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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Fish Lines

## Region 3 - Great Lakes/Big Rivers

*Leadership in Conserving, Enhancing, and Restoring Aquatic Ecosystems*

### Region 3 Hatchery Manager Named “Fisheries Project Leader of the Year”

(See the “Feature Stories on Page 5)



-USFWS photo by Lavonda Walton

Hatchery Manager Doug Aloisi of the Genoa National Fish Hatchery was the recipient of the 2006 Fisheries Project Leader of the Year award, presented in Washington D.C. in March.

### 2006 Region 3 Recovery Champion Honored at La Crosse (WI) Event

(See the “Feature Stories on Page 5)



-USFWS

Roger Gordon of the Genoa National Fish Hatchery received the 2006 Recovery Champion Award from Regional Director Robyn Thorson and Deputy Regional Director Charlie Wooley, for his work with recovery of threatened and endangered aquatic species.

To view other issues of “Fish Lines”, see our Regional website at: (<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/Fisheries/>)



## Region 3 - Great Lakes/Big Rivers Region

The Mission of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service: working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people

### *Region 3 Focus Areas*

#### **1. Partnerships and Accountability**

Partnerships are essential for effective fisheries conservation. Many agencies, organizations, and private individuals are involved in fisheries conservation and management, but no one can do it alone. Together, these stakeholders combine efforts and expertise to tackle challenges facing fisheries conservation. The success of these partnerships will depend on strong, two-way communications and accountability.

#### **2. Aquatic Species Conservation and Management**

The Fisheries Program maintains and implements a comprehensive set of tools and activities to conserve and manage self-sustaining populations of native fish and other aquatic resources. These tools and activities are linked to management and recovery plans that help achieve restoration and recovery goals, provide recreational benefits, and address Federal trust responsibilities. Sound science, effective partnerships, and careful planning and evaluation are integral to conservation and management efforts.

#### **3. Aquatic Invasive Species**

Aquatic invasive species are one of the most significant threats to fish and wildlife and their habitats. Local and regional economies are severely affected with control costs exceeding \$123 billion annually. The Fisheries Program has focused its efforts on preventing introductions of new aquatic invasive species, detecting and monitoring new and established invasives, controlling established invasives, providing coordination and technical assistance to organizations that respond to invasive species problems, and developing comprehensive, integrated plans to fight aquatic invasive species.

#### **4. Public Use**

As the population in the United States continues to grow, the potential for adverse impacts on aquatic resources, including habitat will increase. At the same time, demands for responsible, quality recreational fishing experiences will also increase. The Service has a long tradition of providing opportunities for public enjoyment of aquatic resources through recreational fishing, habitat restoration, and education programs and through mitigating impacts of Federal water projects. The Service also recognizes that some aquatic habitats have been irreversibly altered by human activity (i.e. - dam building). To compensate for these significant changes in habitat and lost fishing opportunities, managers often introduce non-native species when native species can no longer survive in the altered habitat.

#### **5. Cooperation with Native Americans**

Conserving this Nation's fish and other aquatic resources cannot be successful without the partnership of Tribes; they manage or influence some of the most important aquatic habitats both on and off reservations. In addition, the Federal government and the Service have distinct and unique obligations toward Tribes based on trust responsibility, treaty provisions, and statutory mandates. The Fisheries Program plays an important role in providing help and support to Tribes as they exercise their sovereignty in the management of their fish and wildlife resources on more than 55 million acres of Federal Indian trust land and in treaty reserved areas.

#### **6. Leadership in Science and Technology**

Science and technology form the foundation of successful fish and aquatic resource conservation and are used to structure and implement monitoring and evaluation programs that are critical to determine the success of management actions. The Service is committed to following established principles of sound science.

#### **7. Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management**

Loss and alteration of aquatic habitats are principal factors in the decline of native fish and other aquatic resources and the loss of biodiversity. Seventy percent of the Nation's rivers have altered flows, and 50 percent of waterways fail to meet minimum biological criteria.

#### **8. Workforce Management**

The Fisheries Program relies on a broad range of professionals to accomplish its mission: biologists, managers, administrators, clerks, animal caretakers, and maintenance workers. Without their skills and dedication, the Fisheries Program cannot succeed. Employees must be trained, equipped and supported in order to perform their jobs safely, often under demanding environmental conditions, and to keep current with the constantly expanding science of fish and aquatic resource management and conservation.

The vision of the Service's Fisheries Program is working with partners to restore and maintain fish and other aquatic resources at self-sustaining levels and to support Federal mitigation programs for the benefit of the American public.

Implementing this vision will help the Fisheries Program do more for aquatic resources and the people who value and depend on them through enhanced partnerships, scientific integrity, and a balanced approach to conservation.

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*Click here to visit our Fisheries Web Site*

# Great Lakes - Big Rivers Region Fisheries Field Offices

## National Fish Hatcheries

The Region's National Fish Hatcheries primarily focus on native fish restoration/rehabilitation by stocking fish and eggs, such as pallid and lake sturgeon and by developing and maintaining brood stocks of selected fish strains, such as lake trout and brook trout. Hatcheries also provide technical assistance to other agencies, provide fish and eggs for research, stock rainbow trout in fulfillment of federal mitigation obligations and assist with recovery of native mussels and other native aquatic species.

## Sea Lamprey Control Stations

Sea Lamprey Control Stations assess and control sea lamprey populations throughout the Great Lakes. The U.S. Department of State and Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans fund this program through the Great Lakes Fishery Commission.

## Fishery Resources Offices

Fishery Resources Offices conduct assessments of fish populations to guide management decisions, perform key monitoring and control activities related to invasive, aquatic species; survey and evaluate aquatic habitats to identify restoration/rehabilitation opportu-

nities; play a key role in targeting and implementing native fish and habitat restoration programs; work with private land owners, states, local governments and watershed organizations to complete aquatic habitat restoration projects under the Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife and the Great Lakes Coastal Programs; provide coordination and technical assistance toward the management of interjurisdictional fisheries; maintain and operate several key interagency fisheries databases; provide technical expertise to other Service programs addressing contaminants, endangered species, federal project review and hydro-power operation and re-licensing; evaluate and manage fisheries on Service lands; and, provide technical support to 38 Native American tribal governments and treaty authorities. In other Regions of the Service, FRO's are also referred to as Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance Offices.

## Fish Health Center

The Fish Health Center provides specialized fish health evaluation and diagnostic services to federal, state, tribal and private hatcheries in the region; conducts extensive monitoring and evaluation of wild fish health throughout the region; examines and certifies the health of captive hatchery stocks; and, performs a wide range of special services helping to coordinate fishery program offices and partner organizations.

## Great Lakes - Big Rivers Region Fisheries Field Offices



## List of Acronyms

DNR- Department of Natural Resources  
 FHC- Fish Health Center  
 FRO- Fishery Resources Office  
 NFH- National Fish Hatchery  
 NWR- National Wildlife Refuge



## Region 3 Hatchery Manager Named “Fisheries Project Leader of the Year”

Doug Aloisi, Hatchery Manager at Genoa National Fish Hatchery (NFH), was awarded “Fisheries Project Leader of the Year-2006” in Washington D.C. on March 1, 2007, by the Fish and Wildlife Service. This award, presented annually to project leaders from across the country, is given to persons who have shown leadership in conservation, recovery, and restoration of the nation’s aquatic fauna and habitats. Aloisi was selected based on his ongoing contributions to recovery and restoration efforts for imperiled native mussels and lake sturgeon in the Upper Midwest, as well as his strong outreach efforts on behalf of the programs he manages at the Genoa NFH.

