New Mexico Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office

Monthly Accomplishments — August 2013

Fisheries Activities

In cooperation with Pueblo of Isleta and Pueblo of Sandia, staff completed monthly monitoring for the Rio Grande silvery minnow (RGSM) within the Middle Rio Grande, Pueblo of Isleta, and Pueblo of Sandia. Monitoring efforts are to determine presence/absence of visible implant elastomer tagged fish in relation to augmentation and research efforts.

With the assistance of personnel from the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE), Bureau of Reclamation, Ecological Services, and the Regional Office, staff completed salvage efforts for the RGSM on 36.5 unique river miles of the Rio Grande since efforts began in June 2013. Salvage efforts were in the San Acacia Reach (26.9 river miles) at the southern boundary of the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and moved upstream to south of Socorro. During this time, efforts were also made in the Isleta Reach (9.7 river miles) between the Peralta Wasteway to near Tome, New Mexico. A total of 1,141 adult RGSM (>30mm, 942 San Acacia Reach, 199 Isleta Reach) were collected from isolated pools, transported, and released in a flowing portion of the Rio Grande below San Acacia Diversion Dam or Isleta Diversion Dam, depending on the reach. Of the 1,492 RGSM observed (including mortalities) in 2013, 1,226 (82.2%) have been visible implant elastomer (VIE) marked, indicating that they are hatchery-released individuals from last fall (2012). Within the Isleta Reach, a single fish was found that was hatchery-released from fall 2011. This is the first time a second-year hatchery fish has been collected during salvage efforts. Please note that this is provisional data and all numbers are considered approximate until the final report is completed. Salvage efforts are ongoing.

With the assistance of New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF), staff completed an endangered species monitoring and nonnative fish control trip on the Hogback Diversion to Shiprock, New Mexico reach of the San Juan River. This was the last of three trips to the Hogback to Shiprock reach. Nonnative fish removal is one management tool used by the San Juan River Basin Recovery Implementation Program (SJRIP) for the recovery of the endangered Colorado pikeminnow and razorback sucker.

Staff assisted the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF) and the Pueblo of Zuni with annual Zuni bluehead sucker monitoring. During this time, staff also provided an electrofishing demonstration to Zuni Pueblo students.

With the assistance of NMDGF and the U.S. Forest Service, staff completed a habitat and fish presence/absence survey on Willow Creek, Gila National Forest. Habitat conditions within the drainage were negatively impacted from the Whitewater-Baldy Complex fire in 2012 resulting in the collection of only two German brown trout and no Gila trout. The documented low fish abundances prompted discussion with U.S Forest Service regarding the installation of a barrier on Willow Creek for Gila trout conservation.

Staff assisted the NMDGF with quarterly fish community monitoring at seven sites in the Canadian River east of Tucumcari, New Mexico. Data from these monitoring efforts are used to determine the status of the fish community, with

emphasis on the federally listed Arkansas River shiner.

Meeting and Trainings

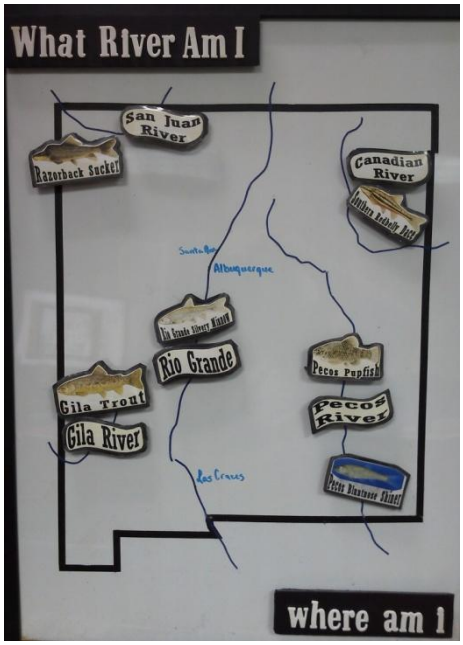
The NMFWCO hosted the Gila Trout and Chihuahua Chub Recovery Team meeting. Findings from post-fire sampling on previously occupied streams impacted by the Whitewater-Baldy complex fire of 2012 and status updates of evacuated Gila trout impacted by the Silver Fire of 2013 were discussed. Additional topics included remaining streams needing assessment (occupied and unoccupied), genetic status of remnant populations, and restoration schedules and needs. Mora National Fish Hatchery (NFH) provided updates on Gila trout currently held by the hatchery. Gila trout from all five lineages are now represented at the hatchery with >90% survival of wild fish. The Recovery Team identified needed actions for Gila trout streams, captive populations, nonnative streams, and recreational fisheries.

The NMFWCO hosted the RGSM Captive Propagation and Genetics Workgroup bi-annual meeting. Topics of discussion included station updates, fish tagging schedules, stocking dates, and fish health sampling for 2013. In the fall of 2013, Rio Grande silvery minnow will be stocked in the Angostura Reach of the Middle Rio Grande. This stocking follows a five-year moratorium to study the effects of no population augmentation.

Staff participated in the quarterly meeting of the Southwest Tribal Fisheries Commission held at the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Education and Outreach

Staff participated in the Santa Ana Environmental Fair hosted by the Pueblo of Santa Ana. Approximately 225 people attended the fair. The NMFWCO booth consisted of two display aquariums with Rio Grande fish (i.e. RGSM, red shiner, and flathead chub), interactive activities, and handouts (pamphlets and coloring books). Staff used activities such as "What River Am I" and "Make a Fish" to engage and interact with the public.



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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
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Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Conservation

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Current staff members

Jim Brooks	Project Leader
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Chris Kitcheyan	Supervisory Fish Biologist
Weston Furr	Fish Biologist
Thomas Archdeacon	Fish Biologist
Dustin Myers	Fish Biologist
Angela Palacios James	Fish Biologist
Bobby Duran	Fish Biologist
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