

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Jordan River NFH Accomplishment Report

Partnerships and Accountability

Protecting the Jordan River Management Area for the Future

Rick Westerhof, Hatchery Manager, attended the Friends of the Jordan River (FOJ) board meeting in April. The highlight from the meeting was the discussion of Ward Lake Energy's request to drill two new natural gas wells in the Jordan River Management Area (JRMA). The proposed sites would violate the provisions of the JRMA Plan of 1974, which specifically prohibits oil, gas, or mineral extraction.



FOJ is opposed to the new gas well sites on the basis of their negative environmental impacts, precedent-setting intrusion into a protected natural area, and drainage of public resources (Richter 2004)¹. Since 1974, all previous requests to drill on public land on the JRMA have been opposed, withdrawn, or denied.

The JRMA guiding principles are to protect in a near natural setting the exceptionally high environmental and aesthetic attributes of the nearly 23,000 contiguous acres of public land for low impact multi-use recreation (Richter 2004). The Michigan Department of Natural Resources describes the Jordan River Valley as the "Crown Jewel" of Michigan's forest ecosystems.

Even though the public and oversight agencies are doing the best they can, there are inherent legal issues. Under Michigan's property laws, there is separate ownership of the surface lands and mineral rights.

The two natural gas wells would be located approximately one mile above the hatchery near the current snowmobile trail and hiking path. Potential concerns and impacts include bulldozing well pads and developing access roads, flow lines, and processing plants that degrade and disrupt fragile forest ecosystems. The potential impacts from the proposed gas wells on the hatchery's water supplies are from brine releases which contain chlorides. Petroleum products, diesel fuels, and hydraulic fluids used during the drilling process could contaminate the water supply if a spill(s) occurred. The wells are above and between both of our water sources. The hatchery's water supplies come from two springs or creeks called Five and Six Tile creeks. Five Tile supplies 2,000 gpm and Six Tile provides 3,000 gpm of gravity flow water into hatchery.

This local grass roots conservation organization is vital to the continued protection of the JRMA for future generations. The hatchery staff will continue to work with the FOJ to improve public access to the JRMA, while promoting environmental stewardship of such a great natural resource.

-Timothy Smigielski and Rick Westerhof

Adopt-a-Highway

On April 22, we did our springtime Adopt-a-Highway cleanup. After picking up trash from both sides of two miles of Highway 131, we had filled 26 trash bags for later pickup by the Michigan Department of Transportation. This program provides us an opportunity to outreach to the local community through the road signs that declare our commitment to environmental stewardship. We owe a special thanks to six eighth and ninth grade students from Concord Academy of Antrim County, Michigan who volunteered to help us: Brittany Carpenter, Amy Churchill, Donald Dubay, Nicole Malbouef, Amanda VanBlooy, and Laura Vasher.



-Wayne Talo

Aquatic Species Conservation and Management

Pond Cleaning Work Intensifies

The increasing sunlight, water temperatures, and nutrient load (due to our annual maximum feed use just prior to fish distribution) all work together to increase problematic algal growth on the submerged surfaces of our outside raceways. This algae reduces water quality by trapping particles of sediment (wasted feed, feces), and if its growth is left unchecked, pieces of it will begin to slough off and clog the raceway screens, potentially causing raceways to flood over their walls. The most practical remedy at this time of year is manual scrubbing with pond brooms, which is very labor intensive. Fortunately, we were able to pressure wash many of the raceway walls during fin clipping in March and early April, so the number of truly problematic raceways is manageable. However, we are still working to maintain the relative cleanliness of the previously pressure washed walls with occasional manual brushing. Finally, our

problems with low D.O. require careful water management, so pond cleaning is taking more time.

-Wayne Talo

Jordan River National Fish Hatchery Fin Clips 1.45 Million Native Lake Trout

On April 8, 2004, fin clipping of the Brood Year 2003 lake trout at the Jordan River NFH was completed. A grand total of approximately 1.45 million fish were marked with a combination left pectoral/right ventral clip from February 24 through April 8. This fin clip serves to identify these fish as hatchery-origin lake trout to researchers who may later collect some of them while doing biological surveys. The total cost of this year's fin clipping operation was \$33,390. This covered the wages of both the fin clipping crew and those of a Biologist and Biological Technician who took turns supervising. The size of the fin clipping crew ranged daily from seven to 15 people, but averaged 12. Most of these people are permanent-intermittent employees, but we also hired three people on a 30-day term emergency basis to expedite this important job. To make fin clipping more enjoyable, we had numerous potlucks hosted by the fin clippers or the hatchery staff. At the last potluck, somebody brought in a special dessert in honor of another successful fin clipping season. Tim Smigielski, Lead Biologist was the only brave soul to eat the "fin clipped "trout jello". He described the dessert as ambrosia. A special thanks to Darla Wenger in Human Resources for the quick turn around on hiring the three fin clippers.



