



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Alpena National Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office

April 2008 Station Activities

The Alpena National Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (NFWCO) is located in Alpena, Michigan and works to meet the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Fishery and Ecosystem goals within Lake Huron, Western Lake Erie, and connecting waters of the St. Marys River, St. Clair River, and Detroit River. Activities include Aquatic Species Conservation and Management, Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management, Aquatic Invasive Species, Cooperation with Native Americans, Leadership in Science and Technology, Partnerships and Accountability, Public Use, and Workforce Management – all of which are conducted in alignment with the Service Fisheries Program's Vision for the Future. The station is one of many field offices located within Region 3, the Midwest Region.

Aquatic Species Conservation and Management

Alpena NFWCO Project Leader Jerry McClain Retires

*Submitted by Aaron Woldt
Fishery Biologist*

On April 1, 2008 Project Leader Jerry McClain of the Alpena National Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (NFWCO) retired after 32 years with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. On April 5, over 40 family members, friends, and colleagues gathered at the Alpena Golf Course to celebrate Jerry's career. Guests enjoyed hors d'oeuvres, a buffet dinner, a PowerPoint presentation featuring pictures spanning Jerry's career, and several award presentations to commemorate Jerry's professional achievements and dedication to natural resource conservation.

Thanks to donations from staff, friends, and colleagues, Jerry and his wife



Alpena NFWCO Project Leader Jerry McClain speaks during his retirement party. Jerry retired in April after 32 years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Photo credit: Anjanette Bowen, USFWS.

Kathy were presented with a double matted and framed lake trout print by artist Joe Tomelleri and a gift certificate for TreeTops golf resort in Gaylord, Michigan. Now that he is retired, Jerry will be able to devote more time to the truly important things in life—walleye fishing, golfing, bow hunting, and mushroom picking.

Jerry, good luck in your retirement from the staff at the Alpena NFWCO.

Work accomplished under Project Leader McClain during his tenure at the Alpena NFWCO directly supported all eight priorities (“Partnerships and Accountability”, “Aquatic Species Conservation and Management”, “Aquatic Invasive Species”, “Public Use”, “Cooperation with Native Americans”, “Leadership in Science and Technology”, “Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management”, and “Workforce Management”) of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Partnerships and Accountability

Conservation Workshop Hosted By Congressman Candice Miller

*Submitted by Jim Boase and Rick Westerhof (Green Bay NFWCO)
Fishery Biologists*

On March 3, 2008, Congresswoman Candice Miller hosted a Conservation Workshop at the Huron Pointe Sportsmen’s Association in Lenox Township, Michigan. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) teamed up with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to present funding programs available to constituents in Miller’s district.

Jim Hudgins, state coordinator for Partners for Fish and Wildlife, presented the FWS habitat restoration and fisheries program overview. The habitat programs included Coastal, Partners and Fish Passage, while the fisheries program included native species restoration. Garry Lee, state conservationist for NRCS, presented the Wildlife Habitat Incentives and Environmental Quality Incentives programs. After the presentations, there was a question and answer session where experts from the Coastal Program (Bob Kavetsky, East Lansing, Ecological Services Office), Partners Program (Michelle Vander Haar, Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge) Fisheries Program (Jim Boase, Alpena National Fish and Wildlife Conservation



Congresswoman Candice Miller and Biologists from the Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service listen as Michigan DNR Biologist Ernie Kafcas presents information about federal funds used to restore St. Johns Marsh. Photo courtesy of Bob Kavetsky, USFWS.

Office) and Fish Passage (Rick Westerhof, Green Bay National Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office) were available to field questions. Other FWS staff in attendance included Jerry McClain, Alpena National Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office and Craig Czarnecki, East Lansing Ecological Services Office.

Jim did a great job with the overview presentation and the expert staff from both agencies did a wonderful job answering questions and explaining the

various missions of the Service. Most importantly, this forum provided and excellent opportunity for Service personnel to interact with more than 100 people that were in attendance and supports the Service's

Partnerships and Accountability policies. We hope to see some proposals from Congresswoman Miller's district for the Coastal, Partners and Fish Passage programs in the near future.



