



Uvalde National Fish Hatchery

Monthly Activity Report

July 2016



Staff

Project Leader • Patricia Duncan

Fish Biologist • Valentin Cantu

Engineering Equipment Operator • Cirilo Alonzo

Maintenance Worker • Rene Guerra

Administrative Assistant • Mark Dietrich

CDP Intern • Tamika Wright

YCC • Vincent Diaz, Moira McDowell

temperature in RGSM ponds. As with last year, the fish grown out at Uvalde NFH will augment the numbers released to the Rio Grande in Texas in recovery efforts.

Dr. Jeff Hutchison from San Marcos visited Uvalde and provided information and background for Texas wild rice stocks and cultivation. New tanks recently wired for operation with Texas wild rice, are being equipped with pumps which will provide increased capacity for wild rice cultivation.

Workforce Management

Partnerships and Accountability

As identified in approved Recovery Plans, refugia efforts continued for the Texas Wild Rice, Fountain Darter, Comanche Springs Pupfish, Devils River Minnow, and San Marcos salamander in July.

The station continued to maintain communications with the San Marcos Aquatic Resource Center (SMARC) for existing and upcoming refugia activities of threatened and endangered species native to the Edwards Aquifer system.

In collaboration with the Southwestern Native Aquatic Resources and Recovery Center (SNARRC) and other partners, Uvalde NFH also began culture of Rio Grande silvery minnow (RGSM) again in FY2016. During July, the 140,000 RGSM stocked into four ponds at Uvalde NFH in May continued to thrive and grow. On July 13, staff participated in a RGSM conference call for updates from partners on progress in the grow out of RGSM at each facility. Each member of the group employed HOBO data loggers in July to monitor hourly

In July, our Student Conservation Association (SCA) intern, Tamika Wright, traveled to Albuquerque to participate in the region wide meeting for interns held for Region 2 USFWS office. While there Tamika provided a presentation on her project investigating different types of solutions for the germination of Texas wild rice. She was able to learn more about Region 2, the USFWS and meet staff and other interns throughout the area.

The Uvalde National Fish Hatchery (UNFH) continued to host the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) program in July 2016. The YCC program provides opportunities to young students on a variety of projects at the UNFH, to learn more about potential career positions within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This month, Moira McDowell, a Utopia High School Jr. and Vinny Diaz, a Sabinal High School Jr. assisted biologists with daily refugia activities including assisting with the control of aquatic nuisance algae and macrophytes within refugia and display tank

systems and setting up tank systems for Comanche Springs Pupfish reproduction trials.



Moira McDowell YCC on the top left and Vinny Diaz YCC on the bottom right cleaning and preparing for the hauling of catfish.

The YCC students also assisted with disinfecting equipment on the fish hauling truck as a biosecurity measure to prevent the spread of disease from one body of water to the next.



Tamika Wright SCA, Moira McDowell YCC and Vinny Diaz YCC, assist with moving channel catfish for derby

In July, our two area Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) members continued to assist with a variety of projects at Uvalde NFH. They assisted with care and feeding of channel catfish, pond vegetation removal, raceway management and other activities. The YCC students assisted with channel catfish harvest from ponds and later care in raceways. They also learned about pond production of Comanche Springs Pupfish and refugia culture of other species in the tank house.

In addition, they assisted with collecting catfish eggs from a broodstock pond and with a tour of the UNFH. Maintenance personnel were assisted with hatchery ground maintenance projects which included picking up trash along the property fence line and within hatchery grounds. The YCC members also assisted maintenance personnel with hatchery facility maintenance projects which included replacing light bulbs and other indoor custodial duties.

Another term fish biologist, GS 7-9 was selected in July for Uvalde NFH to work primarily with Rio Grande silvery minnow production along with other endangered species. The new staff member will report to work in mid August.

Aquatic Species Activities

Studies were conducted on the germination rates of wild rice seeds in different solutions by Tamika Wright as her Student Conservation Association intern project. Her study looked at the effectiveness of different protocols to produce successful germination of new and older stored Texas wild rice seeds. In August, her study will be completed at Uvalde and data collection and analysis will be performed.