-Wayne Talo

Preventative Disease Treatments

On April 14 and 26, we did prophylactic Chloramine-T treatments (15ppm flow through) on our 5-Tile water supply to prevent outbreaks of bacterial gill disease, a problem encountered here in past years in our small fish at about this time. So far, no bacterial gill disease problems have been detected.

-Wayne Talo

Goedes Fish Health Assessments

In addition to the pathogen screening done by personnel from the LaCrosse Fish Health Center (highlighted later in this report), Paul Haver, Biological Technician, also does a qualitative and quantitative assessment of fish condition. This is called the Goedes Fish Health Assessment, and its purpose is to use a numerical rating system to describe the general condition of a population of fish. Paul does this every year in preparation for fish distribution. He has been doing this work since the early '90s and is one of this Region's most experienced and well respected people in this area.

-Wayne Talo

Fish Distribution Season Begins with Emergency Shore Stocking

During the last week of April, dissolved oxygen (D.O.) concentrations dipped to critical levels in some of our most downstream raceways, the C and D ponds. These raceways are supplied with reuse water that has already been passed through the tank room, the metal building raceways, the 57/58 series of raceways, and at least two raceways upstream within their own series. D.O.s at the downstream ends of some D ponds fell below 4 mg/l. Paul Haver stayed late on April 29 with bottled oxygen and air stones to prevent fish kills in the lower 2- and 3-series.



It is at this time that our fish loads are at their annual peak, and it is not unusual that we have problems like this just before fish distribution is scheduled to begin. Pond 3C was one of our heaviest ponds and was suffering the most, so we released about a third of its inventory to thin it out on April 30. We released 22,000 fish into Lake Michigan at the Maritime Academy pier in Traverse City. The average size of these fish was 13.75 fish per pound, or about 6.2 inches.

These fish were initially slated for off-shore release from the M/V Togue in the northern refuge of Lake Michigan. The remaining inventory of this raceway will be released later in the distribution season into southern Lake Michigan.

-Wayne Talo

The Bobcat Returns to Jordan River National Fish Hatchery

After being away for repairs for approximately two months, our Bobcat was finally returned to us in early April. The repair took longer than anticipated because all the parts had to be manufactured. We also learned there was a recall on the bearings and associated parts which we were unaware of since we weren't the original purchaser. The final cost to replace its badly damaged wheel bearings totaled \$8,116. We use this combination machine in the winter with its snowblower attachment to push back roadside snow banks. Fortunately, we didn't get any major snow storms during the Bobcat's absence. We'll be using it throughout the rest of the year as a backhoe, a front end loader, and as an industrial size forklift.



-Wayne Talo

Sewer and Septic Maintenance, Smells of Success

Much to the delight of the staff living on station at Jordan River NFH a sewer and septic maintenance project took place in late March. Bob Peterson (Certified Diver and Maintenance Mechanic) along with volunteers Scott Rozanski and Dan Sutherland located a major blockage in the system and avoided a potentially ugly problem. The system is quite old and has tree roots infiltrating it. Three families now live on station and the system is "just not used to that." Bob has plans for a spring and fall prophylactic treatment and cleaning of the system which services the five residences. Thank You Bob, Scott, and Dan!

-Tim Smigielski

Public Use

Traverse City Hunting and Fishing Expo a Great Success

The Fish and Wildlife Service was again part of the annual Traverse City Hunting and Fishing Expo held in Traverse City, Michigan on March 19-21, 2004. The event draws people who are avid about fishing, hunting, and the outdoors. Some of the exhibitors involved were





sporting goods vendors, taxidermists, outfitters/resort owners, woodworkers, and a local fish farm.