Jim Hudgins, State Coordinator for Partners for Fish and Wildlife presented the FWS's habitat restoration and fisheries program overview at Congresswoman Candice Miller's Conservation Workshop. Photo Courtesy of Bob Kavetsky, USFWS.

For further information regarding each of the above programs please contact:

Coastal Program, 517-351-5293 bob_kavetski@fws.gov

Partners Program, 989-777-5390 (ext 12) michelle_vanderharr@fws.gov

Fisheries Program, 248-894-7594 james_boase@fws.gov

Fish Passage Program, 989-356-3052 (ext 16) andrea_ania@fws.gov

Midwest Region Public Affairs, 612-713-5313, charles_traxler@fws.gov

DTE Harbor Beach Power Plant Improves Dock to Help USFWS

*Submitted by Aaron Woldt
Fishery Biologist*

In April 2008, staff of the Detroit Edison (DTE) Harbor Beach Power Plant in Harbor Beach, Michigan worked with Rooney Contracting to install tie-off pilings near the existing DTE coal dock to improve accessibility for the Service's lake trout stocking vessel, the *M/V Spencer F. Baird*. In past years, DTE allowed the Service to use its Harbor Beach dock as a platform for transferring hatchery reared, yearling lake trout to its previous stocking vessel, the *M/V Togue*. Due to the dock's configuration (several round mooring dolphins separated by large distances), Service vessel crew had difficulty safely securing the *M/V Togue* at the dock without the vessel pivoting on the round dolphin. The *M/V Baird*, which replaced the *M/V Togue* in 2007, presented an even bigger challenge to secure due to its longer length and greater width.

Fishery Biologist Aaron Woldt, Captain Mike Perry, and Seamen Fishermen David Bohn met with Jim Masterson of DTE at the November 2007 Lake Huron Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee meeting to discuss options for improving the dock for Service use. A subsequent on-site meeting in Harbor Beach with Mike Perry and David Bohn of the Service, Jim Masterson, Mike Trischler, Rocky Boynton, and Tom Wetzler of DTE, and Ken Merckel, Jack Noble, and Jerry Lawrence of the Michigan



Steelheaders Thumb Chapter yielded a solution. DTE agreed to drive a tie off piling 20 feet north and 20 feet south of the second dolphin to aid in securing the boat. Further, DTE

New tie off pilings (foreground) installed at Detroit Edison (DTE) Harbor Beach Power plant by Rooney Contracting to aid in securing stocking vessel M/V Spencer F. Baird. Photo credit: Ken Merckel.

agreed to weld new cleats on the existing dolphin and to widen the road at the base of the dolphin to make it easier for Service hatchery trucks to back-up to the vessel. DTE paid for all Service requested dock improvements.

Maintaining access to the DTE dock at Harbor Beach was critical to the Service's lake trout stocking efforts in southern Lake Huron, since no other dock with enough water depth and adjacent dock space to maneuver hatchery trucks exists between Alpena and Harbor Beach. In June 2008, the Service will deliver five vessel loads of hatchery lake trout (440,000 to 480,000 fish) from the Jordan River National Fish Hatchery to the Port Austin stocking site using the Harbor Beach Power Plant dock. These fish will directly support the lake trout rehabilitation efforts of the Service, the Lake Huron Technical Committee, and the Lake Huron Committee of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission.

Since the 1970's, the Service has contributed to multi-agency lake trout rehabilitation efforts in the Great Lakes by planting hatchery reared lake trout. Rehabilitating native lake trout stocks is consistent with the Service's goal of building and maintaining self-sustaining populations of native fish species under the "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" and "Partnerships and Accountability" priorities of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Tissues Collected from Native Species for University of Toledo Genetics Study

*Submitted by Anjanette Bowen
Fishery Biologist*

The Alpena National Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office collected tissues from the spawning population of yellow perch in Thunder Bay, Lake Huron for a genetics study underway at the

University of Toledo. Tissues were also collected from walleye. These tissues will aid in the development of DNA markers to distinguish unique spawning populations of these native species.

