



# Uvalde National Fish Hatchery

## Monthly Activity Report

October 2013



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

*Project Leader – Grant Webber*

*Assistant Project Leader – Vacant*

*Administrative Technician – Sandra Castaneda*

*Engineering Equipment Operator – Cirilo Alonzo*

*Maintenance Worker – Rene Guerra*

*Fish Biologist – Rick Echols*

*Animal Caretaker – Vacant*

*Volunteer – Ian Westmeyer*

### **Partnerships and Accountability**

October 2013 marks the end of the Uvalde National Fish Hatchery's cooperative agreement with the San Juan River Recovery Implementation Program, as the last of our razorback sucker were stocked in the Animas and San Juan rivers in New Mexico. The first trip was scheduled to leave on October 1, but was temporarily interrupted by the government shutdown.



The Uvalde NFH requested a waiver for distributing the endangered razorback sucker to the San Juan River during the government shutdown. The waiver was approved on October 9<sup>th</sup> and staff was immediately called in to begin the razorback sucker distribution trips. Based on the size and number of fish, seven individual trucks delivered the fish over a 3 ½ week period. The efforts of the dedicated staff resulted in the last of the razorbacks being successfully stocked on October 28<sup>th</sup>. Uvalde NFH staff also had assistance from Valentin Cantu (San Marcos Aquatic Resource Center). We greatly appreciate Val's assistance in the delivery of these endangered fish.

River levels were above normal during the stocking season with ample surface water runoff. This buffered the usual cold water release from Navajo Dam. As a result, fish were released into the various stocking locations having water temperatures ranging from 8-12 degrees C. With the exception of the first two trips, the razorbacks were held by a block net for 24 hours by New Mexico Fish and Wildlife Coordination Office (NMFWCO) staff. The NMFWCO staff conducted the release of the fish. In total, 5,809 razorbacks were delivered totaling 10,893 lbs. Staff drove a total of 13,132 round trip miles to stock the razorback sucker into the various destination sites.

As identified in approved Recovery Plans, refugia efforts continue for the Texas wild-rice, fountain darter, Comanche Springs pupfish, and San Marcos salamander. Wild rice plants are continuing to respond favorably to increased light.

## Workforce Management

Like most Federal government facilities, Uvalde NFH was shut down and ceased normal operations on October 1<sup>st</sup> as a result of the government shut-down. Grant Webber was designated as the “excepted employee” and worked the weekdays taking daily water quality measurements, feeding fish, maintaining refugia species and other necessary duties to maintain the facility grounds and species. He also participated in daily conference calls to provide updates and reports to the personnel in the Regional Office. Cirilo Alonzo was called in to fill in for Grant on weekends. All other employees and volunteers were subject to the imposed furlough. The government shutdown caused the hatchery to miss the Carrizo Springs High School career fair and a Laredo Elementary School on-site tour of the facility.



Ian Westmeyer, a local home-schooled student, continued to volunteer at the hatchery. He logged 68 hours during the month of October. For the month, he concentrated on the general feeding and care of fountain darters and San Marcos salamanders. In addition, he made a trip with staff to Farmington, New Mexico to assist with the stocking of the razorback sucker.

He expressed an interest in seeing where the species naturally occur.

## Additional Facility Activities

Zooplankton is essential to provide dietary variation for fountain darters and San Marcos Salamanders. Zooplankton is produced in our hatchery ponds by simply fertilizing water in fishless ponds. An initial flush of usable zooplankton is typically followed by increasing numbers of predatory organisms. This cycle typically occurs over 4 to 6 weeks. Two ponds naturally developed into detrimental or non-nutritional zooplankton for the darters and salamanders and were subsequently drained. A new pond was started to continue a food supply of zooplankton.

Rick Echols and Grant Webber met with Michelle Crawford, a PhD student from Texas State University. She is proposing a study that would quantitatively determine the light requirements of endangered Texas wild rice. Requirements of her study were discussed including basic design, space requirements, and timing. Pending approval, she expects to get started sometime this coming winter. Ms. Crawford is also an instructor at Southwest Texas Junior College. This collaboration will provide important biological information to the Service, while also providing Ms. Crawford with suitable space, equipment, and assistance for her study.

## Facility Maintenance

Scheduled maintenance of tanks, pumps, and chillers for fountain darters and San Marcos Salamanders was accomplished during the month. Hard water build-up necessitates the need to acid wash the water lines, tanks, recirculation pumps, and chiller units.

Staff assisted the Southwestern Native Aquatic Resources and Recovery Center (SNARRC) with the transfer of various types of equipment that

were purchased by the San Juan RIP. The equipment is being transferred to other facilities to assist them in conducting their San Juan River RIP recovery activities.

## **Recycling Efforts**

Staff recycled 10 pounds of cardboard, 10 pounds of paper, 1 pound of glass, 1 pound of tin, and 10 pounds of plastic this month.

## **Facility Visitors**

The hatchery was visited by 5 individuals this month for bird watching, tours, and other outdoor visitation activities. This number was no doubt suppressed by the government shutdown during the first half of the month.

## **Weather**

October's air temperatures ranged from a low of 48°F to a high of 95°F. Overall, temperatures were near normal, but precipitation was above normal. Measurable rainfall occurred on 8 days in October with precipitation totaling 3.86 inches. According to The Weather Channel, the monthly precipitation average for Uvalde in October is 2.88 inches.