Paul Haver, Biological Technician at the Jordan River National Fish Hatchery, was this year's coordinator for the Fish and Wildlife Service's booth and display. The booth featured Region 3's "Conserving American's Fisheries" display, a PowerPoint presentation on the lake trout program, a 2003 lake trout stocking site map, a display mount of a sea lamprey attached to a lake trout, samples of invasive species, and plenty of information handouts. This gave us a great opportunity to talk to the public about forming a Friends Group for the Jordan River Hatchery and volunteer opportunities at Fish and Wildlife Service facilities. The real "attention getter" was our aquarium which contained lake sturgeon from the Genoa National Fish Hatchery and both normally pigmented and albino lake trout from the Jordan River National Fish Hatchery. The children were excited to receive the free sunglasses and keychain totes that carry the Fish and Wildlife Service logo.

Assisting Paul in the booth were Burr Fisher (East Lansing Ecological Services), Tracy Roessner and James Anderson (Pendills Creek National Fish Hatchery), Mike Perry (M/V Togue), and Tim Smigielski, Bob Petersen, and Clarice Beckner (Jordan River National Fish Hatchery). The group handled a lot of questions from the interested public, including many questions from irate fishermen and lake property owners on cormorant issues.

This is the third year that the Fish and Wildlife Service has been involved in this annual event. Event organizers estimated 6,000 people enjoyed the show. We hope to continue to attend this event in order to spread the word about all the good work the Fish and Wildlife Service is doing.

-Timothy Smigielski

Cooperation with Native Americans

Jordan River National Fish Hatchery loaned Greg Wright of the Nunn's Creek Fish Hatchery, Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority (CORA), two stacks of Heath tray incubators. The trays will be used for experimental propagation of feral lake trout. We will provide any assistance with the experimental lake trout program at Nunn's Creek. The hatchery staff also learned about Nunn's Creek walleye program and other activities at the facility.

-Wayne Talo

Leadership in Science and Technology

Jordan River NFH Receives Results of Annual Fish Health Inspections

On March 10, 2004 John Whitney of the USFWS Lacrosse Fish Health Center sampled the 2003 and 2004 year classes of lake trout being reared at Jordan NFH. Ages of the fish were 15 months and 3 months, respectively, at the time of sampling. Typically, 60 fish are sampled from each of 12 lots during the inspection. Results for all but two lots of lake trout were negative or free from the pathogens for which they were tested. One lot of Lewis Lake strain and one lot of Green Lake strain yearlings were verified positive for *Renibacterium salmoninarum* (*Rs*). *Rs* is the bacteria which is present when hatchery or feral salmonids experience outbreaks of Bacterial Kidney Disease (BKD). Polymerase Chain Reaction Assay (PCR) was used by the Fish Health Center to verify the presence of *Rs* in these two lots of yearlings. Lake Trout are one of the salmonids least susceptible to BKD. Even so, this type of data is critical to the annual and daily decision making processes made at Jordan River NFH during the fish production and distribution cycle.

-Timothy Smigielski

New Fish Fudge Recipe Perfected at Jordan River National Fish Hatchery

Bob Petersen, Maintenance Mechanic, and Scott Rozanski, volunteer, cleaned the off-line settling basins on April 15. This time Scott tried a variety of fudge recipes while mixing and pushing the sludge in the big slow cooker. The hatcheries favorite was the triple trout fudge with leaves and softened 1/8 pellets arranged into the shape of a Great Blue Heron. At this time of year, our settling basins contain a heavy load of solid waste because it is not possible to clean them during the winter months. Therefore, it is important that the basins be cleaned before fish distribution begins in late April, as there won't be another opportunity to do this until July. The sludge is pumped into a tanker truck and deposited on a nearby field, as per agreement with the landowner.



-Rick Westerhof

Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management

(nothing to report)

Workforce Management

Alpena FRO, Alpena U.S. Coast Guard Station, and Seney NWR Receive CPR and First Aid Training

Jordan River National Fish Hatchery's traveling CPR and First Aid Instructor, Bob Petersen (alias Maintenance Mechanic) taught Adult CPR and First Aid to seven staff members at the Seney NWR on March 23. Plus on April 6, he provided this training to 11 people at the Alpena Fisheries Resource Office including Coast Guard staff. Five of the 11 people attended the infant and child CPR portion. This was the first year that the Coast Guard staff participated in the training. Jerry McClain, Project Leader at Alpena invited the Coast Guard staff to attend the training as part of the FWS efforts to development Partnerships with other agencies.

-Wayne Talo

Another Chapter Begins...

