



Uvalde National Fish Hatchery

Monthly Activity Report

September 2016



Staff

Project Leader • Patricia Duncan

Fish Biologist • Valentin Cantu

Fish Biologist • Gregory Cottingham

Engineering Equipment Operator • Cirilo Alonzo

Maintenance Worker • Rene Guerra

Administrative Assistant • Mark Dietrich

Rio Grande. Staff also participated in the RGSM Genetics Management and Captive Propagation Work Group Meeting held on September 21.

Discussions on cross-programmatic plans to advance the conservation of the Yaqui catfish continued in September with partners in Refuges and the Fish and Wildlife Services. Plans are underway for future meetings and development of strategies for collaboration for conservation activities for the Yaqui catfish.

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 August.

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 continued culture of the Rio Grande silvery minnow (RGSM) in FY2016. During September, the 140,000 RGSM stocked into four ponds at Uvalde NFH in May, continued to thrive and grow. Staff participated in the monthly RGSM conference call on September 7. Sample groups of fish from each pond of RGSM were collected and transported to Dexter Fish Health Unit on September 13, for the health inspection required before the fish can be stocked in the

Workforce Management



Gregory Cottingham, fish biologist Uvalde NFH

In late September, Uvalde NFH welcomed Gregory Cottingham as a new addition to our staff in the position of fish biologist. Mr. Cottingham is a native of North Carolina who has worked with a number of different freshwater and marine aquatic species during his career. After obtaining a bachelor's degree from the University of North Carolina Wilmington, he gained experience with black sea bass and summer and southern flounder. In 2015, he completed his master's degree in fisheries and mariculture at Texas A&M Corpus Christi. Just before joining the team at Uvalde

NFH, he worked in the hatchery culture of Pacific White shrimp in Rockport, Texas.

Aquatic Species Activities



Bringing RGSM into the pond kettle for harvest



Cleaning debris out of nets with RGSM before stocking in raceways

September brought a close to the grow-out period for the RGSM that had been stocked as five day old fish in May at Uvalde NFH. During the last week of September the four RGSM ponds were harvested and fish stocked into concrete raceways for holding until stocking in

the Rio Grande. While being held in the raceways fish were also marked with tetracycline. This will provide a means to identify hatchery reared fish compared to wild fish when fish surveys of the Rio Grande are conducted in the future. 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. Harvest of the four ponds of RGSM resulted in a total weight of 506 pounds of fish which represents 121,056 fish. Stocking of these RGSM into the Rio Grande in Texas is planned for the week of October 17.

In September, reproductive trials continued with Comanche Springs pupfish held in the tank house in refugia. Research trials were initiated to determine the effectiveness of different spawning mats and also to develop methods to improve the hatching success of the eggs produced.

In September, the communal spawning method to trigger reproduction in the federally listed San Marcos salamander, continued with those housed at Uvalde NFH. 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.

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

Pond water temperatures ranged from 22.0°C to 30.5°C. Channel catfish fry from 2016 spring and summer production had all been stocked into pond 38 and continued to thrive and grow well.

Facility Maintenance

Work continued on the construction of a canopy over the existing deck for the cedar trailer by Uvalde NFH staff. The frame was also erected by Uvalde staff for construction of a canopy for the parking area next to the cedar trailer.

Staff continued 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

Progress was made in the acquisition of the water tank listed in the deferred maintenance program. A vendor was selected and the tank is scheduled to be delivered in late October.

Cirilo Alonzo and Jae Ahn continued work on the GPS guide to the station water system, including all water control valves and the pond water lines. This diagram and location guide should be of great value for the future operation and maintenance of the station water system.

Outreach

Pat Duncan was the invited speaker for the September meeting of the Uvalde chapter of the Native Plant Society at the El Progreso Memorial Library in Uvalde on September 6. Pat provided information on the various endangered species housed at the Uvalde National Fish Hatchery and on aquatic conservation. Discussions were held with Native Plant society members about future joint projects for native plants and pollinators for various areas at the Uvalde NFH. Further plans were made for the group to visit and discuss project development at the hatchery on October 4.

Weather

Temperatures were a bit cooler in September compared to August in Uvalde. Temperatures ranged in Uvalde from a low of 56°F to a high of 95°F with an average temperature of 85°F in the month of September. There were a total of 2.89 inches of measured rainfall in Uvalde in September.

Upcoming Events

Planning visit with Native Plant Society for pollinator gardens at Uvalde NFH on October 4.

Wage Grade Workshop from October 7-11 in Tuscon, Arizona for Cirilo Alonzo and Rene Guerra.

Stocking of Rio Grande silvery minnow in the Rio Grande is scheduled for the week of October 17.

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