

MONTHLY ACTIVITY REPORT

**Arizona Fishery Resources Offices
Pinetop, Parker, San Carlos, Flagstaff**

DATE: March 19, 2003
REPORT FOR: **February 2003**
DCN: USFWS-AZFRO-PT-03-007
ACTIVITIES:

General

Mark Brouder represented AZFRO at the University of Arizona, Cooperative Fish & Wildlife Research Unit's Annual Cooperators Meeting.

Leslie Thompson participated in the monthly Regional Fisheries conference call, representing AZFRO.

Leslie Ruiz participated in the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program meeting in Phoenix. This meeting was held to rank projects that will be funded in FY03.

Stewart Jacks participated in a Regional DOI MOCC Instructors meeting held at Aransas NWR. We will schedule four courses per year with multiple instructors to help get everyone trained that needs it.

Brenda Brouder and M. Brouder participated in a planning meeting via a teleconference where B. Brouder will continue work on the printed program for the upcoming Western Division AFS Meeting in April. B. Brouder completed the first draft of the AFS printed program and distributed to meeting organizers for review and distribution on the meeting website. B. Brouder continued formatting the meeting abstract booklet.

Jacks participated in the Southwest Tribal Fisheries Commission Meeting held in Phoenix. The group made headway into their charter and bylaws and will be having elections in April to choose leaders for the Commission.

Shelley Simmonds attended a Regional Office employee meeting with Regional Director Dale Hall while she was in the Regional Office for training.

Jacks participated in the Tribal Focus Meeting in Phoenix to get input from Tribes for the Fisheries Region 2 Step-down plan. This will be incorporated as part of the Fisheries Strategic Vision.

S. Simmonds sent out a property database program she developed for AZFRO to Austin Ecological Services, Tulsa Ecological Services, and Maxwell NWR as per request.

Rob Simmonds and Jacks ranked all projects under consideration by AZFRO for 2003. This is one part of a larger process that identifies AZFRO projects based on our mission and our partner's needs, prioritizes those projects, and compiles the top projects into an annual work plan.

Mid-year evaluations were completed for all AZFRO staff. R. Simmonds completed Individual Development Plans with all new staff.

Jacks completed accessibility reviews of the Pinetop and San Carlos offices.

All AZFRO employees participated in a staff meeting call. A variety of topics including information from the Regional Project Leader's Meeting and National Fisheries Leadership Conference, the new CARES system, communication, and safety were discussed.

Outreach

M. Brouder, Daniel Parker, Tom Ensmann, B. Brouder, R. Simmonds, Ruiz, Randy Van Haverbeke, Pam Sponholtz, and Jacks participated in the AZ/NM AFS (American Fisheries Society) Annual Meeting held in Gallup, NM. M. Brouder (AZ/NM AFS President) put together a great meeting and for the first time in recent history there were more fisheries talks than could be accommodated. AZFRO personnel gave six presentations at the meeting including, B. Brouder with "Evaluation of Trout Stocking in Fort Apache Indian Reservation Recreational Fishing Lakes," Sponholtz with "Reservoir Sampling on the Navajo Nation, August 2002" and Sponholtz gave a second talk authored by Ben Galuardi entitled "GIS Monitoring of Humpback Chub in the Little Colorado River," M. Brouder with "Effects of Dam Operations on Largemouth Bass in a Southwestern Reservoir," Van Haverbeke with "Native Fish Monitoring Efforts in the Little Colorado River, Grand Canyon, Arizona," and Ruiz with "Population Estimates of Apache Trout in 11 Stream on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation." This gathering brings together fishery biologists from a number of arenas with a variety of expertise. As always, the meeting was very informative and a very productive place to meet with partners and peers.

Mary Jo Stegman participated in the Blue Ridge Middle School Career Day. She gave a presentation on the various careers available within the Service and information on endangered species and their management in the White Mountains of Arizona.

