



Tishomingo National Fish Hatchery Monthly Accomplishment Journal



Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management



Paddlefish stocking began in mid-August when the paddlefish were about 13 – 14 inches in length and feeding well on commercial feed. Before stocking began, each paddlefish had to be tagged with a coded wire tag. These 2012 year class paddlefish were stocked in Lake Eufaula in an effort to restore them to their native range above impoundments on the Arkansas River.

Tagging paddlefish prior to stocking.

Staff from Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) visited the hatchery to implant sonic transmitters in 20 paddlefish to be stocked in Grand Lake. A veterinarian from Oklahoma

State University performed the procedure to implant the transmitter using a small incision in the abdominal area of each anesthetized paddlefish. After the implant, each fish was watched carefully in a fresh water tank to be sure there were no problems coming out of the anesthetic. In three weeks, the paddlefish, the youngest ODWC has ever implanted with transmitters, were transported for stocking in Grand Lake to begin a study on their migration habits.

**(CSF 5.2.1;
CSF 5.1.2)**



Implanting paddlefish with sonic transmitter.

Harvesting channel catfish for delivery to Fort Sill Military Base.



Channel catfish were delivered to Fort Sill Military Base, completing the reimbursable agreement for the 2012 fiscal year. Four thousand catfish, 10-14-inches in length, met the agreement specification for this final delivery of fish.

(CSF 5.2.1; CSF 15.4)

The 2012 year class alligator snapping turtles began hatching August 3rd, after 87 days of incubation. Weights and measurements to indicate a satisfactory growth rate are started after the yolk sac is absorbed. The hatching should continue into early September. As of August 27th, Tishomingo NFH has 492 alligator snapping turtle hatchlings. **(CSF 5.2.1)**



Alligator snapping turtle hatchling with yolk sac.

Differences in coloration of alligator snapping turtle hatchlings.



Cooperation with Native Americans

Channel catfish were distributed to the Seminole tribe of Oklahoma for stocking on tribal trust lands. In addition, channel catfish were transported to a new outdoor classroom in Caddo County, Oklahoma. (CSF 5.2.1; CSF 18.1)



Seminole staff assists in channel catfish stocking on their tribal land.

Partnerships and Accountability with Leadership in Science and Technology

Tishomingo NFH had the honor of welcoming Assistant Secretary of the Interior, Anne Castle, and the Deputy Regional Director, Joy Nicholopoulos, for a brief tour in September. Visitors from The Nature Conservancy, National Park Service, USGS, and the Chickasaw Tribe joined these dignitaries in touring. They got to view the historical beauty of Pennington Creek, see 2012 year



class paddlefish, and compare an alligator snapping turtle hatchling to a 50-pound adult alligator snapping turtle. As they were viewing the 2012 year class alligator gar, weather cooperated and treated them to a sudden Oklahoma thunderstorm. The visit was wonderful and appreciated by our staff. Assistant Secretary Castle was in the area to plant a tree at the newly-acquired Nature Conservancy Preserve named Oka'Yanahli. (CSF 18.1.12; CSF 15.4.8)

Brian Fillmore, Tishomingo NFH Biologist, explains life history of alligator snapping turtle.

Hatchery staff discussing hatchery operations with Assistant Secretary Anne Castle.



Outreach

The Oklahoma Herpetological Society held their monthly meeting travelling to the Tishomingo NFH for a tour of the hatchery, with emphasis on the alligator snapping turtle program. The members were amazed to see the square, rectangular, and circular fiberglass tanks housing the turtles with the unique air and water flow system in the culture building. In addition, year classes from 2004 through 2012 were available for viewing in fiberglass tanks, creating an educational focal point comparing age and size development. Following the hatchery tour, members of the Herpetological Society seined Pennington Creek for unusual aquatic species. Everyone specifically enjoys this tour and requests repeat visits each year in order to view the alligator snapping turtle, designated a species of concern in Oklahoma. **(CSF 15.4.8)**



Seaside alder tree grows well alongside Pennington Creek, one of the few locations in the country conducive to their growth.