Under Doug’s leadership, the endangered mussel program has grown into a national leader in mussel propagation with over 5.5 million mussels, of multiple age classes, having been stocked into waters of the Upper Midwest. Additionally, the station’s lake sturgeon production program has grown from its fledgling



-USFWS photo by Lavonda Walton

**Hatchery Manager Doug Aloisi of the Genoa National Fish Hatchery was the recipient of the 2006 Fisheries Project Leader of the Year award, presented in Washington D.C. in March.**

state into the largest production program in the nation for this species. With Doug’s guidance, the hatchery has expanded beyond traditional hatchery programs to make significant contributions to restoration and recovery efforts for non aquatic species.

*Roger Gordon, Genoa NFH*

## 2006 Region 3 Recovery Champion Honored at La Crosse (WI) Event

Roger Gordon of the Genoa NFH was presented with Region 3’s *Recovery Champion Award* of 2006 on March 28th at the Stoney Creek Lodge’s Thomas Rowe Center. Roger was given a plaque and letter of appreciation signed by Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dale Hall, presented by Midwest Region Regional Director Robyn Thorson. The award of *Recovery Champion* is a national award used by the Fish and Wildlife Service to honor eight Fish and Wildlife Service employees and eight non-Service employees for their accomplishments in helping to recover the nations threatened and endangered fish and wildlife resources. Roger earned his award through his ground-breaking work in endangered mussel recovery. Through Roger and the staff’s efforts at Genoa, and through the cooperative work with the multi-agency mussel coordination team, over six million endangered mussels of two species (the Higgins’ eye pearlymussel and winged mapleleaf) have been released since 2000, and over 35,000 Higgins’ eye pearlymussel adults are now available to be released into portions of the Upper Mississippi River basin.

Native mussels are among the most endangered fauna today, with an estimated 55 percent of nearly 300 North American species in danger of extinction. With



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the spread of invasive zebra mussels into North America in the late 1980’s, the native mussel’s already serious plight took a turn for the worse. Zebra mussels use native mussels as substrate, which interferes with the mussel’s ability to breathe, feed and reproduce. This caused serious declines in mussel populations in the Upper Mississippi River. Through propagation efforts at Genoa, it is hoped to maintain species numbers and viability while addressing habitat declines and invasive species in order to save these unique and special aquatic fauna.

*Doug Aloisi, Genoa NFH*

## Partnerships and Accountability

### Neosho NFH's Visitor Center is a GO

(reprinted from The Neosho Daily News, 3/22/07)

Neosho National Fish Hatchery manager David Hendrix was traveling to Rolla, Missouri, to get a pallid sturgeon fish when he received good news. The good news was Seventh District Congressman Roy Blunt said that federal funding in the final 2007 appropriations measure assures that construction on an expanded visitor's center at the hatchery can begin this summer.

"This project is a go," Blunt said in a prepared statement, after he learned that \$2.88 million had been assigned by the National Fish and Wildlife Service for fiscal year 2007 to the Neosho project. Blunt, working with U.S. Sen. Kit Bond, had secured \$1 million for the project in 2005.

"This project will benefit the kids, groups and tourism in the four-state area," Hendrix said. "Right now we do not have the space for tour buses. We have 40,000 visitors a year, most of them are children. The new facility, with its added space for exhibits and history of the 119-year old hatchery, will accommodate 100,000 visitors."

Hearing the news from Blunt's office, Teresa Van Winkle, president of the Friends of the Neosho National Fish Hatchery, said, "I literally had tears running down my face. I thought that we would not get the funding for this project this year. I was already working on the project for next year."

The existing visitor center is approximately 400-square-feet. The new one, which will be located on the north side of the hatchery,

near Hwy. 86, will cover nearly 9,500 square feet. The new center will house an auditorium, a library, and a bookstore / gift shop managed by the Friends group, exhibits about the hatchery's history, an aquarium and offices upstairs for staff.

"The new visitor's center at the nation's oldest active national fish hatchery is the result of the work of a host of local residents and hatchery supporters," Blunt said. "The new building will accommodate more students and tourism and will enhance the experience of visitors to the Neosho-Diamond area. This funding is a major commitment to educating visitors about the history of the Neosho hatchery and the natural resources that make it unique in the nation."

According to Hendrix, the hatchery not only receives local visitors, but also those from Kansas City and St. Louis. The next step for the hatchery is for engineers to make the finishing touches on the design and then go out for bids for the visitor's center project.

"We hope to go out for bids soon," said Hendrix. "We then hope to have the Visitor's Center done within the next year."

Founded in 1888, the fish hatchery is the oldest active federal hatchery in the nation and specializes in protecting endangered species like the blind Ozark cavefish and recovery of the pallid sturgeon to the lower Missouri River. The hatchery also produces rainbow trout and walleye in its Neosho spring waters.

*Todd Higdon, Daily News Staff Writer*



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This diagram displays the future Neosho National Fish Hatchery visitor center, which will increase visitor center space from 400 to 9,500 square feet.

### Ashland FRO Coordinates Circle of Flight Partnerships

Circle of Flight is a waterfowl restoration program unique to the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the Midwest Region. Initially funded in 1991, Circle of Flight has distributed more than \$9 million to 31 reservations and three inter-tribal organizations for waterfowl research and management projects and waterfowl habitat restoration and enhancement. Tribes use funds as match money for North American Waterfowl Management Plan projects.

Through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, the Ashland Fishery Resources Office (FRO), has worked in partnership with Circle of Flight, providing financial and technical assistance on tribal projects in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan. This year, Ashland FRO is taking a new approach to better provide assistance. Instead of the Ashland FRO being responsible for three states, staff will attend Circle of Flight meetings but coordinate projects with the three relevant state Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program offices.

Ashland FRO still directly assists the four tribes and three inter-tribal organizations in its

Wisconsin Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program area of responsibility. The office's Habitat and Wildlife Operations section is working with the Lac du Flambeau tribe to replace the water control structure on the 400-acre Sugarbush Impoundment on the 14,000-acre Powel Marsh, an emergent marsh wetland system that supports hundreds of thousands of migratory waterfowl and songbirds. A second project, in partnership with the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, will restore the 43-acre Jackson Box Flowage in Douglas County, Wis., an emergent marsh wetland that is an integral part of a 900-acre system important to migratory waterfowl and songbirds. Leveraging Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program dollars on these projects will have long-term benefits for migratory and local wildlife in northern Wisconsin.

*Ted Koehler, Ashland FRO*



### Lake Superior Binational Program Accomplishments

Ashland FRO personnel continue to work with the Lake Superior Binational Program, serving on the Lake Superior Task Force and Work Group, as United States Co-Chair of the Aquatics Community Committee and member of the Terrestrial Wildlife Community Committee. Significant accomplishments so far in FY 2007 include:

- attended Lake Superior Task Force, Work Group, Aquatic and Terrestrial Wildlife Community Committee meetings and conference calls;
- participated in the SOLEC conference held in Milwaukee in November, providing Aquatics Community Committee materials and comments on the draft presentation prepared for the Lake Superior breakout session, and provided materials for the Ecosystem Goals presentation of the SOLEC Lake Superior breakout session;
- in collaboration with our counterparts, submitted the three top priority committee accomplishments of 2006 for inclusion in the Lake Superior Annual Report;
- continued to support the Lake Superior Pathfinders Leadership School and the Connecting the Coast project;
- reviewed the Lakewide Management Plan (LaMP) Updater;
- provided input and edits to the revision of the Ecosystem Goals and participated in multiple conference calls about and provided material for the goals revision;
- in conjunction with the winter Lake Superior Technical Committee meeting, solicited presentations on fisheries issues for the October State of the Lake Conference, developed topics for discussion and action by the Aquatics

Community Committee, including progress on the 2004-06 work plan, and development of work plan priorities for 2007-09;

- presented status updates on lake sturgeon and coaster brook trout rehabilitation at the Great Lakes Fishery Commission Lake Committee meeting in March;
- coordinated Terrestrial Wildlife Community Committee involvement in implementing the herptile project by tracking project progress and organizing conference calls to receive updates and provide committee input to the principle investigators;
- attended two Hog Island planning meetings to offer input into restoration and protection activities proposed for the site.