S. Simmonds set up Tim Gatewood (White Mountain Apache Tribe) and Jim Thompson (Arizona Game & Fish Department) with the Service's Reference Center so they can order articles as a cooperator. She also set up Tim Gatewood with some available online training.

Van Haverbeke gave a presentation at a Flagstaff Lions Club meeting. The talk covered a general description of the Service, activities of AZFRO, and educational

awareness of native fish species existing in Arizona. The presentation was well received and generated lots of questions.

Jacks gave a paper entitled "Preventing the Spread of Aquatic Nuisance Species with the HACCP Approach, How the Service is Living It" at the Aquaculture America - World Aquaculture Society National Meeting held in Louisville, KY. This meeting included professionals involved in all aspects of aquaculture and was receptive to how the Region 2 Fisheries Program is attempting to control or prevent invasive species and how they might utilize this tool.

AZFRO-Pinetop

The Pinetop staff participated in the Fishery Coordination meeting among AZFRO, A/WC NFH (Alchesay/Williams Creek NFH), Pinetop FHC, & WMAT-WORD (White Mountain Apache Tribe - Wildlife & Outdoor Recreation Division).

Stegman completed the draft informal Section 7 on the BIA's proposed use of U.S. Forest Service Roads on the Tonto and Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests to transport timber harvested from the Rodeo-Chediski Wildfire Salvage Timber Harvest Operations on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation. This project was coordinated with the Arizona Ecological Services Field Office.

Ruiz participated in the White Mountain Crayfish Workgroup meeting at HonDah. The group is developing ways to control crayfish in Arizona especially in the White Mountains.

R. Simmonds reviewed Ruiz's 2001 Apache Trout Population Status Report.

Ruiz, M. Brouder, R. Simmonds, B. Brouder, Ensmann, and Parker, met with WMAT-WORD and A/WC NFH to discuss an upcoming angler survey on several lakes on the FAIR (Fort Apache Indian Reservation). In addition to determining angler preference, satisfaction, etc., the survey will also determine the rate of return for sub-catchable rainbow trout that are produced by A/WC NFH.

Ensmann and Parker, with assistance from Dewey Wesley, Sisto Hernandez (WMAT-WORD), and Williams Creek NFH staff, clipped fins of 35,000 rainbow trout for later identification as part of an angler use survey and trout survival study on the FAIR. This will allow us to measure growth rates and return to creel of our spring subcatchable program.

Stegman completed the 3rd draft of the Hopi Water Quality Standards Biological Opinion. This project was coordinated with the Arizona Ecological Services Field Office.

Ensmann continued Apache trout habitat and mapping data entry. Completed maps are

used to determine slope, elevations, stream length, and stream type.

Ruiz and Jacks met with Mike Lopez (Arizona Game & Fish Department) and Danny Hooper (Old Pueblo Trout Unlimited Conservation Chair) to plan Apache trout volunteer days for the summer and fall.

Ensman, with assistance from Sisto Hernandez (WMAT-WORD), conducted water quality surveys at several FAIR lakes. Hopefully we will avoid major winter fish kills.

Stegman worked with Sylvia Cates and Alex Puglisi (WMAT) on the WMAT Water Quality Standards. The Tribe has decided to request informal consultation on their Water Quality Standards at this time and reinstate consultation in the near future, if necessary, based on the findings of the National Triennial Review.

B. Brouder began restructuring the WMAT Recreational Fishing Program study report based on input from the meetings with the WMAT-WORD. The new format should better lend itself to the development of the FAIR Fishery Management Plan, as well as, any future studies that need to be conducted.

Stegman met with Joanie Sawyer (Director of the Navajo County NRCD Education Center) regarding AZFRO projects that she could incorporate into her education programs.

Ruiz met with Johnathan Long (WMAT Watershed Planning) to coordinate habitat monitoring in high elevation streams on the FAIR.

AZFRO-Parker

Mitch Thorson conducted the water quality projects at Alamo and Painted Rock reservoirs. Both reservoirs are still very low.

