

# Hatchery Highlights

## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Warm Springs NFH News and Updates



Jan. - March 2012

### Lake Sturgeon

Carlos Echevarria participated in the annual southeastern meeting of agencies and partners participating in restoration work for lake sturgeon. The meeting was held in Chattanooga, TN on January 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>. Topics included reviewing and assessing data from 2011, planning and revising assessment strategies and production goals for 2012.

Carlos and Chad Shirey participated in a multi-agency assessment for lake sturgeon stocked over proceeding years. Using trotlines, crews standardized sampling and data collecting methods while assessing sections of the Tennessee River drainage basin. Eight boats and crews participated in the effort March 19<sup>th</sup> through the 23<sup>rd</sup>. This effort refined techniques found effective the previous Fall.



Unseasonably warm weather in March required Carlos and Chad to leave weeks ahead of schedule to Wisconsin for collection of lake sturgeon eggs. Carlos, Chad and Bill Bouthillier prepared equipment and culture facilities at Warm Springs NFH in March. Participation with spawning efforts in Wisconsin began March 24 and carried on through the end of March.

## **Striped Bass**

Unseasonably warm weather throughout the southeast accelerated production schedules for striped bass this year. Production ponds were started up in mid March using modified pond fertilization procedures. Josh Simmons developed a trial using soybean meal that will be added into half the ponds and then evaluated. Eight of our twelve ponds typically used for striped bass production were started up in anticipation of receiving fry much earlier than in previous years.

Carlos participated in the annual Morone Meeting in Crawfordville, FL Feb. 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup>. Participation included review of 2011 restoration efforts along with setting management and production goals for 2012.

## **Sicklefin Redhorse**

Ecological Services and North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission are in the process of submitting a grant proposal involving WSNFH for continued culture, propagation, marking and monitoring efforts with Sicklefin.

## **Alligator Gar**

Haile Macurdy gave a PowerPoint presentation on alligator gar culture at the Georgia AFS annual meeting in Macon, GA Feb. 7<sup>th</sup>. through the 9<sup>th</sup>.

Carlos facilitated and provided input for regional, national and international efforts directed towards restoration of alligator gar through its historical range. Carlos participated in the SDAFS Technical Committee meeting at Biloxi, MS Jan. 26<sup>th</sup> through the 27<sup>th</sup>.

## **Atlantic Sturgeon**

Warm Springs NFH maintains 15 Atlantic sturgeon, produced at Bears Bluff NFH, for future assessment work. These fish now average 14 to 16 inches in length.



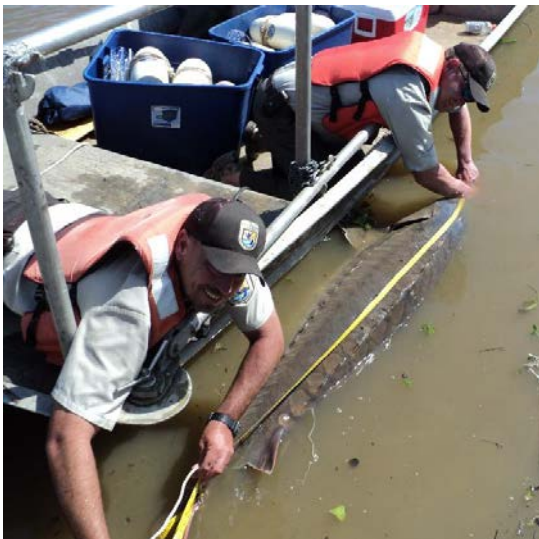
## **Mussels & Small Stream Fish**

Andy Hartzog and Bill Bouthillier worked on various and wide ranging tasks associated with upcoming mussel work. This included tasks associated with propagation, refinement of intensive culture techniques, host fish identification for imperiled mussel species or their surrogates within the ACF river basin. Bill participated in Alabama's Non-Game Fish/Mollusk meeting in Rogersville, AL, Jan. 17<sup>th</sup> through the 19<sup>th</sup>. The ACF Propagation Plan developed at Warm Springs still under reviewed by WSRFC staff. Andy has facilitated regional mussel research and participated in programs on behalf of the FWS. In January, Andy collected mussels for onsite research, began coordination of Freshwater mussel workshops for the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint (ACF) River mussel workshop and Escambia, Yellow, and Choctawhatchee mussel workshop. In February, he collected fish for research projects, conducted several mussel surveys and collections for research projects, and prepared hatchery facilities for upcoming fish and mussel work. In March, he collected 25, gravid paper pondshell mussels for research projects and 12 blackbanded darters for host fish research project using backpack electrofishing gear.

## **Pearl River, Saint Marys River, Fish Passage Work**

Staff was active in diverse projects through the region. Projects included fish passage work, habitat assessment work on the Saint Marys River and participation with Spring sampling for Gulf Sturgeon on the Pearl River basin.