*Ted Koehler, Ashland FRO*

### Genoa Biologist Nominated to Lead Mussel Group

Tony Brady, mussel propagation biologist at the Genoa NFH, was recently asked to step up from the ranks and serve as propagation committee chair of the Freshwater Mussel Conservation Society.

The Freshwater Mussel Conservation Society is devoted to advocacy for, public education about, and conservation science of freshwater mollusks, North America's most imperiled fauna. Brady has been stationed at the Genoa NFH for four years, and has been an integral part of the station's endangered mussel recovery efforts. He also brings specific skills to the position, including being a member of the hatchery dive team. Having Brady's diving skills at Genoa allows biologists to collect adults and place mussel culture cages on recovery sites at the best possible times of the year. He is also skilled in mussel population surveys and assessments, a



nontraditional role for fish hatcheries which has allowed the station to participate in mussel restoration efforts across the country.

This new leadership position should allow Brady to continue his career development and growth and continue to do great things for the mussel resources of the Upper Mississippi River basin.

*Doug Aloisi, Genoa NFH*



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**Tony Brady of the Genoa National Fish Hatchery is the new chairperson of the Freshwater Mussel Conservation Society. He was the first mussel propagation biologist hired by the Fish and Wildlife Service.**

### **Alpena FRO Participates in Michigan Wildlife Plan Meeting**

Alpena FRO Project Leader Jerry McClain participated in Michigan's Wildlife Action Plan: Conservation Partners' Working Meeting in March. The meeting kicked off the process of identifying priorities and actions for implementation of Michigan's State Wildlife Action Plan. More than 70 representatives of state, federal and non-government partners attended, resulting in a very productive one-day session. Participants helped identify the highest priority issues in advance, to focus the discussion when the group convened. Breakout sessions addressed the five highest priorities identified: invasive species, habitat fragmentation, wetland modifications, social attitudes and

altered hydrologic regimes. The group agreed on numerous actions, and the next step will be to refine the list to address a manageable suite of actions to facilitate the initial implementation phase of the action plan. Also attending and representing the Fish and Wildlife Service were Jim Hudgins (Partners for Fish and Wildlife) and Chris Mensing (East Lansing Field Office).

*Jerry McClain, Alpena FRO*

### **Middle Basin Pallid Sturgeon Workgroup Stocking Subcommittee**

Columbia FRO Project Leader Tracy Hill and Branch Chief for Missouri River Studies Wyatt Doyle attended a stocking subcommittee meeting in St. Joseph, Mo., to determine pallid sturgeon stocking numbers for the lower Missouri River and work out logistic concerns for the state and federal hatcheries that are rearing pallid sturgeon. In addition, the group discussed whether hatcheries should hold pallid sturgeons that are within a year of stocking when captured from the wild, the appropriate number of fish to be stocked per family group produced, and which sites to use for stocking hatchery produced pallid sturgeons. The meeting was a tremendous success, equipping hatchery managers with the tools to make decisions for future brood stock production.

*Tracy Hill, Columbia FRO*

### **Rivers and Streams Technical Committee Meeting**

Columbia FRO Project Leader Tracy Hill traveled to Rock Island, Ill., to attend the North Central Division of the American Fisheries Society Rivers and Streams Technical Committee Spring Meeting. The committee invited him to deliver a presentation on the Midwest Region's Fish Passage Program, giving him an opportunity to tell meeting participants about the program and illustrate how the program has been functioning within Region 3 to provide passage for aquatic organisms. Hill gave a brief history of the program, explained how interested parties could get prospective projects to the appropriate contacts, and highlighted projects that had been completed or were in the process of being completed by the Columbia FRO.

*Tracy Hill, Columbia FRO*

### **Columbia FRO Attends Missouri River Conference**

During the week of March 5, private citizens and representatives from state and federal agencies along the Missouri River met in Nebraska City, Neb., at the annual Missouri River Natural Resources Conference, co-sponsored by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Fish and Wildlife Service. This annual conference serves as a forum for public and private stakeholders along the Missouri River, to present and discuss the results of river research. Tracy Hill, Wyatt Doyle, Nick Utrup and Cliff Wilson of the Columbia FRO attended the meeting and shared information during talks and poster presentations. Doyle presented information on the dispersal of hatchery reared



pallid sturgeons from the stocking site throughout the lower Missouri River; Utrup presented information on the population characteristics of shovelnose sturgeon in the lower Missouri River; and Wilson presented a poster on the use of side channel chute habitat by fish, compared to the main channel of the Missouri River.

This conference was a huge success and allowed several agencies and individuals with interest in resource management of the Missouri River, to come together and share information and ideas about managing this unique ecosystem.

*Nick Utrup and Cliff Wilson, Columbia FRO*

### Biologists Summarize Sturgeon Activities

Columbia FRO biologists Nick Utrup and Andrew Plauck completed annual reports for the *Pallid Sturgeon Population Assessment and Associated Fish Community Monitoring Project*. Columbia FRO monitors the lower 250 miles of the Missouri River, which is divided into two segments. Detailed annual reports are required for each segment. Utrup and Plauck, along with technician Patricia Herman, spent the last three weeks of March compiling and analyzing data, building graphs, writing and editing text for each of the 165-page reports.

These reports give biologists a chance to interpret results from the hundreds of datasheets they have completed in the previous year. Despite all of last year's efforts and the 34,000 fish captured in the two segments, only 16 pallid sturgeons were captured. Eleven were of traceable hatchery origin. The other five were not marked; genetic testing will deter-

mine whether they are wild or hatchery origin pallid sturgeons. This very low number of fish shows the rarity of this endangered species. Other fish in the Missouri River are not so rare: 4,300 shovelnose sturgeons were captured within the same time period.

Pallid sturgeon recovery is a priority of the Columbia FRO. Standardized sampling effort and reporting will allow biologists to detect changes between years and between different reaches of the Missouri River.

*Andy Plauck, Nick Utrup and Patty Herman; Columbia FRO*

### Missouri River Recovery/Mitigation Agency Coordination Team Meeting

Columbia FRO biologist Cliff Wilson attended the quarterly meeting of the Missouri River Recovery/Mitigation Agency Coordination Team on March 15. At these meetings, representatives from state and federal agencies involved in the recovery/mitigation program are briefed on program progress, allowing the team to use state and federal monitoring data to determine whether mitigation sites are performing as expected and to plan for future mitigation sites.

Under the Missouri River Fish and Wildlife Mitigation Project, a variety of aquatic and terrestrial habitats acquired by the Army Corps of Engineers have been restored and developed in the Missouri River and its floodplain to enhance the habitat for fish and wildlife. To date, 15 mitigation areas are open and providing habitat for fish and wildlife. Four more areas are currently under construction and 21 are in the acquisition process.

Monitoring by state and federal agencies along the Missouri River basin will enable the coordination team to determine whether the mitigation sites are performing as expected. Columbia FRO continues to partner with other agencies to conserve and increase native fish populations in the Missouri River and to identify and take appropriate actions.

*Cliff Wilson, Columbia FRO*

### La Crosse FRO Assists with Eagle Count

La Crosse FRO biologist Heidi Keuler and volunteers Barb Hammes and Jackie Rand helped the La Crosse District of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge with its annual eagle count on March 19. They counted 73 bald eagles during their 25 mile road survey on the Minnesota side of Pool 8. The La Crosse District totals were 249 eagles for Pool 7 and 381 for Pool 8, for a total of 630 bald eagles. This year some of the backwaters were still frozen and the Black River was too high to get a boat under the bridges so some areas were inaccessible for counting. Last year, observers counted 618 eagles in the La Crosse District.