Chuck Minckley, Thorson, and Darren Thornbrugh, with assistance from Jules Fiochii (Achii Hanyo) sampled the Emerald Canyon Golf course ponds for razorbacks and bonytails. Thirty-six razorbacks and two bonytails were tagged and released into Lake Havasu.

Doug Jann and Thorson, with assistance from David Baker and Grady Crone (California Fish and Game) and volunteer Howard Bandy, completed a second monthly monitoring trip to evaluate the renovation of the five duck ponds at Imperial NWR. The ponds are being renovated to provide refugia habitat for endangered fishes of the lower Colorado River. Fish collection techniques in the 40 acre pond complex included 155 minutes and 29 seconds of electrofishing (pedal time), and 1,850 meters of trammel nets fished overnight (12 hours). Four warmouth, ranging from 14 to 22 cm, were taken in one net fished in Pond 5. No fish were taken in Ponds 1 – 4. Many thanks to California Fish and Game for lending us an electrofishing boat and crew on such short notice (the

outboard motor on AZFRO's electrofishing boat suffered lower unit failure midway through the sampling).

Minckley and Thorson surveyed Lake Havasu from the air in a Bureau of Reclamation helicopter this month. Three schools of razorback sucker were located and a possible school of flannelmouth suckers. These aerial surveys assist crews with subsequent netting surveys.

Jann distributed Trip Reports on activities conducted in the Native Fish Protected Habitats during the period from November 2002 through January 2003 to several federal and state agencies, and academic researchers.

Minckley, Thorson, and Thornbrugh, with assistance from Angler's United volunteers, completed a native fish survey of the Colorado River from Lake Havasu to Blankenship Bend. In the eight mile reach two razorback suckers and four flannelmouth suckers were captured, PIT tagged, and released. This survey is part an ongoing USGS study.

Thorson, Jann, and Thornbrugh conducted the 5th Annual Lake Havasu Roundup where we concentrated our efforts in the Bill Williams River NWR area. They were assisted by Van Haverbeke, Jules Fiochii (Achii Hanyo), and volunteers Ed Marvin and John Lehn. Five PIT tagged bonytail were taken in this effort, the largest number taken to date in this annual survey. Arizona Game & Fish Department and USGS also participated in the survey.

Minckley assisted Cibola NWR personnel in control spraying of the invasive plant giant salvinia. The area sprayed was in the vicinity of Mitchel's Camp on the Refuge.

Jann submitted a report of management activities conducted in the Native Fish Protected Habitats during the first quarter of FY2003 to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. R. Simmonds reviewed the quarterly report. The Bureau of Reclamation is providing the funding for the management of the habitats.

Minckley reviewed three endangered species permit applications for the Regional Ecological Services Office and provided assistance to Stegman in completing the Coolidge Dam Biological Opinion.

Thorson, Jann, Thornbrugh, and Van Haverbeke assisted the California Fish and Game Department in a survey of a large reservoir on Metropolitan Water District Land that has been drawn down for maintenance. Species collected included flathead catfish, channel catfish, striped bass, and redear sunfish.

Minckley and Thornbrugh met with biologists from the Colorado River Indian Tribes regarding assisting them in sampling the Moovalya wetlands.

AZFRO-San Carlos

Dewey Wesley conducted water quality measurements and angler surveys at several SCAR (San Carlos Apache Reservation) lakes. Wesley also provided lake patrol assistance and a fishing report to the San Carlos Recreation & Wildlife Department. M. Brouder and Wesley sampled Point of Pines and Seneca lakes (SCAR) as per trout overwinter/survival study plan. They continued marking (Floy tag) largemouth bass in Seneca Lake to determine population size via mark/recapture procedures in conjunction with the overwinter/survival study.

Wesley conducted salt cedar removal and control at Bylas Springs on the SCAR. This is part of an ongoing project to maintain the Gila topminnow springs at Bylas.

