



Genoa National Fish Hatchery News and Notes

Endangered Higgin's Eye Pearlmussel Recovery Project Reaches Important Milestone

A consortium of federal and state partners, led by Region 3 fisheries and ecological services has been involved in an active range wide recovery effort for the federally endangered Higgin's Eye Pearlmussel (*Lampsilis higginsii*) since 1999. From its humble beginnings in a small rearing area at Genoa National Fish Hatchery, the program has produced millions of young mussels for recovery areas throughout the species current and former range.



The arrow is pointing to a gill containing hundreds of thousands of larval mussels called glochidia. Photo by Mike Davis, Minnesota DNR

Additionally, thousands of advanced growth mussels, (those mussels over one year old, and ranging in size from 1-3") have been stocked in areas within the Upper Mississippi River to create new breeding populations of this rare species. During scheduled assessment operations in early fall of 2005 state and federal biologists detected viable larvae in propagated animals in the wild. These mussels were the progeny from operations carried out at the Genoa NFH in cooperation with multiple state partners and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Samples collected from several of the recovery sites by divers from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources showed 100% of stocked female mussels examined to be brooding (holding) viable larval mussels.



Arrows are pointing to the microscopic larvae that has been collected in a Petri dish. Photo by Mike Davis Minnesota DNR

This exciting news is confirmation that a major hurdle in recovery has been reached for this species, in that, animals produced under artificial culture techniques have reached maturity, bred, and produced viable larvae under natural conditions. The next step that biologists with the project hope to detect is the discovery of second generation mussels located at the recovery sites that can be attributed to the initial stockings.

- Roger Gordon

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For additional information about any accomplishment report please contact Genoa