*Heidi Keuler, La Crosse FRO*



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**Heidi Keuler from the La Crosse Fishery Resources Office and volunteers Barb Hammes and Jackie Rand assisted the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge with their annual eagle count.**

# Aquatic Species Conservation and Management

## Mississippi River Museum assists with Mussel Restoration

The mussel program at Genoa NFH has been expanding over the past four years as management agencies realize the potential of propagated mussels produced by the hatchery. One challenge the program faces is how to handle agency requests for mussel species that use host fish not in production at the hatchery. One such mussel is the yellow sandshell which uses long nose and short nose gar as its host. The yellow sandshell is a species of interest to several states along the upper Mississippi River.

The biggest challenge to propagate yellow sandshell is to find a source of yearling gar. Genoa NFH and the La Crosse FRO teamed up to electrofish gar from the Mississippi River near Lansing, Iowa. Lansing is home to a coal burning power plant that has a warm water discharge throughout the year. It is this warm water discharge that attracts large numbers of fish, including yearling gar. In less than two hours of electrofishing, biologists collected 52 gar comprised of both long nose and short nose species. The gar were transported to the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium in Dubuque, Iowa, where they will be housed until May. They will then be inoculated with yellow sandshell glochidia and placed in cages. Progeny from this year's culture effort will be used to start restoration of yellow sandshell at several key sites in the Upper Mississippi River and its tributaries.

*Tony Brady, Genoa NFH*



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The yellow sandshell mussel utilizes gar as a fish host for its larvae. Genoa National Fish Hatchery is working with the National Mississippi River Museum in Dubuque, Iowa, to develop a culture program for this species of freshwater mussel.

## Pallid Sturgeon Brood Stock Collected

Propagating pallid sturgeon is an important component of the recovery plan for this endangered species. Collecting, holding and transporting brood stock is a collaborative effort among multiple agencies and offices. As part of this effort, Columbia FRO has been collecting local wild brood stock to be spawned at Neosho NFH. The brood stock collection season started with a bang when a suspected egg-bearing female was captured on March 6.

Crews captured a second wild pallid sturgeon in the same area of the Missouri River near Boonville, Mo., on March 19. Crew members included Nick Frohnauer, Andy Starostka and Jennifer Johnson. This large (35 inch) and lean (5 pound) pallid sturgeon is likely a male or a non-spawning female. The fish was captured off the tip of a wing-dike on an outside bend in a gill net. The fish was kept secured in the river until hatchery biologists arrived later in the day. Blind Pony state fish hatchery personnel transported the fish to Neosho NFH, where it will be evaluated

for use in the spawning effort for the propagation program.

Reporter Sara Agnew and a photographer from the Columbia Tribune were present when this fish was captured. On March 27, the Tribune ran an article on propagation efforts to recover pallid sturgeon. The article can be found at <http://archive.columbiatribune.com/2007/mar/20070329news001.asp>.  
*Andy Starostka and Nick Frohnauer, Columbia FRO*

## Annual Spring Fin Clipping Activities

Spring fin clipping activities can be quite challenging in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan at Pendills Creek NFH, and this year's chain of events to complete this essential activity are typical to what goes on year after year. Clipping certain fins off hatchery produced fish is essential for population assessment biologists to determine wild verses hatchery fish origin and other pertinent management information. Hiring and maintaining the most effective and efficient number of fin clippers is always a challenge. Turn-over of employees in these types of positions and replacement with new employees yearly can become very time consuming and laborious for the field in order to complete this mission-critical activity prior to fish distribution. With increases in fish production of both fall fingerlings and yearlings, the emphasis and need in getting these lake trout fin clipped and ready for fish distribution has grown immensely. Complicating these activities are weather-related challenges we face nearly every spring — abnormally cold temperatures, major

snow events and very cold water temperatures, especially for the fin clippers who have their hands immersed in water all day long.

Fortunately, we are blessed with a very dedicated group of individuals that brave the weather, work in the cold water, and report for duty every day. Without these additional helpers our fin clipping would not be completed in time for fish distribution. So we thank these workers whole heartedly when this activity is completed each year. "Thank you fin clippers!"

*Curt Friez, Pendills Creek NFH*

### **Alpena and Jordan River Collaborate on Trout Stocking Poster**

Biologists Aaron Woldt of the Alpena FRO and Tim Smigielski of Jordan River NFH created a GIS-based map of stocking trips made by the *M/V Togue* in 2006. The *M/V Togue*, based in Cheboygan, Mich., was the Fish and Wildlife Service's offshore stocking vessel used to plant yearling lake trout in United States waters of lakes Huron and Michigan in support of interagency lake trout rehabilitation programs. In 2007, the vessel was replaced by the *M/V Spencer F. Baird*.

Smigielski worked with Captain Mike Perry to obtain coordinates for all waypoints and lake trout stocking locations used by the *M/V Togue* in both lakes Huron and Michigan. Woldt created a map showing trip paths, waypoints, stocking locations, total miles traveled and total number of lake trout stocked. In 2006, the *M/V Togue* traveled 876 miles in Lake Huron, stocking 1,059,268 yearling lake trout, and 1,754 miles in Lake Michigan, planting 1,992,865 yearlings. Woldt formatted a poster-sized electronic version of this

map, which Midwest Region personnel can use to educate the public and Fish and Wildlife Service employees about vessel operations. It was displayed at the 2007 Great Lakes Fishery Commission Combined Upper and Lower Lake Committee meetings.

*Aaron Woldt, Alpena FRO*

### **Biologist Assists with Walleye Telemetry Project**

Biologist Jim McFee from the Alpena FRO provided assistance to the Ohio Division of Wildlife (ODOW) for the second year of a walleye telemetry project. McFee traveled to the Sandusky, Ohio, Lake Erie Research Station during February and March to help ODOW prepare gear and provide instruction on the use of telemetry equipment to the crew that will be continuing the project, initiated by McFee when he previously worked at the station.

The Sandusky River and Sandusky Bay walleye spawning stocks are a very important contributor to the Lake Erie walleye population. In the spring of 2006, McFee initiated a walleye telemetry project to investigate additional spawning locations in Sandusky Bay. The project involved tagging 50 adult walleye with radio transmitters. Crews collected fish near the mouth of the bay after ice-out using short-duration gillnet sets and a commercial seine.

McFee implanted several select male and female adults with individually coded transmitters. Because of the lack of visual gametes, sex was determined by body shape. After implantation, fish were tracked by fixed station, aerial and mobile boat tracking. Three fixed stations are located in the

Sandusky Bay and Sandusky River, the middle of the bay at a bridge constriction, the mouth of the river and just downstream of the historical spawning site in the river. Each station records the presence of individual fish if they pass. Mobile boat and aerial tracking consists of running transects that cover the entire bay, to ensure sufficient radio coverage. The river tracking is performed by traveling to the Ballville Dam, which acts as a fish barrier to any upstream migration. In 2007, egg mats will be added to the study to confirm spawning in the bay, at locations where fish were located during the 2006 spawning season.

The second year of data may reveal additional spawning locations for this important walleye stock and give biologists information on successive year spawning. McFee will be involved as a consultant if questions concerning data collection occur and will have a hand in the final analysis and write up, to continue the partnership between these two agencies.

*James McFee, Alpena FRO*



**Walleye, a prized catch for Lake Erie fishermen.**



## Gill Nets Maintained

In March, Alpena FRO biologists Scott Koproski and Adam Kowalski finished repairing bottom set gill nets fished during the 2006 fishery independent lake whitefish survey in 1836 Treaty waters. They mended or slugged more than 10,000 feet of gill nets with mesh size ranging from two to six inches, increasing in half-inch increments. A gang of gill nets fished in the survey consists of three 900-foot boxes of net, for a total effort of 2,700 feet. Two to three gangs of gill nets were fished daily during the duration of this project.

