

### **Columbia FRO Biologists Serve on Regional Watershed Committee**

In the spring of 2005, Region 3 assembled a committee to address issues relating to the implementation of a more watershed based approach to some activities in the fisheries program. The committee contains representatives from the five fisheries offices within Region 3 and the Regional office. Nick Frohnauer and Joanne Grady represent the Columbia FRO. The committee broke its task down into three charges. The first charge was finding current or potential projects that displayed a watershed/geographical approach for potential funding on the national level and to help guide our development of a protocol for watershed plans. The second charge was developing a protocol for developing watershed plans. The last charge was revising the current fish passage funding process. Joanne and Nick are serving on the committees addressing charge 2 and charge 3. To date, there have been approximately 10 conference calls developing drafts for charge 2 and 3 protocols. Currently, charge two has a draft on preparing watershed/joint venture plans and is working on ranking criteria, gathering information, prioritizing watersheds, and approaching potential partners. Charge 3 has a process developed for year 2006 funding and will be adjusting it to fit more in the watershed plan for years thereafter.

Serving on the regional committee to develop a more watershed based approach for some fisheries activities is helping promote the Service's goal of facilitating management of aquatic habitats on National and Regional scales.

Nicholas K. Frohnauer

### **Columbia FRO finishes sampling season at Fort Leavenworth**

Fishery Biologists Geno Adams, Andy Staroska, and Cliff Wilson traveled to Leavenworth, Kansas from August 23 through August 26, 2005 as part of a continuing effort to assess the fish communities present in and around the Fort Leavenworth Army Post. This trip marks the end of the sampling season for the installation with Columbia FRO crews sampling Missouri River bends that border the military reservation for the third time and sport fish management surveys on two ponds in June. During this effort, river sampling consisted of drifting trammel nets, mini-fyke netting, seining, and otter trawling. Catches consisted primarily of shovelnose sturgeon, smallmouth buffalo, shortnose gar, silver chubs, and young-of-the-year channel catfish, blue catfish, river carpsuckers, and freshwater drum. Sampling the waters associated with Fort Leavenworth has given the Columbia FRO the opportunity to work together with the Department of Defense in an attempt to improve health of the aquatic resources which will provide quality fishing for the families living on the post and to determine the presence or absence of the endangered pallid sturgeon in the Missouri River bordering the military reservation.

This project helped fulfill objective 1.1 of the partnership goal; Develop and improve long-term partnerships with States, Tribes, other federal agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGO's), and other Service Programs to develop collaborative conservation strategies for aquatic resources.

W. Geno Adams

### **USFWS & USGS Sturgeon Telemetry Partnership**

During the first week of August, biologists from the Columbia FRO attempted to recapture valuable shovelnose sturgeon from the Missouri River. These sturgeon are especially important due to the ultrasonic transmitters implanted by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) prior to the spawning season. The transmitters allow USGS biologists to track the sturgeon and quantify their habitat use throughout the year. Along with location data, these tags collect depth data which may be important in identifying spawning habitat for this species. Unfortunately these tags need to be retrieved from the fish to download the depth data. Theoretically, retrieval should not be a problem since the crews know the location of the fish.

Unfortunately catching a bottom dwelling fish in swift water filled with snags is not an easy task. Drifting trammel nets over the located fish is one method of recapture which has worked well in the past. One particular sturgeon, occupying a large snag in about 3 meters of swift water, eluded capture. When drifted, the net would hit the snag first making the recapture of that individual impossible. Three crews attempted recapture of these sturgeon using trammel nets and gill nets over the course of a week. Low water levels and the nature of their locations kept the sturgeon swimming in the river a little while longer. The CFRO is dedicating time in October for this project once the Pallid Sturgeon Community Assessment and Mitigation Projects conclude. Additional gears, such as trawling, overnight set gill nets and baited set lines (trotlines), will be employed to capture these important fish.

Interacting with other agencies, such as the USGS, fulfills the Fish and Wildlife Service's Partnership Goal. Sturgeon monitoring also accomplishes the native species conservation and management goal. The CFRO looks forward to partnering with the USGS office on other projects on the Missouri River. Combining knowledge and skills of multiple agencies and biologists will hopefully improve shovelnose sturgeon populations, as well as other fish populations, on the Missouri River.

Andy T. Plauck

### **CFRO Partners with Big Muddy NFWR Refuge**

Fishery Biologist Jennifer Johnson assisted Biological Science Technicians Adam Jones and Kyle Singer from the Big Muddy National Fish and Wildlife Refuge on August 10th with spraying herbicides on purple loosestrife. Purple loosestrife is an exotic plant with the ability to spread rapidly once established. During the growing season a single plant may produce over 100,000 seeds. The best time to control purple loosestrife is during mid-summer when the plant is easily recognizable and has just begun flowering. This exotic plant crowds out native plants, destroying valuable wildlife habitat. The crew targeted the Jameson Island and Lisbon Bottoms units of the refuge searching along the Missouri River banks for the plant and when found the location was recorded (with GPS) and then sprayed with glyphosate. The Jameson Island unit consists of 1,871 acres of bottom land containing floodplain species such as cottonwood, willow, box elder and is across the river from the Lisbon Unit. The Lisbon unit consists of 2,013 acres of

primarily young forests of cottonwood and willow. Combined the two units provide 4,000 acres of public land for hunting, fishing and exploring.

The CFRO worked with the Big Muddy refuge to improve the quality of riparian habitats by spraying to prevent the expansion of exotic purple loosestrife on the Big Muddy Refuge. The partnership fulfills the "Partnerships and Accountability" and "Aquatic habitat Conservation and Management" goals of the Fisheries Programs Strategic Vision.

Jennifer L. Johnson