

Warm Springs Fish Health Center

September-November 2010 Activity Report



Norm Heil, Project Leader

Brian Hickson, Fish Biologist

Devin Chappell, Fish Biologist

Allison Hernandez, Fish Biologist

Nikki Persons, Fish Biologist

(not pictured)



The Fish Health Center (FHC) is a component of the Warm Springs Regional Fisheries Center (RFC) and was developed to improve and enhance fisheries management. More specifically, the FHC provides a wide range of services from disease diagnostics to ploidy inspections.

Goals:

- Provide service, expertise and information that contributes to the health, survival, enhancement, restoration, and recovery of fish and other aquatic species in support of national and regional priorities.
- Supports hatchery operations to provide quality fish that contribute to ecosystem objectives.
- Assists in the development of management strategies through assessment and applied research to support the protection of wild stocks and recovery of threatened and endangered species.
- Educates key audiences about the elements of comprehensive fish health and its critical significance to healthy aquatic ecosystems.



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<http://www.fws.gov/warmsprings/FishHealth/index.html>



Triploid Grass Carp Program



Allison, inspector for the Triploid Grass Carp (TGC) program, traveled to Arkansas in October to conduct inspections for Nikki Persons. At the time, Arkansas was going through an extreme drought, and as pictured below, water levels around the state were very low.



Fish Health Diagnostics



Above: Brian collected fish in a UTV from the raceways for inspection. Left: FHC brings along a multitude of supplies and equipment to set up for doing inspections.



Several off-site fish health inspections were conducted by the FHC staff: Norm Heil, Brian Hickson, Devin Chappell and Allison Hernandez. Norm and Brian went to Chattahoochee NFH in September (above).



In October, Devin and Brian conducted inspections at Wolf Creek NFH in Kentucky and at Tellico, a Tennessee state hatchery. The waterfall (left) is nearby the Tellico hatchery.

Fish Health Diagnostics

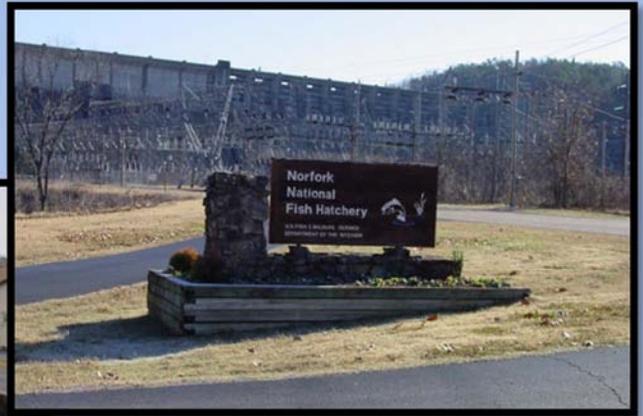
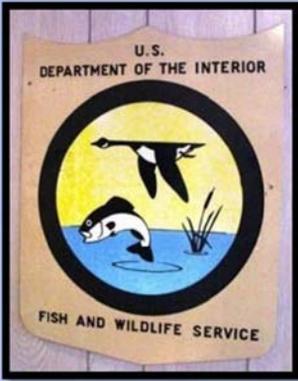


In November, Norm went to Erwin NFH in Tennessee for an inspection. Bill Wayman and Mike Hassett from the Fish Technology Center also went along to conduct cryo-preservation of Erwin's broodstock sperm. Above: hatchery staff collecting fish for inspection. Bottom right: waterfall near Erwin.



Fish Health Diagnostics

Norm and Devin went to Norfolk NFH in Arkansas in November to conduct an inspection. Nikki, who is normally stationed in Arkansas, met them to assist with the inspection. Parasite checks are performed on site. Kidney and spleen samples are taken for viral and bacterial testing.