The data collected from this survey is used in the catch-at-age models for 1836 Treaty waters. Alpena FRO is responsible for collecting data from Lake Huron Whitefish Management Units 4 and 5. Catch-at-age models are used to calculate harvest limits in 1836 Treaty waters for tribal commercial, state commercial and state recreational fisheries. Allocation of harvest within each management unit is defined within the consent decree signed in 2000 by the state of Michigan, five 1836 Treaty tribes and the federal government.

*Scott Koproski, Alpena FRO*

## Fish Health Center Keeps Busy

Eighteen cases initiated at the La Crosse FHC in March totaled 52 lots of fish from 15 species. Testing included federal hatchery inspections, wild fish health surveys, state fish hatchery cooperative agreements and VHS viral surveillance in the Great Lakes basin. This is the start of the Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia surveillance and Spring Viremia of Carp and Largemouth Bass Virus season. The workload will continue to be at peak levels for many months.

*Rick Nelson, La Crosse FHC*



*-USFWS photo by Rick Nelson*

**Fish health inspection set-up at the Neosho NFH.**

## Fish Health Analysis Conducted for Neosho NFH

La Crosse FHC Project Leader Rick Nelson completed a fish health examination at Neosho NFH in Missouri. Four lots (60 fish each) of rainbow trout being raised at the hatchery for stocking throughout Missouri were tested for the list of certifiable fish pathogens, as required by the current versions of the Fish and Wildlife Service/American Fisheries Society Blue Book and the Fish and Wildlife Service Aquatic Animal Health Procedures and Protocols. All production fish were tested with results pending.

A special thanks to hatchery employees Ralph Simmons and Jaime Pacheco for their valuable assistance during the inspection.

*Rick Nelson, La Crosse FHC*

# Aquatic Invasive Species

## Pike Spawning Interrupted by Virus Fears

Concern about a new strain of fish virus that is triggering widespread fish die-offs in the Great Lakes has caused fisheries managers to alter many ongoing management programs this year. VHS, or Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia, is a serious fish virus that causes hemorrhaging of skin, muscle and internal organs, resulting in death. Biologists are concerned that fish moving among the Great Lakes and interconnected waterways may lead to the unintentional spread of the virus. The U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) passed an emergency rule halting all interstate movement of fish from the Great Lakes states until fish were tested for the virus.

To protect inland fisheries populations, some states have decided to further regulate fish movement. In early April, the state of Wisconsin shut down all transfer of fish from the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River to state waters in hopes of isolating inland waters from the virus. Genoa NFH has operated wild brood stock and egg collections from the Mississippi River since 1932. Because of this state emergency order, Genoa was not able to fill any northern pike egg and fry requests for inland waters of the state.

Regional fisheries personnel, including the La Crosse FHC, will continue to monitor the Upper Mississippi River in an effort to track this and other fish health threats through the National Wild Fish Health Survey.

*Doug Aloisi, Genoa NFH*



-USFWS

**Netting crews from the Genoa National Fish Hatchery check nets for wild northern pike brood stock on the Mississippi River.**

## Invader Expands in Lake Superior Only

The fishery resources offices in Ashland, Alpena and Lower Great Lakes collaborated with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR) to draft *Surveillance For Ruffe in the Great Lakes, 2006*, which summarizes fish sampling activity in each of the Great Lakes targeting invasive Eurasian ruffe, as well as other reported fish sampling that may incidentally capture ruffe. The invasive, perch-like ruffe received the stigma of "nuisance species" in 1992, following suspected implication with declines of native forage fish in the harbor of Duluth, Minn., and Superior, Wis. From sampling data, biologists identify new locations containing ruffe, update the range and evaluate the control strategy based on locations of new discoveries and suspected pathways of introduction. Sampling that targets ruffe also collects baseline data on native fish communities.

Since 1992, the Fish and Wildlife Service and OMNR have been tracking the ruffe to document its range, evaluating opportunities to delay ruffe range expansion in the

Great Lakes, and working to prevent range expansion into inland lakes and streams. Cooperators with this task include the U.S. Geological Survey, the state departments of natural resources bordering the Great Lakes, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Environment Canada, Native American communities, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Sea Grant, universities, and anglers.

The ruffe was confined to western Lake Superior until 1995, when it was detected in Lake Huron, near Alpena, Mich. Catch per unit effort in Lake Huron surveillance trawls reached a high of 660 per hour in 1999, but declined to zero in 2001. Capitalizing on a distressed, self-confined ruffe population, the Alpena FRO sped the ruffe decline by initiating an intense gill netting effort in 2002 to remove adult spawning ruffe. Paralleling the ruffe decline in Lake Huron was increasing round goby abundance there, suggesting that the goby may have also been a contributing factor in the ruffe decline. No ruffe have been captured from Lake Huron since 2003.

In Lake Superior during 2006, the ruffe made a major range advance of 226 km east along the south shore from Marquette Harbor, Mich. Along the Lake Superior north shore, minor expansion was verified within the ruffe range in Thunder Bay, Ontario. The Bays de Noc have comprised the ruffe range in Lake Michigan since 2002 and 2004, and no ruffe range expansion was detected in Lake Michigan during 2006. In the Lower Great Lakes, ruffe remain undetected. The surveillance report is available at <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/ashland>. *Gary Czipinski, Ashland FRO*

## Public Use

### Genoa NFH, La Crosse FRO and Friends Team on Exhibit

Roger Gordon and Doug Aloisi from Genoa NFH and Pam Thiel and Heidi Keuler from the La Crosse FRO are working with Fred Kusch and other members from Friends of the Upper Mississippi Fishery Services on an exhibit for the Myrick Eco-Park, a zoo being designed in La Crosse, Wis. Myrick Eco-Park will feature animals indigenous to North America and reflective of Wisconsin, as well as have an educational nature center. The Friends group hopes to have an exhibit in the nature center showing that the Mississippi River is a national treasure, telling the past, present and future story of the "Mighty Miss," and enticing the public to work with the Friends to preserve the river's valuable assets.

Fish and Wildlife Service employees helped Friends group members brainstorm ideas for interactive displays and learning activities. Some of these ideas include working with mussels, fish, invertebrates and learning how human practices have impacted these resources, both positive and negative. Members of this project hope to raise money for the exhibit during a banquet this October.

*Heidi Keuler, La Crosse FRO*



### Alpena FRO Outreach Activities

Alpena FRO biologists Anjanette Bowen and Heather Rawlings participated in the Michigan Regional Science Olympiad tournament on March 10, judging the ecology category, and administering an ecology test they developed for six junior high and eight high school teams. Bowen and Rawlings investing a considerable amount of time and effort in designing the tests. First through third place finishers in each category received medals, and the schools that ranked the highest overall advanced in the competition, becoming eligible to compete at the state level.

Rawlings also participated in Fairview High School's Career Day on March 16. She discussed careers with the Fish and Wildlife Service, focusing on her career as a fisheries/private lands biologist and emphasizing the importance of obtaining a college degree and following your dreams. The presentation was interactive to harness the attention of the students, and gave them a chance to articulate their future intentions. Several students expressed a strong interest in Fish and Wildlife Service employment programs. This is the second year the Alpena FRO has participated in Fairview's Career Day.

*Heather Rawlings, Alpena FRO*



*-USFWS photo by Heather Rawlings*

**Fairview High School's Career Day was held on March 16th. Biologist Heather Rawlings from the Alpena Fishery Resources Office discussed careers with the Fish and Wildlife Service.**

### Missouri Night at Paxton Keeley Elementary

Columbia FRO Project Leader Tracy Hill and technician Lee Erickson attended Missouri Night at Paxton Keeley Elementary, a forum to teach fourth grade students and their parents about the cultural and natural resources of the great state of Missouri. The night was a success with 150 participants.