The samples were collected during regularly scheduled monitoring activities targeting Eurasian ruffe. Yellow perch and walleye were encountered as by-catch in overnight sets with small mesh (1.3 cm) gill nets. Sampling consisted of eight single night sets per week during the last three weeks of April (April 17-May 2). The tissue samples consisted of a 1 cm fin clip. Approximately 20 yellow perch and 15 walleye samples were collected. Tissues were frozen and will be shipped via Fed Ex to the University of Toledo, Great Lakes Genetics Laboratory.

For more information about studies at the University of Toledo's Great Lakes Genetics Laboratory, visit their website at <http://www.utoledo.edu/as/lec/research/glg/index.html>.

The Service assists with collaborative partnerships that benefit natural resources by allowing for the most efficient use of limited human and fiscal resources. This project is consistent with the "Partnerships and Accountability" and "Aquatic Species Conservation and Management" priorities of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Alpena NFWCO Invited to Talk with Students at Wilson School

*Submitted by Adam Kowalski
Fishery Biologist*

Fisheries Biologists Adam Kowalski, Scott Koproski and Aaron Woldt attended Wilson School's Enrichment Day to talk to students about "What Animals Do in the Spring." The event was broken up into five one hour sessions and involved approximately 200 elementary students. Kowalski, Koproski and Woldt each talked for 20 minutes per session regarding the spring activities of birds (specifically turkeys), seasonal animal hide changes, and animal tracks that may be seen now that animals are out of hibernation.

The students were given a chance to view and touch different animal hides, use some turkey calls, and view different animal tracks. Biologists discussed topics such as migration, hibernation, egg laying, color change, different type of tracks and foot patterns, why birds sing in the spring, and other general spring time activities.

Educational sessions like this help connect children with nature by describing animals that students may see in their local area and helping students understand animal behaviors. This outcome is consistent with the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future priorities of "Partnerships and Accountability" and "Public Use".

Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management

Partners for Fish and Wildlife Tri-State Meeting

*Submitted by Heather Rawlings
Fish and Wildlife Biologist*

Biologist Rawlings traveled to Angola, Indiana on April 29-30, 2008 for the second bi-annual Tri-State Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) meeting. This meeting allowed biologists and supervisors from three states- Michigan, Indiana and Ohio to share ideas and compare strategies to make our programs more consistent regionally, with one another and possibly find new and better ways to achieve habitat restoration goals on private lands. Jeffrey Kiefer, State Coordinator of the Indiana Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program was the host of the meeting. This meeting's focus was the federally endangered

copperbelly water snake (copperbelly). Coordinators in the tri-state area have focused wetland restoration efforts on the copperbelly because recovery efforts are linked with wetland restoration, the biggest focus of the PWS Program in the Midwest. Copperbelly snake experts Yu Man Lee from Michigan Natural Features Inventory and Bruce Kingsbury from Indiana-Purdue University gave presentations updating PFW coordinators on the latest science of the copperbelly, and then led the group into the field to view known locations of the copperbelly. The highlight of the meeting was a wild foods dinner held in Pokagon State Park and hosted by the Indiana PFW Coordinators held Tuesday evening.

Approximately 25 natural resources professionals attended the meeting, including Service personnel from the Regional Office. Completion of aquatic habitat restoration projects is the focus of Alpena NFWCO's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, which contributes toward the "Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management" priority of the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

McCormick Creek/Marsh Monitoring

*Submitted by Andrea Ania
Fishery Biologist*

On April 17, 2008, Service Biologist Andrea Ania collected water velocity measurements on McCormick Creek at Maxton Road on Drummond Island, Michigan. There are currently two perched and undersized culverts at this road crossing that prevent pike from migrating upstream to spawning and rearing habitat in McCormick Marsh and the upper reaches of the creek. Maximum



water velocity at each culvert was greater than 9 feet per second and averaged from 4.3 to 4.9 feet per second. As a rule of thumb, velocities greater than 3.3 feet per second (1m/sec) block fish passage by creating a velocity barrier. Measurements were taken one week following peak spring runoff.

The Chippewa County Road Commission is planning to replace the existing culverts with a large, bottomless structure later this summer. Project design for the site was completed by the Michigan DNR and will reduce spring water velocities to allow fish passage. Additionally, a second culvert will be placed south of McCormick Creek to improve hydrologic connectivity within the marsh. Water temperature monitoring is scheduled to start June 1st.