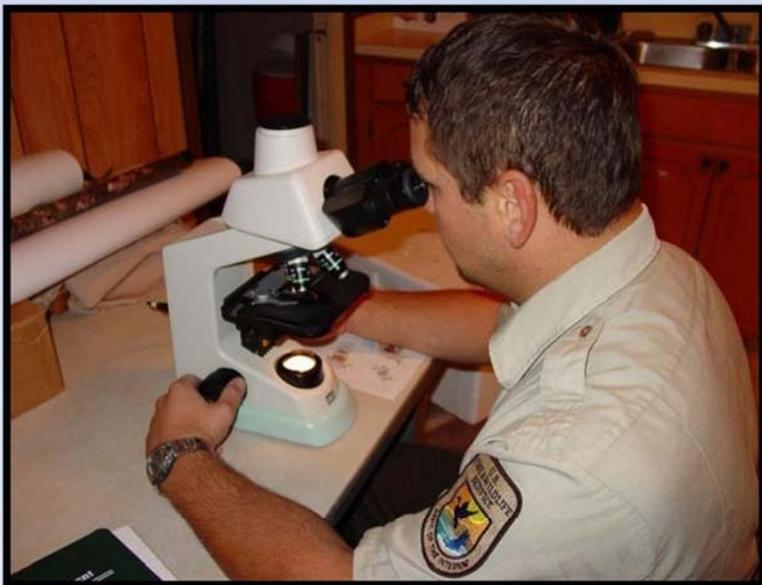


Above: Gut of a trout. Dark mass along backbone is the kidney.



Above: Norm and Nikki working up samples

Below: Devin performing parasite check under microscope (left) and collecting fish from the raceway (right).



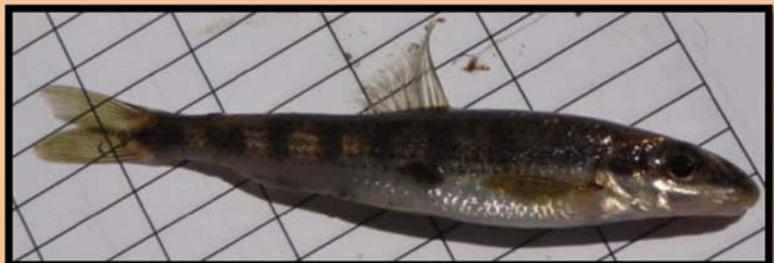
Wild Fish Survey



Devin and Allison traveled to the Paint Rock River in Northern Alabama to conduct wild fish sampling using backpack electro-shocking devices and to assist with Index of Biological Integrity (IBI) surveys. In September, they teamed up with the AL Department of Natural Resources, the US FWS Daphne Ecological Services Office, The Nature Conservancy and the Geological Survey of Alabama to make up five teams doing IBI surveys over several days.



Some of the less common species encountered included: the blotch side log perch and blotched chub (images below).



Wild Fish Survey



In October, Devin and Brian, while collecting for a wild fish case, also assisted Andy Hartzog (above on right), a Warm Springs hatchery staff, and Dr. Bill Birkhead (above center), a Columbus State University professor, on a bass hybridization study in the Chattahoochee River.



Wild Fish Survey



In November, Devin and Allison collaborated with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to assist with removing a sample of West Point Lake's fish from gill nets (as pictured above). Following GA DNR's data collection (pictured below), fish were used for inspection by WSFHC.





FHC Outreach Activities



2010 Warm Springs Regional Fisheries Center Open House

The Warm Springs RFC and Friends Group hosted the 2010 Open House on September. The Fish Health Center had their booth alongside the other groups from the RFC to educate the public about why and what they do as fish health biologists. Norm, Brian and Allison were stationed at the FHC booth, while Devin was displaying heavy machinery. The FHC booth featured fin clips, skin scrapes and gill clippings of fish, as well as pond water creatures to view under a microscope. There was also a whole dissection presented to the public to show the internal organs of the fish (image bottom right). The passport books, which helped people find their way to visit all 5 of the booths to get them stamped, were a big hit!

Outreach Activities



BiT Program

In November, Allison assisted Fish Biologist, Jaci Zelko, of the Warm Springs Regional Fisheries Center with the Biologist-in-Training program. Allison led the older group of home school children through an outdoor curriculum including wading in a stream, using a kick seine to find organisms, testing water pH, learning the parts of a fish, and learning about watersheds and riparian systems.

You can learn more about the program by visiting the site:
<http://www.fws.gov/southeast/fisheries/BiT/>

Outreach Activities



Boy Scout Event November 2011

Pictured at top from left to right, Mike Hassett, Allison, Rosla Plant, Cody Meshes, and Nicole Rankin. Rosla is the staff ranger at the Warm Springs Regional Fisheries Center, while Cody, Mike and Nicole are at the Warm Springs Fish Technology Center. The staff were asked to educate boy scout groups about opportunities available for them at the WSRFC. Image description clockwise from top right: Mike, Cody and Allison excited about showing animals in the touch tank; Boy Scout Encampment building in background, Allison trying the blind maze in foreground; Allison was responsible for educating about composting at the event. She used example containers: in left container; fresh green kitchen waste and brown yard waste, in right container; healthy soil/compost after breakdown of materials, and in foreground there are informative handouts and examples of badges that a composting project may be used to attain.