Columbia FRO displayed a fish identification puzzle, printed materials and a slide show. A squishy sturgeon was awarded to students who matched the correct fish on the fish puzzle. The sturgeon award provided an opportunity to talk about the endangered pallid sturgeon's life history, habitat and ongoing recovery efforts. The slide show highlighted fish of the Missouri River. Students found the slide show fascinating and couldn't believe that those fish were caught right there in the Missouri River.

*Lee Erickson, Columbia FRO*



# Cooperation with Native Americans

## Red Lake Walleye Restoration Effort Continues

The Ashland FRO is continuing to work with the Red Lake Band of Chippewa, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Bureau of Indian Affairs and the University of Minnesota to restore a naturally spawning population of walleye in Red Lake. In December, Mark Brouder and Frank Stone met with the Red Lake Task Force Committee to discuss the walleye restoration program and performance indicators of this long-term restoration effort.

Topics discussed included: the opening of the 2007 walleye fishery in Red Lake; the exceptional natural reproduction and recruitment in the upper and lower Red Lakes; protecting 17 to 26 inch walleye; and closing the walleye sport fishery when the harvest cap is reached.

The tribe will likely not return to commercial fishing in 2007; however, plans are being made to once again activate the commercial fishery in 2008. Once initiated, safe harvest quotas will be set and monitored. Data was distributed highlighting walleye population forecast models, winter harvest estimates and 2007 harvest plans. Invasive species and lake sturgeon updates were also presented.

The law enforcement effort on Upper Red Lake will continue to be significant. The Army Corps of Engineers has funds set aside to modify the Red Lake dam, allowing for a collection and transfer of specific fish species from below the dam. The forage fish trawling effort by the Ashland FRO will again be needed in 2007. The tribe signed a reimbursable agreement for this effort.

Historically, the Red Lakes have provided food, recreation, cultural pursuits and income to many people. Government leadership, cooperation and coordination have been paramount throughout the recovery process. All parties have demonstrated a willingness to provide leadership by example to achieve the community support and involvement required to reach the goals of the Red Lake walleye recovery effort.

*Frank Stone, Ashland FRO*



**The Ashland Fishery Resources Office continues to work with the Red Lake Band of Chippewa, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Bureau of Indian Affairs and the University of Minnesota to restore a naturally spawning population of walleye in Minnesota's Red Lake.**

## Ashland FRO Assists with Scoring Tribal Grants

Frank Stone from the Ashland FRO assisted regional Tribal Liaison John Leonard with scoring the 2007 Tribal Wildlife and Tribal Landowner Incentive Program grants. This is a national scoring process for project proposals submitted by tribes throughout the United States. Stone reviewed 28 proposals — 19 Tribal Wildlife and 9 Tribal Landowner Incentive Program grants.

A review team first scored all proposals submitted to each region, then forwarded their top ranked proposals to the national panel. The proposals reviewed at the national level included regionally ranked proposals that scored at or above the top 60 percent. Although the list of accepted grants has yet to be finalized, tribal resource programs throughout the United States will soon be receiving the financial help they need to initiate projects ranging from base line data collection and habitat restoration to the control of invasive plant species.

The tribal grant programs will provide funding opportunities to tribes for activities that protect and restore habitats that will benefit fish and wildlife species of tribal significance. These grant programs also support the efforts of tribal governments to develop or augment the capacity to manage, conserve or protect fish and wildlife species of concern through the provision of additional funding and technical support.

*Frank Stone, Ashland FRO*

### MTAN assists Tribes

The Ashland FRO has the unique distinction of providing technical assistance for numerous tribal fish hatchery operations. One of the ways we contribute to these programs is by publishing a quarterly newsletter. The Midwest Tribal Aquaculture Network (MTAN) is dedicated to assisting tribal hatchery programs by sharing cool/cold water fish culture information. For example, after attending a workshop on the "What-When and How" of pond fertilization for northern climates, Ashland FRO biologist Frank Stone will be able to share the techniques and information he gained in a future issue of the MTAN.

The MTAN has been assisting tribal fish hatchery programs for 16 years. The reward from this kind of technical assistance is in knowing we are providing information that enables hatchery programs to better utilize their resources and provide a healthier product for the fishery. The MTAN has also helped to educate fish hatchery staff and direct them to other areas so they can better research their specific needs.

*Frank Stone, Ashland FRO*



### Biologists Co-Chair Meeting

Biologist Aaron Woldt of the Alpena FRO and John Netto of the Green Bay FRO co-chaired the March meeting of the Modeling Subcommittee of the Technical Fisheries Committee. The primary focus of this meeting was to generate preliminary 2007 harvest limits for lake trout in 1836 Treaty waters of lakes Huron, Superior and Michigan, although the group discussed other technical matters. As stipulated in the 2000 Consent Decree, preliminary lake trout harvest numbers must be calculated by the Modeling Subcommittee, reviewed by the Technical Fisheries Committee, and presented to the parties to the decree by March 31 each year. The subcommittee will complete final lake trout harvest numbers and present them to the Technical Fisheries Committee for review at its May 4 meeting.

Woldt and Ji He of the Michigan DNR presented an update of the status of two northern Lake Huron lake trout stock assessment models, model diagnostic output, and preliminary 2007 lake trout harvest limits. In both models, the 2007 preliminary lake trout harvest limits decreased from 2006 levels as a result of changes in the lake trout population structure and survival of young fish. The MSC will continue to evaluate and monitor these changes.

In addition to performing model analyses, Woldt helped run the Modeling Subcommittee meeting, ensuring all agenda items were discussed and kept meeting minutes. A preliminary draft of the March meeting minutes was emailed to members for review.

Harvest limits produced at this meeting, when reviewed by the parties and finalized, will become

binding for lake trout in 1836 Treaty waters, allowing lake trout fisheries to be executed while still protecting the biological integrity of the lake trout stocks.

*Aaron Woldt, Alpena FRO*

## Leadership in Science and Technology

### Sampling of Lake Sturgeon Spawning Sites Resumes on the Detroit River

Biologists James Boase and Jim McFee and with biologists from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Great Lakes Science Center, resumed sampling historic and newly created lake sturgeon spawning sites on the Detroit River. Sampling occurred in United States and Canadian waters of the river from Oct. 30 to Dec. 4 and resumed after ice-out on March 19. Fall sampling focused on identifying lake whitefish use of the Detroit River, while spring efforts have been directed at all native species with particular emphasis on walleye and lake sturgeon spawning locations.

During the sampling period, biologists used several methods to collect information on fish species spawning in the Detroit River. Fish and Wildlife Service efforts were directed at compiling age and growth data on the adult stages of species spawning in the river using gillnets, setlines and baited traps. USGS biologists used egg mats, egg pumping equipment and larval nets to identify early life-history stages of species spawning in the river, where they were spawning and when spawning was taking place. This research will continue through the spring of 2008.

Through this collaborative effort, lake whitefish have been found spawning at a number of locations in the Detroit River for the first time in almost a century. Both adult and young lake sturgeons have also been found occupying sections of the river in late fall and winter, indicating that suitable nursery habitat exists and the fish may reside in the river year-round.

Results from this research provide insight on the remaining spawning habitats in the Detroit River and also provide insight on the utility of creating artificial spawning habitat.

*James Boase, Alpena FRO*



*-USFWS photo by James Boase*

**Alpena Fishery Resources Office biologist Jim McFee and Mary Bohling of Michigan Sea Grant hold a lake sturgeon caught in March on the Detroit River during sampling on historic and newly created lake sturgeon spawning sites.**

### Where Did All the Pallids Go?

Biologists, administrators, basin stakeholders and students attended the Missouri River Natural Resources Conference, sharing information on pallid sturgeon and the Missouri River. Columbia FRO took the lead in preparing a database and summarizing pallid sturgeon recapture information from stocked pallid sturgeons captured over five years by seven crews in the lower 800 miles of the river.