Tamika Wright works with Texas wild rice germination trials

In July 2016, Valentin Cantu began using a communal spawning method to trigger reproduction in the federally listed San Marcos salamander. The method was first successfully (oviposition events occurred 70% of the time) used at San Marcos Aquatic Resource Center (SMARC) to trigger reproduction with another closely related plethodontid salamander (Barton Springs salamander). The procedure involves separating males and females for about two months, combining them for two weeks to initiate courtship behavior, and then separating the males from the females to minimize disturbance to encourage the oviposition of eggs. This is the first attempt to reproduce San Marcos salamanders at the UNFH.

Propagation efforts continued with the Devils River minnow. Tank rearing of various offspring from different group spawning of Devils River minnow continued in refugia tanks.

Final repairs and equipment replacements were completed in July for experimental aquaria

systems selected for pupfish reproductive studies.

Temperatures continued to warm in July. Pond water temperatures ranged from 23.4°C to 32.4 °C. Young of the year channel catfish continued to thrive with an increase in feeding due to the increasing seasonal temperatures.

Pond spawning of channel catfish continued into July. Channel catfish fry from spawns in June were stocked into station pond 38 during the month of July. Rearing of channel catfish fry in raceways in the tank house continued for fish produced from later pond egg collections which were hatched in July.

Facility Maintenance

On July 7, a safety inspection was conducted for the Uvalde NFH by Dr. Jeff Hutchinson from the San Marcos Aquatic Resource Center. Only minor issues were identified which are being corrected as soon as possible.

On July 12, a road inspection was conducted at Uvalde NFH by representatives from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Regional Transportation Program Coordinator and Mr. Jae Ahn from R2 regional office. The purpose of the visit was to scope the condition of existing public use roads and parking lots.

In July, installation of an additional water inlet to pond 48 across the pond from the kettle, was completed. This will help provide better water quality in this pond.

Materials for construction of a roof over the existing deck for the cedar trailer were obtained. Additional supplies were obtained to make a concrete driveway adjacent to the trailer. Work also began on this project by UNFH staff.

Staff initiated work on obtaining various valves and pipe needed for repairs throughout the

Uvalde NFH pond system. Leaking or poorly operating valves in the system will be replaced with new valves to improve the efficiency of water flow in the pond system. In July, numerous loads of gravel were obtained, which will be used to improve roads around the ponds on the station.

Several pieces of equipment were sent for repair in July. These include the crane, large tractor and mower.

The renewal of the application for aquaculture water effluent discharge was completed. This renewal is due every three years with the state of Texas.

Outreach



Rene Guerra, UNFH at top left is releasing catfish from the fish hauling truck. Chris Stautzenberger, TPWD on the right is helping to support the catfish discharge pipe.

Uvalde NFH contributed to another successful fishing derby in Crystal City at Popeye Lake held on July 16. Chris Stautzenberger, a game warden with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) organized the fish derby in Crystal City and reported that it was very

successful this year. To make this possible, on July 13th, hatchery staff delivered 1,609 channel catfish averaging 0.70 lbs. each, to Popeye Lake in Crystal City, Texas for this kid's fishing event. Chris Stautzenberger has participated in numerous kid fishing derbies held at UNFH.

Popeye Lake also provides continuing recreational fishing opportunities for the public since it is open for fishing year round. Local residents will be able to continue fishing for the stocked catfish in Popeye Lake long after the fishing derby.

Pat Duncan provided a tour of Uvalde NFH for Dr. Elise Kirchoff, a member of the Native Plant Society member. During the visit, plans were discussed for native plant landscaping at Uvalde NFH and future collaborative projects with the Native Plant Society.

Five separate tours of the Uvalde NFH were provided to visitors including Boy Scout troops and groups of local residents.

Pat Duncan attended the monthly Uvalde Tourism Council meeting on July 26.

Visitors

Uvalde NFH hosted a total of 41 visitors during the month of July.

Weather

Temperatures continued to warm in July with a maximum temperature in Uvalde of 102°F. Temperatures ranged in Uvalde from a low of 69°F to a high of 102°F with an average temperature of 85°F in the month of June. There was 1.04 inches of measured rainfall in Uvalde in July.

Upcoming Events

Presentation at Uvalde Library on aquatic conservation of fish and amphibians on August 17.

Presentation on aquatic conservation and threatened and endangered species for the Native Plant Society on September 12.

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