County students view the alligator gar and alligator snapping turtles.



In September, the Tishomingo NFH participated in the Johnston County Fair, which lasted 3 days. On

Friday, the public schools in Tishomingo and the surrounding counties brought their students to the fair. We were able to showcase the alligator gar and alligator snapping turtle juvenile and hatchlings in aquaria for all the visitors to see. Outreach materials were also given to the students such as pencils, notepads, and tattoos stating “It’s Cool to Care”. [\(CSF 15.4.8\)](#)

Staff from the Tishomingo NFH were invited to present an educational program in September to the Johnston County 4-H Sixth Grade Club. A presentation on the life cycle of the paddlefish and the alligator snapping turtle was given to these students by using actual photos of the different stages and narrative explaining each stage. Following the presentation, those who could answer questions correctly were presented a token prize of a paddlefish or alligator snapping turtle stress ball.

[\(CSF 15.4.8\)](#)



In an effort to foster cooperative projects with the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC), the Tishomingo NFH participated in the ODWC 7th Annual Wildlife Expo, sponsored entirely by ODWC and several business partners. The Expo covers a three-day period with spectacular hands-on events for children and adults in both outdoor and indoor venues. The free event attracted an estimated 42,000 people, with Friday's designated school attendance bringing 16,000 young people on that day alone. Hatchery staff set up an educational booth, using aquaria for live alligator snapping turtles, a common snapping turtle, red ear slider turtle, and mud turtle for comparison, and an alligator gar to catch the curiosity of visitors. A panoramic pictorial display of hatchery activities and species served as the backdrop for our booth to educate the public on the purpose and mission of a federal fish hatchery – that of conserving natural resources and protecting the environment, as well as the President's initiative of getting young people outdoors. The huge success of the Expo is a worthwhile outreach event that the hatchery will continue supporting in future years. **(CSF 15.4.8)**

Booth for Tishomingo NFH attracts people anxious to view the alligator gar and alligator snapping turtles.



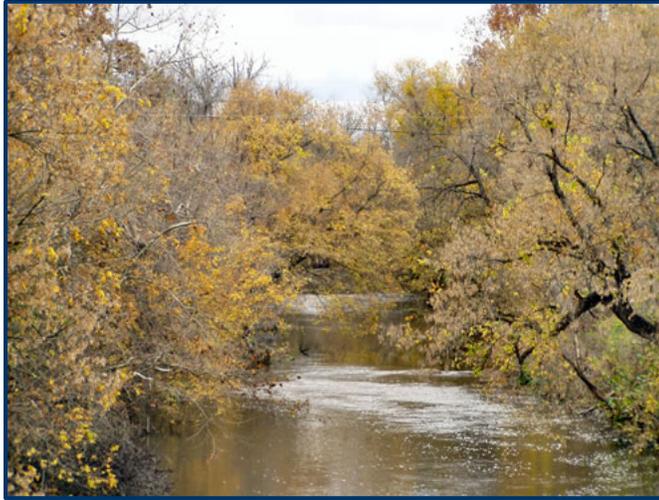
A view of half of the crowd present at the EXPO 2012.

Facilities

A Trail Survey at Tishomingo NFH was conducted by a couple of Student Conservation Association resource assistants. These volunteers used GPS instruments to map our Nature Trail, inputting coordinates into the GPS as they went. All of this data will be presented to the National Business Center in Denver for production of finished maps. **(CSF 52.1.2)**



View of Nature Trail.



Fall on Pennington Creek alongside Nature Trail.

Tishomingo NFH Staff



Kerry Graves ~~~~~Project Leader
Ralph Simmons ~~~~~ Assistant Project Leader
Mary Davis ~~~~~Administrative Technician
Brian Fillmore ~~~~~ Fishery Biologist
Wayne Walker ~~~~~ Maintenance Worker
Matt Cooper ~~~~~ Maintenance Worker
Brian Wheat ~~~~~Maintenance Helper
Kyle Wisener ~~~~~STEP Animal Caretaker

**U.S. Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**

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