The presentation, given by Wyatt Doyle with help in preparation by Nick Utrup and Andrew Plauck, was time well invested as it provided the first look into stocking success and general trends in dispersal behavior of hatchery raised pallid sturgeons. The data showed that only 0.06 percent of the 70,000 fish stocked were being captured each year by monitoring crews. Interestingly

though, age three fish were returning at a rate of three to five times higher than yearling fish. Additional information showed that pallid sturgeons in the lowest part of the Missouri River did not significantly disperse from their stocking site while fish in the upper-most portion dispersed significantly downstream, and fish in the middle of the river moved only slightly downstream. In all cases, the data showed the pallid sturgeons had an affinity to their stocking site but with different home ranges and did not disperse throughout the river.

The database created through this exercise will enhance our ability to get stocking success summaries back out to the team and the information provided in this presentation will be a catalyst to analyze population changes and decide on future stocking sites, sizes and numbers in the future.

*Wyatt Doyle, Columbia FRO*



# Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management

## Columbia and Carterville Team Up to Tackle the Mississippi

The Fish and Wildlife Service is a close community where getting the job done is important, not only for individual offices but for the entire region as well. That was evidenced during the month of March when the Columbia FRO sent two technicians per week to support field sampling efforts of an understaffed Carterville FRO. Columbia FRO help included Christopher Clemens, Derek Eisenbrei, Colby Wrasse, Christopher McLeland and Kyle Winders, who assisted Carterville FRO biologists Nate Caswell and Rick Echols with winter fish sampling on the Mississippi River. The team used a variety of sampling gears including gill nets, mini-fyke nets, hoop nets, trawling and electrofishing.

This work was a continuation of an ongoing project examining the effects of dike alterations on the fish community. The current configuration of wing dikes on the middle Mississippi River typically creates homogenous habitat, usually consisting of a single deep swift channel that many species do not prefer. It is believed that modifying these wing dikes will lead to greater habitat heterogeneity and ultimately a more diverse fish assemblage. By monitoring the fish community before and after the dike alterations, biologists will be able to determine the effectiveness of the project.

Deep-water electrofishing was a new experience for Columbia FRO staff. Electrodes are set as deep as 40 feet to sample benthic fish, an effective way to sample scours above and below wing dikes, as evidenced by their catching

several giant blue catfish along with Asian carp, freshwater drum and channel catfish among others. Since the electrofishing boat must steer a consistent course, a chase boat is used to retrieve fish that surface, normally occurring several meters downstream.

This collaborative effort underscores the necessity of offices working together to accomplish their goals. Furthermore, the sampling could not have been accomplished without the volunteer help of Chris Clemens. Columbia FRO has a history of having dedicated volunteers, and some of these volunteers have parlayed the experience they gained into full time jobs in the natural resources field.

*Colby Wrasse, Derek Eisenbrei and Chris McLeland; Columbia FRO*



*-USFWS photo by Nate Caswell*

**Volunteer Chris Clemens from the Columbia Fishery Resources Office (FRO) holds a large blue catfish collected in the Mississippi River while assisting the Carterville Fishery Resources Office.**

## Novel Approach May Benefit Threatened Fish

The Missouri Department of Transportation (DOT) is in the first phase of developing a Highway 54 loop around the heavily congested Lake of the Ozarks region. As part of Phase I, more

than 3,000 feet of streams will be placed in culverts. Missouri DOT biologists approached the Missouri Department of Conservation, Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers with a novel idea to meet their mitigation requirements. They would like to consider replacing up to four low water crossings over the Little Niangua River with free-span structures. The current structures limit movements of the threatened Niangua darter. This project idea would help the DOT meet county and watershed requirements of their mitigation activities.

Much remains to be resolved concerning the feasibility of this idea with regards to state and federal mitigation requirements. Columbia FRO Branch Chief for Fish Conservation Joanne Grady accompanied biologist Rick Hansen of the Missouri Ecological Services Field Office and Eliodora Chamberlain of the Environmental Protection Agency to the meeting. Joanne provided information regarding previously completed Niangua darter passage projects and information about each of the four crossings in question. Columbia FRO surveyed all four crossings for their aquatic organism passage impacts in December. Hansen represents the Fish and Wildlife Service on the multi-agency team that reviews mitigation policy including mitigation banks (aquatic and wetland) and in-lieu-fee agreements. He reviews U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 404 permits for stream impact review. This meeting is a fantastic example of partners working within and between agencies to develop new ideas for habitat restoration.

*Joanne Grady, Columbia FRO*

# Workforce Management

## Offices “Go Green” at Volunteer Banquet

On March 9, the La Crosse FRO and La Crosse District of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife & Fish Refuge (NW&FR) thanked their hard-working volunteers at the Annual Volunteer Banquet. The theme this year was “Go Green,” with an emphasis on being environmentally friendly. The banquet room was decorated St. Patrick’s Day style along with environmentally friendly messages. Dinner was corned beef and cabbage or baked fish. Entertainment was provided by the *River City Strings* before dinner and Chuck and Regina Chihak after the award ceremony.

During fiscal year 2006, fishery volunteers contributed more than 617 hours to the La Crosse FRO, assisting in endangered mussel propagation, invasive species monitoring, lake sturgeon tagging, fish collections for the wild fish health survey and fishery surveys. Fifteen people contributed to this volunteer effort, and La Crosse FRO recognized Don Schroederas as the volunteer who contributed the most hours in 2006, a total of 250 hours. Schroederas is also a two-time *Volunteer of the Year* and reached the 3,000 hour club last year for volunteer service with the La Crosse FRO and the La Crosse District of the Upper Mississippi River NW&FR.

La Crosse FRO recognized Ken Visger as the 2006 *Volunteer of the Year*. Visger has been instrumental in developing the Friends of the Upper Mississippi Fishery Services. Visger also helped with the La Crosse Boat Show and sturgeon tagging. Pete Schaettle was added to the La Crosse FRO

Volunteer Hall of Fame and Jeff Dahl received recognition for donating more than 364 accumulative hours over the past five years. All 15 volunteers received a certificate, volunteer pin and a small gift.

*Heidi Keuler, La Crosse FRO*



-USFWS

Entertainment for the annual volunteer banquet for the La Crosse area Fish and Wildlife Service offices was provided by the *River City Strings*.

## Fishery Biologist: A Career to Consider

Biologist Mark Steingraeber of the La Crosse FRO participated for the third consecutive year in the 8th Grade Career Day at Aquinas Middle School in La Crosse, Wis. About 90 students attended the March 9 event to hear about 18 different careers. Students selected from among these career choices, attending four presentations given by local professionals. The morning-long event culminated a month-long Guidance Department program designed to encourage students to think about career options. Steingraeber discussed the duties, responsibilities and requirements of a professional fishery biologist for the Fish and Wildlife Service while a computer screensaver displayed examples of the diverse work performed by Fish and Wildlife Service biologists around the country.

Based on personal experiences dating back more than 30 years, Steingraeber described the educational path and life-journey that led him to a satisfying natural resource career in service to the nation. Students were encouraged to closely examine potential career choices by actively participating in volunteer opportunities offered to them in high school and college.

*Mark Steingraeber, La Crosse FRO*



-USFWS

Mark Steingraeber of the La Crosse Fishery Resources Office talks to students from Aquinas Middle School in La Crosse, Wisconsin, at Career Day.

## Columbia FRO Welcomes New Staff

Columbia FRO’s staff grew by three this winter. Here are their stories:

Brett Witte – I was born here in Columbia, Missouri, but moved to Glasgow [Missouri] in time for the 6th grade. I graduated from high school in Glasgow and then returned to Columbia to attend the University of Missouri. I earned a Bachelor of Science in Fisheries & Wildlife Sciences w/ a minor in Biology. I coded fisheries surveys for the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) as a student. I also worked on the crew tending the Show-Me Missouri Fish Mobile Aquarium with Columbia FRO biologist Jeff Finley, when we both worked for MDC. After graduation, I worked for MDC seasonally

at Davisdale Conservation Area. I then became a salaried employee at Schell-Osage Conservation Area where I worked with both upland and wetland habitat at the Four Rivers Conservation Area. On a lighter note, I've been married almost three years to Erin, a real estate agent in the booming metropolis of Glasgow. We have two daughters, Evann and Alayna.