On Friday, March 19, 2004 the Great Lakes lake trout restoration program lost an avid supporter and very knowledgeable fishery biologist.

After fifteen years with the Fish and Wildlife Service, Assistant Manager Dave Huntly resigned his position at the Jordan River National Fish Hatchery in Elmira, Michigan to pursue other interests in Florida. Dave spent four years as a fishery biologist at the Iron River National Fish Hatchery (Wisconsin) before transferring to Michigan.



The Service will greatly miss Dave's knowledge and management of the spring lake trout stocking schedule utilizing the Motor Vessel *Togue* and his input at the lake management committee meetings.

A farewell party in Dave's honor was held Thursday, March 18, 2004 at BJ's Restaurant in Gaylord, Michigan. Approximately 40 people attended, including co-workers and volunteers from the Jordan River Hatchery and persons from the Alpena Fishery Resource Office.

-Clarice Beckner



Sharing Administrative Knowledge

Entering an administrative position for the Fish and Wildlife Service has gotten much more difficult over the years. Long gone are the days of office personnel just answering telephones and filing paperwork. With so many new administrative personnel, administrative workshops at a premium, and travel reductions, field offices have become very dependent on other field offices filling in during times of vacancies and also training new administrative personnel. It helps to get some of the information “first hand” when you are working with so many computerized systems and increased administrative responsibilities.

On March 2-3, 2004 Deborah Jones, new Administrative Technician at the Pendills Creek National Fish Hatchery in Brimley, Michigan visited the Jordan River National Fish Hatchery in Elmira, Michigan. Clarice Beckner, Administrative Technician at the Jordan River National Fish Hatchery for the past 32 ½ years was more than willing to familiarize Deborah with Fish and Wildlife Service procedures and computer programs. After some prodding from her Project Leader, Rick Westerhof, Clarice previously began gathering information she had gained during her long career with the Fish and Wildlife Service. The standard operating procedure (SOP) manual will hopefully centralize a lot of information that may assist both personnel at the Jordan River Hatchery and new administrative personnel at other facilities. It is a “work in progress” as things are constantly being added and changed when necessary.

Deborah’s positive attitude and eagerness made for an enjoyable training session. Plans are being made for Clarice to visit Deborah at her facility in early April to expand the training.

-Clarice Beckner

Jordan River NFH Partnerships with Area Agency on Aging

Since October 2003, the Jordan River NFH has participated in the Senior Community Service Employment Program (Title V) with the Area Agency on Aging (Agency) in Traverse City, MI. Title V is a job training program designed to provide useful part-time work in community service for low income seniors age 55 and older. The program goal is to put seniors in positions with non-profit agencies to gain work skills to increase their chances of permanent employment after the training is done. Training periods typically last six months, with a maximum of 23 hours per week that the enrollee can work. The Agency pays the seniors wages and the host agency provides agreed upon work and training.

Mrs. Norma Sparks from Bellaire, MI has been working/training at the hatchery since October 2003, and just recently has been extended another three months. Norma has been doing a great job with a variety of duties around at the hatchery, which frees up valuable time for other staff members, since we are two permanent staff short. The hatchery staff is required to provide at least two hours of training per pay period. Norma has been learning many office duties (copying, faxing, computer activities, answering phones, etc.) to assist her in finding a permanent job. Norma has been very valuable and usually handles the phones when Clarice is out of the office. So next time you call, say hello to Norma. We are looking forward to having Norma with us for another three months.



-Rick Westerhof

Emergency Hire

Ray Puroll from Bellaire, Michigan was hired in April to assist with hatchery operations during this busy spring season. Ray is a quick study, he has been performing well. Ray has been assisting with feeding and cleaning tanks and raceways. He has experience with residential painting, which is a real asset as we get the on-site quarters ready for some summer volunteer workers and student workers. Welcome and Thanks Ray!



-Timothy Smigielski

New Volunteer

Andrea Sanders began volunteering in April. She has been doing excellent work in helping with fish culture duties, and she brings with her some previous experience in aquaculture, having been raised around private fish hatcheries which her father managed. Andrea plans to attend North Central Michigan University this fall and will be majoring in a two-year transfer program called Natural Resources Management. After finishing her two-year degree, she hopes to transfer to a four-year institution to earn a Bachelors degree in Fisheries Management.



-Wayne Talo



¹ Richter, John W., PhD. Jordan River Valley Threatened Again. Friends of the Jordan (newsletter). January 10, 2004.