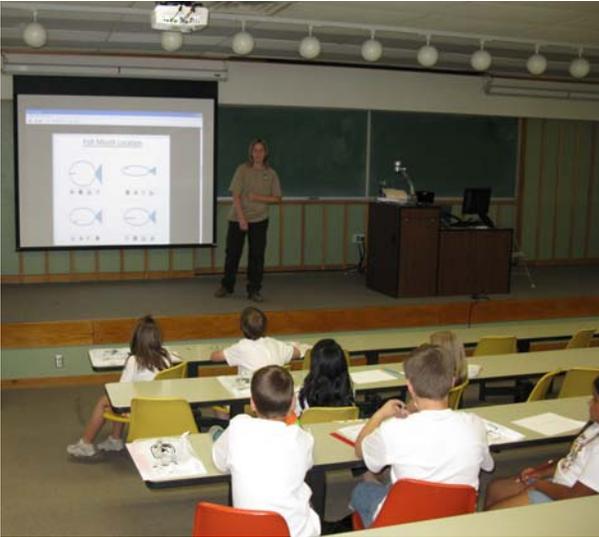


The 2011 Dexter NFHTC YCC crew

This summer Dexter NFHTC once again hosted a YCC program. This year's crew included five high school students from Dexter and Hagerman High Schools and a volunteer crew leader. The YCC participants performed a variety of maintenance tasks and fish culture and distribution activities. In addition to their work, they were provided with environmental education on a variety of topics each week. Specific work performed by the YCC crew included: cleaning up bird netting, assisting in pond cleaning, assembling office furniture, harvesting fish, stocking catfish, routine vehicle maintenance and grounds keeping activities.

Bill Williams, Dexter NFHTC

Dexter NFHTC Offers Biology Workshops for Students



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Fourth graders learn about fish anatomy

Dexter NFHTC staff participated in “Superday”, a series of workshops offered at Eastern New Mexico University-Roswell for gifted fourth through sixth grade students in the Roswell Independent School District. Staff conducted workshops for four groups of students throughout the day. Students enjoyed learning about the importance of genetic variation and the role that fish hatcheries play in the conservation of fishes. A hands-on activity was used to help students understand how extensive phenotypic variation could be generated using only the four DNA bases. Students were able to create a wide variety of “fish” by choosing strands of “DNA” with different base pair combinations to code for physical traits such as body shape, color, and tail shape. Students were eager to take part in discussions about the benefits of various physical traits in relation to differences in habitat and feeding behaviors of species of fish.

Morgan Robinson, Dexter NFHTC

Tishomingo NFH Collects Record Number of Turtle Eggs

Tishomingo NFH collected a record number of alligator snapping turtle eggs this spring. The hatchery has been harvesting and incubating turtle eggs since 2005 and although nesting numbers remained the same as in past years, there was a 36% increase in clutch size. This increase in clutch size produced a record of 735 turtle eggs, which was up by 33% compared to the previous record. To date, the eggs have been incubated just over one month and early candling suggests that the hatchery will have a record hatch of alligator snapping turtles this September. The juvenile turtles will be held on station for two to three years, and then used to fulfill recovery objectives in Oklahoma and Illinois.

Brian Fillmore, Tishomingo NFH



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A volunteer pulls an alligator snapping turtle egg from a nest

Leopard Darter Surveys Completed by Oklahoma FWCO

The Oklahoma FWCO in conjunction with the Tulsa Ecological Services office conducted their annual surveys for the threatened leopard darter during the summer. The area of focus is located on the Little River drainage system in southeastern Oklahoma and southwestern Arkansas. Darters, as well as all other fish numbers are relatively low compared to previous years due to the severe drought conditions in the region. Water levels are very low throughout all the rivers sampled, thereby reducing available habitat and effecting population size. A total of 20 sites were surveyed, including new sites that haven't been surveyed in several years. Preliminary results indicate that darter numbers for this summer were the second lowest in the 13 year history of this monitoring effort.



Biologists snorkeling for leopard darters

Clayton Porter, Oklahoma FWCO

Cub Scouts Visit Dexter NFHTC



Cub Scouts visit the Fish Health Lab at Dexter NFHTC

While monitoring the health and well-being of hatchery and wild fish populations is the primary focus of the work accomplished by Dexter NFHTC Fish Health Center staff, educating the public about the importance of the Service's Fish Health mission is also an important part of the job. Such was the case when Cub Scout Troop #214 came for a visit. The scouts received a tour that focused on fish culture and fish health. In the Fish Health Parasitology laboratory, the troop viewed several species of fish parasites. Troop #214 also observed samples being processed for whirling disease testing. As always, looking at tapeworms was considered the highlight of the Fish Health tour.

Teresa Lewis, Dexter NFHTC

Alligator Snapping Turtle Research



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Cameras record turtle behavior and feeding activity

Three Missouri State University students under the guidance of Dr. Day Ligon are researching aspects of alligator snapping turtle biology at the Tishomingo NFH and wild sites around Oklahoma. The students are researching niche partitioning, characterizing each species' diet from fecal samples, conducting feeding studies at the hatchery to observe foraging behavior and prey preferences, studying nesting ecology in a reintroduced population at the Tishomingo NWR, monitoring and measuring physical features of nests where eggs are allowed to incubate naturally, determining hatchling sex ratio by non-lethal surgical methods, studying nest predation by comparing predators' response to sensory cues in the wild and nesting behavior within the hatchery's captive population. All of these studies will assist the Service and its partners in conserving and managing populations of alligator snapping turtles.