An aerial view of McCormick Marsh and Maxton Road-Stream Crossing on McCormick Creek on Drummond Island, Michigan. INSET: The perched culverts on the creek block migrating pike moving from Potagannissing Bay upstream to spawning and rearing habitat in McCormick Marsh. Aerial Photo credit: Michigan DNR and Culvert Photo credit: Andrea Ania, USFWS.

Pre- and post-construction monitoring efforts increase accountability and are consistent with the Service's "Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management" priority of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.

Aquatic Invasive Species Management

Michigan DEQ Hosts Annual Earth Day Celebration in Lansing

*Submitted by Anjanette Bowen
Fishery Biologist*

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) hosted their annual Earth Day Celebration at Constitution Hall in Lansing, Michigan on April 19, 2008. The celebration brought together over 14 organizations and agencies to staff 55 educational displays that helped teach children about the Earth and issues impacting the Earth. Over 2,700 children attended the event from 31 area schools.

The USFWS was invited to participate in the celebration. Service Biologists Barbara Hosler (East Lansing Field Office) and Anjanette Bowen (Alpena National Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office), along with Emily Finnell of the MDEQ Office of Great Lakes, staffed a display on Great Lakes Aquatic Invasive Species. The display included live sea lamprey, hands-on invasive species

specimens, and fish games. The lamprey were provided by the USGS Hammond Bay Biological Station located in Millersburg, Michigan.

For more information on the Earth Day Celebration, visit the Michigan DEQ's website at <http://www.michigan.gov/deq>.

Public education is important to increase awareness about the problems associated with aquatic invasive species and to prevent or slow their spread to new areas. The Earth Day Celebration provided a great opportunity to partner with state conservation programs for a unified approach regarding aquatic invasive species issues. This activity supports the "Aquatic Invasive Species", "Public Use" and "Partnerships and Accountability" priorities of the Fisheries Program Vision for the Future.



Service Biologists Barbara Hosler (pictured above) and Anjanette Bowen participated in the Earth Day event held at Constitution Hall by staffing the Great Lakes Aquatic Invasive Species booth. Photo credit: Barbara Hosler, USFWS.

Public Use

Alpena NFWCO Collecting Animal Skulls and Hides

*Submitted by Adam Kowalski
Fishery Biologist*

The Alpena National Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (NFWCO) is building an animal skull and hide collection of North American mammals to use as an outreach tool to connect children with nature. The skulls are being donated by a local taxidermy and trapping supplier, and hides are being purchased. Currently the Alpena NFWCO has 34 skulls from 10 different animals, and 6 hides from 4 different animals. All the skulls must be cleaned of flesh and clear coated for protection. Fisheries Biologists Adam Kowalski and Scott Koproski have observed the



Alpena NFWCO prepares animal skulls for use as education and outreach tools. Photo credit: Anjanette Bowen, USFWS

process of preparing and cleaning animal skulls and will be the leads for ensuring the collection's completion.

The skulls must be boiled and all fur and flesh removed. Next the skulls go into a degreasing solution before being bleached and varnished. The process takes about two weeks to complete. When completed, this collection will be used in the Alpena NFWCO's outreach efforts in the Alpena school system.

This project will be used to help connect children with nature by describing some of the animals they may see in their home area and allowing them to touch and see the different sizes, colors, and characteristics of these animals. This project is consistent with Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future priority of working with partners to identify and implement outreach and educational activities that provide "Public Use".

Alpena NFWCO Participates in 2008 Lake Huron Regional Fisheries Workshops

*Submitted by Scott Koproski
Fishery Biologist*

The Alpena National Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (NFWCO) participated in two weekend workshops hosted by Michigan Sea Grant and Michigan State University Extension (MSU Extension) to provide information to the public on current research and field projects related to the Lake Huron fishery. Each workshop consisted of natural resource professionals from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), Michigan Sea Grant, and the Service. One workshop was held in Bad Axe, Michigan, which is located in the southern portion of Lake Huron, and another was held in Alpena, Michigan, which is located in the northern portion of Lake Huron. Over 100 individuals attended the workshops.