The following was staff deploy to Louisiana during this Quarter to conduct gill net sampling associated with NRDAR monitoring efforts on Gulf Sturgeon within the Pearl River basin: March 11<sup>th</sup> – March 17<sup>th</sup> Chad Shirey and Josh Simmons; and March 25<sup>th</sup> – April 1<sup>st</sup> Andy Hartzog and Haile Macurdy. WSNFH staff will continue to participate in this effort into April.



Warm Spring NFH staff conducted water quality monitoring and facilitated efforts of the water quality working group within the Saint Marys Fisheries Restoration Committee. Haile Macurdy provided a Power Point presentation on 2011 water quality monitoring work and findings to the committee at a Jacksonville meeting Feb. 1<sup>st</sup>. In addition to servicing a Hydrolab sonde unit currently deployed in the river, Andy Jackson, Welaka NFH, Haile and with fantastic assistance of members of the FWS dive team, attached a protective PVC pipe enclosure to the pilings at the I-95 bridge, site of a second Hydrolab sonde to be deployed. FWS dive team members were: Steve Rees, Refuge Law Enforcement and Glenn Cullingford, Regional Dive Team coordinator.



Bill Bouthillier submitted SARP projects involving fish passage. These included Ichawaynochaway Creek Watershed fish Barrier Survey in Georgia and the Big Canoe Creek Watershed Fish Barrier Survey in Alabama.

Bill Bouthillier presented his results from the fish passage surveys of the Paint Rock River at the annual Alabama Non-Game Fishes, Mussel and Crayfish Meeting at Guntersville State Park in Guntersville, Alabama on January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2012. Five barriers were identified during the survey, of which four will be eliminated completely: one has been since replaced, one is in the final design phase, and a third is waiting on the funding to be approved and fourth is soon to be purchased and removed by the Nature Conservancy.

Carlos Echevarria and Josh Simmons participated in the annual Georgia DNR Warmwater Hatchery meeting in Ocmulgee, GA Jan. 31<sup>st</sup>. They provided an overview of key programs, results from 2011, goals for 2012 and opportunities for cooperation in meeting common conservation goals.

## **Training and Administrative**

The fire management plan developed for WSNFH was reviewed during a site visit Feb. 29<sup>th</sup> by Terri Jenkins, Fire Management Specialist, Okefenokee NWR. Options for securing chain saw training for staff were also discussed with Terri. Chad Shirey is coordinating efforts with regional staff to provide station staff onsite forklift and other



heavy equipment training. Chad participated in a refresher instructor training course and MAT project workshop at Okefenokee NWR in January.

On January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2012, Chuck Hunter, Susan Cielinski, Janet Ertel, Theresa Thom, and Nicole Rankin from Refuges I&M staff and Catherine Phillips (Panama City FWCO) met with staff from the WSRFC to share time discussing the kinds of field work and technical activities that are being done through WSRFC.

Hatchery staff participated in WSRFC quarterly meeting February 21<sup>st</sup> outlining work activities through the rest of 2012.

An onsite meeting and tour highlighting research capabilities to Inter- Agency partners was provided on March 12<sup>th</sup>.

## **Maintenance and Operations**

Staff focused on preventative maintenance, repairs and construction activities during the quarter. Our damaged shop building, hit by an RV in 2011 that caused an estimated \$30,000 in damage, was repaired by staff at a fraction of the cost. Repairs were made to the eaves, gutters, support beams, overhead doors and associated hardware.



Staff conducted area maintenance on grounds, trimming trees, removing limbs and leaves from ditches, roadways and levees prior to Spring rains. Preventative maintenance (painting) was performed on various buildings and equipment. Chain link fences were repaired. The shingled roof to the Administration building developed leaks that will require a complete replacement of the shingles. Bids are currently being requested in order to award a contract for the repairs.

Buildings, water processing and treatment equipment was serviced during the Quarter.

Equipment was serviced and cleaned for Spring production and assessment work. This included: working on boats, building 16 trot lines for lake sturgeon assessment work,

repairing screens and air stones used for pond / tank culture. An auxiliary fuel tank was added to a station pickup enabling extended travel without having to purchase fuel off site.

An enclosure in the wetlands demonstration pond including in part a boardwalk with a chain link fence was drained to initiate repairs. A concrete pad will be poured within the enclosure to prevent animals from borrowing under the fence.

Ponds and associated aeration equipment, kettle structures typically used for striped bass production were drained and put back into production during the Quarter.

## **Outreach**

Staff participated with Friends of Warm Springs NFH to plan for upcoming events such as the annual kids fishing day held in June.

Bill Bouthillier was a judge at the Annual Columbus Regional Science and Engineering Fair (CRSEF) February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

Hatchery staff submitted a proposal for Connecting People with Nature Grant to build a handicap fishing pier for children with disabilities. One lumber company has already agreed to donate \$500 towards the project and to discount the remaining cost for the lumber.

Bill Bouthillier and Greg Scull from WSFTC conducted a BIT (Biologist in Training) class for 11 students from Crossroads Christian School in Fayetteville, Georgia on station.

The hatchery staff gave an informal tour to students and patients struggling with mental illness, developmental disabilities, or addictive disease from New Horizons from Columbus, Georgia on March 21, 2012.



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