



# Inks Dam National Fish Hatchery



## Monthly Accomplishments

## February 2015

### Fisheries Activities

All the FY14 production Channel catfish and brood stock have been stocked into their over-wintering ponds and readied for next year's stocking and spawning seasons. Both seasons usually begin in May but it still depends a great deal on the weather for the spawning season. Inks Dam NFH has received requests from the New Mexico FWCO for FY16 but not finalized.

Production numbers for the FY14 Channel catfish are 57,507 averaging 6.89 fish per pound (fpp) and 7.91 inches in total length. Earlier ponded fish from this year class are averaging 9.00 fpp and will be the fish ones stocked out for FY15 Tribal requests. A mortality was recorded for the month caused by avian predation. Migratory piscivorous birds have not decreased in abundance but staff has parked vehicles, and increased harassment measures to prevent losses.

Incoming water quality remains constant but water temperatures have fluctuated for the fourth straight month. Incoming dissolved oxygen averaged 9.48 ppm and an average temperature of 11.1°C by months end. Minimum temperatures averaged 5.25°C. Feeding again has, for all intents and purposes, stopped for month on all the catfish production.

Currently there are 3,948 FY13 channel catfish averaging 1.91 fpp and 12.07 inches in total

length. These fish will be used for future brood stock and future reimbursable fish. Additional production also includes 1,855 FY12 averaging 0.58 fpp and 18.03 inches in total length. These fish will be utilized for brood stock in FY15 and future Fort Hood Reimbursable contract fish. Two mortalities were recorded for the month and caused by avian predators.

The original (FY2010) Clear Creek gambusia refugium population has now been in recirculation tanks for two full years and approaching five in refugium. There are now only 17, originally, trapped fish. Three mortalities were recorded in the FY2010 population during the month. All mortalities were female again and no external parasites or disease signs were observed in any of the mortalities. Mortality now is more than likely due to normal life expectancy.

The FY14 Clear Creek gambusia currently in isolation now number 154 fish. Two female mortalities occurred during the month. The Asian Tapeworm treatment was conducted on the control population on February 16<sup>th</sup> and no complications were observed during the entire 24 hour treatment. The second treatment for Asian Tapeworm will occur on March 3<sup>rd</sup> which is under the twenty-one day recommendation for the second treatment. These fish have been on station for almost 180 days.

Inks Dam NFH had several unexpected but pleasant visitors during the month of February. Early in the month Inks Dam NFH finally has some newly birthed Clear Creek gambusia. This is the first offspring from captive Clear Creek gambusia in five years! We now have a total of six offspring with many other females looking like we may have more, soon.



At just 1mm in length at birth it's difficult to see the young gambusia. Trying to get all six in one picture was impossible but we do have six!

Last but not least, the National Monarch Conservation Coordinator, Donita Cotter, and Julie McIntyre, Pollinator Coordinator/Monarch Lead (R2) visited while on their way to attend a "Monarch Conservation Meeting". They visited Inks Dam NFH to see monarch habitat and were surprised to see a good representation of the local, science-based citizen organizations that showed up to demonstrate support and discuss the work they have already undertaken for this project.



Pictured left to right; George Brugnoli, President of Friends of Inks Lake State Park; Billy Hutson, Chairman of the Board and current President of the Upper Highland Lakes Nature Center; Julie McIntyre and Donita Cotter, USFWS; Sondra Fox, local chapter of the Highland Lakes Master Naturalists; Fred Zagst, local chapter of Texas Native Plant Society and Phil Wyde, Friends of Inks Dam NFH.

A total of 218 FY15 Clear Creek gambusia were trapped and brought back to Inks Dam NFH on February 5, 2015. All of these fish were stocked into tanks at required density levels and been allowed to acclimate to their aquaria. By months end these fish were acclimating and eating a variety of commercial feed very well. A total of six mortalities occurred during the month. They will receive their first Asian Tapeworm treatment in early March with a second follow up treatment before the end of March and the 21-day recommendation.

On February 12, 2015, staff observed a female that appeared to be in distress until it was noticed that the gravid female was trying to give birth. The female was separated and 24 hours later had three stillborn offspring. Later that day, another gravid female produced six offspring; one was eaten by the female but five survived. Four days later another female produced three offspring but two were stillborn. Inks Dam NFH now has a total of six captive born Clear Creek gambusia for the first time in five years. The success is primarily because of the new biologist position and observations made while working with those fish more closely than before.