M. Brouder continued preparation of the manuscript "Effects of dam operations on largemouth bass in a southwestern reservoir."

Stegman continued work on the Biological Opinion for the operation of Coolidge Dam on the San Carlos Apache Reservation. She coordinated with the Regional Office regarding the status of this Biological Opinion.

Wesley attended a conference put on by the USDA on Exotic New Castle Disease.

M. Brouder and Jacks attended a meeting with Dale Hall (Region 2 Director), Kathy Kitcheyan (San Carlos Apache Tribal Chairwoman), Steve Titla (Tribal Attorney) and several Tribal livestock association members to discuss Mexican wolves on the SCAR.

Wesley assisted Elliot Talgo (San Carlos Apache Tribe, Environmental Protection Agency) with water chemistry sampling at three sites along Bonito Creek (SCAR).

AZFRO-Flagstaff

Van Haverbeke completed and delivered AZFRO's "Stock Assessment and Fisheries Monitoring Activities in the Little Colorado River within Grand Canyon During 2001, Final Report" to GCMRC (Grand Canyon Monitoring and Research Center).

Sponholtz and Van Haverbeke participated in a conference call with the Bureau of Reclamation and the Arizona Ecological Services Field Office to discuss logistics of transporting approximately 300, 30-60mm humpback chub above the Atomizer Falls complex in the Little Colorado River. This conservation action was recommended in the December 2002 Biological Opinion on Modified Flows and Trout Removal Efforts in the Colorado River. Sponholtz drafted, with review by Van Haverbeke and R. Simmonds, a proposal that addresses surveys, capture efforts, and monitoring for this project.

Stone completed a draft of a manuscript on gut flushing techniques and sent it out for internal review.

Sponholtz met with Charles Swinger (Northern Arizona University and the Verde Watershed Research and Education Program) to discuss collaborative approaches to research on Fossil Creek. Discussions included pursuing National Science Foundation funding to incorporate a watershed approach to restoration once flows are returned to the historical channel in December 2004.

Van Haverbeke updated the 2003 Sampling Plan for the Little Colorado River. This document outlines staff, equipment, and logistical needs for upcoming fishery sampling in the Little Colorado River.

R. Simmonds, Sponholtz, and Van Haverbeke participated in a meeting of the AMWG (Adaptive Management Work Group) Ad Hoc subcommittee formed to discuss the current status of humpback chub in Grand Canyon and to develop a comprehensive strategy to address the threats faced by humpback chub. This meeting was very successful and brought forth a number of important potential projects that will be compiled into a package of recommendations that will be presented to the AMWG. Also discussed was the need for augmentation of the humpback chub population and the hurdles that must be considered to complete such an action.

Stone participated in GCMRC's stock synthesis meeting. Since we were the only agency that submitted anything, they didn't really have anything for us to continue to work on.

Sponholtz worked with U.S. Geological Survey, SWCA Inc., and Arizona Game & Fish Department at Bubbling Ponds State Fish Hatchery to further evaluate the new Biomark FS ISO 1400 pit tag readers. The new technology has been improved to read older 400 kHz tags that are currently used in the Colorado River and elsewhere. In addition to using the new readers, operations in the Colorado River will also switch over to a new frequency of pit tag, 134.2kHz that has been shown to have increased longevity and detection rates.

Stone continued to work on the "Humpback Chub Ontogenesis" paper. This manuscript should be ready for submission very soon.

R. Simmonds reviewed Sponholtz's Watershed Prioritization Operational Plan.

Training

Ensman and Parker completed a Hydrolab Workshop held in the AZFRO-Pinetop office.

S. Simmonds completed PPMS Property Training and a condensed version of the Dreamweaver/Fireworks Web Design Training in Albuquerque. Both courses were good with lots of real world applications.

Jann completed the self-study NCTC course “Principles and Techniques of Electrofishing” and CPR/First Aid training. He is now certified to lead electrofishing crews.

Sponholtz completed an Internet version of Microsoft Project training.