Fishery Biologist Scott Koproski gave a presentation entitled "Lake Huron Lake Trout: A Native Species on the Road to Recovery" at both of the workshops. Koproski discussed the Service's lake trout rehabilitation efforts, including sea lamprey control, hatchery production and stocking, fishery assessment, and management assistance. Koproski discussed positive trends in lake trout biomass and abundance at the workshops, as well as increases in young-of-year lake trout in USGS and MDNR trawling surveys, and increased catches of un-clipped, presumably wild, lake trout during gill net assessments conducted by the Service and MDNR. Given the decrease in sea lamprey wounding and mortality rates due to intense basin wide control efforts, lake trout seem to have turned a corner due to rehabilitation efforts in Lake Huron.

Most feedback from workshop attendees was positive. Many individuals did not realize how many different agencies were responsible for fishery research in Lake Huron. This workshop provided an excellent opportunity for the Service to interact the public while showcasing some of our Lake Huron lake trout rehabilitation efforts.

This work is another example of the Alpena NFWCO's commitment to the following Fisheries Program Vision Priorities: "Partnerships and Accountability" and "Public Use."

Alpena NFWCO Participates in Under the Sea Week

*Submitted by Scott Koproski
Fishery Biologist*

During the month of March, the Alpena Senior Citizens Center sponsored an event titled "Under the Sea Week." The Senior Center invited various people from the community to speak to its members about local attractions and activities. The speaker list included local fishing guides, lighthouse enthusiasts, shipwreck experts, and natural resource professionals.

Alpena National Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (NFWCO) Fishery Biologist Scott Koproski delivered a presentation to the group highlighting some of the activities and projects that the Alpena NFWCO participates in. Koproski spoke about projects related to aquatic invasive species, native species restoration, treaty fishery assistance, and habitat and ecosystem health. Additionally, he provided some advice to local anglers looking for some shore-fishing opportunities. The group was most interested in the work that the Alpena NFWCO conducts to improve habitat and ecosystem health. However, many individuals were looking for fishing hot spots and favorite lures to improve their fishing success. About 20 people attended this presentation, asked questions, and expressed their appreciation for the information provided.

This work is another example of the Alpena NFWCO's commitment to the following Fisheries Program Vision Priorities: "Partnerships and Accountability" and "Public Use."

Workforce Management

Motorboat Operator Certification Course Instructors and Vessel Crew Developing Safety Course for *M/V Spencer F. Baird*

*Submitted by Adam Kowalski
Fishery Biologist*

The *M/V Spencer F. Baird* is the largest vessel owned by the Fish and Wildlife Service in Region 3. This vessel is primarily used for stocking hatchery lake trout, but it is also capable of trawling, gillnetting, and conducting hydroacoustic surveys. The Service is in the process of developing a stand alone training module for the *M/V Baird* to address the specific and unique safety issues presented by this large, multi-purpose vessel. Service Motorboat Operator Certification Course Instructors Adam Kowalski, Aaron Woldt, Dave Wedan, Kyle Krysiak, and Jeffery Lucas along with vessel crew Mike Perry, Bob Bergstrom, and Dave Bohn are developing the course. To date there has been several conference calls and one meeting of the team.

The team has developed the tentative course content to include boat orientation, house keeping, fire suppression, emergency procedures, night operations, required and recommended equipment, use of visual distress signals and cracker shells, cargo handling, radio use, and safety during assessment work. Each topic will be broken down into basic boating safety sections and safety concerns specific for the *M/V Spencer F. Baird*. This course will be mandatory for all personnel riding on the *Baird* during stocking and assessment work.



The maiden course is currently scheduled for late August or early September 2008. The instructors will conduct a run through prior to the first course to work out any logistic or safety concerns and to make sure all concerns have been addressed.

Staff from the Alpena NFWCO are working with Motorboat Operator Certification Course instructors to develop a safety course for the M/V Spencer F. Baird. Photo credit: Aaron Woldt, USFWS.

This new training will be a valuable course designed to help make Service personnel competent and safe while working on the *M/V Spencer F. Baird*. Teaching boat safety courses is consistent with the Service's Fisheries Program Vision for the Future priority of "Workforce Management" to maintain and support an adequately-sized, strategically positioned workforce with state-of-art training, equipment, and technologies in their career fields.

For more information about Alpena NFWCO programs and activities contact us at:

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