## Personnel

Jerry Simmons and Scott Walker both completed certification for Heavy Equipment training. Many "thanks" goes out to Cixto Saucedo and the Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge for training our new staff. Jerry Crouch has completed all the FBMS training for Fleet Management and completed the "hands-on" portion of Industrial

Cart for Heavy Equipment training with Scott and Jerry Simmons.

In February, facility staff once again worked with the Leander Independent School District (LISD) for their COOL Week Program. Out of the last ten years, Inks Dam NFH has worked with LISD for nine of those years and was one of 138 businesses and departments placing 371 students in career opportunities. "COOL" stands for Career Opportunities On Location. It provides High School seniors an opportunity to work with businesses or organizations that they will be pursuing in the future for a career.

During the week of February 2nd Madison White, a senior at Cedar Park High School, started her "Cool Week" at Inks Dam NFH. Ms. White assisted Inks Dam staff with feeding fish, performing water quality analyses, and monitoring hydrological parameters in both channel catfish ponds and Clear Creek gambusia aquaria. At the end of her stay, Ms. White participated in a mock interview for a Fish and Wildlife Biologist position.

## Maintenance

Staff performed routine equipment and facility maintenance during the month. All of the facilities heavy equipment and vehicles has been serviced and repaired. Repairs were completed on bathroom floor in Residence #73. This project required pulling up the old tile, cabinet, toilet and bracing the floor joists to make the necessary repairs. The



An incoming water line where for some reason new pipe was spliced into new pipe and the couplers failed. These pipes (pictured above) are 12 inch lines that fed five ponds but 8 inch pipe was used for eight ponds in a prior repair. Note the old pipe still left in ground.

project looks very good and was finished in four days.

Hatchery staff started a new repair, late in the month, on another incoming water line break. This is incoming water line, completed in 2010, and affects five ponds but only three of those are currently in production. This break occurred at a location where new pipe had to be spliced into new pipe and the couplers had failed. Staff is quickly becoming experts at repairing pipe and some rumors of working for the oil and gas industry has started to occur.

A drain line break was repaired after obtaining 16 inch couplers needed to replace a bell end that had been push on too hard and split when it was installed.



Completed repairs on the 16 inch drain line. Industry experts suggest that when it was installed it was pushed on too hard with a backhoe and split the bell end. When the incoming water line broke that serviced the eight ponds feeding into to this line, it filled it completely, and showed us where it leaked.

Weather has still prevented much of the work needed on the levees where the pipe lines damaged them, but repairs should occur in March, weather and pipe lines permitting.

## Visitors, Education and Outreach

Inks Dam NFH had a total of 153 visitors for the month of February. Numerous people were here to hike on the trails and/or birding activities.

During the warmer days many people came to fish for the White bass that have not started to run yet because of the inconsistent weather. The Friends of Inks Dam NFH (FOIDNFH) and other volunteers had a total of 31.5 hours for the month of February. The FOIDNFH membership created a pictorial board in the



The FOIDNFH created a pictorial board showing some of the species visitors don't readily get to see or some of the tasks we accomplish only during certain times of the year. The board is currently a work in progress but it will assist in outreach and education to the public.

Holding House for visitors to see some of the things we do and work with. The pictures answer some of the more common questions we get from visitors during the "off-season" when we aren't doing things like spawning catfish or harvesting ponds. Although not completed and probably never will be, as quickly as things change, it will become an excellent outreach tool that helps folks understand what it is we and the USFWS do.

U.S. Department of the Interior  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Southwest Region  
Fisheries and Aquatic Conservation



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## Current staff members

Paul Dorman .....	Project Leader
Scott Walker .....	Assistant Project Leader
Vacant .....	Environmental Education Specialist
Julie Burks.....	Administrative Technician
Gregory Landry .....	Fisheries Biologist
Vacant .....	Fisheries Biologist
Vacant .....	Animal Caretaker (Term)
Larry Guerro .....	Motor Vehicle Operator
Jerry Simmons .....	Maintenance Worker
Jerry Crouch .....	Maintenance Worker