



# Uvalde National Fish Hatchery

## Monthly Activity Report

November 2013



### ***Uvalde National Fish Hatchery Staff***

*Project Leader – Grant Webber*

*Administrative Technician – Sandra Castaneda*

*Engineering Equipment Operator – Cirilo Alonzo*

*Maintenance Worker – Rene Guerra*

*Fish Biologist – Rick Echols*

*Animal Caretaker – Vacant*

### **Partnerships and Accountability**

As identified in approved Recovery Plans, refugia efforts continue for the Texas Wild-rice, Fountain Darter, Comanche Springs Pupfish, and San Marcos salamander. All species are currently thriving under hatchery conditions.



Uvalde NFH continues to transition to rearing efforts for the Edwards Aquifer system and other federally listed Texas endemic species. In an effort to make room for listed species intensive rearing activities in the station's

tankhouse. The raceways that were purchased by the San Juan River Recovery Implementation Program were disconnected from the tankhouse plumbing and moved outside. This provides easier access for the transfer trucks to pick up the tanks and frees up space in the tankhouse for other aquaculture activities. The station is in the process of setting up fiberglass tanks to receive Devil's River minnow (*Dionda diaboli*), which is endemic to Texas. The species is federally listed as threatened.

Efforts continue to set-up five rectangular raceways in the station's tankhouse for a Texas State University PhD student, who will be cooperatively conducting a study to determine optimal lighting for the endangered Texas Wild-rice. Rick and Grant met with the PhD student again this month to discuss specific tank set-up needs for the study.

### **Workforce Management**

Cirilo Alonzo and Rene Guerra spent two weeks at Dexter, NM, where they assisted the staff of Southwest Native Aquatic Resources and Recovery Center. The facility is in the process of building new one-acre aquaculture ponds. Although Cirilo and Rene both put in a tremendous effort working from sun-up to sun-

down, the work was not completed so they plan to return sometime after the holidays.

Sandra Castaneda attended Reimbursable Training at the Regional Office, Albuquerque, NM and one-day training on FBMS reporting at the San Marcos Aquatic Resource Center (SMARC). Grant Webber attended the Regional Office's quarterly safety teleconference. Rick Echols was approved to attend the Fisheries Academy training, which will be held in February at the National Conservation Training Center.

Ian Westmeyer completed his volunteering efforts with the hatchery this month. Although he indicated that he learned a lot and enjoyed his volunteering time at Uvalde NFH, he found it necessary to devote more time to his high school studies. Ian logged 21 hours for the month and 432 hours for the time he spent with us since late May. In that time, he became a valuable asset for assisting with the daily care and maintenance activities for Texas Wild rice, Fountain Darter, and San Marcos salamander. His assistance is very much appreciated and will be missed.

### **Additional Facility Activities**

Grant Webber continues to transition the hatchery computers to Windows 7. He has encountered some issues with computers recognizing printers and other devices but so far nothing that could not be fixed. The entire process should be complete by the end of December.



Fountain darter

Last year, Uvalde NFH captively spawned over 200 Fountain Darters from our wild caught Comal River strain. On November 14, 2013, Uvalde NFH transferred these individuals to SMARC. Tom Brandt, Jeff Hutchinson, and Scott Davis from SMARC took possession of these nearly year old fish. These fish will be used in a study to determine optimum rearing conditions and collect life history data. The ultimate goal is to gain a better understanding of the species so that it can be raised more successfully in the hatchery and to better understand its tolerances.

During the same trip, 35 endangered Texas wild-rice plants were transferred from the SMARC to Uvalde NFH. The plants were added to the existing stocks. The transferred plants had previously been collected as tillers from the San Marcos River in September and were held at SMARC in quarantine until they were established in pots and determined to be free of pathogens and any unwanted aquatic organisms.

### **Facility Maintenance**

The replacement commercial sprayer arrived in late November. It has a smaller capacity than its predecessor but is a very good sprayer and will meet our aquaculture spraying needs. It will soon be put to the test as a few hatchery ponds have experienced a filamentous algae bloom. The sprayer will also be used to control weeds throughout the hatchery grounds, which

have thrived as a result of some much needed rain.

## **Recycling Efforts**

Staff recycled 10 pounds of cardboard, 25 pounds of paper, 5 pounds of glass, 2 pounds of tin, and 15 pounds of plastic this month. Additionally, 6 computer back-up batteries were recycled.

## **Facility Visitors**

The hatchery was visited by 58 individuals this month for bird watching, tours, and other outdoor visitation activities. Among those that visited were a middle school group from Laredo, Texas and a senior citizen group from McAllen, Texas. The seniors had many questions which spurred a discussion around the worthiness of protecting and producing endangered species. Multiple individuals indicated that they would be interested in volunteering at the hatchery, if only they lived closer.

## **Weather**

November's air temperatures ranged from a low of 33°F to a high of 89°F. Although the official low on November 14<sup>th</sup> was 34°F, the date marks the first observed frost of the season. Overall, temperatures were near normal, but precipitation was above normal. Measurable rainfall occurred on 12 days in November with precipitation totaling 1.96 inches. According to The Weather Channel, the monthly precipitation average for Uvalde in November is 1.54 inches.