Emily Kunz - March 19, 2007, marked the start of my sixth season working for federal agencies. While at Mt. Hood National Forest in Oregon, I was a woodland firefighter, trail maintenance crew member, and technician. On the west slope of Mt. Hood, I monitored endangered salmon populations through traps and field surveys, taught wetland ecology to students and performed habitat restoration. I continued my efforts with salmon with the Sandy River Basin Watershed Council (SRBWC), a non-profit watershed concerns group. As a project coordinator with the SRBWC, I provided technical advice to private landowners through home visits and public workshops and led volunteers in performing restoration activities. Finally, an opportunity arose to return to Missouri to work for the Ozark National Scenic Riverways in 2005 and 2006. As a technician, I wrote planning documents for park projects in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act and assisted Natural Resource Management staff with the inventory and monitoring of aquatic species and habitats, water quality testing, and cave monitoring. I graduated from Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois, with a BA in biology and environmental studies.

Veronica Smith - I joined the Columbia FRO in January of 2007 as a temporary employee with my

job to help the administrative officer, Deb Turner. I am a junior at the University of Missouri - Columbia and will graduate in May 2008 with a Bachelors of Science in Textile and Apparel Management with a minor in Business. With no experience in endangered species conservation, my function involves office work rather than field work. Every day is different, but I am responsible for the every day paper work and tasks that aid in the functioning of the Columbia FRO.

*Brett Witte, Emily Kunz and Veronica Smith; Columbia FRO*



-USFWS photos

**Veronica Smith (upper left), Emily Kunz and Brett Witte started their work assignments this spring at the Columbia Fishery Resources Office.**

## Introduction to Fish Health Management

**L**a Crosse FHC staff completed the annual *Introduction to Fish Health Management* short-course held at the La Crosse Laboratory and sponsored by the National Conservation Training Center. In the one week course, 17 attendees participated, including a U.S. Department of Agriculture veterinarian. All attendees were trained to recognize and identify external or gross signs of the more common fish diseases and parasites, isolate and culture selected disease organisms, calculate dosages and treatment levels, and properly care for and package moribund or dead fish as specimens for shipment to a diagnostic laboratory.

*Rick Nelson, La Crosse FHC*



-USFWS

**The La Crosse Fish Health Center completed the annual *Introduction to Fish Health Management* short-course, with 17 students in attendance.**



## Columbia FRO Adopts Coin Tradition

Biologists Wyatt Doyle and Jeff Finley have designed a “pallid sturgeon coin” that mimics military coins in looks and intent. The coin’s intent is to show appreciation and the boost morale. The pallid sturgeon coin is presented to all members of the field crew when a pallid sturgeon is captured. On March 5, biologists Andy Starostka, Nick Frohnauer and technicians Tammy Knecht, Derrick Eisenbrei and Lee Erickson were the first field crew to be awarded the pallid sturgeon coin.

The Military Coin tradition started during World War I. Legend had it that a wealthy lieutenant presented personalized bronze coins to his classmates as graduation presents. One of the young pilots put the coin in a leather pouch and wore it around his neck. His plane was shot down and he was captured by German troops. He later escaped into French territory. The French did not believe that he was an American and prepared to execute him. The pilot showed the coin to the French soldiers to prove that he was an American. It is now a tradition that all service members should have their coin on them at all times to prove allegiance. Coins are presented to armed forces members to prove membership when challenged and to enhance morale.

*Tammy Knecht, Columbia FRO*



*-USFWS photo by Tammy Knecht*

**The pallid sturgeon coin was designed by Columbia Fishery Resources Office staff and is used as an incentive for staff members who capture federally endangered pallid sturgeons.**

## Biologist Completes Leadership Training

Biologist Aaron Woldt of the Alpena FRO graduated from *Stepping Up to Leadership* (SUTL) training at the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) in March. SUTL is a six-month leadership development course consisting of two classroom portions at NCTC and an interim project phase that includes group and individual projects. The primary objectives of this training are to help attendees articulate a personal vision of leadership, integrate Fish and Wildlife Service leadership competencies into their personal development and career plans, and exhibit leadership behaviors that support the agency’s mission. Topics included effective communication, giving and receiving feedback, team communications, group dynamics, power and influence and the life of a Fish and Wildlife Service leader.

*Aaron Woldt, Alpena FRO*

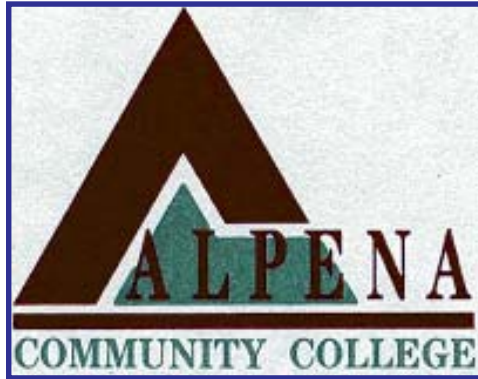
## Career Pathways Explored

The Alpena FRO participated in the Arts & Communications and Natural Resources & Agriscience Career Pathways Night at Alpena Community College. The goal of Career Pathways is to expose college and high school age students and their parents to a number of professions, allowing the students to see what is required of the various careers. Speakers shared their personal experiences and challenges in pursuing their career goals, educational and training requirements, potential salary, demand for the career and pros and cons of the profession.

Biologist Anjie Bowen provided information on biological and technician careers with the Fish and Wildlife Service. She provided background on her own career path and detailed the types of activities associated with work at Fish and Wildlife Service offices in the region – including fishery resources offices, biological stations, national fish hatcheries and fish health centers.

A number of students and their parents participated in the event, which was sponsored by Alpena Regional Medical Center, Educational Talent Search and the Alpena Community College. This event was the fourth of five events held during February and March to expose students to over 100 careers in Health Sciences, Human Sciences, Business, Management, Marketing & Technology, Engineering, Manufacturing & Industrial Technology, Arts & Communications and Natural Resources & Agriscience.

*Anjanette Bowen, Alpena FRO*



## Biologist Completes Washington Detail

Biologist Susan Wells from the Alpena FRO completed a two-month detail in the Washington Office, Branch of Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance that exposed her to many facets of the Fish and Wildlife Service on a national scale, primarily the National Fish Passage Program and the National Fish Habitat Action Plan. While on detail, Wells worked on numerous budget and information requests from the Office of Management and Budget and other departments for Congressional inquiries and the development of the FY 08 President's budget request. Wells had the opportunity to accompany Fisheries staff to meet with Congressionals at briefings to discuss issues related to fish passage, the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, viral hemorrhagic septicemia and other topics of national interest.

Having the opportunity to do this detail provided a mutually beneficial interaction between the Washington Office and field office staff. In addition, it allowed for an exchange of ideas and views on how programs are implemented and what is needed from both offices to achieve success. One of the more important aspects of the detail was the interaction and exchange of information and ideas, not just within the Fish and Wildlife Service, but with partners across the nation such as American Rivers, Trout Unlimited and the U.S. Geological Survey.

*Susan Wells, Alpena FRO*

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-Jerry French Postcard Collection; U.S. Fish Hatchery; Lake Mills, Wisconsin (1925)

## Windows in time

### *A Glimpse into our Proud Past:*

*The U.S. Fish Hatchery at Lake Mills was established in 1931 and operated until 1983 when it was leased to the State of Wisconsin. Lake Mills is in Jefferson County, mid-way between Madison and Milwaukee.*

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