Brian Fillmore, Tishomingo NFH

Aquatic Invasive Species Monitoring in Texas

Staff from the Texas FWCO and Aquatic Invasive Species program participated in a broad-scale invasive species survey in late June on the Gulf Coast of Texas. The Texas Rapid Assessment Team (TexRAT), led by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, consisted of over 50 biologists from universities and state and federal agencies who cataloged species of the Galveston Bay watershed during the week long sampling trip. Some of the invasive species collected included armored catfish, Asian grass carp, hydrilla, and channeled apple snails. This event is in its first year and will hopefully provide a baseline of information on invasive species distributions for future monitoring projects.



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An armored catfish collected during invasive species monitoring in Texas

Joshua Booker, Texas FWCO

Well Water Testing at San Marcos NFHTC

A 1,300-acre housing development and associated golf course are planned for construction near the San Marcos NFHTC. The development would encompass environmentally sensitive recharge and contributing zones of the Edwards Aquifer and would be less than a quarter mile away from the two wells that supply water to the hatchery. Staff have begun a cooperative study with Edwards Aquifer and Research Data Center and Texas State University to monitor the hatchery's wells and other nearby wells to collect baseline data before development proceeds. Changes in conductivity can be associated with rain events and may provide a timely "warning" of water quality problems that might be able to be avoided, or at least minimized.

Laura McCalla, San Marcos NFHTC



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Well water sampling device

Dexter NFHTC Helps Out with "Kiss The Critter" 2011



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Dexter NFHTC provided this years fish to kiss

Dexter NFHTC staff participated in the Dexter Elementary School's "Kiss the Critter" event in May. Each year, the entire school raises money by holding a penny drive. The funds raised are used towards getting a guest speaker who comes out in the fall semester. To make it fun, the class who raises the most pennies gets to silly string the class who raised the least amount of pennies. In addition, the teacher whose class raises the least amount of pennies has to kiss a fish. Dexter NFHTC provided the 2-pound fish that Principal King had to kiss.

Courtney Lane, Dexter NFHTC

Apache Trout Recovery Projects Show Positive Progress



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Crews use backpack electrofishing units to capture and remove brown trout from Apache trout recovery streams

While the 2011 Wallow Fire burned through over 535,000 acres of forest in Arizona, most of the occupied Apache trout streams were not located within the burn perimeter. Crews from the Arizona FWCO continued mechanical brown trout removal projects on three recovery streams located on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation. Results from this project, started in 2007, continue to be encouraging. In 2007, numbers of Apache trout captured in the three streams varied from 124 to 911. Now, four years after multiple-pass electrofishing to remove brown trout (a competitor and predator), numbers of Apache trout captured have skyrocketed to 1200 to 2700+ in these recovery streams, while brown trout numbers (and size of brown trout) have drastically declined.

Jeremy Voeltz, Arizona FWCO



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.

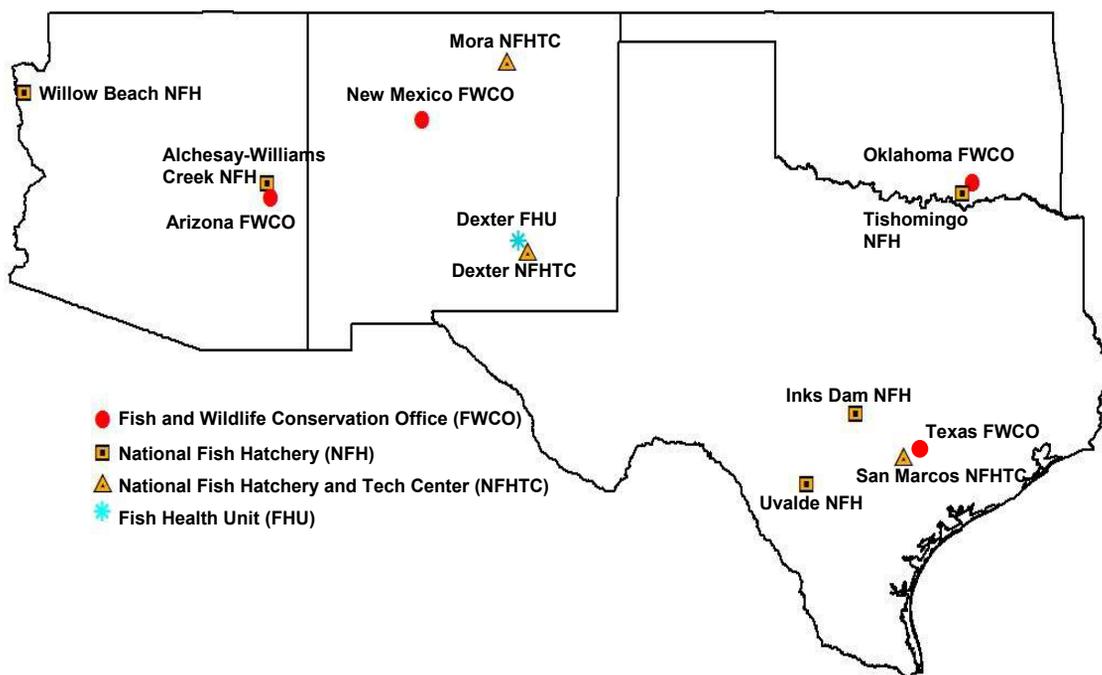
Fish Technology Centers

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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